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CUTTING OUT THE DEADWOOD.

by P. J. McNamara.

The Amount of Deadwood.

A casual glance at even the roughest assessment figures for "untreated" forest shows two salient points which foresters would do well to ponder -

- (1) About 15% of standing volume is unmarketable.
- (2) Between 10-25% (higher percentages in the South) of standing volume is Marri in some shape or form.

A minimum of 15% and more likely an average of 20-30% of basal area or cambial area of these stands is supporting material of little, or at best, extremely doubtful value. In other words, only three-quarters of the site is under effective utilisation and the present production from 4 million acres of State Forests is only equivalent to the potential production of 3 million acres of fully productive forest.

Efforts to reduce this dead weight of static volume depend on economics of log hauling and royalty, but there is no doubt that they can be successful, at least in near metropolitan divisions.

What can be done about it?

For the past few months regeneration falling has been in progress along the Kalamunda Road with objectives -

- (1) To improve growth on standing trees, and to improve development of second growth by removing moribund and defective Jarrah and poor quality Marri.
- (2) To enhance scenic values along a much used tourist road.
- (3) To demonstrate that moves are afoot to tend the Eucalypt forest.

Results are encouraging.

The first trial area of 106 acres was felled and logs were prepared by daywork power-sawyer to marking by Forest Guard. Acceptable sawlogs contained in defective trees were assessed at 2 loads per acre standing and actually averaged 1.85 loads per acre fallen without falling any of the true growing stock.

(1) Produce.

Jarrah Sawlogs.

194 loads sold by auction	
@ 66/- per load.	£659.

Jarrah Firewood.

620 tons at estimated royalty	
of 5/- per ton	155.

Marri possible firewood.

300 tons at estimated royalty	
of 2/6d. per ton	<u>37.</u>

£851.

The firewood has not been sold as yet but will be removed in due course; the Marri presents another problem.

(2) Production costs.

Wages		£162.
Power saws 315 hrs.		96.
Sharpening		3.
Vehicles 323 miles		<u>29.</u>
Plus overheads 25% on wages		<u>41.</u>

£331.

(3) Returns based on Jarrah sawlogs only.

Royalty as at auction		66/- per load
Less costs (194 lds. for £331).		<u>34/-</u> " "
Nett return 1.85 lds. per ac. @		<u>32/-</u> " "

= 58/6 per acre.

Allowing for the eventual sale of firewood, the return per acre would amount to 94/8d.

Financial success depends on -

- (a) An adequate quantity of saleable logs to offset the total cost of falling and stand improvement. In this case cost per saleable load was 34/- as against 8/2d. per load taking into account all waste material fallen.

- (b) A reasonable proportion of saleable logs to waste; in this case extremely large Marri were not fallen on account of prohibitive costs. These trees, possibly 1 or 2 per acre, remain as a challenge to Foresters' ingenuity.
- (c) Complete recovery of marketable logs. At a royalty of 66/- per load, unless a faller recovers one load per day, he has not earned his keep, and even half a load missed by him is equivalent to the loss of another half day's work.

Further outlook.

Large amounts of timber reserved to the Crown await removal from alienated land and the time may not yet be ripe for widespread salvage falling. However, maximum production will be required from State Forests when timber from alienated land has been fully exploited.

More immediately, regeneration falling provides productive work for men retained primarily as fire fighters and where high royalties cannot be obtained it provides a means of paying at least part of their wages bill with some added increment on the side. Actually, once the sale is made and costs are recovered, the money could be used for further work and the operation would become virtually self-supporting.

As a practical demonstration of forestry, this work shows the public that they are getting something for their money.

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