



James E. Brown

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When retired Oregon State Forester Jim Brown makes his case for sustainable forestry—the art and science of managing for an interdependence of social, economic and environmental benefits that ensure forests for the future—he’s drawing on a lifetime of personal experience and knowledge gained in the woods, and on the proving grounds of forest policy both in Oregon and nationally.

Brown, Oregon State Forester from 1986-2003, has served as forest policy advisor to Presidential commissions, western governors, the United States Congress, state legislators, economists, academics and the forest sector, and is recognized as one of the nation’s leading thinkers about forest sustainability.

The pathway that formed Jim’s thinking leads back through a remarkable combination of work and study, and is shaped by his personal work ethic, his inquisitiveness, and an intellectual discipline respected by all who have worked with him.

Born into a Puget Sound forest products family in 1940, Jim was exposed to the business of forests and wood at the earliest age: His father J. Harold Brown was a career-long chemist for Weyerhaeuser, developing new paper fiber technology from

its labs in Everett and Longview. His grandfather owned and operated Tacoma-based Mountain Lumber Company in the 1920s and 1930s. His uncle was the chief safety officer for Region 6 of the U.S. Forest Service. Forestry definitely ran in the family.

Jim became involved early in Boy Scouts, which provided opportunities to explore and make connections with the forests, meadows and high mountain lakes of the Cascades, and to learn life-long lessons, like these words of wisdom from a favorite professional scouter: “You need to get along with everyone whether you like them or not,” a foundational concept for Jim. His love for scouting, and of the mountains, would become a constant thread throughout his life.

Another constant thread, just like his early interest and love for the forests of Washington State, was Jim’s absolute calling to be a forester, which came to light for the first time in a 9th grade career project. For his subject, Jim focused in on his Forest Service Uncle, R.C. Lindberg, which provided an epiphany of sorts: “When I had that career notebook project done, I made the decision right then and there that I wanted to be a forester.”

Attendance at the University of Washington was a natural next step, though Jim was the only student from his graduating class in Marysville headed down the forestry pathway. In the fall of 1960 he enrolled at the University of Washington and rushed the Tau Phi Delta fraternity—known as the forestry frat because all of its members were forestry students, something Jim remembers as being a real asset for a new student.

Jim took a series of summer jobs between school years, laying out logging roads on the Olympic peninsula, cruising timber and preparing sales in Oregon's Elliott State Forest, measuring fuel moistures and developing controlled burn predictors and indices in the Yacolt Burn area of Washington's Skamania County. Unlike other students, Jim mixed it up with his summer work, deliberately seeking out something different each year: different agencies, different geographies, different tasks.

Each summer provided challenge, adventure, learning and—importantly—working relationships that would be valuable as he moved forward in his career. The Oregon connection, formed in Coos Bay with a tight group of foresters who became friends, would shape his career direction and peer group for years to come.

In the fall of his senior year, before graduating UW, Jim made a quiet and what he remembers as impulsive decision to apply into the graduate program at Yale University. He had met Yale's Dean of the School of Forestry during a lecture stop in Seattle. Jim liked the dean, and was attracted to the sense of Yale as a place where big thinkers about forestry wrote the text books used in all the other forestry schools, and where serious students engaged in serious study. He was also attracted to the one-year master's program that involved field studies, but required no thesis. He filled out the application and sent it away without telling anyone—a message in a bottle—forgetting about it completely until he came home at Christmas break and his parents handed him

the acceptance letter. He was as surprised (and pleased) as his parents, and in the weeks that followed organized a scholarship and the funds to make his graduate studies possible.

A favorite professor at UW, C. Frank Brockman, had encouraged Jim to consider the Yale option, and passed along words of wisdom that guided Jim's career choices for decades: "He told me that if I was going to graduate school, that I should get out of the northwest and go see what another guy calls a tree." *Go see what another guy calls a tree.*

After his summer measuring fuel moisture for the Forest Service in the Yacolt Burn, Jim headed for New Haven, where the first five months of the program involved classroom learning from the masters at Yale, followed later in the year by the field studies, which commenced with a two-week road trip from New Haven to Crossett, Arkansas, stopping and meeting foresters across the southeast along the way.

