Situational decision-making in public resource agencies

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Situational Decision-Making in Public Resource Agencies

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PREFACE

As pressure for the use of our public lands increase, the idea of what I will call particularized and situational management of our public lands needs to be dealt with. It is my contention that decision-making in our public resource agencies at the on-the-ground managerial level is at best faulty, and, in fact, is not decision-making at all. Perhaps before I go on, a definition is in order. Each and every resource decision that a manager faces confronts him with unique problems economically, ecologically and politically. These decisions, therefore, are unsolvable by books or manuals which seem to be the mainstay of federal resource decision-making, and must be decided individually, particularly and situationally. Thus, the term particularized and situational management.*

It is the now stated purpose of this paper to determine, hopefully conclusively, whether or not more real decision-making powers are warranted for the on-the-ground manager in our federal resource agencies. In the light of what seems to me the undisputable statement that resource managers face

*The term is not my own. The credit is due Prof. R.W. Behan for his lectures which prompted this paper.
unique problems economically, ecologically and politically with each decision that they attempt to make, I am perhaps biased from the outset that particularized and situational management is the answer to resource decision-making. I am not biased, however, in seeking here to prove or disprove this assertion.

The National Park Service, in February, 1968, apparently concerned with precisely the same problem with which I will attempt to deal in this paper, discontinued the use of its manuals, guidelines, handbooks, etc., which until that time had been the decision-maker's decision-maker. They subsequently replaced the manuals with three booklets measuring in thickness and in total approximately one inch. These booklets described Park Service administrative policies, and left to the manager the powers of decision-making within the realm of these policies. Gone were the times when a park ranger faced with a problem could merely look in the manual for a precise and unqualified answer. He was virtually on his own within the limitations of Park Service policies to deal with the economical, ecological and political aspects of the problem in a way which he calculated would best satisfy that problem.
In the first two chapters, "The Park Service Experiment" and the administrative policies which the Park Service pursued in order to give the on-the-ground decision-maker more authority will be presented. Hopefully, these will set the stage for the ensuing chapters - discussions evolving around topics which every public resource decision-maker must take into account. These facets of decision-making are: preformed decisions, the public interest, and rules, regulations, and manuals.

Realizing that there are other inputs which must necessarily precede many decisions, not the least of which is consideration of the resource itself, I have been selective and have singled out the above mentioned three. This was done not to detract from the importance of other considerations in decision-making, but because I feel these are points, the resolution of which separates a resource technician from a resource decision-maker. Granted, a resource decision-maker must have a thorough knowledge of the resource(s) with which he is dealing, this is taken as a given premise in this paper.

This paper was originally intended for and about federal resource agencies, but has application for all formal organizations
Chapter 1

THE PARK SERVICE EXPERIMENT*

In February of 1968, a decision was made by the then Director of the National Park Service, to eliminate that agency's manuals. The director stated that this drastic action was needed because the "manuals were becoming a substitute for the park superintendents - the regional directors, to exercise judgment." Further, that there was too much dependence on the manuals, and that decision-makers were "hiding behind" the manuals to protect their positions. In place of the discarded manuals, the director substituted three small and vaguely worded administrative policy booklets which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

These administrative policy booklets provided little guidance to a decision-maker in terms of specific duties, and, therefore, the quick break from the manuals, which were quite specific, was a complete and abrupt change. Along with the manual elimination, the agencies' authority delegation, work standards, and goals and objectives of the Service itself

*I am indebted to Mr. Thurman Trosper for much of what appears in this chapter. Mr. Trosper was employed in the Washington office of the National Park Service while these procedures were taking place.
were eliminated. Somewhat of a "reign of terror" presided in the Service, as the professional managers and decision-makers, not knowing what their authority to make decisions was, simply did not make any decisions, and passed responsibility ultimately to the director. A fear of retaliation settled over the Service, that when you made a mistake, you were out. This situation became almost intolerable for honest, committed professionals, for they never knew when they might be reorganized out of a career for making some "wrong" decision.26

