CONFLICTS IN THE USE OF FOREST LAND IN ONTARIO

By E. L. WARD¹

"Chop down the trees, burn them, get rid of the forest." This was the cry on the lips of the first settlers in this land. No one could blame them. Here was a land with trees growing right down to the water's edge, trees that had to be cut down and the stumps removed before the land could be cultivated; and cultivation of the land meant food for the new settlers and their families. They would no longer have to depend upon the ships from overseas to bring in their food, ships that could founder and leave them to starve. It is understandable that clearing the land was the most important job for the settlers.

This urgency diminished of course as time went on, but for many years there still remained the feeling of an encroaching forest and certainly the feeling that there was more than enough timber for future needs.

This, therefore, engendered a lack of interest as to what happened to the forest. The only people interested in the hinterland were the timber operators—excepting of course the trapper, who caused little inconvenience or interference, and the prospector, who was a source of fires, but who was put up with as a necessary adjunct to the provincial economy. So the lumberman was king of all he surveyed. His only objective was to take out material which would sell on the open market at a profit and it never even occurred to him to consider what was happening to the forest itself. The main thing was to get out the wood as cheaply as possible, and he brooked no interference with this objective.

As the forester appeared upon the scene, his function was to assist in this objective. Even of recent years this has affected his thinking so that today it is difficult for some foresters to see anything in the woods but trees and to conceive of the forest as having any other function but that of producing trees.

There is nothing wrong with harvesting the timber crop and with making a profit in so doing. Our economy would receive a terrific setback if anything were to prevent this, and no one knows better than the forester the part that the logging industry and the pulp and paper industry have played in developing our country.

However, times have changed over the years: the forest is no longer a dark forbidding place to be feared and the trees removed, but it has become a great and increasing source of revenue, a place that receives the attention of everyone. This has occurred as a result of increasing populations. With these increased populations, together with the increased leisure of the present times, demands are being made upon the forest for something more than the production of timber. Among others, we as foresters must recognize this fact and should revise our thinking, as it is presently reflected in the foresters' definition of a "forest."

¹ Supervisor, Land Use Planning Section, Ontario Dept. of Lands and Forests, Toronto, Ont.

This brings me to the place where we should consider the definition of a forest. If we look in the Forestry Terminology (1) of the S.A.F. (third edition revised in 1958), we find on page 34—'Forest, A plant association predominantly of trees and other woody vegetation.' In the British Commonwealth Forest Terminology (2) published by the Empire Forestry Association in 1953, we find on page 57—'Forest, (a) A plant community predominantly of trees and other woody vegetation usually with a closed canopy.' These statements are undoubtedly true but as a definition of a forest, they leave much to be desired. The timber aspect is set forth but nothing else. From these definitions one would take it that the forest consists of trees and plants alone.

In Koestler's text on Silviculture (3) which was translated into English by Mark L. Anderson and published in 1956, we find on page 9 the following:

"Seeholzer, an experienced silvicultural practitioner who has distinguished himself by his intellectual efforts in the interest of science, writes as follows in one of his remarkable last essays: 'In the forest living communities and all the forces acting within the living space are united to form a homogeneous entity, a system which is to be regarded not as static but as dynamic

"The forest is a combination of relationships.

"This concept acknowledges clearly the reciprocal dependence of all the biotic and abiotic parts upon the whole. The forest is an association in which the dynamic effects of the natural law of cause and effect and those of the inherent orderliness of life stand in the closest mutual relationship, in which the organism and its environment are intertwined to form a harmonious whole, an entity, in fact a forest.

" . . . In practical silviculture the higher we rise above the stereotyped, the nearer do we come to obtaining a comprehensive view of the dynamics of association and the more do we see that the key to success is the comprehensive review of the mutual relationships of all the forces of the living space.'"

Also in the introduction to the second edition of Forest Management (4) by Recknagel, Stevenson, and Bartoo, we find "The forest is a renewable resource which provides timber and the products for home and industry, food and cover for wild and domestic animals, protection of soil and water values and facilities for recreation. It is the forest managers' responsibility to make sure that these are assured not just for present use but for all time."

Duerr in his Forestry Economics (5) states on page 19, "The forest economy is that part of the general economy which is concerned with making, distributing, and consuming the goods and services of the forest. These goods and services are primarily recreation, wildlife, forage, water and watershed regulation, trees, and the products into which they may be converted."

The two definitions of a "forest" in the Forest Terminologies of professional foresters are definitions of a specific thing—a place where trees are grown. The extracts from the three texts demonstrate the concept of

a much larger field for forestry. Thus we have a contrast as between the single use view and the view expressed by foresters who recognize in their writings the complicated biological associations with which they are dealing. This is recognized in the forest terminologies too since if you delve further you will find a definition for multiple use forestry. But how many do delve further and how many of us are really interested in more than the first definition implies?

