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Interviewee: Robert Wolf
Interviewers: Arnold Bolle, Dan Hall
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Summary: Wolf describes the historical process behind the 1974 Resource Planning Act including the issue of roads, assessment of forest lands in regard to funding, effectiveness of the Act, Nixon’s proposal to abolish regional offices, and Senate response.

Dan Hall: This April 21, 1989. We’re in Missoula, Mont., in the Archives of the Mansfield Library. We’re talking with Arnold Bolle and Robert Wolf today.

Arnold Bolle: The subject is the Resources Planning Act, and my questions are going to be just enough to get you started because you know all about this thing from the very beginning. Of course the RPA didn’t appear out of the blue. It was a process of a long series of things, and it came in historically after EBA. It came in after the Church hearings on clear-cutting when a whole lot of the [idea] was brewing. It came in after the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act, and as I understand it it was trying to put this together and was trying to create order in the whole process as far as management of the national forests, the forestry, and so perhaps if you just sort of give us how it fit in. Where does it come in? What was it intended to do? And then we can talk about what happened to it.

Robert Wolf: It really, I guess, started in 1972. I had joined the staff of the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress, having been Assistant to the Director of BLM. The Congressional Research Service works with committees and members of Congress. And since I had done that before in quite a number of instances, and there were still a lot of these people around who knew me, they sort of started asking me about working on this and that and asked questions about a variety of issues. Members of Congress like to get different views than are expressed by the executive agencies. Sometimes they’re suspicious of the executive agency even when they are in the same party. And they’re always certain that the special interest groups, no matter how high flung or motivated, also have their own agenda.

In 1972, as I recall, the Farm Bill was going through, and Humphrey had come back to the Senate. Senator Humphrey from Minnesota had returned to the Senate, and he was concerned that having gotten the Wilderness Bill enacted in 1964 and having participated in the act and the Multiple Use Act of 1960, that there was still so much vigorous debate going on. As you know the clear-cutting issue had erupted and was then what seemed to be a major issue. The Church hearings, the guidelines that were published under ... they were called the Church Guidelines, which had actually been written by Leon Cambre, a Forest Service employee who was a White House fellow working in Lee Metcalf’s office, but working independently of the Forest Service and certainly not in any way really expressing their view. According to my recollection, from what Leon told me, some of the Forest Service people didn’t like what he
was doing. Leon had done most of the drafting of the guidelines, and so they really could more properly be called the Metcalf Guidelines in a way than Church ones. But Frank Church was the chairman of the subcommittee. Anyway, these eruptions were going on and Humphrey had talked with me about drafting some amendments to the Farm Bill that would hopefully deal with some forest policy issues. And I did draft some and I took them over and I talked with Mike McLeod, the committee council, and Jim Giltmeir as some of these would have dealt with the issue of roads, which was one of the more troublesome ones. Unfortunately I didn't bring a copy of them with me, but they weren't earth-shaking.

As a matter of strategy after discussing it with Senator Talmadge, the decision was made not to put them on the Farm Bill because the Farm Bill was rolling through and they had enough agricultural stuff on their plate without putting wood chips on it. So that was that. Humphrey, as I say, we knew each other; and he would ask me over to have a cup of coffee to chat about conservation issues because he was concerned about them. In 1973, late '73 as I recall, he said to me that he wanted to try to find some way to mediate the growing divisions that were occurring between the conservation sector and the commodity sector. He realized that the old style of conservation was changing. He was a much more astute observer of things than I was. The old style was based on development – roads and cutting timber – those were the prime things. It was a changing situation.

AB: These are where he kept in touch with a lot of people. Chuck Stoddard was one of his advisors from way back.

RW: He had lots of friends and people in the Boundary Waters canoe area in particular. But also John Blatnik was from Minnesota. Humphrey just had this wide array of contacts, and he was a fast thinker more than he was a fast talker. He just kept all these things going. He was interested in trying to see if there wasn’t something that could be done. He sort of [viewed it as] his unfinished business. Anyway, he asked me to develop some thoughts for him on it, and he said, “You know, Bob, we've made much greater progress at getting to the moon than we have on this planet.” He said that any nation that could get to the moon ought to be able to solve more of the problems on this planet than we’ve solved.

It was against that background that I sat down and started toying with some possible things. I went back to him and I said that what you might want to consider is an approach in which the Forest Service would engage in broad scale evaluation of all renewable resources so that we could get a national focus of what its role should be – research, education, the so-called state and private forestry programs (new initiatives in that area), and in national forest management. The Forest Service was heavily biased toward national forest management and also heavily biased toward the production of timber. You would think that a narrow band, in my exact words to him, you would think there was a narrow band of timber down the Pacific coast of Canada and northern California. It was all the timber in the world. And I said I just think that what's needed is a broader assessment of it. He thought that was a good idea. And he said, “I want you to begin getting this together for me and putting it together,” and he said,

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"I want you to talk to Dick McArdle about it."

Dick McArdle was the chief of the Forest Service when Humphrey first came to Washington, and he had a high opinion of McArdle who was then quite a bit older and long retired – had retired in ’62. And I talked with Dick about some of these things. And I told him this was confidential, that Humphrey hadn’t reached any conclusion. He wants me to talk with you about it and not talk to anyone else in the Forest Service. So we explored these back and forth. Mac and I had several conversations. Finally Mac said, “What you ought to do is, you ought to come up to the American Forestry Association meeting and talk to a little broader group of people in a general way. We won’t be specific as to the legislative goals that Humphrey may have – just explore it and see what happens, sort of a trial balloon.” And I went back and told Humphrey and Humphrey called over to the Congressional Research Service and said he wanted me to go up to this meeting in Lake Placid, New York, and that was sufficient for me to go. And so we had some discussions up there with various people. Charlie Connaughton wanted to have an absolute explicit forest policy for the national forests – that’s what we needed. McArdle said, “No, that isn’t the way to do it.” And Mac told me, “When we put the program for the national forests together in 1960 my biggest mistake was believing you can have that independent of a policy.” He said, “What we need to have is a tandem arrangement.” He said, “I think Bob has got the right general direction on this.” Anyway the board of AFA agreed with McArdle, and I went back and told Humphrey so. And Humphrey said, “All right, let’s put the thing together and let’s get a bill in and let’s see if we get some co-sponsorship for it.” And that was the basic RPA bill. You can look it up and see what it says.