These actions by the director resulted in his running a "one-man band" so to speak. In all likelihood this was an objective of the director to begin with. Professional managers were forced to mirror the director's wishes, and if they made a "wrong" decision in his estimation, he had a technique, this was to reorganize.26 These continual "reorganizations every three to six months", plus the other previously described actions put the Service into a constant state of confusion and chaos. Nobody knew what they were to do or what anyone else was doing. Wanting to protect their careers, the decision-makers in the Service bucked decisions up the line, ultimately to the director. This whole campaign turned into a management technique on the part of the director.
He, and only he, decided on matters of any significance.\textsuperscript{26} His weapon in this climb to autocracy was reorganization. If managers and decision-makers made "wrong" decisions, or if the director's wishes were not included in the decision process, they were "reorganized out" of positions of responsibility. It all turned into quite a complicated contradiction. First, the manuals, rules and regulations were eliminated, ostensibly to give managers a freer hand in decision-making. This done, the director saw to it that any decisions of significance were either made by him or had his approval. It was a subtle form of coercion. Thus, through these actions, the on-the-ground decision-maker in actuality was exercising less judgment now than he did before the manuals were eliminated. This was, in my opinion, not a direct result of the elimination of the manuals, but of the director's management technique. He was "not an administrator - he could not delegate," and, therefore, the "experiment" was doomed from the outset.\textsuperscript{26} For, whether by accident or design, the director took on the job of decision-making for the entire Service. The task was enormous, involving 284 different areas, nearly 30,000,000 acres and an annual budget of $300 million. (Approximate 1972 figures)\textsuperscript{13} Due to the constant reorganizations and the elimination of the manuals, without replacing them with
any standards, goals and objectives, or delegations of authority, the director had destroyed open communications and moved everyone to protecting their own interests. Even today, as far as administration is concerned, the Park Service is a "place of chaos".\textsuperscript{26}

To have made the "experiment" work, standards, goals, and delegations of authority would had to have been set up. To some extent work standards were outlined in the administrative policy booklets offering guidelines to the decision-maker, but goals and delegations of authority were noticeably lacking. Without goals, the managers, by definition, had nothing to aim for in their activities with the exception of preserving their careers. Along with this, is the fact that there was no delegation of authority. This is, I think, the key to decentralization of organizations - to let the on-ground manager know where and how far in which he can operate, and let him go.\textsuperscript{26}

The director realized this too late. A crash project was implemented to determine the above, but the director was fired before they could be implemented, and the new director did not utilize the findings. What the decision-makers had to assist them in their duties is the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 2

THE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

The Administrative Policy booklets, of which I have previously written, are surely a study in governmental brevity. The booklets of which there are three, (one each for natural areas, historical areas, and recreational areas of the National Park System), measure a scant 5 11/16 inches by 9 2/16 inches, with an average thickness of approximately 5/16 of an inch. Also, a major portion of the booklets are repetitious. I mention this not to detract from the booklet's contents, but for a comparison to the manuals of most large government agencies consisting of ream upon ream of bureaucratic exactness, that if not specifically designed to strip a resource manager of his innovative and resourceful qualities, do so inadvertently. This is not so with the Park Service booklets.

The Park Service booklets are at once all-encompassing, yet leave much to the discretion, innovation and resourcefulness of the professional managers in the Service. As an example, the booklet for natural areas covers 116 topics from advertising through religious services, to wildlife population. To illustrate, two topics from the natural
Wildlife Populations

Wildlife populations will be controlled when necessary to maintain the health of the species, the native environment, and the scenic landscape, and to safeguard public health and safety. Ungulate populations will be maintained at the level that the range will carry in good health and without impairment to the soil, the vegetation, or to habitats of the several species in an area.

Signs

Roadside signing, whether regulatory, informational, or interpretive is an integral part of the visitor experience, as well as road design. Care should be exercised to insure that the quality and design of all signing enhance the visitor experience.29

The exactness is gone from these guidelines, and decision-makers are left to determine what decision is best for the area ecologically, feasible economically, and desirable politically for the user public. The manager is virtually unrestrained in using his judgment and resourcefulness. And that is as it should be; for what else is a manager for? Surely no professional is needed to follow the strict and virtually unwaivering rules contained in, for example, the Forest Service Manual.28

Manuals should be no more than guidelines for decision-
makers. They cannot be a step by step progression of how to handle every conceivable situation if the organization is to improve and change in the face of changing values and knowledge. For, "Manuals are only a repository of history," and we cannot look at history to solve all our problems or as a basis for all our decisions. If that were true, progress would never be made. Managers must be given a chance to use discretion in decisions affecting the vastly different ecologies, economies and publics encountered in our large resource agencies.

