

# Chapter 1

## Summary

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The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA) requires the Secretary of Agriculture to evaluate the Nation's renewable forest and rangeland resources and to consider their future use and sustainability. The Secretary has directed the USDA Forest Service to prepare three RPA documents: the Assessment, the Program, and the Annual Report. The Presidential Statement of Policy, also required by RPA, and the documents prepared by the Forest Service, are submitted to Congress to guide policy and budget decisions.

Congress is concerned that this costly process has not provided a comprehensive evaluation of renewable resources or an effective guide for policy and budget deliberations. Individual Members of Congress, congressional committees, and public and private interest groups have expressed disappointment with the results of RPA, criticizing both the process and the documents. Because of the disappointing results, some have proposed repealing RPA, but others, believing in the merits of the process, argue that this would be “tantamount to throwing out the baby with the bathwater.”

RPA arose from concerns about the future of our renewable resources and about the tendency to focus on short-term problems rather than on long-term conditions. Senator Hubert Humphrey, chief sponsor of the legislation, was particularly disturbed by the Nixon Administration's failure to reduce work backlogs, which Humphrey believed was short-changing future forest and rangeland resources. Congress intended RPA to establish long-range planning for renewable resources and to provide greater congressional control over Forest Service programs and budgets.

By requiring that the RPA Program be developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, RPA opened the door to public participation in the planning process—both in the scoping of issues to be addressed and in the reviewing of the draft documents. The extent to which the public influences forest and rangeland policy depends largely on Forest Service efforts to solicit and analyze public input and to address public concerns in the RPA Program. Some critics assert that the agency has not involved the public in the

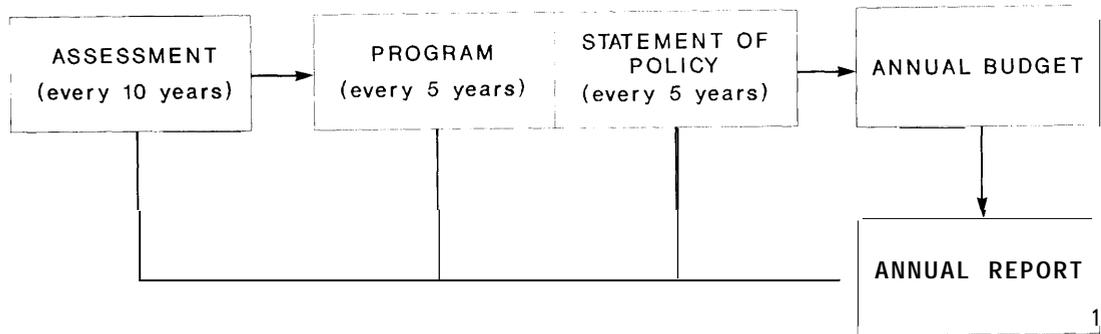
process in a manner that allows for meaningful participation. Declining numbers of public comments suggest either that the public does not expect to influence the RPA documents or process, or that the documents do not have a significant impact on policy and budget decisions.

RPA established a long-range planning process for the Forest Service that is built on principles of strategic planning (figure 1-1). Strategic planning establishes a framework through which an organization defines its mission, goals, and objectives and sets its future direction. The process typically includes evaluating an organization's present situation, assessing internal strengths and weaknesses, and examining threats and opportunities. Because a strategic plan guides operations, it must also be integrated with internal control systems, such as budgets. Strategic planning is a flexible process that includes systematic monitoring and feedback to measure performance; plans can then be modified in response to new information, emerging issues, and changing priorities. Above all, strategic planning demands that top officers and line managers remain committed to the process.

To date, RPA has not functioned well as a strategic planning system. RPA Assessments have suffered from poor data on resource conditions and the analyses of opportunities and threats have been incomplete. RPA Programs have provided neither sufficient guidance for annual budgets nor clear direction for agency activities. Annual Reports have provided inadequate feedback on implementation. And neither the Administration nor Congress has demonstrated sufficient commitment to make the process work.

