1970

The Lincoln back country controversy: A case study of public land administration

Donald Robert Kendall

The University of Montana

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THE LINCOLN BACK COUNTRY CONTROVERSY
A Case Study of Public Land Administration

by

Donald R. Kendall

B. S. University of Montana, 1966

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Forestry

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1970

Approved by:

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The list of people deserving recognition for their contributions to this paper is a lengthy one. Space limitations restrict my specific thanks to a few, but not my gratitude to those many others.

I am especially indebted to Cecil Garland, without whose generosity and interest this endeavor would not have been possible. My graduate committee, Dr. Robert F. Wambach, Mr. Richard W. Behan, Dr. Thomas Payne, and Dr. K. Ross Toole, were invaluable sources of encouragement and inspiration. Senators Mansfield and Metcalf and Congressman Olsen were most helpful in answering my many and frequent questions. The numerous Forest Service personnel that I contacted willingly donated their time and knowledge. Finally, special thanks are in order for Mrs. Irene Evers, Forestry School librarian, for her untiring and ever-cheerful assistance in the library.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Reflection on the vibrant and often chaotic history of Montana's economic evolution with its boom and bust cycles reveals one predominant characteristic; a pattern of resource exploitation and extraction is continually repeated. The beaver and the buffalo, the precious metals, the timber and grass, the soil itself have all felt the squeeze of American ambition.¹

The casual reader of this history may be appalled by foregone events because he is applying contemporary value judgements. A hundred years ago Montanans were understandably unconcerned with pollution or vanishing wilderness. Our economic system justified, indeed demanded, the exploitation that took place.

History can reveal the reasons for and results of the interaction of man and his natural environment. At times the results have been disastrous to both as a result of unrealistic and unworkable regulations imposed by unaware

administrators who failed to use this tool of hindsight when advocating policy change or continuation. The public can and should be informed of management alternatives and probable results of the choice that they ultimately influence.

There is a tract of wild land in western Montana that awaits such a decision. The Indian, the trapper, and the miner have roamed through it, and today the pack strings and hikers come to hunt or fish or enjoy the scenery. Although this area is unroaded and essentially unaltered by man's activities, its face is not the same as it was a thousand, a hundred, or even ten years ago. The forces of fire, flood, erosion, and vegetative succession are continually altering the landscape.

Modern man has surveyed the area and contained it within the boundaries of a map. He has described it, inventoried its resources, and named it. Now he must decide what to do with it. It is the Lincoln Back Country.
Beginning with the concern of the British Crown for the regulated harvest of ship timbers in the original colonies a matrix of laws and regulations affecting forest land management has evolved in the United States. This chapter presents a brief outline of several of these regulations that are pertinent to management possibilities for the Lincoln Back Country.

Section 24, in the form of a last minute rider to the Act of March 3, 1891, states: "That the President of the United States may, from time to time, set apart and reserve, in any State or territory having public lands wholly or in part covered with timber or undergrowth, whether of commercial value or not, as public reservations, and the President shall, by public proclamation, declare the establishment of such reservations and the limits thereof." In effect this act authorized the President to withdraw forest reserves from the public domain, but made no

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provision for use or management.

Another last minute rider to the Sundry Civil Appropriations Bill of June 4, 1897 states in part that "no public forest reservation shall be established except to improve and protect the forest within the reservation for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States." Management and public use of the forest reserves was now legal.

The first wilderness-directed land classification was the 1929 Forest Service L-20 regulation. This regulation, the result of a study directed by Chief Forester William B. Greeley, provided for the establishment of primitive areas. These areas were set aside for further study and consideration, but timber harvest and road construction were not permanently prohibited.

In 1939 the first "U" regulations appeared. Regulation U-1 established 100,000 acres as a minimum size for wilderness areas in national forests and prohibited within their boundaries roads and other provisions for motorized

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3Ibid. p. 108.

transportation, commercial timber harvest, occupancy under special-use permits, and the landing of airplanes and use of motor boats except where such use is already established or when necessary for administration or emergencies.\(^5\)

Regulation U-2 provided for the establishment of wild areas of at least 5,000 acres and less than 100,000 acres. Administration and restrictions are the same as those governing wilderness areas.\(^6\)

Regulation U-3a provided for roadless areas which would be managed principally for recreation use and maintained in substantially their natural condition.\(^7\)

It is evident then, that thirty years ago the Forest Service realized the need for preservation of wild lands and initiated the establishment of wilderness areas.

On June 12, 1960 the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act became Public Law 86-517. Section 2 refers, in part, to wilderness areas and multiple use:

The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized and directed to develop and administer the renewable surface resources of the national forests for multiple use and sustained yield of the several products and services obtained therefrom. In the administration of the national forests due consideration shall be given to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas. The establishment and maintenance of areas of wilderness are consistent with the

\(^{5}\)Ibid. p. 21.
\(^{6}\)Ibid.
\(^{7}\)Ibid. pp. 21-22.
purposes and provisions of this Act.

On September 3, 1964 the Wilderness Act became Public Law 88-577. Essentially this law superseded the first three U-regulations previously described by defining wilderness, outlining administration and use of wilderness areas, and establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Act stipulated that within ten years of its enactment all existing primitive areas would be studied and the Secretary of Agriculture would report the findings to the President with recommendations as to inclusion or exclusion from the wilderness system. It went on to define wilderness as follows:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence without permanent improvements of human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.
CHAPTER III

THE AREA AND ITS RESOURCES

The area known as the Lincoln Back Country is being considered by Congress for wilderness classification. It is situated approximately seventy miles northeast of Missoula, Montana and due north of Lincoln, Montana. The northwestern edge of this 240,500 acre tract shares a common boundary with the extreme southeastern tip of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. It lies in three national forests; the Helena, Lolo, and Lewis and Clark.

