

Chapter Seven

NEW FACES, CHANGING VALUES



Smokejumper Jeanine Faulkner (right), Lolo National Forest, 2000. (USDA Forest Service)



AS THE FOREST SERVICE GREW IN SIZE AND RESPONSIBILITY DURING THE 1950S AND 1960S, IT ACHIEVED THE HEIGHT OF ITS POPULARITY, EVEN AS ITS POLICIES BEGAN TO COME UNDER FIRE AND LEGISLATION FORCED CHANGES IN ITS OPERATIONS. SOME OF THE AGENCY'S DIFFICULTIES IN THE DECADES THAT FOLLOWED WERE DUE TO THE MAKEUP OF ITS PERSONNEL. NEW ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND PROCEDURES REQUIRED ADDING NONFORESTRY SCIENTISTS AND EXPERTS TO THE PLANNING TEAMS. WOMEN, LONG RELEGATED TO OFFICE WORK OR UNPAID SUPPORT POSITIONS SINCE THE AGENCY'S FOUNDING IN 1905, FOUGHT FOR AND WON THE RIGHT TO WORK IN FIELD POSITIONS. AFRICAN AMERICANS, NATIVE AMERICANS, AND HISPANICS SOON JOINED THEM IN MOVING INTO THOSE POSITIONS AND UP THE LADDER INTO ADMINISTRATIVE JOBS.

It's a Family Affair

In the early years of the Forest Service, rangers' wives provided a convenient and much-needed source of free labor on understaffed and underfunded ranger districts. Wives sorted and date-stamped the mail, prepared correspondence and reports, and operated switchboards. They also made and delivered meals to fire fighters and sometimes stayed to help fight. In one extreme example of familial dedication to the agency, Harriet Eveleth, a ranger's wife, purportedly left her three small children behind during the Big Blowup of 1910 and rode twenty miles on horseback from Monarch to Neihart, Montana, to take charge of a hundred men fighting a fire, not knowing whether the fire would jump the ravine and claim her home and family. Eveleth's bravery earned her the nickname "The Paul Revere of the Belts."³⁹²

Other wives took on less dramatic roles in time of crisis. They served as nurses and camp cooks on the fire lines, helped prepare fire reports by estimating timber and forage losses, and finally analyzed the causes of the fires. When Washington refused to send more equipment because records showed forests had their allotment, wives dug into their personal finances to pay for tools. Families also hosted visiting stockmen, hunters, or forest supervisors overnight in their homes. Supervisors and administrators viewed women who declined to take on the role of active helpmate as disloyal and hindrances to their husbands' careers, and rangers with uncooperative wives tended not to stay in the Forest Service very long.³⁹³

Several wives saved their husbands' careers because of their behind-the-scenes contributions, something the Forest Service quietly acknowledged at times. Emma McCloud, wife of forest officer Mal McCloud, handled most of her husband's correspondence during his thirty years of service and curbed his "weakness for liquor" to keep him employed. Charles Shinn was on the



Often shorthanded while fighting fires in the early years, rangers' wives like these two on the Sierra National Forest provided critical assistance, even leading fire crews when necessary. (USDA Forest Service)

brink of losing his job on the Sierra when his wife Julia became his paid clerk. Her office managerial skills complemented his field abilities, and despite rules against nepotism, the need for good field leaders was such that Shinn's superiors kept him on as long as his wife worked for him. When Charles retired in 1911 after a long and distinguished career, Julia continued serving as a clerk in the Sierra office until 1923. Rangers relied on her professional advice so heavily that her husband's replacement had to instruct his men to come to him—not Julia—to discuss their problems: he could not establish himself as supervisor as long as they looked to his clerk for leadership and advice.³⁹⁴

Though most wives were not compensated for their work, they faced scrutiny and criticism from their husbands' superiors. As in the military, wives were expected to toe the line and be supportive if their husbands wanted to succeed in the organization. Retired forester Bob Wolf recalled the expected role of wives during the 1950s and 1960s:

When I got my first efficiency rating, it was excellent except to say that my wife wasn't very sociable. The ranger's wife had teas and my wife didn't go to them. She was working in the hospital, which was sixty miles away. And when she saw that, she went down to the ranger's office and demanded that she be paid, or else take her name out of the efficiency report. It was a very paternalistic operation, you know. So a ranger's wife was a sort of a queen bee and all the women in the ranger station were supposed to march to her orders.³⁹⁵

Like the military, the agency moved personnel around every few years, which required families to adjust to a new place and the husband's new boss. In contrast to the Wolfs' experience, Marian Leisz, wife of former forester Doug Leisz, found that fellow Forest Service wives eased the adjustment of moving and fostered a feeling that the Forest Service was a large, extended family:

The wives in general were hostesses on the ranger stations. And so we would have potluck picnics probably once a month in the summertime. And sometimes this was done on a forest level so that all the ranger districts on the forest would get together for a picnic. They would include all the young guys that were out there working in the summertime, you know, that were just bunking in bunkhouses and include them and that was lots of fun, too. And when people came through from the regional office or from an adjoining ranger district, you know, they'd always stay for dinner or one of those kinds of things. It was just expected....

