Hall: We're in the archives at Mansfield Library, this is Dan Hall. This morning we will be talking to Bob Wolf about the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Act in 1974. Bob, if you would like to start and give us a little background information on why this came about.

Wolf: By 1974 I had been at the Congressional Research Service for two years, well [two] years, I got there in [1972], and had been working on a number of conservation issues with various members of the House and Senate. And having worked on the Senate earlier, I knew enough of them fairly well. In 1972 Senator Humphrey had talked with me about problems that were developing in the conservation community and its relationships with the Forest Service and the growing litigation approach to issues and the inability to resolve the wilderness questions which he had thought would be much more amicably resolved by the enactment of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

I had also talked as a result of that with Senator Talmadge, and there had been some discussion of possible amendments to the Farm Bill of [19]72. At that time one of the staff people -- there were a couple of staff people there in the Senate [Agriculture] Committee who...
were interested in forest issues -- Jim Giltmeir, who’s still around and active as the Director of Pinchot Institute, a friend of Gray Towers organization, and Phil Thorton who’s on the staff of the committee, and Mike McCleod who was on the counsel for the committee. And after some discussion it was decided that it would not be desirable to try to do anything on the Farm Bill. And Humphrey, though, continued to talk with me as well as with others, including former chief Dick McArdle about his concerns that the Forest Service wasn't functioning as effectively as he thought it should as a conservation leader.

At any rate, sometime in [19]73, early [19]73, he asked me to develop a strategy, he outlined the major thrust of it, and I was to go on from there. What he wanted was to devise a planning process for natural resources, renewable natural resources -- private and public -- that set us on a course of decade planning, where you would develop an assessment of the situation and then you would develop a plan that suggested what the federal government thought it ought to do in the decade ahead in order to reach a resource condition 50 years out that that generation thought was appropriate. This would be revised every ten years, which would mean that each generation could take a new look at the near term and the far term as they saw it. His main concern was he did not want to embark on what would appear to be and would be a rigid planning process. He wanted it to be a continuum, not one that consumed all your time and planning, but a continuum of planning so that people had some feeling that this was where the country was heading. This was really not dissimilar from the thoughts Senator Henry Jackson of Washington had had on a bill he had proposed for national planning which had been shot down on the ground that it would intrude the government in the affairs of everybody in the country, much to Senator Jackson's chagrin and amazement. But that was the core of the idea, and I remember Humphrey saying to me that any nation that could put a man on the moon ought to be
able to solve some of the problems on this earth, which to him summed up what he was about.

Hall: Was there any chance for a review during this 10-year planning?

Wolf: Oh yes, there was going to be, but I'll get to that. At any rate, he also told me, be sure you talk to Dick McArdle about some of this [chuckles], he had this informal approach to things, and anyway Dick and I talked at some length about it, and my recollection is Dick said there was going to be a meeting of the American Forestry Association and maybe I ought to come to that and discuss this with the board of the American Forestry Association, which was, at that time, still a rather vigorous conservation group. And they were meeting up in the Adirondacks of New York that year and I went up there and I explained the basic outline of the Humphrey Bill which hadn't evolved to a bill yet, but the basic outline of it.

Anyway, and I am not sure of the exact dates of when this occurred, but this must of been late [19]72 that we did this, now that I think of it, late [19]72, because that would be the fall of [19]72 because that's when the AFA usually meets. Anyway, McArdle's conclusion had been that the program for the national forest had not caught on because it didn't have any continuum to it; it was a one shot thing. At any rate I explained this. Bill Towell, who headed the American Forestry Association, he had an idea of a more rigid national policy pronouncement that would be more iron clad. McArdle did not favor that, I didn't favor it, and Humphrey, I knew, wouldn't favor it because he didn't want these things to be cast in iron, he wanted them to have some flexibility. One of his other goals was to make sure that the national forests in particular were not buoys in the eyes of the storm that the Forest Service approach to problem identification usually stressed the national forests, and it often ignored the private lands. It
ignored the rangelands which Humphrey considered to be an important part of the forest-agricultural base because of the inter tie. It ignored the role of research. It ignored the role of the kind of things the federal government could do outside the national forest with state and private cooperation in aiding private land owners and he felt the Forest Service was concentrating on the national forests and their timber to the exclusion of a well rounded program that could best be summed up by the euphemistic term Multiple use= -- the various resources being used in a balanced manner.

