2F. WASTE THROUGH SOIL EROSION

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Soil erosion through the action of wind and water is common to all soils. Speaking of water erosion particularly, it is one of Nature’s great forces which shapes land surfaces and in large measure determines the character of soils. Left to herself Nature brings about a perfect adjustment between erosion losses, soil-forming processes, and the development of a natural flora. Erosion is, therefore, a normal, natural phenomenon which serves to renew soils by steadily bringing new soil material into the zone of soil development. It is only when man interferes with Nature’s processes that erosion becomes a seriously destructive force. The removal of timber and the breaking up of prairie sods bring about greatly increased runoff of the water which falls. Floods increase and over large areas the surface soil may be removed more rapidly than Nature can replace it. As a result much land may be practically ruined while streams are choked with sediment, thus interfering not only with agriculture but with power development and navigation.

The National Conservation Commission\(^3\) has estimated that of approximately ten million acres of abandoned land in the United States almost 40% of the abandonment has been the direct result of soil erosion. In a broad sense, therefore, soil erosion control has become a national problem, affecting not only agriculture but transportation, flood control, power development, and industry.

It is, of course, the influence of erosion upon farm land with which the agronomist is concerned and the injury which may result is well recognized. This is particularly true in the southern and south-

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\(^1\)Paper read as a part of the symposium on “Soil Deterioration” at the meeting of the Society held in Chicago, Ill., November 16, 1925.

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\(^3\)Senate Document 676, Vol. I, 60th Congress, 2nd Session.