

Forestry^{The}Source

News for forest resource professionals published by the Society of American Foresters

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Bill Hagenstein's Legacy: Telling the Public about Forestry

Lecture series launched at the World Forestry Center in October

By Steve Wilent

No Society of American Foresters member has ever been more passionate about forestry than Bill Hagenstein, as anyone who knew him will tell you. Hagenstein, who died at age 99 in 2014, served as executive vice president of the Industrial Forestry Association for 35 years and as SAF president from 1966 to 1969, and in 1966 he helped establish the World Forestry Center (WFC) in Portland, Oregon. He described his remarkable life in *Corks & Suspenders: Memoir of an Early Forester* (See *The Forestry Source*, June 2010, tinyurl.com/zayedq9). Before he died, Hagenstein earmarked generous bequests to SAF and the WFC and directed that they be used to educate the public about forests and forestry. "I want to have lectures to the public by foresters," he wrote, blunt and to the point, just as he was in life.

In October, SAF and the WFC fulfilled Hagenstein's wishes by inaugurating the Hagenstein Lectures, a series of public talks designed "to create a robust and ongoing local-global conversation about real opportunities to advance sustainable forestry in the 21st century. The Hagenstein Lectures are intended to be a catalyst for action." The October 9 event, entitled "Emerging Voices in Forestry," featured five leaders in the field of forestry under the age of 45 (see hagensteinlectures.org); about 150 people turned out on a rainy Sunday to hear them. A Hagenstein Lecture focusing on forest policy is in

the works for 2017 in Washington, DC, and will be led by SAF.

WFC executive director Eric Vines, wearing Bill Hagenstein's hard hat, introduced the speakers as accomplished foresters who are "working hard on contemporary issues in forestry, people who are balancing the demand for wood products and ecological services. These are tough choices, tough things to balance. In our complex society today, there are many constituencies that each have a view of what they want to happen with our forests. Forestry is grounded in science. The ability to practice forestry is affected by sociology and politics and anthropology and all of the cultural issues that make us an interesting society. We ignore those influences at our peril as we try to manage forests.

"We want to bring to light the tough, complicated issues and choices that we face in managing our forests—those remarkable assets that we all depend on," Vines added. "We really need the public to understand how sustainably managed forests affect everything—and forests *do* connect to everything. Social justice, water security, human health, housing—you name it, you can draw a connection to forests."

SAF CEO Matt Menashes said that the lectures represent "a long and continuing legacy" from Hagenstein.

"For us, the lectures are about two things," he said. "First, living up to Bill's goals of providing for communications in this community. It was what he

did and loved as well as being a forester—Bill was all about communications. [Second,] Bill's bequests to both the World Forestry Center and to SAF are a living link to our past, but they are also a benefit to the future of forestry. That's what this community is about right now. What is forestry going to look like for the next 40 years, for the next 99 years, or the life of the next Bill Hagenstein? That's what we're here to talk about. These young and exciting foresters are the start of that conversation through the Hagenstein Lectures, and they set the standard for continuing legacy of conversation about forestry through the World Forestry Center and SAF."

It's about People

Aaron Everett, Washington state forester and policy director at the state Department of Natural Resources Office of the Commissioner of Public Lands, was the first featured speaker.

"At the Washington Department of Natural Resources, we're about a 1,500-employee organization managing extensive forest and agricultural land, aquatic tidelands and bedlands, fighting wildfires, conserving natural landscapes, assessing geological hazards, conserving rare species, and regulating timber harvests. But that's not really what we do," Everett said. "We help children have a place to go to school, help people have clean drinking water. We help protect people's way of life. We protect them from wildfires; we protect them from landslides, tsunamis, and earthquakes. We help people's communities improve by caring for their trees and forests. We help Native peoples have healthy salmon runs to carry on their thousands of years of culture. We help people find joy in being outdoors. We help people have a home, a roof over their heads, a place to raise their families. That's my job. Those are some of the things that inspired me to [become a forester]."

