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Forest Service Vision: or, Does the Forest Service Have a Future?

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Abstract

This paper maintains that the Forest Service (FS), as an institution, is in deep trouble. It argues that the FS today is an agency without a unique mission and without a supporting constituency. For the FS to be viable in the future it needs a distinct well-defined mission and a committed constituency. The distinct mission needs to be generally supported, or at least not opposed, by most of the American people. The constituency needs to be committed to the FS to the extent that it will provide major support in the Congress for FS budgets.

The paper identifies some potential candidates for a mission for the National Forest System (NFS), e.g., as a biological reserve or as a provider of forest recreation. Another potential paradigm could be that of the Quincy Library Group, which apparently is going to receive separate Congressional funding and a unique management mandate for a set of national forests in California. This paper examines the feasibility of these missions and paradigms including budget and constituency support.

Finally, there is the question of whether the FS has completed its useful life and if society would be better served by merging existing land management agencies into an integrated agency that can better provide for the coordinated management required.

Key Words: forestry, Forest Service, forest management, federal lands

JEL Classification Numbers: H41, H42, Q23, Q26, Q28,

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FOREST SERVICE VISION: OR, DOES THE FOREST SERVICE HAVE A FUTURE?

Roger A. Sedjo*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Forest Service (FS) is in transition. Change is everywhere. The FS knows where it has been, but it has a much less clear vision of where it is going. Just before leaving the FS in late 1996 then Chief Jack Ward Thomas stated, "The Forest Service needs a revision, or at least, a clarified mission" (Thomas 1996, p. 182).

Historically, the FS mission has been fairly well defined. The 1897 Organic Act gave three purposes to the Forest Reserves:

- (1) to preserve and protect the forest within the reservation,
- (2) to secure favorable conditions of water flows, and
- (3) to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of the people of the United States.

In the intervening period the mandate was expanded to include other of the multiple-uses of the forest (see Appendix). The most recent comprehensive forest legislation, the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976, mandates the Forest Service to "provide(s) for multiple use and sustained yield of the products and services obtained therefrom, . . . and, in particular include coordination of outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, and wilderness."

The legislation appears clear and unequivocal. The FS is to provide for the sustainable production of the seven products and services explicitly mentioned. The outputs are clearly identified as is the requirement that they be produced on a sustainable basis. If this is so clear, what is the rationale for the Jack Ward Thomas' lament that the Forest Service needs a "revision or, at least, a clarification of mission" (1996, p. 182)?

Thomas went on to explain some of his concerns. He stated, "It is not yet widely recognized--much less openly acknowledged--but public land managers now have one overriding objective (or constraint) for management--the preservation of biodiversity." He gave his view of the inadequacy of the legislative support for these activities. "The law does not clearly say that (*the FS should manage for the preservation of biodiversity*). Nobody seems to openly recognize it." Additionally, he states "I don't personally have an objection to that (*managing for the preservation of biodiversity*)--if that is what society wants. The Congress and the President need to examine the situation that has evolved and ask, 'is that

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what we intend?' If so, so be it. If not, then clarification is required as to what is expected of federal land management agencies in regard to achieving 'multiple-use' management" (Thomas 1996, p 161).

Many of these activities have been driven by the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which requires protection of habitat for threatened or endangered species and other environmental legislation. The courts and recent federal policy held that the requirements of the ESA are clear and overriding. If conflicts occur between ESA and an agency's other governmental statutes, ESA must dominate. This stress on biological considerations has been strengthened by the "viability" clause in the FS regulation, which as interpreted by the FS requires the widespread maintenance of viable populations of plants and animals.

The result of these conflicting signals, suggested by Thomas, is that in recent years there has been a serious disconnect between the directives of the FS's statutory mandate and the nature of the activities and management being practiced by the Forest Service. This is due, in no small part, to a host of intervening litigation and court rulings, and Thomas believes that clarification is required by the Congress and the Administration.

