

measurable environmental damage (i.e.—An area where a golf course would render unusable, a valley heavily trafficked by elk and deer that need it for winter range.) whereas in another, it would enhance the area; in one region public interest in golf may be so strong that any other recreational use of the land available for use permit would not be considered, while in another, many types of recreation would vie for use of public ground, in which case the Forest Service would determine which would best serve the needs of the community; in one region the administration will favorably view golf as a viable type of forest recreation, whereas another forest supervisor will pronounce golf inconsistent with forest-oriented recreation. This is not to imply that administrative partisanship is the determining factor in the granting of use permits, but often it proves to be the catalyst that tips the scales one way or the other, when the facts, favorable and unfavorable to a type of proposed use, are on balance. It is only natural that the administrative attitude would differ from region to region as does the terrain.

Notwithstanding the variations evident in Forest Service application of the law to the facts of each proposal in each area, a fair general statement of their policy as it applies to commercial public-service facilities on the national forests (golf courses operated for profit by private parties would come under this category) would be as follows: Resorts, hotels, cabin camps, ski lifts, stores, gas stations and similar developments offering accommodations and services needed by the public are permitted on national forest lands under special use permits.

The Forest Service permits the construction of commercial public-service facilities by private capital on suitable tracts of national forest land when there is a public need for such accommodations, facilities and services, and when such use is consistent with the over-all plans of national forest administration. Developments offering moderately-priced accommodations or services, which are within reach of a majority of recreationalists, have priority.

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"THE USE OF SCENIC LANDS PROVOKES AS MANY DIVERSE AND CONFLICTING OPINIONS AS A FRENCH ELECTION"

by CHET HUNTLEY

The former television news commentator writes from personal experience on the Forest Service view of use permits for golf course development in Montana

BIG SKY, MONT.—Criticizing and castigating the United States Forest Service is one of the most popular pursuits in this nation, because it is the principal administrative agency for the millions of acres of publicly-owned scenic America. The use of scenic lands provokes as many diverse and conflicting opinions as a French election, and the question is more recently confused by the appearance of the "instant ecologists" on their ego trips, who can usually draw a crowd by assailing the U.S. Forest Service and its policies.

At Big Sky we had some rewarding experiences negotiating with the Forest Service in behalf of the use permit for our golf course. Seven acres of Forest Service land lay there obstinately between tee and green of the 15th hole and it refused to move, nor was there any way to bend the 15th fairway around the intruding seven acres. The problem was explained to the Forest Service and a use permit was negotiated. Later, the seven acres in question were part of a land exchange between the Forest Service and the Burlington Northern Railroad, and Big Sky purchased the seven acres

from the new owners.

There are, of course, those who disapprove of this type of permit. By the very nature of its responsibility, the United States Forest Service is certain to draw the ire of most and the applause of few. It is charged with the awesome task of administering these vast acreages for the benefit of *all*. That being the case, the Forest Service is frequently attacked on the grounds that it seems to have no settled policy . . . that its rules and practices in Montana are totally different than those in West Virginia or Upper Michigan. The land-use requirements in Montana are not the same as those in another part of the country, and so the Forest Service has practiced its "multiple use" concept. It is, indeed, a policy that invites the charge that the agency tries to be all things to all interests and, thereby, pleases none.

But the United States Forest Service has managed to accommodate an incredible range of interests: the lumbering industry, the mining industry, towns and cities and farmers in need of water sources, the advocates of more and more wilderness and primitive areas, the fishermen, the hunters, the wild life conservationists, the camper, the backpacker, the mountain climber, the skier, the kayak enthusiast, the float-trip crowd . . . name it.

At Big Sky, a very small portion of one of our lifts is on Forest Service land. In treating and negotiating with the agency's representatives in this district, we have found them to be fair, reasonable, efficient and helpful. The lift towers

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more than 1 per cent, but that 1 per cent must be there or it's no deal.

Huntley's side-bar (see page 23) is an example of a use permit being issued and a subsequent land exchange.

Despite the several legal conditions, vicissitudes of market and administrative inclination, which must be surmounted to qualify an investor for the granting of a commercial use permit for golf course development, GOLFDOM is convinced that this alternative to buying land is a feasible and worthwhile process, unless the availability of funds is not important to an investor.

We have tried to anticipate the reader's questions and forebodings on this subject, but if we have inadvertently left any loose ends we welcome reader inquiries. □

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are being installed to meet the Service's ecological standards, which made sense. At the end of each year, we shall determine the total receipts for that particular lift, multiply by the percentage of the lift on Forest Service land, and multiply again by the agreed percentage of the gross.

The Forest Service, out here in the West, has pursued a general policy of limiting its leases to 80 acres. That is usually ample for a ski resort and the attached amenities, such as hotels, hostels, restaurants, shops, and so on. In its concern for the basic resource—the land—the U.S. Forest Service takes the enlightened attitude that a ski resort is of no permanent danger to the land and represents only a minute, temporary threat to the ecology. The same attitude, very likely, would prevail for a golf course.

But the Forest Service would probably take a dim view toward leasing land for a golf course in these Northern Rocky Mountain areas. Its first question would be, "How many people will use this proposed course?" And quite likely the agency would conclude that the acreage would, in the long run, serve more people, better, if it were employed as a habitat for wild life, a camp ground for recreational vehicles or as a source of supply for the lumber industry.

As golfers petition the U.S. For-

REFERENCE SOURCES

The National Environmental Policy Act; Regional Foresters and Land Use Experts, Division of Recreation and Land for the 10 United States National Forest Regions; United States Department of Agriculture, Washington D.C., Assistant Chief of Concession and Special Uses; Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960 (Dept. of Agriculture); Multiple Use Management Plan—Final Environmental Statement for White Mountain National Forest, Eastern Region Forest Service; Forest Service District Rangers in districts where golf course use permits are in force; Bureau of Land Management, Washington D.C.; "Land Exchange In The National Forest System," a Department of Agriculture publication.

est Service for lease permits to design and build new courses, the agency will certainly be a good listener. For a government bureaucracy—which it undeniably is—it will respond to the numbers . . . the numbers of people who might evidence an interest in playing golf on public land.

But a warning. In proposing that few golf courses be located on Forest Service land, the golfer will find himself assailed and slandered by the arrogant and extremist self-styled "ecologists." We are all a bit stupid and remiss for permitting them to parade with that word "ecologists." They are something else. They belong with the alarmists who predict earthquakes and the end of the world, those who call up tidal waves and who are constantly observing "Unidentified Flying Objects." In our new and admirable concern for the environment of our country these egocentrics were standing "at the head of the line," and it is they who represent the clearest danger to the U.S. Forest Service. By every device, from outright slander to the use of phony petitions and fictitious organizations, they seek to destroy the public confidence in the Forest Service and eliminate the agency. These extremists must be kept out "in the rough" and at least a mashie shot away from the decision-making processes regarding the use of our public lands.



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