Let's face it—the forest is more than a stand of trees waiting for the forester to harvest it, important though this may be. The forest is a complex biological community. All manner of plants and animals are born, live out their life span and die within the community that we call 'the forest'—from the tiniest micro-organism to the tallest pine tree or the lordly moose. In nature these are all part of the forest community and all are living in a delicate balance one with the other. With the appearance of man upon the scene the picture changes. Whatever he does in making use of a natural resource changes the picture in whole or in part, no matter what his activity may be:

The farmer wishes to clear the land so that he can cultivate it to raise crops and domestic animals.

The forester wishes to cultivate the trees so that he may harvest the crop of timber.

The miner wishes to look for and then extract the minerals.

The urban dweller wishes to see the watersheds well clothed with vegetation so that he may have pure water for his own use.

The recreationist wishes to fish, hunt, camp, trip, etcetera, in the forest or he may just wish to enjoy the scenery and the fresh air.

Thus we see that instead of the forester alone, we have many classes of people all wanting to make use of the forest, in their several ways. As soon as there is more than one use in the forest, there may be conflict. If there are several uses the picture becomes more complex.

In the province of Ontario our government has declared itself as being in favour of "multiple use" (6) as a guiding principle. However, the fact of giving expression to a policy does not surmount the difficulties involved in carrying out such a policy. In fact it may have the opposite effect, in that through the recognition of a policy of multiple use, we must of course attempt to apply the principles of multiple use, which means subjecting an area to as many uses as are in the public interest. This in itself can cause conflict through the introduction of new concepts.

Thus multiple use of forest land may result in conflict. I use the word "may" advisedly since multiple use does not necessarily involve conflict. Many uses are compatible one with the other, but where conflict is indicated we must learn to recognize it before it happens, and plan for integrated use in accordance with the best land use principles.

Often the conflict is in the mind of the first user. He feels that his is the paramount interest and anyone who trespasses upon his territory is an intruder to be disposed of with the greatest dispatch.

Again people have been subjected to propaganda which has been entirely single purpose, with the result that through ignorance of anything better

they have been converted to a type of conservation, which is not use but an attempt to bottle up our natural resources. But natural resources by their very nature cannot be bottled up because, as Seeholzer says, they are dynamic. You can no more 'bottle up' a resource, with the possible exception of minerals, than you can bottle up a human being. (Some of us may have attempted this latter through 'pickling' but even this type of preserving does not solve problems). So we have timber operators who gaze askance at anyone entering their limits and we have the so-called conservationist who will not permit of any utilization of the crop, be it trees, or wildlife. Oftentimes a mere look at the viewpoint of the other person would resolve the conflict that appears to exist.

On the other hand, though, there are some real conflicts when two or more uses are suggested for the same area. The only way in which these conflicts can be resolved is by compromise.

Recognition of the principles of multiple use has been evidenced by the Province of Ontario policy supporting "multiple use." To partially implement this policy, the Department of Lands and Forests embarked on a program of Land Use Planning under the guidance of the author of this paper. It was soon recognized that something more than judgement through experience was needed in a program such as this, since in a department with such a varied program, scattered over such a tremendous area, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find enough people with both the experience and the judgment to make decisions on 'multiple use.' Therefore a technical basis for setting up multiple use or a land use plan was sought. Fortunately over the past fifteen years our Research Branch has been working on site evaluation and here appeared to be the answer to a Land Use Planner's prayer (7). This site classification program was first set up to settle some of the conflict between agriculture and timber harvesting in Northern Ontario (and it served its purpose well in this respect). However, further exploration under the capable guidance of Angus Hills, the Supervisor of the Site Section in the Research Branch, produced a site classification (8) adaptable to the determination of the use-capability of the site for the production of any product including recreation. Thus we are able to recognize and evaluate the capability of the land to produce for different uses and are able to give a priority for recommended use.

We believe in Ontario that our site classification will enable us to see more clearly the possibilities of multiple use and will help in recognizing the conflicts that may appear and orient their importance.

This paper would be far from complete if I limited my remarks to the foregoing philosophical treatment. We in Ontario are running into conflict of use. No multiple use area can have any other experience. The conflict, however, is not the serious matter, since once it is recognized one can set about to resolve it, but the inability or refusal to recognize the conflict or the right of another user is where the trouble arises. I shall list some of the conflicts with which we have had experience. Some have been resolved and some are still in the process of solution. Where serious conflict occurs, it is probable that there will have to be a compromise but in many cases the

conflict is not real but exists only in the minds of certain people who are loath to recognize the other uses.

CONFLICTS

A. Agriculture

1. Particularly in Southern Ontario a conflict exists on the so-called marginal lands, which may be used for timber production or agriculture. Part of this conflict was caused by the indiscriminate sale of Crown lands to settlers up until the early 1940's, by which time most of the Crown land south of the precambrian shield had been disposed of. This resulted in a great deal of land being cleared which was unsuited for cultivation.

2. There is some conflict between agriculture and forestry in the draining of swamp lands, which may provide the storage reservoirs for streams and the breeding grounds of wildfowl.

