

AN ASSESSMENT OF INDIAN FORESTS AND FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

An independent assessment of Indian forests mandated by Congress and conducted by a team (IFMAT) formed by the Intertribal Timber Council recommends urgent action on Indian forests. A major recommendation is to redefine the U.S. government's role in discharging its trust responsibility so that tribal governments have primary responsibility for directing Indian forestry. The U.S. government should provide financial support, technical assistance and research access, and trust oversight. IFMAT believes that considerable management flexibility still exists on Indian forestlands, where many innovative approaches are already being tried. Further, IFMAT believes that others have much to learn from Indian forestry and the holistic Indian view of forests and people.

Keywords: Indian forests, forest management, assessment

On November 28, 1990, the 101st Congress passed the National Indian Forest Resources Management Act (Public Law 101-630). Section 312 of the Act states that the Secretary of Interior, in consultation with affected Indian tribes, shall enter into a contract with a non-federal entity knowledgeable in forest management practices on federal and private lands to conduct an independent assessment of Indian forestlands and Indian forest management practices.

The Secretary of the Interior contracted with the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) to meet the requirements stipulated in the Act. Seven nationally recognized forestry experts were selected by ITC to serve on an Indian Forest Management Assessment Team (IFMAT). In addition, IFMAT had a national team of six specialists that provided support and resource expertise for the assessment. This paper provides a summary of the IFMAT findings and recommendations to the ITC and Congress.

INTRODUCTION

Indian forests are vital to tribal communities. They are a source of employment, income and a setting for recreation. They provide habitat for fish and wildlife, and sanctuaries for worship and religious ceremonies. They provide materials for shelter, fuel, canoes, clothing, housewares, native medicines and foods, artistic expression, and tribal forest-products enterprises.

Sixteen million acres on 214 reservations in 23 states are forested. Nearly half are timberland, and the rest woodland.

Management of these forests provides the foundation for economic activity. For instance, in 1991 Indian forests and related programs generated over 465 million dollars and supported 40,000 jobs. Of this total, over 180 million dollars and 9,000 jobs benefitted non-Indians in areas adjacent to reservations.

Furthermore, Indians live with both the environmental and economic consequences of their forest management more intimately than most people in the U.S. They directly experience the impacts of cutting practices, prescribed fire, grazing, and other activities. Indians often see the direct relationship between tribal revenue and the economic use of their forestland.

The U.S. government has a trust responsibility for managing Indian forestland—a responsibility largely assigned to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) with the involvement of tribal governments. Although the BIA has long contended with vacillating and vague federal policies toward Indian affairs, complex land-ownership patterns, and the inability to secure the resources necessary to meet its obligations, many dedicated BIA professionals have contributed significantly to Indian forest management.

Over the past two decades, Congress, the Administration, and tribal governments have dedicated substantial resources to improving Indian forest management. Significant increases in Congressional appropriations have come about within the last 15 years. Yet concern about Indian forestry remains, shared by both Indian communities and the BIA, which has expressed misgivings about its ability to provide necessary forest-management services. As a result of these concerns The National Indian Forest Resources Management Act stipulated that the assessment be national in scope and shall included the following eight tasks:

1. An in-depth analysis of management practices on, and the level of funding for, specific Indian forestland compared with similar federal and private forestlands.
2. A survey of the condition of Indian forestlands, including health and productivity levels;
3. An evaluation of staffing patterns of the forestry organization of BIA and of Indian tribes;
4. An evaluation of procedures employed in timber-sale administration, including preparation, field supervision, and accountability for proceeds;
5. An analysis of the potential for reducing or eliminating relevant administrative procedures, rules, and policies of the BIA consistent with the federal trust responsibility;

6. A comprehensive review of the adequacy of Indian forestland management plans, including their compatibility with applicable tribal integrated resource management plans and their ability to meet tribal needs and priorities;
7. An evaluation of the feasibility and desirability of establishing minimum standards against which the adequacy of the forestry programs of the BIA, in fulfilling its trust responsibility to Indian tribes, can be measured; and
8. A recommendation of any reforms and increased funding levels necessary to bring Indian forestland management programs to a state-of-the-art condition.