The three months in the field covered real-life questions that ranged from business planning to time and motion studies, from silvicultural studies to forest engineering problems. By the end of the year, Jim earned his masters, and had seen and experienced the forestry world in a way that none of his UW or Pacific Northwest peers could have.

Equipped with his master's from Yale, knowing the Draft Board would be tapping him soon for service, and still hearing Professor Brockman's voice, Jim took a job with Scott Paper in Waterville, Maine. He spent five months studying how best to dry pulpwood that would be floated down to the Scott plant on the Kennebec River. He also helped update their forest inventory and address some time-and-motion inefficiencies with their logging practices.

But by far the most important development during his time in Waterville was a romance with Mona Cameron. The two started a friendship that led to marriage and to a solid partnership that saw them

through their parenting years, two careers, grandparenthood and retirement.

Marriage had to wait until midway through Jim's Army service. He was drafted in November 1963, one week before JFK's assassination, and sent to Ford Ord for basic training. Along the way he had an opportunity to demonstrate his aptitude for Morse code (learned as a Boy Scout), which was noticed and appreciated by his superiors, and resulted in a stateside assignment to the Personnel Security Office of the Army Signal School at Fort Gordon, Georgia, for the duration of his service.

Jim's forestry story resumes back in Coos Bay, Oregon in 1965, on the Elliott State Forest, where he worked for 18 months as an entry level forester on everything from reforestation to timber sale layout. Back once again with his colleagues from the summer of 1961, and working for an organization that provided lots of opportunity, Jim began to set his sights on the brass ring of a Department of Forestry career: eventually serving as a District Forester, in charge of all field operations for one of the 15 Department of Forestry districts. But at the end of that stint, when the promotional opportunities Jim hoped for weren't working out, he and Mona opted for another direction. Jim applied for and was hired as a research officer for the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Forestry's Petawawa Forest Experiment Station in eastern Ontario. He left ready to take on something new, and needing a break from Oregon.

"After about three years in Canada, several things happened," Jim recalls. "One is, I matured a lot; two, I figured out research wasn't my interest; and three, we were in a very remote part of Canada—not a real pleasant living environment—so we moved back to Oregon."

His Oregon Department of Forestry colleagues hadn't wanted Jim to leave in the first place, always hoped he would return, and offered to find a spot for him somewhere in the agency if he ever chose to come back. Jim and Mona returned from

Canada and he settled back into the Department of Forestry and into the District Forester career track.

Jim's dream of being a District Forester led him through a series of field jobs, working in several different programs, including serving for a time as Director of the Service Forestry Program at Department of Forestry headquarters in Salem. Even though he was focused on returning to the field in pursuit of the dream job, something happened along the way: a seemingly trivial assignment as part of the service forestry job put him in contact with the Oregon legislature.

"Up until 1975, the State Forester and Deputy State Forester were the only people who ever went downtown to work with the legislature," Jim remembers. "In that year, there was a Mickey Mouse tax bill that Ed [Schroeder] and Frank [Sargeant] didn't want to fool with, so they collared me and told me to go downtown and monitor that thing, and if necessary, testify on it."

Jim did as he was asked and found it mildly interesting. When the next session rolled around in 1977, based on his past experience with forest tax issues (and because higher ups were still busy with other more important topics), Jim was roped into a more complicated legislative process that condensed 20 forest tax-related bills down to three. He was directly involved in writing the language, working with the legislative committees and the legislator—Representative Doc Stephenson, from Coos Bay. All three bills eventually passed.

"After that experience, I was hooked. I made the decision right then to go from wanting to be a field forester to realizing that policy and politics was where the action is in forestry."