Some observers assert that RPA cannot serve as an effective strategic planning process because of inherent political, institutional, and contextual limitations. However, a comprehensive assessment of resource conditions can establish a common basis for looking to the future, while an evaluation of threats and opportunities can explore possible options. Public input can then be used to develop an acceptable direction for Forest Service activities, and annual monitoring and feedback can show progress in achieving the agreed-upon direction.

Figure 1-1—The RPA Planning Process



Congressional intent:

Analysis of the current situation

Strategic direction

Commitment and budget guide

Implementation, monitoring, and feed back

SOURCE: Office of Technology Assessment, 1990.

Strategic planning for renewable resources is thus a feasible process to address the still prevalent concerns about deteriorating resource conditions and budget constraints. OTA therefore concludes that the strategic nature of RPA should be retained and enhanced. With commitment to the process from the Administration and Congress, Forest Service strategic planning can chart a course for improving the long-term management of the Nation's renewable resources.

## THE RPA ASSESSMENT

RPA requires the Assessment to include an inventory of renewable resources; a supply and demand analysis of renewable resources; a review of the international resource situation; a description of Forest Service programs in research, cooperative assistance, and the National Forest System; and a discussion of policy considerations and regulations expected to influence all forest and rangeland owners. These requirements provide for the evaluation of the current situation and for the analysis of opportunities and constraints that are necessary for effective strategic planning.

The first Assessment under RPA was due on December 31, 1975, with an update required in 1979 and subsequent Assessments due every 10 years after that. The three Assessments and one supplement completed to date have met with varied response from Congress and the public. Most reviewers commend the efforts of the Forest Service, but many note shortcomings in specific Assessments or in the process. In general, the Assessment is a

comprehensive document reflecting substantial Forest Service effort but lacking some of the resource quality and quantity data needed to make well-informed resource management plans and decisions.

### Resource Data

The 1989 RPA Assessment is a short, general document supported by several more detailed reports on each of the major resources, including range forage, timber, water, wildlife and fish, and wilderness. Recreation, unlike the other categories, is an activity rather than a resource and recreation planning requires different kinds of inventory data and management concepts than planning for renewable resources.

An inventory of renewable resources is most useful to resource managers when it provides accurate data on the quantity, quality, and outputs of each resource. The amount of the data on these parameters varies substantially among the resource reports supporting the 1989 RPA Assessment. The Timber Assessment, because of a long history of data collection by the Forest Service, has basic information on quantity, quality, and outputs for evaluating the timber resource. The Recreation Assessment, although dealing with some intangible measures, quantifies recreation activities and measures the quality and outputs of the services provided. The Water Assessment also has relatively complete data on quantity, quality, and outputs of the water resources. The remaining Assessments are missing at least one of the inventory components. In particular, data on quality of the resources are lacking. For

example, while the area of wilderness is quantified, no measures for the quality of wilderness are presented. The Range Assessment does not provide useful measures for quality or quantity, due in part to a change in the inventory techniques for rangeland that has restricted the amount of information available to assess historical trends. The Wildlife Assessment also fails to present sufficient quantity and quality information to assess population levels and trends, although it contains output information on many species.

Differences also exist among the types of measures presented and their usefulness in evaluating the resources. Direct, replicable measures are most useful for assessing conditions and trends, although variable measures based on field surveys can be helpful. Indirect measures, as surrogates for conditions, are typically less reliable, while professional judgment often cannot be replicated. Outputs are the least useful measure for conditions, because output levels can often be maintained temporarily at unsustainable levels.

Data presented in the Assessment reports are rarely from direct measures, although some exceptions exist. For example, the status of the timber resource is monitored through periodic surveys of volume of growing stock, growth, mortality, and removals. These data are generally of better quality than those for the other resources. The Water Assessment synthesizes data from several agencies to produce measures of water flows and quality of watersheds and, as with the Timber Assessment, provides better quality data than most of the other Assessments. The Recreation Assessment uses primarily indirect or output measures because some of the variables used to evaluate recreation activities cannot be quantified. The Range Assessment estimates total rangelands that can be used for livestock grazing as a surrogate for forage production, but this does not assess the quantity or quality of the range forage resources. The Range Assessment also estimates productivity in terms of livestock grazing use, but this measure is also of little value because of incomplete data on the acres of forests and rangelands actually grazed by livestock and wild herbivores. The Wildlife Assessment discusses land use and vegetative cover types as indirect measures of the amount of land that supports a faunal community. These measures provide a coarse description of wildlife and fish habitats, but are inadequate for monitoring resource quantity and quality. Profes-

sional judgment and variable measures, compiled from numerous State agencies, provide the databases for many of the population estimates, but output measures are often used for small game and furbearers.

