

PERCEIVED OBJECTIVES AND VALUES  
OF THE FOREST SERVICE  
LONG TERM TRAINING PROGRAM IN SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS

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Larry Miller

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## INTRODUCTION

Through its Policy Analysis section, the Forest Service has conducted a Long Term Training Program in Systematic Analysis (hereinafter called the Program) at Michigan State University, then later, jointly at both Michigan State and Oregon State University for twenty years. Approximately one hundred graduates of the Program are now in various stages of career development within the Forest Service. A few trainees have quit the Forest Service altogether (Ashford, 1985).

The Program is reviewed periodically as part of the monitoring function. Currently, a questionnaire is used to determine the effectiveness of the Program in terms of applicability of the presented material to subsequent field work problems; desirability of continuing the Program; identification of opportunities for refinement of the Program; and the rating of the graduate's performance as scored by their immediate supervisor (Leffers, 1986).

Although previous reviews have indicated a strong desire to continue the Program, questions regarding the effective utilization of the graduates have arisen. In March of 1985, Eugene Ashford spoke to the current and prospective Program candidates and indicated that only three graduates were in line positions (Ashford, 1985). With these data in mind, the Policy Analysis group has become interested in determining why there was such a low representation in the line positions when one of the underlying (but undocumented) purposes of the Program is to increase the number of line officers with analytical skills

(Ashford, 1985). A major question is, what value is placed on the graduates of the Program? The purpose of this paper is to determine what constraints are driving the job selection process and how this Program interrelates with those constraints.

To fulfill this purpose, two objectives were formulated.

1. To identify the major attitudes and values toward the Program of a cross section of Forest Service officers.
2. To draw implications from those attitudes and values for the job selection task.

### THE PROGRAM

The Program to be studied has several objectives which are stated in the following quote.

"The training is intended to equip the trainee with the intellectual framework necessary to conduct effective analysis. This is accomplished by mastering the fundamental skills of systematic analysis and by broadening the viewpoint of the trainee.

Systematic analysis training consists of developing an understanding of the theory and techniques of economic analysis, regional and land management planning, simulation and mathematical modeling and related disciplines. In addition to the above analytic disciplines, the trainees also receive training in management and organizational disciplines.

Trainees views toward Forest Service programs and policies are usually strongly supportive, due to career experiences. It is necessary for the successful analyst to develop a more critical viewpoint. This assumes that through critical analysis, better programs and policies can be developed. This psychological change is accomplished largely by removing trainees from the traditional Forest Service environment, and by exposing them to other viewpoints" (Leffers, 1986).

The hallmarks of these stated objectives are:

1. removal of the trainee from the confines of his job to promote critical review of Forest Service programs from perspectives outside of Forest Service norms.

2. provision of an array of fundamental analytical skills and techniques; though not an exhaustive library of skills worthy of job reclassification.
3. provision of management and organizational disciplines for broadening the analytical skills.

The Program is a one-year, non-thesis Master's program in systematic analysis conducted by the Policy Analysis section of the Washington Office of the Forest Service. The Program consists of coursework in statistical methods, analytical techniques, policy analysis and economics with elective options in business management, sociology, agricultural economics and related sciences. The Program consists of core and elective coursework designed to provide candidates with mathematical skills in analytical statistics and economic theory plus policy history and development. Through elective work, the candidate emphasizes particular fields of interest such as business management techniques or sociological and political implications of policy development.

Potential candidates respond to a service-wide vacancy announcement advertised by the Washington Office. Each Forest Service submits their lists of candidates, in order of priority, to the affected Regional Office. Each Regional Office submits a Region-wide list of candidates, in order of priority, to the Washington Office where a final nationwide selection is made. Although funding for the Program is from the Washington Office, responsibility for placement upon completion of the Program rests with the sending Region.

Candidates selected for the Program must have high levels of achievement in their undergraduate work, be appraised by their superior officers to have potential for significant contribution to the Forest Service mission and have expressed a strong personal desire to, both, attend graduate school and to progress into the higher ranks of the Forest Service.

### METHODS AND CONSTRAINTS

The method used in this paper was to ask the same battery of questions to a sample population of line and staff officers, then, review to the responses for thoughts that represented the common perception of the question. Divergent opinions were noted. Patterns or grouping of responses by geographical location or function of office were checked. Responses to each question were quoted for the common train of thought and divergent opinions noted for their revelations. Tables of common phrases or thoughts expressed by the respondents are provided for questions with broader meaning.

There are 120 Forest Supervisors in the Forest Service and 36 staff officers in the Washington Office at the level examined. This study work was constrained to six Forest Supervisors in Oregon and six staff officers in the Washington Office. Therefore, the study results are only representative of this limited convenience sample.

## Interviewees

The following six Forest Supervisors were interviewed:

Tom Thompson	Siuslaw NF	Corvallis
Mike Kerrick	Willamette NF	Eugene
Dave Rittersbacher	Ochoco NF	Prineville
Jerry Allen	Wallowa-Whitman NF	Baker
Dick Pfilf	Mt. Hood NF	Gresham
Roger Baker*	Umatilla NF	Pendleton

\*Roger Baker was the Acting Forest Supervisor of the Umatilla due to James Lawrence being in transit to his job. Roger has had eleven years at Pendleton as the Forest Range Staff and was, therefore, most adequate as a respondent representing the Umatilla.

