

# Rust opposes timber clearcutting

## Commissioner calls practice unjustified

By Ben Heskett  
Emerald Contributor

Forestry clearcutting on Bureau of Land Management and United States National Forest lands is no longer justified, said Lane County Commissioner Jerry Rust.

Rust, speaking at the Valley River Inn during an engagement sponsored by Lewis and Clark College, told the panel of United States Forest Service and BLM upper-level managers his ideas for revenue, jobs and sound environmental concepts in regards to the forest industry.

Rust said he approved of the current revenue-sharing formula, and called the relationship between Lane County and the federal government "a historic partnership." However, Rust did call for a reduction in the harvest and a replacement for

the revenues that would be lost to Oregon counties.

"Flooding the market with cheap old growth timber depresses the price, and drives the value of small woodlot timber down as well as keeping federal prices artificially low," Rust said during his address.

He said counties must find alternative forms of revenue to replace the economic hole left by a reduction in the harvest. He criticized the idea of a gas tax as a remedy to the problem but stressed that the health of the forest is the primary concern.

"The ultimate question is how well our forests remain healthy through time," Rust said. "Steps must be taken to insure the health of the forest."

As for forestry-related employment, Rust called for the creation of 2,500 new jobs, aided by a proposed \$70 million "investment" by the federal

government.

Citing the loss of 14,000 jobs in the timber industry during the 1980s, Rust said, "The federal government has an obligation to assist the region in making an economic transition."

"We have got to realize that our days of mowing down thousands of acres of ancient forests are numbered," he said.

Rust, a former tree planter, said the wanton clearcutting of the past is simply not a viable option for the economic future.

"At one time, perhaps on short-term economic grounds, clear cutting was justified," he said. "Now that we are down to the last 10 percent of native northwest rainforest, clear cutting is no longer justified as a management practice. It is too destructive."

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