A Statement of Vision

William H. Banzhaf

Two short years ago many of us were among the 1,500 delegates to the Seventh American Forest Congress. The large-group process that was tested and applied during that wonderful gathering continues to be used all over the country when people with diverse ideas want to resolve a problem.

The visions and principles generated by dedicated natural resource professionals, environmentalists, and individual citizen stakeholders have stood the test of time because of their remarkable simplicity and common sense. Although all 13 vision statements adopted by the congress provide an important view on forestry, let me share some I feel are of particular value.

- In the future, our forests will be held in a variety of public, private, tribal, land grant, and trust ownerships by owners whose rights, objectives, and expectations are respected and who understand and accept their responsibilities as stewards.

- In the future, our forests will be enhanced by policies that encourage both public and private investment in long-term sustainable forest management.

- In the future, our forests will sustainably provide a range of goods, services, experiences, and values that contribute to community well-being, economic opportunity, social and personal satisfaction, spiritual and cultural fulfillment, and recreational enjoyment.

- In the future, our forests will be shaped by natural forces and by human actions that reflect the wisdom and values of an informed and engaged public, community and social concerns, sound scientific principles, local and indigenous knowledge, and the need to maintain options.

It is apparent to me that if all those involved in the current debate about forests and forestry could remember these overriding vision statements, more progress could be made in meeting everyone's needs.

I had the honor of moderating one of the last general sessions of the Seventh American Forest Congress. During this session, one of our more distinguished and long-time SAF members, Jay Gruenfeld, offered an additional vision concept. His idea received a great round of applause and, I think, deserves additional attention. Jay's concept is simply this: "In the future, our forests will benefit from strong trust between diverse stakeholders." Without this basic tenet, many of our efforts to achieve healthy and sustainable forests will be in danger of failure.

Outdated Rhetoric

Karl Wenger, in his January Commentary, simplifies the forest debate to nature versus management.

Environmental groups provide a vocal expression of the general public's lack of confidence in historic forest management. Rather than attack their motives and throw up the barricades against their questions, we should be making every effort to engage in meaningful dialogue. Everywhere I go, whether to industry meetings, professional conferences, or environmental gatherings, the topic is the same: How do we achieve sustainable forestry? It is more than harvesting trees in a sustained way. Foresters know the resiliency of the treed environment—cut them down and new trees will replace them. But we won't be listening to the public. Without this basic tenet, many of our efforts to achieve healthy and sustainable forests will be in danger of failure.

"Environmental groups want to control the resource," only creates a platform for greater polarization. If some of us in the profession want to continue with the old ways and try to justify it with outdated rhetoric, so be it, but we won't be listening to the public. We need to do better. All of the resources derived from forests are important and valuable. Our collective challenge is to manage forests so that on a landscape basis all values are perpetuated. Only through dialogue with all of (Continued on page 56)
the forest constituencies can we begin
to come to grips with what is sustain-
able management.

So Karl, you’re right. Nature doesn’t
know best as long as society wants and
needs forest resources, but neither can
the timber management of the past
meet the needs of today. We must adapt.

Frank M. Dunstan
New York State Forester
Albany, New York

Deficient Educations

Re: “Thinking Big about Foresters
and Forestry,” in the February issue.

A review of the authors’ education
and experience shows serious deficien-
cies. I wonder what parallel courses in
botany can replace dendrology and sil-
vics. Systematic botany won’t do it; I
have studied both and thus can make
the comparison. Forest mensuration
goes far beyond biometrics. Was the
time I devoted to the study of forest
management and economics wasted? I
don’t think so because the knowledge
gained has been put to use many times
I doubt that the haphazard silviculture
training the authors describe would
provide the knowledge needed to pre-
scribe ecologically and economically
sound treatment of forest stands to sat-
sify any of a variety of objectives.
Knowledge of soils and site fertility
would seem essential, yet it isn’t men-
tioned. The list could go on.

Several years ago I had the opportu-
nity to discuss silvicultural practice in
the forest with persons making silvi-
cultural decisions. I visited more than
40 ranger districts throughout the
USDA Forest Service’s Southern Re-
gion. Mistakes were being made be-
cause of inadequate knowledge. Often
the individuals knew and cited the dis-
ciplines in which more knowledge was
needed. This situation, prevalent
throughout the country, prompted the
development of on-campus continuing
education courses in cooperation with
accredited forestry schools. If this con-
dition existed with graduate foresters, I
question how well the authors of the
article are educated in subjects funda-
mental to the practice of forestry.

