

# Fear of Forestry

OPB documentary looks at innovation in timber industry.

EW invited Eric Cain, producer of OPB's documentary *The Oregon Story: Rethinking the Forests*, to respond to a news brief Nov. 17 in which local environmentalists were highly critical of the film's content and government funding.

**W**hat at OPB actively publicize the fact that the "Oregon Story" series has been funded by money from USDA Rural Development – each program begins and ends with a credit to that effect. These grants have been a real boon for us, and we're grateful for them.



Having worked on the series since the beginning, producing nine of the 20 episodes, I can say with certainty that we have never, ever, not once, at any time, in any way, shape or form, experienced even a hint of editorial influence from the USDA or anyone affiliated with it. No one there has ever suggested editorial direction nor have we ever discussed it with them; we have never screened advance copies of shows for them, nor have they ever asked to see them. USDA approval or disapproval is simply not – nor has ever been – a factor we consider when making content decisions, period.

I think that raising questions about possible funder influence on content is good – I'd do the same. But the answer is: Our funder, the USDA, has had none.

In that same vein, the OPB staff has been quite unhappy with recent (and hopefully failed) attempts to politicize the programming of PBS via its funding entity, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). Our own CEO, Maynard Orme, is one of the network's most adamant and outspoken critics of those efforts. OPB gets plenty of calls and mail alleging that we're either lackeys of the Liberal Media Agenda or mouthpieces for a Right Wing Conspiracy, but the fact of the matter is we're really quite independent in our production and programming.

**O**regonians stand to lose a lot of hard-fought environmental ground in the next few years if we urban types can't set aside out-of-date rhetoric, confrontational tactics and our "fear of forestry."

Oregon is home to some of the top forestry science and talent in the world, able to manage forests for a vast array of diversity, habitat, product and aesthetic values. We need to use these people's skills. Tens of thousands of tree farmers, loggers and mill workers live here too, among them plenty of real-life conservationists and even harsh critics of Big Timber. People with "forest" in their job descriptions are not the enemy.

I wish we could also own up to some of the inconsistencies in our approaches to conservation: Why are clearcuts and plantations acceptable in other countries but not here? How can we justify mowing down great swaths of temperate rainforest in Canada or ancient boreal forest in Siberia to save second-growth trees in Oregon?

We praise the virtues of locally grown produce. Why don't we extend the same pride-of-origin to log trucks loaded with home-grown timber? Seriously.

No one should be logging old-growth virgin forest, but most of our public forests are second or third growth. And so what if timber lobbyists claim that trees are a renewable resource? It's true. Those guys may exploit the "forest health problem," too, but it's real.

Why is so much of the discussion about public forest management reactionary? We've become effusive about what we oppose in our forests, but who can say what we actually WANT? And without some clear vision of what we expect Oregon's forests to look like, we're going nowhere fast.

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