Box 20, Folder 1: Policy background documents, Vol. II (Folder 1 of 2). 1997-1998

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WOMEN IN THE FOREST SERVICE: EARLY HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS

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The first half of this century, women were expected to conform to the roles and rules set at the end of the late 19th century, the so-called Victorian era. Men were believed to be the physically strong, mentally capable, prone to action, outdoor oriented, and leaders of society. Women were thought to be the weak, passive, supporters, homemakers, submissive, and followers of strong leaders (men). Thus, after the Forest Service was established in the summer of 1905, it is not surprising that men were the only employees doing field work, and most office work, while women were not allowed to take such "dangerous" outdoor jobs and only grudgingly such jobs as clerks and typists.

The Forest Service, as well as most other employers in the era, began slowly to realize that being a woman was no barrier to any job. The struggle for women to get full recognition for their abilities has taken almost eight decades to come to fruition.

The early history of women employed by the USDA Forest Service are found mostly in anecdotal accounts (e.g., the two-volume set, *Sampler of the Early Years,* by the Forestry Wives Club). To this date, no researcher or writer has attempted to compile good solid data on women employees in the Forest Service until recent times. However, growing interest in women as employees has taken a turn for the better with the publication of the journal, *Women in Forestry* (now called *Women in Natural Resources*), since 1979.

WOMEN IN THE OFFICE WORKPLACE - THE EARLY YEARS

The first accounts of the Forest Service employing women came from the Washington office during Pinchot's term as Chief (or Forester as he wished to be called) from 1905-1910. Women were employed as clerks or "typewriters" in an office setting. At the forest supervisor's office (there were no regional offices until 1908), women might have been occasionally employed, but not on a regular basis. This was the era of male bank tellers and male clerks in practically every office and business setting.

The typical supervisor's office (the headquarters for a national forest) often had fewer than five employees, comprised of the forest supervisor, deputy supervisor, and clerk. The other national forest employees (often fewer than a dozen) were rangers and forest guards, who were usually riding their horses on the national forest during the spring, summer, and fall months. There were no ranger district offices until around 1910-12 and even then they were staffed by men. In the winter months, these field employees were either furloughed or given clerical tasks in the supervisor's office. This was typical until the 1930s.

When the regional offices were established in November and December of 1908, employees in the Washington office were offered employment in the more "remote" locations around the U.S., including Missoula, Denver, Albuquerque, Ogden, San Francisco, and Portland. Many women employees went West, settling into these new offices for their entire careers. Albert Cousins wrote about women in the early regional offices:

> When District 6 [Pacific Northwest Region today] was established and its personnel organized, the employment of women clerks in the Supervisor's office was not looked upon with favor and the policy was established to employ men only - the idea being that a woman clerk could not handle the "rough" work required in the administration of a forest, such as assembling and shipping fire tools, rustling fire fighters, etc. Such work properly was for a "two-fisted" ranger or forest officer. However, it was not long before it became apparent that there was another element in forest officers' work which had not been taken into consideration. That was PAPER WORK: reports, letters to forest users, etc. Such work proved to be too much for the "two-fisted" rangers and supervisors. Their experience with

> paper work was practically "nil." Under such conditions the idea grew that "perhaps" women did have a place in forest organization and so "Lovely women" got her "foot in the door." The result was very satisfactory and you know the rest of the story (Cousins 1955: n.p.).

Generally, it took several more decades to find women employed on the national forests or ranger districts. As the need for increased staffing on the forests began during the mid- to late-1920s, women began to be hired for clerical positions. It wasn't until after the end of World War II that the huge increase in staffing was necessary at the supervisor's office or ranger district levels.

