

Towards a Lippmannian Conception of Argument

Presented at the Rhetoric Society of America Conference

Seattle, May, 2008

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Let me start with a question.

As a US citizen, do you support the conservation provisions in the 2007 Farm Bill, vetoed by the President this Wednesday?

There is no need for a reminder of the importance of the bill. It's obviously vital to the ecological health of my home state of Iowa; with over 98% of Iowa's land in active use, encouraging farmers to take property out of cultivation is a primary way of making room for wildlife and for reducing pollution in Iowa's waterways. But more widely, the US agricultural policy set by the Farm Bill has an impact on our energy independence, and thus on our foreign policy; on the price and availability of food around the world; and on global climate change, preservation of endangered species and whole ecologies, and so on. The effects of this bill ramify across the globe.

But perhaps you're not familiar with the conservation provisions of the bill. So let me help you out. Here they are—or at least first of several hundred pages of them.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

I admit, that's pretty hard to understand—there is too much fine print. So let's simplify. The 2007 Farm Bill, among other things:

- reauthorizes the Conservation Reserve Program, reducing the enrollment cap to 32 million acres, down from 39 million acres.
- provides \$4 billion in new funding for the Voluntary Conservation Incentives Program.
- restricts the Sodsaver provision to the Prairie Potholes Region, and then only upon request of the State Governor.

Well, it's apparent that even this simplification invokes a lot of background knowledge: an explanation of these technical terms ("Conservation Reserve" and so on) would begin to require the hundreds of pages again. So instead, we could depend on opinion leaders we trust. Iowa's staunchly Democratic Senator Tom Harkin supports the Bill. On the other hand, the Audubon Society opposes it. And the World Wildlife Federation stands in between. Which of these more expert views do you endorse?

Finally, let's also notice that my original question included a presupposition: that we should be supporting or opposing the current farm bill at all. Perhaps something entirely different would be best—perhaps complete deregulation, or collectivization, or some other radical change far beyond that contemplated by any bill.

I want to suggest that the farm bill provides an example of a central challenge facing contemporary democracies: what I am going to call the Epistemic Challenge. As citizens, we are called upon to answer about problems we face. These problems are large in scope; they present themselves as technical in form; and they are complexly interconnected, with consequences ramifying across the world. Our capacity to understand these problems, however, is as limited as always: we have small resources of time and attention to invest; we have only ordinary

experience to bring to bear; and our points of view remain inevitably local. How can the participation of citizens with such limited understandings ever contribute to making well-justified decisions about what to do?

The Epistemic Challenge creates serious difficulties for any democratic political theory; but it poses difficulties for rhetorical theory as well. As Patricia Roberts-Miller pointed out in her 2004 book, *Deliberate Conflict: Argument, Political Theory, and Composition Classes*, conceptions of democracy and conceptions of democratic talk are deeply intertwined. Much contemporary political theory puts discursive practices as the center of democracy—in particular, the practice of civic deliberation, in which citizens exchange reasons with each other. Any conception of deliberative democracy is going to propose some tasks for communication to accomplish. In particular, any answer to the Epistemic Challenge is going to propose either a way in which citizens exchanging reasons together can overcome their limited capacities, or alternatively, what citizens can expect to accomplish by arguments which they don't understand. Either should be of interest to rhetorical theorists.

In this paper, I want to begin to explore the rhetorical responses to the Epistemic Challenge; here by returning to one of its original sites, in the Lippmann-Dewey debate. After a brief reprise of the debate, and summary of Dewey's position, I want to lay out Lippmann's response to the Epistemic Challenge, before ending with a brief discussion of what a Lippmannian theory of argument would look like.

