Crimes in the name of the environment

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Eco-terrorism Sweeps the American West

Escalating sabotage to save the environment has inflicted tens of millions of dollars in damage and placed lives at risk, a 10-month review by The Oregonian

Arsons, bombings and sabotage in the name of saving the environment and its creatures have swept the American West over the last two decades, and Oregon is increasingly the center of it all.

At least 100 major acts of such destruction have occurred since 1980, causing $42.8 million in damages, The Oregonian found in an examination of hundreds of crimes in 11 contiguous Western states.

In the last four years alone, the West has been rocked by 33 substantial incidents, with damages reaching $28.8 million. And one in five of all major events have occurred in Oregon.

Law enforcement agencies are for the most part baffled by the mounting phenomenon.

Just a month ago, an animal experimentation lab in Orange, Calif, was vandalized, sustaining $250,000 in damages. In May, arson destroyed a $65,000 log loader at a chip mill near Cle Elum, Wash., that draws from the Wenatchee National Forest, and arson struck a Eugene meat processor, causing $350,000 in damages.

From the 1981 torching of an herbicide-spraying helicopter on Oregon's central coast, to the 1993 pipe-bombing of a federal predator-control office in Portland, to the 1998 arson of a timber company headquarters in Medford, damage here has exceeded $13 million — more than California's $8.5 million in 30 incidents and more than in any other Western state.

The crimes are typically intended to disrupt logging, the recreational use of wilderness, or the use of animals for fur, food or research. They stymie law enforcement agents, who find aftermath scenes relatively free of clues except for spray-painted signs decrying environmental abuse. And in many cases, such as the arson nearly one year ago at the Vail, Colo., ski resort, a nameless communique is sent to a sympathetic mouthpiece.

In the case of Vail, a Portland animal rights activist, Craig Rosebraugh, called local and national media to say he did not know who sent him the message but to clearly state the purpose of the $12 million blaze: protecting lynx habitat from destruction by the ski resort's developers. Rosebraugh, laying responsibility to a group called Earth Liberation Front, had acted as messenger before but has never been linked by authorities to the crimes.

The crimes are acts of domestic terrorism — violence intended to change the behavior of individuals and institutions or to alter public policies. Environmental preservation is their cause, making them distinct from other terrorist acts, such as the 1995 bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City, which killed 168 people.

But the crimes are not classified as environmental, because few agree on a definition.

Radical environmentalists contend that terms such as "eco-terrorism" and "environmental terrorism" unfairly spread blame to all who care about protecting the Earth. Some dispute even the existence of a widespread problem. Loggers, ranchers and animal researchers, however, say the crimes are acts designed to intimidate them and that they represent a dangerous, emerging epidemic.

The Oregonian examined the crimes and found the threat to humans and property in the American West to be real — and on the rise.

In its 10-month review, the first comprehensive accounting of environmental terrorism in the West by a newspaper, The Oregonian evaluated hundreds of incidents noted by the Animal Liberation Front, Fur Commission USA, the U.S. Forest Service, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Americans for Medical Progress and others. It used the Federal Bureau of Investigation's definition of terrorism — a crime intended to coerce, intimidate or change public policy — and considered only those crimes in which damage totaled at least $50,000 or that potentially put human lives at risk.

The newspaper verified or debunked each case by reviewing thousands of pages of police files court records, government reports and news accounts, and by conducting interviews with more than 200 people, including victims, police and a few convicted of the crimes.

Borderline cases that could not be convincingly linked to environmental terrorism were thrown out.

On March 11, for instance, arsonists set fire to three pieces of logging equipment near Sweet Home, a $910,000 loss for Timber Harvesting Inc. Although protests and sabotage had occurred there before, none had recently, and no one took credit for the crime. The sabotage was not included among the final 100. Neither was the 1995 sabotage of a paper mill in Camas, Wash., in which power supplies to steam boilers were shut, bringing the plant to within minutes of exploding. At the time, the company was downsizing its workforce, which might have set the stage for the attack.

Although these crimes started nearly two decades ago — some seem clearly inspired by Edward Abbey's 1975 novel, "The Monkey Wrench Gang" — they have escalated dangerously, sometimes with the use of bombs, in the last six years.

On Memorial Day weekend in 1993, a pipe bomb exploded in the window of an unoccupied U.S. Department of Agriculture predator-control office in Southeast Portland. The agency had killed coyotes, black bears and cougars that threatened livestock. Environmentalists had fought bitterly with the agency about those killings and were for the first time in the West, suspected by law enforcement officials of a bombing.

But no charges were ever filed.

Since then, bombs have exploded on logging trucks in California, on the roof of a Forest Service office in New Mexico and inside meat and feed businesses in Utah.

Even more worrisome to federal agents are large-scale arsons.

