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Fasting: Local teens join strike efforts for weekend

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more than 13 local high school students joined them in their hunger strike to oppose "logging without laws." Braving nighttime temperatures in the lower 30s and frequent rainfall during the day, the students said they would stay in support of the strike until classes resumed Monday.

"We believe in what we're doing, so it's worth it," said Laurel Rose, 16. "I hope it makes a statement that anyone and everyone can join in and that this is a message to continue the cause."

Molly Keogh, 15, said she joined the strike because she believes it symbolizes what has been happening recently throughout the timber industry. "We consume food mindlessly, and that is what is happening to our forests," she said. "They're being logged mindlessly and the consequences aren't being thought about."

Hunger strikes such as this and other forms of protest are increasing throughout the Pacific Northwest as the backlash from an emergency timber salvage rider signed into law by President Clinton last July continues. The rider, part of a larger budget-cutting bill approved by Congress, exempts certain salvage projects from major environmental laws like the National Environmental Protection Act and has placed a sharp splinter between environmentalists and the timber industry.

Locally, activists have formed a permanent camp atop Warner Creek, an arson-burned area near Oakridge. They say they

"This isn't just an Oregon problem anymore. It's now a nationwide problem."

— Shannon Wilson
 Hunger Striker

will resort to civil disobedience if needed to stop loggers from entering the site. Their concern is that allowing salvage logging in the 9,000-acre fire area will encourage arsonists to set more fires as a way of getting more timber to area mills. As it stands now, the Forest Service has yet to cross the activists' camp.

Although he declined to say whether he would participate in civil disobedience acts himself, Wilson said he neither condones or condemns them but would likely end the hunger strike within the next day or two.

"I see this hunger strike as actually being the highest and strongest form of disobedience against a law that destroys all remaining ancient forests," Wilson said. "But since I no longer have any body fat left, it's time to say my health is at risk and to end the hunger strike."

Regardless of where they go next, Wilson and Ream say they will continue to spread their views on current forestry issues and will work to get student groups from other states to form a national campaign protesting logging from coast to coast.

"This isn't just an Oregon problem anymore," Wilson said. "It's now a nationwide problem."

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