COMMENTS FOR WFPA PANEL INTRODUCTION

Looking forward is what I do best. Recently, I've spent some time looking back over nearly 50 years in the forestry business as folks have asked me to reflect on my experiences or relate the stories of the past. But my focus has always been on the future, using the past as much as a cautionary tale as anything. So, while the past is prelude to the future, forestry, more than nearly any other business, must look the future squarely in the eye. When we plant that tree, we are doing it for our children and grandchildren.

There are two opposing views of how to deal with the future – the "Que Sera, Sera" approach – that which will be, will be, and there is nothing we can do about it, or the "The future is mine to make" approach. Another way to put it is either to let the future take its course without trying to change things, or to seize the opportunity to make the future what you want it to be. You can follow a path, or be guided by a beacon.

For many years, the forest industry tried to hold the clock still…to keep things as they were. Neither the world nor reality was in any mood to stand still. Great leaders like Stu Bledsoe and Bill Wilkerson recognized that the future was going to be different, and that the industry could sit on the sidelines and try to hold the clock still, with clearly uncertain results, or step forward and be involved in creating a future you could live with.

Futuring is an interesting exercise. It requires a sense of being in charge of your own destiny. It requires an openness to see things the way others see them. It requires the ability to engage in "imagineering".

What I find so compelling about the future of forestry is the strong commitment on the part of all the players to the future of

sustainable forestry. In the past hundred years, not quite the time it takes to reach DFC, we have seen forestry evolve from a custodial enterprise, to the extractive era in the immediate post-WWII era, through the forest stewardship period in the 80s and 90s to reach the era of sustainable forest management. This latter element, I believe, will provide the social license for the future.

During this period, we have seen forest management mature from extensive management, to intensive management, and now we are clearly engaged in site specific management, meeting the core needs of a wide range of public resources, but a site specific strategy that plays out on a landscape basis.

Forest products meet the needs of a society centered on sustainability better than any other material. With the most comprehensive and protective forest practice requirements and the amount of forest land green certified, the forests of Washington are uniquely situated to provide a wide range of high-quality, high-demand forest products at the lowest environmental cost of anywhere.

Our speakers today will each give you no doubt a touch of the past, but a focus on the future.