These Administrative Policy booklets do just that. They are virtually all-encompassing, yet let individual managers decide what is best for his particular situation. Situational management can be a reality within the confines of these booklets and professional managers have the opportunity to utilize their skills in making decisions affecting their area of responsibility. These booklets could easily serve as a model for our resource agencies and other organizations where common goals and objectives are present, but where restrictive manuals stifle the resourcefulness of professional managers and decision-makers.

However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the "Park Service experiment" did not work even though Park
Service personnel had these booklets at their disposal. Can this be called a failure for the concept of situational management? In view of the other things that took place during the period, I think not. For besides the complete elimination of the detailed manual system; delegation of authority, work standards, filing systems and even mail routing channels were destroyed. This drastic action destroyed all "habits", good and bad. Further, "one 'bad' decision" and managers were "in trouble" with the director. No goals were outlined, and the director, through his use of constant reorganizations, held Park Service personnel in fear of losing their careers. In short, Park Service managers didn't manage or make decisions at all. "Nobody knew what they were to do or what anyone else was doing." Park Service personnel were given the opportunity (through the Administrative Policy booklets) to exercise their judgment and discretion, but this then was neutralized by the extenuating circumstances described above. In view of this fact, no system of guidelines or manuals could conceivably have worked. Park Service managers one day enjoying the complete security of detailed and exacting manuals were without any security whatsoever the next. This though, instead of being the fault of the policy booklets, was the fault of the director's "management technique" and of his not having the foresight to realize that authority
delegation, goals, and the other points described above were essential for effectiveness in the Service.\textsuperscript{26}
Chapter 3

PRE-FORMED DECISIONS

Herbert Kaufman, in his book *The Forest Ranger*, has made popular a term that I find most fitting for my purpose here, this being "Pre-formed Decisions", which Kaufman defines thusly:

...events and conditions in the field are anticipated as fully as possible, and courses of action to be taken for designated categories of such events and conditions are described. The field officers then need determine only into what category a particular circumstance falls; once this determination is made, he then simply follows the series of steps applicable to that category. Within each category, therefore, the decisions are "preformed."\(^{15}\)

The idea behind preformed decisions is not new; it has been employed since man discovered organization. More bluntly, preformed decisions are simply rules and regulations handed down from superiors to their subordinates in the decision-making realm. The point of the matter though, is whether the man closest to the decision is really a decision-maker; whether or not he really makes a decision considering the economic, ecological and political circumstances of the particular situation which he faces. The manual is there and
according to Kaufman, it is to the field officer's considerable advantage to categorize the problem in terms of the manual and to follow its dictates. Doing this by no means requires a decision-maker, for "Any warm, ambitious, and reasonably erect 'ticket puncher' can please his superiors by routinely and dogmatically applying the preformed decisions contained in the Forest Service Manual..."\(^3\)

I do not wish to single out the Forest Service here, for it is undoubtedly true that many organizations employ manuals and preformed decisions with as much or more vigor. However, I am more knowledgeable concerning Forest Service procedures; therefore, I have chosen this organization as a frame of reference in this regard.

Perhaps at the crux of the matter are the concepts of centralization and decentralization. The Forest Service has maintained from its inception to the present that it is a highly decentralized organization leaving management decisions to its field officers (district rangers). Indeed, "The Forest Service has made decentralization its cardinal principal of organization structure, the heart and core of its 'administrative philosophy'. The ideal (of decentralization) has been affirmed and reaffirmed, over and over again, for every generation of foresters. It is now part
of the dogma of the agency."¹⁵ But, is the Forest Service or for that matter, is any organization with the type of elaborate preformed decisions aptly described in The Forest Ranger really decentralized? That is, does the field officer really make decisions? For, "a result of governing by rules is centralization in decision-making."¹² Kaufman suggests that tests whereby a group of rangers without all the usual preformed decisions encumbering them, be set up. Procedures such as lump-sum allocations, abandonment of diaries and the manual, and less frequent inspections could be employed. Then,

If experimentation discloses that field behavior can be controlled as effectively by inculcating the fact and value premises of central headquarters upon the minds of the field men without extensive use of close supervisory and enforcement procedures, as is possible with these devices, then an organization which gives every indication of decentralization by all the usual indicies (supervision, reference of matters to higher headquarters, the number and specificity of regulations under which field officers work, the provision of appeal from the decision of field agents, the decisions made by field men and the variety of duties performed) may in fact be as fully governed from the center as one without these visible paraphernalia of central direction.¹⁵

Such an experiment would undoubtedly prove very useful, but
since such an experiment is as yet forthcoming, a reliance on past and present investigators is mandatory.