The Back Country is roughly bisected by the Continental Divide. Probably the most well-known promontory is centrally located Scapegoat Mountain. The spectacular limestone cliffs of this 8,580 foot peak are actually an extension of the Bob Marshall Chinese Wall. Major drainages are the North, East, Landers, and Dry Forks of the Blackfoot River on the west side, and the Dearborn River, South Fork of the Sun River, and Straight Creek on the east side. Heart, Webb, Parker, and Twin Lakes are located in the southern end of the area. The boundary of the proposed wilderness area is illustrated in Figure 1.
Figure 1

BLACKFOOT SUN RIVER DIVIDE AREA
HELENA, FLATHEAD, LEWIS & CLARK and LOLO NATIONAL FORESTS

AREA PROPOSED FOR WILDERNESS
A detailed resource inventory of the Back Country per se does not exist. Three management proposals, each encompassing the same half million acres and including the entire Back Country, have been prepared by the Forest Service.

A merchantable timber volume of 666 million board feet of sawtimber and 209.4 million board feet of poles is estimated on the entire area. The annual allowable cut is calculated to be 15.9 million board feet, predominantly lodgepole pine with some Douglas-fir, alpine fir, white bark pine, Engelmann spruce, and ponderosa pine. It is roughly estimated that 50-60 percent of this volume lies within the Back Country, meaning an annual allowable cut of between 8 and 9.5 million board feet.  

Rangeland suitable for domestic stock is practically nonexistent in the Back Country. No grazing permits are issued for the area except to a few packers. Forage is insufficient for pack stock along the more popular routes and outfitters often find it necessary to pack in supplemental feed.

Because of the large proportion of High Area Zone, the planning area is a heavy producer of water, primarily from winter and spring snowfall. Large contributions of water are made to both the Columbia

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and Missouri River Basins. In addition to the benefits this resource provides the recreationist within the area, the water provides for irrigation and domestic needs in the Sun River and Blackfoot valleys.\(^9\)

Populations of a great many species of game animals are known to exist in the Back Country. Elk, mule deer, whitetail deer, grizzly bear, black bear, mountain goat, mountain sheep, mountain lion, martin, wolverine, coyote, and Canada lynx are found there, but population estimates are not available for any of them.\(^10\)

The Back Country sport fishery is variable. Native Westslope cutthroat trout can be caught in places, and Heart Lake contains an introduced population of grayling. Most of the lakes and streams are small and shallow, some still showing severe damage from the 1964 flood, and there is little argument that the fishery is susceptible to severe population reduction under heavy fishing pressure.

Back Country scenery, while picturesque, is generally not especially spectacular. The massive limestone cliffs of Scapegoat Mountain and the more than fifty feet high North Fork Falls are rare examples of grandeur.

While there are no active mines in the Back Country, operations along the immediate periphery have generated speculation concerning mining potential within the proposed

\(^9\)Ibid. pp. 10-11.
\(^10\)Ibid. p. 9.
The lack of mineral deposit information is a major point of contention, and the passage of pending legislation may be blocked until adequate surveys are made.

The U. S. Forest Service multiple-use plan envisages the opening up of one or more access roadways, through the Lincoln Back Country, for the tourist, sportsman, and commercial use. Any proposed roadway will be cut primarily through the glacial drift mantling the valley bottoms and lower walls. Early in the summer of 1968 I had occasion to investigate the U. S. Forest Service access road along Lake Creek, on the western border of the proposed wilderness area. Geologically, the Lake Creek Road cuts material identical to that in the proposed wilderness area. At the time of my investigation it had been raining for 24 hours and many of the features directly related to the immediate rainfall were superimposed on the normal erosion of the road banks in the 2 years since construction. A number of colored slides are included with this statement to illustrate the features discussed below.

The Lake Creek road was strewn with boulders eroded out of the glacial drift in the road cuts. These boulders are anywhere from a few inches to a few feet across and are a potential road hazard. Large sections of the glacial drift slope are undergoing sliding, both above and below the road level. In places large trees and soil are moving down over the road embankment, and in another place, where logging has occurred just above the Lake Creek road, the logged area has undergone massive slumpage. Undercutting this unconsolidated glacial drift during road construction produces a very unstable situation and sliding, slumpage and sloughing will continue to occur until the natural slope again develops by eliminating the road cuts.11

A soil stability evaluation involving surface erosion and mass failure hazard was made on all proposed

road locations and timber harvest areas in the Blackfoot-Sun River Divide area. Proposed road locations on unstable soils (high or very high mass failure hazards) were relocated to more stable soil areas and in several situations (usually very high mass failure hazard) entire roads were eliminated from the transportation plan because of highly unstable soils. Roads located on soils having medium mass failure can be designed to prevent new mass failures from developing. Timber management on highly erosive soils can easily be modified to protect the soils resource.

Our investigation found the soils in this area to be similar and in many instances identical to other major soils areas in western Montana and northern Idaho already under intensive multiple use management.\(^\text{12}\)

The two preceding excerpts are presented in succession for illustrative purposes. The particular subject matter of geology and soils was chosen because of the interest generated in this case. "Fragile" has become probably the most often used adjective when discussing the Back Country. Although the definition of this term is unclear, its connotation is not.

The statement by Dr. Silverman, while perhaps not his intention, could easily be interpreted to suggest that the entire area is highly erodible and subject to mass slumpage at the slightest disturbance. The Forest Service management plan, completed a month after Dr. Silverman's testimony, describes a detailed soils study of the area.

