

Correspondence – National Parks and Conservation Association

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August 1, 1974

Hon. Jimmy Carter
1974 Campaign Chairman
Democratic National Committee
P. O. Box 1524
Atlanta, Georgia 30301

Dear Governor Carter:

Thank you for your letter of July 18 addressed to me as President and General Counsel of the National Parks and Conservation Association.

I would like to reply, if I may, as an individual. I am also Chairman, as an individual, of the Environmental Coalition for North America, which includes people associated with most of the conservation organizations of the United States and several major labor organizations. I am a member, as an individual, of the Executive Committee of the Citizens Committee on Natural Resources, a principal legislative arm of the conservation movement. I am a life-long registered Democratic voter in Franklin County, Pennsylvania.

The Democratic party obviously has a great opportunity to provide vigorous political leadership at this critical juncture in American history. I am concerned that it may not arise to the occasion.

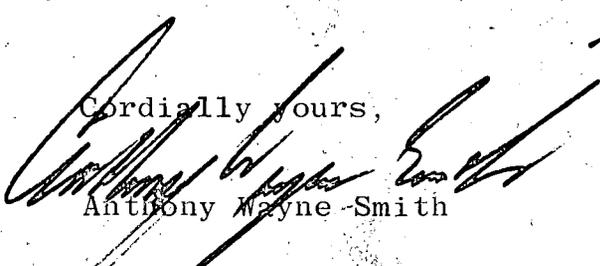
I would be happy to talk about these problems with you in Atlanta if opportunity affords, or with you or your representatives here in Washington. There are many environmental issues which should be picked up.

Enclosed is an issue of the National Parks & Conservation Magazine, The Environmental Journal, with a policy article by me beginning on the inside front cover on Open Budgeting. Enclosed also is the advance proof of a similar article which will appear in the September issue of the same magazine on Natural Stand Forestry. Both of these issues are very basic, and should be incorporated in the public statements of the Democratic party.

I suggest that you let me know how I can make contact with your representative here in Washington, because I would like to continue these discussions.

With best wishes,

Cordially yours,


Anthony Wayne Smith

AWS:as
Enclosures

Natural Stand Forestry

FORESTERS, economists, and students of government met recently in the city of Washington to compare viewpoints on forest policy at a forum organized by Resources for the Future.¹

One of the sessions focused on the problem of investment in forests, around a background paper by Dean John A. Zivnuska.

The President of the NPCA was invited to participate in the session on investments, and did so as an individual. He offered the case for ecological forestry in the sense advocated by NPCA for many years—essentially selective cutting.

THE WORLD MOVES rapidly into a population and resources position which compels a re-examination of the basic assumptions of an endlessly expanding economy. The rapid stabilization and eventual reduction of populations, worldwide, becomes a matter of human survival. The exploding technology of extraction and exploitation must also be restrained, lest it wreck the ecological and economic foundations of society.

The productive capacity of the forests of the world in pulpwood and timber must be viewed within the constraints of the forest ecosystems. Those ecosystems produce commodities such as water and oxygen which are indispensable to all life on earth. There is grave danger of a severe overshoot in the utilization of all the living resources, such as the forests and the fisheries, and consequent collapse and widespread human misery.

The paper by the President of the NPCA is reprinted² as follows:

In commenting on Dean Zivnuska's excellent paper, I would suggest that regulation is forced saving rather than forced investment.

It is true that present controversies turn to a significant extent around harvesting methods.

I would prefer to reserve the term silviculture for what I would like to call ecological forestry.

Silviculture in this sense has been a lost art, but it should be recaptured.

I am using the term deliberately and with the intention to be provocative.

Silviculture in that sense, in my vocabulary, means methods of management which preserve the soil, water, water courses, water tables, vegetation, wildlife, soil microorganisms, micro-climate, and recreational, scenic, and aes-

thetic resources of the forest, and certainly the forest itself, while permitting an abundant harvest of forest products. Silviculture in the sense of ecological forestry means the maintenance of an ecological diversity, and hence excludes artificial monocultures. Silviculture means mainly individual or group selection, shelterwood, or at the most, small patch clearcutting.

Ecological forestry, in this sense, results in an *even flow* of products. It results in the long-range protection of the capital investment in land and forest. It probably results, over the long haul, in the most prudent and profitable employment of investment capital.

We are talking about investment. Ecological forestry means retaining the capital already invested in the standing forests, and drawing on the annual growth as income. It means letting the forest re-invest in itself (reseedling into openings resulting from cutting), to maintain its productivity. It means accelerating the growth rate, hence productive investment, by thinning.

Ecological forestry means market stabilization. Harvesting is restricted to the accelerated growth rate. If the system is applied to all timberlands, restricted marketing maintains price levels. Prices rise to carry the internalization of ecological costs and to place forest products on that legitimate level, presumably higher than at present. Such price levels would attract the new capital investment in forestry which this Forum is presumably seeking. At such levels, other products might well take over a portion of the housing market; so be it, there are plenty of other good building materials, and forest products should be priced at ecological levels.

Ecological forestry, can, if we wish, mean intensive management. As visualized here, it does indeed mean intensive management. It means that cuttings on short cycle eliminate the less promising trees, speed up the growth of the remaining stand, and remove production approximately equal to the normal natural kill-off in the woods. Ecological forestry does not mean letting nature alone, but means operating a productive forest while at the same time maintaining the forest ecosystem.