Concerning decentralization and decision-making, Bernard H. Baum, in his book Decentralization of Authority in a Bureaucracy, has written, "The substantive essence of the process of administrative decentralization is decision-making." And it must be, for what else in an organization is there to decentralize? Surely, the preformed decisions described by Kaufman do not constitute decision-making authority, and, thus, do not constitute a decentralized organization.

From free-use permits to huge sales of timber, from burning permits to fighting large fires, from requisitioning office supplies to maintaining discipline, classes of situations and patterns of response are detailed in the Manual. Every action is guided.

This is not decentralization, but is a highly centralized organization, whereby line officers are virtually required to mirror the decisions already made for them.

At the risk of deviating from my goal, I have presented the above discourse on decentralization to try to illustrate the complicity of the terms decentralization and decision-making. For decision-making at the lower hierarchical
levels presupposes a decentralized organization - decentralization, in fact, not only in word. Of course, it is true that different goals might be attached to different districts or units and these must be defined, but then, the on-the-ground decision-maker must be given the authority to exercise his discretion within these definitions. Hopefully then, I have made the case that decentralization and decision-making go hand in hand. If then the premise is accepted that decentralization is the distribution through delegation of decision-making authority, we can now proceed to another aspect of decision-making in federal resource agencies.
Chapter 4

THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The public interest is an old often used term with respect to decision-making, especially in the federal agencies. And quite naturally so, for the federal agencies are in business to serve the public interest. However, what constitutes the public interest? Who is to judge where the public interest lies? What the public wants? These are some of the questions which I address in this chapter.

"Anything so inchoate and diverse as the large broad concept of the Public cannot really exist." 19 This quote, from Walter Lippmann's *The Phantom Public* circa 1925, is, I think, as true today as it was then. Yet federal agencies go on blindly "determining" the singular public interest and setting agency policy accordingly. In support of this, I offer the following statements from *A University View Of The Forest Service* regarding the recent turmoil over management of the Bitterroot National Forest: "Over the past few years management decisions and policies have frequently resulted in situations that have disappointed virtually all the publics that make use of the Bitterroot National Forest. This situation results, ....because of policies laid down
in Washington...." The policies laid down in this case were, in fact, that The Public Interest was a singular interest for timber production at any cost, regardless of other expressed public interests. But is there really a single definable public interest? Can a Washington official of some agency really know how best to serve the public interest; and, knowing that, set policy and performed decisions for his subordinates who themselves are dealing with the public? I think not, and, as Charles Reich in a paper Bureaucracy And The Forests puts it, "... the Service recognizes ... that its ultimate job is nothing less than the definition of 'the public good,' a task once reserved for philosopher-kings." If we are committed to some singular public interest, then we are also committed to finding that singular public interest. This in reality is an impossibility, for the "silent majority" is, in fact, silent, and "... no one really knows where 'the public interest' really lies." "The task of government [and, therefore, of public administration in the United States] ... is not to express an imaginary popular will, but to effect adjustment among the various special wills and purposes." 

The silent majority is either apathetic, acquiescent, or ignorant, and the public interest is served in any given
issue by anything that conflicting groups can agree upon. This would seem a much more realistic and rational approach to a definition of the public interest. But, lest I stray too far from situational and particularized decision-making, I will proceed to make my point with the understanding that the broad public interest is, in fact, undemonstrable, whereas, the situation of conflicting groups voicing their interest is a public reality.

