

TRANSCRIPT

The Andrus Center for Public Policy
and the Boise State University Department of Public Policy and Administration
present an address by:

DALE N. BOSWORTH
Chief USDA Forest Service

Sustainable Management of the National Forests

December 12, 2001

Boise State University Student Union
Jordan Ballroom



BOISE
STATE UNIVERSITY



Sustainable Management of the National Forests

DALE N. BOSWORTH

Chief USDA Forest Service

December 12, 2001

Boise State University Student Union

Jordan Ballroom

Presented by:

The Andrus Center for Public Policy,
Cecil D. Andrus, Chairman

The Boise State University Department of Public
Policy and Administration



BOISE
STATE UNIVERSITY

Sustainable Management of the National Forests

An Address by:

Dale N. Bosworth
Chief USDA Forest Service

Presented by the Andrus Center for Public Policy
Boise, Idaho

December 12, 2001

Thank you all for being here tonight. Several people today have said, "Well, I have a choice between coming to hear you or watching the University of Wyoming play Boise State." Everyone I talked to said they were going to watch the University of Wyoming, so I particularly appreciate you folks who came here tonight.

It is good to be back in the state of Idaho, and I do have a lot of strong ties to this state. I graduated from the University of Idaho, and I was on the Dean's List most of the time. It just wasn't the list everyone was trying to get on.

[LAUGHTER]

I have good memories of Idaho, both about my formal education in this state as well as the informal education I received working in the mountains in the St. Joe and Clearwater National Forests where I was a district ranger. Those places have some of the most special country and special people that I've run across anywhere in the United States. So it is a real pleasure to be in Idaho again.

Before I get too far into this, I'd like to recognize a couple of folks who are here tonight, folks I may have to call on to help me with some of the questions. Brad Powell is the Regional Forester in Missoula. He took the really good job that I had. Brad came from the Regional Forester's job in California and has been there in Missoula for a couple of weeks now. He will be a really good addition to that region, and that region covers Montana and Northern Idaho as well as North Dakota.

Jack Troyer is Acting Regional Forester in Ogden, which covers the southern half of Idaho. He's going to be acting in that job until we get a permanent replacement, and he replaces Jack Blackwell, who was there for a number of years and who is now the Regional Forester in California. We just move people around to see if they can take it.

I do appreciate the willingness of a lot of people to change jobs to help me put together the kind of team I want at the upper levels of the Forest Service. The only way to get the things done that we need to get done is by getting the right people in the right places, people who can work together, who know the country, who know the issues, and who know how to solve problems. It's not been easy to make those changes, but we're going to get there. With their help, we're going to be able to make some headway on sustainability in our national forests and to build healthy landscapes.

Working together with communities and trying to achieve healthy landscapes are what sustainable land management is all about. I want to talk a little bit about sustainability this evening. Sustainability has, in my view, three parts: the ecological, the social, and the economic. It seems as though we're always arguing and fighting over what's most important. Is the economic sustainability of a community most important? Or is it the ecological? Frankly, I don't think you can have one without the other. They are three legs of the same stool. We have to quit

fighting about what's most important, and we have to work together to try to achieve the things that need to be achieved if you're going to have sustainability of any kind.

For a number of years, we in the Forest Service used to talk about sustainability in terms of timber sustainability and timber supply. Over the years, we've changed our thinking and are talking more about ecological sustainability, which, from my viewpoint, really ties in more with both the social and economic parts of sustainability. I don't think you have to ignore one to have the other. In fact, I don't believe you can have stable communities if you don't have healthy ecosystems. We need to quit arguing about it, and we need to bring those things together and look at the three parts of sustainability as the three legs of one stool.

Our statutory obligation, I believe, is to serve all Americans. That includes not only the people in communities near national forests but also people across the country. Over the years, we have started focusing a lot on what we refer to as "the community of interest." In concern for the rights of citizens across the country, we started forgetting about the community of place. It's time for us to start focusing more on the community of place, those people that live around the national forests, in the national forests, and in the communities that are influenced by the management of the national forests.

Having said that, I would still say that the community of interest, those people everywhere who care a lot about the different issues, still have their rights and their part to say in the management of the national forests. One of the difficult jobs for our local managers is to find that balance between the national interests, which they are required and obligated to serve, and the needs of local communities.

We have a chasm that has been growing in our country between rural and urban America, which is part of the same issue. It seems to me that this chasm is very obvious when you look at the last election, the big map that we all saw with the red and blue states. It showed how much of a difference there was between the urban and rural states. I hope the Forest Service can do some things to try to pull urban and rural America together. Maybe we're not in a bad place to be able to facilitate some of that. It has always interested me that we'll send people overseas to some other country on an exchange program so that we can understand them better, and we have them come to our country so they can understand us better. Yet right in our own country, we're not doing much to try to help those two parts of our nation understand the different needs of urban and rural areas.

