Newsweek

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Smokey:

'Only YOU Can Prevent Forest Fires

(See Science)

Fabulous Bear, Famous Service Fight Annual Billion-Dollar Fire

America's best animal friend is a sturdy brown bear named Smokey (see cover). A sensible dresser, he is invariably clad in blue jeans and an old-time forest ranger's broadbrimmed campaign hat. He carries a forest fire fighter's spade and from his broad face there comes an expression of kindly but firm warning. Some 20,000,000 times this year—peering from placards in 95,000 buses, streetcars, and subways, from posters on the side of every United States mail truck, from highway billboards, from magazine and newspaper pages, from inserts in railroad timetables, from stamps, blotters, calendars, and bookmarks—Smokey will rumble his multi-million-dollar message: "Remember, only YOU can prevent forest fires."

On television and radio, too, and inevitably from the pages of comic books, the friendly bear reminds Americans that nine out of every ten forest fires start from human carelessness, stupidity, or malice.

This week, as his two-footed friends began their annual vacationtime stampede to the nation's woodlands, Smokey faced his busy season with a mixture of hope and resignation.

Last year, 164,090 blazes burned 10,781,039 acres of forest lands, destroying almost $50,000,000 worth of growing timber. At that, the gray ashes and blackened snags represented only an insignificant fraction of the total damage.

No balance sheet could reflect the fatal searing of several billion seedling trees, the forests of the future; the agonized deaths of hundreds of thousands of large and small wild creatures; the scorching of lush pastures; the soil erosion of land stripped of its protecting vegetation; or the choking of reservoirs and streams with silt cascading from burned-over areas. Nor did the ledger show the loss in loggers' wages and tourist trade.

Conservatively, Americans had thus unthinkingly incinerated $1,000,000,000 in 1951. Horrendous as this figure might seem, it nevertheless demonstrated clearly that Smokey had become one of his country's most valuable citizens. For since he started his crusade in 1945, forest fires have decreased to 90 per cent of the normal prewar level, despite the fact that 45 per cent more human beings have taken to the woods.

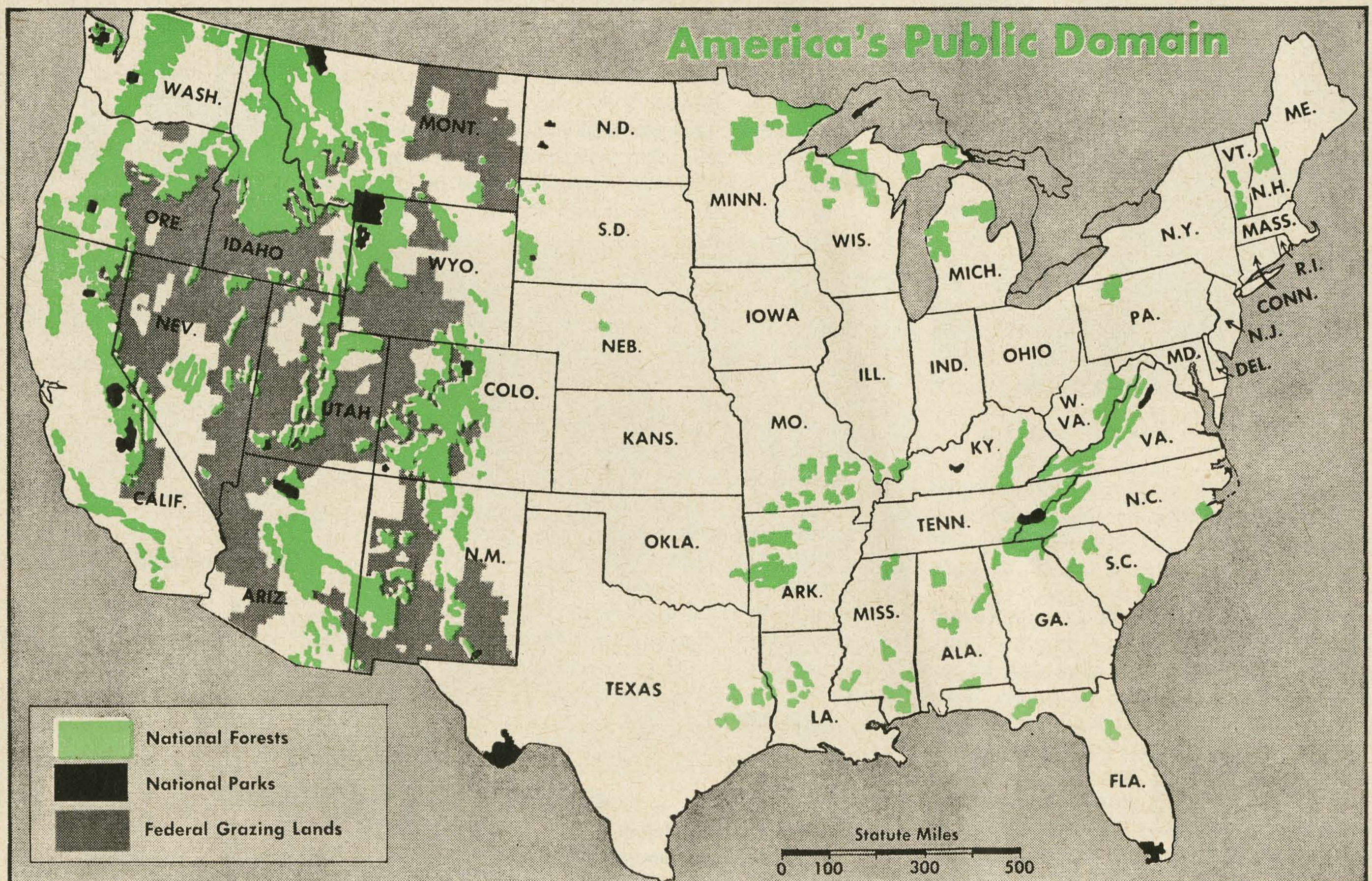
Not since the early days of Mickey Mouse and Bambi has any cartooned animal made such an impact on Americans. And the story of how Smokey was born and how he grew is a prize example of wholesome and energetic cooperation between government and business.

