

United States  
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Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Pacific Northwest  
Research  
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Reply To: 1330-1/4070

Date: APR 11 1992

George Brown, Dean  
College of Forestry  
Oregon State University  
Corvallis, OR 97331

Dear George:

I have just finished reading an article entitled "Silvicultural Correctness: The Politicalization of Forest Science" by Bill Atkinson. It was published in the Winter, 1992, edition of Western Wildlands. I have had several other people in the Station review it. We have all come to the same conclusion: that, while some of the things Bill says in the article are true and some are not, it amounts to a vituperative pseudo-scientific inflammatory political attack on the Forest Service.

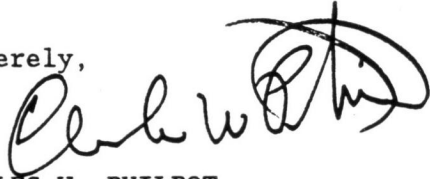
Both I and those around me in the Forest Service have witnessed Bill's pronouncements in this regard at numerous lectures, workshops, field trips, etc., in the past. We have often been disturbed and offended by his extreme and, often, erroneous remarks about the Forest Service and those who work in it. However, we have chosen to consider his distemper as the reaction of a commodity resource production zealot, with long and profitable connections to forest industry.

However, Bill's extreme remarks published in Western Wildlands are intolerable. Particularly, his assertion that the advent of new forestry is "yet another example of Forest Service mismanagement, on a par with the insect fiasco in eastern Oregon," etc., is just not consistent with professional ethical behavior or the facts, especially as we have come to expect from your College. At another point, Bill indicates "cautionary statements.....by scientists (at the Olympia Lab)...were basically ignored"; this is patently untrue. He goes on to allege that "an agency proposal to close the (Olympia) lab at one point" was a punishment for the Olympia scientists' "dissent" (Bill's word). The fact is that Bill knows nothing of the internal budgetary considerations that prompted the "agency proposal" and the fact that these antedated the rise of the "New Forestry" issue he addresses. In this case, Bill took speculative rumor and published it as the truth to advance his own agenda and, evidently, for titillation.

Now, I would, defend, just as you would, Bill's right to publish his scientific results and his professional opinions. My point is that much of what Bill says in the Western Wildlands article is (1) untrue, (2) unjustly defames the Forest Service for things it has not done, (3) is needlessly inflammatory and pejorative (4) ignores public sentiment that more attention be paid to non-commodity resource values, and is, (5) very unprofessional, especially as a representative of a great University and fine College like yours.

I urge you to discuss these concerns with Bill. Continued untrammelled attacks of this sort, in print especially, cannot help but damage his professional standing and that of the College. Indeed, the vitriolic, biased nature of the Western Wildlands article is more appropriate to writers of muckraking tabloids than college professors, in my opinion.

Sincerely,



CHARLES W. PHILPOT  
Station Director

Enclosure (copy of article)

Author:McDonald:mc:4/7/92

cc: sent to  
Owston, DeBell, +  
Buttrille



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Reply To: 1330-1/4070

Date: **APRIL 14 1992**

Jennifer O'Loughlin  
Editor, Western Wildlands  
A Natural Resource Journal  
University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59182

Dear Ms. O'Loughlin:

I was shocked and dismayed to find an article like "Silvicultural Correctness: The Politicalization of Forest Science" (Vol. 17, No. 4, Winter, 1992) in your journal. The article is full of inflammatory language, factual errors and innuendo obviously intended to excite the reader and bias opinions rather than providing factual information. I understand that you cannot be responsible for the accuracy of all data in the journal, but I do assume you are responsible for the professional tone and quality of articles included. I would contend that the Atkinson article is more appropriate to a sensationalist tabloid paper than to a professional journal.

Certainly, I understand the goal you had in the issue regarding display of an array of attitudes toward "New Perspectives" and "New Forestry." However, some authors can always be found that are zealous to the extent of exceeding normal bounds of professional propriety.

I urge you to strengthen your endeavors to have your contribution keep the tone of their articles at a high professional level and exclude articles concentrating on defamation and political axe-grinding like Atkinson's.

