

Business



3265 **B5** "I've been following New Forestry and wanted to see it firsthand." — Bond Starker (story below)

Forest industry members view a recently logged site in the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest while listening to researchers explain New Forestry techniques.

Tour showcases New Forestry

Stories by Joyce DeMonnin

Gazette-Times reporter

BLUE RIVER — In the Cascade Range about 45 miles east of Eugene, researchers are studying "New Forestry" methods that may provide a compromise between maintaining ecological and aesthetic values with demand for timber production.

Forest industry members got a firsthand look at some New Forestry practices last week on a tour through the H.J. Andrews Experimental For-

About 90 foresters, researchers and others affiliated with the industry went on the tour, spon-sored by the Portland-based Western Forestry and Conservation Association.

The group was taken to an old-growth grove and two sites logged with New Forestry methods.

On one 70-acre parcel, most of the timber had been logged. But instead of clear-cutting the site, some live trees were left standing along with dead trees, or snags.

After a typical logging operation, there is plenty of wood left on the ground in the form of branches from the downed trees. Under traditional forestry practices, that "woody debris" would be burned or otherwise removed.

But at these experimental sites, much of the debris is left behind to naturally decompose and replenish soils.

The snags are left to provide homes for birds, insects and other life in the forest and to provide future sources of woody debris.

These methods probably won't be adopted by private timberland owners, but they should be applied to some tracts of national forests, said Kent Kelly, spokesman for the Siuslaw Timber Operators Association based in Philomath.

He said he's been reading about New Forestry methods, and the tour gave him a chance to see them in practice.

The methods are "too speculative and nebulous" to apply to private lands, Kelly said. But they could be applied to habitat conservation areas set aside for the northern spotted owl, he said.

That would offer a compromise of harvesting some timber, yet leaving behind enough foliage and biological diversity to support the owl, the animals the owl feeds on and other organisms,

Andrews facts

The H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest about 50 miles east of Eugene is the center for much of the world's knowledge on forest and stream research and ecosystems.

It's managed cooperatively by the U.S. Forest Service, Oregon State University and the Willamette National Forest.

The Andrews Forest is one of the few forests with stands of old growth that have been studied for 20 years or more, said Jerry Franklin, formerly with OSU and now the chief plant ecologist for the U.S. Forest Service and a professor of forestry at the University of Washington.

According to Franklin, much of the forestry research done this century centered on wood production - how to grow trees more efficiently and quickly. There wasn't much interest in old-growth forests until the 1970s, when a small group of scientists decided to look at them before they were completely gone, he said.

Franklin and others received National Science Foundation grants to study old forests at the Andrews. They discovered they were much more complex than previously thought.

"We don't even know all the organisms that live there," he said. "We don't know all the processes that are going on below ground. We don't understand the way the tree canopies in-teract with the atmosphere. We don't know more than just the very first thing about insects.

Some of the research being carried on at the Andrews by OSU scientists and others includes:

Experimental watersheds: The effects of timber harvests and road construction on water, sediment and nutrients.

■ Old-growth forests: The development of forest structure and composition through time, including biological diversity, wildlife habitat, the roles of insects, spiders and mites, soil nutrients, pollination and other ecological pro-Cesses

Stream ecosystems and riparian zones: The effects of forests on stream ecosystems, vegetation dynamics, the effects of woody debris on streams, the effects of logging and other disturbances.

Kelly said.

In order to implement New Forestry and still maintain current timber supply levels, he said, more acreage would have to be logged than is being done now.

The practice of leaving snags also is of concern to loggers, according to James McCauley of the Associated Oregon Loggers.

"Loggers are caught in the middle" between forest service rules for leaving snags and Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements to remove them because they may fall, he said.

"It comes down to a question of safety," McCauley said, surveying the many snags left behind. "I'd be interested in knowing who logged the (tour) site."

Bond Starker of Starker Forests also went on

the tour because "I've been following New Forestry and wanted to see it firsthand.'

The methods can be applied "as appropriate" to both public and private timberlands, he said.

Although Starker Forests doesn't have the same constraints on its private lands as federal forests, which must manage for recreation, wildlife and water quality, Starker said the family business still tries to "maintain existing populations of wildlife when it doesn't adversely affect the growth of timber."

As a result of the tour, Starker said he would consider leaving more snags, but only in creek bottoms, where the fire hazard is less

For the most part, Starker doesn't plan to implement the new methods. But he said he will wait and watch what happens on the Andrews Forest and other places where they're being used.

