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From Combat Biologists to Restoration Practitioners

Remarks of Mike Dombeck
American Fisheries Society
August 1998

I'd like to start out today by reading you a few quotes. The first is by the former Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court. Rose Bird. She says:

"We have probed the earth, excavated it, burned it, ripped things from it, buried things in it, chopped down its forests, leveled its hills, muddied its waters and dirtied its air. That does not fit my definition of a good tenant. If we were here on a month to month basis, we would have been evicted long ago."

The second quote is from the writer, Richard Nelson. He says:

"The most I can do is strive toward a different kind of conscience, listen to an older and more tested wisdom, participate minimally in a system that debases its own sustaining environment, work toward a different future, and hope that someday all will be forgiven."

We all know of many biologists who subscribe to Rose Bird's point of view and whose outrage eventually mellows to the sort of withdrawal described by Nelson. Indeed, as Aldo Leopold said, "one of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds."

Biologists were often grossly generalized to belong to one of two groups. The first group was the combat biologists. They would don their fatigues and fight an endless battle against seemingly insurmountable odds. Many biologists spent years and years of their careers attempting to stop what they perceived as irresponsible development.

The second group of biologists simply found it easier to get along than to fight. And so they did. Some called them sell-outs, or worse.

Today, we are here to learn about and discuss a different path. A path that fisheries biologists should embrace and celebrate - a path of restoration and renewal. At long last, I believe the pendulum has shifted and individual citizens are beginning to ask how do my actions influence the health of the land?

Public land managers are managing landscapes in order to protect and restore watershed health and integrity. Public servants such as Governor John Kitzhaber and Jim Martin are working with communities to restore anadromous fish watersheds and their surrounding communities. Private companies such as McMillan-Bloedel -- recently announced it was abandoning clearcutting on their lands -- are looking for new and better ways to work within the limits of the land.

Because of the work of groups such as AFS and people in this room today such as Dave Nolte of the Crooked River group and Jim Cummins, who works on the Anacostia watershed in and around Washington, DC, we have models we can follow to restore our watersheds.

I'll talk about the benefits of healthy watersheds in a moment, but first I'd like to read to you one more quote by the writer Barry Lopez on the benefits provided by the *process of restoration*:

Restoration work is not fixing beautiful machinery, replacing stolen parts, adding fresh lubricants, cobbling and welding and rewiring. It is accepting an abandoned responsibility. It is a humble and often joyful mending of biological ties, with a hope clearly recognized, that working from this foundation we might, too, begin to mend human society.

Lopez's quote comes from a work appropriately titled, *Waiting on Wisdom*. Thankfully, restoration offers us as fisheries professionals a new way - a way to bring people together to restore the soil and water and air upon which we depend. And the amazing thing is that in doing so, we see people reconnecting to the land - and perhaps most importantly - reconnecting to other people in their communities.

Why watersheds? Well for one thing it is not new. Watershed protection is as old as the Organic Act itself. Watersheds are the basic building block of resource stewardship. Whenever I hear scientists or natural resource managers getting hung up on the definition of words such as ecosystem, biome, or landscape, I always steer them back to watersheds. We all live within a watershed and all of our actions on the land are reflected by their health.

Watersheds perform three basic functions. They catch, store and release water over time. The health of our watersheds and forests is reflected by their ability to produce sustainable supplies of wood products, clean water, recreational opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitats. This is why the work of the fisheries community is so very important!

Fish are the ultimate indicators of healthy watersheds. How much longer would we have gone on ignoring the decline of salmonid stocks if Willa Nehlsen, Jack Williams, and Jim Lichatowich didn't sound the wake up call with their AFS published paper that documented over 106 salmon stock extinctions and over 214 stocks that stood on the brink?

Healthy watersheds retain historic flows and are resilient in the face of natural events such as floods, fire, and drought and more capable of absorbing the effects of human-induced disturbances. They connect headwaters to downstream areas, wetlands and riparian areas to uplands, and subsurface to surface flows. Floods then dissipate across floodplains increasing soil fertility and minimizing damage to lives, property, and the stream-course.

Jack Williams and Chris Wood -- both here in the crowd today, are going to holler at me if I don't throw in a plug for our book sometime soon. So, I will now; these and other benefits of healthy watersheds are well documented in Watershed Restoration: Principles and Practices. The book documents thirteen case studies where people have come together to conserve and restore the health of the land that sustains us all.

Most of these efforts developed locally; all involve local landowners, farmers, and ranchers working in partnership with scientists, environmentalists, government agencies, and a host of local citizens.

People working together to restore their lands and waters; in the Forest Service, we call this collaborative stewardship. But it is really just plain common sense. We simply cannot meet the needs of present or future generations without first sustaining the health of the land. This is the reason that one of my first acts as Forest Service Chief was to implement new performance measures for all agency managers that are based on the health of the land. We cannot allow one use or value to take precedence over any other.

Our most important task is to manage our lands in ways that utilize our resources without jeopardizing the opportunity for future generations to have healthy, diverse, and productive lands. Nothing less will be acceptable! This is the essence of watershed restoration.

It used to be that we would look across a given landscape and plan a wilderness area there, a clear cut there, a road there, a recreation area there, a stream improvement project there. This philosophy of segmenting the landscape into various uses more or less defined the concept of ``multiple use.' Today we recognize that we cannot isolate out and manage parts of the landscape without first considering the whole.

Today, we know that we must do more. We cannot simply preserve our national parks and wilderness and by extension protect our natural resource heritage. We cannot manage national forests in isolation of other federal, state, and private lands. We must work in partnership with others to link our communities' neighborhood creeks and tree-lined streets to the sea-bound rivers, state and national parks and forests.

The community watershed restorations such as those depicted in our book herald a new American Restoration Era. An era that will be marked by state and federal agencies working hand-in-hand with interested landowners, and local communities to restore our forests, rangelands, and watersheds.

Working across scientific disciplines and with broad coalitions requires a strong commitment to collaborative problem solving, a willingness to listen to new ideas, and support from all upper levels of management. The last point is critical because natural resource managers, foresters and biologists alike may not initially understand the long-term benefits of taking the time to build trust with landowners, industry, environmental groups, and others.

By restoring the health, diversity, and productivity of our lands and waters, we are healing our communities themselves - improving the quality of life, increasing energy efficiency, and saving countless tax dollars. Like the barn raisings of old, community-based restorations are re-connecting people to the land that sustains them. Watershed approaches are not a panacea to resolving difficult resource issues. But they do provide a new framework for moving beyond the polarization of the natural resource debate that too often permeates our communities.

I'd like to close by sharing with you three principles that I believe are critical to the success of any successful community-based restoration project.

- Collaborative groups must be balanced among the full array of users and diversity of interests.
- Identify a shared vision or a collective goal for conserving or restoring healthy ecosystems.
- Collaboration is a process not an outcome. It should never be used to abrogate decision-making responsibilities - whether they rest with federal, state or even private landowners. The measure of success of any community-based approach is better decisions on the land and improved working relationships among interests. Effective, long and short-term monitoring is essential.

These principles are the essence of sound ecosystem management and watershed restoration. And, as a former Forest Service employee Aldo Leopold might have said, a basic requirement of membership in the land community.

Submitted by: Donna Janisch

Modified: 9/15/98

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Remarks of Chief Dombeck

NASF Annual Meeting

October 5, 1998

Thank Jim Warner our host!

Thanks for inviting us to be here today. I have with me today folks representing all of the Deputy areas in the Forest Service. I brought them with me because if I've realized one thing since I became Chief, it's that this is not a one person job.

It seems that it was just a short time ago that I was standing before you at your annual meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah. A lot has happened in a very short time span. And, a lot of it has been good. Good for the Forest Service. Good for you. Good for our working partnership.

Last year I announced Janice McDougale as Associate Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry. Since that time I am very please to have added Phil Janik as our Deputy Chief and Larry Payne as Assistant Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry. We have also added Steve Satterfield as Director of Cooperative Forestry and Jose Cruz as Director of

*Sustainability = ecological
level
economic*

Fire and Aviation. These folks have hit the ground running, are operating as a real can-do team, and I know that, working together in partnership with the National Association of State Foresters, we can make a difference when it comes to the sustainability of the nonfederal lands in this country.

Less than a year ago the National Research Council delivered its very significant report on Nonfederal Lands, and with a few exceptions is playing well with our partners and with the leadership in the House and the Senate and I believe will make a positive difference over the next few years in terms of the kind of resources that we have to address the issues the NRC report outlined relative to nonfederal lands.

In the interim, I am very pleased to note that we have begun to bring focus to our conservation efforts in the Forest Service through the development of our Forest Service Natural Resources Agenda with its focus on watershed health and restoration, sustainable forest ecosystem management, recreation, and forest roads.

Last year I also charged Phil Janik, Janice McDougale, and Jim Hubbard to craft a vision to guide the direction of State and Private Forestry into the 21st century. And, I told

them I wanted S&PF to take off like a rocket. I am pleased to say they have done just that. They have identified 13 areas in which to focus our collective energies with the big five being Sustainable Natural Resources and Communities, Watershed Issues and Conditions, Urban Forest Resources, Forest Information for Landowners and Managers, and Tribal Government Relations. Because of the cross-cutting nature of these issues for the Forest Service and State Foresters and the implications of mixed ownership in program delivery services, I have supported their recommendation for a Board of Deputy Chiefs to coordinate policy development and program activities in relation to these five issues. I believe this level of collaboration is critical if we are to be successful in our efforts to address these complex issues comprehensively.

Within the last year two other developments are also very significant. One is the Presidents Clean Water Action Plan. The other is the Roundtable on Sustainable Forest Management that occurred just this summer. I acknowledge your role in bringing to the attention of the Forest Service the need to provide leadership in the national discussion over criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management in a substantive manner.

In the words of someone who was raised in an rural area, we have sown a lot of seed in fertile ground over the past year and now it is our job to tend the crop and reap the harvest!

I now want to turn briefly to some of the challenges and opportunities facing the Forest Service and NASF, all of which are relevant to the American people that we serve.

I said in a letter sent to all my employees on July 1, that "a conservation leader is someone who consistently errs on the side of maintaining and restoring healthy and diverse ecosystems even when -- no, especially when -- such decisions are not expedient or politically popular." If we take care of and speak for the land, be it public or private, it will take care of all of us. Our collective challenge is to work together to maintain and restore ecologically and socially important environmental values.

As we go out and work with our stakeholders and publics to develop collaborative strategies to maintain and restore forests and watersheds, we need to talk with people and communicate the importance of caring for these resources in ways they understand and value. Values such as unfragmented landscapes which I know is a big concern relative to

nonfederal lands. Values such as clean water and air, protection of rare species, and livable and sustainable cities and communities.

Quality of life

Science and professionalism must lead the debates on use, management, and conservation of natural resources. If we are flexible and adaptable in responding to conservation issues and social needs we can adjust to change. However one principle must remain sacrosanct-- we must manage and live within the ecological limits of the land. We must preserve and, if possible, enhance the quality of life for future generations. We do this, as we all know in this room, by being good steward of the land and its resources.

I salute our partnership and look forward to a banner year working in collaboration with you in carrying out the work we set forth in 1998.

next but 1st

I now want to turn to the other members of my executive team to share their thoughts on a collaborative agenda that will build on what we have accomplished this past year.

Diversity

Remarks of Mike Dombeck
~~September~~ 9, 1998
The Tuskegee University
Forest/Natural Resources Program (1968-1998)

October

"Working Together In the 21st Century: Partnering For Success"

I am truly pleased to be with you today. I'd like to thank Dr. Benjamin Payton and Dr. William Lester for inviting me to be here today. I'd also like to thank Dean Walter Hill and the founder of the Forestry Program, Dr. B. D. Mayberry for their leadership of the forestry and natural resources program over the years. Finally, I'd like to recognize the two liaisons from USDA and the Forest Service to the program, Mr. Louis Black and Ms. Jerri Marr. In our busy and hectic lives, too often we forget to say thanks to those who work the hardest. But it is not an exaggeration to say that without the leadership and vision of these hard-working people, the Forest/Natural Resources Program would not exist.

Before we celebrate the forest and natural resources program here at Tuskegee, I'd like to very briefly preview for you the direction that the Forest Service is moving. More importantly, I want to work with you and others to develop this agenda further so that we truly maximize the amount of good work we can do together on the landscape.

As natural resource professionals, I ask you to be emissaries for conservation in your communities. As I said in a letter sent to all my employees on July 1, a conservation leader is someone who consistently errs on the side of maintaining and restoring healthy and diverse ecosystems even when -- no, especially when -- such decisions are not expedient or politically popular. If we take care of the land, it will take care of us. Our collective challenge is to work together to maintain and restore ecologically and socially important environmental values.

Our natural resource agenda focuses on four areas: 1) watershed health and restoration; 2) sustainable forest ecosystem management; 3) recreation; and 4) forest roads. As we go out and work with folks to develop collaborative strategies to maintain and restore our forests and watersheds, we need to talk with people and communicate the agenda's importance, in ways that they understand.

Talk about, and manage for, the values that are so important to so many people. Values such as large and unfragmented landscapes, wilderness and roadless areas, clean water, protection of rare species, old growth forests, naturalness -- these are the reasons most Americans cherish their public lands.

And, of course, we cannot do it alone. We need to continue partnerships with Universities such as the one we are celebrating here today. We need to work with industry and conservation partners, state and federal colleagues, local communities, Indian tribes, and others too.

Science and professionalism must lead the debates on use, management, and conservation of natural resources. If we are flexible and adaptable in responding to conservation issues and social needs we can adjust to change. However, one principle must remain sacrosanct -- we must manage and live within the ecological limits of the land. We must preserve quality of life for future generations. We do this by being good stewards.

How does this relate to Tuskegee? Well, I turn to Aldo Leopold and his seminal work, A Sand County Almanac. In it, Leopold spoke of his personal land ethic and the need for land managers to extend their own ecological conscience to resource decisions. The natural resource agenda is our public expression of our land ethic.

As present and future natural resource professionals, we need you to help us

carry the message of our agenda to your communities and partners.

work with others to communicate the urgency and benefits of conservation.

work with industry develop commodities in an ecologically sustainable manner.

These are our greatest challenges and if we work together, will be our greatest rewards. So let's go back to where it all began.

From a bill passed in 1880 by the Alabama State Legislature that appropriated \$2,000 yearly to establish a school for blacks in Macon County, emerged Tuskegee Normal School. A former slave and a former slave owner both saw the need for better education opportunities for black youth in rural Alabama, especially in Macon County.

After considerable recruitment, the group landed Booker T. Washington as its school's first principal. And on Independence Day, July 4, 1881, Tuskegee University was born.

One of my favorite quotes from Booker T. Washington is "I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed."

Truer words have never been spoken, and Washington must have known something about the path that Tuskegee would follow because the University's accomplishments in the face of adversity are awe inspiring.

Consider:

- the Tuskegee Airmen – the nation's first all-black flying pilots;
- The first agricultural experiment station at an historical black institution, headed by the eminent Dr. George Washington Carver;

- the Jesup Wagon, which initiated the Cooperative Extension Service in the United States;
- the first program in Alabama to train African Americans nurses; and
- The first Aerospace Science Engineering Program at an historical black institution.

So it should not be surprising that Tuskegee would become the first institution to introduce a forest resources program to train African Americans in forestry and natural resources.

When Tuskegee University ventured in 1968 to facilitate the entry of minorities into careers in professional forestry, most resource professionals thought it a profession that African Americans were simply not interested. Few efforts, encouragement, opportunities, or role models were available to motivate those minorities wishing to choose forestry and natural resources as career choices.

In 1968, Dr. Mayberry, who then served as dean of the School of Applied Sciences, established partnerships with the USDA Forest Service, private forestry industry, and several other institutions, thus launching a forest resources program at Tuskegee University.

I am proud to say that the efforts of Tuskegee, both in the past and at the present, have assisted in paving the way for racial and ethnic groups in forestry and natural resources.

The influence of Tuskegee has literally helped open thousands of doors to African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, women and men, as well as, our physically challenged citizens.

As of 1992, according to a wonderful book by Dr. Mayberry, fully 65% of the more than 100 professional African American foresters in the nation come from Tuskegee. Let me repeat that statistic because it is amazing. Of the 100+ professional African American foresters in the nation, Tuskegee has produced over 65% of these professionals.

I am exceedingly proud that the Forest Service is the employer of choice for so many of these fine professionals along with our partners in the private and public sectors. In fact, would all of the Tuskegee graduates, who are employed by the Forest Service, please stand? Further, I want to ask that, would those graduates of Tuskegee who are foresters or natural resource managers and employed with industry, state agencies, municipalities, or self-employed, please stand? Ladies and gentlemen, you have just been introduced to a unique and special group of professionals.

I have been told by Drs. Mayberry and Hill, that this group has become to be known as the "Fabulous 51+". The "Fabulous 51+" originated in 1993 at the Program's 25th Anniversary Celebration. I can see why both Drs. Mayberry and Hill call them the "Fabulous 51+". I would too, be proud of these fine graduates. They have good reason

to be proud to say "I am a "Fab 51+". I understand that each graduate received a commemorative pin at last night's Recognition Gala along with a special plaque. I wish you all the best!

Much of the success of the "Fab 51+" can be attributed to the hard work and dedication of many of the Forest Service Liaisons who served at Tuskegee during the 30-year period. I'd like to name this special group of people who tirelessly gave of themselves to help make this program the success it is today. Brian Payne, Charles Tierman, Larry Gadt, Bob Lillie, Ronald Bonar, Ronald Smith, Jerome Thomas, Robert Williamson, Louis Black, Samuel Larry, Stephen Kolison, Jerome Caston, Tina Terrell, and Jerri Marr.

I would like to join all of the University Presidents, Provosts, and Deans at the various institutions in praising these professionals in carrying out our joint collaborations and partnerships.

You and I know that with the ever-present focus on using every dollar in a prudent manner, partnerships and collaborations are the way to go. We are very satisfied with the 30-Year Partnership with Tuskegee University. It is truly one of our most acclaimed "success stories".

In close, I would like to mention two of the most successful initiatives that we endorse on Tuskegee campus, as well as, on several campuses. These two programs are the USDA/1890 National Scholars Program and the USDA Forest Service and Tuskegee University Initiative Program.

The USDA/1890 National Scholars Program allow some of our best and brightest students to enter the federal workforce after high school graduation and enroll into a program at one of the seventeen institutions, including Tuskegee to study agriculture, natural resources, engineering, and other natural and physical sciences.

Tuition, books, room and board, and other related fees are paid in full.

Moreover, each scholar is awarded a personal computer, printer, and an assortment of software. Further, the scholar comes on board as a full-time employee with health, medical, and dental benefits. As with any scholarship, there come requirements and responsibilities. Students must maintain a high academic standing while in the program. For every year that the agency pays the scholar's tuition, etc., the scholar must work equally for the agency once she/he completes their undergraduate degree. Similar standards apply to the USDA Forest Service and Tuskegee University Initiative Program.

It is imperative that we continue to find innovative new ways to recruit young African Americans and other minorities into our workforce. Just as the profession of forestry has learned that healthy forests require a lot more than simply managing a stand of timber -- requiring care and attention be given to water, forbs, cultural resources, recreation,

wildlife, and other biological diversity -- so too we can only maintain the health of our organization by ensuring our diversity.

Programs at HACU Institutions and American Indian Tribal Colleges are similar to those at the HBCUs. All of these institutions are unique in their own way and add diversity to our agency. We embrace what these programs offer and do for us nationally. We at the Forest Service appreciate Tuskegee in inviting us to this festive and historic occasion. We have had a wonderful and exciting 30 years and look forward to the next 30 years. I thank you!

Words to Action: Conservation Leadership for the 21st Century

Remarks of Mike Dombeck

National Leadership Conference

October 27, 1998

We have had a challenging but great year and a half or so. I am excited by prospects for the future. Whether the issues are civil rights, roads, agency accountability, financial management, or below-cost timber sales, we have faced up to the most challenging issues directly and without hesitation.

I am proud of the work we've done.

Today, I want us to step out of our comfort zones, abandon our assumptions and talk about the future and how we get there. More specifically, I want us to discuss the incentives that drive the agency and to determine the steps we can take to ensure that those incentives support our essential mission of maintaining and restoring healthy, diverse, and productive ecosystems for the benefit of present and future generations.

Accomplishments

When I began this job, many of you told me that we needed to regain our status as conservation leaders by articulating a strong natural resource agenda. The second challenge was to motivate the organization to follow this agenda, promote its support, and lead its implementation.

Our conservation leadership over the past year is obvious.

- We articulated a straight forward natural resource agenda that focuses on services and values that the American people need and support. This has helped to mute calls to rewrite our mission and to engage people in more productive dialogue about maintaining and restoring healthy, diverse, and productive ecosystems.
- By laying out aggressive solutions to long-standing issues such as civil rights, financial management, and fiscal accountability, we will be able to direct more energy in a more effective manner to natural resource conservation and restoration.
- By taking on the controversial issue of forest roads, we have helped begin a long overdue dialogue about the future of the forest transportation system. We also, for the first time in many years, did not have a divisive appropriations fight over roads.
- Eliminating purchaser road credits will diminish the divisive subsidy debate and lessen the internal incentive to build new roads in order to pay for maintenance of our existing road system.
- We developed a strategy for delivering State and Private services to expand technical assistance to private woodland owners, and bolster urban forestry.