One reason these Forest Supervisors were interviewed was because they are the hiring officers for their Forests. They are key individuals who must be convinced of any program's value before that program receives an opportunity to be utilized fully. In addition to their use in determining perceptions about the program, these supervisors were selected to enable assessing if differences in responses could be attributed to the "eastside vs westside" division of Region 6 of the Forest Service. Three Forests were selected from each side. Eastside forests were the Umatilla, Ochoco, and Wallowa-Whitman. Westside forests were the Siuslaw, Willamette and Mt. Hood. Also, the Forest Supervisors selected represented varying years of experience in their positions from very recent selections to over ten years in this position.

The six staff officers selected in the Washington Office were:

Lynn Sprague	Information
George Leonard	Timber
Bob Williamson	Range
Bob Nelson	Wildlife
Everett Towle	Land Management Planning (LMP)
Chris Risbrudt	Policy Analysis

Chris Risbrudt was selected as one person clearly knowledgeable about the Program since it resides in his Policy Analysis section. The other individuals were selected to represent a cross section of the Washington Office directors. Also, since they represent different functions, it would be possible to identify attitudes defined by function.

Although all the respondents had scheduled activities in and around their interviews, all worked diligently to respond thoroughly to the questioning.

### INTERVIEWS

The interview format was used because it allowed the respondents to express themselves freely without the effort involved in formally composing written responses and the additional time necessary to compose in writing. The author took pains to ask the same questions in the same sequence, same wording, and same emphasis for each interviewee. The author scheduled the interviews weeks in advance to allow the interviewee the ability to plan a two hour block of time necessary for the interview at his own most convenient time.

The interview scheme was to set the interviewee at ease. Then, to ask a series of questions that would draw out the interviewees perceptions and attitudes about the Program.

Each interviewee (respondent) was asked a battery of fourteen questions. Additional discussion along lines of thought developed during the interviews was frequent. The interviews were always conducted in the respondent's office and were all tape recorded.

Since the interviewer (author) is a participant in the Program, there was a tendency for the respondents to carefully couch their words to avoid offending the author. The author tried to elicit unvarnished remarks from the respondents by disarming the automatic "positive complimentary approach" most respondents would take in answering by assuring them that their raw comments were much more valuable than practiced subtlety. Additionally, the author referred to the training program as the "the Program" to the respondents to avoid hints as to the contents or objectives of the Program. Respondents were encouraged to speak their minds. Points were not debated. The role of the interviewer was to draw out the feelings or beliefs of respondents.

The questions and the rationale for their inclusion are:

1. How is any knowledge acquired, both in a general sense and with respect to the needs of the Forest Service?

As an initial question, this question was designed to place the respondent in the right arena of thought - knowledge and the Forest Service - and give the respondent an opportunity to engage his thought processes, organize his thoughts and prepare logical, stepwise responses.



2. Would you define training?

This required definition focused the respondent's thoughts on his own training exercises and the Program of interest and narrowed the scope of the respondent's thoughts.

3. Would you define education and contrast it with training?

This statement focused the respondent's attention on the differences between technical material and managerial material: specific vs. general. Admittedly, it produced a "yo-yo" effect designed to have a respondent narrowly define training, then, be forced back to a more generalized plane of educational reference and perceive the distinction. However, the effect was to require sharpened thought and concentration.

4. What kind of training (used as an all encompassing term) do you feel is needed for your personnel in terms of technical training and educational or managerial experience? Could you prescribe a % for each?

This question was designed to focus the respondent's attention on his own organizational chart and look for needs in terms of technical training and managerial experiences; then, to estimate an amount of each. In management theory, this is the first step toward designing "low-level controls" for an organization (Sayles, 1979). It is a necessity for gaining an understanding of what the people of his organization see as their personal objectives and, thence, what the organization can do for them. These "low-level controls" are tools for gaining commitment from the employees.

The thrust was to have the respondents look critically at their own organization and consider what "training needs" are needed within the organization. Since the respondents were in positions of authority, they really did have the ability (and responsibility) to exert their managerial control and design training needs.

The combined effect of these three questions was to narrowly define the respondents's vision and require nimble exercise in assessing vague terms in preparation for assessing the Program itself.

5. Given your designation of training and education, would you state the title of the graduate program I am attending and in what category would you place it?

This question requires identifying the Program and differentiating it from other Forest Service training and educational programs. The question requires recall of information the respondent possesses about the Program.

6. What do you understand to be the objectives of the Program?

Deeper understanding of the Program is required here. The purpose was to determine those depths of recognition of value or importance of the Program to the respondents. Based on this value, the respondents could be expected to make distinctions in candidate selections for positions.

7. The Program has been in existence for twenty years and has produced about one hundred graduates. For the period of time you have been familiar with this Program, how successful do you believe the Program to be in meeting its objectives? Use any scale or descriptive terms with which you feel comfortable.

This question focuses the respondents attention on the Program's values and requires a review of his understanding of the Program. Also, the respondent must review people he is acquainted with in order to assess the Program objectives and achievements. Latitude is granted in the rating scheme to induce a comfortable feel for rating the Program.