Forestry, he added, is not about commodities, regulations, recreation, or revenue: "We need to be skillful at those things, to be certain, but that's not what our work is about. It's about people. It's about connecting with the natural world in a way that cares for their needs and for the environment.... Forestry has a powerful ability to bridge this connection, but you know we don't think of it that way. Not as a profession, not as a society. In a lot of ways that's a puzzle to me."

Everett described how forests provided the building materials that let the young United States

grow and expand, saying that forests were fundamental to shaping the nation. Yet today, many people take the forests and the products and services drawn from them for granted, even though they remain vital infrastructure.

"Along the way I feel like we got distracted, we as a people and we as a profession," he said. "After building the nation, we as a profession sort of kept going. We got more efficient at what we do, and that seems like a good thing. But we as a society entered a period of affluence, a period where those basic things like food and shelter became kind of a given, or at least more of a given than they'd ever been before.

"Now don't get confused," he continued. "The debate over resource management and sustainability has been going on since the 1800s at least. But almost 50 years ago, the calls for more environmental protection reached a tipping point in the national consciousness. Progress was made, a lot of laws were passed, and a lot of conflict and debate took place at that time and continues today. But that's 50 years of conflict. And I have to ask, are we ready for something better than that?"

Everett turned to examining the purpose of the forestry profession.

"To me it's about purpose, about our works, our actions, our intent, and how we apply it. What does that mean to the world? What we do, after all, is the only proof of what we believe in," he said. "Our purpose in forestry, for a time, was to build a nation. Now what is it? What do we want it to be? What do people really need from us? Are we outmoded, antiquated? Are we from a bygone time? I think not, but we're flirting with it. I'm not talking about a different way to explain why our environment is important or why forestry is so great—or magic words that we can say that would make a person who's never thought about forestry for their entire lives wake up in the morning and want to put Bill Hagenstein's hat on. That's not what I'm talking about. It's not about interpretive signs or brochures or events—we know how to do that, and we're pretty good at it. It's not words, not messages, not talking points or TV ads. I'm talking about our purpose, the proof of what we believe, what we do to connect to people."

Land Management Decisions

Following Everett's talk, three speakers took part in a panel discussion: Sue Baker, a research fellow at

the School of Plant Science at the University of Tasmania, Australia; Eric Farm, coastal operations and marketing manager at Barnes and Associates Inc., a forest-management consultancy based in Roseburg, Oregon; and Abraham Wheeler, a lead forester with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) who is charged with helping to manage 2.4 million acres of Oregon and California Railroad Revested Lands in western Oregon. The discussion was moderated by Travis Joseph, president of the American Forest Resource Council, a regional trade association representing forest-products companies. What follows is an edited excerpt of the conversation.

Joseph asked Wheeler about involving the public in public land-management decisions.

Wheeler: A big part of my job up to this point has been involving the public. First, we all have to understand the legal authorities we work under and what are the sideboards. Not everybody comes to the table knowing that, but this is the information age, and people have more information at the touch of a finger than they've ever had in the history of humanity. So you can become an expert on something within hours.... That being said, there's a lot of misinformation out there, too. Look up BLM forest management, and you'll get just as much good information as bad. When I'm involving the public in [forest-management] projects, the beginning is to establish a common understanding of the legal authority and the scientific basis for what we do. But then you've got to *hear* people. They came to that meeting room to be heard. They have something that they want to say, something that they care about deeply. You have to hear them—not just hear them shine them on, but hear them make an effort to incorporate their ideas into what you do, if possible. It's not always possible, because at some point as decisionmakers we need to take all this input and decide on the path forward. That's the challenge—folks say, 'Well, that's not exactly what I wanted.' But it might be a combination of what everyone we talked to wanted to see.

Joseph: When you've gone through a public process—you've listen to people, you've responded to their concerns to the best of your ability and made the best decision that you think is right for the land—there are still times when the BLM gets protests and objections. How does the agency and how do you personally deal with attacks that can sometimes be very personal?