All of us had big families and on a ranger station there might be, you know, three families and fifteen kids. Families were very important in our lives....And living on a compound like that had its wonderful advantages, and most of the time just wonderful relationships came out of it. After about



the first or second move, every time we moved there was someone there we had known earlier. And, so we did have an extended Forest Service family all through our career.³⁹⁶

“Family” in Forest Service vernacular even carried over into the workplace. As early as the 1910s, Forest Service employee meetings have been called “family meetings.” Ellie Towns, an African American woman who started with the agency in 1978 and retired as southwestern regional forester in 2002, was initially skeptical:

The look of the Forest Service family changed dramatically between 1963, when the Stanislaus National Forest rangers posed for a photograph (top), and 1978, when an employee civil rights meeting was held. (USDA Forest Service)

That word “family,” it bothered me when I first came into the Service because it seemed to me that everybody knew everybody else but I didn’t know any of them. And we’d go to meetings and there were all these relationships and these friendships and I thought, “Gee, I’ll never be a part of that.” And I was thinking about that near the end of my career, that word “family,” and of course now everywhere I go in the Service, even now that I’m retired, I know people and I do have that sense of family. You know, we have family meetings; we don’t have employee meetings. And I used to think, ooh, why do they call them that, why don’t they just call them employee meetings, which is what they are? Well, now I feel really warm and fuzzy about that.³⁹⁷

The Can-Do Agency and the Mythical Ranger

In the 1950s, the Forest Service reached its peak in power and prestige and was the undisputed leader in American conservation. Chief Silcox’s success in suppressing forest fires gave only an inkling of what could be accomplished if the agency applied the right mix of manpower, science, and spirit. As former Chief Michael Dombeck (1996–2001) described it, “If commercially valuable timber was inaccessible, build a road. If harvested forest on south-facing slopes resisted regeneration, terrace the mountainside. If soil fertility was lacking, fertilize the area. If pests or fire threatened forest stands, apply pesticides and marshal all hands to combat fire. If people grew unhappy with the sight of large clearcuts, leave ‘beauty strips’ of trees along roadways to block timber harvest units from view.”³⁹⁸

The Forest Service soon became known as the “can-do” agency, the Marine Corps of the civil service. The comparison to the military was apt. Pinchot had patterned the agency’s structure and organization in part on the somewhat paramilitary Prussian forest service, and the early uniform designs mimicked those of the U.S. Army. For many in the Forest Service, military service during World War I was a source of great pride. Men who had served in the forest engineers, including Henry Graves, William Greeley, and Robert Stuart, preferred to be addressed by their military rank afterward, even when they were chief. Evan Kelley, who also served as an officer in the forest engineers during World War I, went by “Major Evan Kelley” until he retired in 1944.³⁹⁹

World War II reinforced the military connection in the Forest Service. In addition to recruiting smokejumpers for paratrooper service, the Army recruited Forest Service rangers for the 10th Mountain Division. The division trained at Camp Hale, which was built on land the Army acquired by permit from the White River National Forest near Leadville, Colorado. On the steep hillsides adjacent to the camp, situated above 10,000 feet, soldiers learned skiing, rock climbing, and winter survival skills in temperatures that often dropped to thirty degrees below zero. After the war, several men from the division became involved in developing the ski industry in western states carved from national forests; others served as “snow rangers” in the Forest Service. In 1965, the military turned Camp Hale back over to the Forest Service.⁴⁰⁰



Time in the military taught the men that there were few obstacles they could not overcome. They learned to work within the limits of military regulations and yet remain flexible and adaptive to get things done. After the war, soldiers used the G.I. Bill to go to forestry school and then joined the Forest Service. Veterans were attracted to smokejumping and firefighting and brought a military bravado to those jobs, and conversely, the discipline and excitement of firefighting and smokejumping inspired some Forest Service men to join the military. The command-and-control administrative style of the military that had typified Forest Service cultural and administrative behavior since World War I became more ingrained and made Forest Service employees both conformist and inward looking.

The foresters and engineers who dominated leadership positions came from similar backgrounds. They were white males, usually from middle-class families and rural, conservative backgrounds. They trained in one of twenty-seven forestry programs that all emphasized timber production yet required little if any understanding of nontimber resources.⁴⁰¹ Those with military experience were unlikely to question authority and placed the interests of the agency above their own.

A 1949 study of Forest Service administration, conducted by the U.S. Army, praised the agency as “representative of many of the finer principles we associate with the American way of life.” It extolled “the democratic way in which relationships are handled, the dedication to the worthwhile

After World War II, alpine skiing became enormously popular in the United States, in part because of Forest Service efforts. As of 2005, 135 alpine ski areas had been built on national forests, including Arapahoe Basin in Colorado, where this image was taken in June 1998. (Author’s personal collection)

concept of conservation, the continual striving for efficiency and effectiveness of job accomplishment and an organizational morale second to none.”⁴⁰² It is little wonder that the Army found much to like in the Forest Service: supervisors with military backgrounds often used fear and intimidation to motivate their men. Edgar Brannon, a landscape architect who entered the Forest Service in the early 1970s, remembered their style of leadership:

*This post-World War II leadership culture, these were strong people in charge—they chew tobacco, they drink whiskey, they smoke cigarettes, they are hard. They are tremendously dedicated, but they are, in some sense, a bunch of characters, too. The leadership style is really command, control, [and] intimidation. Basically, if the people that work for you don't fear you, then you're "country clubbing" it—you know, you're not getting the most out of your people. That's the style. I can remember an early forest supervisor I worked for who basically began his day drinking coffee and reading the morning paper, and then at ten o'clock, he would begin walking down the hall, and I could hear the staff officers begin to tremble because he was, as he would say, looking for someone's ass to chew. And he would go in and pick somebody—seemed to be at random but I'm sure it was focused—and basically ream them out. There was a sincere dedication from these people to really do the job and they were so into the Forest Service, it was their entire life.*⁴⁰³

In 1960, Herbert Kaufman published a study of administrative behavior in the Forest Service. He sought to learn how field personnel operating under the agency's decentralized system, which allowed the lowest-ranking officers to make decisions without consulting superior officers, succeeded at consistently high levels. Kaufman found that the Forest Service recruited men with technical knowledge and practical skills who also had the will to conform and carry out what he called “the preformed decisions” of their superiors, which could be found in the ranger's bible, the *Forest Service Manual*. No longer a slim volume that fit in a shirt pocket, the manual had become a multivolume set of loose-leaf binders. The agency designed the manual to do most of the thinking for rangers: decisions on everything 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” were detailed in the manual. The manual and agency culture ensured a standard way of handling the situation or problem, regardless of where it occurred.⁴⁰⁴

