

COMMUNITY



Photo by Sean Poston

Delegates from Irkutsk, Eugene's Soviet sister city, will spend this week in Eugene speaking at seminars and conferences on environmental issues.

Sister city delegates visit Eugene

By Brian Bloch
Emerald Reporter

In the spirit of international cooperation and learning, nine Soviet environmental scientists and activists are in Eugene to explore shared concerns about the environment.

The delegates from Irkutsk, Eugene's Soviet sister city, arrived last Tuesday and will be spending the next week holding seminars, forums and exploring the lakes and forests of Oregon.

The group will hold an open seminar today at 3:30 in 110 Willamette Hall to discuss theme areas including biology, ecology and forestry of the two regions.

Led by Irkutsk scientist Dr. Grigory Galazy, who was recently awarded the United Nations Ecological Award for work he conducted on Lake Baikal, the group hopes to study and gather information from the area and apply it to similar environmental issues faced in Irkutsk.

"We're helping each other by working on the problems and issues we share," said organizer Kate Gessert.

She said Oregon and Irkutsk are similar in that both areas are heavily forested and contain many lakes vulnerable to pollution and commercial development. In addition, pressure from the logging industry is prevalent in both areas, she said.

The Soviets are hosted by Eugene area scientists and activists throughout their stay and will be traveling to Crater Lake, Waldo Lake, Spirit Lake, Andrews Experimental Forest and parts of the Siskiyou National Forest.

Besides the forums and seminars, the group will be meeting with local scientists in similar disciplines and representatives from a variety of environmental and activist groups to share ideas and solutions.

The group from Irkutsk will host a public forum tonight at 7:30 at Harris Hall, Eighth Avenue and Oak Street, and a discussion on future environmental changes Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. at the Green House, West Eleventh Avenue and Van Buren Street. The later event will feature the Soviets and a delegation from Oregon.

Gessert said a group of Oregon activists and scientists from Eugene, Corvallis and Portland will travel to Irkutsk next summer on a similar environmental exchange.

"When you bring people who care about their land to a similar area, they begin to care about that area also and great things begin to happen," Gessert said.

She said the exchange stems from an information and delegation sharing that took place in June 1989 between the two cities. After extensive communication and interest between scientists from the two areas, the exchange "came together very quickly."

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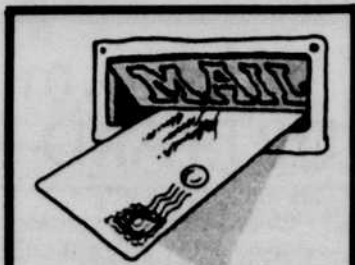
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