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San Jose Mercury News

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Critics scorch forestry agency

Federal authorities say state's methods harm environment

BY STEPHEN BUEL
Mercury News Staff Writer

OAKLAND — Federal authorities and residents of mountain communities had strong words for state forestry officials Monday. Your practices seriously undermine the environment and have produced mudslides, damaged streams and cut sharply into salmon populations.

Despite the severity of the problem, biologists' warnings about such matters are routinely ignored by California forestry officials, two federal environmental officials as well as a state fish and game biologist told state lawmakers.

The testimony came during a hearing by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife. The committee was investigating the ex-

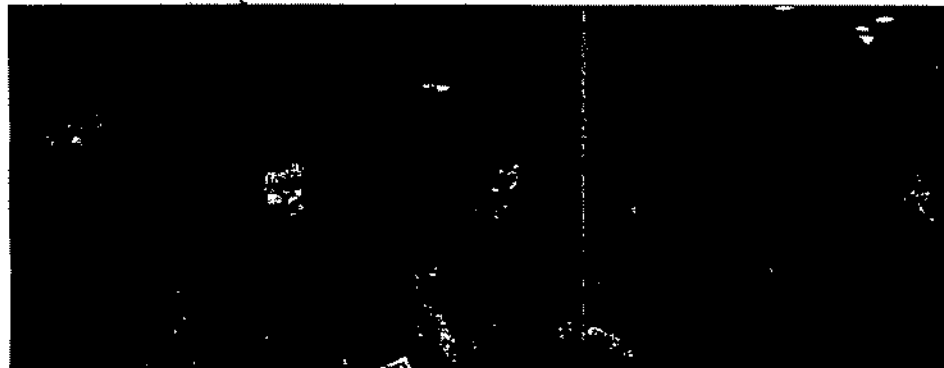
FINANCIAL TURMOIL IN ASIA

■ **S. Korea:** Confidence, stocks plunge on IMF bailout.

■ **APEC:** Leaders struggle to project air of confidence.

■ **Markets:** Wall Street, Asian exchanges slide again.

Scramble is on to avert crash



Asia-Pacific leader: that al

BY MICHAEL
Mercury News Staff

VANCOUVER — This year's economic Cooper: expected to be session to dot it's on breaking the past. Instead: leaders from nations has turned surreal event to give calm as- with

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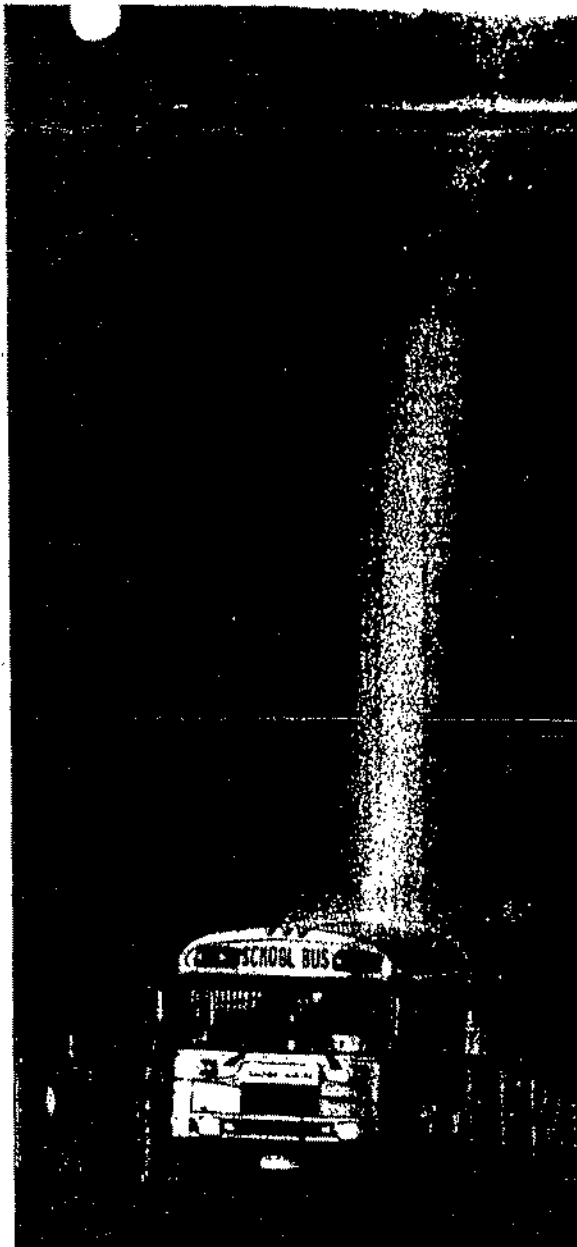
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ASSOCIATED PRESS

Morning glory

A school bus aglow with the light of a rainbow drops off students at their destination early Monday morning in Helena, Mont.

