



APPALACHIA - SCIENCE
IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

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Forest Preservation Techniques

ASPI Technical Series

INTRODUCTION

The American forests once spread virtually uninterrupted from the Atlantic Coast to the Mississippi and in continuous strips following the rivers far upstream to their origin in the Great Plains. The slopes of the Rockies were heavily forested as was the Pacific Northwest with its great evergreens. For the past two hundred years these forests have been under siege from the axe, crosscut saw, and chain saw and the desires of people to turn them into farmlands, roads and urban development. These forests have suffered from various blights, air pollution, acid rain, and more recently the heavy impact of recreational vehicles.

Today the great sylvan resource is highly threatened by the actions of thoughtless and greedy people. Concerned citizens must take the steps necessary to preserve these endangered ecosystems. Trees are renewable, forests however, are not. These unique eco-systems can be lost forever through the destruction of the priceless community of beings that dwells there. ASPI is one of the few environmental groups located within a National Forest (the Daniel Boone). This particular forest has suffered in recent years through a dramatic increase in large-scale timbering by clearcutting methods and by the indiscriminate encouragement and use of off-road vehicles (ORVs). In light of this, we share a very personal concern about the health of our forests.

Preserving forests requires several degrees of involvement: Proper individual or group conduct in forested areas; careful monitoring of forests to keep them in a pristine condition; tree planting campaigns; group actions to save the forests; and when necessary, radical actions.



FACTORS IMPACTING THE FORESTS

- * Timber harvests in areas which are old growth or near scenic or historic sites.
- * Improper forms of timber management such as clearcutting.
- * Erosion due to excessive road building and poor maintenance.
- * The use of ORVs in forests.
- * Urban development in forested areas.
- * Clearing land for agriculture or mining.
- * Litter and dumping in forested areas.
- * Poor policing of areas used for camping, hunting, fishing and other recreational activities.
- * Neglect in reforesting damaged areas.

PROPER CONDUCT

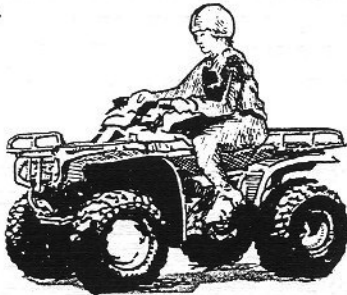
Everyone's forest conduct could benefit from some review and correction. Thus, a checklist of what to do and not do is still very appropriate.

- * Don't litter forest areas (A frequent offense).
- * Don't chop or carve initials in trees or cut down live ones unnecessarily.
- * Don't make fires when prohibited, or during very dry periods.
- * Bury or better yet pack out decomposable waste materials.
- * Don't pick or dig up the wildflowers and other species that grow in the understory.
- * Pack out what you pack in.
- * Replant a tree when you cut one down.
- * Always speak up for the trees.

MONITORING

Forests, private and public, are poorly policed in most places, especially in the Eastern United States. In this region forest lands do not always have contiguous boundaries and a multitude of roads allow easy access. The forest is part of our heritage and legal designations of private or public should make no difference in our care and protection of them. In one way, there are no "private" forests, for the trust belongs to all. Following are some tips for good monitors:

- * Know the bioregion and the species that live in the forest and come to respect and love them;
- * Observe seasonal changes and the impact of tornados, landslides and other natural events;
- * Be observant of human practices which harm the forests, such as timbering and ORV use;
- * When possible, try to halt or reduce negative impacts as they occur, if such action is not threatening to your health and/or safety;
- * Report those who harm the forest to the proper authorities.



TREE PLANTING

While planting trees may help the environment, it does not directly halt activities that destroy or damage forests. However, the symbolic value of tree-planting should not be underestimated. By planting trees we admit that we will not be around to see the plant mature. Thus, while confronting our own mortality, we give life to the forest. Tree planting affirms the value of trees as sources of fruit, nuts, wood, wind and soil protection, and as furnishers of oxygen and cleaner air. Without trees there could be no forests and so each tree planter is a budding forest preservationist.

Participate in tree planting ceremonies and arrange to plant trees at important events; observe Arbor Day; conduct tree trimming and care workshops; join tree protection groups; encourage others to plant species which enhance edible landscape. Inexpensive tree seedlings are available from many state forestry agencies.

