LABORATORIES OF DEMOCRACY AND ECOLOGY: THE AMERICAN NATIONAL FORESTS

Dixie and Fishlake National Forest
Forum to Discuss Perspectives on the Proposed Forest Plans

June 28, 2006

Haze Hunter Conference Center
Southern Utah University
Cedar City, Utah

I want to thank Kenton Call, Mary Erickson, Frank Fay, Bob Russell and the forum planning committee for inviting me to speak to you all today. In the interest of disclosure, I need to point out that Bob Russell and I were friends back in graduate school days at the University of Montana; and Kenton and I figured out on the phone one day that we're probably related through common ancestors – by which I do not mean Adam and Eve. When you hang around natural resource issues long enough, you come to realize that in some respects it really is a small world out there. The best part of this work has always been the people – the incredible numbers of deeply committed and good-spirited people I have met over the years. I think it's up to us elders

now to bring more young people in, and I suppose that's why I have taken such an interest in teaching.

I'm especially thankful for any invitation to return to Utah, for this state is my original home. I was born up north, in Price, where my mother still lives. My dad was a native of Orangeville, in Emery County. Most of my relatives still live in Utah. If we can speak of collaboration as the marriage of strange bedfellows, then I was the product of one such collaboration – the union of a Mormon farm boy and the daughter of Lutheran Finnish immigrants who had somehow found their way to the coalfields of eastern Utah. My mother was born in a town that no longer exists: Newhouse, Utah. When I was kid, I used to find that sort of funny until I later came to realize that the town we lived in when I was a baby also no longer exists: Hiawatha, Utah.

My grandfathers on both sides worked in the coal mines. My Finnish grandfather was a miner; my paternal grandfather, Sam Snow, worked for a long time as a stock boss at the mines, taking care of the mules and horses that pulled coal-cars. My father was an underground miner for 20 years before he joined the Department of Interior and became a mine safety inspector around 1954. That decision on his part was the end of my young life in Utah. The work my father did took our family to Ohio, then to Pennsylvania, where I grew up. But our ties to Utah and the West were unalterably strong, and my dad never considered vacations in any direction but home. His favorite place in the world was Fish Lake, and his favorite pastime was trolling for rainbow trout and mackinaw in that beautiful body of water. We didn't have an RV back then, not even a travel trailer. Our camp was a white canvas wall tent, and my mother – also an angler – would cook our meals on an old Coleman stove. I still use that stove. And so I have

some rich childhood memories of the country you'll be talking and debating about for the next two days.

It's terribly important work you're all doing here – not only locally important but nationally and even internationally as well. The theme of my remarks this morning will relate to the relationship between public lands and democracy. If such a relationship truly exists, then the involvement of people in national forest planning represents an elemental involvement in citizenship. I know that "citizenship" is a corny old word, but I want to keep trying to bring honor to it, corny or not. One of the courses I teach every year at Whitman College is titled "Environmental Citizenship and Leadership," so perhaps you can see how hopelessly mired I am in the antique gullies of democracy.

And that's really what I came prepared to talk about today to talk about today: democracy and the art of politics – specifically, the question of our involvement in the politics of the public lands. The public lands, after all, are an extraordinary laboratory for both democracy and ecology:

Democracy, for the obvious reason that every citizen has a stake in the management of those lands. And involvement in efforts such as forest planning is an excellent way to exercise our franchise.

Ecology, because we're free to try things on public lands that we might never attempt on private lands. The demands of the market drive most decisions that relate to private real estate. This is not to suggest that a short-term vision necessarily guides all private lands decisions; and it is certainly the case that much excellent stewardship occurs across the private domain. But the very existence of the vast public lands – which some have called "the lands nobody wanted" –

has allowed us to experiment with a variety of ideas that private lands never could have accommodated.. Good historical examples would be national parks and monuments, and wilderness areas. If we can say that the vast public lands are indeed ecological laboratories, then we also can say there is no fixed or ultimate condition for these lands. Evolutionary processes, disturbances of many kinds, climate shifts – all of these things and more mean that the forests are in constant flux. The difficult questions for land managers seem to relate to whether the flux is healthy or not – whether we can locate and influence the many factors that converge to create forest and rangeland health. Our understanding keeps changing, too. Ecology is a science, and science, like democracy, never sits still. Our very knowledge is a work in progress, and the lands we are trying to learn from, the lands we are making public decisions about all the time – those lands are a work in progress as well.

