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ETHICS: CAN PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES LEARN FROM THE MILITARY?

BY

MR. RICK D. CABLES

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Professional ethics has long been considered a foundation for the leadership of the U.S. armed forces and receives considerable emphasis in the military's leadership development programs. Current trends indicate an apparent erosion of the ethical fiber of the U.S., making the military's emphasis on the subject of professional ethics timely and highly appropriate. In contrast, the three largest Federal public land management agencies, (the U.S. Department of Interior's National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service), do not

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include an ethics component in any of their national leadership development programs. This study explores national trends with respect to professional ethics, the military's approach to developing an ethical foundation in their leaders and the approach of the public land management agencies. In addition, the two professions, the military professional and the professional public land manager, are compared in terms of the ethical dilemmas that each must face. These starkly different professions surprisingly face very similar ethical issues in the conduct of their duties. Conclusions suggest that public land managers, and their respective agencies, could benefit from an increased emphasis on the subject of professional ethics.

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

ETHICS: CAN PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES LEARN FROM THE MILITARY?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Mr. Rick D. Cables

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
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ABSTRACT

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ETHICS: CAN PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES LEARN FROM THE MILITARY?

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing.[1]

Edmund Burke

In general, ethics is concerned with answering the question, "What should one do?" Thus understood, it is an unavoidable activity. Each of us must decide what we will do. The only issue is how carefully and how seriously we will concern ourselves with the problem of responsible decision making.[2]

Eric H. Beversluis

I am a forester not a philosopher, a fact that may become self-evident as you read on. My entire professional career has been spent as an employee of a large Federal public land management agency. Through an unlikely set of circumstances I was selected to attend the U.S. Army War College as one of the few civilian students. Perhaps the only thing more unlikely than a forester at War College would be if that same forester elected to write a paper about ethics --and if the subject weren't so important, I wouldn't be doing it.

As the academic year began I was immediately struck by the amount of the curriculum which was dedicated to studying and debating the subject of ethics. I don't know why, but this surprised me and, as we learned and reviewed historical case studies, and their ethical dimensions; I began to

reflect on my own career. I realized that in my entire career I had never had any formal training or education in professional ethics. In the senior level leadership courses that I have attended prior to the War College the subject of professional ethics was never an agenda item. Yet, I could think of many examples, many situations where the decisions that I had made had clear ethical implications.

As we debated the ethical dimensions of leadership, the contrast between my agency and the military became more apparent. I wanted to understand why the military would make ethics an area of emphasis in their leadership development programs, whereas my agency didn't spend much time, at least overtly, discussing the topic. Even though I had never really closely studied professional ethics, I could not think of a topic more timely or critical to the leaders of today.

"What should one do?" is not always a simple question to answer. Responsible or *ethical* decisionmaking involves critical reasoning skills. Should the officers who make decisions about risking young men's lives have the discriminating skills necessary to make the right ethical choices? Do the individuals that make decisions concerning the vast acreages of public land in the United States, and the wise use of public funds, also need that clearly developed ability to make the right ethical decisions?

The purpose of this paper is not to debate these two questions, for the answers should be obvious. *Both* the military professional and the professional charged with managing public land need the skills necessary to make the moral and ethical decisions that we expect them to make: the "right" decisions. Both professions are involved in the most noble of causes -- they are caretakers of public trust. As caretakers of this

trust, they must be worthy, because the public does not expect, or deserve, anything less.

Yet, if we can agree that both professions require the highest standards in honesty and integrity, that the armed services and the public land management agencies need professionals with these attributes, why is there such a disparity in the way these institutions approach the subject of developing ethics in their leaders?

Ethics has long been considered the foundation of leadership by the military and a fundamental part of their officer development. Professional soldiers are provided opportunities, in fact they are encouraged, to study and debate ethical issues all throughout their careers. Conversely, the three largest public land management agencies in the United States do not include ethics as part of their formal leadership development programs.

There are, of course, many differences between the two professions and one cannot rightfully equate the harrowing decisions that must be made in war with the decisions about how an acre of public land is used. That is not my point. The issue is more than simply the results, or the types of decisions being made. Rather, the real issue is the *process* that the decisionmaker or commander uses to arrive at an ethical decision. And when we focus on this process, the once clear distinction between these two professions begins to blur.

BACKGROUND

There are just two things on this material earth -- people and natural resources.[3]

Gifford Pinchot

When compared with the military services, the large Federal land management agencies are relative newcomers on the scene. The U.S. Army was established by the Continental Congress in 1775 and this date marks the official birth of the American military professional. It was well over 100 years later before the U.S. Government began hiring professional natural resource specialists in significant quantities. History and tradition notwithstanding, there are other obvious differences between these two professional cultures.

The reader may therefore wonder how two such divergent professions could have been picked to provide the basis for this paper. But are these two professions *really* that different in terms of the ethical and moral leadership that the American public expects of them? Does the American public hold the soldier to a different ethical standard than they do the public forester or wildlife manager? As keepers of public trust -- one for our national values and the other for our natural resources -- each profession is responsible to perform with honesty and integrity. Moreover, it should be their guiding responsibility.

It isn't surprising that historically, ethics has received high priority as a subject of study for the military professional. The nature of a soldier's duty and the ethical dimensions of war explain the necessity for

this emphasis. The military profession is entrusted with our *most precious* national treasure -- the very lives of our young people. Moreover, military professionals protect our national core values.

> *the military profession in an ideal state is clearly among the most noble; its function involves preservation of our highest human values, collectively referred to as our way of life.*[4]

Public land managers, on the other hand, have not benefitted from a similar historical emphasis toward the subject of professional ethics. Yet, they too are entrusted with a national treasure -- the incredible cache of natural resources found in the United States. Much of this wealth is located on the millions of acres of public lands which are managed by several federal agencies. When I refer to "public land management agencies" or "federal agencies" in this study I mean: The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USFS), and the U.S. Department of Interior's National Park Service (NPS) and it's Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These are the three largest Federal land management agencies, and collectively responsible for stewardship of over 540 million acres of public land in the United States.

James Coufal, in his article titled "The Land Ethic Question," suggests that society may actually be judged, based in part on how they treat the land. He writes:

> *The way a society treats its natural resources has significant impact on just and honorable human relationships, and our attitudes and ideals relate to how we treat these resources.*[5]

The custodians of these magnificent natural resources, the career Federal government employees are herein collectively referred to as public

land managers. Who are these professional public land managers and where do they come from? In the context of this paper, they are the decision-makers; the individuals who decide, within full public view, how public land is allocated for various and often conflicting uses. Where is the timber to be harvested? Where is the road to be built or closed to motorized travel? Which acres should be recommended for wilderness? Which wildlife species should be favored, protected, or reduced in numbers? These are tough decisions with long-range consequences and ethical considerations. These professionals come from a variety of educational backgrounds, ranging from foresters to archaeologists; and include wildlife biologists, rangeland conservationists, geologists, civil engineers, recreation planners, archaeologists, and public administrators, as well as others.

SCOPE

Having introduced my hypothesis and provided a little background, I would like to be explicit about the scope of this study. I am not concerned here with suggesting morally "right" behavior. Nor has the research for this project been oriented toward facts and figures. No attempt is made, for example, to quantify the effectiveness of the military's emphasis on ethical development in terms of the number of cases of "right" behavior versus "wrong" behavior. Not only would such a quantitative analysis be an impossibility, it would sorely miss the point. Rather than numbers, I am more concerned with examining ethics in terms of the process or activity of reflecting and deciding what one ought to do. Specifically -- can public land

management agencies borrow a military philosophy; a philosophy that says, "We want our leaders to develop the 'capacity for reasoning to a morally sound conclusion'[6] irrespective of the issue they are facing?" The remaining chapters explore the answer to this question.

