Description of Field Methods Followed by the Michigan Land and Economic Survey

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Michigan's problems of conservation, development, and agricultural improvement have a broad similarity to those of her neighbors, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Our annually increasing acreage of cutover land; the steadily decreasing area of productive forest; the State's attractiveness and accessibility to tourists and recreation seekers, coupled with the necessity for conserving the fish, game, and wild life for maintaining this attractiveness; the variety and importance of the mineral resources; the insistent call of our fast growing manufacturing centers for power, raw material, and products of the farm, have forced upon those interested in the State's growth and development a realization of the keen necessity for formulating intelligent and constructive policies to guide the use, development, and conservation of the idle lands, the forests and other natural resources.

On the other hand, due to local conditions, Michigan's problems have individuality which calls for local study and local application. Policies cut on the wide spreading "Mother Hubbard" style which cover everything and touch nothing will not fit the situation. What is required are policies based on facts as obtained from two localized sources of information:

First, an inventory by counties or regional units of the present status of the State's resources and the industries arising out of, and dependent on, their development and use; and second, a study of the economic conditions and factors which are accountable for their present existing state of use or lack of use. Such an inventory and study will reveal that certain regions of the State have problems peculiar to themselves; and that these can only be successfully handled when recognized as local.

The Land-Economic Survey was organized to make this inventory and study. With that as its object it is necessary for the survey to be broad in its scope and to bring into cooperation all the forces and organizations capable of giving assistance. A study and classification of the soil element is a vital and important branch of such a survey. In some instances it will have a dominant influence in shaping the policies of development, conservation, improvement, or reconstruction. In other instances it may possibly be only a contributing factor which is overshadowed by the importance of some other single factor or group of factors.

Accordingly then, in April 1922 a cooperative agreement was made between the State Department of Agriculture, State Conservation Commission, Michigan Agricultural College, University of Michigan, and the United States Geological Survey for the pooling of men and money to carry out the past season's field operations. The Advisory Committee representing the cooperating organizations voted that the interests of the cooperating bodies in the Survey should be focused on the field operations through a Director the State Geologist, Mr. R. A. Smith, in charge of a field organization, consisting of a Field Manager, with a Chief of Forestry and a Chief of Soils, each of whom had an experienced assistant or captain and eight field men. These field men were inexperienced but consisted of Juniors, Seniors, and Graduate students from the University of Michigan, Michigan Agricultural College, University of Wisconsin, and the...