

**BRIEF ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIFTH HIMACHAL
PRADESH FOREST OFFICERS CONFERENCE**

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The Conference was held at Simla from 9th to 11th October 1957, under the Chairmanship of Shri D. C. Kaith, B.Sc. (EDIN.), Chief Conservator of Forests, Himachal Pradesh. It was attended by all the Gazetted Forest Officers of Himachal Pradesh including Deputy Game Warden and Deputy Warden of Fisheries.

No technical papers were read. The deliberations of the conference were confined to discussion of administrative and technical problems of current importance. The agenda comprised 12 items and was drafted so as to include a resume of the problems together with points at issue. Amongst the subjects discussed, the execution of development schemes under the Second Five-Year Plan, soil conservation, preparation and revision of Working Plans, Working of the Himachal Pradesh Private Forest Act, 1954 and raising of mulberry, willow, Poplar, *Simbal*, and *bhabar* grass plantations for industrial purposes figured as more important items.

In the absence of Dr. Punjab Rao Deshmukh, the Union Minister of Co-operation, who could not be present owing to pre-occupation elsewhere, the conference was opened at 11 a.m. on the 9th October, 1957 by Shri D. C. Kaith, the Chief Conservator of Forests, Himachal Pradesh.

In reviewing the progress of forest management and that of Forest Development Plans in the State, Shri Kaith in his address emphasized the qualitative development of forest resources in the State as there was little scope for extension of forests in Himachal Pradesh where large areas were unculturable, being under river and stream beds, alpine pastures and rugged snow-bound lofty mountain peaks or sheer rock. He expressed gratification at the progressive increase of annual forest revenue of the State from 63.5 lakhs in 1948-49 when Himachal Pradesh came into being as a separate Unit to Rs. 97.25 lakhs in 1956-57, but at the same time he pointed out that the area was in the grip of the increasing menace of soil erosion and denudation. The pressure of grazing and destruction of tree growth over certain lands in the past had given rise to soil erosion in its hydra-headed form. The situation in the foot-hills was pretty serious, where vast areas, specially the grazing grounds and *shamlats* presented a picture of desolation. Thus, he said, the problem of forest management in Himachal Pradesh was two-fold, viz., conservation and development of forest resources and checking erosion including re-conditioning of eroded lands. Realizing the gravity of situation, he added that an ambitious programme of work has been planned under the Second Five-Year Plan involving an expenditure of about Rs. 38 lakhs. The main features of the various schemes in progress were soil conservation and afforestation works over 8,600 acres, survey and demarcation of about 28,000 acres of ruined undemarcated forests, game preservation, raising *bhabar* grass plantations and development of forest communications involving construction of 560 miles of forest roads and 200 buildings of various types. In the execution of these schemes, he stated that a good start has been made in the first year of the Plan. The achievements constituted soil conservation works over 1,500 acres, survey of 13,000 and demarcation of 3,000 acres, *bhabar* grass planting over 200 acres and construction of 42 buildings and 65 miles of forest roads. The development of game and fisheries, he said, was also receiving due attention. Mirror carp, a fish of Chinese origin, had been introduced in various lakes and

ponds in the State with great success. In conclusion he made a brief mention of the shortage of technical personnel for managing various Development schemes and of the arrangements made for training technicians by opening a forestry school and a soil conservation school in the State.

The proceedings for the day (9th October) closed with a general survey of the items of the agenda and suggestion of certain supplementary items for discussion by various officers. The next two days (10th and 11th October) were devoted to detailed discussion of the agenda. At the close of the proceedings, Shri Chopra thanked the Chairman on behalf of the members of the conference for his inspiring address and valuable guidance in making the conference a success.

