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TRANSITIONS

Journal of the IEPLC

The Inland Empire Public Lands Council is a non-profit organization dedicated to the transition of the greater Columbia River ecosystem from resource extraction to long term community and biological sustainability.

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CLEARCUTS & FLOODS

“And the public has to shoulder all or a large part of the cost of restoring partially wrecked or devastated forests.”

—Henry Wallace, FDR’s Agriculture Secretary, 1940.

Cutting down trees causes floods. Many children learn this in school or scouting. Parents are being forced to relearn this lesson in the Northwest. People are digging out from February floods. Property damage in north Idaho alone is expected to top \$100 million. Damage to fisheries is incalculable.

Timber companies and their stable of lobbyists and politicians call this flood disaster an “Act of God.” In north Idaho the historic record reveals that timber companies and government officials had ample warning of this impending disaster:

- In the 1960s, *thirty years ago*, Forest Service hydrologists on the Idaho Panhandle warned that cutting down forest canopies risked downstream flooding. ***Yet overcutting continued.***

- In the early 1980s hydrologists sounded the alarm to reporters: clearcutting would damage streams and fish, and risk flooding. What did the Forest Service do? It moved one hydrologist out of Idaho and forced another into early retirement. ***Overcutting continued.***

- Through the 1980s Senators James McClure and Steve Symms, and Rep. Larry Craig used heavy-handed political pressure and manipulated timber targets to benefit large timber corporations. Conservationists warned the public of dire threats to watersheds. ***Overcutting continued.***

- In 1990 Idaho communities downstream from clearcuts were hard hit by floods. ***Overcutting continued.***

Is the 1996 flood disaster in north Idaho an act of God as timber companies claim? — or was this disaster caused by the greedy hand of man? ***Overcutting continues.***

Have you ever poured water on a sponge? Try it. It’s just like when winter rains fall on the forest. See how the sponge holds the water. Now with your fingers tear away a bit of the sponge. That’s just like a clearcut. The forest that acts like a sponge is now gone. In the winter clearcuts fill with snow. Warm winter storms melt that snow. Without trees, the forest can’t hold the water. The clearcuts cause floods.

Too many logging roads make floods worse. Bulldozer blades cut into hillsides. They expose perched water tables which bleed water to the surface. This adds more water to already flooding streams. Also roads have hard surfaces. Water doesn’t soak in, and run-off adds to flooding streams.

Logging roads and clearcuts cause the land to slide away. Culverts may be too small or become plugged. Water flows across the road and washes the road down the mountainside which is termed a “blow-out.”

Floodwaters hitting the sides and bottoms of streams wash away dirt and even boulders. When the water slows, the rocks drop to the bottom. Streams and rivers fill with rocks. Deep channels become shallow. Floodwaters spill over river banks. Houses flood.

In Idaho floods carry tons of heavy metals — lead, cadmium, zinc, mercury, arsenic — into beautiful Lake Coeur d’Alene. The poisons don’t stop at the Idaho line; the heavy metals flow into Washington.

And still the overcutting continues.

As floodwaters recede and we rebuild our communities, we should look upstream to our watersheds. Right now Sen. Larry Craig and his corporate sponsors are playing a high stakes game of demolition derby. If upstream overcutting continues, so will downstream flood disasters.

—John Osborn, MD

Clearcut Warnings: 1990 Floods

Panhandle floods leave residents stranded

By David Bender

Staff writer

CATALDO, Idaho—Melting snow and heavy rain swelled streams in the Panhandle Sunday, washing out roads and stranding scores of rural residents.

More than 50 families along Latour Creek Road south of Cataldo were isolated when the Coeur d'Alene River flooded about a half mile of the road.

Earlier Sunday, residents used high-clearance trucks to drive to and from home, said Larry Huber, one of the stranded residents.

When the water rose during the day, residents used boats, and those who had left home for the day made plans to stay with friends.

"This is the worst I've ever seen it," said Huber, a commissioner for the East Side Highway District, which maintains rural roads in eastern Kootenai County.

"We had snow up on the mountains, then we had the warming temperatures and the rain," said Kootenai County Sheriff Lt. Skip Rapp. "You combine all that and— whoosh—here it all comes."

The floodwaters were expected to recede late Sunday night or early this morning. But recent rains and low overnight temperatures were expected to create icy conditions on roads in North Idaho and Spokane this morning, the National Weather Service warned.

Early Sunday, emergency crews began building a sandbag dike under an Interstate 90 overpass near Cataldo to prevent 50 homes in the community from being flooded.

The community is protected from flooding by a huge, earthen dike. But the river overflowed downstream from the dike's end and began flowing toward the town behind the dike.

Elsewhere in North Idaho:

* The St. Joe River overflowed its banks in southern Shoshone County, washing out a section of the St. Joe River Road between Loop Creek and Avery, a sheriff's dispatcher said.

* Deputies set out by boat to retrieve a northern Shoshone County family that was cut off by flooding on the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River. The river, a tributary of the Coeur d'Alene River, flooded state Highway 5 between Enaville and Pritchard.

* Bonner County officials were warning residents along Pack River and Upper Pack River to watch for flash floods.

The floodwaters also covered a mile of Union Pacific railroad track south of Cataldo with 3 to 5 feet of water.

The tracks, which lead to the silver mines in the Coeur d'Alene mining district, carry only two trains a week, Rapp said. The next one isn't scheduled until Tuesday.

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Associated Press

Flood waters erode the high ground protecting this isolated home on flooded Fir Island near Conway, Wash.

Lewiston Tribune
November 27, 1990

AP photo

Steve VanderYacht, 23 and Nina Dwyer, 18, watch the Nooksack River rise from atop a friend's house.

Spokesman Review
November 11, 1989

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Clearcut Warnings: Citizens

Riverside residents fear logging Will more watershed timber sales increase flooding?

By Julie Titone

Staff writer

Although decades of heavy logging have increased the threat of floods along the Coeur d'Alene River, the U.S. Forest Service is planning more timber sales in the watershed. Agency officials say carefully planned sales that include expensive stream improvements will actually lessen the threat.

But nervous riverside residents are getting a different message from environmental activists, one of whom is a former Forest Service staff scientist.

Allen Isaacson was a hydrologist for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests from 1966 to 1986.

"We started noticing flooding in the late '60s in that area," Isaacson said of the stretch of river commonly known as the North Fork. "We knew the problem. We warned management. We kept warning them and kept warning them. And they kept building roads and logging."

The problem occurs when hillsides are cleared of trees and rain falls on the snow-covered ground. Without protection from the rain and warm wind, the snow melts quickly and runs off the frozen ground.

The rush of water moves large rocks that tumble into the river, altering its channel and making it shallower.

"The riverbed is filling in in places, losing its capacity," said Gary Kappesser, the Panhandle Forests' current hydrologist.

Kappesser, who said he has a high professional regard for his predecessor Isaacson, was among scientists who measured the riverbed upstream of Enaville. They found it had risen 2.5 feet over 25

years. But logging is not the only thing that's changed the river, Kappesser said.

"The reasons are probably very complex. Some are historical ... caused by splash dams, placer mining, dredge mining, the 1910 fire and subsequent fires."

The Soil Conservation Service is spearheading a federal study of the river, which will include analysis of flooding and impacts from logging. The study results, due in 1994, will be incorporated into a management plan being written for the entire Lake Coeur d'Alene basin.

Meanwhile, residents of Prichard, Enaville and Cataldo worry about the floods that come with increasing regularity.

"If we get heavy rains here now, and a chinook wind, you can just bet it's going to take everything out—Kingston and Cataldo," said Duke Hobart. He has lived for 15 years near Prichard, bounded on three sides by national forest land.

"There's just nothing to hold this," Hobart said of the deep snow. "We've been trying to stop this clearcutting for years and years."

Kappesser mentioned January floods that occurred in 1964, '74 and '82. Although some houses should never have been built in the floodplain, he said, if he lived there he'd be looking for ways to floodproof his property.

Some people who do live there have turned for advice to Isaacson, now a Coeur d'Alene consultant. He tells them anything they do to alter the river channel "is just a Band-Aid" because the real problem lies in the headwaters.

Continued on next page

Water Crisis

Logging and road-building throughout the huge Panhandle National Forests have wreaked havoc on its watersheds, from destroying fish to causing floods

By J. Todd Foster

Staff writer

Forest Service scientists began warning the agency 25 years ago about logging's environmental legacy on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests.

Their bosses rarely listened.

Drainages under siege from chainsaws since World War II continue to be dissected by erosive roads and scalped with new timber harvests.

The Coeur d'Alene River and its tributaries, once a fly-fishing paradise, have become a hydrologic hell. The last documented sighting of a bull trout in the Coeur d'Alene Basin was in 1985.

"I've been telling them since 1968. Now these watersheds are destroyed," said Al Isaacson, a Panhandle

hydrologist from 1966-86. "The only way it could be reversed would be to quit harvesting timber."

The Panhandle pumps out 25 percent of the timber in this region, although it is but one of 13 forests.

The Coeur d'Alene, Kaniksu and St. Joe forests, each prolific timber growers, were combined under the Panhandle label 20 years ago to form one of the nation's largest reserves of federal trees. The 2.5 million acres are nearly 100 miles deep and 75 miles wide.

"This is one of the best places in the world to grow trees," said Ken Kohli, a spokesman for the Coeur d'Alene-based Intermountain Forest Industry Association.

Every year for the last decade, about 250 million board feet of wood, enough to employ 2,500 sawmill workers for a year, has been sliced from the forest in virtually one

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One of the first places Isaacson saw the effects of rain-on-snow was near the Little North Fork, where the Fernan Ranger District is planning a timber sale dubbed Barney Rubble's Cabin.

