Tom McCall, Oregon's late and legendary governor, would have been proud. In a Portland State University conference room, on a sunny Saturday last month, more than 600 people gathered to consider a heretical concept: The end of growth.

It was fitting that this pathbreaking gathering took place in Oregon, the state that pioneered comprehensive land use planning to control growth and urban growth boundaries to contain it. It was Oregon that elected McCall, who, in a 1971 interview with the CRS Evening News, to visit, “...but for heaven’s sake, don’t come here, the city is jammed.”

That year Oregon’s population hovered at just over 2 million. Now in 1997, and even with land use planning, the state has added another million people. By 2015, the population of the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area alone is expected to vault by another 700,000 to 2.2 million, with explosive growth in Washington’s Clark County helping to fuel the increase. To help accommodate this growth, Metro, the Portland area’s regional government, has expanded its urban growth boundary by 4,500 acres. Oregon is not alone. The Cascadia bioregion is growing faster than the nation as a whole. Between 1969 and 1993 the combined population of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana grew by 48 percent, far outstripping the national average of 28 percent. By 2015, the population of those four states will swell to 9.7 million to 12.5 million, according to moderate projections by the Northwest Power Planning Council.

In Seattle, growth is driving an escalation in housing costs that has real estate experts predicting it will be impossible to find a new home in King County for under $200,000 by 1998. In an October 19 column, Seattle Times reporter Joni Balter said Seattleites have had it up to here with choking traffic, long ferry lines and lost open space. Balter raised the possibility of — guess what? — a summit to deal with alternatives to growth in the Seattle metropolitan area, and suggested that new businesses should be directed to other parts of the state.

On the same weekend hundreds jammed the Portland conference, about 80 people attended a meeting Pablo, Montana, to discuss what Western Montana will look like in a decade if the present growth rate continues unabated. In Polson, controversy is swirling around construction of a new Wal-Mart on the shore of Flathead Lake. In Missoula a task force is writing an out­dated growth management plan in an effort to get control of urban sprawl.

What is fueling this growth? The usual things: immigration, and a birth rate that continues to outstrip the death rate. Greater access to birth control and abortion and a safe and secure home environment for every child may help to nudge the birth rate down further. But immigration presents the larger challenge. Dealing with it will require us to redefine what progress means.

"Growth is no more inevitable than 'Every ancient tree must be cut,'" maintains Andy Kerr, one of the organizers of the Portland "Alternatives to Growth" conference. Kerr should know; he gained national notoriety fighting for wild forests, another "lost cause." The time has come, Kerr says, to ask two key questions: "Is growth good? And is growth inevitable?" It's now politically correct, even mandatory, he says, for environmentalists not only to address such loaded issues as population control and immigration but to challenge the conventional wisdom that growth equals progress.

This will not be easy. Virtually every state, province, county, city, and village in Cascadia still defines progress in terms of economic growth, and many spend a substantial share of their increasingly scarce tax revenues trying to lure new businesses and jobs. Local governments court businesses by promising to waive local property taxes, build schools, roads and parking structures, and subsidize increased demands for water, sewers and electricity. But when a community wins in this highly competitive game, what does it win?

Eben Fodor, a Eugene land use consultant, has calculated that each new three-bedroom house built in Oregon is subsidized by the rest of us to the tune of $25,000 — after the taxes the new household generates are figured in. Nearly half that subsidy goes to pay for new classrooms, a huge bur­den that has prompted Oregon legis­lature to consider allowing school-impact fees to be levied on new residential con­struction. Vodoor figures the net cost to government for developing one in acres of land at about $150,000 and speculates that "It may be cheaper for government to buy land to prevent it from being developed."

We all pay for this growth, speakers at the "Alternatives to Growth" conference stressed — not only through our taxes but through lost open spaces, lost time spent sitting in traffic jams, and a lost sense of community as newcomers who don’t share our sense of place swell our small towns and big-city neighbor­hoods.

What to do? We can’t put a fence around Cascadia. Freedom of movement is a bedrock principle of American life. But we can do a much better job of controlling where growth occurs. The American Farmland Trust rates farmland in Oregon’s Willamette Valley and Washington’s Puget Sound area as "endangered" by development. The Oregon land-use watchdog group 1000 Friends of Oregon reports that each year local governments approve about 3,200 houses in prime farmland and forest areas, despite protests written into Oregon’s land-use law. California is developing 100,000 acres of farmland a year.

We can also withdraw the open invitation that is bringing our region new industries, new subdivisions, more traffic, higher taxes and higher housing costs. Growth for growth’s sake has brought away at our wildlife habitats, pollutes our streams, forces us to find new sources of drink­
Misplaced Blame
The Real Roots of Population Growth

By Alan Thein Durning and Christopher D. Crowther
(Reprinted by permission from Misplaced Blame: The Real Roots of Population Growth, Copyright 1997, Northwest Environment Watch, Seattle)

Olympia, Washington, January 23, 1997. Carrie Coppinger Carter, a law student and mother of one from rural Whatcom County, Washington, is testifying on a welfare reform bill before the Legislature. “I am a former teenage parent,” she says, addressing the chairwoman Suzette Cook and her colleagues on the House Committee on Children and Family Services. She reads the bill’s second paragraph aloud: “It is the public policy of the state … to discourage teen pregnancy by unwed parents as an action that is destructive to society.”

In the back of the hearing room, Charlie Langdon, a stocky transplanted easterner with a nubby complexion and a shock of white hair, is suppressing a cheer. Awaiting his turn to testify, he can’t keep himself from whispering running commentary on the day’s proceedings. “Carrie’s great. She’s one of our best speakers. She milked cows all the way through high school to help support herself.” Charlie is on a first-name basis with many of the former and present teenage mothers in Washington state. He came out of retirement to direct a struggling outfit that helps them. Called Advancing Solutions to Adolescent Pregnancy (ASAP), it organizes programs for pregnant and parenting teenagers.

