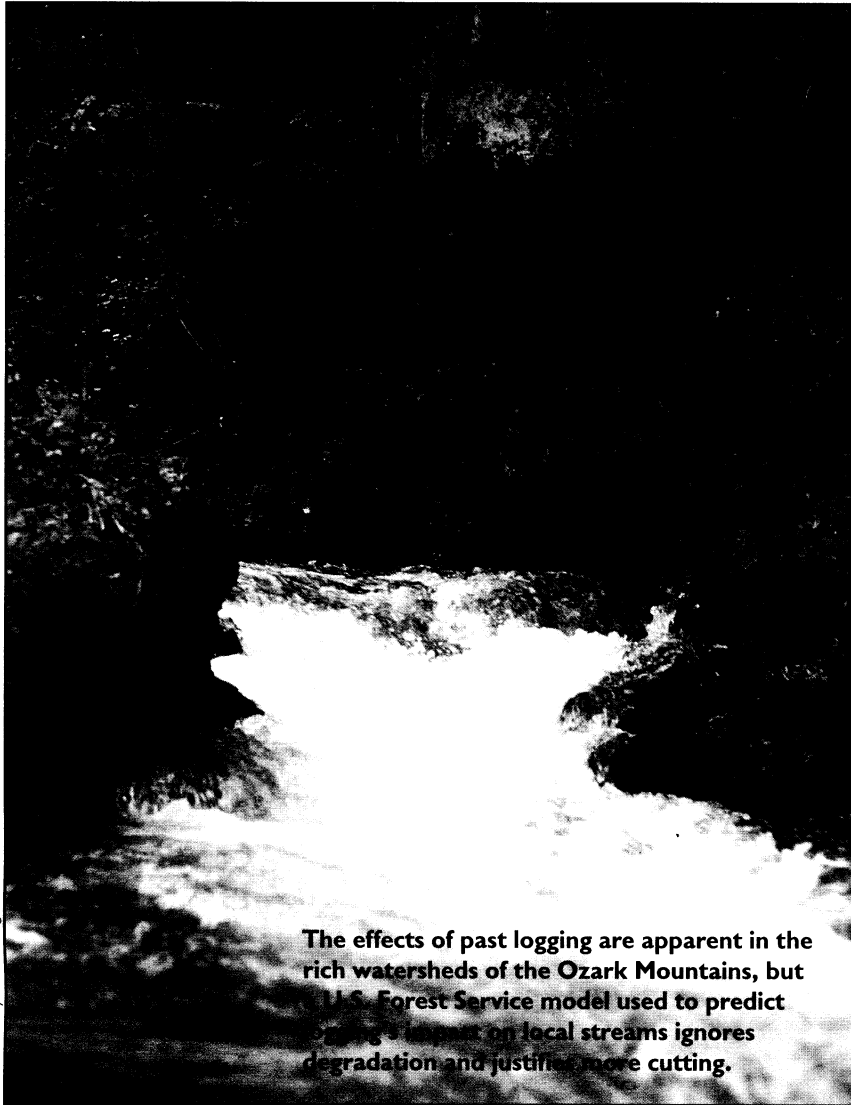


Inner Voice

Newsletter of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics

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The effects of past logging are apparent in the rich watersheds of the Ozark Mountains, but U.S. Forest Service model used to predict logging impacts on local streams ignores degradation and justifies more cutting.

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Rick Golden was hired

on the Ozark–St. Francis National Forest in 2001 to build a new fisheries program on the northern Arkansas national forest. It would be an interesting professional challenge for him, and he was assured that the Ozark–St. Francis had a commitment to build a strong program.

Once on the job, it didn't take long for him to spot a serious flaw in a model forest managers use to predict the effects of logging and road building on streams. Golden pointed out to his superiors how the flawed model would be a liability for forest projects: it wasn't supported by scientific literature and ran counter to one of the fundamental principles of hydrology. He was told instead that he was the liability.

