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CHAR MILLER

The Once and Future Forest Service: Land-Management Policies and Politics in Contemporary America

The news from the Far North is not good. In the spring of 2007, University of Alberta scientists reported that portions of the Canadian tundra were transforming into new forests of spruce and shrubs much more rapidly than once was imaginable. “The conventional thinking on treeline dynamics has been that advances are very slow because conditions are so harsh at these high latitudes and altitudes,” reported Dr. Ryan Danby, a member of the UA research team. “But what our data indicate is that there was an upslope surge of trees in response to warmer temperatures. It’s like [the forest] waited until conditions were just right, then it decided to get up and run, not just walk.”¹

The multifaceted impact of global climate change is chilling. As tundra converts to forest cover, species and their habitats must move higher up or die off. Sheep and caribou are already responding to the environmental transformation that has affected members of Canada’s First Nations, who are dependent on these food sources. Moreover, the process feeds off itself: trees absorb more light than tundra does and they emit that energy as heat, further warming the atmosphere and reinforcing the very conditions that allow more spruce to

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flourish on the formerly treeless terrain. “These results are very relevant to the current debate surrounding climate change,” Professor Danby noted, “because they provide real evidence that vegetation change will be quite considerable in response to future warming.”²

The scientific data, and their myriad implications, raise key questions about how human institutions will respond to a human-generated crisis. This is particularly relevant to those land-management agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service that are responsible for innumerable bioregions and ecozones. How will it steward its 193 million acres of forests and grasslands as the climate and landscape shift in relation to one another?³

That confounding question comes at a fascinating moment in the agency’s history. Established in 1905, in the immediate aftermath of its centennial celebrations, the Forest Service found itself with a golden opportunity to consider whether its prior commitments will allow it to celebrate its *bicentennial*. That may seem an odd statement. After all, the Forest Service has managed to weather serious challenges in the past, a legacy suggesting that it might prove as nimble when confronted with future trials, however unpredictable as those global warming may pose. That said, the agency’s history may not be a useful guide to a future layered with the dilemmas that a warmer earth is expected to produce. But however traumatic climate change may be, however disruptive its impact on the agency’s previous patterns of behavior and action, analyzing its past still may provide insight into its future. How will its leaders, line officers, rangers, and staff daily face complexities posed by an integrated series of forces that may overwhelm their capacity to manage landscapes? How will they respond to the welter of opportunities and challenges that already have emerged and will arise? These are not just policy questions but also have a historical dimension, for as Richard Neustadt and Ernest May observe in *Thinking in Time*: “Seeing the past can help one envision alternative futures.”⁴

This article is concerned with some of the alternative futures that the U.S. Forest Service might face, in particular three possible paths that could redefine its structure and mission. For the sake of clarity, I have segregated the three tracks, but in reality they might well merge or intersect at various points, a speculative approach that is designed to provoke a larger discussion about land management in an age of climate change.

SCENARIO ONE: EVOLUTIONARY DYNAMICS

The Forest Service has evolved in relation to the lands that it manages, establishing a dynamic interaction between environment and the professional

conservationists who seek to manage it, which confirms a broader claim: “History has repeatedly demonstrated that the health and welfare of human societies are fundamentally dependent on the health and welfare of their forests.” This reciprocity, in its particularity and broad sweep, may prove the key to the agency’s long-term survival. Because over time it has had to adapt to shifts in political temper, scientific knowledge, and social concern, the agency’s legacy of resilience also may define its twenty-first-century behavior, enabling it to morph as required while retaining its core responsibilities and organizational structure.⁵

The Forest Service’s creation depended on an argument about evolving landscapes. Three maps illustrating an article by William B. Greeley, the agency’s third chief, make the case. Entitled “Virgin Forest Cover: 1620, 1850, 1920,” they tell a story of profound environmental change as the original forest cover of what would become the United States was cut down, and hints at the Forest Service’s mitigatory role. Early U.S. foresters believed that America in 1620 was virginal, so they could highlight the differences between those Euro-American settlers, farmers, and industrialists who slashed their way through ancient forests and latter-day Forest Service professionals, whose function was to protect and steward the remaining resources.

In political terms, the Forest Service produced such images to convince the nation that its work was critical to national security. To repair the land required an organization whose mission was to restore what had been destroyed. Replant, regenerate, repair: this would be the agency’s environmental ethos for its first forty years, from 1905 to 1945.