Sincerely,



CHARLES W. PHILPOT  
Station Director

Author: S. McDonald:mc:4/13/92

cc: O'Wston, DeBer  
John Buttrille



# Another View of New Forestry

*Excerpts from a presentation by William Atkinson, Head, Forest Engineering Department,  
Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, at the Oregon Society of American Foresters  
Annual Meeting, May 4, 1990 in Eugene, Oregon.*



**I**would like to make five major points about New Forestry. The first point is that New Forestry is obsolete — it fights the last war. The last war refers to the era of compromise in an attempt to manage the forest under multiple use. The second point is that the loss of land base for commercial forestry is the real issue — that's the new war. Third, the wood supply situation is too serious for what I call "hobby silviculture" (my word for New Forestry). Fourth, New Forestry is not good forestry, technically it is a disaster; and point five, a better solution is to modify plantation forestry.

## **New Forestry is Obsolete**

Let's start with point one, New Forestry is obsolete — it fights the last war.

Back in the days when we were still trying to manage the forest under the definition of several uses on one acre, New Forestry might have made some sense, not much, but some. It took the politicians and the courts to finally settle the definition of multiple use. The definition today is to manage for a single dominant use, spatially separated.

So, under this scenario, we are no longer considering managing forest acres for several uses. When Jerry Franklin first pro-

posed New Forestry he said it was a response to an either/or mentality; either lock it up or manage it intensively for timber. He also said that environmentalists must move away from preservation as the sole solution for their social objectives. The fact is that they haven't moved away from preservation, if anything they are pushing even harder. So this middle-ground approach was aimed at fighting the last war, the war where we assumed that timber production would coexist with wildlife, scenery and all of the rest.

The war has been lost — New Forestry is no longer credible. The job now is to grow as much wood as we can on the scraps of forest that we have left.

## **Loss of Land Base Real Issue**

A major problem that we have in forestry today is the locking up of our timberlands, which results in the loss of the commercial forest land base. Contributing to this loss of land base are the various resource specialists who are carving out their own set of land withdrawals. Forty percent of Forest Service land has been set aside for uses other than growing timber, as well as 19 percent of Bureau of Land Management land. And this is before any withdrawals associated with the

spotted owl being listed as threatened.

## **Hobby Silviculture**

Point 3 is that the wood supply situation is too serious for hobby silviculture. I would like to remind the proponents of New Forestry that we are in deep sheepdip regarding wood supply in Oregon. Latest national forest plans show a slight reduction to 2.6 billion, but with the owl listed we are down to 1.6 billion board feet, a 55 percent reduction from the 1983-87 average.

In order to reach this level of cut the Forest Service is assuming intensive management for timber production on those lands that they have available to manage. Without intensive management the cut will decline even more. For whatever its virtues, New Forestry will not produce anything like the timber that can be produced under plantation forestry.

## **New Forestry isn't Good Forestry**

Let's take a look at history and see what we can learn. Back in 1934 the Forest Service called for an abandonment of clearcutting to be replaced with frequent light cutting, which retained a large percentage of forest canopy and used single tree selection in all age stands. Does that sound familiar?

This was the practice of the Forest Service up until the 1950s, and was tested on a large scale. Fortunately, one of the most famous silviculturists in the Northwest, Leo Isaac, decided to study the results of these practices. Isaac concluded that these practices resulted in accelerated windfall, huge mortality losses, damage to residual stands and bark beetle attacks.

#### Consequences of New Forestry

Turn now to some of the consequences of New Forestry. I have divided these into two areas — harvesting and future stand management.

One of the first consequences of New Forestry is the increased cost of harvesting and silviculture due to the complex system being installed. We have demonstrated time and time again the tremendous costs involved in partial cutting and repeated logging entry. Silvicultural costs have not been studied as much, but we know that it is going to take a great amount of money and talent to "pull off" these New Forestry systems. It seems to me that New Forestry is a device to move deficit timber sales to western Oregon.

The second point is the loss of revenue and decreased yields due to leaving merchantable material in the woods, increased windfall and unmanaged stands left as buffers or for wildlife. Much of the material that is being left after logging under New Forestry is merchantable. This is an investment of capital being left out in the forest.

Windfall is a major problem. Anyone who manages timber on the coast of Oregon or in the Cascades deals with wind as a major management factor, as much in the picture as site quality or soil characteristics. You have to design systems that work, and one thing we have learned is not to leave trees standing by themselves when they have been

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growing in a closed stand — they blow down.