Unfortunately, Charlie’s on an uphill climb – more like a winter ascent of nearby Mount Rainier. The United States is in the midst of a national witch hunt aimed at teenage mothers, blaming them for corrupting the moral fiber of the nation, bearing most of the country’s criminals and juvenile delinquents, causing poverty, and soaking up public dollars to support idle lives.

Decades of research in the social sciences debunk these claims, but no matter. Much of the public believes them, and in politics, perceptions are reality. So the federal government has rewritten the rules on public assistance, rescinding the principle that everyone who resides legally in this country is entitled to assistance when she or he falls on hard times. The federal government has slashed budgets for helping people who become poor and delegated most authority to the states, giving them about a year to rewrite their own welfare laws. The welfare overhaul drafted by Representative Cook singles out young mothers for special censure, promising to cut them off the rolls. The bill also requires almost all adult welfare recipients to work or do community service. It tells your mothers to go back to their parents’ homes. And it limits aid to a cumulative total of five years per person.

Teenage parenting is a product of social policies in North America that abandon young families to poverty. Blaming teen mothers for their poverty is especially convoluted because, although many teen moms do live in poverty, they’re not poor because they’re moms. They live in poverty because they are poor – and have been long before they become mothers. Eighty-three percent of American teenage mothers were poor before they became mothers. And poor women who become mothers as teens do no worse for themselves than poor women who become mothers in their twenties. Except among mothers younger than 15, teen parenting is not the core problem. Indeed for most of history, many women have had a high birthrate. The two-child family has been the norm among northwesterners who are not poor. But this observation misses the point. The truth is that the poverty responsible for teen births also deserves blame for much population growth – growth due to earlier childbearing and to increased childbearing overall.

Outside its poorest groups, the Northwest does not have a high birthrate. The two-child family has been the regional norm for a quarter century. After the baby boom years of the 1950s and early 1960s, when typical northwesterners were having between three and four children each, family size decreased swiftly. In 1972, the total fertility rate per woman came to relative stability and has remained there, hovering around two children per woman in the Northwest states and 1.6 per woman in British Columbia.

The reason the Northwest states have higher fertility rates than B.C. is not that middle-class Americans want larger families than middle-class Canadians. It is that more Canadians are middle class – or, more precisely, that British Columbians do not tolerate child poverty on the scale that exists in American parts of the bioregion. The norm among northwesterners who are not poor is families with fewer than two children – a fertility rate that would eventually lead to a modest and beneficial reduction in population, were it not for people moving in from elsewhere. As economic inequalities have expanded in the United States since 1979, the timing of childbearing has become a class issue. Just as income prospects have diverged, so have childbearing patterns. The haves in the new economy wait until after graduate school to have children; the have-nots begin during high school. This divergence is something new. For generations, American fertility was dominated by marriage and childbearing, often beginning in the teenage years. Since 1970, the middle and upper classes have begun to delay starting their families. The poor, meanwhile, have continued on the traditional schedule.

Here’s the bottom line for the Northwest’s population: roughly one-third of births in the Pacific Northwest simply would not occur if the bioregion eliminated poverty; that’s how much poverty boosts the birth rate. Poverty generates most births to teens and also increases fertility among non-teens. Women who live in poverty have about twice as many children, on average, as more affluent women. They do so not because they are foolish or ignorant, as common misconceptions hold, but because they are playing the hand they were dealt as best they can. Their entire life experience confirms they...
Here's the bottom line for the Northwest's population: roughly one-third of births in the Pacific Northwest simply would not occur if the bioregion eliminated poverty; that's how much poverty boosts the birth rate.

Population growth is responsible for most of the growth in consumption of energy, use of residential water, generation of solid waste and emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide. On these measures, per capita environmental impacts in the region have stabilized. Yet all four measures are climbing with population.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10
than migration (persons moving to the Northwest) that have added 3.3 million to regional population increases, regardless of total population.

Individuals are often the basic unit of consumption. Spending Less of their Lives married. Better family planning. Poverty brings a 3.3 percent increase in the teen birthrate in the entire region. Of every 1,000 women under 19, 32.5 become pregnant one decade later.

Migration simply shifts the population burden from one place to another. So a Northwest population strategy that aims for international attainment rather than income (the two are closely correlated), found that college graduates, by contrast, have 2.7 children, often when they are in their twenties, and those who drop out of school have 3.2 children. Obviously, small households mean a smaller population, but so does the absence of children. Inner-city poverty brings a 3.3 percent increase in the teen birthrate.

The older age of first-time mothers falls abruptly to 15 years. The younger age of new mothers, says Dr. Lunia Leopold, now a first-time mother in the region's highest major town in the Northwest. Now imagine a single, unsaddled studying again: the average age of first-time mothers falls abruptly to 15 years. The younger age of new mothers, says Dr. Lunia Leopold, now a first-time mother in the region's highest major town in the Northwest.

Migration brings 3.6 million new persons to the northwest, about double the number in 1970. But for each community, there is no migration, the Northwest has a consumer goods problem: meat, milk, eggs, and so on. One study put the region's human weight on the land at 50,000 tons. A central thrust of the legislation does: "Get a job."

The Value of Land: A TROUBLING FORECAST

By Tim Paterson
Reported by permission from The Columbia: A Sustaining Resource, Copyright 1997: The Mountaineer Books, Seattle

The wild salmon have almost been lost, and the old growth forests have been cut to a remnant, the wild salmon have almost been lost, and the old growth forests have been cut to a remnant. Some of the wild salmon have almost been lost, and the old growth forests have been cut to a remnant.