Rangers also kept diaries and filed reports that would eventually reveal deviation. Because personnel were rotated every two to three years, any inconsistencies might be found and reported by one's successor. In such an atmosphere, a forester who questioned operations might be labeled a troublemaker and place his career at risk. By handling personnel this way, Kaufman noted, the Forest Service “enjoyed a substantial degree of success in producing field behavior consistent with headquarters directives and suggestions.”⁴⁰⁵

According to Forest Service Historian Gerald W. Williams, the agency's mobility policy benefited its employees as well: it gave them broad experience in managing different resources and different people. Mobility was a prerequisite for advancement; it screened and trained future leaders and gave them a national perspective on the agency. It also weakened ties to one community, ranger district, or forest so that decisions would be based on national priorities. The effectiveness of mobility, however, fell victim to changing circumstances. Some chiefs wanted more movement, while others wanted less—sometimes for budgetary reasons. A tight budget might mean there was less money available for moving families, and so they were moved less often.

Within the agency, there may have been disagreement about what to do or how to do it, but once a decision was made, everyone accepted it and worked to implement it.⁴⁰⁶ That a forester's peers rarely questioned his decision contributed to a sense of always doing what was best for the land. The emphasis on conformity and obedience fostered what one forester called the "myth of the omnipotent forester," an attitude that came to dominate the agency's thinking. In the mid-1960s, a seasoned forester told newly hired foresters, "We must have enough guts to stand up and tell the public how their land should be managed. As professional foresters, we know what's best for the land."⁴⁰⁷

Through its ever-increasing timber yields, the Forest Service was making tangible contributions to the growing U.S. economy and the struggle against communism—no small motivation for employees of a goal-oriented agency in the Cold War. In the age of Sputnik, scientific achievement mixed with a can-do attitude made the Forest Service a model agency and transformed the forest ranger and his partner, Smokey Bear, into iconic figures. Forest Service rangers wore the proverbial white hat, an image the agency had cultivated since the early 1930s through a radio program, "Uncle Sam's Forest Rangers," which had aired on Thursdays at lunchtime from 1932 to 1944 as part of the NBC radio network's *National Farm and Home Hour* program. The drama taught housewives and children about the agency's range, logging, and fire policies, and that well-mannered rangers on their rare visit to the city always removed their hats in the presence of ladies, a courtesy ignored by callous city dwellers.⁴⁰⁸ After the war, countless agency-approved fiction and nonfiction books, and various movies and radio and television programs portrayed the forest ranger as the epitome of the mid-twentieth-century American man: "The man getting out of the station wagon was tall and well built. The forest ranger uniform with its big Stetson seemed a part of the man himself. His friendly, yet strong face appealed to [the young protagonist], who found himself liking the man at first sight."⁴⁰⁹ Women wanted to be with him and men wanted to be like him.

The typical narrative found the forest ranger, who personified the agency, living an exemplary life in the woods while carrying out a job that brought him into conflict with people abusing the land. The confrontations presented an opportunity to educate the young audience. "Multiple use," at first merely implicit in the early radio program and in books in the 1950s, became a

The Forest Service had effectively used radio programs since the 1930s, but in the 1950s it began cooperating with Hollywood to promote its mission and the dedication of its employees through television shows like *Lassie* and films like *The Forest Rangers*. (USDA Forest Service – Forest History Society)



repeated mantra by the 1960s. When the collie Lassie, a character already popular from movies and television, joined Ranger Corey Stuart for a series of adventures in the 1960s in authorized books and a television series, the forest ranger reached the peak of his popularity.⁴¹⁰


Yet despite the agency's efforts to promote itself, the public constantly confused the Forest Service with the National Park Service as well as the purpose of each agency. Even Smokey wore a Park Service-style hat. Such war campaign hats, with the pinched peak, had not been worn by Forest Service personnel in more than twenty years. The confusion only deepened as civic groups and state organizations began linking Smokey to broader conservation issues, such as fighting pollution, commonly associated with other federal agencies.⁴¹¹

Women: The Deskbound Years

Women had worked in clerical positions as "typewriters" in the Washington headquarters office since the agency's Division of Forestry days. Before World War II, the agency hired very few women for professional positions. Eloise Gerry, the first woman appointed to the professional staff of the Forest Products Laboratory, just after its opening in 1910, is a noteworthy figure not only because of her scientific achievements but also as an exception to the men's-club attitude that prevailed well into the late twentieth century. In the 1910s, the agency began hiring women as draftsmen, bibliographers, and what would later be called information specialists but made it clear that women were not welcome to apply for jobs that took them into the field. That remained the agency's position until the 1970s.⁴¹²


During Gerry's career, the agency made one notable exception to its position regarding women in the field. With the fire season of 1913 approaching in northern California, Assistant Fire Ranger M. H. McCarthy wrote to his boss, Klamath Forest Supervisor W. B. Rider, to inform him that last year's fire lookout would not be returning to Eddy's Gulch Lookout Station because he had found a better-paying job. McCarthy had three applicants to submit for review. McCarthy thought so little of the first applicant that he

The Difference Between THE FOREST SERVICE AND THE PARK SERVICE




Forest Ranger

The National Parks, such as Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, are great outdoor museums. They are managed by Park Rangers. The only roads, trails, and buildings that are permitted in these public lands are those which they need to protect and manage them and provide for the comfort of visitors. National Parks specialize in preserving nature and do not produce crops as do the National Forests. The National Park Service is in the Department of Interior.




The National Forests are lands of many uses. In them, the lands are managed to produce water for towns and cities, cattle are grazed, timber is cut for market, hunters and fishermen are welcome, skiing and camping are encouraged, Forest Rangers manage the National Forests. Lassie and I work for the Forest Service, which, as I have already said, is part of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

One way you can tell a Park Ranger from a Forest Ranger is by his uniform. There is a difference, especially in the hat, badge, and shoulder patch.