In fact, no legislative clarification has been forthcoming in the period since Thomas stepped down as Chief in late 1996. The most recent comprehensive legislation is still the NFMA (1976), which calls for management for sustainable production of a set of multiple-outputs, while the *de facto* practice of the FS, according to Thomas, has been to manage for the preservation of biodiversity.

Recently, a Committee of Scientists (COS) was assembled by the Secretary of Agriculture to "provide scientific and technical advice to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the Forest Service on improvement that can be made in the NFS Land and Resource planning process." In their report the Committee decided to provide the mission statement that the FS has lacked. Casting aside concerns about whether it is appropriate for the Committee to dictate a mission for the FS, the Committee boldly has recommended, in essence, that the FS manage for biological sustainability. Apparently, the Committee was less concerned about the necessity of having a legislative directive to provide mission clarification from the Congress and the President than was Chief Thomas. Furthermore, an articulation of what ought to be the focus of management clearly is not a scientific question but reflects a set of personal values. Thus, in addressing the issue of what ought to be the objective of management, the Committee went well beyond what its scientific credentials could justify. In fact, the Committee asserted that the manager's obligation to provide for species viability and ecological integrity is "morally" appropriate.

Having asserted a mission for the FS that the Congress and Administration were reluctant to state, the Committee then suggested ways that this objective might be accomplished. The COS Report argues that ecological sustainability is paramount and, in essence, the legislative multiple-use mandate ought to be replaced *de facto* with this alternative objective--that of maintaining biological sustainability.

One can argue the appropriateness of a COS establishing social objectives and tying their preferences to morality. However, the fact that the COS recommendations are at such

variance with the Forest Service's statutory multiple-use mandate highlights the environment in which the Forest Service has been forced to operate and the potential contentiousness that might occur in absence of an effective, clear, well-defined mission. In today's society, land-use decisions have become "moral" issues, even among presumably objective scientists.

This paper examines the past and current situation of the FS and tries to provide a contemporary perspective. First, it briefly covers the history of the FS, most of which is well known. Next, it describes and characterizes the recent and current situation in which the FS finds itself, including a discussion of the major problems and challenges. Finally, it outlines a number of alternative possible future scenarios for the FS, suggesting some of their strengths and weaknesses.

II. BACKGROUND

The history of the FS and the NFS is well known. In response to public concerns over water conditions and future timber supplies in the latter part of the 19th Century, large areas of public lands were designated as part of the Nation's "forest reserves," later to be called the National Forest System. However, even in that early period there were alternative perspectives and philosophies as to what were the objectives of the maintenance of the forest. The pragmatism of the conservationists, as represented by Pinchot, was reflected in their concept of the "wise-use" of resources. The philosophy of wise resource use was pitted against the views of preservationists, such as Muir and Thoreau. The American people wanted water and future timber, but there were also concerns about preserving naturalness, wildness, and wilderness, which were even then recognized as part of the American heritage.

Although these two philosophies vied with one another for dominance, in that early period the on-the-ground conflicts between these two perspectives were small, largely because the FS assumed primarily a custodial role. The public forest provided only modest amounts of timber, allowing the vast majority of public forest to remain largely unimpacted. The wise-use philosophy largely prevailed in the early periods as Pinchot and his conservationist successors dominated the institution of the FS.

Using Clawson's 1983 characterizations, one can perhaps view the first 50 years of the FS history, from its inception to about WW II, as a period of custodial management and forest protection, although it was also active rehabilitation in some places. With the advent of WW II and in the subsequent post-war period, the National Forests took on a new importance as a source of timber. The period beginning with the war was one that saw the National Forests become substantial producers of timber, meeting both the needs of the war period and subsequently producing substantial volumes of timber for the post-war housing boom and continuing high levels of output on into the late 1980s. As the 1950s gave way to the 1960s, however, public environmental concerns were growing. Among these concerns was a fear that the emphasis of the NFS on timber was too great and that focus should also include other forest outputs. The Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act (1960) (see Appendix) emphasized both nontimber goods and service outputs provided by the forest and the sustainability of these outputs. Production of multiple outputs, however, generated concerns over the level and

mix of the various outputs. As the rancor among the various interests grew, Congress passed both the Resources Planning Act (RPA) in 1974 and the NFMA (1976) (see Appendix).