The accessibility to public lands decision-making comes with a price, and the price is politics. One of the most pointed & memorable statements about the public lands I have ever heard came from James Huffman, professor of law at Lewis and Clark College in Portland. Huffman contends that the "public lands" are misnamed. In actuality, he says, they are "political lands." And whether we like it or not, political processes will largely determine what happens to them.

This old, established fact about America's public lands has been the source of a broad debate which has simmered, and sometimes raged, since the origins of the public lands concept in the 19th century. I want to spend a few moments with history right now, in an attempt to place what I hope will be some useful brackets around forest planning today. Gifford Pinchot and Major John Wesley Powell had sharply differing ideas about the vast forested uplands of the

American West. Powell, we remember, led an extraordinary series of scientific expeditions across the Great Basin and Colorado Plateau beginning in the years just after the Civil War. As a scientist, Powell was among the first federal men to realize the practical limitations of agriculture in arid and semiarid environments. In 1878, he issued a monumental *Report on the Arid Lands* to Congress (Powell, 1878). With the Report, Powell urged the suspension of homesteading in the lands beyond the 100th meridian – until a full survey of irrigation potential could be completed (Worster, 482). In the canyons and basins west of the Rockies, in the red deserts of Utah and Arizona, and out on the far plains, Powell had seen something that no western Congressman wanted to hear: very little land in the West could support agriculture without irrigation, yet the homestead laws tended to treat all lands as if they were alike – as if they had the agricultural potential of a moist place like Iowa. Powell ended up presenting to Congress a plan for what Wallace Stegner, Powell's first biographer, called "a new blueprint for a dryland democracy" (Stegner, 202-38).

Powell wanted to create a system of orderly, planned development that would proceed within the boundaries of watersheds, and that would be designed to live within the natural water budget of each river basin. He envisioned hundreds of dams, thousands of miles of canals to serve western agriculture – but he wanted all of this to be developed locally, using local funds, local labor, and local systems of water allocation. He also wanted the vast majority of the land to remain public – but public in a sense different from what we mean today when we use the term "public lands" (deBuys, 252-3). Powell's plan would allow homesteading only on lands that could be irrigated; and his geographical surveys indicated that only around 15% of far western lands could be (Worster, 472). Powell wanted the federal government to retain nearly all of the

rest – particularly the forested uplands of the precious western watersheds. But he also wanted a system of complete local control of all of those publicly held lands: "I say to the Government: Hands off!" Powell wrote. "Furnish the people with institutions of justice, and let them do the work for themselves" (quoted in Worster, 495). People who arrived to farm and ranch in the rich but limited irrigation basins of the West would be given full authority to manage the dry uplands and moist forested watersheds of their regions. And they would do it well, Powell believed, because it was in their own interests to protect those watersheds. Here is what he said:

> "Every man is interested in the conservation and management of the water supply, for all the waters are needed within the district. The men who control the farming below must also control the upper region where the waters are gathered from the heaven and stored in the reservoirs. Every farm and garden in the valley below is dependent upon each fountain above" (deBuys, 306-7).

Under Powell's vision, there would be no huge water agencies, no massive allocations of federal dollars to build irrigation projects. And there would be no large federal land agencies, either. In fact, in an 1890 magazine article, Powell took a nasty swipe at the notion of a federal forest agency, 15 years before the U.S. Forest Service came into existence:

"If forests are to be guarded," he wrote, "the people directly interested should perform the task. An army of aliens set to watch the forests would need another army of aliens to watch them, and a forestry organization under the hands of the General Government would become a hot-bed of corruption" (deBuys, 307).

Well, Gifford Pinchot would have vehemently disagreed. Pinchot, of course, wanted a

big, robust federal Forest Service. And he wanted to use the police powers of the central government to put an end to the pillaging of the nation's forests (Wilkinson, 129). Nevertheless, the first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, Pinchot, had a great deal in common with Powell, whose brief career as head the of the U.S. Geological Survey ended more than a decade (1894) before Pinchot assumed command of the Forest Service. Both were men of science who firmly believed that careful study and planning must precede natural resource development. Both were politically progressive Republicans; both had strong affinities for the needs of the "little guy." Powell was a thoroughgoing agrarian, in the tradition of Thomas Jefferson. He believed that the institution of the family farm lay at the very foundations of democracy. Pinchot said that the new national forests, which he had helped to create, were to be managed "for the home-builder first of all" (quoted in Wilkinson, 128). He did not want the Forest Service to work at the beck and call of the timber companies, or any companies.

