

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

“traditional” practices, to more ecosystem-based concepts, will appreciate this book. The author uses examples and ideas in such a way that the goal of the book: “to help readers understand the impacts of deliberate human activities on forests and to effect changes that are capable of providing benefits without damaging ecosystems” is repeatedly emphasized. Upon completing this book, a reader cannot help but step back from a previous mindset and rethink what forests are, how we can sustain them, and how we should consider the future of our forests. In general, this book will make people think harder about what kind of impact they want to have on our forestlands.—*Jesse Steele*, Washington State University, Pullman, WA.

Tending Fire: Coping with America's Wildland Fires. By Stephen J. Pyne. 2004. Washington, DC: Island Press. 256 p. US \$25.00, hardbound. ISBN 1-55963-565-7.

In his book, *Tending Fire: Coping with America's Wildland Fires*, Stephen J. Pyne discusses the wildland fire problem in America. Pyne is a 15-year veteran of fighting fires on the rim of the Grand Canyon and is currently a professor in the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University. The author brings his background in life sciences to his analysis of fire's role in society and does so in a broader context than many other books dealing with wildland fire.

The book begins by examining fire's role in history from the beginning of human history through the present. Much of the burning occurring today is in the form of “industrial burning,” where flame is often contained in an internal combustion engine or power plant. In much of the world, fire has changed from primarily the burning of biomass to the burning of fossil fuels.

Fire management in the United States includes that used by Native Americans to manipulate the landscape to provide what people need to attempts at excluding fire from land to keep it from destroying trees. The latter practices have led to unhealthy forests and to the large and destructive wildfires that have been occurring in recent years. A history of fire policy by land management agencies, especially the US Forest Service, is presented, along with events in US history that have made it possible to make decisions and policy dealing with fire on public lands.

Chapter 2 outlines 4 possible choices about what to do when faced with a wildland fire: let it burn, suppress it, prescribe a burn, and change fuel combustibility. Each of these options has been used during the history of fire control in the United States with varying degrees of success and sometimes with negative consequences. Suppression, and the official policy of working to contain a fire by 1000 hours on the day after it is spotted, have led to the forest conditions that we have today. These conditions have gradually led to the policy of changing combustibility to try to remove or rearrange fuels to prevent catastrophic wildfires.

The state of fire research and policy, and the public's perception of them, is discussed in chapter 3. In recent years, the United States had fallen behind many of the other nations faced with similar fire problems, including Canada and Russia. Now, in this country, we are beginning to bolster our research and reorganization efforts, whereas others are cutting back. Public awareness of what is occurring within the fire community owes much to Norman MacLean's book, *Young Men and Fire* (1992).

Possibilities for the future direction of fire policy in the United States and strategies that seem to be working, such as better collaboration among private and governmental groups, are considered in chapter 4. The fire environment of concern, now, is at the interface of urban areas and natural landscapes. Such areas are difficult to protect because managers are often faced with accommodating many property owners and the many constituents that have stakes in public lands.

Comparisons between fire control efforts and military operations are often made in books dealing with wildland fires. Pyne states early that he does not think such metaphors are appropriate or valid, but many times throughout the book he makes the same kinds of comparisons and uses the same kinds of metaphors.

For some readers, Stephen Pyne's writing style and vocabulary may make *Tending Fire* more difficult than necessary to read. The writing style actually varies throughout the book, with some sections easily read and others requiring more effort. The reader can become lost in his long, compound sentences, requiring that some parts be reread to understand his point. I found Pyne's book challenging to read.

Overall, *Tending Fire* is informative, and it brings to light ideas and perspectives dealing with wildland fires that I had not previously considered or encountered. Its good insights into fire are rewarding enough to outweigh the arduous reading.—*Andy Eldred*, Washington State University, Pullman, WA.