### *Economic Analysis*

The Forest Service is directed to analyze current and expected supplies of and demands for renewable resources and to evaluate resource investment opportunities. Econometric models are used for timber resources and for the land base, providing a systematic approach that can be tested. For other resources, the Forest Service has used the “gap” model, projecting future demands and supplies independently and then comparing them. Such an approach can be useful if the projections are based on sound assumptions and logic, but the Assessment generally does not include enough information to evaluate the projection methods. Furthermore, some projections are inconsistent with current trends and with other information. The gap model includes no information about likely price trends, although the size of the gap could be expected to indicate the likely direction and magnitude of changes in the values of nonpriced and subsidized resources. In general, future resource values correlate with supply and demand projections, but future values for range forage and for hunting and fishing seem to be overestimated. While these models are far from perfect, they represent significant efforts and provide useful insights on likely trends.

Although RPA requires an evaluation of opportunities, with investment costs and direct and indirect returns, the Assessment is largely a catalog of possibilities, with virtually no information on costs and returns to help decisionmakers arrive at informed choices. The Wildlife Assessment at least contains a discussion of general priorities, and the Timber Assessment contains an evaluation of opportunities on some timberlands. Overall, however, the Draft 1989 RPA Assessment is inadequate in meeting this requirement of the Act.

### *International Context*

RPA requires the supply and demand analysis in the Assessment to consider the international context for domestic resources, because trends in international resource use and protection can affect demands on domestic resources. International trade is considered in the Timber and Range Assessments.

Global resource situations such as demand for fuelwood, atmospheric pollution and acid deposition, loss of rangelands to encroaching deserts, and population declines of migratory songbirds are identified in the individual resource reports. However, two major international environmental concerns, tropical deforestation and global warming, were essentially ignored in the Assessment, despite important implications for the future of America's renewable resources.

### *Cooperative Assistance and Research*

The 1989 RPA Assessment is of little value for assessing cooperative assistance and research. Despite the information on these topics in the individual resource Assessments, the 1989 RPA Assessment neither summarizes the identified needs nor examines their priorities.

Many of the individual resource Assessments suggest specific cooperative assistance actions for increasing supplies or improving quality of resources on State and private lands. The Recreation Assessment, for example, concludes that programs directed at private lands should focus on keeping land open for recreation by providing information to landowners on management, limiting liability risks, and capturing financial benefits. The Timber Assessment suggests increasing timber productivity on nonindustry private lands as a way to slow the expected rate of increase in timber prices. The Water Assessment suggests that lack of knowledge and lack of financial incentives to private landowners are major obstacles to the control of forestry-related nonpoint-source pollution. Two major issues relevant to private lands-habitat restoration and improvement and restricted access to private lands for hunting and fishing-are identified in the Wildlife Assessment. However, the 1989 RPA Assessment downplays the potential for using markets and prices to encourage private landowners to respond to the identified possibilities and problems.

Each of the accompanying individual resource Assessments also contains a section on research needs. The Recreation Assessment identifies standardized information on recreation participation trends, future demands for recreation, and available supplies of recreation opportunities. The Range Assessment calls for research on vegetation management for multiple-resource uses of rangelands. The Timber Assessment suggests continuing importance

for research on basic physiological and biological processes of tree growth and timber management. The Water Assessment states that more information is needed on cumulative effects of different management activities on water quality, and on possible control actions. The Wildlife Assessment notes that research is needed on species-habitat relationships and population inventories. However, research priorities and costs are not evaluated in the 1989 RPA Assessment.

