

Symposium speakers discuss threats to national forests

Keynote speakers Marc Fink and Andy Stahl discussed the value of forests and the struggle to keep them safe

By Caron Alarab
Senior News Reporter

Since the war against wildfires began more than a century ago, more than 900 lives have been lost, professional forester Andy Stahl said at the 13th Environmental Law Symposium Thursday.

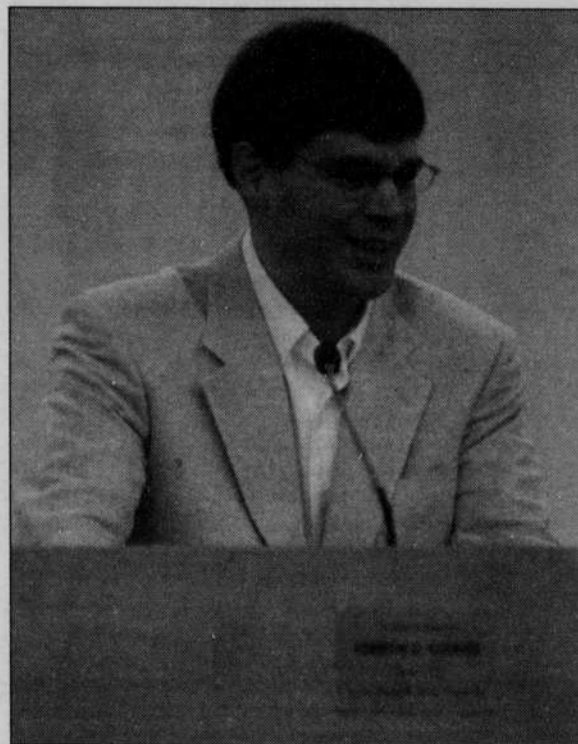
"But this war cannot be won," said Stahl, executive director of the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics.

Stahl was one of two keynote speakers at the symposium, which drew about 50 students, faculty and community members. The symposium, organized by the University's Journal of Environmental Law and Litigation, focused on the environmental risks and commercial implications of wildfires in the country.

Stahl compared the struggle to save forests with the struggles of America's past wars. From the airborne battle tactics of Vietnam to the fueled conflicts in the Persian Gulf, Stahl equated the art of war to the tools of modern firefighting, including hazardous, fire retardant chemicals and back fires. And even if he didn't offer an answer to the "wildfire war," Stahl did provide an alternative: To clear vegetation surrounding homes in high risk areas and ultimately making those homes fireproof.

"When you've moved people out of harm's way, you've ended the war," he said at the end of his half-hour-long speech. "Let's withdraw from it honorably."

The second keynote speaker, Marc Fink, who is a staff attorney of the Western Environmental Law Center, gave a detailed presentation on the Forest Service's refusal to assess the negative effects of post-fire timber sales.



Marc Fink, of the Western Environmental Law Center, lectures to students and faculty concerning international, national and regional environmental issues Thursday evening.
Lauren Wimer
Photographer

"The Forest Service has lost the battle by shifting to logging forests to prevent future fires," Fink said. "Hence, the timber industry's voice is louder than that of conservationists."

Fink said time-consuming "snags" inherent in injunction and appeal processes distract courts from the accelerating pace of post-fire logging.

He said it is important for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service to disclose more information to the public about risks related to fire fighting methods.

"Historically, wildfires are not widely questioned by the general public," he said. "If all this can get disclosed to the public, perhaps the Forest Service's methods will change."

The symposium ended earlier than expected due to a last-minute cancellation by the third keynote speaker, Scott Horngren, an attorney who has represented the timber companies in post-fire timber sale cases.

JELL editor Daniel Ellison, who coordinated the event with fellow editor Lan Nguyen, said it took about four months to decide on a symposium topic and invite recommended experts to speak on related issues.

Participants had several questions for the forest fire experts. The majority of questions centered on Fink's case against post-fire timber sales and the Forest Service's refusal to disclose risks associated with the use of flame-retardant chemicals.

While disclosure might not win the war, Stahl said, it should strike a blow for public interest.

"If we succeed in (making the Forest Service disclose this information), they will have to explain all their other tactics of firefighting," he said.

Contact the business/science/technology reporter at caronalarab@dailyemerald.com.

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down one, to eight, one could perhaps think that choosing whom to endorse would be that much easier, which is not the case.

The announcement that Carol Moseley Braun has withdrawn and given her support to Howard Dean does not change things. Braun withdrew because she was not going to win, and endorsing Dean does not mean the few who were going to vote for her will in fact vote for him.

To be brutally honest and completely undemocratic, citizens need to vote for the person who is most likely to win the nomination and who can be tolerated. Voting for Al Sharpton because one agrees with all his viewpoints is perfectly acceptable, but voting for another candidate who could actually win the Democratic nomination and who has similar beliefs is the wiser move. This goes against the democratic establishment the country was founded on, yes, but it can actually net better results.

The Democrat who faces George W. Bush will have his work cut out for

him. The war in Iraq is a success, at least by the standard that Saddam Hussein has been captured. The War on Terrorism is a success, at least by the standard that the United States has not been attacked again. The economy is indeed in trouble, but Democratic candidates committed to repealing tax breaks and increasing social services do not seem capable of reversing the situation.

What those in the Democratic party need to decide are what issues are most important to them and to what extent those areas can be improved by someone other than Bush.

The areas of most concern should clearly be: A) Height, B) Tie selection and C) Ease with which one can say the candidate's name.

According to unscientific research, Bush is 6 feet tall. Only John Kerry (6'4"), Dick Gephardt (6'1") and John Edwards (6'0") can stand up to Bush.

When it comes to tie selection, President Bush wins, hands down. The subtle blues and striking reds often work so well with his suits that one has to wonder whether Barbara has stopped dressing her son.

The final factor — names — will

truly determine the next president of the United States. Gephardt loses here because he has too many tricky consonants and because, as a practice, people named Dick don't tend to make popular politicians. Kerry — a John from Massachusetts — can use his Kennedy-like style only so far. But when push comes to shove, will Americans really want President Carrie negotiating for them?

So there it is: Edwards. He's equally as tall as the incumbent. He can't beat W's tie selection. But Edwards is a good, strong name.

Except no one knows anything about him, and he has no shot at winning.

Which means four more years of Shrub.

The point here is not to belittle the candidates, democracy or the importance of voting. The message is to vote for whom you believe is the best candidate, based on your own criteria. Listening to others will only get you so far.

Contact editor in chief Brad Schmidt at editor@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

Applebaum, University student Lach Litwer and representatives of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Lane County are putting on the workshop.

Those interested in attending should contact Applebaum at hal@oregonhillel.org.

— Jared Paben

NEWS BRIEF

Oregon Hillel will host two free Israel workshops designed to provide a "training opportunity for people who want to learn how to stand by Israel while working for peace," according to a release from Executive Director of Oregon Hillel Hal Applebaum.

The forums will look at "critical aspects" of Israel's history and methods of educating people about Israel despite rampant misinformation in society.

Participants will also receive a free copy of the book "The Case for Israel" by Alan Dershowitz.

The workshops are scheduled for Jan. 28 and Feb. 4 at 5 p.m. at the Hillel House, located at 1059 Hilyard St.

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