This set of tasks is comprehensive and our Assessment Team often debated if we in fact could meet the challenge because we had no precedent to follow for a natural resource assessment of this magnitude. However, within two months the seven team members and six resource specialists came together as a well organized working group and we were able to present, on time, our findings and recommendations to ITC in a final report and on time. Over 2 years, IFMAT accomplished its assignment by:

1. Visiting 33 reservations with timber programs of varying sizes;
2. Surveying (through a questionnaire) tribal communities and BIA staff about Indian forest issues;
3. Conducting focus groups during reservation visits to further assess tribal perspectives about Indian forestry;
4. Comparing forest management on Indian lands with that practiced on similar federal and private lands;
5. Surveying reservations about staffing patterns of natural resource professionals other than foresters; and
6. Visiting national, area, and agency offices of the BIA.

FINDINGS

The results of the assessment presented in this paper lack the detail of the final report, but they do give an indication of the status of Indian forestlands—both the problems and the potentials. Our findings are grouped under ten general categories.

1. **Tribal members emphasize different visions and goals for their forests than do BIA forestry employees.**
 - Tribal members value resource protection most. Yet BIA forestry employees place relatively less emphasis on these goals and more on the forest's economic benefits.
 - The forest's scenic beauty is much more important to tribal members than to BIA forestry employees.
 - Tribal members emphasize that an integrative, holistic approach be taken in managing all forest resources, recognizing a multiplicity of use and values.
2. **Generally, a small proportion of tribal members or BIA forestry employees believe that current resource management is good or excellent, but these results varied significantly by activity or resource.**

- Less than 25% of tribal members rated management of the following activities or resources as good or excellent: grazing, recreation, water quality and quantity, nontimber forest products, tribal employment, creation of new enterprise, food gathering, spiritual values, visual quality, overall management, and protection from pollution, waste, poaching and trespassing.
- From 25-40% of tribal members rated management good or excellent for wildlife, fisheries, wood for tribal use, timber for sale or enterprise use, cultural site protection, and forest resource protection. Wood for tribal use and timber for sale or enterprise use scored the highest at 40%.

3. **The administrative relationship between the United States government and each tribal government is the key factor affecting the ability of tribes to achieve their forest management goals.**

- The concept of trust responsibility in relation to the management of Indian forests has not been clearly defined in law or regulation, although draft trust standards exist for several forest resources and activities. Lack of definition contributes to poor communication between the BIA and the tribes and can make it difficult to evaluate the adequacy of forest management.
- Tribal governments have embraced the concept of self-determination and increasingly are assuming more of the forestry functions previously performed by the BIA. Parallel BIA and tribal lines of authority undermine the prospects for coordinated forest-resource planning and management, in which the suite of forest values of interest to the tribes—timber, water, fish, wildlife, range, and cultural resources—is considered in decision-making.
- The BIA has had difficulty in providing Indians with the variety of technical assistance and management guidance needed for tribes to meet their goals. Placing trust oversight, technical assistance and management guidance in one federal agency—the BIA—has made it difficult to obtain impartial assessment of the quality of this assistance and guidance.

4. **Indian forestry is seriously underfunded and understaffed compared with forestry on similar federal and private lands. Inventories, staffing, and budgets are inadequate for biodiversity assessments and for coordinated resource planning and management on Indian lands.**

- Current funding for Indian forestry is only 63% of that for timber production for the national forests, only 50% of that for timber production for private forestry in the Pacific Northwest, and only 35% of that for coordinated resource management for the national forests.
- Foresters and engineers working on Indian lands are fewer in number and have greater workloads than their counterparts on national forests. Professionally trained forest-road engineers are in especially short supply.