Anyway, after that I began drafting. Phil Thorto from the committee was involved; Jim Giltmeir, Mike McCleod and myself, and we produced an initial draft. My recollection was that we gave a copy to the Forest Service and talked with them about it. They had also developed what they called a program for the future, which was more a slogan and a press release than it was an identifiable program. That appeared, I think, in [19]71. But it had the kernels of the same sort of ideas, and the Forest Service was beginning to think of long term issues that should be focused. And so we took advantage of that also, a couple of things stand out in the meeting of the Forest Service. One of their legislative people, the man by the name of Gene Bergoffen, who when he had been at Syracuse had written on a thesis on the Multiple Use Act of 1960, he done that, I think, in 1962. He came to see me one day and he told me that the chief wanted the title of the bill changed to the Forest and Related Resources [Bill]. And I asked him why and his response was "well, that's the way the Multiple Use Act is." Well I didn't say anything to him but I was just shocked because there's no such language in the act. It's not a long law, and I was quite familiar with it also, having actually worked on its enactment. And so I just nodded, "no, that's fine." I said, "I appreciate that thought and we'll consider it." And he saw the next draft of the bill and it wasn't there. The language hadn't changed, it said Forest and Rangeland.
Resources. We were dealing with two kinds of cover, in effect, on land using that title. And Berghoffen asked me why the change hadn't been made, and I said, "Well, when you show me the language in the act, we'll change it." The language isn't in the Multiple Use Act, [chuckles] and so he never changed it. It was sort of my, I don't know whether it was the polite way, it was my way of telling him to go back and read the laws he was supposed to be familiar with. I was amazed, but this demonstrates part of the dilemmas that the Forest Service had because that's the way they were looking at things. Everything was related to the forest, and timber was the top thing, rather than having a more balanced renewable resource approach. And that did indicate to me that it would be a rather tremendous challenge to get the Forest Service to change its thinking once it got any act passed.

At any rate, the bill went on through the subcommittee. Also when we went to introduce the bill, Humphrey had talked to several members, he found strong support, for instance, from Senator Mansfield, Senator Metcalf, Senator Jackson, and Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and a couple of other Southerners. Of course Herman Talmadge, he quickly gathered some bipartisan support and national support for it. One of the problems that he confronted and was well aware of was the chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture was noted for his indifference to dealing with forest issues. Poage of Texas and the chairman of the Forestry subcommittee in the House -- a fellow by the name of John Rarick -- Rarick had spent his whole Congressional career saying that all black people should be sent back to Africa and the League of Women Voters was full of Communists, and he didn't do anything on forest legislation. He was from Louisiana and had been a local commissioner down there, which gave him the title of judge. And then remarkably, I think it was Jim Giltmeir got a call from a fellow by the name of Nick Ashmore on Rarick' s staff that indicated Rarick was interested in being a cosponsor of the
bill in the House, which was wonderful news. At first we couldn't figure out why, but then after Jim did a little checking, it turned out that Rarick was facing formidable opposition in the primary in Louisiana and the fellow running against him was running on the fact that Rarick had never done anything on forestry, and never done anything at all, except rail against the Communists and Negroes. So at that point Humphrey had John Blatnik, of course, his colleague in the House who was from Northern Minnesota, Chairman of the Public Works Committee was the principal sponsor for the House Bill. And Blatnik was a power in the House and he had Julia Butler Hansen, who chaired the House subcommittee on Appropriations for the Forest Service as a cosponsor. As I recall, Wendell Wyatt, a ranking Republican from Oregon, was a third key person on it that they had. So they had a bipartisan team. But when Humphrey heard about this he called Blatnik and said, "John, we gotta let Rarick put the bill in [chuckles] and make him the lead sponsor. Well Blatnik was delighted, you know, and certainly let him take the lead, after all he's the chairman of the Forest Subcommittee, that would surely help get the bill through not only the subcommittee but the vote. So that was very fortuitous for the bill.

