

A Conservation History of the National Forests



Steve Holmer, Unified Forest Defense Campaign

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Establishing a National Treasure	pages	3 - 4
Conservation Verses Preservation		4 - 7
The Rise of Exploitation		7 - 10
Congressional Incentives for Logging		10 - 12
Preservation Makes a Comeback		12 - 19
Conservation Setbacks and a Return to Exploitation		19 - 21
The Legacy of Exploitation		21 - 23
The Future of the National Forests: A Restoration Century		23 – 24
Sources		25

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The Unified Forest Defense Campaign is a coalition of national and regional conservation organizations that includes Defenders of Wildlife, NRDC, The Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, Earthjustice, National Environmental Trust, US PIRG, American Lands Alliance, Northwest Old Growth Campaign, National Forest Protection Alliance, Alaska Rainforest Campaign, Center for Biological Diversity and Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness.

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A Conservation History of the National Forests

The existence and use of the National Forests has been debated since before their designation, and as that debate continues today it is worth considering how conservation has fared during the first 100 years of U.S. Forest Service management.

Establishing a National Treasure

The very existence of the 192 million acre National Forest system is a significant conservation achievement that should be treasured by all Americans. The notion of preserving forests in public trust to protect watersheds, ensure sustainable use today while maintaining their bounty for future generations is a magnificent conservation idea. The National Forests make the United States unique and the holder of a rapidly disappearing and increasingly valuable commodity – intact forest ecosystems that provide abundant clean water.



Hyalite Canyon, Gallatin National Forest, Montana

1870's-1890's – Forests in the public domain are being logged at an alarming pace. The vast wastelands of stumps and debris left behind by cut-and-run logging operations feed massive fires that kill thousands.

“At the present increased rates of consumption, it is believed that the timber now growing the lake states will be all cut and marketed within fifteen or twenty years...It is generally admitted that an equal demand upon our redwoods in the future, as has been made during the past, will obliterate them from our shores within the course of a few years only.”

– Excerpt from “Western Woodlands” by Taliesen Evans for the *Overland Monthly*. 1871

1871 – Over 1,500 people are killed when 3.8 million acres burn at Peshtigo, Wisconsin.

1876 – Congress establishes a Division of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture to study forests and forestry. This division analyzes the problem of forest devastation and becomes a clearinghouse for possible solutions.

1891 – Congress passes the Creation Act granting the President the authority (now repealed) to establish forest reserves from lands held in the public domain. The legislation is supported by a broad array of interests including preservationists, hunters and anglers, garden clubs, farmers and cities needing watershed protection, as well as foresters concerned about rampant abuse of the public forestlands. Logging is prohibited in the new Forest Reserves.

1891-93 – Presidents Benjamin Harrison and Grover Cleveland authorize the creation of Forest Reserves containing more than 17 million acres.

1897 – President Cleveland proposes to designate an additional 20 million acres of Forest Reserves. Congress objects but President Cleveland vetoes legislation that would have cancelled the new reserves. With passage of the Organic Act of 1897, these 20 million acres are added to the Reserve system.

“If the present rate of forest destruction is allowed to continue, with nothing to offset it, a timber famine in the future is inevitable. Fire, wasteful and destructive forms of lumbering, and the legitimate use, taken together, are destroying our forest resources far more rapidly than they are being replaced. Fortunately, the remedy is a simple one, and your presence here today is a most encouraging sign that there will be such forethought [and action]...”

– President Theodore Roosevelt

1907 – Forest Reserves are renamed National Forests and President Roosevelt adds 99 million acres to the system. In 1905, the Forest Reserves number 60 units covering 56 million acres; in 1910 there are 150 National Forests covering 172 million acres and today we have 155 National Forests covering 192 million acres.

1911 – In response to extensive logging and the resulting flooding and forest fires, Congress passes the Weeks Act, allowing the establishment of National Forests in the Eastern U.S. The act authorizes the purchase of forests and cut-over lands impacted by excessive logging. Today, there are 25 million acres of National Forest in the East.

Conservation Verses Preservation

When the Forest Reserves were created, a debate ensued about how best to manage them. Two schools of thought dominated, one favoring sustainable logging, grazing and mining, the other emphasizing watershed protection and preservation for future generations. This conflict was exemplified by its two main proponents, John Muir arguing for preservation, and Gifford Pinchot pushing for sustainable multiple-use management. The Organic Act of 1897 settled the matter at the time by allowing for logging in the reserves, a significant setback for preservationists.

Pinchot believed in sustainable use and that keeping the forest reserves in public hands was essential to their conservation. He advocated for allowing restricted grazing which he concluded would be better than the unrestricted grazing that was then devastating the forests: he also wanted to keep grazing interests from opposing the creation of additional Forest Reserves.

"Conservation means the greatest good to the greatest number for the longest time. It demands the complete and orderly development of all our resources for the benefit of all the people, instead of the partial exploitation of them for the benefit of a few. It recognizes fully the right of the present generation to use what it needs and all it needs of the natural resources now available, but it recognizes equally our obligation so to use what we need that our descendants shall not be deprived of what they need."

– Gifford Pinchot

Pinchot deserves considerable credit for convincing President Roosevelt to greatly expand the National Forest system. President Roosevelt expressed strong support for the forest reserves with a sustainable use philosophy and appointed Pinchot to be the first Chief of the Forest Service. The agency's mission to coordinate potentially conflicting uses was laid out in a letter to Pinchot by the Secretary of Agriculture. It says that "where conflicting interests must be reconciled the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."



Boulder White Clouds Proposed Wilderness, Sawtooth National Forest, Idaho

1897 – The Organic Act “provides that no National Forest may be established except to improve and protect the forest, or to secure favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber.”

1905 – Congress passes the Forest Transfer Act that transfers the Forest Reserves to the Department of Agriculture (USDA). Gifford Pinchot, a USDA forester, is credited with

convincing President Roosevelt that the transfer would ensure better management.

1906-07 – Gifford Pinchot prepares bills for Congress placing the National Parks under the Forest Service so that they may be open for resource development. These are successfully opposed in committee. Pinchot's effort ultimately backfires by sparking a preservationists' campaign to establish a permanent separate bureau to administer the National Parks.

1907 – Shortly after the creation of the Tongass National Forest in 1907, the Forest Service tries to install a pulp industry in Southeast Alaska. Consistent with contemporary ideas about timber management, the agency plans to convert “decadent” old-growth forest into “vibrant,” faster growing second-growth that will produce pulp. The plan calls for five pulp mills and logging practically the entire forest.

