LEADING PUBLIC FORESTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Next Generation Leaders
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Leadership Challenges

1. Understanding the Broader Context within which we work—*What’s changing and what do we do about it*

2. Ethical Pressures—*Maintaining Professional Integrity*

3. Some things I’ve learned...
I. Understanding the Broader Context within which we work

*What’s changing and what do we do about it*

It is our responsibility to get outside our own “bubbles”

- Learn what larger forces are affecting our work
- Determine if what we are doing is still important and relevant
- Study other ways to get work done—be open to new ideas
- Support the workforce to do the same, to expand the vision, encourage learning
How do we do this?

- Encourage organizational learning and growth, to give people time or pay to attend sessions (like this one), take classes, do cultural exchanges, etc.
- Allow for experimentation of new ideas as a result of this learning, understanding that not all experiments will succeed. Give people room to fail.
- Stay positive and cultivate a culture of innovation—the best, most creative and productive people will want to work for you
What do leaders too often do to stifle innovation?

- Discourage staff from doing work beyond what are tasks directly in front of them, the “urgent” but not always the most “important”.
- Discourage experimentation of new ideas by criticizing and highlighting failures, or simply not acknowledging successes.
- Cultivating a culture of fear—through judgment, shaming, etc.
One Example from USFS

Support Global Seminars like this one

- 2003-2008 USFS held 5 seminars on Global Forestry in Oaxaca, Mexico
- Nearly all 65 Senior Executives in the USFS attended
- Goal: Deepening the understanding of how US forestry fits in the global forestry world: who are we selling to, buying from; what ideas are we exporting and what ideas do we need to import?
- Topics: Trends in global trade; emergence of non-market forces: certification, payments for ecosystem services, business sustainability principles; community forestry, regulatory reforms around world
- Leader: Chief Dale Bosworth support
Leadership lesson for me

Seminars like the one the USFS held in Oaxaca have to be orchestrated carefully

• Courageous leader who defended us but demanded from us good evidence to support them (cost evaluations etc)
• Careful relationships built with potential critics, some we brought to the seminar
• Pay-offs still endure: USFS certification of Nat Forests, 2 USDA offices on PES, collaboration/community forestry
II. Ethical Pressures on Forest Leaders

What are typical ethical challenges?

• Friends or relatives ask for privileges (jobs, permits, influence on policy)
• Potential forest license holders “be-friend” you, ask for “favors”
• *Advice* might be perceived giving *Preferential Treatment* for forest services (concessions/permits...) that are supposed to be ‘equitably’ decided through competition
• Community or business leaders ask for support for their projects/ideas
Ethical Challenges

*Could be more extreme:*

- Offers of money (bribes/corruption)
- Offers of future jobs
- Offers of other benefits (club memberships, meals, trips, etc.)

Destroys careers more than any single other issue (and lives along with...)

⇒ *None of us are immune from it, they touch us many ways, and the higher you are in the organization, the more pressure on you.*
Ethical Challenges

• Examples I faced:
  • Friends asked if I would grant preferential treatment in permit applications
  • Family asked me to help influence the outcome of a land sale
  • My boss was caught cutting firewood without a permit on the public land (was fired).
  • Another boss I worked for was (falsely) accused of collusion (taking brides) from a timber sale contactor (and years of investigation ensued).
  • Major timber theft occurred on the forest I was managing—requiring significant changes in log accountability and monitoring. Were the staff too lax in enforcement? Was there collusion?
So how do we handle the inevitable ethical challenges we face?

• Critical that every forest agency has a code of conduct/ethics that clearly outline what is ok and what is not. **There must be definite consequences for failing to adhere to them.**

• Critical to have a “culture” of ethical behavior, established by the agency leadership

• YOU are the leader others will follow. You must be the leader *beyond ethical reproach*. **What you do and say is what they can do and say.**
III. Some things I’ve learned

Remember that *bad* things happen to everyone...

- You don’t get the promotion you want
- Your advice is disregarded
- You have a difficult boss
- You have a staff you feel is undermining you

The measure of leadership is HOW you deal with these

Remember:
- we learn the most from making mistakes
- we mature as leaders when we lose
- we grow the most from dealing with difficult people
Encourage People Daily

Support a young professional everyday
Find something nice to say to someone each day
Never miss writing a letter of support
Know that the kindest thing you can do is give honest critique
Lead from where you are

• Don’t wait for formal leaders to act
• You can influence issues beyond your current positions, its essential that you do so
Balance is critical to being successful in both a professional and personal life. Manage your time to enrich your life and pay attention to:

- aging parents
- children and pets
- time for sports/recreation/vacation
Finally...

You never know when you will meet that person who will change the course of your life and career.

So....

- treat every encounter as that special one
- build and sustain a strong network
- develop an interesting professional reputation that draws other to you
- stay open to new people, ideas and opportunities
Thank You!