


WE CAN WORK IT OUT



CONCLUSION

It is clear that the Forest Service has not evolved over time in order to guarantee the protection of the last vital forest regions it administers. In response to this failure a reclassification of important forest areas is urgently needed to ensure the long-term conservation of America's last great, wild regions.

History has shown that such protection will only be guaranteed by transferring these lands away from the Forest Service to other agencies and designations. As we have seen, one generation's hard-fought agency reform or policy change can be easily dismantled by another. Indeed 40 years of environmental policy and law, such as the Wilderness Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Forest Management Act, the Northwest Forest Plan, the Sierra Nevada Framework and the Roadless Area Conservation Rule have been eliminated or rendered meaningless by the Bush administration in the last four years alone.

Reclassification is not a new concept. Some of the nation's best public lands currently managed as national parks were once national forests and were converted by acts of Congress. National parks such as Glacier [Montana], Glacier Bay [Alaska], Grand Teton [Wyoming], North Cascades [Washington], Olympic [Washington], Rocky Mountain [Colorado], Sequoia and Kings Canyon

[California] and Voyageurs [Minnesota] were all created, at least in part, from national forest or forest reserve lands. In addition, many wilderness areas have been created on national forests and BLM land giving them permanent protection from industrial exploitation. Many of these reclassifications and increased protective measures were established over the objections of the Forest Service and the timber, mining, energy or grazing industries.

On the centennial anniversary of the Forest Service, the United States is confronted with a situation very similar to that facing President Theodore Roosevelt when he helped create the agency. An unchecked private sector has created a modern-day version of Roosevelt's robber barons who are closely allied with powerful politicians and who seek short-term profits at the public's expense. President Roosevelt, one of our greatest environmental presidents, a Republican and a conservative, took action and so must we.

Roosevelt's vision has been corrupted as the U.S. Forest Service has evolved on a single trajectory of rapid liquidation of native forests and insufficient restoration. Accordingly, the United States must once again take bold initiatives to protect our last remnants of wild forests in parks and wilderness areas. With less than three percent of America's timber production coming from our federal forests,⁷⁵ the United States can well afford to take gallant action once again.