FOREST QUALITY CHECKLIST

- * Is the forest sufficiently protected from those who trash, litter and/or further abuse it?
- * Can the forest recover from past harm?
- * Is there indiscriminate cutting of trees with failure to replant after logging has ceased?
- * Do forest species show evidence of harm from acid rain and/or other threats?
- * Are flowers and wildlife preserved and protected to some degree?
- * Are owners and caretakers of the forest aware of its condition? Often stewards know little about events in remote areas of their property.
- * Is the land posted with No Trespassing signs and if necessary, have guards and/or security barriers been installed?
- * Has there been poaching of herbs, plants, animals or valuable trees?

GROUP ACTIONS

Dissuading those who threaten and destroy the forests can often prove dangerous to individuals.

Consider the following group actions:

- * Organize new or join existing forest groups. If possible join active types with local organization, democratic procedures, and a willingness to take significant action to preserve forests. Avoid groups which focus on symbolic action alone.
- * Contest environmental impact statements (for timbering) or the establishment of guidelines for ORV use. Opposing timber sales through regulatory processes may be effective, but government agencies often avoid issues. This is especially true where large commercial interests pressure the sale of National Forest timber.
- * Pursue lawsuits and legal actions to halt destruction on public and private forestlands. Definitive decisions have implications beyond the current situation and can affect regulation of the natural resource base. However, judicial action requires environmental lawyers as well as expert witnesses. This can become too expensive for citizen groups.
- * Participate in symbolic actions involving demonstrations or drama to gather press

Group Actions cont...

attention. These can be effective but be aware that symbolism is often misunderstood.

- * Apply political pressure through lobbying, supporting candidates with a strong environmental agenda, and endorsing specific legislation. Groups of active citizens can mount strong campaigns resulting in governmental regulations which could ultimately save the forest. Legislators who are fully aware of an issue can make better decisions.
- * Conduct fact-finding briefings, conferences, or tours for media and decision makers to show forest destruction. Remember that information overload can lessen the effect of such exposés.
- * Support nature preserves and conservation trust groups who purchase fragile areas and preserve threatened biosystems. These are only partly successful due to the difficulty in guarding lands where habits of abuse are widespread.
- * Pressure the manufacturers of ORVs or lumber interests through publicity, opposition at stockholder meetings, protests at offices, and boycotts. These efforts are most successful when widely supported, as in the case of the infant formula boycott several years ago. International organizations have mounted extensive efforts to save the rain forests of other nations. These need to be extended to the threatened temperate forests as well.
- * Participate in organized protest of improper actions. For example, a number of activists may decide to hold a dramatic action where a timber sale is occurring or where an off-road congregation is taking place. In this setting, the danger of confrontation is quite high. Protestors have been harmed when lying down in front of trucks or climbing trees to stop cutting in old growth forests. When deciding on such actions try to consider all possible consequences.

INDIVIDUAL AND RADICAL ACTIONS

Though many question the effectiveness of activist Johnny Appleseeds, individual action can still help save the forests. Writing letters to Congresspersons or the media can be beneficial, but it is often a greater help to the writer than the receiver -- unless part of a massive organized campaign. Individual essays, testimonies, classes and other informational sessions have some impact, especially when coordinated into the larger strategy of "spreading the word".

Much timber cutting is to make paper and lumber. According to the National Association of Home Builders, residential construction in the U.S. uses one million acres of virgin forest every year! It is hypocritical to demand less cutting while continuing to overconsume wood products. Unless consumption is reduced to sustainable levels we are part of the problem. Don't waste paper or lumber. Recycle and reuse whenever possible. Use the lowest grade that is adequate for the job. With the development of portable sawmills it is more feasible to make lumber on site. If possible, use wood from your own property for your next building project. Consider alternatives to wood where appropriate.