WOMEN IN THE FIELD - THE EARLY DAYS

Basically, there were no women hired by the Forest Service to do field work for many decades. There are a few accounts of women accompanying their husbands in forest ranger duty as early as 1902 in the Cascades of Oregon and probably other places, but they were not actually employed. There were, however, several instances when women were employed as lookouts (fire spotters) in remote locations. The first women employed by the Forest Service as a lookout was Hallie M. Daggett, who started work at Eddy's Gulch Lookout Station atop Klamath Peak (Klamath NF) in the summer of 1913 (she worked as lookout for 14 years):

> Few women would care for such a job, fewer still would seek it, and still less would be able to stand the strain of the infinite loneliness, or the roar of the violent storms which sweep the peak, or the menace of the wild beasts which roam the heavily wooded ridges. Miss Daggett, however, not only eagerly longed for the station but secured it after considerable exertion and now she declares that she enjoyed the life and was intensely interested in the work she had to do....Some of the Service men predicted that after a few days of life on the peak she would telephone that she was frightened by the loneliness and the danger, but she was full of pluck and high spirit...[and] she grew more and more in love with the work. Even when the telephone wires were broken and when for a long time she was cut off from communication with the world below she did not lose heart. She not only filled the place with all the skill which a trained man could have shown but she desires to be reappointed when the fire season opens this year [1914] (*American Forestry* 1914: 174, 176).

These lookout stations were primitive at best. The well known and well stocked lookout houses and towers we think of today were but a glimmer in the forest ranger's eye. Iva Gruenewald described her lookout on Tumwater Mountain near Leavenworth on the Wenatchee NF: "There was no cabin, or lookout tower but a tent down in a sheltered place among a few trees. My 'office' was a very rocky higher peak, no shelter from wind, or sun, just a map, a phone and an alidade to locate fires in all four directions (Gruenewald 1983: 1)."

There were several stories published in national magazines about the idealized experiences of women as lookouts during World War I: "The Woman's Home Companion and the American Magazine are the latest to run stories telling of the wild, isolated, odd, interesting, unusual, brave, courageous, noble, primal, patriotic, western, romantic life that these ladies lead (*Six Twenty-Six*, April 1921: 31)." But, as Gladys Murray, a woman lookout at the Columbia Lookout on the Colville National Forest during World War I, suggests from her experiences:

> Being a lookout was quite an experience this year for it was probably the worst fire season the west has known. During July and August I located and reported fifty fires. I was provided with the standard Osborne fire finder, which can be mastered in a moment....It is a wonderful sight to witness an electric storm about the adjacent peaks at this altitude [about 7,000 feet]....The Forest Supervisor kindly approved my request for a warm log cabin for next year and the sturdy building is now ready to roof and receive its windows. I like the job and the Forest bunch likes me so it won't be difficult for me to return next year (Murray 1919: 7-8).

These women were to be fire spotters only, not fire fighters. However, there is an account of a lookout fighting fire on the Fremont NF during the war: "The Fremont has a woman who is not only a lookout but also a fireman. Mrs. Bertha Covert is her name, and she is stationed on Dog Mountain. She has demonstrated her ability in fighting forest fires on three different occasions, and when not otherwise engaged is not averse to using the pick and shovel with good effect on roads and trails (*Six Twenty-Six*, September 1918: 12)."

There is one account of a woman employed during the First World War as a "patrolwoman" on the Willamette National Forest: "Miss Helen McCormick, of Eugene, has been employed to patrol in the Upper McKenzie River country....Her district will embrace the territory between Blue River village and the Blue River mines [about 10 miles]. She will cover this district on horseback; carrying an emergence camping outfit, to be prepared for the nights which must necessarily be spent along the trail." These are the only accounts found, thus far, of women employed in field going positions on the national forests in other than a lookout position in these early years.

However competent these women were at their duties on the national forests, there was still the prevailing attitude among society about women employed in non-traditional jobs:

> Another [woman] recently applied for the position of ranger. This latter wrote from the "O. A. C." [now Oregon State University], and among other things stated: "...As I understand, these duties belong to the position of Forest Ranger:- First, to ride the range; having ridden horseback the greater part of my life, this prospect is not displeasing. Second, to look for and fight fire; this of course is to be expected in work of this sort, and I feel that the very strongest emphasis must be placed on the first part. A constant lookout must be maintained if great losses in this way are to be prevented. And, third, to build seven miles of trail, cut out all logs and remove rocks....I see nothing alarming in this requirement. The trails over which I have ridden...were not above a woman's power of construction...." We have the lady's address on file, and should any of the other Supervisors want to give her a tryout we will be glad to furnish it (*Six Twenty-Six* May 1918: 10-11).