ENDNOTES

1. David D. Acker, "Ethics in the Eighties," Program Manager, September-October 1986, p. 16.

2. Eric H. Beversluis, "Is there 'No such thing as Business Ethics'?" Journal of Business Ethics, February 1987, p. 84.

3. Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946). Gifford Pinchot was one of the first leaders in the American conservation movement, first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, noted author and political leader.

4. Malham M. Wakin, War, Morality, and the Military Profession, p. 8.

5. James E. Coufal, "The Land Ethic Question," Journal of Forestry, June 1989, p. 24.

6. Peter L. Stromberg, Malham M. Wakin, and Daniel Callahan, The Teaching of Ethics in the Military, p. 71.

CHAPTER II

TODAY'S ETHICAL ENVIRONMENT

I'm always distressed to hear fellow business people concede that we should operate honestly and ethically, even though this makes it harder to be successful. This is nonsense. Ethical conduct makes it easier to do business -- in the short and the long run.[1]

Robert Krikorian

I'd like to see people, instead of spending so much time on the ethical problem, get after problems that really affect the people of this country.[2]

Richard Nixon

This chapter examines the ethical environment -- the trends and public attitudes which exist in the United States today. It is within this environment that both the military and public land management professionals must learn to live, adapt and succeed. To fully appreciate the current trends, attitudes and perceptions about ethical behavior in this country we need to explore a healthy cross-section of American society. Therefore, this chapter includes more than a narrow discussion of the military and public land management agencies; corporate, political and religious components of our society are examined as well.

COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The military is no longer a "closed society" as it was prior to World War II.[1] Technological evolution and the mass media have changed that. Nor are professional public land managers isolated, as many once were, simply because of the remoteness of the places they live and work. Forest fires in the wilds of Wyoming never used to share the limelight with world events on national television. Yet, Americans debated controversial fire fighting policies as they watched the drama of the 1988 Yellowstone Fires unfold in their living rooms.

The advent of lightweight audio-visual equipment and satellite communications capabilities mean real-time news stories are possible even from the most remote locations. Even though it was only in its infancy, this technology had a profound influence on the military during the Vietnam War. Via television and satellite, Americans witnessed the horror of war first-hand. Daily viewing of this controversial war resulted in questions about our objectives in Southeast Asia, leading some to conclude that America had lost the war, not on the battlefield, but on the 6 o'clock news.

For the public land manager, the influence of this technology is no less penetrating. While the net result of this telecommunications technology is hard to predict, it appears certain that there will be *more* public and media attention fixed on the future decisions made by our public officials, not less. It is also a safe bet that this public focus will not be confined to only the professional lives of our leaders. Their private lives may also be considered fair game. Professionals in all vocations, and their ethical behavior, will be in the spotlight.

EROSION OF ETHICS?

-- Watergate

-- Iran-Contra

-- Wall Street and insider trading

-- My Lai Massacre

-- The PTL Ministry and TV Evangelist Jim Bakker.

Fraud, corruption, ethical lapses: do these examples signal an erosion of the ethical fiber of the United States or a changing of ethical standards? Perhaps it is simply a matter of increased public attention focused on ethics. As the list above illustrates, significant ethical and moral breaches have become commonplace in this country -- and no particular segment of society appears to be immune to the "disease." Corporate, political, religious, and governmental agency leaders have all contributed to the apparent erosion of this country's ethical foundation. Scandal sheets are doing a booming business.

If indeed the ethical or moral fiber of the United States is eroding, as some suggest, one question is "why?" Theories and ideas are plentiful. One theory, for example, holds that the young people of this country, the "yuppies," do not have adequate ethical standards because they are "spoiled."

John Makin, in the periodical Public Opinion, described these individuals as "corruppies."[4]

> *The young are soft. The young have had it easy. Therefore, the young have no ethical standards. The crucible theory of ethical behavior suggests that such standards are developed under duress, during periods of material deprivation, or when the country is at war.*

Makin went on to quote General Omar Bradley, who said this of the postwar period:

> *The world has achieved brilliance without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants.*

The "corruppy" theory is fine -- but it doesn't hold up under close scrutiny. It does nothing to explain the behavior, for example, of those "non-yuppies" who have had their lives ruined by repeatedly making poor ethical decisions. Of note recently are Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, and ex-senator John Tower. All of these men did live through periods of material deprivation and world war.

Is there a perfect theory to explain the recent epidemic of shameful behavior? If so, which theory is correct? Has the ethical fiber of the country actually eroded or has the line between right and wrong simply shifted? No one has a definitive answer. However, the increase of questionable moral behavior by prominent leaders has clearly captured this nation's attention.

Conspicuously, the public perception of an eroding moral and ethical foundation in the U.S. may be contributing to a counterbalancing effect, a kind of "ethical renaissance." There is more emphasis currently being placed on ethical behavior, and the awareness of the ethical dimensions of leadership is growing. Moreover, it is evident that the American public

desires, indeed *expects*, it's leading citizens to exhibit the highest standards of ethical behavior. Colonel Malham Wakin, who has been teaching ethics and philosophy at the United States Air Force Academy for over 30 years, wrote:

> *One can discern extreme emphasis currently being placed on honesty in all human relationships and less embarrassment by institutions in insisting that moral character "counts" as both a job requirement and an educational goal.*[5]

In the public's eyes, ethics "count" and have for some time. Further evidence comes from a 1976 study by U.S. News and World Report. In this study Americans were polled to determine what they considered the most important characteristics of leadership. While "charisma" was listed by only 5.5 per cent of those polled, the trait listed most frequently (by 76.1 per cent) was "moral integrity."[6]

BEYOND "BLACK AND WHITE" ETHICS

If the public feels that honesty and integrity are the preferred qualities for our leaders, how do the leaders themselves feel about ethics? In a recent article that appeared in the Journal of Business Ethics, the authors concluded:

> *Taken as a group, managers feel that moral expectations have a bearing on their relationships with employees, peers and superiors, customers and suppliers, and with other stakeholders such as government legislators, stockholders and the public at large.*[7]

Some of today's leaders, as implied by the previous quote, are recognizing the value of ethical leadership. This is a positive trend.

However, it is not omnipresent. There exists another side to this discussion -- another set of attitudes to consider. While it is hard to disagree with the basic premise that ethical behavior is important, if you are a leader in your organization, the question is: "What are you going to do about it?" Many of our leaders apparently feel that there is really no need to discuss the subject beyond simply acknowledging that ethical behavior is desirable. These individuals, whether corporate leaders, military officers, or public foresters, find it difficult to discuss morality and ethics to any great extent. In their minds they have already staked out the "moral high ground."

What is all the fuss about? Morality is a simple issue to them. Either it is clearly right (ethical) or clearly wrong (unethical). Theirs is the "absolutist" view, "black and white" ethics. It is a curious approach. Whereas most topics in their professional lives require critical thinking and are open for debate and analysis somehow ethics isn't one of them. This absolutist view of human behavior is not only flawed, it is alarming because there is never a recognition of that "gray" area between the two extremes. Yet, the gray area does exist and recognizing it is an essential first step toward reasoning through an ethical problem.