- We have strengthened leadership in sustainability and advancement of criteria and indicators.
- We increased attention to watershed and forest health problems including insect and disease, fire risk, and invasive species.
- We have increased emphasis on research needs of forest inventory and monitoring.
- Our temporary suspension of road building in roadless area proposal will allow us to waste fewer resources on appeals and litigation and give our field managers a breather, while we develop the scientific and analytical tools to make more informed decisions about road management.
- Our proposal to de-couple 25% payments to states from the collection of timber receipts could lend much needed stability to counties and remove the incentive to harvest trees in order to finance local schools, roads, and other social services.

I am pleased with our progress but we must accelerate the pace. We were able to get this far because we have not shied away from taking on the tough issues. What remains is for us to articulate - both internally and externally - how our policies and practices are changing the agency's emphasis from tracking inputs to producing outcomes on the land.

Our agency priorities, budget procedures, planning processes and accountability measures are opaque and confusing. We must make them transparent - clear for everyone to see and judge.

The complexity of our accounting, budget, and reward systems have led us to become an organization that assigns greatest value to the outputs of forest management. Consequently, most of the debate over the Forest Service focuses on outputs - whether they are associated with roads, timber harvest, mining, grazing, or other traditional forest products.

The appropriation cycle has become a rancorous debate over how much one program should be funded versus another. Yet, few are really focusing on what happens on the land. The debate is presently over the level of inputs and outputs - not outcomes.

Even as society demands clean water, better outdoor recreation opportunities, landowner assistance programs, and new research and technologies on forest inventory, analysis, wood conservation and more efficient wood utilization, we are spending too much time and money in controversy about timber sales in roadless areas.

Is it any wonder people say our mission is muddled, our laws unclear? Our systems defy both the auditor and the average citizen.

Our laws are less the problem than is our own incentive systems that are complex and outdated.

We must change. Consistent with principles of ecosystem management, collaborative stewardship, and social values, we must transform our view of forests as a warehouse of outputs to one that assigns greatest values to the positive outcomes of watershed management and responsible stewardship.

Incentives

I'd like to read you a part of a letter that recently came across my desk.

''It is considered that past experience of the Forest Service with clear cutting in the fir region together with developments and the findings of the research foresters of the Forest Service fully warrant the consideration of a change in timber sales policy. Clear cutting has always been questionable because of its tremendous losses in forest productivity, partly because of its attendant extreme fire hazard, frequently resulting in reburns and forest devastation, also because of the low degree of timber utilization. It is concluded that clear cutting practices on national forests should be abandoned if possible and systems of selective logging devised and substituted.'

The letter goes on - citing science and promoting more selective logging for the Forest Service. This letter is similar to many I have received over the past year and a half, except in one regard. It was written 64 years ago by C. J. Buck, then the Regional Forester for the Pacific Northwest.

I read that letter to set you in the right frame of mind for this discussion. Had we listened to C.J. Buck's advice so long ago, perhaps we would be in a very different place today. We could have likely avoided the disruption of the owls vs. loggers' era. Agency credibility and trust would be less goals then they would be standard operating procedures.

Let's take a hard look at the fundamental assumptions and incentives that drive our management and see if we cannot improve on them.

Incentives: Merriam-Webster defines ''incentive' as, ''something that incites, or that has the tendency to incite to determination or action.' What I want us to talk about today are the policies, practices, and incentives that incite us to make the decisions we do.

For the next few minutes, I will focus on the National Forest System. But make no mistake; the lessons cross into Research, Administration, and State and Private. For example, Deputy Chief Phil Janik and his team have worked out an aggressive conservation agenda for State and Private Forestry. Yet, if we cannot change significantly the tenor of the existing debate, our funding needs to implement the State and Private agenda will almost certainly be unmet.

For many years, the Forest Service operated under a basic formula. The more trees we harvested, the more revenue we could bring into the organization, and the more people we could hire to deliver more of the programs that the American people demand. As I intimated earlier, Congress, State and local governments, industry, and the conservation community all responded to the agency within the context of that formula. The result is that today our debates focus on inputs, such as funding levels, and on outputs, such as wood fiber harvested, and animal months grazed.

During the era when we harvested 9-12 billion board feet per year, we could afford to finance the bulk of the organization on the back of the timber program. Timber, through a combination of appropriated money and trust fund revenues, financed much of:

- The forest management program,
- Reforestation,
- Road maintenance and construction,

- Fish and wildlife habitat and watershed improvements and mitigation,
- Recreation development,
- Cultural resource inventories and preservation, and on and on.

Our timber harvest has declined by about 70% of its high in less than a decade and today we are finding it ever more difficult to finance road maintenance, recreation and wildlife projects, overhead, and salaries. And you know as well as I that the harvest is not going to return to its high historic level.

More importantly, we have become reactive, defensive, and in many cases, divided as an organization. Not because we are timber beasts, not because we are not conservationists, but because we know that without a large timber program and our present budget structure, we cannot fund the full multiplicity of uses upon which the American people depend, and which we are so committed to delivering.

Given social values and new information, the pattern is completely unsustainable. We talk and write about ecological sustainability. It is our essence - our reason for being. Yet, our budgets, our performance evaluations, our organizational structure, and our intrinsic incentive systems are based on producing outputs. We need to find a new path, a new organizational direction that is based on outcomes on the landscape as opposed to outputs produced.

Outputs are: board feet of timber; minerals produced and brought to market; livestock animal months grazed; fish produced; recreation visitor days, to name a few. Those are all socially meaningful and economically important. But the values that most citizens appreciate from their national forests are:

- Clean air and water.
- Open space and large unfragmented landscapes.
- Wildness and naturalness.
- Diverse and abundant wildlife, fish and plant habitats.
- Endangered species conservation.
- Leaving choices for future generations.
- Ecologically sustainable development.
- Forests that look like forests.

Some would challenge these values as more akin to the Park Service than the Forest Service mission. Multiple use, the thinking goes, is inconsistent with wilderness, with ecosystem services, with the preservation of ``inconsequential' plant, snails and fishes, or birds.

We must reject that argument with every ounce of professionalism in our marrow. On the eve of the 21st century, our central challenge is to demonstrate, through our management actions, research, and conservation leadership, how society can live in productive harmony with the resources and values

that sustain us. This is our land ethic.

With a new State and Private strategy that can deliver conservation benefits to millions of interested land-owners; with the finest natural resource research and technology development organization in the world, no agency is more prepared to meet this challenge than the Forest Service.

Our challenge, plain and simple, is to ensure that the outputs we produce occur within the ecological limits of the land and the value society attributes to public lands.

Ours' is a unique and difficult mission. We need to look for answers, rather than place blame. We need to work in collaboration with states, local and Tribal governments, Congress, local communities, the American people, and all our partners. If we in this room cannot articulate our land ethic and values, deliver solutions and demonstrate our successes on the land, then I fear for the future of this organization.

Opportunities

I want to spend a few minutes talking about how the policies we have already articulated are beginning to reshape our incentive system - from both the natural resources and the business practices side of the organization.

There are numerous ways we can change our incentive system. I'd like to discuss a few.

- First, development of land-based performance measures and their integration into our new streamlined business model.
- Second, the Committee of Scientists recommendations for new planning regulations and more effectively linking our budget and funding priorities to forest plans.
- Third, reform of our trust funds.
- Fourth, accelerating the Forest Management program's emphasis on forest ecosystem stewardship.

Land-based Performance Measures

One of the most important and lasting ways we can change the agency's incentives is through development of land-based performance measures. We need to put in place a system that effectively and efficiently evaluates the health and diversity of the resources entrusted to our care. By being able to point to the positive outcomes of our natural resource management, we will **broaden the support base** for the Forest Service and the work we do.

Trends in these measurements should drive the way we:

- Evaluate employees' performance.
- Develop budget priorities.
- Track accomplishments.

- Communicate with the public.

Our existing budget and tracking systems focus on measuring inputs to the system, such as dollars spent on wildlife or timber management or watershed programs, and outputs such as recreation visitor days or timber offered. It tells us little, however, about whether we are achieving our core mission of caring for the land. With such a system in place, is it any wonder that the congressional appropriation process is consumed with acrimonious debates over spending on timber management versus recreation versus road maintenance versus watershed programs, and so on?

Our system gives Congress and interest groups little incentive to focus on the outcomes of our management, *because we do not measure them in a meaningful way!*

We are on the right path with new proposals to track forest management accomplishments based on land health as opposed to outputs, use of criteria and indicators, and our draft Government Performance and Results Act strategic plan. Developing and implementing performance measures for land health will allow us to proceed with efforts to dramatically simplify our budget processes and deliver more resources to the ground.

Planning

The Committee of Scientists will issue their final recommendations very soon. Among other issues, they will suggest that we:

- Make maintaining and restoring ecological sustainability the focus of forest planning.
- More effectively link forest planning to budget and funding priorities.
- Practice collaborative stewardship through use of diverse and balanced advisory groups and adaptive management through monitoring.

For years, Forest Service employees and others have said that our management and budget bears little relation to forest plans. We must take this historic opportunity to make forest planning an opportunity to work in a collaborative manner to develop and implement a collective vision for managing healthy watersheds and landscapes. Our planning and budget processes must be simplified. In a very real sense, this is the best venue to demonstrate to the American people and Congress the need for, and benefits of, making investments in the land.

Trust Funds

We cannot hope to change the agency's incentive system without taking a close look at Forest Service trust funds. In the past era of higher timber harvests and with little public opposition, trust funds helped to ensure completion of salvage, wildlife mitigation, and reforestation. As appropriations for timber have declined, however, more and more often we are using trust funds to finance organizational costs.

The Northern Region for example, is funding upwards of 35% of their *entire organization* through K-V, Salvage, Brush Disposal, and other permanent trust funds. I need not tell you that this is completely unsustainable. For example, just this year the House of Representatives passed a measure that would

prevent the use of trust funds to fund overhead costs.

The ability to maintain timber revenues on the forest through the use of trust funds lends incentive for managers to choose certain management prescriptions over others. Quite often, the only way our managers can afford to conduct projects for ecological or watershed restoration purposes is through a commercial timber sale or by using trust fund revenues.

What happens when the sale is not profitable or, as the Northern Region and Dale Bosworth are now dealing with, when the trust fund receipts begin to dry up? We need to figure out a way to put more tools in our managers' toolboxes.

The policy question that we need to answer is, would making the use of the big three trust funds, Salvage, K-V, and Brush Disposal, subject to annual congressional appropriations make Congress and the American people more aware of the relative costs and benefits of timber sales on National Forests? Would it not also improve agency accountability by making our processes more open and transparent to congressional and taxpayer scrutiny?

We must build an ironclad case with Congress, the Administration, and the American people to make investments in the land. Investments that may not yield immediate financial gain, but whose dividends in the form of watershed services, healthy landscapes, and ecologically sustainable goods and services yield long-term benefits generation after generation.

Forest Stewardship

The issue of below cost timber sales has plagued the agency for years. We argue that the purpose of timber management is often *not* to return financial benefits to the Treasury, while our critics allege we are subsidizing commercial harvest and calling it stewardship. This debate will continue so long as our primary mechanism for practicing forest management is the commercial timber sale contract.

Many in Congress and the agency have been working on a proposal called ``stewardship contracting' that would pay for forest management activities such as water quality improvements, noxious weed removal, thinning, and prescribed fire through proceeds from commercial timber sales. This is a step in the right direction. It makes clear that there are multiple objectives and purposes for forest management.

Unfortunately, it still requires that commercial timber sales fund needed restoration. We must have additional sources of funds. We must get to the point that our accounting systems and the incentive for restoration need not be commercial timber harvest. For that reason, as part of our 2000 budget, I will propose creation of an appropriation for Forest Stewardship.

We can use this appropriation to pay for the cost of activities that improve the health of the land but that cannot pay for themselves. When commercial timber harvest is needed or desirable, we will continue to use commercial sales to accomplish our objectives.

We must convince Congress and the American people of the imperative of making investments in the land.

Conclusion

These are the sort of ideas and proposals that we, as the senior leaders of a 30,000 person, \$3 billion organization, must address in a creative and direct manner. I understand there are risks associated with some of these ideas. But we cannot stick our heads in the sand and hope these will go away or hope for answers for other quarters. We must lead. Isn't that what conservation leaders do?

The forests and grasslands of the future that I see are:

- Models for ecologically sustainable natural resource management.
- Comprised of healthy functioning watersheds that properly catch, store and release water.
- A source for a wide array of cultural, educational, recreational, and economic opportunities for the American people.
- An internationally known model for demonstrating how mankind can live in productive harmony with the land.
- Productive, healthy, and diverse.

The Forest Service of the future (and we are already there in some cases!) will be:

- A place where employees of all races and backgrounds feel valued and are treated with decency and respect.
- An innovative organization known for its creative thinking, research, and acceptance of new ideas.
- An agency widely known and respected for its conservation agenda and assistance to private landowners.
- An organization known as a model of efficient and effective business management.
- An organization touted by others as the world conservation leaders.
- Thanked by future generations for helping to re-establish a land ethic that reconnects people to the land that sustains us.

As the senior managers of this great organization, our job is to ensure that the incentives that drive all levels and all aspects of our programs are based upon ecological sustainability. I'm asking for your help and creativity in helping us to develop the policies, hire the creative young people, and implement the management that support our words with on-the-ground actions and results.

Let's get to work!

Submitted by: Donna Janisch

Contact: [Chris Wood](#)

Modified: 11/4/98

Remarks of Chief Dombeck
SAF Breakfast
September, 1998

Thanks for inviting us to be here today. I have with me today folks representing all of the Deputy areas in the Forest Service. I brought them with me because if I've realized one thing since I became Chief, it's that this is not a one-person job.

It is great to be in a place like this, in a part of the country where Forest Service management -- really, the effort of all forest professionals -- has helped to restore such a rich and thriving forest ecosystem in an area that had been so devastated from cut-and-run forestry. Whenever I come to a place like this, I am reminded of Dale Bosworth's words that the measure of good forestry is not what we take from the land, it is what we leave behind. And through the work of sound forest management, we have definitely left this a healthier forest than the one we inherited.

I'll only talk for a few moments because I really want to focus our conversation on how we are implementing the natural resource agenda in each of our deputy areas.

What I want to talk about are some of the challenges and opportunities facing the Forest Service and more relevant to SAF, some of the areas of forest management, policy, and communications that we share.

I'd like to very briefly preview for you the direction that the Forest Service is moving to further develop and implement a natural resource agenda for the 21st century. I'd like to really focus in on how the forestry profession can help us to maximize the amount of good we are able to accomplish.

As natural resource professionals, I ask you to be emissaries for conservation in your communities. As I said in a letter sent to all my employees on July 1, a conservation leader is someone who consistently errs on the side of maintaining and restoring healthy and diverse ecosystems even when -- no, especially when -- such decisions are not expedient or politically popular. If we take care of the land, it will take care of us. Our collective challenge is to work together to maintain and restore ecologically and socially important environmental values.

Our natural resource agenda focuses on four areas: 1) watershed health and restoration; 2) sustainable forest ecosystem management; 3) recreation; and 4) forest roads. As we go out and work with folks to develop collaborative strategies to maintain and restore our forests and watersheds, we need to talk with people and communicate the agenda's importance in ways that they understand.

Talk about, and manage for, the values that are so important to so many people. Values such as large and unfragmented landscapes, wilderness and roadless areas, clean water, protection of rare species, old growth forest, naturalness -- these are the reasons most Americans cherish their public lands.

And, of course, we cannot do it alone. We need to continue partnerships with professionals and universities such as the one we celebrate here today. We need to work with industry and conservation partners, state and federal colleagues, local communities, Indian tribes, and others too.

Science and professionalism must lead the debates on use, management, and conservation of natural resources. If we are flexible and adaptable in responding to conservation issues and social needs we can adjust to change. However, one principle must remain sacrosanct -- we must manage and live within the ecological limits of the land. We must preserve quality of life for future generations. We do this by being good stewards.

With that in mind, I was recently reviewing SAF's position statements on various issues and was pleased to see the many areas of mutual agreement between our organizations. For example:

- SAF has taken a position of strong support for maintaining and enhancing biological diversity.
- You have called on the Forest Service to develop opportunities for more efficient land management and financial and budgetary reform.
- You have expressed strong support for addressing forest health issues where they occur.

I am particularly pleased to see your interest in financial management and fiscal health of the Forest Service. As I see it, this is one of those areas that if we do not fix, it will become the millstone that drag us down. The marching orders that I gave to my deputies and the chief operating officer is that as we strengthen financial health and accountability in the agency, I want to make certain that we are developing and implementing land-based performance measures.

In the absence of land-based performance measures, all of our budget restructuring, financial health improvements and better business practices are meaningless. It is not enough to be efficient. We must be efficient natural resource stewards.

The reason that I am placing so much emphasis on land-based performance measures is because even though we have decreased the size of our timber program by nearly 70% in less than 10 years, timber production still very often drives our program priorities, our incentives, and our reward system. That needs to change.

We need to look at the appropriation's process as an opportunity to convince Congress and the American people to make investments in forestry.

Investments in the land. Investments that may not yield immediate benefits in terms of economic profit or short-term gain but whose long-term benefits as measured through the ecosystem services provided by healthy, diverse and productive forests provide multiple benefits to millions of people.

It all begins and ends with the health of the land. Unfortunately, our internal incentive system does not always recognize that fact. Often the only way we can fund wildlife and fish programs are through conducting a timber sale. Sometimes we even have to pay for our biologists on the backs of the timber program. Often, we have to harvest trees that we might otherwise not cut if we didn't need the additional revenue for work elsewhere on the forest.

Congress, interest groups on both sides of the aisle, and the Administration are demanding that we make our processes less opaque and more transparent. We need to be more accountable both in explaining the taxpayer money that we spend and the array of benefits that our services provide.

Our answer is to develop land-based performance measures that evaluate the "outcomes" rather than the "outputs" of our management -- to focus less on what we take from the land and more on what leave behind. To focus less on the volume of wood fiber removed and more on the quality of the water, the diversity of the species, the productive capacity of the land, itself.

We are moving in the right direction but we need your help. So long as the focus revolves around the board foot produced, the timber budget allocated the debate will follow about below-cost, subsidies, money losing sales, etc., etc. With that in mind, Bob Joslin and the other Deputies here today recently came up with some new recommendations for managing the performance of the forest management program. They recommended development of performance measures that track the health, diversity, and sustainability of the land.

So, I'm going to cut this short so we can engage in a full dialogue this morning. But I do hope that this represents the renewal of a long-term and lasting partnership. I'd leave you with three ideas that we could really use the assistance of SAF to help us with:

- I'd like to ask for your help to develop these new and improved performance measures for forest management. My staff already discussed them with the SAF staff in Washington, but we need to broaden out the dialogue.
- I'd like for your continued assistance in helping to make us more accountable as both forestry professionals and servants of the public trust.
- I'd like you to work with me, my staff, and the deputies to revamp the incentives and reward systems of the Forest Service.

Words to Action:
Conservation Leadership for the 21st Century
Remarks of Mike Dombeck
National Leadership Conference
October 27, 1998

We have had a challenging but great year and a half or so. I am excited by prospects for the future. Whether the issues are civil rights, roads, agency accountability, financial management, or below-cost timber sales, we have faced up to the most challenging issues directly and without hesitation.

I am proud of the work we've done.

Today, I want us to step out of our comfort zones, abandon our assumptions and talk about the future and how we get there. More specifically, I want us to discuss the incentives that drive the agency and to determine the steps we can take to ensure that those incentives support our essential mission of maintaining and restoring healthy, diverse, and productive ecosystems for the benefit of present and future generations.

Accomplishments

When I began this job, many of you told me that we needed to regain our status as conservation leaders by articulating a strong natural resource agenda. The second challenge was to motivate the organization to follow this agenda, promote its support, and lead its implementation.

Our conservation leadership over the past year is obvious.

- We articulated a straight forward natural resource agenda that focuses on services and values that the American people need and support. This has helped to mute calls to rewrite our mission and to engage people in more productive dialogue about maintaining and restoring healthy, diverse, and productive ecosystems.
- By laying out aggressive solutions to long-standing issues such as civil rights, financial management, and fiscal accountability, we will be able to direct more energy in a more effective manner to natural resource conservation and restoration.
- By taking on the controversial issue of forest roads, we have helped begin a long overdue dialogue about the future of the forest transportation system. We also, for the first time in many years, did not have a divisive appropriations fight over roads.
- Eliminating purchaser road credits will diminish the divisive subsidy debate and lessen the internal incentive to build new roads in order to pay for maintenance of our existing road system.