1907 – Agricultural lands in California's Owens Valley are incorporated into the Inyo National Forest in violation of the Organic Act to prevent homesteaders from staking claims and gaining rights to water being redirected south to the city of Los Angeles.

1910 – Devastating forest fires hit Idaho and Montana and 78 Forest Service firefighters die nationwide. This is a traumatic event for the agency that sets the tone for an aggressive fire control effort in the future. Wildfire prevention and suppression became a highly successful effort led by the Forest Service which developed ways to forecast fire behavior, inform citizens about fire prevention, and employ technologies to extinguish the flames.

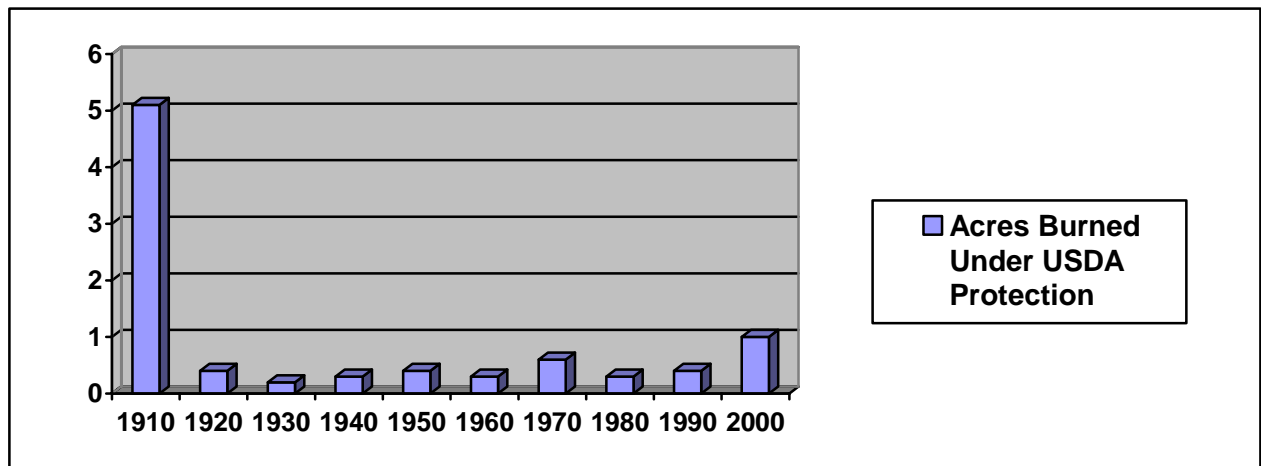


Chart Showing Decrease in Acres Burned Due To Fire Suppression (Peak Year Each Decade)

1920s – Prosperity brought about growth in recreation on the National Forests and the agency responds by steadily developing and improving roads for automobile use, campgrounds for forest visitors, and summer home sites for semi-permanent users. By 1925, there are 1,500 campgrounds on the National Forests.

1920 – Congress passes the Mineral Leasing Act creating a system of rental and royalty fees for oil, gas and other minerals.

1933-42 – Before President Franklin Roosevelt's inauguration, the Forest Service drafts *A National Plan for American Forestry* outlining a program for more intensive management and hundreds of projects that need completion in the National Forests. When Roosevelt creates the

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the spring of 1933 the Forest Service is ready to put people to work. When the first of 2,600 CCC camps are established, many are on the National Forests, with each hosting at least one. The Forest Service facilitates thousands of work projects including the construction of trails, camp grounds, and bridges.

1960 – Due to growing conflicts between recreation and the expanding timber sale program, Congress passes the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960. The law is a formal statement of the sustainable multiple-use policy that National Forests be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes. The administration of forest lands must be carried out in a way that “provides the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources without impairment of the productivity of the land.” Unfortunately, the law is ineffective and does little to reduce unsustainable logging levels in the 1960's, 70's or 80's.



Old Growth Clearcut, Mt. Hood National Forest, Oregon

The Rise of Exploitation

The agency's commitment to good stewardship of the land, waters and wildlife has shifted back and forth over the decades. In its first three decades, the Forest Service was for the most part a good steward that limited environmentally harmful activities on the forests to a small scale with the exception of a few extremely large timber sales where entire drainages were logged. However, starting during World War II, the agency facilitated a period of intensive resource extraction that was only slowed in the early nineties due to public protest, congressional action, court rulings, and administrative rule changes.

During World War II the government ordered the Timber Production War Project to increase National Forest wood outputs. After the War, demand for jobs and timber for housing rose dramatically. Some looked to the National Forests in the West to meet those demands. Lyle F. Watts, Chief from 1943-52, and his staff created and implemented plans to open up the National Forests to development. National Forest sale levels increased from 2 billion board feet in the mid 1940's to over 10 billion board feet by the 1960's.

"Forest conservation involves much more than the growing of crops on forest lands to supply raw material in one form or another for an ever-growing list of uses. Forestry must be coupled with the social and economic welfare of rural communities, especially in regions primarily dependent upon forest industries. Improving forest productivity should mean a great deal to rural America in augmenting the income of farm folk, maintaining pay rolls in small communities, and sustaining the tax base to support local government functions."

Lyle F. Watts, Chief, U.S. Forest Service , 1943 - 52

1944 – Sustained-Yield Forest Management Act authorizes sustained yield logging units for private interests on federal lands. These areas are reserved for one community or mill to intensively manage and as happened in most cases, excessively log. Supporters tout the program as a way to provide job stability, but it proves unpopular with industry which thinks it is uncompetitive and exclusionary. Only six units are created under the Act and today, only one remains in operation as a small-scale restoration and fuel reduction project.

1947 – Congress passes the Tongass Timber Act. The goal is to establish a year-round industry in Southeast Alaska and it is established in a way that fortunately remains unique among America's National Forests. The Forest Service offers long-term timber contracts to create incentives for companies to build pulp mills. These 50-year logging contracts guaranteed the industry Tongass timber at a very favorable price. Old-growth trees hundreds of years old are sold for less than three dollars apiece. The two pulp mills and the 50-year logging contracts dominate the forest, regional politics and economics in southeast Alaska from the early-50s to the mid-90s. During this period, over eight billion board feet of timber is cut and sold at a loss to taxpayers.

1950's – Private forest lands become exhausted due to overcutting, particularly of old growth. To pick up the slack in timber supply, logging and roadbuilding in National Forests surge. Logging levels increase from 3 billion board feet in 1950 to 9 billion board feet in 1959.

1953 – The Eisenhower administration requests a 90% increase in funding for construction of new logging roads. The roads budget increases from \$11 million in 1952 to \$24 million in 1956.