But Pinchot's and Powell's visions of the role of scientific expertise in the management of resources revealed a sharp division in political philosophy.

Powell wanted scientifically trained experts to perform studies, provide information and perspective, tell the truth according the best available knowledge, then back away (deBuys, 144). He hated the idea of government agencies staffed by experts making decisions that would affect the lives of western settlers. He wanted the citizen themselves to gain intimate knowledge of local conditions. He wanted them to listen to the scientists, yes, but to make all land and water management decisions themselves, even on behalf of the public lands. In the words of historian William deBuys, this was "one of Powell's most original and least popular ideas" (deBuys, 144).

It was particularly unpopular among the leaders of the emergent conservation movement,

Pinchot among them. In the renowned "Pinchot letter," which in effect created the original mission of the Forest Service, Pinchot said this:

> "You [the professional foresters of the agency] will see to it that the water, wood and forage of the [forest] reserves are conserved and wisely used for the benefit of the home builder first of all. . . . The continued prosperity of the agricultural, lumbering, mining and livestock interests is directly dependent upon a permanent and accessible supply of water, wood, and forage, as well as upon the present and future use of these resources under businesslike regulations, enforced with promptness, effectiveness and common sense. . . . [W]here conflicting interests must be reconciled the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run" (quoted in Wilkinson, 128).

And here a political paradox comes to light. As legal scholar Charles Wilkinson points out, the scientific management paradigm used by the Forest Service (following Pinchot's orders) was, in a sense, undemocratic. Compared with Powell's vision, it was profoundly undemocratic. Decisions were to be made by trained experts, who worked for the unelected Chief of the U.S. Forest Service (Wilkinson, 129). Expert decision-making didn't eliminate the democratic experiment of the public lands, but it made sure that democracy would be representative rather than direct. Local citizens and resource-users were relegated to the role of advisors, not decision-makers. Foresters wearing uniforms were going to make the decisions about the national forests, and in Pinchot's view, the thing that qualified them to make those decisions was precisely their scientific training, coupled with their studied disinterestedness.

Over time, it was Pinchot's vision that became dominant, not Powell's. But as Pinchot's vision worked itself out in practice, it came to accommodate some of what Powell had desired. Scientific experts were supposed to be in command of the Forest Service, and perhaps they were. But the science they were performing was anything but centralized. Pinchot had told his people to "get out in the forest or get out of the agency," and that meant fieldwork, local contact with local people, a dedication to serving the communities that had sprung up in the forested mountains of the West. For the first few decades of its existence, the Forest Service seemed to find a balance between scientific opinion and public input. Interestingly, all of this took place in an era when "public input" remained far less formalized than it is today. By the middle of the 20th century, the Forest Service had become the world's premier conservation agency, and one of the world's finest administrative agencies of any kind – as a number of learned students of public administration later pointed out. Today, with our fractured and deeply polarized electorate, it's hard to imagine a U.S. Forest Service enjoying almost universal acclaim, but by the middle of the 20th century, public support for government was soaring, and there was no agency more respected than the one that gave the world Smokey the Bear. The cover story for a 1952 issue of *Newsweek* magazine said it all:

> "No one can deny that the Forest Service is one of Uncle Sam's soundest and most businesslike investments. It is the only major government branch showing a cash profit and a growing inventory. This year, through timber sales, grazing permits, and other fees, the foresters will turn back to the U.S. Treasury a new surplus of $10 million. . . . Most Congressmen would as soon abuse their own mothers as be unkind to the Forest Service."

The article continues:

"The Forest Service owes much of its phenomenal efficiency to two policies: decentralization and cooperation with anyone who will cooperate*"* (*Newsweek*, June 2, 1952; quoted on Forest Options Group report: *2nd Century*, 1998).