As public servants, we in the Forest Service have an historic opportunity. We can build bridges between the local and national interests by trying to find and establish

common goals and by helping people work toward those common goals. As I see it, our mission is to work with local individuals and communities to get the results that Americans want, which again are those resilient ecosystems.

We can accomplish our land stewardship goal by looking for creative new ways to get the necessary work done on the land, to get the products from it, and to build communities at the same time. Those are the real opportunities that I want to focus on.

What I'd like to do in the next few minutes is talk a little bit about what I think that means for the national forests in the Northern Rockies. As a former Regional Forester for both the Northern and the Intermountain Regions, I think I am fairly familiar with the issues in this part of the world although they change quickly. It's real easy when you're in Washington, D.C., I've found, to lose track of what's going on in the rest of the world.

A big issue for folks in this part of the country is fire. I was Regional Forester during the 2000 fire season in Montana, and I have to tell you that, even though I've been involved in fire for forty years, I never saw anything like what I saw in 2000. In the Northern Rockies, we had about 20,000 fire fighters there all at one time. They were from different countries and 46 different states. Those fires showed that fire management is key to sustainable forest management in the Northern Rockies.

The Andrus Center here did a real service last December by holding The Fires Next Time conference. I wasn't able to be here, but I did read a lot of the material and talked to a lot of folks who were here. Lyle Laverty, who was our National Fire Plan coordinator, led a delegation here. A lot of other folks came from state and federal government, from academia, from environmental groups, and from private interests. A fairly broad-based exchange took place, and I really want to commend you on that, Governor Andrus, because some really important findings came out of that discussion.

For the remarks I want to make, I'd like to draw on some of those findings to illustrate what I think we ought to be doing. The first finding is that "fire belongs on the western landscape." I guess we've known that, but it was one of the findings discussed at the conference. It's a far cry from the way we used to think about and manage fire years ago. When I started in the Forest Service, we tried to suppress every fire by 10:00 AM the next day. That was our fire policy. That's what we did.

Today, we're trying to introduce fire into the ecosystem; we're trying to do the thinning that needs to take place so that we can get fire back into the ecosystem. Every year now, we're burning about 1.3 million acres across the national forests and grasslands. That's a lot of acres that we're burning on purpose. A lot more burn by accident,

but we're burning a lot on purpose. If we can do that in the right way, we will be in a much better position to manage fire.

I call it "reintroducing fire into the ecosystem." The reason I want to use the term "reintroduce" is that fire was here; it was a part of the western landscape. When I use the word "reintroducing," that implies active management. We have to have active management. We can't just sit back and say, "Well, let nature take its course." We've been suppressing fire for decades, and because of that, the landscapes have been altered. We've done a lot of other things that have altered landscapes. That means we're going to have to have active management if we're going to have the kind of healthy landscapes and healthy forests that I believe people want.

The big fires we had last year were a wake-up call. If we are paying attention to that wake-up call, then we'll take some action. The scope of the forest health problem today across the country is huge. On the national forests alone, there are about 73 million acres that are at risk from wildland fires that would be severe enough to compromise ecosystem integrity or public health and safety. About 70 million acres of all ownerships are at risk from 26 different insects and diseases. Other symptoms of the forest health crisis include the spread of invasive weeds and invasive species of all kinds and the degradation of watersheds.

If you don't believe there is a problem with invasive species, particularly noxious weeds, in this part of the country, then you need to leave for about two years and come back. Then you see the difference. The problem is that, if you're right there watching it, you don't notice the difference. When I was gone for about seven or eight years and came back to the northern region, I thought an explosion had taken place. That will become a bigger and bigger problem for us.

These problems are all inter-linked. Decades of fire suppression have produced over-crowded vegetation in the forests, weakened the trees, made them more fire-prone and susceptible to pests and pathogens, made them more prone to displacement by invasive species. Too often, the result is soil erosion, habitat degradation, particularly in the watersheds, wetlands, and streams. As professional foresters—and we have some of the best forest science in the world—we know what needs to be done, we know how to do it, and we have the will to do it.

On national forest lands, we've made at least a start. We're returning fire to the ecosystem, we're thinning to help reduce future fires, and we have a fairly vigorous pest-management program and a watershed program that need to be made bigger. We're making some progress. We're doing that in a collaborative way with state and private landowners. We can do better at that as well, but

we're working on it and are improving. At the rate we're going, however, it's going to take about fifty years just to treat the 73 million acres that are at risk. That's not acceptable. If it's going to take us fifty years, we'll have, during that fifty-year period, a whole bunch more land that will become susceptible.

We're going to have to pick up the pace, and that echoes another finding from The Fires Next Time conference: A one-time increase in funding is not going to solve the problem. We were given a pretty good increase in fire dollars last year to deal with the fire program, but with all the different costly things that are happening right now in our country, we have no idea how much money will be available in the coming years. A one-time fire increase will not solve the problem. It will take ten to fifteen years.