In particular, the RPA as amended by the NFMA was crafted to address the source of the contentiousness. The NFMA tried to do at least three things. First, it tried to articulate in legislation a multiple-use vision. Specifically, this vision called for the production of multiple outputs including timber, range, wildlife, recreation, water and (less explicitly) wilderness. The "trick" was to produce these outputs jointly and to produce the appropriate mix, which would satisfy the various publics. In addition, the laws required that these outputs be produced sustainably. Given this general mandate, a forest planning process was created that was intended to allow all of the interested parties to participate in management and output decisions. The assumption was that the planning process would provide a vehicle for the various interests to work out their differences and converge on a consensus forest plan with a broadly acceptable mix of actions and outputs. Also, it was implicitly assumed that if there was a consensus on the forest plan as to what should be the goals of forest management in a particular forest, Congress would provide the budget to implement those objectives. In addition, the importance of monitoring these resources on a continuing basis had earlier been addressed by a provision in the 1974 Act for the periodic renewable resources assessment.

In the over two decades subsequent to the NFMA, little of what was envisaged has come to pass. Although the periodic resource assessment has been undertaken regularly, the planning process has often been a failure. For example, it has not generated the desired consensus. In the first 125 forest management plans there were about 1200 appeals and over 100 subsequent lawsuits. Some appeals have been in process for almost a decade. Furthermore, when plans were created, budgets generally were not forthcoming to allow faithful implementation. There has developed little or no relationship between most of the plans and the budget. In fact, there are now two largely independent planning processes: one as called for in the NFMA and involving protracted "public participation" by the various interested "publics," and the other planning process is that undertaken by the Administration and the Congress in their deliberations regarding the budget to be provided to the FS. There is little connection between the budget, which emerges from the political process and provides funds on an aggregate programmatic basis, and the various forest plans developed through the decentralized planning process (Sample 1990).

No Longer an Elite Agency

Traditionally, the FS had been viewed as an elite agency. This perspective emerged out of the ties between Pinchot and President Teddy Roosevelt and the prevailing progressive philosophy (see Nelson 1998) that placed confidence in technocratic solutions. This was a new agency with a new mandate supported by the President. Gifford Pinchot, later to become governor of Pennsylvania, had the power of the President behind him and was able to craft an agency relatively insulated from the usual bureaucratic and political pressures commonly directed at agencies like the FS. The new agency would reside, not in the Interior Department, which was viewed as highly political, but rather in the Agriculture Department.

Here the agency could have both a high degree of power and maximum autonomy. Also, this organizational location reflected the FS responsibility for the promotion of tree growing and research. In addition, consistent with the positive view of progressivism and scientific management, the FS was able to recruit the best and the brightest foresters trained in new European techniques. This was a new agency with a highly trained and committed professional staff. This view of professionalism was maintained for many years. Until the early 1990s the Chief of the Forest Service was still essentially a nonpolitical position drawn from the ranks of its senior professionals.

The FS made the most of its positive image. As recently as the early 1950s, the agency was commended in an article by *Time* magazine (June 2, 1952) for its professionalism, its effectiveness in dealing with forest concerns, and its ability to work with local people to help achieve local objectives. The FS had a storehouse of good will both in the Congress and in the hinterlands where it operated.

However, as a member of the Committee of Scientists my experience suggests that little good will currently exists in the local regions. The committee held almost a dozen meetings in various regions of the country. One of the most memorable and perhaps most pitiful events I observed was the high degree of frustration and disillusionment by local forest users. It was local people, those who raised issues of local use of timber, forage and summer home permits, who felt the most betrayed by the FS and by the process. They had believed that by participating in the process they could contribute to the final outcome. Ultimately, they found, that their hard fought positions and compromises meant nothing, since the forest plan was appealed and litigated, or never implemented for lack of budget or due to some overriding legal or executive decision.

