

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on Forests & Forest Health

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### Witness Testimony

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### *Forest of Discord*

*Options for Governing Our National Forest and Federal Public Lands*  
A report from the Society of American Foresters

Testimony by Dr. Donald W. Floyd  
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before the

Committee on Resources  
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health  
U.S. House of Representatives  
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Madam Chairman, my name is Don Floyd, Chair of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) Task Force that has been studying the management of the national forests and BLM public lands since December of 1996. The product of that work is the report you have before you entitled *Forest of Discord*. This report represents the collective wisdom of the almost 18,000 members of the Society that constitute the scientific and educational association representing the profession of forestry in the United States. SAF's primary objective is to advance the science, technology, education, and practice of professional forestry for the benefit of society. We are ethically bound to advocate and practice land management consistent with ecologically sound principles. I am especially pleased to be here today and I thank the Subcommittee for its continued support of professional forestry. I thank the Chair for the opportunity.

I am not here today to give a response to the Committee of Scientists report. Like our report, theirs took a great deal of time to develop and is at least 100 pages. It will take SAF considerable time to provide a scholarly review of their important work. We have committed to this review, and will make it available to this subcommittee, the Department of Agriculture, and the public as soon as we complete it. In addition to SAF's formal review, the May *Journal of Forestry* is devoted to the Committee of Scientists report and will contain analysis from leading scholars reflecting a variety of viewpoints.

I wish to briefly describe the process we used to develop our report. The Task Force represents natural resource professionals from all employment sectors and regions of our membership. They are an excellent group of people and it was an honor to work with them. Our charter was different than the Committee of Scientists in that we were to look beyond the planning regulations and examine all the laws and regulations that affect the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Our charter reminded me of the charge to the last Public Land Law Review Commission in the 1960s. It was, at times, an overwhelming task.

As part of our process, we met with the SAF membership at national conventions, state society meetings,

and one on one. We also visited field offices of the Forest Service and spoke to BLM managers. The Society's Forest Science and Technology Board and Committee on Forest Policy have reviewed and approved the report. In addition, scholars both inside and outside the SAF membership have reviewed the report. The SAF Council (our board of directors) endorsed the report on March 10, 1999, after a very deliberate debate on its contents.

In developing our report I made a conscience effort not to review the Committee of Scientists' work. I felt this would ensure some independence of thought. I have now read some drafts of their report, and the executive summary released yesterday. It is remarkable to find so many similarities between the two efforts. I am pleased that our report and the Committee of Scientists' report offer a platform for Congress and the Administration to put aside their differences and begin the overdue discussion about priorities for conservation.

Madam Chairman, as I mentioned there are similarities between the two reports. If I was forced to find a difference after my initial screening of the Committee of Scientists' report, I believe that difference is that we call for new legislation. The SAF believes that the purposes of the national forest and public lands are no longer clear. After careful analysis we hold the belief that multiple use, when viewed as a guiding principle for all forest lands, has become an engine of conflict that pits one interest group against another and denies land managers a clear mandate. Bob Wolf (formerly of the Congressional Research Service) compares multiple use to a product created accidentally in a G.E. laboratory over 50 years ago. He states "Silly Putty can be shaped, but if left for a few minutes it reverts to its indeterminate mass. Multiple use has the same characteristic: it can be stated specifically ... but it defies meaningful description when one seeks to portray examples on the ground." Congress has the constitutional responsibility to set policy for the national forests and public lands and should act decisively to establish clear priorities for their management. Congress should work cooperatively with the Administration to develop new legislation. This legislation should articulate that multiple use is not necessarily appropriate on every management unit, but may be better applied in the aggregate across that national forests and public lands. It should also spell out how to rectify perceived conflicts between our revered environmental laws and our land management statutes.

The Society of American Foresters is a group of professionals trying to solve problems to benefit society. We are not the timber industry, we are not the environmental community, we represent all these interests in our membership and like to think of ourselves as moderates. We do want change. We want better forest management. Our concern is not how it is achieved, as long as it is achieved. The Administration does not believe new legislation is needed. The Congress does not believe the Administration can fix the problems through new regulations. If bipartisan solutions cannot be developed, I fear that our effort and that of the Committee of Scientists will be just another in a series of discarded reports. Perhaps we should not be called moderates but idealists, as we believe that a bipartisan Congress and the Administration should work together to develop new regulations and new legislation to address these important issues. This will take a commitment to negotiate in good faith, with a clear goal of balancing the legitimate public values for national forests and public lands.