At that time President Nixon had also proposed abolishing several regional offices of the Forest Service in the West as well as research stations, specifically Missoula, Montana – the regional office. And Mansfield had called me over to express his desire that I prepare an analysis that showed why this was a bad idea. I never saw Mike so mad in my life. He was almost excited. He told me that he had talked to Senator Hayden and Senator Bible and he had language in the appropriation bill that prevented this. He had gone down and talked to the President – President Nixon – and told him that this was going to happen over his dead political body and he wasn’t near dead. And I remember saying to Mansfield, “If you’ve done that, what do you need me to do?” He said, “I want to make sure that this idea is dead.” He said, “I don’t think that this whole notion of these standard federal regions organized this way is sound.” Now I honestly don’t think that Mansfield was concerned about moving the regional office out of Missoula as he was in a broad governmental sense. But anyway that was another part of this thing that was coming along. He said he had also talked to Talmadge about having a hearing on this. Senator Talmadge was chairman of Agriculture and Forestry. Mansfield’s position was well known among his colleagues, and Humphrey ... we had this bill moving and that became sort of the other vehicle that brought a lot of co-sponsorship along. We had a bill with broad bipartisan co-sponsorship that would set up this idea of resource planning and the fundamental Humphrey idea in it was that plans were like dreams. You hoped they would come true, and the chances were awfully good that your dreams might come out a little differently in the real world of time. He also used sort of a space analogy in this: “When we
took a shot at the moon, we didn't shoot for it. We corrected as the space shot went.” One of the weaknesses of planning in America was the rigidity of it – the idea of rigidity. And therefore plans should be able to shift with events. You needed a broad national focus of what the direction ought to be, and then each generation had the opportunity to examine the results and see whether the course was the course that ought to be followed and recognize that if things change that was likely going to be the way it was – that change was the real constant.

AB: One of the best planners I ever knew said that one of the main reasons for planning is that you had to have a good reason to change.

RW: Anyway, that's how the thing started. One other assignment on this, I think is appropriate and a key part of it ... we got to the point though when I sat down and discussed it with the Forest Service. Humphrey said, “I’m far enough along; now I want you to talk to them about it.” Gene Bergoffen, who is now with the National Forest Products Association, was in the legislative office of the Forest Service, and I talked with Bergoffen about it, Leon Cambre and Lamar Beasley. Bergoffen called me one day and he told me that John McGuire, the chief, didn't like the title of the proposed bill. He thought that it should be “Forest and Related Resources.” And I said, “Oh, we'll think about that. Why?” Well he said, “That's the way the Multiple Use Act is written.” And I said, “Oh, it is. I'd forgotten.” And I said, “I'll look into it and I'll let you know.” I was really shocked personally that a man who was trained as a lawyer in the legislative office of the Forest Service didn't realize that the words “forest and related resources” wasn't to be found in the Multiple Use Act of 1960 and that he would use that as an argument for changing it. But it also demonstrated an internal bias in favor of forests where everything else was related in a subordinate way. Now one of my contributions to the process was certainly, in pointing out to Humphrey [that] half of the national forest lands, roughly, were non-timbered, open rangelands. And while I didn't think it was the best title, I thought that we should say “Forest and Range Lands” because we were trying to broaden this not only in terms of the national forest but in terms of the whole spectrum of forest and range land excluding urban centers and agricultural lands so that the planning would broaden out in that spectrum. I think it was several days later Bergoffen was talking with me and asked me why this hadn’t been changed. And I had to tell him it was because the Multiple Use Act doesn’t say what you said it said.

Then another funny thing happened. Senator Mansfield called me over, and he said, “There's some people coming in from Montana that I want you to talk with – the head of the soil conservation districts. They're concerned about this bill because they think it's a threat to the Soil Conservation Service.” So that could have only come from the Soil Conservation Service. And Mike said, “Talk with them about it. I've told them it isn't. Don't let it worry you, Bob.” But he said, “You need to talk with them.” And so I did. And these people were concerned. And I said, “Tell me, where do you get this notion? What is the language here that makes you think that?” Well they didn’t know. And I said, “Well, you can go talk to Senator Humphrey who’s chief sponsor of the bill,” but I said, “I don’t know anyone who's had anything to do with this that thinks it is an effort to do anything to the Soil Conservation Service.” I said, “In fact, I think
the sponsor would be most delighted if the Forest Service would adopt the soil conservation system of forest and rangeland examination to develop improved maps and improved soil and water data on an integrated basis.” Among the people that were involved in this thing were Senator Humphrey, Senator Eastland from Mississippi, Senator Talmadge, and I chatted with them a little bit about it. I remember Hubert Humphrey saying to me when I told him I was concerned about it, what Mansfield had told me, he said, “Bob, this is wonderful.” He said, “The Soil Conservation Service must think this is a good idea.” He said, “You know, if we could get this through for the forests, they’ll want it for the Soil Conservation Service. We’ll then have a totally integrated agricultural forest and rangeland approach that will be in the Department of Agriculture.” He said, “You gave them the right assurances, but this really is an encouraging thing.” And then he said to me, “And if the thing fails, nobody will want to touch it.” So anyway, as the bill went rolling through, these were some of the things that were happening.