The Government Accounting Office in one of their reports said it will cost \$30 billion over the next ten years, just to deal with the fuels problem on federal lands. That doesn't include fire suppression costs or some of the other aspects of our fire plan. Congress did make a pretty good start by funding it. The western states, working together with federal, tribal, and local partners, drafted a ten-year strategy for restoring to health the fire-devastated ecosystems. So I think we're on the right track. It's a good strategy, and it has had input from a lot of people. If we can implement it, we can make some progress. I'm personally totally committed to the National Fire Plan. It offers some huge opportunities, and I'll talk about some of those opportunities in a minute.

But there is another problem. Even if we know what we need to do, if we have the will to do it, and if we're ready to do it, we can still get stopped by procedural gridlock. That was another finding in The Fires Next Time conference. Too often we spend so much time going through the required process and paperwork stuff that we can't get the necessary work done on the ground. You hear people refer to "analysis paralysis." That's gridlock, and we are in it, big time.

Since the 1960's, Congress has enacted a lot of laws that affect the Forest Service and other land management agencies. The Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Historic Preservation Act, the National Forest Management Act, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act are a few of them. They fill about 900 pages in our book of principal laws that relate to Forest Service activities. If you looked at the book prior to the 60's, it was about one-third that size. Those are good laws, and I'm not knocking any of them. I'm a strong supporter of those laws, and every single one was driven by the best of intentions.

The problem is that they all have certain processes and certain procedures that go along with them. When you

take all these processes and procedures and put them together, what seemed like a perfectly fine and reasonable approach for each individual law becomes an unbearable burden for the folks in the field, trying to get the job done. Those laws have generated literally thousands of pages of regulations that overlap and often conflict. The requirements include an endless stream of consultations, studies, and analyses, followed by administrative appeals and litigation. It goes very deep. Too often laws have been interpreted and implemented in ways that prevent land managers from doing things that need to be done on the ground and that people want to have done on the ground.

We get so tied up in the process that we often can't get to it in the end. It doesn't matter whether you're talking about fuels projects, land acquisitions that we need to complete because the areas contain important threatened or endangered species habitat, or regulations for off-highway vehicles that everyone can support. Just the process often prohibits us from getting the work done and ends up having a detrimental effect on that land, land that is owned by all Americans. That makes analysis paralysis a problem for all Americans.

I've talked to a lot of forest supervisors about how much they spend on the process, and some of them tell me they spend as much as 50 to 70 cents of every dollar on just the process. Even if that figure is just a ballpark figure, that's way too much. Spending 70 cents of the dollar doing the process stuff so that 30 cents ends up on the ground just doesn't make sense to people. It frustrates our folks.

It frustrates the people that are trying to work with us in a collaborative way. People come together to try to find a solution, and then we say, "OK. Thank you for coming together to help us find a solution. We'll be back in two years after we've gone through our process." Then we wonder why they don't want to come back to the table and work with us again. Too little value returns to the public. Too little is done to protect the resources that we're charged to protect and manage if we're taking that much of the dollar and putting it into paper work. The system is broken. Analysis paralysis means really that we can't manage the land in the ways that the American people have come to expect.

They expect us to use the best science, and we ought to use the best science. But we're required to incorporate into the process every bit of new information that comes along. If the folks on the forest have been working away, and they are finally getting close to making a decision, some new information becomes available. They're back to the drawing board to incorporate that new information. During the time that they're incorporating that new information, another bit of new information comes in.

Now they have to go back to the drawing board again and consider that new information. You can get yourself into just a vicious circle and end up never making a decision that you can sustain.

People expect us to make timely decisions, and they expect us to act on them. They expect us to take care of the land while we're doing it, but we'll have to make some changes in the process.

At the national level, we decided, through the Fire Plan, to do some thinning for fuels management and forest health, and we expect the district rangers to implement projects for removing the material. Then we hold public meetings and hearings, and when people oppose the projects, they end up debating national policy at the local level. So we end up frustrating both the public and our local rangers because on every project on every district on every forest, they have to debate national policy at the local level through the appeals. That doesn't make sense. Either we're going to have to work on the national policy, or we have to change the processes. We need to find other ways of doing things than we have used in the past. We need to bring together local and national interests.

People expect us to work closely with individuals and communities, but as I said, if we have too many of these procedural delays, then we lose the momentum and trust gained. That's not acceptable to people either. If we do manage our way through these processes and do manage to get a project done, somebody with a good lawyer and an axe to grind is in a good position to keep things tied up through administrative appeals and litigation. In the end, we might win, but it's very possible that it's too late. Either we've lost the money or fire has burned through the area or something else has happened, and we might not be able to implement the project in the end anyway.

Again, I want to be clear. I still am absolutely committed to meeting the requirements of the environmental laws, and I think it's good that the American people value the environment and have become more directly engaged. I just think we have to find some ways to get back to what I think was the original intent of the laws. We need to rescue the spirit of the environmental laws from the ways they've been twisted to serve a few narrow interests.

