

# RARE II:



## David Is Goliath Now

by Jay Gruenfeld

**"The preservationist David has now matured, and, to the slingshot-like weapons of emotion and total sincerity, he has added sophisticated litigation and. . .has stopped all activity on over one-third of the National Forest System"**

IT'S A MULTIPLE pleasure to discuss the roadless-area issue. Not only is it of vital importance, but I'm an industrial forestry professional who also believes sincerely in the value of Wilderness areas. I'm a wilderness user to the point of addiction. By choice—usually by choice, anyhow (I've been lost a time or two)—I have spent over 200 days recreating in wilderness in the lower 48 states. (I'm using a capital "W" to denote land that has official federal designation as wilderness.)

This is not intended to be an exhaustive commentary, reflecting industry consensus, on Dr. Cutler's presentation on the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation process. It's just some comments from one point of view, although industry people would agree with most of this. A heavy majority of forest-industry people believe a Wilderness Preservation System is necessary and desirable. The question is, how much?

RARE II is designed to speed up the reclassification process, and in-

dustry is in total support of this objective. A speedup is not beneficial, however, if it doesn't result in an equitable solution. The major concern of the forest-products industry, the nonwilderness recreationists, miners, stockmen, and other users of forest land is not with the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation process as described by Dr. Cutler in the May issue of AMERICAN FORESTS. It is with the possible results of RARE II. The decision-making mechanism seems to be out of balance.

An observer might argue that nonwilderness benefits will certainly get fair treatment, and he could cite obvious favorable evidence such as the huge need for wood, a need which is expected to double by 2020. Wood is renewable, has a low energy cost, and the waste is even biodegradable. Many communities are dependent on trees for their jobs. Housing has been called the greatest social problem in the United States, and lumber prices are rising because of a wood shortage. Further, non-wilderness recreation is in far greater demand than wilderness recreation. National Forest ski-area use alone equaled the total Wilderness area use in 1976. One could also point out that, after all, the public will be involved and will act in their own best interest. So surely non-

wilderness users will get a fair shake.

But consider some history.

When the Wilderness Act passed in 1964, it was to some like David whipping Goliath. A dedicated, hard-working minority of Wilderness believers with an appealing cause had convinced Congress of the wisdom of setting aside huge areas of forest land to provide primitive-wilderness benefits. Most industry people thought wilderness desirable but made a big effort to keep the areas smaller, principally to reduce the economic impact. Another major argument against wilderness establishment was the knowledge that the huge majority of people don't use Wilderness areas. When they recreate, it's developed recreation.

The achievement of getting over 14,000 square miles put into immediate Wilderness, with provision for massive increases at the sacrifice of many nonwilderness benefits, was a dramatic accomplishment. You could call it a David-over-Goliath victory. But the preservationist David has now matured, and, to the slingshot-like weapons of emotion and total sincerity, he has added sophisticated use of litigation and appeals, and the Wilderness System has now increased by about 85 percent to nearly 26,000 square miles.

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## DAVID IS GOLIATH NOW

(continued)

He also, as Dr. Cutler said, has stopped all activity on 103,000 square miles, which is over one-third of the National Forest System. Let's face it, David looks a lot like Goliath now.

One of my favorite aphorisms is "the excess of any virtue is a vice." It may be applicable to the future Wilderness System because of the Wilderness Goliath.

You may believe I'm exaggerating the danger of an unwise, heavily overwildernessed resolution of the roadless-area issue. But consider this. Although the Forest Service was conducting an intensive study (RARE II) of National Forest roadless area, it was possible and perhaps politically desirable for Congress to bypass this process and pass this year the Endangered Wilderness Act that put over 2,000 square miles into instant Wilderness. And this area contained much prime timber and commercial forest land.

As part of this Act, one 71-square-mile area, small by Wilderness standards, was designated Wilderness even though most of it is prime timber-growing land and by most criteria is low-quality Wilderness. I'm familiar with this tract. If only one percent of its present saw-timber volume were harvested annually, it would be enough to build 1500 large wooden homes.

Utilizing one year's harvest would provide about 150 direct jobs plus 150 or more indirect jobs. And this is in an area where the employment future is bleak. If this timber were valued at \$12 below the 1977 average for sales in that ranger district, it would mean that one of the costs of establishing this Wilderness is to sacrifice a direct gross sales revenue of \$3 million per year (15 MMBF x \$200 per thousand board feet). A very high percentage—well over the 60-percent national average—is net income that would reduce taxes or otherwise help balance the budget.

When it becomes politically desirable for an Administration and a Congress to sacrifice this much in national wealth and jobs in order to provide relatively low-quality wilderness recreation, watch out—it looks as though the system is out of balance.

It's a common misconception that the Wilderness System includes very



▲ Multiple-use land surrounds this Jaype, Idaho, plywood plant. Despite repeated logging of the forest, industry officials say the area retains much of its wilderness appeal

*Photo by Potlatch Corp.*

Old Man Creek winds through Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness on the Montana-Idaho border. Wilderness designation here, permitting an unforgettable fishing experience, is wise use in industry's opinion. The question is: how much?

