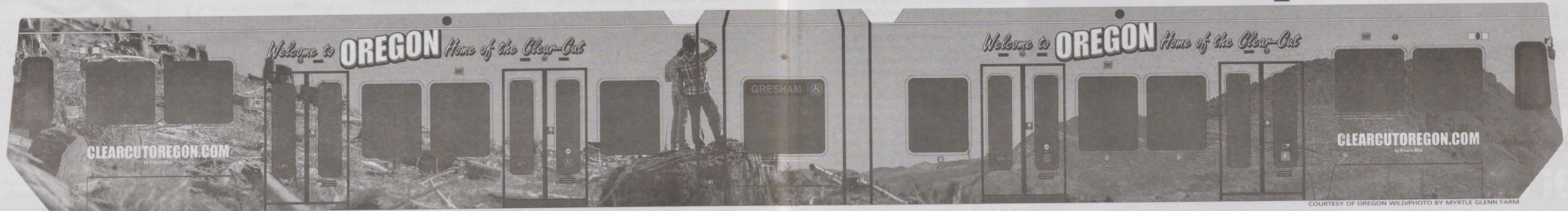


Oregon Wild hopes its bold new ad campaign will remind Portlanders that clear-cutting is still rampant in the state



Relaunching its "Welcome to Oregon, Home of the Clear-Cut," Oregon Wild has taken out an advertisement that covers the side of a MAX train in Portland.

BY EMILY GREEN
SENIOR STAFF REPORTER

Throughout March, a giant photo of a clear-cut forest will confront Portland commuters as it rolls around the city on the side of a MAX train.

That's because Oregon Wild has relaunched its "Welcome to Oregon, Home of the Clear-Cut" campaign in a big way, using a MAX train car and 20 TriMet buses to show Portlanders what's happening in Oregon forests.

While Oregon Wild is a nonprofit based in Portland, its campaign is aimed at elevating the voices of rural Oregonians. They are outraged over the impact industrial clear-cutting has on their drinking water sources and the habitat that surrounds their homes, said Jason Gonzales, the organization's forest and watershed campaign organizer. Gonzales has spent the past seven years living in the heart of the Oregon Coast Range and organizing with other rural Oregonians on environmental issues.

"Welcome to Oregon, Home of the Clear-Cut" was originally launched in 2013, when Oregon Wild took out ads in the form of giant postcards that would hang at the Portland and Eugene airports, showing travelers images of clear-cuts when they got off their planes. While the ad ran briefly in Eugene, the Port of Portland, which operates Portland International Airport, rejected the campaign.

In response, Oregon Wild teamed up with the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon and filed a lawsuit. In June, the Oregon Court of Appeals upheld a lower-court decision barring the port authority from rejecting ads for political reasons.

The ruling also applied to public transit, so when deciding whether to move forward with the airport ads, Oregon Wild saw an opportunity to get more bang for its buck with TriMet.

Street Roots spoke with Gonzales in the days leading up to the campaign launch to find out why Oregon Wild has undertaken this bold campaign now and what it wants Portlanders to know about Oregon's forests.

Gonzales, a lifelong environmental activist, lives about halfway between Eugene and Florence on a 150-acre forest property that borders both publicly and privately managed

forests. He became concerned about Oregon's forest practices after witnessing the impact clear-cuts and aerial spraying was having on his watershed and on his neighbors, he said.

Environmental watchdogs like Oregon Wild can be perceived as anti-logging extremists, but Gonzales stresses that this campaign isn't about stopping logging; it's about finding more ecologically responsible ways to extract wood products from our forests.

From his time working as a logger and in Oregon mills, Gonzales said, he's learned there are ways to do forestry without going to the extremes of clear-cutting, and that's what Oregon Wild is advocating for.

Emily Green: What is it that you want Portlanders to know about clear-cutting in Oregon?

Jason Gonzales: There are a few components to it. One is that clear-cutting is rampant in Oregon. When I do events or talk to people in Portland, and even sometimes in Eugene, it's always shocking how often people say, "We don't clear-cut in Oregon anymore, do we?" I always have to ask that person if they've gotten out of the city in the last five years.

I think that what happens is when people are on the highways or when they're on the coast, they may not necessarily look up very much, and they're focused on what's right around them. One of the messages for the city-based folks is that a lot of this state is still being clear-cut on a regular basis. They think that this is something we fixed with the famous timber wars of the '90s, when a lot of public lands got better protections, but that other half of Oregon's land that's private is still being clear-cut.

The second component is, right now there's a huge push from the logging industry to use cross-laminated timber and mass timber products that are being used in Portland's buildings and to paint them as this new green product. It's something that we really want to challenge.

