Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Assistant Secretary of the Interior John A. Carver, Jr., today instructed the heads of two Bureaus to take every action possible to reduce economic losses to the people of flood-damaged West Coast areas.

In a special memorandum to the Director of the Bureau of Land Management and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Mr. Carver said:

"I hope that you will promptly instruct your field people to cooperate with other government agencies and with communities and private industry in planning the rehabilitation effort, and that you will take necessary action by way of adjustment of (timber) cutting schedules, authorization of temporary repairs, and all other steps to reduce to a minimum the economic impact of the damage in the affected communities, subject, of course, to sound conservation practices."

Carver's memorandum said recent flooding, particularly in the timbered regions of Oregon and California, "is probably more damaging than the Columbus Day windstorm of October, 1962." It is noted that industry-government cooperation had been remarkably successful in the rehabilitation effort then.

A wind and rain storm on October 12, 1962, struck the West Coast with hurricane force and toppled or damaged about 1.25 billion board-feet of Douglas fir and other timber on Interior-managed lands in western Oregon. Damage was scattered and much of it was in inaccessible areas, but the downed timber had to be disposed of before it could become a fire hazard and haven for beetles.

Plans to sell the allowable cut of green timber were abandoned in favor of the cleanup campaign, which involved round-the-clock work by many BLM foresters and special efforts to cooperate with industry and local governments. By the summer of 1964, the downed timber had been cleared out through sale to private loggers.

Preliminary estimates of flood damage by the Department's Bureaus this week have run high--not counting expected damage to valuable timber stands. BLM estimated its damage in Oregon at more than $22 million, mostly in washed-out roads and bridges. Since most of these structures are in timbered country, the losses will complicate the problem of removing downed and damaged timber, officials said.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs estimated damage at nearly $1 million, mostly on the Warm Springs Reservation, with damage also reported on the Umatilla Reservation. About three-fourths of the total damage was to Government property, and the remainder to tribal and individual Indian property, according to estimates.

As Assistant Secretary for Public Land Management, Carver has direct supervision over the two affected Bureaus. President Johnson last week designated Carver Under Secretary of the Interior, subject to Senate approval.