Vail's $12 million burn was preceded in 1996 by the torching of the U.S. Forest Service ranger district office in Oakridge, southeast of Eugene, a loss. now calculated

at $9 million, and two federal wildlife offices in 1998 in Washington state worth $1.9 million.

None of these cases has been solved.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, prompted by the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, set up task forces throughout the United States to look into domestic terrorism. Some of those forces, including a multi-agency group that meets monthly in Oregon, have spent many hours sharing leads in environmental terrorism cases.

But those investigations have been spotty and unsuccessful. Fewer than 20 of the 100 major cases have been solved.

Eco-terrorists frustrate investigators by hitting remote targets, often at night, and leaving little evidence but charred ruins.

About the only time police catch the terrorists is when clues are delivered to them. The rest of the time, the terrorists have remained anonymous while identifying their group or left such a trail of circumstantial evidence as to draw attention to their cause.

Blind luck has led to the arrest and conviction of some.

In early 1997, militant animal-rights activists tried to set fire to an Ogden, Utah, trapping supply store with a night watchman inside. Nolan Horton saw youths dousing his building with gasoline and chased them away. Later, he described their pickup's garishly customized wheels, a clue that helped to solve several cases.

Federal agents caught Rodney Coronado, 33, who moved to Eugene in March after serving 3 1/2 years in an Arizona prison for fur industry arsons, after he used an expired Federal Express account number. The package contained a video linking Coronado to a $1.2 million arson at a Michigan State University lab. The evidence helped solve several cases.

And in the late 1980s, an undercover FBI agent infiltrated a radical Arizona group calling itself the Evan Mecharn Eco Terrorist International Conspiracy. The group, jokingly named after the conservative car dealer who'd been elected governor of Arizona, sabotaged ski resorts and electrical transmission towers. The agent gained access only after an insider blabbed to the FBI. The case put four people behind bars.

But the vast majority of the crimes have gone unpunished.

Typical is the toppling of three 345,000-volt power poles on July 4, 1981, near Moab, Utah — an incident that occurred while the radical environmental group Earth First! was conducting its second annual Round River Rendezvous six miles, to the south. Whoever cut down the poles planted a tiny U.S. flag in the sand. No charges were ever filed.

Until recently, terroristic crimes in the name of environmental protection had limited, local impact and drew little attention because they were spread over two decades and such vast territory. But targets have grown larger in recent years.

Larger targets meant more damage. And more damage meant more attention, said Special Agent James N. Damitio, a veteran U.S. Forest Service investigator in Corvallis.

"The objective of these people is to bring attention to their cause for change," Damitio said. "And if they don't feel like they're getting that attention, they try something else."

Environmental terrorists have taunted authorities by taking convincing but nameless credit for 67 of the 100 major crimes identified by The Oregonian. They have routinely passed anonymous notes and encrypted computer e-mails to people such as Rosebraugh and to news services such as The Associated Press.

In the summer of 1997, terrorists took credit for torching a $1.3 million slaughterhouse in Redmond on behalf of the Animal Liberation Front. They passed a communique to the ALF press office in Minnesota and to Rosebraugh, who disseminated specific details: The activists drilled holes in the walls of the slaughterhouse and poured 35 gallons of homemade napalm inside, then set three electrically timed incendiaries to "bring to a screeching halt what countless protests and letter-writing campaigns could never stop."

Police recognized the claim as credible and accurate but have yet to arrest anyone.

The "tagging" of such crimes infuriates them.

But it reveals a pattern about the perpetrators: Anyone who commits an act of environmental terrorism and claims credit on behalf of the Animal Liberation Front or the Earth Liberation Front, or other underground groups, is automatically a "member." There are no membership rosters, no boards of directors, just a collective sentiment that is enough to inspire certain people to commit life-threatening crimes against society.

Police believe the perpetrators are typically ad hoc bands of two to six individuals who focus on hitting specific targets.

Coronado certainly was one, though he denies he is a terrorist. Instead, he says he and his comrades were militant environmentalists and animal-rights activists who were interested only in financially crippling enterprises they accuse of plundering nature for profit.

He says the term eco-terrorism was thought up by corporations and applied to a variety of small-time pranks such as sitting in trees to prevent logging or throwing animal entrails on public officials to protest hunting.

"I personally consider myself an anti- terrorist, because everything I oppose I see as acts of terrorism," said Coronado, who writes for the radical Earth First! journal, published in Eugene. "When I think of eco-terrorist, I think of corporate executive officers in high-rise buildings."

Serious environmental terrorism started to mount in the late 1980S as conservationists fought to prevent loggers from cutting ancient trees that provided habitat for the threatened northern spotted owl. Taking pages right out of a 1985 sabotage manual — "ECODEFENSE: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching" — terrorists damaged dozens of bulldozers and other logging equipment in timber-rich Oregon, Washington, Northern California and Montana.

