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*Pacific Southwest Research Station, Albany, CA 94710*

## Chief Urges Restoration of Land Health Legacy

*Following is the last in a series of excerpts from FS Chief Mike Dombeck's speech on "Protecting Land and Health Legacy," which he delivered on Feb. 3, in Missoula, Mont.*

The Forest Service natural resource agenda highlights the strategic importance of recreation as a priority for the agency. Increasingly, outdoor recreation is the way an urbanized society interacts with the natural world. In 1997, national forests accommodated more than 40 pct of all outdoor recreation use on public lands in the United States.

An estimated 75 pct of the nation's recreation takes place within a quarter mile of a river, lake, or coast. Our job is to try to meet people's demands in a manner that does not impair the health, diversity, and productivity of our land and waters.

Our recreation strategy focuses on providing customer service and opportunities for all people. As part of that strategy we are using new technologies to assist in trip planning, expanded interpretative services, and seamless delivery of the myriad outdoor recreation opportunities that help families to reconnect with each other while they connect to the land that sustains them. We will strengthen our relationships with communities adjacent to forests so that they may more fully reap the economic benefits of tourism and recreation.

The outdoor recreation industry and other recreation user groups are approaching a crossroads. I liken recreation to the timber industry 20 years ago. Who would have thought that timber harvests across the national forest system would decline by 70 pct in less than a decade? It is my belief that if we agree to abide by some basic principles, the recreation community can avoid what happened to the timber industry.

\* Nothing should ever compromise public ownership of public lands.

\* Our overriding objective must be to maintain the health, diversity, and productivity of our lands and waters - recreation use must occur within those ecological sideboards.

\* Outdoor recreation is a wonderful way to educate our children about the wonders of nature and the imperative of treating and stewarding the land with respect.

Most Americans value public lands for the sense of open space, wilderness and naturalness they provide clean air and water, and wildlife and fish. Other uses, whether they are ski developments, mountain biking trails, or off road vehicles have a place in our multiple use framework. But that place is reached only after we ensure that such activities do not, and will not, impair the productive capacity of the land. That is the essence of our recreation strategy.

Representing nearly 20 pct of the National Forest System and

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## USDA Scientists Report on Forest Service

The Committee of Scientists appointed by Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman in December 1997 to review the Forest Service's land planning process released its report on March 15—and it contained no surprises.

The committee concluded that sustainability should be the focus of the Forest Service in the next century. This would mean less emphasis on production and more on the preservation of plants, animals, and habitats whenever management decisions are made.

FS Chief Mike Dombeck said that "there are no radical proposals. But there are new concepts that make sense as we soon begin another century of public land management."

The 13-member committee was convened to recommend ways the FS can improve the way it manages natural resources. Many of the suggestions will become part of the National Forest System resource planning regulations that are expected to be unveiled shortly.

The committee also recommended that timber-cutting methods result in healthy forests and plant regrowth; that wildlife habitats be preserved by concentrating on those species that are the best indicators of the forest's health; that management plans cover not only the National Forests but also the surrounding landscapes; and that such plans be clear and understandable to the public.

Chaired by Norm Johnson, professor of forest resources, Oregon State University, the committee met in cities throughout the country, where it heard from FS employees, representatives of tribes, State and local governments, other Federal resource management agencies, and the public. Its members had 11 from academe—including a former PSW project leader, Barry Noon, who is now on the Colorado State University faculty. And the staff of detailers who helped facilitate the meetings included Joanne Hildreth, who is assigned to the PSW Station Director's Office.

## DeMuth Named New OPA Assistant Director

Carol DeMuth has been selected to fill the new, upgraded position of Assistant Station Director for Operations, Planning, and Applications, at PSW headquarters in Albany, effective March 28. The job combines two positions—that of Assistant Director for Program Planning and Applications, which she has held since 1991, and that of Assistant Director for Administration. Since July 1994, several detailers and Carol have served as Acting Assistant Director for Administration.

As OPA Assistant Director, Carol directs the administrative operations for the Station as well as its research planning and applications programs. She oversees a workforce of more than 40 employees, including six Group Leaders who are responsible for budget and financial management, facilities and administrative services, human resources, information management and technology, research information services, and statistical services.