Proposed road and trail routes and timber harvest locations were dictated by the results of on-the-ground soils mapping.
CHAPTER IV

EARLY SIGNS OF DISCONTENT

In May, 1960, Cecil Garland resigned from the Forest Service. Mr. Garland had been an improvement foreman on the Lincoln Ranger District of the Helena National Forest for four years. In 1962 he became President of the Lincoln Back Country Protective Association (LBCPA). This organization, with an original membership of three men, had been formed in September, 1950 under the leadership of William Mayger. Its objectives are as follows:

The objectives of the Lincoln Back Country Protective Association shall be to encourage protection of wilderness, water, wildlife, forest and field; to seek wise use of land and water in broad public interest, nurture and improve wildlife stocks; and restore and rehabilitate wildlife environment.

To sponsor and support legislation designed to end methods and activities destructive to natural resources and to institute methods seeking to replenish and renew a sound resources economy. ¹³

In a letter dated June 11, 1962 sent to Senators Mansfield and Metcalf and Representative Olsen, Mr. Garland complained of what he considered to be bureaucratic inefficiency in the management of the Lincoln District. He also

mentioned Forest Service plans for development of the Back Country and contended that this proposal was in direct opposition to public wants. Essentially the same letter was sent to Boyd L. Rasmussen, Regional Forester of Region One, the following day.

On June 25, 1962, Mr. Rasmussen replied to Cecil Garland, and on June 28 Chief Forester Edward P. Cliff replied to the Montana Congressional delegation in reference to Mr. Garland's charges. The theme of all these letters was the same; the administration of the Lincoln District would be investigated and the development of the Back Country had been determined to be in the best public interest based on the "greatest good for the greatest number" principle, even though there was some local opposition.

In a three page letter dated September 28, 1962 Chief Forester Cliff assured the Montana congressmen that a review of the Lincoln District's program had indicated no basic irregularities in administration, although there was room for improvement. As for the Back Country, he referred to the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act as a directive from Congress. Apparently the implication intended was that Congress, and therefore the public, desired that national forest land, not already set aside, should be developed for a variety of uses.
Prior to this time the Back Country had been, and presently remains, a de facto wilderness area. It was inevitable that the Forest Service would propose some form of management in compliance with the multiple use directive. Wilderness classification was to be considered, but with the adjacent 950,000 acre Bob Marshall Wilderness already established the alternative was hastily discarded.

In March, 1963 the Long Range Plan, Northern Half Lincoln Ranger District, Helena National Forest appeared. This plan encompassed 177,262 acres. The community of Lincoln was situated at approximately center of the southern edge of the management unit, as shown in Figure 2. Only part of the area now being considered for wilderness classification was included in the plan, the remainder apparently being ignored for the time being. In brief, the plan called for timber harvest and related road construction in the more accessible drainages.

Recreation access roads were to be constructed to Heart, Webb, and Parker Lakes. Where feasible, lakes would be damned to raise water levels in order to enhance fish habitat and water-oriented recreation; the use of motorboats would be prohibited. The plan also proposed an 18,000 acre Red Mountain Scenic Area and an adjoining 8,000 acres to be maintained in a "near natural condition" for a total of 26,000 acres of "semi-wilderness."
Figure 2

LONG RANGE PLAN PROPOSED MANAGEMENT UNIT, 1963

NORTH HALF of LINCOLN DISTRICT
HELENA NATIONAL FOREST

BOUNDARY - PROPOSED

WILDERNESS

LEGEND
- EXISTING ROADS
- PROPOSED MAIN ROADS
- EXISTING TRAILS
- PROPOSED TRAILS
- PROPOSED CAMPGROUNDS
- PROPOSED RED MTN SCENIC AREA
- HIGH AREA ZONE
- WATER AND TRAVEL INFLUENCE ZONE
- POSSIBLE LAKE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
Fish and game populations were vaguely mentioned, acknowledging the existence of several species of big game and pointing out that the deer herds were overgrazing their winter range. It was predicted that logging activities would help alleviate this situation by creating browse and dispersing hunter pressure.

At a meeting of the Lincoln Lion's Club on March 27, 1963 the Long Range Plan was first made public, and immediate opposition was voiced by representatives of the LBCPA and several sportsmen's groups.  


Garland's following expanded, and on April 8, 1963 Dr. George F. Weisel, President of the Western Montana Fish and Game Association, wrote to Regional Forester Rasmussen requesting a public hearing on the Long Range Plan. On the same date Cecil Garland outlined the developing controversy in a letter to David Brower, Executive Secretary of the Sierra Club, and requested that organization's support.

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Vernon Hamre, Supervisor of the Helena National Forest, released notice on April 10 that a public meeting would be held on the issue on April 19 in Lincoln. According to the April 21 edition of the Great Falls Tribune, "Approximately 500 persons attended the meeting and opponents and proponents were evenly represented," but this statement is misleading because of a rigid "equal-time" rule enforced by the Forest Service. Bitter criticism of this regulation was forthcoming and the agency accused of distorting public opinion.

On April 30, 1963 Dr. John J. Craighead, President of the Montana Wilderness Association, took the following position in a letter to Mr. Rasmussen:

On the basis of the public hearings and the information at our disposal, we wish to go on record as opposing the plan in its present form. We do not advocate that this area be set aside as wilderness nor, on the other hand, do we support a full scale development program.