Park Ranger



The Forest Service has long struggled to differentiate in the public's mind its multiple-use mission from that of the National Park Service's "single use" mission. In the 1960s, when the Park Service was pushing its "Mission 66" program, this page appeared in *The Forest Ranger Handbook with Corey Stuart and Lassie* interpretative booklet, produced for children with the agency's cooperation. The description touts national forests as the "lands of many uses" and points out the differences in uniform styles. (Personal collection of Sandra Forney)

Eloise Gerry, Early Forest Scientist

"I must admit the Forest Service did not want a woman," Eloise Gerry recalled, "but as it happened there wasn't a man willing to come and do the work." Hired shortly after the Forest Products Laboratory opened in 1910 because she had highly specialized training for cutting wood specimens and preparing photomicrographs, Gerry spent forty-five years with the Research branch. She held bachelor's and master's degrees from Radcliffe College and earned a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in 1921. Gerry's first task for the lab was collecting wood samples of all native species and preparing them for study.

Gerry contributed to the new science of treating wood with preservatives—work that led to her long and productive association with the southern naval stores industry. She examined southern pines to study the effects of tapping for the resin that went into turpentine, an important forest product, and her research led to less destructive collection methods. During the two world wars, her work on wood structure contributed to improved use of wood in aircraft and packing materials. After the second war, Gerry developed a new area of expertise, in foreign woods. In all, her name appears on more than 120 publications. Six years after retiring in 1955, she lamented that opportunities for women in science were still "definitely limited and much more difficult."

Source: Lida W. McBeath, "Eloise Gerry, A Woman of Forest Science," *Journal of Forest History* (July 1978): 128–35.

declared bluntly, "I could not conscientiously recommend him, even in a 'pinch.'"⁴¹³ Though the second applicant had poor eyesight, it did not prevent him from frequently violating the local game laws.

"The third applicant is also 'no gentleman,'" McCarthy continued, but would nonetheless make a "first-class Lookout." McCarthy's suggestion was so unprecedented, he warned Rider, it "may perhaps take your breath away, and I hope your heart is strong enough to stand the shock." He recommended Hallie Morse Daggett, "a wide-awake woman of 30 years, who...is absolutely devoid of the timidity which is ordinarily associated with her sex as she is not afraid of anything that walks, creeps, or flies. She is a perfect lady in every respect, and her qualifications for the position are vouched for by all who know of her aspirations."

McCarthy urged his supervisor to try "the novel experiment of a woman Lookout." He also told Rider not to worry about being overrun by female applicants in the future "since we can hardly expect these positions to ever become very popular with the Fair Sex." McCarthy's faith in Daggett proved justified. She was one of the most effective lookouts on the Klamath National Forest, typically reporting fires before others did. Of the approximately forty fires she reported that first season, fewer than five acres burned. She also garnered national publicity, and the Forest Service soon had its choice of women for lookout positions. One forester optimistically predicted, "We may have [in] some time not only female forest guards but female forest rangers and even supervisors."⁴¹⁴ Indeed, by 1920, women had applied for jobs as rangers and grazing assistants, but the agency turned away their applications.⁴¹⁵

Like all lookouts, Daggett had a telephone on which her supervisor called three times a day to check in. Every day she climbed a twenty-foot pole to take weather readings in winds up to fifty miles per hour. Daggett had a relatively easy time with other women lookouts. She had a log cabin, and once a week, her equally rugged sister made the six-hour round trip to deliver mail and provisions. Other lookouts might receive visits every two weeks and typically lived in more primitive conditions. In Washington, Colville National Forest lookout Gladys Murray reported that the "Forest Supervisor kindly approved my request for a warm log cabin for next year and the sturdy building is now ready to roof and receive its windows." She also had to haul drinking water from a spring twenty minutes' ride away and could do so only between dusk, when visibility dropped, and nightfall, when fires would again be visible.⁴¹⁶ Lookouts took in stride such difficulties as sunburn, scorpions, mice, rats, bears, coyotes, and high winds that blew down their tents.⁴¹⁷ Ironically, if a fire was nearby, agency rules required the female lookout to call a male smokechaser to come fight it, even if it was threatening



Hallie Morse Daggett (below), the first woman fire lookout, served for fifteen years. Helen Dowe had a more diverse career than most agency women of her generation. From 1919 to 1921, she served as a fire lookout on the Pike, in Colorado, before she married J. Burgess, who was in charge of maps and surveying for the Rocky Mountain region. Dowe (pictured with her husband) then worked on his survey crew before becoming a topographer with the agency. (USDA Forest Service)

the lookout post. Most women ignored the rule, since help could be several hours away.⁴¹⁸

Serving as a clerk provided the other major opportunity for women in the Forest Service. Before Chief Pinchot reorganized the Forest Service and established regional offices in 1908, women rarely worked in the forest supervisor's office. The reorganization created new jobs and the opportunity to move west. Initially, men deemed the work too rough for women, contending it required a "two-fisted ranger" or forest officer to assemble and ship fire tools, round up volunteer firefighters from bars and saloons, and perform other nonclerical tasks. As the men advanced, however, women found themselves tackling the work of the "two-fisted ranger" as well as paperwork. Office work quickly became a "pink collar" job.⁴¹⁹

A district clerk was the backbone of the organization, providing continuity between district rangers as they rotated through and briefing the new rangers on local issues. During her forty-six years with the Forest Service, Gertrude Becker worked for ten district rangers and ended



her career on a note of triumph: “The last one, it took me twelve years to get him squared away. He’ll tell you that. But we made it.”⁴²⁰

Clerks took care of expected clerical duties such as payroll, issuing permits, and hiring seasonal employees, and worked as much as eleven hours a day five days a week. With the ranger often in the field, the clerk also became the public face of the Forest Service. Clerks “had to be schooled in what the agency was all about” to interact with users of the national forests—ranchers, miners, loggers, or vacationers—concerning rules, regulations, and local conditions. It became agency folklore that the district clerk of the 1950s and 1960s did the job of twelve people today.⁴²¹