*Photo by Jay Gruensfeld*



little commercially valuable forest land (land able to perpetually grow 20 cubic feet per acre per year or more in industrial wood).

In my home state of Idaho, we were astonished to learn recently that there are already over 3,000 square miles of commercial forest land in our existing Wilderness and primitive areas. This means that almost two-thirds of these areas are composed of commercial-quality forest land. To say it another way, nearly one commercial forest acre out of every six in Idaho National Forests is already in Wilderness or primitive areas. This 3,000 square miles is over 100 percent greater than the total forest land owned by the forest industries in Idaho. Many Idahoians—especially labor, industry, recreation-vehicle users, and other nonwilderness groups—think Idaho has already contributed its fair share to wilderness preservation.

Some say that a minimum growth capability of 20 cubic feet per acre per year is too low for commercial forest land. However, in many areas of Scandinavia timber is grown commercially on land that is much less productive. With improved management, these low-site lands can produce 50 percent more than when unmanaged. Also, many of the Idaho lands are far above the minimum in productivity.

In the long run the cost in jobs of putting forest land into Wilderness is determined by the basic capacity of the land to produce harvestable trees. As wood value continues to rise, it becomes economical to harvest trees that were formerly inaccessible.

Our system requires participation by citizens for wise action on major problems such as public-land resource allocation. The public has a great deal of common sense, but common sense functions well only when it can be used with basic facts. On the roadless-area issue, the public doesn't have enough basic facts. This is partly due to an underfunded communications job by industry.

Here are just a few of the facts that, in my opinion, should be considered in reaching a balanced, equitable allocation of the National Forest roadless areas.

1. The basic strength of our civilization still rests in our ability to pro-

duce energy, minerals, building materials, fibers, chemicals, and foods through the application of capital, science, technology, and labor to natural resources.

2. There are already nearly 26,000 square miles of congressionally established Wilderness.

3. A Wilderness Preservation System is unique to the United States. It's a sign of affluence and of a new country with a pioneering history.

4. There are hundreds of thousands of square miles of wilderness in Canada and Mexico. This is part of the existing wilderness resource and should be considered when determining the optimum size of our domestic system.

5. National Forest timber sales have been declining. They are now well below the allowable harvest, which itself is considered by most professional foresters to be set at a very conservative level.

6. Delay in releasing roadless areas for harvest hurts industry, increases forest-product prices, causes inflation, and has contributed to mill closures and unemployment.

7. It is profitable for the Forest Service to sell timber. In fiscal year 1977 over 60 percent of the income from total National Forest timber sales was net contribution to the treasury after deducting timber-sales expense and all road costs. The timber-sale income of \$625 million made up over 90 percent of the total National Forest income.

8. Replacing timber put into Wilderness by intensifying management on the better sites sounds better than it is. Harvesting a cost-free Creator-given tree usually provides a high net profit to the national treasury. This keeps taxes down and provides wealth that can be distributed the way society wants.

Intensifying management might mean investing heavily in improved site preparation, fertilizing the trees, and supporting these costs at a high rate of interest. Usually this means that you are paying a high cost (in the form of taxes or foregone benefits, etc.) for not harvesting. Forest fertilizers and other intensive forestry activities often have a high energy cost; the most common forest fertilizer is an oil derivative.

9. Urbanites especially do not realize that many thousands of square miles are available for wil-

derness experience in areas managed primarily for nonwilderness benefits. Urbanites do understand that there are people who can have a pleasurable "wilderness" experience in a Forest Service campground but would experience fear or boredom in a big-"W" Wilderness.

These are facts that the citizenry needs to hear before voicing an opinion on the value tradeoffs.

Now for some comments with which some of you may not agree. Please accept them as the honest beliefs of a wilderness addict who also believes in the American system.

From personal conversations, I know that Rupert Cutler and I agree on the necessity for a *quality* Wilderness Preservation System. Although quality is a relative term, he and I do agree on two general points:

- In the West at least, other than as a sort of frame for the pristine picture, heavily timbered commercial forest land has relatively low wilderness value. And the cost of the frame should be in balance with the value of the picture.

- There is relatively little wilderness use of solid-forested areas, although their people-carrying capacity is high.

In the long term the Wilderness System will survive best if it does not include large areas of low-quality wilderness that have significant value for other uses. In the future low-quality wilderness areas will be vulnerable to dismemberment under increasing demands for shelter, energy, jobs, and other needs.

About five years ago I noted an interesting sociological wilderness statistic based on extensive observations. Since then this statistic has assumed increasing validity as I've continued my use of wilderness.

The fact is this: in over 200 days of wilderness use, I have never seen a black person. It's true that you don't usually see many people in wilderness areas, but 200 days is a long time and I've seen many people. I'm including people seen at the trailhead parking lots. This fact has some obvious implications in the allocation of National Forest roadless areas:

- Most blacks and other people are in the East; Wilderness areas are almost entirely in the West. Thus the relative need for Wilderness is greatest in the East.

