

**Business**

**Timber towns turning to other industries**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Pacific Northwest's economy is evolving, and Bend is exhibit A.

Once home to two of the world's largest pine sawmills, it now has none yet is among the fastest-growing places in the region. The Bulletin reported in the final installment of a series of reports on Oregon forests. The soft hum of high technology has replaced the screeching whine of the saws.

And Bend is just one example.

In Klamath Falls, a high-tech telephone support center was built. Compact discs are rolling off conveyors in Springfield. A foreign trade zone is being established in Medford and a factory in Eugene is producing semiconductors.

Before the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan was enacted, President Clinton said the region would need to diversify and established an aid package to help retrain workers and help communities attract new employers.

The overall economy has grown, but many say the Clinton plan played only a minor role.

"It may have helped some folks, certainly, but it did little to help the transition of the economy on a larger scale," said Ernie Niemi, an economist with Eugene-based ECONorthwest and co-author of a study called "The Sky

Did Not Fall: The Pacific Northwest's Response to Logging Reductions."

Rather, the growth can be traced to high demand in the high tech and aerospace industries along the Interstate 5 corridor plus a recession in California that sent a surge of migrants north, said John Mitchell, a U.S. Bank economist in Portland who tracks regional trends.

"I don't think the Northwest Forest Plan had much effect on Boeing or Microsoft," he said. Even in Springfield, where the Clinton dollars helped lure a Sony compact disc plant, officials don't see the forest plan as a key to their evolving economy.

"It didn't play a huge part. If that money hadn't have been there we would have found it someplace else," said Lee Beyer, director of the Eugene-Springfield Metro Partnership.

High-tech jobs now outnumber timber industry jobs in Oregon.

Before the forest plan, lawmakers and timber industry lobbyists predicted widespread layoffs across the spectrum of Pacific Northwest businesses.

"People were scared and they thought the economy was just going to go to hell," Niemi said. "But the notion of timber as the base of the economy turned out to be just flat wrong."

**Oregon reopens food stamp rolls, offers self-sufficiency services**

CONTRIBUTED STORY FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

One of Oregon's key food stamp guidelines is being revised in hopes that single employable adults without children will sign up for state-sponsored job services along with food stamp benefits.

Under the new Oregon Department of Human service guidelines, the schedule under which these employable adults' ages 18-49 may receive benefits without a work requirement - three months out of every 36 - started December 1.

This means that estimated 700-800 employable Oregon adults who may have exhausted their food-stamp eligibility will qualify again. AFS will substitute a fixed 1999-2002 three-year "clock" for all employable adults receiving food stamp rather than using a rolling clock for each individual as it has the past.

"By inviting these people to sign up for food stamps we are hoping they will also take advantage of our self-sufficiency services," said Jim Neely, deputy administrator of the DHS Adult and Family Services Division. He noted that qualifying adults with children as well as adults with mental or physical disabilities are not affected by federal food stamp time limits.

Among the job services available, Neely said, are help with resume writing, workplace expectations job search and related skills. However, to qualify for food stamps, an able-bodied adult without children can participate in these services for only 30 days, after which the individual must volunteer five hours a week at a workfare site to continue eligibility. AFS contracts with public and non-profit agencies to provide workfare opportunities. This work - such as stocking food-bank shelves, doing clerical work for a community action agency or helping out at a veteran's home, for example - permits people to gain valuable work skills and job

references that may help them become more employable, Neely said.

As an alternative, people may instead participate in vocational or educational training for at least 20 hours a week to maintain food-stamp eligibility.

Neely said Oregonians who believe they qualify should contact an AFS or Senior and Disabled Services

Division Food stamp office. The limitation of three months of food-stamp in a three-year period is contained in federal welfare reform, known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. About 105,00 Oregon families receive food-stamp assistance each month averaging \$ 150 per household.

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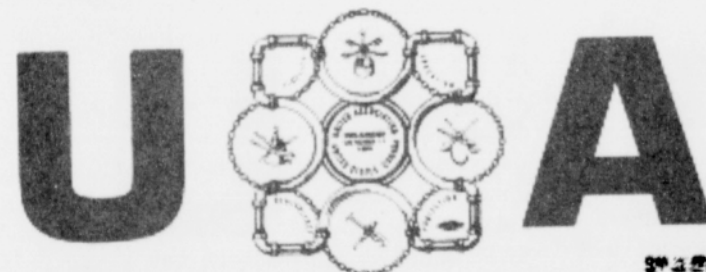
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