The Forest Service did hire thirteen women with forestry degrees before World War II, but they remained deskbound, prevented from doing the ranger’s rough-and-tumble job in the field. In 1934, the Forest Service appointed Alice Goen Jones as an entry-level junior forester in Region 5. Jones had a degree in forestry from the University of California at Berkeley, but the agency’s position on women as forest rangers had been made clear three years before her appointment in *The Forest Rangers’ Catechism in Region Five* (1931): “Women are not appointed by the Forest Service as members of the field force even if they pass the civil service examination.” Jones remained in research throughout her career and, as late as 1972, still encountered sexual discrimination.⁴²²

World War II temporarily allowed women to get out from behind their desks and demonstrate their field skills. In addition to Forest Service positions such as fire lookout and patrol, cooks for fire crews, telephone operators, patrolmen, and truck drivers, women took over traditionally male jobs in private industry—logging, operating mill saws, and scaling lumber. But when the war ended, women were removed from their jobs in favor of men returning home. The end of the war also spelled the end for the old-style ranger who had gotten the job because he lived in the area and knew the land and his neighbors. After World War II, as land management became more professional and complicated, a ranger needed to have a college degree. The G.I. Bill enabled veterans to go to college and earn degrees in forestry.

After World War II, the Forest Service continued to discourage women from applying for junior forester positions. Officials held to the old assumption that a female forester would get pregnant and resign to start a family or subordinate her career to that of her husband and move away. And if she married a forester, nepotism laws required one of them to leave the Forest Service.⁴²³

An agency employment leaflet from around 1950 stated the agency’s position on women in field positions: “The field work of the Forest Service is strictly a man’s job because of the physical requirements, the arduous nature of the work, and the work environment.”⁴²⁴ The only way to find out whether women could do the job was to hire them, but that was not permitted: it was a man’s job. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which required employers to provide equal employment opportunities, meant the agency would have to change its hiring practices.



That same year, President Lyndon Johnson signed legislation creating Job Corps. Part of Johnson's slate of "Great Society" programs, Job Corps gave job training and skills, along with some basic schooling, to unemployed young men (women were admitted later) from deprived backgrounds who were not in school. Although Job Corps workers participated in firefighting, community work, and forestry activities on the national forests, not all Job Corps work focused on conservation projects. In 1970, Congress established the Youth Conservation Corps expressly for that purpose. Like the Civilian Conservation Corps on which it was based, the YCC did not offer job training but it did give young men and women summer employment opportunities while giving the Forest Service the workers to deal with its backlog of conservation projects. These and similar programs exposed both rural and urban young people to conservation work, and some participants later joined the Forest Service because of their experience.⁴²⁵

The feminist and civil rights movements were slow to affect the Forest Service. As late as 1976, women held eighty-four percent of clerical jobs in the agency and fifteen percent of administrative and technical jobs, but fewer than two percent of full-time professional jobs.⁴²⁶ The career of Geraldine "Geri" Bergen Larson was typical of the handful of women with a forestry degree. Although she ranked at the top of the 1962 forestry class at Berkeley and then earned a master's degree in botany, Larson had to work in research and public information

Job opportunities for women were limited largely to office and clerical tasks until passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which required employers to provide equal employment opportunities. Several more years passed, however, before women began working in field positions.
(USDA Forest Service)

instead of in the field, as she hoped to do, from 1967 to 1972. Her work on environmental issues and her educational background led to her appointment as the regional environmental coordinator for Region 5 in 1972, an unusual position for a woman to hold at that time. She developed regional policy to implement the National Environmental Policy Act, consulted in the field with people working on environmental impact statements, and coordinated those and other similar activities with the Washington office and other federal agencies.⁴²⁷

Larson still wanted to work in forest management. Bob Lancaster, the forest supervisor on the Tahoe National Forest, discussed her aspirations with Doug Leisz, the regional forester. Leisz hesitated because Larson's husband, who owned his own business in San Francisco, would have to move in order for her to advance in the agency. She and her husband worked out a compromise that allowed her to accept the appointment as deputy forest supervisor of the Tahoe National Forest in 1978, making her the first female line officer. She took over the Tahoe in 1985 and became the first female forest supervisor in the agency's history.⁴²⁸

A year after Larson made it into the field as deputy forest supervisor, the first woman candidate for smokejumper training arrived at McCall smokejumper base in Idaho. Women were not hired on a permanent basis to fight fires by a federal agency until 1971, when the Bureau of Land Management put an all-female firefighting crew to work in Alaska. The Forest Service reluctantly followed suit in the continental United States, at first fielding all-women crews, then integrating women into existing firefighting teams. The agency debate about placing women in a dangerous occupation foreshadowed the later national debate about women in the military; both centered on whether women had the strength and temperament for traditional male jobs.⁴²⁹

By 1978, women had joined hotshot crews and helitack units, in which firefighters rappel from helicopters. The following year, Deanne Shulman, a seasonal firefighter since 1974 who had served on a hotshot crew and a helitack unit, applied for and was accepted into the smokejumpers program at McCall. When Shulman reported for training, she was told that she did not meet the minimum weight threshold and was immediately dismissed. As she packed to leave, she learned from some sympathetic male jumpers that, over the years, several men who were underweight had not been dismissed. Allen "Mouse" Owen, a four-foot-eleven, 120-pound Vietnam War vet who had received congressional waivers on the height and weight requirements and had been with the smokejumpers for ten years, contacted her and encouraged her to fight for her rights.⁴³⁰

Shulman did not dispute the legality of her termination but argued that the weight requirement had been waived for others and that she should receive equal treatment. When her initial complaint to the forest supervisor proved unsatisfactory, she filed a formal Equal Employment Opportunity complaint. The Forest Service, faced with unwanted media scrutiny over the dismissal, reconsidered and offered her another chance as long as she met the minimum weight when she reported, which she did. Shulman completed the training in 1981 to become the first



female smokejumper in the United States. Other women soon followed, and another closed door was permanently opened.