- We developed a strategy for delivering State and Private services to expand technical assistance to private woodland owners, and bolster urban forestry.
- We have strengthened leadership in sustainability and advancement of criteria and indicators.
- We increased attention to watershed and forest health problems including insect and disease, fire risk, and invasive species.
- We have increased emphasis on research needs of forest inventory and monitoring.
- Our temporary suspension of road building in roadless area proposal will allow us to waste fewer resources on appeals and litigation and give our field managers a breather, while we develop the scientific and analytical tools to make more informed decisions about road management.
- Our proposal to de-couple 25% payments to states from the collection of timber receipts could lend much needed stability to counties and remove the incentive to harvest trees in order to finance local schools, roads, and other social services.

I am pleased with our progress but we must accelerate the pace. We were able to get this far because we have not shied away from taking on the tough issues. What remains is for us to articulate – both internally and externally – how our policies and practices are changing the agency’s emphasis from tracking inputs to producing outcomes on the land.

Our agency priorities, budget procedures, planning processes and accountability measures are opaque and confusing. We must make them transparent – clear for everyone to see and judge.

The complexity of our accounting, budget, and reward systems have led us to become an organization that assigns greatest value to the outputs of forest management. Consequently, most of the debate over the Forest Service focuses on outputs – whether they are associated with roads, timber harvest, mining, grazing, or other traditional forest products.

The appropriation cycle has become a rancorous debate over how much one program should be funded versus another. Yet, few are really focusing on what happens on the land. The debate is presently over the level of inputs and outputs – not outcomes.

Even as society demands clean water, better outdoor recreation opportunities, landowner assistance programs, and new research and technologies on forest inventory, analysis, wood conservation and more efficient wood utilization, we are spending too much time and money in controversy about timber sales in roadless areas.

Is it any wonder people say our mission is muddled, our laws unclear? Our systems defy both the auditor and the average citizen.

Our laws are less the problem than is our own incentive systems that are complex and outdated.

We must change. Consistent with principles of ecosystem management, collaborative stewardship, and social values, we must transform our view of forests as a warehouse of outputs to one that assigns greatest values to the positive outcomes of watershed management and responsible stewardship.

Incentives

I'd like to read you a part of a letter that recently came across my desk.

“It is considered that past experience of the Forest Service with clear cutting in the fir region together with developments... and the findings of the research foresters of the Forest Service fully warrant the consideration of a change in timber sales policy. Clear cutting has always been questionable because of its tremendous losses in forest productivity, partly because of its attendant extreme fire hazard, frequently resulting in reburns and forest devastation, also because of the low degree of timber utilization. It is concluded that clear cutting practices on national forests should be abandoned if possible and systems of selective logging devised and substituted.”

The letter goes on – citing science and promoting more selective logging for the Forest Service. This letter is similar to many I have received over the past year and a half, except in one regard. It was written 64 years ago by C. J. Buck, then the Regional Forester for the Pacific Northwest.

I read that letter to set you in the right frame of mind for this discussion. Had we listened to C.J. Buck's advice so long ago, perhaps we would be in a very different place today. We could have likely avoided the disruption of the owls vs. loggers' era. Agency credibility and trust would be less goals than they would be standard operating procedures.

Let's take a hard look at the fundamental assumptions and incentives that drive our management and see if we cannot improve on them.

Incentives: Merriam-Webster defines “incentive” as, “something that incites, or that has the tendency to incite to determination or action.” What I want us to talk about today are the policies, practices, and incentives that incite us to make the decisions we do.

For the next few minutes, I will focus on the National Forest System. But make no mistake; the lessons cross into Research, Administration, and State and Private. For example, Deputy Chief Phil Janik and his team have worked out an aggressive conservation agenda for State and Private Forestry. Yet, if we cannot change

significantly the tenor of the existing debate, our funding needs to implement the State and Private agenda will almost certainly be unmet.

For many years, the Forest Service operated under a basic formula. The more trees we harvested, the more revenue we could bring into the organization, and the more people we could hire to deliver more of the programs that the American people demand. As I intimated earlier, Congress, State and local governments, industry, and the conservation community all responded to the agency within the context of that formula. The result is that today our debates focus on inputs, such as funding levels, and on outputs, such as wood fiber harvested, and animal months grazed.

During the era when we harvested 9-12 billion board feet per year, we could afford to finance the bulk of the organization on the back of the timber program. Timber, through a combination of appropriated money and trust fund revenues, financed much of:

- The forest management program,
- Reforestation,
- Road maintenance and construction,
- Fish and wildlife habitat and watershed improvements and mitigation,
- Recreation development,
- Cultural resource inventories and preservation, and on and on.

Our timber harvest has declined by about 70% of its high in less than a decade and today we are finding it ever more difficult to finance road maintenance, recreation and wildlife projects, overhead, and salaries. And you know as well as I that the harvest is not going to return to its high historic level.

More importantly, we have become reactive, defensive, and in many cases, divided as an organization. Not because we are timber beasts, not because we are not conservationists, but because we know that without a large timber program and our present budget structure, we cannot fund the full multiplicity of uses upon which the American people depend, and which we are so committed to delivering.

Given social values and new information, the pattern is completely unsustainable. We talk and write about ecological sustainability. It is our essence – our reason for being. Yet, our budgets, our performance evaluations, our organizational structure, and our intrinsic incentive systems are based on producing outputs. We need to find a new path, a new organizational direction that is based on outcomes on the landscape as opposed to outputs produced.

Outputs are: board feet of timber; minerals produced and brought to market; livestock animal months grazed; fish produced; recreation visitor days, to name a few. Those are all socially meaningful and economically important. But the values that most citizens appreciate from their national forests are:

- Clean air and water.
- Open space and large unfragmented landscapes.
- Wildness and naturalness.
- Diverse and abundant wildlife, fish and plant habitats.
- Endangered species conservation.
- Leaving choices for future generations.
- Ecologically sustainable development.
- Forests that look like forests.

Some would challenge these values as more akin to the Park Service than the Forest Service mission. Multiple use, the thinking goes, is inconsistent with wilderness, with ecosystem services, with the preservation of “inconsequential” plant, snails and fishes, or birds.

We must reject that argument with every ounce of professionalism in our marrow. On the eve of the 21st century, our central challenge is to demonstrate, through our management actions, research, and conservation leadership, how society can live in productive harmony with the resources and values that sustain us. This is our land ethic.

With a new State and Private strategy that can deliver conservation benefits to millions of interested land-owners; with the finest natural resource research and technology development organization in the world, no agency is more prepared to meet this challenge than the Forest Service.

Our challenge, plain and simple, is to ensure that the outputs we produce occur within the ecological limits of the land and the value society attributes to public lands.

Ours’ is a unique and difficult mission. We need to look for answers, rather than place blame. We need to work in collaboration with states, local and Tribal governments, Congress, local communities, the American people, and all our partners. If we in this room cannot articulate our land ethic and values, deliver solutions and demonstrate our successes on the land, then I fear for the future of this organization.

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Let's get to work!

Remarks of Mike Dombeck
Ski Industry Week
December 3, 1998

Introduction

It's great to be with you today. I'll talk only for a short while because I'd like to leave plenty of time for you to ask questions and to share your ideas with me. I will talk about the growth of recreation on national forests and grasslands, collaboration between the ski industry and the Forest Service, and the future of recreation on public lands.

Change and Growth

Both of our businesses have undergone change in the last few years. In your case, changes include consolidation in the ski industry, the aging of the baby boomers, the advent of snowboarding, and the promise of the "echo boomers," -the children of the baby boomers who are the large market of tomorrow.

For the Forest Service, change has included the decline of timber harvesting and the explosion of recreation on public lands. The growth of recreation represents one of the major changes in public use, and public expectations for the national forests and grasslands.

In 1980, 560 million recreational visits were made to national forests. By 1996, that figure grew to 860 million. By the year 2,000 it may exceed 1 billion. With the leadership of people like Lyle Laverty, the former director of Forest Service Recreation who is now Rocky Mountain Regional Forester, the Forest Service has become *the world's largest supplier of outdoor recreation*. Annually, over 800 million visits on national forests and grasslands represent almost 50% of *all* recreation visits to the nation's public lands.

Last week, I was briefed on the findings of a survey prepared by the Recreation Roundtable. One of the questions asked how many people could identify a specific Forest Service recreation site. You will be pleased to know that 90% of the downhill skiers reported awareness of at least one Forest Service site. This is up 18% from last year!

Our partnership and joint marketing efforts such as SKI US are directly attributable to the increased public awareness of skiing on national forests. Today, almost 60% of U.S. skier visits occur on Forest Service managed lands. That so many downhill skiers knew they were on Forest Service lands should come as no surprise. Over 31 million skiers visit Forest Service lands each year. On-snow activities on national forests produced over \$10 billion in revenue last year.

Economic significance

Ten billion dollars. It baffles me that the Department of Agriculture tracks the value of soybeans, corn, or wheat to the penny by the day. Yet, rarely is recreation and tourism on federal lands understood as a revenue generator. Instead it has been perceived as an amenity—something extra that we are privileged to enjoy. Fortunately, that's beginning to change.

Just last year, over \$12 billion dollars was generated to local communities through wildlife and fish related recreation on Forest Service lands. That's \$12 billion in revenue that small communities can use to build schools, hospitals, ball parks, and more. In total, *each year*, recreation on Forest Service managed lands contributes \$112 billion dollars to state economies and local communities.

Recreation and tourism provide *a trade surplus* of \$22 billion dollars; the country's single largest positive trade sector.

As an industry, it is in your interest to demonstrate to policymakers, Members of Congress, and community leaders the significance of recreation to economic stability, and to community prosperity and well-being.

Recreation not only improves the economic condition of local communities. The Recreation Fee Demonstration Project will enable us to return more revenues, in order to meet growing recreation demands of the American people. The revenue will enable us to address the backlog of maintenance needs, improve and expand interpretative programs, upgrade recreational facilities, and reduce vandalism. In short, revenues from the Recreation Fee Demo project will be returned to the sites from which they were collected in order to improve the overall recreation experience. The fees are modest, and in fact 99% of Forest Service recreation lands will remain free to all.

Shifting Values and Uses

The growth of recreation on public lands is a major shift in society's priority for public lands. The decline of timber harvesting is another major shift. In the past ten years, timber harvest on federal lands has declined from approximately 11 billion to 4 billion board feet. Federal lands that used to supply 25% of the nation's soft wood saw timber today supply about 10%.

In the past, we were sometimes criticized for seeming to value commodity production over other uses. To be sure, we also developed world class research capabilities, a substantial State and Private Forestry program, and provided multiple benefits. But timber seemed to drive our budgets, our incentive and reward systems; it even drove a fair amount of our work in wildlife and fish habitat, watershed restoration, and recreation projects. That is changing.

Back in April, my leadership team and I identified the following priorities for the agency.

- First, maintaining and restoring water quality and quantity, riparian health, forest ecosystem health, and rangeland ecosystem health.
- Second, promoting partnerships and the ecologically responsible recreation use of public lands.

The Forest Service is the Proctor and Gamble of outdoor recreation with SKI US some of the some of the strongest "outdoor recreation brands" in the world. Dramatic growth in demand presents us with significant challenges and opportunities.

To a large extent, our challenges and opportunities overlap. For example, I was told how awhile back, Andy Daly of Vail heard customers complain about the unhealthy look of aspen stands visible from I-70 driving into Vail.

Well, we looked into it and found that indeed, many stands were in trouble. Years of fire suppression had left the stands highly susceptible to insect and disease infestation. We will probably need to do some mechanical treatment and prescribed fire to encourage new growth, so those wonderful trees that define can thrive again, for the long term. However 20 years go, the public told us not to touch those trees.

Now, we are learning to find a better balance to more effectively manage for a healthier resource *and* to better meet the needs of our customers. In your industry, this is akin to the transformation from narrowly defined ski areas to comprehensive mountain resorts.

Partnerships

As you are committed to providing your customers with a quality experience at your resorts, so too are we looking to promote – and seek your help to promote – the full array of recreation products and services that we offer the American public.

Forest Service Programs such as Watchable Wildlife, Hike with a Ranger, and the hundreds of other interpretive programs complement the experience of visitors to your mountain resorts.

Cooperative efforts and partnerships such as the merging of the Forest Information Center and REI headquarters in Seattle saves customers' time by making forest information far more accessible. Ultimately this attracts more people to forest visits and recreation, and at a net savings to the taxpayer! These are they type of cooperative efforts that I hope you will help me identify, so that we may better meet our mutual objectives.

Partnerships demonstrate that state and federal agencies, conservationists, and the recreation industry – can work together toward common goals. I call this commitment to working with people *collaborative stewardship*. It is exemplified by dedicated Forest Service employees who go the extra mile, and by professionals like you that help to stretch federal dollars while improving recreational experiences on federal lands. Creating successful partnerships takes creativity, patience, and a willingness to take risks and do things a little differently than in the past.

I hope that we will use opportunities such as the 2002 Winter Olympics at Snowbasin to showcase the many successful partnerships between the ski industry and the Forest Service, and to help “bring home” the benefits of collaborative stewardship.

Conservation Challenges and Opportunities

Dramatic growth in recreation poses other challenges. The land is the foundation of the outdoor experience, and our first priority must be to promote environmentally responsible recreation use of public lands. There should be no greater supporters of conservation than public land recreationists. More so than for almost any other user group, the quality of the recreation experience depends on the quality of the land.

The Ski Industry Week theme is “rediscover the sport, rediscover the passion.” I think that entirely appropriate. As people look for more and more places to escape from the tug and pull of day to day stress, they look increasingly to recreate on public lands. Some come to connect with nature. Many come to ski. Some to enjoy the companionship of friends and family. And to paraphrase Huck Finn, some come “just to flat out get away.” For whatever reason, they come. And when they do, they expect healthy land. As more people value the recreational opportunities available to them, and they will learn to tread more lightly on the land.

As industry leaders, you have both a terrific opportunity and a mandate to promote a conservation ethic among the millions of Americans who recreate on public lands. Given the number of young skiers and snow-boarders who come to your resorts, we have an excellent opportunity to develop conservation education partnerships among schools, mountain resorts, and the Forest Service.

The point I want to leave you with is simple. If we work together, we can improve the quality of people’s recreational experience, we can deepen their appreciation for public lands, and we can instill in them the need to respect, value, and protect the land.

#

File Code: 1600

Date: November 2, 1998

Route To:

Subject: Words to Action: Conservation Leadership for the 21st Century

To: All Employees

I am sending each of you a copy of the speech that I delivered at last week's National Leadership Conference entitled: "Words to Action: Conservation Leadership for the 21st Century." Please read it carefully. It is important that we all work together in moving the Forest Service into the 21st Century. I appreciate all your good work and support.

The Conference was attended by about 70 field employees in addition to the usual attendees. I invited field employees to the Conference, because I felt it was important to improve communication and broaden understanding of the Natural Resources Agenda and our strategies to move ahead. I really appreciated their active participation and candid feedback, as well as the examples of on-the-ground work that is moving the Agenda forward.

A highlight of the Conference for me was a campfire under the desert stars on the shore of Bartlett Lake on the Tonto National Forest. The evening ended with a traditional Ponca Tribe ceremony that closed with a touching message that I ask each of you to contemplate often, **"remember you are managing the land for seven generations."**

/s/ Mike Dombeck

MIKE DOMBECK

Chief

Enclosure

Words to Action:
Conservation Leadership for the 21st Century
Remarks of Mike Dombeck
National Leadership Conference
October 27, 1998

We have had a challenging but great year and a half or so. I am excited by prospects for the future. Whether the issues are civil rights, roads, agency accountability, financial management, or below-cost timber sales, we have faced up to the most challenging issues directly and without hesitation.

I am proud of the work we've done.

Today, I want us to step out of our comfort zones, abandon our assumptions and talk about the future and how we get there. More specifically, I want us to discuss the incentives that drive the agency and to determine the steps we can take to ensure that those incentives support our essential mission of maintaining and restoring healthy, diverse, and productive ecosystems for the benefit of present and future generations.

Accomplishments

When I began this job, many of you told me that we needed to regain our status as conservation leaders by articulating a strong natural resource agenda. The second challenge was to motivate the organization to follow this agenda, promote its support, and lead its implementation.

Our conservation leadership over the past year is obvious.

- We articulated a straight forward natural resource agenda that focuses on services and values that the American people need and support. This has helped to mute calls to rewrite our mission and to engage people in more productive dialogue about maintaining and restoring healthy, diverse, and productive ecosystems.
- By laying out aggressive solutions to long-standing issues such as civil rights, financial management, and fiscal accountability, we will be able to direct more energy in a more effective manner to natural resource conservation and restoration.
- By taking on the controversial issue of forest roads, we have helped begin a long overdue dialogue about the future of the forest transportation system. We also, for the first time in many years, did not have a divisive appropriations fight over roads.
- Eliminating purchaser road credits will diminish the divisive subsidy debate and lessen the internal incentive to build new roads in order to pay for maintenance of our existing road system.
- We developed a strategy for delivering State and Private services to expand technical assistance to private woodland owners, and bolster urban forestry.

- We have strengthened leadership in sustainability and advancement of criteria and indicators.
- We increased attention to watershed and forest health problems including insect and disease, fire risk, and invasive species.
- We have increased emphasis on research needs of forest inventory and monitoring.
- Our temporary suspension of road building in roadless area proposal will allow us to waste fewer resources on appeals and litigation and give our field managers a breather, while we develop the scientific and analytical tools to make more informed decisions about road management.
- Our proposal to de-couple 25% payments to states from the collection of timber receipts could lend much needed stability to counties and remove the incentive to harvest trees in order to finance local schools, roads, and other social services.

I am pleased with our progress but we must accelerate the pace. We were able to get this far because we have not shied away from taking on the tough issues. What remains is for us to articulate – both internally and externally – how our policies and practices are changing the agency’s emphasis from tracking inputs to producing outcomes on the land.

Our agency priorities, budget procedures, planning processes and accountability measures are opaque and confusing. We must make them transparent – clear for everyone to see and judge.

The complexity of our accounting, budget, and reward systems have led us to become an organization that assigns greatest value to the outputs of forest management. Consequently, most of the debate over the Forest Service focuses on outputs – whether they are associated with roads, timber harvest, mining, grazing, or other traditional forest products.

The appropriation cycle has become a rancorous debate over how much one program should be funded versus another. Yet, few are really focusing on what happens on the land. The debate is presently over the level of inputs and outputs – not outcomes.

Even as society demands clean water, better outdoor recreation opportunities, landowner assistance programs, and new research and technologies on forest inventory, analysis, wood conservation and more efficient wood utilization, we are spending too much time and money in controversy about timber sales in roadless areas.

Is it any wonder people say our mission is muddled, our laws unclear? Our systems defy both the auditor and the average citizen.

Our laws are less the problem than is our own incentive systems that are complex and outdated.

We must change. Consistent with principles of ecosystem management, collaborative stewardship, and social values, we must transform our view of forests as a warehouse of outputs to one that assigns greatest values to the positive outcomes of watershed management and responsible stewardship.

Incentives

I'd like to read you a part of a letter that recently came across my desk.

“It is considered that past experience of the Forest Service with clear cutting in the fir region together with developments and the findings of the research foresters of the Forest Service fully warrant the consideration of a change in timber sales policy. Clear cutting has always been questionable because of its tremendous losses in forest productivity, partly because of its attendant extreme fire hazard, frequently resulting in reburns and forest devastation, also because of the low degree of timber utilization. It is concluded that clear cutting practices on national forests should be abandoned if possible and systems of selective logging devised and substituted.’

The letter goes on – citing science and promoting more selective logging for the Forest Service. This letter is similar to many I have received over the past year and a half, except in one regard. It was written 64 years ago by C. J. Buck, then the Regional Forester for the Pacific Northwest.

I read that letter to set you in the right frame of mind for this discussion. Had we listened to C.J. Buck's advice so long ago, perhaps we would be in a very different place today. We could have likely avoided the disruption of the owls vs. loggers' era. Agency credibility and trust would be less goals than they would be standard operating procedures.

Let's take a hard look at the fundamental assumptions and incentives that drive our management and see if we cannot improve on them.

Incentives: Merriam-Webster defines “incentive” as, “something that incites, or that has the tendency to incite to determination or action.” What I want us to talk about today are the policies, practices, and incentives that incite us to make the decisions we do.

For the next few minutes, I will focus on the National Forest System. But make no mistake; the lessons cross into Research, Administration, and State and Private. For example, Deputy Chief Phil Janik and his team have worked out an aggressive conservation agenda for State and Private Forestry. Yet, if we cannot change significantly the tenor of the existing debate, our funding needs to implement the State and Private agenda will almost certainly be unmet.

For many years, the Forest Service operated under a basic formula. The more trees we harvested, the more revenue we could bring into the organization, and the more people we could hire to deliver more of the programs that the American people demand. As I intimated earlier, Congress, State and local governments, industry, and the conservation community all responded to the agency within the context of that formula. The result is that today our debates focus on inputs, such as funding levels, and on outputs, such as wood fiber harvested, and animal months grazed.

During the era when we harvested 9-12 billion board feet per year, we could afford to finance the bulk of the organization on the back of the timber program. Timber, through a combination of appropriated money and trust fund revenues, financed much of:

- The forest management program,
- Reforestation,
- Road maintenance and construction,
- Fish and wildlife habitat and watershed improvements and mitigation,
- Recreation development,
- Cultural resource inventories and preservation, and on and on.

