

Roundtable on Sustainable Forests - 2003  
From the ground Up  
A community based forestry Perspective

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Thank you sponsors of this Roundtable for having the courage and insight to incorporate multi perspectives in this difficult and arduous process of assessing the National Report on Sustainable forests - 2003.

Thank you, Meridian Institute, for this opportunity to speak in behalf of rural forested communities, and a special thank you to Jay West who has been a great coach to this rookie.

Attempting to speak for rural forested communities is far more than one person can do. So I have solicited comments from people, groups and businesses all over the country. My involvements with the National Network of Forestry Practitioners have been most useful, in this regard.

This report comes at a time when we are at a crossroads. We have come to understand that our 'management' has consequences both intended and unintended. The very fact we are faced with unintended consequences is a testament to incomplete or perhaps myopic analysis. Sustainability requires us to have a comprehensive understanding of the environmental, economic and social costs and benefits and subsequent externalities that follow in their wake.

The last 60 years (3 generations) has seen changes in technology and science our grandfathers probably couldn't have imagined. Our ability to extract resources has exceeded or soon will exceed the carrying capacity of many resources, whether we are talking about fish, clean water or mature trees.

Perhaps our next frontier is learning to live within our means while we learn the wisdom of both Gifford Pinchot and R. Buckminster Fuller when he suggested the need for 'doing more with less'.

I believe that the very need for us to be talking about 'sustainable forests' is largely

driven by the fact that past management isn't sustainable, in light of the unintended consequences and externalities that follow.

## National report on Sustainable Forests - 2003

### Key Messages:

For me the key message in the national report is that:

“Sustainable forest management is a highly integrated and interdependent concept. The environmental, economic and social spheres exert joint and simultaneous and inextricable influences on the forests. Opportunities to shape one sphere affect the others. We need to think more about sustainable forest management in the context of linkages among the three spheres.”

(p 113)

The problem is that none of the 67 indicators simultaneously integrate the triple bottom line

(Environmental health, Economic vitality and Social equality). So a key question becomes, how can we bring a more comprehensive and integrated understanding to this process that is reflected in the triple bottom line? What are the consequences and externalities that follow our management choices when viewed from all three spheres simultaneously? Are there any models that integrate all three spheres? How might we conceive of research that might?

Secondly, what can we learn from our history? What trends and trajectories become apparent as we learn from our past? What are the dominant trends in each sphere? What are the symbiotic and interdependent relationships that impact our analysis and our choices? Where are the models of an integrated and sustainable approach to forestry? Certainly if we don't learn from the past, we are bound to repeat it, as many have said.

Thirdly, what historical insight might we gain regarding these questions? Certainly an essential part of our past is the foundation that the Honorable Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service, stated as the mission of the newly formed agency almost 100 years ago.

“Conservation means the wise use of the earth and its resources for the lasting good of men. Conservation is the foresighted utilization, preservation, and/or renewable of forests, waters, lands, and minerals for the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest time. Conservation is the application of common sense to the common problems for the common good”

These quotes are found in Gifford Pinchot’s delightful and insightful autobiography, *Breaking New Ground*. Out of curiosity, how many of you have read it? Show of hands - thanks

## Key Concepts

Almost 40 years ago, a professor emeritus at Yale, William Burch Jr. made the following observations that I believe capture the essential concepts we need to understand.

First, “The fate of homo sapiens is bound to the land and its envelope of air and water. Yet, whether organized into tribal, feudal or industrial societies, our species remains curiously ambivalent toward the land. We worship the land, create deities from its living substance, write poems and sing songs that honor its grace and beauty. At the same time, we seek to minimize effort and maximize yield in exploiting the land and its resources. Often the motherland gets patriotic songs and dustbowl in about equal measure.”

“In our times, the ‘economic goods’ of the industrial system have clearly defined property rights and responsibilities. On the other hand, the ‘bads’ of the system are the lonesome stepchildren who belong to no one and therefore to everyone. Such is the irony of our time, that the solutions we can conceive of are more of the same, expand the market system, sell the pollution rights, tinker with technology, pass more laws, identify those with the responsibility for the grossest deterioration of the environment and give them the biggest subsidies to stop”

And lastly,

We continue to act like the Donner Party in its early stages, privately selling and buying under ever rising inflation and the increasing animosity of the poor. Like those solid New England merchants facing an unknown Sierra winter, we denude ourselves into thinking the old system will work even though the environment has changed radically. We avoid cooperation and sharing and mutual aid. We look to

the other person to make the sacrifice and do the work. We expect the present distribution of wealth to remain intact. The Donner party held firm to the old enterprising values. They ended by devouring one another.”

Is that our fate? How did we go from the wisdom of Gifford Pinchot to the present conditions? Can we understand that what we ‘value’ drives our choices and our policies? Given the reality we face today, I believe there is a direct relationship,

‘When short term profit is the measure; long term sustainability is at significant **risk**.’

## Refinements

There are many needed refinements to this report, given the time constraints; I will focus on a few.

# 2 Extent of Area by Forest type and by age-class or successional stage.

It states, “This latter trend is indicative of the dominant use in the United States of SELECTIVE harvesting, which accounts for nearly 2/3 of all harvesting.” (p16)

This statement does not reflect in any way my experience in Oregon on the Willamette National Forest. Between 1950 and 1990 over 25 Billion board feet of timber was taken off the Willamette with the vast majority being clear cut. Pictures of national forests taken from above clearly show the fragmentation and extensive clear cutting patterns of the last 50 years, where more volume of timber has been taken than any other area of the contiguous United States. Data sets need to reveal DOMINATE patterns and trends.