Yet embedded within that purpose was an intense anxiety, best captured in a 1908 cartoon: “Uncle Sam as He May Appear in Twenty Years.” It depicts a crew-cut Uncle Sam—with stumps standing in as hair stubble—who, like Sampson, has been shorn of his power, too weak to maintain his authority and expand his reach. Contemporaries understood that the United States was on the cusp of imperial dominance. By 1910, the American gross national product had exceeded the combined output of England, France, and Germany. Yet in recognizing that they had the chance to supplant Europe, many Americans were also haunted by the specter that they would miss this opportunity by acting as other empires had—by consuming and devastating their natural resources at such a clip and to such an extent that their economy would collapse along with their dreams of hegemonic power.⁶

Conservationists played a part in this wider cultural debate: their descriptions of forest devastation and the resultant “timber famine” dovetailed with their prescription—to create a system of public lands dedicated to

the practice of conservative resource management. This argument had emerged in the aftermath of the publication of George Perkins Marsh's seminal work, *Man and Nature: Earth as Modified by Human Action* (1864), and it gained momentum in the 1870s and 1880s as the American Forestry Association, fishing and hunting clubs, and women's groups agitated for regulatory mechanisms to control resource exploitation. Their agitation had an impact: in the 1870s, the Division of Forestry was created within the Department of Agriculture. In 1891, Congress passed the Forest Reserve Act, granting the president power "from time to time, [to] set apart and reserve in any State or Territory having public land bearing forests ... public reservation." Within a year, President Benjamin Harrison had set aside more than 13 million acres as forest reserves, and his successor, Grover Cleveland, added another 5 million; by 1899, the number had swelled to 40 million. But it was not until 1897 that administrative control over these reserves was codified.⁷

President Theodore Roosevelt helped tip the balance in favor of conservation. Between 1901 and 1908, he added 110 million acres to the National Forest System; he also signed off on the transfer of these lands from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture, and he created the Forest Service and appointed Gifford Pinchot as its first chief.

In short order, Pinchot and his peers used their legislative mandate to train rangers to survey and map the lands within the boundaries of the national forests. They also pressed for the resolution of legal challenges, which ultimately led to Supreme Court decisions affirming the Forest Service's statutory standing and authority to manage the forests and grasslands, and lobbied Congress for budget increases to match its expanded duties.

With the establishment of these boundaries—topographical, political, and legal—the Forest Service went to work on its central managerial task from 1905 until World War II, the regeneration of abused terrain in the west. During the Great Depression, its charge widened to include gullied southern farmlands. By World War II, the Forest Service's engagement had proved national in scope and local in significance; it had become the nation's soft-hatted custodial agent.⁸

That hat hardened with the advent of global war and postwar prosperity. Then its task was to get out the cut. In 1940, two billion board feet were harvested on the national forests; by 1960, the figure had zoomed upward, topping out at twelve billion board feet in the late 1980s. This shift was of incalculable importance and is perhaps best reflected in the controversies that erupted in the 1970s over clear-cutting on Montana's Bitterroot National Forest and West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest. For its supporters,

clear-cutting signaled the agency's newfound ability to harvest trees in once-difficult terrain and its laudable ambition to turn natural forests into plantations. For its critics, this was a dire reflection of the Forest Service's technological fixation. So intense did the debate become that even an internal task force chided agency employees on the Bitterroot for acting as if "resource production goals come first and ... land management considerations take second place."⁹

Protests over clear-cutting and the technological imperative provoked a backlash against the Forest Service, sparking federal lawsuits, local demonstrations, and a welter of state and congressional inquiries. When the dust had settled, a new legal environment had emerged. Among its most critical components was the 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA), which gave the public a much stronger role in determining forest planning and set strict limits on the Forest Service's clear-cutting practices.

The NFMA was the last in a remarkable series of landmark environmental initiatives. Beginning with the 1964 Wilderness Act, and including the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968), the National Environmental Policy Act (1970), the various Clean Air and Clean Water Act amendments of the 1970s, and the Endangered Species Act (1973), these bills constitute the second great wave of environmental activism. The end result has been that these initiatives regulate the very land-management regulatory agencies, such as the Forest Service and the National Park Service, that had been established during the first surge of environmental legislation, crafted in the Progressive Era.