The absolutist may feel that the even the mere acknowledgement of that gray area will be used as an excuse not to worry about being ethical.[8] Not by him of course, but by those other weak souls who simply lack the moral courage to clearly define good and bad. But, is it possible to always be on certain ground by only considering the "black" and the "white?" Perhaps for some, but to paraphrase Eric H. Beversluis, we consider these thoughts:

Absolutism or dogmatism, as it is sometimes called, holds that there is no possibility that one is mistaken. This is dangerous territory because it doesn't allow us to examine our beliefs and to evaluate potential conflicts using valid grounds. In the area of ethics, as in other areas, it would be preferable if our conclusions were subject to review and possible revision. We may be better off using an approach that is not dogmatic -- fallibilism -- the acknowledgement of one's fallibility.[9]

Another noted author on the subject of morality and reason, James Rachels, writes:

...the rote application of routine methods is almost never a satisfactory substitute for critical intelligence, in any area. Moral thinking is no exception.[10]

There is another kind of argument which leads down the same road. This is the notion that somehow business and ethics are separate and distinct entities that are not really connected. "Separatists," like their cousins the absolutists, simply do not see the subject of ethics as worthy of discussion or priority; it is "not worth the time." Again we consider this to be imperfect reasoning, because it has never been realistic to truly separate business from ethics for any reputable profession or business. This debate is eloquently summarized by Thomas E. Schaefer:

Business ethics is a major difficulty precisely because we separate the "Business world" from the "world of ethics". No sooner do we seal the activities of business and ethics into their own independent compartments, so that "business is business" and "ethics is ethics" than we cut off the possibility of a morally responsible business decision. Such a decision may exist only on condition that business and morality may somehow truly interpenetrate.[11]

Fortunately, there appears to be a trend in today's professionals to get beyond this "black and white" view of ethics. Once removed from the false security offered by the viewpoint of either the separatist or the absolutist, we can critically examine the ethical issues to be dealt with and establish a process for approaching these issues. Chapter III will concentrate on the types of ethical issues or dilemmas which both the military and natural resource professionals must confront.

ENDNOTES

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2. Robert Tinsman, Col., Leaders and Ethical Behavior. Lecture. Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 10 August 1989. (Cited with special permission of Col. Tinsman).

3. John C. Buckingham, Jr., Maj., "A U.S. Code of Military Ethics," Proceedings, December 1989, p. 40.

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5. Malham M. Wakin, War, Morality, and the Military Profession, p.4.

6. Ibid.

7. James Waters, Frederick Bird, and Peter Chant, "Everyday Moral Issues Experienced by Managers," Journal of Business Ethics, October 1986, p. 375.

8. Kenneth Blanchard and Norman Vincent Peale, The Power of Ethical Management, p. 18.

9. Eric Beversluis, "Is There 'No Such Thing as Business Ethics'?", Journal of Business Ethics, February 1987, p. 85.

10. James Rachels, The Elements of Moral Philosophy, p. 9.

11. Thomas Schaefer, "Professionalism: Foundation for Business Ethics," Journal of Business Ethics, November 1984, p. 269.

CHAPTER III

SIMILAR ETHICAL DILEMMAS

While every action or decision a leader makes will not have an ethical component to it, senior-level leaders teach their subordinates how to recognize and be sensitive to those actions or decisions which do. [1]

U.S. Army Field Manual 22-103

Moral myopia: "Well everyone does it, that's the way it's done."[2]

Colonel Malham Wakin

Having examined public and individual attitudes and trends associated with professional ethics; I now wish to identify analogous ethical dilemmas which confront our military and civilian leaders. While the military profession is unique, the moral issues facing military leaders are not. Parallel issues exist in other professions.[3] This is especially true when the country is at peace, not war, and "it is important to remember that military forces spend most of their time preparing for war, not fighting."[4]

My research shows that many of the moral and ethical issues facing the military professional also face the professional public land manager. For instance, what military officer or public land manager has not completed a job performance appraisal or provided an employee of theirs with personal career counseling? Do these activities have a moral dimension? One respondent to a survey dealing with ethical issues in the work place states:

> *We have alot of people in my company who don't know where they stand. Half-truths or incomplete pictures are drawn in performance appraisals. The truth is bent and the employee is not dealt with in a forthright and honest fashion with respect to his performance and his prospects.*[5]

Beyond this example, there are many parallel ethical issues -- more than one might imagine. This chapter focuses on three general categories of ethical issues, or behavior, which routinely influence the decisions of both the military and public land management professionals. I first examine the so called "bottom line" ethic and how this mind-set is manifested both within individuals and organizations. Second, the dilemma of conflicting or divided loyalty is discussed. Third, both professions are contrasted in terms of the wisdom of separating or "de-coupling" professional competence from moral integrity.

BOTTOM LINE ETHICS

How do we define a "bottom line" ethic? There is nothing inherently wrong with using the bottom line as a measure of progress toward a stated goal. As part of a quarterly or annual corporate statement, the bottom line has a legitimate place in business. This study is not interested in the legitimate use of the bottom line, we are only interested in how a distorted view of the "bottom line" can affect the moral and ethical behavior of both leaders and their organizations. Let us first consider how individuals can be affected.

INDIVIDUAL ETHICS AND THE "BOTTOM LINE"

Much of the unethical behavior practiced by some of today's professionals, at least within the context of "bottom line" ethics, can be explained using just two theories of moral behavior: ethical egoism and ethical relativism.

Ayn Rand, in his book The Virtue of Selfishness, defines the goal of the ethical egoist:

> *The achievement of his own happiness is man's highest moral purpose.*[6]

Ethical egoism is a "me first" approach to life. It is the practice of putting one's self interest above all else. "The ethical egoist says that a person's one and only duty is to maximize his/her own well-being."[7] The bottom line for these folks is -- self preservation. Colonel Malham Wakin expresses the theory this way:

> *As we get more status, as we move up the bureaucratic or corporate ladder, we get a kind of arrogance that says that our purposes become more noble -- and any means become justified, we know our goals are more noble, critical, and right -- because they are our goals.*[8] (emphasis added)

Can ethical egoism influence the military professional? Perhaps General Douglas MacArthur's conduct during the latter stages of the Korean War is one of the best historical examples of a military officer displaying the tenet's of ethical egoism and the bottom line. History tells us that MacArthur had a clear vision of what constituted victory in Korea. MacArthur's bottom line was to achieve victory as *he* defined it. President Truman had a different vision of victory; and, unfortunately for General MacArthur, the two were not compatible. Had MacArthur's goals become more noble than the goals of the United States and the President? Perhaps not in his mind, but Truman clearly thought so.

The second moral theory which helps us understand the motives of those individuals who live by the bottom line is ethical relativism. Ethical relativism can best be described using the phrase, the end justifies the

means. It is a "whatever it takes" philosophy and the bottom line is to be achieved with any means available.

Sometimes the two moral theories merge. An individual can exhibit a "me first" attitude (the egoist) and will do "whatever it takes" (the relativist) to achieve personal gain. We all know people like this -- they are called careerists. In the military service, or in any profession, the careerist is "intent only on advancing to the best jobs and the highest rank, no matter what the cost to other people or to the service."[9] "Professionalism" has given way to "careerism." The individual has gone beyond legitimate ambition which is not the same as selfish concern for personal image.[10]

When the bottom line becomes "whatever it takes" to get the next star or promotion -- then there is clearly an ethical issue. Careerists may encourage false reporting (in an effort to appear error free) or they may conceal problems in order to avoid the appearance of incompetence.[11] Either practice breaches any accepted ethical code and exposes the fallacy of both ethical relativism and egoism.

