

THE ALLOWABLE TIMBER HARVEST IN COASTAL ALASKABackground

The coastal Alaska forest land which is capable of and available for economically producing industrial wood now contains 183.4 billion board feet of softwood sawtimber measured by International 1/4-Inch Log Rule, or 156 billion board feet Scribner Log Scale.^{1/} About 92 percent of this volume is on the national forest lands. This large and valuable asset is essentially in the condition which nature provided it to us. The land on which it grows has good capacity for continuous crops of timber under management. The U. S. Forest Service which manages these national forest lands has a planned program of timber harvesting that will ultimately convert this large naturally-provided inventory into well-regulated timber stands. This is to be done by harvesting a portion (the allowable cut) each year during a transition period that is long enough to permit trees to reach merchantable size on the lands which are being harvested. Obviously, the success and speed of this management program depends upon markets for the timber.

It is the policy of the Forest Service that these markets should be local primary manufacturing facilities. A shortage of such facilities has limited the rate of development. The following tabulation of national forest timber harvest in coastal Alaska by years is evidence of the rate of market development and management progress:

^{1/} Source: ALASKA'S FOREST RESOURCE, U. S. Forest Service Resource Bulletin PNW 19, 1967. All subsequent volumes in this report will be in Scribner Scale unless otherwise noted.