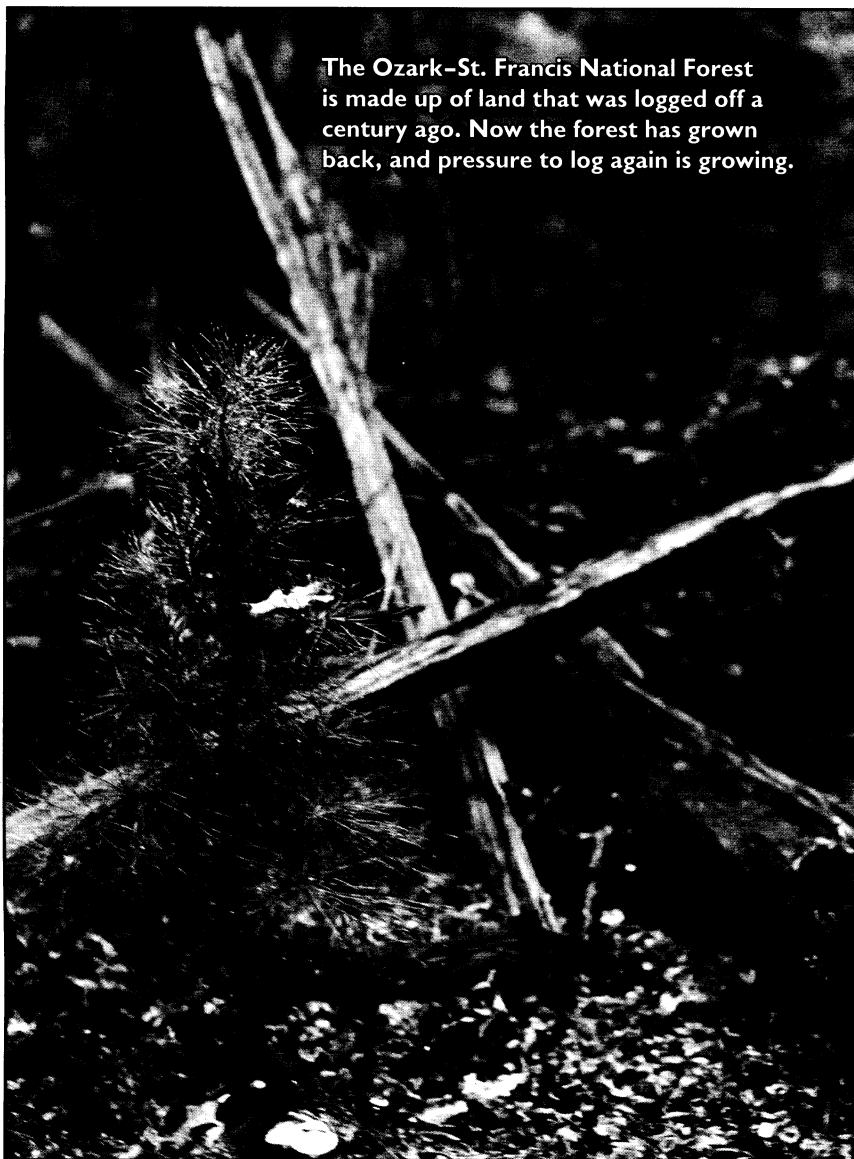
"It was as if I cut loose a tightly coiled spring," Golden says.

At issue is the way the Ozark–St. Francis calculates how sediment accumulates from disturbances in the forest—logging, road building and other development. With the model the national forest uses, the more degraded a landscape is, the easier it is to

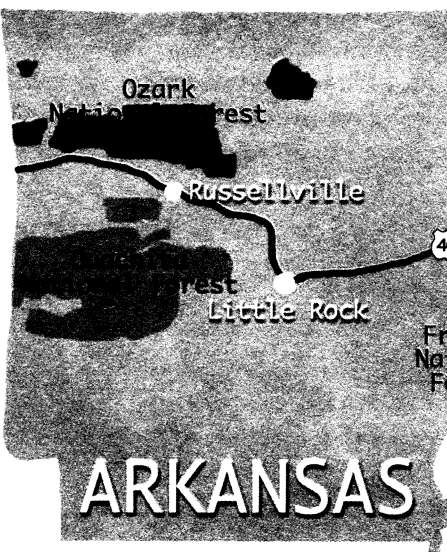
See **Runoff**, inside

Run Down Over Runoff

Inner Voice



The Ozark–St. Francis National Forest is made up of land that was logged off a century ago. Now the forest has grown back, and pressure to log again is growing.



justify more disturbance. And if the project pushes beyond the acceptable threshold of what a stream can tolerate, project managers can just expand the boundaries of the survey area to include more undisturbed land.

"You can make it look as good or as bad as you want," Golden says.

History compounds the problem. The Ozark and St. Francis national forests were established on land that had been picked clean by logging a century ago (the Ozark National Forest was established in 1908 by Teddy Roosevelt, the St. Francis in 1960 by Dwight Eisenhower).