That sale, and a second one nearby called Skookum, together call for harvesting 12.2 million board feet of timber over 1,400 acres.

District Ranger Don Bright noted that plans for the two sales call for nearly \$500,000 worth of repairs to the watershed. Some roads will be removed, and some moved, to limit erosion; clogprone culverts will be taken out; vegetation will be planted along streamsides. Clearings will be no larger than five acres and be used sparingly on south-facing slopes where snow melts quickly.

The benefits to the watershed will outweigh impacts of logging, he said.

Kappesser believes watershed work such as that planned by the Fernan District can definitely help.

"We can bring the watersheds back faster if we go out there and do some good land management," he

said. "The question to be answered is: Have we balanced that (improvement) against the effects of continued logging?"

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has argued against the pending North Fork timber sales. The declining cutthroat population is one sign the watershed is in serious trouble, said state biologist Chip Corsi.

A 1991 fish count confirmed the stories of anglers like Hobart, who contends that "since 1980 fishing up here on the North Fork has just got to nothing."

Isaacson said the Fernan District's stream improvements would reduce the fine sediment that clogs trout spawning beds, but would do nothing to stop the rock-tumbling runoff caused by logging.

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Water Crisis

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clearcut after another.

The timber is reached by a maze of logging roads which, laid end to end, would stretch to Florida and back—twice.

A new Forest Service study shows that 43 percent of the Panhandle's streams are so damaged that logging should be banned in their drainages until they heal.

"The fishing used to be fantastic. Logging has ruined it," said Al Richey, a 72-year-old former logger who has waded the Coeur d'Alene Basin with a fly rod since the mid-'50s.

Forest Flooding

Historically meandering, narrow and shady, Coeur d'Alene River tributaries now look deformed.

Clearcuts have removed so much of the forest canopy that, every year, warm coastal winds grope for openings and quickly melt the snowpack.

Water gushes down hillsides and into streams with such force that it moves soil and gravel, filling in trout habitat and carving new channels that beeline wide and shallow. Without the cover of trees, the streams overheat in summer and don't attract the insects that sustain fish.

"They used to be streams. Now they're ditches," one federal biologist said.

In 1935, nearly every fishing hole on the Panhandle included bull trout. Now 76 percent of their habitat has been destroyed, and the fish is proposed for the endangered species list.

The numbers of cutthroat trout are also dropping drastically, even in areas where the Idaho Department of Fish and Game has enacted catch-and-release regulations.

Biologists found 10 fish per mile in Trail Creek, instead of hundreds. "On the Coeur d'Alene, I'm running out of options. The fish populations are just hanging on," said Ned Horner, state regional fisheries manager.

Holes in the forest canopy and the 10,000-mile network of roads cause 100- and 500-year floods almost every winter, scientists say.

"In a phrase, the Panhandle is trashed. The watersheds are unraveling, and the fisheries and wildlife are pushed

to the brink of extinction," said John Osborn, a Spokane physician who founded the Inland Empire Public Lands Council.

If the council were a football team, its 13-5 record in blocking Panhandle timber sales would be good enough for a bowl game.

"If you look at the numbers available, it becomes very clear that this patient is in critical condition," Osborn said.

Elective Surgery

The Forest Service, a lethargic agency known for resisting

change, is starting to buckle under public pressure.

The agency is prescribing fewer clearcuts and more cable and helicopter logging—expensive but easier on the land. Old roads are being returned to vegetation. Fish habitat destroyed by tax dollars is being rebuilt with more public money.

"People didn't have the science, the knowledge or the background about what could happen to a watershed if you did these types of things," said Dave Wright, supervisor of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests.

"So we built a lot of roads. We've probably got too many roads out there. We did some cutting right into the stream courses, which probably wasn't the best thing to do. I think as a community, we've learned some lessons from how we treated the land in the past," Wright said.

The Panhandle's Wallace Ranger District recently landed two national awards for stream restoration.

"In a phrase, the Panhandle is trashed. The watersheds are unraveling, and the fisheries and wildlife are pushed to the brink of extinction."

**-John Osborn,
founder of the Inland Empire
Public Lands Council**

But the method of funding the work has drawn sharp criticism from environmentalists and even agency scientists.

The Forest Service has virtually no money to repair logging damage. Most of its budget, allocated by Congress, is devoted to selling trees and building roads.

The Panhandle is one of four national forests participating in a pilot program that allows it to barter with timber companies.

The agency is trading trees for environmental repairs. But many of the trees are coming from the same drainages that logging damaged in the first place.

"It's kind of like picking a scab on a wound so that it never heals," said Gary Kappesser, the Panhandle's supervisory hydrologist.

Many of the repairs aren't working anyway, according to the North Idaho Fly Casters, a fishing club that has volunteered to repair a few streams.

"We feel they have been for the most part a failure," Skip Quade, of the Fly Casters' legislative committee, wrote an environmental group last January. "We also feel that the Forest Service may be using our volunteer mitigation work as justification for further timber harvest."

Throughout the Panhandle, the healthiest watersheds would seem to be the most unlikely.

"What's interesting is the watersheds burned in the 1910 fire are the most stable today in contrast to those that have been harvested," Kappesser said.

Forest scientists now know that natural disturbances such as fire, insects and disease happen sporadically as part of nature's design. Streams and the land bounce back quickly, he said.

But nature's management tools don't include clearcuts and roads. "There's nothing in that kind of management that simulates nature," Kappesser said.

Joe Hinson, a versatile timber man who looks as comfortable talking to a sawyer as a senator, admits that logging's old school now flunks Environment 101.

Pointing to an old clearcut overgrown with brush where small trees should be, Hinson loads up his bearded cheek with Beech Nut and turns to honesty and humor.

"This is an example where we rode roughshod over Mother Nature instead of mimicking her," said Hinson, executive vice president of the Intermountain Forest Industry Association

"But you have to treat this like a marriage. We did nothing wrong in the past. Now if we do something bad

now, that's different."

For every environmental failure, there are 100 successes in the woods, industry leaders said. Not far from the ugly clearcut is another one that was replanted 19 years ago, where Douglas firs top 30 feet.

Underground Fungus

Industry officials say the Panhandle's biggest problem is one of the country's worst epidemics of root rot. The fungus spreads below the soil and feasts on Douglas and grand firs.

The severity of the root plague and whether careful logging is a partial cure are the subjects of a scientific debate.

Tree pathologist and University of Idaho professor Art "Doc" Partridge believes the disease is within historical levels. Using it as an excuse to harvest trees is a ruse to feed sawmills and fatten pocketbooks, Partridge said.

But timber industry scientists and even other UI professors say trees infested with root rot are vulnerable to huge fires and should be removed.

White pine and other heartier species better able to fight off root infections should be replanted in place of firs.

"Eventually, nature will make a catastrophic change—fire. And that change may not be pretty," said Kohli, of the Intermountain Forest Industry Association. "If you can sell the timber in an environmentally sound fashion and provide wood products to our society, that's a win-win.

"But if your political agenda is to stop logging, then you go out and draw a red line around huge areas. The idea that this could be a giant green carpet is not ecological reality."

Defector

Al Isaacson spent 20 years with the Forest Service on the Panhandle, 13 years as supervisory hydrologist. The agency's inertia forced him to the environmentalists' side in the late '80s.

The Panhandle is Isaacson's back yard. He's fished its creeks, hunted its meadows and sojourned in its shade, especially after his wife died of cancer.

The burly, bearded Isaacson doesn't need a map to navigate the Panhandle's back roads.

"These watersheds are gone. It's personally frustrating and makes me angry. I grew up here. I have a stake in

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Clearcut Warnings: Agency Scientists

Scientist says agency forced him out

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—A scientist who worked 23 years for the Forest Service said Wednesday he was forced out of his job in 1986 because he complained that excessive logging was damaging water quality in Idaho's Panhandle.

"Environmental laws were not taken seriously if they stood in the way of (logging) targets," said Al Isaacson, who now lives in Coeur d'Alene and teaches hydrology at Spokane Community College.

"The forest plans were viewed as unnecessary evils that restricted managing the forests and imposed unrealistic constraints," he said.

Largely as a result of the clearcut logging, he said, the region is suffering floods three to five times a year that are the magnitude of floods normally experienced once every 200 years.

Isaacson was the supervisory hydrologist for 16 years on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest until he was ordered transferred to Atlanta in June 1986, he said.

"I chose to quit. It was a tough decision because I had been with the Forest Service for 23 years and my father worked for the Forest Service," he said in an interview Wednesday.

Isaacson said he was forced out because he argued against changes in forest management plans that he said would damage fragile rivers and streams. Some forms of logging have been shown to accelerate erosion, which can fill streams with gravel and silt.

"I was given a statement that when the plan comes out we want you as far away as we can get you," he said.

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this area," he said.

Forest Service brass see him as a malcontent, and industry experts claim Isaacson's work does not constitute science. That angers the soft-spoken man, who calls industry specialists "prostitutes who are more politicians than hydrologists. I can dispute everything they say and beat them in court."

Residents 30 miles northeast of Coeur d'Alene don't have hydrology degrees but know all about high water.

Nearly every January, when warm coastal winds collide with December's snowpack, the resulting thaw becomes a flood where the Little North Fork meets the North Fork above Enaville.

A century of silver mining and dumping the heavy metal-laden waste in creeks and rivers has also destroyed stream-side vegetation.