- The BIA forestry program is not adequately staffed to support coordinated resource planning and management. There are virtually no staff from specialties such as fisheries, wildlife, range, and cultural resources.
 - The BIA and tribes are experiencing substantial problems in recruiting and retaining natural resource professionals, in part, because of lower pay, budgets, and benefits than comparable agencies. Indians have clearly stated that they would like more Indians managing their lands. Yet, relatively few Indians are in managerial positions within the Indian forestry program.
5. **Managers of Indian forests are practicing more ecosystem management now than in the past. That is, they have begun to shift from a focus on producing commodities to one of maintaining ecological processes critical to sustaining forests.**
- Despite funding and staffing difficulties, many Indian forests are places of experimentation and innovation. Some of the most highly developed uneven-aged management anywhere is found on Indian forestlands.
 - Timber management practices on Indian forests are generally comparable to those on the national forests with some qualifications. For example, uneven-aged management has been more widely used on Indian forests than on the national forests, although the national forests are now rediscovering uneven-aged management.
 - Management of roads, water, fisheries, wildlife, and grazing is seriously deficient compared with that on the national forests.
6. **The health and productivity of Indian forests are mixed, and vary by forest type and geographic location.**
- Ponderosa pine forests, the most widespread commercial forest type on Indian lands, are generally in good ecological condition. Ecological concerns about these forests include low levels of some structural features (e.g., snags), continued emphasis on the harvest of large, old trees, and effects of fire suppression.
 - Ecological conditions in mixed-conifer forests vary. Although uneven-aged management has allowed structurally complex, productive forests to persist in many places, conditions generally are less than ideal and, in most cases, are deteriorating. The major concern is forest health; other concerns include further simplification of stand structure by current harvest practices, effects of fire suppression, and watershed protection.
 - Most pinyon-juniper woodlands are in a deteriorated ecological and economic condition as a result of overgrazing and other agricultural uses, fire suppression, and unregulated harvest of firewood and other forest products. Other woodland types have similar problems.
 - Structural complexity and species composition of many eastern hardwood-pine stands have been substantially reduced although there are some significant exceptions. Concerns include low economic value of the current forest, complex ownership patterns, and difficulties in regenerating desired species.
- Overall, on sampled reservations, timber volume growth equals or slightly exceeds recent harvest volumes in the Northwest (east-side) and the East, whereas recent harvest exceeds growth in the Northwest (west-side), the Southwest, and, perhaps, the Lake States.
 - Sufficient structural complexity, in terms of tree species and size, still exists on many reservation forests to provide options for developing a wide range of forest structures. However, this flexibility could disappear within a decade under some BIA-proposed management plans which emphasize harvesting large, old trees and stands.
 - Populations of big-game species, such as deer and elk, generally appear to meet the needs of the larger reservations. However, long-term population trends or habitat conditions rarely are monitored, and sensitive, threatened, and endangered species sometimes receive inadequate attention.
 - Watershed, riparian (streamside) areas, and stream channels often show signs of deterioration from past timber harvest, road construction, and grazing.
 - Livestock grazing on reservations is largely uncontrolled, with resulting adverse effects on streams and upland areas.
 - Prescribed burning needs to receive considerably more attention as a tool for reestablishing and maintaining healthy mixed-conifer stands in the Intermountain West and for managing pinyon-juniper woodlands.
7. **Roads have contributed to a number of environmental problems.**
- Many reservations show extensive soil compaction from roads and skid trails.
 - Most reservations visited had numerous roads that were poorly designed and inadequately drained. Roads sometimes were placed in stream channels, where they constrict water flows and preclude streamside vegetation.
 - The lack of an all-weather road system is a major obstacle to implementing coordinated resource management.
8. **Opportunities exist to substantially increase income and other benefits from timber harvests.**
- On average, timber-sale planning is inferior to that in the Forest Service and BLM because of insufficient or inadequately trained personnel, or lack of funds.
 - Information on markets and the characteristics of future timber supply often is not available to managers of forest-products enterprises to help them make good log-allocation decisions.

