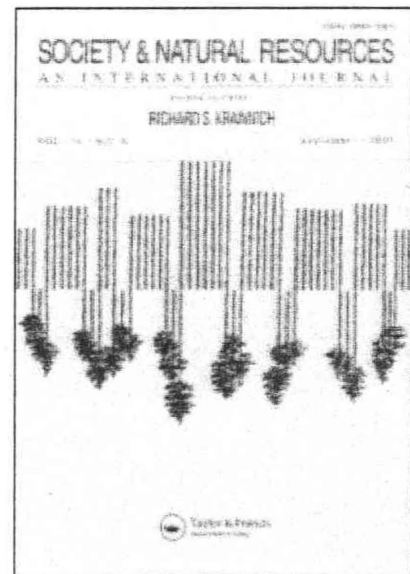


**A Review of: "Organ, John F.,
Daniel J. Decker, Len H. Carpenter,
William F. Siemer, and Shawn J.
Riley. *Thinking Like a Manager:
Reflections on Wildlife
Management.*"**

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Introduction

Thinking Like a Manager is a unique book that offers students and wildlife professionals a fresh format for considering a complex array of themes associated with the contemporary wildlife management. The title refers to Aldo Leopold's classic essay, *Thinking Like a Mountain*, which promotes the integration of ecological and sociocultural processes in natural resource decisions. *Thinking Like a Manager* assumes the form of a fictional novel featuring six wildlife managers stranded on a remote beach. While waiting for the fog to lift, the characters draw from their experiences to discuss the changing role of the wildlife manager. The result is a highly readable and provocative account that, despite a few shortcomings, raises important issues about human dimensions of natural resource management.

In seven short chapters, the book presents themes framing current discussions about the challenges of wildlife management in North America. These include the public trust doctrine, the integration of ecological and sociocultural approaches, the role of human values in shaping stakeholder responses, managing across complex scales, and the role of scientific knowledge in natural resource decision making. The authors' overriding argument is that managing wildlife essentially denotes managing public resources for human benefits (5). These issues reflect the most confounding aspects of contemporary wildlife management, and the authors are commended for their succinct presentation to student and manager audiences.

Chapter 1 finds six wildlife professionals on an isolated beach, having inventoried the effects of an ecological disaster on coastal populations. With foul weather preventing the landing of their airplane, they ponder the challenges they face in integrating human values with wildlife decisions. The characters discuss the role of the wildlife manager, highlighting the importance of incorporating biophysical and socioeconomic information. One manager introduces the concepts of *fundamental objectives* (desired outcomes) and *enabling objectives* (milestones) and their potential application in wildlife planning (8). The notion of the *public trust doctrine* is woven

through the discussion, as resource professionals from different backgrounds discuss what it means to manage for future generations (12).

In Chapter 2, the group delves into the role of human values. Various characters discuss how natural resource organizations represent expressions of societal values and consider the extent to which wildlife managers impose their own values upon their management recommendations. One character's impending need to develop a prairie dog management plan frames a discussion about conflicting stakeholder values (19). This chapter deals with the role of *stakeholders* as various wildlife managers discuss how stakeholder views may be balanced and incorporated in decision making.

In Chapter 3, the conversation shifts to the challenge of managing bear populations in a semirural environment. As the characters prepare an evening meal, they struggle to differentiate between wildlife *effects* on human populations and wildlife *impacts* - effects prioritized by a variety of stakeholders. One character suggests that a management plan's fundamental objectives should stem from determining significant wildlife impacts, such as public safety (37).

In Chapter 4 the example of deer management is used to introduce *cultural carrying capacity* as a framework for measuring the limits of people's tolerance of wildlife (45). A regional increase in deer population suggested distinct implications for hunters and suburban commuters. Characters discuss how social values and stakeholder interests shift over time, implying that carrying capacity is a dynamic concept. Managers also stressed the importance of agencies being candid with stakeholders about the limits of their knowledge and the risks involved in decision making.

Chapter 5 finds the characters listening to night noises in the dark woods. The conversation turns to the complexities of decision making across multiple scales (e.g., temporal, spatial, and organizational) (60). One character was faced with the problem of managing cormorants, which migrate across multiple political jurisdictions. Population reduction of cormorants in one location would have immediate effects on subsystems in remote geopolitical areas. The challenge of identifying stakeholders at the appropriate spatial scale was emphasized.

Chapter 6 unfolds the following morning, as the six managers relax under clear skies and await the airplane's arrival. The characters address the need to identify effective decision-making models that suit the specific nature and scale of problems and biophysical and social conditions. The characters acknowledge the influence of political forces in decision making. The concept of *adaptive impact management* is introduced, which uses *wildlife impacts* as the basis for forming *fundamental objectives* to reach enduring decisions (66).

The final chapter takes place at a wildlife conference several months after the group's original encounter. The characters are collaborating on a decision-making model that emphasizes the integration of social and biological processes. Each of the six characters reiterates a theme discussed in the first six chapters. As such, Chapter 7 offers a useful summary, particularly in combination with the book's postscript, which adopts a more traditional expository style to reiterate concepts and themes woven through the novel.

The book serves as a useful vehicle to discuss challenges facing wildlife managers in public agencies; however, two problems inhibit the realization of these goals. First, the use of the fictional novel as a stylistic form was not fully maximized. There are many examples of the novel format being employed as a pedagogical tool, particularly in the management sciences. Second, the dearth of descriptive detail about the individual cases that frame these discussions prevented readers from gaining deep understanding of the concepts introduced and their potential application.

Students may appreciate the use of the novel format as a refreshing departure from the traditional textbook. Unfortunately, the authors ignored several components of the novel: the need for clearly rendered characters, a

compelling plot line that focuses on resolving a problem, and the effective use of dialogue. Each manager represents a distinct wildlife agency and is at a different stage in his or her career. Yet their depiction is wooden and one-dimensional, making it difficult to differentiate among them or connect how their particular perspective had been shaped by their background, agency affiliation, or professional experience. Rather, characters simply serve as a vessel for espousing a particular concept or viewpoint. Meanwhile, the plot line did not move the characters down a decision-making path, nor did it elicit a special role for each character. The use of dialogue can be an effective device to help readers generate questions and reflect on nuances of a debate. Yet the dialogue was somewhat stilted and contrived, which may distract some readers. Moreover, references from North American pop culture may limit the accessibility of this material.

In each chapter, a character draws upon an example that he or she has encountered in managing wildlife. However, the reader does not learn enough about the geopolitical, sociocultural, or biophysical setting to fully understand the challenges or constraints. Moreover, the authors present various approaches for addressing management problems, but the reader may not appreciate the utility of these approaches without fully understanding the issues and interests at stake. Case studies may have been a more useful way to draw out key concepts. Similarly, the reader may be left craving more information about the management approaches introduced. A glossary defines these terms, but some sidebars throughout the book with more theoretical discussions and literature links would have been helpful.

In spite of these shortcomings, the book offers students and wildlife professionals an important opportunity to contemplate difficult issues associated with the integration of ecological and sociocultural processes and the role of human dimensions in shaping wildlife objectives. The use of the novel format makes this material accessible to a variety of readers. In particular, they will be more attuned to the role of sociocultural values, the challenges of operating at multiple scales, and the role of science in wildlife decision making. I urge educators teaching the human aspects of wildlife management to consider *Thinking Like a Manager* as a supplementary text alongside more traditional works. The approachable format likely will stimulate readers to debate these concepts and probe further through additional reading.