Geri Napolitan, who lives on the North Fork about four miles off Interstate 90, has been forced from her home five times in 13 years.

Her husband loads Geri and the kids in a boat and wades through chest-high water to pull his family to higher ground. "How can water stay on the mountain when there's no trees to hold it back? It's frustrating. We think something should be done to help us so we don't lose the place that we love," said Geri, 44.

Corps of Engineers officials have told Enaville families that reacting to floods is cheaper than preventing them. The only real solution is to stop logging in the North Fork drainage and allow the forest canopy to recover, said Osborn, the Spokane physician and environmentalist.

"That means decades," he said. "What the Forest Service did to the Coeur d'Alene Basin is heinous enough, but when you combine it with the heavy-metal contamination on the floodplain, you have built for this region an environmental time bomb that will cost \$1 billion to fix."

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Isaacson said former Forest Supervisor Bill Morden gave him the ultimatum. Morden could not be reached Wednesday night at his home in Coeur d'Alene.

Forest Service spokesman Jim Sanders in Washington, D.C., said Wednesday night he knew nothing of Isaacson. No one was available for comment Wednesday night at the regional Forest Service office in Missoula, said a man who answered the telephone.

Isaacson planned to testify today before the House Appropriations subcommittee on the interior, which sets the Forest Service's annual budget and establishes logging targets for national forests.

He met Wednesday with members of the House Civil Service subcommittee on civil service, which is investigating allegations from other past and present Forest Service workers that the agency violated environmental standards and retaliated against critics.

John Mumma, a biologist and former regional chief of the Forest Service in Montana, told Congress last fall he was ordered transferred from his job when he refused to cut trees in violation of environmental laws.

John McCormick, the former special agent in charge of Forest Service whistleblower complaints, told the civil service subcommittee month of a "pattern of lawlessness" within the agency.

McCormick alleged deliberate attempts to circumvent the laws, improper political pressure to maximize logging and reprisals for those who stood up for their scientific ethics.

Isaacson said during the 1960s he became one of the first six hydrologists to be hired by the Forest Service and began researching watersheds on the Panhandle National Forest in 1967.

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Directed Reassignment: Accept, Resign, Or You Will Be Removed

Excerpts from Al Isaacson

Former Supervisory Hydrologist, Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF)

"How many of you have heard this statement, or received a letter with this message. I did in the spring of 1986. The events leading up to this situation covered about six years. I was not unique in this ploy used by the Forest Service when someone does not buckle under to the timbersale program. Here is what happened."

"I began my career with the Forest Service as a summer employee while attending Forestry school in college. I had always wanted to work for the Forest Service as I grew up with the FS. I was a Smokejumper for several seasons and had forest experience. I received a permanent appointment in Nov. 1966 as a Watershed Specialist."

"In 1980 the mission of the FS changed due to political pressure, both external and internal."

"The whole mood of management changed during these years. Specialists were directed to support the district ranger on all projects no matter how severe the environmental damage. Laws were being broken every day to meet the 'timber target.' When an employee complained, he was labeled as not being a team player and was removed. In 1982 a timber sale was proposed on the Forest that was located in a drainage that was trashed from previous harvest activities and was producing sediment far in excess of any other in the area. Pete Bengeyfield and I worked on the Hydrology for this proposal and could not go along with the planned activity. This was our Waterloo. The Ranger was a very strong individual with strong political ties to the Idaho congressional delegation. He was going to sell this no matter what. We did not cave in to the pressure exerted by the Ranger, my Supervisor or from the Forest Supervisor. This was the one time in my career that I was asked to make my report fit the decision: usually it was implied. This time it was demanded. Instead a meeting was arranged with the District, forest and

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Regional Hydrology Staff. This was to be an in-house meeting but the Ranger rallied his support by inviting many timber industry representatives and tried to make it a political meeting instead of a technical meeting. The Forest was still going to approve this activity over our objections until they received a letter from the Regional Forester as a result of his staff's participation. The recommendation was that this sale not be planned until monitoring showed a decrease in the damage and restoration was instituted to remedy the sediment sources. This sale has still not sold and was a sore point with this Ranger."

"Also at about this time we were finishing up work on the Forest Plan. We had a series of public meetings during the spring and summer of 1985. We went to the public with a proposed annual timber sell program of 225 million board feet. We had analyzed all the watersheds on the Forest and about 268,000 acres in about 49 drainages were to be deferred status because of the damage to the stream and fishery from past sale activity. There were also 18 drainages totaling 123,000 acres where any future management was to be after mitigation measures were finished. The districts could not reach the sell figure without entering these drainages. The result after the public meetings due to pressure from the timber industry and the Idaho political delegation was to raise the sell to 275,000 million and to lower the water protection standards. I took the stand that if that was what the Forest wanted to do we ought to go back to the public and explain the trade-offs. This was not done and I was informed that, 'They wanted me as far away as possible when the plan came out.'

"I had pioneered the work on [water yields and their impact on streams] and had published several papers on the subject. [I] was known for my knowledge on water yields, however the analysis we had evolved over almost 20 years as hydrologists working with our peers across the country did not give the answer that this management wanted. So they gave an assignment to a very naive biologist that would tell them what they wanted to hear. I had invited a noted researcher, Walt Megahan, a FS employee to look in the field at the damage and give his opinion, I also invited the fish biologist. Walt wrote to the Forest with his ideas and ask to follow up, the Forest did not acknowledge his letter and were not happy that he was invited onto the area.

"I now had a new supervisor who had been a ranger and was in his first staff position. He made it clear that he supported the rangers and we were to work with them to achieve their targets. I did that but received a rating that was low in "program coordination", I wrote a letter to my supervisor at this point giving him examples of our accomplishments and the coordination that this took on my part. He wasn't interested and informed me that he was doing what he had been instructed and that I should transfer as things were only going to get worse, as I had no future on the IPNF."

"What has happened to the IPNF? The Forest Plan came out with the 275 million sell. They are 5 years into the plan, have had many appeals that they have lost and cannot implement the fishery program in the plan. The Fish Biologist was promoted and left the area and left a legacy of stream structures that are high and dry due to the changing stream courses or are buried under the bedload movement from over harvesting in these watersheds. Sixty-seven percent of the deferred drainages have been entered with watershed damage that will take generations to repair. Before retiring last Fall the Forest Supervisor wrote a letter stating that the allowable sell should drop to about 120 million. For the past several years the Forest Service has given into demands from the timber industry and have borrowed against the future. They cannot continue on the present course.

WHY HAVE INTEGRITY AND ETHICS IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT?

"This is one of many true stories that have happened all over the country. What is the result? Careers were lost, but most importantly the resource has been lost. I live here while forest managers come and go with no accountability for their actions. Where there was a thriving trout fishery in the Coeur d'Alene River system there is now none. Where there was a beautiful river system with deep pools and riffles, there now is a wide shallow river of changing courses of bedload rock. Where people had river front homes that were safe from floods except in extreme cases, there now is annual or even several times a year that their property floods because the channel has filled up with moving rock and sand. WHAT A LEGACY SO ONE OR TWO PEOPLE COULD ADVANCE THEIR CAREERS !"

[Excerpted from a speech delivered at a conference on Ethics in Government. Washington, D.C.. March, 1992, sponsored by the Government Accountability Project (GAP) and AFSEEE]

FLOOD! Part 1: December 1995

Landslide, Quartz Creek, Clearwater National Forest. The slide created a dam 600 feet long. The Forest Service insists the slide was naturally caused - and plans more "salvage" logging of trees still standing.

Rains devastate N. Idaho forests and watersheds

Officials blame clearcuts, roads in wrong places for most of damage

By **Ken Olsen**

Staff writer

The casualty list runs from Sandpoint to Lolo, Mont., and the roster is far from complete.

Early estimates suggest triage will cost taxpayers millions.

It's the worst damage to North Idaho's forests most experts have ever seen: Roads overloaded with water from recent storms fell off mountainsides, walls of mud and debris tore up logged and unlogged watersheds.

In Clearwater National Forest, federal officials frankly admit the devastation was aggravated by too many clearcuts and roads built in the wrong places.

At least 28 roads are closed due to more than 100 slides, slumps and washouts. Some of the roads probably won't reopen next summer, the U.S. Forest Service said.

The Idaho Panhandle National Forests to the north reports extensive damage to 200 miles of roads in the Bonner's Ferry District alone. The havoc raised by mudslides is worst in the St. Maries and Avery Ranger Districts—cutting off the road between Avery and Wallace and blocking other byways.

The forests appear to qualify for emergency repair money from the Federal Highway Administration.

"This is not a good picture," said Art Bourassa, district ranger on the North Fork of the Clearwater National Forest, as he pointed to a slide.

"I wish we didn't have a road up there," he added, pointing to a new road in a recently logged area 20 miles east of Dworshak Reservoir.

The rainstorms turned the road into an avalanche that charged through a clearcut and took out a piece of another logging road below it. The debris tumbled into the North Fork of the Clearwater River.

Not far away, raging Isabella Creek punched out a 100-yard-long, 10-foot deep curve on an older road, clear down to bedrock. It is the only road to the popular Mallard-Larkins Pioneer Area.

It definitely will be rebuilt, officials said, starting with a rock barrier to shield the next road from the creek.

Hardest hit was Quartz Creek Road, buried under a massive slide 600 feet wide and 60 feet deep.

It blocks the easiest access to an active timber sale.

But removal of the dirt and debris, and repair of the road, will cost an estimated \$1 million.

Many of the slides and washouts happened on steep slopes with unstable soil. They involve roads built four to 40 years ago.

This is a grand-slam education on how not to manage forests today, officials said.

