

TALKING POINTS FOR “ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT IN WESTERN INTERIOR FORESTS”

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In 1983, I went to Germany with my father. My father was born in Germany—in fact he still has a German accent after nearly 50 years in this country—and he, and I suppose many of you would say this about your parents or your children, sees things very differently than me.

We went into the Black Forest, the cradle of forestry for centuries. The Black Forest wasn't exactly what you picture when you think of or describe biological diversity. The trees were cookie cutouts, perfectly managed in a traditional sense, all the same species, width and height. There wasn't any understory or downed and woody debris. There were a few of the things that make our forests of the Northwest so unique.

I will never forget what my father said when we left the car to hike around in this forest. He told me, “See, now this is a natural forest. Those forests of the U.S. are all overgrown and crowded. You can't walk in them.”

I guess it's all in your perspective. When my father thinks of a forest, he thinks of the managed stands he grew up around. When I think of a forest, I think of “all of its parts”—the native forests of this region. Nonetheless, both my father and I have a forest ethic, and both believe in what we consider to be “ecosystem management.”

I have been asked to discuss perspectives on ecosystem management. Since there are many here who will discuss the science behind ecosystem management, and even behind the President's Forest Plan, I would like to get more philosophical and give you some thoughts on moving forward, based on my experience in the last year and a half. I would like to start with some thoughts from Aldo Leopold.

Aldo Leopold spoke about ecosystem management before the term became a part of our vocabulary. His theories serve as the basis for many of our efforts today.

Leopold said, “Who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.” In this case, that means saving the forests—its trees, rivers, and associated flora and fauna—for both current and future generations. We need to show that the environmental laws of today can work. Sustainable ecosystems are possible—like the forestry we are proposing in our Forest Plan. This is not an indictment of the past, but a recognition of what we have learned.

Leopold went on to speak of symmetry when he said, “Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land. By land, we mean all of the things on, over, or in the earth. Harmony with the

land is like harmony with a friend; you cannot cherish his right hand and chop off his left. That is to say, you cannot love game and hate predators; you cannot conserve the waters and waste the range; you cannot build the forest and mine the farm. The land is one organism. Its parts, like our own parts, compete with each other and cooperate with each other.”

Leopold spoke about humility when he said, “Only those who know most about ecosystems, can appreciate how little is known about it.”

And finally, he wrote, “Have we learned the principle of conservation? To preserve all the parts of land mechanism? No, because even the scientist does not recognize them.”

But we have learned a lot since Leopold wrote these words almost half a century ago. And, as we try to put these principles to work on the ground, we struggle with the change they represent.

Ecosystem Management. What is it? It's protection. It's management. It's restoration. It is intelligent tinkering, and that is what we are struggling to define and accomplish.

Ecosystem management recognizes that forestry has changed. In the early 1900s, Pinchot utilitarianism was a radical idea—now it is mainstream. Ecosystem management recognizes we need to spend more time looking at forests as a whole, which we have done on the westside, and are now doing on the eastside.

This movement is not only happening in our region. In the Southwest, they are working on restoration ecology. In the Northern forests, they are working on biodiversity. I've spent a lot of time talking to people about what to do about our forests—many of you in this room. And, after all of the people I've talked to and the things I've seen, I would like to share some thoughts with you about how we might move forward with a philosophy of “intelligent tinkering.” First, some assumptions.

In order to have “intelligent tinkering”, we need to adopt a groundrule making phrases like “ecosystem management” and “sustainable development” as complete phrases that cannot be separated. You cannot have ecosystems and leave out the management. You cannot have sustainable forests and forget about management, whether that management decision is to leave a stand alone, to do a precommercial thin, or a commercial removal.

Another assumption—science is an important basis for decision making in our society. But scientific perspectives vary almost as widely as public opinion. Policy makers must use

science to the extent that there is agreement within the scientific community. Absent agreement, and/or given scientific alternatives, decision makers must move forward, based on the best information available.

Finally, it is human institutions—our laws, our governments, our philosophy—not the forests, that will or will not allow us to tinker intelligently. So, how do we turn the corner on ecosystem management? What are our challenges?

