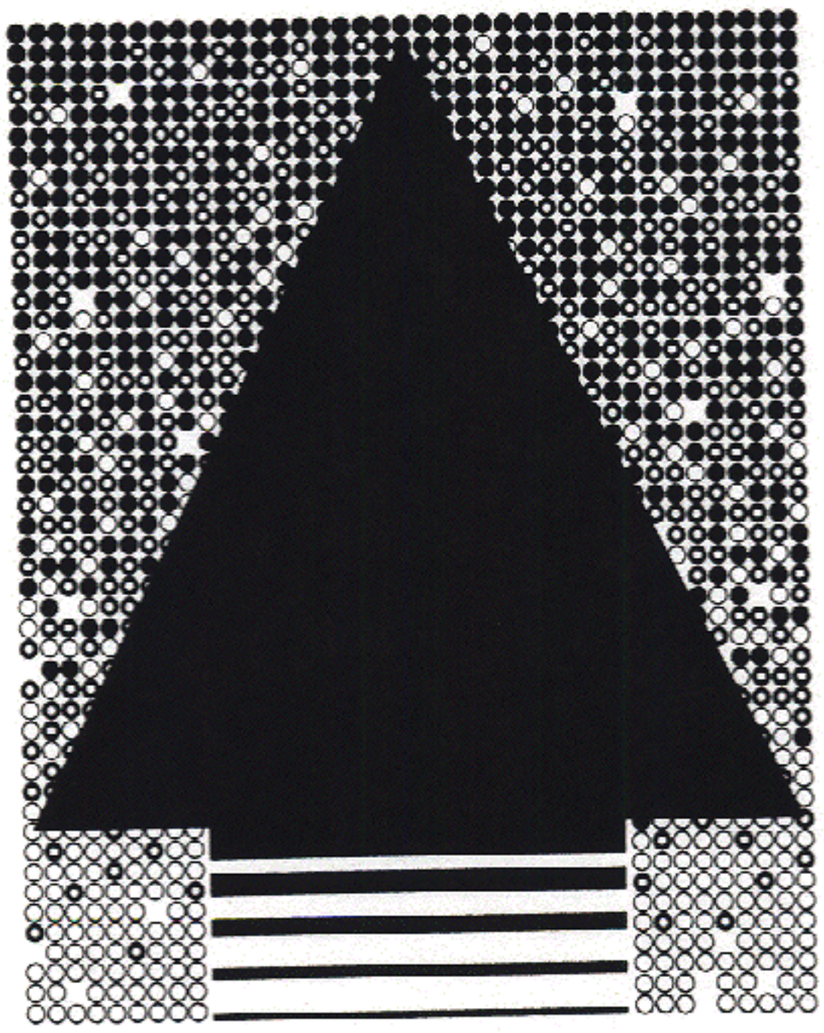

SECTION 4: CURRENT ISSUES

T. A. Terry, *Moderator*

Although fertilizer has been successfully applied on over one million hectares of Pacific Northwest forest land, the growing concern to know the direct and indirect effects of forest management on both forests and associated ecological systems has placed additional responsibilities on forest scientists, forest managers, and those who influence or carry out forest policy. These increased responsibilities include developing: (1) a thorough understanding of fertilizer treatments, to be able to predict the impact on forests and associated ecosystems; (2) methodology to ensure that there are no detrimental secondary effects on forest ecosystems from the use of nutrient amendments; (3) regulatory policies consistent with research findings and relative risks to ensure that forest fertilization can be used without undue constraints to enhance the productivity of forest systems; and (4) methods of considering fertilization in conjunction with other productivity-enhancing treatments as a viable silvicultural tool for all forest managers, as long as specified economic and environmental criteria are met. This section summarizes what is currently known about the effects of forest fertilization on water quality, fisheries, and wildlife; the trends in the regulatory arena at the state and province level to ensure that forest fertilization contributes to, rather than subtracts from, overall environmental quality; and the issues and concerns about the role of forest fertilization in maintaining and enhancing long-term forest productivity. The reasons for addressing these issues should be obvious: if we are to enhance the productivity of an ever-declining forest land base for both forest commodity production and all the other associated forest resources—including water, wildlife, and fisheries—then we must utilize forest fertilization in a responsible manner that demonstrates the highest standards of stewardship. At the same time, the public and regulatory authorities have an equally important responsibility to ensure that the regulatory environment is such that constraints are commensurate with what is required to maintain adequate environmental quality without jeopardizing the operational and economical effectiveness of the practice.