And it turned out to be excellent because Rarick worked like a Trojan to get this bill through the House. Anyway, the bill passed the Senate, there was a hearing and passed the Senate unanimously, went over to the House, passed this House, came out of the committee in great shape with practically no changes in the House Bill. Rarick tinkered around with a few things but nothing substantial, but enough so that we had to go to conference because of the differences. Rarick had a few different ideas on a couple of planning details, as I recall. We got to conference, and this was one of the last closed conferences of that era, they were going toward the sunshine era, when markups would be open and conferences would be open to the public. But this was closed, there was nobody in there except the conferees in the House and Senate and
a few staff people. I was one of them. The Forest Service was sitting outside curiously wondering what was going to happen. The conferees as I recall, were Senator Dole, a Republican from Kansas, Senator Talmadge, of course, chaired it, Senator Eastland, Senator Humphrey and there may have been one other member but the record would show who signed the conference. And the House conferees were lead by Rarick, and Poage and a couple of other members.

One of the things we had was a budget provision on dealing with roads. It was in the Senate bill that put purchaser construction roads on budget, that the Congress was in the process of passing the Budget Reform Act -- Budget Impoundment and Control Act of [19]74. There was a move toward getting everything on budget, and so then Senate Bill had included such a provision, which had been drafted for us. I say us because I was working on it mainly on a Senate bill by another acquaintance of mine who has a chief architect of the Budget Bill and on the House staff, Doctor Laurance Woodworth. After you work in a place for a while you have a lot of acquaintances. You know who can do the job on something and Woodworth and his associate Gene Wilhelm, who were working on the Budget Impoundment Act, were highly respected staff people, professional staff people. So Woodworth was the chief of staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation, and therefore Senator Talmadge, who also served on Finance, knew Woodworth well. So his work had a quality assurance aspect that automatically took care of it as being good stuff. Now there are inside people dealing, you know. It isn't like you get something from a lobbyist who is trying to push some special deal for himself. These are the insiders working on real issues of government as they see them that are understood. So we get to the conference and the House objects to this language, the Forest Service didn't like the idea, they didn't want purchaser roads on budget, and the House objected to it. I remember Senator
Talmadge leaned across to Poage, "why," he said, "this was drafted for us by Larry Woodworth, you know it's gotta be good." [chuckles] We went to the House to get the language, you know, we got it through your brother, in effect, because everybody in the House knew Woodworth. He'd been a staff director for a long time on a key committee. You didn't have a piece of tax legislation move without Dr. Woodworth being involved in it. So as soon as they heard that, well, if Larry Woodworth drafted it then it was alright. But, you see, if it had been drafted by somebody in the Senate they would have argued about it. And I knew that when we went to work on the development of it, and we wanted it to be technically sound.

Anyway, that's how the House agreed to the Senate language on that. And there were a few other little things and the House had fiddled around with some language on planning. Hubert Humphrey had a great sense of humor, as did Talmadge, and they decided they'd tweak Congressman Rarick a little bit. This is the way in which Conferees...

Hall: Just a minute, Bob, we're going to have to interrupt here for a moment...

[Editor's note: tape stops here for a moment]

Hall: Alright, we were at the conferees...

Wolf: Okay, this is the way Conferees throw one another off balance -- by diverting them from something. These people are experienced, many of them are lawyers, they are experienced negotiators and they are working on compromising things, and usually it's done with a high degree of pleasantness and I would call it artistry. So Humphrey turns to Rarick and he said,
"John" said, "this section is a national planning section the way you've changed the draft." And Rarick said, "What?" because national planning was an anathema to Rarick. Bear in mind that you got Jim Eastland, one of the most conservative members of the Senate sitting there with a straight face and Herman Talmadge who is very conservative, and Rarick is leaning forward, "What?" And Humphrey said, "Yes," and he looks at John Rarick and said, "But don't worry John, we'll take that language, we won't tell a soul." [laughs] And Rarick flips over, "Please wont somebody on the Senate side object," because under the way a conference runs the Senate has to object to the House language, if they don't object its accepted. And these guys sat there all impassively and wouldn't object. And he's looking, pleadingly, looking at Talmadge [chuckles] and Eastland for them to object. And Humphrey just keeps saying "Don't worry John, we won't tell a soul." But that threw Rarick off sufficiently. For a good part of the conference he was totally unnerved, and so the Senate managed to maintain virtually all of its language rather than the House language because of that little maneuver. At any rate, we came out of conference and told the Forest Service sitting outside there, and told them what the results were and the bill went on, too. And it had some budget language in it too, regarding some other aspects of the budget of presenting the programs of the national forests. This is early August 1974, late July of [19]74. Richard M. Nixon is the president of the United States and is on the verge of resigning because of the Watergate controversy. The question is when is he going to resign because his impeachment appears to be imminent, the House having already voted in committee to bring the articles to the floor of the House. So the question was would Nixon sign this bill before he left or would he veto it? By then the Office of Management of the Budget was unhappy with the Senate language dealing with the President setting up a policy and stating the financial consequences, and they wanted the president to veto it. Now this is very odd because
you would think that the Bureau of the Budget would want to know what the long term consequences would be of going down a spending road or not going down it. But they prefer really to have it dealt with on a year to year basis. Which really presents one of the dilemmas we have in the way in which our budget process functions these days. But anyhow, they were urging the President to veto it, and John McGuire, chief of the Forest Service, called and told me this. And he was deeply concerned.