Garland's subsequent request for a ten year moratorium followed this same reasoning. The moratorium was suggested in a letter dated May 17, 1963 to Supervisor Hamre. Mr. Garland proposed that development continue around the Back Country, but should be delayed within the area itself until July 1, 1973. He further suggested that during the interim an intensive study be conducted to determine technical feasibility and economic justification for further development.
CHAPTER V

THE LEGISLATURE REACTS

Opposition to the Long Range Plan was now of sufficient magnitude to demand political action. Suddenly the Forest Service's role as unquestioned guardian of the Back Country was being challenged and the agency was plunging headlong into the web of pressure group politics. These pressures prompted Senator Metcalf to write to Chief For­ ester Cliff on June 11, 1963. In his letter the Senator warned of mounting opposition to the plan and requested consideration of a compromise, whereby the northern half of the Lincoln District would be divided into two management units. The southernmost unit would be developed as proposed, while the northern unit, the Back Country, would remain undisturbed.

In response to the growing political concern, Supervisor Hamre advised Representative Arnold Olsen on June 12 that modifications had been made in the original plan and he felt that" . . . we have been able to reconcile the opposing interests to the point where the plan will be at least acceptable to both sides." The modifications made public June 14 announced that the road across the Continental
Divide had been eliminated and other road construction would be carried out in stages rather than all at one time.

Mr. Hamre's confidence proved false, for the alterations failed to appease the interest groups, and the requested moratorium was not granted on the basis of projected demands for timber and developed recreation sites.

Regional Forester Rasmussen advised Senator Mansfield on July 3 that he had decided to make an on-the-ground inspection of the area during the week of July 15, in light of the questions raised. No additional road construction would be initiated until the inspection and further review were completed.

On July 7, 1963 Robert S. Morgan replaced Vernon Hamre as Supervisor of the Helena National Forest. Mr. Hamre had held the position for four years.

While they awaited the outcome of the Regional Forester's inspection, the interest groups continued to pound out letters. Dr. George F. Weisel and Donald Aldrich, Director of the Montana Wildlife Federation, made their own first hand examination. On August 13 they reported their findings to Chief Forester Cliff, evaluating the Back Country as best suited for roadless recreation. Mr. Cliff acknowledged their report, saying he appreciated the effort, and felt certain that Mr. Rasmussen would find their remarks helpful in reviewing the case.
The long awaited statement of the Regional Forester was forthcoming on October 15. It said:

My study of the northern half of the Lincoln Ranger District has led me to the conclusion that it is not in the public interest to designate 75,000 acres here as a roadless or wild area reserved exclusively for wilderness-type recreation.\(^3\)

At this time, of course, there had been no proposal made that the Back Country be classified as wilderness. Opponents of the Long Range Plan had, in fact, stated that they did not favor wilderness classification, but only requested a ten year moratorium of development plans. This point was repeatedly asserted in the disgruntled correspondence received by the Congressional delegation.

At the request of the LBCPA, the Montana Fish and Game Department made a study of the Back Country. The survey was directed by Robert Cooney, and on December 26, 1963 Department Director Frank H. Dunkle released a memorandum to his staff stating the official position of the Department as follows:

In the interest of high quality hunting and fishing and related outdoor recreation, it would appear desirable at this time to retain that portion of the North Half of the Lincoln Ranger District, north and west of Lone Mountain in trail access status.

Primary reasons offered for opposition to Forest Service development proposals were predicted loss of grizzly

\(^{15}\)Ibid. p. 39.
habitat, despoilation of the native fishery, and degradation of elk hunting quality caused by increased sportsman pressure due to road access.

Support of the Forest Service plan was aired in a lengthy article in the January, 1964 issue of Western Timber Industry. The article applauded the multiple use concept and presented a blanket negative attitude toward wilderness. Here again was made the erroneous assumption that wilderness classification had been proposed for the Back Country. It had not, yet.

On January 19, 1964 Neal Rahm replaced Boyd L. Rasmussen as Regional Forester of Region One. This change, coupled with the recent replacement in the Supervisor's Office gave the pressure groups new hope as evidenced in the closing statement of a letter from George Weisel to Cecil Garland dated February 5, 1964:

Also, after the meeting we should meet with Morgan, Neal Rahm and others of the Forest Service. The change in administration may make a big difference.

A flurry of correspondence was fired back and forth between the interest groups concerning strategy in light of the Forest Service overhead alterations. It seemed to be generally agreed that the best approach was to wait for the reaction of these new men to the controversy.
CHAPTER VI

WILDERNESS CLASSIFICATION PROPOSED

At a meeting of the LBCPA on February 12, 1964 there was apparently a need felt for immediate action, and the group resolved that the Back Country should be classified as a de jure wilderness, either as a separate entity or as part of the Bob Marshall.

On March 1, 1964 Gerald Stern replaced Bert W. Morris as Ranger of the Lincoln District. He held the position until August 27, 1967 and the vacancy was filled by Neil O. Peterson on December 3 of that year. With a now completely new cast; Ranger, Supervisor, and Regional Forester, there was some change in agency attitude. Mr. Morgan, for example, feels it was a mistake to push the Long Range Plan in the face of the opposition. Nevertheless, the LBCPA still considered the area threatened, the commitment to action was made, and the other groups involved rallied behind their leader.

The Montana Wildlife Federation met in Missoula on April 4, 1964 and resolved to request the Forest Service to

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make a joint study with state and national conservation groups to determine the desirability of classifying the Back Country as wilderness. The proposed boundary accompanying the resolution was the same as in current pending legislation.

No time was lost in acquainting Mr. Rahm with the situation. He met with representatives of the various wilderness proponents, professed interest in their viewpoint, and granted a moratorium on development plans for at least a year until he could become familiar with the issues involved.