Since these laws were adopted, the agency has appeared to be wandering in the forest. Pounded in federal court, faced with drastic budget cuts and sharp reductions in personnel, it has struggled to find its way, leading one former chief to argue that it is mired in "analysis paralysis," a logjam preventing it from doing its proper work. Complicating this struggle to define its contemporary mission has been steep declines in timber harvests, escalating population pressures along the urban-wildland interface, increased recreational use, intensifying forest fires, and serious water-management issues. No wonder the agency's morale is low.¹⁰

The Forest Service's initiatives reflect this sometimes shaky sense of self. "New Perspectives," the rubric it employed to describe its 1980s policy reforms, was succeeded by "Ecosystem Management" in the 1990s, which ten years later became the "Four Threats," Chief Dale Bosworth's rhetorical device to describe the new century's major environmental issues: the loss of open space, the buildup of fire and fuels, invasive species, and unmanaged recreation. The agency's wavering commitments (real and perceived) are linked to

the larger culture's curious inability to embody the environmental principles it purports to embrace. One example should suffice: through legal pressure and political compromise, the public has forced the Forest Service to scale back its timber harvests, from twelve billion board feet in the late 1980s to two billion in 2007. Yet American demand for wood products has increased every year for the past fifty years. We have accomplished this by a simple expedient—outsourcing demand to Canada, Eastern Europe, southern Africa, and the equatorial band of tropical rainforests, thus exporting our environmental problems to other, often poorer, parts of the planet.¹¹

Such myopia only roils the political context in which the Forest Service operates. As Gifford Pinchot argued a century ago, the national forests “exist today because the people want them. To make them accomplish the most good the people themselves must make clear how they want them run.” Gaining that clarity has been difficult, hindering the agency's ability to revise its land-management practices on the national forests.

Still, a persuasive case can be made that what has appeared to be a lack of coherent guidelines may simply be a necessary by-product of evolutionary change. It is tough to decipher, in the midst of a transition, the precise nature of that transition. The agency's history supports this view. Its management of resources, the emphasis of which has moved from grass to trees to water, has revealed its ability, however constrained, to shift its ground, to adapt to changes in politics and polity, ideas and images. That is how all organisms survive.

SCENARIO TWO: DEVOLUTIONARY PROGRESS

Yet sometimes the rate of change is so radical that organisms emerge as something else altogether. Indeed, a proposed alteration that the Forest Service has faced—and to date has fended off—is the devolution of its lands and authority to the individual states in which its forests and grasslands are located. Those who have argued for this outcome have drawn on a powerful strain in American political thought, starting with the Tenth Amendment: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved for the States respectively, or to the people.” In attempting to define the precise relationship between federal and state sovereignty, a central issue in the United States since the eighteenth century, the amendment actually makes clear that this relationship is in tension. The Forest Service knows this full well, for the agency long has been a flashpoint in the heated political debate between states rights and national prerogatives.

And with reason: in the early twentieth century, western critics of President Theodore Roosevelt alleged that his creation of the Forest Service and the national forests were but a means to expand presidential authority. That is why they erupted in anger when he withdrew 110 million acres from the public domain during his two administrations, sparking the first Sagebrush Rebellion, which simmered between 1905 and 1908. Although the Supreme Court legitimized the agency's managerial control of these lands (and thus implicitly supported Roosevelt's actions) through a series of test cases resolved in 1911, its decisions did not defuse western resentment. In the 1950s, western livestock interests reignited the debate, but without success. No more successful was the 1990s "Wise Use" movement, which demanded that the federal government relinquish its rights to the national forests. Commissioners in Nye County, Nevada, bulldozed Forest Service fences, and across the west agency vehicles and offices were firebombed and vandalized. In this overheated environment, Pinchot, mocked in a 1908 cartoon entitled "Czar Pinchot and his Cossack Rangers," would have felt right at home.¹²

Although the states rights argument has never gained much traction in the United States, it did in Canada and New Zealand, and an analysis of these other countries' experiences helps to set American land-management practices in an international context. Originally, each had followed a similar path as the United States: in a federalized structure in which national and provincial governments maintained different levels of sovereignty, each country established a national forest system under the management of a professional forest service. Like the U.S. Forest Service, the Canadian and New Zealand agencies were expected to oversee and maintain their valuable resource base. That expectation is not surprising. Gifford Pinchot had been a strong proponent of the Canadian conservation movement, and all three societies had adapted European ideas on how to regulate resource exploitation. Linked at their creation, it would have been reasonable to suppose that the futures of these three professional agencies also would have run in tandem.