Not only had Jim arrived at another career epiphany, but he had begun to change the model and method of involvement the Department of Forestry would use in working with the Oregon legislature.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Jim continued to gather experience in a variety of other assignments with the

Department of Forestry—still learning *what another guy calls a tree*. He moved quickly from Forest Practices Program Director, to Northwest Oregon Area Director to Assistant State Forester for the Forest Management Division, and then to the agency's number two leadership position as Associate State Forester.

Jim was indeed tapped for the State Forester job, taking over in 1986, achieving the goal he had sought for more than 10 years, and more than realizing his childhood and early-career goals of being a forester.

Now he was The Forester

But being State Forester took some getting used to.

For one thing, his 750 employees kept asking him which direction he wanted to go. They wanted to know how he was going to be different than his predecessors, what his values were. And then there were the outside voices, interests expressing their views, conflicts and problems needing solution. Everyone was waiting to see what course Jim was going to set for himself and the agency.

Even before H. Mike Miller stepped down in 1986 to take a position outside government, former State Forester Ed Schroeder had taken Jim fishing and asked him if he “had the stomach” for the job.

“I didn't have a clue what he meant by that, but before long we got into some streamside management issues and I had my guts grind like never before,” remembers Jim.

“What dawned on me in that first year was that in the end, no matter what the external and internal voices were saying, I had to find in my own heart what the public interest really was. Once I could figure that out, I could stare anybody down, and I did. That became my benchmark: figure out what was the public interest. I quickly learned that it's only through public debate that you find the public interest.”

One of Jim's great legacies at the Department of Forestry, and across the practice of forestry in Oregon, was his ability to determine the public interest

through a variety of mechanisms he instituted, including the use of public advisory committees. By systematically listening to all the players, and involving them in helping solve the problems, Jim and the Department of Forestry found that decisions made by the Board of Forestry were able to stick both politically and operationally.

Jim also instituted a biennial program of visits to community leaders and to editorial boards, which got him out into local communities and in touch with what Oregonians were thinking and worrying about. He found that doing community leader visits paid big dividends when it came time every two years for the Oregon legislative session.

“It was like a night and day difference in that you weren't trying to establish a working relationship while the legislature was in session, you already had one,” Jim says.

As State Forester, Jim was also the chief executive of one of Oregon's oldest and most respected state agencies. But generational shifts, a changing public and political dynamic, and a changing work culture suggested that the agency needed to pay attention to its own internal processes and culture of leadership.

Jim instituted quarterly agency leadership meetings, spurred a series of mandatory management training based on Steven Covey's Seven Habits of Effective People, benchmarked a variety of corporate culture models, and then facilitated an agency-wide effort that resulted in what he calls “alignment and empowerment.” As a result, all employees had a clear sense of the work they needed to be doing, and were given the support from higher-ups to get the job done. Jim carried this alignment work through to development of the agency's budget, so that when it came time to prepare the biennial funding request for the legislature, it was very clear how to connect Board of Forestry goals with agency objectives with planned work, and with outcomes on the ground.

Putting the organizational house in order, and finding ways to connect with and listen to the public, were critical to preparing a platform from which Jim and the agency could operate to achieve other long-term goals. But this foundational work took time.

“In all of my past jobs, I was pretty comfortable after about six months, and by 18 months had the job figured out,” Jim recalls. “But it took me seven years to really figure out the State Forester job, and to begin to find which direction I wanted to lead.”

Jim’s direction, implemented across the following ten years, included an active role in shaping National Forest management plans; continued revision of riparian protection rules within the Forest Practices Act; comprehensive planning for the future of State Forests management; development of forest education strategies that reached into classrooms and shaped development of the Tillamook Forest Center; providing national-level leadership for the National Association of State Foresters; and articulating for the first time a vision of sustainable forest management that identified the interdependence of social, economic and environmental values.