- Some logging contracting procedures, such as not allowing competitive bidding, can result in passing on excessive costs to the tribe.
 - Some timber-sale policies do not encourage full utilization of raw material. As an example, the common practice of assigning an average price for each species discourages utilization of smaller logs which are worth less to the purchaser than the average price.
 - Better quality control in tribal forest-products enterprises could increase the value added through manufacture. Few such enterprises have professional quality-control personnel.
9. **Management plans for reservation forests have the potential for meeting many tribal goals and priorities but a narrow definition of sustained yield management, inadequate analysis in some cases, and lack of funding and personnel make attainment of goals difficult.**
- Forest management plans contain comprehensive objectives for management of commercial forests. A standard set of goals is provided by the federal government which address maintenance of forest productivity, forest regulation, economic contributions to tribal self-sufficiency, and the protection and management of the forest resource to benefit recreational, cultural, aesthetic, water quality, wildlife, and other resources. These goals have evolved through time with increasing involvement of the tribes themselves. In addition, each tribal government can add an individually-tailored set of goals.
 - Federal guidance for forest planning increasingly calls for the tribes to take a strong leadership position in development of forest plans. Current regulations for forest planning call for tribal endorsement of forest plans. New draft regulations based on NIFRMA and prepared with tribal involvement, also call for active tribal participation and leadership in developing the plans.
 - Harvest-scheduling techniques used by the BIA generally have not kept up with those of other agencies and are inadequate to support coordinated resource planning. Lack of an adequate sustainability check in these techniques has allowed higher-than-sustainable harvest levels to be developed without adequate review.
 - The BIA's Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) system for planning and policy analysis rates highly in comparison to similar systems in other federal agencies. Some problems exist, however, in collecting and using CFI data, including the lack of a central repository for CFI data and a system to make the data readily available, inconsistencies in CFI design among reservations, neglect of noncommercial aspects of forest resources, and slow turn-around in inventory analysis at BIA area and national offices.
- An overly technical presentation of the forest plans largely precludes anyone but planners from understanding their results. Few pictorial or graphical descriptions are provided that address the future forest that will be created under the plan or the aggregate harvest/growth/inventory conditions over time.
 - Consideration of all forest resources, as called for in forest plan goals, has been difficult to achieve. Concentration on commercial timber production, including the overly restrictive definition of sustained yield, lack of funding, and lack of natural resource professionals other than foresters have all contributed to the problem. The new draft regulations, however, could help broaden the focus and could help forest management plans fit better into the coordinated resource plans of the future.
 - Integrating cultural values and traditional knowledge into forest management needs special attention. Lack of knowledge and/or interest on the part of forestry staffs, combined with the sensitive and somewhat confidential nature of traditional knowledge, has led to planning deficiencies. Tribal cultural staffs, where they exist, generally are small and barely able to keep up with timber-sale requirements and off-reservation concerns, let alone establish baseline data necessary for planning.
 - Recent BIA policy calling for development of "integrated resource management plans" has not generally been successfully implemented. These coordinated plans would provide overall direction for land use on reservations, and would have forest management plans as one component. Completion of coordinated (integrated) resource management plans has been difficult to accomplish on most reservations, in part, due to lack of clear examples of the purpose, content, and use of these plans, a relatively low priority for their development in the BIA, and the absence of adequate funding and resource management expertise.
10. **A number of issues require special planning and management.**
- **Allotments.** The allotment of substantial portions of forest trust lands to individuals on some reservations has greatly complicated land management and increased the difficulty of coordinating management. Management costs for individual allotments are greater and, in many cases, services to allotments are poorer than those enjoyed by tribal trust lands.
 - **Alaska.** The BIA has trust responsibilities in Alaska for lands of individual allottees and the Annette Islands reservation. Obstacles to forest management in Alaska include difficult topographic and seasonal operating conditions; poorly developed or nonexistent transportation systems; long distances to markets; limited forest inventories, particularly in the interior; few forest-management plans; and an insufficient silvicultural research base.

- **Other ownerships within Indian reservations.** A variety of owners control forestland within Indian reservation boundaries, including federal agencies (Forest Service, BLM, Fish and Wildlife Service), states, counties, private forest industry, and nonindustrial private owners. This mixture greatly complicates planning and management of Indian forests, especially with the new emphasis on ecosystem management.
- **Off-reservation lands.** Monitoring and participation in the management of off-reservation lands, where many tribes have treaty rights, greatly increase the cost and staffing needs of tribal programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made by IFMAT are intended to provide a foundation for the future—to help tribes realize the full potential of their valuable, renewable forest resources. They are not meant to demean the contributions of the many dedicated people who have managed Indian forests.

A major recommendation of the Assessment Team is to Redefine the U.S. government's role in discharging its trust responsibility so that tribal governments have primary responsibility for directing Indian forestry. The U.S. government should provide financial support, technical assistance, research access, and trust oversight. Technical assistance and trust oversight should be independent of each other. The new arrangement should reflect the following:

- Each tribe should be the principal agent responsible for drafting, implementing, and monitoring a coordinated resource management plan congruent with its vision for forests and forest management.
- Standards for evaluating performance in meeting the trust responsibility should be agreed upon between each tribal government and the Secretary of the Interior.
- BIA forestry should be reorganized to separate technical assistance from trust oversight. The BIA should retain technical assistance, but trust oversight should be delegated to an independent commission.

