

In-Depth

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mer, insects and disease take their toll on trees, especially the older ones. Between 1976 and 1985, 1.6 billion board feet of timber was destroyed because of disease and insect damage.

"If the forest is not cut and regenerated, either naturally or replanted by man, nature herself is going to harvest that forest, by fire or disease or something else," Stewart said. "We lose a great deal of valuable raw material for the forest products industry."

Stewart concluded by stating that the present rate of cutting is sustainable for both the economy and the environment.

"The present rate is a sustainable rate," he said. "Obviously it's not a sustainable rate at which old-growth can be created on the forest, nobody would claim that."

"But we're talking about the tree-growing ability of the Willamette National forest," he said. "We grow more than we cut, year after year. That's the whole definition of sustained yield. We believe that is the soundest possible policy that you can run a forest on."

Clouds on the horizon?

William Atkinson, head of the forestry engineering department at Oregon State University, said that like it or not, the timber industry is headed for changes.

According to an OSU forestry study released Nov. 16, timber harvesting and production in most areas of the state will fall by at least 15 percent. An estimated 7,300 jobs in the industry will be lost in Oregon by 1995.

The study, "Timber for Oregon's Tomorrow: The 1989 Up-

date," is a follow-up to a report released in 1976 by forestry professor John Beuter, which also warned that the industry's cutting levels were too high.

Of the jobs lost, 2,500 will be due to automation and other "changing technologies," and the rest will disappear as companies run out of areas to cut and trees that are of harvestable size.

Atkinson said that while the timber industry may be in for

probably going to grow.

"The timber industry is right about the kind of communities in which they mostly exist," he said. "Oakridge, Coos Bay, they are in trouble."

Even with the loss of timber jobs, the OSU report predicts an annual growth of 2.3 percent for the state's economy.

Forestry's future

Atkinson said forestry educa-

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— Bud Stewart

some hard times, other areas of the economy will absorb some of the losses. Atkinson explained Oregon's unique problem of being stuck between California, which produces one-tenth of the U.S. economy, and the "boom" that is occurring in the Puget Sound region around Seattle.

"We are in the middle of a tremendous development, and a lot of that's going to spill over," he said.


As for the recession that will hit the timber industry, Atkinson said it will hit the state in different areas in different ways.

"It's going to hit unevenly. Small towns, mill towns, are going to suffer, there's just no doubt about that," he said. "Portland, Eugene, Salem, Corvallis, where you have diversified economies, are not going to be hit quite as hard, and are

tion is changing, and is much more "multiple-use oriented" than it was 10 or 15 years ago. More people going to OSU to study forestry are choosing to study forest recreation and wildlife.

"The young people today are much more interested in that than they are in the more traditional parts of forestry, although we see a lot of people that do the planting and forestry engineering," Atkinson said. "But the big boom is in multiple use."

And of the future of the industry, Atkinson said the trees planted in the last 20 years will begin to come "on line" in 15 or 20 years, and the companies "are going to have every bit as much wood as we did during our most busy time, but it's going to be small wood."



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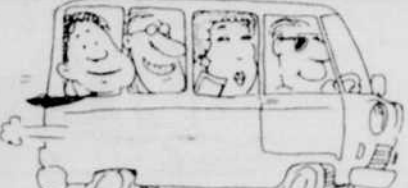
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