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Community Forests
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Community Forests for Rural People

Prepared by the Forest Service and Extension Service

One of the lessons emphasized by World War II is that power lies in cooperation. Group action is especially important today to farm people, who need to think more seriously about their community interests and work together more effectively to promote them. The people of rural communities should become better acquainted in order to build up community spirit, foster neighborly cooperation, and advance their common interests.



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FIGURE 1.—A community forest provides a place where people can play and which they can call their own.

Every rural community should have a place that the people can call their own, where they can get together for social or business purposes and for recreation. A community forest and recreation center is an ideal place for either adult or youth groups to get together for mutual benefit and collaboration. At the same time, the forest may yield timber which in the long run will defray the cost of upkeep and produce profits.

The size of the forest may vary according to the needs of a community. It should, if possible, be large enough to provide a picnic ground with tables and a barbecue pit; a playing field for baseball and other sports; a building for community meetings and recreational activities; and it is always desirable to have water where swimming and fishing may be developed. To take care of all these uses and provide a stand of timber large enough to contribute materially to the running expenses, the forest should have at least 20 acres and preferably 40 or 100 acres, or even more, depending on the program of uses. In some places the



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FIGURE 2.—High-school students planted these white pine trees 17 years ago as a community forest.

local situation will not permit of the establishing of a project as large as 20 acres and a more modest beginning is necessary. Even 1 acre may be feasible.

The title to the land should be held by the county government or the State agricultural college. The property should be managed by a nonpolitical, non-sectarian commission of at least three people, who are appointed officially and serve without pay. If the forest is accessible to a school, it can be made available as an out-of-doors laboratory where students and others may be shown forestry practices, study natural history, and lay out nature trails.

The same pattern of community forest will not be feasible in every community and in every State. The needs of the local community should be the guiding principle in determining the kind of forest to be developed. The forests may be

