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Case Study #2: Hofmann Forest

1. Describe the evolution of the policy problem to a policy issue. Please be sure to clearly state what the policy issue is.

The policy problem began when the status quo of annual income from the Hofmann Forest changed, which led North Carolina State University and the Natural Resources Foundation to consider selling the land. The policy issue developed when the sale was announced by NCSU and subsequently opposed by a few stakeholders. The policy issue was whether or not a change in ownership (and change in natural resource management) was legal.

2. Describe the process of the policy issue creation and the interest groups that sought to be part of the agenda-setting process.

Some of the first interest groups that sought power to make a change were the wood product industries that took over the Natural Resources Foundation board and were able to get the issue of selling the Hofmann Forest on an NCSU agenda. Following the announcement of the sale listing, some forestry professors and conservation or environmental NGOs became involved stakeholders that fought for agenda access.

3. Using the agenda-setting process model (Fig. 3-1, p. 57), please explain:

a. The triggering event and/or initiator in this case study

The triggering event was a decline in annual income from timber sales and other factors that led to the NRF and NCSU to consider seling Hofmann Forest.

b. The gatekeeper(s)

The gatekeepers were the NCSU dean of the College of Natural Resources, the Natural Resources Foundation, and the NCSU Endowment Fund Board.

c. How perceived uninfluential groups engaged, including if/when their agenda status was denied, their use of broadening support tools and expansion tools

The campaign against selling Hofmann Forest was multi-faceted. There was a public relations campaign with yard signs and rallies, many NGOs helped organize support for the campaign, and local NCSU and community stakeholders teamed up to expand the issue. Issue expansion was achieved through rallies, petitions, social media and newspaper editorials, and finally when denied agenda access by NRF and NCSU a lawsuit galvanized and publicized the issue even more.

4. What step(s) were taken (or not taken) in policy formulation?

The lawsuit was dropped when the sale was dissolved; recognizing that another sale would be difficult the policy was adjusted to allow for commercial harvest, but not sale of the land, for decades to come. Some other conservation and mitigation measures were taken. Although this policy was a compromise, many stakeholders felt dissatisfied with the process and outcome.