By contrast, our meetings were regularly attended and we received substantial numbers of comments from representatives of national timber and environmental interests. Often, the same people met with us each week in a different region of the country as they monitored the process while providing both visibility and comment. These people recognized how the political game is played and knew not to take these processes, not only those of the COS but also those involved in the earlier planning process, too seriously. Nor were they inclined to count on any promises.

In the early 1960s Kauffman wrote his famous book *The Forest Ranger*, in which the FS was used as an example of how a large public government organization ought to function. He argued that, unique among large organizations, the FS had been able to maintain its focus, its discipline and its *esprit de corps*.

The high esteem in which the FS was held was not limited to the public but carried over to the Congress. Its rapport with the Congress was rewarded by generous budgets. In return, the FS fostered a "can do" attitude. It would provide the Congress with what it wanted. In fact, it was the "can do" attitude, which in some experts' view that led the FS to press to the limits its harvests to meet the high harvest desires of its champions in the Congress. Ultimately, however, these high harvests appear to have "backfired" resulting in increasing numbers of citizens who became concerned that harvest levels were "too high."

Also, the FS had achieved a high degree of autonomy. In his book *Public Land Politics* (1980), Paul Culhane argued that the FS had successfully been able to maintain a high degree of autonomy as the various interest groups competed against one another. The groups he examined, timber interests, environmentalists, and recreationists, all provided the FS with constituencies that supported its budget requests and programs. In return, the FS provided the outputs desired by each group. Because the interests were so diverse and relatively evenly balanced, the FS had autonomy in decision making in that it could justify an action undesired by one of the groups by arguing that it was necessary to pacify one of its other constituencies, who wanted even more. Furthermore, when the time for budget decisions arrived, these groups could still be relied on to support FS budgets.

Today, few would view the FS as an elite agency. Local users of National Forest lands are highly disenchanted and discouraged. Recreationists, environmentalists and timber users also voice major complaints. It seems that nobody is happy with the Forest Service.

A quintessential example of the general disillusionment is the experience of the Quincy Library Group, a small informal group that met in the library in Quincy California and discussed issues relating to the management of the several National Forests in the region. This group, which having given up on the "process," has undertaken direct political action with what appears so far to be great success. Bypassing the FS entirely they have appealed directly to the California delegation in Congress for a separate management charter and separate funding. It appears that legislation to this end is likely to pass. With the help of the new legislation they will have both greater control over what is done on local FS lands, and they will also have a greater budget from the Congress with which they hope these lands are managed in accordance with local desires and objectives.

III. THE CURRENT SITUATION

As suggested above, the previous happy situation for the FS has seriously eroded over recent decades. My own hypothesis is that the system has broken down because the fine balance among the various competing constituencies gradually disappeared. It was the battles among these groups, particularly the environmentalists and timber interests, that forced Congress to pass the NFMA to try to restore order and the balance. However, this was not to be. In addition to increasing rancor over the management of the NFS, a host of environmental laws and their evolving interpretation by the courts forced both a reduction in harvest levels and rethinking of policy. Harvest levels, which peaked in the late 1980s under the still-existing NFMA legislation, have declined thereafter to less than 1/3 of their peak levels.

Whatever its past "sins," in recent decades the FS has truly been given a "mission impossible." The FS is being asked to reflect the will of the people when, in fact, in this country we are deeply divided. There is no shared vision of the role of public forestlands, although the recent American Forest Congress did attempt to define a shared perspective (Bentley and Langhein 1996). Attempts to "reinvent" the role of the FS continue to be frustrated by a lack of consensus.

Judging from their turnout at the COS hearings, the timber industry appears to almost have given up on maintaining high harvest levels from NFs and appears content to try to get smaller harvests when it can. In addition, the industry has been stressing the need for salvage logging, both to remedy the excessive timber and under-story build-up which pose various hazards to the forest health, especially fire hazards, and to provide timber for local operations.

