

Clinton wants to protect forest, but doesn't back bill



WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton wants to protect Opal Creek but opposes Rep. Mike Kopetski's bill

to ban logging on the 34,000-acre Oregon forest reserve, Assistant Agriculture Secretary James Lyons said Wednesday.

"It would impede the successful implementation of the president's forest plan for the Pacific Northwest," Lyons told a congressional panel.

Lyons said the administration supports many of the bill's objectives, but Clinton's plan already protects about 85 percent of the centuries-old forest where Kopetski wants to ban logging.

Clinton's proposal would allow for some road building, thinning and salvage logging in the reserve 35 miles east of Salem, Lyons said.

The proposal by Kopetski, a democrat, would prohibit it.

Lyons also said it was unlikely any timber would be harvested "given the con-

tentious nature" of the region's forest controversy and the likelihood of legal challenges should timber sales be proposed.

At the same time, the administration would "like to retain flexibility to make the forest plan work," Lyons told the House Agriculture Subcommittee on forests and family farms.

Kopetski said after the hearing he remained optimistic the bill would be approved by Congress despite the administration's criticism.

"We hope to resolve their concerns," he said, adding he expects the subcommittee to pass the bill to the full committee in June.

Kopetski, who is retiring at the end of this term, said the Opal Creek section of the Willamette National Forest contains one of the largest intact stands of low-elevation old-growth in the Pacific Northwest. It includes some trees that are 1,000 years old and as large as 10 feet in diameter.

"Opal Creek is a special place that

deserves to be set aside for people to enjoy today and forever," Kopetski said Wednesday. "It is quite plainly, one of Oregon's and America's last uncut gems."

Kopetski's supporters include James Trappe, a forestry professor at Oregon State University, and Trygve Steen, a biology professor at Portland State University.

"We need this area in its natural state for the sustained yield of information it can give, as opposed to a few more board feet of lumber," Steen said.

Kopetski said that although Clinton's plan would make logging unlikely, a law approved by Congress would make protection of the area permanent.

"Forest preservation is tenuous as long as its security is based on the whims of succeeding administrations," said Kopetski, who would expand the administration's proposed protection at Opal Creek to include watershed lands for the little north fork of the Santiam River and French Creek.

George Atiyeh, preserve director for

Friends of Opal Creek in Mill City, said he first testified before Congress in support of protecting the area in 1974.

"This forest is of unique ecological significance because the entire watershed has been substantially untouched by logging and has been minimally impacted by recreation and development," Atiyeh said Wednesday.

Tom Hirons, who owns Mad Creek Logging Co. at nearby Gates, said Kopetski's bill "reflects a typical modern day tactic of the environmental movement by asking for more than what is necessary to do the job."

Hirons said Clinton's "promise to bring balance has only brought more dissension and confusion."

"The promise of financial aid and retraining is a cruel hoax to proud people who only want government to leave them alone," he said. "To us, the administration seems bent on carrying out its agenda for the Pacific Northwest regardless of the body count."

AIDS stats dominated by gay men

SEATTLE (AP) — In the Northwest, AIDS statistics are still dominated by men who have sex with men.

Nearly 80 percent of King County AIDS cases involved homosexual activity, compared with 54 percent nationally, the Seattle-King County Health Department reported.

The higher proportion of gay victims is found throughout the region, Bob Wood, medical director of the department's AIDS Prevention Project, said Wednesday, citing similar data from Portland and Vancouver, British Columbia.

The trend also affects rural numbers for AIDS, Wood said, though he noted many rural victims actually are infected in Seattle.

The numbers indicate AIDS-prevention information is not reaching those most at risk in the region, said health officials and gay activists attending a Monday conference, "Reinventing HIV Protection for Gay Men."

Of special concern are young gay men, more than half of whom will get the deadly acquired immune deficiency syndrome if current trends continue.

"It's very frightening that the average uninfected young gay man has a 50 percent chance of being infected by age 50," Wood said at the conference.

Nationally, nearly a quarter of AIDS cases affect heterosexual intravenous drug abusers, compared with just 5 percent here. Nationally, more than half of AIDS victims are members of minority groups, compared with 16 percent here. Heterosexual contact is blamed for 6 percent of AIDS cases nationally, compared with 2 percent here.

Local health officials say they can't explain the differences, but suspect they are partly attributable to the disease's relatively late arrival here. Additional lead time made it possible to curb AIDS' spread among some risk groups with such tactics as needle-exchange programs, which reduced the sharing of needles by infected drug abusers.

Cobain leaves no will; Love, child sole heirs

SEATTLE (AP) — Rock star Kurt Cobain, who committed suicide last month, apparently left no will behind, according to court papers.

That would make Cobain's widow, Courtney Love, and their 21-month-old daughter, Frances Bean Cobain, the sole heirs to his estate.

Love was appointed executor of Cobain's estate Friday by a King County Superior Court judge.

"Frankly, we're in the process of putting together the

inventory of assets," Love's attorney, Celeste Norris Mitchel of the Seattle law firm of Gores & Blais, said Tuesday.

The inventory must be filed in court, along with any debt claims, within four months.

Cobain amassed assets of at least \$1.2 million and ran up debts of less than \$740,000, according to court papers made public Tuesday. Mitchel would not say how those tallies were made, only that they were used to show the estate is solvent.

Thomas withdraws proposed rule

PORTLAND (AP) — Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas withdrew a controversial rule change Wednesday after receiving thousands of complaints.

"Many people were confused and upset about the intent of our proposed rule, and I'm sorry that happened," Thomas said in a statement issued in Washington, D.C. "We will respond with a new version for people to review."

The proposed rule change,

published in the Federal Register in February, was intended to give the Forest Service more leeway in responding to problems on the nation's 191 million acres of national forests and grasslands.

The change would have given forest supervisors increased law enforcement authority to ban firearms, alcohol and glass containers, and would have required permits to mine rocks and fossils.

However, many people wor-

ried that the change would interfere with legitimate recreation activities.

"I want to assure the public that the Forest Service has no intention of hampering legitimate recreation," Thomas said.

Forest managers today face increasing law enforcement problems, such as gang violence, drug use and cultivation and theft of public resources, including trees and archaeological treasures.

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