Other doors had begun to open as well. The Forest Service appointed its first woman district ranger, Wendy Milner Herrett, in 1979. Herrett had started her career as a landscape architect at Region 6 headquarters in Portland, Oregon. As district ranger, she oversaw 346,000 acres on the Blanco Ranger District of the White River National Forest in Colorado.⁴³¹ Her appointment foreshadowed another change: unlike other district rangers, she was neither a forester nor an engineer.

The Consent Decree

Forest Service leadership did not formally address the problem of discrimination against women and minorities in the workplace until a lawsuit in 1973 forced them to do so. At the Forest Service experiment station in Berkeley, Gene Bernardi, a female Forest Service sociologist, applied for a position but the hiring supervisor decided to wait for a male applicant. In 1973, Bernardi sued on the basis of sexual discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, and won compensation but not the job. She and several other women then filed a class-action lawsuit over the hiring and promotion of women and minorities in Region 5, which covers all of California.

In 1979, the Forest Service agreed to a consent decree, which the district court approved in 1981. The decree meant the agency had to bring its California workforce into line with that of the state's civilian labor force by having women in more than 43 percent of the jobs in each job series and grade. The Forest Service agreed to monitor progress and enforce the rulings. The

Gordon Rowley, who worked for thirty-four years in fire suppression, recalled, "I often wondered why a woman wanted to fight fire and come down black, grubby, teeth all black, bruised shins, sore muscles. I didn't know what they wanted to do that for. And finally my wife said, 'What do you want to do it for?'" Pictured are (left to right) Jennifer Martynuik, Mara Kendrick, Lori Messenger, and Jeanine Faulkner on the Toiyabe in Nevada in 2000. (USDA Forest Service)

Reagan administration argued that the Bernardi decree represented little more than a hiring quota system, and its opposition delayed the Forest Service's efforts to comply, leading U.S. District Court Judge Samuel Conti to extend its terms until 1991; in 1992, the parties agreed to a new settlement that expired in 1994.

Forced to implement the consent decree or find itself in contempt of court, the Forest Service began to increase the number of women at the GS-11 through GS-13 levels to give them the experience and exposure that would qualify them for higher administrative positions. Aiding its efforts was the implementation of environmental laws, such as the National Forest Management Act, that expanded the agency's responsibilities and required more workers with backgrounds in recreation management, sociology, and other nonforestry disciplines, disciplines that many women had entered because they held more opportunities than did forestry. The rapid promotions of women, however, proved a powerfully divisive issue among employees. Many felt that the consent decree put "accelerated" women in an unfair position, forcing them to succeed or be judged as failures. Some did succeed, to the benefit of the Forest Service, but others did not, and both they and the agency "lost." The shift away from the concept of meritocracy in hiring and promotion practices generated resentment within a few years and created a difficult work atmosphere in Region 5.⁴³²

Though the Forest Service stepped up the recruiting of women following the consent decree, with so few women in management or in the sciences to serve as mentors or role models, women began seeking ways to connect with one another. The journal *Women in Forestry* (now *Women in Natural Resources*) began publication in 1983 "to provide ideas and information for, from, and about women in the forestry profession."⁴³³ The journal gave women a place to voice their concerns and problems, to learn from one another, and to diminish the isolation they experienced in male-dominated land management agencies.

Professional women entering the Forest Service brought with them a different perspective on the relationship between humans and the environment. A survey conducted in 1990 found that "women in the Forest Service exhibit greater general environmental concern than men" and in particular were more in favor of reducing timber-harvest levels on national forests and designating additional wilderness areas. Another survey found that nontraditional professionals (regardless of gender) held beliefs similar to those of the women in the first survey. Subsequent studies have shown little or no difference in attitudes concerning general environmental issues between men and women, but women exhibited "significantly more concern than men about local or community-based environmental problems." Taken together, the studies suggest that the increase in the number of nontraditional employees had a measurable impact on the attitudes of other employees and was changing the agency's management focus. Forest Service employees' values are now more closely aligned with those of the general public they serve.⁴³⁴



Minorities and Cultural Biases

While women made their way into new positions in the agency, African Americans held the fewest jobs of any race at all levels. African Americans had to overcome cultural bias not only in the Forest Service but also within the black community itself. When Charles “Chip” Cartwright considered forestry in the 1960s, agricultural careers carried the stigma of field labor during slavery. Cartwright had been discouraged from studying forestry by his college professors for that reason.⁴³⁵ But Cartwright’s summer job as a Forest Service fire lookout made him want to persevere. After graduating in 1970, he became one of the first African American foresters in the agency and was subsequently the first African American district ranger in 1979 and the first African American forest supervisor in 1988. He took charge of Region 3 (Southwest) in 1994 and was succeeded in 1998 by Ellie Towns, the first African American woman appointed regional forester. Shortly after becoming district ranger in Washington’s Okanogan National Forest in 1979, Cartwright began working with black community leaders in nearby Seattle, hoping to attract black youths to enroll in the Young Adult Conservation Corps and forestry schools.⁴³⁶

Unlike African Americans, American Indians and Hispanics have long been associated with the Forest Service. Because of the agency’s early strategy to hire locals who knew the land and its users best, some of the first rangers in the Southwest came from the local Hispanic population.

Charles “Chip” Cartwright, the agency’s first African American district ranger, was urged not to join the Forest Service in 1970 because some in the black community associated agricultural work with slavery. (USDA Forest Service)

The Ordinary Career of Paul Howland Logan

Paul Howland Logan, of Alabama, graduated from Cornell University in 1926 with a degree in forest management and joined the Forest Service as a junior forester in 1927. He worked in a variety of timber management positions in the Pacific Northwest and Montana, with the exception of war emergency work in Alaska for the agency during World War II, until 1950. After briefly working for a plywood company, he returned to the Forest Service, which in 1954 sent him to East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) to help introduce forestry practices. He returned two years later and spent another eight years with the Forest Service before retiring. Logan was a member of the Society of American Foresters and several social organizations.

