

## WEEKS BILL PASSES SENATE

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### Measure Insures Permanent Protection of White Mountain Forests

The policy of conservation had a sweeping endorsement last week Wednesday, when the national Senate passed the Weeks bill for a White Mountain and Appalachian forest reserve by the decisive vote of 58 to 9.

The passage of this bill will mean, within five years, an investment by the Government of \$ 11,000,000 to [in?] the purchase of forest areas to be under the control of the Department of Agriculture. It will also mean cooperation between the national and state governments for protection against forest fires. It means the salvation of our timberlands, and one of the country's most beautiful and valuable recreation grounds. Furthermore, it means checking droughts and freshet [sic] along the navigable streams which rise in these mountains, upon which streams industries with an annual product of more than \$ 200,000,000 are dependent.

The present bill began its checkered career in Congress in January 1909 [sic] but the campaign for forest reserves in the Appalachians has been waged ever since January, 1900. The Weeks bill is the only measure which ever really had a chance.

The first bill, introduced in 1901 related only to the Southern Appalachian mountains, and this and four others failed before November 1900, when Senator Gallinger brought in the first White Mountain bill. This and five successors, although some of them were reported favorably, also failed, and in January 1906 the first bill which united the interests of both North and South was brought in, at the instance of the American Forestry association. Strong support developed was [sic], but the only accomplishment in the fifty ninth Congress was an appropriation for a survey of the region by the Department of Agriculture, which presented a very valuable report. Bills were again introduced in the sixtieth Congress, and in April 1908 the committee on judiciary decided that they were unconstitutional, ruling that "the federal government has no power to acquire lands within a state, solely for forest preserves." If the bills were for the conservation and improvement of the navigability of a river, the committee said, they would be constitutional. A bill modified to conform with this was passed by the Senate, but the House passed a different bill, which was pigeon holed in the Senate.

It was in January, 1909, that the present Weeks bill was reported to the house. Behind this bill the New England governors, press and public, concentrated their energies. It was at this time that the newly organized Boston Merchants Association (since consolidated with the Chamber of Commerce) began to take active part, and since then until today it has been the real leader of the magnificent campaign.

Then, led by Boston, these commercial bodies invaded other parts of the country. They interested commercial organizations in large cities throughout the West, appealing to them for fair play. Business men spurred their friends and customers in Western cities to write to their own congressmen. The Boston organization paid half the expenses of an expert who traveled all through the West, building up a sentiment for the measure. The newspapers were given material which they were glad to print in support of the bill. Committees went to Washington. As a result of this work, culminating in a flood of telegrams on the day the bill came to a vote. It was passed in the House, but only on the evening of the day before adjournment. It was too late to be considered in the Senate, and died a natural death, but the campaign had served to build up a great sentiment which was effective in the next Congress, when the bill was again introduced. The Boston Chamber of Commerce renewed its campaign, and sent Prof. George F. Swain as an expert to Washington to argue before the House committed on agriculture the necessity of forests in regulating stream flow. One June 24, 1910, the bill passed the House, but not until a brilliant debate had lasted until midnight. Meanwhile the bill was battered about in the Senate for three days, and a determined filibuster was inaugurated by Senator Burton and others from the West. At last it became evident that the bill could not be passed, it being the last day of the session, and finally Senator Brandegee obtained unanimous consent to vote on the bill February 15, 1911.

The climax came in the work of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, with commercial organizations throughout the country, and before the bill came to a vote this body had obtained assurances from nearly sixty leading cities all through the nation, even to the Pacific coast, that they would ask their senators to vote for the bill. It is generally believed that this was the crowning effort, and the Boston Chamber is receiving congratulations right and left for its effective leadership for the final campaign after the bill had failed so many times.

Senators Page of Vermont and Overman of North Carolina have been appointed by the vice president to serve on the commission created by the bill and Speaker Cannon has the appointment of two members, One will probably be a Republican and one a Democrat member of the House. Representative Peters of Massachusetts is spoken of as the possible democrat appointee. It is understood that Mr. Weeks declined to accept a position.

In discussing the act Mr. Weeks says:

“It is not an extravagant bill. It requires but \$ 11,000,000 during the next six years, and it follows in its general characteristics the best experience of all foreign nations. Forest fires constitute one of the greatest destructive elements in this country, and experience shows the damage incurred from these fires can be gratly lessened by an expenditure which would in commercial pursuits be considered a very modest insurance premium.”.