Well I talked with various members of the Senate about it and also with the people in the House, particularly with Wendell Wyatt, a Republican from Oregon who I knew quite well, and Julia Butler Hansen, who I knew quite well. And simply informed them that President Nixon was being urged to veto this. Nixon was so busy worrying about what was going to happen, he did nothing. He left, Gerald Ford became the president of the United States, the Office of Management and Budget renewed their request that it be vetoed. There were then some further discussions with President Ford by Wendell Wyatt, by Mrs. Hansen, by Senator Mansfield, by Senator Humphrey. And the net effect was to point out how many cosponsors this bill had, which was a majority of the Senate by then, how strongly it passed both the House and Senate, that it had bipartisan support and generally unanimity, and in a nutshell, Jerry Ford decided you don't start off on a honeymoon by kicking a couple of your partners out of bed. [Hall laughs] He was persuaded to sign it just by, you know he was a pragmatic politician. And he didn't think he would start off his time in office with a veto of a bill what had such wide support, it wasn't, and so little external controversy surrounding it. There weren't a lot of interest groups out there yelling don't sign it, do sign it. This was a governmental issue in a sense -- how the government went about its planning processes and laying out its budgets. It did not direct the outcome. So it wasn't a bill like a decision to create a wilderness or a decision to have a certain level of timber
cutting or something like that. It was a process bill. And so to the chagrin of the Office of Management and Budget, it was signed by the president. I might say that at one point in the process, I heard it from McGuire about the problem, but I’d also heard it from Steve Satterfield who was then the budget examiner in OMB who now works for the Forest Service in 1990 in their budget office. But he called me and told me that he regretted to inform me that this bill was going to be vetoed. [chuckles] And I kind of delighted to have that clue because it helps you with your efforts to inform the members of the House and Senate of the likely status of a presidential signing or not signing. But anyway, Ford signed the Bill, that’s how it became law.

Wed been now through several iterations of the process. At the time when the bill went through, John McGuire, the chief of the Forest Service, was concerned with the short time frame for preparing the first assessment and program. He wanted a five year delay, and he was told to produce the first one by [19]76. And in particular, I recall both Senator Humphrey and Senator Talmadge, without any consultation or discussion with any of the staff, both told the chief the same thing: "Do it now." Humphreys position was: we know it won’t be the best that you can do, but you'll never produce the best that you can do, in terms of perfection, you know, that the experience of doing this with the information you have, which will make a plan that will just last for five years, will be beneficial, and if you delay and spend a lot of time developing things, you won't do nearly as well as if you do a job with what you have now, and then get started so that the 1980 one is on a basis which benefits from this experience. Humphrey didn’t want to give them time to just work and work on how they should do it. He wanted them to get to work on it. Talmadge had the same view, and both of them had the view that the service had been managing resources for seventy years. You’ve been doing timber resource reviews and other reviews, national reviews of things, you know a lot, you have a lot of information down in there
in the department, you don't need to spend five years trying to figure how to give us something that tells us what we ought to be doing in a general way. And I know at one point John McGuire expressed concern to Humphrey that the Forest Service be criticized if the product wasn't as good as somebody thought it ought to be. And Humphrey said, that made no headway with Humphrey or with Talmadge. Their reaction was, well, were criticized all the time. Don't worry about it. We're not going to criticize you, we know that we told you to do this quickly, and also to their way of looking at it, criticism was a constructive thing. The fact that somebody said that a better job could be done, or that there were gaps or holes or there were things that weren't dealt with effectively make you examine whether that complaint...