The Columbia Basin's highest major town in the Northwest. Consider Yakima County, Washington: a overview of married American women aged 30 to 34, those with poverty incomes (under $10,000) had 2.5 children each on average and wanted to have 2.5 children before they stopped. Mid-child women ($15,000 to $20,000) had 2.7 children each on average and expected to have 2.7 children. High-income women (more than $20,000) had 3.7 children each on average.

Another study, which investigated educational attainment rather than income (the two are closely correlated), found that college graduates, by contrast, have 2.7 children, often when they are in their twenties, and those who drop out of school have 3.2 children. Obviously, small households mean a smaller population, but so does the absence of children. Inner-city poverty brings a 3.3 percent increase in the teen birthrate with 76 percent accuracy from that city's poverty indicator alone.

Middle-class women ($35,000 to $50,000) have 2.3 children, often when they are in their twenties, and those who drop out of school have 3.2 children. Obviously, small households mean a smaller population, but so does the absence of children. Inner-city poverty brings a 3.3 percent increase in the teen birthrate with 76 percent accuracy from that city's poverty indicator alone.

Middle-class women ($35,000 to $50,000) have 2.3 children, often when they are in their twenties, and those who drop out of school have 3.2 children. Obviously, small households mean a smaller population, but so does the absence of children. Inner-city poverty brings a 3.3 percent increase in the teen birthrate with 76 percent accuracy from that city's poverty indicator alone.
million by the year 2030. It’s easy to see why people want to come. A number of studies identified quality of life as the main reason. Availability of jobs is important, but a revealing report, Economic Well-Being and Environmental Protection in the Pacific Northwest, written by 30 Northwest economists, credited much of the region’s growth to quality of life. Can people come without ruining what attracted them? Can communities avoid the plague of urban and suburban ills that drove the newcomers to leave? Will they stay? Will the area become an end or the beginning of growth and change, or will it continue indefinitely? Wondering about all this, I visited the communities of central Washington, separated from the big Northwestern cities by the Cascade Range.

REVAMPING KITITAS VALLEY

Beginning at the summit of Snoqualmie Pass, east of Seattle, the Yakima River headwaters drop eastward. The 6,000-square-mile watershed is the largest river basin in Washington. The Yakima enters near the Tri-Cities. The picturesque upper valley spreads out from its river bottom, where a cottonwood corridor adjoins the grasslands and hills. Conifer on north-facing slopes fade away upward elevations. The rolling, ash tree-bank of the Yakama’s Kittitas Valley from the lower Yakima Valley. Long a refuge from the urban, rainy west side of the state, the Kittitas Valley now lies on the main line of Interstate 90, and travelers tramp off with ease after driving two hours or less from Seattle.

“The valley’s filling up,” said Clayton Denman, a Central Washington University anthropology professor. “People come for a lot of reason, but the push and gravity of the pull, he said, referring to the drive to escape the Puget Sound chain of cities. In 1970, Denman founded the Small Towns Institute, dedicated to protecting small-town values across America, values becoming endangered in his own hometown of Ellensburg and elsewhere in the basin. The “filling up” is evident in summer along the transparent Cle Elum River, a Yakama tributary where 6,000 campers move in on weekends. New vacation cabins sprout up, and old cabins are leveled to make room for $300,000 homes.

The bastion Plum Creek Timber Company sells off parcels once it clears-cut them. “We studied one section in the Yakima’s rural headwaters,” said geographer Morris Uebelacker at Central Washington University, “and it’s been divided into 650 private parcels. Seventeen government entities make decisions about that land. Even the birds don’t know what to do.”

In 1995 alone, Washington grew by 95,000 people, with 60 percent of the increase owing to in-migration. Development in the Columbia Basin of Eastern Washington outpaced the Puget Sound basin on a percentage basis and represented one-third of state growth. From 1990 to 1994, Oregon’s population increased by 60,000 a year; about 20 percent were in-migrants from other states and countries. Earlier, in 1989, Idaho was the fastest growing state in the nation. In 1995 the Northwest Power Planning Council forecast 20 percent more people in the eastern region (an area larger than the Columbia Basin and including Seattle) will climb from 9.7 to 15.7 million by the year 2015 in a high growth scenario, which is likely 10 years are any indication. A population projection for 7.8 million more people during the 30-year period ending in 2015. Under this forecast, Washington is expected to increase from 3.5 to 6.8 million; Oregon from 3.9 to 4.8 million; Idaho from 1.1 to 1.5 million; and western Montana from 329,000 to 379,000. The entire population of British Columbia is expected to double from its current 3.8 million people to 7.5

What I know from my uncles is that this place is not only from what it was. I call it stepping down the biomass pyramid. First, they wiped out the large animals. Now we’ve done the same to the trees. The big ponderosa are gone. The stability is knocked out of the system, and it becomes simpler and simpler. Less productive, less resistant, until we have a desert and monoculture of exotic weeds.”

— Morris Uebelacker

survives in the agricultural zones. “We have a lot of houses surrounded by weeds,” Randall explained. And the weeds are native foxtails and wildflowers, are not native exotics such as zinnias and daylilies, which have become overgrazed or otherwise disturbed landscapes and pose a plague to cattle, wildlife and people alike.

