

RECREATION, PROTECTED AREAS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCE: WHERE ARE WE GOING?

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Abstract: I am new in my job as coordinator for USDA Forest Service research in recreation, social sciences, and wilderness. I predict that we will be giving greater attention and resources to this area in the near future, despite recent budget cuts and personnel reductions. Researchers should cooperate with each other nation-wide, and involve resource managers and users in the research process. They should also take time to enjoy their jobs and their personal and family life, as new Chief Mike Dombeck has suggested.

Thank you for inviting me today. I must tell you that I prepared these remarks before I knew exactly what the assigned title was to be. However, I normally add titles to papers after I see what turns out, so this one may fit. Because I am new in my job, it's easier to talk about the future than the past. I know myself better than my job, so I will talk more about where I am going and less about where we are going. Please tell me if we're headed the same way.

Greetings from Washington, our nation's capital. I remember learning from Ross Tocher in 1969 about the *escape from* versus the *attraction to* motivations for recreation. For me, both are operative today. It's good to be here on Lake George, a very attractive place.

In truth, if I wasn't happy to be here, I would not be here. After all, today is Sunday, a day not for work, but for rest, renewal, recreation, family, and listening to "Car Talk" on National Public Radio. However, my wife came with me, and we are looking forward to celebrating our 34th wedding anniversary tomorrow in this luxurious hotel. So this is fun, and my remarks are going to reflect that.

It's Sunday. We can say anything we want. So greetings again from Washington -- home of avarice, bureaucracy, back-biting, butt-kicking, mud-slinging, political posturing, bombast, pork, drugs, murder, but no baseball. I like it there, I really do. Not because of all these negatives; every place has negatives. But Washington also has cherry blossoms, two rivers, fabulous buildings, great art, wonderful music, opera, museums, other cultural attractions, winning soccer, the best collection of ethnic restaurants outside of New York City, and cheap booze. Right! I can buy French wine cheaper in Washington than you can buy California wine in the Napa Valley. Why? Because Congress controls the taxes in DC, most of the cost of alcoholic beverages is taxes, and Members of

Congress are known for their appreciation of the finer things in life, like foreign travel and foreign wines.

In addition to these attributes, Washington is full of good people who work hard. Despite stereotypes, despite what you read in the newspaper or see on TV, this is true for all three branches of government, from the very bottom to the very top of the pay scale. So it's an exciting place, and it's a great place to work with other people to get things done. It is a better place for extroverts than introverts. Even though I'm an introvert, I like working there.

Since last October 2, I have been sitting in a chair once occupied by Alan Ewart as the national coordinator for Forest Service research in recreation, wilderness, and social sciences. This is in the staff that also handles forest inventory, economics, and urban forestry research. Some of you know Al. All of you know him at least as well as I do. I think he called this area of research, "human dimensions". Apparently, that nomenclature failed to fly in the Forest Service. Nobody knew what it meant. So Ken Cordell and a cast of colleagues are convening Tuesday in Salt Lake City to figure out what to do with human dimensions.

I have spent some of my time since October counting heads and some of it counting dollars, mostly looking forward. For fiscal year 1998, which begins in only 6 months, the Forest Service is asking for about 4 1/2 million dollars for social/cultural research, including recreation, and about \$1.1 million for wilderness research, some of which is recreation. The total of \$5.6 million is up about 6 percent from actual dollars in 1997.

Is this a lot of money or a little? It's not a lot compared to a total budget of \$180 million for all areas of Forest Service research. The only areas that got less in 1997 are forest health monitoring, forest product safety and human health, rangeland ecology, and urban forestry. Wilderness research would have been last if I hadn't cheated and added it to social, cultural, and recreation.

Hey, they brought me back from Vienna to be in charge of one of the five smallest research programs in the whole organization! I guess I can look at this magnificent display of confidence in two ways: (1) there's no way even I can make things much worse, or (2) they have given me a huge challenge to make things better.

Can we make it better? I hope so. Based on some very early numbers, I would not be surprised to see an increase of about one million dollars in 1999. If we turned everyone loose to ask for as much as they think they could use productively, we would probably get a request of more than double what we're requesting this year. Doubling sounds good, but I'll be happy simply with a bit of growth. We have certainly had enough of shrinkage.

