

FROM THE CENTER

Another Pivotal Decade Is Here -- Are We Up For The Challenge

There is an old Chinese saying that I was told, in my youth, was a blessing. It goes, "May you live in interesting times." Later, I found out that this statement was a curse. So far as the management of the public's lands is concerned, these are certainly the most interesting of times and the most acrimonious of times.

The period of conservation history that occurred between 1895 and 1905 is widely recognized by historians as a pivotal decade. And, it was a decade within which the members of the Boone and Crockett Club stood tall and were critical players in the drama that produced the National Parks and the National Forests. It was during this critical period that the legacy of the public's lands, the lands owned by all the American people, was created to be built upon by succeeding generations.

I believe that exactly one century later, the decade of 1995-2005 will go down in conservation history as an equally critical period. Therefore, it is well that we consider what occurs in conservation matters during this pivotal decade.

There is no doubt that the vast public lands are critical resources to those Americans who value hunting and fishing and other forms of outdoor recreation. For example, the National Forest System composed of over 194,000,000 acres is the nation's largest provider of quality outdoor recreation. According to Wildlife Management Institute, the Forest Service manages 80 percent of the elk habitat, 73 percent of the old-growth forests, 28 million acres of wild turkey habitat, and 5 million acres of wetlands and waterfowl habitat. In addition, the national forests contain most of the wild sheep and quality mule deer habitat and

more whitetail deer habitat than any other entity. These lands are major contributors to small game habitats such as three species of grouse and four species of quail along with the habitat for numerous threatened species such as wolves, grizzly bears, spotted owls, marbled murrelets, among many others.

Considering aquatic resources, the national forests contain 2,200,000 acres of fishing lakes, 200,000 miles of fishable streams, 16,500 miles of shoreline and provide habitat for more than half of the country's salmon and trout. These fish and wildlife resources provide over 86,000,000 days of recreation generating a minimum \$4,200,000,000 in expenditures and provide some 137,000 jobs in the process. This results in an estimated contribution to state and federal coffers of \$565,000,000 per year. Contributions to the national economy from all national forest sectors approximates \$130,000,000,000 annually. Some \$111,000,000,000 (85 percent) of that total comes from recreational activities - including hunting and fishing.

Perhaps it is inevitable that as the U.S. population increases in numbers and affluence and the public land base remains constant that debates over the management of those lands will escalate. As that debate exacerbates, the old technological/science paradigm of land management more and more gives way to positions based more on morals, ethics, and philosophical values. These are attributes that the managers of the public's lands are traditionally ill equipped to handle.

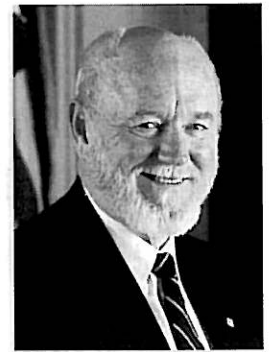
These manager's problems are exacerbated by what has been called the present "crazy quilt" of laws and regulations and case law with which they must comply.

These laws have accumulated over the decades emerging from different Congresses with little or no consideration of their interactions. Evolving case law has proven as much confusing of the issues than clarifying.

Then, there is the imposition of policy by Administrations in temporary power that constantly shift with changes of those in power. For example, it is clear, at least to me, that the overriding objective of (or the overriding constraint on) the management of the Federal lands is the preservation of biodiversity. This results from

compliance of the requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Regulations issued pursuant to the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) that is more stringent than the ESA. Those regulations require the maintenance of "viable populations of all native and desirable non-vertebrates well distributed within the planning area."

When Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota stood on the Senate floor after the passage of the National Forest Management Act, he proclaimed that management of the national forests had been taken from the hands of the Courts and returned to professionals. His thought was that a planning process had been put in



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place that would allow people and professionals of good will to reason together and, thereby, reach consensus. The result over the past two decades has turned out to be almost the exact opposite of his stated dream.

What the application of the NFMA produced was polarization with those interested in commodity production on one side and those interested in reduced commodity production or preservation on the other. As issues in a democracy are usually settled on the basis of the majority of the minority that cares deeply about a particular issue, acrimony has continued to build over one contentious issue after another. Both extremes in the continuing debate care deeply about their positions. The depth of that concern has loosened pocket books to the extent that an industry has built up around fighting over each land-use plan and each management activity. This industry employs lobbyists, lawyers, organizers, writers, publicists, spokespersons, fund raisers, and strategists. These "gladiators" fight for a living and fight hard to win. They thrive on the fight - it is what they do and do well.

Unfortunately, they often fight dirty. One of the tricks of their trade is "demonization." In the demonization game efforts

are made to create demons suitable for and deserving of attack and vilification. And, it's not coincidental that fighting such demons opens pocket books to help fund the crusade against evil - however defined.