Kittitas County entered the federal flood insurance program, which requires a modern of floodplain regulation in order to qualify for subsidized insurance, which, in turn, is required for a federally backed mortgage issued to anyone building on land likely to flood. Overaken by a rabid private property group, a bill with an amendment that said, “I own my land and can do what I want,” the county rescinded the floodplain regulations in the early 1980s. Harassed by people who then could not get mortgages because they lacked the federally backed insurance, and pushed by banks that profit from the mortgages, the county reentered the program but half-heartedly. It granted permits without proper restrictions, was not responsive to the need for flood insurance without upholding the local end of the bargain. Yet the same “property rights” advocates who typically expect federal disaster aid when the next flood washes out new development are silent when the old could have been avoided. The county was placed on probation by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In a wave of responsibility and foresight, Kittitas County in 1990 joined the state’s Washington Prototype Program, though, as a rural county, officials didn’t have to participate. The state program required that basic guidelines of good planning be met. When real estate interests recaptured local government, a referendum to rescind the requirement was carried and the county tried to break out of the growth management program, but it couldn’t. The state requires that the county show it can actually accommodate and pay for the growth it allows, but brakes of any kind are scarcely applied in this climate of rapid buying and selling, wheeling and dealing. With similar dynamics of growth and subdivision, Chelan County commissioners, north of Kittitas, refused to meet guidelines of the state law. After the county had accepted and spent $500,000 to state aid to meet its planning obligations, Washington Governor Mike Lowry had to notify local officials that, under state law, $1.0 million in state aid for road maintenance to the county would have to be cut.

Morris Uebelacker said, “An old Indian friend of mine once told me that you have to stay in a place for five generations to know it. So it’s not surprising if you feel confused after you’ve just arrived in a valley changing as rapidly as this.” The geographer is the fourth-generation Uebelacker here. “What I know from my uncles is that this place is trashed from what it was. I call it stepping down the biomass pyramid. First, they wiped out the large animals. Now we’ve done the same to the trees. The big ponderosa are gone. The stability is knocked out of the system, and it becomes simpler and simpler, less productive, less resistant, until we have a desert and monoculture of exotic weeds where we used to have a pine savanna and grassland full of animals and people living in relative balance.”

Ken Hammond, chairman of the Governmentd-Housing Committee at Washington University, said, “People come here because it’s a nice place to live. It’s a nice place to live, but it won’t be forever. We’re on the road of Napa Valley. Twenty acres here, twenty acres there—the cumulative effect is staggering. Soon, only the wealthy will be able to buy land and live here.”

“For a time, I was not so discouraged that in the late 1970s, there was a genuine effort to exact good zoning. But then the price got to be too much. In 40 years of this work, I’ve noticed that it’s very hard to get a local government to act that’s long-term in its view. Property values go up and up, and development stakes escalate, and people can be bought, can’t they?”
New housing goes up in Yakima.

In Idaho, land development in the 1990s reached virtual boomtown proportions. The state drew new employees and residents with aggressive economic policies and a reputation for low crime, quality of life, and a natural environment, all of which people elsewhere desperately sought. But with the new development, Idaho communities are changing. The new construction and congestion remind me of Denver in its boom years, decades ago," said Hugh Harper, a longtime Boise resident. In 1993, Harper had moved away from Boise because the city's air quality had deteriorated so much. Winter temperature inversions trap car exhaust and smoke in the valley lying against the Boise Front of the Rocky Mountains; once a garden scene, it is now shrouded in smog. In 1995, violent crime in Idaho was up 10 percent, drug offenses grew by 52 percent, and robberies increased 22 percent from the year before.

A Boise businessman and U.S. Senate candidate in 1996, Walt Minnick recognized, "Excessive growth is what drives the other problems. Because of our quality of life, Idaho is an appealing place to the new food service industries. But with our existing tax structure, growth never has paid its own way. Now we're outrunning our abilities to maintain the very attributes that caused the region to be attractive. In the Northern Rockies we're still falling over ourselves begging industries to come to us before rapidly growing cities. It's like throwing gas on the fire." In the same year, with a different attitude, Republican Gov. Phil Batt said, "A real estate lobby pays for the political campaigns," he noted, "and then the county uses public money to fight the real estate lobby's battles. Opposing them, we use our own money and pay on both sides." Seeking solutions to long-term problems in her state, Senator Patty Murray of Washington said, "The challenge will be always looking at the short-term versus the long-term. We need to take a broader approach, but to do that in the current political climate will be difficult." Changing the political climate is the only choice for the people of the Northwest and Northern Rockies who want to see lasting qualities and real property value in their homeland.

People who care about the land and the communities need to be elected. The voters in Jackson, Wyo., sent one of those people to office. In considering a new Teton County plan, which ultimately advanced the cause of long-term values, Commissioner Steve Thomas reflected on the importance of choices and opportunities relevant in the 1990s but equally so in all of the decades to come. "We currently have a unique opportunity to have an impact on the future of the valley. When we get lost in the details of this draft, we need to remember why we started this process. It was to protect our valley and way of life - the beauty and the wild things that make it unique."
Has the Forest Service Seen the Light?

By Kathie Durbin

I know it happened, because I was there. In fact, I asked the question.

At the annual conference of the Society of Environmental Journalists, held last month in Tucson, Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck was asked to predict the future of the timber sale program on the national forest system. He wouldn't venture numbers. But he did tell an audience of hundreds: "We're going to revert back to a light touch on the land. We may be a decade away from looking at single-tree removal. ... I really see us moving away from the era of large clearcuts. Society has told us that." Emphatic rhetoric, you say? Consider recent events here in the Northwest, and in Washington, D.C.

In October Siskiyou National Forest Supervisor Mike Lunn announced that he would cancel logging on five units of the controversial China Left timber sale and pay the purchaser, Rough and Ready Lumber Co. of Cave Junction, Ore., $480,000 for the unused trees. Lunn said he was convinced that logging of those units, located in steep terrain with unstable soils, would threaten critical coho spawning habitat in Sucker Creek. Coho runs in southwestern Oregon were listed as threatened last June, even as logging along Sucker Creek was underway.

China Left, one of the bad old sales left over from the 1980s, had been the target of forest road blockades and arrests since last fall. Unfortunately, 86 percent of the magnificent old-growth stands in the sale area were logged before Lunn called a halt to the destruction.

