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## Can Oregon stand on its wooden leg?

*Just how dependent is Oregon on our timber industry? What are the hidden tradeoffs and possible alternatives that accompany a harvest of 8 billion board feet? The environmentalist viewpoint:*

By Christopher Blair  
Emerald News Editor

**Editor's Note:** The following is the first of a two-part *Monday In-Depth* series examining Oregon's dependence on the timber industry. This section focuses on the environmentalists' viewpoint, and will be followed by opinions from representatives of the timber industry on Tuesday.

It has been an argument since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution: when to use natural resources for their use in products or energy production, and when to preserve those resources in the interests of ecology and nature.

Logging and the production of wood products have been some of, if not the most, important industries to Oregon in terms of the number jobs they provide and the money they contribute to the state's economy.

In recent years, however, some are re-evaluating Oregon's dependence on timber, an industry that leaves hillsides barren and allegedly threatens the existence of endangered plant and animal species. They have been met with traditional arguments from timber proponents about how important the industry is. Entire towns would suffer, they say, if any bans were placed on cutting trees that could otherwise be harvested and put to economic use.

Regardless of one's opinion of the timber issue, some statistics are hard to ignore.

Oregon is the leading supplier of wood products in the nation, providing one-fifth of the country's softwood. According to the August 1989 issue of *Oregon Labor Trends*, a monthly report put out by the state employment division, 79,400 of Oregon's workers earn their living from jobs in logging, sawmills and paper production.

This figure represents about 7 percent of the workers in Oregon and 34 percent of all manufacturing jobs in the state. One worker in five is employed in manufacturing.

The state's office of economic analysis reports lumber, wood and paper products contribute about \$3.1 billion, or 7 percent, to Oregon's gross state product. Reductions in the amount of trees processed most likely would affect all of these figures.

### Too Much?

As with any issue, however, there is another stack of facts and figures that is equally important.

More than 8 billion board feet of timber was harvested from Oregon's hillsides in 1987, about a billion less than the record 9.6 billion board feet harvested in

1972.

About 15 billion board feet of timber were cut from federal lands in Oregon and Washington in 1988. A total of 7.5 billion board feet of wood chips and raw logs were exported overseas from private, state and some federal lands.

Environmentalists say this is too much, especially when the trees being cut down are centuries-old "ancient forests" or old growth, trees that have previously been untouched by the logger's saw.

Much of the debate earlier this year centered on protecting the endangered northwest spotted owl. Timber industry executives and workers, and even some lawmakers, mocked the spotted owl as something that tasted like fried chicken. A few owls have even been found dead. Industry proponents voiced their dismay that a bird was being seen as more important than workers and their families.

Environmentalists have countered by saying more than 90 percent of Oregon's original forests have been cut down, and the 2.5 billion board feet of harvested logs sacrificed by protecting the owls is one-third of what is exported every year.

The point environmentalists are trying to make is that the timber companies are doing irreparable damage to the forests, especially those stands of old growth that are home to many plant and animal species. Even if halts to cutting are made soon, some say it is too late to repair ecological damage that already may have been done.



Photo by Andre Kamier

**Environmentalist claim that clear cuts such as this recently replanted one are hazards to the ecosystem.**

### Cutting Back

Wendell Wood is the western representative for the Oregon Natural Resources Council, a group of 90 conservation, outdoor education and sportsman organizations

Turn to Timber, Page 14

## Student groups enter into timber/environmental fray

By Polly Campbell  
Emerald Reporter

The future of the ancient forests has been a hot issue in the Pacific Northwest for several years. Now the issue has caught national attention and University students are educating the public and organizing local groups to gain the support needed to preserve the old growth timber.

"We know that we cannot win this issue and save the forests if we keep it on a regional level so we need to nationalize," said Matthew Snider, co-director of Survival Center, the University's home-base for the nationwide Student Environmental Action Coalition.

"Through Student Environmental Action Coalition we have been able to network throughout the country and

bring the issue of the national forests to the forefront," Snider said.

Although the Survival Center is involved with a variety of environmental issues, specific groups have been established to focus on the forest issues.

The Rainforest Action Group is part of a nationwide effort to preserve the rain forests of the world, Snider said.

"This group is a network of grass root organizing groups that exist literally everywhere in the country," he said.

The Opal Creek Defense Coalition is a group of local citizens and University students who are working together to save the Opal Creek area of the Willamette National Forest, Snider said.

Opal Creek, located about 35 miles east of Salem is in danger of being clearcut.

Members of the Survival Center also

conduct hikes into parts of the ancient forests to educate people about the issue and to show them what is going on in the forest, Snider said.

"There is always a lot of talking about forests and the clearcuts, but the reality is to actually go out into the forests and see what the forests are all about," said Trevor Dick, ancient forest coordinator for Survival Center.

People find themselves passing from group to group because the forest issues tend to overlap, said Heidi Schultz, oceanography coordinator at the Survival Center.

The organization process is handled within the groups and from there decisions are made regarding what to do next and how to bring awareness of the issue to the people, Schultz said.

"The only way to approach people is on the educational level," Schultz

said. "But in the past nobody has really documented what is really happening in the environment so now it is important to go out and make contacts with people to get the latest information."

By conducting grass roots campaigns people can learn about the issues and have an effect, Dick said.

"We're here to put power back in the hands of the people," Dick said. "There is power in numbers and that is the idea of grass roots."

Because the lands in dispute are national forests and a national treasure, the issue relates to everyone, Dick said.

"I think that when people in Maine write to their congressmen and say they don't want their national forests in Oregon destroyed people might listen," Snider said.