

Clinton forest plan inspires praise, criticism

■ The President's new protection plan will safeguard forest roads, but critics say not soon enough

By Lisa Toth
Oregon Daily Emerald

Members of OSPIRG said a recent road management policy approved by the Clinton Administration is a step in the right direction to protect national forest land, but the policy still has some weaknesses.

The policy will protect forest land in Alaska's Tongass National Forest, and members of OSPIRG, the Oregon student chapter of the national Public Interest Research Group, have been actively lobbying for the forest's protection since the beginning of the school year.

The policy, intended to halt commercial logging and prohibit road construction on 49.2 million acres of timber, was approved Jan. 4 by Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck. Since then, there have been conflicting reactions from OSPIRG members and logging company representatives.

The original plan, begun in January 1998, caused concern from PIRG because it did not effectively address road building in the national forests. OSPIRG members said the new policy is a success, but it still has a few loopholes.

"It is the largest wilderness protection act since the national parks were set aside in 1907," OSPIRG campus organizer Jessica Smetana said.

OSPIRG, which handles issues involving the environment, public safety and health, has focused attention on educating students at the University about the National Heritage Forests Campaign through distributing information and showing movies.

"I hope people become more aware of the issue of the forest plan," said Venus Killen, OSPIRG's forest project coordinator for the National Heritage Forests Campaign. "[Students] might want to contribute to preserving the forests."

U.S. PIRG member Tiernan Sittenfeld said the U.S. Forest Service received 1.5 million letters, faxes and e-mails from the public during the course of this summer's nine-week public comment period regarding the original plan. Ninety-five percent of those comments

supported full protection for roadless areas on national forest lands.

OSPIRG members joined the national mission when they flooded the White House switchboard in October to make the Clinton administration aware that PIRG members wanted full protection of all forests under the policy. They spent a day outside the EMU with cell phones and encouraged passing students to place a call to the switchboard.

Killen, a freshman environmental studies and sociology major, said her main criticism is that the Tongass National Forest won't be fully protected until 2004.

"We would like [the policy] to include the Tongass right away and to define stewardship logging," Killen said.

Sittenfeld said stewardship logging, the practice of cutting trees for forest health reasons, is responsible for two-thirds of the timber cut from the national forests.

The Boise Cascade Corporation, a lumber company in Idaho, owns more than 2 million acres of timberland that supports its manufacturing operations. Boise Cascade Spokesman Mike Moser said the policy will limit the company's amount of timber harvesting.

"The U.S. Forest Service were rule-making a process that was predetermined," Moser said. "It was implemented too fast and without proper analysis, and it was totally one-sided."

Moser said the U.S. Forest Service ignored requests that more time be spent investigating and more information be gathered about the policy before it was approved. While the policy doesn't allow road building, Moser said roads already exist in roadless areas. He also said evidence shows forests are not healthy but are overgrown.

"More aggressive management and thinning is necessary to prevent devastating forest fires — like the fire this summer — and this plan won't allow this to happen," Moser said.

Boise Cascade, coalition partners and other Northwestern lumber companies believe the Clinton Administration has gone beyond its authority. Moser said the administration is taking actions that should be made by the U.S. Congress.

The final record of Clinton's decision is expected later this month.

ing during the past few years but has recently experienced financial trouble and has racked up significant debt.

Michael Lamont, owner of the Bijou Art Cinema, said he recalled the McDonald Theatre's recent effort to change operation with a new strategy.

"A year or so ago, they toyed with the idea of showing mature, arty-type of films," Lamont said.

But that strategy was unsuccessful.

"(The McDonald Theatre) was identified as an under-performing location and was targeted for closure," Regal spokesman Dick Westerling said. "The industry is overscreened as a whole, and as a part of our reconstruction, we're reviewing theaters on a case-by-case and market-by-market basis."

Eugene's other Regal theaters have been performing relatively well and aren't likely to close in the near future, Westerling said.

The new forest road policy:

Prohibits most road construction on 49.2 million acres of timber. This number will be increased to 58.5 million acres in April 2004 when the Tongass National Forest will be included in the policy.

