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A Vision for the U.S. Forest Service: Goals for Its Next Century, edited by Roger A. Sedjo

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BOOK REVIEWS

A VISION FOR THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE: GOALS FOR ITS NEXT CENTURY

EDITED BY ROGER A. SEDJO

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,
for Resources for the Future, 2000

Pp. 266, \$39.95

This volume is essentially a dissent to the Committee of Scientists' (COS) report on implementing the National Forest Management Act for the second round of forest planning by the U.S. Forest Service. It takes umbrage at ecosystem management; counsels resistance to involving politics either in the form of Congress, the Administration, or even a diverse set of stakeholders; and, surprisingly, even advocates against local decision making in National Forest management. *Vision and Goals* consists of collected papers and raconteurs' comments from a Resources for the Future (RFF) conference dedicated to the memory of Marion Clawson, a pioneer in public lands economics, management, and administration.

Marion Clawson's strength was his willingness to move between academia and agency, to look at and involve himself in the intricacies of managing natural resources. He was willing to propose ideas that pushed the limits of conventional wisdom, and was also willing to jump into the trenches as Director of the Bureau of Land Management, in its formative era in the nineteen fifties, to try to implement his ideas. In contrast, the RFF conference brought together a cast of characters with similar mindsets and experiences: generally economists or political scientists with an institutional bent, with only a historian and a pair of ex-Forest Service Chiefs thrown in for diversity. And many of the papers wistfully hark back to the days of the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act (1961), before the complexities of managing diverse resources for diverse stakeholders was fully engaged.

That the first round of Forest Plans is seen as an expensive failure is acknowledged (due to a lack of resolution on critical issues such as protecting species, old growth, and the underlying productivity of the lands), but the culpability of the book's authors in this result is not adequately recognized or thoroughly analyzed. This is particularly true of the essays by R. Max Peterson and Jack Ward Thomas, the ex-Chiefs. Thomas's lead off essay reads like a dog looks when just whacked with a newspaper. His palpable dislike for Jim Lyons (the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture who oversaw, and increasingly micro-managed, the Forest Service during the Clinton administration) oozes and drips from his essay. Both Thomas and Peterson urge a "depoliticization" of the Forest Service, as if this will miraculously heal the patient.

But the major failure in the first round of Forest Plans was that they were based on the type of economic efficiency modeling that characterizes

RFF, while failing to build the political consensus and support required to manage public resources. The traditional economic efficiency argument on how to manage National Forest is made in *Vision and Goals* principally by Roger Sedjo (of RFF), and less so by Clark Binkley (of Hancock Timber Resources, a forest manager for pension funds). This failure of the economic efficiency paradigm to accurately reflect the reality of publicly-owned natural resources management is accurately portrayed in Al Samples' short synthesis chapter.

Binkley and others in *Vision and Goals* do recognize that many areas of the National Forests would not be "managed" at all if economic efficiency were the deciding criterion. Instead, they propose either zoning for dominant uses, as advocated by Clarke Binkley, using New Zealand as an example; by Robert Nelson, advocating devolving to local control through privatization (as if the "cut and run" era, which continues today, never existed); and by Sally Fairfax and Randall O'Toole, enthusing about variants of trusts as a solution. The New Zealand experience, which is unlikely to be replicated here, was unique in that the "natural forests," *i.e.*, non-plantations, were either put under National Park management or transferred to the Maori's as aboriginal lands, the majority of the plantations being either sold or leased long-term to multinational corporations, and the New Zealand Forest Service is now strictly a research organization. Strangely, no such mention of this fate is made in Binkley's paper. Nelson's chapter is interesting because, while he criticizes the Progressive Era philosophy that more and better science will lead to better decisions, his remedy—privatization—is not subjected to the same analytical rigor. Sally Fairfax is provocative, as usual, but does not go far enough. While she postulates managing resources as a "portfolio" of assets, introducing the concept of prudence to balance risks and returns, she does not take the next step to recognize that this balancing is the foundation for adaptive management, a key facet of ecosystem management.