1953 – The Forest Service testifies that the sustained yield potential of all 73 million acres designated for commercial logging was about 6½ billion board feet a year. By 1961, the agency raises the commercial acres to 95 million acres and the allowable cut to 11.2 billion board feet.

1955 – The Lolo National Forest in Montana logs 108 million board feet – twice the allowable cut.

1959 – The Northern Region proposes a plan to greatly increase logging levels by converting all accessible National Forests to tree plantations through intensive management.

1959 – Operation Multiple Use, a Forest Service plan, envisions annual logging on the National Forests will increase to 21.1 billion board feet and 542,000 miles of logging roads by the year 2000. Fire suppression and controlled burning will be increased to protect and enhance managed stands and the forest trail system will be reduced from 112,000 miles to 80,000 miles.

Early 1960's – Landslides caused by timber roads constructed on poor soils in Idaho's Salmon River watershed destroy salmon runs.

1964 – The Forest Service prepares an 8.75 billion board foot timber sale for the Tongass National Forest.

1968 – The Gifford Pinchot National Forest logs 559 million board feet of timber even though the allowable cut is only 381 million board feet.

1970 – President Nixon instructs the Forest Service to implement the Forest and Related Resources (FARR) plan, a presidential task force report calling for a 50 percent increase of logging on National Forests. The FARR recommendations are identical to provisions proposed in a defeated timber industry bill entitled the National Timber Supply Act.

1976 – The National Forest Management Act passes as a compromise. One effect of the bill is to end court injunctions that halted clearcutting on a large portion of the National Forests. Restrictions are put in place against clearcutting in the legislation, but loopholes allow it to continue, and unsustainable logging levels are not reduced for another fifteen years. Clearcutting continues to be routinely used today.



Old Growth Logging, Willamette National Forest, Oregon

1980 – The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) sets a target of logging 450 million board feet a year on the Tongass, and provides a permanent \$40 million annual subsidy to the Forest Service to prepare and administer timber sales.

1984-89 – Congress passes a series of appropriations amendments to require the continued liquidation of old growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. Despite evidence as early as 1983 that the Northern spotted owl is in rapid decline, this congressional interference prevents citizen oversight of old growth timber sales or judicial review.

1987 – National Forest logging reaches its high-water mark with 12.7 billion board feet cut.

“One of my major initiatives has been to speed up harvest of slow-growing or decadent, over mature timber stands in the Pacific Northwest, the old growth.”

-- John Crowell, Undersecretary at the Department of Agriculture, former Louisiana Pacific executive, who oversaw the Forest Service

1990 – Congress passes an old growth logging rider (section 318 of the FY 1990 Interior Appropriations bill) that overturns two court injunctions that had halted over 140 old growth timber sales, and orders the Forest Service and BLM to offer a fixed volume of timber in Washington and Oregon during that year, about 9.6 billion board feet. It also includes sufficiency language saying citizens could not challenge these projects if they violate environmental laws except for the Endangered Species Act. Many of these projects did not have stream buffers to protect water quality or other minimal environmental safeguards.

1995 – President Clinton signs an emergency appropriations bill with the Salvage Logging Rider allowing logging of healthy trees in National Forests under the guise of salvage. The 18-month law suspends environmental laws and the public appeals process, prompting a huge public outcry. Particularly harmful logging projects are offered for sale by the Forest Service including old growth and roadless area sales that previously had been ruled illegal by federal courts.

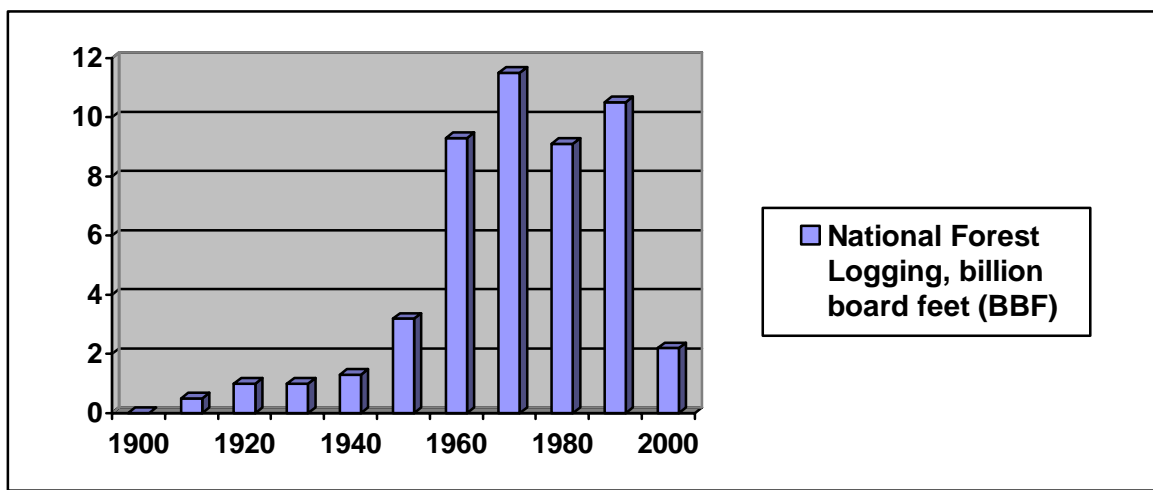


Chart Showing National Forest Logging Levels from 1900 - 2000

Congressional Incentives for Logging

Over the past 100 years, Congress has passed legislation creating powerful financial incentives for the Forest Service to support extractive uses of the forest over conservation. In addition, each year Congress spent heavily on logging, road building and drilling development projects and prodded the agency to increase production to deliver favors to contributors, jobs, and cheap consumer goods for their districts and states.

Over a period of decades, there came into existence what is known as an “Iron Triangle” consisting of the Forest Service, Local Communities and Industry, and Western Representatives and Senators. This triangle formed a powerful alliance that successfully promoted increased

logging and roadbuilding on the National Forests even when it was shown to waste money and damage the well-being of the forests.

Today, 109 of 122 of the National Forests lose money on their timber sales and, in doing so they sacrifice the environment and non-timber values in addition to taxpayer dollars. There also remains a \$10 billion road maintenance backlog that resulted from the agency building too many subsidized logging roads. The result of these financial incentives and this ongoing mismanagement is that the National Forests are exploited and the agency lacks resources in the areas where they are truly needed -- for watershed restoration, fuel reduction and maintenance of recreational facilities.

