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Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: Log Drive, St. Regis Paper Company, Machias River

Date: May 8, 1957

Recording number: Tape 37, part 1

Length of recording: 4:17

[transcript begins]

[Sound of river]

BILL MINCHER: Covering a log drive in four minutes or so is a big order but so is a log drive itself, with thousands of huge logs being moved from the Maine forest to the mill. We can tell the story with highlights, though. So let's begin on the banks of the Machias River in Maine's Washington County. Here is Byron McPheters, Logging Superintendent for the St. Regis Paper Company.

McPHETERS: Log diving on the Machias River dates back to pre-Revolutionary days. We cut now about five million feet annually. That would mean with the size of the logs running between 80 and 90 feet that there would be between 50 and 60,000 pieces in this year's drive. The drive comes down the river for a distance of about 50 miles some year, some years, although this year, it came from only about 30 miles upriver. We try to cut the valley in our holdings here on a sustained yield basis. I mean by that that we cut only the annual growth so that the valley, and the growth in the valley, will perpetuate itself.

[sounds of chopping and sawing in background]

MINCHER: Years ago, the story began with axes, and hand saws, as it did for centuries. But now the chainsaw, motor driven, has taken over with its angry snarl, felling and cutting up the trees into the right lengths for pulp and lumber logs. And behind these instruments, now as always, there are men. Here's the boss of the drive, Francis Haley. What sorts of trouble do you try to avoid most? Is there anything besides jams that can really make a mess of things?

HALEY: Oh, there's not very much. If you can keep your logs running, you've got a point to gain and if you can only just keep them logs running, of course you've gotta have your men on the front and know what's going on all the time. Of course, you've got to know what's going on the whole length of the river. And you, the logs, well, they will outrun your water. And that's one thing that you have to watch, watching out for.

MINCHER: Now how do you gauge your water, how much you need?

HALEY: Well, along the river, different places. We would try the best we can to keep it up there.

MINCHER: Once again, we go back to experience.

HALEY: That's right.

MINCHER: There must be the men, but the big moving factor is water. [Sound of river] The Machias River is frozen in the winter, but each spring the sun and rain and melting snow break up the ice and the log drive is on. The drivers sum up their work nonchalantly.

WRIGHT: My name is Bob Wright and the log drivers try to keep the logs moving at all times and probably one of the best ways to do this is to be sure that the river is properly filled with logs. And of course, the thing that we have to watch out for is to keep the river from jamming at all times. And when the river jams, or we have quite a bad mess, and it takes quite a lot of time to straighten it out. And after it's gone there's there's a lot of logs left on the sides of the bank that takes quite a bit of time to move along.

MINCHER: When there is a jam, the huge logs must be cleared by men wielding pick poles and Peaveys, or camp dogs. Here's what dislodging one log sounds like.

[a few seconds of listening to the men talk to one another and water splashing]

MINCHER: And at the end of the drive, which moves maybe, oh, two to six miles a day, at the mill pond and the mill, pulp and lumber. We don't have time for the lumber mill story so now this is Bill Mincher of WLBZ in Bangor, speaking from the St. Regis Paper Company on the Machias River in Washington County, Maine, returning you to Monitor at Radio Central.

[transcript ends]

For more information about this transcript, audio recording, or other materials in Special Collections at the University of Maine, contact:

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