That is not what happened. Founded in 1899, the Canadian Forest Service developed simultaneously with schools of forestry. The first of these, at the University of Toronto, was directed by German-born forester Bernhard Fernow, who had recently resigned as head of the U.S. Division of Forestry. The graduates of these schools joined the new agency's staff, and their scientific expertise shaped the organization's managerial perspective; by 1924, Canadian foresters had 9.2 million acres under management. Within six years, this short-lived experiment in federal forestry was over. In 1930, as the depression bore down, all national forest lands were returned to the

provinces from which they had been appropriated originally, and the agency's budget and staff were cut drastically. The concept of a national agency with land-management regulatory control never recovered. Over the years, the Canadian Forest Service's bureaucratic status has been downgraded from an agency to a department, from a service to a division. It regained its departmental status in 1989, but a decade earlier had lost a critical part of its research responsibilities when its forest products laboratories were privatized. Because it no longer has a land base or a scientific mission, the Canadian Forest Service now serves as a "navigator" for private and provincial foresters and forests. Its mission statement reflects this change in function: "The Canadian Forest Service promotes the sustainable development of Canada's forests and the competitiveness of the Canadian forest sector." Not everyone has been happy with its new role as a promoter or catalyst. As Ken Druska and Bob Burt have observed, at "various points in its history, some of its leaders or its critics have looked wistfully at its southern counterpart, the U.S. Forest Service, with its vast national forest base, and its authoritative position in U.S. society."¹³

New Zealand showed no such wistfulness when in the 1980s it embarked on an even more rapid devolution of its public forests. The nation's central role in forestry had begun seven decades earlier. In 1913, after nearly a century of largely unregulated and intense harvesting of native forests, a Royal Commission on Forestry was appointed to evaluate forest conditions, determine which lands would remain in public control, define their purposes, and estimate future demand for timber and other resources. The commission concluded that New Zealand needed a commissioner of forestry and a professional forest service that would manage the state-owned woods. Although World War I delayed the implementation of these recommendations, by 1920 they were enacted, new schools of forestry were established, and management commenced. Sixty years later, the national government owned more than 50 percent of New Zealand's commercial forests and it dominated the national timber economy.

By 2000, that was no longer true: the government owned only 6 percent of commercial forestland, 34 percent was held by Maori trusts, 3 percent was under local control, and the largest ownership group was international timber companies. Corporate, for-profit forestry now was the law of the land.

Why and how had this rapid transition occurred? In 1986, the Labour government, responding to the country's sluggish economy, first corporatized, then privatized, the resource agencies. One year later, the New Zealand Forest Service was abolished and folded into a new Department of Conservation.

The new Ministry of Forestry was, like its Canadian peer, to serve as a policy shop, and the New Zealand Forestry Corporation gained control of the state's commercial forestry operations on 4.4 million hectares, focusing on market-driven resource management and the creation of a profitable forest sector.¹⁴

Neither the Canadian nor the New Zealand model has been seriously advocated in the United States. True, those who would like to reduce or eliminate the U.S. Forest Service's regulatory clout have proposed transferring the national forests to the states. But this proposal does not resemble the Canadian experience of returning lands to the provinces; the U.S. national forests had always been federal property. Neither is it clear that the various states in which national forests are sited would welcome a complete dismantling of the federal presence. They might not have the budgets, staff, or political will to maintain these invaluable lands.¹⁵

Much more plausible are calls for the creation of a cooperative conservation strategy in which local groups and federal land managers together develop forest plans. This has a historical basis, too: Circular 21 (1898), which promoted the agency's cooperation with private landowners, found its analogue in other initiatives that encouraged forest rangers to discuss with local communities and economic interests how best to manage the forests. More recently, cooperative actions have been nurtured by the National Forest Management Act and the Endangered Species Act, which require public participation and interagency coordination. They have also been energized by community environmental initiatives promoted at the 1997 Seventh American Forest Congress. Bolstered by university-sponsored think-tanks, such as the Public Policy Research Institute at the University of Montana, they have launched several successful ventures, including the Quincy Library Group (1992) and the New Ranch program developed by the Quivira Coalition (1997). The latter seeks to operate within what it calls the "radical center—a neutral place where people could explore their interests instead of argue their positions—and at the grassroots, literally the 'grass' and the 'roots,' where, we believed, trust needed to be built anew."¹⁶

