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## Decade of Change: The Remaking of Forest Service Statutory Authority During the 1970s, by Dennis C. LeMaster

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# DECADE OF CHANGE: THE REMAKING OF FOREST SERVICE STATUTORY AUTHORITY DURING THE 1970s

By DENNIS C. LEMASTER.

Westport: Greenwood Press. 1984. Pp. xiv, 290. \$29.95:

“The 1970s were unique in the history of the Forest Service because during that decade statutory authority for the agency was effectively rewritten.”<sup>1</sup> This book is a detailed account of how that legislation was formed and something of the consequences of the new laws.

In Chapter 1 the multiple use, wilderness, and national environmental policy acts are considered. Though each of these was passed before 1970, LeMaster argues, and I think effectively, that these earlier Acts provided both the legislative and conceptual base on which the several Acts passed during the 1970s were constructed. This account is brief but adequate for the purpose.

Then in Chapter 2 the clearcutting controversy is briefly described, and also the ultimately unsuccessful attempt to pass a Timber Supply Act. For a brief time in the history of the latter, it appeared that the conservation groups would accept provisions for enhanced timber production on the national forests—an objective which the forest industry was anxious to obtain—but this early agreement fell apart and the measure was not enacted. But LeMaster argues that it was these two events which provided the critical impetus to later legislation.

Chapter 3 is the first of several detailed chapters on how specific legislation made its way through Congress and into law. This chapter is concerned with the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974. To some extent, this law gave the Forest Service solid legislative support for many of the activities it had long carried on based upon general but possibly inadequate legislation. As LeMaster says (p. 49), “S. 2296 was conceived in Congress. It was not an administration bill as was the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act. Nevertheless, the Forest Service played an important role not only in its development, but also in its passage.”

The 1974 Act had scarcely been passed, and planning under it was just getting under way, when the clearcutting controversy described in Chapter 2 erupted in court decisions which put into jeopardy the whole timber harvesting program of the Forest Service. This led to extensive and com-

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1. William E. Towell, in the Foreword at ix, and the author, at 175.

plicated maneuvering in the Congress, which is described here in detail, and which in the end led to the 1976 National Forest Management Act. As LeMaster well says (p. 78), "Congressional passage of the National Forest Management Act produced a collective sigh of relief in the forestry community." Chapter 5 discusses, rather briefly but with characteristic citations and descriptions of maneuvers, some of the steps taken to implement this act—most notably the passage of what the author calls "three little bills," dealing respectively with cooperative forestry, forestry research, and forestry extension.

In Chapter 6 LeMaster chronicles the various efforts of federal reorganization in the natural resource field. Nixon tried unsuccessfully to obtain the necessary legislative authority; failing, he tried to accomplish the same ends by administrative decree, only to see the whole apparatus swept away. This is followed by a long and, I believe, accurate account of the very inept effort by President Carter to create a new Department of Natural Resources (p. 129):

If the Carter Administration wanted to reorganize the natural resources functions of the federal government, it needed to have its objectives clearly in mind, to make them known and understood by key members of Congress, and to move decisively in getting Congressional approval. The Carter administration either didn't have its objectives identified or it could not articulate them well enough to make them known and understood by Congress. But whichever of these was the problem, the effort was still destined for failure because of the ponderously slow and indecisive manner in which the administration moved.

Chapter 7 is a detailed and informative discussion of the attempts to implement the 1976 Act—especially the efforts at planning. Much of this is familiar to everyone who has followed events since that Act was passed, but LeMaster does introduce some material new to me, showing that this Act did not gain the Forest Service much in terms of increased appropriations, contrary to the assertion often made by Forest Service people. This chapter also includes a detailed account of the evolution of the regulations designed to carry out the Act and of the roadless area review and evaluation (RARE II) undertaken by the Carter administration.

A very short Chapter 8 presents some conclusions. Only near the end are there any references to events in 1980-81; this book is in no sense a description or a critique of the Reagan administration.

Most of this book is highly detailed, with names of persons, dates of various actions, and many specific references. The text is fully documented with a list of sources at the end of each chapter. Yet, LeMaster achieves the unlikely combination of such detail with a relatively short book—only 177 pages of text. The two main bills are printed in their

entirety in an Appendix, as is also a long comparison of the effort of some conservation groups to write a considerably different bill than the one which became the 1976 Act. As a source book, this exposition is likely never to be excelled for those interested in the history of forest policy.

But in many ways LeMaster goes beyond a simple, though detailed, historical account. Without much theorizing or philosophizing, he nevertheless tells the reader a great deal about how laws are made in the United States. He emphasizes at several points the need to arouse a large and vocal interest in any problem or proposal since Congress acts, if at all, only on presently evident matters which concern many people and is generally unwilling to deal with a prospective, as contrasted with a presently evident, problem. He shows the very real advantage of getting the greatest achievable consensus on a proposal prior to the formal hearings. Complete consensus is often impossible but partial consensus, or agreement as to what is still in disagreement, may be vital. He also explains most clearly the major role of congressional staff, and that what appears in public as the Senator's views has likely been formed by his staff. As he says (p. 176), "It was not the merit of the content of these laws alone that compelled their passage. Merit is not enough for legislation to pass. Passage also requires fitting circumstances."

This book is very much an insider's account of happenings. LeMaster was employed as a consultant to the House Committee and surely played a considerable role in the events which he chronicles.

There are obvious advantages to an insider's role; he or she knows many things, including where to look for documentation, that no outsider can possibly know. There are also serious disadvantages: bias, self-aggrandizement, refighting a fight which is already lost, and others. I think LeMaster has very carefully and productively used the advantages of his position without falling into any of these errors. He mentions his role in various events without bragging; his writing is calm, well-balanced, and lively in style. His account impresses me as fair and accurate. For those with an interest in the formation of forestry legislation in this decade, this is surely a book to buy.

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