STATE LAND USE PROGRAMS*

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There are many elements entering into any State Program of Land Use. These elements are social as well as economic in character and influence the urban as well as the rural population. They concern water supplies, sanitation, transportation and highways, taxation, parks, playgrounds and other facilities for recreation, game preservation, forestry and agriculture. Obviously, it is impossible to discuss all these in the allotted time so I shall restrict this paper largely to the discussion of state land use planning as related to agriculture and the rural population, as it is this particular topic and people in which this group is most interested.

Objectives

As pointed out by the author in a previous publication, an efficient state program of land now used for agricultural purposes should aspire to have at least three objectives. First, a definite policy and program on soil conservation; second, a policy of readjustment in land usage or agricultural practice where necessary; and third, the permanent retirement from agriculture of lands which persistently refuse to yield a profit.

A state land use program should further provide for an orderly, well regulated and economic plan and policy for the development and use of the potential or undeveloped land resources of a state to an extent and for such purposes as economic conditions dictate.

Procedure

It hardly need be said that any policy of land use must be built from the ground up and by the ground, i.e., mean the soil. It is also not necessary to remind this gathering that there are vast differences in the physical and chemical properties of soils, as well as their economic value and relative ability to produce various crops. The first fundamental step in the formulation of a Program of State Land Use is, therefore, to gather together all available information of the location, extent, limitations and possibilities of usage of the various soil types occurring within the state, in other words, to effect a classification and inventory of the land or soil resources.

Making the Soil Inventory

In making the soil inventory, a great fund of most useful information may be had from published soil surveys. When available they should be used. If soil surveys are not available, land classification surveys of some type must be inaugurated.

As an example of the assembling of the soil inventory from information obtained from soil surveys, the situation in New Jersey might be cited. In this State the detailed soil survey of the whole State has been completed and therefore a great mass of detailed soil information is available. In regard to present land usage, there are two major problems, both are being vigorously attacked in order to conserve the permanent retirement from agriculture of lands which will comparatively soon go out of production, much of it permanently.

The New Jersey Soil Inventory

The land area of New Jersey is 4,809,000 acres; the extreme length of the State is 166 miles and 65 to 32 miles wide. The inventory of the State reveals the occurrence of 193 different soil series in 51 soil series and ranging in extent approximately 482,000 acres to 128 acres. They are in round numbers 870,000 acres of sands, 840,000 acres of sandy loams, 1,130,000 acres of silt and clay loams and 265,000 acres of silt and clay. Approximately two-thirds of the land in the State is drained, one-third contains excessive moisture.

Present Use of Land for all Purposes

In New Jersey there are 1,758,000 acres of farms, 797,000 acres of which are in cultivation and 340,000 acres in pasture. There are 26,000 acres of undeveloped land now in forest, one-third of which is made up of soil capable of production if needed. In addition, there are 46,000 acres of State owned parks and forest reserves and 60,000 county parks and water reserves. Cities, towns and villages occupy 444,000 acres. (Fig. 1).

Use of Land for Agriculture

The most important agricultural commodities produced are corn, wheat, hay, potatoes, apples, small fruits, cranberries, a great variety of crops, and dairy and poultry products. There are approximately 482,000 acres to 128 acres. Texturally there are in round numbers 870,000 acres of sands and loamy sands, 840,000 acres of sandy loams, 1,130,000 acres of silt and clay loams and 265,000 acres of silt and clay loams. Approximately two-thirds of the land in the State is drained, one-third contains excessive moisture.

The State Land Use Program Soil Conservation

Every State has particular problems of soil conservation. In New Jersey there are two major soil problems: soil erosion and the maintenance of soil organic matter. Both are being vigorously attacked in order to conserve the fertility of land now under cultivation. If control measures are neglected, on a vast area of land will comparatively soon go out of production permanently.

Redjustment of Land Use and Agricultural Practice

Any policy of State land use must also mean that in a country such as ours rapid changes of great economic importance are always taking place. For example, the land will comparatively soon go out of production, much of it permanently.