

Attitudes Will Chart the Course: Forestry Industry Perspective

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Thank you Bob, good morning. It's great to be here in Biloxi. I hope all of you made it back from the casinos intact—not only physically, but fiscally as well. For those of you who lost your shirts, we have complimentary coffee and pastries in the back—you might want to stock up for the trip home.

Before I get into my remarks, allow me to give you a brief background on my company. International Paper is just about the largest private landowner in this country with 6.2 million acres under management—that's a land mass about the size of the state of Maryland and most of it is right here in the southern and mid-Atlantic states. We also hold interests in 800,000 acres in New Zealand and a million acres in Chile.

We're a \$14 billion company and employ 75,000 people around the world. In addition to growing trees, we manufacture wood and building products, imaging and graphic arts products, nonwovens, chemicals, packaging, and, of course, a lot of paper.

But in addition to those manufacturing businesses, I guess you could say we're also in the service business. Almost 6 million of the 6.2 million acres we own is available for public use. Sixty percent of that land is leased, 10% is in permits, and the rest is available to the public at no charge. Our primary product on this land is deer hunting, but we have an awful lot of other types of outdoor experiences—both consumptive and non-consumptive. To help keep all this running smoothly, we employ over a dozen wildlife biologists—the largest, and if I may say so, the best wildlife biology staff in the industry.

What I'd like to do today is share my thoughts regarding where I see wildlife management going in this country. Unfortunately, since wildlife doesn't recognize property lines, I can't talk about this just from my perspective as an industrial landowner. I must also consider your perspective—as a custodian of wildlife on public and private lands—as well as the perspective of the often overlooked but extremely important small private landowner.

I'm going to give you a brief review of how I see the public's values broad-

ening in terms of wildlife and how all of us—government, corporate and private landowners and resource managers—must adapt to meet an increasingly challenging set of public expectations and needs.

Before many of us were much more than a gleam in our parents' eyes, public values and expectations concerning wildlife centered primarily on the game animal—the deer, the turkey, the squirrels, to name a few. Our agricultural economy was shifting to an industrial economy and lands that used to be available for wildlife were being developed into factories and towns. Game populations in many regions plummeted and the people who hunted and fished—both for sport and sustenance—cried out for help.

As a result, agencies like yours were formed. Hunting and fishing seasons were established. Bag limits were enforced. Hunting and fishing licenses were sold to underwrite the programs. Likewise, companies like mine instituted wildlife management programs and began leasing land for hunting and fishing. This led to an economic value being attached to game animals and the result has been the establishment of some of the healthiest game populations in the world.

But, that was then and this is now. The mood of the public has been changing somewhat.

Today, the public is still very interested in healthy game populations but there is a new concern that wasn't prominent half a century ago. That new concern comes from the non-consumptive user. The hiker, the bird watcher, the camper, the wildlife photographer, the naturalist. The person who enjoys the outdoors but who doesn't choose to hunt or fish. This is the person who may not have had much of a voice 50 years ago, but who today is extremely vocal, very organized, importantly connected, and very powerful.

Today, this person is demanding not only healthy game populations, but healthy non-game populations as well. They're interested in the white tailed deer, but they're also very concerned about the red hills salamander. They still want to see turkey and quail, but they also want to know that the red cockaded woodpecker and yellow breasted chat are thriving too. Large-mouth bass are important to this person, but so are the plethora of other aquatic life in our rivers, lakes, and streams.

In fact, this person is interested not only in the creatures of the wild, but in the wild itself. The systems—the ecosystems—in which all wildlife function.

If nature and wildlife are the products, then this is today's important consumer. And we in industry and you in government must broaden our thinking and our services if we are to meet this consumer's needs.

For my company, I can say that we have made some progress, but we still have more work to do. For example, with the help of some federal agencies, we have been able to develop some pretty innovative solutions for the protection of habitat for endangered species. The Habitat Conservation Plan for the red hills salamander, for example, was an approach we pioneered that will ultimately preserve the habitat for the only population of this species just over the border in southern Alabama. The good news is they will be preserved. The other side

is—4,000 acres of land will never be harvested. There is no free lunch. We're working on a similar plan for the gopher tortoise which is a listed species here in south Mississippi.

We've also recently initiated an effort with the National Biological Survey which is being administered out of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Under this agreement, we're agreeing to allow the NBS to study the ecological system on some of our land in which candidate species—such as the pitcher plant and henslow sparrow—live, and to consider making adjustments to our management practices to ensure their continued survival. Collecting basic data is the first mandatory step to sound management practices.

These are steps in the right direction, but industry, frankly, has a long way to go to meet the expectations of this new consumer. For one, we have some credibility problems we must address and some trust we must build.

I don't have to tell you that we, as an industry, have made some mistakes and have had some periods of poor judgment in the past. But we are older now and hopefully quite a bit wiser. And we are in the midst of making some pretty significant changes in the way we do business. Changes which center on strengthened environmental performance standards and greater accountability to the American public.