Records of women employed on the national forests during the period between the wars are non-existent, other than a very few lookouts. In fact, after the "War to End All Wars," women were "supposed" to return to their household duties (the same held true after the next war). Even the lookout positions were felt to be man's work. After the war, a few magazine articles appeared about the women who took the manly outdoor jobs during the war years: "As a result of which Supers [Forest Supervisors] are given warning that they will probably be flooded with letters written in neat, Spencerian style, asking for jobs, from many school marms (*Six Twenty-Six*, April 1921: 31)."

Then the Forest Service *D-3 Bulletin*, now Region 3-Southwest, believed that the proper place for women was not as lookout: "From Georgia comes the first shot of the current lookout season for applications for the romantic and thrilling position of lookout-woman. She has a beautiful name, writes a fine hand, and offers more details of her qualifications. Sadly but firmly, however, her request for a job has been passed up with appropriate words of regret (*Six Twenty-Six*, Feb. 4, 1924: 6)."

As for other forest positions, the mood was much the same. During the spring of 1920, this report shows the prevailing tenor of the times: "Miss Mildred Johnson of Corvallis (O.A.C. [Oregon State University]) has made inquiry in regard to qualifications and training essential before she might take the Grazing Assistant examination to be held April 7 and 8. Watch out Mr. Grazing Assistant. J.L.P. (*Six Twenty-Six*, March 20, 1920: 5)."

Typically, Iva Gruenewald, a lookout for four summers, was offered a clerk position, which she accepted. After working on the Okanogan for about a year, she married and left the Forest Service: "Had I been a male perhaps I would have liked to have stayed in the forestry. However, I found my to-be husband in the

social life of the little town, and marriage. So family life took over in the fall of 1923 (Gruenewald, 1983: 5-6)."

During World War II, there was another surge of women employed as lookouts on the national forests. "It has been indicated that the forest service may employ women for lookout service. Announcement was made in Bend some time ago that classes designed to prepare women for this work has been organized. A similar report came out of Corvallis (*The Forest Log*, April 1943)." The following month the same newsletter mentioned that:

> The Portland [Regional] office of the U. S. Forest Service announces that 246 women have been hired to fill fire-protection positions next summer in the national forests of Oregon and Washington. School teachers and wives of men in the military services constitute the majority of the employees.
>
> These women are to be assigned to lookout service, patrol of campgrounds, truck drivers, alternate fire dispatchers, cooks for fire crews, telephone operators and clerks in rangers' offices. *The women will be assigned to lookouts only when there is no smoke-chasing attached to the job.*
>
> One ranger has reported that he has been able to employ a versatile young woman who can handle his string of pack mules, drive a fire truck, operate a fire pump, write shorthand and type his official letters. [Emphasis added.]

Gale Burwell, now retired from the Willamette NF, related that she served as a lookout on the Siskiyou NF during World War II. She had specific instructions that if a fire was spotted nearby, even threatening the lookout cabin, she was to call in the fire to the ranger station so that a male smoke chaser could come to put it out!

There were also women who worked as aircraft observers during World War II. From 1942 to 1943, women and couples were employed as part of the Aircraft Warning Service (AWS) to search the sky for enemy airplanes that never came. The AWS system was for reporting any airplane that flew over or near the lookout that you were assigned to. Generally, there were several lookouts per national forest that were assigned AWS duties. The AWS lookouts were open 24-hours a day, 365 days a year. The AWS was disbanded in early 1943 when the coastal radar system became effective.

THE RANGERS' WIVES - THE UNPAID EMPLOYEES

For years, the wives of the District Rangers and other district employees served as unpaid employees ("volunteers"). Wives were often considered a convenient, necessary, and free source of labor on ranger districts short on staff and money. In fact, wives who balked at doing such free work were thought of as being unloyal to their husbands and the Forest Service. "Wives of career rangers generally assumed extra duties early in their marriages and continued them until their husbands retired or died (Pendergrass 1990: 18)."