Neither the military professional nor the public land manager is immune to the bottom line reasoning process. Falling into this trap is easy. It is also easy to judge, or label, those individuals who display a bottom line perspective. We simply say that they have no ethics. But perhaps that is not the case, consider the words of Max Lerner:[12]

> ***The point about these businessmen -- as about their brothers, too, the politicians and lawyers -- is that they do have an ethic, but it is the wrong one. It is, to use the common business phrase, a "bottom line" ethic ... For a politician, the ethic is to get power and hold on to it; for a lawyer, it is to win his case and get his fee ... for a corporate executive, the ethic is to win out in the lethally competitive struggle for profits, market, stock values. The bottom line is what counts, whatever the means used. It is the cancer of the professions.***

INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS AND THE "BOTTOM LINE"

If the bottom line is the "cancer of the professions," how do institutions, organizations, or systems either combat or foster a bottom line ethic? Institutional policies may actually create a bottom line ethic where none previously existed. Well intentioned internal systems may inadvertently be designed in a fashion that gives employees a feeling that their ability to use discretion is lost. As a result, we may find numerous instances of ethical misconduct. But who is responsible? The critical responsibility in perceiving when institutional policies unnecessarily strain the moral fiber of subordinates rests squarely on the shoulders of our leaders.[13]

Both the armed services and public land management agencies can cite examples where internal institutional polices have tested the moral fiber of their soldiers or employees. The military, and the country, learned a very painful lesson about how a bottom line oriented policy could affect young men at war -- in Vietnam. Vietnam was an unconventional war and a protracted one. Success in Vietnam was difficult to measure. How could one tell who was winning? The practice of using the "body count" was devised as the best way of measuring a unit's effectiveness, and subsequently the effectiveness of the U.S. military in Vietnam.[14]

What seemed like a good idea actually brought tremendous pressures to bear on U.S. troops in Vietnam, and may have contributed to the "moral blindness of some of the soldiers at My Lai."[15] As the body count became the most important criterion for success, subordinates sometimes inflated the numbers. Colonel Wakin in his treatise titled, "Wanted: Moral Virtues in the Military," examined the My Lai massacre in terms of the "body count"

policy and had this observation:

> *Some of our side treated the body count like the bottom line on a business ledger. This approach to measuring unit effectiveness may have been well intentioned since body count was, after all, an "objective" measure. But pressures to increase the body count and hence "look good" may have influenced the fearful and enhanced the careers of the ambitious.*[16]

But that was war. Have there been analogous peacetime policies which have yielded similar, although certainly less grievous, results? The U.S. Air Force's so called Zero Defect System, adopted in the mid-1970's, is one good example.[17] Quality, or more specifically the lack thereof, had become a serious issue in the Air Force during this time period. The Zero Defect system, which was borrowed from private industry, essentially held that the only acceptable level of performance was perfection -- zero defects. The system went along way toward promoting the falsification of reports and cover ups when defects were discovered. In the hands of an over zealous commander, the system became impossible. Philip Flammer highlighted the dangers of the "zero defects" mentality when he wrote:

> *In the end, many errors were made and consequently covered up, for the zero error mentality is automatically wedded to the grotesque philosophy that it is worse to report a mistake than it is to make one.*[18]

The potential for a "zero defect" mentality also exists for the public land management agency. The three largest public agencies, the USFS, NPS, and BLM all operate in a decentralized fashion. Field units are assigned targets or goals to meet within budget and time constraints. In the U.S. Forest Service, for example, Ranger Districts are allocated dollars and assigned "targets" or outputs which must be produced in any given fiscal year. Targets may include selling a certain amount of firewood or creating

so many acres of wildlife habitat. What if the commander, in this case the District Ranger, is consumed by a "bottom line" ethic? This Ranger may establish an organizational climate that says to the employees, "I will not accept anything less than 100 per cent completion of my targets, *whatever it takes.*" What pressures does this policy place on subordinates?

If a young wildlife biologist, for example, knows that her "target" is to create 1000 acres of elk habitat -- and that nothing short of that is permissible -- how will she react if she realizes that she cannot meet the goal? Will she act unethically, perhaps filing a false report, in blind pursuit of the Ranger's target? Does the policy, the organizational climate, allow her the discretion of reporting that the target was not met? She knows that is would be easy to falsely report -- to say that the goal had been met. Suppose that 900 acres were actually completed, she would only have to lie about 100 acres. She knows that the area where the habitat work was done is very remote. It is likely that no one will go out and actually count the acres.

I am not suggesting that organizations do not need some form of accountability. Accountability is one thing, but, if the message from the leadership is to do "whatever it takes" to accomplish the mission, then the subordinates may have difficulty distinguishing exactly what that means.

There are other examples. Another area of significant ethical debate in today's public land management agencies has nothing, at least directly, to do with natural resource management. This is the issue of affirmative action. This area is ripe with the possibilities of the "bottom line" mind-set going overboard. Historically, a relatively small percentage of women and minorities have chosen careers in the professions dealing with natural

resource management. The result has been a work force composed almost entirely of white males. Public land management agencies recognize the benefits of having a more diverse work force, and have been working toward achieving diversity. However, there still exists a large gap between the demand for affirmative action candidates and the available supply. The result is an ever increasing competition for these individuals.

Are there institutional policies within public land management agencies, or any government agency for that matter, which may foster questionable ethical practices in the recruitment and hiring of certain "target" employees, such as women and minorities? As individual organizational units strive to become more diversified, a more modern version of the "body count" may come into play. How does a unit measure the diversity of it's work force? One way has been the traditional method of counting the total numbers of women and minorities working in a unit -- a "live" body count, if you will, of the employees who help the unit meet it's affirmative action targets. Expressed as total numbers or percentages of women and minorities, these targets are used to measure progress. It doesn't take much imagination to see how serious ethical issues can emerge particularly if the unit leader lives by the "bottom line." Our friend the careerist, for example, may care less about actually diversifying the work force. This person may have no qualms deciding to lure women or minority candidates from other units, thereby improving the "numbers" in his unit at the expense of a neighboring unit. In other words, employing the contemptible practice of "pirating" employees from one unit to another. The careerist easily rationalizes that the end justifies the means, but what about the more conscientious individual, the moral manager

who wouldn't dream of "pirating?" If the institutional policy is largely bottom line motivated how will this person fare? Can these fundamentally moral employees be driven to act unethically? And who speaks for the real victims of this practice, the women or minority employees whose own career development may suffer as they are shuffled around to meet someone else's "bottom line?"

CONFLICTING LOYALTIES

Another ethical consideration for both the military professional and the professional public land manager is the subject of loyalty. To whom or what are we loyal? At the macro level both military officers and Federal employees pledge to uphold the Constitution of the United States. But even this most basic allegiance can be tested under certain circumstances. During the so called Iran-Contra scandal certain military officers and their civilian counterparts felt that they were in a situation which required them to choose between allegiance to the flag or to the President. Conflicting loyalty also occurs at the lower echelons, and for most of us, conflicting loyalties begin early on.

