

# Timber managers learn new ways from research near Willamette Forest

The Associated Press

**BLUE RIVER** — Many of the facts and figures being thrown around in the debate about preserving old-growth forests comes from a stand of timber on the edge of the highest-yield national forest in the country.

Dozens of painstaking projects

at the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest are dramatically changing government management of public forests — like the surrounding Willamette National Forest.

The Willamette traditionally has produced more timber than any national forest.

But at its edge, researchers like

Fred Swanson keep a careful watch on some of the world's oldest trees.

Since 1975, Swanson has helped tag the 1,000 or so fallen trees along Mack Creek northeast of Blue River. A camera takes their picture every 30 minutes. Once a year, each log is plotted on a map.

This mapping, tagging and photography are part of an experiment designed to track how the creek and forest are gradually changing.

Research at H.J. Andrews has suggested that continually cutting up the forest into small patches can harm wildlife and break down

the forest ecosystem, even in the uncut slivers of old growth that remain.

The research has influenced U.S. Forest Service management and is being used by environmental groups to support lawsuits to limit old-growth logging.

"Understanding the complexity

of old growth has played a pivotal role in framing some of the issues today," said Swanson, who is the chief researcher at H.J. Andrews and is based at the Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station in Corvallis.

Studies at H.J. Andrews have  
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Statesman Journal, Salem, Ore., Sunday, June 2, 1991

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resulted in a fundamental shift in the public view of old-growth forests, said Dave Wilcove, a biologist for the Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C.

"One role of the H.J. Andrews experimental forests is to teach people about old-growth forests," Wilcove said. "From that knowledge came the concern. And from that concern came the real watershed we're at now in terms of public policy."

In 1977, the National Science Foundation picked H.J. Andrews as one of its 17 long-term ecological research sites. The facility is the National Science Foundation's only coniferous forest research site.

The Forest Service started the 15,800-acre facility — named after a regional forester who died in a car wreck — to study how best to plant and regenerate trees after logging.

Founded in 1948, the facility at first focused on industry-oriented topics such as tree genetics, road design and slash burning.

In the 1960s, the focus shift-

ed to the effects of logging and road building on watersheds. Long-term studies at H.J. Andrews showed these activities could contribute to erosion and stream sedimentation, prompting changes in Forest Service rules for logging-road construction and forest work.

But in the 1970s, Jerry Franklin, now a University of Washington professor and chief ecologist for the Forest Service, pushed hard to focus H.J. Andrews research on old growth. It was a turning point, Swanson said.

A number of scientists who have worked at H.J. Andrews — among them Franklin, Swanson, Chris Maser, Tom Spies, Jim Sedell, Tim Schowalter and Stan Gregory — have emerged as national experts in old growth ecosystems.

Along with the recognition has come more money, mainly from the National Science Foundation.

The agency recently awarded H.J. Andrews a \$3.3 million, six-year grant to continue old growth research.