Another aspect of this is important. When Humphrey put the bill in the Senate, he had arranged with his friend John Blatnik to put it in the House. Blatnik was chairman of the Public Works Committee. But Blatnik was looking around for co-sponsors and discovered that Congressman Rarick from Louisiana who was chairman of the Subcommittee on Forests wanted to be the person to put the bill in the House. And this was remarkable. Congressman Rarick up to that point had two points of view. One was that all the Negroes in the United States should be shipped back to Africa, and organizations such as the League of Women Voters were Communist fronts. And he regularly made speeches that spouted this point of view.

AB: Wasn’t there some kind of a rating showing him as the dumbest congressman . . .

RW: Well, I don’t know about that, but I do know that was his general position. Anyway, Blatnik had lined up a nice small group of key people in the House as co-sponsors with him: Wendall Wyatt of Oregon, a ranking republican, Julia Butler Hansen, “Bizz” Johnson; there were several of them. He had to go around telling them, “If you want to get off, you can. Rarick would like to put this in.” Finally I called Humphrey and told Humphrey, and I remember Humphrey called me over to tell me, and I said, “Well, that isn’t going to help us too much. Is it in the House?” “Oh, yes,” he said. “Rarick is chairman of that subcommittee; he’s never done anything for forestry. That will cause Chairman Teague to be willing to act on it. This is going to be a great thing for us.” But the question … what motivated Rarick to do this? Nobody had lobbied him; nobody talked to him. The Senate bill had gone in. It had this long list of bipartisan sponsors – south, north, east, and west – and then we learned there was somebody running against Rarick in the primary in Louisiana, running on the grounds that all this guy ever did was flail black people and Communists and had never done anything. He was chairman of a subcommittee on forestry and he had never even introduced a forest bill. And so he was going to beat the heck out of them on his failure to perform in any way, shape, or form.

Rarick saw this bill that had all these great co-sponsors – Strom Thurmond. Couldn’t be a radical measure with Strom Thurmond on it, Jesse Helms, Mike Mansfield. So Rarick said, “I’ve
got to co-sponsor this.” And so he did. I remember being called over to a meeting in Rarick’s office and AA who now works for Foley kept referring to him as judge. Down in Louisiana if you’re county commissioner, you’re a judge. And he had been a county commissioner. And Rarick, that’s what he wanted. And I remember when I talked to Humphrey about it, Humphrey laughed. He said, “You know, John Rarick and I have a great deal in common. We both went to LSU at different times.” Again, Humphrey could see the political ramifications immediately in getting this guy on the bill. That caused Rarick to push and push to get this thing through as fast as possible before his primary so that he could capitalize on it. Now the timber people they didn’t think it was a bad bill or a good bill. Most of the conservation organizations thought it would be a good idea. There was nothing life-threatening in the bill to any of them. The Forest Service thought it would be a good idea because they had developed this environmental program for the future, which wasn’t going anywhere. And McGuire, while he couldn’t get the Ford administration to endorse the bill, they wouldn’t condemn it. They were silent. So the bill goes on, rolling on through. It goes through the House and the Senate just in great shape, a few slight differences so we have to have a conference.

One of the changes put in the House version by Rarick involved the role of the federal government in relation to states’ planning. This was one of the last closed conferences there was before the Sunshine Era open conferences. It was all just Senators, Congressmen, and a couple of staff people in there; Forest Service people and others were sitting outside the conference room. They didn’t know what was going on inside. Senator Eastland, Senator Talmadge, Senator Humphrey were there for the conference, for the Senate. Not all bills attract all the conferees even. And there were no dreadfully serious, significantly serious, problems in this bill that were going to take extensive debate. But Rarick had put some language in that was a little different than the Senate, and Humphrey didn’t want to give on it. I’ll never forget how he leaned across the table to Rarick and he said, “John, I’m mighty surprised to see this language in here. It directs land use planning?” Rarick says, “Where?” [-------] Rarick’s language and he said, he turned to Talmadge [who] said, “Hubert, I think we ought to accept the House language.” Rarick looks across the table and says, “Don’t.” Humphrey looks over at Rarick and says, “John, we’re going to accept it but we won’t tell a soul it’s yours.” So the Senate accepts it because through this technique what they were doing was negotiating on some other language they weren’t going to accept. And what he had done was got poor Rarick so rattled that he’d lost track of what was what.

Anyway, the bill came out of conference. We had some language in there on roads dealing with forest roads. The Budget and Impoundment Act was going through at the same time. It’s a major piece of legislation that’s a thing out of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Budget Act and so forth. This was the Congress telling the Nixon administration that we were through with royal leadership, the Congress was going to have a budget office; it was going to have impacts on the budget.

Two of the principal architects – at the staff level of that act – and I were close friends. Gene Wilhelm, who had long been on the staff of the House Appropriations Committee, came out of

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what’s called the Jump School of Budgeting and Agriculture, named for William A. Jump – a
longtime friend of mine. I’ve known him since the ‘50s, and Larry Woodworth, who was chief of
staff of the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation.

We had developed some language on roads and trails that from the Senate side were not ready
to do. And so what we did was develop an alternative that was really what they wanted. There
are all sorts of little games people play in legislation. And we knew the language we’d
developed the House wasn’t going to like. But anyway we had this other language that was in
the Act. It put roads and trails under the budget process when they were built by timber
purchasers.