> ***"The most fundamental ethical conflicts in history are those arising from tensions, often outright confrontations, between family, church, and state. The reason is easily arrived at. Each of these three universal institutions seeks the fullest possible loyalty of its individual members -- kin, communicants, subjects."***[19]

We will concentrate on two aspects of the loyalty issue which appear the most germane to our two professions. The first aspect is the subject of loyalty, or obedience to orders, versus the ultimate loyalty to a higher

cause or set of values. The second area involves the practice of parochialism --loyalty to branch, service or agency.

When one institution, person or organization requires the fullest possible loyalty of its members, ethical conflicts are inevitable. Yet we often consider loyalty as one of our most noble virtues. Loyalty is something to be admired and cultivated. But there is a danger. Liddell Hart warns that loyalty is a

> *noble quality, so long as it does not blind and does not exclude the high loyalty to truth and decency.*[20]

How often have we heard someone excuse their behavior by simply stating, "I was just following orders." Obedience to orders, versus blind obedience to orders, is an age old dilemma for the military professional.

Let us use an example to portray how this quandary might also become an issue for the professional public land manager. Suppose a controversial decision is made to build a large dam on a stretch of river located on Federally managed public land. All the required environmental documents have been completed and are available for public review. Actual construction has not yet begun on the dam when an employee of the Federal land management agency responsible for the decision discovers a rare species of plant near the dam site. The employee knows that construction of the dam will be delayed, if not altogether stopped, if this new information is disclosed because the rare plant is protected by law. As a conscientious employee, this individual informs the responsible senior decisionmaker and is "ordered" to forget that the plant was ever discovered and not to mention this finding to anyone. When the employee objects to the order the senior official questions his loyalty. But where does the

ultimate loyalty lie: to the law, to the agency, or to the decisionmaker?

This example shows that the obedience to orders issue has many parallels with professions other than the military. Yet the military ethic, above all others, is supposed to place principle above self-interest:[21]

> *Because so many human lives and the success of military operations are frequently at stake, obedience to orders in the military is a compelling obligation. Disobedience rightfully entails serious penalties. But in some contexts the obligation to avoid evil overrides the obligation to obey... But -- who decides? The answer is an easy one and an ancient one. Persons of good moral character make the right choices...*[22]

The practice of parochialism is another dimension to the issue of divided loyalty which deserves consideration. Parochialism, like loyalty, can be either viewed as a virtue, i.e. "patriotism," or as a vice. Within the military establishment inter-service parochialism has been an unresolved issue since this country declared independence from the King. Even intra-service battle lines exist between different branches within the same service. Two branches of the Army, for example the Artillery Branch and the Aviation Branch, will compete for resources as surely as the Army and the Navy will fight over limited dollars.

The military, however, does not have the proverbial "market" cornered. Public land management agencies have their share of parochial interests and the associated ethical conflicts that go with them. These agencies also have "branches" within them that compete for scarce resources and attention. The questionable practice of making one "branch" or functional area look good -- at the expense of another functional area -- exists in the civilian agencies just as it does in the military.

Perhaps more importantly, as competition for the Federal budget dollar increases, is the question: "will public land management agencies or

individual armed services be able to work as coalitions to accomplish future objectives?" Or will parochialism permit coalitions at all?

For Federal land management agencies, the Yellowstone Fires of 1988 may prove to be a bench mark. During this natural disaster several Federal, State, and local agencies cooperated to suppress the devastating wildfires. There were conflicting agency policies and jurisdictions. Fires were burning in Yellowstone National Park, administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, and on surrounding lands managed by the USDA's Forest Service. The fundamental management philosophies of these two agencies are quite different, if not directly conflicting in some areas.

Where did the loyalties lie at Yellowstone? The senior level Park Service and Forest Service leaders had to decide if their parochial interests *ethically* took precedence over the larger mission. A similar decision must be made by any senior level military leader commanding joint and/or combined forces.

COMPETENCE VERSUS MORAL INTEGRITY

> ***Typically professional training is so focused on the technical aspects of the job that students are "professionally socialized" not to look for moral conflicts.***[23]

Competency versus moral integrity is the final ethical dilemma we will examine as we contrast the two professions. Just as the "separatist" would separate "ethics" from "business," as if they could be separated, some consider competency to be a discrete entity that is not really connected with moral integrity. Competency has a distinctively technical or scientific

connotation to these individuals. They would argue that "competency" is one thing and "moral integrity" is something else.

Yet this philosophy is obviously flawed, instead of competency *versus* moral integrity, a more developed line of reasoning would combine the attributes. Instead of having one versus the other, competency *and* moral integrity would be the preferred approach.

How beneficial is it, for example, for an organization to employ an extremely competent, at least "technically" competent, person who is morally deficient? An employee with these attributes is not even half an employee and becomes even more of a liability when he or she attains executive status. Technical competence is not enough, particularly for executives, because so many of the issues they deal with do not lend themselves to technical solutions.

> *...the principle crises of executives are moral in nature. The executive's job rarely is impersonal. His principal problems are what he does about people. The executive may have begun as a master craftsman, production expert, or teacher; but, as an executive, he puts plans into action for people to carry out. Executive actions affect people. The criteria guiding his actions -- his morals -- are, therefore, an important feature...* [24]
>
> Lewis W. Norris

For the military professional, history illustrates that competency and moral integrity must go hand in hand. We expect the commander and his troops to be technically competent as they perform exercises and conduct military operations. Specialists must be competent in the use of a particular weapon that they are trained to use. But there is more. These same specialists and their commanders must also be competent to make the right moral decisions in the conduct of these duties. U.S. troops in

Vietnam, successfully and competently out-performed the enemy in nearly every significant military operation. Yet the will of the American public, a necessary pre-condition to any military effort, was seriously eroded by, among other things, a few isolated cases of moral incompetence. Professionalism is more than being able (competent) to hit the target once the trigger is pulled. We demand that the military professional have the ability to morally decide if it is time to pull the trigger in the first place. Colonel Malham Wakin reminds us:

> *Military knowledge and competence are not enough; we insist that they be conjoined with ... moral integrity.*[25]

THE "LAND ETHIC"

Do similar competency versus moral integrity issues also exist for the natural resource professional? There is an "ethic" which is unique to those professions dedicated to the wise stewardship of our natural resources. It has been alternatively called the "land ethic" or the "conservation ethic." Aldo Leopold, one of the great fathers of the conservation movement in the United States, was also one of the first to suggest the concept of a land ethic. James E. Coufal, in his article "The Land Ethic Question", describes Leopold's philosophy:

> *Leopold believed that ethics were first expressed as codes of conduct between individuals and communities (society). Leopold then suggested, in fact urged, that ethical considerations be extended to relationships between man and his community. The term "land ethic" was used because Leopold included in his definition of community, "soil, water, plants, and animals, or collectively, the land".*[26]

Leopold successfully raised the national conscience concerning conservation. He rightfully challenged professional wildlife biologists, soil scientists, foresters, and other professionals to help educate society about the interrelated web of environmental consequences that can result from various land uses; particularly those uses driven strictly by economic considerations.