In 1942, at the behest of the United States Forest Service, the Advertising Council added forest-fire prevention to its list of worthy promotions, including blood-donor campaigns and bond drives. Two years later, the council commissioned animal artist Albert Staehle to create a poster personality that would be the special champion of the Forest Service men and their close friends, the state foresters.

Staehle came up with a shy brown bear dousing a campfire with a bucket of water. Ever since, Smokey bear (named after a famous New York fire chief, Smokey Joe Ryan) has been the national symbol of forest-fire prevention.

Through the years, Smokey has matured. From a potbellied and faintly comic character, he has grown to the sensible and authoritative bear on the cover of this magazine, whose image this summer will be distributed as the 1952 Smokey poster. As symbolical firewarden over 630,000,000 acres of forest lands, public and private, he commands respect and attention.

Newsweek—Magill



The Forest Service suggests that you can help Smokey's campaign by tearing off NEWSWEEK's cover and displaying it in your home, office, school, or any woodland where it is permissible.

Through the Advertising Council, American industry has supported Smokey like a favorite child. Payments for advertising space and radio and TV time have totaled $25,000,000—$6,000,000 in 1951. Not the least contribution has come from the advertising firm of Foote, Cone & Belding, which has had direct charge of Smokey since his birth. Each year, FC&B plows into the job more than $35,000 of time and effort, gratis.

Smokey's Law: Such a talented publicist as Smokey is in universal demand. The Forest Service has unhesitatingly lent his services to fellow foresters in Canada and Mexico (where he wears a sombrero). Naturally, many manufacturers would like to have Smokey boost their products. To keep the bear from being commercialized, a bill signed last week by President Truman provides fines and imprisonment for Smokey's use other than in the public service.

Although the poster Smokey is still head bear in the fire prevention campaign, he is no longer the only bear in the business. In 1950 he was joined by a brown cub rescued from a fire in the Lincoln National Forest, N.M., and now living in the National Zoo in Washington, where he does his part to make visitors forest fire conscious.

While Smokey has become a bright national institution, his friends of the Forest Service have often been obscured in the fumes of Washington's boiling tureen of alphabet soup. Ask any reasonably well-informed man what the Forest Service does, and he will likely mutter something about Yellowstone Park. He couldn't be more wrong.

Parks and Forests: The National Park Service, part of the Department of the Interior, has charge of 171 national parks, historical parks, monuments, memorials, military parks, cemeteries, battlefield sites, battlefield parks, historic sites, parkways, a memorial park, and the national capital parks in and around Washington. These 20,775,000 acres are strictly reserved for recreation and sightseeing. Interior administers an additional 169,000,000 acres of grazing lands.