Talmadge put forth this language and the House objected to it; they weren’t going to take any
draft [language] by some people in the Senate staff as the chairman said. Talmadge said,
“Drafted by the Senate staff? This was drafted by your boys over in the House – Gene Wilhelm,
Larry Woodworth.” Of course, Talmadge knew Woodworth very well because he was on the
Finance Committee also. He said, “We went to the boys that drafted the Budget and
Impoundment Act. We asked them for some language. What we’re doing here is just exercising
fiscal responsibility, and we went to the right place. We went to the House to get it.” He said,
“Now you can object if you want, but if you object, you object to what your boys in the House
did.” They agreed. In a lot of these pieces of legislation there’s a lot of strategy that’s involved.
But anyway, that was how the RPA got enacted.

Now let me back up. When the bill came out of the subcommittee, I had talked with
Humphrey. There was litigation going in West Virginia, which was called the Monongahela
case. It was some rascal out in Montana named Bolle; he had also issued some report on clear-
cutting. I don’t know where Bolle is but you can ask him about that. There was concern in
Wyoming over it; there was concern in Alaska. There was concern in Oregon on the Mount
Hood National Forest. The Monongahela case was proceeding but it had not been decided. I
had talked with Dick McArdle about that, and Mac agreed with my thoughts on it.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
The issue was popularly called "clear-cutting" but the real one was the 1897 act which said that the Forest Service could only cut trees that were dead, down, mature large growth, and they had to mark them before they sold them – individually mark them. And for a number of years the Forest Service had done neither. And I talked with Dick McArdle about it. His view was that the chances of the government winning its suit were very limited. At one time he had toyed with the idea of seeking an amendment to the 1897 act but decided to let sleeping dogs lie. The issue was [the problem]; it was there.

Not being a lawyer, of course, I had no idea what the courts might do. I had some notions on the subject because of my wife who was school board president in Prince Georges County, Maryland, and had gone through a school desegregation suit in the fourth judicial circuit in which the presiding judge was Clement Haynsworth of South Carolina who had been rejected to the Supreme Court because he was too strict a constructionist. We had some friends with Covington and Burling, a major law firm – Dean Acheson’s law firm – and I recalled discussions she had had with them about the likely outcomes of the litigation. They had pointed out that Clement Haynsworth genuinely was a strict constructionist. And if the law was bad, it was not for the court to correct it. It was for the court to tell the litigants to go back to Congress; they write the laws. If the law was vague, the court might have an interpretive rule. And my reading of it was that the law was clear.

In talking with Forest Service people as well as industry people who were involved in an amicus curiae position on this case. Their basic argument was that 70 years of violating the law made it the law. My judgment, based upon those earlier revelations, was that 70 years of violating the law wouldn’t work in the fourth circuit. So I had drafted some very simple language that simply said the Forest Service can sell timber in an environmentally sound manner. It didn’t change any of the other things. It didn’t require all the trees to be marked in advance because it didn’t make sense for the clear-cut to do it. But it didn’t say that clear-cutting was the way to cut or any other way. And I talked with Senator Humphrey and Senator Talmadge about it when the bill was in subcommittee and they had agreed that since the matter had not been settled in court with initial decision, that it would be appropriate for Congress to change the law. The plaintiffs, their particular case based on the law is [as it] existed might not even be affected at all in terms of West Virginia. So they said, “Yes, we’ll put some language in that takes care of this. It will help modernize the law that needs modernization.” I had pointed out to them that under the 1897 language you couldn’t conduct a shelter woodcutting, a selective cutting, a thinning, as well as a clear-cutting in a silviculturally rational way. And while everybody was talking of this as an anti-clear-cutting issue – and the people in West Virginia had been disturbed about clear-cutting – that from a legal standpoint, that was not the issue. Senator Talmadge, who is a lawyer, agreed with my judgment as well as the committee counsel for the Agriculture Committee. You don’t have to be a lawyer to have common sense. Anyway, we put the language in; it appeared in the subcommittee versions. The Forest Service, and the timber industry people came running up to see Humphrey with almost unanimous word for word.

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verbatim arguments – “we’re going to win this case; we’re going to win.” The court isn’t going to go with these yahoos from West Virginia. Anybody knows that people from West Virginia aren’t smart to begin with. Humphrey said go see Talmadge: “If Senator Talmadge wants to take it out, we’ll take it out.” Talmadge said, “They think they’ve got a winner in court, I’m not going to argue with them. No sense in doing a favor for someone who doesn’t want it.”

So the language came out. A few weeks after the bill came out of the subcommittee the district court rendered its decision. Back came these same people to Humphrey. “Put the language back in.” Humphrey said, “Go see Senator Talmadge.” I was at one of the meetings with Senator Talmadge on it and he told them, “You wanted to be in court, you stay in court; you go to the court of appeals.” He was thoroughly aggravated with the nerve of them coming back after he had taken it out at their request, and his view was now it was too late to put it in. Strategically, legally, now he would be meddling in the court’s business before the appeals had run out. And if they thought they had a valid legal case ... he gave them a chance for an out-of-court settlement earlier. Now it was up to them to exhaust their legal remedies, at least wait out the 30-day period and decide whether they wanted to exhaust their legal remedies.

AB: NDRC, National Defense Resources Council, is looking places for federal lawsuits. One of them is on clear-cutting. They looked at the Bitterroot; they looked at many other places. But Monongahela was just made to order because this was a eastern hardwood forest. [inaudible] where clear-cutting was not a normal recommendation [inaudible]. They started in on it and it was young Larry Rockefeller, Lawrence Rockefeller, Jr., who was working for them as a lawyer, and he was the one that [found] this language [inaudible]. He was very proud of that. I think that was one of the proudest moments of his life. He picked that out of the ’97 act and that was the basis for their suit.

RW: He was right, of course, as the litigations were approved.