Enough about dollars. What about people? My head count is not complete, but there are about 30 Forest Service scientists identified with social, cultural, recreation, and wilderness research, at about half that many locations. My goal, naturally, is to visit all these locations and meet all these people, and their cooperators. So far, I have been to

only two of these locations, but by going to meetings such as this, and because some folks come to Washington, I have met quite a few already.

As I get around to meeting everyone, I intend to assure them of my support in getting the resources they need to do their job.

I intend also to find out how well they know each other and whether it might be possible to integrate their efforts a bit better. Communications are getting cheaper, faster, and easier, but it is surprisingly easy still for researchers to put their heads down close to their work and not notice someone else doing similar work elsewhere. For example, it is surprising that we have two meetings scheduled this week that have forced many people to choose between Lake George and Salt Lake City.

As I get around, I plan to ask our researchers how they decide what to work on. Who participates in problem identification and problem selection? Do we have a good balance between individual inspiration and customer-driven research? Are resource managers and resource users consulted by researchers in deciding what to do, where to do it, and how to do it? Are we going far enough to make sure our research is relevant to real problems, used to solve these problems, and available to all who face these problems? Are researchers rewarded for doing the right thing, either in pay and promotions, increased resources and flexibility, or opportunities for professional growth and personal satisfaction?

I'll also ask if we're having fun. We are in *recreation* for goodness sake! If we are not having fun, there is something wrong with us. Former Forest Service Chief Dale Robertson used to encourage all of us to have fun, but he also told us that if we weren't working hard enough, we were going to be bypassed by someone who was working harder. He worked hard, but it didn't help. I think he's having more fun now. I know former Chief Jack Ward Thomas pretty well, but I can't remember him ever talking much about having fun. Jack did have fun as a researcher. I think he did not have much fun while he was Chief, although he worked hard in both roles. Our new Chief, Mike Dombeck, has said something I like. He said, "Give it your best, but don't give it your all; save something for yourself and your family." I *hope* he is following his own advice. I hope that *you* are following this advice. I *know* that I am following this advice!

I've told you a couple things I've done on the job so far, counting dollars and heads. That's been fun. Also on the job, I reviewed the Forest Service draft long term strategy under the Government Performance and Results Act. It was terrible, awful, poorly written, but I *had fun* saying so.

I reviewed a couple manuscripts on social science inputs to ecosystem management that were pretty good, and I *had fun* reading them and saying so. I've traveled to Orlando, Riverside, Burlington, and Pretoria, South Africa, *on the job!* I drove to this meeting with my wife, and that was fun and continues to be. I learned about Koreans who pick ferns on forest land, saw a picnic area being modified to meet the wishes of Hispanic users, met a woman who is the executive director of the American Association of Nude Recreation. Diversity takes many directions, and diversity is fun.

On the job, I have fought with an old computer system that I could not believe still functioned, but this was fun, like using antique tools to build something. I have fought with a new computer to try to access e-mail and the Internet at the same time, and to build my own web page; here, the fun continues. I fielded inquiries from students at the Wharton School about the current definition of visits vs. visitor-days in the RPA statistics on recreation use. I consulted the experts. They didn't know! They disagreed! In the old days, when it made little difference, we knew the answer. Now, when it matters, we don't! I sent back a lot of information and explained the difference between information and knowledge. This was amusing, and it continues to be so.

What else? I shook hands with the new Chief as I came in the door on his first day at work. I shook hands with several Deputy Chiefs as they left on their last day of work. Well, some things are more fun than others.

I said I was following our new Chief's advice to save some time and energy for self, family, friends. Here's proof it can be done. Since we came home from Austria, I've been to a high school reunion in Oakland, saw `beat Stanford at a basketball game in Berkeley, went to Pagliacci at the Metropolitan opera in New York, and the Matthew Passion at Constitution Hall in Washington. I went skiing with my older son, and baby-sat for his daughter, my granddaughter. I replenished my wine cellar and went to a winery, went out to dinner in two dozen different restaurants, hosted family and friends at our house, wrote a preface for a friend for his book of poems, raised funds for two churches, became a deacon, narrated a Christmas play, worked in the yard, walked in the woods, and spent way more than half of my time with my wife, some of it sleeping.

What is the point of this rambling walk with my inner self that I have inflicted on you this afternoon? I guess it's that I'm glad to be here, I'm glad to meet you, I'm glad to see you, I'm looking forward to working with you, and I hope you plan to have as much fun doing it as I will.

Thanks again for the invitation.