### *Conclusions*

The 1989 RPA Assessment, together with the individual resource reports, is a fairly comprehensive document that improves on past efforts. Nonetheless, serious shortcomings remain. Data on resource conditions, particularly on resource quality, are lacking for many resources. Assessments of resource conditions often rely on surrogates, professional judgments, and/or outputs to estimate resource quantity or quality. The supply-demand analysis is generally improved over past RPA Assessments, but the required evaluation of investment opportunities is missing. The Assessment ignores major global resource concerns, and generally contains insufficient information on cooperative assistance and research needs and priorities.

## **THE RPA PROGRAM**

The purpose of the RPA Program is to review management and administrative programs of the Forest Service in relation to Assessment findings. It is to inventory public and private investment needs and opportunities; identify outputs, results, and benefits associated with investments; discuss priorities for the inventoried opportunities; and study personnel requirements. Congress clearly intended the RPA Program to be a strategic plan for Forest Service activities, providing necessary information to the final decisionmakers-the Administration and Congress.

The first Program under RPA was due by the end of 1975, with succeeding Programs required every 5 years. The three Programs completed to date have not been very useful to the Administration, Congress, or the public for evaluating policy and budget decisions. These documents have been criticized for not providing strategic direction, for inadequately responding to projected resource demands, and for poorly establishing output goals and budget targets. The Forest Service has improved the Draft 1990

Program over previous efforts by including more of the critical components of strategic planning. However, problems remain that limit the value of this document.

### *Program Structure*

The Draft 1990 RPA Program revises the structure of past Programs by discussing roles, issues, strategies, and initiatives. This new structure is closer to a strategic planning model for forest and rangeland resources than previous RPA Programs, but it still fails to set clear goals and priorities. The discussion of roles is a step forward, but the roles are not clearly defined. Issues reflect public concerns about renewable resources, but are not used for comparing strategies. The strategies are really output mixes, and most do not reflect strategic thinking about direction. Finally, the initiatives are presented as separate activities rather than as integral components of the strategies.

The National Forest System dominates the Draft 1990 RPA Program, probably because it accounts for 90 percent of Forest Service funding. The strategies reflect different resource emphasis, with timber programs and wildlife and fish programs showing the greatest variation. The remaining funds are allocated to cooperative assistance, research, and international concerns with little variation in program emphasis among the strategies, sometimes ignoring proposed roles and needs. Timber production is expected to continue to dominate cooperative assistance on private nonindustrial lands with few differences in approach among the strategies. Research under the various strategies responds neither to proposed Forest Service roles nor to the research needs identified in the individual resource Assessments. The international forestry program discusses broad research and assistance programs with foreign countries without providing guidance for the Forest Service on relevant global resource issues, such as tropical deforestation and global warming.

### *Information Content*

Effective strategic planning in the public sector relies on substantial data to describe the current conditions and thorough analysis to examine possibilities. Incomplete inventories in the Assessment make it difficult to present complete resource and

economic analyses in the Program. Many of the data presented in the Draft Program are not drawn from the Assessment. For example, the acres of noxious weed infestations is a measure of range management in the Draft Program, but the Assessment contains no information on noxious weeds. For timber, two measures of public concern—acres clearcut and acres of old-growth forests—are discussed in the Draft Program, but again, the Assessment has no supporting data on conditions or trends. Similarly, big game winter range and commercial salmon and steelhead harvests are measures of wildlife and fish management in the Draft Program with no background information in the Assessment.

The Draft 1990 RPA Program proclaims that economic efficiency has been maximized for each strategy, but presents insufficient evidence to evaluate this claim. Evidence from past RPA Programs, likely overestimates of future range and timber revenues, and incomplete cost data tend to refute such undocumented claims. The Forest Service, the Administration, Congress, and many individuals and groups are also concerned about the consequences of Forest Service activities on local communities. The Draft Program responds to such concerns by projecting total employment impacts and county payments under each strategy. Except in the Timber Assessment, however, there is no baseline information on resource industry employment, and the Draft Program does not document how the projections were made.

### *Budget*

The 1980 and 1985 RPA Programs contained two budget levels: the high-bound level representing the Forest Service's view of what is needed for managing the Nation's renewable resources and the low-bound level representing the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) efforts to control total Federal spending. Among the five strategies presented in the Draft 1990 Program, all strategies (except the continuing current budget strategy) contain large budget increases, consistent with past Forest Service efforts but not likely to be acceptable to OMB. The Forest Service has also failed to identify budget priorities and to provide benefit/cost information on proposed actions, as required, making it difficult for the Administration, Congress, and the public to arrive at intelligent budget decisions.