While the National Forests are now producing only about 5 percent of US industrial wood production, the Nation is obtaining its wood needs from other sources. Harvests on private lands have filled some of the gap as private owners are increasing their management intensity. Also, timber imports have risen from foreign suppliers, especially Canada, and today would be even higher were it not for the imposition of recent trade restrictions.

In addition, the FS has changed internally. The culture has changed as staff trained in traditional forestry has been supplemented with those trained in wildlife, ecology and the biological sciences. While such a change may be inevitable and indeed desirable, it also contributes to the confusion regarding the appropriate mission for the FS.

There have been changes at the top, also. Historically, FS career professionals have had a Civil Service career path that allowed them to rise through the ranks to the top position as Chief. The days that the highest Civil Service appointment in the US Government was the Chief of the FS have passed and the senior positions are now political appointments. Today, contacts between the professional civil service staff and their politically appointed leaders, including the Chief, are far more limited than in earlier eras and many of the agency's professional resource managers feel their decision making is "micromanaged" by political appointees.

In many respects the FS is probably more politically vulnerable today than any time in its history. The former trust by the public in scientific management, which was a major driving force in the creation of the FS under Pinchot and Teddy Roosevelt, is today highly eroded, if not in total disarray. In addition, the FS is essentially naked to various political forces due to its lack of any serious constituency. Earlier this year a number of groups came to the defense of the National Forest System when Republican Congressmen fired a shot across the FS's bow by raising the prospect of returning to custodial management (Murkowski et al. 1998). If the FS could not provide outputs for constituents, why expend large amounts of resources on management? True, various groups came to the aid of the NFS. However, it is clear that the defense was not of the FS but of the forests. Furthermore, some have opined that if the proposal had come from the Democrats, rather than the Republicans, it would likely have received a much warmer reception.

Also, the FS has lost many of its traditional supporters. For example, although the timber industry has been a traditional FS constituency, in recent hearings the American Forest & Paper Association supported only a very modest budget for the FS noting that it viewed the recent activities and outputs of the FS as of only limited interest to the members of the Association. Furthermore, environmental organizations that might be expected to be supportive of the new policy direction at the FS have not appeared.

There is little interest on the part of national environmental organizations in active forest management. The split between national and local environmentalists over the nature of the desired management of public lands in the region of the Quincy Library Group reveals deep divisions even within the environmental community regarding appropriate forest management. Similarly, recreational interests are also largely absent in defending the FS. Finally, as noted, with few exceptions, local forest users appear to be largely frustrated and disillusioned with the FS and there is likely to be little interest in asking local Congressmen to support overall FS budgets that are seen as only minimally, if at all, responding to local concerns. None of these events bode well for the future of the FS.

Thus the FS now stands largely exposed, without powerful public constituencies to advocate its cause. Given this lack of powerful constituencies, it is difficult to see how the FS could resist an attempt, such as was made under the Carter Administration in the late 1970s, to reorganize the FS, perhaps out of existence. It is doubtful that the FS could find champions to defend it as it has done so successfully in the past. In fact, given the absence of a mandate that has broad support, one might ask if there are any reason to try to maintain a FS separate from other Federal land management agencies.

IV. WHERE FROM HERE?

What appears clear is that for efficient operation, perhaps as well as survival, the FS needs a well-defined mission and a powerful political constituency if it is to move beyond its current malaise. Let me examine three potential candidates for a mission and constituency: biological preservation, recreation and local management.

The COS has suggested that the management of the forests for biological sustainability ought to be the desired objective of management. Further, an objective of managing the forest to keep it within the historic range of variability is to move management in the direction of returning to pre-European forest processes and functions. This objective involves a "mission shift" away from a focus on outputs, dramatically reducing certain outputs, not only timber but other outputs as well, such as certain recreation. But, what do the American people want from their National Forests? Probably a host of things. It is probably accurate to say that Americans want naturalness and an element of wildness. They surely want many of the ecological services provided by forests including watershed protection, erosion control and wildlife habitat. The American people might even be supportive of a program that identifies the priority responsibility of the National Forest System as that of maintaining a sustainable ecosystem, while the responsibility for timber production is shifted to private producers and foreign lands.