Wolf... wasn’t necessarily favorable. At any rate, that sort of, does sum up the highlights of the enactment of the bill. It was an effort, and is an effort to have a system of reviewing the condition of the rangeland of the United States, and the forest land of the United States, private and public, to defining the conditions these two bodies of land are in and the resources associated with them. To describe what seems to be the direction that the resource base is going based upon the private and public actions, what the long-term needs of the nation are expected to be, and what should be done if there are going to be gaps that can effectively be closed in order to have the best resource posture that the nation needs. It’s a complicated process because estimating future demands and future of populations are always chancy, so that the long term aspect is always subject to dispute, and you never know what the population and the demand and the national and the international conditions are going to be 50 years out. But you take your best
look at it because this then causes you to decide what sort of stewardship there should be for the private and public lands. And I think that all of the members who worked on it, intimately, had the feeling that the underlying goal was to maintain our natural resources on our private and public lands in the kind of condition that enabled them to make a contribution over the long term. And as I look at what’s evolved, a lot of it has been more output orientated than what I would call input oriented.

Hall: So would you say the process works well?

Wolf: I would say it hasn't worked as well as it could have, but again that's what you expect. But I think the Forest Service has been more output orientated than input orientated. They have done less on land conditions, resource conditions, and they have done more on resource outputs and anticipated consumption levels. They have not done as much, although each one has been an improvement over the last, they have not done as much on the non-commodity resources, which are harder to identify and define, admittedly, as they have done on the commodity resources. Timber still is the thing they do the most on. Range is the thing they do the second most on. The other thing I would say is that the Forest Service has not made the shift as fully as they should to putting in focus the fact that most of our resources should be coming and will be coming from private lands. They still can't get away from what I call the moth candle syndrome. You know, a moth flying around the candle until it burns its wings off. Of stressing the national forests, which really are not the source of most, because in total, the national forests are really only 180, 190 million acres of a billion and a half acres of forest and rangeland.
Hall: Where does this mindset come from?

Wolf: Well, agencies tend to look at themselves more than they look at the larger world. The Forest Service structure is a three-legged stool arrangement, in theory: national forests, research, and state and private forestry. But if you look at the dollars, it's a badly tilted three-legged stool, because state and private forestry, particularly under the Reagan/Bush years, was down around, well it would have been extinguished under the Reagan program if Congress hadn't maintained it, so they would have cut that leg off virtually entirely. The research, particularly during the Reagan years, got very little, no increases really proposed. I think this last Bush budget recommended some increases, Congress added even more. So what you have is a budget structure which isn't an even three-legged stool, not that it should be even, because you wouldn't necessarily want to spend as much money on research as the Forest Service has to spend to administer the national forests, but it hasn't focused that way effectively in terms of being equitable even instead of numerically even. And the timber budget still dominates, and unfortunately Congress is part of that problem, particularly the Western members of Congress, who keep pushing timber on federal lands even where it's contraindicated in terms of financial terms. Again the problem is they have these past program levels. There are mills in place and this is an extremely difficult thing for a member of Congress to, and particularly it's his own state, to say that we ought to do less, spend less here because it's a subsidy. It's not cost effective. This is a hard thing to expend. We have a lot of examples of subsidies of all sorts, not just here. Further the non-market resources do not have the, in the minds of many, the pulling power of federal intention that the market resources have. And the schism between the conservation community and, in particular, the forest products industry and livestock users of the
public lands has not really narrowed more than an inch. In fact I think it’s deepened, and this is a significant reason for the problem is that these interest groups are at loggerheads instead of approaching some of these things in a more constructive and rational basis. And that I think is a major problem, a cause of the problems that they confront. So when you look at failure, it’s hard to point a finger at say only one sector if the process fails. It generally involved a wider spectrum of our society who are contributing to the dilemmas that have been created. Does that cover the issues that you wanted to ... 

Hall: I think that covers just about everything that we started on this one.

[End tape]