The "Lubrecht Conversations," held outside Missoula, Montana, in 1998, shared this commitment to a "bottom-up" approach to national-policy reform. Local consensus management would evolve to include wider watershed and bioregional perspectives that then would shape the national agenda. Most captivating was the group's call for the creation of a "virtual" Region 7 within the Forest Service wherein districts and forests would propose "to develop practical collaborative decision-making processes at the local/regional level, which might eventually evolve into a national restatement of

basic mission.” If acceptable, the Forest Service would fund the experiment but would not retain authority over its design or implementation.¹⁷

Although to date “Region 7” remains but a tantalizing idea, other experimental formats have been enacted. One on-the-ground example is the Valles Caldera Trust (2000), a government-owned entity that provides management and administrative services for the Valles Caldera National Preserve in northern New Mexico. This national preserve suggests the array of options that have been emerging in timber towns and ranch country in response to decades of political discord, legal wrangling, and bureaucratic entanglement. This development received another push in August 2005, when the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation convened, a sign that community-oriented, collaborative conservation has captured considerable political interest and generated significant momentum.¹⁸

Whether this top-down support of grass-roots actions will be manifest in long-term reform is uncertain. But the incremental development, innovative perspectives, and experimental character of these projects give them a much greater chance of success in revising the reigning principles of public land management in the United States than anything advocated by the Wise Use movement or modeled in the devolutionary actions of Canada and New Zealand.¹⁹

SCENARIO THREE: REVOLUTIONARY IMPULSE

The creation of a new Department of Conservation in the executive branch, by contrast, would expand the federal managerial presence and its regulatory authority. With a seat in the cabinet, this department would house the nation’s most important land-management agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, the Geological Survey, the National Resources Conservation Service, and the National Park Service, among other entities. By creating economies of scale and greater efficiencies of action, this new department would save money and would serve as a standard bearer for the modern environmental movement.

Such an approach flies in the face of contemporary environmentalism, which stresses local agency over national solutions. Yet an unreflective dismissal of this possibility may lead conservationists to miss a chance to restructure federal land-management institutions and their delivery of environmental services. It may turn out that the most effective way to secure much-desired bottom-up reform is through simultaneous top-down change.

That said, none of the previous efforts to establish a Department of Conservation has been successful. When the Forest Service was created in 1905, it, like its progenitor, the Bureau of Forestry, was located in the Department of Agriculture. The nation's forests, however, were administered in the Department of the Interior. To bring the foresters and the forests together, Gifford Pinchot faced two choices: shift his tiny staff to Interior, to be united there with the national forest reserves, or seek the transfer of millions of forested acres from one cabinet department to another. Because he was convinced that Interior's history of corruption would compromise the newly formed Forest Service, he chose the latter path. Seven years after he inaugurated discussions in 1898, Congress and Interior signed off on the transfer.

The Department of the Interior has been trying to recover these lost acres ever since. In the 1920s, Interior secretary Albert Fall pushed for the transfer of the Forest Service and its forests, but he failed when he was implicated in and later jailed for his participation in the Teapot Dome scandal. Ten years later, Harold Ickes, Franklin D. Roosevelt's innovative and pugnacious secretary of the Interior, proposed a Department of Conservation as part of a broader New Deal scheme to reorganize the executive branch. His bid revolved around moving the Forest Service and national forests to Interior and pulling in other federal land-management agencies under one roof. This restructuring, he believed, would enable those who worked on soils to talk with those who worked with trees, hydrologists with botanists. In trying to finesse turf wars, Ickes ignited a contentious political brawl that damaged the Roosevelt administration.²⁰

In anticipation of such potential problems, President Roosevelt had informed Secretary of Agriculture Harry A. Wallace in 1933–34 that he must not publicly protest or privately fight the Forest Service's impending transfer. Roosevelt also required Wallace to gag Ferdinand Silcox, chief of the Forest Service. Through back channels, Silcox asked sixty-eight-year-old Gifford Pinchot to come to the agency's aid, a request Pinchot gladly accepted. Over the next seven years, Pinchot and Ickes engaged in a titanic struggle inside and outside Washington. Over the radio, through newspaper columns, and before any audience that would listen to them, the former friends blasted each other. Pinchot's reasoning was simple: if he whipped up a storm of protest, he might force the president to recalibrate the costs associated with Ickes's concept. By the late 1930s, after pouring tens of thousands of dollars of his money into the campaign and creating an aggressive lobbying force of fellow conservationists and western legislators, Pinchot forced Roosevelt to capitulate. In 1940, while meeting with the so-called Forest Lobby, a group of senators

and representatives from timber-producing states, Roosevelt tore up the executive order authorizing the transfer of the Forest Service.