"Everything up to four to five years ago was heavily clearcut," Bourassa said. "That probably isn't sitting with what Mother Nature planned."

As for roads, "some shouldn't have been built, based on location, drainage and stability," he said.

In areas like Skull Creek and Quartz Creek, "there were too many roads, too close together."

That management won't be repeated, he said.

The Forest Service knew long before Bourassa arrived here six years ago that several of those roads were risky because the soil is so unstable. "But if we didn't build in medium- to high-risk areas, we wouldn't have a road down the North Fork corridor," a major timber-hauling route, Bourassa said.

District Ranger Art Bourassa walks away from a massive slide on Quartz Creek in the Clearwater National Forest.

Those risks are never figured into the cost of a timber sale, but they are risks taxpayers will now pay for, environmentalists said.

Former Forest Service employees contend the current devastation is also partly a result of logging the same watershed year after year, instead of giving it time to heal.

Without those trees, there is nothing to drink up rainwater and prevent erosion, said Al Espinosa, who was chief fisheries biologist on the Clearwater for 20 years.

For example, there are no roads above the Quartz

Creek slide.

Yet this watershed has sustained 200 million board-feet of logging since 1965, much of it done in the name of salvaging white pine.

In 1979, the most valuable white pine was taken from the north slope by helicopter, leaving primarily dead and dying trees on the slope that slipped away last month.

It was salvage logging, advertised then as now as essential to get the trees while they are still valuable.

Spokesman Review

December 8, 1995

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FLOOD! Part 2: February 1996

Waters rage across Northwest

Worst flooding in 30 years forces thousands to flee

By Mike Prager

Staff Writer

The Pacific Northwest's worst flooding in more than 30 years pushed rivers over their banks and closed highways from Oregon to Western Montana Thursday.

Fast-melting snow and days of heavy rains triggered the deluge.

Hundreds of tired workers, many of them volunteers, battled surging waters with plywood and sandbags from downtown Portland to small farm towns like Colfax and Palouse in Whitman County.

"It's a nightmare down here," said Palouse resident Teri Haglin.

"The adrenaline is so high. We're trying to make the best of it. We're trying to laugh through the tragedy."

There, the swollen South Fork of the Palouse River swamped homes and businesses Thursday, forcing evacuations, closing bridges and threatening the town's municipal water supply.

Similar reports came from other towns: Pullman, Dayton, Waitsburg, Touchet and Walla Walla in Washington; St. Maries, Hayden Lake, Culdesac, Lapwai and Rose Lake in North Idaho.

Washington Gov. Mike Lowry proclaimed a state of emergency in 13 of the state's 39 counties, and more were expected to be added.

"Some of these counties are still coping with the damage from floods and winds last fall," the governor said. "This . . . just adds to the suffering."

Eighteen counties in Oregon and seven counties in Idaho were also declared disaster areas.

The next step is for the governors to ask President Clinton for federal aid.

Forecasters were calling for relief today. Drier weather is expected.

Thursday's flooding caused washouts and mudslides that blocked major highways linking the Inland Northwest to coastal Oregon and Washington. Highways were also blocked in North Idaho.

A sheriff's patrol car - lights still flashing - was swept by a mudslide into the Columbia River near Cascade Locks, Ore., on Thursday.

"It was like a moving light show," said state police Lt. Bernie Giusto.

Oregon and southern Washington were hardest hit by the floods.

The Willamette and Columbia rivers were expected to crest today at their highest levels since the Christmas flood of 1964, when 47 people died and 17,000 people were left homeless.

In Portland, the Willamette was forecast to rise a foot higher than the lowest point in the downtown seawall.

"We don't call the shots, the rivers do," said Portland emergency coordinator George Houston.

In nearby Vancouver on the Columbia River, air-planes were moved to higher ground at Pearson Air Park where half the runway was under water.

Longtime city worker Kelly Puteney said, "We've been a little arrogant about this river for a long time, and it's important that we realize what it can do."

In Eugene and Salem, 13,500 people were forced from their homes by the raging Willamette. Tillamook on the coast was largely under water.

Flooding was blamed for three Oregon deaths, including a 9-year old girl who drowned in a culvert after she went out to get the mail Wednesday in the Willamette Valley town of Scio.

A Troutdale, Ore., woman was missing after her home dropped into the Sandy River and drifted three miles into the Columbia River. Her husband, who was also in the house, was rescued by a tugboat crew.

No deaths were reported outside Oregon.

South of Tacoma, a locomotive was swept Thursday into Puget Sound by a landslide, injuring two Burlington Northern crew members.

In Montana, flooding and ice jams were reported in half the state's 56 counties. About four-dozen residents in Helena were evacuated.

“Weather can be our greatest ally or our greatest enemy,” Montana Gov. Marc Racicot said Thursday after surveying the damage.

Where the raging rivers were contained, residents watched in awe.

“It’s really boogeying past here,” said George Currier, a councilman in St. Maries, Idaho.

The North Fork of the Palouse River was in full fury in downtown Colfax, filling the city’s “concrete river”-built for flood control- within 3 feet of its lip. Water spilled over late Thursday.

Throughout Whitman County, volunteers and county workers had used 20,000 sandbags. Another 19,000 were on order.

A levee in Elberton overflowed. Water was across the road to Endicott.

On the South Fork of the Palouse, Pullman held its own - barely.

Water flooded several streets. Sandbags two to three deep protected businesses. Traffic to the evening basketball game at Washington State University was slowed.

“Benewah Street is now a river again and the city playfield is now an island,” said police Sgt. Sam Sorem.

A countywide state of emergency remained in effect, with non-essential traffic banned from rural county roads.

“Overall, it’s worse than yesterday,” said Whitman County Commissioner Jim Potts.

While Red Cross officials toured the city preparing a damage assessment for federal relief funds, the South Fork rose about a half foot during the afternoon and crested at 8.2 feet, slightly below its crest of 8.4 feet Wednesday.

In Spokane County, Latah Creek continued to flow over its banks about 2 feet above flood stage. No serious damage was reported.

While some people are surprised by the swift rise of the region’s rivers, the Northwest is historically flood prone, although dams have lessened the threat.

In Portland, with the Willamette River raging a few yards away, restaurateur Gary Kaer said, “I’ve always felt like you can overcome anything life throws at you.

“With this, what can you do? Nothing but wait and hope for the best.”

Staff writer Eric Sorensen and the Associated Press contributed to this report.

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An aerial view along the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River near Kingston, Idaho, Friday reveals more road washed out than dry.

Missoulian
February 11, 1996

AP photo

North Idaho cities treading water

Some prepare for more flooding while others view devastation

By Rich Roesler

Staff writer

CATALDO, Idaho—Mike Irwin waded Sunday through the pond that was Cataldo Drive, towing a boatload of people to the island that was his home.

“It looks like a war zone with a mudslide mixed in,” Irwin said standing beside his wife, Tina.

“We both just broke down and cried,” he said. “I guess we thought it wasn’t going to be that bad. I’ve always looked at these things on TV and thought, ‘Oh, those poor people.’ Now I’m one of those poor people.”

President Clinton signed an emergency proclamation late Sunday providing federal aid for North Idaho flood victims. The proclamation covers the Nez Perce Indian reservation and nine counties, including Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai Latah and Shoshone.

Meanwhile, downstream from the Irwins, Lake Coeur d’Alene continued to rise. It was expected to crest late tonight or early Tuesday at 8 feet above peak summer level.

About 300 volunteers furiously sandbagged Harbor Island, on the Spokane River, to protect 30 homes threatened by rising water.

Another 80 volunteers were sandbagging in the Fernan Lake area where 20 homes are threatened.

Near Blackwell Island, The Cedars floating restaurant was holding fast against the current—with the aid of piling extensions and a tugboat.

Rising water Sunday flooded parts of Blackwell Island and several other areas around the lake.

Throughout North Idaho, 1,500 to 2,000 people were without telephone service due to flooding. The largest outage was in Harrison, where about 1,000 people lost contact with the outside world. Phone service was restored late Sunday, officials said.

In the Silver Valley, police in helicopters and boats were urging evacuation of an estimated 4,000 people stranded in their homes by washed-out roads and high water.

Nearly all chose to stay home to protect livestock and their property, said Carl Gidlund, information officer at the Pinehurst command center.

One person ruled out evacuation but asked the chopper pilot to bring back eggs and a gallon of milk.

Many evacuees were staying at the Sands Motel in Smeltonville, which opened its doors free of charge.

“It’s a frustrating thing for the poor Red Cross, which has opened shelters, only to have almost no one come,” Gidlund said.

Military helicopters evacuated two families and flew an unconscious jet skier to Kootenai Medical Center.

In Benewah County, disaster services coordinator George Currier said 117 homes and 19 businesses had been inundated. Another 30 homes and seven businesses were partly flooded, he said.

Damage to buildings and contents were estimated at \$20 million. Other Panhandle counties didn’t have damage estimates yet.

St. Joe City was nearly surrounded by water, with emergency workers ferrying in two truckloads of food via an old railroad right-of-way. Benewah County sent sandbags to residents near the Cottonwood dike, where water was channeling under it.

Nonetheless, Currier said, the level of the St. Joe River is receding. It dropped 6 feet Sunday and is expected to drop another foot today, then stay at that level due to backed-up water from Lake Coeur d’Alene.

Road damage in Benewah County was extensive, Currier said.

Roads were out throughout the Panhandle. State Highway 97 near Carlin Bay was closed at 4 p.m. due to a washout. Highway 3, one mile north of St. Maries, was under several feet of water due to dike failures. Highway 6 south of St. Maries is closed at Harvard Hill, where water washed-out about a mile of roadway. The highway should be open by Wednesday, the Idaho Transportation Department said.