Wheeler: There's an administrative process for protests, appeals, and litigation, and that's how the American system is meant to work. If the government has done something wrong, if we haven't followed the laws and haven't used the best science, and if we don't have a logical path that makes sense to a reasonable person, then we need to know about that. I think the system is good. Sometimes it may not be a misunderstanding—it may be that they just don't like that kind of project, and they're going to use whatever reasons they can come up with to stop it. How does that affect me on a personal level? If I've worked in full faith to bring everybody to the table and incorporate their ideas into these projects to the greatest extent possible, and then I see [an article about a protest or litigation of the project], it hurts me personally. It's been difficult to deal with on a professional level. I've seen it churn through people, and it can affect morale. That being said, we can't let that affect us personally—we have to separate ourselves from that and know that we've done the best that we can. This will be an ongoing challenge.

Farm: It's going to be incumbent on our generation to be more pragmatic in how we're going to solve these problems. We've got to find a balance between economics, the environment, and community, and if any one of those is out of balance, the plan is just not going to work.... There will never be zero impact on any one of those. If there is zero impact on the environment, then there will be a big impact on the community. It may have a great economic impact, but there may be [negative] environmental and social impacts. We need to look at these things in a more balanced way. Yes, there are going to be impacts, so how do we balance them?

Joseph: Are you seeing movement away from controversy to solutions-oriented processes? Yes, we're all creatures of our past and our history, and there have been major social and political controversy in the past—not just here in Oregon, but all over the world in terms of natural-resource management. Do you think that our generation has the ability and the temperament to move beyond that historical baggage?

Baker: I think science can be part of the solution—what's more objective than science? If there's a debate about something, often we don't know what the answer is. The forest industry can engage with the universities and independent

scientists to help find solutions. To me the most inspiring example of that was on Vancouver Island in the 1980s, where something like 600 protesters against clearcutting were arrested in one year. McMillan Bloedel, which managed one of the biggest areas of industrial timberland there, engaged the scientific panel. They had the environmentalists nominate some of the scientists, the government nominate some of the scientists, and the lumber company nominated some scientists, and then they sat back and let the scientists work together to come up with a solution. McMillan Bloedel promised to phase out clearcutting and to use variable retention harvesting. The company was bought out by Weyerhaeuser, which continues to do 100 percent variable retention, and they were bought out by Western Forest Products, and they're still doing variable retention harvesting today. And to my knowledge, there haven't been any protests about logging on Vancouver Island. It was scientists working together with communities, environmentalists, and the lumber companies that found a solution that's been able to stand the test of time. That's been incredibly inspiring to me, and it's what we're trying to do in Tasmania.

Wheeler: Think about the bell-shaped curve of public opinion surrounding forest management. You've got this big curve, and you got the tails on either side. [People on] the tails are really loud and they're in the courts, and that can be distracting. You might think that this defines public opinion, but the people who are involved on those extreme ends are just a small percentage of all those who were involved in the conversation. When I look at the next generation of folks who are coming out of college now, they're people who want to be team players, they want to be solution-oriented; they want to work toward common goals. It's not whether or not [these controversies] will be solved—I think it's inevitable that they will be solved.

Farm: I think so, too. There are some examples—there's a good one [in the Four Forest Restoration Initiative] in Arizona, where communities had a shared value of reducing wildfire risk, and they banded together in a collaborative process and decided that they want to thin more than two million acres of national forest that goes from the Grand Canyon to Phoenix. The reason is that they didn't want wildfire around their communities. It's going to be big issues like this that get us to the point [where solutions are agreed upon].... When

shared values that are being destroyed through either no action or some other action, that's what's going to drive us to sit down at the table.

Forestry for Communities

The final featured speaker of the day was Mike Dockry, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and a research forester and social scientist with the US Forest Service Northern Research Station in St. Paul, Minnesota. Dockry described forestry as practiced by the Menominee Tribe in Wisconsin since its members were confined to their current 235,000-acre reservation. The tribe practices sustained yield management, following the wisdom of legendary Chief Oshkosh, who said, "Start with the rising sun, and work toward the setting sun, but take only the mature trees, the sick trees, and the trees that have fallen. When you reach the end of the reservation, turn and cut from the setting sun to the rising sun and the trees will last forever." Dockry noted that the tribe has harvested more than 2.25 billion board feet of timber over the past 160 years, but has more standing volume today than when timber harvesting began in 1854. The Menominee, said Dockry, serve as a model for sustainable forest management.