The Forest Service, part of the Department of Agriculture, supervises the country's 151 national forests, which have a combined area of 181,255,449 acres. Although 30,000,000 Americans visited these forests in 1951, they are immensely more than mere playgrounds.

Collectively, the national forests comprise almost a tenth of the nation's land. But commercially speaking, two-thirds of their area is almost worthless—the bare tops of high mountains, inaccessible wildernesses, precipitous slopes overgrown with brush, or unfathomable swamps. Almost 15,000,000 acres are set aside as wilderness or wild areas so that Americans will always know the natural primitive splendor of their country.

Newsweek—Ed Wergeles

Chief Lyle Watts visits the live Smokey in the National Zoo

This year, nevertheless, 10 per cent of the nation's lumber will come from its national forests. A total of 9,000,000 animals—11.6 per cent of all beef cattle and 24.8 per cent of all the stock sheep in the United States—will graze on forest pastures. Some 2,500,000 big-game animals live within national forests and provide sport for hunters. Almost every important Western river, the source of drinking and irrigation water, rises on carefully protected watersheds within national forests.

In short, the national forests are geared for production in every way that woodlands can conceivably produce.

Pinchot's Vision: Through the nineteenth century, America's woodlands were being plundered and burned over by loggers. But what of it? A few miles farther West a man could always find virgin stands of timber. Always? A handful of provident men led by a gangling young Yale woodsman, Gifford Pinchot, saw that the era of waste had to be halted.

Pinchot had studied forestry in Germany, where trees had been scientifically grown for 400 years or more. He regarded a stand of trees as a crop, to be tended, harvested wisely, and replanted when necessary. Among Pinchot's converts was another great lover of the out-of-doors, Teddy Roosevelt. Finally in 1905, when Roosevelt was President, Congress set up the Forest Service and gave it a sizable empire to manage: all the remaining wooded public lands of the West.

The credo of the Forest Service is contained in a letter dated Feb. 1, 1905. It was undoubtedly composed by Pinchot, but officially it is addressed to him as the first Chief Forester and signed by his boss, Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson. In part it reads:

"In the administration of the forest reserves . . . where conflicting interests must be reconciled, the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

Sound programs and lofty ideals were not enough to win popularity contests for the men of the infant Forest Service. Still, the service prospered, and its domain slowly grew, thanks to the Weeks Law (1911) and the Clarke-McNary Law (1924). The first authorized the purchase of forest lands to protect the headwaters of navigable streams. The second made it legal to buy land for timber production as well.

Good times or bad, the service has stuck to its business of working the forests and making the forests work. Most congressmen would as soon abuse their own mothers as be unkind to the Forest Service. Although the annual appropriation has never been lavish ($52,500,000 budgeted for the fiscal year now ending), it has increased fairly steadily.

Funds for Forests: This spring when one member of the House of Representatives suggested a $600,000 cut in next year's allotment, 34 of his fellows leaped to their feet, vying to orate against him. With only two dissenting votes, the economy-minded House killed the slash.

The Forest Service is one Washington agency that doesn't have to worry about next fall's election. Nor will the next administration have to worry about the Forest Service. In 47 years, the foresters have been untouched by scandal.

No one can deny that the Forest Service is one of Uncle Sam's soundest and

most businesslike investments. It is the only major government branch showing a cash profit and a growing inventory. This year, through timber sales, grazing permits, and other fees, the foresters will turn back to the United States Treasury a net surplus of $10,000,000. At least $17,000,000 (25 per cent of gross receipts) will go to counties which include national forest lands. If privately held, the forests would not yield half that much in local taxes.

America Collects: The $10,000,000 profit is tidy, but it is only a pittance compared with the benefits that don't show up in bookkeeping. The annual value of free recreation, wildlife management, increase in the value of timber stands, and particularly the pure and abundant water easily tops half a billion dollars.

The Forest Service owes much of its phenomenal efficiency to two policies: decentralization and cooperation with anyone who will cooperate.

In all but three states, the service works closely with state foresters. Kansas, Nebraska, and Arizona have almost no state or private woodlands and, therefore, do not participate. Elsewhere, the Forest Service, under the Clarke-McNary Law, helps support fire control, forest management, forest extension, and tree planting. The funds this year amounted to $10,750,000, to which the states added $30,000,000 of their own. These grants were not mere handouts; in every state the Federal foresters chipped in with advice and helped make sure that the money was spent wisely.

