

# EMPHASIZE COOPERATIVE NATIONAL FOREST DECISION MAKING

Western national forests are suffering from management neglect. After years of interventions (such as excessive fire suppression, predator control, road construction, and stream channelization) public lands policy has for the last few years, restricted many uses

and opportunities—except for growing recreation use. As a result, problems created by these interventions continue to worsen, and opportunities for restoration and to promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of these lands are declining.

Though controversies over resource management on public lands continue, a new kind of debate is emerging. In recent years, a growing number of conservation-minded citizens have engaged voluntarily in face-to-face negotiations. These people have acknowledged the complexity of problems on public lands and the opportuni-

ties to solve them. A few hard-won agreements based on detailed study of maps and local data have emerged from this work, only to be stifled in some cases by bureaucratic

process or scuttled by the legal tactics of those who refuse to support agreements. ■

## RECOMMENDATION

**The Administration should encourage volunteer efforts of interested publics to propose science-based, packaged solutions to public land management dilemmas. For example, projects could package together compatible practices such as road repair or removal, erosion control, and modern forestry practices to restore native vegetation. The most effective encouragement would be to ensure that projects resulting from these volunteer efforts are analyzed, modified where necessary, and expeditiously implemented by the appropriate agency(ies). Such volunteer efforts could test better ways of expanding and streamlining “stewardship contracting” within the letter and spirit of the NEPA.**