Our timber harvest has declined by about 70% of its high in less than a decade and today we are finding it ever more difficult to finance road maintenance, recreation and wildlife projects, overhead, and salaries. And you know as well as I that the harvest is not going to return to its high historic level.

More importantly, we have become reactive, defensive, and in many cases, divided as an organization. Not because we are timber beasts, not because we are not conservationists, but because we know that without a large timber program and our present budget structure, we cannot fund the full multiplicity of uses upon which the American people depend, and which we are so committed to delivering.

Given social values and new information, the pattern is completely unsustainable. We talk and write about ecological sustainability. It is our essence – our reason for being. Yet, our budgets, our performance evaluations, our organizational structure, and our intrinsic incentive systems are based on producing outputs. We need to find a new path, a new organizational direction that is based on outcomes on the landscape as opposed to outputs produced.

Outputs are: board feet of timber; minerals produced and brought to market; livestock animal months grazed; fish produced; recreation visitor days, to name a few. Those are all socially meaningful and economically important. But the values that most citizens appreciate from their national forests are:

- Clean air and water.
- Open space and large unfragmented landscapes.
- Wildness and naturalness.
- Diverse and abundant wildlife, fish and plant habitats.
- Endangered species conservation.
- Leaving choices for future generations.
- Ecologically sustainable development.
- Forests that look like forests.

Some would challenge these values as more akin to the Park Service than the Forest Service mission. Multiple use, the thinking goes, is inconsistent with wilderness, with ecosystem services, with the preservation of “inconsequential” plant, snails and fishes, or birds.

We must reject that argument with every ounce of professionalism in our marrow. On the eve of the 21st century, our central challenge is to demonstrate, through our management actions, research, and conservation leadership, how society can live in productive harmony with the resources and values that sustain us. This is our land ethic.

With a new State and Private strategy that can deliver conservation benefits to millions of interested land-owners; with the finest natural resource research and technology development organization in the world, no agency is more prepared to meet this challenge than the Forest Service.

Our challenge, plain and simple, is to ensure that the outputs we produce occur within the ecological limits of the land and the value society attributes to public lands.

Ours’ is a unique and difficult mission. We need to look for answers, rather than place blame. We need to work in collaboration with states, local and Tribal governments, Congress, local communities, the American people, and all our partners. If we in this room cannot articulate our land ethic and values, deliver solutions and demonstrate our successes on the land, then I fear for the future of this organization.

Opportunities

I want to spend a few minutes talking about how the policies we have already articulated are beginning to reshape our incentive system – from both the natural resources and the business practices side of the organization.

There are numerous ways we can change our incentive system. I'd like to discuss a few.

- First, development of land-based performance measures and their integration into our new streamlined business model.
- Second, the Committee of Scientists recommendations for new planning regulations and more effectively linking our budget and funding priorities to forest plans.
- Third, reform of our trust funds.
- Fourth, accelerating the Forest Management program's emphasis on forest ecosystem stewardship.

Land-based Performance Measures

One of the most important and lasting ways we can change the agency's incentives is through development of land-based performance measures. We need to put in place a system that effectively and efficiently evaluates the health and diversity of the resources entrusted to our care. By being able to point to the positive outcomes of our natural resource management, we will **broaden the support base** for the Forest Service and the work we do.

Trends in these measurements should drive the way we:

- Evaluate employees' performance.
- Develop budget priorities.
- Track accomplishments.
- Communicate with the public.

Our existing budget and tracking systems focus on measuring inputs to the system, such as dollars spent on wildlife or timber management or watershed programs, and outputs such as recreation visitor days or timber offered. It tells us little, however, about whether we are achieving our core mission of caring for the land. With such a system in place, is it any wonder that the congressional appropriation process is consumed with acrimonious debates over spending on timber management versus recreation versus road maintenance versus watershed programs, and so on?

Our system gives Congress and interest groups little incentive to focus on the outcomes of our management, *because we do not measure them in a meaningful way!*

We are on the right path with new proposals to track forest management accomplishments based on land health as opposed to outputs, use of criteria and

indicators, and our draft Government Performance and Results Act strategic plan. Developing and implementing performance measures for land health will allow us to proceed with efforts to dramatically simplify our budget processes and deliver more resources to the ground.

Planning

The Committee of Scientists will issue their final recommendations very soon. Among other issues, they will suggest that we:

- Make maintaining and restoring ecological sustainability the focus of forest planning.
- More effectively link forest planning to budget and funding priorities.
- Practice collaborative stewardship through use of diverse and balanced advisory groups and adaptive management through monitoring.

For years, Forest Service employees and others have said that our management and budget bears little relation to forest plans. We must take this historic opportunity to make forest planning an opportunity to work in a collaborative manner to develop and implement a collective vision for managing healthy watersheds and landscapes. Our planning and budget processes must be simplified. In a very real sense, this is the best venue to demonstrate to the American people and Congress the need for, and benefits of, making investments in the land.

Trust Funds

We cannot hope to change the agency's incentive system without taking a close look at Forest Service trust funds. In the past era of higher timber harvests and with little public opposition, trust funds helped to ensure completion of salvage, wildlife mitigation, and reforestation. As appropriations for timber have declined, however, more and more often we are using trust funds to finance organizational costs.

The Northern Region for example, is funding upwards of 35% of their *entire organization* through K-V, Salvage, Brush Disposal, and other permanent trust funds. I need not tell you that this is completely unsustainable. For example, just this year the House of Representatives passed a measure that would prevent the use of trust funds to fund overhead costs.

The ability to maintain timber revenues on the forest through the use of trust funds lends incentive for managers to choose certain management prescriptions over others. Quite often, the only way our managers can afford to conduct projects for ecological or watershed restoration purposes is through a commercial timber sale or by using trust fund revenues.

What happens when the sale is not profitable or, as the Northern Region and Dale Bosworth are now dealing with, when the trust fund receipts begin to dry up? We need to figure out a way to put more tools in our managers' toolboxes.

The policy question that we need to answer is, would making the use of the big three trust funds, Salvage, K-V, and Brush Disposal, subject to annual congressional appropriations make Congress and the American people more aware of the relative costs and benefits of timber sales on National Forests? Would it not also improve agency accountability by making our processes more open and transparent to congressional and taxpayer scrutiny?

We must build an ironclad case with Congress, the Administration, and the American people to make investments in the land. Investments that may not yield immediate financial gain, but whose dividends in the form of watershed services, healthy landscapes, and ecologically sustainable goods and services yield long-term benefits generation after generation.

Forest Stewardship

The issue of below cost timber sales has plagued the agency for years. We argue that the purpose of timber management is often *not* to return financial benefits to the Treasury, while our critics allege we are subsidizing commercial harvest and calling it stewardship. This debate will continue so long as our primary mechanism for practicing forest management is the commercial timber sale contract.

Many in Congress and the agency have been working on a proposal called "stewardship contracting" that would pay for forest management activities such as water quality improvements, noxious weed removal, thinning, and prescribed fire through proceeds from commercial timber sales. This is a step in the right direction. It makes clear that there are multiple objectives and purposes for forest management.

Unfortunately, it still requires that commercial timber sales fund needed restoration. We must have additional sources of funds. We must get to the point that our accounting systems and the incentive for restoration need not be commercial timber harvest. For that reason, as part of our 2000 budget, I will propose creation of an appropriation for Forest Stewardship.

We can use this appropriation to pay for the cost of activities that improve the health of the land but that cannot pay for themselves. When commercial timber harvest is needed or desirable, we will continue to use commercial sales to accomplish our objectives.

We must convince Congress and the American people of the imperative of making investments in the land.

Conclusion

These are the sort of ideas and proposals that we, as the senior leaders of a 30,000 person, \$3 billion organization, must address in a creative and direct manner. I understand there are risks associated with some of these ideas. But we cannot stick our heads in the sand and hope these will go away or hope for answers for other quarters. We must lead. Isn't that what conservation leaders do?


The forests and grasslands of the future that I see are:

- Models for ecologically sustainable natural resource management.
- Comprised of healthy functioning watersheds that properly catch, store and release water.
- A source for a wide array of cultural, educational, recreational, and economic opportunities for the American people.
- An internationally known model for demonstrating how mankind can live in productive harmony with the land.
- Productive, healthy, and diverse.

The Forest Service of the future (and we are already there in some cases!) will be:

- A place where employees of all races and backgrounds feel valued and are treated with decency and respect.
- An innovative organization known for its creative thinking, research, and acceptance of new ideas.
- An agency widely known and respected for its conservation agenda and assistance to private landowners.
- An organization known as a model of efficient and effective business management.
- An organization touted by others as the world conservation leaders.
- Thanked by future generations for helping to re-establish a land ethic that reconnects people to the land that sustains us.

As the senior managers of this great organization, our job is to ensure that the incentives that drive all levels and all aspects of our programs are based upon ecological



sustainability. I'm asking for your help and creativity in helping us to develop the policies, hire the creative young people, and implement the management that support our words with on-the-ground actions and results.

Let's get to work!

speech for

Proposed Schedule for WO Employees Meeting

December 15, 1998

Jefferson Auditorium, 1:30 -2:30

Overview: Focus of meeting will be recognition of FS, especially WO successes in 1998 including an overview of our national priorities for 1999. A Deputy Chief will moderate the meeting. There will be opening and closing music. Deputy Chiefs will each have a short presentation of 98 successes and 99 priorities for their Deputy Area. A special musical number will be performed, and then the Chief will deliver his comments and thanks for the good work and successes of 1998, and his expectations for 1999. Carols will be sung as employees leave the meeting. Extra transportation from Rosslyn will be arranged to accommodate FS employees there in getting to the meeting, and in attending the following reception in the Chief's office.

1:25 Holiday music: WO Holiday Singers, Paige Ballard, April Bailey, Art Bryant and E. Lynn Burkett

1:35 Moderator Welcomes Audience, Introduces and thanks Holiday singers and describes focus of meeting on 98 successes, (also introduces new WO leadership if any): Deputy Chief (Janik?)

1:38 Moderator introduces Under Secretary Jim Lyons for his reflection on 98 successes and 99 challenges

1:55 Moderator introduces Deputy Chiefs in turn for a short (2 min each) presentation on important accomplishments in 98 and their primary focus for 99

- Deputy Chief for Programs and Legislation
- Deputy Chief for Research
- Deputy Chief for State and Private
- Deputy Chief for National Forest Systems
- Deputy Chief for Operations
- Deputy Chief, Chief Financial Officer

2:10 Moderator introduces WO Holiday Singers "With a Special Musical Number (to be named)

2:16 Moderator introduces Chief Dombeck for his Review of 98 Successes, and 99 priorities.

2:26 Moderator thanks all for attending, reminds all of the Holiday Gathering in the Chief's Office immediately following, thanks the WO Holiday Singers and invites them to sing a carol as we begin to depart.

2:30 Singing concludes

and new technologies that support ecologically sustainable development. And third, through State and private forestry programs, which help deliver the benefits of conservation to hundreds of communities and States across the Nation. *and 4th to do all this using the most up to date business management practices*

You, the employees of the Washington office, make up a critical part in helping us achieve our mission-- through your support, guidance and leadership... So, my deepest thanks to all of you for your continued hard work and dedication day in and day out as exemplary conservation leaders. I truly appreciate your ability to face each and every challenge directly and get the job done--no matter how difficult the task...

And, have we had challenges this year! Oh, but it's been a terrific year! I really mean that...

This year, we provided a straight forward Natural Resource Agenda that focuses on services and values that the American people expect, need and are willing to support. The fact that the FY 1999 and FY 2000 budgets show increases in the agenda's four emphasis areas is proof that it is working and taking effect.

Forest Service
This year, the ~~Agency~~ also:

- outlined aggressive solutions to long-standing issues such as civil rights, financial management and fiscal accountability, we'll now direct greater effort in a more effective manner to natural resource conservation and health of the land; and
- the Forest Service defined a much long overdue debate about the future of the forest transportation system by taking on the controversial issue of forest roads. I might add that this was the first time in many years when we did not have a divisive appropriations fight over roads.

Our temporary suspension of road building in roadless area proposal will allow us to waste fewer resources on appeals and litigation and give our field managers a breather, while we develop the scientific and analytical tools necessary for a more informed decisions about road management.

*James Lee With
Pronto for press release
Lunch*

DRAFT, 12/14/98

WO Employees Meeting Speech
Tuesday, December 15, 1998
Chief Mike Dombeck

Good afternoon!

A special thanks to Jim Lyons for joining us here today and for the guidance and leadership you have demonstrated over the past year. We look forward to your continued support in 1999...

at Hall
Also, thanks to my deputy chiefs for their remarks. It has been a pleasure working with all of you this year at this great organization! And, I know that all of you are as excited as I am about the work we have ahead of us...

Okay, let's hear it once more for the WO Holiday Singers--what a witty bunch...

It's important to never lose your sense of humor--especially when the joke's on you!

& retirees
Welcome Washington (and Rosslyn) employees! Thank you for taking a break to be here today...

I know that we are all extremely busy during this time of year. So, I will be brief, but I do want to reflect on just some of the many significant accomplishments we've had over the past year and to talk about what's in store for us in the new year... I know we all have a holiday party to go to, which--trust me--you'll want to join in because I've seen the goodies and they all look delicious!

and
I am immensely proud of the work we continue doing. ~~Let me say~~ there is a great deal to be proud of.

We the Forest Service play a vital role in the management and conservation of the nation's land, natural resources and natural heritage. And, we redeem our pledge to "care for the land and serve people" in several important ways. First, through wise care and stewardship of national forests and grasslands. Second, through cutting-edge research programs, which promote conservation, recycling

And, eliminating purchaser road credits will diminish the divisive subsidy debate and lessen the internal incentive to build new roads in order to pay for maintenance of our existing road system.

Still, there's more. We also:

Thank the support staff

- ~~*We had a relatively safe year but have to do better*~~
- developed a strategy for delivering State and Private services to expand technical assistance to private woodland owners and bolster urban forestry;
- increased attention to watershed and forest health problems including insect and disease, fire risk and invasive species;
- increased emphasis on research needs of forest inventory and monitoring;
- collected about \$20 million from 65 recreation fee demonstration test projects on national forests and grasslands in the fee program's second year--double what was made last year; and
- proposed to de-couple 25 percent payments to States from the collection of timber receipts, which could lend much needed stability to counties and remove the incentive to harvest trees in order to finance local schools, roads, and other social services.

We had a relative safe year but must do better

And, let's not forget our banner year with the number of hearings we were involved in--91, which is truly an amazing feat when you consider all of the other actions we accomplished.

Now for the future... Just last week I met with the executive committee at Grey Towers, where we deliberated about our efforts for 1999 and beyond. Here's what came out of our retreat loud and clear.

- We must do things better and be more responsive.
- We must mend our relationships and reaffirm partnerships.
- We must remember that the Forest Service and the Department are a team--not opposites.
- We must resolve contentious civil rights problems quickly and fairly or they will continue to over shadow our efforts in that area.
- And, we must simply and quickly communicate all of our actions with the public, Congress as well as to ourselves.

Chief of the Forest Service

7

On the eve of the 21st century, our central challenge must be to demonstrate, through our management actions, research and conservation leadership, how society can live in productive harmony with the resources and values that sustain us. Never forget that this is our land ethic...

And let me reiterate what I outlined at this year's National Leadership Conference in Phoenix related to opportunities to change our incentive system--from both the natural resources and the business practices side of the organization. Opportunities like:

- developing land ^{health}-based performance measures and their integration into our new streamlined business model;
- developing new planning regulation--based on the Committee of Scientists' recommendations--to more effectively link our budget and funding priorities to forest plans;
- ~~reforming our trust funds; and~~
- accelerating the Forest Management program's emphasis on forest ecosystem stewardship.

I would also like to mention that ^{we} ~~the Agency~~ this fall released *Charting our Future...A Nation's Natural Resource Legacy*, a new publication detailing our conservation vision for our nation's forests and grasslands in the 21st century. The Office of Communication is currently printing a second edition for employees who may have missed the first. I encourage you to take the time to look at it and to reflect on the Agency's future...

Remember that we have a great deal to be thankful for and a lot to look forward to together! All of you know that I am especially looking forward to the Millennium tree, which will come to our Nation's capitol from ^{an experimental forest in} Wisconsin's Northwoods! *where I spent nearly 30 years of my life*

Before I conclude, I would like to welcome all the new--and not-so-new--faces to the Washington office leadership like Ann Bartuska, Paul Brouha, Denny Bschor, Jack Craven, Jose Cruz, Harv Forsgren,

5
Vincette Goerl, George Lennon and Larry Payne.

*In fact there are so many of you . . .
please stand up.*

I would also like to acknowledge and say good-bye to those that have moved on or retired in the past year from the Washington office--Luther Burse, Mary Jo Lavin, Nettie Silva and from California, Lynn Sprague.

In particular, a warm good-bye to Bob Joslin, who is looking forward to retirement this month...

Best wishes Bob, you will be missed...

I wish all of you a safe holiday season and a prosperous, joyous and productive new year. And, I hope to see you at the holiday celebration immediately following this meeting. Enjoy!

Make peace, or renew a friendship

MIKE DOMBECK
Speeches & Talking Points
1999

January 3
Partners Outdoors

January 20
Partnership Conference

February 3
"Protecting and Restoring a Nation's Land Health Legacy"
State of the Forest Service Message to All Employees

* March 29
North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

* May 3
Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival

May 27
IITF Anniversary Gala, San Juan, PR

* June 5
"Thinking Like a Mountain"
Gila Wilderness, NM

* June 21
"The United States Forest Service: The World's Largest Water Company"
Outdoor Writer's Association

→ 3/9 ~~Great Lakes~~
Forest Alliance
3/22 - NACO Spring
Weg Conf.
3/24 Andrus Public
Pol Forum
4/8 MANNRS
Roanoke, VA
4/19 ELRC & WSLCA Spring Conf.

Berkley
4/21/99

Berkley

August 5

"Mann Gulch Fire: They did not die in Vain"

September 14

Society of American Foresters 1999 Convention

9/20 NASF Speaker
PA

September 30

Talking Points – Press Conference for Planning Rule Rollout

October 7

"Building on Leopold's Vision: Conservation for a New Century"

@ Leopold Conference in Madison, WI

October 19

Recreation Exchange Luncheon

October 21

"The Future of Forests? It Takes a Community to Decide"

Centennial Celebration of Public Forests

October 26

"Leopold's Land Ethic of Yesterday and the Natural Resource Agenda of Today"

Closing Remarks at National Leadership Conference

December 15

Forest Service WO All Employee Meeting

11/8 OC Conf Speech
12/3 Seminar @ Stevens
PT, WI
12/6 Midwest F&W Conf.
Chicago

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January 3-4, 1999

Talking Points for Mike Dombeck
Partners Outdoors

I want to thank Derrick and the others who over the years have helped to make this gathering such as success.

What I'd like to do is look back over the past year and try to identify some of our major challenges of the future.

1998 was a good year for the Forest Service and for recreation. We continue to see more and more Americans connecting to their public lands through outdoor recreation. More importantly, people are reconnecting with their families and friends through such healthy activities as bird watching, mountain biking, hiking, skiing, and so on.

By making recreation one of the centerpieces of the Natural Resource Agenda we are succeeding in harnessing public interest and organizational energy so that our recreation programs can provide:

- greater customer service and satisfaction;
- enhanced relationships and opportunities with local communities;
- More partnerships with interest groups and recreation users to provide for more quality recreation experiences and healthier environments.

As you know, we promoted Lyle Laverty, our former Recreation Director to Denver where he is now a Regional Forester. We are extremely pleased to have Denny Bschor on board to help us deliver to you folks and the hundreds of millions of other people that recreate on national forests and grasslands an effective and vibrant recreation program.

The natural resource agenda highlights the strategic importance of recreation as a top priority for the agency. Increasingly, outdoor recreation is the way an urbanized society interacts with the natural world. Our job is to make sure that they meet their needs for open space, naturalness, and beauty in a manner that does not impair the health, diversity, and productivity of the land.

Two areas that I want to thank you for your consistent, and I hope ongoing help with are recreation access and recreation infrastructure. Roads and facilities. Can you think of two less sexy issues? But, as you know, they are critically important to the overall recreation experience.

Over half of our recreation facilities are not meeting their standards. This is intolerable and must be fixed.

I announced our intention to develop a long-term road strategy for the National Forest System earlier in 1998. A portion of that policy proposal dealt with protecting roadless area values. The other portion of the policy will address long-term management of the Forest road system.

Our overriding objective is to provide for safe and efficient public access to the national forests in a manner that does not compromise -- indeed, that even begins to restore -- the health of the land.

That will require that we upgrade certain roads that were built for one purpose -- primarily to haul timber -- but that are now being used to provide access to millions of recreation users every weekend. We need to make sure those roads are safe and are not causing erosion.

Fixing our road problems also means putting to bed and closing old, unused, unauthorized, and other roads that contribute to environmental degradation. But we cannot make these decisions in Washington.

Our long-term policy will be implemented at the local level with our managers working with the full diversity of interests who use and care about their public lands.