Well, this is obviously a bit of journalistic hyperbole. There were plenty of tensions surrounding the agency, no matter how popular it appeared. There were always resentments leveled at the federal government for locking up western lands in public ownership – for keeping those lands out of the property tax base, for enforcing the rules on grazing and timbering – but in the main, the Forest Service probably did come to be viewed as an indispensable member of western communities, and an indispensable partner in economic development.

But as I said earlier, science never sits still, and neither do the lands and watersheds we have tried to place within a regime of active scientific management. Neither Pinchot nor Powell could have ever predicted the welter of changes – ecological, climatological, economic, political, demographic – that have occurred in and around the West's forested watersheds during the first century of the national forests. Even a single generation ago, and armed with what was then state-of-the-art information, it would have been hard to foresee with much clarity the issues we are dealing with today.

When I first went to work on national forest issues in the late-70s and early-80s, the hot debates were all about RARE I, RARE II, and the timber program. (For those of you too young to remember, RARE stood for Roadless Area Review and Evaluation. It was a Powell-style attempt at careful study to precede new additions to the wilderness program. This was a <u>very</u> big

deal in 1981, but when you say the word RARE today in any context outside of a steak-n-chop house, people's eyes just go blank.)

In several recent speeches, Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth has set down what he feels are the leading-edge issues across the national forests today. These issues are emphatically not about timber or wilderness inventories. The four big issues, in his view, are fire-and-fuels, invasive species, the pressures of increasing urbanization, and unmanaged outdoor recreation (Bosworth, July 17, 2003). Now, some may be tempted to claim that this is just propaganda aimed at deflecting attention from the "real agenda" of the Bush Administration, but I think not. My sense is that Chief Bosworth is on the mark here, and we ought to listen.

The pressures on the national forests are enormous, and they are growing. They are pressures of a different order from the ones we were struggling with when the agency still saw itself largely wedded to timber production. Since 1999, five western states have experienced record forest fire years. Species composition in some national forests has changed dramatically, often due to the strenuous fire suppression of the agency's first century of operations. Today we realize – though some scientists realized it more than a generation ago – that climate change is also altering forest species dramatically. Some cold-climate tree species are beginning to disappear from the continental U.S., leading botanists to predict the complete absence of species such as aspen and birch from the Great Lakes region, and the weakening of subalpine fir in parts of the Far West (Bloomfield, 2000). The majestic aspen groves of our Rocky Mountain forests are imperiled. Between 1962 and 1985, Arizona and New Mexico lost nearly half of their aspen communities (CP-LUHNA, Northern AZ U. website). Fire suppression, coupled with diseases and excessive animal browsing seem to be the culprits. Invasive species, too, have become an

immense problem, not just on the national forests, but everywhere. Invasive plants now cover more than 133 million acres of land in the U.S. And they are expanding at the rate of 1.7 million acres per year (Bosworth, at ff. 7).

While all of this is going on, the national forests are nonetheless becoming more and more important as refugia – and here I mean refugia in two senses of the word. In ecological terms, the largest number of imperiled species in the U.S. are found on federal lands, with the greatest concentrations in the national forests. This does not mean that the Forest Service has been managing things toward extinction; it means that the 192 million acres of national forests collectively provide habitat for many species' last hurrah (Bosworth, 5-6). But the national forests are now refugia in another sense as well. Communities adjacent to the forests have become retirement Meccas. Of the 80 fastest growing retirement destinations in the U.S., 74% border national forest land (Bosworth, at ff. 13). We may presume that some share of this is simply an interest in the undeveloped open space that the public lands represent. But there is clearly a more active interest as well – outdoor recreation. The national forests now receive around half of all recreational visits to the federal lands – the national parks & monuments, the wildlife refuges, forests, grasslands, and BLM combined. Ten years ago, the number of annual recreational visits to national forests stood at 860 million (Anderson, 1999) ; today it is approaching 1 billion. This represents a doubling of recreational use since 1980.

When Major Powell took his little boat named *Emma Dean* down the Green and Colorado Rivers, he was not out for recreational adventure. He thought rivers were nature's irrigation canals, and the only trouble with them was that God had put too many of them in the wrong places. When Pinchot was confronted with the skyrocketing interest in the young national

parks at the turn of the century, he was known to scowl. Pinchot was no friend of the land preservationists – he referred to them disparagingly as "short-haired women and long-haired men" (Wild, ____). And it is clear that he did not envision his U.S. Forest Service as an agency much committed to outdoor recreation; he didn't think of national forests as ecological retirement communities. Well, as far-seeing as these two government scientists were, they turned out to be pretty poor at predicting the future of the resources they loved best.