The third point is damage to residual trees from logging and site preparation. How do you protect scattered trees when you leave them standing in the middle of a logging unit? It can be done, but it is costly. How do you protect trees during site preparation? If you want to burn, how do you burn without killing the trees that are left?

The final point is safety. People are getting killed by snags and trees left in the middle of logging areas. Safety people in Washington are clamping down on partial cuts because of the danger involved in working around snags and trees.

Turn now to future stand management and some of the consequences of New Forestry. The first point is decreased yields — sloppy clearcuts make sloppy plantations. You don't hear proponents of New Forestry talk very much about wood productivity. When you go on a field trip and look at New Forestry, be sure and get into the unit — look at stocking, and look

at the amount of brush, weeds and trees being left to compete with whatever seedlings there are. This is point 2 — lack of full stocking, especially of intolerant Douglas-fir.

Point 3 concerns destruction of advanced regeneration during future harvesting. It is always a problem to remove overstory trees without destroying advanced reproduction. If you are not going to remove the overstory but leave it for the next rotation, that needs to be considered as a capital investment and accounted for in the cost benefit analysis.

Point 4 is the disease situation you are setting up. New Forestry may well be a strategy for disease enhancement. A good example is mistletoe. Disease may be the "revered old-growth heritage" that is passed down from old stands to young stands.

The final point deals with brush buildup as understory vegetation is exposed to light. New Forestry could well be encouraging intense brush competition with conifers. Anybody who has worked with a vigorous brush species knows what happens when you take off the overstory and allow light to reach the forest floor — the brush goes absolutely "bananas."

#### Modify Plantation Forestry

My final point is that a better solution is to modify plantation forestry. Here are some practical ways to modify plantation forestry to meet new goals. Briefly discussed are the categories of harvesting, roads and site preparation, stand management and protection/long-term productivity.

Under harvesting, roads and site preparation, I think we ought to use clearcuts except in areas that are visually sensitive; we ought to construct narrow roads carefully located and carefully constructed so that they stay on the hill and not slip out. We should use minimum impact logging; cable systems, helicopter systems, carefully controlled ground skid-



# USFS Herbicide Ban Lifted

The USDA Forest Service has cleared the way for the use of herbicides in Oregon and Washington national forests after a seven-year absence.

The Forest Service policy for managing competing and unwanted vegetation will continue to emphasize alternative methods of weed control but herbicides can now be considered as an option. Limited chemical use is expected to save the agency \$4 million annually in vegetation control.

The new ruling is in response to a final decision on 10 administrative appeals contesting a Forest Service Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on vegetation management. All appeals were denied. The EIS was prepared in response to a 1983 lawsuit. After a court-arranged mediation between environmental groups and the Forest Service, the lawsuit was dismissed in 1989.

The Forest Service put its own delay in place until it could rule on the EIS appeals.

During the chemical-free years, the agency determined that the most effective alternative methods were weeding by hand and with chain saws.

## New Forestry ... continued from inside

ding. We ought to do minimal site preparation, light burning in the spring, or use harvesting to control slash. We should be doing shovel piling or minimal scarification, trying to live with more slash and more brush. We should clump wildlife trees around the edges of cutting units and in places where they are out of the way.

Stand management techniques should result in something very close to full stocking, using the best quality genetically improved planting stock. We ought to be planting through more slash, mixing our species, using micro sites cleverly and even putting some hardwoods in. We should appreciate the diversity that other species add to the forest, especially when conifers are away and free to grow; then we can allow other plants to grow between them. We ought to be leaving special areas for wildlife, but be clever about it — leave areas that are hard to log, sensitive soils, wetlands, rocky areas, low site, hardwood patches, meadows or buffers.

Finally, under protection and long-term productivity, we should control the amount of slash we want on the forest by whole-tree

yarding and the location of delimbing. It is important to be managing soils by adding organic matter, by allowing alder to grow intermixed and by fertilizing.

### Caution Suggested

I will close with some advice to advocates of New Forestry. Don't move too rapidly, use caution and consider cost and yield implications of what you are suggesting. Study research findings, understand biological and engineering principles, learn from history and study past results. Don't make it too complicated, involve experienced operational people, and keep logistics and people resources in mind when you are designing your systems. And finally, borrow the best ideas from plantation forestry.

A copy of the full presentation is available from WFEA by calling 503/226-4562.

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