Page 1A

roadside, which wrecked seven
homes near the ancient Headwaters
Forest in Humboldt County.

But the topic also hit closer to
home.

Among several Stafford area resi-
dents who blamed the disaster on
logging were several homeowners
who live in the Santa Cruz Moun-
tains near the epicenter of the 1989
Loma Prieta earthquake.

They expressed fears that steep
increases in logging in their area
may lead to mudslides or even
flooding in the coming El Nino win-
ter.

Defends practice

In response to the heated criti-
cisms, Deputy Director Craig Antho-
ny of the California Department of
Forestry and Fire Protection ack-
nowledged problems with past log-
ging regulations. But Anthony de-
fended his agency's current practi-
ces, saying it has learned from its
mistakes and now takes environ-
mental matters into consideration.

"The system is working," he said.
Several witnesses spoke of the
devastating effects produced by too
much logging in one stream's drain-
age basin.

But Anthony said such cumula-
tive impacts are hard to measure,
acknowledging that his agency does
not review proposed timber harvest
plans with the health of an entire
watershed in mind.

Anthony's upbeat assessment was
joined by several representatives of
the forest products industry, who
said forestry officials care about the
environment and impose some of
the nation's strictest safeguards to
prevent erosion and the loss of
stream quality.

Nonetheless, the Department of
Forestry was assaulted Monday by
an unceasing barrage of critical tes-
timony from environmentalists, con-
cerned citizens and even some log-
gers themselves. They accused the
agency of being too cozy with tim-
ber companies and lying about fish
populations to justify logging pro-
posals.

"They lie, they cheat and they
steal for the timber companies,"
said Richard Coates, head of the en-
vironmental group Forests Unlimited.

Forester speaks out

Some of the most dramatic testi-
mony came from forester William
Condon, a fisheries biologist for the
state Department of Fish and Game
who spoke as a private citizen.

Condon, who said he feared repris-
als, charged that state forestry offi-
cials routinely ignore the advice
they receive from his and other
agencies concerned with the envi-
ronment.

"The people who control the pro-
cess put environmental protection
second to timber production," Con-
don said. "It's a case of the fox's

California are set by the state Board
of Forestry, a body appointed by the
governor.

Condon was one of several speak-
ers who faulted the state for failing
to prohibit the logging of large areas
in one watershed over a specifi-
c time period. While it generally is
agreed that the health of a water-
shed is affected by the total amount
of logging that occurs in it in any
given period, nothing in state law or
state forestry regulations appears to
prevent the logging of even a whole
watershed.

Consequently, several speakers
urged the Legislature to set maxi-
mums for how much of one water-
shed can be logged in a fixed period.
Condon suggested that no more
than 20 percent be logged over 10
years.

Christy Wrigley, a Eureka-area
homeowner and apple grower, said
she was forced to abandon her
home because of a sudden increase
in Elk River flooding that she
blamed on the logging of half of her
watershed.

"The house used to flood every
10-20 years, and now it floods once
or twice a year," Wrigley said. "My
options are to move it or raze it."

Several government officials dis-
credited Wrigley's testimony by
agreeing with Condon that the sta-
te fails to consider the cumulative
impacts of logging throughout a who-
le watershed.

Limited measuring

"Cumulative impacts cannot be
measured when timber harvest
plans are reviewed case by case,"
said Patrick J. Rutten of the Natio-
nal Marine Fisheries Service.

Rutten, a Northern California spe-
cialist in endangered species, said
the state's forest-practices rules do
not adequately protecting the co-
salmon, which is listed as a threat-
ened species in central California,
and not in Northern California,
spite depleted stocks.

Jane Freeman of the U.S. En-
vironmental Protection Agency
criticized the Department of For-
estry, noting that regional water qua-
lity officials review only 10 percent
proposed timber harvest plans in
a given year.

Although the impact of the cri-
sism was statewide, most of
specific examples concerned
logging by Pacific Lumber Co., which
owns the Headwaters Forest
200,000 other acres of timberland
outside of Eureka.

For instance, Pacific Lumber
received state approval to log 7
80 percent of the entire Freshw-
Creek watershed, area resident
Kraepelien said. Proposed log-
levels also are way up in the Elk
watershed, he said. Company offi-
cials could not immediately con-
firm these figures, but they didn't dis-
miss them, either.

"The old Pacific Lumber is
good neighbors," Kraepelien said.
"We had no problem with them."

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