Although Pinchot frustrated Ickes's plans, the two men's battle royal obscured a larger issue: what was the best way to organize the management of the public lands? Would Ickes's vision of an integrated Department of Conservation have provided a more comprehensive leadership for and efficient stewardship of the nation's forests, rivers, and grasslands? We will never know, but the alluring idea of a unified conservation department has continued to attract adherents. In the early 1970s, the Nixon administration, at the same time it advocated the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, pushed for the establishment of a Department of Natural Resources that would have been merged with Interior. The idea failed in part because Russell Train, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, argued against it. "There was some logic [to the idea,]" he recalled in 2006, "but I testified against it, against building a bigger bureaucracy. I was opposed to burying environmental responsibility in a big conglomeration with everything from Indian affairs to reclamation. The environment would have been submerged."²¹

Undaunted, President Jimmy Carter also floated the idea of a Department of Natural Resources in concert with his plan to create a Department of Energy; each would absorb disparate agencies and offer a more cost-effective and integrated management. Energy became a cabinet-level position in 1977, but Natural Resources did not get beyond the discussion stage.²²

Despite the failure of these various presidents to create a conservation superagency, there are signs that an integration of agency function is under way. In 1997, Congress authorized a program called Service First: Working Together, in which the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management were authorized to merge various functions. One such joint venture is the Durango Public Lands Center. Through it, the two agencies manage their lands in southwestern Colorado. The leadership of the San Juan National Forest and the San Juan Field BLM Office, like the twelve-person staff, is "cross delegated." Because each employee is responsible for "all aspects of the two agencies' work and is equally responsible to the USFS Regional Forester and BLM State Director," because each is required to be fluent in both agencies' statutory regulations and wears the two uniforms, this is an innovative, even unusual, arrangement. The San Juan is "the only organization in the country with a single team providing leadership in all aspects of land management and public service for the two federal agencies."²³

These interchanges are part of a larger attempt to merge scarce skills and resources among the nation's land-management agencies. Forest policy expert

Sally K. Fairfax has argued that more should be done to facilitate the convergence of the identities and missions of these agencies. Noting that “the historic distinctions and feuds” between the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management “no longer matter,” she observes: “The hostility between the advocates of forest reserves and park reserves that began before either agency was formed conceals the fact that for most of their existence, they have been more alike than not. As timber fades as a Forest Service preoccupation, and recreation emerges as dominant [in] present and future concerns, the justifications for having multiple and distinct federal management agencies fade as well.”²⁴

Lending further credence to her argument is a November 2006 Memorandum of Understanding that the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service signed in partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. It committed the four agencies “to carry out shared or joint management activities to achieve mutually beneficial resource management goals.” Service First authority has been utilized primarily for merging offices, issuing joint permits, sharing management, and creating single points of contact for resource programs. Given the patchwork of lands each agency manages and the proximity of their holdings, this integrative approach makes considerable sense, so much so that the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Army Corps of Engineers are considering seeking Service First authorization. In this incremental fashion, the dream of a Department of Conservation that has eluded several presidents and innumerable policy analysts might well come into being.²⁵

FUTURE FOCUS

Separately, none of the three scenarios sketched out here—evolution, devolution, revolution—will have much chance of redefining the Forest Service’s twenty-first-century structure or its guiding perspectives. None of these possibilities will be achieved without reference to or in combination with the others. Moreover, although any change in the agency’s land-management mission will require internal support from the leadership and staff of the Forest Service, the real locus of any such transformation lies in Congress and the executive branch. That is what Roger Sedjo, senior fellow at Resources for the Future, had in mind when he noted in 2000 that the Forest Service “no longer controls national forest policy. Instead, mandatory provisions of the law and regulations ... mean that the regional and local landscapes, watersheds, and their resources are now the focus of attention.”

Because the assessments of the viability of these resources shape policy, the Forest Service and other public land-management agencies now “lack the institutional capacity and authority to fully develop and implement ecosystem conservation agendas and resource management programs.” That these organizations lack the necessary clout is tied to their inability “to interpret and respond effectively to the public’s priorities regarding national forest management.”²⁶

To regain the capacity to listen to the citizenry and address its varied concerns, the Forest Service needs only to recall the words Gifford Pinchot uttered in 1907, when the nation’s forest reserves were renamed the national forests. These public lands were, he asserted, “made for and owned by the people. They should also be managed by the people. ... This means that if National Forests are going to accomplish anything worthwhile the people must know all about them and must take a very active role in their management.”

