The Alaska Department of Fish and Game reports of 5,667 trees that have been targeted for harvest, 4,470 were approved for cutting—an 83 percent approval rating. Environmentalists have lambasted this approval rating as showing favoritism, private timber owners argue it shows how carefully the trees were selected.

John Sturgeon stands proudly among large, mature timber lining a narrow stream on Montague Island. As President of Koncor Forest Products, Sturgeon sees the value in these trees, both in terms of money to Koncor's native shareholders and the trees' contribution to the health of the streams.

He explains to a group of visitors that Koncor has no problem in not harvesting the privately-owned trees, as long as the trees will actually contribute to protecting fish habitat and water quality.

Koncor has been leaving buffer strips along riparian areas long before the State Forest Practices Act mandated the 66-foot riparian zone along streams and rivers on private lands. On Montague Island, Koncor will leave over 7 million board feet of timber, valued at more than $5 million in buffer zones on the private lands where it is harvesting timber. The company began harvesting timber it purchased from Chugach Alaska Corporation last year at Patton Bay and Beach River, located in the southeast corner of Montague Island, which is the largest island in Prince William Sound. The remainder of the island, as well as the majority of all lands in Prince William Sound, belongs to the U.S. Forest Service and is currently off-limits to timber harvesting.

"The intent of the buffers is to protect fish habitat and water quality," Sturgeon said. "Among other things, the buffers are intended to control erosion, maintain bank stability and provide woody debris important to salmon rearing," he added. "Foresters and loggers not only enjoy the forest for its aesthetic..." (Continued to page 8)
RC's upcoming 15th Annual Conference will feature a series of exciting debates and point-counterpoints on changing public policy issues and regulatory developments that will have near-term and long-term implications for Alaska's basic industries.

Set for November 17-18 at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage, "Point-Counterpoint: Alaska Trends, Perspectives and Options," will examine key issues and other factors that will affect resource producers across Alaska. New federal access regulations, timber harvesting, oil and gas development, wetlands policy, the Endangered Species Act and many more critical issues will be debated by speakers from both sides of the development and non-development equation.

In addition to exciting point-counterpoints and hot debates, the program includes interactive workshops, expert economic panels and accurate industry update reports. The conference is expected to attract decision-makers from business, industry and government, including legislators and regulators.

The two-day, Thursday-Friday event opens with a media workshop Thursday morning on environmental and natural resource issues. Panelists from the Anchorage Daily News, The Associated Press, the Alaska Public Radio Network and KTVA-Channel 11 will outline how to be more effective in communicating positions and ensuring better press coverage on issues important to industry and business. A second workshop will outline effective strategies for winning environmental and natural resource battles in Congress and the state Legislature. Experienced political analysts and the Alaska House Majority Leader will be on hand to deliver the strategies.

The first of two keynote luncheons will feature Alaska's new Governor-Elect while John Fink, Sr., Editorial Writer for the Wall Street Journal, will address "War for the West: The Frontier & Washington Collide" in the second-day lunch.

The Thursday afternoon segment of the conference will open with Dennis O'Brien, President of the U.S. Association of Energy Economists and President of Calixx Petroleum Company, speaking on World Oil and Gas: Supply, Demand and Price. Neal Fried of the Alaska Department of Labor will follow with an in-depth presentation, "Alaska Overview & Trends: Oil, Minerals, Timber and Tourism." Gunnar Knapp, an economist with the Institute of Social and Economic Research, will address "Alaska Fisheries: Supply, Demand, Price and Politics."

The conference will continue Friday with a series of debates and point-counterpoints and a special panel of industry leaders examining trends, opportunities and obstacles. The Alaska Forest Association, the Alaska Visitors Association, the Pacific Legal Foundation, Arctic Power and Cape Fox Corporation will debate and counter the National Wildlife Federation, the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, the Alaska Rainforest Coalition and Greenpeace on issues ranging from federal wetlands policy, federal access regulations to phase out of fossil fuels to the Endangered Species Act and sustainable logging.

Participating in an insightful industry workshop panel are Ken Thompson, ARCO Alaska, Inc., Robert Loescher, Sealsaska Corporation, Ralph Lewis, Ketchikan Pulp Company, Mary Northdal, Pacific Power & Light Company, Chuck Meacham, Jr., Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Johnie Binkley, Alaska Visitors Association.

