

Evolving Toward
Sustainable Forestry:
Assessing Change
In U.S. Forestry Organizations

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study grew directly out of need, a need greater than anticipated by the Pinchot Institute when it initiated this effort in early 1995. First was the need to describe and document some of the fundamental changes that have taken place in forestry organizations in the United States, particularly during the past decade. The intense interest in this from the skeptics was surpassed only by that of individuals who have been participants or observers of forestry and forestry organizations in this country for many years, and who themselves are astonished at the extent and rate of recent change. As a profession, forestry has been as conservative and tradition-bound as any, long appearing to be resolute and immovable in its resistance to growing outside pressures for different approaches to forest management and conservation. But the pressure for change seems to have been growing from within as well, driving forestry organizations forward as critical barriers to change were overcome. The need for these forestry professionals to tell their stories of turmoil, exploration, and discovery--of finding new order out of the chaos that has been forest policy during the last several decades--is as great as the need of those outside the forestry profession to glimpse the internal workings of these organizations and understand the play of forces that are ultimately bringing about meaningful change.

The second need to which this study responded was to help discover the most effective means by which to facilitate the ongoing evolution toward sustainable forest management. Once again, we found that the thirst for such information and ideas is at least as great within forestry organizations as outside. Bringing conservationists and forestry professionals together and creating an environment in which they find themselves searching together for innovative solutions to their common concerns has been a wellspring for new cooperative efforts that have continued long after the culmination of this study. As a result, this study contains many of their ideas, but by no means all of them. Participants in the study continued to offer creative and innovative suggestions up to the moment when this report went to press. Many more will simply have to wait until the next volume.

I would like to thank the literally hundreds of individuals who invested both their time and creative energy into helping us at the Pinchot Institute to better understand both the needs and opportunities for facilitating the evolution toward sustainable forestry. Many of them rolled up their sleeves and helped us to get beyond the generalities and rhetorical flourishes of forest policymaking, and to dig into the more challenging questions of forest policy implementation on the ground. Through this, we gained many new insights into how complex organizations of thousands of individuals can learn and adapt, how organizational culture and values can change over time to become catalysts for new approaches to doing business rather than barriers.

Many thanks to the authors of the sections of this report that focus on particular organizations, sharing the important details of what has taken place in their organization and why. Many of these grew from informal workshop presentations, which were found to be so thoughtful and valuable that they could not but be included as part of what began as a more general report. Thanks, too, to the independent reviewers of the earlier drafts of the report--John Gordon, Charles Bingham, Jim Kennedy, David Radloff, Bruce Cabarle, Michael Northrop, Catherine Mater, and Perry Hagenstein--for insights and suggestions that have added significantly to this final version.

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Finally, I am indebted to the coauthors of this report, Jim Giltmier of the Pinchot Institute and Rick Weyerhaeuser of The Nature Conservancy, for their persistent focus on the real challenges and discerning evaluation of practical solutions. Their willingness to engage in an organic process of exploration, whose outcome was unknown and unknowable at the outset, has helped produce a report that is responsive to what we discovered along the way and truly reflects the work of the many participants in the study. A special thanks to David Tilford, currently on a research fellowship at the Pinchot Institute, whose special skills at weaving many varied strands of thought into an appealing and comprehensible tapestry are greatly appreciated.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Assessing Change in U.S. Forestry Organizations

V. Alaric Sample

Pinchot Institute for Conservation

The past decade has witnessed unprecedented change in our scientific understanding of the role and functions of forests. This has, in turn, brought about important changes in the way we think about the management and stewardship of these unique and valuable resources. The practice of forestry in the United States, as elsewhere across the globe, is evolving to reflect a more comprehensive view. The Seventh American Forest Congress, which took place in Washington, DC in 1996, brought together a broad and diverse cross-section of American citizens to articulate a shared vision for U.S. forests and forest management, and to develop principles by which to define and evaluate sustainable forestry in a U.S. context. The results of the Forest Congress suggest that a broad majority of Americans would like to see a continuation of forest conservation and management that is ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially acceptable.

In recent years, forestry organizations have made important strides toward this broader concept of forestry. Early changes in response to public pressures have led to active and concerted efforts by forestry professionals themselves to begin changing the "culture" within their organizations, whether their focus is forestry research, education, policy or

forest management. What are these efforts, and how can they be documented? Which of these efforts have been successful and which have not, and why? What are the opportunities for facilitating further evolution toward a broader approach to forestry that is recognized as ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially acceptable?

To help answer these questions, the Pinchot Institute conducted a strategic assessment of recent change in forestry organizations that was designed to:

- evaluate current efforts within forestry organizations to advance sustainable forestry
- identify opportunities to facilitate this evolution, and
- suggest strategies for doing so

The assessment provides an overview of current efforts in each of the major sectors of the profession--forestry education, research, policy, and management--that reflect the kinds of approaches to forestry described by participants in the Forest Congress and other recent efforts. This assessment also helps to highlight current and future needs for

additional activities and investments in each sector. The challenge is to think strategically, to prioritize these needs and target future investments for maximum effectiveness.