Prohibits timber harvesting except for defined stewardship purposes.

Allows road construction when necessary for public safety and resource protection.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service

Forest Facts:

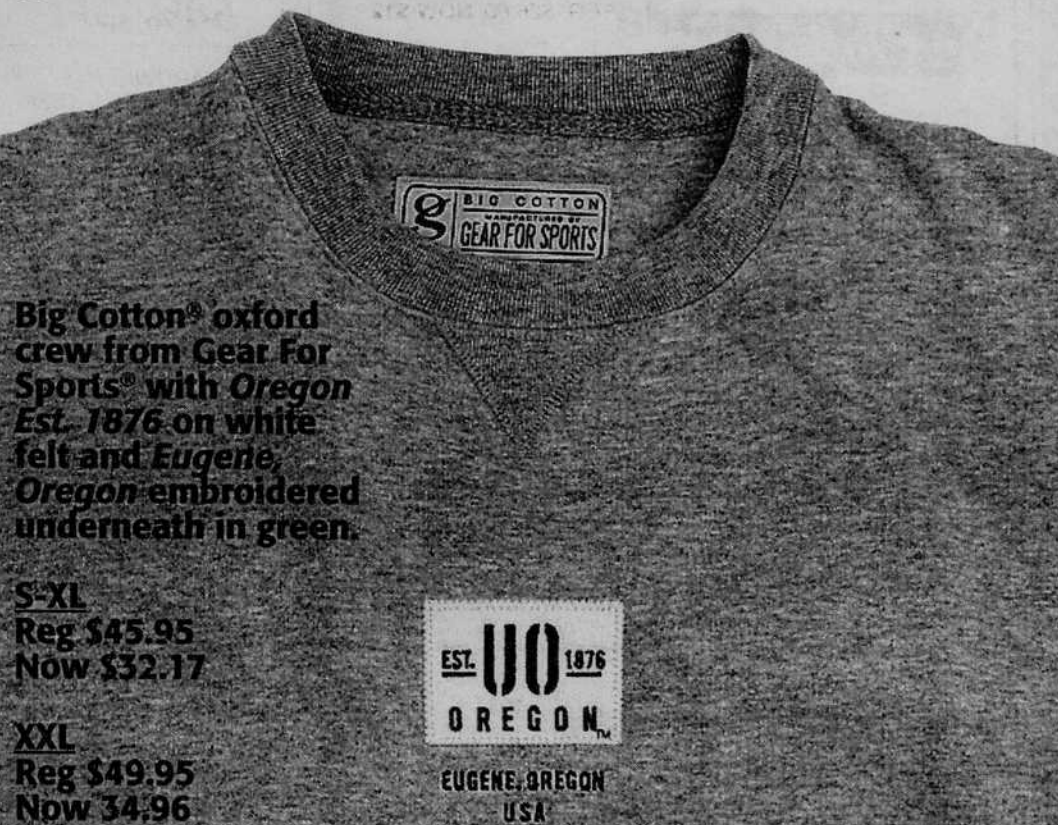
About 15,000 logging vehicles use forest roads daily — about the same number as in 1950.

In contrast, an estimated 1.7 million vehicles travel forest roads for recreation on a daily basis, which is 10 times greater than in 1950.

The new forest road policy is available on the Web at roadless.fs.fed.us

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service

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"There might be a time when a person could roam between three venues and see on video screens what's happening on the other stages," he said. "The loss of this theater would be the return of the theater. It was originally constructed as a vaudeville theater."

The 75-year-old McDonald Theatre was originally the city's grand theater. It is a Eugene historic landmark and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Its exotic design, high ceilings and spacious lobby are emblematic of the colorful architecture of the Roaring '20s.

Regal Cinemas has operated the theater since 1993 and runs two other Eugene theaters, including Cinema World 8 near the Valley River Center and Movieland 6 in West Eugene.

Regal has been rapidly expand-

Black & white and READ all over campus.

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