What we are really talking about is the "sum-of-the-minorities" concept of the public interest. This is that for any given issue the consensus is the majority of the vocal. Again, borrowing from Professor Behan, an illustration might look thus:

Thus, "through the medium of acquiescence, apathy or ignorance, the silent majority consents to the choices of
the active minority."²

This view, that the sum-of-the-minorities more accurately reflects public interest is held true by many political scientists. ⁴,⁶,¹¹,¹⁶,¹⁸,¹⁹,³⁰ The question then is who is to determine what the sum-of-the-minorities view is? It must be the on-the-ground manager in closest proximity with the public minority groups, dealing with these groups situationally and particularly as problems arise. "Bureaucratic professionals simply have to respond to the public as it is, not as they hope it would be."²

Government agencies often equate public interest with the long term public benefit. But what of short term public benefit? Do we not have public interest in the short run? "About the only thing we can be fairly sure of from a study of history, barring the possibility of nuclear wars is that future generations will be wealthier than we are. Deliberate redistribution [of resources] in favor of the future may well involve a transfer of wealth from a poorer to a richer group."²² We must provide for our children before we worry about providing for our children's children. Public interest in the short run is real and cannot be defined as the long term public benefit.
The short term is now and must be decided by the sum-of-the-minorities concept of public interest, which in turn must be decided by the situational decision-maker coping with the various publics in whatever capacity he may be in a situation to handle. The public interest cannot be passed down from agency heads in the form of policy guidelines and preformed decisions for the resource manager. For there is no singular public interest and the on-the-ground situational decision-maker is the key to determining public interest in a given situation.
"Detailed rules prevent adaptation to changing situations."\textsuperscript{5} This seemingly quite obvious statement describes perfectly the gist of this chapter. That is, a decision-maker working under detailed rules, regulations and preformed decisions cannot adapt to changing peculiarities and situations which occur in his realm, and that really, he is not a decision-maker at all if bound to work under such conditions. But this is precisely how many of our federal agencies operate.

Again, using the Forest Service as an example, and citing Kaufman's \textit{The Forest Ranger} "By issuing authorizations, directions and prohibitions, it is therefore possible to influence the behavior of organizations. An extensive elaborate network of such issuances envelopes every district Ranger."\textsuperscript{15} These systems of rules, regulations and preformed decisions are, I believe, unjustifiable in view of the fact that first, the resources are situationally diverse and complex, and, second, that the needs and desires of the public (public interests) are situationally diverse and complex. These situationally diverse and complex problems can be handled
only by a situational decision-maker in closest contact with the resource and the public. The on-the-ground situational manager has a better feeling for what might occur as a result of the action which he takes. For it is impossible for an agency head policy-maker to know the particular public interest and the implications of resource decisions in the vast array of problems arising concerning resource decisions nationwide. And then to be able to put down in writing the action to be taken to best serve the nation's resources as well as the public interest is preposterous! For "No system of rules and supervision can be so finely spun that it anticipates all exigencies that might arise." If this were so, there would be no need for professional on-the-ground land managers; "manual trained" technicians could do the job nicely.

Charles E. Lindblom, in a paper, The Science of 'Muddling Through', though speaking of policy-making has expressed some views that are, I think, applicable here. He talks of incremental policy-making in a way which we could interpret here as incremental decision-making. Incremental policy-making is just that, adjusting policy at the margin to accommodate shifting values, interests, and in our case, resource problems. Our situational decision-maker can be thought of in the same light, whereby he can make his
decisions relying on past, similar situations, adjusting decisions incrementally as each unique situation warrants. No one is in a better position to deal with the particular decision and to know whether the outcome will be preferred politically (public interest), rational economically and justified ecologically than the on-the-ground situational decision-maker.

Not only is the on-the-ground situational decision-maker in a better position to handle his particular resource and public(s), but, the agency further suffers in this setting of prescribed rules, regulations and preformed decisions, because the initiative and innovation of the manager is unable to flourish. "Rules set limits not only on what men do but also on what men think. ... the bulwark against future proposals." And, "if we devise too elaborate a system of checks and balances, [rules and preformed decisions], it will only be a matter of time before the self-reliance and initiative of our managers will be destroyed...." It would seem, (even putting aside for the moment the detrimental effects on agencies and their managers) with all the schooling, screening, and on-the-job training that resource managers must adhere to in this day, that agencies would learn to trust more in the good judgment, hon-
esty, integrity and credibility of its on-the-ground managers. Admittedly, in most, if not all resource agencies, the on-the-ground manager is usually on the bottom rung of the career ladder, a deplorable situation. If, as I have noted, that resource decisions cannot be made at the top and handed down to the on-the-ground manager; and if it is this manager that must make the basic decisions, then he carries considerable responsibility and should be in a position in the line structure commensurate with this responsibility. The so-called "Bolle Report" considering Forest Service practices found likewise; "We find the bureaucratic line structure as it operates, archaic, undesirable and subject to change. The manager on the ground should be much nearer the top of the career ladder."27