The approach taken by the Pinchot Institute in conducting this strategic assessment consisted of the following components:

- *Sector Analysis.* A description of the major areas within forestry (research, education, policy, and management practice in public, private, and non-profit forestry organizations), their changing characteristics and relationships with one another, and their role in providing leadership in forestry. The analysis identified potential opportunities within these sectors for facilitating the evolution toward sustainable forest management, and organizations that have demonstrated outstanding leadership.
- *Inventory of current efforts.* Identification and description of current efforts toward sustainable forest management in each of the above sectors. This component begins with general descriptions of major changes that are taking place in each sector and ends with a series of focus reports. The focus reports are brief case examples from individual organizations describing efforts to facilitate an evolution of their organizational culture toward sustainable forestry, observations of what has worked well and what has not, and how such efforts might be made more successful in the future.
- *Evaluation.* A review of the success and effectiveness of current efforts, and identification of impediments to change.
- *Options analysis.* Identification of opportunities for effectively facilitating the evolution toward sustainable forest

management, including examination of a range of options for overcoming impediments identified in the evaluation of current efforts.

- *Strategy.* An action plan that prioritizes among the opportunities identified above and helps target limited resources for greatest effectiveness. The objective is to help forestry organizations to strategically guide efforts to promote forestry that is recognized and accepted as sustainable.

Key to the assessment was a two-day workshop held in November 1996 at the Pinchot Institute in Washington, DC. The purposes of the workshop were to:

- review and supplement the inventory, evaluation, and preliminary options analysis for supporting the continued evolution of sustainable forestry in organizations involved in forestry research, education, policy and management, and
- prioritize among the available options and suggest strategies to help target limited resources for greatest effectiveness.

This report is a compilation of the presentations and discussions that took place at the workshop, in combination with sector overviews that are the results of more than 200 in-depth interviews conducted with individuals from throughout the forestry and conservation community and involved directly in forestry education, research, management or policy.

Framework and context for organizational change in forestry

In the first section of the report, Pinchot Institute Senior Associate Terence J. Tipple offers a conceptual framework for considering organizational change. Change in organizations takes place over time and at various levels, and can

manifest itself in many different ways. Tipple addresses the larger topic of managing change in large complex organizations, and explores briefly how those organizations go about the process of stimulating and directing organizational change, and how they evaluate the progress and direction of these changes. Senior Fellow Jeff Sirmon then provides a broad overview of some of the major social, political, and economic forces that have shaped the values and attitudes of American society over the past three decades, with reflections on how this evolution has changed society's expectations toward forests and forestry.

The changing culture of forestry in the U.S.: examples of current efforts at individual organizations

The next section focuses on the changing culture of forestry in the U.S. A series of focus reports provides an inside look at recent changes in forestry organizations in each of the major sectors of the profession--education, research, policy, and management. These focus reports provide insights into recent efforts within forestry organizations to instill and cultivate among their employees a broader perspective toward forests and forestry, one that is responsive to the public's desire for (1) conservation of a broader set of forest resources and values, and (2) forest management that can be demonstrated to be ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible.

Focus report authors were asked to explore the institutional and cultural changes that have taken place in their organizations: what combination of external and internal events or forces has influenced institutional change in their organization; of these, which have had the greatest effect on organizational culture (the values, attitudes, and perspectives of individuals and the organization overall). In addition to the more visible manifestations of organizational change, authors were asked to consider subtle administrative mechanisms such as changing criteria for budget allocation or annual performance reviews that can

be as influential over time as overt attempts--such as strategic planning or "reinvention"--to steer a new course for an organization. Many of the authors use examples from ongoing projects or partnerships to illustrate the kind of organizational culture changes that are taking place.

Evaluation

The *Evaluation* section takes a second look at the reported changes in the organizations that were the subjects of focus reports, and at the broader observations of change in forestry organizations discussed in the overviews based on direct interviews. The purpose of this section is to provide an overall assessment of the success and effectiveness of these efforts at organizational culture change, and to identify existing or potential impediments to change. At the November workshop, several panelists were asked to provide perspectives based on their own recent experience, and to respond to the earlier focus reports with questions or observations specific to these organizations. A key concern is whether the kinds of organizational changes described are truly having a significant impact on the way forestry is understood, taught, and practiced in the U.S. The panelists were also asked to reflect on the potential long-term durability of these changes, i.e., are steps being taken to *institutionalize* these changes in the organization so that they are not regarded as a passing fad or a limited function of the current CEO, agency chief, or dean.

Options and strategies

The *Options and strategies* section identifies a variety of opportunities for effectively facilitating the evolution toward sustainable forest management, and examines a range of options for overcoming impediments identified earlier. These opportunities include administrative and policy mechanisms, but also new institutional arrangements among organizations and a variety of other innovative approaches to facilitating constructive change. At the workshop, panelists

were asked to provide perspectives based on their own recent experience, and to reflect upon the focus reports and other presentations in which useful options have been identified and discussed. Subsequent discussion among workshop participants identified additional mechanisms that have been successful in facilitating the evolution toward a broader set of values and perspectives in forestry organizations, and opportunities to build upon or expand the application of these mechanisms. Workshop participants also identified additional opportunities and mechanisms for managing organizational change that have been useful in other public or private organizations but have not yet been widely applied in the forestry sector.

This strategic assessment of change in U.S. forestry organizations was conducted in cooperation with a broad and diverse array of individuals and

institutions, including federal and state natural resources agencies, forest products companies, forestry schools and colleges, non-profit conservation organizations, and charitable foundations active in forest conservation. A broad array of individuals was involved throughout the assessment process, and contributed a diversity of experiences, perspectives, and ideas that greatly enriched the study and its results.

This report is designed to serve as a guide for both public and private forestry and conservation organizations as they plan their own future programs and activities. The report is also intended as a guide to charitable, governmental, and corporate grantmaking organizations seeking to target their efforts to facilitate further evolution toward sustainable forestry in public, private and non-profit forestry organizations.