RC's 15th Annual Conference promises to be most the exciting resource development conference of the year. RDC aims to build a broader understanding of diverse resource development and environmental perspectives through this stimulating, new program, which is dedicated to creating the links among people, politics, science and industry to advance the economy.

Your attendance and sponsorship of this event not only demonstrates your support, but allows RDC to continue its vital work year-round. To register for the conference, call RDC at 276-0700.

If you can take an extra day, on Wednesday, Nov. 16, the day before the conference, Call RDC at 276-0700.

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Editor's Note: Charles F. Herbert served as President of RDC in 1981. He served as the Commissioner of Natural Resources under Governor Bill Egan and has worked as an operator and owner in Alaska, Canada and Central and South America.

It was over 13 years ago that I sort of wandered into a one-year term as president of the Resource Development Council. That sounds like a very long time, which it is. So I suppose I can use elapsed time as an acceptable excuse for not doing a very good job of recalling specific events back in 1981.

In a chair-moving routine, I had replaced as president, Tom Fink, our former two-term close call loser in the Republican gubernatorial race. Tom had closed a very successful year as president, a year in which RDC membership had grown and many problems had been tackled, so I was a little surprised when he told me to look out or Executive Director Paula Easley would "take over." Fact is, I had the idea that Paula was the RDC and had been all through the years during which the RDC had grown from a single issue group with the mystical name of OMAR to a lively, research-oriented organization with an increasingly authoritative voice on issues that affect resource use.

Tom Fink's reputation as a man with rock-hard opinions, well-protected from dilution by opposing argument, was well known. So again I was more than a little surprised when Tom Fink took the debate for not doing a very good job of remembering events back in 1981.

Looking back 13 years, it seems that many issues and many questions were raised on topics where we were certain that discerning people would accept reasonable answers and would have dismissed the wooly nonsense of no-growth. But the same issues and the same questions, continually embellished by fancy and immunized against fact, still remain targets of a stronger and better financed RDC.
Industry, State oppose Tongass proposal

(Continued from page 5)

dependent communities," Nordlinger said. "Planning has gone on all summer long behind closed doors."

The EA proposes to create a series of large 40,000-acre and medium 10,000-acre habitat conservation areas where timber harvest would be prohibited. In addition, the EA proposes to create no-harvest zones of 221.5 square miles around each goshawk nest found south of Frederick Sound (Admiralty Island). Other goshawk protection areas vary from 4,500 to 360,000 acres.

The Forest Service believes the conservation areas are needed to minimize further fragmentation of wildlife habitat. It also says it has no choice but to draw up conservation zones, pointing to the acceptance of the petitions by Fish and Wildlife Service to list the goshawk and wolf as threatened.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, however, says no evidence exists that the goshawk qualifies for listing as either threatened or endangered, based on information it has gathered to date in an intensive study of the ecology and habitat of the bird. In addition, Fish and Game reports that wolf populations are not declining in Southeast, increasing 40 to 60 percent since 1989. It has told Fish and Wildlife Service that wolves are currently abundant and well distributed in the region and face no imminent threat of extirpation.

Meanwhile, environmentalists are complaining to the Forest Service that the proposal does not include the establishment of wildlife migration corridors for animals moving from one area of the forest to another. The Forest Service, however, noted that fringes of timber required to be left as buffers around rivers, streams, beaches and estuaries could serve as migration routes.

In a letter to Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas, Governor W. W. Hickel said that the Forest Service’s actions relating to the new conservation zones are based not on science, but environmental politics.

“The Forest Service’s newest restrictions threaten to transform economically vibrant, culturally diverse areas of Alaska into wilderness ghettos, rife with unemployment, poverty and despair,” Hickel said. The Governor noted that the new restrictions will cut the available timber volume by almost 40 percent unilaterally, which is what has authorized under TLMP.

In a recent news release, outgoing AFA Executive Director Troy Reinhard said “it is conceivable that we are experiencing a burgeoning population of goshawk in Southeast, for all we know. Yet every new nest found raises a cry for more protection.”