### *Conclusions*

RPA Programs have not been useful documents for evaluating policy and budget decisions. The failure to document sources, to describe analytical methods, to provide realistic near-term revenue estimates and accurate cost information, and to relate programs to the findings of the Assessment make alternative strategies difficult to evaluate. The Programs have generally failed as strategic plans, and have provided little help on budget choices. The Forest Service has taken steps in the Draft 1990 Program to move it toward strategic planning by including critical components of strategic planning as well as better information. The Draft falls short of being an effective planning document, however, because of recurring problems of poor linkage to the Assessment and inadequate resource and budget information.

### **PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

RPA requires the President to transmit to Congress a detailed Statement of Policy to be used in framing budget requests for Forest Service activities. If the budget requests do not conform to the direction set forth in the Statement of Policy, the President is required to explain the differences. The President and OMB have expressed dissatisfaction with this requirement, because of the perceived limitations the Statement imposes on the President in making budget requests and deciding national priorities.

Since RPA was enacted, three Statements of Policy have been transmitted to Congress, by Presidents Gerald Ford (1975), Jimmy Carter (1980) and Ronald Reagan (1985). These Statements have been general pronouncements including only broad commitments to Forest Service programs and not even general guidance for future budgets. Although the law states that the Statement may be modified by Congress, only the 1980 Statement was rejected, primarily for its failure to set forth a firm budget request. The 1975 and 1985 Statements also failed in this regard, but Congress did not respond with a revision within the designated 90-day period and the Statements became the broad budget guides to be used by the Forest Service.

To carry out the original intent of the Act, Congress must hold the President accountable to a budget guide, and deviations must be publicly explained. The purpose of the Statement of Policy is to gain support from the Administration for the recommended Program, a necessary condition for effective strategic planning. If the President cannot be held accountable in this way, the Statement serves no real purpose.

### **THE ANNUAL REPORT**

RPA requires the Forest Service to report annually on progress in implementing the Program, with appropriate measures of costs and benefits, and on agency activities and expenditures. The Annual Report is to describe accomplishments and backlogs in cooperative forestry programs and significant research findings and applications. Several more specific requirements call for information on acres and location of lands needing reforestation and timber stand improvement, and of lands where successful treatments have occurred; on herbicide and pesticide use; on the benefits and costs of activities; on expenditures on timber practices; and examples of below-cost timber sales.

The Forest Service (or its predecessor) has prepared an Annual Report on its activities since 1886. The Reports have varied in content, and only with the enactment of RPA in 1974 have there been explicit information requirements.

#### *Annual Report—Narrative Portion*

The 1989 Annual Report provides a brief but comprehensive description of Forest Service programs and activities, including a section on each branch of the Forest Service-National Forest System, State and Private Forestry, and Research—as well as a chapter on administration. This description is quite laudatory in tone, however, and fails to address adequately such controversial issues as protecting old-growth forests and conducting below-cost timber sales.

The Annual Report contains output measures for most national forest resources, but contains little information on resource conditions. Management activities are described, often quantitatively, but without relating the activities to resource conditions and without adequate expenditure information to evaluate efficiency. Cooperative assistance activities are also poorly evaluated in the narrative portion

of the Annual Report, although measuring such performance is more difficult. Research performance is also difficult to evaluate, but the discussions of priority research programs and of research highlights provide a reasonably complete picture of Forest Service research.

### *Information Content—Statistical Appendix*

The Forest Service has included a statistical appendix with the Annual Report since 1955. Output information is included for most resources, but data on resource conditions and trends are generally missing. Reforestation and timber stand improvement needs are identified, as required by RPA, but backlogs and needs for other resources are lacking. Even the output data are incomplete for some resources, such as water, wildlife and fish, and most notably wilderness.