One increasingly common tactic in this game has been to not only attack land management agencies - and the employees of those agencies - but to vilify them as the personification of evil. This, of course, is in keeping and plays well with the increasing distrust of government and "experts" in general. Conspiracy theory seems in vogue. And, it helps, that those who are attacked are constrained from counter attack - or even defense - by the rules of the game of political correctness. This combination of factors makes demonization a very dirty but effective game in swaying public opinion and keeping the money rolling in. I have worked in the conservation arena for some 42 years. Among the finest and most dedicated men and women that I have ever known were my colleagues - in state fish and wildlife departments, in land management

their lives and their being to that dream - and a significant number have paid with their health and lives for their vocation. Now, they are increasingly bewildered as the public whose land they hold in the sacred trust of stewardship splits into two camps. They are confused, hurt, and angered as they are called such names as "jack booted thugs", "the Darth Vader of America's woodlands, "lackeys of the timber industry - or of the environmentalists," "arrogant occupiers," purveyors of the "chain saw massacre," "indifferent to those whose livings and lifestyles depend on resource extraction," and so on.

They are confused, and maybe a bit frightened, when they are ridiculed or threatened and even attacked. They flinch, but do not flinch from duty, when offices and homes are bombed. They wonder why there is no public outcry. They feel abandoned when elected officials, with but few exceptions, look the other way.

Yet, they continue to serve and most remain in their posts - true to their vocations. These men and women and their pre-

\$130,000,000,000

Annual contributions to the national economy from all national forest sectors

\$111,000,000,000

Amount that comes from recreational activities including hunting and fishing

agencies, and other conservation agencies.

The vast majority of these folks are dedicated to a dream of sustainable natural resource management. They dedicate

decessors and successors are a significant part of the foundation upon which the conservation movement in this country has been constructed and will be maintained. And, I

ask in this reverie the words of the old hymn - "How Firm a Foundation?" It is essential for those concerned about conservation to make certain that foundation remains strong and firm. This Nation stands in the critical decade of 1995-2005 with a century of progress behind us and an uncertain future ahead.

It is most legitimate in a vibrant democracy that the future management of our public lands is debated - over and over and vigorously. It is well, as in debate, to examine the actions of the past and to determine them good or bad - and then, strive to do better. It is critically important to give our public land stewards a revised mission as we enter the next century. We can no longer avoid facing the fact that "the system" as it applies to public land management is "broke" and requires attention. To pretend otherwise is increasingly implausible. Setting the policies and direction for the management of the public's land for the beginning of a new century will be a complex job - a simple adjustment in a single law will not suffice.

It is critical that this pending debate of such importance to the American people be made considering the complexity and interactions of the social, political, economic, ecological and legal factors involved. We should be highly suspicious of the gladiators on both extremes of the issue of public land management who resort to demonization and reduce complex natural resource issues to clever - even amusing - and nearly always misleading "one-liners." The "one-liner" ploy assumes that the American people are too ignorant or too lazy to grasp the complexities of the quickening debate over the

management of their lands. I believe otherwise.

We should complain vehemently about reporting of events that is reduced to the reaction of an official to some situation, followed by a clever one-liner from industry and environmental spokespersons. Such is incompetent and lazy reporting and a violation of the responsibility of the press to inform the citizenry on critical matters. Unfortunately, the reason the demonization and one-liner ploys persist in the debate is that they are effective money raising and political actions. That is a sad state of affairs. We, as humans, must exploit our environment in order to live. That is not the question.

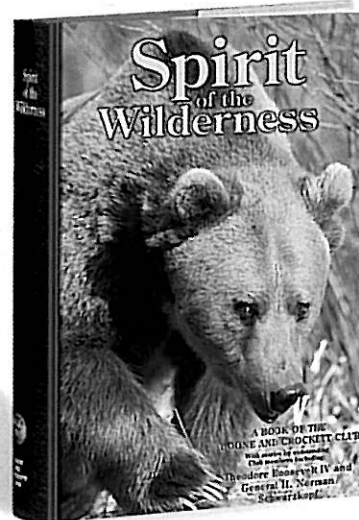
The question is how. That is the question that is most germane to the management of our precious public lands. There is not at the moment, a clear picture of how and for what such management should be predicated and carried out. The President and the Congress owe the American people - and the stewards of those lands - answers to those questions.

In the meantime, anyone or any group that uses the tactic of demonization should be recognized for what they are - purveyors of a position or a cause that will not stand up to rigorous debate and detailed examination. Our professional conservationists and public institutions and the American people deserve better. And, I believe, that we are a better and more mature people than such gladiators believe.

We tire of the fight. Our lands and people suffer. Only the gladiators win.

We can do better. I trust that we will. Whatever happens, it is likely to occur in this most critical decade. ▲▲▲

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Stalking wild sheep, tracking a trophy cougar, hiking the back country of British Columbia, fishing for striped bass and coming face to face with a grizzly bear are some of the wilderness adventures found in *Spirit of the Wilderness*, a new 300-page hardcover book by Boone and Crockett Club.

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In addition to stories by Schwarzkopf and Roosevelt IV, other noted Boone and Crockett Club members contributing stories of hunting, fishing, hiking, exploration and adventure include Richard Borden (wildlife film maker for Walt Disney Company and National Geographic), Richard P. Carlsberg (noted sheep hunter), Prentiss N. Gray (first editor of the B&C records book, *Records of North American Big Game*), John M. Kauffmann (National Park Service executive), Dr. William MacCarty (surgeon) and Paul D. Webster (B&C president). Idaho wildlife artist Hayden Lambson created the cougar sketch etched in silver leaf on the book's cover. A four-color photograph of a massive grizzly bear, by Denver Bryan, graces the dust jacket.

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