The federal government is providing some help - Republican Sen. Dirk Kempthorne announced Sunday that the Federal Highway Administration is giving \$2 million in emergency grants to the Idaho Transportation Department.

Kempthorne is returning to North Idaho today to visit flooded areas with Gov. Phil Batt.

Spokesman Review

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Three dikes on the St. Joe River ruptured Saturday, destroying more than 100 homes and businesses in St. Maries.

Mike Orwom pulls his family ashore after checking his flooded home Sunday in Cataldo, Idaho. "It looks like a war zone with a mudslide mixed in," he said.

Less water, worse flood, says Geological Survey

By Julie Titone

Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE — About half as much water pulsed through the Coeur d'Alene River last week as during the benchmark flood of 1974.

That will come as a surprise to many Kingston and Cataldo residents who had 4 feet of water in their homes. They swore the flooding was as bad or worse than 22 years ago.

They're not necessarily wrong, according to scientists who met Wednesday in Coeur d'Alene.

"When you hear folks up there saying it was higher than the '74 flood, that may be so," said Paul Woods of the U.S. Geological Survey.

He noted that the depth of water, known as the "stage," is different from the flow, which is measured in cubic feet per second (cfs).

"You could have lower flow, but higher stage because the river can't handle it," he said.

The river is shallower because there's more rock in the stream bed than there was two decades ago, scientists say. They blame erosion caused by unstable stream banks and faster runoff.

In the 1974 flood, 79,000 cfs flowed past the USGS measuring gauge at Cataldo. At its peak last week, the flow was above 40,000 cfs.

The Geological Survey scientists aren't sure of that second figure yet, and may never be because the automated streamflow gauge may have been washed downstream. They haven't been able to reach it yet.

The gauge upstream at Enaville definitely disappeared.

The measuring stick used to tell the height of the water at Cataldo couldn't be read during the flood. But the level apparently reached a record 53 feet.

The flooding dominated conversation at Wednesday's meeting of the Coeur d'Alene Inter-

agency Group. It includes scientists, land managers and others interested in cleaning up mining wastes and restoring streams in the Coeur d'Alene River basin.

Among other flood-related comments:

- While the main river did not reach an all-time high, the South Fork experienced record flows. So did Pine Creek, one of its main tributaries.

- Floods flush mining wastes into the river system. While figures aren't available from last week, a smaller flood one year ago washed as much lead and zinc into the water as would normally occur during an entire year, said Mike Beckwith of the Geological Survey.

His figures from Feb. 21, 1995, showed 69 tons of lead and 42 tons of zinc per day moving in the water at Harrison, which lies at the mouth of the river on Lake Coeur d'Alene.

At Pinehurst just downstream of the Bunker Hill Superfund site on the South Fork, the figures were 16 tons of lead, 11 tons of zinc. At Enaville on the North Fork, where there's been less mining, the figures were .9 tons of lead, 1.7 tons of zinc.

- The three floods that have occurred in the last 12 months complicate efforts to clean up heavy metals. David Fortier of the Bureau of Land Management, which owns land along Pine Creek, noted that nature has been sweeping away tailings before they can be moved from the stream.

- So far, streambank stabilization and cleanup efforts at Nine Mile Creek and Elizabeth Park have withstood flooding. But it's too early to tell in other places, such as the Cataldo boat ramp.

Last year, officials tried two methods for stopping erosion at the ramp below Old Mission State Park. One method involved using heavy equipment to

Continued on next page

Idaho flood: A year's worth of lead

Continued from previous page

place logs below the riverbank. The logs were held in place by cables. It didn't work.

After the Nov. 30-Dec. 1 flood, Mike Stevenson of the Bureau of Land Management visited the boat ramp and was crushed to find the logs "sticking straight up from the water like an obscene hand gesture."

The other method survived the fall flood. It involved driving posts into the riverbed and filling in between them with willow cuttings. The log work cost \$2,000; the willow project, done with the help of student volunteers, cost \$200.

•Marti Calabretta, coordinator of the Silver Valley Natural Resource Trust Fund, noted that massive flooding probably wouldn't have happened before people stripped the riverbanks of vegetation.

Capt. John Mullan, assigned to find a military road through the region in the 1860s, deemed the river valley unsuitable because it was a cedar swamp, she said. "We did this to ourselves."

Spokesman Review

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Coeur d'Alene Tribe photo archives

Floods push heavy metals into beautiful Lake Coeur d'Alene. Note the toxic swirl shown here at the mouth of the Coeur d'Alene River. The lake bottom is covered with about 150 billion pounds of toxic sediments containing lead, cadmium, zinc, mercury, and arsenic.

U.S. Forest Service photo

Clearcutting streams, Idaho Panhandle National Forests. In the 1960s, thirty years ago, hydrologists warned that cutting down forest canopies risked downstream flooding. Yet overcutting continued.

Poor forest management blamed for flood damage

By Ken Olsen

Staff writer

Logging should be suspended on federal forests in the Northwest until there is a tally of damage from recent flooding in heavily logged areas, environmental groups said in a letter Thursday to President Clinton.

Much of the flood damage has been caused by poor forest management, the Idaho Conservation League and 17 other groups said in the letter.

"We must first understand what has caused the problem before continuing with problems that may simply recreate or exacerbate the problem," the letter said.

In North Idaho, meanwhile, state and private timber officials say the damage would have been much worse if they hadn't been aggressively improving roads in recent years.

A perfect example of the damage is found on state and private land around the Floodwood State Forest, environmentalists say. The area is an important source of timber for mills in the St. Maries area and the slides are making it more difficult to get trees to the finishing saws.

There are between 50 and 100 slides in the Floodwood and the devastation appears worse than what appeared in the Clearwater National Forest after November rains, said Larry McLaud of the Idaho Conservation League.

"Most all of the slides started at a road and go downhill," McLaud said after flying over the area Tuesday. The largest slides are in the largest and most recent clearcuts, he said.

The rain storms melted snow too rapidly and caused flooding, "but the hand of man was also working here," McLaud said. "You can't look at it as a natural event with regard to the roads, the mudslides and the silt in the streams."

State and private timber officials acknowledge it's the worst damage in memory. They say roads and clearcuts added to the problems, but put much of the blame on Mother Nature.

"On balance, considering the amount of water we had and the warm winds that came through. I expected worse," said Sam Charles of the Idaho Department of Lands. "And this does happen in a virgin forest."

Most of the slides happened on old roads and most happened on private or federal land, Charles said. The state changed its road building standards in the early 1980s and that prevented a much worse disaster.

"Had this event occurred 10 to 15 years ago, it wouldn't have been pretty," he said.

Potlatch sustained heavy damage to its 670,000 acres, some of which is intermingled with the Floodwood State Forest, spokesman Mike Sullivan said. You can't blame logging and roads, he said.

"In such an event, with such a massive amount of precipitation, land is going to move," he said. Potlatch foresters estimate that at Bovill, for example, there was 5 1/2 inches of precipitation in recent storms.

That's one-fifth of the total annual average precipitation, Sullivan said.

"These are not natural events," countered Barry Rosenberg of the Inland Empire Public Lands Council. "If we did not have roads and clearcuts, we would not have this much dirt in the creek."

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Taxpayers: Paying to overcut & repair damage

President vows to cut red tape for hard-hit northern Idaho communities

Additional \$4 million for road repair is on the way, with more coming

By Michael R. Wickline
of the Tribune

Boise - Federal agencies will cut through red tape and speed aid to northern Idaho's flood-ridden counties, President Clinton said here Thursday night.

During a meeting with Idaho's congressional delegation, Gov. Phil Batt and four northern Idaho lawmakers, he said the federal Department of Transportation has released an additional \$4 million to the state and Department of Labor has given \$500,000.

The federal Department of Transportation released \$2 million to the state last weekend.

Clinton said he will ask Congress for a supplemental appropriation soon in the wake of floods in the Northwest and East Coast.

"We need to put a bill before Congress as soon as we can," he said during an hour-long meeting that marked his first visit to Idaho as president.

"We need to gather up the losses as soon as we can."

During a teleconference, Clearwater County Commission Chairman James Wilson said county officials need a Federal Emergency Management Agency official to explain what documents are required to apply for federal aid.

"If we don't submit proper documentation, I'm afraid we might bankrupt our county," he said.

Clinton said his administration has had no example of when legitimate needs of the people haven't been met when there is a serious emergency.

"Do the best you can on record-keeping," he told Wilson.

Batt said the damage in northern Idaho's counties exceeds \$100 million.

"I think the initial estimates will skyrocket once people learn to apply for this assistance," Nez Perce Tribal leader Samuel N. Penney said.

"We'll do our best to make you whole at the federal level," Clinton said.

U.S. Rep. Helen Chenoweth, R-Idaho, suggested President Clinton issue an executive order giving regulatory relief in wetlands to allow the restoration of banks, creeks and riprap.

Otherwise, people could face delays of 60 days before they get authorization from the federal government, she said.

Clinton said Chenoweth made "a very good suggestion" and asked for a catalog of all these projects.

"Anything I have the legal authority to do, I'll do," he told Chenoweth.

U.S. Rep. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, told Clinton to help with regulatory relief and FEMA and he and Chenoweth will do their part in return.

Federal, state and local officials spent most of the hour-long meeting praising each other's responses to the flooding in northern Idaho.

"We certainly appreciate your time and agencies' help," Nez Perce County Commission Chairman Earl Ferguson told Clinton. "It certainly shows how government agencies can work together."