AB: When they talked about using it I thought, “Well that's interesting,” because I was teaching policy and I was thinking it was a very interesting old law. It was interesting to see how they thought about forestry at that time but obviously it wouldn’t work. But it never occurred to me that it was still important legal language.

RW: When you stop and think back to the fact that the basis for the [1897] act ... these were reserves. They were not intended to be a major part of the timber supply. The language did not authorize wholesale timber cutting. It allowed occasional timber cutting of dead, mature, down trees as appropriate. It did not articulate a concept of forceful forest management. There were reserves. The word "reserves" was used commonly even after 1905 when Pinchot has a name change. The forest products industry had supported their creation at the time, because it would take off the market timber that was being stolen and taken in trespass or taken under the archaic land laws and pushed on the market depreciating the market and the value of private timber.
Now some of that private timber that has been acquired has been fraudulently acquired also. That's beside the point. We had gone through a series of economic roller coasters in the 1880s and '90s, which led people to believe that they would, in the timber business, that they would be better off if they could arrest development in the West and not push it ahead in terms of timber. So they were quite willing to see the forests in reserve status. It was Pinchot with his idea of selling forestry as profitable who also took the Teddy Roosevelt view that that which is not expressly prohibited, I can do; who was also willing to go one step farther and say “that which is expressly prohibited I will do.” Who said there was a higher duty and that is to bring the message of forest conservation to the unwashed and to the unclean so that they will now be saved.

AB: One of the major changes where you felt [inaudible] the land. This was part of the [inaudible]. There’s another aspect of RPA that I’d like to hear your discussion on. You’ve got the law passed now. What did the Forest Service do with it?

RW: One of the things that was debated in it as we got near reporting the bill, was when to have the first assessment and program. John McGuire said he wanted to wait an extra five years (1980) before it was done, that he needed more time to do a good job. And Humphrey as well as Talmadge refused to give them more time. John said, and I was a bit surprised by this, that “We are going to be criticized if we don't have a good job.” And Humphrey said, “Well, you're going to be criticized anyway. Don't worry about criticism. You're going to learn more doing the job and having some criticism than spending a longer time doing the job and still having criticism.” Humphrey was a person who wasn't afraid of being criticized; he had spent a whole public career being criticized. And so had a lot of other members of Congress. Criticism wasn’t something that scared them. They were used to it. You couldn't please everybody and you didn't try to please everybody, at least most of them didn't. The argument “I might be criticized” just didn’t cut anything with them. So they provided that they'd provide the first program and assessment in ’75.

The other thing, the way these fellows looked at it in the Senate in particular was the Forest Service has been in business a long time. They'd done timber assessments and other things. There was a major grazing study of the '30s; there’d been one in the '60s also on grazing fees; they’d done timber assessments. It wasn’t as though they hadn’t been looking at resource issues. The Bureau of Forestry that was originally created was supposed to be assessing things. There was the old study – the Bureau of Corporations – that looked into it. But, no, their view was, “We don't know everything; we don't expect you to know everything. But we know you know enough to provide something that will form a creditable basis for doing some assessment planning of things for the next several years. So do it.” And they wouldn't give them until 1980 and told them to do it at once. The other thing, though, that was of concern was the presidential statement of policy. And the Bureau of the Budget – while there was no Ford administration position – was concerned, and this is an odd thing, because they said the president shouldn't have a statement of policy. They wanted to argue that it was an intrusion upon the president's prerogatives even for them to be instructed to submit a statement of

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policy, notwithstanding the fact that there’s a law that says you’ll submit a budget every year, and a law that says you’ll submit an economic report every year, and other laws on things he’s supposed to submit. They wanted to say the president shouldn’t lay out a strategy, a national strategy, which is really all the statement of policy does. By then Watergate had peaked and Nixon was about to leave office; it was August. The bill landed on Nixon’s desk while he was still in office, and the Bureau of the Budget was imploring him to veto the bill before he departed for San Clemente.

But Nixon had other things on his mind than vetoing bills and so he left without doing anything on that. A new president arrived on the scene; under our constitutional procedure Gerald Ford became president. And the Bureau of Budget went to him and said, “Veto this thing.” But here’s Jerry about to embark upon a honeymoon, and you don’t start a honeymoon kicking your wife out of bed. Ford looked at this – he’s experienced in the House, knows the process – looks at this array of co-sponsors that goes across the board: Democrats and Republicans, so-called Conservatives to so-called Liberals – a hell of a way to start a honeymoon. Make these [inaudible] guys mad: the Senate majority leader, Senate minority leader. So he doesn’t exactly want to do that. I got a call from Steve Satterfield who is a budget examiner, he now happens to work for the Forest Service, and he and I had talked about the bill at various times, and he was sorry to tell me that Ford was going to veto the bill. I said, “Well, you know how it is, Steve, you win some, you lose some.” I went right over to see Mansfield (there’s a chance you’re going to win some and lose some) and Humphrey and Talmadge and so forth, and Wendell Wyatt and Julia Butler Hansen over in the House.

And so there were some calls placed to the White House, not saying that they’d heard the bill was likely to be vetoed but expressing the hope that the president would consider having a signing ceremony when the bill was signed. A few days later the bill was signed into law. If you read the signed statement of the president, you’ll see that the Bureau of the Budget prevailed and the president expressed his concern that there may be some intrusion on his prerogatives. But these were overcome by the larger purposes of the bill.

AB: At the signing ceremony.

RW: No, they didn’t have a signing ceremony. Nobody expected a signing ceremony. Anyway, that is the way in which it became law and there it was on the books. Now the Forest Service had to figure out how to go about doing an assessment of the resources and a program. The bill did not give them a cookbook formula for doing it. It left them a considerable degree of latitude, and that brings us up to what would happen further under the NMFA, which really didn’t tinker with, develop, refine, or change in a major way, the RPA.