8. Graduates of the Program are represented in various levels of the Forest Service organization now. In your opinion, has the Program accelerated the career development of its graduates? Has some other influence (mentoring, luck, networking) been equally as effective for these graduates? Apply a % to the factors, if possible.

This question focuses attention on the graduates themselves and requires redefining the Program objectives to include personnel development. It, also, required an assessment of how effective the Program is separated from other career influences. This provides another critical facet of review of the Program.

With questions 4-8, the respondent thoroughly reviewed his knowledge of the Program. At this point, the respondent was asked a series of questions designed for him to provide an assessment of the Program, what he saw as Program needs and Program utility.

9. Do you see a need for this Program in the Forest Service?

No? - what kind of program then?

Yes? - any need for a change in objectives or emphasis?

No? - are you really satisfied with the objectives as they are?

Yes? - what changes? what should the objectives be?

This dichotomous question series explored the respondent's depth of knowledge about the Program and allowed him to express or contribute to the enhancement of the Program.

10. Where do you see the Program fitting into a Forest level training program? You can consider zoned forests or regions for that matter.

This question begins directing the respondent to consider application of Program benefits to a particular area, even his own forest or area of responsibility.

11. Has this Program been used to meet any objectives on your Forest (or area of responsibility) or has the Program influenced personnel who transposed part of the Program training to your Forest or area of responsibility?

This question further directs the respondent to thoughtfully recall any direct or indirect influences of the Program training onto his Forest or area of responsibility.

With question series 9-11, the focus was to sharpen the respondents detailed examination of the Program's effects in field application. Question 12 then moved on to consider the future.

12. Do you foresee any objectives in the future (and not currently present) that Program graduates could possibly address?

Here the sharpened focus is directed at the future - any time length is acceptable - and the respondent is asked to compare current Program skills with his estimate of future organizational needs. This is one more chance to change objectives as he sees fit.

13. What kinds of positions do you feel could best utilize this Program's training?

With this question, the respondent can suggest any particularly named position (eg. District Ranger), grade level (eg. GS-12), functional area (eg. Range Management), or office level (eg.

Regional Office). The purpose behind the question was to stimulate the respondent into considering the most effective placement of Program skills in the short or long run.

14. Describe your commitment to training someone within your area of responsibility in this Program or recruitment of someone who has completed the Program. Also, how do you score, rate or evaluate this Program when it is reflected on an SF-171 for a candidate's consideration for a position?

Here is the bottomline. Does the respondent view the value of the Program strong enough to support training someone in the Program or actively seeking recruits from the Program? Respondents were allowed to qualify their responses as they felt necessary.

#### ANAYLSIS

All of the responses were reviewed and grouped in like groups. Examination was made for variations in people, geography and function. One difficulty emerged. There was homogeneity in the responses. There was absolutely no variation in people, geography or function. The respondents used similar phrases or expressions and revealed no variation in thought that could be construed to hold any significance.

With no variation to plot, responses were tabulated, including the actual words of respondents for use by the reader in judging the feelings of the respondents. Conclusions were drawn from the suggestions of the respondents and recommendations for management have been prepared.

#### RESULTS

All of the respondents identified training and education as the main source of new knowledge acquisition. Several other

sources were also listed including experiences or life experiences, on-the-job training, mentoring, self inquiry and reading. Their responses were very much consistent with the body of educational material which suggests that knowledge is ideas, fact, relationships, theories, models, research and common sense experience (Ward, 1983).

Leonard Nadler describes the purpose of training or education as presenting a series of organized activities, conducted within a specified time and designed to bring about behavioral change (Nadler, 1979). He further states that Training is a set of activities designed to improve performance on the job the employee is presently assigned to or is being hired to do; it is task oriented (Nadler, 1979). Education is those activities which are designated to improve the overall competence of the employee in a specified direction and beyond the job now held (Nadler, 1979).

Nadler encapsulated them further drawing an analogy from economics: "Training is an expense - education is an investment" (Nadler, 1979). He states that an immediate return on investment cannot be expected - that is not the purpose for the experience. Nadler keeps emphasizing the need to look at the immediate, short term, here and now of training and the not so obvious, but very important, needs of education for a long lasting effect.

The Forest Service respondents had a very clear grasp of the difference between training and education (Table 1). As a matter of fact, in discussing knowledge acquisition, training and education; the respondents answered almost identically; there was no difference of opinion.

TABLE 1  
Definitions of Terms

	<u>Training</u>	<u>Education</u>
Dave R.	"knowledge specific to a job"	"higher order understanding"
Mike K.	"rote learning; technical skill"	"behavior change occurs"
Tom T.	"job related"	"generalities to gain broad understanding"
Dick P.	"skills for a specific task"	"knowledge for living... background to base actions upon"
Jerry A.	"particular, directed type of knowledge"	"broader scope"
Roger B.	"new information for a job"	"higher level, long term"
George L.	"focused, specific experience"	"aimed at broad concepts, then reconstruct problems"
Lynn S.	"skills and knowledge for particular job"	"knowledge essential to being a human being"
Bob N.	"knowledge, specific tool needed"	"broadening of ability"
Bob W.	"short term specific"	"long term knowledge acquisition"
Ev T.	"particular subject area"	"outside the agency to gain credence"
Chris R.	"structured knowledge; direct, applied"	"general sense of knowledge for interpretation of needs"

For example, Roger Baker (Umatilla) described training as addressing specific skills or tasks toward resolution of an immediate deficiency. His response was echoed by the other respondents who accurately discussed training in terms of short term, applied, specific experiences. Dave Rittersbacher (Ochoco) captured the beliefs of all the respondents by stating that education, by contrast to training, was growth in knowledge of norms, principles, and concepts related to a higher order of understanding. Their collective thoughts on both training and education could best be summed by Stephen Wehrenberg who wrote: "Education requires the student to know something at completion. Training requires the student to do something at completion" (Wehrenberg, 1983).