Respond now, before it’s too late

The deadline for commenting on the EA’s Thursday, November 10. RDC has requested that the comment period be extended. Comments should be sent to: Interim Guidelines EA, Forest Plan Revision Team, 8465 Old Dairy Road, Juneau, AK 99801.

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The proposed regulations appeared in the Federal Register August 1. Copies of the regulations may be obtained by contacting Tom Gorey at the BLM Public Affairs Office in Washington at 202-208-5717.

Comments should be mailed to U.S. Department of the Interior, Main Interior Building, 1849 C Street, N.W., Room 5555, Washington, D.C. 20240.

RDC opposes the new regulations, as does the Alaska Miners Association and the State of Alaska.

The RDC tours of Cape Fox Corporation’s log transfer facility near Ketchikan. Pictured from left to right are Board Members Karen Hoftid, Ernesta Ballard, Jim Cloud, RDC Executive Director Beddy Gay, President Dave Parish, Cindy Bailey, Doug Campbell (Cape Fox Corporation), Joe Henri, Steve Thompson (Alaska Pacific Trading Co.), Elizabeth Rensch, and RDC staff Carl Portman and Ken Freeman.

See additional photos on page 4.
RDC board members tour Ketchikan Pulp Company's sawmill at Logger Jack Gabriel demonstrates his skill in harvesting a Sitka spruce on Cape Fox Corporation land near Ketchikan.

KPC sends high quality logs to its sawmill for processing into lumber while utilizing low-quality timber for its pulp operation. KPC is the largest year-round employer in Southeast Alaska.

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RDC board members look over Ketchikan timber operations

Photos by Carl Portman

RDC President Dave Parish brands the Cape Fox insignia on a log at the company's log transfer facility. While in Ketchikan, Parish addressed timber, tourism, fishing, mining and other resource issues the KPC mill. Pulp is used to make a wide range of consumer products.

RDC Senior Vice President Elizabeth Rennich examines a sheet of pulp at the KPC mill. Pulp is used to make a wide range of consumer products.

RDC board member Ernesta Ballard, Chief Operating Officer of Cape Fox Corporation, explains to RDC staff and board members timber harvesting procedures on corporation lands in Southeast Alaska.

Visitors view log transfer facility at McLeod Harbor on Montague Island. Koncor spent nearly six years permitting its Montague Island project. It will take the company about five years to log the project area, which represents a small fraction of the island. (Photos by C. Portman)

argue the rating shows how carefully the variation trees are selected. Sturgeon explained that Koncor's high approval rate is a direct result of the careful preparation that is taken before proposing any tree for harvest as a variation tree.

The company begins by evaluating the sensitivity of the stream and if the harvest of individually-selected trees can be done without causing harm to the site. The process includes an thorough evaluation of ten habitat components established under state law, plus any additional site-specific conditions that may affect the ability to harvest the variation trees. The evaluation is performed by Koncor foresters with college degrees in forest management, as well as the company's environmental manager who has a doctorate in ecosystem analysis. In areas with a high profile, Koncor will hire outside expertise in riparian interactions and fish habitat to provide additional insight into the short and long-term affects of harvesting timber. Only after such a careful analysis is any tree selected.

Sturgeon said a high approval rate by the State agencies should be expected from such a process.

"While some may question the approval rate by the State, the high percentage shows how well all the private timber owners are doing in protecting water quality and stream habitat," said Sturgeon. "We're only asking to harvest privately-owned trees that will not hurt the public resources. We have a deep respect for the forest and all its resources," Sturgeon said. "We're only asking to harvest privately-owned trees that will not hurt the public resources. We have a deep respect for the forest and all its resources," Sturgeon said. "That is why we became foresters in the first place. Even as we leave trees to protect streams and rivers, we get a bum rap. However, we know that we are doing a good job on the lands that we manage, and, more importantly, so do the native owners of our company. The fish and the timber will be here long after this issue has faded."

Koncor and its contractors spent over $7 million to build a 50-mile road from its log transfer facility at McLeod Harbor through its timber harvest area near Patton Bay. The road crosses 34 miles of Forest Service land that is off-limits to logging. As a condition of its permit, the company is required to "obliterate" the road and its river crossings when logging is completed. The road provides access to prime recreation sites on Montague.