Logan's career is not unusual except that he is believed to be the first African American forester in the agency's history. His light skin and light-colored eyes allowed him to "pass" as a Caucasian in white society, something he started doing around the time he joined the U.S. Army in World War I. The decision to pass opened up many doors to him in a segregated society, including a career in forestry that landed him in predominantly white western towns. He retired six years before the first forester known to be an African American, Chip Cartwright, was hired.

Source: Paul H. Logan, Personnel File, in U.S. Forest Service History Collection, Forest History Society, Durham, NC; and Adele Logan Alexander, interview with author, 25 January 2005.

In fact, three members of one family were serving as rangers before the 1905 transfer, and four Hispanic rangers were listed at the time of the transfer on the nation's most remote ranger district, the Cuyama District, in what is now the Los Padres National Forest in central coastal California.

But those early hiring practices had long been abandoned, and in the 1980s, Hispanic employees in Region 5 filed a class-action lawsuit. The resolution they reached with the Forest Service in 1992 required the agency to actively recruit, hire, and retain more Hispanics. A second settlement agreement in 2002, like the consent decree of 1979, included further measures to bring the number of Hispanic employees in line with California's workforce, of which Hispanics comprise about thirty percent. As of 2003, Hispanics accounted for about ten percent of the Region 5 payroll.



Paul H. Logan may have been the first black forester to work for the agency.
(Courtesy of Adele Logan Alexander)

The Arrival of the *Ologists*

Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Forest Management Act created demand for new types of employees, such as wildlife biologists, hydrologists, recreation experts, economists, archaeologists, and sociologists—collectively, *ologists*. Some of these new employees questioned the status quo in land management as well as personnel management. Some knowingly risked their jobs—and in some cases, their personal safety—to speak out publicly against land management practices with which they disagreed. The willingness of some to confront the old-guard foresters and engineers earned them the epithet *combatologists*.

There were several reasons for the differences. Studies conducted in the 1980s found that older foresters who had risen to managerial positions had typically joined the agency between ages nineteen and twenty-four years, an impressionable age, during the agency's heyday. They were so loyal to the agency's mission and methods that they were said to wear green underwear, be green-blooded, or speak the green language. They had been indoctrinated in Forest Service culture and were reluctant to question authority. During the 1980s many older timber managers viewed wildlife management and the other nonforestry sciences as an unwelcome constraint on timber harvesting, and they were not shy about voicing that opinion.⁴³⁷

In contrast, the ologists had joined at about age thirty, after attending graduate school. Their graduate studies encouraged loyalty to their professions and emphasized independent research and thinking rather than the conformity and uniformity that had characterized past decision making in the agency. The continued emphasis on timber fostered resentment over the low priority given to the other uses they had been hired to help manage, leading some ologists to question making a long-term commitment to the Forest Service. In addition, female ologists often found it harder to fit in with the male-dominated Forest Service culture and to juggle career and family.⁴³⁸

The willingness of combatologists to take on their bosses revived a whistle-blowing tradition in the Forest Service that began with its first chief. Gifford Pinchot had challenged Interior Secretary Richard Ballinger and President William Howard Taft over disputed Alaskan coal leases in 1910 and was fired for insubordination. In the 1910s and 1920s, researcher Raphael Zon argued with Chiefs Graves and Greeley on behalf of an independent research branch and was transferred out of Washington for speaking his mind. Arthur Carhart and Aldo Leopold both resigned from the Forest Service in order to freely advocate for their visions of wilderness. In the 1980s, John Mumma and Jeff DeBonis and other combatologists also wanted to see the Forest Service do what they believed was best for the land and for the public. In doing so, they were carrying out Zon's exhortation: "The success of the Forest Service is based on the encouragement of free expression of new ideas. If forestry is to make progress in the States, the same principle should be recognized even if it calls forth resentment from those who do not want or cannot keep pace with new developments."⁴³⁹

Budget Cuts and Backlash

Just as all of those pressures intensified, the Forest Service budget was slashed because of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (more popularly known as the Gramm-Rudman Act). Aimed at reducing the federal deficit, the act forced the federal government to cut payroll and services. The Forest Service saw a twenty-five-percent reduction in staff. Employees in the traditional forestry positions found that the doors flung open for new scientists and women were now marked "exit" for them. Between 1983 and 1992, jobs in engineering and range management decreased, while employment in nonforestry fields generally increased.⁴⁴⁰ Some employees took early retirement, taking their expertise with them.⁴⁴¹ Technology contributed to job losses, too. The introduction of desktop computers, especially the Data General system, in the mid-1980s eliminated the need for typing pools and many of the women who staffed them. In all, between 1980 and 1990, the Forest Service eliminated approximately five thousand positions.

The workforce cuts under Gramm-Rudman prompted a backlash against the consent decree of 1979. In October 1985, African American employees in Region 5 filed a class complaint over



The environmental laws passed in the 1960s and 1970s opened up new career opportunities for women and minorities. Here, scientists monitor fish populations on the Ouachita National Forest in Arkansas. (USDA Forest Service)

their “gross under representation” in the workforce. The Forest Service filed a motion to dismiss the complaint on the basis that it was in conflict with the consent decree; the courts dismissed the complaint in 1991.⁴⁴² In 1990, four male employees filed suit to stop the consent decree’s implementation. When the courts turned them away, three others joined them in filing another suit, this time claiming reverse discrimination. That, too, was dismissed.⁴⁴³