I've been in the Forest Service now for 35 years, and I've served in a lot of different jobs at different levels. If there is one thing I've learned over the years, it's that one of the greatest strengths of this agency has been the ability at the district ranger or forest level to make decisions and to strike a balance between national and local interests. We need to get that flexibility back, and we're not going to get it back until we end that analysis paralysis.

How can we get there? We're doing a number of things to try to make a difference there. We're trying to get some

proposals through the Federal Register to streamline a few things. We're doing some work on categorical exclusions, which would help the folks in the field move some of the projects through more quickly. We have an Inventory Monitoring Institute in Fort Collins, which is modeling the maze of activities that are required for someone to be able to perform. If we can find out exactly how it all fits together, then maybe we can find out where it doesn't make sense and how it ought to be changed. I think the new model we're working on should be a good tool for explaining to people what kind of changes we might be able to make.

I've put a team together in my office to look at ways to streamline our own processes. One of those ways includes updating Former Chief Jack Ward Thomas's report, which he did in 1995, on this same subject. It never did see the daylight. We're updating that and will be using that. So I think the opportunity is real, and one of the top priorities I have is to make some of those changes, not just to review them. As we put our house in order, any needs for reforms beyond the Forest Service are going to become clear, and our priority then will be to work with other agencies that oversee the implementation of some of the other laws that affect our decision-making. If it's appropriate, we'll be looking for some legislative changes, but I think we ought to try to work with the public and make the changes we can within our own authority.

Another of the findings from The Fires Next Time conference is a strong consensus that we should focus fire suppression efforts on the communities most at risk and work outward. We need to build on that. The National Fire Plan lets us do that. It lets us put dollars on the ground where they count. It lets us treat fuels adjacent to communities and then work outward toward more remote lands. We have a lot of work ahead of us into the foreseeable future, work that is close to communities, so we don't need to worry too much about how far out we're going to get away from the communities. We have a huge amount of work that needs to be done close to communities. Most people I talk to agree that should be our first priority, to work near the communities and with the people who live in those communities, and to deal with the fuels problem. Those areas we call wildland/urban interfaces and the areas around municipal watersheds are the places that we should go first to try to do some of the fire restoration work.

As I said earlier, the Fire Plan gives us the funds for fire protection, burned area rehabilitation, and forest health treatments. The plan also requires us to work closely with local communities and to identify and choose projects that will meet local needs, including the need for jobs and local stability. So although it's focused on fire, an important part is focused on community stability and jobs as well.

In this process, I think we may have some opportunities to help meet the President's energy goals. For example, we have some projects underway through the National Fire Plan for removing some of the small-diameter materials and using the biomass to try to generate electricity. There would be some real win-wins if we're able to make those things happen.

Another finding from The Fires Next Time conference was that the fire policy solutions should be tied to other policies and laws. Again, the National Fire Plan gives us opportunities in that direction. An example would be that the Forest Service has been given limited authority to test stewardship or what we refer to as "end-results contracting." That is an alternative to some of the ways we've been doing things in the past. We're experimenting in Idaho and a number of places with these stewardship contracts where we can go out and get a request for proposals to get the end results. We can pick the best value to the government and then get the best contractor. Hiring locally can be a part of the criteria we use to select the contractor.

We're trying to get permanent authority to do this. It's difficult because have it only as a test authority, and if we've never gotten all the way through the process, it's hard to say whether the test worked or not. So we need to get some of these done and see whether they're working before we have a lot of support for permanent authority. But I think it's a tool that will make a huge difference.

We have to quit depending on timber-sale contracts as the only way to treat national forest lands. We need to be using other more creative ways of treating them. Through some of these projects, we're going to be able to demonstrate increased flexibility and improved efficiency in meeting the goals we're trying to achieve.

We have large-scale watershed restoration projects that help us develop partnerships to do the watershed restoration. I'm talking about ridgetop to ridgetop, not necessarily streambank to streambank. We're trying to find ways to get that work done in a shorter period of time.

Then there is the Craig-Wyden Payments to States legislation, which was enacted last year. It helps stabilize resource-dependent communities in a couple of ways: first, by providing some predictable annual levels of financial assistance and, second, by financing restoration, maintenance, and stewardship projects that will yield local benefits. There is another value to that. It will help us learn how to work together more effectively at the local level. I had the opportunity today to meet with one of the newly-formed Resource Advisory Committees. Startup is always interesting, and we'll see how it goes. But I think that in the long run, we'll make huge differences by having people across the spectrum of interests getting together and working together to try to come to

some common agreement to achieve the goals that they have for the national forests in their areas. If these things can help us bypass the gridlock and if we can work together on the landscape level on the long-term health of the land, maybe we can avoid things like ESA listings and some of the problems that follow.

As I wrap up, I'd like to summarize some of the main points, and then we can get to some of your questions. First, we need to work with local communities to restore and maintain healthy ecosystems in order to meet the needs of present and future generations. That's just another way of stating what the Forest Service's mission is. It's taking the Forest Service mission and putting it in different words.

