

MULTIPLE-USE SUSTAINED-YIELD ACT OF 1960

In: The Fully Managed, Multiple-Use Forest Era, 1960-1970

The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of June 12, 1960 (MUSY), was the congressional embodiment of 55 years of Forest Service management and policy. The Organic Act of 1897 guided the agency for decades with the management ideas of protection of the forests and water and the production of timber. For the most part, Federal forest management was not controversial during this period, but major changes were on the horizon. Part of the reason for the act was a realization that everyone could not get everything they wanted or needed from the national forests' finite resources. Even an equal balancing act between the available natural resources was not possible.

By the mid-1950's, the first inkling of a shift in management philosophy came with the congressional debates about multiple-use bills. The first was introduced by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota. Basically, there was a growing concern that in the decade of rapid development of the national forests since the end of World War II, the Forest Service was leaning so much toward managing of timber that other resources, especially recreation, were getting short shrift.

Initially, the Forest Service was opposed or neutral to a multiple-use bill. However, the Forest Service was beginning to feel the heat from growing opposition to its policies about logging in or near recreation sites. One focus of this contention was in California's Deadman Creek area. The 3,000-acre site contained a stand of old-growth Jeffrey pine. When the Forest Service announced plans to do "sanitation salvage" in the area, reaction was swift and allegations were made that the recreation and scientific values were being ignored for the timber value. Similar conflicts arose in many parts of the West.

By the late 1950's, the conservation groups generally supported the Humphrey bill, with the exception of the Sierra Club, which felt that support of the multiple-use bill would jeopardize its efforts to pass a wilderness bill. During the spring of 1960, agreements were made with various groups to clarify wording in the act so that timber would not dominate, that recreation would be equal to other resource uses on the national forests, and that the Organic Act of 1897 would only be supplemented, not replaced.

After the act was signed in 1960, the Forest Service was active in managing the national forests where all resources (timber, wildlife, range, water, and outdoor recreation) were treated equally. Many rangers did their utmost to embody the principles of multiple use into their management. For some, however, the act simply redefined what the Forest Service had been doing for decades: timber harvesting and road construction. Many people outside the agency saw that management was not any different on the forests under MUSY-it was still just a road leading to an ugly clearcut. *This example of redefinition of the old ways rather than managing differently on the ground had implications for the controversies regarding forest management for the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's.*

The passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964, opposed by the Forest Service as being authorized by MUSY, set the stage for strident antagonism expressed by the old conservation organizations and new environmental groups that would be felt by the Forest Service to this day. One important aspect of MUSY was the creation of multiple-use planning, which brought a number of new specialists such as soil scientists and wildlife biologists into daily land management decisions.