"Koncor receives no compensation for the millions of dollars lost to stream buffers and asks only that there be a direct public benefit to be gained from our loss, either in water quality or fish habitat. If there is no scientific benefit to be gained to the public, we should not be required to leave the trees. The government should have the burden of proof that harvesting trees will cause harm since they are taking private property for a public good."

John Sturgeon, President, Koncor Forest Products

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Company receives no compensation for leaving privately-owned trees in buffer strips

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and recreation values, they also work in the forest year-round. Their future depends on a healthy forest, a new generation of trees and maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat."

Although Sturgeon, a former state forester, has always supported buffer zones, he believes there needs to be more flexibility in the delineation of the no-cut areas. Site-specific circumstances should be the deciding factor in determining the size of the buffer, not an arbitrary line. Sturgeon believes that some buffers may need to be wider, such as areas surrounding Kiti Lake on Afognak Island where a hatchery receives its water. Other streams may be narrow or face a high risk of bank degradation due to blowdown, and thereby may do better with no standing trees within the riparian areas except for younger, vigorous trees. Sturgeon pointed to a number of buffer zones on Montague Island that have dry stream beds or small trickling streams. Some streams on the island were raised in excess of 30 feet by the 1964 earthquake and have been dry since.

Sturgeon has no argument against leaving private trees in buffer zones which truly are contributing to fish habitat and water quality protection, but he takes exception to blanket requirements which force the company to leave its trees standing when the harvest of those trees will cause no significant harm.

"Koncor harvests timber only on private land and all the trees within our buffers are private property," Sturgeon said. "Koncor receives no compensation for the millions of dollars lost to stream buffers and asks only that there be a direct public benefit to be gained from our loss, either in water quality or fish habitat. If there is no scientific benefit to be gained to the public, we should not be required to leave the trees. The government should have the burden of proof that harvesting trees will cause harm since they are taking private property for a public good."

The State Forest Practices Act does allow timber to be harvested within buffer zones where the harvest is not likely to cause significant harm to fish habitat or water quality. Trees that can be harvested within the buffer areas are called "varigation trees." These trees are nominated by the private timber owner, then individually inspected by both the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Each individual tree is inspected to determine if its removal can occur without causing significant harm.

The timber owners have been very careful in their selection of the variance trees. As a result, ADF&G reports that of the 5,667 variance trees that have been requested for harvest in Region I since 1990, 4,470 were approved for harvest — an 83 percent approval rating. Whereas environmentalists have lambasted this approval rating as showing favoritism, private timber owners recognize that the Forest Service proposal seeks to reduce the land available for timber harvest by about one-third in order to create conservation zones for the northern goshawk and the Alexander Archipelago wolf. Areas one-third of the commercial timberlands in the Tongass are closed to logging. Of the one-third open to harvest, logging is further limited by 100-foot buffers along rivers and streams, 500-foot buffers along beach fringes, and 1,000-foot buffers around estuaries.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently accepted petitions from Outside environmental groups to list the goshawk and wolf as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, even though populations of both are healthy and not in danger. Timber industry leaders and the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game say no evidence exists that the northern goshawk qualifies for listing as either threatened or endangered, nor does local knowledge support the listing of the wolf.

The proposal for new conservation zones is outlined in the "preferred alternative" of the EA, which contains guidelines for interim management of the forest until the Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) is completed late next year or in 1996. RDC is asking its membership to write the Forest Service asking that it withdraw the EA and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with a full disclosure of all scientific views and economic impacts. RDC is also requesting a full range of options, backed up with scientific evidence demonstrating sufficient need for any conservation zones. RDC believes that any needed management changes should be done under the full revision process for TLMP.

Marielle Nordlinger, Communications Director of the Alaska Forest Association, pointed out that social and economic impacts are not addressed in the EA. She said reducing the available harvest lands by one-third will result in the loss of a significant number of jobs, including the continued closure of the Wrangell sawmill.

The Forest Service claims its interim measure will not affect timber harvest, but Nordlinger noted it already has, halting or reducing available sales across Southeast. She charged that the EA was predetermined and has already been applied to the Tongass, noting a June 30, 1994 timber sale program reflects interim management guidelines.

"Illegal implementation by the Forest Service of interim measures has already affected timber harvesters and"

(Continued to page 10)