In one possible rearrangement the tribal vision for forests is transmitted through the tribal government to the tribe's natural-resource manager. With technical assistance from the federal government, the tribe's natural resource staff then develops a coordinated resource management plan defining objectives, standards, operations plans, and monitoring procedures. U.S. government funds are provided to tribal governments under the conditions of the trust standards agreed upon between the Secretary of the Interior and the tribe. Federal oversight is via an independent trust oversight commission, which reviews the initial coordinated resource plan and periodically assesses whether the standards agreed to by the tribe and the Secretary of the Interior are being met. This commission might operate largely through regional boards formed from local technical experts sensitive to regional differences.

One challenge is managing the transition to this new arrangement. The shift and how it occurs rests primarily with the tribes themselves; their degree of preparedness and comfort levels will dictate the timetable and mechanisms.

In addition to the major recommendation there are seven supporting recommendations.

1. Develop tribally defined trust standards that are easy to monitor and that clarify trust oversight. We believe the following principles should underlie those standards:

- A tribal vision for forests and their management should be articulated where one does not now exist;
- Trust standards should be established and relate to this tribal vision;
- Each tribe should write and approve the standards with local involvement;
- The agreed-upon standards should have yardsticks for measuring the achievement of trust responsibility, with measurement techniques determined before standards are approved;
- To the degree possible, standards should measure achievement of desired conditions and outcomes (performance) rather than inputs, techniques, or technologies; and
- Standards should encourage and reward compliance and promote efficient use of resources.

In addition, the U.S. government should provide, as part of the trust responsibility, technical assistance to tribal forest-products enterprises and reports to the tribes on enterprise performance.

2. Increase base-line funding and investment for Indian forest management to levels comparable to those of the national forests.

- An increase in baseline funding of \$121 million per year (that is, a 182% increase) is required to put coordinated resource planning and management on Indian reservations on par with that of the national forests.
- This level of funding would include an increase of over \$34 million per year to put per-acre funding for timber production on Indian reservations on a par with that of national forests.
- Investments of over \$200 million are required to correct deficiencies in road systems which will promote a stable transportation network and improve watershed conditions.
- Significant investments are required to address forest development backlogs (that is, forested acres requiring additional regeneration or thinning), especially where overly dense stands increase the probability of catastrophic loss.

3. Protect the health and productivity of Indian forests through ecosystem management.

- Forest health and productivity should be monitored over the long term, and inventorying and monitoring of wildlife habitats and populations greatly increased.
 - More thorough and sophisticated silvicultural prescriptions should be written to guide stand treatment.
 - Thinning and partial cutting of mixed-conifer stands should be accelerated to reduce the presence of disease and insect-resistant species.
 - Watershed and stream protection should have increased priority, as should improving forest roads.
 - Significant investments are required to restore streams. Sediment reduction programs, riparian shrub development, streamside forest silvicultural prescriptions (thinning, planting, fencing) and inchannel reconstruction are a necessary part of ecosystem restoration. Such actions will require a watershed assessment before commencing.
 - Use of fire—prescribed burning—to maintain forest health should be increased, especially in the ponderosa pine, mixed-conifer, and pinyon-juniper forest types.
 - Efforts to protect and enhance habitat for plants of special cultural significance should be increased.
 - Where allotments form a large fraction of trust lands, incentives should be provided to encourage allottees to join with tribes or form associations to do coordinated resource planning.
 - BIA and tribal access to research-based information tailored to their needs, and to the people and organizations who undertake the research, should be improved.
 - An adaptive management approach, in which monitoring provides feedback on operational practices, should be built into forestry on Indian lands. Ecosystem management demands an approach that is flexible (responding to new information) and site specific. To capitalize on such efforts already underway on Indian forests will require a much greater emphasis than currently exists on training, education, and communication.
- 4. Bring staffing levels to parity with those of national forests having similar resource management objectives.**
- Deficiencies in staffing for ecology and natural resources such as wildlife, range, soils, archaeology, fisheries and hydrology should be eliminated.
 - Professional engineering staff should be increased to support coordinated resource planning and address deficiencies in reservation road systems.
 - Recruitment and retention measures should be developed, with special emphasis on natural resource specialties other than forestry.
 - Training and education programs authorized by NIFRMA should be fully funded.
- 5. Increase tree value through improved forest management, timber harvest and forest enterprise performance.**
- Train planning personnel in the value of improved tree-inventory information.
 - Improve communication between forest planning personnel and forest enterprises.
 - Train forest administrators and harvesting managers to recognize the importance of improved log cutting practices.
 - Review timber sale policies to verify that sale procedures lead to maximum benefit for the tribe.
 - Promote competitive bidding for tribal logging.
 - Transfer stumpage at market value to forest enterprises to provide useful value signals to enterprise managers.
 - Develop auditing procedures to document the competitiveness of the forest product enterprise.
- 6. Greatly strengthen coordinated forest resource planning and natural resource inventorying.**
- Forest resource planning and management should be based on tribal goals and objectives derived from each tribe's vision for its forest.
 - Coordinated resource plans should guide Indian forest management via clearly defined objectives, standards, operations plans, and monitoring procedures. Such documents should be the centerpiece of forest planning and the guide for implementing ecosystem management. Technical assistance from the federal government should aid in the preparation and implementation of these plans.
 - The current and proposed interpretation of sustained yield management should be changed to one that focuses on the protection of underlying ecological processes and forest productivity.
 - Plan results should be accessible to the lay reader. Graphs, figures, pictures, and charts should clearly display the type of the forest that will be produced under the plan, the proposed harvest level over time, and the associated growth and inventory.
 - Harvest-scheduling techniques should be modernized and should include an up-to-date sustainability check. Inventory/planning support should be allocated to helping reservations in harvest scheduling. Some reservations and BIA area offices have started using modern operations-research tools for harvest scheduling; this work should be encouraged.
 - The BIA's CFI system should be improved by (a) developing standards for maintaining or improving the integrity of CFI data, (b) allowing the large reservations to process their own data, (c) consolidating inventory support staffs at the national and area offices, (d) increasing the number of