A door was opened on September 3, 1964 when the Wilderness Act became law. Senators Metcalf and Mansfield introduced the first legislation to classify the Back Country as a statutory wilderness area. S. 107 was introduced January 6, 1965. It called for the establishment of a 75,000 acre reserve, rather than the 240,500 acres desired by the LBCPA and the Montana Wildlife Federation. This disparity apparently resulted from a misunderstanding between the senators and the LBCPA. Only that part of the Back Country within the Helena National Forest and threatened by the Long Range Plan was included in the bill, which was unexpected and unsatisfactory to the wilderness

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advocates. An example of this feeling is in the following statement contained in a letter of January 19, 1965 from Kenneth K. Baldwin, President of the Montana Wildlife Federation, to Clifton R. Merritt, Director of Field Services of the Wilderness Society:

We do not like the limitation of 75,000 acres to the Helena National Forest. This bill will need a lot of revision.

Another flurry of inter-group correspondence resulted in a general agreement that S. 107 was a step in the right direction, although gentle pressure had to be exerted in order to enlarge the proposed boundary without losing Congressional favor.

The approach was successful, and on April 7, 1965 Representative James F. Battin, a member of the LBCPA, introduced H. R. 7266, proposing wilderness classification for the 240,500 acres desired by the pressure groups.

Neal Rahm dropped a letter to Senator Mansfield on April 30 to bring him up to date on Back Country plans. Roads for the Back Country, he said, were of low priority at the time in Region One, and future construction would depend on timber and recreation demands.

The pressure groups initiated another letter writing campaign, and requests for action on S. 107 and H. R. 7266 came from several states. No immediate action was taken, and the issue began to cool. During the last
part of 1965 and all of 1966, little surface action was discernible except an occasional letter or position statement, and virtually nothing was heard from industry.

On February 18, 1967 Senators Metcalf and Mansfield introduced S. 1121, and on March 14 Representative Battin introduced H. R. 7148. These documents again proposed wilderness classification for the quarter million acres of national forest land known as the Lincoln Back Country. The boundaries recommended in these bills have not been changed since.

Following the introduction of these bills, the Department of Agriculture made a recommendation to Representative W. R. Foage, Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, that the Lincoln Back Country not be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Reasons offered were predicted increased demands for developed recreation sites and timber, and the assertion that adequate wilderness existed in Montana. 18

Representative Battin informed Mr. E. L. Shults, Vice President of Tree Farmers, Inc., and a former Forest Service employee, of the Forest Service position on the Back Country legislation. Mr. Shults responded on September 5, 1967, advocating multiple use of the area and

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emphasizing the importance of the timber resource. He also revealed that he was involved in the formation of the Inland Empire Multiple Use Association, Inc., a pressure group to be affiliated with Outdoors Unlimited, Inc., which advocated development of the Back Country. Representative Battin promptly forwarded this letter to Cecil Garland.
CHAPTER VII
INVENTORIES, PLANS, AND HEARINGS

The legislation proposing wilderness classification of the Back Country caused an upsurge of activity in 1968. In May, 1968 the Forest Service made available a sixteen page brochure entitled Patterns for Management Blackfoot-Sun River Divide Area. The study area reviewed in this paper encompassed approximately 500,000 acres, including the entire Back Country proposed wilderness. Essentially the report considered two management alternatives. Wilderness classification was dismissed as an unwarranted lock-up of needed resources, especially with the existence of the adjacent Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. The second alternative would provide a scenic highway along the North Fork of the Blackfoot River and over the Continental Divide to Augusta, Montana. Additional development would include campground construction, fish and game habitat manipulation, winter sports areas, and logging. Regarding this second alternative, the report concluded on page 16 that, "All-in-all, it makes a much better contribution to the needs and desires of the whole public than any other pattern of management."
Senator Metcalf announced that a public hearing would be held on June 11, 1968 in Great Falls, Montana by the Public Lands Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs on S. 1121. The pro-wilderness interest groups bustled about encouraging attendance or written testimony to preserve the Back Country. Emotion was not entirely one-sided, however. The Great Falls Tribune carried an article on June 12 covering a meeting of the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce's Committee for the Development of Outdoor Recreation. This group was opposed to wilderness classification and desired snowmobile and trail bike use of the area.

Congressman Battin recognized that the new management plan absorbed the entire Back Country in a half-million-acre unit, and that no separate detailed resource inventory existed for it. In a letter of July 2 he asked Mr. Rahm to correct this situation. Mr. Rahm's reply of July 9 assured Mr. Battin that the size of the management unit was in no way influenced by the pending legislation. Regrettably, he said, cost prohibited a specific inventory of the Back Country, but he estimated that it contained about 50% of the merchantable timber volume in the entire study area, and predicted that development plans would not interfere with existing commercial outfitting operations.

The June 11 Senate hearing was postponed, and
rescheduled tentatively for September 25, 1968. This delay disappointed the interest groups, but they used the time to bolster their forces. The LBCPA gained the support of the Sierra Club when its northwest representative, M. Brock Evans, discussed the issue with Cecil Garland. The Missoula Board of County Commissioners had originally submitted a resolution opposing S. 1121, but in a letter of July 12 to Senator Quentin N. Burdick of North Dakota, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, rescinded that resolution.

Nor was the other camp idle. Mr. E. L. Shults, in a strongly worded letter of August 26 to Representative Battin, accused the congressman of misrepresentation by his support of wilderness classification. Mr. Shults stressed the importance of Back Country timber and suggested that only an active minority of Montanans supported the legislation. He went on to charge Louis O. Alkesich, Mr. Battin's administrative assistant, with ulterior motives in the case because of land holdings near Lincoln.