1. The Background.

The scene: the 1920s; New York. The characters: Walter Lippmann, in his 30s, having permanently left politics and government service, a columnist at the *World*. John Dewey, in his 60s, a professor at Columbia. The two shared a background in Progressive politics, and a

commitment to pragmatic philosophy; they also shared a deep unease about contemporary democracy. Their distress was driven by a variety of sources: the shameful successes of the propaganda and censorship campaigns of the First World War; Freudian and Darwinian notions of human irrationality; the rise of expert cultures in government, the academy and professions. But central to their concern was a problematic proposed by Graham Wallas, in his 1914 book, *The Great Society*.¹

For Wallas, contemporary society was "Great" not as the superlative of "good" (as with LBJ's social programs), but as the superlative of "big." Changes in communication, transportation and energy technologies over the previous century had produced an "enlargement of scale" and a "general system of international relationships" which meant that everyone's actions were now interdependent with everyone else's, across the globe. "A sudden decision by some financier whose name he has never heard," Wallas noticed, 'may, at any moment, close the office or mine or factory in which [the worker] is employed.... The widow who takes in washing fails or succeeds according to her skill in choosing starch or soda or a wringing-machine under the influence of half-a-dozen competing world-schemes of advertisement." And so on.

Unfortunately, the scale and complexity of society had not been matched by any new growth in human endowments. So Graham found himself

sometimes doubting, not only as to the future happiness of individuals in the Great Society, but as to the permanence of the Great Society itself. Why should we expect a social organisation to endure, which has been formed in a moment of

¹ As it happens, the book was dedicated to Lippmann, who had taken a class from Wallas when he was a visiting professor at Harvard.

time by human beings, whose bodies and minds are the result of age-long selection under far different conditions?

Graham, in sum, was proposing what I have called the Epistemic Challenge: how citizens who have remained small can expect to participate meaningfully in the self-rule of a society which had become Great.

What would democracy mean in a Great Society? Lippmann opened the exchange of books with *Public Opinion* (1922)—a work which Dewey (1922) greeted as "perhaps the most effective indictment of democracy as currently conceived ever penned." Dewey in response answered the challenge of the Great Society by proposing in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) what could be thought of as the "Great Inquiry." The Epistemic Challenge would in this view be met head on. Politics would become a massive social inquiry, undertaken with a pragmatist methodology. Each policy choice would be an hypothesis: something to be tried, the results observed, and adjustments made. The knowledge that resulted would not only be social in its content, but in its form. It would be held in common. The expert inquirers and lay publics would be epistemically interdependent; the technical knowledge discovered by the inquiries of the former would co-evolve with the public interests recognized in their experience by the latter.

As a political theory, Dewey's proposed resolution of the Epistemic Challenge has had a bit of a renaissance—carried forward, for example, in several recent essays by philosopher James Bohman (1999, 2004). The outlines of the associated rhetorical theory are less explicit. As is well known, Dewey himself was a bit coy about the kinds of communication needed to enact such a "Great Inquiry." He hints at a poetic journalism which would convey, vividly, the expert results to the lay publics. Perhaps a better sense of the discourse of a social inquiry can be gleaned from the Deweyian-inspired textbooks, re-traced by Bill Keith in *Democracy as*

Discussion. In this tradition, social inquiry is realized through a cooperative exchange of reasons regarding a problem, resulting in collective learning and a consensus as to a solution.²

Our perennial complaints about the uncooperative, irrational, static and divisive nature of our actual civic conversation suggests that the Deweyian ideal is still with us. But is this ideal the only way to meet the Epistemic Challenge?

2. Lippmann's Alternative.

Before laying out Lippmann's alternative resolution of the Epistemic Challenge, and the rhetoric associated with his resolution, let me issue a caveat. What I will be presenting is *a* Lippmann. The man was notoriously changeable; shifting over his lifetime from socialist to conservative liberal, Lippmann's most consistent tendency was to disagree with whatever way things were going: the columnist's privilege. There is certainly material, especially in *Public Opinion*, to justify Chomsky's Lippmann, the arch-technocrat. But there is material for other portrayals as well; and here, I construe a Lippmann, the democratic theorist of *The Phantom Public* (1925).

Lippmann's central contention in this slim volume is that the Epistemic Challenge cannot be met. Citizens are not, and will never be, "omnicompetent" (12) in the way required for them to understand and act upon the Great Society. Lippmann develops this view along a variety of lines; I will note only three here.

First, Lippmann is adamant about the central problematic. "The environment is complex," he states. "Man's political capacity is simple" (68).³ In contrast with his endorsement of civic

² For yesterday's continuation of this tradition, see the "paideweyan" rhetorical pedagogy sketched by Brian Jackson.