But rules are seemingly synonymous with organizations even though rules might be harming the functioning of the organization. R.K. Merton has aptly described this process:

... top management(s) attempt[s] to obtain control over the behavior of the members of organizations as the organization grows larger and more complex. Standard operating procedures are instituted and emphasized, while control consists largely in checking to insure that procedures are followed. The consequences are: (a) Relationships become less personalized and are more prescribed by the position people
hold. Evaluation and reward become less closely tied to individual achievement. (b) The rules of the organization become internalized and adherence to rules becomes valued even when it no longer results in the outcome for which the rule was originated. (c) Finally, decision-making evolves into a process of sorting questions that arise into a restricted number of categories and applying the rule connected with the formally applicable category rather than searching for alternatives. As a result, behavior becomes increasingly rigid and defensible. Behavior also becomes less responsive to customer or client needs and more responsive to internal organization standards. As trouble with outside parties arise, individuals feel an even stronger need to be able to defend their actions and so place an even higher premium on following prescribed rules. Management's efforts to prescribe behavior [to assure the customer's or client's needs are served] actually results in the loss of the organization's power to serve their needs. As a consequence, management feels an even greater need for control and issues new rules and procedures, etc. Thus management efforts to control not only have dysfunctional unintended consequences, but also a tendency to perpetuate the consequences.21

That, in a rather large nutshell, explains better than I the effects and consequences of extensive rules and preformed decisions on not only decision-makers in large organizations, but on the organizations themselves, and their clients.
It is, I believe, precisely this chain of rule oriented events that has led our federal resource agencies into the troubles that confront them today. For, "A rule run organization is easily surprised by the unexpected." And unexpected they were, for the onslaught of opposition against agency practices of recent years, (particularly opposition to even-aged forest management practices & clearcutting), an onslaught with which managers were unable to deal due to the rigidly defined rules, regulations and preformed decisions which undoubtedly were followed, and which also undoubtedly were the reasons for the agencies' inability to cope. Public interest(s), resource values and ecological constraints are ever changing entities, and rules cannot change fast enough to allow for these changes. Again, Herbert Kaufman has captured this idea stating that, "Most appeal cases arise not because Rangers fail to adhere to the preformed decisions of the Forest Service, but because they do conform." This then, that managers cannot react to changing conditions precisely because of preformed decisions curtailing their initiative and innovation, is the essence of my case. "Decisions affecting the multiple uses of forest land [or any public resource] cannot be made by standard formulas or rules learned by rote. The forester
[or any public resource manager] must work in uncertainty and controversy."\textsuperscript{31}
Chapter 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

SUMMARY

In this paper, I have attempted to demonstrate that situational management is the key to managing federal resource agencies in a manner that is justifiable ecologically, feasible economically, and acceptable politically. To do this, I have sought to show what a professional manager must do, and how best he can accomplish his ends. I have frequently used logic though in most cases this logic has been substantiated by other investigators. A summation of my studies follow.

Chapters 1 and 2 dealt with what I have called the "Park Service Experiment", and, therefore, they will be combined here. The Park Service, by eliminating its manuals, presented a unique opportunity to employ a system of situational management as I have portrayed in this paper. The director of the Service had determined that the manuals were becoming a substitute for decision-making, and that managers were using the manuals in lieu of professional judgment to protect their positions. The manuals were being used as the authority instead of as guidelines. Because
of this, the manuals were eliminated and the Administrative Policy booklets were substituted in their place. I'll not delve into those again, as I have already noted their potential worth. However, the experiment seemingly did not work, and as such, would seem contrary to my previous writing concerning situational management. Again, however, as I have also previously noted, there were some drastic, extenuating circumstances which I believe contributed to the experiment's downfall. They are as follows:

1. Goals and objectives went undefined, leaving employees without direction.
2. Work standards were not set up, thus job performance could not be gauged.
3. The director's management technique of reorganizing whenever decisions were made without his knowledge and approval.