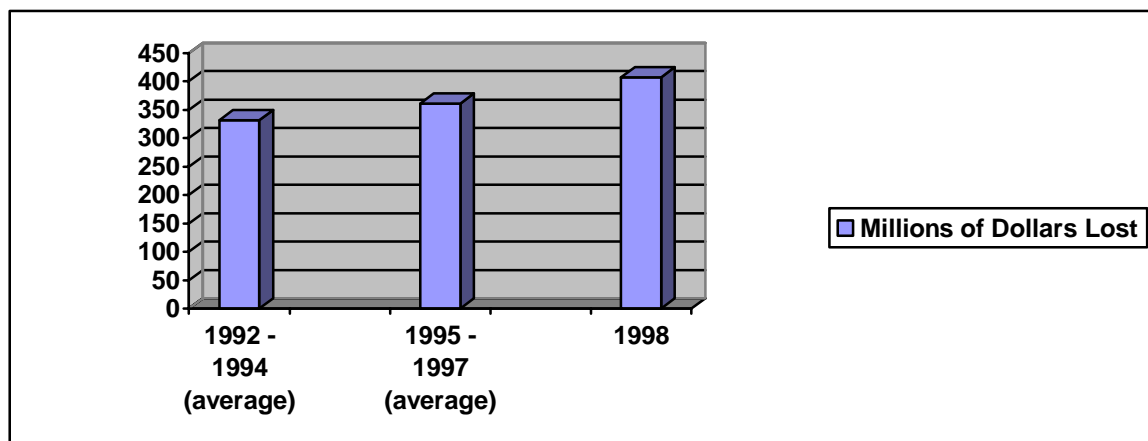


Chart Showing Losses to the Treasury from National Forest Timber Sales (The 1992 – 1997 annual averages are based on analysis by the General Accounting Office. The 1998 figure of \$407 million is based on analysis by Taxpayers for Common Sense using similar methodology.)

1908 – The National Forest Receipts Act of 1908, and the act of 1911, require that 25 percent of receipts from the National Forests is paid to the State in which the forest is located for the benefit of schools and roads in the county in which the money is collected. While good intentioned, this law creates a powerful incentive for local communities and schools to support increased logging to provide higher payments for their roads and schools.

1916 – The Brush Disposal Fund authorizes the Forest Service to charge timber purchasers a deposit to cover the cost of disposing of unwanted debris and brush left after logging. The more timber sold, the higher the deposit. And because the agency keeps a substantial portion of this deposit for overhead, it creates an incentive for increased logging.

1930 – The Knutson-Vandenburg (K-V) Fund is established to pay for the reforestation and restoration of logged over areas of the National Forests. However, the Forest Service siphons money from the fund to pay for basic overhead costs such as office equipment and rent, creating a powerful incentive for the agency to approve more logging projects to feed their budgets. In fiscal year 1997, the last year for which figures are available, the USFS spent 49 percent of the K-V Fund on overhead expenses. In 2001, Congress limits this abuse by capping the amount of overhead the agency can take to 20% but this still cost taxpayers \$115 million in fiscal year 2003.

1976 – The Forest Service Salvage Fund is created to expedite the removal of insect-infested, dead, damaged or down timber. Salvage sale revenues are deposited in the Salvage Fund to pay for additional projects and presently finances approximately one third of the logging on the National Forests. The Fund creates an incentive for managers to promote salvage sales, because forest managers keep the sales receipts instead of returning the funds to the Treasury. The Interagency Review on the Salvage Program of 1996 also finds that the fund creates a financial incentive for agency managers to choose salvage logging when other restoration activities that do not return receipts to the agency would be more appropriate.

2003 – Stewardship Contracting passes Congress allowing the Forest Service to trade trees for services creating a potential incentive for the agency to rely on logging to pay for restoration projects. This has the potential to create an endless treadmill because restoration projects are often made necessary by the impacts of logging. There are and have been a number of controversial stewardship contracting projects opposed by conservationists due to the sensitive areas proposed for logging.

Preservation Makes a Comeback

While logging and other forms of active management won out in the original debate of the Organic Act and was implemented by the Forest Service, strong pressures for protecting areas of the National Forests continued to surface. Significant areas, including the Grand Canyon and Olympic Peninsula were carved out of the Forest Reserves and designated as National Parks where Muir's hands-off management philosophy prevailed.



Siskiyou National Forest, Oregon

The Forest Service also undertook a number of internal efforts to manage primitive areas and began designating areas as wilderness long before the Wilderness Act was passed in 1964. Although this was done in part to prevent the Park Service from gaining more National Forests to manage, the environment benefited nonetheless.

Citizen challenges to agency management decisions began avalanching during the early 1970's and combined with new environmental laws such as the National Forest Management Act, Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, have prompted substantial management changes in favor of forest preservation. These efforts culminated in forest plans that provide for greater forest protection and public involvement, designated Wilderness areas covering millions of acres, policies issued by the Reagan administration to protect wildlife and by the Clinton administration to protect roadless forests, reduce logging of old growth in the Pacific Northwest and require that ecological sustainability be the management priority.

The level of National Forest timber sales has declined by 80 percent from an average of 10 to 12 billion board feet of logging during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, to around 2 billion board feet today. National Forest timber sales in the Pacific Coast states of Oregon, Washington, and California impacted by the over-cutting of old growth forests and the need to protect imperiled species have seen the most dramatic declines, dropping by 89 percent between 1987 and 1995, from 6.86 to 0.78 billion board feet. Between 1989 and 1995, the area of National Forest lands on which timber harvesting occurred annually declined by 44 percent, from 838,000 to 473,000 acres

1924 – Aldo Leopold recommends the designation of the 500,000 acre Gila Wilderness in New Mexico, the first time "wilderness" is explicitly named and protected.

1929 – Forest Service publishes regulations concerning primitive areas. By 1939, the agency puts 14 million acres in the primitive classification.

1936-37 – Bob Marshall takes the first inventory of large wildlands he believes are large enough to be true wilderness. He records 48 unroaded forests over 300,000 acres in size. As director of the Forest Service's Recreation and Lands Division he develops tight restrictions for the use of wilderness areas.

1938 – Due to efforts by the Forest Service to remove areas from the Olympic National Monument to log them, the monument is transferred to the Park Service and renamed Olympic National Park. During the 40's the Forest Service continues to lobby to have areas removed from the National Park so that they can be logged. These efforts are unsuccessful.

1939 – The Forest Service issues a series of regulations written by Bob Marshall to provide for the designation of Wilderness Areas and Wild Areas within National Forests, instead of the former classification as Primitive Areas.

Under the new regulations, Wilderness Areas are at least 100,000 acres in which there are no roads or motorized transportation, no commercial timber harvest, and no special use permits for hotels, lodges, resorts, or similar facilities. Most other rights of public access are open, including prospecting and developing mineral resources. The Wild Areas are similar to Wilderness Areas but in smaller 5,000 to 100,000-acre units.