U.S. Sen. Dirk Kempthorne, R-Idaho, said this cooperation needs to be built upon to find solutions for people in northern Idaho's hard-hit counties, so they know they have a future. Clinton said the cooperation might be a model for the future, so government is a partner in helping communities.

The officials watched a five-minute video that showed the damage inflicted on U.S. Highway 12 near Cottonwood Creek, U.S. Highway 3 along the Potlatch River and the Nez Perce Indian Reservation.

Clinton said personal problems will hit flood victims within a few weeks and they will need the help of family, friends and volunteer groups.

"A lot of 'em still are in shock and haven't come to grips with the human dimension," he said.

Idaho Sen. Marguerite McLaughlin, an Orofino Democrat, said she would love to have Clinton visit the Clearwater country when this disaster is over.

"I'd love to come," Clinton told her.

He later said he hopes he could ski the next time that he visits Idaho. "I guess I could go water skiing," Clinton quipped.

Lewiston Tribune
February 15, 1996

GAO finds Idaho timber sales lose money

Forest Service disagrees with office's accounting

By Jonathan Brinckman

The Idaho Statesman

The U.S. Forest Service will receive at least \$1.2 million if it succeeds next week in its plan to auction off 2,200 acres of burned timber straddling the Boise and Payette national forests.

There's just one problem: When everything the Forest Service will spend is taken into account, the action will translate into an overall loss to the federal government of \$800,000, according to Forest Service figures.

Such losses are not unusual. The General Accounting Office, the audit arm of Congress, found that timber sales in Idaho's 10 national forests from 1992 through 1994 cost the federal government a total of \$95.1 million.

"There's no reason why timber sold on public lands should not go for its true value," said Don Smith, Idaho representative for the Alliance for the Wild Rockies, a Montana based environmental group. "Presently, it's not."

The GAO's findings are strongly disputed by the Forest Service. It argues the audit unfairly counted as expenses such things as the money the Forest Service spends to replant trees or combat erosion.

If only the cost of planning and administering sales was counted, the Forest Service made \$187 million over the three-year period, GAO figures show.

Environmentalists say the GAO's conclusions make sense. They say reforestation efforts should be considered a cost of timber sales because such measures are needed to repair damage done by logging. And they call next week's sale, dubbed the Thunderbolt sale, a perfect illustration of Forest Service action making neither environmental nor economic sense.

"It's an environmentally risky sale that's going to lose money," said John McCarthy, conservation director of the Idaho Conservation League. "This is dumb and dumber."

The Idaho Conservation League filed a federal lawsuit last week against the Thunderbolt sale, arguing that removing trees from steep slopes could lead to erosion into the South Fork of the Salmon River, which is important habitat for chinook salmon, bull trout and other fish.

At stake is a prime recreation area about two hours by car north of Boise. Thunderbolt is the last of three major salvage-logging sales of several hundred thousand acres of forest land in Boise and Payette national forests scorched by the fierce fires of the summer of 1994. Thunderbolt is the name of one of the wildfires.

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The Forest Service says it will take action, such as planting trees, that will make the burned area less susceptible to erosion.

And it puts the blame for the financial loss on environmentalists, saying that opposition delayed the sale until many types of trees, including lodgepole pine and subalpine fir, decayed and became worthless as timber.

The agency in March proposed selling 32 million boardfeet of timber for a total of \$2.8 million. It has now reduced the offering to 13 million board-feet.

A board-foot is one foot square by one foot thick. It takes about 10,000 board feet to build a typical single-family home.

“Thunderbolt could have been a winner for us if we could have sold it as we wanted to in the beginning,” said Frank Carroll, a spokesman for the Boise National Forest. “But even though that sale is not going to be a moneymaker, it still makes sense.”

Timber industry officials argue that environmentalists use economic arguments as just one of many tools in their battles against timber sales.

“When sales are above cost, the enviros never say that’s a good deal and we should go ahead and sell that timber,” said Jim Weathers, region manager for Boise Cascade. “They’re just looking for other ways to try and sway public opinion.”

The Forest Service says that looking only at the net return to the federal government is a poor way to evaluate the economic value of timber sales.

For one thing, 25 percent of gross receipts of all federal timber sales go to the counties which host national forests, Carroll said. The money is used for schools. He said proceeds from timber sales are used to make improvements to national forests that are appreciated by hikers, hunters and other recreational users.

The Forest Service should produce budgets that show exactly how timber revenues are spent, environmentalists say, including a breakdown of what money is used to repair damage done by logging and what is spent on other areas of the forest

“They can play all the games with numbers they want,” McCarthy said. “We still know they’re having sales that don’t pay for themselves.”

Idaho Statesman
November 1, 1995

Damage in forests extensive

The toll in lost trees and to roads and structures

“makes your eyes pop”

By Hal Bernton

of The Oregonian staff

Pacific Northwest forests last week were gouged with hundreds upon hundreds of landslides that sluiced through logging roads, scoured the bottoms of salmon streams and damaged trails, boat launches and campgrounds—a striking storm and flood toll in back-country regions.

Federal, state and private forestry officials are just beginning to tally the damages. The tab likely will surpass \$40 million, mostly for road repair.

Reconstruction efforts will take months—in some cases years—to complete. U.S. Forest Service officials say some roads probably never will reopen.

“Given the steep decline in our budgets, we may be forced to look at closing some areas,” said Patti Rodgers of the Willamette National Forest. “This will be an opportunity for us to determine whether a road really has use . . . or whether it’s time to return it to nature.”

On the federal forest lands, flood damage extends across a wide swath of territory on the west and east sides of Washington and Oregon, slowing and in some cases shutting down logging operations. Aerial surveys have begun to document damage on 10 national forests and the Columbia River Gorge.

So far, the worst hit federal forests include the Gifford Pinchot in Southwest Washington and several of the forests along Oregon’s west side. In those areas, heavy warm rains unleashed the worst slides of the past three decades. The earth gathered up bunches of logs and debris that then washed down through stream bottoms used by spawning salmon and other fish.

“It just kind of makes your eyes pop open,” said Chuck Tietz, a Portland-based regional programs manager with the Forest Service.

In the Mount Hood National Forest east of Portland, the hardest hit areas included the heavily logged upper drainage of the Clackamas River, where slides largely spared campgrounds but dumped masses of soil into important salmon streams. The slides uprooted enough trees to build more than 100 houses, then dumped them

"It was one of those incredible events. It seems like the focus has been on the populated areas ... but a lot happened out in the woods."

Julie Cox,
public affairs officer,
U.S. Forest Service

into a reservoir now covered in five feet of debris. The slides also blocked roads to a favorite bathing spot — Bagby Hot Springs — putting it off limits.

In the Willamette National Forest east of Eugene, slides caused widespread damage to roads and hit boat launches and campsites, according to Rodgers, the public information officer.

In the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon’s coastal mountains, Forest Service officials are struggling to open a few key roads used by area residents and which are serving as emergency routes.

“We have some sort of blockage on nearly every road out there,” said Julie Cox, an agency public affairs officer. “It’s a huge impact.”

State estimates were still incomplete but included at least \$2 million worth of damage, largely due to road problems on the Tillamook, Clatsop and Santiam state forests.

Private landowners reporting extensive damage included Weyerhaeuser, Cavenham Forest Industries and Willamette Industries Inc. No dollar damage estimates were available.

In some areas of Columbia County northwest of Portland, some logging operations find their routes off the mountains blocked by roads that no longer can support heavy truck traffic. “Logging is basically shut down,” said Ralph Saperstein of Cavenham.

The huge number of slides also has rekindled an old debate about the role logging and road-building may play in increasing storm damage.

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Area left with mud, wreckage

Floods ease but cities face long, costly cleanup

From staff and wire reports

Floodwaters eased Saturday across much of the Northwest, revealing a sodden landscape of blown-out highways, wrecked homes, rock slides and a whole lot of mud.

It'll take weeks to dig out, mop up and dry off.

After four days of heavy rain, clear weather and receding rivers allowed a return home for most of the estimated 30,000 people chased out by rising rivers in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana.

The flooding killed at least three people in Oregon and one each in Washington and Montana.

In Spokane and Kootenai counties, residents have been luckier than elsewhere in the region. Other than isolated creeks overflowing their banks, Spokane County

was spared any real threat of flooding until Saturday, when Lake Coeur d'Alene began unleashing a bellyful of rain and snowmelt.

The lake is expected to rise 6 feet above summer levels by Monday or early Tuesday, bloated by the Coeur d'Alene, St. Maries and St. Joe rivers.

Forecasters were so impressed with the wall of water arriving from Idaho that they declared a flood warning from the Post Falls Dam to Nine Mile Falls.

The Spokane River is expected to crest Monday morning a foot above flood stage, swollen from days of rain and snowmelt upstream.

Although Washington Water Power Co. officials said they couldn't predict where the Spokane River will spill

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Some Forest Service officials say last week's slides occurred in both logged and undisturbed areas.

"It seems to be a kind of a mix," said Tietz, the Forest Service program manager. "When you get this much water, the whole country gets up and starts moving."

In the Mount Hood National Forest, for example, one of the largest slides occurred in the Bull of the Woods Wilderness, an area untouched by logging. In the Willamette National Forest, some of the worst slides were in the Whitewater Creek drainage. Nearby drainages had considerably more logging but fewer slides, said Rodgers, the Willamette public information officer.

Other agency officials, however, say that studies indicate logging can intensify slide problems.