Typically, the early Forest Service had only a handful of employees that were hired year-round. During fire season, men were hired to fight fires, but only after the fires began. This meant that the primary smoke chasers were already out on the fire when more men and equipment would be needed. Prior to the Civilian Conservation Corps days (1933-1941), men were hired from local areas around the ranger district, or on occasion scavenged from the cities (often drunks and homeless men) to fight fires. This was a time when the wives were often enlisted as unpaid employees funneling men and supplies to fight the fires, as well as serving as telephone operators (both public and Forest Service), cooks, and overall managers of the entire ranger districts.

> The role of the ranger's wife has varied tremendously depending upon the orientation, personality, and motivation of the individual. Some have been strictly the ultimate helpmates, providing necessary clerical support and morale to harassed husbands who lacked sufficient staff, money, and time to meet both the physical and administrative demands of the job. Other have become de facto assistant rangers. In a number of reminiscences, Forest Service men admit to taking advantage of their wives, but there is little written record to show that the wives considered themselves exploited. Many women believed themselves fulfilled because of the valuable assistance they provided their husbands (Pendergrass 1990: 17).

As the ranger stations were most often in remote locations, Forest Service families faced a lonely life with a Spartan lifestyle and with few amenities. They were burdened with many responsibilities and resourcefulness was an important part of living in these conditions. Women, especially, had the additional burden of rearing children in the home. As a result wives were, in some cases, acknowledged as better leaders and organizers than their husbands:

> Beginning in the middle of August, 1922, lightning storms set many fires in the Entiat ranger district [Wenatchee NF]. The fires started by these storms kept Ranger [James] McKenzie and his protective assistant away from the ranger station almost continuously for several weeks. Ranger McKenzie left his wife in charge at the station and in two days' time 15 fires were reported to her. She was alone and had entire charge of getting men, pack outfits and provisions together, hiring horses for them and sending them to the fires and according to Mr. McKenzie she did better than any man could have done, including himself. Mr. Springer, who was central fire dispatcher at Leavenworth [WA] at that time, and reported many of these fires to Mrs. McKenzie states that he was reluctant and ashamed of having to report so many fires to her, knowing she was alone, but on the other hand, knew that she would cope with the situation better than anyone else and did not feel at all doubtful when told by her that she would get someone to go [to the fire] (*Six Twenty-Six*, May 1924: 14).

By and large, these women felt it was their duty to support their husbands, the Forest Service, and the national forests in any way possible. It was also expected that they serve as the district counselor, organizer of community events, and serve on local school boards, clubs, and associations--in general, have great leadership skills and duties without the pay or recognition that goes along with those responsibilities.

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THE PROPERTY RIGHTS MOVEMENT:

REFERENCES ON THE CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING THE FOREST RESERVES, GRAZING RIGHTS, SAGEBRUSH REBELLION, STATE AND COUNTY RIGHTS, AND WISE USE, 1891 TO PRESENT

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PROPERTY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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Since the beginning of what is now the United States, there have been a series of efforts to transfer the "wide open spaces" (Public Domain) from public ownership to private ownership. Initially, large grants of land were given by European kings and queens to encourage settlement of North America. With the establishment of the United States, the policy of the federal government from 1776 to 1872 was to get rid of all the Public Domain land by selling, gift or grant.

A variety of homestead acts from the 1850s forward was incentive for many thousands to move to the "untamed" West, often just "liberated" from the Indians, obtain free or cheap land, and turn it into productive farms or ranches. Many millions of acres of public lands were thus provided to settlers either through these homestead laws or the outright sale of the land. Millions of acres of public land were also granted to war veterans, states, railroads, and military wagon roads.

Reserving public land for present and future generations took a giant swing in 1872, when the Yellowstone National Park was created - the first national park in the world. Some nineteen years later, the so-called Forest Reserve Act of 1891 allowed the President, with the stroke of a pen, to establish "Forest Reserves" from public domain land that was covered with timber. Within a few years, many million of acres of public forest land would be retained by the federal government rather than sold. This 100-year plus forest reserve (now national forest) policy still affects the discussions about the role of public lands and land management today.

Initially, forest reserves created in the 1891-1893 era were non-controversial, but in 1897 they became the center of a great multi-state outcry over the establishment of some 17 million acres of forest reserves on February 22, 1897. The controversies were led by state legislatures, chambers of commerce, miners, timber barons, settlers, and graziers. Congress reacted by suspending most of the reserves, but allowing the first management of them.

