

Book Review

Forest Conservation Policy: A Reference Handbook

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This is a 'Reference Handbook' rather than a conventional text. The text component (116 pages) presents concise accounts of the roots of US forest policy, and current issues in forest policy. The bulk of the book (205 pages) presents a compendium of information relating to US forests and forest policy.

The authors characterise US forest policy in a way that could apply equally well to Australia. Policy change is seen as a process by which diverse interests within society arrive at a common set of goals. Forest policy does not stay the same for long — it is natural that forest policy should evolve to reflect new knowledge and changing social values.

Historically, US forest policy was driven (as in Australia) by fears of timber shortages, first at the local level, then at the national level. Again, as in Australia, forest policy development during the last 30 y of the 20th century began to reflect an increasing strain between the economic uses of forests, and protecting non-extractive ecosystem goods. This provides the historical context within which key issues of current forest policy are examined.

The key issues of forest conservation policy include:

- (1) sustainable forest management,
- (2) conserving biological diversity,
- (3) wilderness and roadless areas,
- (4) forest health,
- (5) community forestry,
- (6) forestry regulation on private land,
- (7) forest land conservation,

- (8) forest management certification,
- (9) watershed protection and water quality,
- (10) forests and atmospheric carbon,
- (11) forest biotechnology, and
- (12) emerging issues and future policy directions.

Any listing of current issues of Australian forest conservation policy would undoubtedly be very similar to this.

The 205-page compendium of information relating to forests and forest policy covers a highly diverse range of topics. These include a chronology of policy events (starting in 1626), personalities who have contributed to policy development; forestry facts and data — including summaries of the Montreal Process and Forest Certification Principles and Standards; a directory of US forestry organisations (federal, state, non-government, industry and trade, forest products companies and others); and print and internet information on many aspects of US forestry.

This account of forest conservation policy is written in a straightforward and readable way. It will provide very useful background reading, not only to those directly involved with matters of forest policy, but also to administrators and managers coping with the complexities of multiple use and the 'dynamic, evolving concept' of sustainability in forest management.

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