Second, as professional land managers, we know how to do the job, and we know how to work with people to figure out what they want and what the land needs, based upon their values. Too often, though, we can't get the work done that needs to be done because we're tied up in so much process. We have to get beyond the gridlock if we want to have healthy landscapes and healthy communities.

Third, the National Fire Plan gives us some great opportunities for reconciling local and national interests by working together for outcomes that I believe all Americans really want: healthy, resilient forests and grasslands.

That brings me to the final point. I do think we have an historic opportunity to establish a consensus, based on what unites us. In times of crisis, part of our culture is that we tend to pull together. We've seen a lot of that since September 11th. I think it's time we pulled together to try to overcome some of the forest health problems. We need to unite behind a common agenda for restoring the national forests to health. As a basis for what unites us, I would offer that what we leave on the land is much more important than what we take from the land. Our goal needs to be to strike the right balance between social, economic, and ecological sustainability, using approaches that are citizen-centered, that are results-oriented, and that are market-based. That will not be easy.

Let me mention one last finding from The Fires Next Time conference. "Support for locally-based collaborative solutions is strong, but these concepts need better definition." I think that's exactly right. I want to leave you with a challenge: Work with us; help us. Help us find the on-the-ground solutions at the district ranger level, at the community level. Help us find the concepts that work, that will get work done on the ground. Help us share these collaborative successes with others so they can learn from them across the country. If we do that, we can make a difference. That is the key to sustainable management of America's national forests and grasslands.

[APPLAUSE]

I'd be happy to answer any questions now. *A*

Sustainable Management of the National Forests

Moderator:

Marc Johnson
Senior Vice President,
Andrus Center for Public Policy

CECIL D. ANDRUS: Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce to you Marc Johnson. Marc is one of the senior members of the Board of Directors of the Andrus Center for Public Policy, also a partner and principal in the Gallatin Group, which has offices throughout the Pacific Northwest. With that, let me remind you to fill out your question cards.

MARC JOHNSON: Chief, we have quite a few of these, but we probably won't get to all of them. You addressed the analysis paralysis problem at some length, and a number of questions spoke to whether it's realistic to expect a constructive change in that process that doesn't require some change in legislation. Do we need to look at the fundamental structure of some of our environmental statutes in order to address that problem?

BOSWORTH: My belief is that if we decide to undertake something like a land law review, we'll be in analysis paralysis about analysis paralysis. If we try to bite off too big a piece, make too great a change, we'll never get there. I'm not against looking at the environmental laws to see whether there are some changes that are needed, but I think the problems are more self-imposed than contained in the laws. The problems result largely from the things that we did through our regulations and then through the case law that evolved over a period of time.

My belief is that we can make some changes in some of the regulations and still keep to the spirit of the law. We can do that in a much shorter period of time by getting people together and getting their support. I think we can make a difference that way. If we get into a massive study, created by Congress or someone else, in ten years, we'll still be talking about this problem.

That's not the solution. I'm not against doing it, but let's not stop what we're doing now and wait for a major land law review.

JOHNSON: This questioner said, "A great deal of litigation was generated because the Forest Service refused to explain its decisions. Without the threat of litigation, what's to prevent the Forest Service from reverting to its old bad habits?"

BOSWORTH: There isn't anything except for the public's demands that ever keeps us or any other agency from reverting to anything. To me, the Forest Service is not a living, breathing organism. It's made up of a lot of people, people that care about how the land is being managed. A lot of change has taken place in the last ten years in the Forest Service. Some think it's good; some think it's not so good. When I started in the Forest Service in the 1960's, we were selling around 11 or 12 billion board feet of timber. We're at about 1 or 1-1/2 billion now. Some people think that's too little; some think it's too much.

When we do harvest timber, we're doing it for different purposes. It's not that you have to watch every single thing we do because we're not willing to disclose what we're doing or to work with people. Every employee in the Forest Service wants to be able to explain the decisions we make; they want to have good rationale for those decisions and are willing to take the criticisms and make adjustments. But let's not be burdened with all the process stuff to bring that about.

Let me just add one comment. There is a lot of discussion about the appeals process. Originally, the idea behind the appeals process was that if a forest supervisor made a decision and somebody didn't like that decision,

he or she could go to his boss and say, “I don’t like that decision, and here’s why. Would you change it?” That was the appeal. Now you have to hire a lawyer, and you have to spend a whole bunch of money and time to try to find a flaw in the process. It takes us 120 days, and it takes you 120 days to work through that. Meanwhile, the guy who just wanted to say, “I don’t like that decision,” can’t be heard. We’ve lost the spirit of what originally prompted the appeals process. We’ve turned it into a process-oriented game.

JOHNSON: Is it active management to decide to let a natural fire burn? If not, how do you propose doing forest management in roadless areas.

BOSWORTH: Let me think about how I would define active management. There are a lot of different aspects to active management. Prescribed burning is active management, but if you have a lightning strike and, under certain prescriptions, you’re allowing it to burn, I don’t know that I would consider it active management. It’s not as active as if you went out and did the prescribed burning. But I think the real question he was getting at had to do with was how we plan to take care of fire in roadless areas.