"This is not about whether it's right or wrong," Richmond cannot come here and tell models are all wrong with

From the 1880s to the 1950s, the landscape was worked over, and local watersheds suffered. Streams are wider and shallower than they were before disturbance and development, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Pools filled with sediment, leaving fewer deep-water refuges for fish through the hot, dry summers. Much of the forest has grown back and is again attractive for logging, but watersheds still show the effects from the last wave of tree cutting and agriculture. Now logging is increasing on the forest, and the pressure and payoff of cutting is growing.

Much of Golden's conflict within the Ozark–St. Francis is a problem of perspective: When managing an already disturbed system, what's the reference point? What is natural?

"People want to believe that the past doesn't matter," says Golden.

In many ways, to log or not to log on the Ozark–St. Francis National Forest comes down to where biologists like Golden draw a baseline. He argues that the national forest can't ignore past effects from logging and road building, even if they're generations removed from the experience of today's land managers. The Ozark–St. Francis sediment model has a floating baseline. In effect, the model is blind to history, redrawing acceptable limits with each project using the reference point of current conditions. The result is that projects deemed acceptable according to the model are adding negative effects to extremely impacted conditions, Golden says.

"A lot of these streams have never recovered," Golden says. Returning to log will add injury to an already weakened system, he says.

According to the Ozark–St. Francis National Forest, about two-thirds of its more



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than 1.2 million acres are suitable for timber harvest. It's second growth wood, mostly pine and oak. The forest also has six wild and scenic rivers stretching 164 miles, and five wilderness areas covering 66,652 acres. The Ozark Mountains support 112 species of fish, 196 species of birds and 58 species of

by scientific literature, but there's a growing body of research that's delving into just how degraded Ozark streams are. A team from the USGS based in Columbia, Missouri, has started to document the conditions of Ozark streams and are finding that streams are in pretty bad shape from more than a century of intensive land use.

Golden says the Ozark-St. Francis doesn't acknowledge that research like that of the USGS even exists when doing environmental assessments, choosing instead to rely on models "that always come up with the right answer." The answer is to

Golden says the Ozark-St. Francis doesn't acknowledge that research like that of the USGS even exists when doing environmental assessments, choosing instead to rely on models "that always come up with the right answer." The answer is to log.

mammals in an unusual ecosystem of clear-water streams, springs and rugged, rolling terrain. Every year about 1.5 million people visit the wild and scenic rivers of the Ozarks.

The forest's sediment model is unsupported

log, and for some district rangers and forest staff there, Golden started to come up with answers they didn't like.

To that end, Charles Richmond, the Ozark-St. Francis supervisor, described

resistant attitudes within the districts in an e-mail exchange with Golden in June 2002. "This is not about whether the sediment model is right or wrong," Richmond writes. "You simply cannot come here and tell everyone the current models are all wrong without offering a solution."

Golden offers a solution, in the form of an admonition from former Chief Jack Ward Thomas "to tell the truth and obey the law." The law in this case being the National Environmental Policy Act and its requirement to consider the environmental consequences of forest management.

Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics is helping Golden make his case to the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest. FSEEE is studying the legal implications of his scientific analysis and building a coalition of scientists for peer review of and support for his work. FSEEE has also supported member Grant Nally, who lives downstream from a proposed timber sale on the Ozark-St. Francis. In September 2002, FSEEE filed interested party comments on the Ridge Pine Timber Sale, pointing out flaws in the forest's sediment model. FSEEE will continue to support Golden's effort to bring a strong fisheries program to the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest and apply sound, science-based policy on public lands.



Reddy for the Call?

Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics introduced U.S. Forest Service employees to Reddy Squirrel and her fire protection message in a 40,000-person e-mail in early March. The message invited employees to subscribe to an e-mail list that would give regular updates on Reddy and other issues of concern to agency employees. At this writing, several hundred employees have subscribed to the list.

The Forest Service does not acknowledge that any list of its employees' e-mail addresses exists. The agency's website, www.fs.fed.us/fs/directories/, includes a search engine for finding the e-mail addresses of employees by last name and first name. FSEEE automated a search of this directory and extracted the e-mail addresses from it, writing them to a database file.

Although some recipients of the Reddy Squirrel mailing objected to receiving unsolicited mail from FSEEE, we believe the public has a right to communicate with its employees. That's particularly true when the communication is noncommercial and concerns an issue directly relevant to the agency's mission—fire management.

Future messages to those who have subscribed will inform Forest Service employees about privatizing the federal workforce, congressional appropriations and other issues that receive little attention in the mainstream media.

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