The data for many of the resources in the Annual Report suffer from additional problems. One is inconsistency in the level of detail provided. For example, although road construction is the largest and perhaps most controversial Forest Service program, much more information is presented on range forage. Another problem is inconsistent geographic data. Some data are reported by national forest or by region, while other data are reported by State. A third problem is the inconsistent categories used. Data categories in the 1989 Annual Report often do not match those used in the Draft 1990 RPA Program, the 1989 Assessment, or previous Annual Reports. For example, from 1962 through 1976, the Annual Report included information on quantity and nature of developed facilities on Federal lands. The 1989 Recreation Assessment includes such data, but since 1977 they have not been presented in the Annual Report. Other examples of measures used in the 1989 RPA Assessment but not shown in the 1989 Annual Report include data on timber growth and mortality, instream flows and water quality, and wildlife populations. In addition, several measures used in the Draft 1990 RPA Program were not included in the 1989 Annual Report (or the 1989 Assessment), including acres of old-growth forests and acres clearcut, acres of noxious weeds, and commercial salmon and steelhead harvests.

The Annual Report contains information on management activities, often in lieu of reporting on resource conditions or outputs. For example, information is given on wildlife and fish habitat improve-

ment, acres of watershed improvement, and range allotments under improved management. Such measures implicitly assume that activities and expenditures are beneficial, but they have not been correlated to changes in the quality or quantity of the resources. Thus, the effectiveness of "improved management" cannot be determined. Furthermore, because the costs are not matched to the activities, and because most of the data have no geographical disaggregation, the efficiency of "improved management"--over time and in comparison to activities elsewhere--cannot be evaluated.

The statistical sections in the 1989 Annual Report on State and Private Forestry and Research are much shorter than the National Forest System section, reflecting their much smaller budgets. Information on State and Private Forestry is thorough and consistent with past Reports. The data on fire protection and on forest management are particularly useful, but the data on pest management are less valuable. Forest Service research is more difficult to quantify, because it may take years to show the results of research efforts. Data are reported on funding and publications but not on scientist-years or other measures of research effort or interest. Finally, the statistical appendix contains no information on international forestry.

Data presented in the 1989 Annual Report on funding and receipts generally match the 1989 results reported to the Appropriations Committees in the FY 1991 budget request. While the funding data are presented with reasonable effort to allocate funds among the 1989 accounts, problems with the funding and receipt information do exist. For example, biannual changes in the timber funding data show reduced total costs, by removing selected cost items from the analysis, when costs have actually increased. Timber sale values in the receipt data show the value of timber sold, implying that these are actual receipts rather than estimates of future receipts and that all of the receipts are paid into the General Treasury rather than to various trust funds and special accounts.

### *Meeting Reporting Requirements*

The 1989 Annual Report is satisfactory in meeting some requirements, but weak in meeting others. The 1989 Report includes a separate chapter on RPA, making this the second attempt to address RPA Program implementation as required in the

Act. However, not all important outputs and conditions are examined, and information on costs and benefits needed to assess the balance between economic factors and environmental quality factors is missing. Thus, the Annual Report has not fulfilled this RPA requirement.

Of the more specific requirements that RPA defines for the Annual Report, one is met adequately, one is met with shortcomings, and one is met only marginally. The requirement for information on reforestation and timber stand improvement backlogs and accomplishments is met adequately; detailed tables providing more than the required information are included in the Annual Report. The requirement for information on pesticide use in the National Forest System is met with shortcomings, because the section fails to discuss the beneficial and adverse effects of the chemicals. The requirement for reporting on estimated long-term benefits and costs, expenditures on timber activities, and examples of below-cost timber sales is met only marginally. The timber sale accounting system is purported to meet this requirement, but the information is incomplete, the system is not explained, and the validity of the data cannot be evaluated.

### *Conclusions*

The Annual Report is a weak final link in the series of documents required by RPA and does a poor job of making RPA planning an integrated strategic process. The 1989 Annual Report is devoted substantially to the National Forest System, and fails to provide a comprehensive evaluation of our renewable resources. Data in the 1989 Report poorly evaluate resource quantities, qualities, and outputs, and many of the data are inconsistent with measures used in the Assessment, Draft Program, or previous Annual Reports. The requirements under RPA for this document are generally inadequately met or are ignored.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Congress intended RPA to be used as a strategic planning process for long-term planning of our renewable forest and rangeland resources. To date, the process has not resulted in effective strategic planning because of problems with data, analysis, and direction (table 1-1). Improvements in these three areas, with input from the Forest Service, the

Administration, Congress, and the public, could make RPA work effectively as an instrument for strategic planning and provide useful guidance for the management of our renewable resources.

