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GARAGE SALE

May 25-27 from 12 noon - 6 p.m.
 McArthur Court basement, Rm B-38

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Struggling mills buy logs long-distance



PRINEVILLE (AP) — Sawmills in the eastern and central portions of Oregon are hauling logs from as far away as Idaho and California because of cutbacks in timber sales on nearby national forests.

Ochoco Lumber Co. in Prineville recently purchased private and public timber from California. The logs were shipped by rail to Eugene, then trucked over the Cascades to Prineville.

Malheur Lumber Co., an Ochoco subsidiary based in John Day, purchased 22 million board feet of pine and fir in a Boise National Forest fire salvage sale in Idaho.

Snow Mountain Pine of Hines also purchased 15 million board feet of fire salvage timber from the Boise forest, where fire burned across 200,000 acres last summer.

Although mills have attempted to buy timber from distant areas in the past, their recent efforts have been much more aggressive.

"They've been bidding over here for quite some time," said Darla Arana, a timber resource assistant for the Boise National Forest. "But they were very, very competitive this time."

Timber shortages have fueled the mills' efforts.

"The reality is we have not offered a whole lot of timber in the past three years," said Andy Coray, assistant timber staff officer on central Oregon's Deschutes National Forest.

During the third quarter of 1990, 204 million board feet of saw timber was sold on the Deschutes forest. Two years later, the amount had dropped to 99 million board feet, said Shawn Church, assistant editor of Random Lengths, a Eugene-based timber industry research publication.

The Deschutes is only a microcosm of all national forests in Oregon, Church said. "The shortage of volume-under-contract has forced mills to go farther distances for timber."

Skyrocketing lumber prices also have led to the decision to try harder for long-distance logs. Higher costs of transporting the timber are worth the effort because of the price the lumber will bring.

The supply on Eastern Oregon national forests dried up completely last week when the Forest Service temporarily halted all sales while trying to work out an agreement with environmental groups over the protection of old-growth forests.

The competition for timber remains fierce.

"It's already a bidding war," said John Shelk, managing general partner of Ochoco Lumber. "It's not like it's been peaceful."

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