INTRODUCTION

Today's world continues to place increasing pressures on our natural resources. It was recently reported that we now have over 250 million people in the United States. And as I stop to reflect on this I note that the population of our country has about doubled in my short lifetime. Why note this at this conference? Well, we need to keep in mind that society is changing. Fewer people live on or depend on the land directly. That is, we are no longer an agrarian society but an urban one. And an urban society expects different values from our forests while often not having a biological understanding of the complexities of forest management.

However, first as professionals, it is time that we stopped looking upon the choice of a silvicultural system as one versus another. We need to look at the choice of a management system as a reasoned, rational, scientific approach that best meets the management objective of our forests. This of course will vary from the perspective of the land owner and/or the publics that we serve. This sometimes means that the "optimum" prescription might have to be compromised to meet society's needs. With the help of the public and the principal users of a specific area, the manager needs to define what the future desired conditions of the vegetation are and determine how these conditions may be obtained over time. This approach needs to recognize that vegetation is not static but that vegetation is ever changing, that one or more interim steps might be needed to achieve the objective, that once the objective is achieved it might not last, and finally that more often than not "one can't get there from here." As an example, one has to plan how a stand or that portion of the landscape that is proposed for management might be regenerated in the future. Manipulating vegetation today without realistic plans about how an area might be regenerated could provide future managers with an impossible task.

INFLUENCING SILVICULTURAL SYSTEMS

My comments are going to be limited to the Forest Service but many of the same challenges face other Federal and State land management agencies and to some extent even industrial landowners. In some states like California there are several proposals concerning the environment and the management of forest lands that could have major impacts on landowner objectives.

As the Forest Service moved through the 70's and 80's into the 90's the make up of the personnel of the Forest Service changed by adding a broader cross section of disciplines. These disciplines reflect society as a whole in that a wide range of biological opportunities and management objectives are not only recognized as possible but are demanded as management options of the Forests. These values include not only the widely recognized values of recreation, range, water, wildlife, fisheries, minerals, and timber but also the more non-traditional values of rare and endangered species, micro organisms, or just plain natural conditions. Thus the public and many employees expect that the Forest Service will emphasize these values while de-emphasizing other values particularly the consumptive ones like timber, big game, and minerals.

What does this mean as to the choice of silvicultural systems? Clearcutting is viewed by many across the country as an unacceptable alternative. And the other even-aged methods, shelterwood and seedtree harvests are not much more attractive in their viewpoint as these practices are considered as only a 2 or possibly 3 steps to a clearcut.

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Unevenaged management, all-aged management or more specifically individual tree harvesting are deemed more acceptable. However, in making a choice of silvicultural systems, the silvics of the species being managed are often ignored, logging systems are not fully coordinated, the long term effects on vegetation are not assessed over time. A major concern in many areas that will need more attention in the future is the impacts of insects and diseases. One can name specific insects from coast to coast that are causing havoc with the multiple use objectives of all forest land ownerships. And an item probably dear to the hearts of many people here at this symposium today, economics, have little bearing on what is deemed acceptable.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY

Presently, in trying to be responsive to all these concerns, treatments are being applied on the ground that often display modifications of better known approaches. People are searching to name these approaches, such as leaving group of trees in clearcuts or shelterwoods, often forgetting that the Society of American Foresters and most silvicultural text books already define clearcutting and/or shelterwood with reserves. Unevenaged management is equalled to all age management without making the distinction of the differences. One needs uniformity in describing management activities so that communications between individuals and groups will be understandable.

Examples of what people are trying include:

1. Extrapolation of the work on unevenaged management at Crossett

2. The testing of unevenaged systems in Southern pines in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississipi.

3. The leaving of individual hardwoods to become part of the future stands in the Eastern hardwoods.


5. The selection of 2 Districts in California to test not only the practicality of alternative silvicultural treatments but also the economic feasibility.

6. The administrative studies in cooperation with research that are testing various unevenaged concepts on the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests in Central Oregon.

7. The Shasta-Costa Planning area on the Siskiyou Forest in Oregon which will evaluate the opportunities of management alternatives.

8. The Shady Beach Fire Rehabilitation area on the Willamette National Forest in Oregon.

In addition to these examples, this winter the Chief announced a program called "New Perspectives" for managing the National Forest System. This program is intended to improve the stewardship of lands and resources on the National Forests and Grasslands. In accord with the Forest Land Management Plans, this program combines new research with ecologically sensitive resource management. Some specific items include finding practical ways to blend protection of the whole land community with production of natural resources and managing whole ecosystems rather that single species, single trees, or just one resource at a time.

The "New Perspectives" program will be an evolving one where new ideas and new research will be blended with old practices to provide for a healthy environment that provides a sustainable use of resources. It is neither a choice of "Protection" or "Production" but a blend of both. The Washington Office will provide overall coordination and hopefully provide a reasonable mechanism for quality control. The real work will occur in the field.

The successful achievement of the objectives of this program will be through the implementation of sound biological silvicultural prescriptions. Again, this means defining reasonable, obtainable land management objectives. Then developing and analyzing alternative treatments to meet the stated objectives. These analyses need to provide the decision maker with the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative. This includes not only items like yields of timber, recreation user days, possible wildlife or fishery populations, etc. but also the opportunities foregone.

One could develop a long list of items to consider here but I will limit the suggestions to things like the possible dysgenic effects of treatments, the species of plants and animals to manage, the effects on rare endangered species, yields of timber or forage, and both short term and long term costs.

SUMMARY

Society has changed over the past several decades and this has resulted in a changing need or perception of needs from our natural resources. We are more of an urban dweller than a rural one. We use the outdoors more for the amenity values and often do not recognize opportunities for management. Land managers need to define what the resource management objectives are for the stand and/or landscape being managed. Silvicultural practices must consider the biology of the species being managed and base any treatments on sound scientific facts. The Forest Service is trying to be responsive to people's needs and through the cooperation of research and others is searching ways to do a more acceptable job that will provide for continued resource values for the future. I am optimistic that our forests can provide the goods and services that society needs.
LITERATURE CITED