The last of these circumstances was probably the most fatal. Men naturally feared for their careers as a result of the director's techniques, and, thus, deferred decisions to him. Situational management was by no sense of the term taking place, and, thus, did not get a fair trial.

In Chapter 3, the concepts of preformed decisions and organizational decentralization were discussed. The two concepts basically are at extreme opposites. Decentral-
ization, is the distribution through delegation, of decision-making authority, whereas, preformed decisions are the distribution of decisions to the "decision-maker." I have argued that preformed decisions are unjustifiable in view of the situationally diverse and complex problems facing on-the-ground managers. Further, that decentralization, in fact, giving managers true discretion within the confines of their authority is essential for managing public resource agencies.

Chapter 4, brought up the age-old controversy of public interest. Who is to decide what the public interest is in a given issue? Here, I presented, with the support of many others, the case that "... the public interest in any given issue is served by anything that two conflicting minorities can agree upon." The situational manager is in the best position to arbitrate the public interest in decisions which he must carry out. Some vague concept of public interest whereby agency heads "decide" the public interest of the silent majority is intangible and unrealistic, and, "... through the medium of acquiescence, apathy, or ignorance, the silent majority consents to the choices of the active minority." Therefore, active minorities will voice their opinions and express their wishes to a situational manager who is in the best position to weigh the differing public
interests and to harmonize them with the other ecological and economical constraints. "The task of government ... is not to express an imaginary popular will, but to effect adjustment among the various special wills and purposes ..." The situational manager can best affect this adjustment since the active minorities will voice their various special wills and purposes to him.

Chapter 5, is similar to Chapter 3, in that rules and preformed decisions are very similar. Detailed rules handed down from agency heads deprive a manager of using his skills and resourcefulness in making decisions that are necessarily unique to his area of responsibility. Charles E. Lindblom, writing on the subject states that, "The attempt to push categorization as far as possible and to find general propositions which can be applied to specific situations is what I refer to with the word 'theory'." Not only this, but detailed rules and regulations prevent a manager from adapting to changing peculiarities and situations which occur, besides undermining the self-reliance and initiative of decision-makers.

CONCLUSIONS

To say that situational management would have been successful had the previously mentioned deficiencies in
the Park Service experiment been removed, would be conjecture at this point. However, on the basis of my studies the odds are in its favor.

Concerning manuals, rules, regulations and pre-formed decisions, there are good reasons for them, not the least of which involves repetitive type work. There is good reason to commit to writing this type of work as far as time saving in job performance and in the training of new employees is concerned. There is a fine line between that of no manuals creating problems of no direction, and that of too extensive a manual system creating a shelter and stifling initiative for employees. "The problem is one of all of [the] professionals in an organization of recognizing - of being able to delineate and define what things have to be handled by the manager as breaking new ground, and what things can be handled in the tradition - under the old system." The point of this paper is that this judgment should be left up to the situational manager, and not prescribed for him in the form of preformed decisions. For he is in the best position to know all the unique circumstances surrounding a decision and, likewise, he should have the opportunity to break new ground when the situation warrants. The on-the-ground situational manager has a better feeling
for what might occur as a result of his action.

There are essentially three things which a professional public resource manager must look to when evaluating a decision. They are: the resource, the public, and economics. In the light of this, he is then the best qualified to make decisions concerning his area of responsibility. He is trained in the knowledge of the resource and should know the peculiarities of that resource in his area better than others. The particular public(s) interest in the decision will make their opinions known to him, while economically, the manager, through agency budgets, congressional appropriations, etc., knows what he can and cannot do in this regard. Who then is better qualified?

I have presented my case and find that a situational manager must be the answer. Though this paper is by no means definitive, I think it has shed some light and though the conclusions may be inexact, they are inescapable in view of my studies.

SUGGESTIONS

As I have stated, this study is neither definitive nor conclusive, so perhaps a suggestion or two would be in order. An elaborate system of rules, regulations, pre-formed
decisions and the public resource agencies penchant for determining the public interest has been, I think, disproven in previous chapters as the best means of decision-making at the ground level. We've found also, however, that the Park Service's rather radical attempt to change this system ended in a qualified failure. Qualified because at least it showed that people were aware and thinking about the problem, even though their solutions were perhaps too much-too fast.