In August the Forest Service printed another brochure on the 500,000 acre study area publicized in May. This one, entitled The Blackfoot-Sun River Divide Area Management for People, again briefly described the existing resources and outlined development plans, making
no allowance for wilderness classification or mention of pending legislation.

On September 12, 1968, Senator Metcalf announced that the Senate subcommittee hearing on S. 1121 to be held in Great Falls, Montana had been rescheduled from September 25 to September 23.

For some time Forest Service personnel had been speaking at various service club meetings, explaining the Back Country development plans. Lester R. Rusoff, Professor of Law at the University of Montana and ally of Cecil Garland, suspected a violation of the Hatch Political Activities Act, pertaining to political activity of Civil Service employees. He requested clarification of the situation in a letter dated September 13, 1968 to Mr. John M. Young, Director of the United States Civil Service Commission at the Regional Office in Seattle, Washington. His letter was forwarded to Washington, D. C. On September 25 Karl Ruediger, Assistant General Counsel of the Civil Service Commission, wrote to Mr. Rusoff explaining that the Hatch Act applied only to partisan politics and in his opinion had not been violated.

The hearing was held September 23, 1968 in Great Falls, Montana. An estimated 300 people were in attendance and the published proceedings contained more than 900 statements regarding S. 1121. Supporters of the
bill outnumbered opponents by about five to one.

In October, 1968 the Forest Service completed yet another management plan. This one was entitled Coordinated Resource Development Plan for the Blackfoot-Sun River Divide Area. The seventy-four page report also encompassed the same half-million acre unit, including the Back Country, and represented a great deal of field work, data collection, and writing effort. It was evidently intended as support for multiple use development. The wilderness, or "no management" alternative was again glossed over as not serving the public interest, although this interest was neither described nor defined. It was also inferred on page 10 of the plan that not building the scenic highway would have an adverse effect on the town of Lincoln by reducing overall recreation use in the area. A recreation use sample was taken in the Lincoln area to determine probable use of the paved scenic highway. The results predicted that 280,000 people could be expected to use this road annually, and Appendix I of the report went on to state: "The survey also concluded that 76 percent of vacation or pleasure drivers could be lured from their originally planned route of travel to a locally attractive route."

It was a good multiple use plan. Roads, trails, campgrounds, scenic areas, and logging chances were well
planned. The point is that a single alternative, intensive multiple use development, was still being given the "hard sell" as being in the public interest, which was questionable. No inventory or plan had yet been effected for the Back Country itself, although this was the third such effort for the larger management unit.

On January 3, 1969 Representative Battin introduced H. R. 393, again calling for wilderness classification of the Back Country as previously described in S. 1121 and H. R. 7148. On January 15 Congressman Olsen introduced H. R. 3682 which was identical to H. R. 393, and both were referred to the Committee on Agriculture. On January 21 Senator Metcalf introduced S. 412, identical to S. 1121 of the previous year.

A hearing was held in Washington, D. C. on March 7, 1969 on S. 412 before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. The turnout was considerably smaller than for the Great Falls hearing, due probably to the location. This factor may also have effected the opposition/support ratio. This time there were only seven oral statements, five supporting the bill. Of the seventy-two written testimonies, forty supported the bill.

The first to testify was Mr. Edward P. Cliff, Chief of the Forest Service. In essence, he said that the
Back Country was still under study, that he was not recommending any particular plan for the area, and that he foresaw no planned development for the next several years which would alter it.

Hearings on H. R. 393 and H. R. 3682 were held in Washington, D. C. on April 16, 1969 before the Subcommittee on Forests, House Committee on Agriculture. Twenty-two statements were accepted, however the hearing results have not yet been printed.

Mr. Olsen felt that his bill would receive more favorable action in the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, so he withdrew H. R. 3682 and introduced H. R. 11489 on May 20, 1969. The only change in this new bill was a slightly different wording to insure its reference to the desired committee.

May 29, 1969 was a day of jubilation for Back Country wilderness advocates. The Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs unanimously approved S. 412.

A Forest Service policy change was now in order. On July 2, 1969 Regional Forester Kahrm sent a memo and a copy of Chief Forester Cliff's testimony on S. 412 to the Forest Supervisors of Region 10. The memo contained an interpretation of the Chief's statement, a brief history.

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of the case, and an outline of the Forest Service position on the issue. That position boiled down to a recognized need to satisfy public wants. It was emphasized that no plan would be implemented that didn't meet with general public acceptance. Public participation in the decision making process was encouraged. The Forest Service was opposed to wilderness classification at that time because a review which would give a thorough airing to all alternatives had not been completed, although apparently the only valid restraint on wilderness designation was an insufficient mineral survey.

With the impetus of Senate approval behind them, the entire Montana Congressional delegation, in a letter of July 20, 1969, requested the Interior Department to expedite the Back Country mineral survey. They suggested that the crews then working in the Bob Marshall be transferred to the Back Country, and that the survey be completed within a year. The request was publicly denied on September 5 for reasons of priorities and a rigorous time schedule. A preliminary report was not visualized before the end of 1970.

Trying another route, Senator Mansfield wrote to Congressman Aspinall on October 28, asking his assistance in bringing the legislation to the House floor. Mr. Aspinall of Colorado is the Chairman of the House Interior and Insular
Affairs Committee. His reply of October 30 was a refusal of Senator Mansfield's request. He said that the Wilderness Act established priorities for mineral surveys, the primitive areas being first, and such a survey must be completed prior to further action on the Back Country.