The more important resolutions and recommendations of the Conference were as under :—

Item No. 1. *Execution of Development Schemes under the Second Five-Year Plan*

- (a) In view of the short working period and peculiar working conditions in the State, for economic and timely execution of the schemes, it is essential that financial sanctions are given a year ahead or at least in the 1st week of April each year.
- (b) Material required for the execution of Development Plans should be purchased under the normal budget of the Forest Department and stored. Whatever material is utilized can later on be debited to the account of the scheme concerned.
- (c) The State Administration be requested to issue directions to the Civil Supplies Department to maintain food godowns in difficult and remote areas deficit in foodgrains for issue of subsidized food stuffs to the forest labour.
- (d) The State Administration be requested to issue a directive to the Deputy Commissioners to render active help to the Forest Department in the application of closures and procuring land for implementation of the development plans.
- (e) For speedy execution of the development plans, it is necessary that the financial powers of the Divisional Forest Officers, who are generally Class I Officers, are enhanced so that they are somewhat better than those given to the Block Development Officers.

Item No. 2. *Soil Conservation including ways and means to combat erosion*

- (a) The need for soil conservation is emphasized particularly when erosion and denudation has become very active over extensive tracts of the State. It is suggested that forest settlement of undemarcated forests and Government wastelands be taken up as early as possible so that adequate control could be exercised to conserve such areas which form a large part of the State and are in a deplorable condition.
- (b) In the meantime, problem areas should be listed and preliminary schemes prepared for implementation in the Third Five-Year Plan.
- (c) Co-operation of the villagers should be secured to close as much areas as possible for rest and recuperation under the existing Acts.
Demonstration plots should be set up, one in each Forest Division, to demonstrate the utility of closures to the public.
- (d) Re-orientation of grazing rates should be considered in order to discourage maintenance of un-economic herds of cattle by the villagers. In forest settlement operations grazing incidence should be prescribed in consultation with the Forest Department.

- (e) The Conference realizes that professional graziers could not be thrown out of their vocation and appreciates the necessity of improving fodder resources in the State. Goats are considered a great menace to the State. In fact goat has been the main cause of turning prosperous land into desert all over the world. In order to control this "fire-mouth" it is considered necessary to increase the grazing rates for this animal. But to avoid hardship to the *gaddis* it is suggested that the rates for sheep grazing may be reduced so as to induce the *gaddis* to take to rearing sheep rather than goats. The Conference suggests revised grazing rates of 75 and 6 *Naye Paise* in place of the current rates of 37 and 19 *Naye Paise* per goat and sheep respectively.
- (f) The Agriculture Department be requested to take up early control measure to check erosion of agricultural lands under the Himachal Pradesh Land Development Act, 1954.
- (g) The Conference recommends revision of *nautor* Rules making a specific provision that no *Nautors* are granted by the Revenue authorities without prior consultation of the Forest Department.
- Item No. 3. *Raising of willow, poplar, mulberry and simbal plantations*
walnut, mulberry, softwoods and *bhabar* grass are badly needed for our national economy for feeding gun-making, sports, paper and pulp, matchwood, packing cases and such other industries. Plantations of these species should be expanded so far as possible.
- Item No. 4. *Working of the H.P. Private Forest Act, 1954*
Definition of a 'Forest' as given in the Act is not comprehensive and needs amendment so as to include all private wastelands and areas not under cultivation.
- Item No. 5. *Preparation and revision of Working Plans*
A Working Plan forms the basis of forest working and scientific management. In the State a large number of such plans expired some years ago and it has not been possible to find officers to re-write them. The work is of highly technical nature involving prolonged out-door and in-door duties and cannot be done as a routine. Creation of a separate Working Plan Circle is necessary to carry out the work.

NEWS AND NOTES

Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi

SILAGE FROM BERSEEM

Excellent Quality

New Delhi: A silage of excellent quality can be prepared from berseem.

At the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi, the silage is prepared by mixing berseem with oats straw or green oats, which serve as absorbents.

Layers of oats straw are placed between layers of chaffed berseem. The oats straw absorbs the juice that flows out of berseem in the process of silage formation.

Berseem silage is best prepared in large-sized circular silo pits. The fodder is firmly pressed and compacted in the silo pit so that all air is excluded.

It is also found that berseem from the March-April cuttings is best for silage-making.