There is a place in organizations where manuals, rules, regulations and pre-formed decisions fit in and also, of course, since public resource agencies are set up to serve the public, the public interest must be served. I have argued, however, that the on-the-ground manager is in the best position to know what that public interest is in his area of responsibility, and that rules and regulations, etc., should not stifle a professional on-the-ground manager's initiative and resourcefulness.

While it is probably true that organizations and agencies do not make rules, regulations, etc., specifically to stifle their managers, it seems that this is the case as Kaufman repeatedly points out in regard to the Forest Service.15 And, as Bernard Baum has pointed out, "if we devise too
elaborate a system of checks and balances, [rules and pre-formed decisions], it will only be a matter of time before the self-reliance and initiative of our managers will be destroyed ..."¹

But organizations and bureaucratic agencies change ever so slowly, and a trend toward giving on-the-ground managers greater responsibility in real decision making authority is not going to come about simply because reports, papers, theses, etc., advocate such a change. Change will, I think, have to come from the bottom, from the on-the-ground managers working now in the field. Top rung organizational officials will have to be shown that decisions for and about the resource and the particular publics at the ground level, can and should be made by the ground level professional.

Much of what follows, what I consider alternatives and a means of attaining the above, is taken or has evolved from a book by Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, The Soft Revolution. ²³ In it, the authors describe ways to work within the system to achieve goals virtually unattainable from without.

Following then are some thoughts to consider which could turn the agency around - giving more real decision-
making authority to on-the-ground managers:

1) "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's," - and go about your business. For a start, this will provide the manager with a means to do things his own way, while still supplying the agency with its "fuel" for self-preservation. In other words, don't break the rules and preformed decisions of the agency, simply bend them to fit you and your client's particular needs. Don't infuriate or frighten people. Give them their reports, follow their directives, then go about the business of providing the best professional help possible. As I said, this is only a start and will not cause any significant change. It will merely give the professional manager the means to maintain his professional integrity, while also supplying the agency with its supposed needs. In other words, don't sacrifice professional integrity for bureaucratic exactness.

2) When attempting to make a change, first ask why some procedure used is good for the clientele - the Service? Do not give the impression that
your ideas are more virtuous, just that you may have a better idea to attain the virtuous goals. For example, all public resource managers would agree, I hope, that the public deserves the best possible ecological and economical resource management available. Do not question that pre-formed decisions and rules and regulations do not attempt to achieve this, but merely that as a trained professional resource manager in closest contact with the public, you are in the position to make decisions the consequences of which cannot readily be known by whoever wrote the pre-formed decision and caused it to be placed in the agency manual.

3) Virtually all agencies and bureaucracies have solemn beliefs that, (it is assumed), bind the organization together. In the Forest Service multiple-use management is emphasized "(with apparent unawareness of its obscurity)" as is the idea "... that the national forests must be managed for the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run (again, with no evident recognition of this slogan's ambiguities)."
A more general and far reaching solemn belief is that resource agencies function better with not only central direction, but central decision-making as well. It is the job of the resource manager desiring change in this regard, to make visible the ridiculousness of solemn beliefs. Suggest alternative procedures - seriously, not solemnly, and have solutions to problems that you might bring up because administrators are always full up with problems. The solutions that you suggest might be tried simply because no one else has the time, the energy or the inclination to figure out anything better. Don't simply suggest that some procedure is wrong, but have viable solutions at the ready.

4) As institutions grow, (and this is especially true of governmental bureaucracies) the purposes of the institution are overshadowed by its earnest desire for self-preservation. For, "that is the way with institutions. Their forms, including their rhetoric, always survive their functions." Many pre-formed decisions, rules and regulations, etc., are exactly for this purpose, that is self-
preservation of the institution. Recognize these for what they are, and again "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's" - and go about your business.

5) "A major characteristic of the American culture is that it is pluralistic. If pluralism means anything, it means the availability of options. Where there are no real options, you have a fraudulent pluralism ..." Pre-formed decisions leave the on-the-ground resource manager in many cases, without options. A manager or decision-maker without options is nothing more than a figurehead. This is a useful point to use when opting for change.

The above suggestions are offered not perhaps as alternatives, but as a means by which on-the-ground decision-makers might work within agencies to effect changes that my studies and experience have shown are needed.
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