That is how the issue stands today. House action is blocked by Aspinall's committee and the deciding vote is not likely to be taken until either the mineral survey is completed or the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs has a more sympathetic chairman.
CHAPTER VIII

OPINIONS

In an attempt to sample national sentiment on the Back Country issue, a letter questioning public opinion was sent to two senators and one representative of each of the fifty states. Forty senators from thirty-one states and fifteen House members replied. Of these, only the Montana delegation felt that the majority of their constituents favored wilderness classification. The others indicated a populace largely unaware of the issue.

It should be safe to conclude then, that the significant number of concerned individuals are Montanans, and the Back Country controversy, while of national significance, has not generated country-wide interest.

Six interviews were conducted in August, 1969 to sample opinions of those most intimately involved. The results were as would be expected. Cecil Garland and Dale Burk, State Editor of The Missoulian, felt that the Forest Service had been insensitive to public opinion and that the Back Country is definitely best suited as wilderness. Mr. Shults was firmly in favor of developing the area's mass recreation and timber resources as being
in the best public interest. Mr. Large, Supervisor of the Lolo National Forest, indicated that the Back Country timber was not of major significance, that the most recent management plan was a good one, but that nothing should be pushed through in the face of public opposition. Mr. Morgan, Supervisor of the Helena National Forest, felt that the timber resource could potentially be a major issue, depending on economic conditions, that the management plan was well done, and that there should not be a win or lose attitude between opposing interests but a need for cooperation. Mr. Peterson, Ranger of the Lincoln Ranger District, deemed the timber to be of secondary importance and said there was a definite need for better understanding between professional land managers and the general public.

Also in August of 1969 a questionnaire was sent to twenty-seven packers known to have used the Back Country. Only eight replies were received. All of them felt that Forest Service development plans would have a definite negative effect on their incomes. Their Back Country clients were attracted for a variety of reasons; hunting, fishing, scenery, etc. Six of the respondents said that the majority of their customers were non-residents, while those of the other two were about equally divided between Montana residents and non-residents. When asked to make an estimate of Back Country user contributions to the
Montana economy, six of the outfitters replied. The estimates ranged from $12,000 to $90,000 per packer annually. None of the respondents felt that their interests were fairly considered in the initial Forest Service development plan. They generally felt that the Forest Service is insensitive to public desires and that the Back Country is too fragile to support the pressures of development.

Since this section deals with opinions, some personal thoughts on the issue may be in order. During the summer of 1969 three back-pack trips were made through the study area, one in each of the national forests involved. Observations made along the ninety miles of trails hiked are completely personal and can be supported only by my education and experience as a professional forester.

The timber resource within the proposed wilderness area would have to be classified as marginal in economic importance at the present time. Most of the merchantable forest is lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir, with occasional pockets of Engelmann spruce. In general the terrain is steep and rocky, cut by deep, narrow canyons. Many similar areas are being logged in western Montana, but this in itself is not a justification. The best logging opportunity observed, considering timber, terrain, and access, is in
the Heart Lake area.

Considerable erosion remains evident as a result of the 1964 flood. Presumably, accelerated erosion as a consequence of surface disturbance would be of major concern for any development activity.

Unless future mineral surveys uncover something of consequence, Back Country mining holds little promise of profit.

The range resource is economically insignificant. Small, scattered grasslands having a short growing season and providing wildlife forage could be expected to support little if any domestic stock.

Mule deer, whitetail deer, and elk were seen and evidence of big game, including black and grizzly bear, was abundant. Pan-size cutthroat trout were readily caught in the Dry Fork and Parker Lake, and Heart Lake produces fat grayling, but the overall Back Country fishery is not of unusually high quality.

Scapegoat Mountain's spectacular limestone cliffs and the awesome North Fork Falls are rare examples of scenic grandeur. Most of the area is picturesque, but certainly not in the Glacier Park category.

In my opinion, the Lincoln Back Country is not presently an important source of raw materials for the extractive industries. It definitely qualifies as a
wilderness area and also offers great potential for a carefully planned recreation development.

Study of this case has generated some unanswered questions that may warrant speculation. For instance, would the issue have reached Congress if the LBCPA had not pressed for wilderness classification in 1964 before giving the new Forest Service administrators more time for consideration? The answer is probably yes, eventually. Even though these new men seemed more receptive than their predecessors, the multiple use development plans continued to appear, all glossing over the wilderness alternative.

A second question is then raised relative to Congressional intervention and Forest Service policy. The question actually is twofold: Why has there never been an inventory and management proposal for the Back Country itself, and why was the area engulfed in a half-million-acre management unit in the 1968 proposals? The Forest Service's reply to the first part is prohibitive costs. This would be acceptable except that the entire area has been inventoried. The data was collected during the heat of the controversy, yet no separation of information was made. Still, Mr. Rahm maintains, in answer to the second part, that pending legislation in no way influenced the decision to include the Back Country in a larger unit. The hearing on S. 1121 was originally scheduled for June, 1968
and later moved to September. The Forest Service multiple use brochures appeared in May and August, 1968.

A third question, again related to Back Country inventory, is: Why did industry make only a relatively token effort to block wilderness designation? This lack of enthusiasm suggests that the area's resources offer a small profit margin to the extractive industries.

Observers of this case often ask a fourth question: Didn't the Magruder Corridor controversy teach the Forest Service the effectiveness of pressure group politics? Cunningham's study of the Magruder Corridor indicates that dispute began in 1963, when the Back Country issue was already at hand. The LBCFA was formed in 1959. This question also illustrates the common error of group personification. In this case the Forest Service is assumed to be capable of learning. Any organization is composed of individuals and it is their behavior that must be analyzed.

