

Portland rushing plans for Clinton's conference



PORTLAND (AP) — City officials were scrambling Wednesday to find a place with the right security, size and availability to hold President Clinton's forest conference on April 2.

Sam Adams, spokesman for Portland Mayor Vera Katz, said a team has been set up to work with the White House in finding a home for the conference.

"They have not firmed up the number of participants or the space requirements and that would weigh in on the decision," he said. "There's nothing on the exact location other than it being someplace in Portland."

The most likely candidate for such an event would be the Oregon Convention Center, but that is booked for April 2 with two conferences.

Memorial Coliseum has a concert scheduled that day, and spokesmen for other likely locations said they had heard nothing about conference plans.

Oregon Gov. Barbara Roberts said she expected the conference to relieve the logging gridlock and produce "some clarity and predictability" about future timber harvests on federal lands in the Northwest.

Washington Gov. Mike Lowry also welcomed the conference.

"Finally, we have a president who is willing to put the full force of his admin-

istration behind solving this long-running problem," Lowry said.

Some timber industry groups said they welcomed the chance to try to balance environmental protection with economic growth. Logging has been banned on large tracts of federal forest by lawsuits that followed the Endangered Species Act listing of the northern spotted owl as a threatened species.

James Geisinger, president of the Northwest Forestry Association, said the conference will provide Clinton and Gore with their "first opportunity to test their contention that environmental protection creates jobs rather than abolishes them."

Other timber industry representatives were pessimistic.

"Essentially, the issues will be solved, but they are not going to be solved to our benefit," said Bill Pickell of the Washington Contract Loggers Association in Olympia. "I think the ducks are all lined up in a row and the ducks are all preservationist ducks, and that's the way it's going to come down on the Northwest."

Steve Whitney, Washington state director of the Wilderness Society in Seattle, said the conference will help bring about public control of national forests.

"I think a real achievement is to, once and for all, bring the debate out of the back room and into the daylight," he said. "Private interests have been running the show for far too long. It's time for the public interest to have its shot."

Lawmakers optimistic about forest summit

WASHINGTON (AP) — Several members of the Northwest's congressional delegation said Wednesday they had high hopes for the Clinton administration's approach to the forest conference in Oregon next month.

"They will force their agencies to come together and agree on a single legislative solution and will propose that legislation to Congress in short order after the summit. Their intention is to get it done before fall," said Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore.

Added Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash.: "Over the past four years, we have worked with an administration that, at times, had five separate and different positions on how to resolve the problems."

Even Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., said he was optimistic a change in administrations would bring movement on the issue.

"This administration is able to start fresh," he said.

But there was a lone voice of criticism amid all the optimism. "We have talked this issue over until we are all blue in the face," said Rep. Bob Smith, R-Ore.

"It is nothing more than window-dressing, a public relations gambit intended to show concern for Northwest residents while the administration and Congress prepare to pull the rug from underneath our communities," he said.

Smith said Vice President Al Gore is "committed to shutting down timber communities" and that his participation in the conference amounts to "leaving the fox to guard the hen house."

Smith is most upset that the conference apparently will exclude members of Congress. White House officials said no decisions have been made on the format or participants, but most other lawmakers said Wednesday it would be a good idea to keep congressmen out.

"If one member of Congress shows up, 30 will be there," DeFazio said. "By the time they finish opening statements, Clinton will be on his way to Vancouver and won't have a chance to hear from real people."

Clinton, Gore and four Cabinet members will convene the conference on April 2 in Portland, Ore. Clinton heads to Vancouver, British Columbia, for a summit the following day with Russian leader Boris Yeltsin.

Gore briefed Northwest lawmakers and key congressional leaders on plans for the conference Wednesday.

"I got the indication from President Clinton directly that he planned to sit there the whole day, six or eight hours, to listen and learn," Rep. Mike Kopetski, D-Ore., said.

Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, said Gore "got an ear full" from lawmakers at the briefing.

"It is a problem that is much bigger than he originally thought it might be," Craig said.

"Logging has to be given equal priority to other considerations. We have to recognize it is just as valuable in this country to cut trees and build houses and create jobs as it is to secure habitat for a specific species."

Two charged in alleged mercy killing

SOUTH BEND, Wash. (AP) — Two people, including a teen-ager who reportedly worshiped Satan, were charged Wednesday in the slaying of an Ilwaco man who was depressed over the breakup of his marriage and allegedly asked to be killed.

Gregory Lee Wood, 33, and William Joshua Young, 17, both of Ilwaco, were charged with aggravated first-degree murder in the death of Frank Ainsworth, 54, Pacific County deputy prosecutor Jim Conley said. They were held without bail pending arraignment Friday.

Ainsworth apparently wanted to die and had promised Wood his truck if Wood would kill him, Conley said. Wood then got the teen-ager to carry out the killing in exchange for drugs, Conley alleged.

Prosecutors are seeking to try Young as an adult. They had not decided whether to seek the death penalty if Wood and Young are convicted. Aggravated first-degree murder is the only crime in Washington punishable by death. Ainsworth had been very depressed over his separation from his wife and called the sheriff's office several times saying he was planning to kill himself, officials said.

"He didn't want to kill himself, so his friend, Mr. Wood, was going to do it for him. But he (Wood) didn't have the guts to do it himself so he hired the kid," Sheriff Jerry Benning alleged.

Benning said the teen was hired "because he was known not only as a satanic worshiper but also as an extremely violent young man."

Deputies found Ainsworth's body Friday morning in the bed of his Ilwaco home after relatives and Wood asked that the victim be

checked on.

His head was bludgeoned and his neck was slit. There were no signs of a struggle.

"He was asleep when he took the first hit, we think," Benning said.

In a ditch near Ainsworth's home, investigators found a knife and an ax handle thought to have been used in the killing. The first blow to Ainsworth's head was probably from a large wine bottle found shattered near his body, Benning said.

Wood is not thought to have been present during the killing, the sheriff said.

Before Ainsworth's body was discovered, Wood told police "he was concerned his friend may have overdosed on barbiturates," Benning said.

Wood was arrested Friday after Benning's office called him in for questioning. The juvenile was arrested the same day in Long Beach.

Conley said Ainsworth and Wood had "entered into an agreement" in which the victim would be killed in exchange for the truck he owned.

Wood then got the teen to carry out the slaying, promising him drugs, Conley said. "That is the only motive we can tell at this point," he added.

Statements made by the defendants to investigators detailing Ainsworth's death wish, Young's devil worship and willingness to kill for drugs, and Wood's agreement to have one of his closest friends murdered, may be presented in court Friday, Benning said.

"There's going to be some interesting reading in there," he said.

Bandit safe at home after cat burglary

BELLEVUE, Wash. (AP) — The bandits who swiped Bandit the cat were watching the television show Cops when they were nabbed by real cops.

Now Bandit is back home and the bandits are in jail.

Matt and Renae Dekker's cat — one of two the couple owned

— was taken in a burglary of their house nearly two weeks ago.

The mystery was solved Monday when Bellevue and King County police detectives investigating a series of burglaries in the south Bellevue area served two search warrants, one at a

residence in Skyway and the other in SeaTac.

At the SeaTac location, police arrested a man and woman for investigation of burglary and possession of stolen property. They were also searching for another man.

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