

The Forest for the Trees: How Humans Shaped the North Woods.

By Jeff Forester. 2004. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press. US \$72.00, hardbound. ISBN 0-87351-480-7.

For anyone who has walked through woods or wilderness and wondered why a piece of land looks the way it does, this book could answer some of those mysteries. The book should change the way its readers see forests, for as Jeff Forester notes in citing a Talmudic saying, "We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are."

Forester takes the reader on a historical whirlwind tour of the North Woods of Minnesota, using what he terms *the six land-management paradigms*. He starts out with the *tribal*, in which he recalls the practices of the Native Americans and how they are diametrically opposed to the more puritanical practices that came with the white settlers.

The author then takes the reader into the *pioneer* stage. In this stage, small independent operators and families like the Whiteside brothers eked out a living from the land.

The *industrial* stage follows, in which the harvest of the forests accelerated exponentially with the influx of lumber barons, including companies like Weyerhaeuser. These larger corporations brought in railroads and used mechanized inventions to fell trees at rates never before seen. The reader will find that there was much corruption during this stage, including abuses of congressional acts like the Homestead Act of 1862.

After the *industrial* stage came *conservation*. In this stage, far-thinking men like Gifford Pinchot observed that the forests should be treated as any other crop is treated, with the exception that they have longer rotation periods.

The fifth stage, which followed, saw men like Aldo Leopold consider the forests as being for much more than just timber production. They saw that the forests have values that have no price tag, including values for recreation and spiritual renewal. The appreciation came to be known as the *wilderness ethic*. This ethic demanded that some land should be held in its primeval state. The reader will find out that this process of wilderness establishment turned out to be a long, drawn-out effort.

The sixth stage, the one we are currently in, is the *restoration forestry* stage, in which we attempt to undo the impacts of the pioneers, industrialists, and some conservationists. The most important of these lasting impacts was the suppression of fire in the North Woods. Many readers will be surprised at the impacts that this practice has had, and is still having, on the health of the northern forests. Mr Forester spends considerable time on the impacts of our current fire-suppression efforts.

As a student of forestry, and as a practicing forester, I found *The Forest for the Trees* to be insightful reading. It has changed my way of thinking of how I should practice my craft. Most natural resource professionals will find this book enlightening reading, and I recommend it to anyone who is interested in the history and management of our forests.—Kevin Parkinson, Washington State University, Pullman, WA.

Positive Impact Forestry: A Sustainable Approach to Managing Woodlands. By Thom J. McEvoy. 2004. Washington, DC: Island Press. 229 p. US \$55.95, hardbound. ISBN 1-55963-789-7.

The management of our natural resources is an area that is full of strong views and opinions from many of its stakeholders and management interests. These differing views often result in controversial actions and generate much of the fundamental controversy regarding natural resource management.

The discipline of forestry is not without exception when it comes to strong opinions, including these generated from educa-

tional backgrounds and experiences. Some natural resource professionals, as well as private landowners, see their academic backgrounds in natural resources and other ecologically based professional areas as enough to guide their forest management decisions. In some cases, this method of decision making can be an adequate foundation for decisions regarding forest management practices. However, it is also important to build on that foundation by accepting that learning involved with forest management is never completed.

The processes involved with understanding forest management practices to balance mother nature's and society's needs are the subject of *Positive Impact Forestry: A Sustainable Approach to Managing Woodlands* by Thom J. McEvoy. In this recent book, the author uses organized theories, rigorous definitions, and effective illustrations to present his view of what he calls *positive impact forestry*.

The book begins with a discussion on the history of forest use, forest management, and the evolutionary process of foresters' views regarding such activities. This effort includes examining archeological evidence and historical references. From this basis, the author incorporates the need for positive impact forestry to pursue the idea of sustainability in forests. Chapter 2 emphasizes the understanding of forest ecosystems. Topics such as species succession, form and function of trees, and forest soils are all discussed in this chapter. Chapters 3 and 4 examine forest reproduction, the relationship between timber value and volume, timber investments, and harvesting and selling timber. The common misconception that clear-cutting is an entirely negative tool is thoroughly discussed in these chapters. Changing the mindset from a short-term emphasis on ecosystem management to a long-term management concept is also discussed here. The harvesting practices of positive impact forestry are discussed in chapter 5. This chapter discusses incorporating past harvesting methods with alternative harvesting and extraction methods. Chapters 6–8 address managing forests for wildlife, other nontimber products, the future of forests and their products, and the different planning methods for forests.

The book culminates in broad themes that relay an optimistic and realistic message concerning positive impact forestry. One such theme deals with the concept of management. The author emphasizes the point that management implies control for the "purpose of allocating benefits." In addition, he argues that the degree of complexity in methods, tools, and reasons regarding management are not necessarily what should be the focus in forest management.

Another theme the author explores deals with the risk factors associated with managing forests. It is here that the fundamental distinction between low-impact forestry and positive impact forestry is made. Positive impact forestry acknowledges and accepts risks; its management decisions are not based primarily on avoiding negative outcomes.

The distancing relationship between urban society and forests is another interesting topic the book considers. The author discusses the sensitive relationship that is generated by "contemporary education and a sensation-driven media," regarding the connection between wood products used by society and the forests they come from. The book is structured in such a way that positive impact forestry is at the philosophical root of all of these themes and ideas. The primary essence of positive impact forestry is stated by McEvoy to be "knowledge of forests and respect for the land, good practices, healthy soils, and patience." The author discusses the importance of definitions and wording, and pokes fun at the way the two can cloud the decision-making process.

Positive Impact Forestry is written in a way that will appeal to natural resource professionals, landowners, and average citizens. Anyone wanting to expand their knowledge of forestry from more