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Protesters object to new trail-fee system

The Associated Press

BEND — In the melting snow of Mount Bachelor, activists painted a 300-foot dollar sign with green food coloring to protest a trail-fee system approved for federal lands.

The snow-painting was part of a rally Sunday by 50 people from the Wild Wilderness organization, which believes the Forest Service and other federal agencies, in partnership with some corporations, intend to make people pay to enjoy the woods.

The fees, approved for federal lands in 1996, now cover hundreds of trailheads and other recreation spots across the country. Federal officials say the money helps maintain and improve related recreational facilities.

Protest organizer Scott Silver of Bend said the fees are the first step in a corporate-driven scheme to accustom the public to paying for the great outdoors. The ultimate aim, he said, is to allow corporations to develop and operate recreational facilities on federal land, essentially turning campgrounds into mini-resorts.

"The Forest Service now speaks of recreation as a product," he told the sign-carrying crowd. "We are no longer own-

ers. We're customers." But Federal officials say the fees, generally \$3 for a day of hiking, are needed to boost recreation budgets. The trial trail-fee system, due to expire after next season if Congress does not extend it, is supposed to return 80 percent of the money collected to the agency for use on recreation facilities.

Terri Gates, spokeswoman for the Deschutes National Forest, said her forest is able to spend about \$120,000 more this year for trail maintenance and other projects because of fees collected last season. The forest has used the money to reroute four trails, rebuild four pedestrian bridges, install about 1,200 water bars to combat trail erosion, and remove hazardous trees from trailheads.

"We were able to do an awful lot of stuff with the trail-fee funds," she said.

Some rally participants said the fiscal argument is just a smoke screen.

The Forest Service, Silver said, no longer sees itself as a timber, mining and grazing agency, but as a seller of recreation.

"Understand, the Forest Service is desperate for a new business," he said. "It's going to be industrial-strength recreation."

Japanese: Sylwester enjoys UO

Continued from Page 1
pointless to learn the language and never get a chance to use it."

When asked about the college experience, Eva said her classmates are nice, and she has a good professor, Nancy Iwakawa. Eva said that being the young one on campus hasn't affected her.

"It's really not that big of a deal," Eva said. "Everybody knows that I'm younger."

"It's OK, I just wish I had a little more free time," she said about her summer school experience. Otherwise she'd just be "hanging out."

Eva said she is looking forward to taking her Japanese knowledge into the world and doing something great with it. At such a young age, Eva is finding a niche. And so far Eva said she's enjoying it.

Walking with her father across campus, Eva announced she still has more goals to conquer.

"I'm going to learn guitar now," she said with a giggle.

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Information Session Tuesday, July 28th
EMU, Century Room F at 3pm

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