

## Visitors from the Monongahela

I recall that during the early days of the Nixon Administration when Assistant Secretary Tom Cowden was my immediate boss, that we had a visitation from two or three people from the Monongahela Forest, who came in to protest against the clearcutting on the Monongahela. They were very upset because there was some timber harvesting in the area that they had been using for years for turkey hunting. They felt that the cutting that was being done was not compatible with hunting. They demanded that this be stopped.

Well, I recognized their viewpoint and sympathized with it. But my initial reaction was--what's more important, the personal pleasure of a small handful of people for turkey hunting, or the utilization of this resource for production of jobs and raw material, done under a silvicultural system that, if properly applied, was sound? Personally, I didn't pay as much attention to that protest as perhaps it deserved. I didn't recognize the strength of the opposition that could be developed over this issue.

It soon got beyond the turkey hunting issue. These people whom I thought were militants, and I still think they were militants in support of their own cause, were able to get the support of the Izaak Walton League and others, to rally around to protest the use of clearcutting as a harvest method on the Monongahela National Forest. That led in turn to the lawsuit that stopped timber harvest by that method, not only in the Monongahela, but challenged the whole legal basis for timber management on the national forests.

I don't know, if I had to do it over again, whether I would have recognized the potential of this immediate protest, which had all the appearance of a very self-centered protest from a very small segment of the population who wanted the national forest to be managed just for their own personal pleasure. This is the way I sized it up, and I think that's an accurate analysis of their position. What I didn't realize is how potent they could be in expanding this protest.

## Hindsight

Can anyone say that they had the vision to recognize everything that has happened in the last few years? I can assure everybody that any decisions we made, any mistakes we made, were made in a sincere attempt to do the proper things, and manage lands and resources for the benefit of the total public. I say this in recognition that many people have not fully adopted or subscribed to the principle of multiple use. Some even object to any timber harvest or any development on any national forest land that's not now developed.