"The results have been quite consistent," said Fred Swanson, a Forest Service resource geologist. But Swanson said detailed studies of slides triggered by past storms showed that the frequency of slides in cut and roaded forest areas was greater than in uncut areas.

Swanson's initial flyovers of areas hit by last week's storms in the Willamette's Andrews Experimental Forest and Santiam drainages indicated that most slides were in logged areas. Swanson cautioned, however, that slides in

uncut areas were more difficult to detect.

Andrew Stahl of the Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics also did a survey of the steep and rugged Mapleton Ranger District in the Siuslaw National Forest. That district was the focus of a bitter legal battle in the 1980s as environmentalists—fearful of slide damage—gained a lengthy injunction against much of the logging in that district.

Stahl is a former Forest Service employee who now heads a watch dog group of past and former agency employees. He said he logged 185 slides in two days of flying. He said 114 were in clearcuts, 68 were along roads, and three appeared in undisturbed areas.

"It was no act of God that caused these landslides," he said.

Everyone agrees that the mountains may be slow to heal.

"It was one of those incredible events," said Cox of the Siuslaw forest. "It seems like the focus has been on the populated areas ... but a lot happened out in the woods."

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over its banks today, company hydrologist Gary Stockinger said, "I don't think it will be catastrophic."

Paul Lauritzen has admired the river for most of his 57 years.

On Saturday, as he surveyed the raging whitewater from a footbridge near Riverfront Park, Lauritzen had one word: "Awesome."

The Spokane River's streamflow is expected to hit 40,000 cubic feet per second by Monday or Tuesday.

This time last year, the river was running at 17,300 feet per second.

Stockinger put it this way: To store 40,000 cfs of water for one day would take a football field 80,000 feet deep.

"There are three rivers going into the lake and only one coming out," WWP's Stockinger said. "That's why there was a delay in this hitting Spokane."

For the record, the flood of 1974 pushed the Spokane River to 45,500 cubic feet per second on Jan. 20. The all time record is 50,100 cfs on Christmas Day 1933.

In Idaho, Gov. Phil Batt said Saturday the damages from North Idaho's flooding could run into the tens of millions of dollars, but after viewing some of the results of days of devastation, he said even that figure might be low.

Batt and other top state officials—along with U.S. senators Larry Craig and Dirk Kempthorne—made a helicopter inspection of areas pounded by heavy rain and warm temperatures that have turned normally placid creeks and rivers into raging floodways.

In southeastern Washington, about 2,000 people were evacuated when the Yakima River at Toppenish in Benton County overran a berm.

U.S. Rep. George Nethercutt, R-Spokane, toured the towns of Palouse, Colfax and Pullman and was overwhelmed by the destruction and outpouring of support in those communities.

"Bridges lost. Farmland flooded. There's a lot of damage," Nethercutt said. "They are deserving of some help."

In Columbia County near Dayton, the 130-foot-long Star Bridge crashed into the South Touchet River.

About 70 people were stranded in the tiny community of Baileysburg, said County Commissioner Jon McFarland. "This is way beyond our capability," he said.

At least 1,000 Dayton residents along the Touchet River and Patit Creek had been evacuated by Saturday, he said.

In southeast Adams County, the Palouse River crested

about 11 p.m. Friday near the town of Hooper. When floodwaters began marching back toward their banks Saturday, officials could see at least one damaged bridge and feared two other spans took mighty wallops.

About 500 miles of Adams County roads have been closed. One in five county roads has sustained damage, County Engineer Steve Flude said.

James Witt, the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, visited the devastation in Oregon on Saturday and was expected to tour Washington state today.

He'll start at Waitsburg west of Dayton and end up at McChord Air Force Base in Western Washington.

The American Red Cross had opened 23 shelters in Eastern Washington by early Saturday afternoon.

In Montana, state disaster officials said Saturday that floodwaters were receding as colder temperatures slowed the melt of snow and ice.

But serious problems remained, particularly in Lincoln, Missoula and Chouteau counties. States of emergency were in effect in 14 counties, and the state said it had distributed 65,000 sandbags to stem floodwaters. Red Cross shelters for evacuees were open in Helena, Libby, Lolo, Crow Agency, Thompson Falls, Plains and Fort Benton.

In Oregon, rain-soaked hillsides continued to slip away, and water or mudslides blocked hundreds of roads, including two major freeways—Interstate 84 in Oregon's Columbia Gorge and Interstate 5 in Washington.

Portland, its downtown spared when the bloated Willamette paused just inches short of the seawall's top, now faces a shortage of drinking water. Flood-muddied streams clouded the city's supply from mountain reservoirs, forcing a switch to backup wells that could meet only half of the demand.

Along the Oregon coast in Tillamook County, dairy farmer Steve Neahring stacked the muddy carcasses of dead cows, wrapping chains around their stiff legs and piling them up with a front-end loader.

About 75 of his 175 Holstein and Jersey milkers swam to safety. Of the rest, many got mired in mud or chilled to the bone and had to be shot. Others succumbed on their own.

"They just got tired," Neahring said wearily. "They laid down and they drowned."

Staff writers J. Todd Foster, Brian Coddington and Craig Welch contributed to this report.

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Sen. Craig: Clearcuts and floods

Idaho senator backs disaster aid this time

Democrats say Craig consistently opposes relief for other states

By **Ken Olsen**

Staff writer

When Larry Craig asks Congress for help fixing an estimated \$100 million in damage from flooding in North Idaho, he'll want support from colleagues whose constituents suffered through the Chicago floods and Hurricane Andrew.

Idaho's senior U.S. senator may have to hope those colleagues don't reciprocate his attitude when they were looking for help, Democrats say.

"When the president came to Idaho this week to survey the damage from the floods, Craig made remarks that he is a good supporter of disaster relief," said Stephanie Cohen of the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee. "He has a long history of voting against disaster relief legislation.

"So now that his state's impacted, he is claiming to be a great advocate of disaster relief," Cohen said.

Soon after Clinton stepped off the plane in Boise, Craig reported that Clinton "would do all he could to expedite federal disaster aid as I requested," according to a press release.

"I will do all I can with the rest of our delegation to ensure maximum federal help in a minimum amount of time," Craig said.

That's the routine, not the exception, Craig's staff said.

"You may have 'no' votes, they were probably party line votes, for a number of reasons," said Bryan Wilkes, a Craig spokesman. "Basically he's voted against some disaster bills, but (overall) he's voted for more."

Wilkes points to Craig's support for disaster relief measures for the Los Angeles earthquakes and the Midwest floods during the last two years.

Craig's overall stand is to support federal disaster aid, as long as it doesn't increase the budget deficit, Wilkes said.

So far, Craig hasn't suggested what should be cut to bring disaster dollars to

Senator Craig

Idaho without increasing federal red ink.

"We'll have to cross that bridge when we come to it," Wilkes said. "We don't know that we'll have to cut anything."

A few recent positive votes don't erase Craig's overall record in the House and Senate, Democrats say. At least six times in the past six years, Craig has opposed bills specifically aimed at disaster relief.

"The votes we have pointed to are final passage votes or decisive votes that would have killed legislation," Cohen said. The votes Craig's camp cites, "I tend to think of as more procedural votes."

October 1989, when Craig was in the House, he voted against three budget resolutions that would have provided money for the victims of Hurricane Hugo. A few months later, he voted against a supplemental appropriations bill that would have provided federal money for people hit in the San Francisco earthquake.

That pattern was repeated twice in 1992. Craig first voted against spending \$10.5 billion to help

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Western lawmakers urge Forest Service to log faster

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—Western Republicans told Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas on Wednesday that his agency should be logging national forests faster to salvage dead and dying timber before it rots.

“We are barely getting started on the job which needs to be done,” said Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources subcommittee on forests.

“To me, these (new estimates) do not show the administration is acting with the urgency to accelerate the timber salvage program in order to utilize burned trees while they still have value,” he said.

Craig’s panel and members of the House Resources subcommittee on public lands grilled Thomas during a joint hearing on the progress of salvage logging under a bill Congress passed and President Clinton signed this summer to expedite the harvests through exemptions to environmental laws.

“I just don’t know why we can’t crank it out,” said Sen. Conrad Burns, R-Mont. “Are we a Park Service or are we timber managers?”

Thomas replied, “Maybe we’re a mixture. This is a multiple-use agency.”

Rep. Wes Cooley, R-Ore., chairman of a House task force on salvage timber, said the national forest trees represent “a public asset.”

“If we allow it to rot, we don’t get anything out of it,” Cooley said. “It appears we have an agency that absolutely is basically doing nothing. We have an agency that is looking at the birds and trees and talking about things that may or may not have value.”

Thomas said the agency is “right square on track” to meet the 4.5 billion board foot target of salvage logging by the end of December 1996.

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victims of Hurricane Iniki in Hawaii, Hurricane Andrew in Louisiana and Florida and Typhoon Omar in Guam.

That same year, he voted against spending \$1.94 billion to repair damage from floods in Chicago and riots in Los Angeles.

Craig even suggested disaster relief be relegated to a voluntary check-off on federal tax forms, similar to the one used to help finance presidential campaigns.

None of this should matter, Craig spokesman Wilkes said. Idaho can still count on getting federal disaster aid.

U.S. Rep. Helen Chenoweth, R-Idaho, also is catching flak for voting for a bill that would cut more than \$243 million from the federal Emergency Man-

agement Agency’s budget for this year. Democratic challenger Dan Williams says it’s hypocritical for Chenoweth to “appear on television asking the President to provide assistance for her district when she voted to hamstring the very agency designed to provide that assistance.”

