

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on Forests & Forest Health

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### Witness Statement

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Testimony  
Committee on Resources  
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health  
Hearing on the Future of the U.S. Forest Service  
September 21, 2000  
Submitted by Lynn Jungwirth  
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Madame Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to participate in today's discussion regarding the future of the U.S. Forest Service. I am here today as Executive Director of the Watershed Center, a community-based nonprofit in Hayfork, California, promoting a sustainable local economy and healthy forest ecosystem. I also serve as chair of the Communities Committee of the 7th American Forest Congress. In this role, I have worked with many communities around the nation who are struggling to make the new "biodiversity" goals of forest management work in terms of their local economies.

As such, they have made worker retraining programs, developed techniques for road deconstruction and maintenance, learned to survey virtually everything under the sun, developed new ways to enhance wildlife habitat, repair riparian areas and construct fuel breaks and small

diameter utilization projects. They have worked through torturous "collaborative processes" as they have learned to integrate conservation and economy. They, at the community level, are providing the reality for the future of the Forest Service. They know, as you do, that the

best hope for the forests lies not here, in D.C., but along the edges of the National Forests, in the rural communities of this country.

The future of the forests and the future of the Forest Service are linked, and so far, it doesn't look good for either. And when it's not good for them, it isn't good for communities. First, we were caught in the over harvest during the Regan/Bush years and now we are caught in

the "no harvest" of Clinton and Gore. So, if we were to posit a future for the Forest Service it would look like this.

1. First, the Forest Service, BLM, Fish and Wildlife Service, the anadromous fisheries part of the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the regulatory agencies for the Clean Water Act would

become one agency. Why? Because in Political Science 101 we learned that separating authority and responsibility is the most inefficient mistake government can make, and this county made it in spades. We need to recombine authority and responsibility and put it in the same agency.

2. Second, the budget for this new natural resources agency would be constructed from the bottom up, with budget requests originating in the needs identified at the ground level. If ESA is going to remain the trump card, then ESA needs must be driving the budget.

3. Fire: The natural resources agency would employ the equivalent of the old BD crews. Only now they would be ecosystem crews, cross trained, local, trained among other things to respond quickly to fire. They could either be employed by the agency or contracted, but they

would remain in place in the local districts, which would be the only part of the old Forest Service system which would remain.

4. Decision Making: Working under broad national guidelines, the natural resources agency would develop local management plans by working through an open, collaborative, transparent process at the local level. The plans would be short, the amendment process would be quick, and they would be revisited every five years.

5. Staffing: The natural resources agency would move its staff to the field. The Washington Office would be responsible for monitoring and reporting to congress on the trends across the landscape, not on how the money was spent, but what the results of that spending were. Regional Offices, as we know them, would disappear. Supervisor Offices, as we know them, would be staffed with those who provided technical assistance to the field.

6. Contracting would be decentralized and put back in the hands of the districts. Local districts would contract out locally and at least 50% of the work would have to go to crews within the county where the work was done. If the 50% was not reached, then the agency would work with

workforce development entities to help create a competitive worker and contractor force.

7. The appeal process: A national arbitration board would hear appeals. The appeal could not be on "process" but on what would actually happen on the ground.

8. CEQ would bring together a FACA committee to help them perform "all party monitoring" of the natural resources agencies and conditions on the ground. That group would report their findings to Congress and their findings would be integrated with the findings of the Washington Office monitoring process.

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