Beyond this direct aid, friendly foresters in the field are always willing to take time out to show people, through example and professional advice, how to make the most of their woodlands.

Decentralization started with a bang in 1908. Gifford Pinchot shot a curt memorandum to his Washington staff: get out into the woods or get out of the service. Today only 2 per cent of the entire staff, including clerical workers, are stationed in Washington. This compact headquarters is so well organized that letters almost always get answered within two days.

On Their Own: The system works because the service's 2,500 foresters are spoon-fed from the junior forester stage on a diet of responsibility and intense loyalty to the organization. For example, the Regional Forester who is head man in the Northwest can on his own hook negotiate any timber sale up to 50,000,000 board feet. Thus without any referral to Washington, he can, and often does, carry out a million-dollar deal.

The man who rises through the Forest Service is of a peculiar breed. He is a woodsman, a scientist, an engineer, an economist, an accountant, a public-relations expert, and something of a nomad. Typical is the history of Lyle Watts, the sixth and current Chief Forester. He got a degree in forestry from Iowa State College in 1913, passed the civil-service examination, and started his career in Afton, Wyo. From there his itinerary took in: Ogden, Utah; Logan, Utah; Ogden again; Boise, Weiser, and McCall, Idaho; back to Ogden; Logan for the second time; Ogden; Missoula, Mont.; Milwaukee; Portland, Ore., and finally Washington. During this trek he served as district ranger, assistant supervisor of one national forest, supervisor of two, silviculture and watershed researcher, head of an experiment station, and boss of two of the Forest Service's ten regions. This list,

U.S. Forest Service

Pinchot: Father of the service

Watts admits, does not include several temporary assignments for which he did not move his family.

The foresters love their service as an old grad reveres his college. The pay is much lower than that offered by lumber companies, pulpwood outfits, and other private industries. District Rangers, with a minimum of six to eight years' service, get between $5,000 and $6,000. None of the six assistant chiefs on Watts's staff draws down as much as $13,000. Just the same, the service loses few men to the lure of bigger money.

Some men in the Forest Service have won public recognition, generally only those involved in the spectacular job of fire fighting. Before the war, the service organized and trained smoke jumpers, who dropped by parachute to put out blazes in otherwise inaccessible places. The Army Air Force later adopted the Forest Service's methods to train its own parachutists. Fire watchers (who are not professionally trained foresters) also get their reward in publicity for lonely vigils in high observation towers.

Says Kenneth O. Maughan, District Ranger on the Wasatch National Forest in Utah: "I often wish the public's thinking about rangers was right—that we spend half our time perched on a tower and the rest of it hunting or fishing." Actually, Maughan has less forest leisure and more paperwork than many a resident of Salt Lake City.

Day's Work: One typical day this month Maughan was awakened at 5:30 by a motorist who had lost his bearings. The ranger then breakfasted with his schoolteacher-wife in the white clapboard, two-bedroom house which he, like all other rangers, rents from the government. He visited the doctor for his annual typhoid and Rocky Mountain spotted-fever (tick) shots; by short-wave radio reported to his supervisor a rising flood that was threatening a highway; and checked his $100,000 worth of fire equipment—enough to equip 100 men with five trucks, a jeep, gasoline, Pulaskis (combination grubbing hoes and axes), field rations, water bags, hand pumps, first-aid kits, weed killers, and saddle gear.

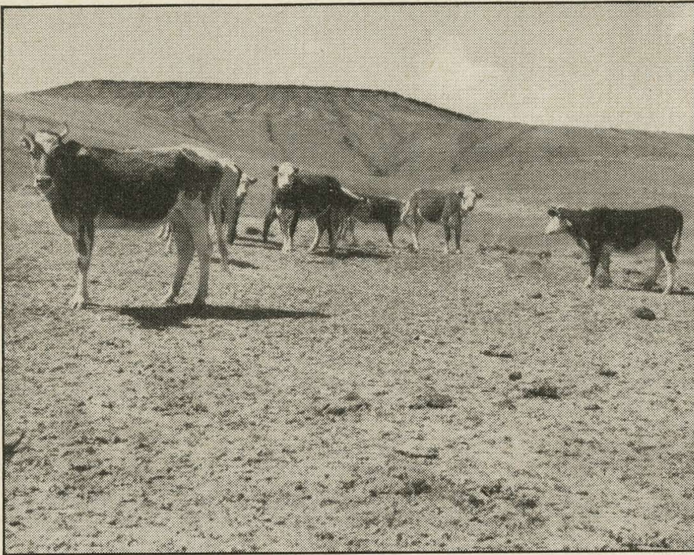
Next, Maughan strolled down the main street of Kamas to make sure that the lodgepole pines which the local lumber company was sawing were properly marked, and ticketed. By lunchtime, he was engrossed in a deer census report. His figures showed that 5,638 hunters had killed 4,308 deer on his district last season. But overbrowsing of the pastures indicated that the season ought to be extended this year. He would recommend this to state authorities and tell them when roads could be opened to nearly 1,000 upland lakes and trout streams.