Chenoweth’s staff says that’s not fair. She was voting on an entire package of appropriations for several agencies, not just federal disaster aid, said Keith Rupp, Chenoweth’s chief of staff.

The Congresswoman voted against five amendments Democrats offered in 1995 that would have cut funding for the federal disaster agency, Rupp said.

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More logging planned in area of mudslides

Environmentalists call for more study of planned roads, cuts in unstable areas

By Ken Olsen

Staff writer

Barely three months ago, mudslides inflicted the worst damage in memory across the Clearwater National Forest.

The Forest Service, admitting most of the 295 slides were caused by logging roads and logging, promises not to repeat its mistake.

But now the agency is initiating 27 million board feet of logging next to some of the worst damage — a 1,000-foot-long scar where roads, trees and mud plunged from a ridgetop to the North Fork of the Clearwater River.

Environmentalists are outraged.

“The Forest Service wouldn’t even recognize a nuclear explosion as a change in the forest,” said Charles Pezeshki of the Clearwater Biodiversity Project in Troy, Idaho. “It lives in denial of the damage done by the slides.”

The Forest Service, meanwhile, says the Fish Bate timber sale will make the woods better by reducing fire danger and getting rid of dead and dying trees.

“If we do nothing, it will burn, and it will burn very, very hot,” said Art Bourassa, ranger on the North Fork District. The result would be no trees to hold the soil and terrible erosion.

The sale calls for extracting 14.9 million board feet of live trees and 12.7 million board-feet of dead timber.

If there’s a buyer, it’s a done deal. The sale comes under the salvage-logging law passed last summer that exempts it from appeal and prohibits challenges under environmental laws.

But it’s way too soon to be cutting trees, environmentalists say. A wet spring could carve out more devastating slides.

“Before they cut one tree, they need to do an extensive review of the landslides, of the land types, and of how many trees have been taken out of these drainages,” said Larry McLaud of the Idaho Conservation League.

“What are the impacts of Fish Bate’s 2 square miles of

clearcuts in an area that is highly unstable and has already slid?”

Forest Service officials disagree that the planned timber sale amounts to clearcutting.

From a distance, harvested areas will “look like lightly stocked stands in natural condition,” said Bourassa.

Roads were responsible for the nearby Lower Leuty slide and most of the problems on the forest, Bourassa said. But Fish Bate timber will be removed by helicopter, requiring little road construction, Bourassa said.

That, in conjunction with leaving wider uncut buffers along streams and some replanting, should mean the logging won’t affect streams in the area, the Forest Service said.

“What good are buffers (when) the Lower Leuty slide went through 1,000 feet of forest and into the river?” said Pezeshki of the Clearwater Biodiversity Project.

Environmentalists also are angry that the agency won’t appoint an independent panel to review the worst flood-related destruction anyone can remember.

Soon after the November mudslides, a dozen environmental groups asked Hal Salwasser, head of the Forest Service’s regional headquarters in Missoula, to appoint an independent panel to figure out why the damage was so severe.

Environmentalists also wanted an accounting of how often slides occurred in logged watersheds, or those with extensive road networks.

These groups, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, said they are worried the Forest Service will use emergency money from the Federal Highway Administration to rebuild roads that will dissolve into mudslides during the next season of heavy rainfall.

A blue-ribbon panel is a good idea, but it’s impractical, Salwasser said in a letter to the Idaho Conservation League in mid-January.

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Larry McLaud photo

Landslides and clearcuts, Potlatch Corporation has overcut forests and is reaching for trees still standing in the Clearwater region of North Idaho. Potlatch Corporation has overcut these forests.

Timber salvage law called corporate giveaway

Forest Service broadly interprets a provision shielded from challenges

By Scott Sonner

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—The idea was to cull national forests of dead trees and fire-prone underbrush, but thousands of prized healthy timbers also are being targeted for commercial cutting under a controversial logging law suspending most environmental safeguards.

The so-called salvage logging provision, enacted last year, is a financial bonanza for the timber industry and is causing severe ecological-damage to public forests from coast to coast, critics say.

The law opens thousands of acres of federally owned forests that otherwise would have been off limits to chain saws.

Backers say the law will ease fire threats across hundreds of thousands of acres, produce thousands of jobs for loggers and mill workers and bring tens of millions of dollars to the U.S. Treasury.

But the cost of the new law will exceed revenue from timber sales, assert opponents trying to get Congress to repeal the law.

“The tab could run to \$430 million in corporate giveaways for timber companies,” according a recent report of the Wilderness Society.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated last year timber sales would result generate \$84 million to the federal treasury. But the Congressional Research Service, an arm of the Library of Congress, said last week the ultimate impact would be a loss of more than \$50 million.

In several places, conservationists say, the logging poses serious threats to wildlife, including threatened fish in Oregon, grizzly bears in Alaska, goshawks in Colorado and the endangered Indiana bat in Kentucky.

“It’s logging without laws,” says Carl Ross, co-director of Save America’s Forests, a coalition of grass-roots conservation groups. One logging site the Forest Service is pursuing in Idaho was opposed by three different federal agencies—the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

NMFS biologists warned in September that the “Thunderbolt” salvage sale planned for 3,300 acres near the Salmon River in Idaho would jeopardize survival of Snake River chinook salmon.

“It’s what we call chain-saw justice,” said Ron Mitchell

of the Idaho Sporting Congress in Boise.

The logging provision was in a larger budget bill that President Clinton reluctantly signed last summer. The measure, about which the administration now acknowledges concern, suspends the Endangered Species Act and all other environmental laws that normally apply to logging on national forests.

The new law also more broadly defines the kinds of trees that qualify as salvage and insulates the cutting from legal challenges. Senior administration officials now say they didn’t anticipate the broad sweep of the exemptions.

Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas insists the agency is operating within the confines of the environmental requirements in place before Clinton signed the salvage exemption last summer.

Nevertheless, the U.S. Forest Service is interpreting the law broadly.

In a growing number of cases, “salvage” timber sales include thousands of healthy trees whose harvesting previously had been blocked by citizen appeals or held up because of concerns within the Forest Service that fish, wildlife and nearby streams would be adversely affected.

Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., who helped write the law, said he has no problem with the Forest Service offering live trees for sale as part of the salvage packages. He said he’s confident the agency won’t cause any serious environmental damage.

The agency had planned to sell about 3.7 billion board feet of timber on national forests this year, including 1.4 billion board feet of so-called salvage. But under the new law it now intends to increase the total about 20 percent - to 4.5 billion including 2.1 billion board feet salvage.

Grass-roots groups, along with The Wilderness Society and the Western Ancient Forest Campaign, began last fall documenting dozens of sales across thousands of acres they said would be found illegal if not for the salvage law’s suspension of existing regulations.

Clinton said he wants to change the law, but his administration has been reluctant to back a full repeal, in part because of pressure from Republicans and some Democrats in the West to bolster overall harvests on national forests to keep wood flowing to local saw mills.

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We shouldn't forget those who usher in destruction, Rich Landers contends

Environmental pillagers deserve plaque buildup

By Rich Landers

We mount plaques on bridges and name great wilderness areas in honor of politicians who have a hand in laws and projects of lasting value.

At least as much should be done to commemorate those who usher in destruction.

Future generations ought to know whom to loathe.

There should be a memorial to the native cutthroat trout that once thrived in the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River. At that monument, a large brass plaque should list the politicians who allowed the Silver Valley and Lake Coeur d'Alene to become one of the nation's saddest examples of heavy metals pollution.

On the Snake River, we should build a visitor center in memory of chinook and sockeye salmon. Prominent space should be given to former Sen. James McClure and other politicians and bureaucrats who allowed forest roads to be gouged into steep slopes in fragile spawning drainages.

The Lake Pend Oreille Idaho Club could rename its Kamloops and Kokanee fishing derby in honor of Larry Craig and Slade Gorton. Both senators are

pushing for weaker endangered-species laws and elimination of citizen oversight in timber sales.

These men are monuments to the mindless human destruction inflicted on the spawning grounds of once-prolific bull trout and rainbows.

Such infamy should never be forgotten.

Salvage sanity: Sen. Craig is among those trying to use the smoke from last year's forest fires to sneak through a bogus agenda for suspending federal environmental regulations.

Craig wants to give bulldozers virtually free rein in what the timber industry is promoting as "a forest emergency." Meanwhile, scientists say there's no more reason to trash forests now than before.

A fisherman isn't worth his weight in worms if he doesn't recognize that a future for fishing depends on maintaining environmental safeguards for watersheds, not suspending them.

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A lack of money and the uncertainty created by the budget battle between President Clinton and Congress means "such a committee may have limited opportunity to be successful," Salwasser said.

Agency scientists will "identify the cause and effects of the damage resulting from the flood event, the relationship of this damage to past management activities, and proposed corrective actions," Salwasser wrote.

That's little comfort to environmentalists.

The lack of outside review "makes me more leery about their findings," said the conservation league's McLaud.

In preliminary findings, the Clearwater National Forest determined that 212 of the 295 slides were probably caused by roads, and 16 by logging. Fire likely played a role in six slides. Trails and natural causes are pegged for the rest.

To the surprise of environmentalists, the largest slide, on Quartz Creek, is being blamed on natural causes.

Aerial photographs show clearcuts above the slide area, McLaud said.

A road in the forest that was buried by 500,000 tons of rock and debris was controversial because of the instability of the soils, he said.

A similar tally of mudslide-related road problems in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests is not yet available.

"There are 20 to 30 road failures that we know about," said Jim Penzkover, a Forest Service engineer. "It's so preliminary—we really didn't get to look at them before it snowed."

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