AB: There’s one big issue about whether it was bottom-up landing or knock-down planning, and essentially RPA has become a knock-down planning. And the big issue, the critical issue, was always the estimates, the national estimates, that come out of the Forest Service which are – well, you can say Humphrey wanted a dream – well they sure dreamed it because they
were pipe dreams and they were beyond what could be accomplished. They were never ... I've criticized them every year because they're not based on the capabilities of the land. That one fundamental thing they never got down to recognizing the capabilities of the forest land because what they were asking them for ... well, when the last one came out in '85 the regional forester said, “Are you going to protest again?” I said, “Well, are your estimates based on the capabilities of the land?” And he said, “Oh, that.”

RW: I know there's been this top-down, bottom-up argument, which sort of surprises me. On a couple of other occasions I've said that ... I recall the story about the DeForrest who invented the vacuum tube, an early radio device for making radios work. It was supposed to be a big step forward in making radios useful in the home and so forth where people could listen to them.

Fifty years after its invention some newsmen went to DeForrest and asked him what he thought of the radio after 50 years, and he was supposed to have sat there silently for several minutes and said, “My child, my child, what have they done with it?”

Having helped in the formulation of the RPA, I must say I've been almost in DeForrest position. I never envisioned that it was going to have the top-down emphasis that the Forest Service has given it. My view was that they would use the model of the SCS in terms of land capability studies that build from the bottom up soil studies, water studies, cover studies for range land and forest land.

And the forest land, one would look at more than trees and wood producers but look at the kind of biotic communities that we have and the same on rangelands. And that would be put together with what I would call broad economic data, and while on the one hand you might have a biologic capability to produce so much, there's also an economic or financially sound level of operation but that we'd look more at what was also happening on the private sector. But what's come out really is a biased ... the Forest Service is like a drunk. It goes right back like that old Charley Chaplain movie - right back to the national forests with practically nothing really focusing on what's going to happen on the broader, private range and forest land base. It's almost like the moth and candle syndrome – they get attracted back to that damn candle and get their wings singed. So every time they wonder why all the focus is on the national forests is because they do it to themselves, and I think this is one of the major problems. And how they break that syndrome I don't know. In this last RPA thing that came out I wrote a long letter to Dave Darr pointing out that they were right back in the same old stand. And they're not going to solve their dilemmas until they manage to face up to the fact that the 18 percent of the land that's considered commercial forest is just that and that roughly 18 percent of the rangeland in the national forest is just that, and when you measure some in terms of ability to produce economic commodities, it's less than that. But it's ability to produce non-economic values, it's higher than that.

AB: They talk as though the short commodity is land, forest land. You've got to just pour
everything into it to get [inaudible]. If they were to come out and say you've got so much money, invest it in such a way in the national forest that's produced the greatest return or whatever benefits and so on, maybe we can get the reverse.

RW: I don't know whether the shortest commodity is money. There's time when I think the shortest commodity is common sense.

AB: Maybe there's a scarcity of that.

RW: But we're moving now to another RPA assessment. What I've seen so far, the one that's coming out suffers from the same biases. I don't think the Forest Service also has done, although they say they have in this draft assessment, they have not done a critical analysis of how things came out compared to their last assessment. But also their assessments have been so softwood timber oriented, they even ignore the hardwood timber let alone the other renewable resources. You look at the data and what you see is a hardwood timber base growing in volume, not necessarily in financial value or quality, but totally ignoring that.

I believe it's Clark Binckley's stuff in the South that raised the specter of the style of cutting in the South and attitudes toward regeneration. It was converting the southern forests fairly rapidly from softwoods to hardwoods—a rift that was there because of a failure to recognize that the southern pine forests are man made, fire made, not natural. We just sort of lucked out when the South cut out before, and I say "cut out" in the broadest sense, as the agricultural situation changed and a lot of land that was in minerals soil went into softwood timber, which then became the next crop.

But then the second time around now, say it's really the third time around, fire control favored hardwood regeneration, and so in the absence of planned activities to make sure you've got softwood regeneration, a lot of these stands are being converted to hardwoods. Now what we're doing as resource managers is we're pointing the finger at the small landowner and saying, "There's the culprit!" But he wasn't the guy generally with the chainsaw in his hand. He wasn't the guy who decided what was going to happen on the land. And he certainly wasn't being given any help in understanding the broader ecological consequences. Then a lot of them didn't really think that they were interested or gave a hoot whether they produced timber to feed my mill anyway. Another thing us foresters believe, I think, is that you folks as landowners have a duty to provide the timber to feed my mill. And you landowners may have different ideas as to what you want to do. Or you really don't give a darn. Therefore you're not going to worry about going out and breaking your neck. As I got ready for this oral history I went back and was looking at some stuff. In the '50s, regularly Senator Stennis of Mississippi, along with Mike Mansfield, Humphrey, and Murray and other guys, would put in bills to provide for price reporting on forest stumpage and timber stumpage. And it was viciously opposed by the forest products industry.

They didn't want landowners to know the value of timber because if they knew the value of...
timber they might want more for it. It's a dilemma you see. If I'm buying timber, I don't want you to know that it's worth more than I can offer you. But at the same time, I'm also generally trying to convince you that it's in your financial benefit to grow more timber for me. If I don't want to pay you what it's going to cost you for the next crop of timber that I expect you to grow, should I be surprised that after I cut the timber and you look at the land and if you think its wrecked and it may be, you took the money and decided to send your daughter off to college – didn’t put it into planting trees – just let nature come back to whatever is there. That logger Wolf I sold that stuff to – look what he did to the thing. He said he was going to leave it in good shape. Look at it. Now my daughter is 18 years old and she just graduated from high school, she'd like to go to college, and I think what I might do is send her.