The Committee of Scientists "believes that sustainability in all its facets - ecological, economic, and social - should be the guiding star for stewardship of the national forests and grasslands." We strongly agree with this concept, and we think the American people do as well. We all would be angry if the Forest Service and the BLM were not good stewards and if sustainability was not the agencies' primary goal. We do believe, however, that sustainability is a goal but does not clearly define the purpose of these national lands. The SAF feels the questions of sustainability for whom and for what have not yet been answered. This is why we call for a cooperative approach between Congress, the Administration, and others to develop new

legislation to clarify the purposes of the national forests and public lands.

We believe our report presents a framework to ask the people, through Congress and the Administration, to define the purposes. This does not mean that we believe the Forest Service should not develop new regulations for the forest planning process. That effort should move forward based on the excellent work of the Committee of Scientists and other organizations and individuals interested in the national forests.

As we reinvigorate the national dialogue about the purposes of the national forests and public lands we would like to see change in the following areas:

*Improving the planning process:*

- 1.Resource management plans and subsequent monitoring strategies should provide an appropriate range of diverse, resilient aquatic and terrestrial communities.
- 2.Resource management plans should identify and quantify (to the extent feasible) appropriate goals and outcomes, including vegetation management goals, and commodity and amenity outputs.
- 3.The plans should compare and contrast the goals and outcomes with recent performance, highlighting situations where a significant change in direction is proposed.
- 4.Plans should indicate expected financial performance and expected economic and environmental consequences (including economic and social stability, downstream air and water quality and other environmental effects).
- 5.The goals and outputs (including fiscal expectations and downstream effects) should be set forth in a manner that provides a basis for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting agency performance.
- 6.Both citizen participation and professional discretion are important in resource management planning. Citizens clearly have a responsibility to make their wishes known, and professional resource managers have a duty to listen carefully to the public.
- 7.Public participation at the local level should enrich, not paralyze, implementation of national or regional policy goals. Congress must clearly define the role of local participation with regard to national policy directives. National and regional decisions should be shaped through national and regional participation.
- 8.Both Forest Service and BLM forest planning regulations should identify the analyses and decisions that must be made at each planning level.
- 9.Forest or area plans and resource management plans should identify necessary monitoring as well as the type, location, and intensity of measurements needed. Monitoring should be cost effective and should concentrate on key outcomes. The monitoring plan should be part of the decision document.
- 10.Both Forest Service and BLM forest planning regulations should provide a systematic means for addressing new information, including the results of monitoring. This should include ways to preserve or protect values of concern while the new information is examined for scientific validity and incorporated into analyses and decisions, but without overriding or invalidating the planned targets and budgets.
- 11.Experimentation should be encouraged, but it should be limited to certain conditions. Authority for

experiments should be constrained until the agencies have demonstrated that adequate controls are in place.

12. Any legislation designed to improve the planning process should be clear in its relationship to existing planning legislation.

***Financing land management:***

1. A variety of experimental programs exist for collecting revenues from recreational users and nontraditional forest products. These programs should be expanded. If, for example, watershed management is reemphasized, Congress must address how to pay for it, or how it can pay for itself

2. Forest or area plans should explain how the goals and outcomes would be affected by differing budgets. Annual reporting on agency performance can then compare and contrast the goals and outcomes of the plan with the requested budgets and actual allocations.

3. Use of the trust funds and special accounts should be reviewed and modified if necessary. Administrative reform is warranted before legislative changes are considered. The agencies should use care to ensure that projects funded through these accounts meet the legislative intent Congress had when developing the accounts.

4. Congress should continue to examine the adequacy of payments in lieu of taxes and other compensation programs to ensure that the states and counties are fairly and consistently compensated for the tax-exempt status of federal lands.

Madam Chairman, I believe you will see many similarities between the Committee of Scientists' report and the recommendations I have outlined. Our hope is that everyone who cares about the management of our public lands and national forests will carefully consider these two reports. While we differ in the institutions we would pick to make these changes, both the Committee of Scientists and the Society of American Foresters have the same goal: ensuring the health of the land.

This concludes my statement. Thank you for the opportunity to present our views today. I will be happy to answer any questions at this time.

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