They both suffered from a problem common to all of us – the problem of a static vision. Both Powell and Pinchot made some fundamental assumptions about American society, and they had no reason to think that their assumptions would not hold true, far into the future. Powell assumed an agrarian future. Pinchot assumed a natural resource commodity future. But the world, of course, went off in a very different direction. The American West enjoyed an agrarian/natural resource legacy for around a century, but by the 1970s that legacy had begun to fade. Economic globalization, technology transfers, cheap transportation, far cheaper information transfers, and the rapid advancement of urbanization flowed together to subvert the original economies of the early 20th century West. Powell's and Pinchot's ideals for water and land in the West found themselves confronted with competing visions. None of this is to disparage the brilliance of these public lands pioneers. If it were not for strong-minded conservationists like Pinchot and Powell, we would not have the public lands at all. We would not be meeting here in Cedar City, Utah, to try to hash out the next 10-20 – or 200 – years of managing two glorious chunks of land known as the Dixie and Fishlake National Forests. And we would be far poorer for not having the terrible problem and terrible responsibility that lies before us: the democratic responsibility to manage these lands, collectively.

But be that as it may, we should try to avoid the trap of the static vision. If my lifetime has taught me anything, it is that many of my assumptions are probably wrong, and if I rely on my assumptions to try to predict the future, I am almost certainly going to miss it by a BLM mile. The immediate issues of the day on our public lands come and go, but the lands are there forever. Maybe we're not talking any more today about RARE II and timber; maybe we're talking about aspen groves and cottonwood galleries, and transportation plans, and special areas designations – but the central issue, the mother-issue, is always the same: it is the ecological health and integrity of the forests. The central question should always be this: How can we organize ourselves as citizen and professional managers of these national forests in such a way as to restore, maintain, and preserve the ecological health of the resource? How can we best anticipate and meet new challenges as the forests, and the uses of the forests, continue to change? Now, these are not questions that either Powell or Pinchot would have asked, in exactly these terms. But we can still learn a great deal from their sharp disagreement over the relationship between lay citizens and trained experts.

I want to finish my remarks today by relating to you some things that I have learned from that kind of sharp disagreement.

Around 20 years ago, I led my organization, the Northern Lights Research & Education Institute into some fresh, new, and often disturbing territory. Northern Lights was an invention of a committee of citizens in the Northern Rockies states of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming – nine of them, to be exact – who saw the need for a public policy research center to serve that very rural region. One of our first research projects was a series of three inventive papers written by Daniel Kemmis, who had just stepped down as the Speaker of the House in Montana. Over

the span of a year, Kemmis was trying to work through a new kind of political calculus that spoke to the problem of what he, and a political theorist named Michael Sandel of Harvard, had called "the procedural republic" (Kemmis, 54). What Kemmis and Sandel were saying was that the massive bureaucratization of both federal and state governments during the 20th century, coupled with the rise of interest-group politics, had created, in effect, a new republic. It was a republic governed not by men and women, but by a dense and often frustrating matrix of rules, regulations, and formal procedures to govern citizen access to decision-making.

In the environmental politics of the West, Kemmis in particular observed, this gradually developing republic of proceduralism had led us into gridlock. Kemmis borrowed a pithy statement from South Dakota Governor Bill Janklow, who said, about our thickets of proceduralism, "Today, anybody can stop anybody from doing anything" (Kemmis, 47). Kemmis began to ponder the implications of the procedural republic. In the papers he wrote for Northern Lights, he asked not what we had gained from our national fascination with a regulated everything, but rather what we had lost. Well, what we had lost, or were losing, he quickly concluded, was the virtue and efficacy of face-to-face contact though direct, participatory democracy. Kemmis told us that what we had done over time was in fact what the founder James Madison had wanted us to do. Through his intense worry over the corrosive effects of what Madison had called "factions" working in the political arena, Madison had favored forms of government aimed at "keeping citizens apart" in ways that deliberately pitted faction against faction (Kemmis, 18). This was the core of Madison's debate with Jefferson, who favored a very different kind of government – a kinetic, face-to-face government of local citizens working their way directly through the issues that would certainly set them apart. Kemmis said that Madison's

prescriptions for diffusing power by setting interest groups against one another had eventually led to the "procedural republic." And in that republic, "gridlock" may only to be expected, but preferred.