³ Or again: "Looked at from the top, the system in its far-flung and intricate adjustments has a certain grandeur. It might, as some hopeful persons think, even ultimately mean the brotherhood of man since all men living in advanced communities are now in quite obvious fashion dependent upon one another. But the individual man cannot look at the system steadily from the

experts in *Public Opinion*, in *The Phantom Public* he declares that "modern society is not visible to anybody, nor intelligible continuously and as a whole" (32); no elite can be epistemically privileged in public affairs (140). Lippmann does not exclude himself from this generalization. He writes:

Although public business is my main interest and I give most of my time to watching it, I cannot find time to do what is expected of me in the theory of democracy: that is, to know what is going on and to have an opinion worth expressing on every question which confronts a self-governing community (10).

Second, Lippmann points out that however great our intellectual capacities, we don't have time to use them to deal with public affairs. He notes with amusement how the citizen is exhorted "to conserve the natural resources of the country because they are limited in quantity," and "to watch public expenditures" because funds are also finite. "But he, the voter, the citizen, the sovereign, is apparently expected to yield an unlimited quantity of public spirit, interest, curiosity, and effort" to civic questions (14).⁴ Obviously, we do not have "unlimited quantities" of these resources—in fact, they are quite scarce.⁵ But without them, we have no hope of mastering the information necessary to understand the Great Society. The economy of attention (cf. 189) thus makes the Epistemic Challenge to democracy unavoidable.

top or see it in its ultimate speculative possibilities. For him it means in practice, along with the rise in certain of his material standards of life, a nerve-wracking increase of the incalculable forces that bear upon his fate" (164-65).

⁴ The reader should mentally insert a "[sic]" after this and all other of Lippmann's mentions of "he" the citizen, or of "man" or "men."

⁵ In a prophetic passage, Lippmann imagines "some development of the radio" which would allow "every man...[to] see and hear all that was happening everywhere." In this world in which "publicity [has] become absolute," how much more time would be spent on public matters? The citizen would still "probably tune in on the Prince of Wales, or, in desperation, throw off the switch and seek peace in ignorance," to avoid being "condemned to live under a barrage of eclectic information" (33-34).

Third, Lippmann insists on what he calls "deep pluralism" (87) as the basic condition for all democratic decision-making. Despite the best efforts of those who, like my colleague on this panel, Rob Asen (2003), would rescue Dewey from himself, it seems apparent that Dewey is committed to a unitary view of politics: *a* public comes into being when it recognizes itself confronting *a* problem, to which social inquiry produces *a* solution.⁶ Lippmann objects. Even if citizens were able to invest sufficient attention to come to a common understanding of complex situation, "public opinion" could never coalesce around single evaluation of those facts. Citizens are differently positioned; from these differences in position arise differences in perspective; and it is precisely from these differences in perspective that civic controversies arise. "There is no moral pattern available from which the precise nature of the solution can be deduced," Lippmann notes (24); "there is no human point of view,...but only the points of view of men. We cannot expect to find a unity which absorbs diversity" (87-88). If so, then social inquiry or any other method of meeting the Epistemic Challenge will not produce even a tentative single answer to a problem, however much time and intelligence is invested.

Lippmann thus is unshakably pessimistic about the epistemic worthiness of public opinion. Indeed, he defines public opinion as "the opinions as to how others ought to behave" (45). It is a form of meddling by those acting "outside the field of [their] own responsible knowledge" (139)—by those he terms "the random collections of bystanders," (115) "spectators" (93) or "outsiders" (137). At the same time, however, Lippmann is unshakably optimistic about people's ability of understand their immediate environment and to transact well their own affairs. We are not bystanders, but rather "agents" (or "actors" or "executives") in our own small worlds:

⁶ As Richard Vernon points out with respect to the related, Popperian account, framing politics as a form of inquiry suggests that individual perspectives will over time converge on the single best view of the world.

The work of the world is carried on by men in their executive capacity, by an infinite number of concrete acts, plowing and planting and reaping, building and destroying, fitting this to that, going from here to there, transforming A into B and moving B from X to Y. The relationships between the individuals doing these specific things are balanced by a most intricate mechanism of exchange, of contract, of custom and of implied promises. Where men are performing their work they must learn to understand the process and the substance of these obligations if they are to do it at all (42).

What then is the use of the bystanders' meddling "public opinion"? If the public cannot understand the world, in what sense can it participate in democratic decision-making?