Much of the information in the RPA documents is incomplete or of poor quality. The resource inventories in the Assessments scarcely provide sufficient data on the quantity, quality, and outputs of each resource to analyze opportunities for improving resource management, and some of the information is based on surrogate measures or on professional judgments. Data are also difficult to trace from one RPA document to another. Some resource measures in the Assessment are not used in the Program and Annual Report. Some measures are introduced in the Program with no explanation or previous use in the Assessment or Annual Report. Still other measures are presented in the Annual Report without mention in the Assessment or Program. Although the Forest Service could make an effort to report consistent measures throughout the RPA documents, the Forest Service is not solely responsible for problems with the data. Other Federal or State agencies have principal responsibility over certain resources, and inadequate funds for research may preclude thorough inventories. However, better data are needed. Better data will not automatically lead to better strategic planning, but it could settle debates over *what is* and focus attention on *what should be*.

Analysis in the RPA documents falls short of the requirements outlined in the Act. The RPA Assessments are required to evaluate opportunities, but none of the individual resource Assessments provide a complete analysis of opportunities for improving yields, with estimates of costs and returns. RPA Programs have not performed well in identifying public concerns over impending threats for sustained resource management; for example, the 1980 Program failed to discuss herbicide use, while the 1985 Program omitted information and discussion on below-cost timber sales, and the importance of biological diversity. The Draft 1990 Program has moved in the right direction by including a more complete list of impending threats but still does not provide a comprehensive examination of relevant issues. Finally, the required analysis of benefits and costs, though more complete in the 1990 Draft Program, still contains inaccurate estimates and only a limited discussion of the economic and social impacts of the alternatives.

Table 1-1—RPA Problems and Possible Congressional Responses

Problems	Possible responses
<b>Data problems:</b>	
Incomplete and weak data in RPA documents . . . . .	Direct the National Academy of Sciences to study data needs and costs
Poor linkage of data among RPA documents . . . . .	Require the Forest Service to use consistent measures in all RPA documents
<b>Analysis problems:</b>	
Poor foresight on impending problems for resource management . . . . .	Require the Forest Service to use public participation in identifying potentially important issues
Lack of an evaluation of opportunities for improving renewable resource yields . . . . .	Enforce the RPA requirement of evaluating renewable resource needs and opportunities
Poor display of benefits and costs of Program activities . . . . .	Require full and accurate reporting of all relevant economic information
<b>Direction problems:</b>	
Weak guidance for addressing renewable resource issues . . . . .	Require the Program to identify guiding principles for addressing issues
Poor support for budget decisions . . . . .	Enforce the RPA requirement to discuss budget priorities
Poor commitment from decisionmakers . . . . .	Modify RPA cycle to match political cycles; eliminate the Presidential Statement of Policy
Poor evaluation of Program implementation . . . . .	Enforce the RPA requirement to include an evaluation of Program implementation

SOURCE: Office of Technology Assessment, 1990.

Lack of direction from the RPA documents has resulted in an ineffective strategic planning process. First, RPA Programs have emphasized resource output goals for the Forest Service managers, rather than resource condition goals which would be more useful in planning for sustainability of the forest and rangeland resources. Second, the requirement to discuss budget priorities has been ignored by the Forest Service. RPA Programs have therefore provided inadequate information for the Administration, Congress, and the public to determine the mix of funding levels that will lead to good resource management within budget limitations. Third, the RPA process has received poor commitment from

the Administration and from Congress. The Statements of Policy, intended to show Administration support for the recommended Program, have been overly general. Congress has not followed through with its commitment to the process by rejecting unacceptable documents, by conducting oversight hearings and making recommendations, or by appropriating consistent amounts. Finally, the Annual Report has failed to evaluate the implementation of the program, as required by RPA, and thus has not evaluated successes and failures that could lead to improved resource planning in future Programs.