In July, the Bellingham, Wash., based Northwest Ecosystem Alliance and other Washington groups persuaded the Forest Service to adopt a conservation-based plan, for protecting old-growth forests, roadless areas and critical fish and wildlife habitat in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Reversing an earlier plan, G-P Supervisor Ted Stubblefield agreed to follow the recommendation of a broad-based advisory group and sharply reduce the volume of timber taken from the 143,000-acre Gifford Pinchot Adaptive Management Area, which covers two major watersheds in Southwest Washington.

Since July, Forest Service supervisors in Washington have withdrawn four large timber sales — two on the Gifford Pinchot and one each on the Wenatchee and Okanogan national forests — under appeal. In each case the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance argued that the proposed logging violated the agency's own standards.

A couple of years ago, on the Siuslaw National Forest in coastal Oregon, Supervisor Jim Furnish embarked on an ambitious project to close or obliterate hundreds of miles of logging roads, with the ultimate goal of reducing road density on the 620,000-acre forest by two-thirds. The Siuslaw, home to high populations of spotted owls, marbled murrelets and coho salmon, was once one of the Northwest's major timber producers. It's nearly out of the timber sale business now. Instead it's spending $1.2 million annually, roughly 10 percent of its total budget, to remove roads.

At the time, Furnish's initiative attracted little notice inside the Beltway. But U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, Dombeck's boss, recently announced that the Forest Service will embark on a massive project to close many of the 860,000 miles of logging roads that scar our national forests and bleed sediment into streams. Many of the decommissioned roads will be turned into hiking trails.

To his credit, Dombeck has taken a clear-headed stand on the volatile issues surrounding salvage logging and forest health. "The words 'forest health' have become unnecessarily value laden and incorrectly characterized to imply 'log it to save it,'" he told a hostile House Resources subcommittee last March. "Truly restoring forest health will require an array of tools, including prescribed fire, thinning of dense stands, noxious weed management and stream bank improvements, Dombeck said. To restore the public's trust, he added, the Forest Service should focus on those activities, limiting salvage logging to less controversial areas and avoiding stream banks, roadless areas and old-growth stands.

Of course, most of the agency's operating budget for everything from trail restoration to wildlife monitoring still comes from timber sale receipts. That will have to change if the agency hopes to make serious inroads into repairing damaged forests damaged by past management. Prescribed burns, reforestation and thinning of noncommercial trees cost money. Will Congress ante up?

"I'm not sure the fact we can't afford it is a valid argument," Dombeck said in a recent interview. "Sometimes you've got to make investments in land. Last year we spent $900 million fighting wildland fire. If we could reduce that by even 10 percent ... a $90 million investment in forest health would have a tremendous impact."

Dombeck, a fisheries biologist by training, believes in the importance of protecting and restoring watersheds, but he sees forest management in the late 1990s as a social issue. That's why he's spending a lot of time in cities, trying to build an urban constituency for the national forest system. And that's why he believes the future of the national forest system is not in selling timber but in "collaborative stewardship" of forested watersheds. He may be na""

"e, but there's no doubting his sincerity when he says, "Let the land tell us what's good for the land."

Zero Cut on the national forests may not become reality in our lifetimes. But given the new attitude at the top, the time is clearly right for the Oregon Natural Resources Council to reinvigorate its wilderness protection mission with a new "Oregon Wild" campaign. The time is right for push for permanent protection of places like the proposed Copper Salmon Wilderness Area, a priceless coastal salmon and cutthroat trout sanctuary on the North Fork of Oregon's Elk River, which came within a whisker of being logged under the 1995-96 timber salvage rider (and, like China Left, was halted by Siskiyou Forest Supervisor Mike Lunn).

The time is right for President Clinton and the Congress to institute a formal policy prohibiting logging in roadless areas throughout the national forest system. Even the Washington Post says so. In an August 19 editorial, the Post declared: "We are at a point in the exploitation of this resource where the duty of the government is to preserve what remains."

Don't count on the Forest Service to implement this change on its own. In an agency this big, this decentralized and this tradition-bound, change never happens in a straight-line trajectory. As long as timber beasts still rule some regions, forests and ranger districts, we can expect the Forest Service to continue taking one step backward for every two steps forward. Bad sales are still going on board. Ancient forests are being cleared. The agency is hiding behind vague forest health prescriptions and its ecosystem management mantra to justify entering roadless areas that should never be logged.

But leadership does matter. Dombeck is saying things environmentalists never thought they'd hear a Forest Service chief say. And at least on some forests, supervisors seem to be listening. For the first time in a long time, some forest managers are setting aside their knee-jerk defensive-ness, taking a second look at their bad decisions, and acting to correct them before it's too late.

Kathie Durbin can be reached at akotribin@aol.com.
Things Are Not Always Black or White

To the editor:

I am impressed by your recent article ("Tug of War," CT, Oct 97). It’s refreshing to see an article wrestle with the complexities of the environmental impacts of something like the Trans-Cascade pipeline, recognizing that things are not always black or white. I especially like your conclusion that whatever the impacts, the finger points not just at corporate.

The environmental impacts of something like "Tug of War," in the October issue of Cascadia Times (206) 783-6676, (FAX) 783-1799

Seattle, Washington 98117

Ocean Advocates

3004 Northwest 93rd Street

Olympia, WA 98504-3165

(206) 783-6676, (FAX) 783-1799

Fred Fellman

Ocean Advocate

3004 Northwest 93rd Street

Olympia, WA 98504-3165

(206) 783-6676, (FAX) 783-1799

“Green Power” Article Long on Hyperbole

To the editor:

I read with interest your August, 1997 articles, “The Unbeatable Rights of Green” and “How to Pay Extra for Energy and Like It” both by Mr. Kevin Bell. Mr. Bell had an opportunity to provide your readers with a deeper understanding of the complex issues surrounding the marketing of “green” electric power.