In my view such an approach is, in effect, an obituary for the FS. It is doubtful that, in the absence of significant tangible outputs, there is sufficient public support to generate serious budgets for a program such as that suggested by the COS Report. Although many people may support such an approach at one level, it is doubtful that this support could bring together the type of constituency that has the power for generating substantial and continuing budgets for these types of management activities. The services generated by the activities

would be difficult for the public to perceive on a regular basis and the major direct financial beneficiaries would be to the biologists employed in the process. Although major environmental groups are supporting facets of the COS proposal, some of the major national groups oppose timber harvesting of any type, including that necessary to meet other objectives, e.g., wildlife habitat. Because of their persistent distrust of the motives of the FS, it is problematic that these groups would support with enthusiasm the large budget necessary for the management of biological sustainability. The likely outcome would be the erosion of the FS budget with active management being supplanted with custodial management and protection.

Perhaps the major constituency that could emerge to take leadership in supporting the FS is that of the recreationists. The National Forest System provides large amounts of outdoor recreation of various types. Although these groups are far from monolithic in their interests and services desired from the FS, their numbers are large. Perhaps most intriguing is the possibility of generating a substantial portion of the budget for the various forests from recreational user fees. Certainly, many forests have the potential to raise substantial funding from recreational user fees. This is currently the experience for some forests located near urban centers, which have demonstrated the ability to currently generate substantial amounts in user fees. However, such fees are often difficult and costly to collect. Nevertheless, it has often been argued that for many national forests, the recreational benefits far exceed the timber and other traditional output benefits. If this is true, user fees could well provide major revenue sources for many, but surely not all, National Forests. In this context FS budgets could be financed out of recreational receipts supplemented by more modest allocations from the Congress. Of course, such an approach would require that the FS have some control over user fees it generates.

If funding were dependent upon recreational use there would be powerful incentives to provide the types of outputs desired by recreationists. Furthermore, the role of federal funding and the ability of a constituency to support the FS budget in the US Congress becomes less important if the FS is covering a substantial portion of its costs with user fees. Finally, it should be noted that recreational uses may conflict, and recreational use could well lead to conflicts with other desired outputs and services, including biodiversity. Thus, while this approach appears to have much to commend it, there is certainly no guarantee that future conflicts between the various user groups will be avoided.

A third option would be to move in the direction of more localized input into the management of the National Forests in different localities in the spirit of the Quincy Library Group. Perhaps Congress should consider budgeting individual National Forests or groups of National Forests in a manner akin to the budgeting of the National Parks. This could allow management to be customized, to a degree not seen previously, to the needs and desires of the local peoples. Some combination of user fees and customized management could provide both for adequate funding and for the emergence of powerful local constituencies. This could allow for local participation in a way not experienced in decades, if ever. It should be noted, however, that many national environmental groups are opposed to this approach. Shifting

power to the local community implies reducing the influence of national groups on local situations.

Nevertheless, the Quincy Library type of solution does offer promise in that it addresses the budget and constituency challenges facing the FS in a way other approaches do not. However, it seems unlikely that all forests can expect the financial support likely to be received by the Quincy Library Group.

Finally, perhaps the most fundamental question is whether to retain a separate FS at all. Arguments for the coordination of land management are being made louder than ever. Although there are frustrations over the difficulties of coordinating private and public land management, management among independent federal agencies leaves much to be desired.

