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Timber companies may receive relief

PORTLAND — Price rollbacks and voluntary contract terminations may be needed soon for timber sold but yet to be harvested from national forests, says the assistant secretary of agriculture in charge of the U.S. Forest Service.

John Crowell made the comment in a speech to the downtown Rotary Club Tuesday.

"Unless substantial improvements in economic conditions for the forest products industry and its workers are evident fairly soon, authorizing legislation for price rollbacks and contract terminations will have to be given very serious consideration by us and Congress," Crowell said.

The Forest Service already has granted contract extensions to some timber companies who were in danger of defaulting on timber sales purchases. The companies purchased the timber at high prices several years ago, and are unable to get their money back when the

timber is harvested due to low prices and the depressed lumber and plywood market.

"We have not closed the door on more drastic relief," said Crowell, an Oregonian who is former general counsel for Louisiana-Pacific Corp., the nation's second-largest lumber producer.

Crowell said about 8 billion board feet of timber, half the amount under contract in Oregon and Washington national forests, cannot be economically harvested under current conditions.

Meanwhile, the Oregon Department of Forestry said Tuesday it will not meet a self-imposed Friday deadline to decide on regulations for price rollbacks and contract extensions for sales of state-owned timber. Department spokesman Jim Fisher said it is not known when the department will determine the specifics of the regulations.

PUC grants utilities gas price increases

SALEM — Public Utility Commissioner John Lobdell has granted rate increases to three natural gas companies serving Oregon customers, including one that serves Eugene.

On Wednesday, Lobdell authorized rate increases for Northwest Natural Gas Co., Cascade Natural Gas Corp. and CP National Corp. All of the increases were to reflect the higher cost the companies must pay for the natural gas they buy from their supplier, Northwest Pipeline Co.

The increase granted Northwest Natural Gas goes into effect Thursday and will raise \$3.4 million in additional revenue for the company, said Lobdell. At the same time, the commissioner denied a company proposal to spend \$411,000 on an advertising campaign to promote more extensive use of natural gas.

"Given the depressed economy and diminished energy demand forecast," Lobdell said, "the company proposal to promote fuel switching contained in the filing is untimely."

He authorized a general rate increase of 4 percent to offset higher labor, material and operating costs. He approved an additional 5.7 percent rate hike reflecting the increase in the cost of wholesale natural gas.

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APRIL

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ladies Night: All well drinks just 50¢ from 9-2 and no cover (ladies only) Hump Night: 99¢ buys any drink from 9-1. 				1	2	3
4 Garbage Grinders \$1.99	5 HAVE	Guardian		Diamond Hill		
11 Garbage Grinders \$1.99	12 NER	13 The Bees Ladies NITE	14 Hump NITE	15	16	17 Mr. Nice Guy
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