Roadless areas are different than areas next to communities. When you get those areas that are roaded and developed next to communities, it takes active management. It takes thinning, it takes putting fire back in, it takes some logging. The purpose of wilderness areas is entirely different. Active management there will be entirely different. That’s probably where we allow fires to burn in a natural way under certain prescriptions.

In between, we have roadless areas. They are not wilderness, and they haven’t been developed. I think that we can manage fires in those areas, depending on what outcomes we want for those roadless areas.

JOHNSON: This is another question about the National Fire Plan. What is the most pressing challenge in the Intermountain Region in regard to implementing the National Fire Plan?

BOSWORTH: I should probably ask Jack Troyer, Acting Regional Forester for the Intermountain Region, but I’ll make a guess. Again, probably the biggest challenge is—and I hate to keep going back to analysis paralysis—process gridlock. The biggest challenge to the folks trying to implement the Fire Plan is being able to get the work done on the ground in a timely way.

They are doing a great job of working with the communities. They have the analytical skills to be able to figure out in any landscape where we ought to be putting

the priorities. They are doing it in a way that includes what people want. The big challenge is being able to go out and implement the decision on the ground because, again, of the requirements for analysis and documentation and paperwork.

Jack is nodding his head, so I got that right. There are lots of other obstacles to implementing the National Fire Plan. But if there is anything that we in Washington can do to try to help the folks on the ground, simplifying the process would probably be the most helpful.

JOHNSON: Do you believe that the fees charged for recreational use in some national forests are fair and equitable, particularly when compared to the fees charged for livestock grazing, hardrock mining, and mineral leases? They’re not all easy, Chief.

BOSWORTH: Let me say something first about the recreation fees. If I had a magic wand and could do whatever I wanted, I would prefer not to have recreation fees. I would prefer to have enough dollars appropriated by Congress so that we could manage the recreation opportunities in a way that would allow people to pursue those opportunities and not have to pay on an individual basis. I worry that, over time, fees will be increased and that, pretty soon, the national forests will start to feel like the King’s Forests where only the rich can go. We have to watch very carefully that we don’t do that if we’re going to be charging fees.

On the other hand, if we don’t charge fees, we will not have the money to do the job that needs to be done to provide the recreational opportunities that people want. So it’s a fine line to walk there. I support the idea of recreation fees as long as we do it very carefully and identify the work that will be done with those fees, work that might not otherwise get done. And we need to make sure it goes back to the local area to do it. The work has to be done where the fees were collected.

In the end, that’s one of the solutions for doing what we need to do in terms of recreation. Other solutions have to do with building partnerships with non-governmental organizations and with other agencies in order to leverage some of the dollars we do have to meet the recreational needs people have.

The last part of the question was whether forest use fees were fair in light of what we charge for grazing and for minerals. It’s all in the eye of the beholder. What’s fair to one person seems unfair to another. I don’t know how to compare what we charge for AUMs in grazing versus what we charge for somebody to use a recreation area. I’m sure whoever wrote that question has an opinion about that. We’re trying not to charge so much that people are out of the market.

JOHNSON: I saw Jim Caswell here earlier, but I don't know whether this is his question or not. Could you talk about the opportunities for the Forest Service to work with the state of Idaho to be pro-active to try to prevent the listing of species under the Endangered Species Act?

BOSWORTH: If we were all really smart, that's exactly what we would be doing. We'd be working together, developing conservation strategies for these sensitive species, and managing them in a way that eliminates the need for them to be listed. That's what we ought to be doing.

Part of our responsibility is conservation of wildlife, fish, and plant species. We need to manage the national forests in a way that conserves those species, but it doesn't have to be done in a way that keeps everybody out of the woods. I do think there are some great opportunities for the Forest Service to work with the states and with non-governmental organizations to develop strategies and put those in place.

One of the biggest deterrents to that cooperation is analysis paralysis. I say that because in a number of places where we've worked together and have come up with a strategy that we could implement and that would take care of the species, we started going through the process to try to adjust the Forest Plan so we could implement that strategy. By the time we got the adjustments made, the species was listed. That doesn't make sense to me. It doesn't make sense for the species; it doesn't make sense for the way we spend the dollars; and it doesn't make sense for the outcomes.

JOHNSON: I think this is a great question. If you could choose one new item of research information to guide the Forest Service in its duties, what would that be?

BOSWORTH: That's a tough one because there are a lot of areas where we need to improve our knowledge. Right now, it has to do with risk management. It's one of the areas in which the Forest Service is very weak, that is, not understanding what the risk is for taking action or not taking action. What outcome do we risk if we don't do more analysis, for example? If we take the analysis level we're doing now and reduce that level, what is the risk to the land? What's the risk to the species? Can we quantify that risk?