After typing a letter to the regional Boy Scout council to report snow damage at one of their camps, Maughan palavered with cattlemen and sheepmen about grazing fees and grazing-permit transfers. The matters were amicably worked out, but they took time. "They're usually easy to settle in the field, when we get interested parties out on the range to see its condition—its carrying ability—for themselves." Come summer, ranger Maughan will begin to mark for cutting some 7,000,000 board-feet of standing timber.

He gets paid for a 40-hour week, no overtime, but like all other rangers he is on duty around the clock.

151 Problems: Different forests present different problems. The Francis Marion, near the seaport of Charleston, S.C., bristles with loblolly and longleaf pine—thrifty trees with "room to grow and none to spare." The main trouble is incendiarism. Berkeley County law still permits cattle and hogs to range freely over the unfenced forest. And local citizens regularly set the woods on fire to burn away oak brush and release forage for their beasts.

Forest Supervisor Joe Riebold estimates that 77 per cent of the fires on the Marion



Sensible range management reconverts hard-packed, overgrazed wastes to lush pasture

start when some local resident rides his horse through the woods, dropping lit matches as he goes.

While attempting to convince the country folk that the forest means more money to them if it doesn't burn every year, Riebold and his rangers indulge in a little incendiarism of their own. They have mastered the trick of controlled burning when the wind is just right. They use their fires to remove worthless brush, destroy accumulated pine needles which harbor brown-spot fungus or constitute a fire hazard, or to prepare a clean seedbed for new trees.

In Riebold's other forest, the Sumter in the mountainous northwest part of the state, watershed protection, recreation, and wildlife management are predominant activities. This spring ranger Lester P. Schaap of the Sumter's General Pickens District closed a deal that was very important to a dozen girls, aged 10 to 16. The girls, members of the Rosebud Junior Garden Club of Walhalla, wanted to sponsor a picnic table at a spot alongside State Highway 107. As is customary, the Forest Service agreed to build the table and maintain it, but the club would first have to supply the money. The signed agreements show that in January, the Rosebuds' sponsor, Mrs. Clyde C. Brown, deposited $11 with the service's regional fiscal agent in Atlanta. Two months later, a cake sale added another $15 to the kitty; so the girls are over the hump toward their goal of $40. Meanwhile, they have worked hard to clear away underbrush, plant some azaleas, and rake up sticks and dead leaves. To the Forest Service, business dealings with the Rosebuds are just as solemn as those with big lumber companies.

Perhaps the strangest of all the National Forests is the Tonto in South Central Arizona. Tonto means fool in Spanish. And only a fool, or a very wise man, would call the Tonto a forest. It is the size of the state of Connecticut; yet only about 15 per cent of the land bears wood. Fully half of Arizona's citizens depend on the Tonto for the water, without which much of their rich farmland would revert to desert.

Forty years ago, 100,000 cattle feasted on and trampled lush grasses, belly high to a horse. Gradually, stream-clogging erosion took over and left the pastures a network of gullies. Under Forest Service management, the range started to recover. Today 108 ranchers graze 26,000 cattle and 24,000 sheep on the Tonto.

