

# opinion

## Reconsider Watt

Picking the brains of Secretary of Interior James Watt would not be a pleasant experience.

One would find this public servant bent on disqualifying thousands of federal lands as possible wilderness. The shrewd but garbled grey matter told him to order the Interior Department to take acreage in 10 western states out of an ongoing study. He did this during the Congressional break — undiplomatically and illegally.

Watt gave smallness of area (5,000 or less acres), the nearness to existing designated wilderness and "split estate" lands (lands in which the mines are owned by one party and the surface land by another), as reasons for exclusion from the Bureau of Land Management's 15-year study.

Enough for reasons. Lack of sizeable acreage, nearness to other wilderness, and split ownership are not statutory reasons for disqualifying land for wilderness study. In fact, Douglas Baldwin, Interior's director of public affairs, said the lands will continue to be studied for "other kinds of protection."

So why take these lands out of one study only to reassign them to a similar study?

With all the problems Watt has had with Congress, why set himself up for a late winter of Congressional hearings?

Because under his direct supervision the land can be used for multiple usage long before 1991.

True to his industrial-use outlook on the American forest, Watt pre-empted the public process of study, hearings and review.

The House Interior committee, when they finally form (By Feb. 3), intends to hold a Congressional hearing. They should force Watt to withdraw his order or invoke their own power and legislate to consider these lands wilderness.

The Department of Interior was not set up to become an adversary of the Congress. The department was formed to save some of the existing wilderness — at least in the West — after the official "closing" of the frontier in 1890. The department was going to work with timber interests, miners and conservationists to stop the wholesale exploitation of land.

If Watt cannot fulfill his job as a disinterested third party, he should reconsider his position. It would be time and land saving if his boss would reconsider his appointment.

## Clean up bike path

Members of the Cycling Alternatives Network — the core of the hardcore Eugene bicyclists — are coordinating a Saturday clean-up of the bike paths that feed into the University. And they're looking for volunteers.

Since University students are the primary users of the paths, it would behoove them to take some of the responsibility for keeping them in shape.

Currently, fallen leaves and twigs pose a slippery hazard to cyclists who like to lean into corners. The city parks department used to take care of the paths, but funds ran out last year and they have had to rely on volunteers.

To pitch in, ride over to Lamb Cottage, located near the playground at Alton Baker Park, by 9:30 a.m. Volunteers from the Eugene public works department will distribute equipment and supervise the effort.

Last month, nine people managed to clean the path from Autzen bridge to the Springfield outlet. Just think what 50 could do.



# letters

## Not Watt

It is important that concerned citizens respond now to the recent action by Interior head, James Watt, to revoke the "wilderness study" status of hundreds of thousands of acres of wild lands in the United States. Before the interim session of Congress, Watt promised our representatives that he would take no such action without further study and congressional approval. Three days after Congress convened, the wilderness lands were revoked.

As Americans, we should feel a deep frustration from such blatant violations of the public trust. The issue transcends environmental concerns, indeed, Watt's action ignores the fundamental tenets of the checks, balances system and our basic freedoms as individuals.

Watt's action was taken without the recommendation of any subcommittee hearings or petition to the American people. His assurance of an open forum was slammed to the ground when he took this independent action.

The official label of "wilderness" reserves the right to act in the future, if need be, for the development of resources. Such designation does not "lock away" land forever. Hence, I am confused as to the reason that Watt revoked this status.

There is no shortage of timber; the recent closure of most Oregon mills speaks to that. There also does not appear to be any shortage of strategic minerals, or at least Watt never mentioned this issue as a rea-

son for his action.

Why, then, has he violated our trust in this way? Is he responding to the pressures of unnamed interest groups? If so, who are these groups and what is their justification for this drastic action?

I urge concerned citizens to let the people on Capitol Hill know that we are alarmed. Our congressmen need to know our opinions now. Many of our leaders are considering charging Watt with contempt of congress. We need to voice our support for such a move.

Urgent correspondence should be addressed to: House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515; Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. The phone for both houses is: (202) 224-3121.

**Daniel Henry**  
graduate, rhetoric  
and communications

## Convincing

After having observed various activities which have taken place this year on campus in response to various U.S. politico-military policies, such as the proposed intermediate nuclear force (INF) modernization program in Europe, I feel compelled to write this letter.

I see a distressing tendency on the part of many students to rely only on vague generalizations and outright scapegoating when attempting to persuade someone of the virtues of opposing militarism. With all due respect, muttering something about warmongers and the nefarious military-industrial complex just isn't convincing. In fact, I don't see much difference between that and the actions of those who labeled returning servicemen from Vietnam baby burners, war criminals.

If one is truly motivated and dedicated to their cause then he or she owes it to themselves to know and articulate all sides of an argument, including that of your opposition.

The way to accomplish this is to inform yourself.

The information isn't hard to find. Two extremely easy ways to get informed would be to spend some time in the government documents section at the library or to contact Senators Hatfield or Packwood and ask them to send you a copy of this

year's National Debate Topic for High Schools entitled "What Should Be the Level of U.S. Commitment for National Defense?" The document number is 97-34.

Remember, the only dumb question is the one you don't ask.

**David Isenberg**  
Eugene

## Americas

We are Americans who have made our home in Latin America for seven years. Lately, we are seeing much distorted news about the Americas coming out of the United States and would like to set the record straight for the Emerald readers.

When we first moved to Costa Rica — baggage, grandmother, teenagers and pets — we spoke no Spanish and knew little about the country. But, soon, our rural neighbors accepted us and graciously, taught us their language, culture, and how a city-bred family could enjoy ranch life in a foreign land.

Truly, our delightful adventures there merit a book, at least.

My husband's love for the sea (Pearl Harbor survivor, retired Navy), prompted a further move two years ago, to Columbia's Caribbean coast. We found a lovely, old coconut plantation on the Pan American Highway near Santa Marta, the oldest (457 years), most fascinating city in all of the Americas.

Imagine, green palms waving in gentle ocean breezes, blue sea and sky, pounding surf and golden sand and towering 19,000 feet snow-capped, majestic Mount Columbus.

We feel we have incomparable beauty, fine neighbors, perfect climate, a stable democratic government and a satisfyingly-low cost of living.

Like Columbus, we have discovered a new frontier, with a vast potential and, being human, are driven to tell others about our dream-come-true.

**Juanita Bird**  
Santa Marta, Colombia

Bird promises to answer letters from interested readers. Her address is P.O. Box 5222, Santa Marta, Colombia.

Friday, January 7, 1983

oregon daily  
**emerald**

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Monday through Friday except during exam week and vacations, by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, 97403.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices on the third floor of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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Classified Advertising  
Production  
Circulation

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686-4343  
686-4381  
686-5511

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