profit. On the other hand is the backlash by the conservative idealists, who want to instill another societal ethic regarding how Americans should behave regarding the land, etc. The forester is merely bobbing along in this stream of controversy, caught between opposing demands. In the end, the forester merely carries out what is expected. The only exception is a private forest owner, who can do what he wants within normal limits. Therefore, how can a forester be “omnipotent”? At times, the pressure to meet certain production goals may be bad forestry, but a good grade for the ability to meet the quota. No doubt most foresters are required to meet goals that are wrong at times.

I think that foresters or forestry is not the problem, but that the American way of operating or thinking is the problem and is best expressed by America’s unsung prophet, Wendell Berry—the writer, poet, and farmer. Forestry practices with his kind of ethic would truly be omnipotent. But how to effect this sea change in American thinking appears unreachable.

Hank Hays
Bainbridge Island, WA

Mr. Luckert suggests that efforts to legitimize the profession in the eyes of the general public, such as accreditation of forestry programs, licensing of professional foresters, and codes of ethics, have been futile. While I would agree that these efforts have not been totally successful, I suggest that each of them have an integral part in maintaining and enhancing what respect we currently have with the general public. With regard to accreditation of forestry programs, it is probably time that we face the fact that curriculums need to be expanded. I have felt for the past 20 years that a BS (BA as suggested by the author) is inadequate for the breadth of disciplines forestry must encompass. Unfortunately, employers fail to or are unable to financially recognize the extra effort put forth to secure a degree that is well rounded in the technical aspects of forestry plus the necessary sociological skills required to communicate with the general public. Aside from expanding curriculums, I feel that we have done a poor job explaining to the general public that we are trained as forest managers, not specifically tree growers, wildlife biologists, or ecologists. Our training, theoretically, has positioned us to make decisions including risk analyses, economic considerations, and silvicultural and biological decisions. We have allowed ourselves to be compartmentalized as tree growers and not forest managers.

Mr. Luckert seems to address the professional licensing of foresters from a public land manager or societal in general paradigm. One of the major issues is that in portions of the United States, private landownership (small landowners) is prevalent and there is a definite need for assurance that practitioners calling themselves “consulting foresters” should have educational experience and ethical standards that assure the protection of their clients. States that do not have this requirement of those offering their services to the general public for a fee risk allowing their citizens to fall prey to unscrupulous or incompetent practitioners. Those landowners who do not receive proper services are not able to recommend the practice of forestry to their peers, neighbors, or the general public since their perception of forestry or foresters is that they either do not know what they are doing or are unscrupulous. This “poor rap” will increase in the United States as parceling continues to occur at a rising rate and more nonindustrial private forestland (NIPF) landowners are likely to be dissatisfied.

The discussion regarding the potential conflicts of professional ethics could be improved somewhat by utilization or incorporation of the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF) Code of Ethics, including canon number eight: “ACF Consulting Foresters will refrain from publicly expressing opinions on a technical subject unless informed of the facts relating thereto, and will not distort or withhold data for the purpose of substantiating a point of view.” This canon can help show the willingness of professional foresters to seek input from professionals in other fields such as wildlife biology, soils, etc. to make informed decisions. ACF canon number 10 states “ACF Consulting Foresters will be loyal to their clients and to the organization in which they are employed, and will faithfully perform their work and assignments.” This applies to the differentials of public versus private forest management practices. Some surveys show an acknowledgment that private lands should be managed differently than public lands. A clear expression of for whom you are working and why their management practices differ will affect the subjective judgments of those management practices and the profession.

I do not disagree with Mr. Luckert’s article in general; however, I believe we do not need to radically change our curriculum, our code of ethics, or our efforts to legitimize our profession. What we must do is explain to the general public the breadth of our training and expertise and insist that management of our forests needs to be judged on an ownership basis. It is then our individual responsibility to understand and communicate that one type of management does not fit all ownerships.

Maurice Williamson, ACF, CF
Colville, WA

Martin Luckert’s article on the “Omnipotent Forester” (September 2006) has two major flaws in my opinion. First, he appears to identify foresters as the culprits, not recognizing that the environmental propaganda provided by the Sierra Club and others of like ilk succeeded in replacing foresters’ white hats with black ones. Second, that same propaganda has convinced an increasingly urbanized population that management of nature is not a wise choice. It is not as if the general public has any more real knowledge about the forests than in the past, it has much less. Also, the decline in forestry enrollment is most likely due to youth having less and less exposure to the outdoors because their time is increasingly occupied with television and electronic games, as is pointed out in Richard Louv’s book, Last Child in the Woods (2005). Foresters have always been attracted to the profession mainly by their love of the outdoors, not high salaries or prestige. The School of Forest Resources at Penn State University has a very forest-management-oriented curriculum, excellent employment of graduates, and an increasing enrollment. In the long run, wise use and active science-based forest management will best meet the needs of the forest, society, and our profession.

Harry V. Wiant Jr.
University Park, PA (continued on page 50)