The original arguments at the beginning of the 20th Century for a Forest Service focused on the desire to create an elite organization that had technocratic prowess and a degree of independence from the bureaucratic and political processes so that it could "do the right thing" based on its professional judgement. A primary argument that has been used in the past to fight reorganization efforts is that the FS is more akin to an agricultural agency, focused on producing crops of trees, as well as providing protection and so forth. Clearly, the agricultural argument is less relevant now. Today, at the end of the century, these motivations are largely absent. The FS is no longer an elite organization. While retaining many highly trained and competent people, it is no longer unique and is probably more wracked with confusion than most agencies, due to the many years in which its mission has lacked clarity or has been highly ambiguous. Neither is it any longer insulated from the ravages of the bureaucratic process nor from crass politics. In fact, former FS Chief Thomas stated that "the entire process is becoming increasingly politicized through orders which originate above the Chief's level," and where the "exact source of those instructions is sometimes not clear." The fine balance among constituencies, that Culhane saw as the core of the FS's ability to fend off crass political pressures, no longer exists. Furthermore, its ability to supply services to various constituencies is minimal. It now becomes beholden to a single group in society rather than to a host of groups.

In addition, there may be now a compelling reason to integrate federal land management agencies. Although agencies have been directed to coordinate management, many believe coordination is inherently more difficult across organizations than within a single organization. It has been argued that cross-agency coordination of federal lands has simply been grossly inadequate. Perhaps it is time to reconsider the proposals of the Carter Administration of two decades ago, which called for a unified department of natural resources that would include the FS. Perhaps it is time to merge the FS and the Bureau of Land Management into a single agency. Surely, the rationale for such integration becomes more compelling as the Agency loses its unique ability to perform its mission in an outstanding manner.

V. FINAL THOUGHTS

This paper is intended to be provocative. Perhaps it is time to "think the unthinkable." The FS has been an unusually successful organization for much of its history. That is no longer the case. Today the FS finds itself with legislation that gives it a multiple-use statutory mandate while at the same time being covered by the single-purpose ESA statute. Furthermore, the problem is exacerbated by the lack of a public consensus. Until this deadlock is broken, the FS will be in the limbo described by Thomas. However, if the FS is converted into a biological reserve, it may no longer be politically viable as a separate institution. At a minimum, it is clearly time to rethink the role and mission of the FS. A doable mission needs to reflect the views of a cross-section of many Americans, rather than reflect the values of a single interest or a small group with a unique set of values. What is needed is a major dialogue among the American people and a clear direction provided by the Congress and Administration. Furthermore, the dialogue should be expanded to seriously consider whether the federal land management problems of the 21st Century may not require the creation of new streamlined integrated organizations to replace the outmoded agencies of the past century.

APPENDIX

The 1897 Organic Act gave three purposes to the Forest Reserves:

- (1) to preserve and protect the forest within the reservation,
- (2) for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows,
- (3) to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of the people of the United States.

Sustained Yield Forest Management Act of 1944: Although this act was largely intended to provide for the creation of cooperative units of public and private forest land, it also contains a clear statement of the economic and social contributions of forests. "Sec. 1. In order to promote the stability of forest industries, of employment, of communities, and of taxable forest wealth, through continuous supplies of timber; in order to provide for a continuous and ample supply of forest products; and in order to secure the benefits of forests in maintenance of water supply, regulation of stream flow, prevention of soil erosion, amelioration of climate, and preservation of wildlife . . ."

Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of (1960): Called for the "achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the National Forests without impairment of the productivity of the land." Named the multiple uses as: outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish. Stated that "the establishment and maintenance of areas of wilderness are consistent with the purposes and provisions of the Act" and that "the purposes of this Act are declared to be supplemental to" the provisions named in the Organic Act.

The most recent comprehensive forest legislation is the National Forest Management Act of (1976): In this the "The Forest Service . . . has both a responsibility and an opportunity to be a leader in assuring that the Nation maintains a natural resource conservation posture that will meet the requirements of our people in perpetuity." The Act goes on to identify those requirement as the "provide(s) for multiple use and sustained yield of the products and services obtained therefrom, . . . and, in particular include coordination of outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish, and wilderness."

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