B. Timber

1. The question of the use of access roads by other than the timber operator is a source of considerable conflict. The fisherman, the hunter and the forest traveller see these logging roads as avenues of access to new territory and are greatly disturbed to find that in some cases the operator has secured a land use permit for the road and has closed it to travel, thus preventing the use of the area tapped by the road for other purposes than logging.

2. The closure of certain areas due to an existing fire hazard, caused by slash or insect infestations or other means, is sometimes a source of conflict with recreational use.

3. By and large, wildlife management is compatible with good silviculture but there are occasions where conflicts do arise. Where deer are overprotected, they can be a deciding factor in the survival of certain species. The classic example in Ontario is the selective browsing by deer on yellow birch regeneration to the extent that less desirable species take over.

4. The establishment of pure coniferous plantations has the effect of almost prohibiting the survival of wildlife through producing a forest cover which is very unattractive to most forms of wildlife.

5. Furthermore, log driving and booming can come in conflict with other uses, through pollution and through blocking natural avenues of water access. This can become a source of real conflict where only single use is recognized.

6. In some cases conflict arises as between the cottage owner and the timber licensee over restrictions that are imposed upon the licensee to protect the aesthetic values for the cottage owner.

7. The establishment of provincial forests limits their use for recreation and restricts their use for agriculture.

8. Pressure groups, that do not realize the dynamic qualities of a forest, lobby to prevent cutting of timber in many areas. This need not be a conflict if a proper understanding of the forest could be made known to the population at large.

9. Even among the timber operators themselves, there is conflict at times. In particular the case may be cited where the timber licensee, who holds a license to cut all species but may use only one or two, attempts to prevent all other operators from entering his licensed area. There may be good reasons advanced for this stand but the fact remains that a conflict of use exists.

10. Industry, too, comes into conflict with the use of the land for timber production, when sulphur dioxide fumes are emitted into the atmosphere with a consequent killing of the surrounding vegetation. This situation is usually compounded by fire creating a very real conflict of interest not only to the timber licensee but to practically every other user.

11. Another conflict arises when lands are flooded for various purposes, thus withdrawing areas from the production of whatever they may have been capable of producing. We, in Ontario, are so conscious of hydro electric power that we treat the use of our waters for this purpose almost as though it were a sacred right. This may or may not be so, but where a water system is dammed up, there is definitely a conflict of interest with all other uses.

C. Mining

1. No prospecting or mining is permitted in provincial parks under present legislation. This constitutes a real conflict in forest land use since the mining interests feel that they are being discriminated against.

D. Fish and Wildlife

1. Overmature stands constitute a barrier to proper wildlife management. Here is a conflict in use but one that is a result of lack of action rather than a positive act.

2. There is some conflict between commercial fishermen and the angler, particularly in inland lakes. Again this is more imaginary than real in most cases.

E. Recreation

1. There is and probably always will be some degree of conflict between a segment of those who use the forest for recreation and all other users. This is the class of persons who believe that the forest should be kept for their use only, in its primeval state. This concept causes conflict not only with the timber operator, but also with the wildlife manager, the tourist outfitter, the summer cottager and everyone but the person who just wants to look as he walks or paddles through the forest. To complicate matters there are all shades of conflict from the crank naturalist who wants absolutely nothing done in the forest (though he may complain that the portages are not cut out), to the one who wants the area for his own type of use. Each thinks that his is the best. The hunter and fisherman wish to utilize the wildlife but do not want the timber cut.

2. Some of the recreationists clamour for an absolute stop on cutting in the large provincial parks, such as Algonquin and Quetico. Lest anyone might understand this statement, in our larger parks the timber is harvested under strict supervision of the forestry staff.

3. Then there is the conflict between the producers of hydro electric power and cottage owners and tourist outfitters, on lakes that are used for

water storage. During the summer season the two interests are often quite divergent, depending upon the precipitation and the resultant supply of water at the power house in any particular season.

4. In Ontario we have set up reserves from cutting around designated lakes (those that are being or may be used for recreation), along highways and along portages, for the purpose of trying to preserve the scenic beauty of the forest where it is most used. This has of course caused considerable conflict with the timber operator and while it has been accepted to quite a degree, it is still an active source of conflict.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Wherever more than one use is made of a given area there is an opportunity for conflict to occur. Where more than two uses are made of an area the conflicting interests can create an even greater clash. We have tried to point out instances of conflict that have occurred and are occurring in Ontario. As you have heard, Ontario is not unique in this respect. In some cases the conflicts are more imaginary than real but in others there is a definite clash which can only be resolved by weighing the different use values to society and deciding upon what is considered most beneficial.

This paper was supposed to deal with the conflicts of forest use. I have found it most difficult to stay within the confines of such a statement since the conflict and the solution are nearly always considered as in one breath. I say this as I would not like to leave the impression with you that we in Ontario are doing nothing about the solution to these conflicts that I have mentioned, because we are. This will be taken care of on Thursday. It is possible that my colleagues and myself shall have an opportunity to say something on the subject then.

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