*For the first decade after the Wilderness Management Research unit was established, Bob Lucas and George Stankey were the sole scientists and they collaborated extensively. In 1978, David Cole and Randy Washburne joined the unit and George Stankey began a period of increasing involvement in Australia. Eventually he resigned from the Forest Service, went to work in Australia, ultimately returning to Forest Service research but not in wilderness management. Below, George describes how this came about.*

My first Australia connections came while still in Missoula. Around 1976, Ed Corpe, supervisor of the Flathead National Forest, asked me if I would be willing to spend some time with an Australian colleague of his he had worked with on an AID project in Laos in the early 1970s. At that time, Peter Stevens was a professor at Griffith University in Brisbane, Queensland. He was coming to the States for a sabbatical and planned to visit National Parks around the western U.S. Ed wanted me to visit with Peter prior to his tour to talk about key issues facing the parks and to suggest issues and questions he might want to pursue with local managers. I agreed to do so.

Peter arrived in Missoula and we spent several days talking about National Parks and about nature conservation and reserves in the American scene. He then struck off for about 3 months on his tour. Upon completion, he returned to Missoula and we spent 3 weeks talking about what he had seen and heard. It was a stimulating time; Peter was an astute observer and it was an interesting opportunity for me to think and discuss many issues.

At the close of his visit, quite literally as he was backing out of our driveway, he rolled down the window and said “You know, we ought to get you over to Australia to talk with folks there.” I replied that was a great idea and off he went. I think I probably forgot about it fairly quickly. About 6 weeks later, I got a thick envelope in the mail from Peter. Upon opening it, I found a detailed itinerary and schedule for my visit covering most of Australia – a visit I knew nothing about. I suspect conservatively it would have required 6 months. I fired back a note saying I greatly appreciated his efforts, but that I simply couldn’t undertake something this ambitious. But we did negotiate a less ambitious schedule.

During this time of negotiation, folks in the School of Applied Science at the Canberra College of Advanced Education proposed to host the first national conference on Wilderness Management, scheduled in 1978 in Canberra. Peter approached the organisers and they agreed to invite me to open the conference and write a couple of papers. I accepted and traveled to Australia in July 1978 for 6 weeks. I spent the first couple of weeks in Canberra, participated in the conference and then visited Melbourne, Sydney, Armidale and Brisbane, meeting with park officials, local citizens, and universities to discuss wilderness and natural area management.

The Canberra conference had been led by Bob Robertson, a Canadian who was a professor in the Applied Science program at Canberra. He made a subsequent visit to the states and we continued our collegial relationship. In 1980, I was invited to attend the Second World Wilderness Congress in Cairns, Queensland. Following the conference, Bob arranged for me to return to Canberra to meet with staff and students. At that point, he also raised the possibility that I consider coming back to the College for one or two years; he was considering a move to Sydney to work for the New South Wales state government and the College administration had agreed to this, provided he could find someone to cover his classes in his absence. Over the next year, we explored this possibility. Eventually, the Forest Service agreed to give me an up-to-two year leave without pay absence. At the very end of 1979, my family and I left Missoula to move to Canberra. I taught courses, equivalent to Master’s Level courses, in conservation and resource management and also developed close working ties with the New South Wales National Parks & Wildlife Service. Additionally, I lectured in the Forestry program at Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. I had opportunities to travel around Australia and also to New Zealand, where I developed close links with the NZ Department of Conservation and at Lincoln University.

We spent all of 1980 and 1981 in Australia and then returned to Missoula in January of 1982 where I resumed my position in the Wilderness Management Program. But I guess that my experiences in Australia had imbedded themselves even more than I realized, because I started thinking about the possibility of returning . In 1986, Bob Robertson raised the possibility of another opportunity to live and work in Australia. By this time, Bob was Head of School in leisure sciences at what was then Kuring-gai Chase College of Advanced Education in Sydney. In addition, he had had discussions with the Director of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) about my joining the service as a social science advisor to the Service. They offered me a split-appointment, something like 2/3 with NPWS and 1/3 with the College. So, in early 1987, I tendered my resignation to the Forest Service and moved back to Australia, this time to Sydney where I took up the new position. It involved, on the College side, teaching graduate level courses in resource management and conservation, and with NPWS, working to help build an increased appreciation of the social and political dimensions of park management. I essentially served as an advisor to the Director, so I had good opportunities to bring ideas and approaches to the Service’s leadership.

That appointment was good for two years, with the possibility of a renewal. However, we soon discovered that although we really enjoyed living in Sydney, our first experience in a large city, our arrival had coincided with a ferocious increase in the cost of living and a brutal real estate market. Even though my wife Jackie and I were both working, making do was a struggle. We eventually concluded that a return to the US was the best thing.

My long-term colleague Roger Clark, with the Forest Service’s Pacific Northwest Research Station in Seattle, and Perry Brown, associate dean in the College of Forestry, Oregon State University, offered me a senior research professorship at OSU. It was a soft-money position, involving a bit of teaching at the upper division and graduate level along with working with Roger and Perry to help increase regional capacity in social science involvement in resource management. We garnered support from around the region and created what came to be known at the Consortium for the Social Dimensions of Resource Management. We sponsored workshops and other programs to create a better sense of the underlying social and political aspects of natural resource management.

Then, in 1995, in the early years of the Clinton administration, I was asked to join a project to help foster a new forestry management program in the Northwest. It was the product of a Clinton-era promise to try to resolve the long-running conflicts over forest management in the region. It went by a variety of names, but generally is referred to as the Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team (FEMAT). We met in Portland — 40 or 50 ecologists, fishery biologists, economists, social scientists, and others. Our assignment was to provide a science-based plan for forest management our report in 60 days!

Shortly after my return to Corvallis, I was contacted by Dr. Charley Philpot, then director of the Pacific Northwest Research Station. He asked if I would be interested in returning to Forest Service Research, stationed in Corvallis and work as part of the People and Natural Resources Program headed by Roger Clark in Seattle. I agreed to do so and spent the next 10 years with that program, retiring in January, 2006.