Dick Pfilf (Mt. Hood) added an additional twist - education provides the background base upon which an individual relates in a social environment. Dick spoke constantly throughout his interview of the social interaction needs of an education. Lynn Sprague (Information) mentioned that education is to become more human whereas training was to become strictly a more productive individual. This incidence of a more human or social person (due to education) reflects a significant concern for people, an empathy then linked to service to people. The entire thrust of the respondent's discussion in these definitions was that a sense of long term, underlying understanding of problems and concerns could be enhanced by an educational effort - not a training effort.



Question 4 (What kind of training do you feel is needed for your personnel...etc.) elicited diversity of response among all respondents but the underlying themes were very much the same (Table 2).

TABLE 2  
TRAINING NEEDS

Dave R.	technical skills needed, but more than 50% needed interpersonal skills
Mike K.	enough sociology, we need good business managers
Tom T.	continuing technical training needed but continuing education is more important
Dick P.	need training in written communication and reasoning
Jerry A.	management is weak in supervision, communication, conflict resolution
Roger B.	continual training needed, but carefully screen managerial trainees
George L.	written communication
Lynn S.	technical when specialty needed, but more managerial needed overall
Bob N.	political or social weaknesses are prevalent
Bob W.	political realities need to be appreciated
Ev T.	specialist and generalist training to achieve skill balance
Chris R.	individual needs of staff personnel

Tom Thompson (Siuslaw) expressed the feelings of all respondents by suggesting the need for continuing technical training to stay abreast of new developments in the respective fields and increase productivity. Dave Rittersbacher (Ochoco) added, however, a warning about the impersonal objectivity of machines and the necessity of developing and enhancing interpersonal skills. This interpersonal skill theme surfaced in several comments by the respondents to differing degrees. For example, Mike Kerrick (Willamette) suggested we have enough sociology training (Managerial Grid, etc.) and a strong

need for organizational and business management needs - including skills with people management. Jerry Allen (Wallowa-Whitman) suggested that a weakness exists in managerial skills in supervision, communication, conflict resolution, group psychology and budgeting. He suggested that training be composed of 66% managerial training to 34% technical training for District Ranger and Forest Staff. Dick Pfilf (Mt. Hood) suggested that technical training is quite sufficient and must be maintained but that managerial training is sorely needed, particularly, in written communication. Bob Williamson (Range) suggested that the political realities of decision analysis and decision making need to be appreciated and that is a reality not easily trained into somebody. Bob Nelson (Wildlife) echoed the concern of Bob Williamson in that political or social weaknesses are a soft spot in the Forest Service's educational structure. George Leonard (Timber) emphasized the need for strong training in written communication; that we have enough subject matter specialists.

When queried about the percent of managerial vs. technical training, the values of the respondents ranged from 50-50 to 80-20, respectively. However, George Leonard seemed to express unusual perception by suggesting a floating amount of each training... heavy to technical training early in a career but shifting to almost all managerial training as one rises in the career ladder.

The argument of short term, technical training vs. long term, managerial educational training surfaced within many responses. However, the comments all suggest a strongly expressed need for continued technical training with a strong emphasis on

acquiring managerial skills. The managerial skills requested were not simply short term trainable items, but items requiring time to acquire and assimilate.....political sensitivity, written communication, conflict resolution and interpersonal relations. For example, when asked how to acquire good written communication skill, Dick Pfilf (Mt. Hood) replied..."read as much as you can to gain perspective, nuance of language, regional sensitivity." Dick's suggested reading list included the writings of Aristotle, Plato and the novel Moby Dick.

Questions 5 and 6 asked the respondents to identify the name of the Graduate Program, define it as training or education, and list the Program's objectives (Table 3).

Chris Risbrudt (Policy Analysis), Ev Towle (Land Management Planning), and Lynn Sprague (Information) identified the title of the Program, but none of the other respondents were so able. All of the respondents identified the Program as an educational experience but a few, such as George Leonard, felt the Program had training elements within it.

TABLE 3

Table of Estimated Titles

Dave R.	"Systematic Analysis of Forest Management"
Mike K.	"Long Term Study in Systematic Analysis"
Tom T.	no guess
Dick P.	no guess
Jerry A.	no guess
Roger B.	no guess
George L.	no guess
Lynn S.	"Economic and Management Analysis"
Bob N.	"Study of Economics in Forest Management"
Bob W.	"Long Term Study in Systematic Analysis"
Chris R. and Ev T.	"Long Term Training in Systematic Analysis"

Chris Risbrudt noted that regulations do not permit government employees to return to school for education at government expense...only for training. Education is assumed to be completed prior to entering government service.