These laws were very successful, although as with any government "give-away" of land, there were always those who sought to seek an advantage through underhanded deals with politicians or government employees. For Oregon, this culminated in the famous land fraud trials of the 1903-10 era, when many political figures, federal, state, and county agents, and land scammers were brought to trial. Other states did not have the sensational public trials, thus "land sharks" were quick to find any loopholes in every homestead act or regulation for their monetary gain.

John B. Wright, in his book *Rocky Mountain Divide: Selling & Saving the West* (1993) described several trends in the early 1900s. At about the same time as the land fraud trials, the "Country Life Movement" arose, with the blessings and encouragement of President Theodore Roosevelt. His 1908 Commission on Country-Life was to investigate rural areas and to make any recommendations they felt necessary. It was based on the premise that the strength of the country was in farming and the families would benefit in hard work, which would make independent thinkers and solid citizens. The result was for Congress to pass several laws to encourage people to move to the country to "invigorate" the dry land areas of the Rockies and other places. Although the movement was short-lived, it set up an ideal in the minds of millions for free land and creating your own self-sustaining life outside the confines of the cities.

Following this was the "Back-to-the-Land" craze, which was not as idealistic. It was more of a real estate dream of buying rural property cheaply and selling it to city folks at inflated prices (not much different than today in many areas of the West). More laws were passed to encourage settlement of "undisposed" government land. Although the effort was mainly over by the 1930s, there were still elements of this

movement in the 1960s and 70s with the "Back-to-Nature" seekers. Many of these people were money-less and "squatted" on federal land, while a few tried to use the mining laws to their advantage. Some had enough money to purchase land and homes near federal land throughout the West.

Other short-lived efforts followed to transfer federal land to the states or corporations: As early as the Taft administration (1908-1912), there were officials in most administrations who favored the idea of federal land transfers. Various national timber industry groups favored national forest transfer to private interests after both world wars. Even the ranching industry led a "great land grab" movement in the late 1940s and early 1950s seeking to have the public grazing lands transferred to those private interests who used the land and therefore had "vested interests."

The Public Land Law Review Commission of the late 1960s sparked another round of public land transfer ideas. The chair of the commission, Wayne Aspinall, favored most if not all of the public lands should be transferred to the private and/or state sectors. He was reported to have said "We must find the means to provide for the transfer of the public land into non-federal ownership (as quoted in Klyza 1996: 13)."

This was followed by a quite different movement in the 1970s and 80s with the "Sagebrush Rebellion." This effort was largely a land-owner inspired effort to take over or purchase, cheaply, federal grazing land (mostly Bureau of Land Management administered land), which they were accustomed to using. This movement, which was gaining tremendous popularity in the mid- to late-1970s, was effectively taken over by the Ronald Reagan administration of the early 1980s. Reagan, and Interior Secretary James Watt, were sympathetic to the western-led effort, but it fizzled into political slogans and then an aborted "asset management" program to sell off unwanted portions of the public lands.

The "Wise Use Movement" (an off-shoot of the Sagebrush Rebellion), came into being after an August 1988 "Multiple Use Strategy Conference." This national meeting was called by the people, organizations, and companies which utilize the many resources found upon federal lands. It was intended to start an effort to counteract the highly successful efforts by environmental groups to enact tough environmental laws, enforce existing regulations, and stop or slow down projects on federal land. At the conference, 21 goals were adopted covering national parks, wilderness, grazing, mining, timber harvesting, etc.

The Wise Use Movement members are almost all in the West, located in rural communities that are in some ways dependent on mining, forestry, and ranching ways of life. The Wise Use/Home Rule Movement despises federal or state ownership of land and the complexity of overlapping laws and regulations. Ideally, under the Wise Use Movement scenario federal ownership of lands would disappear, to be replaced by state or county ownership or even ownership by individuals and corporations (Klyza 1996).

The following references document some of the many sources on this subject. This is <u>not</u> an exhaustive list of references on the property rights movement. Parentheticals contain keywords regarding organizations and people involved in the movement. Many of the references below were originally compiled from listing by the Forest Service's Washington Office and the Pacific Northwest Regional Office in Portland, Oregon.

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