

# White House accused of playing 'God'



WASHINGTON (AP) — Environmentalists and the Bush administration disagree whether the White House is exerting undue political pressure on a special Cabinet-level panel considering exempting some Northwest logging from the Endangered Species Act.

Two administration sources speaking on condition of anonymity told The Associated Press on Tuesday that members of the panel have been called to White House meetings to discuss the panel's upcoming decision regarding the northern spotted owl.

Attorneys for the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund said Tuesday the communications between the White House and the panel are improper and could be used to overturn the Endangered Species Committee's vote, expected next week.

"We have been disturbed from the start by the cynical manipulation of this process by the (Interior) secretary for political purposes. This seems to be the latest and most serious step along that road," said Victor Sher, an attorney for the group in Seattle.

A spokesman for Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan Jr. said the conversations pertain to general environmental policy and that no political pressure is being placed on the committee, known as "The God Squad."

"No one from the administration will dictate to any committee member how they should vote. That is a decision committee members will have to make on their own after reviewing the evidence," said Steve Goldstein, the Interior Department's chief spokesman.

The sources said each of the meetings was attended by Lujan, chairman of the committee, and Clayton Yeutter, President Bush's domestic policy adviser.

William K. Reilly, head of the Environmental Protection Agency and a committee member, joined Lujan and Yeutter in such a meeting on Tuesday, one source said.

John Knauss, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and a committee member, attended a similar meeting within the last two weeks, the source said.

Frances Hunt, a forestry specialist for the National Wildlife Federation, said her contacts within the administration indicated Knauss was pressured during the meeting to vote in favor of the

exemption to the Endangered Species Act. "My understanding is that it was all-out arm twisting," she said. "Lujan is portraying this as something the administration needs."

Knauss was in Athens, Greece, and could not be reached for comment Tuesday, a NOAA spokesman said. Neither Reilly nor Yeutter could be reached for comment, aides said.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared the owl a threatened species in June 1990, citing excessive logging as a threat to its survival.

The special exemption committee is trying to decide whether saving the bird from extinction carries too great an economic toll for the Pacific Northwest.

It is to meet next Thursday to decide — for the first time since the 1979 case of the Tellico Dam's snail darter — whether to exempt commercial development from the Endangered Species Act.

Goldstein confirmed that Lujan and Reilly met with Yeutter on Tuesday.

"The issues facing the secretary regarding the spotted owl, including ... the upcoming Endangered Species Committee vote, will obviously have a great impact," he said. "It would only be prudent management for the secretary and other members of the committee to keep the White House aware as these things are progressing."

A third administration source who asked not to be identified said the "ex parte communication" Sher refers to applies only to conversations involving more than three people and that no more than three people met on the topic at one time.

That source also said "ex parte communication" applies only to information that is not part of the public record and that none of the White House conversations delved into information outside the public record.

The committee has the power to allow the Bureau of Land Management to go forward with some federal logging in Oregon even though the Fish and Wildlife Service has warned the timber sales could jeopardize the owl.

It can approve the logging if five of its seven members decide the action is of regional or national significance, there are no reasonable alternatives and the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

Other members are Agriculture Secretary Edward Madigan, Army Secretary Michael Stone, White House Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Michael Boskin and Tom Walsh, a citizen appointed by Oregon Gov. Barbara Roberts.

## ET ALS

### MEETINGS

Students for Clinton will meet tonight at 7:30 in EMU Cedar Room E. College Republicans will meet tonight at 7 in EMU Century Room F. Alpha Lambda Delta/Phi Eta Sigma will have a general meeting tonight at 6:30 in EMU Cedar Room F. Constitution Court will meet tonight at 6:30 in Room 221 Law Center. Election violations will be the subject of the hearing. Asian Pacific American Student Union will meet tonight from 6 to 7. ASUO Student Health Insurance Committee will meet today at 7:30 a.m. in EMU Century Room D.

### MISCELLANEOUS

Japanese/English language table will be today at 5:30 in the Yamada Language Center Lounge. "What is Done When a Rape is Reported?" will be the topic of a Greeks Against Rape meeting tonight at 7 in Room 146 Straub. "The Democratic Revolution in El Salvador" will be the topic of a discussion tonight from 5 to 7 in the EMU Ben Linder Room. A candidate's forum will be tonight at 7:30 at the EWEB Building, 504 E. Fourth Ave. County Commissioner and State Representative candidates for District 41 will be featured.

### Jesus Week 1992:

- Information and book table will be in the EMU today from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Dr. Otto Helweg will speak on "The Myth of Moral Neutrality in Academia" at 10 a.m. in the Bean Complex Conference Room.
- Stump the Preacher tonight at 7:30 in the Debussé Lounge in Bean Complex.
- A city-wide prayer for Eugene will be today from 12:20 to 12:40 p.m. at the Eugene City Hall.
- A concert of prayer will be tonight at 7:30 in the Carson Dorn Gold Room.

### RELIGION

A Bible study will be today from noon to 1 p.m. at the Wesley Foundation, 1236 Kincaid St.

Deadline for submitting Et Als to the Emerald front desk, EMU Suite 300, is noon the day before publication. Et Als run the day of the event unless the event takes place before noon.

Notices of events with a donation or admission charge will not be accepted. Campus events and those scheduled nearest the publication date will be given priority. The Emerald reserves the right to edit notices for grammar and style. Et Als are published on a space-available basis.

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