On the subject of outlining the objectives, the respondents illuminated a basic unawareness. Only Chris Risbrudt, Ev Towle and Lynn Sprague, all in Washington DC. had reasonable knowledge of the Program's objectives. This is because they have or have had direct close association with the Program. The other respondents spoke of mathematical skills and analytical skills accumulation suitable for employment on a planning team...the overall impression was one of a "number cruncher". Only George Leonard (Timber) added "...the management of complex programs." Although the Program did have such an emphasis many years ago to provide crucially needed math and analytical skills, the emphasis has evolved into a managerial medium without being noticed by the wide majority of Forest Service personnel including the Forest Supervisors of today who are making job selections at the Forest level.

Chris Risbrudt stated that this evolution toward managerial emphasis is deliberate and is expected to produce line officers with this more sensitive understanding of analytical processes. This educational evolution is nothing more than an organizational response to an observed need. It is a minor redefintion of the Forest Service's goal mix wherein the Forest Service is attempting to provide line officers with an enhanced sensitivity to a perceived change in the environment outside the Forest Service.

Question 7 asked the respondents to recall the Program as thoroughly as they could and rate the success of the Program toward achieving its objectives. The Forest Supervisors interviewed revealed a knowledge of the Program's existence but a lack of knowledge to assess the Program's success (Table 4).

Jerry Allen (Wallowa-Whitman) noted that the Program lacks visibility. This was a common comment from the Supervisors. They are almost completely unaware of who has completed the Program. Any managerial skills observed in their people, therefore, are not ascribed to Program training but to innate abilities. For example, Dick Pfilf (Mt. Hood) was unaware of anybody on his Forest having completed the Program nor could he see any input or influence on decisions made on the Mt. Hood that reflected Program training or influence. However, at least one member of the Estacada District of the Mt. Hood is a graduate of the Program.

Dave Rittersbacher (Ochoco) had personal knowledge of the Program having been through it nearly 20 years ago. He stated that he rated the Program as 70% successful. He suggested that placements from the Program helped employees with the organization goals and their own personal goals. The other 30% were "mishandled" according to Dave and the educational investment "wasted" by the Forest Service. Jerry Allen (Wallowa-Whitman) further noted that, although he has seen the Program listed on the SF-171 of job applicants he has screened, he, personally, nor anyone else on his review committee has given any additional credit or points toward selection based on completion

TABLE 4

## Success Rating

	Rate Success	Career Assist?	Need for Program?
Dave R.	70%	hard to call	yes but select well
Mike K.	good	many folks already had ability	possibly could get this some other way
Tom T.	yes broadened perspectives	created different opportunities for the outstanding to rise anyway	yes, no suggestions
Dick P.	lack of visibility	can't say, folks would have moved anyway	yes work on critical thinking, philosophy
Jerry A.	lack of visibility	don't know	probably; good generalists needed
Roger B.	can't comment, lack of visibility	not much	yes, but we may not need as many trained
George L.	50%	50% have seen a difference	yes, create selection criteria for line potential
Lynn S.	very successful if 50% +	can't say; successes would have made it anyway	needs to be assessed not automatically funded
Bob N.	50%	helped some get along better	no, past its time
Bob W.	not highly successful	no	not really, advanced degrees don't mean much
Ev T.	70%; would be higher if FS outplaced	yes, but hard to say	yes, but placement critical
Chris R.	fairly high but not high enough	yes, but can't separate individual effort and schooling	yes, may need more management emphasis

of this Program. The Washington Office staff voiced similar concerns of low visibility of the Program and its objectives.

These staff officers, also, could not produce a comfortable scale of rating the success of the Program and tended to work around a descriptive rating. Bob Williamson (Range) offered that graduates "...just didn't land right..." that somehow they were not utilized properly. Bob Nelson (Wildlife) suggested that "... not much more than 50% were successfully placed..." and that "... we might have done better to just hire what we need off the street rather than send people back to school..." Ev Towle (Land Management Planning) and Chris Risbrudt (Policy Analysis) rated the Program successful but not highly successful. As Ev Towle suggested "... 7 or 8 on a scale of 10." George Leonard (Timber) stated that 50% of the graduates probably exhibit better performance but the other 50% were sufficiently talented already. Lynn Sprague (Information) offered the thought that if over 50% of the graduates are placed where they can apply their skills, then, the Program is a success.

Due to a lack of Program visibility, the objectives of the Program are not well known. Given the responses, it is obvious that a scale of measurement for monitoring the Program is not present. Success is not defined. Therefore, all the respondents spelled out their own definitions of success. The one constant thread winding through all the responses was that the Program was a success but not sufficiently high enough. Given the Forest Service investment in the Program, that success ratio was seen as needing improvement.

Question 8 asked the respondents to judge whether or not the Program had assisted in the career development of the graduates and compare that assistance to other forms of career development such as mentoring, networking and luck. They were also asked to assign a percentage to the various factors they saw.

Jerry Allen (Wallowa-Whitman) pointed out that the low visibility of the Program obscures the observations of the results. All of the respondents indicated an inability to assay even a reasonable guess at career enhancement for the graduates. Dave Rittersbacher (Ochoco) noted some people who changed functions or entered a different career thrust that was personally satisfying and, by that definition, the Program, indeed, assisted in career development. Dick Pfilf (Mt. Hood) pointed out that many of the graduates would have moved well in career development anyway due to the careful selection criteria for candidates. As Tom Thompson (Siuslaw) observed, many of the candidates may be singled out as outstanding individuals already - those "five percenters" who rise swiftly in the Forest Service. Lynn Sprague (Information) summed it up best by stating that, perhaps, 50% of the graduates achieve sufficient high visibility that they do receive a "jolt" of acceleration in their career. However, further development depends very much on that graduate's own skills in job performance, network and self-advancement.

