

Backfire, change the local activist landscape? What grew from the ashes?

It may no longer be so radical, but Eugene's environmentalist community continues to nurture seeds sown at the peak of the movement in the late '90s. Volunteers with the Northwest Ecosystem Survey Team (NEST), a group formed out of the Fall Creek forest defense campaign, still scout for red tree vole nests in an effort to battle timber sales on public lands. Cascadia Wildlands Project, a forest advocacy group founded in 1997 by James Johnston, regularly brings legal challenges to federal logging projects; Jim Flynn is CWP board president, and another former *EF!* co-editor, Josh Laughlin, is director.

The eco-anarchist TV show *Cascadia Alive!* ended in 2004, but Tim Lewis is currently working to archive the shows for the UO library, and his documentaries of the Warner Creek blockade and the WTO riots are now available on DVD. *Green Anarchy* magazine, launched around 2001 by Robin Terranova and other local radicals, still publishes out of Eugene, while *Earth First! Journal*, which was headquartered locally from 1993 to 2001, has moved to Tucson, Ariz. The journal struggles to stay afloat, with about one-third the subscribers it had in 1997.

In the Whiteaker neighborhood, eco-anarchist hangout Icky's Teahouse is gone, but Tiny Tavern carries on. The Ant Farm, an activist crash-pad, has folded, but the Shamrock House remains, with its "Free Wall" covered in anarchist art. The Jawbreaker gallery, founded by Warner

Creek activist Stella Lee Anderson, still hosts alternative art shows, and the daffodil bulbs Kari Johnson planted in the shape of an anarchy symbol on a 4th Avenue lawn more than a decade ago still appear every spring. Food Not Lawns, the urban gardening movement founded by local activists Heather Coburn and Tobias Policha in 1999, has now gone national; Coburn recently published a book about it under the name H.C. Flores.

And though the arsonists who set fire to Willamette National Forest in 1991 have yet to be caught, the trees of Warner Creek still stand. Tim Ingalsbee, the "godfather" of the mid-1990s campaign against salvage logging, perseveres in his effort to get the site permanently protected as a research area.

Much like the Warner Creek salvage controversy, Operation Backfire illuminated two very different ways of viewing a burnt landscape: as a disaster to be cleaned up and salvaged, or as a natural cleansing, providing nutrients and light for rebirth. The bust seems to have dampened local eco-radicalism, stalled ELF actions, weakened Earth First!, and possibly even chilled progressive activism of all kinds. But Eugene remains a hub of eco-activity, and as sure as wildfires will continue to blaze through forests, stoking controversies in their wake, environmentalists will keep battling the forces of planetary destruction, their tactics evolving with the shifting political landscape. **EW**

Check online for web extras: "Is eco-sabotage terrorism?" and "Thoughts from the trenches."

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