In private hands, the Angeles National Forest would be a white elephant to its owner and a menace to his neighbors. Just 18 miles from downtown Los Angeles, this forest is a stomping ground for 3,000,000 campers, picnickers, hikers, hunters, fishermen, and skiers. Its slopes,

U.S. Forest Service Photos

Smoke-chasing helicopter watches fire transform a wooded mountainside to a charred rubbish pile

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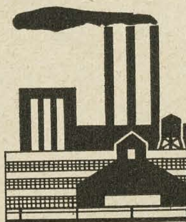

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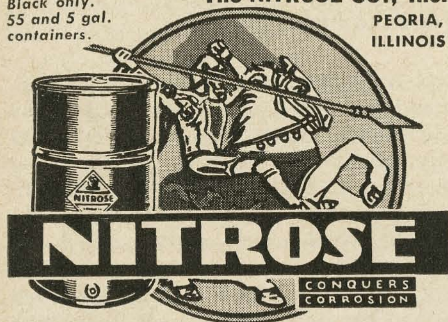

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covered with an unmerchantable snarl of chaparral—mixed scrub oak, cactus, thorny shrubs, and stunted trees—are explosively flammable. Yet that bushy growth must be nurtured as carefully as any stand of trees. For without cover, the steep land would silt up reservoirs and leave Los Angeles a thirsty city.

The Ocala in North Central Florida is another fire hazard. There a few islands of longleaf tower above a sea of feathery-foliaged sand pine. The sterile white sand is so worthless a soil that much of the Ocala remained in the public domain until it became a national forest. Yet Forest Supervisor Frank Rasor and his rangers now have Ocala paying its way, largely through sand pine for pulp.

Naval Stores: Another of Rasor's forests, the Osceola, west of Jacksonville, is rich in slash and longleaf pine, the sources of naval stores. At the adjoining experiment station, researcher Al Snow has developed a revolutionary way of milking these trees of their sticky wealth. He merely chips off the bark and releases torrents of gum with a sulphuric acid spray. The savings are: half the labor formerly involved, plus valuable butt logs free of the usual turpentining scars.

The Siuslaw on the Oregon coast is one of nature's busiest wood factories. Sitka spruce, for example, grow to 36 inches in diameter in 30 years. Fires are few in this damp young forest, where the rangers stick pretty closely to growing and harvesting trees.

On the Pisgah, loftiest watershed in the Appalachians, Forest Supervisor Don Morris caters to hunters, fishermen, and tourists. In the Pisgah District, Ranger Bill Duncan cooperates with state and Federal fishmen keeping the cold streams swarming with trout. The forest's annual receipts, now $500,000, will soon rise to $800,000, thanks largely to new stands of prize yellow poplar.

The Nicolet in Northern Wisconsin was the scene of perhaps the most disastrous forest conflagration in history, the Peshtigo fire of 1871, which burned over 1,280,000 acres and killed 1,500 persons. At the time, the disaster attracted little more than local notice, for on the same day Mrs. O'Leary's cow proverbially kicked over the lantern that set Chicago ablaze.

A prize exhibit on the Nicolet is a 275-acre tract of Norway pine, planted by CCC boys when the Forest Service bought the Nicolet for $2.50 an acre. In 1948 a cutting of Christmas trees paid for the cost of planting. About 1960, the plantation will start yielding $2.50 per acre in annual thinnings of pulpwood. Finally, a century from now, mature trees will be felled for saw logs; at current prices they should bring $400 an acre.

Roads and Research: Light on money, but rich in ingenuity and devoted men, the Forest Service has its domain pretty well under control. Loggers and fire fighters need more roads. Funds are still inadequate for research on such pressing problems as oak blight, pine beetles, and forest genetics, the breeding of better parent trees for seedlings. As it is, the 470 research foresters do 90 per cent of the delving in their field at experiment stations and at the Forest Products Laboratory, Madison, Wis.

Private timber owners are learning that it pays to keep woodlands perpetually bountiful. The large timber and pulpwood companies usually employ their own foresters and manage their timber well. But the farmer who owns a small

Smokey's ally: South Carolina state foresters symbolize the evils of grass fire with this pine seedling

woodlot is still too likely to have it cut ruthlessly clean whenever he needs cash. The Forest Service is urging states to regulate timber management. A few states already have good laws but don't enforce them strictly; the rest have lax laws or none at all.

Another worry is the gaping loophole in the ancient mining laws. A man can still stake a phony claim on national forest land just to grab the standing timber or build a resort hotel.

The Forest Service has a few enemies, mainly disgruntled hunters, livestock raisers, lumbermen, and others who feel that their special interests rate higher than "the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

Most people who have dealt with the foresters would, however, endorse a statement made by H.O. (Hoss) Stabler, one of the original Pinchot boys, who retired five years ago to his Maryland woodlot.

A fellow forester asked Stabler what he considered his greatest contribution to forestry. The veteran tilted back in his chair, pursed his lips, and replied quietly: "For a considerable period, I helped the American people get their money's worth."