These ideas which Kemmis developed eventually mutated into his first book, *Community and the Politics of Place*. But they also planted some of the seeds that grew into what came to be known as the "collaborative conservation movement." In fact, while Kemmis was writing his book, at the offices of Northern Lights in Misoula, our organization initiated some of the first experiments in collaborative approaches to environmental and natural resource issues. Eventually, we created a small journal, the *Chronicle of Community*, aimed at reporting on and debating the many collaborations that were sprouting up all over the West, and by the year 2000 we had collected enough material in the journal to produce the book, *Across the Great Divide: Explorations in Collaborative Conservation and the American West*.

I can tell you today, 20 years after these experiments began – 20 years of watching, studying, and participating in collaborative conservation – the best things I have learned.

First, so-called "collaboration" can readily become as wooden, inflexible, and procedural as the proceduralism it was designed to replace. If "collaboration" simply means that we create a roundtable of "stakeholders" chosen simply because they represent "all the relevant users" of a given resource, we've often merely substituted one set of wooden arrangements for another. Few people are really prepared for engagement in a true collaboration among multiple, often conflicting interests. There really is an "art of listening," and it doesn't just happen spontaneously because someone beckons forth a "collaborative roundtable." What we really need is a University of Collaboration, and people need to be trained before they ever take a seat

"at the table."

Second, there are some communities where collaborations probably will not work very well, simply because there really is not sufficiently strong representation from enough diverse interests to enrich the real knowledge base of the effort. Or – this is at least as problematic – there exists a prevailing Zeitgeist (which typically goes unacknowledged) which systematically filters away all "alien" ideas and points of view. Successful collaborations are, by definition, pluralistic – they are *richly* pluralistic. If 90% of the people around the proverbial table share essentially the same unspoken Zeitgeist about public lands, or the role of the agencies, or fixed ideas as to what constitutes "multiple use," there really isn't much room for collaboration. The "alien" voices will naturally feel alien, and little real sharing of understanding will occur. Minds do not come open automatically, again, simply because someone has called together a "collaboration" and decided to go ahead and invite one liberal.

Third, the best collaborations I have seen were ones in which the collaborative group somehow gained real decisional authority, either *de jure* or *de facto*. The most successful collaborative instigated by Northern Lights, the Clark Fork Project, ended up operating in three stages. The first stage led to a proposal to the Montana legislature, for the Clark Fork Basin Steering Committee – our group – to be given statutory authority to develop a water management plan for the upper basin (the top 160 miles of Montana's largest river). The legislature agreed, and that act brought sufficient gravity to the second and far more difficult stage – of actually drafting a collaborative water management plan. When collaborations don't work very well, it is often because the actors have no real authority to do anything, and no real responsibility to then live with the results. One of the worst effects of American proceduralism is that none of the

many interest groups involved in a given issue or dispute has any real responsibility for the outcome. "Somebody else" is always empowered to make the real decisions, and to accept that responsibility. It doesn't take much thought to realize that this ordinary form of non-responsibility is often a prescription for irresponsibility. Have you ever noticed how hostile and overwrought the rhetoric of many interest groups can be? That's a simple reflection of what I'm talking about. Real decision-makers typically can't afford to use such language or imagery.

Fourth, the best collaborations are incredibly rich "learning circles," and they operate as such on multiple levels. At first, the collaborative group begins learning from one another. Every seat at the table of a great collaboration represents a fund of significant knowledge – not just opinion, but learning, expertise, factuality, and perhaps wisdom. It is the sharing of knowledge, more than any other factor, in my opinion, which can lead to innovation (I'll get to that next). The "learning circle," once it has begun to work its magic, then begins to twist its way outward into a "learning spiral." The collaboration group, rendered cohesive through enriched understanding about the issues, the science, the history, the politics of the resource in question, is then able to spiral out into the broader community to inform the greater public. Again, an example from the Northern Lights experience: Our Clark Fork Basin Steering Committee produced its own regular newsletter, which was sent free of charge to all 3,000 water rights-holders in the upper basin. The Committee later began to conduct its own public "hearings" – by which we meant open public meetings to exchange ideas and knowledge with members of the entire basin community. By the time the draft management plan was ready to submit to the legislature, pretty much every base had been touched, and the steering committee, working closely with staff from the state water agencies, was maximally informed.

