

SCIENCE

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THE FOREST RESERVATION POLICY.

ON March 3, 1891, the Congress of the United States enacted into law a new and important policy, namely, that the government should own and hold in perpetuity certain lands other than those needed for its immediate purposes or those set aside for parks.

This departure from the accepted policy of the past, according to which the public domain is held by the government only until it can be disposed of to actual settlers, was based upon the perception that a forest cover on slopes and mountains must be maintained to regulate the flow of streams, to prevent erosion and thereby to maintain favorable conditions in the plains below.

Enormous devastation of the public timber by theft and fire has gone on for decades, through absence of any care and through lack of any rational system in the manner of permitting the utilization of the wood material by the resident population. For the last 25 years every Secretary of the Interior, every Commissioner of the General Land Office, has pointed out this deplorable condition and has asked for legisla-