Bob Williamson (Range) agreed and added the organization's view about self-advancement is "...advanced degrees don't mean anything except in research..." Therefore, the Program may give graduates a career jolt but recognition of work, not degree



status or Forest Service investment in that individual, will determine future career development. Assigning a percentage to the various factors affecting career advancement (including the Program influence) was not possible according to all respondents.

Question 9 asked the respondents point blank if they could see a need for the Program within the Forest Service. If no, they were asked to suggest a training opportunity that is needed; if yes, they were asked to suggest changes they saw as desirable. The only person who saw the Program working well as is was Chris Risbrudt who directs the Program. He emphasized the need for no more major changes and a continuing need to emphasize more managerial development and to deemphasize numerical studies

Only one person felt the Program should be terminated. Bob Nelson (Wildlife) felt the Program was past its time and the technical and analytical skills needed by the Forest Service could be more economically "hired off the street." He also suggested that more functional training should be able to meet the needs of the Forest Service. Bob felt that the generalist or managerial education such as the Program provides is not warranted. Roger Baker (Umatilla) thought the Program should continue but felt as Bob Nelson that more "directly applicable" emphasis was needed in the Forest Service.

In between these two views were a variety of cautiously worded expressions of concern about the Program's value to the Forest Service. Mike Kerrick (Willamette) voiced a concern that the Forest Service could possibly get this managerial influence some other way such as short courses on specific subjects or special workshops put on in conjunction with colleges and

universities. Others, such as Lynn Sprague (Information) and Bob Williamson (Range) suggested an examination of the Forest Service needs and objectives is needed because of severe budget restrictions and the winding down of Forest Planning developments throughout the organization. Dave Rittersbacher (Ochoco) spoke of a common thought he shared with George Leonard (Timber) and Ev Towle (Land Management Planning). The selections of candidates must be good to insure a reasonable chance for the Program's success. Dick Pfilf (Mt. Hood) and Jerry Allen (Wallowa-Whitman) suggested that "generalist" or "managerial" emphasis should be continued and enhanced although both have little knowledge of the Program's content.

Question 10 asked the respondents to describe how the Program would fit into the training plan of the respondent's area of responsibility be it a Forest or a Staff Section in Washington DC. A few questions later at Question 13, the respondents were asked to name positions within their areas of responsibility that could best utilize the Program's training. All the respondents answered both of these questions simultaneously, always elaborating on Question 10 to include Question 13.

There was consistency in the responses. Everybody thought the target level for the graduates of the Program was a substaff function in a Forest Supervisor's Office or a Regional Office. Based upon this, all those responses leaned heavily toward keeping the Program training at those office levels or where someone's exceptional demonstrated capability would warrant lower level consideration.

Everyone stated this except Chris Risbrudt (Policy Analysis) and Ev Towle (Land Management Planning) who firmly committed themselves to including lower level (GS 9/11/12) personnel who have the potential of developing. It should be noted that Chris and Ev have intimate familiarity with the Program.

The other respondents suggested that the planning function or Program Planning and Budgeting (PP&B) were excellent places to put Program graduates. Almost all felt that the "biggest bang for the buck" was at the Supervisor's Office or the Regional Office so as to keep paperwork off the Ranger District. However, Chris and Ev saw the best use of the graduates to be in line positions including the District Ranger.

The overall thrust of opinions was that the Program would be better utilized in substaff or staff positions above the Ranger District. However, as Dave Rittersbacher (Ochoco) noted, in the past most people were recruited into the Program with those kinds of ambitions. Development for a line position was not considered the primary reason for the Program.

Question 11 asked the respondents to state any objectives of their units or areas of responsibility being met or influenced by the Program graduates. The respondents were being asked to look for influence, positive, neutral or negative, of the Program in their respective areas of responsibility. Ev Towle (Land Management Planning), George Leonard (Timber) and Chris Risbrudt (Policy Analysis) saw definite influences only in Policy Analysis and Land Management Planning.

Lynn Sprague (Information) explained that, in the past, Program participants were selected based on their particular aspirations and the needs of the Forest Service for enhanced expertise in Land Management Planning and Policy Analysis. Additionally, the calibre of the people selected is already high. Since the Program enhances their capabilities, they should show up well in those functional areas. Mike Kerrick (Willamette) noted the enhancement of his Forest's efforts in management control attributable to the influence of a Program graduate on his staff. However, none of the remaining respondents could recognize such an enhancement. Part of the problem is surely visibility. Program graduates fade into the work force and few Forest Supervisors realize this piece of background exists in their work force. As Bob Williamson (Range) said, "Job selection is not based on a training program." Furthermore, some people may consider the Program somewhat elitist. As Roger Baker (Umatilla) suggested, the Program may be more for individual career enhancement rather than utility to a particular Forest.