Forestry in the United States has changed over time, he said.

"In the beginning of our profession, and even 30 years ago, foresters knew the science, we knew the answers. We could go into a forest and see what kind of trees were there, we could understand the history of that landscape, we could think about the ecology and how to move it forward, and we sort of knew what we wanted to do. But nowadays we're shifting our perspective, as you've heard here today. We are starting to see ourselves as servants. We have many tools to do all sort of things in the forest, but we need to work with people to understand what they want and value, and then use our tools to get those values.

"I think forestry can be a game-changer in the 21st century. I think forestry can help us solve not only our ecological, but also our social and economic problems. A forestry that is a people-centered forestry—with people at the center of what we're doing—that is a vision I have for forestry in the 21st century. What are some of the problems that forestry can help solve? We have problems with the economy. As we've heard today, we have rural communities that don't have a lot of job

opportunities. We have sawmills that are closing. We have massive inequality in our society. We have incomes that don't help people live productive lives. We've got manufacturing issues—we hear that on the campaign trail now. We've lost some of our manufacturing capacity.”

Dockry said a variety of social problems also must be addressed.

“There is a social isolation that's happening in our country. People are isolated from one another, communities are isolated from other communities, groups are isolated from each other,” he said. “There is a lack of respect and understanding among people, a lack of respect and understanding of differences. There is inequality in the social realm: there are health disparities, opportunity disparities. Not everyone has the same opportunities in our society. There are educational disparities. We have problems with inclusion and diversity within our institutions and across our society. We can't separate the people from these problems—they're all interconnected. And it's not enough to look only at the science behind these issues. We need to see how communities fit into the picture of the problem as well as the solution.

“Another problem is that we lack a diversity of perspectives. I'm passionate about recognizing different voices, about having gender represented in our discussions. I'm passionate about including ethnic groups, age, income, disciplines. I think we need a diversity of perspectives to really get to the bottom of these problems, because we're so large and interconnected that none of us can do it alone. That's why we're seeing this move toward interdisciplinary studies, a move toward how we work science and [the] humanities together. We really need to find ways to collaborate and bring these perspectives together.”

The answer, Dockry said, is to put people at the center of forestry: “Sometimes we call this community forestry. Community forestry tries to conserve forest ecosystems while at the same time improving and maintaining the well-being of the community. The health of the forest is intimately related to the health of the community. That's community forestry, that's putting people at the center of forest management.”

Dockry noted that there are 567 recognized tribes in the United States, 300 of which have significant forest holdings totaling 18 to 19 million acres in all.

“These are managed as community forests. Some are big, some are small, but they are managed for tribal values,” said Dockry. “The law that guides the tribes, the National Indian Forest Management Act, says that forestry [on tribal lands] has to provide for sustainable communities—people-centered forestry. It has to provide multiple benefits, not just sawyers and sawmills, but all of the other things that we know forest management provides: jobs, traditional uses of the land, clean water, carbon sequestration, and so on.... I think we can argue that all federal forests should be thought of as community forests. We have laws and regulations that say these forests must benefit the people, so it is incumbent upon us to bring our views into the discussion. I think private land and industry land, too, could fit into this—we could broaden our idea of people-centered forestry on the industrial land, because we know that forest management provides all sorts of benefits that go beyond the borders of private land.”

Conclusions

Eric Vines wrapped up the event by summarizing the strategy behind the Hagenstein Lectures.

“The first part is convening, which we did today. The second part is dissemination,” Vines said. “How do we get this information out into the world? Because if the conversation stops in this room today, it's not going to make the kind of changes that we're looking for.”

Vines said he hoped everyone in the audience would share the videos of the day's presentations with their friends and colleagues. The videos will be available soon at hagensteinlectures.org.

“Some things that I heard today: forestry is about people.... Forests are not fixed in time,” added Vines. “[The theme of the lectures was] a vision for forestry that is bigger than ourselves, that goes beyond our lifetimes. Forestry connects to everything, and if we can't get that message out to the public, that's on us. We live in a time when media is ubiquitous, when social media allows us to access people all over the world. We need to be more clever and creative about making sure the message about the importance of forests gets out to the rest of the world.”