Despite his conviction that democratic debate was essential to public land management, Pinchot knew that the collaborative process of defining and achieving conservation stewardship of the national forests would never be easy. He also knew that that was the only way to safeguard these precious assets, a matter of even more pressing obligation in this vexing climate of change.

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NOTES

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13. Ken Druska and Bob Burt, "The Canadian Forest Service: Catalyst for the Forest Sector," *Forest History Today*, Spring–Fall 2001, 28.

14. For differing opinions about the meaning of this transformation, see Andrew D. McEwen, "Exit of State from Plantation Forest Ownership in New Zealand," <http://www.maf.govt.nz/mafnet/unff-planted-forestry-meeting/conference-papers/exit-of-state-from-plantations.htm>, accessed 13 June 2007; and Nicole Spence, "The Privatization of New Zealand Forests," *Journal of Forestry Research* 2 (1997): 203–6; for a discussion of some of the earlier history, see Michael M. Roche, "Reactions to Scarcity: The Management of Forest Resources in Nineteenth-Century Canterbury, New Zealand," *Journal of Forest History* (April 1984): 82–91.

15. A domestic model for state-level control of public lands is the 135 million acres of state-trust lands: Jon Souter and Sally Fairfax, *State Trust Lands: History, Management, and Sustainable Use* (Lawrence, Kans., 1996), and Sally Fairfax, "State Trust Lands Management: A Promising New Application for the Forest Service?" in *A Vision for the Forest Service*, ed. Sedjo, 105–41, suggest that these trusts are an "appealing organizational option" to current federal land agencies.

16. For Quincy Library Group, see <http://www.qlg.org/pub/contents/chron.htm>; for Quivira, see http://quiviracoalition.org/About_Us/index.html; last accessed 14 June 2007; Martin Nie and Char Miller, "National Forest Management and Private Land Development: Historical, Political, and Planning Considerations," *Society and Natural Resources* (in press); David A. Clary, *Timber and the Forest Service* (Lawrence, Kans., 1986).

17. Region 7, which covered many eastern states, was eliminated in the 1960s from the Forest Service's organization structure; *The Legal Framework for Cooperative Conservation*, Collaborative Governance Report 1 (Missoula: Public Policy Research Institute, University of Montana, 2006), which is an outgrowth of the 2005 White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation, summarizes the federal legislative support for collaborative forestry; Elizabeth Beaver et al., "Seeing the Forest Service for the Trees: A Survey of Proposals for Changing National Forest Policy," Natural Resources Law Center, University of Colorado School of Law, 25 June 2000, 27–29, http://www.colorado.edu/law/centers/nrlc/publications/Forestry_Reforms_Report.pdf, accessed 14 June 2007.

18. On the Valles Caldera National Preserve, see <http://www.vallescaldera.gov/about/>, accessed 14 June 2007.

19. Mexico's experiences with locally determined, collaborative forestry have caught to the attention of the U.S. Forest Service, whose leadership has routinely attended workshops in Oaxaca; for background on and evaluations of the Mexican experience, see

the special issue of *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* 15, no. 1 (2002), "Community-Based Approaches to Forest Management."

20. Char Miller, "Crisis Management: Challenge and Controversy in Forest Service History," *Rangelands*, June 2005, 14–18.

21. "Q&A: Russell Train, Green Legislator Pioneer," *American Forests*, Autumn 2006, 39.

22. In March 2008, Congress requested that the GAO undertake a study of the feasibility of transferring the Forest Service to the Department of the Interior; Christopher Lee, "Forest Service May Move to Interior," *Washington Post*, 26 March 2008, A3; see also Ross W. Gorte, "Proposals to Merge the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management: Issues and Approaches," *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, 5 May 2008.

23. Information concerning the Durango Public Lands Center can be retrieved at <http://www.co.blm.gov/sjra/> and <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan/about/organization/servicefirst.pdf>, accessed 15 June 2007.

24. Sally K. Fairfax, "When an Agency Outlasts Its Time: A Reflection," *Journal of Forestry* (July–August 2005): 265.

25. The 2006 memorandum of understanding is available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/servicefirst/>, accessed 15 June 2007.

26. *A Vision for the Forest Service*, ed Sedjo.