The overall thrust of the answers to this question indicated Land Management Planning and Policy Analysis have received most of the graduates because that was seen as the objective of the Forest Service and the people selected. Utility of the Program graduates outside those two functions was not seen as directly appropos.

Question 12 asked the respondents to view the future and suggest areas where Program graduates might address problems or objectives that are not now present. The foreseeable objectives were mainly implementation of the developing Forest Plans

according to Jerry Allen (Wallowa-Whitman) and an eye toward more sensitive people managers or social/political contexts according to Dick Pfilf (Mt. Hood). George Leonard (Timber) noted the increasing complexity of worsening budgets, controversial land uses (amenities vs. commodities) and the increasing need for managers who are sensitive to these social/political issues. Chris Risbrudt (Policy Analysis) noted that, overall, more indepth, accurate and insightful analysis will be needed as input to line officers or those officers must have it themselves.

The only negative comments came from Bob Nelson (Wildlife) who noted that Program graduates would be helpful in sorting out the complexities but he saw no other future need for such training. Also, Bob Williamson (Range) noted that the emphasis on economics has been necessary but is over-emphasized now. This is because budget decisions are not made on economic value, just returns from supply side economics.

There were no varitions to the responses. There was a general cautiousness that kept responses about the future limited to short run, foreseeable changes. This cautiousness about the future could stem from a lack of long range objectives for the Forest Service (real or imagined) or reflect personal desires to keep their thought processes from being overloaded. The short run (sometimes "crisis management" would be an acceptable term) consumes all of the available management time for the respondents.

The result of this question was a very nebulous "feel" for describing the use of the Program graduates in addressing

problems in the future. Dick Pfilf (Mt. Hood) attempted the most sagacious reponse. Realizing how obscure the future was, Dick enthusiastically endorsed the Program because it makes for a more complete person, more sensitive to technical and political issues plus sidelights which cannot but help those graduates to arrive at better decisions.

Question 14 asked the respondents to describe their personal committment to training someone within their area of responsibility or to recruitment of someone who has completed the Program. Bob Nelson (Wildlife) and Bob Williamson (Range) felt there was questionable need for continuance and, thus, a lack of committment to training someone from their staff or recruiting a Program graduate to fill a vacancy within their staff sections.

The other respondents were mildly to firmly convinced of the need for continued support of the Program. Most, such as Jerry Allen (Wallowa-Whitman) expressed concern with the projected constrained budgets of the next few years and the need to review very carefully any expensive projects, including long term training assignments. Tom Thompson (Siuslaw) added the need for interdisciplinary strength. He added that Program work is highly rated in his estimation although completion of the Program would not in itself be the conclusive decision criterion in job selection. Roger Baker (Umatilla) called it "...acquiring an edge, but that's all."

Ev Towle (Land Management Planning) and Chris Risbrudt (Policy Analysis) endorse the Program strongly and see themselves committed to recruitment of Program graduates and encouragement

of others to recruit. Lynn Sprague (Information) took the most time to explain his position which in the author's opinion, could well describe the opinion of the respondents. All of the positive respondents described portions of Lynn's process in describing their own particular commitment to the Program. Lynn suggested counselling a prospective trainee on his personal suitability in terms of career goals and objectives. Lynn would review the needs of his staff to see where such skills might be employed, then, intergrate the two objectives into a common objective.

### CONCLUSIONS

After twenty years of operation, the Program shows evidence of much accomplishment and support within the mangement ranks as seen in the responses to questions 7,8,9. Some career progression was noted even though it was viewed as well masked by individual intiative and opportunistic occurences. However, the expectations from the management group in Policy Analysis are greater than the actual accomplishments masked or not. Needs for training as described in question 4 were definitely reflections of a desire for the managerial education provided by the Program. Question 9 revealed a cautious optimism for Program continuance. It was suggested that review of the Program is prudent but with minor refinements, the Program should be continued.

This paper has found a need for a stronger, more concerted management effort at directing the educational objectives of the Program and then utilization of the graduates so the experience of the Program is an enhancement of both management for the Forest Service and the career development of the graduates.

Resonating throughout the interviews was one fact that there were no differences in response due to geographic location (eg. eastside/ westside, Washington DC./field) or function (eg. timber/ range). The homogeneity of these twelve managers was obvious. Their perspectives were always beyond their particular areas of responsibility in spite of the attention to detail required of their jobs. They were all strongly "team oriented" and concerned with the needs of the organization.

In attempting to answer the basic question of "why the low representation of Program graduates in line positions," we must consider the two major problems: Program objectives and recognition.

The hallmarks of the Program's stated objectives are:

- removal of the trainee from the confines of his job, to promote critical review of Forest Service programs from perspectives outside the Forest Service norms.

- provision of an array of technical analytical skills and techniques - but only the fundamentals, not an exhaustive library of skills worthy of job reclassification.

- provision of management and organizational disciplines for broadening the analytical skills.

First, note that there are no measurable outputs to the objectives. True, output could be considered the number of graduates - a nice hard number to recant to all concerned. However, is the objective of the Forest Service to produce numbers of people with a certain skill level or is the objective to produce a management effect within the Forest Service?



Peters and Waterman explain quite vividly the need for measurable outputs for objectives (Peters, 1984). They further point out that the need is actually two needs. One, the need of the organization, here the Forest Service, for a measurable enhanced management and two the personal needs (rewards) of the graduates.