I'd like to understand better both short-term risk and long-term risk to the species in a quantified way so we can make decisions about land management that are based on those relative risks. Right now, the way we do it is to talk more about whether our comfort level is very high that we're OK, rather than whether we are practicing good risk

management. Researchers would probably be rolling their eyes if they were listening to me, but I'd like to do something like that in order to do a better job of risk management. I'd like quantitative information so we can make better decisions about the actions we're taking or not taking.

JOHNSON: We hear a lot of talk about collaboration. This question deals with what was the poster project for collaboration, the Quincy Library Group in California. Apparently, the Group recently announced that it was suspending its meetings. "What is the Forest Service policy regarding local collaborative conservation efforts like Quincy?"

BOSWORTH: I strongly support local collaborative groups. There are none like Quincy except Quincy. That's my opinion. There may be a number of people who don't know about Quincy. Quincy is a small town in northern California where people got frustrated over their inability to manage the land. Both the environmental folks there and the timber industry folks were beginning to think their community was going to die. So they started meeting at the library, and they started working together to come up with a solution. They came up with a solution, and they were very, very good at working with Congress because they got it funded and got legislation passed to basically put the Quincy Library Group in the statute for a five-year test period.

I don't think that's necessarily a great example because, first, I don't think you ought to have to pass legislation to get something done; and second, I don't think you ought to put a whole bunch of additional dollars in one place and take them away from other places. So there are a couple of things that are wrong with it. What's right about it is that people said, "We have a problem, and we have to come together to try to solve it."

The Quincy Library Group wasn't necessarily a broad-based group of people. It was a small group, and the doors were closed. If collaboration is going to work, the doors have to be open. People have to want to come to the table and to try to come up with solutions. I don't want to say that's a bad example because everyone is struggling to find ways that work, and I have a huge admiration for those folks, who worked so hard on that project. I hope, though, that we can evolve from that and find other collaborative kinds of approaches that will work across the country. And there are a lot that are working in a lot of places around the country.

JOHNSON: This one dips our toe in the roadless issue. What is your policy going to be in allowing logging in roadless areas?

BOSWORTH: As everybody in here knows, the roadless issue has been a big issue for the last several years. It has been a big issue for as long as I can remember. We tried to deal with roadless in RARE I, back in the early 70's. We tried to deal with it again in RARE II in the late 70's. We tried to deal with it again in 2000. It's an issue that's very difficult to find a satisfactory solution for, but let me just tell you my personal viewpoint. I don't want to get into all the legislation and litigation, but I will tell you my viewpoint.

I believe that the roadless areas are very important to the American people and that the roadless values are very important. It's important that we preserve those roadless values in most of those areas. I believe that the worst thing that could happen to us would be to have the roadless areas become wilderness or become roaded and developed because we would end up with all the land being either wilderness or developed. That land in between is land that a lot of people like me like to go to. I like to get in my pickup truck, drive up some winding road into the backcountry, pull out my chain saw, cut up a little firewood, and pitch my tent. You can't do that if it's wilderness, and I wouldn't want to do that if it's roaded and developed. I don't want to lose that part. It's something we have that is very meaningful to a lot of people. It also provides for biodiversity. It's an important facet of what we have to offer.

Now I won't argue that all the areas that are roadless, all 58-1/2 million acres, should remain roadless. There are some exceptions, depending on where you are. I also don't think that the future of the timber industries or the communities depends on the roadless areas in most cases, although there are some localized cases where there are some difficult problems associated with it.

To me, the problem is more in how we go about doing things rather than what we do. We tackled that issue by coming out with one answer that covered all lands, including 3 million acres of roaded country. A lot of people at the local level felt they had no chance or opportunity to have an effect on the areas they cared about. The only thing we were really looking at was all 58-1/2 million acres. If you wanted to talk about the Upper Nine Mile Roadless Area, you couldn't talk about it. There was no way to be engaged in the discussion, so it didn't feel good to people. You have to find a way to do these things so they feel good to people and so local people have more influence and more say about it.

Again, we don't want to lose those roadless values. They are very, very important to a lot of people, so we're going to continue to work through that issue and try to find a solution that will be satisfactory. I think there are solutions that will be satisfactory, at least in the Lower 48. I don't know about Alaska. I don't think anything is going

to solve the problem there. In the Lower 48, I think there are solutions that will be acceptable to 95% of the public.

JOHNSON: What role might timber imported from Canada and other places in the world play in the sustainability of U.S. forests? If we rely on timber from other parts of the world, do we run the risk of degrading the world's forests for our benefit here in the United States?

BOSWORTH: To me, there is a huge ethical problem if you're a proponent of taking care of the environment and you're comfortable with going to some other country, getting their natural resources, and dragging them back over here. When some of those countries don't have the technological capability or information, the scientific information, or the environmental laws in place to utilize those resources intelligently for themselves, you can't feel good about saving the earth just because you're not logging in your own backyard. There is something wrong with that, in my view. In our country, we need to face that issue.