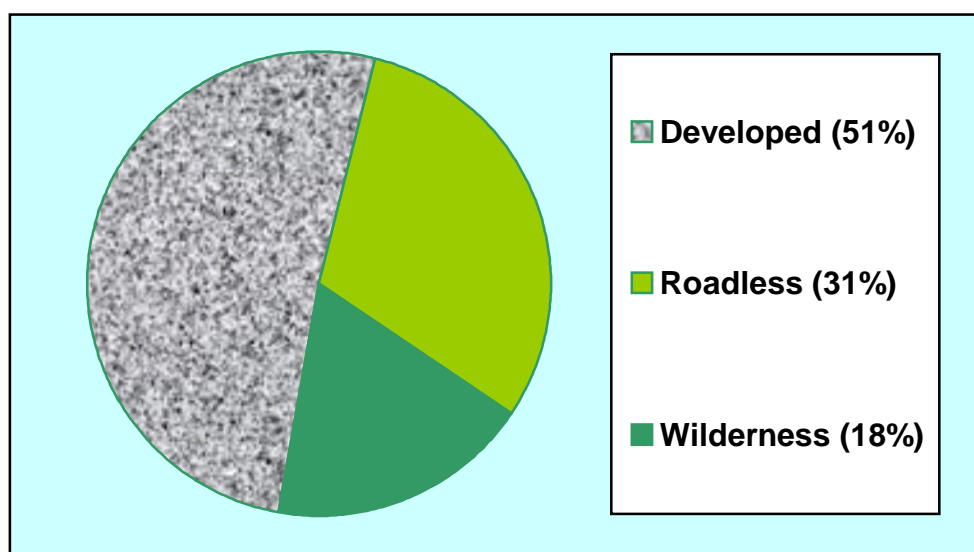
**White River National Forest,
Colorado**

1955 – Congress passes the Multiple-Use Mining Act to stop abuses occurring at mining claims, and creates a process to revoke thousands of illegitimate claims.

1964 – After years of effort by conservationists, Congress passes the Wilderness Act, protecting 54 wilderness areas totaling 9.1 million acres of National Forest. Today, 42.8 million acres, or 23 percent of the 192 million-acre National Forest System is statutorily set-aside in various Congressional designations. These include 34.6-million acres in the National Wilderness Preservation System, 3.4 million acres of National Monuments, 2.7 million acres of National Recreation Areas, 1.2 million acres of National Game Refuges and Wildlife Preserves, and 0.9 million acres of Wild and Scenic Rivers, Scenic, and Primitive Areas.

1968 – The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act authorizes the protection of rivers. Today, there are over 4,000 miles of protected rivers on the National Forests.

1968 – Congress creates the North Cascades National Park from portions of the Mt. Baker National Forest in Washington and designates one million acres of additional Wilderness.



Acres Developed and Protected on the National Forests

1970 – The National Environmental Policy Act becomes law requiring environmental impact statements for major federal actions that have a significant effect on the environment, a range of alternatives for the public to consider, an analysis of the relative impacts of those alternatives, and ensuring citizen involvement in decision making.

1970 – A coalition of conservationists lobbies Congress to defeat the National Timber Supply Act, which threatens old growth in the National Forests by proposing to convert them into tree farms. The bill intends to make timber cutting the “dominant use” of National Forests and blocks further designation of Wilderness Areas within National Forests.

1970 – A report by University of Montana School of Forestry Dean Arnold Bolle on clearcutting on Montana’s Bitterroot National Forest concludes that the Forest Service ignored all forest uses except logging and that Forest Service policy did not reflect the changing tenor of the

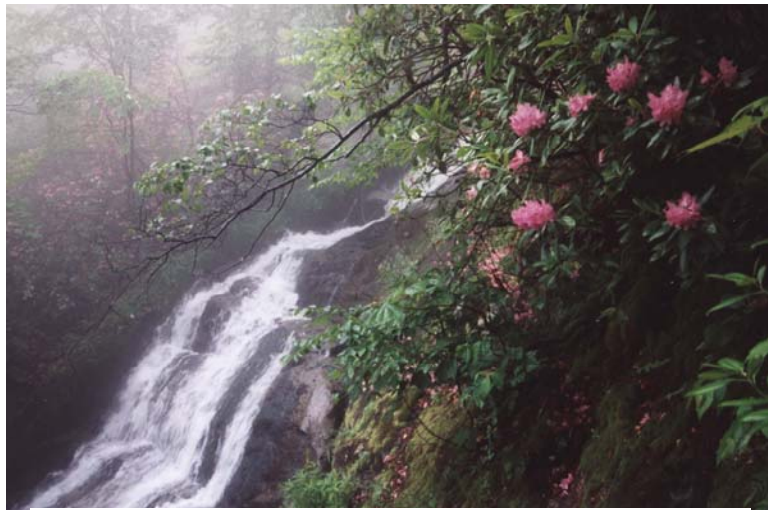
times. This controversy and federal court decisions halting clearcutting, lead to congressional hearings, guidelines for the application of clearcutting on federal lands, and eventually to passage of the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

1971 – A federal court upholds a Colorado district court's judgment enjoining a Forest Service timber sale in roadless land next to a primitive area until the Secretary of Agriculture had included the area in a wilderness study report to the President and Congress. To concede to the Forest Service a "discretionary right to destroy the wilderness value of the subject area," the court of appeals wrote, would contravene "the clear intent" of the Wilderness Act "that both the President and the Congress shall have a meaningful opportunity to add contiguous areas predominantly of wilderness value to existing primitive areas for final wilderness designation." The decision marks a little-anticipated but profoundly important consequence of the Wilderness Act: the judicial recognition and protection of wilderness values.

1972 – Court rulings and conservationists' proposals prompt the Forest Service to inventory roadless areas in National Forests. The roadless inventory is first analyzed in the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE I), which catalogues roadless lands not designated as wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act. The Forest Service reviews 56 million acres of roadless areas larger than 5,000 acres on National Forests west of the 100th meridian and proposes 12 million acres for wilderness designation. This inventory and recommendation are deemed insufficient by most proponents of wilderness.

1972 – The Church Report, by Senator Frank Church gives prescriptive guidelines on forest management, noting that logging in general should be avoided on highly scenic land, and land with fragile soils. It limits the size of allowable clearcut areas to 40 acres, but the Forest Service ignores the guidelines because they are not required by law.