Lippmann reasons as follows. The vast majority of decisions are necessarily the responsibility of the agents immediately involved in an affair—there is no way for anyone else to act, in fact. It should be noted that Lippmann does not take these agents to be credentialed technocrats; instead, they are experts in the sense articulated by Collins and Evans (2002): those "so placed that [they] can understand and can act" (140). Ideally, when conflicts arise among agents, they will be composed by consent, with all participants making necessary adjustments to keep affairs running peaceably and well. Some conflicts prove un-adjustable however; and these will be managed in the first instance by established institutions, especially those we call "government." Government officials and other "professional publics," in Lippmann's view, are not agents or subject matter experts, but roughly experts in managing controversies among experts—what Collins and Evans have termed "interactional expertise."

Some conflicts, however, run so wide and so deep that they prove unmanageable by existing institutions. It is these controversies, Lippmann says, which go "on appeal" (62) to the

bystanding public.⁷ Each side in the dispute seeks the support of the majority of bystanders—not because the majority is more likely to be right, nor because it has some mystical 'sovereignty,' but because the majority of people has the majority of force. When the majority is mobilized and aligns with one side in the dispute, the agents directly concerned are by threats of the majority's force "driven to make terms" (64) and compose their controversy. The process is less one of deliberative decision-making than of "sublimated" (50) civil war.

But then how are these outsiders—the public, that is to say—to choose among the contending parties? As outsiders, they cannot judge the matter itself; Lippmann is firm that the Epistemic Challenge cannot be met. If a bystander is to make a choice, it must be a choice made "intelligently but in ignorance" (99). "The problem," then, "is to locate by clear and coarse objective tests the actor in a controversy who is most worthy of public support" (120). Note Lippmann's focus here on the public judgment of *actors*, not of the *merits* of the case. The bystanders in the public, again, lack the epistemic capacities to assess the agents' reasons. But they can assess which agent is manifestly more reasonable—assess it, in particular, by attending to how the agents transact the controversy itself.

For example, Lippmann notes that an agent's willingness to submit to the process of public debate is itself a sign of her confidence in the soundness of her claims. Openly disagreeing—standing up and speaking out—has consequences for an agent, potentially serious consequences. Thus the fact "that someone is willing to "openly criticize at some personal risk"

⁷ And this is another reason why Lippmann finds the Epistemic Challenge irresolvable. The controversies which the public must intervene on are precisely the ones that those epistemically better positioned cannot themselves resolve—the greatest controversies of the Great Society. He writes: "it is controversies of this kind, the hardest controversies to disentangle, that the public is called in to judge. Where the facts are most obscure, where precedents are lacking, where novelty and confusion pervade everything, the public in all its unfitness is compelled to make its most important decisions. The hardest problems are those which institutions cannot handle. They are the public's problems" (121).

(113) suggests at least the depth of her dissatisfaction with some state of affairs. Lippmann goes on:

The one test which the members of a public can apply in these circumstances it to note which party to the dispute is least willing to submit its whole claim to inquiry and to abide by the result. This does not mean that experts are always expert or impartial tribunals really impartial. It means simply that where the public is forced to intervene in a strange and complex affair, the test of public inquiry is the surest clue to the sincerity of the claimant, to his confidence in his ability to stand the ordeal of examination, to his willingness to accept risks for the sake of his faith in the possibility of rational human adjustments (122).

The agent who attempts to evade argument appears to think her case is weak. The agent who commits herself to argument, by undertaking that responsibility provides indirect evidence of the strength of her reasons.

Or again, Lippmann notes that bias is another aspect of human character that can become manifest as the controversy is transacted. In a debate, "the advocates are very likely to expose one another." Although "open debate may lead to no conclusion and throw no light whatever on the problem or its answer, ...it will tend to betray the partisan and the advocate. And if it has identified them for the true public, debate will have served its main purpose" (104). Thus, Lippmann concludes, "the bystander's only recourse is to insist upon debate."

