



David T. Mason

1883-1973

David T. Mason, widely recognized as the father of American sustained yield forestry, was born in Newark, New Jersey, March 11, 1883. From receipt of his masters degree at Yale Forest School in 1907, after graduation from Rutgers College (University) in civil engineering, until his death September 3, 1973, he crusaded for sound forest management practices and fair timber tax laws. His 66 years of dedication to forestry were characterized by a conservative outlook and a persuasive approach.

The years from 1907 to 1915 were spent alternately in Washington, D.C., and in several western national forests and as Supervisor of Deerlodge National Forest. During this time he lectured at Montana State University and at Yale. This led to an interest in accepting a teaching position as a member of the original forestry staff at the University of California in Berkeley in 1915.

The following six years were interrupted by 17 months' service as captain and then major with the Tenth Engineers, which operated sawmills in France during World War I, and almost two years with the Bureau of Internal Revenue, organizing the Timber Valuation Section. As a result of this timber section work, he came in contact with many in the forest industries, in timber ownership, and in the trade associations.

This probably was the main factor leading him away from teaching and into the establishment of an office as consulting forester in 1921 in Portland, Oregon, in which he remained active until his death 52 years later. His early associate was Donald Bruce, and some years later James W. Girard entered the partnership. From this association the present firm name of Mason, Bruce & Girard was derived. As a pioneer in consulting forestry, David Mason became

widely known and gained respect throughout the world, where he traveled extensively.

His patient and tireless application to differences of opinion between groups or companies gained him his reputation as a mediator as was the same case in 1925 in the selection of Bull Creek and Dyersville Flats, which since has become a California State Park, preserving some of the finest redwoods in the world.

In 1931, he helped to organize the Western Pine Association, acting as its manager until early 1936 when he resigned.

President Hoover in late 1930 appointed him to the Timber Conservation Board, which was set up to consider problems of production and consumption in the forest industries. In 1934 and 1935 he was chief Executive Officer of the Lumber Code Authority under the National Recovery Act, which formulated the first nationwide forest practice rules which applied to private companies.

A major part of his work as a consulting forester was management of the Oregon timberlands belonging to the Louis W. Hill family, heirs of James J. Hill, well-known as the "Empire Builder" of the Great Northern Railway. This counseling he continued through his life.

He married Evelyn Polleys, daughter of a well-known Missoula, Montana lumberman. Their daughter is Dr. Georgia Mason Lee who works in the field of child psychiatry. Several years after the death of Evelyn Mason in 1951, he married Loa Howard, Administrator of the State Public Welfare; she died in 1966.

Beginning as early as 1914, David Mason authored more than 150 statements on forestry and related subjects. His daily diary, which he kept from 1907, is a valuable source of information on the progress of forestry as indicated by Rodney C. Loehr in the introduction of the book "Forests of the Future, the Story of Sustained Yield" when he wrote of the diaries, "Here was a rare find indeed. Through a historical accident, the man who had made the most valuable contribution to a movement of the greatest significance for the forest products industry had kept extensive records and was willing to make them available."

Although the theory of sustained yield was known by European foresters and was taught to every forestry school student in America, it was little used here prior to 1930. For 17 years before the Sustained Yield Law was passed in 1944, David Mason had persisted in advocating sustained yield. He talked to people individually, spoke before groups, and wrote letters and papers in order to educate timberland owners, mill operators, managers of publicly-owned timber and the general public, explaining how the application of sustained yield results in good forest management, in conservation, in continuous, ample supplies of forest products, and in economic stability of communities. His years of effort in promoting sustained yield showed results with the enactment of legislation when in 1937 the O & C Act became law. When the Advisory Board of the Oregon & California Revested Lands Administration was established in 1938, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes appointed David Mason to the board where he acted as chairman or vice chairman for his remaining 35 years. During the same period he was on the

Advisory Council of the Pacific Northwest Forest & Range Experiment Station.

He also worked continually for timber tax reform for the benefit of the forest industry and for the establishment and maintenance of good forest practices. Of particular importance was his work in 1943 and 1944 for federal capital gains tax.

A phase of forestry that absorbed his interest in recent years was multiple use – for wood production, wildlife, watershed and recreation. Observing the increasing interest in recreation, environment, and wilderness in America, he visited and studied the use of forests in western Europe in preparation for furthering the interest in the United States of the many uses which the forests can provide, at once producing income for timber cut, space for animals, trails for hikers, and camping areas for the public because he was sure productive forestry can be compatible with preservation of the landscape and with enjoyment for visitors.

David Mason found an absorbing interest in an endless field of subjects as evidenced by his participation in support of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. His interest in education and history was recognized in directorships of Oregon Historical Society, Forest History Society and Western Forestry Center.

Recognition and honor of receiving awards first came by appointment to Fellow of the Society of American Foresters in 1948; the last award was also from the Society of American Foresters in 1969 when David Mason was presented the Gifford Pinchot Medal for outstanding service to forestry. Two awards were received from the Department of Interior – the Conservation Service Award and later the Appreciation

Award from the Bureau of Land Management to him as an O & C Advisory Board member for outstanding public service. Weyerhaeuser Timber Company honored him pictorially in 1956 with advertisements that appeared in “The Saturday Evening Post” and “U.S. News and World Report.” The American Forestry Association presented its Conservation Award as did the Western Forestry & Conservation Association its Western Forestry Award. He became an honorary Fernhopper of Oregon State University and was cited several years later by the University for distinguished service. Montana State University recognized him on the University’s fiftieth anniversary for his contribution to the profession of forestry. He was elected a Fellow of the Forest History Society for his endeavor to preserve historical records of American forestry. Keep Oregon Green’s Distinguished Service Award called attention to his support of forest fire prevention education. Yale University School of Forestry established a chair in 1966 known as the David T. Mason Professorship of Forest Land Use. The \$250,000 grant was provided by the Louis W. and Maud Hill Family Foundation of Saint Paul, Minnesota. This widespread recognition over many years emphasizes the high esteem in which he was held.

He lived with the firm conviction that one should leave whatever he touched in as good or better condition than he found it.