1972 – President Richard Nixon signs Executive Order 11644 in 1972 in an effort to protect federal lands from the deleterious effects of ORV traffic. President Jimmy Carter clarifies and strengthens this order in 1977 with Executive Order 11989. These orders require the Forest Service "to establish policies and procedures that will ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands."



George Washington National Forest, Virginia

1973 – The Endangered Species Act is approved providing strong protection for species threatened with extinction and their habitat. The law requires the Forest Service to consult with and receive approval from other federal agencies if their actions may affect threatened wildlife and wide-ranging fish species.

1973 – A lawsuit by Sierra Club and other conservationists spur a court ruling that declares clearcutting illegal in National Forests in West Virginia. Another suit by the Izaak Walton League stops clearcutting across many National Forests.

1975 – The Eastern Wilderness Act passes Congress. As the Wilderness System develops, it becomes clear few tracts of public land in the East are large and pristine enough to meet the standards set forth in the 1964 Wilderness Act. The law designates 207,000 acres of Wilderness on federal lands in 13 states and affirms the Congressional intent of the 1964 Wilderness Act that lands recovering from prior use and abuse, such as logging, can be designated as Wilderness.

1976 – The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) is signed into law. The bill limits the size of clearcuts, requires forest plans be developed for each forest, requires the agency to manage the forest in accordance with the forest plan, and for the agency to “maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area.”

1978 – Congress passes the Endangered American Wilderness Act adding 13 new wilderness areas and expanding four others in ten western states for a total addition of 1.3 million acres of National Forest Wilderness. Declaring it “in the national interest,” this congressional action also came in response to an increasingly critical view of Forest Service inventories and management of unprotected wildlands. In a pointed critique of the agency the Endangered American Wilderness Act states, “[these] areas are lands not being adequately protected or fully studied for wilderness suitability by the agency responsible for their administration.”

“These and other undeveloped national forest lands exhibiting wilderness values are immediately threatened by pressures of a growing and more mobile population, large-scale industrial and economic growth, and development and uses inconsistent with the protection, maintenance, restoration, and enhancement of their wilderness character....”

-- Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1978

1979 – The Forest Service completes a second attempt to review roadless areas, called RARE II. Of the 62 million acres inventoried in the study, 15 million are recommended for Wilderness designation, 12 million for further consideration of their wilderness potential, and 36 million for non-Wilderness uses. RARE II is criticized for its incomplete information and its bias toward development. However, this inventory is used as a starting point for making Wilderness designations and serves as the basis for over twenty Wilderness bills in the 1980’s.

1980 – The 2.3 million acre Frank Church/River of No Return Wilderness is protected in Idaho. It is the largest contiguous area of protected wilderness in the continental United States. Together with adjacent Wilderness and surrounding roadless National Forest, it is the core of a 3.3 million acre roadless area.

1982 – The Reagan administration revises forest planning regulations to require the preparation of an environmental impact statement for forest plans and require fish and wildlife habitat to be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area. The regulations provide that, in order to insure that viable

populations will be maintained, habitat must be provided to support, at least, a minimum number of reproductive individuals and that habitat must be well distributed.

1983 – A federal court responds to conservationist and Native American concerns and prevents road construction through a proposed Siskiyou Wilderness in southern Oregon.

1990 – The Tongass Timber Reform Act passes. The law attempts to curb the practice of the pulp companies logging only the best trees, sets 100-foot no-cut buffers on salmon streams, designates 300,000 acres of wilderness and 728,000 acres of permanently protected roadless areas in Alaska's Tongass National Forest, bringing its total to 6.5 million acres of wilderness and legislated roadless areas. The Act repeals the 450 million board foot annual directive and \$40 million funding guarantee, but directs the agency to try to meet "market demand," to the extent consistent with the law's other resource conservation requirements.

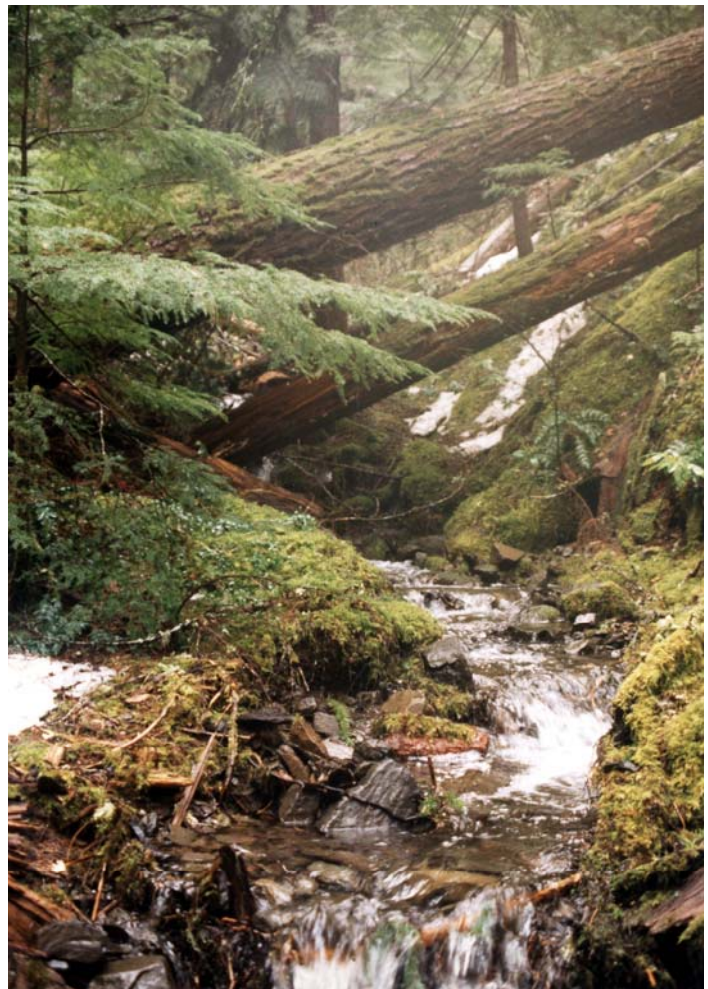
1990 – The Northern spotted owl is listed as threatened, highlighting the plight of ancient forests and the devastating impact on wildlife of over-cutting old growth forests in Pacific Northwest.

1991 – Conservationists successfully lobby Congress to reject a logging rider preventing judicial review of Northwest old growth timber sales. The courthouse door is now open to challenge old growth logging.

1991 – U.S. District Judge William Dwyer of Washington issues an injunction against all logging in Northern spotted owl habitat. Citing the Forest Service for a "systematic and deliberate failure" to follow laws protecting wildlife, Dwyer's scathing injunction halts old growth logging in western Washington and Oregon, and Northern California.