AB: Shortly after I got here in 1955 the top industry people in the state were here and they were bitching miserably about the Forestry School, the state forester, anybody else giving advice to these private landowners. They said it gives them strange ideas about what their land is worth. That's the only place where free enterprise still plays; that's a place where you can get cheap timber because they don't know any better, and they were just taken horrible advantage of. They'd offer a guy $5,000 for his timber.

RW: I used to buy private timber.

AB: Then they'd come in later and they'd begin to wise up. They'd want to know something about 1,000 board feet [inaudible] so this guy would them give them an estimate. His estimate was about 1/3 or 1/4 or whatever – just a fraction of the value. As they began to learn about it then they began to get some people in that made other valuations. So the price of this timber went up ...

RW: I worked for a small, modest sized, landowner and sawmill operation in Southwestern New York for a period. We bought timber, and I remember the owner telling me how during the Depression the banks wouldn't lend him any money and just about drove him to the wall. A group of bankers in Buffalo owned about 4,000 acres of timberland down in Southwestern New York that we had looked at. We had cruised the timber ... had some darn nice hardwood timber – cherry, white ash, maple in particular, birch, some yellow birch even. So he thought he'd make an offer for it, so he took the cruise. We drove up to Buffalo to see these people and we got in to these bankers ... before we got there, C.B. Norton was the fellows name, C.B. said to me, “Bob,” he said, “These bankers skinned me in the Depression and I'm going to skin them today.”

[End of Tape 1, Side B]
RW: Norton said to him, “I've got this young fellow that works for me; he's a forester and he's examined the timber. He hasn't worked for me too long. I think he does his best but of course you're entitled to go get your own estimate if you want.” He said, “But he is a pretty able young fellow. He was a captain in the Air Force.” But he said, “That doesn't mean he's a good timber cruiser. But he graduated from Syracuse and I understand he did fairly well there. We think the timber on this tract is worth about $8,000 to $10,000. If you'll give me 15-year cutting rights, I'll put in a good quality road.” Now that property, I might say, had some oil and gas extraction going on. “I'll protect the oil rigs but of course I'll want to have control of the access so that it's just me and you that can get on the property. But I'll give you $10,000 for 15-year cutting rights and guarantee all the roads will be graveled.” They agreed. He got about $50,000 worth of timber, locked up 4,000 more acres behind it by controlling the access, because the only people that could use the road were us and these owners from the oil rigs. And what he got out, he said, “Well, I think I've evened the score with those bankers.”

AB: In that case someone took advantage of some poor landowner.

RW: And these people were not poor little landowners. On the other side I'll have to tell you, he bought some timber before I came with them from a family and paid for it, bought it, logged it, and this is again the kind old tragic thing you run into with some small owners. The woman's husband passed away and she came in to see Mr. Norton and said, “You bought my timber earlier and I'd like to sell you some more. I want to give a decent burial to my husband.” And I was sent out to look at the timber. I came back and said, “My gosh, the loggers took every darn thing off it.”

He said, “That's alright,” and he calls her up and tells her, “I can't log it right now. We're all tied up.” He said, “But I'll tell you what. I'll send you $5,000 for the timber and we'll cut it sometime later in the year.” Now he hadn't paid her what it was worth the first time around, but at least by then he was 65 years old and he'd had a heart attack. He could see he was getting a little bit closer maybe to going on to the next world. So I think he was looking a little further than the case of this poor widow.

So he sent her a check for $5,000. And as I say, I don't think it was all just because of the widow. The buying and selling of timber is not done, as I think I told one of the classes, for philanthropic purposes and foresters seem to delude themselves into thinking that it's all virtuous good work. I am not saying it's crooked; I'm just saying that businessmen expect you to protect yourself as well as businesswomen. Now businesswomen aren't any kinder hearted than businessmen. What else do we need to cover?

AB: I think we covered [inaudible] pretty thoroughly.

RW: [Dan Hall] may have some questions that ...
DH: The RPA [inaudible] the committee of scientists. And they were foresters but they were not from the Forest Service really.

RW: The committee of scientists was in the NMFA, the ’76 act, and that was part of that process. That was an idea that I had sort of gotten that was a credibility-building device. There was serious distrust in the Forest Service by the conservation community. The Randolph Bill was not being adopted when the NMFA went thorough; it was the Humphrey bill.

DH: [inaudible]

RW: A lot of the stuff was taken out of the Randolph Bill and accepted, but in essence it was the Humphrey bill. There was a need to build confidence that the regulations that were coming out had had some independent group name and were in fact the best scientific approaches that could be used on some of the pressing forest management issues.

AB: There were some real questions about how good the science that the Forest Service claimed to be using was. In fact they were [ignoring] their own research; they were not using their own research.

RW: And I drafted the committee of scientists section, and Talmadge said, “Just give that to Lee Metcalf to put in.” Again, in legislating, people that are involved will have amendments, but an astute bull manager and chairman spread those around among the participants so that everybody has a piece of the action and a commitment to it. Anyway, the problem with the committee of scientists was that after – despite the clear legislative history – the Forest Service should make the initial draft of the regulations and submit it to the committee of scientists for evaluation; they went at it backwards. They had the committee of scientists draft ... I think myself that this was a terrible strategic mistake for the Forest Service, because they did not have the initial internal involvement in the development of the regulations that made the Forest Service people feel that they were with the people that had developed it.

