

## Guest Opinion ...

# Government's attack on the logging industry

By F. R. DUPLANTIER

If the United States had been invaded by a foreign enemy who had seized our lands, we would be at war today, but in Clinton's first term, more than 141 million acres were taken by the federal government!

"To sustain the highest standard of living the world has ever known, America must have its farms, ranches, mines, and productive forests," declares Tom DeWeese in the current issue of his "DeWeese Report" ([www.deweeseonline.com](http://www.deweeseonline.com)). "The vital commodities these elements of the economy produce are the targets of environmental radicals and the web of federal regulations they've been instrumental in creating," he warns. "Banning these industries outright would meet too much resistance," DeWeese affirms. "Instead, powerful government regulations, guidelines, and punitive taxes are being used to slowly diminish and then drive them out of business. Fully a third of all federal regulations and laws," he notes, "are devoted to the 'environment.'"

DeWeese explains what happens after a farm, a mine, or a mill succumbs to the regulatory onslaught. "As an industry disappears from a region," he reveals, "the land it formerly occupied is removed from any further production. It then joins millions of other newly created nonproductive acres under control of the National Park Service or the U.S. Forest Service. After that, no human use is permitted."

DeWeese summarizes the impact of over-regulation on the timber industry. "Because of federal environmental regulations," he remarks, "only a fraction of the timber that formerly was harvested from federal lands is now permitted." DeWeese points out that "fully 247 million acres (33.5 percent) are reserved from harvest by law or represent slow-growing woodlands unsuitable for timber production." He reports that current bans "prohibit even the

removal of dead trees or those downed by storms. Between 1992 and 2000, the years of the Clinton-Gore Administration, more than 300 timber mills were closed in the northwestern states alone, at a cost of an estimated 130,000 jobs. Entire communities that depended on timber revenue have been destroyed," DeWeese laments. "Since 1990, timber harvest on federal land has declined from 12 billion board feet a year to barely 2.5 billion board feet in 2000. This nation is actually importing timber!" he exclaims. "The cost of building a new home in America today has risen by \$5,000 to \$10,000 as a result of the strangulation of our nation's timber industry."

DeWeese rejects the contention that "the ban on timber harvesting in public forests is for the protection of the environment. It is not," he insists. "It's a planned attack on an essential American industry. While sawmills stand empty and jobs disappear, the dead trees attract insects and disease, affecting the remaining healthy trees, and endangering the forest," DeWeese asserts. "Those unhealthy forests are the number one reason why millions of forest acres now burn every year, destroying trees that could have been used for productive purposes," he argues. "As the timber industry reels under the regulations, and more and more forests become untouchable to human hands, the land holdings of the federal government grow in proportion."

*Duplantier is editorial director of America's Future, Inc., a non-profit educational organization dedicated to the preservation of America's free enterprise system and constitutional form of government. He is also affiliated with American Policy Foundation, an educational foundation devoted to public policy issues. American Policy Foundation is located in Herndon, Virginia.*

# Pristine Land Fantasies Precede Biology

by Alston Chase



Photo courtesy of ISIA

**“ Environmentalism increasingly reflects urban perspectives. As people move to cities, they become infatuated with fantasies of land untouched by human hands. ”**

Majestic ponderosa pines and Douglas firs towered above us. Beyond, a clear mountain stream rushed over ice-cold boulders.

The stumps were barely visible in the deep green grass.

I was standing in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in Eastern Oregon, looking at a grove that was logged five years ago. Selective cutting had opened the understory, allowing grasses, sedges and trees to flourish. It would have been the perfect place for a picnic.

This was one stop on a tour organized by the Oregon Lands Coalition (OLC), an assembly of 76,000 loggers and farmers headquartered in Salem. Founded in 1989 in response to the U.S. Government's plan to set aside land for the northern spotted owl, the coalition is dedicated to preserving the rural way of life and to promoting what it calls "responsible environmentalism." And although modestly supported by timber interests, most OLC members are ordinary folks.