Finally, nearly every great collaboration I have looked at has been an innovator. And it was only thru the activities of the collaboration itself that innovation was possible. The effort brought forth an outcome or series of outcomes that none of the actors at the table, working on their own, would have come up with. In this sense, the whole exceeded the sum of the parts. Now how can that happen? Well, again, I go back to my point about the "learning circle." This critical effect of healthy collaboration allows the partners to break away from patterned thinking. One other pernicious effect of proceduralism and interest-group politics is that they invariably place people in blinders. Successful collaborations can be so satisfying to the partners, simply because it gives them a pathway into new ideas – ideas that their individual interest groups may not want them to have.

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The new Forest Service planning regulations are moving us into uncharted territory, and I'm sure there will be some judicial decisions up the road to test the new regs. This, too, is part of the proceduralism I discussed earlier – perhaps a healthy part.

Matt McKinney and Will Harmon, in their book *The Western Confluence*, point out that there are essentially three ways to resolve natural resource disputes. The first way is to determine who is more powerful. Elections, of course, have a way of reinforcing or rearranging power alignments, sometimes dramatically.

The second way is to determine who is right. The parties carry their dispute into a court of law, or place it somehow before an arbiter, and that person (or panel) determines who is correct.

The third way, as McKinney and Harmon put it, is to "integrate interests." And here is

where the collaborative approach comes in. The hardest of the three is the third way.

I know that some of you have spent many months and countless meetings on collaborative processes to get the forest plan to the point where it is today. Along the way, there have been disappointments and some real bright spots; I have talked with just enough of you privately to know that some are pretty happy with the plan and process so far, and some are pretty unhappy. This tends to be what happens in every collaborative effort – every attempt at the "third way." But in any case, it is not my job here to evaluate what has been done.

I have my own concerns about the new planning regulations, but it's also not my job today to air those. What I want to do instead is simply to help you get focused on what comes next, and I hope to encourage you to become as mindful as you can about the resource itself, the Dixie-Fishlake National Forest. You are not at the end of your work here today; you are right in the middle of it, and now that a draft plan has been released, your work is about to intensify.

You have an enormous opportunity before you. It is the opportunity to use our democratic processes – our *political* processes – to manage the Dixie-Fishlake National Forests. This opportunity, while it pertains, obviously, to decisions about a vast network of natural resources, extends well beyond its immediate subject and reaches into the heart of what we mean when we say the word "democracy." In the case of public lands, you cannot do this using only local coordinates; you have to do it by referencing, and remaining mindful of, the real meaning of *national* forests.

Now, the national political scene may be utterly screwed up right now. For the time being the days of honorable administrations in Washington may be on hold – and I'm not just talking about the current one. Washington may be a total mess, but the public lands are not. The

public lands are *our* lands. What happens to those lands is up to us, the people in this room, and people in gatherings like this all over the country.

You have to do it yourself.

Think of people in New Orleans, planning the future of their city in the wake of Katrina. Think of the responsibilities they carry; think of the uncertainties. They have to do it themselves.

Think of the good people in Madras, Oregon, trying to find a way to deal with the pain of a fallen son – trying to find peace in a world wracked by war. They have to do it themselves.

Think of people in places like Eureka, South Dakota, once the largest and most thriving wheat terminal on earth, now struggling for its very existence in a world that has turned its back on the family farm. They have to do it themselves.

Somewhere between Pinchot's vision of a public lands scientocracy and Major Powell's vision for radical home-rule lies a vast and productive middle ground. It's your job, your opportunity, to find that middle ground. And in order to do that you are going to have to – yes – listen to one another, but you are going to have to do much more than that. You are going to have to decide to honor the treasure of creation we have named the Dixie-Fishlake. Your work here involves another great paradox: while the resource is local to your home region, the work you are doing is national, even international, in scope and importance. You are the agents for all of us, and I wish you every good success.

Thank you.

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