Regional foresters in other regions grew resentful when the women they had recruited and trained for professional and technical positions were reassigned to Region 5 to satisfy the consent decree. The transfers increased the number of women working in that region but did not eliminate harassment and discrimination, and so additional lawsuits were filed in the late 1990s. As part of one settlement agreement, the Forest Service established a monitoring council in 2001 at the regional offices in Vallejo, California, to implement an action plan. Unknown persons vandalized the council’s office sign on three occasions, an indication of the continuing animosity.⁴⁴⁴

Two Steps Forward, One Step Back

Although their numbers have increased in forestry, range, and engineering, the categories from which most of the agency’s line officers have traditionally been chosen, women have remained underrepresented in those fields.⁴⁴⁵ Because of the technical demands of these positions, the Forest Service could not easily promote from within: “You can’t change a G-3 clerk into a

District Ranger,” one male district ranger noted in 1984. The real problem was not race or gender, he said, but experience and education, which take years to acquire. The district ranger suggested that efforts to get women and minorities into those positions and into management should begin with recruiting from colleges, a strategy the agency has been pursuing to ensure that the composition of its workforce increasingly resembles that of the American labor force.⁴⁴⁶

To recruit more minorities, the Forest Service created partnerships with American Indian institutions and the historically black “1890s” colleges, the land-grant schools established by Congress in 1890 when southern land-grant schools refused to admit black students. The Department of Agriculture had long had close ties with the originally all-white schools; in 1987, Chief Dale Robertson and Secretary of Agriculture Richard E. Lyng set up programs with minority colleges in an effort to diversify the workforce.

Even as it sought to redress past problems, the agency took a misstep. Robertson recalled a conference in Atlanta at which agency leaders met with black university presidents and their deans of agriculture:

We had a slide program, which was well done, showing people in agriculture at work. Guess how many minorities were in that show? Zero. We agriculture folks were so proud of that slide program because it was professionally done, and we just got immediate negative reaction: “Not a black face in your slide program. That’s an indication you don’t have blacks in very many positions of agriculture, you’re not even sensitive in putting together a slide program to show the black audience that you have blacks working in the Department.” . . . I have to admit. . . Agriculture had been neglecting them and that they needed USDA as their partner to strengthen the 1890s schools. A lot of truth to that.⁴⁴⁷

Robertson took the lesson to heart and focused on creating opportunities for the schools and their students through his 1890s schools initiative, which provided millions of dollars to recruit top minority students for summer and permanent employment. Several agencies within Agriculture began funding full scholarships for black students interested in careers in natural resources, as well as for American Indians and Hispanics, as part of the recruiting process.

Recruiting African Americans is one challenge; retaining them is another. Arthur Bryant and Jetie Wilds saw a need both to engage and inform African Americans working for the Forest Service about opportunities within the agency, and to help the Forest Service communicate better with its minority employees and become more sensitive to diversity and multiculturalism. In 1992, they formed the African American Strategy Group to encourage diversity and retention of African Americans within the Forest Service. In meetings and memos, Bryant and Wilds identified opportunities to close the communications gap between African Americans and agency leaders. Chief Robertson, who had already launched the 1890s initiative, budgeted some \$25,000 a year to help the organization develop strategies and hold workshops. Similar programs were established with groups representing Hispanics, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and the disabled.⁴⁴⁸

Accounting for less than four percent of the agency workforce, African Americans often faced problems similar to those of women, but more extreme. Though a female employee might find she was the only woman in a field office, she was not the only woman in town. For African Americans, working in some remote locations meant being the only black person in the entire community. Those who came from urban backgrounds could experience culture shock and isolation when transplanted to rural, predominantly white towns, and some left the agency.⁴⁴⁹

Retention has in fact proved difficult. From 1992 through 2000, the Forest Service had an average of only 1,241 African American permanent employees, and 1,227 as of December 2004.⁴⁵⁰ The majority of those employees (61 percent) were in Region 8 (the South) and in the Washington office. When Region 5 (California) and the Southern Research Station in Asheville, North Carolina, were included, the percentage rose to seventy-seven, leading to accusations of de facto segregation. African Americans constitute only 3.3 percent of the total Forest Service workforce, compared with 6.1 percent for Hispanics and 3.9 percent for American Indians.⁴⁵¹

In addition to providing training to eliminate discrimination and harassment in the workplace, the Forest Service launched several programs, such as Work Force 1995: Strength through Diversity, designed to achieve an “ideal” workforce as defined by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. On the whole, diversity programs and improved personnel management practices, combined with the introduction of professionals from nontraditional fields, have had an irreversible impact on Forest Service culture. By 2004, roughly one-third of all district rangers and forest supervisors were women.⁴⁵² Implementing policies important to women employees, such as maternity leave and flexible work schedules, which did not exist when Bernardi filed suit, have benefited men as well as women. Career training has helped both male and female employees advance and become more responsive managers in a period when the Forest Service has to serve more forest users with fewer agency resources than ever before.

Despite the progress in hiring and retaining a diverse workforce, problems remain and lawsuits continue to be filed. As one Forest Service employee noted in 1984, “Given the Forest Service’s traditional values, it’s a big step to open up the organization to women and minorities. It’ll take time, but we’re getting there.”⁴⁵³

Twenty-plus years later, with the agency’s employment practices under continued judicial scrutiny, the agency is still getting there. Nevertheless, the Forest Service of 2005 looks nothing like what Herbert Kaufman observed in the late 1950s. The career of Sally Collins perhaps exemplifies the difference. She received a bachelor’s degree in outdoor recreation and worked as a deputy forest supervisor and assistant planner for the Forest Service, and for four years as a wilderness specialist, environmental coordinator, and mineral leasing coordinator for the Bureau of Land Management. She also holds a master’s degree in public administration with an emphasis in natural resources management. Collins, who is married to an oceanographer, served as the forest supervisor for the Deschutes National Forest in Oregon for seven years before

becoming the associate deputy chief for the National Forest System in April 2000. Her diverse academic and professional background complements the more traditional forestry background of other agency leaders, and in 2001, Chief Dale Bosworth promoted her to associate chief, the second-highest position in the Forest Service.