

Devastating Forest Fires Cause Part of Area's Water Problems

Water in Southern California is so valuable a commodity that more than \$244,500,000 has been spent to build aqueducts to insure Los Angeles County a constant supply.

Although it is the most extensive system of aqueducts in the world, the Los Angeles system brings only 470,000 acre-feet of water into the area yearly, or less than half of the 1,100,000 acre-feet currently required, according to a report made by Robert T. Radford, chairman of the Los Angeles County Watershed Commission.

Report Given
The report, recently presented to the House of Representatives Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, pointed out that 630,000 acre-feet of water from the underground supply are being used annually and are replaced by rainfall at a rate estimated at less than 400,000 acre-feet per year.

This indicated that 230,000 acre-feet of water are being withdrawn each year than are being replaced. Already this overdraw has amounted to more than 1,500,000 acre-feet, the report said.

A chief means of maintaining the underground water supply is through preserving the areas where the water enters the soil.

Plant Helps
Chaparral, the highly flammable vegetation that forests the mountainous areas of the county, is a prime factor in replacing the underground water. Roots of the chaparral make the soil porous to rainfall and slow the runoff speed, providing an opportunity for water to be absorbed by the soil.

Besides helping to maintain

the underground water supply, chaparral holds the soil on steep slopes firmly in place. Torrential rainstorms characteristic of this area sometimes bring as much as half of the annual 10 to 20 inches of water within a span of several hours, according to statistics gathered at the San Dimas Experimental Forestry Station.

Floods Caused
A deluge of this sort frequently causes devastating floods of mud, rock, and debris-laden waters. Destruction of the chaparral considerably increases flood dangers. San

Dimas statistics indicate that 28 times as much erosion occurs on a burned-off mountainside than on one covered with natural growth.

This flood problem becomes increasingly serious as the foothill regions of the county become more densely populated.

For these reasons, Los Angeles County and federal agencies spent \$1,082,970 in 1956 on fire prevention and suppression activities in local woodlands.

Another \$353,700,000 has been spent by these two governmental bodies in a joint effort to construct a comprehensive flood control program

capable of handling normal storm waters.

Strides Made
In spite of great strides made by the fire services in controlling watershed fires through use of new equipment and techniques, the number of acres burned each year is alarmingly high.

The number of man-caused fires in the woodlands are steadily on the increase. One hundred one man-caused fires burned 3629 acres of valuable watershed last year.

Natural causes—lightning—accounted for only three of the total of 104 forest fires in this county last year. Willful, intentional arson accounted for

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nine fires in the Angeles National Forest, according to Forest Supervisor Richard F. Droege.

County Fire Chief Keith E. Klinger says four of the forest fires under his jurisdiction were willful arson. He stated that while deliberate arson fires make up a relatively low percentage of the total man-made fires, they are the most needless and disheartening to the fire protection service.

LAND SURFACE
About 16 per cent of the total land surface of the earth is contained within the North American continent.

Couples Club Plans Dinner

The Couples Club of the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection will have a pot-luck dinner at 6:45 p.m., Saturday, in the Fireside room of the church.

The club's presidents, Oris and Rueben Klammer, have arranged an after dinner program of the Madrigal Singers who will perform about 8:30 p.m. Guests are invited.



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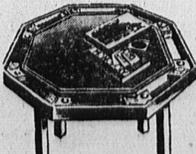
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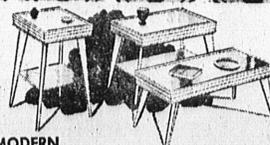
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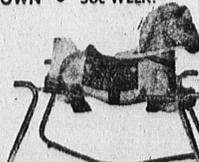
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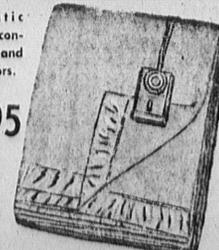
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