



Photo by Paul Ertelt

Controversy over the Oregon Wilderness Bill continued Monday, as members of Cathedral Forest Action Group held a Memorial Day "wake" for lost wilderness near Pyramid Creek.

## Protesters chant, sing in forest for weekend 'wilderness wake'

By Paul Ertelt  
Of the Emerald

A Memorial Day outing made by members of Cathedral Forest Action Group also served as a political statement as the group protested cutting of old growth timber near Pyramid Creek in the Willamette National Forest.

About 50 protesters stood on a stack of recently logged timber, chanting and singing of their concern about lost wilderness and "corporate greed." The "wilderness wake," as they called it, was held under the bright afternoon sunshine and the watchful eye of security guards hired by Willamette Industries.

The recently formed coalition of environmentalists from Eugene, Corvallis and other parts of the state is concerned that the Oregon Wilderness Bill now pending in Congress only protects 7,500 acres of old growth forests in the Middle Santiam region. A House bill sponsored by Rep. Jim Weaver had proposed setting aside 19,000 acres.

The compromise acreage is not enough, the protesters said, because wilderness is quickly disappearing and cannot be replaced.

"This is our land," University student Doug Norlen told the group, accusing the forest service of mismanaging public lands.

"We pay taxes for people to take care of state forests, but everyone knows they work for the timber companies," said Dave Zupan of Eugene.

Despite the group's strong stance, its members claimed they are committed to non-

violence toward persons and property. Company officials fear their equipment may be sabotaged, but there were no reports of sabotage Monday.

The Oregon wilderness bill, which set aside 943,000 acres for protection, is a "travesty," says Mike Roselle from Jackson, Wyo. Most of that acreage includes high altitude areas, lava flows, desert, and other areas where "no commercial conflict" exists, he says.

The issue is not acreage, Roselle says, but the quality of the areas set aside for wilderness. The present bill betrays the spirit of the Wilderness Act of 1964, which says endangered ecosystems should be protected, he says.

Roselle blames pressure from Oregon's timber industry for the exclusion of many old-growth areas from the bill.

"The Forest Service and politicians in this state are afraid of the timber industry," he says. "And we're paying for their spinelessness."

But to many who make their living in the woods, the issue is jobs. Placing more of the area into the wilderness would mean immediate layoffs for 20 to 25 people, says Willamette Industries firewarden Homer Pack.

Cathedral Forest Action Group members said their frustration with legal attempts to protect wilderness areas has led them to consider civil disobedience. Though they were not specific about their plans, they said they will continue action throughout the summer.

"I can't sit idly by and let this happen," Norlen said. "It's not like losing an election; when you lose, you lose for good."

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