(Cross-laminated timber is formed when multiple layers of lumber are fused together with glue under high pressure and high temperature, making a building material that can be used in place of steel or concrete in



Jason Gonzales stands in his front yard in Walton, in the Oregon Coast Range, with his dog Truffles.

tall buildings.)

Up until two years ago, to have a new project certified as LEED certified and as a sustainable building project, the wood sourcing had to come from forests that were certified by the Forest Stewardship Council as FSC-certified logging. About two years ago, with a major push from the logging industry, that requirement was actually removed, and there's no longer a real sustainability requirement when it comes to wood sourcing for LEED or other sustainably certified buildings.

Right now there's a number of examples in Portland where not only is the cross-laminated timber or mass timber or wood

regulations in the region and a lot of this wood is being sourced from clear-cuts that are harming watersheds in rural Oregon, we can't celebrate that.

This is a reminder to Portlanders that just because an industry wants to call something green or sustainable, doesn't mean that it is. And we want to make sure that folks are paying attention to that this coming month.

E.G.: The image on the MAX train is pretty dystopian. Whereabouts in Oregon might people see large swaths of land that have been wiped clean like that?

J.G.: In my experience, you see it anytime you head to the coast from the valley. There's a lot of places that have been hidden behind gates, that are probably the worst of the worst, or that are hidden far up these really complex logging road systems.

There's nowhere that's really hammered quite as heavy as a few specific places: The Jetty Creek Watershed right above Rockaway Beach, where around 90 percent of the watershed has been clear-cut just in the last 15 to 20 years. We just today shared on social media a GIF that I made that's a 16-year time-lapse of Southwest Clatsop County, it went from Seaside, Arch Cape and Cannon Beach, that shows this really devastating level of logging where you can really see over a 16-year period almost the entire landscape becomes in a state of either being clear-cut or recently clear-cut. (See the time-lapse image at news.streetroots.org/loggingGIF.)

Other areas in similar condition would include the Siletz Gorge, especially the upper Siletz Gorge. But we also see it a lot just a few miles north or south of our major coastal routes because the highways are really great corridors to move the logs, but they do try to keep the most clear-cut landscapes a little bit out of view. I very often turn off and head north or south from the coastal highways to look for these places.

Near the Portland area, one of the most visible examples, where you can see it from the car as you're driving, is when you head west on Highway 26 and head down Highway 53, that goes through the upper Nehalem. That's an area where I think people would see.

But the best way for folks from Portland that don't get out a lot to have a chance to see this is to pull up Google Earth and look at any portion of the Coast Range, other than the Siuslaw National Forest, and I think they'll see exactly what we're showing in those pictures just using satellite imagery, which these days are really up to date. Usually those images are taken within the last year.

E.G.: Are there enough sustainable, or FSC certified, forests in Oregon to support a growing cross-laminated timber industry?

J.G.: That's a tough question. Oregon has less FSC-certified acres than any of our neighboring states. And this is a major problem. There's the supply problem and the demand problem. The reason there's not many FSC-certified acres in Oregon is because we have a model currently where more of these small woodlot owners are being eaten up by the Wall Street corporations.

One of things that we'd like to see is, instead of the state of Oregon spending money to call cross-laminated timber "green" – giving tax breaks to Weyerhaeuser because they own over 5,000 acres and spending millions of dollars in taxpayer money letting the Oregon Forest Resources Institute brag about the clear-cutting practices that we do have, (such as replanting trees after a clear-cut) – we would like to see the state of Oregon and the logging industry in Oregon do more work to support folks like Hyla Woods and Zena Forest Products and the others in Oregon who are trying to do a better job by their forests and watersheds.

There's a systemic need from our industry and from our government to do a total 180 and instead of trying to cut down on our FSC acres, to build them up. The FSC operators that I work with in the state are really good folks. They're always out there trying to spread the good word of better stewardship, and they are just really met with resistance and attacks from the industry and a state that's too willing to defend the status quo of clear-cutting and spraying.

E.G.: Are there any large-scale FSC forests

See CLEAR-CUT, page 11

"One of the messages for the city-based folks is that a lot of this state is still being clear-cut on a regular basis. They think that this is something we fixed with the famous timber wars of the '90s, when a lot of public lands got better protections, but that other half of Oregon's land that's private is still being clear-cut."

JASON GONZALES,
FOREST AND WATERSHED
CAMPAIGN ORGANIZER,
OREGON WILD



A clear-cut along Oregon Highway 26 west of Portland.

THE FORESTER'S DILEMMA

While many of the big players in America's timber industry today are risking the future viability of our forests, a growing network of timber company operators are trying to manage their forests for both the timber that brings them money and the ecological benefits that do not. Read Street Roots' previous coverage at news.streetroots.org/timberdilemma