The beginnings of sustainable forestry came into focus for Jim in the early 1990s as the Department of Forestry and Oregon State University began to examine the concept of cumulative effects of forest management, an outgrowth of Forest Practices Act legislation passed in 1991. In the process of pondering the meaning of cumulative effects, Jim identified the need for some type of framework to measure forest values and forest change. About that time—1992—the United Nations Earth Summit was held in Montreal and produced a set of seven criteria and 67 indicators that established a common definition and measure for sustainable forest management. As Jim learned more about this work—referred to as the “Montreal Process”—he felt strongly that it fit with Oregon.

“When I really looked into these, I said to myself ‘That’s it! There’s the criteria.

These are internationally accepted and agreed to, and that’s what we’re going to use.’”

Jim and his planning staff at the Department of Forestry began to construct long-range forest management goals around the Montreal Process that led to development of an Oregon assessment of the criteria called *The First Approximation Report*, and then to a revision of the *Forestry Program for Oregon* which sets direction for all 28 million acres of Oregon forests.

The Montreal Process also fueled Jim’s pursuit of forest policy that recognized in order for lands to provide environmental benefits for Oregon, they also needed to be providing economic and social values. The vocabulary of sustainability began to show up in Jim’s writing and speaking, in internal and external documents, and in his communication with the Oregon Board of Forestry. In 1997, he was invited to be a U.S. delegate to the World Forestry Congress in Turkey to explore these ideas. Later, he traveled to Denver, Guatemala and Japan to deliver presentations on Oregon’s use of the Montreal Process.

Ultimately, Jim’s work on sustainability effectively shifted the paradigm of resource management and policy into the 21st Century, ushering sustainability from being a provocative concept into a widely-held imperative.

“People saw the power in going away from the historic *either/or* debate about natural resources to an *and/and* discussion, where multiple outputs are not only desirable but necessary. That was the power of this logic: people said, ‘We get this.’”

By 2003, two of Jim’s remaining professional objectives—completing a remake of the Department of Forestry’s Salem headquarters compound, and development of the Tillamook Forest Center—were well underway, and he announced that he was retiring as State Forester to serve as natural resource policy advisor to Governor Ted Kulongoski. In that

role he coordinated natural resource policy for all 14 state natural resource agencies, and served as the Governor's point person on all aspects of natural resources.

The new job was a natural fit for Jim, who had witnessed and become close friends with past natural resource policy advisors, and who knew the issues and the players involved. Jim continued to advance the notion of sustainability, asking each natural resource agency director to identify social, environmental and economic goals. He provided leadership to the Governor on the Willamette River cleanup, federal forest policy, renewable energy and other topics. Jim retired from that position in September 2004.

In the latter part of the first decade of the 21st Century, Jim continues being active on statewide natural resource issues. In addition to a busy forest policy consulting business that has focused on forest certification and sustainability, Jim has served on the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission, the Tillamook Forest Heritage Trust, the World Forestry Center board, and the National Commission on Science for Sustainable Forestry. He and Mona have enjoyed international travel (still investigating *what another guy calls a tree*), celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary, enjoyed their two grown children, become grandparents, and stayed very involved with their community and family.

As he looks to the future of forests and forestry in Oregon, what does Jim see?

- ❖ A need for foresters and future forest policy makers to build new partnerships well outside what we think of today as the forest sector: the conservation community for sure, but also energy interests, and urban audiences and community leaders.
- ❖ A need for forestry to insert itself in the green energy discussion. "We need to have some harmonizing theme that drives our society toward energy independence, and do it in a green way that forestry can help with."

- ❖ A need to fundamentally address an imbalance in Oregon's overall tax structure that can help fund natural resource programs commensurate with their impact on quality of life.

Despite these pressing needs for the future, Jim remains optimistic about Oregon, its people and its forests. It's there, too, that his legacy rests.

"In the end, we are all transitory. But an organization that knows what it's about—is aligned and empowered—and a landscape that's growing trees: these are things that live on well beyond any individual."

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