

Environmentalists in training prepare to defend forests

■ ACTIVISTS: Workshops are being held in order to familiarize newcomers with protest tactics

OAKRIDGE (AP) — Environmentalists from across the nation are in training to become "forest defenders" east of here at a rough-hewn hillside fortress dubbed "Cascadia Free State."

Some U.S. Forest Service officials derisively call it "Disneyland on the hill."

Here, activists are attending workshops with names such as "blockading techniques," "cat and mouse games," and "When the Freddie Knocks" — a reference to the arrival of federal law enforcement agents.

The activists believe they soon will be called upon to use their new skills when the Thomas Creek Logging & Lumber Co. begins logging the Warner Creek fire area.

When that happens, activists will climb trees throughout the 9,000-acre forest, said Greg Kahl, a veteran of more than six years of protests over logging of the Northwest's remaining old-growth forests.

There they'll stay, equipped

with food and water, sleeping bag, books and perhaps a cellular phone until they are forcibly removed or run out of food and water — or all the trees around them have been cut down.

But Kahl and others who have maintained a vigil since last September say they won't let loggers into the area that was burned in a 1991 arson fire.

At least not without the resistance they say Warner Creek deserves as the "focal point" in the war over the Northwest's old growth forests and the salvage logging rider passed by Congress.

"I guarantee you — there will be hundreds of people putting their bodies on the line out here," says Tim Ream, a 34-year-old environmental activist who has become a national figure in the wake of his 75-day hunger strike last year to protest the salvage rider.

"For every person in this camp today, there are dozens more in town and across the Northwest who have already trained and know what to do when the moment of truth arrives," Ream says.

Neither the Forest Service or the logging company that bought the timber are saying when logging will begin.

"I would assume it should be

some time fairly soon," says Patti Rogers, a spokeswoman for the Willamette National Forest in Eugene. Rogers says the area is closed to logging for reasons of wildlife protection through the end of June.

The Forest Service has been monitoring the protesters but does not intend to remove them until logging is ready to begin, she says.

"Otherwise it's a tremendous strain on our resources. Our experience with this sort of entrenchment is that you can bring the protesters out but they will go to court and be back out there the next day. It's better to wait."

Although Forest Service officials have taken a hands-off approach to date, they warn activists already face prosecution for violations ranging from trespassing to destruction of government property.

"In some cases, we're talking more than trespassing — we're talking about felonies," Rogers says. "Our intent is to prosecute the people up there to full extent possible for the damage that has been done and that taxpayers will have to pay for to repair."

The damage includes a series of trenches that activists dug in the road after a federal judge in Eu-

gene ruled the Forest Service had a right to log timber from the area.

Once only a few feet across, the trenches have grown to more than 20 feet wide and 15 feet deep at some points. Elsewhere along the road are barricades of rocks and downed trees, and tall tripods on which protesters intend to perch in an effort to halt oncoming heavy equipment.

Chains dangle off activists' arms and from tent posts in the camp. Protests intend to use these to "lock down," which means placing their arms into plastic pipes inserted into concrete-filled 55-gallon drums and locking themselves to rebar, that is anchored deep into the ground.

By the middle of last week, there were more than 70 people in camp, their small dome tents sprinkled along the roadway and on the hillsides above the gate.

Vehicles are parked a mile below the log fort on the other side of a large new barricade made of boulders and logs. License plates bear testimony to Warner Creek's high profile in the nation's environmental community — there are cars and trucks from Virginia, Illinois, New York, Nebraska, Vermont, Connecticut and New Mexico.

The protesters are a diverse group, many of them drawn by national news coverage of the Warner protest in news media ranging from The New York Times to CBS' "60 Minutes."

John Garrett, 40, is a former business law professor at the University of Nebraska. He arrived last week and plans to stay "however long it takes to save this patch of trees."

Kelli Komiss, 22, a recent graduate from University of Texas, came last week with friend, but admits she wasn't much of an environmentalist. "All I ever did was a little recycling and composting."

But Komiss says her brief stay at Warner Creek has made her a believer.

"When the Forest Service comes, I want to be right there in the front," she says. "I'm willing to be arrested — the law doesn't mean much to me any more. Not when there's something like this at stake."

A few participants joke and laugh through the exercises. But most seem solemn, even grim at times. It's a reflection of what they say is a growing conviction that "the Freddie" will soon come knocking at Warner Creek.

Police find woman suspected of abandoning newborn in restaurant parking lot

■ WITNESSES: Customers in McDonald's saw a woman carrying a bundle wrapped in paper

TUKWILA, Wash. (AP) — A 20-year-old University of Washington student was being questioned Monday in the abandonment of a newborn baby in a trash can at a McDonald's parking lot.

The full-term baby boy was found about 7:30 a.m., shortly after his birth — apparently in a restroom, police said.

He had suffered a fractured skull and was in intensive care at Children's Hospital in Seattle. He was in serious but stable condition Monday afternoon, hospital spokesman Dean Forbes said.

A young woman was arrested Monday afternoon on the University of Washington campus, said Assistant Police Chief Keith Haines in this south Seattle suburb.

"She, we believe, is the mother of the child found this morning," Haines said.

She made comments, overheard by the medics who examined her, indicating she

had given birth in a parking lot earlier in the day, Haines said. The medics "didn't believe she was in any medical danger," he said.

Haines declined to release her name before authorities had determined how to proceed in the case. He said she likely would be held in the King County jail after police had finished questioning her.

Charges would be determined by King County prosecutors.

Witnesses at the restaurant reported seeing a young Asian woman with blood on

her legs carrying a bundle wrapped in paper and plastic, Haines said.

Those witnesses also gave authorities the license-plate number of a car the woman was seen getting into. Witness reports indicate another woman may have been driving the vehicle.

Police traced the car to the Kent home of the student's parents, who directed them to the University of Washington, Haines said. Campus police helped Tukwila officers locate the car in a campus parking lot and find the student.

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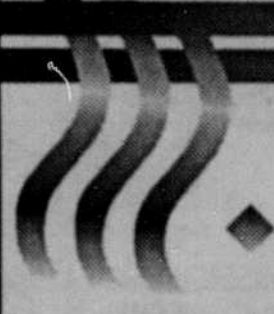
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