They always keep looking on these regulations as though they were developed by outsiders, and so that was a strategic mistake. The people on the committee of scientists were able and competent and fine and they did a good job in my view, but that strategic mistake on the part of the Forest Service, I think, hurt them internally and hurt the implementation of the regulations internally. You've got to create that atmosphere where people really feel that they have participated in it and actually have. You can't make a charade out of it.

The committee of scientists was another thing where the Forest Service sort of went off on their own and didn't follow the law as it was intended. You go read the law and you'll see that that's the sequence that was supposed to exist, and they followed the opposite one. Nobody took them to court and said, “Wait you're doing this the wrong way.” Those aren't the kinds of things you necessarily take to court. Just because somebody isn't booking you on every little
trespass or major trespass, doesn't mean you're going to make them work. And I think that was a real shortcoming in the process that I would cite, and I have cited. In this history you're free to cite it, too.

AB: Then once the bill was passed, they were dismantled. Is there still a group of people sort of overseeing the regulations of the Forest Service or once they got the language how they wanted [inaudible]?

RW: The committee of scientists was disbanded after ... Art Cooper from North Carolina was the chairman – a good ecologist, very able guy. Bill Webb, who happened to be my wildlife management professor at Syracuse, another extremely able guy. He'd also done a distinguished job when he served on the president's advisory panel on timber and the environment, the thing created by Nixon in 1970, and a number of others – Dennis [Teegurden?] from California. They had some really first-rate people there and they labored hard and did a good job. But as I say, because the Forest Service didn't do the job to start with – it didn't act in a situation where it got the reactions of these people to what it had done and what it wanted to do – I don't think that it worked as well. And that's why I think we may have some of the problems they're having.

DH: Any other questions or comments?

RW: Arnold?

AB: Just one ... back to RPA early days ... one of the problems, one of the criticisms, one of the things that RPA, from my information, tried to straighten out, was the fact that the Forest Service – the criticisms that came to the Forest Service earlier on was that the budget process was so skewed toward timber, and the Forest Service was [able] to claim that they actually asked for a well-balanced budget so they could take care of wildlife, watershed, and all the other things that they're supposed to be taking care of but that Congress [didn't provide].

Well, examination of their budget showed that while this was partly true, even under the skewed budget, they were using money that was supposed to go to recreation and also for timber, and they were also using it that way. So the RPA idea of bringing in an analysis of what was needed and balance program and then coming out with a balanced budget – this was partly the cure of that criticism, wasn't it?

RW: It was to improve the balance of funding, yes. It was to strengthen research where research would provide the key; it was to strengthen state and private forestry where getting the commodity resources off private land was the best alternative; and it was to provide for broadening the national forest system application of multiple use. It wasn't designed to simply enlarge the Forest Service budgets. In fact, when the Bureau of the Budget people who talked to me about it complained that that could be the result, I said, “Well, you know, that implies that you guys are out of business.” I said, “I think that these things have to compete against the

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whole budget and will always have to.” I said, “I don’t know of any way to write a law that would guarantee it.” But then Ted Stevens figured out a way on the Tongass – the mandated $40 million for the Tongass. But, no, there was no ...

AB: I just wanted to bring it up to show that this was one of the goals, anyhow, was to try to find budgeting [inaudible] get away from straight timber.

RW: Oh, yes, and you look at the timber funding side of the budget and you’ll see these accounts like recreation, fire, minerals, and so forth where money from those is taken and put into timber. I don’t know of any analysis that’s ever been conducted that shows that these other resources benefit and other uses benefit from using the money for timber.

Timber was viewed by the Forest Service as being the lubricant that made things go, so they were turning everything into timber. I think they have to a large extent. It’s interesting when this accounting system got going – this so-called TSPIRS, timber sale program information reporting system is what TSPIRS means – that the first thing the Forest Service started doing was skithering things out of the timber funding because now they were going to have to show the costs of the program. Now the game had changed. What do you take out? They wanted to take out land-line location. I was on the Society of American Foresters task force on below-cost timber sales (I was appointed to it) and I remember being in a meeting in San Francisco – the first meeting with George Craig who used to be with the Western Timber Association. And George Craig, as we were moving along on the issues, he said, “Well, I think we ought to recommend that land-line location be taken out of the timber budget.” Well that immediately caused little alarm bells to go off in my noggin. What he was saying was, “Let’s pretend these aren’t timber costs.”

My reaction was to first say, “We’re not supposed to be making recommendations as a professional society on the specifics of budgeting. We’re supposed to be looking at the generic issue of below-cost timber sales.” I said, “I’m perfectly willing, George, to say let’s not have any land-line location money spent on timber-sale boundaries in California,” which was his home base. He said, “I’m not willing for provincial reasons to say it for other parts of the country but if you don’t think it should be done in California, I would support it.” He just pulled back right away from it. But it occurred to me that between the timber industry and the Forest Service there had been some communication, or at least something that just comes dancing through in their minds automatically.

We ought to knock some of these costs out. What do you see in TSPIRS? You see land-line location was taken out as a costly timber program and forest road maintenance. Last year in the budget though, in the appropriation bill, Congressman Yates noticed this. There’s a big write-up in the House report that they have further reduced the budget for land-line location because the Forest Service had removed it from the page in the budget explanation that has no fiscal meaning. It said that 75 percent of the land-line location money was used for timber sales layout. They forgot to change the language in the budget part where the money is actually

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found. [They] said they needed it for timber sales. So the Yates report, the committee report, points out that while they took it out in this one place, they didn't take it out here where it really counts. If the Forest Service doesn't need the money for timber sales, this is an activity which could be deferred. And it wasn't essential and therefore they made a whopping cut in the money. The Senate restored it. You look at this year's budget, what do you see? Land-line location is back in as timber funding. That's called bringing religion to the unwashed.

[End of Interview]