1991 – Forest Supervisors from the Northern Region write Chief Dale Robertson and request that logging levels be reduced from 940 million board feet to no more than 590 million board feet. Robertson buckles to congressional pressure and promises the agency will deliver 664 million board feet and strive for 750 million.

1993 & 1997 – The two Alaskan pulp mills with 50-year guaranteed logging contracts close. After the Sitka mill closes in 1993, the Forest Service declares that the company is in material breach of its contract and terminates it. In 1997, the Ketchikan mill negotiates an end to its contract and closes because it is unprofitable.



Ancient Forest Stream, Willamette National Forest, Oregon

1993 – At the urging of conservationists, the Clinton administration proposes phasing out below cost timber sales and increasing grazing fees on public lands. Opposition in Congress and from within the land management agencies force the administration to abandon these initiatives.

1994 – The Northwest Forest Plan is approved by President Clinton to protect threatened species and slow logging in old-growth forests. The plan reduces old growth logging by 80% while funding job creation in impacted communities.

1996 – Strong public opposition to the salvage logging rider prompts changes in how the Clinton administration implements the law. On a trip to the state of Washington, President Clinton admits he erred when he signed the salvage rider and says the rider "has to be repealed." Soon after, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman issues a directive limiting the scope of the salvage logging rider that halts 157 salvage timber sales, primarily in roadless areas.

1996-2001 – Michael Dombeck, is appointed Chief of the Forest Service and initiates reforms to improve roads management and conserve roadless areas.

"Watershed maintenance and restoration are the oldest and highest callings of the Forest Service. The agency is, and always will be, bound to them by tradition, law, and science. The National Forests truly are the headwaters of the nation. Congress recognized this well over 100 years ago and in the intervening years repeatedly reinforced that message. Our agenda places a renewed emphasis on ensuring that our watersheds are protected and restored for the use and benefit of our citizens."

Mike Dombeck, Chief, 1996 – 2001

1998 – Rep. Robert Smith's (R-OR) Forest Health legislation is defeated in the House of Representatives by a vote of 201-181. This bill is intended to be the permanent follow up to the salvage logging rider. Similar legislation stalls in the Senate.

1999 – Congress eliminates the Purchaser Road Credit system which had been the primary mechanism supporting the excessive construction of logging roads. This is in response to a series of appropriations amendments supported by a coalition of taxpayers groups and conservationists to eliminate funding for new roads in roadless areas.

1999 – President Clinton announces a moratorium on roadless development and an initiative that could protect up to 58.5 million acres of National Forest wildlands.

1999 – The Committee of Scientists recommends that maintaining ecological integrity of the forests should be the top management priority.

1999 – Over one hundred organizations petition the U.S. Forest Service, under the Administrative Procedures Act, to strengthen its off-road vehicle regulations. The petition documents off-road vehicle impacts and provides a review of off-road vehicle management and problems within the National Forest System.

2000 – The Clinton administration issues new forest planning regulations based on the Committee of Scientists recommendations concerning ecological sustainability. However, due to a lack of enforceable standards, many conservationists reject these regulations and lawsuits

are filed to halt their implementation. The case is made moot when the Bush administration rescinds the regulations upon taking office in 2001.

2000 – A citizen campaign results in President Clinton designating a national monument to protect giant sequoias threatened by logging in California's Sequoia National Forest.

2001 – President Clinton protects 58.5 million acres of roadless National Forests, including the Tongass National Forest in Alaska by signing the Roadless Area Conservation Rule that prohibits most logging and roadbuilding. The public overwhelmingly supported the proposal, submitting 2.5 million comments favoring roadless conservation.

2004 – The Forest Service announces that it will revise its off-road vehicle regulations nationally. The proposed rule would prohibit unlimited cross-country travel over large areas and limit ATV, dirt bike and other off-road vehicle use to roads, routes and discrete areas designated as open for such use. The proposal would not apply these standards to snowmobiles. However, the proposal does not include a timeframe by which roads and routes must be designated or dedicated funding to complete this work.

Conservation Setbacks and a Return to Exploitation



Old Growth Clearcut, Willamette National Forest, Oregon

After progress towards more sustainable forest management and the protection of ecologically sensitive areas under the Clinton administration, the tide has been rapidly shifting back to reduced protection, intensive logging, and increased energy developments under the Bush administration. Several of the Forest Service's most significant conservation achievements, the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule and the 1982 forest planning regulations species' viability requirements are being undone by the Bush administration and replaced with policies more favorable to development.

Other landmark conservation plans have been weakened or tossed out completely. Changes to the Northwest Forest Plan allow the Forest Service to ignore logging impacts to old growth dependent species and water quality, opening the door to an increase in cutting. The Sierra Nevada Framework was radically altered by the Bush administration to triple logging levels, undermining the ecological and fire-risk reduction goals of the plan, and invalidating an extensive process, strongly supported by the public and science, that cost taxpayers over \$42 million to complete.

2001 – The Bush Administration announces its support for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule but quickly begins series of actions to undermine and eventually eliminate the policy.

2001 – The Administration nominates Mark Rey, a former timber industry lobbyist, to oversee the Forest Service as Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. As a staff member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Rey helped craft the infamous salvage logging rider.

2002-03 – The President announces the Healthy Forests Initiative and begins making regulatory changes to reduce environmental protections and public involvement in forest management projects intended to reduce fire risks. The changes limit citizen appeals and allow the agency greater use of categorical exclusions, including logging up to 1,000 acres without an environmental review.

2002 – The Administration issues draft forest planning regulations that would weaken protections for watersheds, wildlife and recreation while reducing public involvement in future management decisions. Final regulations have not yet been issued.

2003 – Despite overwhelming public support for protecting Alaska's Wildlands, the Administration recommends no wilderness designations for the Tongass National Forest, and scales back Forest Service recommendations for the Chugach National Forest.

2003 – Congress passes and the President signs the Healthy Forests Restoration Act that significantly weakens standards and public oversight of restoration and fuel reduction projects on twenty million acres of National Forest. Under the law, the agency no longer has to consider a full range of alternatives or citizen appeals. It also limits environmental review for logging up to 1,000 acres and the public's ability to get judicial relief to halt environmental harmful projects.

2003 – The Administration issues new regulations allowing the Forest Service to avoid consultation with other federal agencies on logging projects that may degrade threatened or endangered species and their habitat.