Over time, however, the separation of the land ethic from ethics in general may have had a different effect on the natural resources professional. By separating "ethics" for the land and "ethics" in the more conventional sense, Leopold may have solved one problem while inadvertently creating another. How? Natural resource management professionals could now use the concept of a land ethic as a convenient way to dismiss professional ethics other than the "ethics" tied to the land. I am not suggesting that this is a commonplace occurrence, however, for many of today's professional resource managers, when the term ethics is mentioned they immediately think in terms of the "land ethic." Ethics for these individuals may be limited to making the biologically correct decision; in other words, making the scientifically competent decision. The spirit of Leopold's original vision of the land ethic becomes diluted in this shallow and distorted view which says -- *As long as it's a scientifically competent decision, then it is ethical.*

Hitting the target, for the weapons specialist, is the easy part. Morally, deciding if and when to shoot is dramatically more difficult. Similarly, making the scientifically competent decision, for the forester or wildlife specialist, is the easy part. Resource professionals are, by and large, the experts in the science of land conservation and utilization. They

do need to have a land ethic, the kind espoused by Aldo Leopold. Hiding behind an ethic that is solely defined by scientific competence, however, can become a serious problem for the professional public land manager, just as competently applying military force in a moral vacuum is unacceptable for the military professional. The following hypothetical example may help illustrate the point:

> Suppose there is a small insect, the spruce budworm, which has destroyed the trees on thousands of acres of public forest land and is threatening to destroy thousands more. The public agency responsible for managing the forest land has two alternatives for controlling the budworm. One alternative is to control the insects by aerially spraying a chemical insecticide, the other alternative is to aerially spray a naturally occurring biological agent which has limited effectiveness.
>
> Several public meetings have been held to solicit the public's opinion as to which course of action they prefer. At these meetings agency experts explain that there is a much greater probability of controlling the insects using the chemical as opposed to the "natural" agent -- and chemical control is less expensive. Even though the public is aware of the risks and costs involved, they strongly prefer the non-chemical alternative.

The decisionmaker has a dilemma. He or she has been trained to produce the best results for the least cost. The scientific evidence seems to suggest that the chemical spray alternative is the better use of public funds. But, the public clearly opposes this alternative. Strict adherence to a "land ethic" that is wedded only to scientific competence may lead the decisionmaker to rationalize that: "I am the professional. They just don't understand. The issue is very clear to me. Using a chemical spray is more effective and cheaper. My decision is to go ahead and spray with chemicals." In so doing, the decisionmaker may be using his professional competence, his knowledge of science, as a shield, and the larger moral issue of managing

the public land in accordance with the public's wishes may never be recognized. Conversely, the decisionmaker who considers *both* competency and moral integrity may recognize that the issue has transcended the scientific debate over how to control insects. The issue now centers around the integrity of the agency and its employees: will they listen to the public after inviting them to participate in the process, or ignore them?

As we mentioned in Chapter II, the public will likely become increasingly involved in decisions made by both professions -- the military and the public land manager. Advanced communications technology will see to it. This is all the more reason that competency and moral integrity should not be arbitrarily separated.

> ***The more scientific we become -- the more automated -- the greater the need for the ethical man, one who is responsible and accountable, who is not only concerned with his own good behavior but with the welfare of others and of mankind as a whole."***[27]
>
> Ivan Hill

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24. David D. Acker, "Ethics in the Eighties," Program Manager, September-October 1986, p. 15.

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26. James Coufal, "The Land Ethic Question," Journal of Forestry, June 1989, p. 22.

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CHAPTER IV

ETHICAL "ARMOR:" CAN IT BE FORTIFIED?

All the ethics classes in the world will not make a man good.

Aristotle

I began to realize that ... organizations can either foster sound ethical decision-making or retard it...[1]

Blanchard and Peale,
The Power of Ethical Management

Formal education will rarely improve the character of a scoundrel. But many individuals who are disposed to act morally will often fail to do so because they are simply unaware of the ethical problems that lie hidden in situations they confront...[2]

Steven C. Bok

Chapter III established that there is much "common ground" between the military professional and the public land manager, at least in terms of the ethical situations they may face. If this is the case, the next question becomes: how do these professionals, each with unique missions, reinforce their personal ethical "armor" so they can effectively deal with these complex issues?

This chapter provides insights on how the armed services and the federal land management agencies address this question. We will first look at the way the military approaches the problem: how they attempt to augment the ethical "armor" of their leaders. The second part of the

chapter will focus on the same issue, but from the perspective of the federal land management agency.

THE MILITARY MODEL

In their recent book, The Power of Ethical Management, authors Blanchard and Peale, make these observations:

> *We believe that a strong code of morality ... is the first step toward its success.*
>
> *Dealing with such a topic as ethics is like untangling a fishing line. The more you get into it, the more complicated it becomes.*[3]

My research indicates that the U.S. military agrees with the first statement and is not dissuaded by the second one. The subject of ethics is both complicated and vitally important. The military leadership, as I will show, believes that these are compelling enough reasons for emphasizing and debating the subject. For the military the emphasis is everywhere and it is not new. On November 1, 1972, for instance, General John D. Ryan, Air Force Chief of Staff issued a policy letter for commanders which included the statement:

> *Integrity is the most important responsibility of command. Commanders are dependent on the integrity of those reporting to them in every decision they make. Integrity can be ordered but it can only be achieved by encouragement and example.*[4]

But where do our military professionals acquire the integrity that General Ryan felt was so essential? As with most things, both good and bad, we must begin in the home. Robert Nisbet suggests that family, church and

school are the major contributors to our moral education as we grow into adults. He writes:

> *No association of later life has the moral influence that the family does. The family has the individual from birth through the early crucial years of childhood.*
>
> *Church and school are tied for second place in moral education; each, after all, has less than full-time access to the individual.*[3]

Nisbet's statements represent the conventional wisdom -- that the collective influences of family, society, church, and school are the instrumental forces that alter our attitudes and behavior. If this is so, by the time a recruit joins the military, much of his/her ethical armor has already been molded. Is it then too late to harden the "armor" or develop it more fully? Apparently the military does not believe so. They continue to underscore the importance of ethics as a basic tenet of their leadership.

In so doing the military is sending a powerful message: a message with two parts. The first says, "we believe that ethical development is an ongoing process, that it is possible to build a stronger ethical foundation in our leadership." The second part of the message says, "as an institution, we can play a role in this ethical development, in fact, it is our *obligation* to help our leaders continue to develop ethically."

FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Few aspects of the formal military education process are devoid of an ethical component. From the cadets and midshipmen at the military academies to the senior level officers attending the service War Colleges,

students are encouraged to debate and expose the ethical concerns they face.

