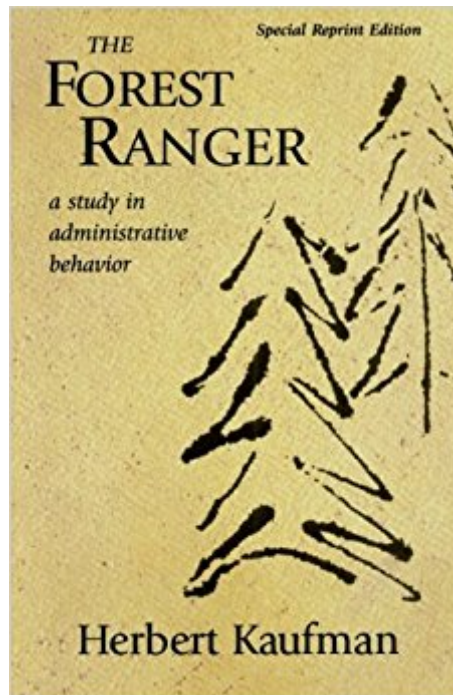


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# The Forest Ranger: A Study In Administrative Behavior (Rff Press)



## Synopsis

It is the rare book that remains in print for nearly fifty years, earning wide acclaim as a classic. The Forest Ranger has been essential reading for generations of professionals and scholars in forestry, public administration, and organizational behavior who are interested in the administration of public lands and how the top managers of a large, dispersed organization with multiple objectives like the Forest Service shape the behavior of its field officers into a coherent, unified program. Published as a special reprint in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the U.S. Forest Service, The Forest Ranger is as relevant and timely today as when it was first issued in 1960. In addition to the original text, this special reprint of The Forest Ranger includes two new forewords and an afterword that highlight how much we have learned from Herbert Kaufman. The first foreword, by Harold K. (Pete) Steen, former president of the Forest History Society, considers the book's impact on the forestry community and explains its continued relevance in light of changes in the culture and mission of today's Forest Service. The second, by Richard P. Nathan, co-director of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, considers the book's contribution to our understanding of administrative and organizational behavior. A new afterword by author Herbert Kaufman describes how his landmark study came into being and offers a candid assessment of how his theories about the agency's operations and its future have held up over time. In 1960, the Forest Service had a well-deserved reputation for excellence, and The Forest Ranger was a seminal analysis of the how's and why's of its success. Kaufman also warned, however, that an organization so unified and well adapted to its environment would have difficulties navigating social change. He was right in his concerns: The environmental, civil rights, and women's movements have all presented challenges to the character and purpose of the Forest Service, ultimately changing the organization in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Now, as then, The Forest Ranger is a striking and prescient case study of how a complex organization operates and evolves over time.

## Book Information

Series: Rff Press

Paperback: 310 pages

Publisher: Routledge; 1 edition (January 6, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1933115270

ISBN-13: 978-1933115276

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.7 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #608,125 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #204 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Communication Policy #266 in Books > Science & Math > Agricultural Sciences > Forestry #401 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Public Affairs

## Customer Reviews

'The best single account of forestry management remains Herbert Kaufman's *The Forest Ranger: A Study in Administrative Behavior*.' John J. Dilulio, Jr., University of Pennsylvania

"The best single account of forestry management remains Herbert Kaufman's *The Forest Ranger*."  
-- John J. Dilulio, Jr., University of Pennsylvania

OK, this book is not a page turner. What it is, is a careful examination of how a federal agency with a challenging mission does its job. Kaufman doesn't theorize (though he was clearly comfortable with management theory of the time). He spent time with forest rangers, observing their behavior, talking to them understanding the world in which they operate. From this qualitative research of the highest order, Kaufman gives us an understanding of how an agency with key personnel scattered across the country achieves a singular mission and fights off the incentives individual rangers have to do things their own way. Lessons about for public administration scholars and the book is rightly thought of as a classic in the field. Despite being written more than 50 years ago, it does not feel dated.

Came quickly and without issue. came in great shape.

The book will be used to help set up a forestry school in the State of Mexico, Mexico. The people involved are very excited by the book's approach.

A well written and eye opening look into a government agency. The time period covered shows an organization that can be run "top down" in an efficient and non-abusive manner.

First published in 1960, *The Forest Ranger* is an impressive study of the United States Forest

Service. In the book, Kaufman (1960/1967) case studies the behavior of district rangers in the Forest Service and endeavors for an answer to the question of how policies formulated by policy executives are realized into integrated action by a service whose field personnel operate under varied conditions. "Even in agencies with simple, routine responsibilities, welding the behavior of field personnel into integral patterns is often a trying experience" (p. 25). In an agency which is as much dispersed and heterogeneous as the Forest Service, is it possible to secure an integrated and coherent policy implementation across a great number of the districts? If you believe it is impossible, I strongly recommend you to have a look at *The Forest Ranger* by Herbert Kaufman. The readers who are familiar with Herbert Simon should remember his masterpiece "Administrative Behavior" in which the author at "theoretical level" demonstrated what takes for the leaders of administrative agencies to direct, manage, and run largely staffed and complex organizations. Simon (1947/1997) spent his intellectual energy for an inquiry into the decision-making process, and knitted his theory around it by developing an impressive understanding that helped the readers to sense that "integrated policy action" depends on the degree that the leaders can control the "environment" of decision-making so that every individual employee in the organization adjusts his/her decisions to common objectives fashioned by policy makers. Organization design, implicitly, stood out as prerequisite for integrated policy action, with "organization design" serving to bring decision premises and necessary data to the attention and use of decision-makers. Herbert Kaufman (1960/1967), in *The Forest Ranger*, demonstrates vividly how once a "theory" becomes a reality in the case of the United States Forest Service. I would not want to summarize the case study with the fear that I am likely to discolor a vivid masterpiece. Suffice to say that at present times in which orthodox public administration theory is being transformed by a new body of knowledge and skills, this case study should present (sometimes poignantly) the assumptions, ideals, weaknesses and strengths of orthodox public administration in its "golden age" that has reached a final stage in our contemporary times. This classic book is organized into seven major chapters. The first chapter gives a summary of research design, data collection and analysis procedures, and the plan of the book. The second chapter makes the reader familiar with the size and complexity of the Forest Service with accompanying challenges to integrated policy action. The third chapter elucidates the challenges to unity that emanate from internal communication problems, the potential for field officers to be captured by local populations, personal preferences of field officers, and the like. In the fourth chapter, Kaufman (1960/1967) gives detail to the procedural devices used by the service leaders in order to "preform" decisions of individual employees (controlling the environment of decision). The fifth chapter shows how the Forest Service executives detect and discourage

deviation from official policies. The sixth chapter explains the means by which the Forest Service leaders develop will and capacity in their employees to conform with the policy expectations. The seventh chapter is a conclusion with final remarks on the success level of policies in the Forest Service and ethical-moral implications. If you are not comfortable with abstract theoretical constructs and need more concrete examples, skip *The Functions of the Executive* by Chester Barnard (1938/1968), *Administrative Behavior* by Herbert Simon (1947/1997), *Organizations in Action* by James Thompson (1967) or *Leadership in Administration* by Philip Selznick (1957/1984), and read Herbert Kaufman. Once you read *The Forest Ranger* you can return to these masterpieces and I believe you are more likely then to digest their theories and understandings. If you are not very interested in public administration theory, *The Forest Ranger* is worth reading even due to its excellence as a case study that would help the readers in designing their own case studies for research purposes. Overall, I highly recommend this classic to the readers.

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