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# Spokesman warns forests are overcut

By Janet Paulson

The National Forests of Oregon are being overcut by an average of 26.2 percent, according to Wendell Wood. spokesperson for the Oregon Natural Resources Council, who spoke at a press conference Tuesday.

Citing figures provided by the U.S. Forest Service that affirm the overcutting. Wood urged that the overcutting be stopped for Oregon's economic stability, as well as protection of the environment.

Overcutting refers to the logging of the forest at a rate exceeding its growth, causing an eventual decline in timber

The USFS is planning to offer 3.8 billion board feet for sale in fiscal 1987, while just over 3 billion board feet will be grown in the same year to replace it. Wood said

Regionwide (in both Oregon and Washington). Congress has established a fiscal 1987 cut level of 5.2 billion board feet, which is a full billion board feet more than the maximum the forest service felt it could cut." Wood said

According to Wood, the timber service knows it is overcutting, and would like to reduce the sales program, but political pressures from the timber industry and Senator Mark O. Hatfield are preventing needed reductions

Delay tactics by the timber industry, reticence by the forest service, and the appropriations power of Sen. Hatfield are combining to cause massive overcutting of our forests."

'It is the strategy of the timber industry to delay the issuance of these new national forest plans for as long as possible. In this way, they hope to maintain the artificially high logging levels currently in effect." Wood said

The USFS was to have completed the new plans by the end of last year, but to date, only three of the 13 Oregon National Forest plans have been issued in draft form, and none have been finalized, he said.

Wood accused Sen. Hatfield of "force feeding" the USFS with extreme timber-cutting levels by securing more money for the forest service than it has requested for timber sales.

New studies by the forest service found that previous estimates of timber volume and growth rates were grossly overestimated, according to Wood. Better inventory methods, such as sophisticated computer and aerial techniques, have resulted in much more accurate estimates. In addition he said trees are not growing as fast as thought or hoped.

According to Mike Morris, spokesperson for the Willamette National Forest, the figures the ONRC cited are accurate, but misleading because net figures (timber yield) are being compared to gross figures (fiscal 1987 projected

For Willamette National Forest, the sustained timber yield under the current forest service plan is 608.3 million board feet, but Congress's projected sales for fiscal 1987 are 882. million board feet, which represents a 45 percent

Morris said this figure is misleading for two reasons. First. Congress's projected sales for fiscal 1987, represents all wood products, not just board feet. The figures also appear inflated because the forest service operates on a 10-year plan. and the numbers are balanced over the decade. Morris said.

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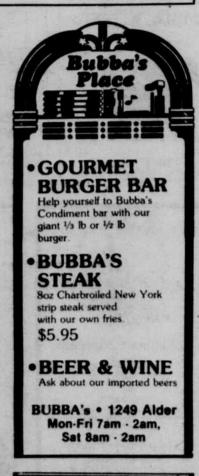
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