Note that in both these examples, it does not matter much what the agents say as they debate before the bystanders. Their arguments may not persuade the public—indeed, they *ought* not persuade, since the public, as outsiders, cannot adequately understand or assess them. Instead, what matters for the public is the action of debating itself. The public judges the controversy

"apart from the intrinsic merits, on the basis of a sample of behavior, an aspect of a situation, by very rough external evidence" (55). The agents' "sample of behavior" in the debate provides some of the "coarse signs" (54 et passim) which allow bystanders to credit one side over the other, to align themselves with that side, and, through their implicit threat of force, pressure the agents to compose their dispute themselves.

What Lippmann is providing here is a *practical* solution to an *epistemic* challenge—as Lippmann himself puts it, "severely practical" (44). Does this mean that democratic decisions are going to be epistemically indefensible—that they will have no relation to reasons at all? Lippmann suggests two ways in which his practical decision-making might indirectly produce epistemically respectable results. First, if the public relies on "coarse signs" such as those above, it will tend to favor those who have reasons which can be stated publicly, as opposed to those whose reasons, based in private interest, will not stand publicity. This means that the public, by "holding the aggressive party in check, ... may liberate intelligence. Public opinion in its highest ideal will defend those who are prepared to act on their reason against the interrupting force of those who merely assert their will" (59).⁸ Second, Lippmann notes that "by insisting in all disputes upon the spirit of reason, we shall tend in the long run to confirm the habit of reason." The exchange of reasons may seem a ritual performed in a language the congregation cannot understand. But "even if the material for a reasoned conclusion is lacking, we demand the method and spirit of reason. We demand any sacrifice that may be necessary, the postponement of satisfaction of their just needs, the risk that one of them will be defeated and that an injustice will be done. These things we affirm because we are maintaining a society based on the principle that all controversies are soluble by peaceable agreement" (124).

⁸ Lippmann's reasoning here resonates with that of Aristotle (*Rhetoric* I.1), when he argued that in the long run, the truth will prove the easier to defend.

3. Conclusions.

Let us take Lippmann's conception of democratic decision-making as given. As rhetorical theorists, let us now ask our specific question: What kinds of talk does Lippmann need to make his democracy run? If we abandon the Deweyian ideal of cooperative discussion, what alternative ideal can we uphold? Let me suggest three specific answers; three elements that would be prominent in any Lippmannian theory of argument.

First, we would have to follow Lippmann in recognizing that attention is in short supply. To achieve democratic deliberation, speakers will need rhetorical resources for earning attention to controversies that they believe require the public's meddling. Thus the first, and perhaps most central sort of talk in a Lippmannian theory of argument would be the talk that makes an issue of something, bringing a public into being through its attending to a controversy. Lippmann himself apparently thought that the public would begin to attend when some controversy produced a "crisis" (e.g., "the work of the world goes on continually without conscious direction from public opinion. At certain junctures problems arise. It is only with the crises of some of these problems that public opinion is concerned," 56). Indeed, "crisis" claims are very prevalent in our public discourse. Continual crisis is wearying, however, and I suspect that many of us have become inoculated against cries (for example) that such & such a constituent in food is about to destroy our health. A Lippmannian rhetorical theorist will therefore endorse the call recently made by Marres (2007) for expanded attention to the specific rhetorical "affordances" which "facilitate a distinctive articulation of issues, as matters of public concern" (see also Goodwin, 2002).

Second, we would have to follow Lippmann in recognizing that the public does not judge the controversy on its merits. Instead, to achieve democratic deliberation, speakers will need rhetorical resources for creating "coarse signs" of epistemic soundness. Thus the second sort of

talk in a Lippmannian theory of argument would be the talk which makes the merits of a case *apparent* (see on this Kauffeld, 2007). Recent work in Science & Technology Studies has hazarded the claim that ordinary folk can judge all the sorts of experts that come forward in civic debates in the same "banal" ways they judge plumbers (Turner, 2001; Collins & Pinch, 1998). Taking inventory of these ways, and accounting for them, will be a task for a Lippmannian rhetorical theorist. Lippmann himself admits that his catalog of "coarse signs" is "wholly tentative" (133). But it is suggestive as to how we might proceed further. Several of Lippmann's "signs" allow speakers to create what Kauffeld (1998) has called a presumption of veracity by undertaking risks. We might carry this thought forward by examining what speakers have to risk, the methods they have for putting themselves at risk, and indeed the institutions that support effective risk-taking.⁹