Fighting what they see as a battle of survival against mainstream environmentalism, coalition activists are on the front lines of perhaps the greatest cultural struggle of our times.

But the issue is not biology. Rather, it is a conflict of visions. The coalition represents long-dominant rural values, and environmentalists embody emerging urban priorities.

Environmentalists are winning. Their message has become conventional wisdom

within government and media as the century-long flight from the farm changes what Americans consider important about nature. But this transformation does not mean the country is necessarily becoming wiser about preservation.

Earlier in the day, the tour took us to a forest that looked as though it had been ground zero of a nuclear strike. There was not a living thing in sight. Gray stalks of burned trees punctuated the landscape like giant porcupine quills. U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Biologists explained:

The decimation was inadvertently caused by preservation policy. Left unlogged and protected from fire, the forest had grown old. As trees aged, they lost resistance to disease. Ailments—root and stem diseases, dwarf mistletoe, spruce budworm, tussock moths and Douglas fir beetles—invaded, killing the trees. Once dead, their desiccated corpses became tinder for forest fires. Then lightning struck, producing a fire so hot it sterilized the soil, slowing regrowth and accelerating erosion.

And this dead grove is not unique. More than half the trees in three Oregon national forests are dead—conditions that a recent USFS study described as "catastrophic." Saving the region, says the agency, will require prescribed burning, some livestock grazing and more logging, including clear cutting.

Anathema to activists and aesthetically unattractive, clear cuts, say many ecologists, can be an important management tool,

promoting bio-diversity. When done right, clear cuts, like fire, remove diseased trees and promote regeneration.

This is the message that the Oregon Lands Coalition advocates would like the public to hear. Believing themselves conservationists, they feel unjustly treated and are puzzled and offended that they should be accused of ecological crimes. They view trees as a valuable resource, forest disease as a tragic waste and wildfires as something akin to burning money.

As a prescription for preservation, the Coalition's message—that forests require management, not neglect—is surely right. But it has failed to capture the moral high ground because many Coalition members appear unconcerned about endangered species and damage done by excessive logging.

Environmentalism increasingly reflects urban perspectives. As people move to cities, they become infatuated with fantasies of land untouched by humans. This demographic shift is revealed through ongoing debates over endangered species, grazing, water rights, private property, mining and logging. And it is partly a healthy trend.

But this urbanization of environmental values also signals the loss of the rural way of life and the disappearance of hands-on experience with nature. So the irony: As popular concern for preservation increases, public understanding about how to achieve it declines.

*(from the Oregonian, 8/19/91)*

# “My name is Donald Walker, Jr.”

## Logger's personal story moves millions

My name is Donald Walker Jr.

For 30 years, I was an Oregon Logger. I have been out of work since August, 1989 when the company I worked for closed out its operations near Oakridge where my wife and I live. Times have been pretty tough since then, though I think we have been luckier than some woodworkers. We still have our home where we raised our children. Many younger loggers, with small children at home, have lost everything as a result of the spotted owl controversy that has tied Congress in knots.

My wife has an office job with the same company I worked for, but she had to accept a transfer to another office a four hour drive from home. Now we see each other only on weekends. It gets pretty lonely here without her, but our faith in God has kept us strong, and we continue to hope for better days when we can be together again like a family should be.

After I lost my job, I took some courses at the local community college, thinking that I might be able to make a new start in life. I figured my best hope was to learn enough to start some sort of small business that was related to my 30 years of wood experience. I took welding, some small business classes and a couple of courses in interpersonal communications. Can you imagine a logger in an interpersonal communications class!

Community college helped me a lot personally, but starting over when you are 55 years old isn't easy. Since 1989 the only work I've been able to find is as a part-time caretaker on some private timber land near here. I've also worked seasonally as a yew bark collector for an outfit that has a contract with a big drug company that is searching for a cure for cancer. They think Taxol, which comes from yew bark might be a miracle cancer cure. I also worked on a family tree farm, and that is the other part of this story.

