

Roger Hoesterey Keynote Address

UW College of Forest Resources 2008 Graduation Ceremony

Thank you Dean Bare. First, I offer my congratulations to the students, their families and friends, and faculty. Students, you are all part of the graduating class in the 100th year of the College of Forest Resources.

This is a big day. My oldest son graduated this spring from college. I know many of you have a mix of emotions; a sense of accomplishment, relief it is over, and hope and fear about your future. This is a good time to reflect on what brought you to the College of Forest Resources. I wonder what dreams you had as you first walked into Anderson Hall.

I'd like to tell you a story, which begins 30 years ago, a story about the dreams of two young men. My friend Kendall and I were on a camping and rock-climbing trip in Joshua Tree National Park the week after Christmas. We climbed all day and then lay down in our sleeping bags on the desert floor beneath a spectacular array of stars on a moonless night. Inspired by the setting we had an amazing talk long into the night. As 20-year-olds, we discussed our futures, what we should do with our lives, what difference we could make in the world.

Kendall had a deep faith and shared with me that he viewed the night sky as a giant sheet of black construction paper suspended above the earth. The other side was filled with the light, warmth, and love of heaven. The stars were pinpricks in the paper to show a darkened world just a glimpse of what heaven was like and to remind us to be sources of light in this world. We talked about what we should do with our lives. Kendall and I had worked as backpack guides the summer before in the Sierras. I was attending junior college and working fulltime, trying to save up money to attend university. Kendall was taking a break from school and working full-time at a family friend's tire shop. Kendall said he thought I should work for one of those land trusts and help make sure that not everything got developed. At the time I didn't know what a land trust was; I told him I wanted to work outdoors as a park ranger or a forester.

A week later, on New Year's Day, Kendall was climbing with another friend in Yosemite National Park. It was late in the day with the sun going down, and they were rappelling down a ridge next to Half Dome. Kendall forgot to tie a knot in the end of the rope and fell six hundred feet to his death. Unknown to me, he had listed me as the beneficiary on a small insurance policy from the tire shop that paid double indemnity for accidental death. Of course, my first response was, I could not take the money, but the tire store owner told me the money wasn't going anywhere else and that I should honor Kendall's wishes and use the funds wisely.

With those funds I moved to Washington in the fall of 1978 to attend the UW College of Forest Resources. I enrolled in the late Dr. Grant Sharpe's Outdoor Recreation Program. In addition to natural history interpretation classes, I took silviculture, dendrology, fire science, forest economics, and other natural resource courses. Immediately after graduation I was hired as a seasonal park ranger at North Cascades National Park, fulfilling one of my dreams. I then spent a few months at Pay N Pak, the precursor to Lowe's Home Improvement, wearing a stylish orange and white -striped shirt. I was looking for a full time professional job. I then worked 19 years at the City of Bellevue Parks and Community Services, buying, designing, constructing, and managing parks. I started a natural resource management program and moonlighted as a consulting forester.

Eight years ago I joined the The Trust for Public Land (TPL) as the Northwest and Rocky Mountain regional director. TPL is a national non-profit land conservation organization that conserves land for people. We help local communities save the land they love. I have had the honor of helping to conserve

over 400,000 acres of land, from urban parks and gardens to wilderness, approximately half of which is conserved as working forestland in the Pacific Northwest.

I feel very proud to have had a 30-year association with the College of Forest Resources. (By the way, Dr. Gordon Bradley, the ageless one, was one of my key professors.) This College's role and the skills you now bring into the market place have never been more important. Natural resource challenges are rising to the forefront of key issues impacting all of society, particularly water issues and the quality of our atmosphere.

The College is providing a key leadership role through the Northwest Environmental Forum in convening NGOs, timber industry, government agencies, small forestland owners, and environmental activists in very productive conversations about how we can retain working forestland. Overseas competition and real estate values greatly exceeding the timber values of forestland are resulting in a rapid loss of timberland.

The real debate on forestland is no longer between old growth or clear cuts; it is a choice between conifers or condos. Industry and the environmental community are working together in a way they never have, and CFR is providing leadership. Your skills are needed, now and in the future. For example, I am currently working in partnership with The Nature Conservancy to acquire 320,000 acres of forest land in Montana at a price of approximately \$500 million. The funding sources will be a mix of forest conservation tax credits just passed in the Farm Bill, State funds, private investment from timber management organizations, and private philanthropy. The majority of the land will be managed for long-term timber production under a conservation easement that will prevent loss of land base through subdivision and secure jobs in the woods and in mills. Key parcels will be conserved as natural open space, connecting wildlife corridors, and preserving the water quality in some of the best fly-fishing streams in America.

You represent the next generation of leaders with the multi-discipline natural resources background, in-depth knowledge of forest science, and political awareness to guide the decisions, which are critical to both the economy and environment of the Pacific Northwest. The retention and management of forestland is vital to our ability as a society to address pressing issues like economic stability in rural communities, forest health, fire safety, adequate water supply in the coming century, and global climate change. It is exciting to see emergence of cellulosic ethanol as part of an energy crisis solution. The College of Forest Resources has played a vital role over the last 100 years in shaping natural resource management. I believe it will remain vital for the next hundred years.

When I look back at the years I spent here at the UW, I know that the education I received has been critical to my career. Two most important things I learned were communication skills and how to think. I learned a lesson early in my career about the importance of clear communication. While working for the City of Bellevue, I was promoted from Outdoor Recreation Coordinator to Resource Management Director in charge of all park, street trees, and arterial landscaping. During my first week on the new job, a City Council member called to say that the landscape bed near his home was in need of maintenance. He shared that his family had donated the money to plant the trees, shrubs, and flowers as a memorial gift. I went to see the sight and, sure enough, he was right. I called the grounds maintenance worker — I'll call him "John" — and asked him to clean up the landscape median. "What do you want me to do?" he asked. I instructed him to pull the weeds, replace the old flowers, and prune the bushes and trees, further explaining that the trees had suckers growing from the base. Two days later "John" called to say the work was done. I drove by the site on my way home. The bushes and flowers looked great, but I was shocked to see that the trees had been removed. I called "John" and complimented him on how much better the site looked, and then asked what happened to the donated trees? He replied, "I did just what you said, I cut the suckers off at the base"!

In addition to communication skills, here is something else I have taken away from my time at UW to my career. It is not so much what I have learned, but rather that I learned how to think; how to think about complex systems like the function of whole ecosystems, and how to convey complex information in a way that is understandable and motivates people to take positive action. These skills have been vital to me in the management of people, politics, and natural resources.

My destiny was shaped by that evening conversation with Kendall and my time at the UW. I feel very fortunate to have been able to fulfill both my dreams, and Kendall's dreams, for my life. I ask you to think about what dreams you have for the future? What difference do you want to make in this world? Understand that you may not be able to get there right now. You might have to wear an orange and white-striped shirt. Hold on to your dreams and commit yourself to lifelong learning.

The future of this College is bright. Over the next 100 years, this College will be a source of light to thousands of more students. Each of you entered with your own unique story and your own dreams. Hang onto those dreams, and be a source of light in this world. Thank you very much.