

Events Leading Up to Establishment of the Sawtooth National Forest

The injury to all persons and industries which result from the destruction of forests by fires, careless use, and other causes, is a matter of history in older countries and was long, and still is, the cause of anxiety in the United States. Early settlers knew that the welfare of the community was dependent upon a cheap and plentiful supply of timber; that a forest cover is the most effective means of regulating a stream flow for irrigation and other useful purposes; that the permanence of the livestock industry depended upon the conservative use of the range; that the forest cover furnished protection and feed for wild game, birds, fish, etc.; that environment within the forest furnished recreation and was healthful.

The exhaustion of lumbering centers, leaving behind desolation and depression in business, public and private losses through unnecessary forest fires, a decrease in the summer flow of streams just as they became indispensable to manufacturing or irrigation, and a serious decrease in the carrying capacity of summer range, seemed to many of the conservationists one of the most vital problems in the United States.

In 1799, and again in 1817, Congress provided for the purchase of timber lands to supply the needs of the navy. An act of the forty-second Congress for the purpose of administration of forests on public lands failed to pass.

In 1876, \$2000 was appropriated to employ a competent man to investigate timber conditions in the U.S. and on June 30, 1886, an act was approved creating a Division of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture. On June 1, 1901, this division became the Bureau of Forestry (now the Forest Service, since the Act of March 3, 1905).

An Act of March 3, 1891, authorized the President to establish forest reserves, now called National Forests. The first forest reserve was created by President Harrison on March 30, 1891, and was called "Yellowstone Park Timber Land Reserve". The creation of forest reserves, as was the practice at first, without provisions for their administration, was disturbing to local interests dependent upon their resources.

National Forests are now administered under the Act of June 4, 1897. The Act of February 1, 1905, transferred to the Secretary of Agriculture entire jurisdiction over the National Forests. Until this time, they were under the Secretary of Interior.

The general administration policy laid down by the Secretary of Agriculture must be devoted for the permanent good of the whole people, and not for the temporary benefit of individuals or companies.

Most of the National Forests were created under the Act of March 3, 1891.

The Sawtooth National Forest was created on May 29, 1905, by proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt. It was then called "Sawtooth Forest Reserve" and contained 1,947,520 acres.