My dad and my grandfather bought this farm in 1932. Our family has been logging it for 60 years. We've replanted as to fields where we graze a few cattle. Our land was burned badly in a fire in 1912 so we don't have any of the old growth timber Oregon is famous for. None of our trees are more than 80 years old. One of the hopes I held on to since I lost my job is that I could supplement our income by continuing to manage our tree farm as my father and grandfather did for so many years. But it

*Donald Walker sat down to work his feelings out on paper one day and ended up writing The Amazing Story That Would Not Go Away.*

*After it was used as a letter-to-the-editor in The Wall Street Journal last May, the phone in Walker's home in Oakridge, Oregon rang constantly for three days. He was summoned to Washington, D.C., where it was read on the floor of the Senate on August 10 during a debate about Sen. Steve Symms' proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act. It was also reprinted in the November issue of Reader's Digest. Walker even receives fan mail.*

*No one could be more surprised about all of this, of course, than Walker himself. "It's gone way beyond what I ever expected it to do," said the soft-spoken Oregonian. "I've even had people send me money! I send it all back. I don't need it, I'm better off than many others, and that wasn't the point."*

*The reason mild-mannered Donald Walker is having such a hard-hitting impact on the consciousness of the nation is this: His story is brilliant in its simplicity, it's brief (which the media likes) and it's well-written.*

*Also his story is true, and personifies the anguish being felt not only by other timber workers in the Pacific Northwest, but by entire communities and regions across the West where the public is being locked out of public lands.*

*Here then is the story he wrote that everyone's talking about:*

doesn't look like this is going to pan out either.

Last November, I received a letter from an outfit called the Forest Conservation Council telling me that if I cut any more timber on our land it would sue me for violating the Endangered Species Act, which protects spotted owls, and makes it a crime to tamper with their habitat.

I have never seen a spotted owl on our place, and I have never met anyone from the Forest Conservation Council. As far as I know, it's never been on our farm. But I do have a typewritten, single-spaced four-page letter from their lawyer saying that what we've been doing on our tree farm for 60 years is no longer legal. I might have felt a little bit better about the letter if they had offered to buy the land, or at least pay the taxes, which we have also been doing for 60 years. But they didn't and I guess I'm not surprised. From what I've read about these people, they don't believe in private property rights.

About 200 Oregon tree farmers got the same letter I got. There are actually many more tree farms in Oregon, but for some reason we were singled out. It got me to thinking about what has happened to us could happen to any private property owner.

In fact, the newspapers are filled with stories like ours. It's happening to people all over the United States. There is even a Supreme Court case now involving a fellow in South Carolina who paid almost a million dollars for a couple of beachfront lots he has been told he can't build on because somebody thinks the land should be left to nature.

A lot of news reporters have visited our place since we got the letter from the Forest Conservation Council. I think they're impressed with the beauty of our farm, but I'm afraid they don't grasp the significance of what is happening to us, or to the other private landowners across the country.

Do they understand that the right of ownership is fundamental to our democracy? I don't think so. I think they are too busy collecting what are called six-second sound bites, and that is not something I am very good at.

Some people say we should cut down all our trees now, while we still can, before the Forest Conservation Council Letter becomes a court case. But we don't want to. We're conservationists. This tree farm is our home, and the trees are part of our way of life. We work with nature to grow a crop the nation needs. The crop is wood. It puts food on our tables.

In 26 years of married life, we have never been late on a bill, we owed. The pressure on us is hard to describe. My wife doesn't even read the newspaper anymore, because it's filled with stories about loggers losing everything and preservationists filing more lawsuits.

Where does it all end? Do people count anymore? Do private property rights still have meaning in America? Who will compensate us for our loss? The public? Forest Conservation Council?

So far, I haven't heard from anyone except the tax collector. The problem isn't the owl, or even old growth for that matter. The problem is an out-of-control preservationist movement that doesn't care about people or their rights. Our tree farm is our last hope. It is worth fighting for, and I intend to fight it every way I know how.