support staff educated and experienced in biometrics, computer programming, and database design and management, (e) working toward creating common data structures and reporting systems, and (f) broadening the scope of the data collected to include measures of ecosystem performance such as understory vegetation, snag characteristics, and dead and down wood.

7. Address issues requiring special planning and management.

- **Allotments.** The greater demands on staff and funding to manage allotments should be recognized. Financial mechanisms should be considered for tribes to purchase allotments for common ownership from allottees who wish to sell.
- **Alaska.** The level of federal funding necessary to provide management services for similar trust lands in other regions should be compared to that in Alaska and differences evaluated. Owners of trust lands and native corporations should be assisted in developing visions for their forests and encouraged to work cooperatively toward their goals. Trust rights of allottees should be safeguarded through agreed upon trust standards between the Secretary of the Interior and regional or village corporations that want to provide forestry services to allottees. Regional expertise in forestry services should be bolstered by encouraging regional corporations with substantial timber holdings to develop natural resource staffs through natural resource education and technical training. The technical assistance program to native corporations authorized under P.L. 101-630 should be developed and funded.
- **Other ownerships within Indian reservations.** Federal forestland within reservations should be returned to the tribes if they wish to claim it. The U.S. government also should help facilitate cooperative management of all forestlands within reservations.
- **Off-reservation lands.** Off-reservation planning and management tasks should be recognized as part of coordinated resource planning to determine funding and staffing needs.

SUMMARY

There is an extraordinary potential for managed Indian forests to serve as models of sustainability. Reservations are permanent homelands where Indians live intimately with the environmental and economic consequences of forest-management actions. Indians want their forests for a complex mix of uses—timber harvest, livestock grazing, hunting, plant gathering, firewood, fishing, scenic beauty, spiritual sanctuary—and have a compelling need to balance competing interests. They have a well-recognized commitment to protect the resources that are both their heritage and legacy.

However, problems exist. IFMAT's four most significant findings are (1) the gap between the visions that Indians express for their forests and how these forests have been managed, (2) the

gap in funding between Indian forests and comparable federal and private lands, (3) the lack of coordinated resource planning and management, and (4) the need for a better method of setting and overseeing trust standards for Indian forestry.

Management of Indian forests can be substantially improved by reconfiguring the relationship between the U.S. government and the tribes, supported by increased funding and other measures. These actions place Indians firmly in control of their forests and provide the technical and financial means for them to reach their visions for these lands.

We believe that considerable management flexibility still exists on Indian forestlands, where many innovative approaches are already being tried. Further, we believe that others have much to learn from Indian forestry and the holistic Indian view of forests and people. But, it is urgent that more attention and resources be directed soon to Indian forests by Congress. Otherwise, options will be irretrievably lost and, with them, a major opportunity to bring Indian forests up to management standards of federal lands such as the national forests and to provide widely useful examples of integrated forest management.

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