One of the three Assistant Station Directors at PSW, Carol joined

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*(Chief, continued)*

over 60 pct of the entire Wilderness Preservation System in the lower 48 States, the Forest Service's wilderness legacy is a crown jewel. In recent years, I have become concerned that our national commitment to the Wilderness Act has diminished and the resources to protect and manage the wilderness have not kept pace with our needs.

I am pleased to announce two specific actions to lend greater emphasis to our wilderness management.

\* First, I am re-instituting the national-wilderness field advisory group to provide senior agency leadership with recommendations for preserving and protecting our rich wilderness legacy.

\* Second, our wilderness portfolio should embody an even broader array of lands - from prairie to old growth forest. We will use our forest plan revision process over the next four to five years to better manage existing and identify potential new wilderness areas.

Our interim suspension of road construction in roadless areas will be finalized very soon. We should now turn our attention to the issue of how we will manage our existing forest road system over the long-term. That does not mean that after the road construction suspension expires we will simply resume road construction into these areas. It is my expectation that in the future, we will rarely build new roads into roadless areas, and if we do, it will be in order to accomplish broader ecological objectives.

Over the next 18 months or so, we will develop a long-term road policy with three primary objectives:

\* Develop new analytical tools to help managers determine where, when, or if to build new roads.

\* Aggressively decommission old, unneeded, unauthorized, and other roads that contribute to environmental degradation.

\* Selectively upgrade certain roads to help meet changing use patterns on forests and grasslands.

We will not delay in taking immediate action to stabilize or decommission roads that pose public safety or environmental problems. With proposed funding from Congress, we will:

\* Increase by 50 pct from 1998, the miles of road we decommission or stabilize in FY 2000.

\* Increase the percentage of forest roads maintained to standard from 18 to 24 pct.

Pacific Southwest Research Station  
Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 245  
Berkeley, CA 94701-0245

*(DeMuth, continued)*

the Station staff in 1991 after 4 years in the FS Regional Office, in San Francisco, as a program analyst and later as a planning and appeals assistant. She became a permanent FS employee in 1980, and worked as a wildlife biologist in the Santa Catalina Ranger District, Coronado National Forest, in Tucson, Ariz. She earned a wildlife biology degree in 1979, and a master's in range management in 1990.

### **Library to Hold Open House at Mare Island**

Along with a new location, the Station Library also has a new name. To mark the change, it is holding an open house for employees on April 15, from 2 to 4 p.m., at the FS Regional Office on Mare Island, in Vallejo. Its new name is "The Knowledge Connection." Visitors are encouraged to "weigh the benefits of getting 'fat-free information' by using the services of the Knowledge Connection," said librarian Pat Pepin.

### **Meetings/Conferences/Seminars**

Following members of the Sierra Nevada Montane Ecosystems Research Unit, presented papers at the Annual Conference, Western Section, Wildlife Society, Jan. 21-15, in Monterey, Calif.:

\* Roberta Fargo, wildlife biologist: "Are House Counts a Reliable Estimator of Dusky-Footed Woodrat Population Size?" (co-author: Bill Laudenslayer).

\* Bill Laudenslayer, Project Leader: "The Role of Advocacy in Wildlife Management in the New Century."

\* Malcolm North, research biologist: "The Association of Weather, Cone Crop Abundance, and Nest-Site Structure with California Spotted Owl Reproduction."

\* Anne Poopatanapong, wildlife biologist: "Management of Small Mammals in a Select Grassland in California's Central Valley" (co-author: Douglas Kelt).

\* Karen Pope, aquatic ecologist: "Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog Movement and Habitat-Use" (co-author: Kathleen Matthews).

### **Personnelly Speaking**

#### **Promotions**

\* Carol DeMuth, Assistant Station Director—Operations, Planning, and Applications, Albany, March 28.

\* Roxanne Orly, grants and agreements specialist, Albany, Jan. 31.

\* Karen Pope, aquatic ecologist, Fresno, Feb. 28.