I think we can make progress on both infrastructure backlog and our roads' problems by working together in a cooperative manner. Recreation Fee Demo can certainly help us target scarce resources back into the recreation resource. We made a good run at securing additional funding for roads last year through the Highway bill. We need to redouble our efforts to see that such an essential part of the recreation access and rural transportation systems are adequately funded. By working together, we can do just that.

Our partnership is long and very important to me. This is part of the reason that I'm going to off script here for a moment. This is sure to drive Denny crazy but I think it critically important to our future success.

The outdoor recreation industry and user groups are at a crossroads. Much like the timber industry 20 or so years ago. Recreational access to national forests is still fairly easy. Increasingly, however, I am hearing about conflicts between developed and non-developed recreation users and others.

I liken the recreation coalition's position to that of the timber industry because 20 years ago, everyone laughed at the thought of cutting timber harvests across the Forest Service by 70% in less than a decade. But that is precisely what happened. A decade ago, in the Pacific Northwest, the industry could have accepted a legislative compromise to drop timber harvests from five or so billion board feet per year to two or three. They angrily rejected both offers. Today, we are harvesting less than a billion board feet.

I want to talk about our proposal to suspend road construction in remote roadless areas and draw a parallel to what I'm talking about here today. To be certain there are compelling ecological, social, and even economic reasons for such a policy. In the end, however, the proposal is about placing limits on the use of the land. Talking about limits is very difficult for such a growth-oriented culture as ours.

- We want to irrigate arid lands and provide cheap electricity – so we build concrete monoliths in the middle of our river systems to direct their water and harness their energy.
- We want river front property so we drain, ditch, levee, and straighten rivers for flood control.
- We want more timber and better recreation access – so we build more and more roads into remote and wild places.

Talking about limits to growth is almost anti-American. We are a nation of optimism, where technology and wealth can find a solution to almost any problem. Unfortunately, such growth even with the best technology has consequences. For example:

- The mighty salmon runs from the Columbia River Basin are now almost, unbelievably, gone.
- Repeated devastating floods in the west, midwest, and south over the past decade have made the concept of 100 year floods almost meaningless.
- Our legacy of road building on national forests has left us with a loss of wild places and a \$10 billion debt in the form of needed road maintenance and reconstruction.

Fixing these and a myriad of other environmental problems is costing us hundreds of millions of dollars per year. Equally important are the social costs of increased contention and litigation, displaced workers and communities, and so on.

What does this discussion of limits have to do with the use of public lands for outdoor recreation? To the extent that mountain bikes damage fragile desert environments, that ORVs disrupt wildlife habitat, and that jet skiers disturb solitude, much indeed. Please do not misunderstand me. I personally engage in many of these and other outdoor sports on public lands. My point is that wild places and natural areas are of increasing importance to a society that can afford to protect them. We are all too familiar with the battle over protecting these places from traditional extractive industries.

The lesson is clear, at least in my mind. In a recent article in the Washington Post, T.H. Watkins wrote about the debate over our proposal to prohibit the use of fixed anchors in wilderness areas. Watkins said, "in natural regions, as in public libraries, we should not be allowed to do everything we can merely because we can do it."

What is the message I am trying to send? Be cautious. Build coalitions among not only other recreation users but also environmental groups and local communities. Now is not the time to get greedy. Now is the time to build coalitions and partnerships that rest on a few simple premises:

- No use, agreements, or proposals for management of the national forest system should compromise public ownership of public lands.
- Our overriding objective must be to maintain the health, diversity, and productivity of our lands and waters -- recreation use will occur within those firm ecological sideboards.
- Outdoor recreation is a wonderful way to educate children -- the future support base of conservation -- about the wonders of nature and the imperative of treating and stewarding the land with respect.

A decade ago, the timber program on national forests ran up against a buzz saw of changing social values. And as is always the case, the social values prevailed. Most people value public lands most for the sense of wildness and naturalness they provide, clean air and water, wildlife and fish habitats, and so on. Other uses, whether they are ski developments or timber harvests have a place in our multiple use framework. But that place is reached only after we ensure that such activities do not and will not impair the productive capacity of the land.

You can be the key players in shaping this coming debate -- but we need to work together with the full diversity of interests on the National Forest System to make that happen.

That is a message we should take to heart. The outdoor recreation community has a unique opportunity to avoid what happened to the timber industry in the Pacific Northwest through self-restraint and self-regulation.

TALKING POINTS
January 20, 1999
Chief's Keynote Remarks
Partnership Conference
Salt Lake City, January 21, 1999

Audience: Line Officers and key staff from National Forest System and State & Private, some key non-agency partners, managers from other land management agencies: National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service. These participants are key individuals who can implement the vision of collaboration and partnerships through actual programs and projects. Conference participants will be looking for clear, consistent messages about building collaborative relationships and working in partnership.

You will deliver the Keynote Address on Thursday, which will be Day 2 of the Conference. Day 1 of the Conference will include:

Discussions of the Friends Initiatives of both the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service by agency employees and their national nonprofit partners with case studies from both agencies. Note: both of these initiatives include investments of significant resources to work with and build support organizations.

Additional sessions focused on developing and understanding the business management principles of nonprofit partners so agency employees can build stronger working relationships with these organizations.

The Forest Service has a rich legacy of partnership with interest groups and local communities. Operating with successful partnerships is something I call collaborative stewardship. Regardless of its fancy moniker, however, it is plain common sense.

When I first ^{became Chief of} ~~arrived at~~ the Forest Service, I ~~tried to set~~ fairly high standards of conservation leadership. I want to see an agency that is ^{large ethic} respected for its conservation ethic, commitment to preserve quality of life, manages for future generations and connects people to landscapes.

I want to see an organization known for its business management ^{acumen} and technical skills, creative thinking, willingness to experiment with new ideas, work collaboratively both internally and with American public.

^{is} ~~These visions are~~ a synthesis of personal working experiences, ^{long term} core values of the agency, values that are important to the American people and what they have communicated to us that they want from their public lands and the agencies that manage those lands.

^{is} Part of the reason ~~I thought~~ the natural resource agenda so important ¹² ~~was~~ to lend strategic priority to our areas of emphases. As you know, the agenda focuses on four key areas:

- Improving watershed health and restoration.
- Practicing sustainable forest ecosystem management
- Taking better care of forest roads

- Providing for recreation use within the ecological limits of the land.

When it comes to forests, the expectations of the American people are high. Demands on National Forest lands increase while budgets in terms of real purchasing power remain stable or are declining. As public demands for noncommodity benefits from National Forest lands increase, trust funds that supported many programs are declining.

At the same time, the American public is telling us that they are more than customers, they are the owners of the National Forests. They want to be involved in the management and decision making of these public lands. *The public told us they want us to be the facilitators and educators, the catalysts for bringing people together on the land.* The Forest Service does not possess all of the skill and knowledge to do all the work that is needed. Nor the human or financial resources. That is why the natural resource agenda includes major themes of collaborative stewardship and working in partnership.

That is why we are at this conference, to improve our skill at building partnerships and working in collaboration. The basic purpose of this conference to better develop the kind of skills that make us more effective conservationists, the make our dollars last longer, and result in more positive relationships with folks outside the agency.

So let's agree that we will use this conference to

- Build upon our successes.

- Share our experiences.
- Work together to overcome the institutional barriers that keep us from taking full advantage of partnership opportunities.

Collaborative Stewardship and Working in Partnership

The Forest Service has a rich tradition of working in partnership as I mentioned earlier:

- **Internal partnerships** between National Forest System, State and Private Forestry and Research. Examples include increased utilization capability, integrated pest management and noxious weed strategies, Northwest Forest Plan, and Rural Community Assistance Partnerships, *and Forest inventory and monitoring, etc.*
- **Interagency and Tribal Partnerships and Collaboration.** For example, wildland firefighting efforts, Greater Yellowstone Area Coordination, Coordinated Resource Management Planning efforts among NRCS/USFS/BLM, Rural Community Development Projects with Native American Communities.
- **Private Sector Partnerships.** For example, we are working with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Nature Conservancy, San Bernardino National Forest and San Bernardino NF Association, or other examples of public private joint ventures. A recent Region 1 success was the building and 1998 opening of the Lewis and Clark Trail Interpretive Center on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. *The city of Great Falls raised over \$3,000,000 for that center.*

- **Watershed Restoration Partnerships.** Henry's Fork example from book.

Building upon this strong foundation, there is an incredible amount of innovation going on in the field about how to implement the natural resource agenda through creativity and collaboration.

Some national examples include:

- The Northern New Mexico Collaborative Stewardship Program where the Camino Real Ranger District worked in partnership to turn a community of animosity into a community partnership to restore the health of a 400,000 acre portion of the Carson National Forest. *For this they won the Kennedy School of Govt innovation in govt award.*
- Central Cascades Adaptive Management Partnership where scientists from Oregon State University, the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service along with members of the community jointly planned projects ~~that~~ resulting in improved ecosystem management and watershed protection.

Two outstanding examples of innovative partnerships within Regions 1 & 4 that will be discussed in more detail at this conference include:

- The expanding partnership between the Sawtooth National Forest and Sawtooth Society to protect the scenic and historic values of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA), as well as providing increased visitor services, trail maintenance and overall protection of the values of the SNRA.

- Upper Swan Valley Partnership between the Flathead National Forest and the Swan Ecosystem Center: a multi-faceted partnership in which the Forest Service and the citizens of the Upper Swan Valley, Montana, engage in ongoing collaborations ranging from landscape analysis, ecosystem restoration projects, backcountry wilderness patrols, pilot projects in land stewardship contracting, shared operation of a Visitor and Work Center and many environmental education and interpretive projects.

Another example of innovative thinking by field units was demonstrated in the more than 900 projects that were proposed for funding through the Chief's Natural Resource Agenda Fund.

These projects covered a wide range of projects that included community forestry, outreach to urban communities, interpretation and education, noxious weed eradication, watershed and road restoration, wildlife and fisheries projects, forest health projects and more. The type of projects and creative thinking shows that our employees have no trouble planning work that supports the natural resource agenda. And most of the proposed and funded projects were developed in collaboration with agency partners.

and community and conservation organizations.

Learning Experiences

While many of our initial efforts at building partnerships were born *because of* ~~the~~ of the need to make prudent use of dollars and resources through leveraging, we are learning that partnerships are about building relationships which lead to advocacy for the national forests.

Successful Collaborative efforts, such as the Northern New Mexico Collaborative Stewardship Program, have taught us that as natural resource professionals the work we do as facilitators, suppliers of knowledge and expertise, educators and communicators who help people search for solutions is just as important as the project work we do on the ground. *and that's because work gets done by people.*

We have learned through experience such as in the Upper Swan Valley in Montana, that collaboration is a process, not an outcome. Good collaboration results in better decision making and improved working relationships.

As our experiences in implementing the Northwest Forest Plan have demonstrated, collaborative stewardship and partnerships mean bringing people together on the land. It does not mean abrogation of leadership or decision making authority.

Our collective agency experiences are teaching us that collaborative stewardship through partnerships can be the tools to link communities with ecosystem health. Communities gain a voice in agency decisions. The agency becomes a part of community planning efforts.

Organizational Challenges

And while many units are doing good work and gaining experience in working in partnership and collaboration, it will take us some time to build the capacity to do this on all units. The work we are doing now is laying the foundation for building long-term, sustainable relationships and the agency is gaining valuable experience. However, to gain experience faster we should recognize and take advantage of the willingness of our partners to share their experience and expertise.

Some major topics at this conference are working with support organizations and leveraging resources including: expertise, human and financial resources. As an agency we need to recognize that these are areas where we do not have a lot of experience and expertise. We can learn from the experiences of our sister Natural Resource Agencies such as the Friends Initiatives of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service and the long term relationship between the National Park Service and the National Park Foundation.

BLM, DOI

The Forest Service and Department of Agriculture should not have different rules for partnership agreements for working with agency support organizations that make it difficult or impossible to work across organizational boundaries with our partner agencies in the Department of Interior.

The American people expect their government to enable good things to happen. It is not tolerable when communities of interest come together only to be frustrated because the Forest Service cannot find the "proper authority" to implement a reasonable course of action.

Think in different ways. Reward creativity. Push out stifling regulations that make little sense and prevent collaboration. Promote those who take chances.

~~Need to~~ Create an environment where employees of all disciplines and backgrounds can work together with respect. This will then carry over into our external relationships. It is not realistic to expect us to be successful outside the agency if we are not skilled within our own work force.

We need to recognize that the agency still rewards short term accomplishments over long term investments into relationship building and problem solving that will lead to ecosystem restoration and sustainability. *Do do it!*

We need to continue to work toward eliminating the disincentives toward working in partnership such as:

- * complicated agreements,
- * narrow interpretations of regulations,
- * inconsistent or contradictory interpretations of policies between regions or staff groups,
- * differing departmental policies, processes with unnecessary layers of approval, etc.

Because working in the partnership arena can mean working in areas where there are not a lot of defined policies and guidelines, we need to make sure that decisions are based on common sense and proper ethical considerations. Our decisions need need to be financially sound and fiscally proper.

and business

Leopold
The progress that
"Bully counts is
progress on the
bank 40."

Protecting and Restoring a Nation's Land Health Legacy

Mike Dombeck, Chief of the United States Forest Service
Missoula, Montana
February 3, 1999

Introduction

A few months ago, I met with the senior leadership of the Forest Service at Grey Towers, the home of Gifford Pinchot. Surrounded by so much history and tradition, it was impossible not to be impressed by 100 years of Pinchot's rich legacy.

How will the decisions we make on the land today influence what we are remembered for one hundred years from now? That should be the question that guides every decision we make. What made Pinchot's young Forest Service unique was a set of conservation values that were not necessarily popular but were always made in the long-term interest of land health. For decades, the Forest Service followed those conservation values and argued, for example, against wasteful clearcutting practices that devastated the watersheds of the Appalachians, and northeastern and Great Lakes area forests.

Following World War II, another set of values came to the forefront - helping to fulfill the national dream of providing families with single family homes - good and important values. Our timber harvests escalated for nearly a quarter of a century. Along the way, social values changed. Many people ceased viewing national forests and grasslands as a warehouse of *outputs* to be brought to market and instead began assigning greater value to the positive *outcomes* of forest management. Wildlife and fish habitat, recreation, and clean water, wilderness, and cultural and spiritual values became more and more important as national goals.

The result is that today, we often find ourselves caught in the middle between competing interests. Some look to Congress to "fix" our organic mandate. Others push to limit the number of citizen appeals. Still others ask courts to resolve land use policies through litigation. Too often we find ourselves waiting for someone else to resolve our issues for us.

The fact is that the roadless areas, wilderness, recreation and old growth issues of today are no different than the 100-year old debate over clearcutting. Our obligation is to exercise leadership over the most vital conservation issues of our generation.

Over time, our leadership capacity to assist those who manage the more than 500 million acres of forests outside of the national forest system has diminished. Our greatest value to society in the future will be to bring people together on the land and to provide technical assistance and scientific information to states, private landowners, and other nations of the world.

Consider, we are spending about two billion dollars per year managing 191 million acres of national forest yet contributing only about \$200 million toward the 500 million acres of state managed and privately-owned forests. Are our best efforts as conservation leaders spent trying to build roads in roadless areas? Or, in helping a wealthy nation to protect and restore its natural resource wealth through

research, technical assistance, and providing international examples of ecologically sustainable forest and grassland management?

As the President noted in his State of the Union address, 7,000 acres of farmland and open space are lost every day. The number of tracts of forestland of 50 acres or less doubled from 1978-1994. In other words, as we lose open space, forest tract size is diminished, and the land's health is compromised. These facts sound a clarion call to action.

Pinchot himself said, "we must everywhere always prefer results to routine." No support exists for a process-oriented and labor intensive bureaucracy. History is replete with agencies and businesses that could not, or would not, adjust to changing times and consequently became obsolete. The giants such as Pinchot, Leopold, Bob Marshall, Carson, and Arthur Carhart set another far higher, far more memorable, and far more forward thinking standard - helping communities develop a more harmonious relationship with the land and water that sustain us. Our challenge is to measure up to their legacy.

We are making progress.

- We articulated and are implementing a common sense and science-based natural resource agenda.
- Our financial management reforms are on track and we have greatly reduced our long-standing backlog of civil rights complaints.
- The Committee of Scientists recommendations on draft planning regulations will soon be released and draft regulations will follow.
- Our interim roadless proposal will soon be finalized and we are developing a long-term forest roads' policy.

We must accelerate the pace. Society demands clean water, species conservation, more outdoor recreation opportunities, conservation education, eradication of non-native invasive species, landowner and community assistance programs, and new research and technologies on forest inventory and analysis, wood conservation and more efficient wood utilization.

Incentives and Challenges

Our challenge today is to ensure that the incentives that drive all aspects of our programs promote ecological sustainability. We have proposals, and a few successes that, with the funding of Congress, will help ensure that future forest management decisions are driven by the long-term interests of the land and the people that depend on it. For example:

- Last year, Congress acted on our proposal to eliminate what was widely perceived as a subsidy and more importantly eliminated the incentive to build new roads in order to finance our road reconstruction backlog - clearly an unsustainable approach.

We must bring greater accountability, more public scrutiny, and transparency to all our processes. For example, we are financing a significant percentage of our costs through timber related "trust funds" that are not subject to annual appropriations or public scrutiny. Given that timber production on national forests has declined by 70% in less than a decade, such an approach is unsustainable. This year, we will begin to implement administrative reforms to our trust funds while we consider more permanent legislative solutions. For example, we propose to revise the definition of salvage to reduce if not eliminate "associated green" timber often taken in salvage sales.

Historically, the agency's success was often measured, and consequently funded, by outputs from the national forest system such as board feet of timber produced or the amount of grazing on forests and grasslands. This year we will develop and begin to implement new land health performance measures that evaluate such things as clean water, wildlife and fish habitat, forest ecosystem health, and soil productivity and stability. We will still track traditional outputs of goods and services but they *will be accomplished within the ecological sideboards imposed by land health*. These new measures will be consistent with international sustainability criteria and integrated into employee evaluations, budget development, forest planning, and agency priorities and accountability.

For the second year, we will propose to Congress separating timber harvest on national forests from the funds that counties receive to maintain schools and roads. Why should the richest country in the nation finance the education of rural schoolchildren on the back of a controversial federal timber program? Collaborative stewardship implies an obligation to help provide communities with economic diversity and resiliency so they are not dependent on the results of litigation, the whims of nature or unrelated social values to educate their children and pave their roads.

The Committee of Scientists will issue their final recommendations on forest planning soon. I expect that they will suggest that we:

1. Focus our planning efforts on the long-term sustainability of watersheds, forests, and grasslands and the ecological, economic, and social benefits they can provide.
2. More effectively link forest planning to budget and funding priorities.
3. Practice collaborative stewardship through use of diverse and balanced advisory groups and adaptive management through monitoring.

Taken together, these efforts will demonstrate to Congress and the American people the imperative of making investments in the land. Investments that may not yield year end profits but whose dividends will be plain when:

- A citizen of Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, or Missoula turns on their tap and drinks clean water from a National Forest;
- A parent in Vermont takes her daughter fishing on the Green Mountain National Forest.
- A small mill operator in Montana sends twice as much wood fiber to market from a single tree due to Forest Service research and development; and
- A private landowner in Illinois bequeaths to his children 20 acres of healthy, diverse and productive forestland through forest legacy conservation easements.

Watershed Protection and Restoration

The cleanest and largest amount of surface water runoff in the nation comes from forested landscapes. Mindful of this fact, a year or so ago, Jay Cravens, a retired Forest Service employee offered me some advice. He said, "Mike, just take care of soil and water and everything else will be OK." That sage counsel guides our approach to watershed management.

Multiple use does not mean we should do everything on every acre simply because we can. We must

protect the last best places and restore the rest. Many areas are simply not appropriate for certain activities, such as hard rock mining. For many years, Congress has been unable to reach consensus on updating the 1872 Mining Law. Their inaction does not, however, diminish our responsibility to use the best science to protect the most scenic, the most diverse, the most special places. One such place is the Rocky Mountain Front.

I have asked the Secretary of Interior to withdraw the Rocky Mountain Front from hard rock mining for two years while we evaluate the long-term future of the area in an open and public process.

The Forest Service has a long and storied history of working to protect the incredible fish, wildlife, cultural, and scenic resources of this area. From Bob Marshall's efforts to protect the wilderness memorialized by his name to Gloria Flora's decision last year to prohibit oil and gas leasing in the area, I intend to continue that tradition.

The Rocky Mountain Front, is only one of the hundreds of thousands of great places under our care and supervision. Within the next five years, over 65% of our forest plans, representing over 150 million acres of land, are scheduled for revision. In keeping with Clean Water Action Plan commitments, likely recommendations from the Committee of Scientists, and consistent with our mandates from the Organic Act through the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water acts, watershed health and restoration will be the overriding priority in all future forest plan revisions.