Reviewing the objective statement of this Forest Service training program, there is no apparent attempt to create or reconcile the organizational goals and individual goals. Yet, the integrating of individual and organizational goals is major problem for organizations (Conner, 1980). The objective statement only tells of the change in the individuals' skill level expected as a result of the training and how these now, well armed individuals will be capable of helping the Forest Service prepare better policies.

The individuals' goals are not mentioned. It must be assumed that the rewards of the Program are an enhanced job performance that somewhere, somehow, sometime will result in promotion or achievement awards that will meet the individuals' personal goals. The Forest Service has no explicit objective of matching or achieving the graduates' personal goals.

In the final analysis, the Forest Service knows what training is being instilled, but has not formally set or raised organizational cognizance of the direction for utilization of those acquired skills, least of all line positions.

The second major problem is the lack of visibility or lack of organizational cognizance. The respondents were unaware of the content of the training and, thence, what value the training

would have for the particular graduates. After completing the battery of questions, this lack of awareness caused the respondents to offer some suggestions regarding modification of the Program.

Suggestions were:

1. Redesign the objectives for managerial positions if that was the desired effort.

2. Consider substitute educational programs. Most Forest Supervisor's Offices are located in communities where universities or community colleges are present. Surely, some educational arrangement could be developed for specific course work.

3. Consider more elaborate use of seminars, workshops, etc. in short term training for specific functional areas or managerial subjects.

As the cost for the Program is significant and current budgetary constraints are severe, the Forest Supervisors and staff officers were quite willing to look at less expensive training programs and, also, to forego the intangible benefits associated with the Program.

The manifestation of this lack of visibility or the "bottomline" is that hardened, functional targets or opportunities are much easier to deal with and justify while the intangibles of good management are difficult to grasp and justify. Functional opportunities such as Advanced Logging Systems training offer short run, immediate returns on investment while the Program offers management training characterized as having long term returns.

From the responses gained in these interviews it is obvious that the Program is not seriously flawed, although it is costly. Significant benefits to the Forest Service should spring from this Program and to the graduates themselves.

The Policy Analysis section has expressed a concern that significant gain in benefits of the Program is not of the magnitude expected. Perhaps, some redirection in the Program is necessary. However, such redirection may run counter to the ambient Forest Service managerial atmosphere.

As explained by Kaufman, the Forest Service has cultivated (from its very beginning) an organization of decentralized authority (Kaufman, 1960). This allows lower levels in the organization the authority to do their own hiring, training selection and training direction. However, this Program is conducted by the Washington Office and, therefore, reverses the basic direction of authority for training within which the Regions and Forests are used to dealing. The Program is an anomaly to the ambient Forest Service organizational structure and, therefore, will require unusual handling in spite of the fact that so very few people are involved in the Program at any time.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Washington Office should clarify the Program objectives as there are no measures of effectiveness nor is there any followup mechanism to intergrate the graduates into the optimal positions for which they qualify.

The objectives should be measurable and clear to the Forest Service and the Program graduates. Obviously, since Program candidates come from different disciplines at different levels of expertise, the objectives would have to be sufficiently broad to encompass these differences. It should be possible to refine the objectives into a specific set for that particular candidate ... a quasi "contract."

2. Increase Program visibility.

If the Program is considered valuable, it should be "advertised" (if nothing else, a better title). The purpose would be to raise the cognizance of the Program in the minds of employees, especially the Forest Supervisors. For example, the value of the Program and suggestions for employment of the skills of the Program graduates could be the subject of staff briefings at Chief/ Regional Forester meetings and at Regional Forester/ Forest Supervisor meetings. The vacancy announcement of the Program could be accompanied by a detailed explanatory information sheet directed to the Forest Supervisors. Educating the Forest Supervisors (who are the first line hiring authorities) should be a priority item.

3. Keep the Program at the Washington Office level.

Forest Supervisors, by the nature of the size of their budgets, will be too parochial in objectives for training. Even Regional Offices will be too sensitive to the Forest Supervisor's objectives.

4. Keep the Program aimed at managerial and national emphases.

Do not allow the Program to concentrate on "number crunching" and local issues. Study should emphasize legislative history and affairs plus national economic effects of public lands management.

5. Avoid outplacement of graduates back to their original Forest.

The Program should be viewed as enhancement of skills commensurate with the need for a transfer.

6. Keep no functional ties.

Do not allow the graduate to be, necessarily, steered back into their original position or function. Assign a Regional Office "networker" with sufficient rank to have the confidence of a deputy Regional Forester and the assigned duty of outplacement of the Program graduate.

Outplacement is a continuing distraction for students of the Program particularly during the final term of the year. Having a spokesperson to deal with would alleviate some of the pressure on the students. Dave Rittersbacher (Ochoco) noted that this is a problem that has persisted since the inception of the Program and it needs resolution.

7. The selection of candidates should reflect people with the same objectives as that of the Forest Service.

If the objective of the Washington Office is to build a cadre of people with a better managerial background through this program, then, that fact should be advertised as a selection criteria.

8. Firm direction in outplacement of graduates is needed to overcome the natural reluctance of field officers to select for the graduates.

For example, directed placement may be the process necessary to place graduates in a timely manner and avoid the personal upheaval and uncertainty suffered by the graduates.

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