First of all, we should make the ecologically tough decisions—and it's best to make those decisions before a crisis. This is not easy nowadays, as I think we have seen in the year since the Forest Conference. Some believe the time has run out. And, in some parts of the world, this may be a reality. But, in most places, including the intermountain West, it is not. We've started trying to solve these crises in the Northwest with the Forest Plan, and we are now getting to work on the Eastside Assessment and the salmon issue. Being willing to make tough decisions today should help make for a smoother transition down the road.

Second, we need to recognize social realities. Real people, with real families and with real jobs, depend on the forests for their livelihoods. We must view these natural resource debates with understanding, compassion, and sincerity. We must also provide forest-related communities with assistance to work through the difficult transitions when they occur. If ecosystem management does not produce the historic levels of timber, forage, or mineral resources in a region, existing economic assistance can be best spent on working through the transition to a new economy. There also needs to be a focus on phasing in new strategies, where time allows.

This is where the President's economic assistance program comes in. On the westside, we are helping communities build new infrastructures to support their changing economies, helping workers and their families with training, helping businesses diversify and expand, and helping get dislocated workers out in the woods repairing the watersheds. It's an ambitious program—and a crucial one. Most importantly, it's a bottom-up process.

Third, we need to recognize the different ownership patterns and the benefits they can provide, both in ecological and economic terms. I don't mean that they should provide the same resources and benefits. The federal lands can serve as a backbone for our conservation strategy, providing those ecological benefits that are not or cannot be found on the private lands. The private lands can provide economic returns, while also being responsible to the public good. For example, habitat conservation plans and selective harvesting are two actions that are beginning to be embraced on private lands in the spotted owl region.

Fourth, we need to come up with workable alternatives to traditional timber sales and grazing permits—in other words, create the right tools to allow ecosystem management work to be done. One way to do that is through “stewardship”, or “end result” contracts, which are being experimented with throughout the region. These contracts refocus the incentive to harvest as quickly and efficiently as possible by applying a portion of the

purchaser's payment to other uses, such as forest health, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat. Initially, we need to look at applying these contracts on public lands, but also prepare to apply some of these strategies to private lands as well.

Fifth, we need to think through budget and personnel reform within all forest institutions. The President's Forest Plan is an excellent model, one in which we are sharing resources—i.e., the interagency coordination of the new Adaptive Management Areas, or the new Fish and Wildlife consultation coordination. The President's proposed Fiscal Year '94 budget takes an initial swing at this in proposing to condense line items and management flexibility.

Sixth, we need to explore some new partnerships. Government can step in when people don't agree, but command and control doesn't necessarily create ecosystem management because the associated ethic is not developed. Partnerships create solutions that include communities of interest—not just communities of place. These partnerships are springing up all over the nation. They are very difficult, time-consuming, and often frustrating. But, in the end, the decisions are better ones. In the long run, these partnerships should save time, and hopefully taxpayers' dollars. What is key here is trust, and restoring that trust may be our most difficult task.

Seventh, to create ecosystem management we need some more successes. This nation has a rich and proud conservation history. Muir and Pinchot, Marshall and Leopold, and Chief Thomas, but we need to show how ecosystem management theories work on the ground. People need to know that an alternative way of doing business can work. Only then will they feel better about buying into this new way of doing business. So let's move forward and stop coming up with excuses for not getting on with it.

Eighth, we need to stand by today's environmental laws. We need to show that our environmental laws can work together. I know many have already made up their minds that the laws must be changed. I don't think they have even been given an adequate opportunity to work. This is one of the key components of both our westside and eastside planning efforts, integrating the Endangered Species Act, the National Forest Management Act, the Federal Land Policy Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and others.

Ninth, and lastly, we need to learn how to think more creatively. We need to find new and creative ways of doing business. We can do more selective logging, like one company I visited in northern California recently which was taking care with the environment, but still making a buck.

One thing is very clear to me after this last year—everyone feels strongly about their forests, rivers, and rangelands. We take that energy and funnel it in different ways. Instead of tearing each other down and criticizing the process, let's sit down together and build something up. Instead of decrying mistakes of the past, let's stand together and plan a sound future. And, instead of blaming each other when we make a mistake, why don't we try complimenting each other for a job well done? Like I said in the

beginning, it's all in your perspective—and, this is my perspective on ecosystem management. I hope we can have it become a part of our daily decision-making as we move into the future together. The Clinton Administration stands ready to help.

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