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Making conservation history

■ The Oregon Wilderness Conference will emphasize protecting Oregon's forests

By Jessica Cagle for the Emerald

The Oregon Natural Resources Council has a mission: "to aggressively protect and restore Oregon's wild lands, wildlife and waters as an enduring legacy." In keeping with that goal, the organization is co-sponsoring, along with eight other environmental groups, the first annual Oregon Wilderness Conference.

"Standing Tall: Protecting Oregon's Wild Forests" will be held at Lane Community College April 27-29.

Leanne Siart, ONRC's Conservation and Outreach Coordinator, says that public involvement is the key.

"The conference is aimed at educating and motivating people to participate in forest wilderness conservation," she said.

The Wilderness Conference will bring several organizations under one roof, each with a specific interest in protecting Oregon's diverse wilderness areas. Bill Marlett, Executive Director of the Oregon Natural Desert Association, explained that while the emphasis of the conference is on forest protection, "the underlying theme is wilderness protection."

Conference co-sponsors have organized steering meetings over the course of the year to ensure the event is a success. "This is a statewide effort. This conference is going to be a public expression of support to protect the last wild places in Oregon," said Ric Bailey, Executive Director of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council.

According to the ONRC, only 3 percent of Oregon's wild forests are protected as wilderness. To help guard the rest of the state's wilderness, ONRC, along with more than 10 other environmental groups, formed the Oregon Wilderness Coalition (OWC) beginning the Oregon Wild Campaign. Since then, the OWC has mapped and completed inventory on roadless areas of 1,000 acres or more around the state. The results of these efforts will be unveiled at the conference in a proposal to protect 5 million

acres of Oregon's wild forests.

The three-day conference will feature speakers, panel discussions and workshops, as well as music and entertainment. Topics are diverse: "Women in the Wilderness Movement," the "Media's Perspective on Wilderness Issues," "Carnivores in the Cascades," fire management, grassroots organizing and drinking water. Keynote speakers include Gloria Flora, director of Sustainable Options in Montana; Elizabeth Furse, retired U.S. Rep. From Oregon's 1st District, known for her support of environmental issues; Robert Freimark, director of the Pacific Northwest region of the Wilderness Society; and Chris Wood, senior advisor to the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service.

Melissa Unger, a senior at UO and campus organizer of OSPIRG, explained what a unique opportunity it is that this conference will happen in Eugene. ONRC expects about 200 people at the conference, which costs \$55 for the weekend (including meals). Registration for Saturday events is \$25.

Siart encourages the public to take advantage of this opportunity to be a part of what she calls "conservation history in the making."

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SBS

continued from page 4B

aware that the public is demanding more from them when it comes to environmental stewardship. The symposium provides ideas and guidance for business seeking to learn more about sustainability. "There is substantial evidence that the movement toward environmentally and socially responsible business practices has gained strength over the past decade. "In the early 1990s, I felt like corporate ecology seminars were quite a bit like pulling teeth. At the end of the decade, I felt like a wave had gone right over my head. The wave of activity was greening businesses," said John Baldwin, SBS faculty adviser.

"Sustainable" or "green" business means different things to different people. A common interest is in improving environmental performance while maintaining healthy profits. For most corporations, incorporating sustainability into business practices is an incremental and dynamic process. Dole Food Company, the world's largest producer of foods and vegetables, recently announced they would sell certified organic bananas. Patagonia has taken a recent stand against genetically engineered products. Coca-Cola Co. is currently responding to a group of socially concerned shareholders who want to see more post-consumer plastic used in their bottles.

For a select group of businesses, the commitment to sustainability rises above all other priorities. Genesis Juice, for example, is a Eugene employee-owned cooperative that sells fresh organic juice in reusable containers. Indigo Teiwes-Cain, a Research Analyst for Progressive Investment Management in Portland, and former SBS Board member said, "Portfolio 21, our global mutual fund focusing on environmental sustainability, currently holds over 40 publicly traded companies that meet our rigorous screening criteria. These are companies that are going far beyond 'responsibility' and 'stewardship' by recognizing the impending ecological crisis and innovating new ways to change how they do business so they can be ahead of the curve."

Sustainable Business Symposium

It's never too early to think about the Fifth Annual Sustainable Business Symposium which will be held November 9-11 at the University campus in Eugene. The program includes nationally recognized keynote speakers, panels, workshops and an exposition of businesses engaged in sustainable activities. In conjunction with SBS, the Institute for Sustainable Ethics and Economics and the Willamette Valley Business Alliance will co-sponsor The Natural Step Workshop, a sustainability training for community leaders.

In addition to fulfilling an urgent need for dialogue in the business community, there is also a need for us, as students, to hear first-hand the problems of business and community leaders as they share their experiences, their failures and their successes. Kathy Lynn, current PPPM graduate student and former SBS Board member: "The Sustainable Business Symposium provides University students with opportunities to engage in activities that are at the forefront of initiatives in Oregon, national issues, and of global concern. Through the symposium, students have the opportunity to learn about the different strategies being undertaken by corporations, non-profits and other organizations, and interact with inspiring innovators in the field of sustainable business."

Defining "sustainable business" is an ongoing discussion. As planners of the SBS, we strive to constrain our vision of sustainability to a strict set of criteria, and to include the most committed businesses in our planning. However, it is also important to recognize incremental change in companies which are working toward sustainability. We hope to encourage all businesses and individuals to broaden their vision of what is possible as we work towards a healthy planet.

If you are interested in learning more about the Sustainable Business Symposium, or in participating in planning for the 2001 Symposium, please email sbs@darkwing.uoregon.edu, or call (541) 346-0670 and leave a message.

You can also check out the SBS Web site at <http://www.uoregon.edu/~sbs>.

Robyn Scofield is a member of the board of directors of the Sustainable Business Symposium.