Forest Service managed lands truly are the headwaters of America, supplying river systems, and recharging aquifers. They contain riparian, wetland, and coastal areas that are essential for the nation's water supply and prosperity. Our forested landscapes contain the coolest and cleanest water in the nation. We must protect these precious resources. Future forest plans will develop strategies and document how we will:

- Maintain and restore watershed function, including flow regimes, to provide for a wide variety of benefits from fishing, to groundwater recharge, to drinking water.
- Conduct assessments that will characterize current condition and help make informed decisions about management activities, protection objectives, and restoration potential.
- Provide for the protection, maintenance and recovery of native aquatic and riparian dependent species and prevent the introduction and spread of non-native species.
- Monitor to ensure we accomplish our objectives in the most cost-effective manner, adapt management to changing conditions, and validate our assumptions over time.
- Include the best science and research, local communities, partners, tribal governments, states, and other interested citizens in collaborative watershed restoration and management, and
- Provide opportunities to link social and economic benefits to communities through restoration strategies.

All future forest plans will prioritize specific watersheds for protection and restoration. Accomplishing these priorities will be linked to annual budget requests and employee performance evaluations. We will develop priorities of protection and restoration based upon:

- Past disturbance history. Emphasis will be given to protecting undisturbed watersheds and roadless areas and integrating these areas into watershed plans to protect and restore the integrity of watersheds.
- Water quality and other water-related objectives.

- Restoration potential and sensitivity to disturbance.
- Biological diversity of native plants, fish, and animals and special designations such as Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- Recovery of threatened, endangered, or other sensitive species.
- Potential to leverage restoration funds, partnerships, and the opportunity to work with interested and willing American Indian tribes, communities, adjacent land managers, and owners.

Sustainable Forest and Grassland Management

In the State of the Union, President Clinton announced new initiatives to protect open space, benefit urban forests, and improve the quality of life for the 80% of Americans living in urban and suburban areas. The Forest Service will play an essential role in their accomplishment.

With proposed increases to our budget, we plan to:

- Collaborate with state foresters and others to develop conservation and stewardship plans for an additional 740,000 acres of non-industrial private forestland.
- Help states protect an estimated 135,000 additional acres of forestland through acquisitions and conservation easements. Emphasis will be given to protecting critical areas such as in the Northern Forest of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and Massachusetts. This unbroken woodland landscape presents unique opportunities to protect habitat *and* traditional uses.
- Acquire environmentally sensitive lands through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- Include nearly 800 more communities in efforts to conserve urban and community forests. In addition, 300,000 more hours of conservation training will be provided to local communities. Approximately one million more hours of volunteer assistance will be generated above 1999 estimates.

Even as we extend the benefits of conservation to the millions of Americans who do not live adjacent to national forests and grasslands, we must recognize the changing face of our national forest management and the benefits and challenges that follow.

The emphasis of our forest management continues to shift from commodity timber sales to management activities to meet stewardship objectives. For example, in FY 1989 "green" timber sales made up primarily of saw log dimension wood, comprised 80% of our timber program. Today, such sales represent just over half of our program. Additionally, the amount of wood fiber harvested from national forests has fallen by 70% in less than a decade.

These changes demonstrate our responsiveness to shifting social values, public demand, and our evolving understanding of how to best manage for ecological sustainability. As we strive to manage healthier, diverse, and more productive forests, the focus on our forest management program - as measured in short term financial losses or profits - becomes less meaningful as a measure of agency performance.

Providing a steady supply of wood fiber remains an important multiple use goal of the Forest Service. Some would ignore increasing rates of national wood consumption and argue for a "zero-cut" approach to managing forests. Until we stop importing wood to meet the nation's demands from countries with more lax environmental restrictions than ours, I think this position both irresponsible and misguided. Forest Service research will expand efforts to improve wood recycling, conservation, and increased

wood utilization. National Forests themselves should be a model for ecologically sustainable forest management. The more timber harvest contributes to ecological sustainability, the more predictable timber outputs will be.

Our understanding of sustainability and sustained yield have changed over time. Today, we recognize that if we do not harvest trees in an ecologically sustainable manner we may not have forests in the future. For example, thinning of the under-story to reduce fuels, restore forest function, and improve forest ecosystem health is often a far more effective way to maintain stability for local communities dependent on timber harvest than are controversial harvests of old growth in areas where such stands are scarce.

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We will protect the basic soil, water, and biotic resources of our forests and accelerate the restoration of forest and rangeland ecosystem integrity. To help accomplish these objectives, our proposed 2000 budget requests funding to:

- Improve an additional 38,000 acres of terrestrial habitat, 7,000 acres of lake and approximately 1,100 miles of stream habitat.
- Restore over 100,000 acres of aspen stands resulting in better habitat for big game species, upland game birds, and resident and migratory birds.
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Our budget proposes funding forest health restoration for activities that cannot be accomplished through traditional timber sales such as road maintenance or obliteration, thinning of overly dense forests in the urban-wildland interface, and riparian area restoration. We must be willing to make investments in land health that may not yield short-term profit but will result in long-term ecological dividends.

Recreation

The natural resource agenda highlights the strategic importance of recreation as a priority for the agency. Increasingly, outdoor recreation is the way an urbanized society interacts with the natural world. In 1997, national forests accommodated more than 40% of all outdoor recreation use on public lands in the United States.

An estimated 75% of the nation's recreation takes place within a quarter mile of a river, lake, or coast. Our job is to try to meet people's demands in a manner that does not impair the health, diversity, and productivity of our land and waters.

Our recreation strategy focuses on providing customer service and opportunities for all people. As part of that strategy we are using new technologies to assist in trip planning, expanded interpretative services, and seamless delivery of the myriad outdoor recreation opportunities that help families to reconnect with each other while they connect to the land that sustains them. We will strengthen our relationships with communities adjacent to forests so that they may more fully reap the economic benefits of tourism and recreation.

The outdoor recreation industry and other recreation user groups are approaching a crossroads. I liken recreation to the timber industry twenty years ago. Who would have thought that timber harvests across the national forest system would decline by 70% in less than a decade? It is my belief that if we agree to abide by some basic principles, the recreation community can avoid what happened to the timber industry.

- Nothing should ever compromise public ownership of public lands.
- Our overriding objective must be to maintain the health, diversity, and productivity of our lands and waters - recreation use must occur within those ecological sideboards.
- Outdoor recreation is a wonderful way to educate our children about the wonders of nature and the imperative of treating and stewarding the land with respect.

In the end, recreation use - all uses of national forests and grasslands are about limits. Talking about limits to growth is very difficult for such a prosperous culture as ours. We are a nation of optimism, where we attempt to use technology and wealth to find solutions to resource dilemmas. Unfortunately, such growth even with the best technology often carries consequences.

Wild places and natural areas are of increasing importance to a society that can afford to protect them. We are all too familiar with the battle between protection and development. The writer, T.H. Watkins recently said, "in natural regions, as in public libraries, we should not be allowed to do everything we can merely because we can do it." A decade ago, the timber program on national forests ran up against a buzz saw of changing social and environmental values in the Pacific Northwest. And just as surely as a river will find its flood plain, social values will prevail in such debates.

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In recent years, I have become concerned that our national commitment to the Wilderness Act has diminished and the resources to protect and manage the wilderness have not kept pace with our needs. Five years ago, my predecessor Jack Ward Thomas asked the question, "when I think of wilderness, I wonder who will be the next ones to step up, lead, and sacrifice for this precious resource? Who will see that the Wilderness doesn't get inched away from us, one compromise at a time?"

Jack, we are taking up your challenge. I am pleased to announce two specific actions to lend greater emphasis to our wilderness management.

- First, I am re-instituting the national-wilderness field advisory group to provide senior agency leadership with recommendations for preserving and protecting our rich wilderness legacy.
- Second, our wilderness portfolio should embody an even broader array of lands - from prairie to old growth forest. We will use our forest plan revision process over the next four to five years to better manage existing and identify potential new wilderness areas.

Roads

Our interim suspension of road construction in roadless areas will be finalized very soon. We should now turn our attention to the issue of how we will manage our existing forest road system over the long-term. That does not mean that after the road construction suspension expires we will simply resume road construction into these areas. It is my expectation that in the future, we will rarely build new roads into roadless areas, and if we do, it will be in order to accomplish broader ecological objectives.

A personal source of frustration is that few people or interest groups are focussed on the issue of our existing road system as opposed to the roadless area issue. Yet if we care about restoring the ecological fabric of the landscape, the health of our watersheds, we must address already roaded areas.

Many roadless areas have become refugia - areas of high biotic integrity where remnant populations of many native species persist. The irony is that roadless areas are historically among the *least biologically*

productive portions of the landscape - typically higher elevation with steep slopes, unstable soils, and often areas of low productivity.

If we ever hope to reconnect the tattered fabric of individual watersheds to an entire landscape, we must look to the areas along valley bottoms and main stem rivers - in other words, the already roaded areas.

With roads that could encircle the globe many times over, our road system is largely complete. Our challenge is to shrink the system considerably while still providing for efficient and safe public access in a manner that protects the land's health. Over the next 18 months or so, we will develop a long-term road policy with three primary objectives:

- Develop new analytical tools to help managers determine where, when, or if to build new roads.
- Aggressively decommission old, unneeded, unauthorized, and other roads that contribute to environmental degradation.
- Selectively upgrade certain roads to help meet changing use patterns on forests and grasslands.

It is my expectation that the long-term road policy will significantly limit, if not eliminate costly new road construction in sensitive areas that can cause erosion, imperil rare species, or fragment habitat. We will also move aggressively to close, obliterate, or otherwise decommission unauthorized and unneeded roads. We will need the help of Congress to maintain needed roads while decommissioning the others.

I expect decisions about local roads to be made by local managers working with local people and others who use or care about our road system. Recognizing that forest roads are often the backbone of the rural transportation network, we will obviously continue to provide access to and through forests. The fact, however, is that we simply cannot afford our existing road system. New information documents that we have a reconstruction and maintenance backlog of approximately \$8.5 billion. Just our *annual* road maintenance is approximately \$500-600 million per year. Moreover, we have found that *only* 18% of our road system is maintained to our own standards. This is unacceptable.

We will not delay in taking immediate action to stabilize or decommission roads that pose public safety or environmental problems. With proposed funding from Congress, we will:

- Increase by 50% from 1998, the miles of road we decommission or stabilize in FY 2000.
- Increase the percentage of forest roads maintained to standard from 18% to 24%.

Conclusion

It seems appropriate to close with the well quoted, but not often enough listened to, words of Aldo Leopold. "Examine each [land use] question in terms of what is ethically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to otherwise." In this the 50th anniversary of Aldo Leopold's seminal work, *A Sand County Almanac*, let us recommit ourselves to an invigorated national land ethic.

- An ethic that recognizes that we cannot meet the needs of people without first securing the health, diversity, and productivity of our lands and waters.
- An ethic that understands the need to reconnect our communities - both urban and rural - to the

lands and waters that sustain them.

- An ethic that respects that the choices we make today influence the legacy that we bequeath to our children and their children's children.

Submitted by: Alan Polk

Contact: Chris Wood

Modified: 2/3/98

Protecting and Restoring a Nation's Land Health Legacy

Mike Dombeck, Chief of the United States Forest Service
Missoula, Montana
February 3, 1998

Introduction

A few months ago, I met with the senior leadership of the Forest Service at Grey Towers, the home of Gifford Pinchot. Surrounded by so much history and tradition, it was impossible not to be impressed by 100 years of Pinchot's rich legacy.

How will the decisions we make on the land today influence what we are remembered for one hundred years from now? That should be the question that guides every decision we make. What made Pinchot's young Forest Service unique was a set of conservation values that were not necessarily popular but were always made in the long-term interest of land health. For decades, the Forest Service followed those conservation values and argued, ~~for example~~, against wasteful clearcutting practices that devastated the watersheds of the Appalachians, and northeastern and Great Lakes area forests. *prior to the turn of the century*

Following World War II, another set of values came to the forefront – helping to fulfill the national dream of providing families with single family homes – good and important values. Our timber harvests escalated for nearly a quarter of a century. Along the way, social values changed. Many people ceased viewing national forests and grasslands as a warehouse of *outputs* to be brought to market and instead began assigning greater value to the positive *outcomes* of forest management. Wildlife and fish habitat, recreation, and clean water, wilderness, and cultural and spiritual values became more and more important as national goals.

The result is that today, we often find ourselves caught in the middle between competing interests. Some look to Congress to “fix” our organic mandate. Others push to limit the number of citizen appeals. Still others ask courts to resolve land use policies through litigation. Too often we find ourselves waiting for someone else to resolve our issues for us.

The fact is that the roadless areas, wilderness, recreation and old growth issues of today are no different than the 100-year old debate over clearcutting. Our obligation is to exercise leadership over the most vital conservation issues of our generation.

Over time, our leadership capacity to assist those who manage the more than 500 million acres of forests outside of the national forest system has diminished. Our greatest value to society in the future will be to bring people together on the land and to provide technical assistance and scientific information to states, private landowners, and other nations of the world.

Consider, we are spending about two billion dollars per year managing 191 million acres of national forest yet contributing only about \$200 million toward the 500 million acres of state managed and privately-owned forests. Are our best efforts as conservation leaders spent trying to build roads in roadless areas? Or, in helping a wealthy nation to protect and restore its natural resource wealth through research, technical assistance, and providing international examples of ecologically sustainable forest and grassland management?

As the President noted in his State of the Union address, 7,000 acres of farmland and open space are lost every day. The number of tracts of forestland of 50 acres or less doubled from 1978-1994. In other words, as we lose open space, forest tract size is diminished, and the land's health is compromised. These facts ~~sound a clarion~~ ^{are} call to action.

Pinchot himself said, "we must everywhere always prefer results to routine." No support exists for a process-oriented and labor intensive bureaucracy. History is replete with agencies and businesses that could not, or would not, adjust to changing times and consequently became obsolete. The giants such as Pinchot, Leopold, Bob Marshall, Carson, and Arthur Carhart set another far higher, far more memorable, and far more forward thinking standard – helping communities develop a more harmonious relationship with the land and water that sustain us. Our challenge is to measure up to their legacy.

We are making progress.

- We articulated and are implementing a common sense and science-based natural resource agenda.

- Our financial management reforms are on track and we have greatly reduced our long-standing backlog of civil rights complaints.
- The Committee of Scientists recommendations on draft planning regulations will soon be released and draft regulations will follow.
- Our interim roadless proposal will soon be finalized and we are developing a long-term forest roads' policy.

Bk We must accelerate the pace. Society demands clean water, species conservation, more outdoor recreation opportunities, conservation education, eradication of non-native invasive species, landowner and community assistance programs, and new research and technologies on forest inventory and analysis, wood conservation and more efficient wood utilization.

Incentives and Challenges

Our challenge today is to ensure that the incentives that drive all aspects of our programs promote ecological sustainability. We have proposals, and a few successes that, with the funding of Congress, will help ensure that future forest management decisions are driven by the long-term interests of the land and the people that depend on it. For example:

- Last year, Congress acted on our proposal to eliminate what was widely perceived as a subsidy *and* more importantly eliminated the incentive to build new roads in order to finance our road reconstruction backlog – clearly an unsustainable approach.
- We must bring greater accountability, more public scrutiny, and transparency to all our processes. For example, we are financing a significant percentage of our costs through timber related “trust funds” that are not subject to annual appropriations or public scrutiny. Given that timber production on national forests has declined by 70% in less than a decade, such an approach is unsustainable. This year, we will begin to implement administrative reforms to our trust funds while we consider more permanent legislative solutions. For example, we propose to revise the definition of salvage to reduce if not eliminate “associated green” timber often taken in salvage sales.

- Historically, ^{our} ~~the agency's~~ success was often measured, and consequently funded, by outputs from the national forest system such as board feet of timber produced or the amount of grazing on forests and grasslands. This year we will develop and begin to implement new land health performance measures that evaluate such things as clean water, wildlife and fish habitat, forest ecosystem health, and soil productivity and stability. We will still track traditional outputs of goods and services but *they will be accomplished within the ecological sideboards imposed by land health.* These new measures will be consistent with international sustainability criteria and integrated into employee evaluations, budget development, forest planning, and agency priorities and accountability.
- For the second year, we will propose to Congress separating timber harvest on national forests from the funds that counties receive to maintain schools and roads. Why should the richest country in the ~~nation~~ ^{world} finance the education of rural schoolchildren on the back of a controversial federal timber program? Collaborative stewardship implies an obligation to help provide communities with economic diversity and resiliency so they are not dependent on the results of litigation, the whims of nature or unrelated social values to educate their children and pave their roads.
- The Committee of Scientists will issue their final recommendations on forest planning soon. I expect that they will suggest that we:
 1. Focus our planning efforts on the long-term sustainability of watersheds, forests, and grasslands and the ecological, economic, and social benefits they can provide.
 2. More effectively link forest planning to budget and funding priorities.
 3. Practice collaborative stewardship through use of diverse and balanced advisory groups and adaptive management through monitoring.

^{Our challenge}
~~Taken together, these efforts will~~ demonstrate to Congress and the American people the imperative of making investments in the land. Investments that may not yield year end profits but whose dividends will be plain when:

- A citizen of Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, or Missoula turns on their tap and drinks clean water from a National Forest;
- A parent in Vermont takes her daughter fishing on the Green Mountain National Forest.
- A small mill operator in Montana sends twice as much wood fiber to market from a single tree due to ~~Forest Service~~ research and *technology* development; and *our*
- A private landowner in Illinois bequeaths to his children 20 acres of healthy, diverse and productive forestland through forest legacy conservation easements.

Watershed Protection and Restoration

The cleanest and largest amount of surface water runoff in the nation comes from forested landscapes. Mindful of this fact, a year or so ago, Jay Cravens, a retired Forest Service employee offered me some advice. He said, "Mike, just take care of soil and water and everything else will be OK." That sage counsel guides our approach to watershed management.

Multiple use does not mean we should do everything on every acre simply because we can. We must protect the last best places and restore the rest. Many areas are simply not appropriate for certain activities, such as hard rock mining. For many years, Congress has been unable to reach consensus on updating the 1872 Mining Law. Their inaction does not, however, diminish our responsibility to use the best science to protect the most scenic, the most diverse, the most special places. One such place is the Rocky Mountain Front.

I have asked the Secretary of Interior to withdraw the Rocky Mountain Front from hard rock mining for two years while we evaluate the long-term future of the area in an open and public process.

The Forest Service has a long and storied history of working to protect the incredible fish, wildlife, cultural, and scenic resources of this area. From Bob Marshall's efforts to protect the wilderness memorialized by his name to Gloria Flora's decision last year to prohibit oil and gas leasing in the area, I intend to continue that tradition.

The Rocky Mountain Front, is only one of the hundreds of thousands of great places under our care ~~and supervision~~. Within the next five years, over 65% of our forest plans, representing over 150 million acres of land, are scheduled for revision. In keeping with Clean Water Action Plan commitments, likely recommendations from the Committee of Scientists, and consistent with our mandates from the Organic Act through the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water acts, watershed health and restoration will be the overriding priority in all future forest plan revisions.

Forest Service managed lands truly are the headwaters of America, supplying river systems, and recharging aquifers. They contain riparian, wetland, and coastal areas that are essential for the nation's water supply and prosperity. Our forested landscapes contain the coolest and cleanest water in the nation. We must protect these precious resources. ~~Future forest plans will develop strategies and document how we will:~~

- Maintain and restore watershed function, including flow regimes, to provide for a wide variety of benefits from fishing, to groundwater recharge, to drinking water.
- Conduct assessments that will characterize current condition and help make informed decisions about management activities, protection objectives, and restoration potential.
- Provide for the protection, maintenance and recovery of native aquatic and riparian dependent species and prevent the introduction and spread of non-native species.
- Monitor to ensure we accomplish our objectives in the most cost-effective manner, adapt management to changing conditions, and validate our assumptions over time.
- Include the best science and research, local communities, partners, tribal governments, states, and other interested citizens in collaborative watershed restoration and management, and
- Provide opportunities to link social and economic benefits to communities through restoration strategies.

All future forest plans will prioritize specific watersheds for protection and restoration. Accomplishing these priorities ^{should} will be linked to annual budget requests and employee performance evaluations. We will develop priorities of protection and restoration based upon:

- Past disturbance history. Emphasis will be given to protecting undisturbed watersheds and roadless areas and integrating these areas into watershed plans to protect and restore the integrity of watersheds.
- Water quality and other water-related objectives.
- Restoration potential and sensitivity to disturbance.
- Biological diversity of native plants, fish, and animals and special designations such as Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- Recovery of threatened, endangered, or other sensitive species.
- Potential to leverage restoration funds, partnerships, and the opportunity to work with interested and willing American Indian tribes, communities, adjacent land managers, and owners.

Sustainable Forest and Grassland Management

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• *I will invite*
Roads

Our interim suspension of road construction in roadless areas will be finalized very soon. We should now turn our attention to the issue of how we will manage our existing forest road system over the long-term. That does not mean that after the road construction suspension expires we will simply resume road construction into these areas. It is my expectation that in the future, we will rarely build new roads into roadless areas, and if we do, it will be in order to accomplish broader ecological objectives.

A personal source of frustration is that few people or interest groups are focussed on the issue of our existing road system as opposed to the roadless area issue. Yet if we care about restoring the ecological fabric of the landscape, the health of our watersheds, we must address already roaded areas.

Many roadless areas have become refugia – areas of high biotic integrity where remnant populations of many native species persist. The irony is that roadless areas are historically among the *least biologically productive* portions of the landscape – typically higher elevation with steep slopes, unstable soils, and often areas of low productivity.

