

Reply to: 2470

Date: September 8, 1988

Subject: Clearcutting

To: Regional Foresters, Sation Directors, and WO Staff

Clearcutting continues to be a controversial issue surrounding National Forest management. It is the basis for numerous appeals, legal actions, congressional inquiries, letters, and press coverage. Despite many years of effort spent informing the public of the role of clearcutting, a significant concern about the practice continues to exist. Many forests have responded to the clearcutting issue by evaluating alternative methods for harvesting timber. These units have used creative and innovate ways to respond to the concerns of some segment of the public by modifying their silvicultural systems and cutting practices.

Considering the importance of the clearcutting issue, I believe we all must take an open-minded approach in identifying and evaluating silvicultural systems and cutting practices. We should seek opportunities to reduce clearcutting when other alternatives will meet our land management objectives. In making the determination, it is essential to use the best information available with full interdisciplinary involvement.

When clearcutting is determined to be the selected method for a site-specific prescription, we must be confident that it truly is the optimum choice given the specific circumstances involved. In addition, we must be open and forthright in working with the public in identifying and evaluating options and making site-specific decisions. We must also work to expand our knowledge and understanding of silvicultural practices and harvest methods with which we have had less experience. Throughout this process we must continually demonstrate our professionalism and commitment to caring for the land and serving people.

Under specific forest conditions, clearcutting is an appropriate forest practice. The National Forest Management Act affirms this. That Act also requires that clearcutting only be used when determined to be the optimum method to meet management objectives. By making an open-minded and sincere effort to assess the optimum methods, we will be able to meet the challenge of determining how best to meet our mandate of multiple-use forest management.

**/s/ F. Dale Robertson**

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Chief