Significantly, several major areas are lacking in the Sedjo book. Surprisingly, there is no mention of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), requiring output-based management and effectiveness assessment, which, if rigorously applied, has the potential to improve National Forest management. None of the Sedjo book's authors evaluated the Forest Service's (or the Bureau of Land Management's) less than stellar performance in meeting GPRA's goals. Secondly, there is little institutional comparison with other natural resource management agencies—absent Sally Fairfax's chapter—either at the federal or state levels, or internationally. Randall O'Toole discusses some interesting proposals for new institutional arrangements from the Forest Options Group, but these are cursorily developed. Finally, there is little discussion or analysis of collaborative planning and decision making that has grown in Forest Service planning over the past dozen years. These locally based efforts—the

best known is the Quincy Library Group—have grappled with how to take an existing hierarchical, largely Washington-driven, and variously lawsuit-shy or lawsuit-happy National Forest management system and have attempted to create real change on the ground. Important lessons should be learned from their successes and failures.

Ideally, *Vision and Goals* should be viewed in apposition to two other works: the first, of course is its object of dissent, the Committee of Scientists' report *Sustaining the People's Lands: Recommendations for Stewardship of the National Forests and Grasslands into the Next Century* (curiously recently missing from the U.S. Forest Service website). The COS Report cogently lays out an agenda for future National Forest management founded on conservation biology principles, implemented through adaptive management, and developed by collaborative stakeholder involvement. Their vision for the Forest Service was based on 12 months of extensive review of Forest Service management across the nation by a truly diverse group (including Roger Sedjo as the lone dissenter from its final conclusions), and it is this report that ex-Chief Peterson, writing in *Visions and Goals*, would completely scuttle: "Reject the current report of the Committee of Scientist..." (203).

For a second comparative vision for the future of small "f" forestry (but including the National Forests), I commend to you Debra Salazar's and Donald Alper's edited volume entitled *Sustaining the Forests of the Pacific Coast: Forging Truces in the War in the Woods* (University of British Columbia Press, 2000). This book focuses on comparative institutions for the management of forests in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest states of Washington and Oregon. While sharing with the Sedjo volume one author (Clarke Binkley) and retaining a strong economic and political science foundation, Salazar and Alper benefit from a broader, multi-national and multi-institutional perspective. But its real strength in comparison to the Sedjo book is that it gives voice to the greater diversity of stakeholders in contemporary forest management: aboriginal peoples, multi-ethnic communities dependent upon non-traditional forest products, and local communities. And it is in this social milieu that real enlightened visions for National Forest management are created.

A Vision For the Forest Service is really all critique and criticism and very little "Goals for the Next Century," unless business as usual circa 1960s is your idea of a vision: paternalistically managed by the Chief with little accountability for budgets (with the exception of Mark Rey, Senior Staff for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee) or administrative, legislative, or judicial review. Had the 2000 Presidential election gone the other way, this volume would be justifiably gathering dust in some remainder bin. As it stands, unfortunately, it is far more likely to become the play book for the new administration, with the net result that National Forest forestry could well go back to the late nineteen eighties/early

nineteen nineties gridlock in the federal courts. This result is surely not a "Goal For the Next Century" that anyone should encourage.

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**EL NIÑO AND THE SOUTHERN OSCILLATION:
MULTISCALE VARIABILITY AND GLOBAL AND REGIONAL
IMPACTS**

EDITED BY H.F. DIAZ & V. MARKGRAF
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000
Pp. 496 + xv, \$90.00

Over the past two decades the term El Niño has become part of the vernacular of both scientists and planners who have worked to understand the processes that control climatic variability and the regional and global impacts of these climatic events. *El Niño and the Southern Oscillation: Multiscale Variability and Global and Regional Impacts*, while written for a scientifically based audience, will be of great importance to readers in a wide range of disciplines. This book ties together nicely the current scientific understanding of El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) climatic variability and the planning and decision making that takes place because of this global phenomenon.

ENSO is part of the natural climate system of the Earth and represents a large-scale interaction between the tropical Pacific/Indian Ocean and the atmosphere. While its strongest impacts are experienced over the Indo-Pacific sector of Earth, linked meteorological changes (teleconnections) related to alterations in atmospheric circulation patterns result in the effects of El Niño being felt over most of the remainder of the planet. Since the timing of individual El Niño events is aperiodic, normally ranging from two to seven years between events, a complete evaluation of El Niño timing and behavior is critical to understanding and planning for the meteorological and climatic change associated with these events. As well, this knowledge can be used to assess the impacts of El Niño (warm tropical) and the associated antiphase La Niña (cool tropical) extremes on regions and ecosystems far from the core ENSO event in the Indo-Pacific sector.

This volume, the collected work of over thirty-five leading experts in their respective fields, represents the current state of knowledge