

Survival center fights dams, mining

By Brian Bubak
Of the Emerald

Hydro, pumice activity targeted

The University has long been reputed to be a bastion for people interested in social change, alternative lifestyles and the environment. The Survival Center, a political/environmental student group, perhaps has been the mainstay of that reputation.

Currently, two issues in particular are taking up the majority of the staff's time, according to director Steve Kramer. One is the proposed open-pit pumice mine in the Three Sisters wilderness area.

The site, located just south of South Sister at Rock Mesa, would produce block pumice for the U.S. Pumice Company of Burbank, Calif. Block pumice, according to Kramer, is used for such things as scouring blocks for grills, toilet bowls, swimming pools, cosmetic aids and cat litter.

Mining in wilderness areas is possible because of a loophole in the Wilderness Act of 1964, Kramer says. Claims can be filed until Jan. 1, 1984, under the act.

Rock Mesa is not lost yet, Kramer says. He hopes the efforts of the Survival Center and other environmental groups will stop U.S. Pumice from mining in the area.

The Center, in conjunction with other groups, is currently appealing the Interior Department's decision that the area contains a valuable mineral base.

"I think we'll beat them — I hope," Kramer says.

But the most urgent problem, in his eyes, is the current rush to build hydro-electric dams in the Pacific Northwest, he says.

According to figures he has

compiled from Federal Energy Regulatory Commission documents, the number of preliminary permits for new hydro-electric facilities is growing at an astronomical rate.

About 40 applications for hydro projects were filed in 1979, Kramer says. That number grew to over 500 in 1980, and an estimated 1,800 in 1981, he says.

This "dam rush" has been aided by the Public Utilities Regulatory Policy Act, according to Kramer.

The act requires utilities to purchase power at their "avoided cost" from anyone who can generate it, he says. The avoided cost is the amount it costs the utility to generate additional electric power at its facilities, Kramer says.

This provides small hydro developers with a high-profit incentive, since most

new generation by the utilities is done at a much higher cost at thermal (coal or nuclear) plants, he says.

"You've got a guaranteed market... you've got a guaranteed profit," Kramer says.

No more dams are necessary, he says, adding that all hydro power in the region is unnecessary.

"I don't think we need to damn one of them," Kramer says. The Survival Center is not sitting still for the current "dam rush" either, he says.

The center is presently calling for a moratorium on all future hydro development, Kramer says. In addition, center members are appealing several dam proposals and setting up information programs for the public, he says.

The goal of the Survival Center, according to Kramer, is to help people get involved in environmental issues.

It tries to help students "plug in and make a difference," he says.

Group wants trucks to pay higher taxes

Heavy trucks cause 90 percent of the damage to Oregon's highways, and truck owners should be taxed heavily because of that, says Ken Warren, president of Oregonians for Fair Truck Taxes.

OFTT opposes ballot measure 4 and urges people to sign an initiative petition which, if passed, would raise truck taxes but not gas taxes.

"The debate over measure 4 is simply a question of whether car owners wish to keep paying for repair of road damage they don't cause," Warren says, adding that measure 4 calls for 36 percent increases in both gas and truck taxes. The measure, placed on the May ballot by the 1981 Legislature, continues "the public subsidy of the trucking industry."

An axle of a heavy car can pass over the same spot 2,500 times before the same damage is caused as by one pass by an axle of a fully-loaded truck, Warren says, citing a report by state highway officials. Vehicles weighing over 6000 pounds cause 90 percent of highway damage, he says.

"Oregon's highways need more repair than the state can afford and a multi-billion dollar investment is being lost."

Caribbean tax plan may hurt US island

Washington (AP) — President Reagan's plan to help the economies of Caribbean nations could wipe out some of the trade advantages that Puerto Rico now enjoys, the head of the island's Economic Development Administration says.

"Puerto Rico is exempt from federal taxes, which is intended to offset the lower labor costs in other Caribbean islands as well as to offset the added expense of following various U.S. regulations," Jose R. Madera

said in a copyrighted interview in U.S. News and World Report.

"But members of the administration seem to be interested in eliminating tariffs on goods from all the other Caribbean islands," he added. "That would be very harmful to Puerto Rico because it would be tantamount to giving them the same treatment that Puerto Rico now has in the mainland market."

Madera said Puerto Rico can play an important role in the administration's Caribbean development "as a conduit between the 200 million Spanish-speaking people in Central and South America. Yet to date, Puerto Rico has not been asked to play the role it could."

On another matter, Madera said Puerto Rico would like federal loan guarantees for the financing of conversion work on oil refineries. "The removal of restrictions on exports of petroleum and petrochemical products also would be helpful," he said.

Alliance to discuss immigration policy

The Oregon Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, concerned about Salvadoran refugees and current legislation, meets this week in Eugene.

Amit Pandya, the National Immigration and Refugee Network's general counsel whose Oregon visit a week ago was sponsored by the coalition, claims the U.S. government is unlawfully returning 200 to 400 refugees to El Salvador each week. Bi-partisan support of current immigration and refugee legislation also threatens immigrant rights, he said.

"There's some urgency on all these issues," Pandya said. The coalition agrees, and will meet Wednesday, March 17 from 5 to 6 p.m. in the Koinonia Center, 1414 Kincaid St.

Convicted rapist draws sentence

Thomas Brown, the 42-year-old elder of the Christ Brotherhood religious commune, was sentenced to five years in prison Friday for rape and sodomy charges involving a 14-year-old female member of the commune.

Lane County Circuit Judge Edwin Allen accused Brown of "blasphemy" in response to Brown's repeated insistence that his lifestyle follows the example of Jesus Christ.

"Many have spoken in the defendant's behalf," Allen said. "Now is the time for the court to speak on behalf of those small girls that the defendant has seen fit to molest, sodomize and rape."

Allen ordered that Brown serve half of his term before being eligible for parole and added a five-year probation with the stipulation that Brown "refrains from any contact with females under the age of 18." The judge said Brown has had sexual contact with at least three other young girls.

The judge read court testimony that quoted Brown as saying age limits should not be set on sexual intercourse and "I am not being accused of anything which is wrong in God's eyes."

Brown was convicted of third-degree rape and sodomy charge at an uncontested hearing in December.

Brown, a former Philosophy professor, organized the Christ Brotherhood commune in Eugene in the late 1960s and then led its members to New Mexico, Colorado and Montana before returning to Eugene last spring.

The rape and sodomy charges were filed against Brown on Oct. 19 after an investigation by the state Children's Services and Eugene police that was prompted by complaints by former members.

Fourteen children were taken from the group's two communal homes in October and were placed in protective custody. At least two have since been returned to their mothers.

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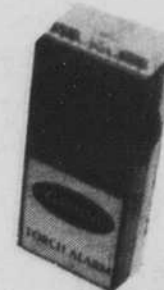


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