

Mobile Nature, Cooperative Management, and Institutional Adaptation in Pacific Northwest Blister Rust Control

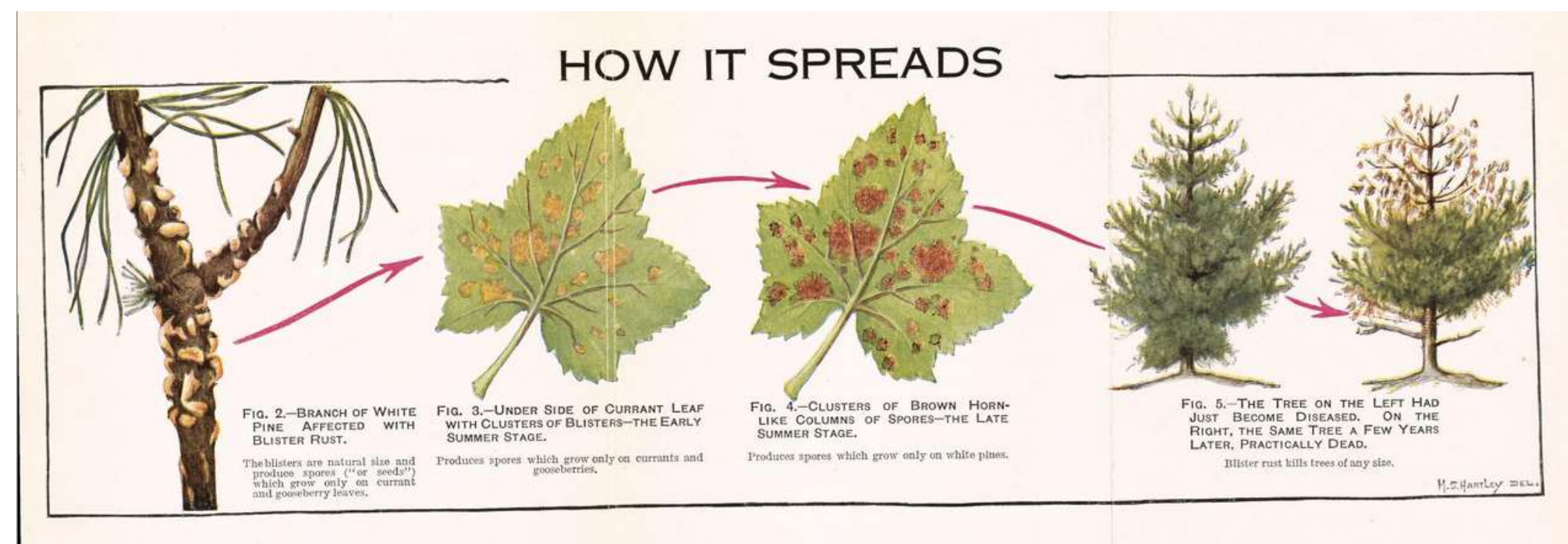
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The Story

The simplified story of blister rust is one of arrival, spread, and decline, though not disappearance. The simplified story of blister rust *control* is quarantine, eradication, and technological control, though not complete.

The fungus arrived in North America in 1906, spread to the Canadian west coast by 1921, and crossed into the American Northwest soon. In the meantime, local and national governments passed laws, funded efforts, and sent forth agents to educate and manage the increasingly damaging pest while cooperating with local industry.

