

THE NEED FOR COOPERATIVE LAND USE PLANNING

Lewis M. Work

It is indeed a foolish person in today's world who does not plan ahead. It is just as important for individuals to plan as for corporations or government agencies.

Planning is a process that attempts to outline a future course of action that will result in smooth-running operations, conform with desired philosophies, and avoid unpleasant surprises. The president of Boise Cascade made a statement several years ago that bears repeating, "A well-run company does not tolerate surprises." The sad plight of Americans in the embassy in Iran has all the earmarks of poor planning.

Planning that involves land use is probably one of the most important and complex planning processes that exists today. It is complicated by intermingled ownerships of land, differing objectives of landowners, human population expansion and shifting of population patterns, differing needs of people using the land or products from the land, and wide variations of geographic, climatic, and vegetative composition.

Land use planning efforts are further confused because of the wide variety of human needs both real and perceived. Individual preferences lead to highly charged and emotional responses to any developing plans.

Are land use planners obliged to consider neighbors when formulating plans or is a mere ethical consideration all that is necessary?

You are all familiar with driving down a freeway and passing a subdivision that is very nicely laid out, landscaped, and contains tastefully built houses with the exception of one house that is painted robin egg blue with a red chimney, and purple door. The neighbors are probably madder than hops and esthetic senses are offended but, it is a free country and no laws have been passed yet to regulate individual taste. This incidence is a common occurring phenomenon in our society and one that we reluctantly countenance to preserve individual freedom. If the owners of this house decide to establish a kennel or to build a small concession stand to peddle produce from their garden, it will soon become apparent to them that some subtle invisible line has been transgressed and their neighbors may take legal steps to preserve the integrity of the neighborhood.

Now let's apply this situation to the forest where the Forest Service, BLM, State of Oregon, Boise Cascade, and numerous smaller private landowners are neighbors. I don't think any of the neighbors will be too concerned over silvicultural practices that take place on each other's land if resource damage is not occurring.

On the other hand, let's look at an example where the U.S. Forest Service or BLM or whoever decides that they want to enhance big game habitat to increase the number of elk and deer on their property to provide a rewarding "quality" hunting experience for a large number of hunters.

Meanwhile, down the ridge below the snowline on the winter range on Boise Cascade and other private property, whose objectives are to grow trees and produce livestock forage, great hordes of elk and deer descent to compete with livestock grazing, and reforestation efforts. It should be obvious that a lack of communications of planning objectives between landowners presents a very real economic problem to one party while striving to achieve another party's intended goals.

Let me give you a real problem that occurred to Boise Cascade illustrating the point. By lack of consideration for our needs as landowners, the Forest Service will fail to achieve its goals.

The Forest Service Wallowa Valley planning unit included about 100,000 acres of Boise Cascade land along with many acres of other private owners.

One of the published goals was to leave old growth timber intact to provide hiding cover for elk and to provide "quality" hunting. By doing this, there would be a necessary reduction of timber harvest volume.

Boise Cascade harvests nearly 70 percent of its annual volume from Forest Service lands and the remainder from its own land and other private land. To make up for the loss of volume from the government, it will be necessary for Boise to harvest more from its own land. Since much of the Boise land being harvested in lieu of preserved Forest Service timber is on elk winter range, the reduction of thermal cover probably will have a more profound effect on elk than removal of hiding cover would have on Forest Service land. The end result is that by failing to recognize adjacent landowner needs and potential, The Forest Service probably has doomed their objective to failure.

It behooves all of us as land managers to consider the entire community of landowners before developing land use plans based on an arbitrary and isolated ownership pattern. To neglect neighbors is to foredoom your planning efforts to partial or complete failure.