If we ever hope to reconnect the tattered fabric of individual watersheds to an entire landscape, we must look to the areas along valley bottoms and main stem rivers – in other words, the already roaded areas.

With roads that could encircle the globe many times over, our road system is largely complete. Our challenge is to shrink the system considerably while still providing for efficient and safe public access in a manner that protects the land's health. Over the next 18 months or so, we will develop a long-term road policy with three primary objectives:

- Develop new analytical tools to help managers determine where, when, or if to build new roads.
- Aggressively decommission old, unneeded, unauthorized, and other roads that contribute to environmental degradation.
- Selectively upgrade certain roads to help meet changing use patterns on forests and grasslands.

It is my expectation that the long-term road policy will significantly limit, if not eliminate costly new road construction in sensitive areas that can cause erosion, imperil rare species, or fragment habitat. We will also move aggressively to close, obliterate, or otherwise decommission unauthorized and unneeded roads. We will need the help of Congress to maintain needed roads while decommissioning the others.

I expect decisions about local roads to be made by local managers working with local people and others who use or care about our road system. Recognizing that forest roads are often the backbone of the rural transportation network, we will obviously continue to provide access to and through forests. The fact, however, is that we simply cannot afford our existing road system. New information documents that we have a reconstruction and maintenance backlog of approximately \$8.5 billion. Just our *annual* road maintenance is approximately \$500-600 million per year.

Moreover, we have found that *only* 18% of our road system is maintained to our own standards. This is unacceptable.

We will not delay in taking immediate action to stabilize or decommission roads that pose public safety or environmental problems. With proposed funding from Congress, we will:

- Increase by 50% from 1998, the miles of road we decommission or stabilize in ~~FY~~ 2000.
- Increase the percentage of forest roads maintained to standard from 18% to 24%.

Conclusion

It seems appropriate to close with the well quoted, but not often enough listened to, words of Aldo Leopold. "Examine each [land use] question in terms of what is ethically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to otherwise." In this the 50th anniversary of Aldo Leopold's seminal work, *A Sand County Almanac*, let us recommit ourselves to an invigorated national land ethic.

- An ethic that recognizes that we cannot meet the needs of people without first securing the health, diversity, and productivity of our lands and waters.
- An ethic that understands the need to reconnect our communities – both urban and rural – to the lands and waters that sustain them.
- An ethic that respects that the choices we make today influence the legacy that we bequeath to our children and their children's children.

leave

Protecting and Restoring a Nation's Land Health Legacy

Mike Dombeck, Chief of the United States Forest Service
Missoula, Montana
February 3, 1999

Introduction

A few months ago, I met with the senior leadership of the Forest Service at Grey Towers, the home of Gifford Pinchot. Surrounded by so much history and tradition, it was impossible not to be impressed by 100 years of Pinchot's rich legacy.

How will the decisions we make on the land today influence what we are remembered for one hundred years from now? That should be the question that guides every decision we make. What made Pinchot's young Forest Service unique was a set of conservation values that were not necessarily popular but were always made in the long-term interest of land health. For decades, the Forest Service followed those conservation values and argued, for example, against wasteful clearcutting practices that devastated the watersheds of the Appalachians, and northeastern and Great Lakes area forests.

Following World War II, another set of values came to the forefront - helping to fulfill the national dream of providing families with single family homes - good and important values. Our timber harvests escalated for nearly a quarter of a century. Along the way, social values changed. Many people ceased viewing national forests and grasslands as a warehouse of *outputs* to be brought to market and instead began assigning greater value to the positive *outcomes* of forest management. Wildlife and fish habitat, recreation, and clean water, wilderness, and cultural and spiritual values became more and more important as national goals.

The result is that today, we often find ourselves caught in the middle between competing interests. Some look to Congress to "fix" our organic mandate. Others push to limit the number of citizen appeals. Still others ask courts to resolve land use policies through litigation. Too often we find ourselves waiting for someone else to resolve our issues for us.

The fact is that the roadless areas, wilderness, recreation and old growth issues of today are no different than the 100-year old debate over clearcutting. Our obligation is to exercise leadership over the most vital conservation issues of our generation.

Over time, our leadership capacity to assist those who manage the more than 500 million acres of forests outside of the national forest system has diminished. Our greatest value to society in the future will be to bring people together on the land and to provide technical assistance and scientific information to states, private landowners, and other nations of the world.

Consider, we are spending about two billion dollars per year managing 191 million acres of national forest yet contributing only about \$200 million toward the 500 million acres of state managed and privately-owned forests. Are our best efforts as conservation leaders spent trying to build roads in roadless areas? Or, in helping a wealthy nation to protect and restore its natural resource wealth through research, technical assistance, and providing international examples of ecologically sustainable forest and grassland management?

As the President noted in his State of the Union address, 7,000 acres of farmland and open space are lost every day. The number of tracts of forestland of 50 acres or less doubled from 1978-1994. In other words, as we lose open space, forest tract size is diminished, and the land's health is compromised. These facts sound a clarion call to action.

Pinchot himself said, "we must everywhere always prefer results to routine." No support exists for a process-oriented and labor intensive bureaucracy. History is replete with agencies and businesses that could not, or would not, adjust to changing times and consequently became obsolete. The giants such as Pinchot, Leopold, Bob Marshall, Carson, and Arthur Carhart set another far higher, far more memorable, and far more forward thinking standard - helping communities develop a more harmonious relationship with the land and water that sustain us. Our challenge is to measure up to their legacy.

We are making progress.

- We articulated and are implementing a common sense and science-based natural resource agenda.
- Our financial management reforms are on track and we have greatly reduced our long-standing backlog of civil rights complaints.
- The Committee of Scientists recommendations on draft planning regulations will soon be released and draft regulations will follow.
- Our interim roadless proposal will soon be finalized and we are developing a long-term forest roads' policy.

We must accelerate the pace. Society demands clean water, species conservation, more outdoor recreation opportunities, conservation education, eradication of non-native invasive species, landowner and community assistance programs, and new research and technologies on forest inventory and analysis, wood conservation and more efficient wood utilization.

Incentives and Challenges

Our challenge today is to ensure that the incentives that drive all aspects of our programs promote ecological sustainability. We have proposals, and a few successes that, with the funding of Congress, will help ensure that future forest management decisions are driven by the long-term interests of the land and the people that depend on it. For example:

- Last year, Congress acted on our proposal to eliminate what was widely perceived as a subsidy and more importantly eliminated the incentive to build new roads in order to finance our road reconstruction backlog - clearly an unsustainable approach.

We must bring greater accountability, more public scrutiny, and transparency to all our processes. For example, we are financing a significant percentage of our costs through timber related "trust funds" that are not subject to annual appropriations or public scrutiny. Given that timber production on national forests has declined by 70% in less than a decade, such an approach is unsustainable. This year, we will begin to implement administrative reforms to our trust funds while we consider more permanent legislative solutions. For example, we propose to revise the definition of salvage to reduce if not eliminate "associated green" timber often taken in salvage sales.

Historically, the agency's success was often measured, and consequently funded, by outputs from the national forest system such as board feet of timber produced or the amount of grazing on forests and grasslands. This year we will develop and begin to implement new land health performance measures that evaluate such things as clean water, wildlife and fish habitat, forest ecosystem health, and soil productivity and stability. We will still track traditional outputs of goods and services but they *will be accomplished within the ecological sideboards imposed by land health*. These new measures will be consistent with international sustainability criteria and integrated into employee evaluations, budget development, forest planning, and agency priorities and accountability.

For the second year, we will propose to Congress separating timber harvest on national forests from the funds that counties receive to maintain schools and roads. Why should the richest country in the world finance the education of rural schoolchildren on the back of a controversial federal timber program? Collaborative stewardship implies an obligation to help provide communities with economic diversity and resiliency so they are not dependent on the results of litigation, the whims of nature or unrelated social values to educate their children and pave their roads.

The Committee of Scientists will issue their final recommendations on forest planning soon. I expect that they will suggest that we:

1. Focus our planning efforts on the long-term sustainability of watersheds, forests, and grasslands and the ecological, economic, and social benefits they can provide.
2. More effectively link forest planning to budget and funding priorities.
3. Practice collaborative stewardship through use of diverse and balanced advisory groups and adaptive management through monitoring.

Taken together, these efforts will demonstrate to Congress and the American people the imperative of making investments in the land. Investments that may not yield year end profits but whose dividends will be plain when:

- A citizen of Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, or Missoula turns on their tap and drinks clean water from a National Forest;
- A parent in Vermont takes her daughter fishing on the Green Mountain National Forest.
- A small mill operator in Montana sends twice as much wood fiber to market from a single tree due to Forest Service research and development; and
- A private landowner in Illinois bequeaths to his children 20 acres of healthy, diverse and productive forestland through forest legacy conservation easements.

Watershed Protection and Restoration

The cleanest and largest amount of surface water runoff in the nation comes from forested landscapes. Mindful of this fact, a year or so ago, Jay Cravens, a retired Forest Service employee offered me some advice. He said, "Mike, just take care of soil and water and everything else will be OK." That sage counsel guides our approach to watershed management.

Multiple use does not mean we should do everything on every acre simply because we can. We must protect the last best places and restore the rest. Many areas are simply not appropriate for certain activities, such as hard rock mining. For many years, Congress has been unable to reach consensus on updating the 1872 Mining Law. Their inaction does not, however, diminish our responsibility to use the best science to protect the most scenic, the most diverse, the most special places. One such place is the Rocky Mountain Front.

I have asked the Secretary of Interior to withdraw the Rocky Mountain Front from hard rock mining for two years while we evaluate the long-term future of the area in an open and public process.

The Forest Service has a long and storied history of working to protect the incredible fish, wildlife, cultural, and scenic resources of this area. From Bob Marshall's efforts to protect the wilderness memorialized by his name to Gloria Flora's decision last year to prohibit oil and gas leasing in the area, I intend to continue that tradition.

The Rocky Mountain Front, is only one of the hundreds of thousands of great places under our care and supervision. Within the next five years, over 65% of our forest plans, representing over 150 million acres of land, are scheduled for revision. In keeping with Clean Water Action Plan commitments, likely recommendations from the Committee of Scientists, and consistent with our mandates from the Organic Act through the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water acts, watershed health and restoration will be the overriding priority in all future forest plan revisions.

Forest Service managed lands truly are the headwaters of America, supplying river systems, and recharging aquifers. They contain riparian, wetland, and coastal areas that are essential for the nation's water supply and prosperity. Our forested landscapes contain the coolest and cleanest water in the

nation. We must protect these precious resources. Future forest plans will develop strategies and document how we will:

- Maintain and restore watershed function, including flow regimes, to provide for a wide variety of benefits from fishing, to groundwater recharge, to drinking water.
- Conduct assessments that will characterize current condition and help make informed decisions about management activities, protection objectives, and restoration potential.
- Provide for the protection, maintenance and recovery of native aquatic and riparian dependent species and prevent the introduction and spread of non-native species.
- Monitor to ensure we accomplish our objectives in the most cost-effective manner, adapt management to changing conditions, and validate our assumptions over time.
- Include the best science and research, local communities, partners, tribal governments, states, and other interested citizens in collaborative watershed restoration and management, and
- Provide opportunities to link social and economic benefits to communities through restoration strategies.

All future forest plans will prioritize specific watersheds for protection and restoration. Accomplishing these priorities will be linked to annual budget requests and employee performance evaluations. We will develop priorities of protection and restoration based upon:

- Past disturbance history. Emphasis will be given to protecting undisturbed watersheds and roadless areas and integrating these areas into watershed plans to protect and restore the integrity of watersheds.
- Water quality and other water-related objectives.
- Restoration potential and sensitivity to disturbance.
- Biological diversity of native plants, fish, and animals and special designations such as Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- Recovery of threatened, endangered, or other sensitive species.
- Potential to leverage restoration funds, partnerships, and the opportunity to work with interested and willing American Indian tribes, communities, adjacent land managers, and owners.

Sustainable Forest and Grassland Management

In the State of the Union, President Clinton announced new initiatives to protect open space, benefit urban forests, and improve the quality of life for the 80% of Americans living in urban and suburban areas. The Forest Service will play an essential role in their accomplishment.

With proposed increases to our budget, we plan to:

- Collaborate with state foresters and others to develop conservation and stewardship plans for an additional 740,000 acres of non-industrial private forestland.
- Help states protect an estimated 135,000 additional acres of forestland through acquisitions and conservation easements. Emphasis will be given to protecting critical areas such as in the Northern Forest of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and Massachusetts. This unbroken woodland landscape presents unique opportunities to protect habitat *and* traditional uses.
- Acquire environmentally sensitive lands through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- Include nearly 800 more communities in efforts to conserve urban and community forests. In addition, 300,000 more hours of conservation training will be provided to local communities. Approximately one million more hours of volunteer assistance will be generated above 1999 estimates.

Even as we extend the benefits of conservation to the millions of Americans who do not live adjacent to national forests and grasslands, we must recognize the changing face of our national forest management and the benefits and challenges that follow.

The emphasis of our forest management continues to shift from commodity timber sales to management

activities to meet stewardship objectives. For example, in FY 1989 "green" timber sales made up primarily of saw log dimension wood, comprised 80% of our timber program. Today, such sales represent just over half of our program. Additionally, the amount of wood fiber harvested from national forests has fallen by 70% in less than a decade.

These changes demonstrate our responsiveness to shifting social values, public demand, and our evolving understanding of how to best manage for ecological sustainability. As we strive to manage healthier, diverse, and more productive forests, the focus on our forest management program - as measured in short term financial losses or profits - becomes less meaningful as a measure of agency performance.

Providing a steady supply of wood fiber remains an important multiple use goal of the Forest Service. Some would ignore increasing rates of national wood consumption and argue for a "zero-cut" approach to managing forests. Until we stop importing wood to meet the nation's demands from countries with more lax environmental restrictions than ours, I think this position both irresponsible and misguided. Forest Service research will expand efforts to improve wood recycling, conservation, and increased wood utilization. National Forests themselves should be a model for ecologically sustainable forest management. The more timber harvest contributes to ecological sustainability, the more predictable timber outputs will be.

Our understanding of sustainability and sustained yield have changed over time. Today, we recognize that if we do not harvest trees in an ecologically sustainable manner we may not have forests in the future. For example, thinning of the under-story to reduce fuels, restore forest function, and improve forest ecosystem health is often a far more effective way to maintain stability for local communities dependent on timber harvest than are controversial harvests of old growth in areas where such stands are scarce.

In the future, research and monitoring information will be essential to validating our assumptions about how ecological systems respond to management activities.

- We are requesting funding to increase by 75 million the number of acres of forestland nationwide covered by forest health detection monitoring by the year 2000. This will keep us on a pace to complete national inventory of all forest types by the year 2003.
- Increases proposed to our research budget will result in the agency producing a comprehensive peer-reviewed report by the year 2000 on how forest management activities can restore watersheds and fish and wildlife habitat, re-establish forest stand structure, reduce the risk of unnaturally occurring catastrophic fires, and otherwise restore ecological integrity.

We will protect the basic soil, water, and biotic resources of our forests and accelerate the restoration of forest and rangeland ecosystem integrity. To help accomplish these objectives, our proposed 2000 budget requests funding to:

- Improve an additional 38,000 acres of terrestrial habitat, 7,000 acres of lake and approximately 1,100 miles of stream habitat.
- Restore over 100,000 acres of aspen stands resulting in better habitat for big game species, upland game birds, and resident and migratory birds.
- Work with state fish and wildlife agencies and others to complete an additional 31 conservation strategies for sensitive fish, plants, and wildlife such as the Canada lynx and the Westslope Cutthroat trout. We will also assist federal regulatory agencies to complete at least seven additional recovery plans for threatened and endangered species.
- Slow the spread of invasive non-native species of fish, plants, and wildlife while increasing prevention efforts.
- Continue to employ fire as a tool to meet integrated resource and societal objectives across landscapes. Since 1995, we have more than doubled fuel treatment acres - from 541,000 to 1.4 million. We will accelerate the mapping of high-risk areas, treatment schedules, and rate of treatment with priority given to:

1. High-risk wildland/urban interface areas where homes and personal property are at risk.
2. Threatened and endangered species conservation and recovery.
3. Accumulated fuels within and adjacent to wilderness areas, and
4. Areas that help to lower long-term costs of suppressing wildfires.

As we seek to restore forest and grassland integrity and return them to their natural range of variability, new tools are needed.

Stewardship contracting authority will help managers more efficiently accomplish restoration needs through forest management. Our challenge will be to avoid financing restoration on the back of timber harvest.

Our budget proposes funding forest health restoration for activities that cannot be accomplished through traditional timber sales such as road maintenance or obliteration, thinning of overly dense forests in the urban-wildland interface, and riparian area restoration. We must be willing to make investments in land health that may not yield short-term profit but will result in long-term ecological dividends.

Recreation

The natural resource agenda highlights the strategic importance of recreation as a priority for the agency. Increasingly, outdoor recreation is the way an urbanized society interacts with the natural world. In 1997, national forests accommodated more than 40% of all outdoor recreation use on public lands in the United States.

An estimated 75% of the nation's recreation takes place within a quarter mile of a river, lake, or coast. Our job is to try to meet people's demands in a manner that does not impair the health, diversity, and productivity of our land and waters.

Our recreation strategy focuses on providing customer service and opportunities for all people. As part of that strategy we are using new technologies to assist in trip planning, expanded interpretative services, and seamless delivery of the myriad outdoor recreation opportunities that help families to reconnect with each other while they connect to the land that sustains them. We will strengthen our relationships with communities adjacent to forests so that they may more fully reap the economic benefits of tourism and recreation.

The outdoor recreation industry and other recreation user groups are approaching a crossroads. I liken recreation to the timber industry twenty years ago. Who would have thought that timber harvests across the national forest system would decline by 70% in less than a decade? It is my belief that if we agree to abide by some basic principles, the recreation community can avoid what happened to the timber industry.

- Nothing should ever compromise public ownership of public lands.
- Our overriding objective must be to maintain the health, diversity, and productivity of our lands and waters - recreation use must occur within those ecological sideboards.
- Outdoor recreation is a wonderful way to educate our children about the wonders of nature and the imperative of treating and stewarding the land with respect.

In the end, recreation use - all uses of national forests and grasslands are about limits. Talking about limits to growth is very difficult for such a prosperous culture as ours. We are a nation of optimism, where we attempt to use technology and wealth to find solutions to resource dilemmas. Unfortunately, such growth even with the best technology often carries consequences.

Wild places and natural areas are of increasing importance to a society that can afford to protect them.

We are all too familiar with the battle between protection and development. The writer, T.H. Watkins recently said, "in natural regions, as in public libraries, we should not be allowed to do everything we can merely because we can do it." A decade ago, the timber program on national forests ran up against a buzz saw of changing social and environmental values in the Pacific Northwest. And just as surely as a river will find its flood plain, social values will prevail in such debates.

Most Americans value public lands for the sense of open space, wildness and naturalness they provide, clean air and water, and wildlife and fish. Other uses, whether they are ski developments, mountain biking trails, or off road vehicles have a place in our multiple use framework. But that place is reached only after we ensure that such activities do not, and will not, impair the productive capacity of the land. That is the essence of our recreation strategy.

Representing nearly 20% of the National Forest System and over 60% of the entire Wilderness Preservation System in the lower 48 states, the Forest Service's wilderness legacy is a crown jewel. When you consider the contributions of former agency employees' Bob Marshall, Arthur Carhart, and Aldo Leopold it would not be an overstatement to say that the Forest Service practically invented the wilderness concept.

In recent years, I have become concerned that our national commitment to the Wilderness Act has diminished and the resources to protect and manage the wilderness have not kept pace with our needs. Five years ago, my predecessor Jack Ward Thomas asked the question, "when I think of wilderness, I wonder who will be the next ones to step up, lead, and sacrifice for this precious resource? Who will see that the Wilderness doesn't get inched away from us, one compromise at a time?"

Jack, we are taking up your challenge. I am pleased to announce two specific actions to lend greater emphasis to our wilderness management.

- First, I am re-instituting the national-wilderness field advisory group to provide senior agency leadership with recommendations for preserving and protecting our rich wilderness legacy.
- Second, our wilderness portfolio should embody an even broader array of lands - from prairie to old growth forest. We will use our forest plan revision process over the next four to five years to better manage existing and identify potential new wilderness areas.

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- Increase by 50% from 1998, the miles of road we decommission or stabilize in FY 2000.
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Conclusion

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- An ethic that understands the need to reconnect our communities - both urban and rural - to the lands and waters that sustain them.
- An ethic that respects that the choices we make today influence the legacy that we bequeath to our children and their children's children.

Submitted by: Alan Polk

Contact: Chris Wood

Modified: 2/3/98

North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

Chief Mike Dombeck

March 29, 1999

Thank you very much for asking me to share with you my thoughts on the direction of natural resource management and conservation in this country.

I'm here representing the collective efforts of 30,000 dedicated Forest Service employees and partners as we mutually strive to protect, to restore, our natural resources through science, stewardship, and public awareness. I am excited and proud of the focused direction the Forest Service intends to lead into the next millennium.