Silvicultural management, in my sense of the term, can perhaps be summed up best as light selective thinning through all age classes on short cycle and long rotation. It implies a good system of access roads and the use of light machinery which will not needlessly disturb regeneration. It implies an artist's eye and a craftsman's hand in the management of the woods.

The objective of regulation should be to require the employment of ecological forestry methods on all forest lands. Such regulation would mean the conservation and preservation of the forest capital, and thus should be regarded as exacting savings, not investment. It should be regarded as requiring timber owners to protect, not squander, their capital. In that light, regulation would not require public compensation, because it would improve the property.

The establishment of the requirement of ecological forestry in respect to public forest lands can obviously be accomplished by legislation. Rates of cutting then become a question of secondary importance. The rates will depend on the long-term even-flow productivity of the forests, and will be geared to maximum sustainable yield with adequate margin for error.

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Public regulation of the large holdings in corporate ownership can also be accomplished easily by legislation. Enforcement will not be as difficult as with respect to the multitudinous small holdings. The corporate administrative structure is available for management and enforcement. Regulation will place a floor under prices by requiring good practices of all producers, and hence will be beneficial to the corporate ownerships, perhaps in contrast to the small scattered ownerships. Convention dictates opposition to such regulation by business; long-term self-interest might well recommend support.

Regulation should be federal, because the market is at least continental. In fact, it should require ecological practices by American corporations abroad. We have a responsibility to the less developed countries to help them conserve their forest capital.

Regulation eliminates the problem of exports versus domestic markets. The objections to exports have turned around the depletion of the forest resource on the one hand, and pressures for over-cutting to provide for domestic needs such as housing while heavy overseas shipments were in progress. Regulation would prevent depletion and over-cutting, and the question of exports would be for the market to decide.

In respect to small ownerships, there is both a financial and an enforcement problem. The public might well acquire managerial easements directed toward ecological forestry. Considering the impecunious condition of many farmers, the purchase price for such interests might be attractive. This approach would protect against the liquidation of stands after significant public investment in economic and technical assistance. It should be accompanied by public investment in local integrated industrial plants for the production of wood products ranging from liquid fuels to structural timber. Producers cooperatives would grow up around such a structure of woodlands management and industrial production.

The ecological management of our forests would harmonize the competing interests which will otherwise remain at war. The problem in the recreational use of the forests is not one of investment, but of the protection of the recreational environment. The same is true for wildlife. The same is also true of the seeming conflict between wilderness and commercial forests; ecological forestry can provide the unbroken forests which are one of the objectives of wilderness preservation. Over the long run, ecological forestry will also meet the requirements of those who think mainly in terms of the physical productivity of the forest.

Only with due obeisance can one enter the august portals of Resources for the Future to question the expanding economy. It is a little like entering Chartres Cathedral and questioning the existence of the Virgin Mary. But the truth is, in this age, that economic stabilization will replace the expanding economy, willy-nilly. Economic stabilization or equilibrium, can be differential in nature; many people need more, and some can do with less; we all need more good products and fewer bad ones; the rich countries can hardly accept much more industrial production, but could use more education and services.

The kind of intensive management that has been proposed by others here, with heavy clearcutting now, and at best a long period of regeneration, and perhaps no recovery, would be highly destructive to economic stability in the timber industries over any reasonably long term.

The present general economic and ecologic situation in the world with respect to natural resources generally is that we are headed toward a reckless overshoot which must necessarily be followed by collapse and general human mis-

ery. We are compelled to work toward ecological and economic stabilization, and the way to do that, as far as the forests are concerned, is to abandon the clearcutting and replanting system and get into even-flow operations which are part of the basic concept of ecological forestry.

IN A CIVILIZATION characterized by widespread disintegration, the breakdown of language and rational communication are commonplace. This has happened with scientific and professional terminology in forestry.

A generation ago, selective cutting meant what it means today in NPCA policy statements and the quoted paper. It has now been defined professionally as highgrading, as resulting in a culled forest. It is used on occasion as meaning the seed-tree system, and rejected as resulting in desiccation, the opposite of ecological forestry.

It has been well said that we have no name anymore for the art of selective cutting, other than the general term silviculture, as used in the quoted paper, or forest management. Selection may now be referred to usefully, however, as natural stand management, in contrast with plantation management, a helpful nomenclature. Selective cutting may also, and properly, be regarded as the best form of even-flow forestry.

ONE THEME which ran through the Forum was that a heavy public investment should be made in big-machinery, high-pesticide clearcutting and replanting (referred to inaccurately as intensive management) on the most fertile timberlands, including the best land in the National Forests and (with public assistance) the best land of the corporations, while the remaining small private holdings could be largely abandoned, and the least productive areas could be given over to recreation and wilderness.

We strongly dissent from that thesis. All forests, except where parks and wilderness areas have been set aside expressly for complete preservation, should be managed for even-flow, multi-commodity productive purposes, and for their cultural and recreation uses, under the imperative of protection for the forest ecosystems.

—Anthony Wayne Smith

FOOTNOTES

¹Proceedings published by Johns Hopkins Press, August 1974, as *Forest Policy for the Future: Conflict, Compromise, or Consensus*.

²Copyright 1974, Resources for the Future; reprinted by permission. The author of the paper spoke as an individual, but has testified on official invitation occasionally on behalf of NPCA to the same effect.

NATIONAL PARKS



*Conservation
Magazine*



The Environmental Journal

August 1974