Unfortunately, these articles are long on hyperbole and short on factual accuracy. It will now be even more difficult for your readers to sort through the approaching avalanche of “green” power marketing claims as deregulation of electricity markets proceeds.

Let me illustrate. Mr. Bell claims to use quotations from a power marketing brochure he states was printed by the Environmental Resources Trust, Inc. (ERT). To date, however, ERT has not even published such a brochure.

Mr. Bell states that the Environmental Defense Fund’s plan to give their profits to environmental groups is “veritably pleasant,” yet the sole reason why ERT is to make more clean energy, not build a better cash cow for environmentalists.” The suggestion that ERT is a profit-making front for EDF is simply without any basis in reality. EDF and ERT are not and will not receive any moneys from ERT’s power marketing transactions. In fact, ERT is committed to reinvesting its net income in co-producing environmental projects that can range from salmon habitat improvement to renewable energy.

Perhaps the most egregious flaw in Mr. Bell’s articles is his assertion that “there is no net environmental benefit from the ERT deal.” Once again the facts greatly differ from Mr. Bell’s claims. ERT’s power marketing agreement with BPA includes several clean power projects that will directly help increase salmon survival, including fish hydropower, new instream flows, and light load energy.

Fish flow hydropower is electric power produced as a direct byproduct of federal land-managed increased water flows in the Snake and Columbia Rivers to improve salmon survival. These increased river flows have been mandated by the National Marine Fisheries Service, the federal agency responsible for determining what steps need to be taken to restore threatened and endangered salmon populations. They are supported by numerous scientists and several salmon advocacy groups have been demanding and litigating for even larger river flow increases.

ERT’s clean power marketing strongly supports such larger river flows through the acquisition of new instream flows above and beyond those mandated by the federal government to improve salmon survival. ERT intends to lease and/or purchase water rights on a voluntary basis from individuals and companies that would otherwise divert water from rivers to grow crops or for other purposes. The water that ERT acquires will be left intact to help migratory and spawning salmon and, at the same time, will generate new electricity as it passes through existing dams. In some years, like 1997, spring water runoff from melting snow is so large that water must be spilled over the dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers without generating electric power. Spilling increases the water’s nitrogen gas content which can be harmful to young salmon migrating to the ocean. Generating more electricity during so-called “light load” hours — 11 PM to 7 AM — reduces spilling if the power can be sold. Every kilowatt-hour of electricity that ERT sells during light load hours helps to reduce spill and improves salmon survival.

In addition to marketing clean electric power products that will help save salmon, the ERT-BPA agreement offers ERT the opportunity to sign up purchasers of electricity from new renewable resource projects such as wind, solar, and geothermal power. Successful sign-ups will provide BPA and other energy suppliers with powerful new information and incentives to develop renewable energy sources.

Not only will the “clean” power marketed by ERT help improve salmon survival and provide sorely needed funding for new onshore and offshore renewable energy projects, but electricity produced by hydro, wind, and solar facilities does not contribute to air pollution or global warming.

Zach Willey, Ph.D.

Pacific Region Director, Environmental Resources Trust, Inc.

Email: zwilley@ertrust.com

Kevin Bell responds:

First, Zach Willey is technically correct when he says that ERT has not published the marketing brochure I quoted from. My source was a draft ERT brochure graciously provided me by a member of the Bonneville Power Administration staff.

I never claimed, nor intended to imply, that profit was the primary goal of the Environmental Defense Fund in setting up ERT. Motives are not the issue here. The fact is that California consumers are going to pay a premium for “green” power from ERT. The margin between the market value of power and the price the energy will be sold at will be huge.

Regarding Willey’s claim that the ERT deal has an environmental benefit, the facts are clear. The environmental benefit is nonexistent. There will be zero change in river operations. Zero new instream flows. Zero change in BPA strategy or goals. Not one new drop of salmon-friendly water will flow as a result of this deal. Not one new electron of environmentally friendly energy will be generated.

This deal is a classic example of green marketing at its ugliest — an initiative that takes credit for things that are already happening. Worse, EDF has given the BPA political cover to evade substantive change a little longer.

Spartina Issue Exceedingly Contentious

To the Editor:

Regarding Ari La Vaux’s Special Report on “Chasing Spartina: Spraying Alien Invader Siris Dispute” (CT, Oct 97), I applaud Ari for taking on, and trying to be objective about, a complex and EXCEEDINGLY contentious issue.

As a scientist (and one quoted somewhat apathetically in the article), I am frustrated to see the extent that rhetoric and misinformation plays in what should be an urgent dialogue about how to understand, control and adapt to intensively invasive species such as Spartina spp.

I point to Ari, which didn’t exactly come through in the article, was that we should look at Spartina as a classic case of how we need to PREVENT future introductions, in order to avoid such quandaries as Spartina spp. present us. You might want to use explicit experts in Ari’s article. Despite my conversation with Ari, he described me as a professor at the University of Washington. In fact, I am not on the faculty but on the research staff.

In the August 1992 study referred to in the article, our role was not to examine the microbial community, but rather microalgae (benthic diatoms...small plants on the sediment surface) and benthic invertebrate organisms.

Charles (“S”) Eminent Coordinator, WETLAND ECOSYSTEM TEAM

School of Fisheries

University of Washington

Exceedingly Contentious

Catfish Moon Intriguing Imports

Across from Nature’s in Hillsdale

6335-A SW Capitol Highway

Portland

245-4124

Catfish Moon

Unique Things for Unique People

Shop Local

Think Global

Catfish Moon Intriguing Imports

Across from Nature’s in Hillsdale

6335A SW Capitol Highway

Portland

245-4124

Shop Local
APEC and Forests: What You Need To Know

By Paige Fischer

This fall forest activists have a chance to join together to confront the threat to forest ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest, British Columbia and around the Pacific Rim.

