

# Workshop stresses new forestry ethic

■ **Timber:** The conference discussed techniques for maintaining biological diversity in forests.

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The Register-Guard

A new ethic in managing the national forests is taking root, about 100 people were told Saturday at a daylong conference in Eugene.

"There's no turning back," said Hal Salwasser, head of the U.S. Forest Service's "new perspectives" program. "It is not business as usual."

Salwasser, an ecologist, was the keynote speaker at Saturday's workshop, "Biological Diversity in Cascade Forests: Trends and Options for the Future."

The program was sponsored by the Cascade Center for Ecosystem Management, a joint project of the Willamette National Forest, Oregon State University and the research arm of the U.S. Forest Service.

Many of the region's top forest ecologists, biologists and scientists were panelists.

The Forest Service's new perspectives program tries to incorporate

emerging scientific information about forest biodiversity and new methods of involving the public in management of the national forests.

It was a response to growing dissatisfaction with the way the Forest Service has been run and to emerging scientific research about the importance of ecosystems and biological diversity.

Environmentalists have criticized the new perspectives program as nothing more than propaganda and a ploy to log sensitive forests, such as roadless areas. The timber industry also is skeptical because the new plan generally does not allow as much logging as traditional clear-cutting practices.

Many of the ideas embrace so-called "new forestry" concepts of logging, such as leaving live trees, snags and downed logs on the site after harvesting. But the program goes beyond logging practices, looking at management on large geographic scales and incorporating both the ecological and

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economic values of the forest, Salwasser said.

Salwasser made it clear that the primary goal of the new perspectives program is to protect the environment. "First, take care of the land . . . I feel very strongly about this," he said.

Salwasser said that will be difficult to do, because U.S. and worldwide demand for wood products is skyrocketing.

There are about 200 new perspectives projects under way, including some in the Willamette National Forest.

A number of other speakers outlined what they said was a changing ethic in forest management.

"Our forest ethic is in a period of upheaval," said Andy Hansen, a forestry professor and wildlife researcher at Oregon State University.

Hansen said what may emerge is "an abandonment of the traditional way we've managed our forests," which largely entailed either preserving lands or opening them up to high-intensity logging.

Hansen suggested that because of past mistakes, such as not allowing wildfires to burn in wilderness areas or national parks, those areas will be

drastically altered unless man more actively manages them.

"This idea that just setting aside land to preserve it is under question," Hansen said. "Nature reserves aren't working."

Norm Johnson, an OSU forestry professor and one of four scientists to develop a landmark land-management report for Congress last year, called for a rewriting of the Forest Service's charter to specify its goals.

Johnson said laws passed in the 1970s "Made it clear that the highest priority of the national forests was environmental protection," yet timber production has remained the agency's top goal.

The report Johnson helped produce last year said the Forest Service's new management plans — more than a decade in the making — fall far short of protecting a number of wildlife species, including the spotted owl and at-risk fish stocks.

"We're eventually going to have to own up to those scientists and the experts," he said.

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