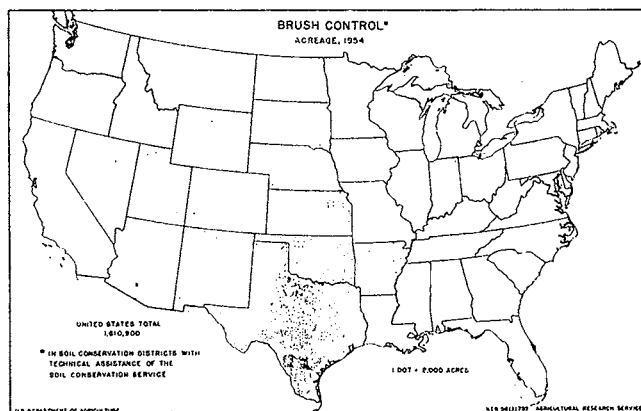


LAND CLEARING AND BRUSH CONTROL



Land clearing.—Land is still being developed for crops and pasture by clearing. Although the total acreage cleared for the country as a whole in any one year is relatively small, clearing of land has considerably greater significance in some areas.

In recent years, the increased use of large-scale mechanical equipment has made possible rapid and economical clearing operations. Some of the new machinery and techniques were developed during World War II in clearing airfields and camp sites in jungle areas. These new machines and techniques make it possible to clear large tracts in a few weeks in contrast to the few areas that formerly could be cleared each year.

The distribution of the acreage cleared in 1954 with technical assistance from the Soil Conservation Service gives a fairly good indication where land is presently being developed by clearing. In some areas, such as in Tennessee, Missouri, and Pennsylvania, the map shows practically no clearing because only a part of these States were included in soil-conservation districts in 1954. Most of the clearing is concentrated in the Southern States. For the most part the land currently being cleared has been

previously cutover for timber or cleared for agriculture. Some of the clearing is being carried out in conjunction with drainage and irrigation.

Land is being cleared for several different uses and purposes. Some farmers are clearing patches of woodland and brush in order to enlarge, consolidate, or reshape fields in order to make more efficient use of tractor-drawn equipment. For other farmers, clearing a few acres of woodland provides an opportunity to expand the cropland base of the farm. Land is also being cleared on farms in order to obtain land best suited for the production of certain specialized crops such as tobacco, rice, citrus fruit, and some vegetables which require rather specific soil and slope conditions. For example, land cleared in recent years in northeastern Arkansas has been cleared mainly for rice production. Another impetus to land clearing springs from the need for more improved pastureland on farms in the South which are making basic changes in type of farming. Increased emphasis on beef cattle production in the Black Belt of Alabama and Mississippi and on dairy production in favorably located parts of the Piedmont have led to the clearing of land for improved pasture. On the cattle ranches of central Florida, land clearing must frequently precede the seeding of improved pastures which are needed to complement the forage supply from native rangeland and woodland.

Brush control.—Brush control is considered as a separate practice from land clearing. It is an important practice in the Southwest, particularly Texas, where undesirable woody plant species have invaded native rangelands. A wide variety of noxious plants such as mesquite, scrub oak, and creosote have become widespread on these rangelands. The spread of these plants has resulted partly from overgrazing and partly from unfavorable climatic conditions such as drought, flood, and hard winters. Fire and wildlife have also contributed to the spread of brush. Mechanical and chemical controls of various kinds are being used in an attempt to eradicate or control further spread of these noxious plants.