But, before I get started. I want to thank the Wildlife Management Institute and all the cosponsors of the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. For over 6 decades the Institute has brought a focus to professional management of natural resources and conservation.

I'd also like to acknowledge Phil Janik, a familiar face at this conference. Phil is the new Chief Operating Officer of the Forest Service. His leadership skills will help guide the Forest Service into the next century.

As natural resource professionals, we look askance at politics. Yet, this past November's elections brought glad tidings for conservation. Voters in some 125 municipalities and States approved budget initiatives to promote land and water conservation and to acquire open space. Citizens directed a staggering \$5 billion of their hard earned dollars be used for State and local conservation efforts.

For example, the voters of Arizona have authorized \$20 million dollars annually to purchase State trust lands for conservation. The electorate of Minnesota dedicated \$50 million dollars per year towards local parks and conservation. Through the democratic process of the ballot box, a clear and simple message has been sent. Americans want and expect clean water, healthy lands, and open space.

What I would like to do today is share with you our vision for working with communities of place and communities of interest to develop and implement a shared national vision of healthy, diverse, and productive landscapes and watersheds.

Consider for a moment the limited dollars available for managing 191 million acres of national forest lands. Should our best efforts as conservation leaders be spent building roads in roadless areas or best focused on protecting and restoring this nation's natural resource wealth through research... through technical assistance... and by providing world-class examples of ecologically sustainable forest and grassland management?

Further consider forest fragmentation has doubled in 16 years, 7,000 acres of farmland and open space are being lost every day. There is an unrefuted correlation, loss of open space equals fragmented habitats and diminished forest tract size, the land's health is compromised. These facts demand action.

Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service said, "we must everywhere always prefer results to routine." Pinchot, along with Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall, Rachel Carson, and Arthur Carhart, also emphasized the importance of helping communities develop a more harmonious relationship with the

land and water that sustain us.

We are challenged to measure up to their legacy ensuring that the incentives that drive all aspects of our programs promote ecological sustainability. We have proposals, and a few successes that, with funding from Congress, will ensure that future forest management decisions are driven by the long-term interests of the land and the people that depend on it. For example:

- The Committee of Scientists, a group of noted scholars in the natural resource field, commissioned by Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman to advise the Forest Service on ways it could improve its forest planning, suggested that we:

1. Focus our planning efforts on the long-term sustainability of watersheds, forests, and grasslands and the ecological, economic, and social benefits they can provide.

2. More effectively link forest planning to budget and funding priorities.

3. Practice collaborative stewardship through use of diverse and balanced advisory groups and adaptive management based on well-designed monitoring

- We must bring greater accountability, more public scrutiny, and transparency to all our processes. We finance a significant percentage of our costs through timber related "trust funds" not subject to annual appropriations or public scrutiny. Given that timber production on national forests has declined by 70% in less than a decade, such an approach is unsustainable. This year, we will begin to implement administrative reforms to our trust funds while we consider more permanent legislative solutions. For example, we propose to revise the definition of salvage to reduce if not eliminate "associated green" timber often taken in salvage sales.

- Historically, the agency's success was often measured, and consequently funded, by outputs from the national forest system such as board feet of timber produced or the amount of grazing on forests and grasslands. This year we will implement land health performance measures that evaluate such things as clean water, wildlife and fish habitat, forest ecosystem health, and soil productivity and stability. We will still track traditional outputs of goods and services but they will be accomplished within the ecological sideboards imposed by land health.

- For the second year, we will propose to Congress separating timber harvest on national forests from the funds that counties receive to maintain schools and roads. Why should the richest country in the world finance the education of rural schoolchildren on the back of a controversial federal timber program?

Efforts such as these will demonstrate to Congress and the American people the imperative for making investments in the land. These investments may not yield year-end profits but dividends will be obvious when:

- Citizens of Salt Lake City, Sacramento, or Los Angeles turn on their faucets and drink cool, clean water, they will appreciate their investment in their national forests.

- Be obvious when: parents from the teeming urban centers of the East enjoy an afternoon with their children fishing on a lake on the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont, they will savor the moment and will remember the value of public lands.

- Be obvious when: a small mill operator in Montana sends twice as much wood fiber to market from a single tree due to Forest Service research and development, she will know that investing in our nation's natural resources future makes good economic sense.
- Be obvious when: a private landowner in Illinois bequeaths his child 20 acres of healthy, diverse and productive forestland through forest legacy conservation easements. He will be thankful that today's investments will result in a natural resource legacy for his family.

You know what this is? Iris is a brand of bottled water whose advertisement celebrates the fact that the Blue Ridge Mountains in Tennessee's Cherokee National Forest provide some of the cleanest and most pure drinking water in the area. I point this out because it speaks to the fact that the cleanest and largest amount of surface water runoff in the nation comes from forested landscapes. And, the purest of the clean water flows off of national forests. Here in San Francisco, approximately 75-80% of the fresh water that flows into the San Francisco Bay originates from land managed by the Forest Service. In addition, although national forests comprise only 20% of the state's land areas, they produce about 50% of the surface runoff.

Jay Cravens, a retired Forest Service employee offered me some advice not so long ago. He said, "Mike, just take care of soil and water and everything else will be OK." That sage counsel guides our approach to watershed management. I was thinking of Jay's words last summer as I floated down the Potomac River with my daughter one weekend. Not so long ago, rivers such as the Potomac were considered little more than open sewers. By the time my daughter graduated from high school however, we significantly slowed the flow of point source pollutants into the Potomac and hundreds of other major rivers because of the Clean Water Act.

Today some of the finest bass fishing in the east occurs on the Potomac River within view of the Jefferson Memorial. Here in California, because of the efforts of state and federal partnerships and coalitions such as the CALFED Bay-Delta program, we are significantly enhancing the quality of the state's rivers and riparian habitat.

Consider where the fresh water that is the economic life blood of California comes from. The great rivers of this State - The American, Eel, Feather, Kern, Kings, Klamath, Salmon, Merced, Smith, Trinity, Tuolumne, Sacramento, San Joaquin - all originate or flow through national forests in California. As land stewards, it is our responsibility to see that these rivers remain clean and clear.

Let me tell you about two projects being carried out right now here in California that will help maintain this legacy of cool, clean, clear water for an ever demanding population.

High in the mountains of the Plumas National Forest northeast of here, Terry Benoit, the Forest Hydrologist, has been coordinating work to restore Big Flax meadow at the headwaters of the Feather River, the beginning of the State's water project. Conducted in cooperation with the Feather River Coordinated Resource Management group, this effort was designed to revitalize the "sponge effect" of the 47-acre meadow and renew its wetland qualities. Flows that were intermittent are now perennial and a trout fishery has returned. There is both open water and wet meadow habitat containing waterfowl, amphibians, and numerous mammals, where once there were dry meadows. The dry land plant community is rapidly converting to wetland species. Restoring more meadows like Big Flat will go a long way towards returning watersheds to their proper functioning condition.

On the Almanor District of the Lassen National Forest, at the headwaters of the Sacramento River, Russ Volke and his team, are using a collaborative approach to improving critical spawning habitat

for steelhead and spring run Chinook salmon. Three watersheds, Deer, Mill, and Antelope Creeks, are the last unobstructed anadromous fisheries in interior California. The Forest Service is pursuing a number of collaborative efforts to improve conditions in these watersheds, emphasizing projects focused on reducing sediment from roads. Using funds from a CALFED grant, the Road and Trail Deposit program, and the watershed and fisheries programs, the Lassen has inventoried problem sites, and is implementing solutions that include replacing undersized culverts, road surfacing, closing and stabilizing unneeded roads, and correcting drainage problems. In addition, the Forest is working with other agencies and private landowners in four watershed conservancies to integrate restoration and monitoring efforts on all land ownerships within these watersheds.

When you consider that efforts such as these are blossoming around the county, on both public and private forestlands, I am very optimistic for the future.

Within the next five years, over 65% of our forest plans, representing over 150 million acres of land, are scheduled for revision. In keeping with Clean Water Action Plan commitments and consistent with our mandates from the Organic Act of 1897 through the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water acts, watershed health and restoration will be the overriding priority in all future forest plans.

Our National Forests truly are the headwaters of America, supplying river systems, and recharging aquifers. They contain riparian, wetland, and coastal areas that are essential for the nation's water supply and prosperity. Our forested landscapes contain the coolest and cleanest water in the nation. In addition, our forests serve as reservoirs of biological diversity. For example, 181 of the 327 watersheds identified by The Nature Conservancy as critical for the conservation of bio-diversity, are in National Forests.

In the State of the Union, President Clinton announced new initiatives to protect open space, benefit urban forests, and improve the quality of life for the 80% of Americans living in urban and suburban areas. The Forest Service will play an essential role in their accomplishment.

With proposed increases to our budget we plan to:

- Work with state agencies and others to develop conservation and stewardship plans for an additional 740,000 acres of non-industrial private forestland.
- Help states protect an estimated 135,000 additional acres of forestland through acquisitions and conservation easements
- Include nearly 800 more communities in efforts to conserve urban and community forests.

Providing a steady supply of wood fiber remains an important multiple use goal of the Forest Service. Some would ignore increasing rates of national wood consumption and argue for a "zero-cut" approach to managing forests. Until we stop importing wood to meet the nation's demands from countries with more lax environmental restrictions than ours, I think this position is misguided. Forest Service research will expand efforts to improve wood recycling, conservation, and increased wood utilization. The more that timber harvest contributes to ecological sustainability, the more predictable timber outputs will be. National Forests themselves should be a model for ecologically sustainable forest management.

- We are requesting increased funding to step up the pace of forest health monitoring to complete nation-wide mapping by year 2003.

- Proposed increases to our research budget will result in the agency producing a comprehensive peer-reviewed report in the year 2000 on how forest management activities can restore watersheds and fish and wildlife habitat, re-establish forest stand structure, reduce the risk of unnaturally occurring catastrophic fires, and otherwise restore ecological integrity

We will protect the basic soil, water, and biotic resources of our forests and accelerate the restoration of forest and rangeland ecosystem integrity. To help accomplish these objectives, our proposed 2000 budget requests funding to:

- Improve an additional 38,000 acres of terrestrial habitat.
- 7,000 acres of lake habitat.
- 1,100 miles of stream habitat.
- Restore over 100,000 acres of aspen stands.
- Work with state fish and wildlife agencies and others to complete additional 31 conservation strategies.
- Slow the spread of invasive non-native species of fish, plants, and wildlife while increasing prevention efforts.
- And double fuel treatment acres to 1.4 million.

Recreation will continue to be a major emphasis of the natural resource agenda. Increasingly, outdoor recreation is the way an urbanized society interacts with the natural world. In 1997, national forests accommodated more than 40% of all outdoor recreation use on public lands in the United States. This use is forecasted to increase dramatically over the next 50 years.

Our recreation strategy focuses on providing the American people the finest wildland recreation experience in the world. As part of that strategy we are using new technologies to assist in trip planning, expanded interpretive services, and seamless delivery of the myriad wildland recreation opportunities that help families to reconnect with each other while they connect to the land that sustains them. We will strengthen our relationships with communities adjacent to forests so that they may more fully reap the economic benefits of tourism and recreation.

I see outdoor recreation continuing to expand as long as we abide by some basic principles:

- Nothing should ever compromise public ownership of public lands.
- Our overriding objective must be to maintain the health, diversity, and productivity of our lands and waters ³/₄ recreation, like all uses, must occur within those ecological sideboards.
- We must continue to educate our children about the wonders of nature and treating the land with respect.

Wild places and natural areas are of increasing importance to a society that can afford to protect them. We are all too familiar with the battle between protection and development. A decade ago, the timber program on national forests ran up against a buzz saw of changing social and environmental values in the Pacific Northwest. And just as surely as a river will find its flood plain, social values will prevail in such debates.

Most Americans value public lands for the sense of open space, wildness and naturalness they provide, clean air and water, and wildlife and fish. Other uses, whether they are ski developments,

mountain biking trails, or off road vehicles have a place in our multiple use framework. But that place is reached only after we ensure that such activities do not, and will not, impair the health of the land.

A key element of our recreation strategy is Wilderness. The Forest Service's wilderness legacy is a crown jewel, representing nearly 20% of the National Forest System and over 60% of the entire Wilderness Preservation System in the lower 48 states. When you consider the contributions of former agency employees' Bob Marshall, Arthur Carhart, and Aldo Leopold it would not be an overstatement to say that the Forest Service practically invented the wilderness concept.

Five years ago, my predecessor Jack Ward Thomas asked the question, "when I think of wilderness, I wonder who will be the next ones to step up, lead, and sacrifice for this precious resource? Who will see that the Wilderness doesn't get inched away from us, one compromise at a time?" We will take up that challenge.

- First, I am re-instituting the national-wilderness field advisory group to provide senior agency leadership with recommendations for preserving and protecting our rich wilderness legacy.

- Second, our wilderness portfolio should embody an even broader array of lands -- from prairie to old growth forest. We will use our forest plan revision process over the next four to five years to better manage existing and identify potential new wilderness areas.

Our interim suspension of road construction in roadless areas is in place. It is my expectation that in the future, we will rarely build new roads into roadless areas, and if we do, it will be in order to accomplish broader ecological objectives. Unfortunately, few people or interest groups are focussed on the issue of our existing road system as opposed to the roadless area issue. Yet if we care about restoring the ecological fabric of the landscape, the health of our watersheds, we must address already roaded areas.

Many roadless areas have become refugia -- areas of high biotic integrity where remnant populations of many native species persist. The irony is that roadless areas are historically among the least biologically productive portions of the landscape -- typically higher elevation with steep slopes, unstable soils, and often areas of low productivity.

If we ever hope to reconnect the tattered fabric of individual watersheds to an entire landscape, we must look to the areas along valley bottoms and main stem rivers -- in other words, the already roaded areas. Areas of high biological diversity and productivity historically were our flood plains, river bottoms, riparian zones, wetlands, and valley floors.

With roads that could encircle the globe many times over, our road system is largely complete. Our challenge is to shrink the system considerably while still providing for efficient and safe public access in a manner that protects the land's health. Over the next 18 months or so, we will develop a long-term road policy with three primary objectives:

It is my expectation decisions about local roads will be made by local managers working with local communities and those who care about our National Forests all within the context of science.

We will not delay in taking immediate action to stabilize or decommission roads that pose public safety or environmental problems. With proposed funding from Congress, we will:

- Increase by 50% from 1998, the miles of road we decommission or stabilize in FY 2000.

- Increase the percentage of forest roads maintained to standard from 18% to 24%.

Let me leave you with some thoughts about natural resource stewardship as we enter the new millennium:

- This nation entered this century with leaders like Gifford Pinchot, Teddy Roosevelt, Aldo Leopold. They elevated conservation to a new plateau, established national forests and parks, advocated the importance of protecting watersheds and wilderness.
- Fifty years later, a war weary nation found jobs, and economic vitality through its forest products.
- And today, as our prosperous nation grows and matures, our National Forests serve as a place of renewal for its people, a sanctuary for conservation of species, a source of water and other products within the ecological limits of the land.
- This country is littered with failed agencies and businesses that could not or would not adapt to a changing environment. The Forest Service has and will continue its evolution of practice and support of the people's lands.

And finally, I close with the well quoted, but not often enough listened to, words of Aldo Leopold. "Examine each [land use] question in terms of what is ethically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to otherwise." In this the 50th anniversary of Aldo Leopold's seminal work *A Sand County Almanac*, let us recommit ourselves to an invigorated national land ethic.

- An ethic that recognizes that we cannot meet the social and economic needs of people without first securing the health, diversity, and productivity of our lands and waters.
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- An ethic that respects the legacy we bequeath to our children and their children's children.

I thank you for this opportunity to share some thoughts on the direction and initiatives of the Forest Service.

Contact: Joe Walsh 205-1134 Modified: 3/31/99

*Thank you Don Dickson
understands Jim Lyons.*

North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference
Chief Mike Dombeck
March 29, 1999

Roger

Thank you very much for asking me to share with you my thoughts on the direction of natural resource management and conservation in this country.

*Recognize
max & Jack*

I'm here representing the collective efforts of 30,000 dedicated Forest Service employees and partners as we mutually strive to protect...to restore...our natural resources through science, stewardship, and public awareness. I am excited and proud of the focused direction the Forest Service intends to lead into the next millenium.

*Scientists &
Resource
managment
Professionals*

But, before I get started, I want to thank the Wildlife Management Institute and all the cosponsors of the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. For over 6 decades the Institute has brought a focus to professional management of natural resources and conservation *education.*

I'd also like to acknowledge Phil Janik, a familiar face at this conference. Phil is the new Chief Operating Officer of the Forest Service. His leadership skills will help guide the Forest Service into the next century.

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2.2

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Water Bottle

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investments may not yield year-end profits but dividends will be obvious when:

- Citizens of Salt Lake City, Sacramento, or Los Angeles turn on their faucets and drink cool, clean water, they will appreciate their investment in their national forests.
- Be obvious when: parents from the teeming urban centers of the East enjoy an afternoon with their children fishing on a lake on the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont, they will savor the moment and will remember the value of public lands.
- Be obvious when: a small mill operator in Montana sends twice as much wood fiber to market from a single tree due to Forest Service research and development, she will know that investing in our nation's natural resources future makes good economic sense.
- Be obvious when: a private landowner in Illinois bequeaths his child 20 acres of healthy, diverse and productive forestland through forest legacy conservation easements. He will be thankful that today's investments will result in a natural resource legacy for his family.

(PAUSE...)

Water bottles

approach is unsustainable. This year, we will begin to implement administrative reforms to our trust funds while we consider more permanent legislative solutions. For example, we propose to revise the definition of salvage to reduce if not eliminate "associated green" timber often taken in salvage sales.

- Historically, the agency's success was often measured, and consequently funded, by outputs from the national forest system such as board feet of timber produced or the amount of grazing on forests and grasslands. This year we will implement land health performance measures that evaluate such things as clean water, wildlife and fish habitat, forest ecosystem health, and soil productivity and stability. We will still track traditional outputs of goods and services but they *will be accomplished within the ecological sideboards ^{of the} imposed by land health.*

- For the second year, we will propose to Congress separating timber harvest on national forests from the funds that counties receive to maintain schools and roads. Why should the richest country in the world finance the education of rural schoolchildren on the back of a controversial federal timber program?

Efforts such as these will demonstrate to Congress and the American people the imperative for making investments in the land. These

decisions are driven by the long-term interests of the land and the people that depend on it. For example:

- The Committee of Scientists, a group of noted scholars in the natural resource field, commissioned by Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman to advise the Forest Service on ways it could improve its forest planning, suggested that we:

1. Focus our planning efforts on the long-term sustainability of watersheds, forests, and grasslands and the ecological, economic, and social benefits they can provide.

2. More effectively link forest planning to budget and funding priorities.

and really

3. Practice collaborative stewardship through use of diverse and balanced advisory groups and adaptive management based on well-designed monitoring.

Pause

- We must bring greater accountability, more public scrutiny, and transparency to all our processes. We finance a significant percentage of our costs through timber related "trust funds" not subjective to annual appropriations or public scrutiny. Given that timber production on national forests has declined by 70% in less than a decade, such an

conservation leaders be spent building roads in roadless areas...**or**....best focused on protecting and restoring this nation's natural resource wealth through research...through technical assistance...and by providing world-class examples of ecologically sustainable forest and grassland management. *on our National Forests.*

Further consider forest fragmentation has doubled in 16 years...7,000 acres of farmland and open space are being lost every day. There is an unrefuted correlation...loss of open space equals fragmented habitats and diminished forest tract size...the land's health is compromised. These facts demand action. (Pause)

Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service said, "we must everywhere always prefer results to routine." Pinchot, along with Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall, Rachel Carson, and Arthur Carhart, also emphasized the importance of helping communities develop a more harmonious relationship with the land and water that sustain us.

We are ^{*challenged*} **challenged** to measure up to their legacy ensuring that the incentives that drive all aspects of our programs promote ecological sustainability. We have proposals, and a few successes that, with funding from Congress, will ensure that future forest management

(PAUSE-PAUSE)

...As natural resource professionals, we look askance at politics. Yet, this past November's elections brought glad tidings for conservation. Voters in some 125 municipalities and States approved budget initiatives to promote land and water conservation and to acquire open space. Citizens directed a staggering 5 ^{Yes 5 billion} billion of their hard earned dollars be used for State and local conservation efforts.

For example, the voters of Arizona have authorized \$20 million dollars annually to purchase State trust lands for conservation. The electorate of Minnesota dedicated \$50 million dollars per year towards local parks and conservation.Through the ^{most} democratic process of ^{all} the ballot box, a clear and simple message has been sent. Americans want and expect clean water, healthy lands, and open space.

What I would like to do today is share with you our vision for working with communities of place... and...communities of interest...to develop and implement a shared national vision of healthy, diverse, and productive landscapes and watersheds.

....**Consider** for a moment the limited dollars available for managing 191 million acres of national forest lands.... Should our best efforts as

- An ethic that recognizes that we cannot meet the social and economic needs of people without first securing the health, diversity, and productivity of our lands and waters.
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