In the realm of individual action civil disobedience should almost always be a last resort. The public interest may not be served when actions contrary to the law are done rashly or without forethought. Not denying the roles of proper monitoring, and full group participation the concerned citizen may at times need to oppose environmental violence more directly. This option is always to be open when faced with blatant abuse of natural resources. However, a cardinal rule is to *never act in ways that threaten the health or safety of fellow human beings.*

A description of the types of drastic actions mentioned in ASPI's "Tree Savers Manual" need not be repeated here. Note that ASPI works for lower income people with less access to legal means who need to know the best and most effective means of assisting their causes. The variety of radical methods possible range from the legal and non-controversial to ecotage and direct confrontation. All of which can be effective under the appropriate circumstances.

Posting and public notice is the mildest form of action. Physically blocking entrances and access roads is another more definite step that may help hinder forest depletion, as is making roads inaccessible through ditches, obstructions, and barriers. Removing the possibility of easy unloading of ORVs can dissuade operators. An ASPI advisor suggested stretching piano wire as an effective means to stop ORVs. However, there is no way to do this without risking serious harm to the operator. We do not recommend it. Don't forget the cardinal rule. Disabling destructive devices may have great economic consequences and can be done in ways that will not harm people. Always accompany more drastic steps with prior notification, to reduce the possibility of harm. Their use should only be contemplated when regulatory means fail and group action has proved ineffective.

Individual and Radical Actions cont...

Eco-tours, conducted in damaged areas may gain media exposure and public notice of wrongdoing. Every effort should be made to discuss the forests with the media through talk shows, letters-to-the-editor, guest editorials, and press conferences. Assemble fact sheets, books, reports, and technical papers on the forest to address widespread ignorance on forest issues.

INFORMATION HINTS

Much of the public is only superficially aware of the fragile nature of forests. In fact, for centuries exploiters have propagated the myth of the deep dark forest as a place of fear with dangers lurking behind every tree. The adventurous entered at a risk to their lives and needed to carry weapons. The general public wanted nothing to do with forests outside of paintings or manicured parkland. Meanwhile, under cover of this myth the great forests were being exploited, abused and destroyed.

Countering misinformation with an ethic of respect for forests takes time and patience. Stress their beauty and gentleness. Encourage those who are suspicious to tour, hike and camp in the forests when possible.

The forests have a great diversity of plant and animal species present according to the season of the year. An excellent educational technique is to take photographs of a special place in the woods at various months of the year. The changes stand out dramatically and illustrate the beauty of the natural cycles.

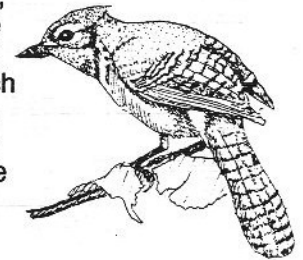
Document the impacts on the forests through mounted displays, posters, slide shows, video recordings, and other methods. Keep these short and simple. Convincing professional or talented amateur movie makers to produce a film on specific forests could prove helpful for activists and interested citizens. ASPI has produced a film titled "National Forest for Sale" which may be both entertaining and still help initiate actions.

DIVIDING THE PROTECTORS

Opposition in the ongoing struggle to save forests includes the misrepresentation of forest preservation supporters as flighty, elitist, and unconcerned about employment. Divisions within and between groups only leads to a continuation of forest destruction. U.S. Forest Service strategies to separate and divide environmental

groups is blatant abuse of their mandate to protect and preserve our national forests. Whenever divisions are evident they must be immediately dealt with. Direct attempts to polarize the groups by those in power should be taken up with higher supervisors, legislators and state officials -- as well as the press.

We would like to address the divisive issue of "trees versus jobs". Note that the present national policy of exporting logs is the singular most job destructive practice in the American forestry product sector. This far surpasses any degree of loss through conservation. Most preservationists realize that there are less destructive timbering methods, which allow for renewal of the forest. Proper care insures a healthy forest ecosystem which can meet human needs (physical and aesthetic) while providing a habitat for the diverse life within it.



RESOURCES

Many state forestry agencies will assist private landowners with planning better use of their forest resources. Along with consideration of the management goals a forester will visit and walk the land with you offering specific suggestions.

Heartwood, Rt. 3 Box 402 Paoli, IN 47454

Save America's Forests, 4 Library Court SE, Washington, DC 20003.

Forest Reform Network, 5934 Royal Lane #223, Dallas, TX 75230.

The Wilderness Society, 610 SW Alder # 915, Portland OR 97205.

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