- Putting commercial forest land

into Wilderness tends to reduce the timber supply and consequently increases housing costs. Blacks as a group have above-average housing needs and below-average incomes. This fact and similar ones must be considered in determining what is an equitable balance between wilderness and nonwilderness.

As a new member of the council that guides the Society of American Foresters, I'm especially aware of the role professional foresters must play to help achieve a reasonable solution to the roadless-area issue.

The Society of American Foresters states that it's our professional responsibility to "use the knowledge and skills of the profession to benefit society." In my opinion, part of this responsibility is that professionals have a special obligation to represent the "silents." The silents are those whose interests are affected but who for some reason are inactive. It's too simplistic to say they deserve what they get. Dr. Cutler and I, as foresters, have a professional ethical commitment to sound land-use and forest-management decisions. Professionals, when they have the facts, have an obligation to temper uninformed public opinion with professional judgment, even when this takes a great deal of political courage. It's awfully easy to abdicate professional forestry responsibility and just count heads.

The end result of the RARE II process, Dr. Cutler states, is for the Forest Service to recommend:

1.) Which roadless areas should be added to the Wilderness Preservation System.

2.) Which areas should be managed for such nonwilderness uses as developed recreation, timber production, and manipulation of vegetation for wildlife.

3.) Which areas require further study.

This is a challenge to all of us who will have input to the process. It is a special challenge to the professionalism of the Forest Service. If, for example, after all this time and study, category 3 contains large areas of valuable commercial forest land, the National Forest professionals will have abdicated a decision-making responsibility, for as Dr. Cutler said last month in AMERICAN FORESTS:

"Without answers now, the disorder of a piecemeal approach will continue to add unnecessary costs to

the already overburdened taxpayer and prevent industries and communities dependent on National Forests from establishing long-range plans and making needed investments."

I don't know for sure whether the preservationist David has become a Goliath, but I do know that things have changed dramatically and appear to be overbalanced against developed recreation, wildlife-habitat management, timber harvest, and other nonwilderness benefits.

Value-tradeoff discussions tend to dwell mostly on wilderness values compared to forest-product values. Other nonwilderness values are sometimes the most important.

In 1976 recreational use was 27 times greater outside the National Forest Wilderness System than within. A spokesman for a recreational-vehicle user group warned:

"RARE II could be an effective tool for curbing piecemeal and excessive wilderness designations. It could also mean a dramatic, massive, and permanent loss of areas important to recreational-vehicle use."

Wildlife is another valuable part of Wilderness recreation, but habitat management is necessary to optimize the management of most wildlife. This cannot be done easily in Wilderness but is often compatible with timber harvest.

There is yet another dimension to the roadless-area issue. States the Executive Secretary of the Idaho Mining Association:

"One of the most serious and perhaps least understood faults or deficiencies of the RARE II process is its failure to recognize and to give appropriate consideration to the third dimension—the depth dimension—of the land. The evaluation techniques now being employed to distinguish between wilderness and nonwilderness areas do not provide for measuring the value of subsurface mineral resources that may lie concealed within this third dimension. Decisions made with only a partial knowledge of the values involved are likely to be faulty and could cause more serious problems than they solve."

I suspect that the cooler heads in the middle of the environmental movement recognize that their Goliath-size strength must be constrained or the nation will suffer an unnecessary and wasteful reduction in the productivity of its natural re-

sources. Also, labor, industry, and other users of nonwilderness need to wake up some sleeping giants and find some Davids in order to assure that the final decisions are in the national interest.

Senator Frank Church has said that the original congressmen and environmentalists who were instrumental in passing the Wilderness Act had no idea that the Wilderness Preservation System would reach its now-probable size. The 1976 programs prepared under the Resources Planning Act project a National Forest Wilderness System of 43,000 square miles by the year 2000, roughly a 115 percent increase over the 1975 total. The timber-sale program for 2000 is projected at 19.9 billion board feet, a 128 percent increase over the 1975 volume sold. However, timber sales decreased in '76 and '77—partly because of the roadless-area freeze. It now appears that the Wilderness goal for the year 2000 will be achieved, but radical changes must be made to reach the timber goal.

Some of you, I'm sure, feel as I do that the time has come to put a ceiling on the amount of National Forest land devoted solely to Wilderness. It's time to do other things. There is some logic in saying that the 26,000 square miles of National Forest currently in Wilderness is surely enough for the relatively few of us who use it. But this is an emotional political issue, not one principally of logic. Compromise is necessary. Therefore, I personally would support the Resources Planning Act's 1976 program goals, which provides for an ultimate Wilderness System of about 43,000 square miles and an increase in timber harvest and other resource benefits. This should be enough Wilderness, and the resource loss will be endurable if the areas are chosen carefully.

The following analogy expresses how most of my coworkers in the woods and mills feel about determining the balance between Wilderness and other uses and how to select Wilderness areas:

"We need wood, jobs, and recreation. The forest is a factory producing wood, jobs, and recreation. To get more Wilderness, don't shut down the factory." ■