Finally, we would have to follow Lippmann in recognizing that the public, too, must communicate. Lippmann does not think that public opinion is itself executive; but it is not just something 'in the head' either. Instead, the public acts (to the extent it can act) by making its alignment with one of the agents in a controversy express, an expression which influences or persuades those more directly involved. Thus the third sort of talk in a Lippmannian theory of argument would be the talk which makes the public's alignment, public. Clearly, voting is the most salient expression of alignment; "it is," Lippmann says, "a way of saying: I am lined up with these men, on this side. I enlist with them. I will follow. I will buy. I will boycott. I will strike. I applaud. I jeer. The force I can exert is placed here, not there." But the force of public

⁹ For example, it might be possible to construe the intricate system of academic credentials—degrees, titles, awards, honors, and offices—as a mechanism for giving experts something to lose if they express themselves rashly.

opinion can be brought to bear through a variety of other "symbolic" (36) means, including "demonstrations" (45) of various kinds. A Lippmannian rhetorical theorist will attend to these.

Let me close with an admission. Of course the Deweyian ideal of democratic social inquiry, and its attendant ideal of cooperative, reason-giving, resolution-oriented discourse, remains attractive. But if it is a false ideal.

I do not mean an undesirable ideal. I mean an unattainable ideal. An ideal should express the true possibilities of its subject. When it does not it perverts the true possibilities. The ideal of the omniscient, sovereign citizen is, in my opinion, such a false ideal. It is unattainable. The pursuit of it is misleading. The failure to achieve it has produced the current disenchantment (29).

An excessively optimistic view of the capacities of democratic citizens is likely to lead us to "disenchantment" with our own inability to voice a coherent response to matters such as the 2007 Farm Bill. By contrast, an apparently more pessimistic view could help us cherish even our most heated, contentious, partisan and divisive civic discourse, understanding its "true possibilities" in making issues, rendering reasonableness apparent, and allowing public opinion to become a manifest force in our world.

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Figure 1

TITLE II--CONSERVATION

Subtitle A--Definitions and Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation

SEC. 2001. DEFINITIONS RELATING TO CONSERVATION TITLE OF FOOD SECURITY ACT OF 1985.

(a) Beginning Farmer or Rancher- Section 1201(a) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3801(a)) is amended--

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (2) through (6), (7) through (11), (12), (13) through (15), (16), (17), and (18) as paragraphs (3) through (7), (9) through (13), (15), (20) through (22), (24), (26), and (27), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph:

“(2) BEGINNING FARMER OR RANCHER- The term ‘beginning farmer or rancher’ has the meaning given the term in section 343(a)(8) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(8)).”.

(b) Farm- Section 1201(a) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3801(a)) is amended by inserting after paragraph (7), as redesignated by subsection (a)(1), the following new paragraph:

“(8) FARM- The term ‘farm’ means a farm that--

“(A) is under the general control of one operator;

“(B) has one or more owners;

“(C) consists of one or more tracts of land, whether or not contiguous;

“(D) is located within a county or region, as determined by the Secretary; and

“(E) may contain lands that are incidental to the production of perennial crops, including conserving uses, forestry, and livestock, as determined by the Secretary.”.

(c) Indian Tribe- Section 1201(a) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3801(a)) is amended by inserting after paragraph (13), as redesignated by subsection (a)(1), the following new paragraph:

“(14) INDIAN TRIBE- The term ‘Indian tribe’ has the meaning given the term in section 4(e) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b(e)).”.

(d) Integrated Pest Management; Livestock; Nonindustrial Private Forest Land; Person and Legal Entity- Section 1201(a) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3801(a)) is amended by inserting after paragraph (15), as redesignated by subsection (a)(1), the following new paragraphs:

“(16) INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT- The term ‘integrated pest management’ means a sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, cultural, physical, and chemical tools in a way that minimizes economic, health, and environmental risks.

“(17) LIVESTOCK- The term ‘livestock’ means all animals raised on farms, as determined by the Secretary.

“(18) NONINDUSTRIAL PRIVATE FOREST LAND- The term ‘nonindustrial private forest land’ means rural land, as determined by the Secretary, that--

“(A) has existing tree cover or is suitable for growing trees; and

“(B) is owned by any nonindustrial private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian tribe, or other private