

# The Forest Service Planning Rule: Please, no not again

National Science Forum Agenda  
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Resources for the Future

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# Sustainable Rural Communities: Social, cultural and economics dimensions across the landscape

- Some History
- - RPA 1976
- - Revised Planning Regulations 1982
- - Forest Plans
- - Status of Plans 2009
  - 54 plans revised
  - 37 revision underway
  - 33 revisions not started
  - 2 with current plans

# What is wrong with planning?

- RPA identified outputs to be produced: timber, water, range, wildlife, recreation, plus one.
- **But, did not give guidance on how much of each output to produce or the trade-offs.**
- Also, focus on the planning process, **little attention given to implementation.**
- Little ability to get broad consensus. Often, groups did not participate in the process but challenged or litigated at the end of the process.
- Wide agreement that the planning process needs to be made simpler, less costly, more user-friendly and understandable to the public. Insulate from both political and legal review except in certain limited circumstances (Peterson).
- But, COS suggested more planning.

# What has worked?

Balance between the timber industry, the environmentalists and recreation. FS was able to balance these against each other.

**BALANCE OF POWER** notion: Culhane (1981) argued this system had worked well in the past. Pre NFMA 1974

# Fundamental lack of consensus position

- What is the mission of the NFS?
- FS mission has changed through time. What is needed is a **new consensus**. (Peterson)
- Political micromanagement (Thomas). Need a **new mission** from Congress.
- Planning Process: If you don't want management, wait until the end and oppose whatever arbitration and litigation.

But, perhaps we do we have the bases for a “new mission,” or a “new consensus”?

- Could argue that since about 1990 the FS has been mostly about custodial management. Attention on wildfire control.
- **A new Consensus?**
  - New interest in carbon sequestration.
  - Wildfire control.
  - Biodiversity.
  - Other values may be minimally managed for.

# MARKETS FOR ECOSERVICES

- Bowes and Krutilla in 1989 RFF book argued that NFS should be viewed as a “forest factory” capable of generating a variety of services, as called for in the legislation. So, objective ought to be to generate that set that would maximize “social income.” **Since many of these values are non market, should use contingent valuation techniques** to estimate the value of each of the outputs and produce that mix that maximizes net present value.
- Indeed, ecosystem management put the focus on the forest factory. Body Beautiful

# Ecosystem service markets

- Can tie to carbon, since can estimate carbon volumes and values for carbon are determined in markets.
- Other values can be determined by markets, e.g., timber, grazing, perhaps recreation and water, but what about wildlife? ... biodiversity?
- May need to estimate values, and values at the margin.



# Conclude

- The attempt at serious planning is probably futile in the absence of a major consensus. Do we now have a consensus around carbon sequestration, biological diversity and wildfire? Timber may no longer be important.
- The de facto new role of the FS seems to be largely fire control.