We have made some profound decisions that will markedly impact our lives over the next decade. We have decided that we must open dialogue with this new consumer—the American public—so they can gain confidence in our ability and intent to responsibly manage the forests of this country. This represents a big change for us.

Through our trade associations—the American Forest and Paper Association and American Pulpwood Association—we are crafting some new standards that are designed to improve not just our own environmental performance but also to encourage better performance from all landowners, even the very small ones.

As part of this, the industry will be committing to some very specific standards regarding harvesting and reforestation. For example, instead of replanting after 10 years of a cut, we'll commit to doing it within 2 years, and within 5 years for natural reforestation. And we're going to monitor our compliance and make our record public annually so that people can see for themselves how well we're doing.

More controversial, but no less important, is a commitment we are making to support actions to encourage sustainable management in which we balance harvest levels and reforestation rates to ensure future generations have healthy, viable forests also.

Harvesting techniques ranging from selective cuts to clear cuts are also up for discussion with a variety of constituents. Considerations such as clearcut limits, landscape and appearance, streamside zones, wildlife corridors and so forth are all serious parts of a forester's plans today. Equally important is increased communication of the biological reasons for forestry management tech-

niques to the millions of people who are interested in the forest but have no training or significant knowledge on which to base their opinions. They just know that they don't like the way a harvested area looks and we as industrial landowners have to pay attention to that.

Strong consideration is also being given to a "green-up" provision in which we commit to give a tract of land 3 years or so to "green up" after we've cut it before we cut another tract of land adjacent to it. This is just one step toward addressing some of the aesthetic concerns people have.

More uniform commitments to formal wildlife management plans are also likely. Most of these things are done within our industry but in some cases they aren't. At any rate, a public commitment and a means through which we are accountable for this commitment will go a long way toward regaining the trust that we as an industry need.

However, that is just the beginning. Taking care of our own affairs won't be sufficient.

We must go a step further and take actions to influence the behavior of other private landowners. You see, while we own over 6 million acres of forestlands we still get most of our wood from forests that don't belong to us. In many cases, it comes from small private landowners. To truly step up to the plate and take responsibility as an industry, we must be willing to work responsibly with our suppliers. This won't happen tomorrow, but I can foresee the day when our mills will only buy wood from landowners that certify that they are taking care of their land in a sustainable manner.

Now, I realize that in many cases, these landowners aren't failing to leave SMZ's or failing to provide for the wildlife on their land out of malice or greed. In most cases, they fail to do these things because they don't know to do them or if they do, they don't have the means to do them. After all, we are one of the largest companies in the world and I've got a pretty proficient staff of scientists, lawyers, and other professionals. We've got the wherewithal to do some of these things and, quite frankly, Aunt Mary and Uncle Bill who own 80 acres down the road, probably do not. That means that we have the added responsibility of educating and training them if we are to expect this higher level of performance. Programs like industry-sponsored logger training and certification will begin soon, and more training and assistance for landowners might be in the offing.

But just as our industry has to broaden its focus to accommodate the needs and desires of a new brand of outdoor consumer, so too must state wildlife agencies. I don't mean this as a criticism, merely as an observation—look at the name of your organization: the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. At some point, your respective agencies are going to have to really confront the question of who your customer is. We all know that hunters and fishers are important customers for you as they are for us, but hunters and fishers are comprising less and less of the outdoor sporting population. The segment that is growing is the non-consumptive user. We all must recognize this and work together to meet the non-consumptive user's needs.

I could foresee a strategy in which your agencies collaborate with companies like mine as well as some of the small private landowners out there to create natural areas that are open to the public for a fee. Areas where hunting and fishing might be available but also available would be various ecotourism opportunities such as hiking trails, camping areas, bird viewing sites and self-guided nature walks and the like. Now, I know some of this is being done, but I believe that this type of service could be built significantly with the right kind of funding and planning.

Remember, these sorts of collaborations must be sustainable, which means that there must be money to pay for them. I know there is a reluctance out there to attach user fees for access to land but remember the lessons we learned with game programs: that attaching economic value to game animals, through hunting licenses and excise taxes, helped ensure their survival. Doing the same thing for non-consumptive outdoor activities, I believe, will help ensure their continued growth, not to mention yours.

The world is changing and as you point out in your meeting theme, the attitudes of the public will determine how we as landowners and resource managers operate in the long term. The attitudes of the public tell us that they still value the forest environment but that they have gained a new and more sophisticated appreciation for it. And with that new appreciation has come a more stringent set of expectations.

We can stay the course, continue to do what we have done in the past, and probably survive for a long time. Or, we can recognize the opportunity that these new attitudes present for us and seize it.

If we choose the latter option, we must recognize that we can't go it alone. For true success—that is, robust wildlife populations, plentiful recreational opportunities and healthy ecological systems throughout this nation—we must not only coordinate our efforts, but we must use our expertise and experience to help the small, private landowner participate as well.