2003 – The Forest Service removes the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Nine million acres covered by the roadless rule are thus exposed to potential road building, mining, logging, or other development. Under the current forest plan, 2.5 million of those acres are in land use designations that permit development and 300,000 acres spread across this larger area are scheduled to be logged. The agency is rapidly moving forward with 50 new roadless area logging projects, driven in part by the mistaken doubling of the expected timber demand in its 1997 Tongass Land Management Plan.

2004 – The Administration revises the Sierra Nevada Framework to allow the cutting of larger trees and a tripling of logging levels.

2004 – The Administration revises the Northwest Forest Plan to eliminate wildlife surveys and reduce water quality monitoring to increase allowable logging levels. There are currently over 180 old growth logging projects pending in the region.

2004 – The administration approves the Biscuit logging project, the largest timber sale in recent history, which plans to log over 12 square miles of roadless areas as well as in old growth reserves in the Siskiyou National Forest. Timber sales in the old growth reserves and roadless

areas are delayed for court review or appeals, sales in other areas sold and are being logged, while several others received no bids from the timber industry.

2004 – The Administration announces elimination of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule and a new process that would allow Governor's to petition the Forest Service for roadless protection in their state. Over 1.7 million comments are submitted opposing the President's plan. A final decision is expected in 2005.

2004 – The Administration announces elimination of the wildlife viability requirement and replaces this firm standard with the general advice for managers to "use the best available science." Conservationists file a legal challenge to stop this rule.

2004 – Status reviews of the Northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet are conducted as part of settlement agreements with the timber industry, which seek to increase logging by removing protection for these species. The administration recommends de-listing the murrelet despite its own scientists' conclusion the species remains threatened with extinction. The spotted owl will remain on the list but may still lose some habitat protection.

The Legacy of Exploitation



Landslide in Middle of Clearcut, Siuslaw National Forest, Oregon

Impacts on Water Quality and Soils

National Forests provide clean water to thousands of communities and millions of Americans and protecting watersheds is a primary reason the system was created. Approximately half of the water that falls as rain or snow in the West falls on National Forests. There is no overall assessment available offering an analysis of the impact on water quality of the past 100 years of management, but a number of facts are available that indicate the Forest Service has not made watershed protection a management priority.

The largest single threat to water quality is the deteriorating system of logging roads that the Forest Service built without adequate resources to maintain. When roads are not maintained they erode, crumble into streams, and choke them with sediment. The agency constructed over 386,000 miles of road, more than 7 times more miles than is contained in the interstate highway system. The current backlog for maintenance and repairs of the road system on National Forests is \$10 billion.

There are currently 21,000 miles of streams in Idaho that do not meet water quality

standards, primarily due to past logging and mining on public lands. The Clearwater National Forest in Idaho reports that in 1992, 71% of the streams were in violation of water quality standards due to logging related activities.

Soil erosion is a major cause of diminished water quality, and it also directly affects the future productivity of the forest. The 1961 Canyon Creek multiple use plan on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest identified timber production as the dominant use of 90 percent of the district, despite that fact 74 percent of the district rated poor or very poor in terms of soil stability.

Forest Service research has discovered that a watershed that is logged and roaded averages 109 times more soil loss than an undisturbed forest. Despite this evidence which came to light in the early 1970's, intensive clearcutting and road construction on National Forest lands continued unabated for another twenty years.

Impact on Biodiversity from Logging, Grazing and Fire Suppression

The Forest Service has demonstrated an ongoing failure to protect wildlife in its pursuit of multiple use management – in fact, the agency claimed for decades that intensive logging benefited wildlife. There are dozens of species that have been negatively impacted by logging, road building, grazing and fire suppression including the spotted owl, northern goshawk, coho salmon, grizzly bears, and wolves. Scientific studies confirm that many species need relief from these development activities to thrive.

There continue to be large numbers of agency projects that put fish and wildlife at risk. And there also continue to be a steady stream of Federal court decisions banning logging in old growth forests, roadless areas, and critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, or grazing in riparian zones and critical habitat.

Fire suppression has caused significant ecological changes, particularly to dry forests in the West adapted to frequent low-level fires. Despite growing evidence that immediately putting all forest fires out is unnecessary, the Forest Service still puts out nearly all fires. Wildlife can be negatively impacted by the changing habitat, and by the absence of fire. Many plant species, such as jack, whitebark and lodgepole pines, and snowbrush need fires to thrive.

Impact of Growing Recreational Use

As the numbers of visitors and high-impact activities multiplied on the National Forests, the resulting environmental impact slowly has come into focus but to date has not been adequately addressed by the agency.



Off Road Vehicle Trail, George Washington National Forest, Virginia

President Richard Nixon issued an Executive Order later strengthened by President Jimmy Carter to give the Forest Service adequate authority to address the issue of motorized recreation. However little was done to establish a sound policy for their use, or enforce existing rules, and the result has been a chaotic proliferation of thousands of miles of user created trails – many in ecologically sensitive areas.

Today, Chief Dale Bosworth recognizes the lack of management of motorized recreation as one of the greatest threats to the forests and biggest challenges that the agency faces. The agency is undertaking a rulemaking that may limit motorized recreation to authorized roads and trails and prohibit cross country travel by wheeled vehicles.



Brasstown Falls, Sumter National Forest, South Carolina

The Future of the National Forests: A Restoration Century

Americans cherish and value the National Forests. The next century should be about managing the forests to do the greatest good for the greatest number. With half of the forests developed in the last century and a growing U.S. population that needs water supplies, recreational spaces, and jobs – the next century must be one of preserving watersheds, roadless areas and the remaining stands of old growth, maintaining recreational opportunities without letting them harm the environment and restoring damaged watersheds and threatened species.

We have seen the pendulum shift between conservation, exploitation and preservation over the decades since the first Forest Reserves were created. Continuing exploitation of the National Forests is prompting frequent objections by the public and bolstering calls for the preservation of the remaining intact forestlands, particularly roadless areas and old growth forests. Protecting these areas is common ground held between nearly all stakeholders and a great place for the Forest Service to start making this the restoration century.

Based on the record of the past 100 years, conservationists recommend that the Forest Service and Congress:

1. Preserve all remaining old growth forests and roadless areas for future generations.
2. Preserve and restore watersheds to ensure we have adequate clean drinking water supplies in the future.
3. Create jobs by restoring damaged watersheds and threatened and endangered species.
4. Remove the economic incentives that skew agency decisions to favor development over conservation.
5. Redirect subsidies and incentives for logging to create long-term forest restoration and fire-risk reduction programs that can be the basis for a strong rural economy.
6. Ensure that all recreation is ecologically sustainable; develop and maintain facilities to ensure the public can access and enjoy the forests, while not overdeveloping or commercializing them.



Coconino National Forest, Arizona

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