Officers are provided with the widest range of ethical development opportunities. In the book, The Teaching of Ethics in the Military, the authors highlight the rationale for this approach:

> *Since officer-leaders provide examples within the profession of ethical conduct and are viewed as "teachers" of military ethics, it seems fitting to teach ethics to officers.*[6]

Future officers are provided ethics awareness training early on. Precommissioning schools such as Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs, Officer Training Schools (OTS), and Officer Candidate Schools (OCS) have all incorporated ethics materials in their leadership courses.[7]

Service academies offer another educational opportunity for future members of the officer corps. For the cadets and midshipmen, attendance at the service academies marks their first exposure to the military "ethic." Graduates of the three military academies, the U.S. Air Force Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy, and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, compose only a small portion of the total officer corps; nevertheless, the "ethical ideals promoted at these institutions have never been considered the exclusive property of its graduates."[8] Nor is the tradition of developing ethical and moral reasoning skills at the service academies a new fad. Ethics courses have been taught for the past twenty years at West Point and the Air Force Academy, and the Naval Academy includes an ethics component in their basic leadership course.[9]

The existing core of officers, i.e. mid-career officers at the military staff colleges and senior officers at the war colleges, also receive

opportunities to formally explore the "military's moral decisionmaking process."[10] Ethics training at these institutions is augmented by the experience that the students bring with them. Moreover, these stude..t-officers strongly support the emphasis on ethics. Stromberg, et al., make the following observations:

> *...at their respective professional schools we have found them to be universally concerned about maintaining or raising the standards of professional military ethics.*[11]

The interest expressed by the students has not been lost on the designers of course curriculums at the senior schools, all of which include strong ethics components. In fact, "Ethical development" is identified as a key "emphasis area" for the students attending the U.S. Army War College in the 1990 Academic Year. To quote the 1990 U.S. Army War College curriculum pamphlet:

> *Because of the magnitude and nature of the issues and the vast impact of decisions made at the upper levels, the ethical climate for the senior officer is qualitatively different than that experienced by most students prior to entering the class. It warrants a most sensitive and comprehensive understanding of the ethical and human dimensions of our profession.*[12]

Despite the emphasis, a dissenting opinion does exist with respect to the teaching of ethics. Some insist that ethics cannot be taught and therefore that ethics training is a waste of time. And so the skeptical reader may also be wondering, can ethics be taught? John P. Lovell addresses this very issue when he states:

> *...ethics can be taught and should be taught. The fact that it is difficult to teach...that the lessons taught may not receive the social reinforcement one would like from the public at large, from the national leadership, or from policy goals constitutes no argument against the necessity for teaching military ethics nor against the possibility of doing so effectively.*[13]

DOCTRINE

Using the Army as an example to see how military doctrine deals with the subject of ethics, we first look at Field Manual 100-1, "THE ARMY." This most basic doctrinal source considers the "Army ethic" to be "the bedrock of our profession."[14] Values such as loyalty and integrity are promoted in this document which applies to everyone in the Army. Other doctrinal sources that include ethics components are: Army Regulation 600-50, Standards of Conduct for Department of Army Personal, Field Manuals 22-100 and 22-103, and Field Circulars 22-9-1, 22-9-2, and 22-9-3.

Doctrine contained in these sources directs the U.S. Army to conduct ethics training and also provides Army personnel with the Army's philosophical view concerning ethics.

> *A firm ethical base is, therefore, the cornerstone of the Army. It is most directly expressed in FM 100-1. Ethics set the standard and framework for correct professional action.*
>
> Field Manual 22-103, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels.

Finally, doctrine is not only addressed to the senior level, the three Field Circulars, 22-9-1, 22-9-2, and 22-9-3 , also provide ethical guidance to junior level officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted soldiers. These Field Circulars utilize the case study method to elicit ethical debate and discussion. More significantly, "these three Field Circulars indicate that the Army has realized the need to teach ethics at all levels of the Army, not just to officers."[15]

LEADERS

The third source of ethical values for the military professional is the military leader himself. Good leaders lead by example. A poll conducted several years ago determined the things that influenced executives to make unethical decisions. The top two influences were: 1) the behavior of executive's superiors and 2) the ethical climate of the organization.[16] Summing up the discussion is the following quote which applies to ethical behavior as well as all other aspects of leadership:

> *Every good leader is a good teacher and every bad leader is a bad teacher.*[17]

PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

It would be difficult to find a starker contrast than the one that exists between the military's approach toward the ethical development of it's leaders and the approach used by the public land management agencies that were researched as part of this study. In comparison to the military professional natural resource professionals receive little structured opportunity to openly study and debate the subject. Where do these professionals fortify their "ethical armor?"

EDUCATION

Unlike the military officers who may attend many of the same schools, our professional natural resource managers come from a variety of educational backgrounds. The predominant educational backgrounds are in the biological and natural sciences; with foresters, civil engineers, wildlife

biologists, and range conservationists the most frequently employed professionals by the largest Federal land management agencies.[18]

Do these future public land managers receive any formal ethical development as a part of their college educations? A cursory look at the curriculums of leading Forestry schools reveals that most programs do not have a mandatory course entitled professional ethics.[19] Nor do most nationally prominent engineering or wildlife management schools include ethics as a mandatory course requirement. It appears that these schools are, therefore, out-of-step with trends which began as far back as 1973:

> *A 1980 survey by the Center for Business Ethics at Bentley College indicated that there had been a 500% increase in business ethics courses in colleges and universities since 1973 -- a trend that seems to be continuing...*[20]

While the schools themselves may not have evolved to a point where they feel that professional ethics courses should be required, there are signs that the organizations that accredit these programs have recognized that a void exists. The Society for Range Management (SRM) is the organization that accredits 35 programs offering degrees in range science in the United States. Nothing is the SRM's accreditation standards speaks to ethics; however, Peter V. Jackson, Executive Vice President of the SRM, states that the subject of professional ethics is "always included as one of the basic discussion topics during the accreditation process."[21]

The Society of American Foresters (SAF), which accredits 45 separate forestry programs in the U.S., takes an even stronger position. Their accreditation criteria was changed in 1986 to include a greater emphasis on professional ethics. The SAF Accreditation Handbook now states, "It is

imperative that ... the curriculum include instruction in and discussion of professional ethics."[22] The SAF has done much more to further underscore ethics for professional foresters and we will discuss their progress later in this chapter.

DOCTRINE AND TRAINING

Once or twice a year a standard letter circulates through all Federal offices reminding employees that they should avoid situations which could constitute a conflict of interest. In addition, the United States Code of Ethics for Government Service must legally be posted in a conspicuous location at all places where Federal employees work. In terms of doctrine or policy, these two pieces of paper are essentially all that there is for the employees of the large Federal land management agencies. Even if employees regularly reviewed these letters and codes of conduct, which of course they do not, is this sufficient ethical guidance? The limitations of ethical codes are captured in the words of Colonel Wakin:

> *Many professions have promulgated codes of ethics, which specify standards of performance and conduct for their members. The military too has ethical codes, written and unwritten, ideal and practical. But codes alone and knowledge of what is right have never been sufficient to guarantee right conduct. Doctors and defense attorneys schooled in the codes of ethics of their professions sometimes appear more interested in their fees than the well-being of their patients or clients.*[23]

To summarize: opportunities for ethical development through education and training are very limited for the natural resource professional who chooses to spend his/her career working for one of the large Federal land management agencies. The National Park Service, Bureau

of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service all have internal, agency-wide, leadership development programs. Yet, none of these agencies includes a significant ethics component in their agency-wide programs. In fact, unless an individual is selected into the Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program (less than 1 per cent of all employees) they will receive no significant formal ethics training at all.[24]

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

The Society of American Foresters, Society for Range Management, American Society of Civil Engineers, and other related professional societies provide limited ethical guidance for our public land managers. We have already discussed their role in accrediting undergraduate and graduate level programs, in addition, these societies have their own "Codes of Ethics" to which their members are supposed to adhere.

These professional societies typically serve a diverse membership. There are over 214 accredited civil engineering programs in the U.S. which produce civil engineering graduates who are employed in a wide cross-section of businesses, both public and private.[25] Producing a single legitimate code of ethics for such a large and diverse membership is difficult. The other professional societies have a similar dilemma. As a result, these "codes" promulgated by professional societies are not commonly geared to the public natural resource manager.