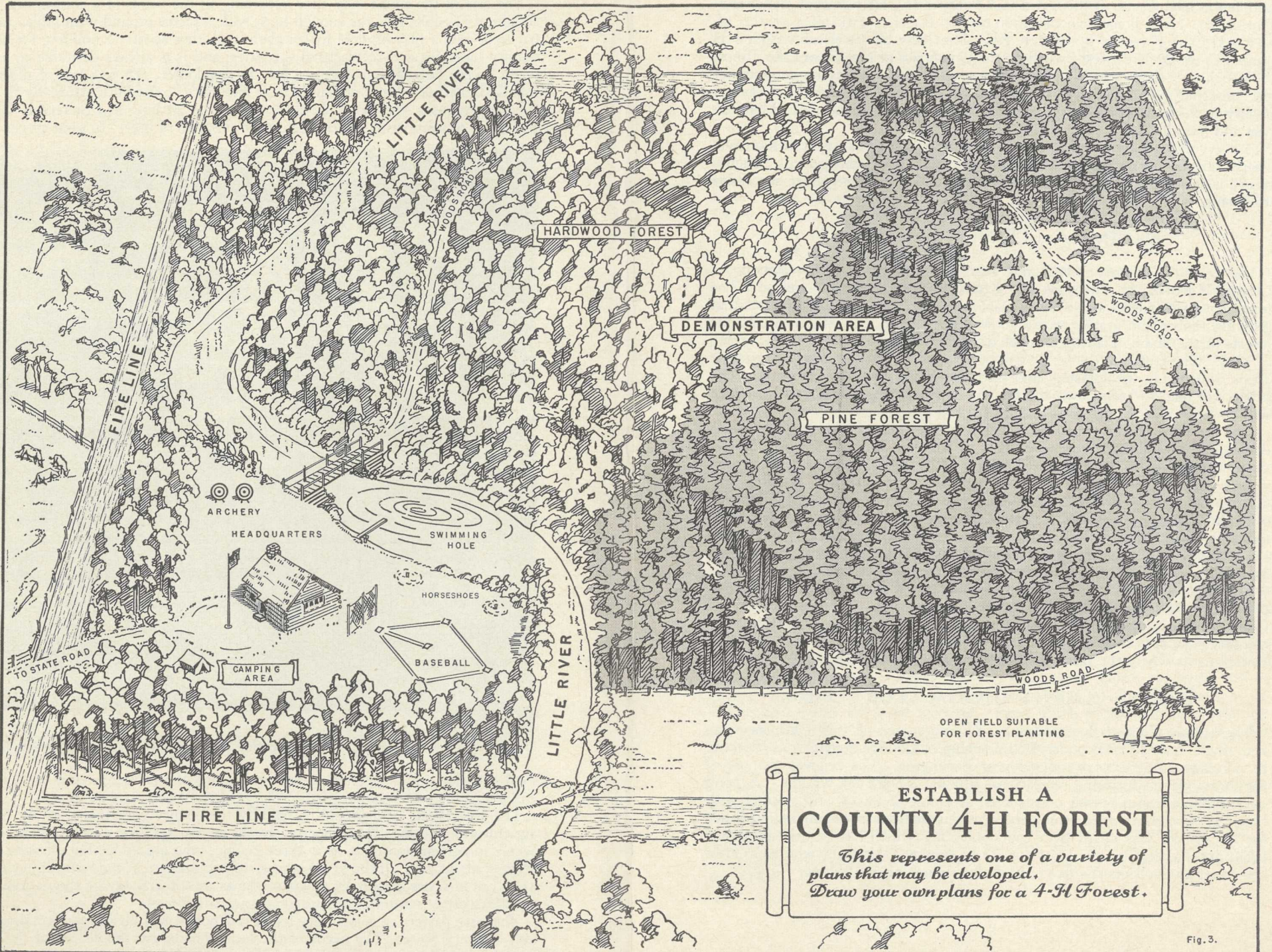


Fig. 3.

as different in character as the Escambia County 4-H Club Forest of 400 acres in Florida, the 1-acre home demonstration council tracts of Arkansas, or the 14-acre 4-H Club Forest of Burlington, Ky. They may be associated with a 4-H camp, like the 20-acre forest owned by the University of Nevada at Lake Tahoe.

Though they differ widely in size and use, all of these forests are designed for the same purpose, namely, to build stronger attitudes of citizenship, greater loyalty to the home community, and a spirit of cooperation and mutual helpfulness and friendliness.

In every case a written plan should be prepared for the forest, which will clearly outline its purpose and the proposed details of management. Such a record is essential to the continuation of the original objective under successive leadership.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY 4-H FOREST

The Escambia County 4-H Forest near Pensacola, Fla., was started under County Agent E. H. Finlayson and Extension Forester L. T. Nieland. The forest covers 400 acres and is being managed to demonstrate the principle that growing timber and grazing cattle go well together in the longleaf-slash pine forests of the State. Planting of open areas to forest trees began in the spring of 1944. One-fourth of the forest will be devoted to grazing; improved pasture strips will divide the forested land into blocks and serve as firebreaks. The cattle will help to keep down the fire hazard by grazing the firebreaks, which will be sown with carpet grass and other good forage species.

This forest is on cut-over land which a public-spirited citizen of Pensacola donated to Escambia County to be held in trust for the 4-H Clubs. Besides its educational value, the forest will provide many desirable forms of recreation. A lake fed by a small stream has been created for swimming, boating, and fishing, and a group of four log buildings will furnish a permanent camp for 4-H Clubs and other groups. A fund of several thousand dollars has been raised to underwrite the initial costs of establishing the camp and improving the property. In time the project should be self-supporting and even yield an annual return over and above installation and maintenance costs.

The products of the forest will be pulpwood, naval stores, railroad ties, poles, piling, saw timber, and beef cattle. The practical value of this project to 4-H Clubs is being supplemented by trips to sawmills, paper mills, turpentine stills, creosoting plants, chemical-wood retorts, excelsior mills, and other manufacturing plants where the products from their forest are processed.

BOONE COUNTY UTOPIA CLUB FOREST

The Utopia Club of Boone County, Ky., composed of 4-H Club members and others, raised \$3,000 under the leadership of County Agent H. R. Forkner to purchase 14 acres of woodland near Burlington. The original purpose of the forest was to furnish a recreational site and a home for wildlife. A pond covering about an acre was constructed at a cost of \$1,000 and stocked with bass. It now affords good fishing and provides facilities for swimming. Money for the project was raised by a community fair which has become an annual event and has enabled the Utopia Club to employ a caretaker who looks after the forest and collects the fees charged for swimming and fishing.