On November 24th, the leaders of the Pacific Rim’s most economically powerful nations will meet in Vancouver, B.C., to negotiate and promote free trade through the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). APEC aims to expand and speed economic growth and integration in the Pacific Rim.

At this Leaders’ Summit, APEC will make decisions that could lead to disastrous declines in timber resources in the Pacific Northwest. With further trade liberalization, the growth in wood, paper and other forest products will continue to stretch into the future. Unfortunately, these talks will not involve forest or citizen’s groups. Yet liberalization of the forest product sector could lead to disastrous declines in timber regulations and forest management standards all over the Pacific Rim. It could also limit forest advocates’ ability to influence these standards.

APEC’s 18 member countries comprise the most dynamic economies on earth, making up 35 percent of the world’s total income and 46 percent of its trade. Their growth will continue to require greater consumption of wood products. Six APEC countries are home to 39 percent of the world’s forest frontiers, which contain globally significant biodiversity and carbon stores. In the U.S., Chile, Canada, China and Russia (which has applied to become an APEC member), temperate forests are threatened by local and international logging ventures, inadequate environmental laws, and increased international financing of the region’s forest sectors. Strong citizen pressure is needed to persuade leaders at the Vancouver APEC Summit to discuss the importance of better forest management, which is currently not on the agenda.

**How does APEC work?**

APEC aims to make trade, investment and technical cooperation easier and more profitable for businesses in the Pacific Rim. Throughout the year, government and business leaders meet to discuss ways in which countries can loosen up rules that govern imports, exports and corporate operations.

Notably, APEC has established a Leaders’ Summit every November. Canada will host this seventh annual APEC Summit and has pledged to address the environmental consequences of the region’s growth. Yet APEC’s main goal remains economic growth. It seeks to facilitate trade by easing restrictions and eliminating barriers, including environmental regulations.

Unlike NAFTA, APEC does not employ binding sanctions or treaties. Countries instead pressure and encourage one another to take steps to open their economies to international trade.

**What does APEC have to do with forests?**

APEC will jeopardize forests in the Pacific Northwest, British Columbia and other Pacific Rim countries. Earlier this year, Canada, New Zealand, Indonesia, and the United States jointly proposed to put forest products on a free trade fast track. They have each identified paper and wood products as their “Individual Action Plan” for implementing APEC’s initiatives.

In its 1996 Plan, the United States committed to zero tariffs on the import and export of wood products by the year 2000. Canada designates forest products (wood, pulp, and paper) as one of six sectors to be fully deregulated. Malaysia is on the same time frame. Pacific Rim consumption — especially in the U.S. and Japan — already drives significant amounts of forest logging in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest. With further trade liberalization, additional environmental safeguards, a burgeoning Pacific Rim economy will place greater pressures on these natural resources. Other countries, such as Japan and Chile, are even more likely to use APEC’s trade liberalization policies to control access to natural resources. And Malaysia, which will host next year’s APEC summit, has a long history of suppressing public knowledge and activism. Malaysia is the world’s largest exporter of tropical wood and actively discourages all regulations on the timber trade.

**What does free trade in forest products mean?**

Free trade in forest products (“Early Voluntary Trade Liberalization” in APEC-speak) could result from decisions made at the November Leaders’ Summit. If approved, APEC will eliminate tariffs and other trade barriers, such as non-tariff measures, on timber trade through regional agreements or global bodies like the World Trade Organization. Examples of non-tariff measures include restrictions on pest-infested log imports or building codes that protect a domestic industry by discouraging the use of imported materials like wood.

Through APEC we can expect to see the dismantling of regulations that protect local industries and ecosystems. The United States and Canada have already presented themselves to other APEC countries as “leaders” in sustainable forestry and logging practices. But the unsustainable felling of forests in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia continues, despite a strong history of citizen activism for environmental protection.

International trade will continue to have a strong impact on local economics and ecosystems. As Pacific Rim nations grow and develop, their need for wood products and materials will increase. The environmental impacts of fueling this economic growth will be compounded by inadequate management practices.

**What can people who care about forests do about APEC?**

It is vital to call attention to forest destruction that will occur as a result of trade agreements. Forest advocates can build networks in their local regions as well as around the Pacific Rim to increase awareness about APEC and to develop ways to combat free trade’s destruction of forests. They can identify links between local campaigns and global trends in timber trade and forest management. By acting in partnership, forest advocates around the Pacific Rim can generate the international awareness and opposition necessary to reform policies that neglect the environment.

In addition, activists can come to Vancouver this fall to attend the People’s Summit on APEC. This will bring together forest activities from Canada, the United States and Pacific Rim countries like Japan, Malaysia and Chile to discuss these issues. Hosted by Pacific Environment and Resources Center (PERC) and Sierra Club of Canada – Ottawa, the session will occur on November 20th as part of the sustainability summit at the People’s Summit on APEC. The day will produce a set of demands for APEC leaders to follow for Pacific Rim forest protection.

For more information and registration packets, contact Paige Fischer at PERC, perc@igc.apc.org. (ph) 415-332-8200, (fax) 415-332-8167.
Senate Poised to Roll Back Endangered Species Act

By Brian Vincent

The Endangered Species Act, the nation's toughest law protecting imperiled species, is suddenly fighting for its life. After months of backroom negotiations, the White House and Senate leaders have hatched a proposal to change the law that could radically scale back species protections and contribute to the decline of the nation's rich biological heritage.

The Senate plan, which was introduced by Republican Senators Dirk Kempthorne of Idaho and John Chafee of Rhode Island, and endorsed by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and some key Democratic leaders, appears to be on the fast track, sparking what will undoubtedly be the most contentious battle over the landmark statute since its passage in 1973. Although a full congressional calendar may postpone action until next year, some senators were pushing for a vote as early as late October.