The Code of Ethics for members of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) is a typical example.[26] This code originated in 1948 and is composed of 15 separate canons. Membership in the SAF includes practicing foresters from both the private and public sectors and, while many of the canons are

generic, some are specifically designed to guide those foresters employed outside government. Canon number two, for example, states that "...a member will advertise only in a dignified and truthful manner...." Another canon, number 13, discusses how members should conduct themselves when competing with other foresters for "supplying forestry services."

While useful in principle, these canons offer little help for the public forester not engaged in advertising or competing with other foresters in the open market place. Even if professional codes were more tailored to the public land manager, the general limitations of ethical codes would still exist. Recognizing these limitations is something that the SAF has done. In 1989, the SAF published an *Ethics Guide* which includes the SAF Code of Ethics and some hypothetical case studies to help members think through the ethical problems they might face. The case studies used in the publication include situations that may be encountered by the public forester as well as foresters employed in the private sector.

Despite the emphasis that these professional societies are currently placing on professional ethics, the fact is that a large percentage of the professionals employed by the large Federal agencies do not belong to these societies. The question needs to be asked: are public land management agencies content to let professional societies and their individual ethical codes assume the burden of providing moral guidance for their employees?

LEADERS

> *...much actual behavior will be influenced by the role model provided by those in command. If they fail to provide exemplary moral leadership, no course in ethics can be expected to overcome their bad example.*[27]

Although there exists no empirical data to support my feelings, I intuitively feel that it is just such "exemplary moral leadership" that has enabled the large federal land management agencies to avoid the major ethical scandals that have plagued other professions. For these agencies charged with managing our public lands, ethical breaches have been conspicuously and fortuitously absent.

Employees have been, by and large, proud to work for these agencies and dedicated to their organizational missions. And pride, as pointed out by Blanchard and Peale, is a prerequisite for ethical behavior.

> *If people are proud of their company, and what it represents, people will fight to maintain integrity in an organization.*[28]

ENDNOTES

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3. Blanchard and Peale, The Power of Ethical Management, p. 7.

4. General John Ryan, "Integrity," in War, Morality, and the Military Profession, ed. by Malham Wakin, p. 180.

5. Robert Nisbet, "Individual Ethics," Public Opinion, November-December 1986, p. 8.

6. Peter Stromberg, et al., The Teaching of Ethics in the Military, p. 60.

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8. Lewis Sorley III, "Duty, Honor, Country: Practice and Precept," in War, Morality, and the Military Profession, ed. by Malham Wakin, p. 143.

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13. John P. Lovell, "Report of the Proceedings of the Joint Services Conference of Professional Ethics IV," p. 18.

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18. Telephone interviews with: Mr. Bernie Akin, Branch Chief, Work Force Management Branch, Personnel and Civil Rights Staff, U.S. Forest Service, Washington, 16 January 1990, Ms. Mona Womack, Chief Training Officer (acting), Bureau of Land Management, Washington, 29 January 1990, and Mr. Richard Cripe, Chief of Work Force Planning, National Park Service, Washington, 29 January 1990.

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21. Telephone interview with Mr. Peter V. Jackson, Executive Vice President, Society for Range Management, Denver, 1 February 1990.

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23. Malham Wakin, "Wanted: Moral Virtues in the Military," United States Air Force Journal of Professional Military Ethics, 1988, p. 54.

24. Telephone interviews with: Mr. John Karwowski, Branch Chief, Employment Development Branch, Personnel and Civil Rights Staff, U.S. Forest Service, Washington, 20 November 1989, Lucia Bragan, Employee Development Specialist, National Park Service, Washington, 23 January 1990, and Ms. Mona Womack, Chief Training Officer (acting), Bureau of Land Management, Washington, 29 January 1990.

25. Telephone interview with Mr. Charles Day, American Society of Civil Engineers, New York, 23 January 1990.

26. Society of American Foresters, "Code of Ethics," Journal of Forestry, June 1989, p. 46.

27. Ibid. p. 48.

28. Blanchard and Peale, The Power of Ethical Management, p. 95.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

I do the best I know how, the very best I can.

Abraham Lincoln

A leader given to excessive worry and doubt about moral decisions, it has been said, will be unable to command effectively. We see no solid evidence to support this judgement, either in the military or any other profession. On the contrary, since moral problems will inevitably be encountered...it would be short-sighted as well as irresponsible to deny...leaders an occasion to think about them, to anticipate them, and to find help in deciding what can be done about them. Sound judgement is no less important than decisiveness.[1]

The Teaching of Ethics in the Military

In the matter of ethical conduct, the act of questioning is almost as important as the answer itself.[2]

Society of American Foresters Ethics Guide

There is still that nagging question, the dubious readers want to know, "what is the bottom line?" They wonder how the military professional compares with the public land manager in terms of ethical *performance*. They cite evidence that even with all the emphasis on ethics in the military, there have still been highly publicized ethical violations committed by military professionals. The Iran-Contra scandal, cheating scandals at our national military academies and Pentagon contracting irregularities involving uniformed officers are noteworthy examples.

Where are the scandals for those employees of the National Park

Service, Bureau of Land Management, or U.S. Forest Service? Unlike their military counterparts, these professionals receive no formal developmental training in the area of ethics. Yet, their agencies have maintained a remarkably high ethical standard with relatively few noteworthy ethical lapses.

Therefore, we have found a paradox. It appears that some organizations with limited formal ethics training also have relatively few ethical problems. Given this situation, public land management agencies need to decide which way they wish to go. Their first inclination may be to stay on the present course. It has apparently worked thus far and, after all, as the old saying goes, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Perhaps though, in the case of ethical development and leadership, our public land management agencies should consider a different path; a path which just might be more viable in today's world. Given the current expectation that public servants exhibit the highest moral standards, that public and media scrutiny will increase, and that the technology exists to expose every aspect of the decisionmaking process, isn't it time to change course? This new course may be necessary because a different version of that old saying, "if it ain't broke, it soon will be" could ultimately prove more prophetic. After all, can public land management agencies collectively "keep their fingers crossed" in hopes that employees of high integrity will continue to migrate in their direction?

This paper is intended to provoke thought, not simply list "hard" facts and concrete recommendations. Leaders of our public land management agencies need to reflect on the rapid pace of change today, and how these forces may influence the moral fiber of their respective agencies. Colonel

Wakin, in his work entitled, "The Ethics of Leadership," articulately addresses the issue and asserts that leadership involves more than a sterile contractual relationship between the leader and the led. Colonel Wakin states:

> *...leadership is not a value-free enterprise; approaches which ignore the critical ethical dimensions of leadership must always be viewed as unsatisfactory.*[3]

If we accept the premise that leadership is not value-neutral and, that there is an ethical dimension which cannot be ignored, what does this suggest about how organizations go about the business of preparing or developing their leaders? Are approaches to leadership development which "ignore the critical ethical dimensions" also unsatisfactory?

Can public land management agencies learn from the military? I believe the answer is yes. This is not to suggest that these agencies attempt to "mirror" every aspect of the military's extensive program. I am suggesting, however, that these public agencies should begin to recognize that moral reasoning requires the same degree of rigor as do other subjects. Further, any program should promote the critical reasoning and analysis skills that would enable our leaders to recognize ethical issues and deal with them knowledgeably. When the topic is ethics, many professions could learn from the military.

It is better to light the candle than to curse the darkness.[4]

ENDNOTES

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2. Society of American Foresters, Ethics Guide, p. 19.

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