

Unique Forest Management Group Approaches Tenth Anniversary

PINCHOT PARTNERS:

Collaboration is Key for Group Composed of Loggers and Environmentalists

By Bianca Fortis

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In 2002, a group of stakeholders in the timber industry who seemingly had nothing in common attended a field trip in the forest, and they discovered they held a lot of common ground.

"We loved the forest — we had differences, but there was that love of the forest," John Squires, a director of Pinchot Partners and longtime Packwood resident, said. "We didn't yell at each other."

In response to the loss of family-wage timber jobs and

faced with crippling unemployment, those stakeholders — environmentalists, members of the timber industry, labor representatives, Forest Service officials — formed the

Gifford Pinchot Collaborative Working Group. This September that group, now known as Pinchot Partners, is set to celebrate its tenth anniversary.

The organization, now a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, focuses on ecosystem management as well as creating local jobs.

Squires said he dreams of again having a Packwood mill.

"Will we go back to the heyday?" Squires said. "Probably not. But how sustainable was that? Not very. What I am look-



John Squires
a director of
Pinchot Partners

ing for is the ability for us to go back to family wage jobs. I think the forests can produce it."

Among the group's accomplishments are forest thinning to create habitat plantations, restoration work and a huckleberry enhancement project.

The progress can be credited in part to the idea of so many interest groups working toward a common goal.

"Collaboration is about the building of relationships," Squires said. "Well, we've got common ground. Let's go do something, let's try something."

Squires acknowledged that so far the Pinchot Partners' projects have been fairly small-scale, compared to the work that's needed.

"But what's the alternative?" he said. "Do nothing and have less? You can't run a four-minute mile until you learn to toddle."

"Am I distressed by how the community is? Yeah, it bothers me. But we're starting in the right direction. We will go back to working in the woods, and our kids will be able to afford bicycles," said Squires, the father of two school-aged children.

Bob Guenther, also a director of the group, said there is no plan to go in and "slaughter" all the trees.

"We'll look and say here's what's here — now what does the market need?" he said. "We have to get

businesses interested. If there's a sustainable supply for me, I'm willing to invest some money to add value to that product."

Member Bill Little said

he hopes local residents see what opportunities are available.

"We need to get local people the sense that there is a future for them if they would come up and see what it

takes to contract for the National Forest," he said.

The group's members know there is a lot of work to come.

"We've lost a lot of infrastructure, we've lost a lot of knowledge," Squires said. "It leaves our community pretty hard-pressed for intellectual manpower. But once there's jobs, people will come."



Bill Little
treasurer of
Pinchot Partners



Bob Guenther
a director of
Pinchot Partners

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