Perhaps the fact that the authors
gained certification may indicate that
certification has become so inclusive that
the process has little meaning. Maybe
the terms forest and forestry are losing
their identity. Are we really a Society of
American Foresters or have we become a
Society of Natural Resource Interests?

J. W. Barrett
Knoxville, Tennessee

March’s Journal featured “sustain-
able forestry.” Is there any other kind?
No less an authority than Samuel Dana
(Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1971) speci-
fied sustained yield as an important as-
pect of modern forestry. Thus, nonsus-
tainable forestry is an oxymoron, sus-
tainable forestry a redundancy. It oc-
curs to me that sustainable forestry, like
the new forestry and ecosystem for-
ergy, is little more than another effort
to invent politically correct forestry.

James H. Patric
Greeneville, Tennessee
Global Government

Reading within and between the lines of the March issue left me somewhere between despair and hopelessness. The United States, the most successful experiment in human government in history, was built on individual freedom, private enterprise, free markets, and a strong belief in private property rights. Several of the authors in this issue seem ready to recommend a global government, or at least global regulatory agencies, to cope with politically correct but scientifically dubious fears of global warming and loss of diversity. Rest assured that this will do what no foreign power has ever been able to do—destroy our freedoms, our prosperity, and our nation. When the present administration’s mismanagement of our national forests and the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project are presented as models, we are truly in desperate straits. We need not only to stand up for forestry, we need to stand up for America.

Harry V. Wiant Jr.
Morgantown, West Virginia

Beware the Black Helicopters

It does not speak well for a profession allegedly driven by science that its practitioners write letters (“Ulterior Motives,” March Letters) warning us about “world government control” of people’s lives with regard to concerns about global warming. I hope no one calls down the United Nations’ black helicopters on me for this, but unless Dr. No or Goldfinger has gone back into business, no one is going to “control” or make the United States do anything it does not want to do. And thus far, in terms of binding international environmental agreements, the United States has agreed to do very darn little—particularly in forest conservation and sustainable management.

Forests and foresters have enormous potential to help resolve or ameliorate the problems created by the production of too many harmful chemical emissions. Many forestry researchers and on-the-ground professionals have been engaged for years in studying forests in relation to climate change. It would be tragic if the forestry profession were to allow its public face to be represented by those who would take the same course with regard to the dynamism of scientific discovery regarding global change as the tobacco companies have in the recent past toward smoking and cancer.

If we are concerned about the future of our nation, we should concentrate on protecting and improving the national institutions created under the auspices of the Constitution that have contributed to America’s greatness, instead of depicting them as devils.

If, notwithstanding our unprecedented strength as a nation, we are afraid of the future, then we ought to rebuild our fallout shelters and write plaintive letters to the National Enquirer, not the Journal of Forestry.

James W. Giltmier
Springfield, Virginia

And the Word Was Mangled

Although Steven Harrington is entitled to his opinion in criticizing Karl Wenger’s and Harry Wiant’s views (“Honor and Denial,” March Letters), he is not entitled to misuse the scripture in doing so. Harrington suggested that Wenger ponder Job 12:7–8 in regard to one’s values and views on nature. Unfortunately, Harrington has badly misinterpreted this passage by taking it out of context.

The Book of Job is about a man’s relationship to God in the midst of trials and afflictions in which he loses his wealth, family, and health. Through several chapters Job debates the cause of these losses with three friends. Finally, in frustration and self-pride, in chapter 12 Job becomes sarcastic and says he might as well ask the beasts, birds, earth, or fish for the answer as ask his friends for help in understanding his situation (verses 7–8). Job then continues in verses 9–25 to correctly state in many ways that it is God who is in control, who is the source of wisdom and answers.

Perhaps Harrington thinks he is wiser than God. I can only guess, from his letter, that he is looking for answers...
to forest management questions by consulting the beasts, birds, earth, and fish. I hope Harrington had time to read a little further, to Job 12:12, “Wisdom is with aged men, with long life is understanding.”

Larry Cron
Missoula, Montana

Memories of Development

Blaming the forest products industry for the lack of social and economic development in an Alabama county is off base (“Development or Dependency? Sustaining Alabama’s Forest Communities,” March). What other industry would want to locate in an area dominated by trees?

An industry invests $1 billion in a facility. Employees are willing to drive 100 miles for the jobs this facility provides. Only 25 percent of employees are from the local county. Company officials say they need people who can read and write at a high school level, but they cannot trust a high school diploma. There appears to be unrealized opportunity for local residents.

The forest products industry has played a significant economic role in the rural South. The ability to receive an education is available. I recommend the authors dig a little deeper to find the root cause of the problem they describe.

Frank Taylor
Plano, Texas