Critics of the bill, including the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund, Sigma Club, Defenders of Wildlife, National Wildlife Federation, and scientific societies, animal welfare, fishing, and religious groups, quickly panned the bill because it would place more emphasis on protecting private lands and industry than on imperiled species and habitats, according to Earthjustice attorney Doug Honnold, the ESA rewrite would create a bloated bureaucracy, greater subsidies for industry, and less protection for biodiversity.

The Kempthorne bill, which is being praised as a tool for protecting endangered species, would put the corporations in control of endangered species protection and that, in our view, simply won't work," said Honnold. In particular, Honnold fears the measure could allow for fixed agreements between the federal government and industry on species management, which couldn't be adjusted over time to better protect habitats. If changes are needed, federal taxpayers, not industry, would be responsible for picking up the tab.

The bottom line is that this bill would result in some species going extinct that would otherwise survive given a strong endangered species law. It really does change endangered species recovery planning into letting a deadline," he said.

The scientific community has also raised concerns about the bill. In a letter to committee members, renowned biologist Reed Noss, who serves as the co-executive director of the Conservation Biology Institute, wrote that the bill "falls far short of a scientifically defensible ESA." Critics of the Senate bill maintain that the proposal would undermine the very intent of the ESA that is, to not only bring species back from the brink of extinction but to put them on the road to recovery. They say the bill would:

- Promote development schemes that give developers a license to kill.
- Allow federal agencies like the Forest Service to leap before they look. The Kempthorne bill would allow the U.S. Forest Service and other federal agencies to continue charging forward with a bad forest plan for 15 months after a species becomes threatened or endangered or critical habitat is designated. This would allow agencies to push through numerous small projects while ignoring the cumulative effects on wildlife in national forests.
- Prevent the recovery of threatened and endangered species by requiring the FWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service to underwrite hasty and speculative cost assessments when developing recovery plans for listed species.
- Close the door on new information, when life is full of surprises. The Administration's own endangered species policies, which would be statutorily enshrined in the Kempthorne-Chafee bill, have been loudly criticized by the scientific community, because the initiatives disregard sound biological principles. It provides landowners with 100 percent certainty while ignoring that ecological systems are unpredictable. In July 1996, 167 scientists signed a letter to Congress expressing serious reservations about the policy, saying it "does not reflect ecological reality and rejects the best scientific knowledge and judgment of our era. It proposes a world of certainty that does not, has not, and will never exist. Because we will always be surprised by ecological systems, the proposed 'no surprises' amendment flies in the face of scientifically based ecological knowledge, and in fact, rejects that knowledge."
- Give federal agencies with a poor track record of protecting endangered species a license to make matters worse. The ESA currently requires federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that their activities do not jeopardize listed species. The "consultation" provision of the ESA was cited by the National Academy of Sciences as one of its most important and effective provisions. Under the Kempthorne bill, however, the FWS has 60 days to object to a federal agency's action. If the FWS does not respond within the 60-day period then the project would be approved. Given the FWS's inability and reluctance to enforce the current law, it is likely the Service would not have the resources nor the stomach for denying projects under the 60-day provision.

The Kempthorne bill, the groups said, stands in sharp contrast to Rep. George Miller's Endangered Species Recovery Act (ESRA) -- a proposal supported by conservation organizations that would strengthen species protections while providing incentives for private landowners. The groups have been working together for passage of Rep. Miller's ESRA. That bill, introduced with bipartisan support last month and endorsed by 80 other House members, has been gaining momentum. To confuse the public and other lawmakers, Senator Kempthorne also called his bill the Endangered Species Recovery Act. Although the Administration has been sending mixed signals on the Senate bill, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Jamie Clark testified before a Senate committee that the White House would endorse the committee's rewrite. Conservation groups blasted the Administration for embracing the package of revisions that would scale back protections for endangered plants and animals. "I think the Administration has made a huge political misjudgment if they think we're going to lay down on this one," said staff attorney for U.S. Public Interest Research Group, Kimberley Defino. "This is not a modest proposal. This is a complete and utter roll back." To date, not one conservation group has endorsed the bill.

Meanwhile, industry interests, including timber, mining, ranching, real estate, and utilities, praised the proposal. Industry has complained that the current endangered species law punts too many restrictions on land use. W. Henson Moore, president of the American Forest and Paper Association, said the bill "would update the Endangered Species Act to accomplish species recovery in a prudent manner."

Some lawmakers, notably Sen. Ron Wyden, D-OR, agree. The Kempthorne bill "is an environmentally strong bill that will enhance ESA from a law that is a failure to a full employment act to a useful tool for protecting species," said David Eldin, communications director for Senator Wyden, who voted for the bill in committee. Mr. Eldin would not say whether the senator would ultimately vote for the bill if it came to the Senate floor.

Although the bill has gained the support of some important political allies, the Senate proposal still has a number of hurdles. October's announcement by Senator Kempthorne that he will run for governor of Idaho will mean that the bill's chief author will have little time to devote to maneuvering his plan on the Senate floor. And a number of Democrats, including Wyden, Sen. Patty Murray, D-WA, and Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-CA, recently submitted a letter to the Administration expressing concern that the Kempthorne bill contains no money to pay for the proposed incentives to encourage landowners to protect wildlife habitat.

The Associated Press quoted Wyden as saying that unless money is found, it "could really be a show-stopper in this bill." The Democrats said they want to work with the Office of Management and Budget before the bill reaches the Senate floor to find "a dedicated source of funding for these new efforts."

Conservationists say that they've only just begun to roll out their heavy artillery. They say the Senate bill may not judy rip the heart out of the ESA. It would dismantle the law's limits by leaving, bone by bone, the nation's toughest wildlife law left for dead.