

Remarks of Robert D. Day, RNRF Executive Director  
"Conference Context, Structure and Process"  
RNRF Conference on Personnel Trends, Education Policy, and Evolving Roles of Federal and  
State Natural Resources Agencies  
Washington, D.C.  
October 28-29, 2003

The seeds of this conference were sown in 1999, when Tom Fry, director of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, met with members of RNRF's Washington Round Table on Public Policy. He reported that BLM was reexamining the kinds of skills that its workforce should possess in light of continuing workforce reductions. He observed that BLM's capabilities and mission were changing in response to diminishing financial and human resources. He also observed that the changes were occurring although there had been no congressional action to amend the agency's organic act.

We started hearing more about an impending wave of retirements in other natural resources agencies, and concerns about maintaining core scientific and managerial competencies.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, the U.S. Congress conducted hearings about these personnel trends in the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency. National security was the concern. However, no congressional hearings were conducted to examine the effects of such trends on natural resources management and research.

An emerging and more complete appreciation of what was happening to the natural resources agencies led to questions of how we had gotten to this point. Major causes were identified as decades of budget cutting and reductions-in-force, changing national priorities, and advocacy of new and diminished roles for government.

We believe that the time has come for leaders of the outdoor sciences and professions to assess these demographic trends, assess how we and the federal agencies are responding, and how the future roles of government are being profoundly affected. We also want to explore how the professional, scientific, educational, and engineering communities should respond to these trends in the current fiscal and political environment.

To do this, we have assembled a group of knowledgeable speakers to describe the facts and the challenges that we face. Following each presentation, you will have an opportunity to question our speakers and begin our collective discussion.

Following plenary sessions, we will participate in working groups to further examine the issues. This will be your opportunity to further share your perspectives, based upon your varied experiences and backgrounds. We have a wonderfully diverse group assembled for this conference. It has been our experience that such diversity leads to new insights. The working groups also promote the closer ties among delegates that will facilitate action following this conference.

We will be producing a report of this conference. Each of you will have an opportunity to review and comment on the report. Once complete, it will be widely distributed. We will conduct a congressional forum on the conference and will identify additional audiences in the coming months. And hopefully, you will encourage additional debate among your professional society members.