Recognition of this need for role analysis leads to the last, and key question. Why has the controversy existed for eight years without the attainment of an acceptable compromise? The answer again is merely

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speculative. Forest Service personnel involved probably were sincere in their efforts to satisfy the public interest. It is understandable for a federal agency to be concerned with more than local sentiment, but inexcusable to ignore it. A management decision was demanded by the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act and the desirability of an addition to the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area was a legitimate question. Misinterpretation of the multiple use concept seems to lie at the heart of the matter. Provision for every possible forest land use on any given management unit has been the common mistake. Logging and related road construction has been the primary interest group objection throughout the case. Even though the timber resource is of questionable significance, every Forest Service proposal has included timber harvest plans.

A roadless recreation area subjected to limited development, called a Pioneer Area, is a recent Forest Service management innovation.21 Had an alternative of this nature been offered initially, the entire conflict might have been avoided.

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CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY

The fate of the Lincoln Back Country has been argued for eight years and is still undecided. During this time the Forest Service has released four proposals advocating development of the area and eight pieces of legislation sponsoring wilderness classification have been introduced in Congress. One of these, S. 412, has been passed.

The quarter of a million acres involved lies within three national forests. Its present status is a de facto wilderness area. Unquestionably it meets the requirements of a de jure wilderness area as described in the Wilderness Act of 1964. Undeniably the area also offers great potential for multiple use development in accord with The Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960.

Apparently concern of the issue is limited primarily to Montanans, and more specifically to the Lincoln Back Country Protective Association. The controversy then, reduces to a long struggle between this small but effective pressure group and the United States Forest Service. Each of these organizations claims that its proposal is in the public interest.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There can be no such thing as a conclusion in any book that treats of human affairs and problems, because we strange beings, we people, do the most unexpected things and are capable of adapting ourselves in unforeseeable ways to new circumstances.\(^{22}\)

The above statement was chosen to preface this chapter in recognition of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of determining a best course of action on such controversial and emotion-laden issues as the Lincoln Back Country. Perhaps this paper should have been entitled something like "A Study of Public Forest Management Myopia Correction through the Use of 20-20 Hindsight." Hopefully some avoidable errors in the process of public administration have been illustrated in this case study and will serve as examples of mistakes to be avoided in future controversies.

It should be evident that public agencies cannot ignore the opinions of interest groups. Programs are commonly described as being in the public interest, but

this term is seldom defined or quantified. This common vagueness is attributable to the confusion on the part of administrators as to what constitutes the public interest. Conventionally it is thought of as some sort of numerical majority, but the difficulty lies with the justification of the population size to be sampled, and as numbers increase the more impossible it becomes to achieve a majority vote on any issue. The point is then, that the informed and concerned interest groups, the active minority, rather than the apathetic or ignorant majority, influence public policy and administration.

Unfortunately there is no simple, concise definition of public administration. According to Dr. Brad Hainsworth, Political Science instructor at the University of Montana, as a field of study it constitutes all of the relevant behavior of those people seeking to obtain decisions on any and all public matters which are within the capabilities of executive branch personnel. In practice it is a type of cooperative human endeavor concerned with the distribution of advantages and disadvantages among people.\(^{23}\) Regardless of the semantics of definition, public administration is essentially the making of

decisions through human interaction.

The Lincoln Back Country controversy as a case study has generated the following list of recommendations for managing potentially controversial public lands:

1. The first step should be the compilation of the most complete and accurate resource inventory possible within operational constraints. No management plan based on rough estimates is justifiable.

2. An important next step is a detailed economic analysis of the area in question. This step is limited to dollar values and would provide opportunity cost figures and a realistic cost/return projection of goods and services provided.

3. A social impact study should be the third planning phase. This technique was used recently in a Forest Service study of Alice Creek near Lincoln, Montana where the Anaconda Company has proposed a mining development. Land uses to which a dollar value cannot be realistically assigned such as historical significance, aesthetic impact, wildlife habitat, and so on are considered and zones of importance delineated.

4. Using the information supplied by the first
three steps, the next phase should then be the production of management proposals encompassing the entire spectrum of feasible alternatives. The Forest Service employed this choice of alternatives approach in October, 1969 when considering reclassification of the Mission Mountains Primitive Area.²⁴

5. Now comes one of the most important and most difficult steps; public opinion must be sampled. Contact with elected representatives would indicate the degree of concern. That is, is it a national, state, or local issue? Once this is determined the prepared management alternatives can be offered and discussed at public meetings throughout the area of interest. It is important that agency spokesmen be objective and intimately familiar with the area. Additional use alternatives should be solicited and added to the original choices. Finally, the agency responsible must make a decision in consideration of the interested public's opinion and the use capacity of the resource.

Public land managers can no longer enjoy the

position of unquestioned guardians, especially in this time of intense environmental concern. It is absurd for public servants to view interest groups as "the opposition." These groups are composed of goal-oriented people. Today's public administrator must be a politician in the sense that he has to satisfy their wants. A forester can no longer rely solely on his technician's credentials. He has to be a social scientist with an understanding of group dynamics and role analysis. His job has become people oriented. This situation is healthy for the profession and slow but encouraging changes are taking place in such recent issues as the classification of the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, use of Jewel Basin, Bitterroot logging practices, and the Rock Creek management policy.
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### APPENDIX I

#### SEQUENCE OF LEGISLATION

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Bill Number</th>
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APPENDIX II

SEQUENCE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

2. May, 1968    Patterns for Management Blackfoot-Sun River Divide Area
3. Aug., 1968   The Blackfoot-Sun River Divide Area Management for People