As I sought to understand this comment, I found out that the time frame used was 1996 - 2001, after the lawsuits over spotted owls and declining ecosystem functions significantly curtailed the cut. How can one use a statistical base that ignores the dominate trends and focuses on minor trends as a measure of this indicator? Is this sustainable?

Secondly, indicator # 25 Area and percentage of forest land experiencing an accumulation of persistent toxic substances.

Toxic chemicals are everywhere now. The National toxicology center identifies a

staggering number of chemicals now in our environment with 2,000 to 3,000 more created each year. Many of these are carcinogenic, bio-accumulating in our fatty tissues, persist over time and break down into other chemicals some of which are more dangerous than the initial substance. This legacy is extraordinarily daunting and largely not understood. The experiment [www.bodyburden.org](http://www.bodyburden.org) clearly shows how we are all guinea pigs. I will not go into depth here as this could be a topic unto itself. Suffice it to say we have many unanswered questions and we have yet to understand the precautionary principal as it relates to chemicals in our forests and in our lives.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> indicator I will briefly touch on is Criterion 6 Maintenance and Enhancement of long term multiple socioeconomic benefits to meet the needs of Societies.

In my paper, I provide a graph and a map of Oregon. The graph shows trends of timber related employment for both Lane County and the State of Oregon since 1958 when statistics were first kept. The graph shows a continuing declining employment base (except for a brief plateau in 1970) for both Lane county and the state. This reflects significant trends of automation and technology having far more significant impacts than the spotted owl lawsuits of the early 1990's. Similarly, between 1989 and 2001 over 360 Mills closed down in the Pacific Northwest with over 40,000 family wage scale jobs lost, never to return. In 2002, the state Economic Development department put out a map showing  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the state is economically distressed. These facts provide context and verification of the reality so many people in rural forest based communities experience. The situation in many rural communities is very desperate. This does not reflect sustainable paths or conditions. Where is this adequately reflected in the National Report?

### Gaps

Given that there is no definition of what a sustainable paradigm might look like that integrates the three spheres, we have no target. Since we have no target or model we can't really know what we are shooting for. Without a target, this process is akin to a ship without a rudder.

So toward that end, I would offer the following target from a ground up and community based perspective where it might serve as a model of integration relative to the triple bottom line.

1) Understand that the well-being of rural communities and well being of forests are interdependent and symbiotic. What we do to the forest, we do to rural communities.

2) That there is ‘unity in diversity’ in our ecology and our economy.

3) That policies that benefit the few and create liabilities and unintended consequences for society and future generations cannot create sustainable conditions, quite the contrary.

4) That policies and programs that encourage and facilitate, ‘the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest time’, are essential to the creation of sustainability.

So how can we get there? What are the transitions needed? How might we test new hypotheses that incorporate the triple bottom line?

Three transitions come to mind:

1) From VOLUME to VALUE-ADDED - a shift toward minimization of waste and maximization of utilization in a value added, job creating strategy. Selection harvesting, local processing and end-product forest management can significantly help in this transition. I will talk more about this in the work session tomorrow,

2) From CAPITAL INTENSIVE to LABOR-INTENSIVE- “Appropriate technology reminds us that before we choose our tools and techniques, we must first choose our dreams and our values, as some technologies enhance them, while others make them unobtainable.” Tom Bender

3) From OUTSIDE control to LOCAL control - This maybe the biggest and most difficult challenge as we have excelled at the centralization of control and influence of corporations, making local control or stewardship dubious at best. However what is good for the corporation may not be good for the community, as the closure of many Lumber Mills can attest. Local control has the greatest opportunity for stewardship, as a sense of place, community pride and longevity of those who have practiced sustainable forestry demonstrate. Examples include the Menominee, Collins Pine, Anderson- Tully and a number of individuals who practice the art and science of selective harvesting, where a sense of place and stewardship remain key components in their management strategy.

Besides these transitions, we must understand the Barriers that we face which prevent us from making significant progress in our understanding of the triple bottom line.

- 1) Subsidies, who do we give them to, who benefits and who pays? How can we create a level playing field?
- 2) Institutional memory as it relates to continuity of community based enterprises.
- 3) Timber sales that are geared to very large volumes.
- 4) Rules that are formulated to protect us from the negative consequences of industrial forestry while making individual tree selection and utilization impossible.
- 5) Our language, words like ‘increased productively’ which ignores the structural unemployment that follows in its wake.

It is interesting to note that when the Sustainable Forestry Colloquium which later became the Sustainable Forestry Partnership at Oregon State University studied sustainable forestry, that two of the forest landowner businesses, the Collins Pine and the Menominee do very little clear cutting and generally for a very different reason than most Industry and Forest Service lands. They clear cut in very small patches to create diversity, not to create mono-culture. Both the Menominee and Collins Pine take pride and identify themselves as being good stewards thru predominately selective harvesting. This is reflected in a statement that Marshall Pecor of the Menominee once said, “I believe the reason that Indian people accept these long term policies (sustained yield management) is because they believe that they do not inherit the resources from their ancestors, but borrow them from their children, and thus are truly stewards of the land.”

What can we learn from those who have practiced sustainable forestry for generations? That is our challenge and our task.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope my words and thoughts stimulate this process benefiting those who live, work and depend on the sustenance embodied in rural forested communities.