HOME DEMONSTRATION COUNCIL FORESTS

In Arkansas, Home Demonstration Club members decided on a tree-planting project as a means of broadening their interests. Since it was not feasible to acquire large areas, original plantings were confined to 1-acre plots. Under the leadership of the extension forester, and aided by home demonstration agents, the home demonstration councils in 31 counties obtained 40-year leases on 1-acre tracts.

On the day of planting, all the home demonstration clubs of the county assembled at the forest site. The extension forester demonstrated the proper technique of digging the hole and planting the seedling in the first or "official row." Each official in turn then planted a tree, followed by each of the clubs. Every row was named for the club, and every tree for an officer, president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, in that order, and for each member, including those absent. One thousand seedlings were planted to the acre. A chart was prepared showing the location of every tree and the name of the person for whom it was planted. Every member is provided with a print of this chart so that she can identify her tree and note its growth from time to time.

The first of these forest plantings was made in 1939, and by 1944 the trees ranged up to 17 feet in height. Already the clubwomen are planning to prune the trees in order to produce nice clean poles, and they are looking forward to the time when they can thin the stands for posts or pulpwood. It is quite likely that many of these forest plantings will be enlarged. Already there is talk in at least one county of getting another acre, where more planting can be done and a modest clubhouse erected.

HOW TO ESTABLISH A COUNTY 4-H FOREST

Many 4-H Clubs have shown an enthusiastic interest in forestry and have made practical contributions to conservation. These clubs, organized with the assistance of extension agents and trained local leaders, have an unusual opportunity to start community forests. Such an enterprise might be dedicated as a war memorial to farm youth and at the same time provide a worth-while and constructive club program. By participating in the development of a project of this kind and sharing the possible financial benefits, clubs can be brought closer together and a greater unity and friendliness achieved.

A county 4-H forest, sponsored by the county 4-H council and used for meetings, camping, or other forms of recreation, nature study, and as a place for demonstrating forestry practices, should have wide appeal to youth and to citizens interested in encouraging their sons and daughters to learn how to develop and rebuild our forest resource. Farm youth provided with wholesome recreation, thrilled by new experiences, and fortified with information about their surroundings, make better citizens and better communities.

The following steps are suggested in establishing a county 4-H forest:

1. Acquire a tract of 20, 40, or more acres of forest land. An individual or group of citizens may desire to help by donating land or funds for the project. Under some circumstances, it may be necessary to begin with a smaller tract.
2. The forest may be dedicated to the farm youth in the county who served in World War II. A suitable dedication board may be erected on the forest, and a permanent record of the dedication, including the names of all who served their country, might be made part of the charter setting up the forest.



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FIGURE 4.—Farm boys at a summer camp learn something about forestry and wildlife before going into the woods.

3. Title to the land should be held by the county, or preferably by the board of trustees of the land-grant college in the State.

4. Administration of the forest should be vested in the county 4-H council. The county agent can be put in charge of management operations with the technical assistance of the State extension forester or local foresters. This arrangement will assure continuous supervision, development, and use of the forest.

5. The State forestry department and the county highway department can assist in building fire lanes and perhaps roads, if needed. Also, arrangements might be made with the State forestry department to supply forest-tree stock for the planting of open lands.

6. If the forest is located on a stream or lake, a portion of the tract may be set aside for camping and recreational purposes.

7. The area designated for forestry purposes can be used to demonstrate good practices and give club members actual experience in forestry work. Clubs from the entire county can participate in these demonstrations and operations. Compartments can be assigned to each club if it is desirable to do so.

8. Any cash returns should go to the county 4-H council for use in promoting 4-H Club work in the county.

A county 4-H memorial forest should have a strong patriotic appeal. A living memorial of this kind is in line with the best American traditions and it should not be difficult to find public-spirited citizens willing to give their support.

For additional information on community or 4-H forests consult your county agent or local and State foresters.

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