We are in a global market. Obviously there will be exports and imports of a lot of different things, but I believe that if we really do care about the resources and the environment, we ought to care about other countries' environments just as much. We ought to be talking a lot about consumption because we consume something like six times more wood products per capita than any other developed country and twelve or thirteen times more than undeveloped countries. It doesn't make sense that we have this insatiable appetite. We don't want to take anything out of our backyard, but by golly, we know where we can go get it because we can. We may be economically strong, but that doesn't seem very ethical to me.

JOHNSON: A quick question about grazing. It appears that the Forest Service will never have the desired staff to fully manage all aspects of grazing on the land. What alternative approaches are you considering to administer grazing allotments more adequately for multiple use value?

BOSWORTH: That's not one of the issues that I've become personally engaged in during these first six months. I do think that the grazing program is a challenge for us because we've lost a lot of our range conservationists, and we're not bringing a whole lot in. Someone was telling me that the number of range conservationists in the intermountain region today is half of what it was ten years ago. Yet, there is still the same amount of grazing going on. So our ability to administer the grazing permits

is diminishing. It's a good question: What are we doing about it? The answer, I'm sorry to say, is "nothing," but I'm going to get right on it. [LAUGHTER]

There are some things we can do with permittees to help in terms of monitoring grazing. There are some things we haven't done in the past that we can do. There are ways we can get other people engaged, but I really don't have a good answer. We do have to make the case, from a funding standpoint, that we need enough dollars to administer these permits if we're going to issue them. It's got to be done right if we're going to do it. So in the end, it will take dollars to do that.

JOHNSON: Two more questions. Traditionally, the Chief's job has been the focus of a good deal of political pressure: industry interests on one hand, environmental groups on the other. Some have suggested that you may still be in the honeymoon period but that it will end soon enough. Can you tell us a little bit about the political pressures that go with the job?

BOSWORTH: If this has been a honeymoon, I can hardly wait till the real stuff begins. [LAUGHTER] Some of the events and the terrorists' activities have caused people in all areas of government to back away a little from some of the strong rhetoric they've been using. They are focusing on other things, and people are trying to work together. So that extends the spirit of trying to work together maybe longer than is customary.

I've had a number of hearings where people have done a lot of yelling at me. It felt just like being a regional forester or a district ranger. Same old people are yelling but maybe for different reasons, and I suspect it may get more intense. But I also have a lot of faith in Forest Service people as well as people who care about the national forests. If we can do our job, focus on solutions, and not try to jam things down people's throats, I think the bulk of the people will understand that we're doing the right thing. If most of the people believe we're doing the right thing, there is hope that we can solve some of these problems. If we solve some of the problems, the political heat isn't bad at all. It's when we can't solve the problems that the political heat gets bad. So I'm hopeful.

JOHNSON: It's always dangerous to end with a philosophical question, but has John Muir supplanted Gifford Pinchot as the philosophical foundation of the Forest Service? As you walk into that Chief's Office every day, whose legacy do you worry about?

BOSWORTH: When I went in there, I dragged Gifford Pinchot's desk back into my office. That's the philosophical viewpoint that I take. There have been a

lot of changes from a hundred years ago when Pinchot started the Forest Service, and I have a lot of admiration for the things that John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and some of the other folks write about and talk about. But I still believe in multiple use. I still believe national forests are different from national parks. I still believe that if we work together with people, we can meet people's needs and can do multiple use. Maybe not on every acre, but I think that the basic purpose for which the national forests were established and that evolved over the years through laws is the direction we ought to be heading. It tastes pretty good to most people if we do it right. *A*

[APPLAUSE]

* * * * *

BIOGRAPHY: Dale N. Bosworth,
Chief USDA Forest Service

Dale Bosworth was announced as the 15th Chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service on April 12, 2001. Prior to his selection as chief, Bosworth had served as regional forester for the Northern Region of the Forest Service, headquartered in Missoula, Montana, since August 1997. He had been in a similar position as regional forester for the Intermountain Region in Ogden, Utah since 1994.



Dale N. Bosworth

Bosworth began his career in the Northern Region as a forester on the St. Joe National Forest (now a part of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests) in Idaho and later served on the Kaniksu, Colville, Lolo, Clearwater, and Flathead National Forests. He then moved to Missoula as the assistant director for land management planning for the Northern Region, where he was involved with the development of the forest plans.

In 1986, Bosworth was named forest supervisor of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Utah in the Intermountain Region. From there, in 1990, he became the deputy director for timber management in the Forest Service national headquarters in Washington, D.C. In 1992, he became deputy regional forester for the Pacific Southwest Region and was promoted to regional forester for the Inter-mountain Region in 1994.

Chief Bosworth was born in Altedena, California, and he holds a B.S. degree in forestry from the University of Idaho. He is a member of both the Society of American Foresters and the Society for Range Management. *A*

BOISE

STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Public
Policy and Administration



Boise State University
P.O. Box 852, Boise, Idaho 83701
(208) 426-4218 Fax (208) 426-4208
www.andruscenter.org