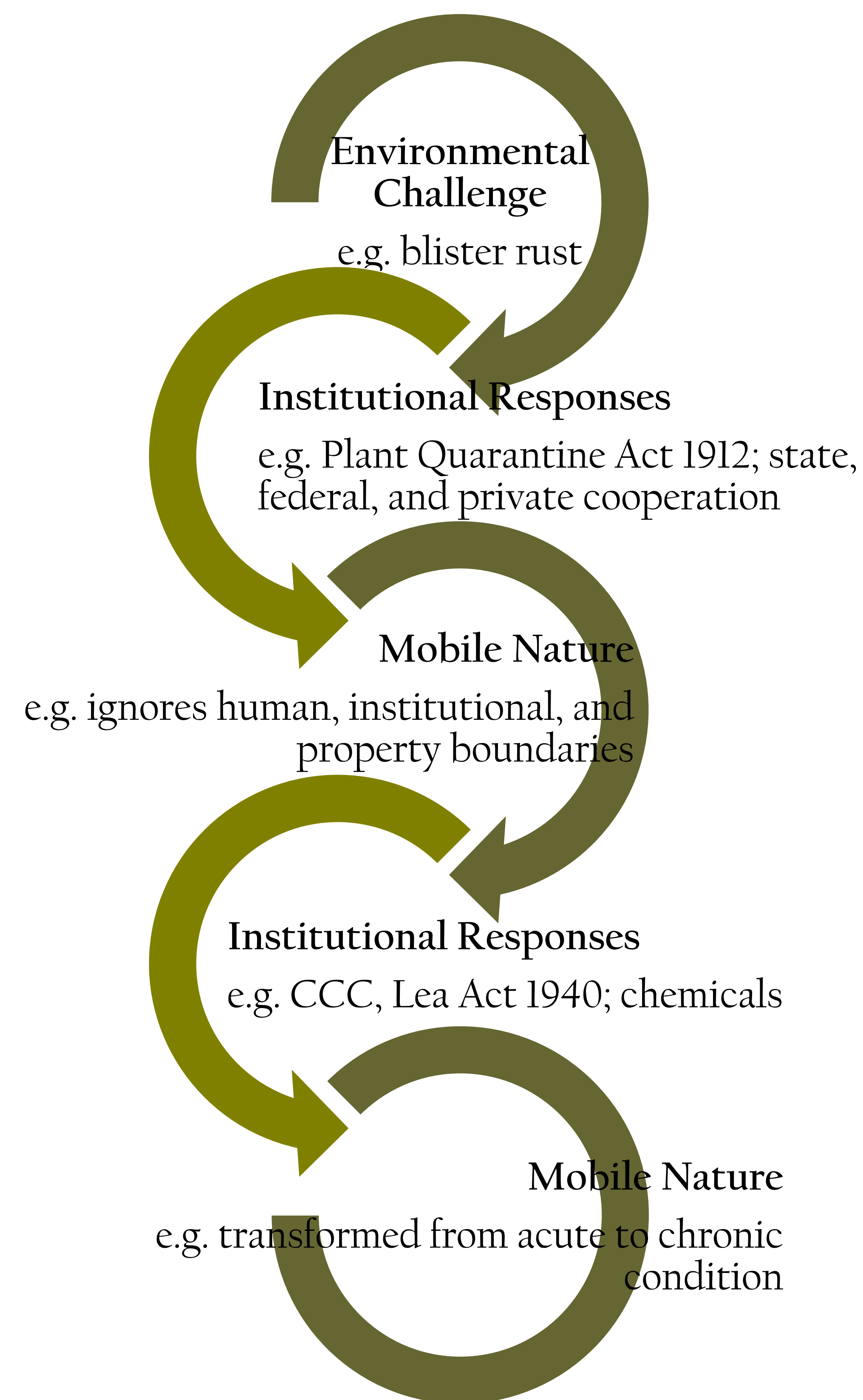


During the Depression as the rust kept infecting forests, the federal government expanded its funding and control programs with Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) laborers while it continued cooperating with local governments and businesses and developed new laws that allowed government agents to cross property boundaries while following the pest's ecological pathways.

Despite accomplishing much, those strategies failed to contain blister rust. After World War II, efforts concentrated on technological approaches, including breeding programs and using chemical pesticides and antibiotics. The acute problem of the 1920s and 1930s had become a chronic problem by the 1950s and 1960s. When blister rust control ended in 1967, it was “the most extensive forest disease control effort in time, money, men, and materiel in the history of US forestry.”

The Argument

Cooperative efforts attempted to marshal resources and innovations to control nature to sustain a vital economic resource, in the process learning more about forest ecology, innovating in governance, and identifying common interests among public and private, local and national parties to cope with patchwork landownership and mobile forest pests.



And therein is a critical lesson from this history: nature changes the very human institutions that seek to shape nature and the dynamic process continues.

The Collaboration

University of Idaho
College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences

Supported by the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences Key Fund, Professor Adam M. Sowards and History major Rebecca Stunz spent Summer 2014 co-researching, co-drafting, and co-revising this project. The result is an article manuscript currently being considered for the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*.

The Sources

REPORT ON
White Pine Blister Rust Control
1919
PUBLISHED BY THE
AMERICAN PLANT PEST COMMITTEE
4 JOY STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

For primary evidence, we used:

- regional newspapers (more than 100 articles)
- government newsletters (e.g., *Blister Rust News*)
- conference proceedings (e.g., *A Brief Report of the Proceedings... of the International White Pine Blister Rust Conference*)
- inter-institutional reports (e.g., highlighted above)
- federal legislation (e.g., Lea Act)
- scientific literature (e.g., contemporary articles in *Weeds*, *Journal of Wildlife Management*, *Science*)
- memoirs and oral histories