At the same time, arsonists in California struck butcher shops, meat packing plants, a cattle yard and university labs in an attempt to persuade such enterprises to stop using animals for food and research.

A decade later, in 1996, underground environmentalists and animal-rights activists were working together to save forests and animals from what they saw as the ravages of humankind.

The Earth Liberation Front ‘ an English offshoot of Earth First!, and the Animal liberation Front spent the Columbus Day weekend vandalizing gas stations and fast-food restaurants along Interstate 5 between Eugene and Grants Pass.

Less than two weeks later, someone spray painted “ELF” and “STOP RAPING OUR FOREST” on the side of the Detroit ranger district headquarters in Oregon’s heavily logged Willamette National Forest, and set fire to a Forest Service pickup. An unburned incendiary device was later found on the roof of the ranger station.

Two nights later, 75 miles south in the same national forest, the Oakridge ranger district headquarters went up in flames.

The next year, in March 1997, ALF declared an official alliance with ELF in a letter to the supervisor of the Willamette National Forest.

“Solidarity between these two movements is the worst nightmare of those who would abuse the Earth and its citizens,” the note warned. “Leave the forests alone, and no one gets hurt.”

What followed was the most concentrated spate environmental terrorism in U.S. history: at least 12 arsons and nearly $17.9 million in damage, most of it in the Pacific Northwest.

The two organizations — sometimes jointly, some- I times alone — took credit for almost all of it.

The Vail ski resort arson was the centerpiece.

In that action, arsonists hit the playground of the well-to-do by torching four buildings, including a 33,000 square- foot lodge, and four ski lifts. The $12 million conflagration was the most destructive act of eco-terrorism in U.S. history.

When Portland’s Craig Rosebraugh announced that the Earth Liberation Front was responsible, he issued an announcement on behalf of the perpetrators: “For your safety and convenience, we strongly advise skiers to choose other destinations until Vail cancels its inexcusable plans for expansion.”

The Vail arson awakened the public to eco-terrorism. Some federal agents who had kept tabs on the mounting crimes joked privately that it took an upscale target like Vail to take the problem into the mainstream.

And they wondered where the public had been for the last quarter-century.

Abbey’s “The Monkey Wrench Gang” follows four ecosaboteurs angered by development of the American West. They bum down billboards, disable road graders and blow up a railroad bridge.

But in the real world of the last two decades, passions burned more furiously.

Angered by aerial herbicide spraying on Oregon's forests in 1981, an anonymous duo calling itself the People's Brigade for a Healthy Genetic Future reduced a $180,000 Hiller helicopter to a smoldering pile of rubble near the coastal town of Toledo.

No charges filed.

The Animal Liberation Front, an underground group born in England in 1976, made its West Coast debut on Christmas in 1983, stealing 12 research dogs from a medical laboratory in Torrance, Calif. The $50,000 theft ruined years of research on heart pacemakers. A series of similar break-ins followed, disrupting research intended to reduce air pollution and alleviate sleep disorders and other human maladies. ALF claimed credit.

Cases unsolved.

ALF reappeared on April 15, 19870 claiming to have set fire to a lab under construction on the campus of the University of California at Davis. The $3.5 million arson set back the diagnoses of veterinary animals across the West and touched off a $1.2 million spate of similar crimes against butcher shops, meatpacking plants and cattle yards across Northern California.

No charges filed in any of the cases.

A growing number of animal-rights activists joined radical environmentalists in their efforts in the late 1980s. They began to see their struggle as a shared fight to save not just the wilderness but all animals, wild and domesticated.

They disrupted the hunting of mountain lions and bison and sabotaged a desert motorcycle race over the sensitive habitat of kangaroo rats and tortoises. They sabotaged logging operations to save not just centuries-old trees but the creatures inhabiting them, especially two birds under protection of the federal Endangered Species Act: the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet.

Coronado, who grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area, saw the struggle to save wild nature and laboratory animals as one in the same. He says he became an activist at age 12 when he watched a documentary film about the slaughter of harp seals in Canada. By 1990, he had sunk whaling boats in Iceland, learned to make firebombs in England and sabotaged logging sites, fur stores and billboards in the United States and Canada.

His five-state arson campaign against the fur industry, launched in June 199 1, was called "Operation Bite Back." He and his accomplices did just that.

They broke into Oregon State University's experimental mink farm, rigged several incendiaries with clocks, cans of Sterno and 9-volt batteries and hurried away. The fire caused $62,000 in damage. Investigators found an ominous warning spray-painted on a wall: "This is only the beginning."

They went on a nine-month tear, setting fire to a mink-food warehouse in Edmonds, Wash.; a coyote research station in Millville, Utah; a mink-food manufacturing plant in Yamhill, Ore.; a research lab at Michigan State University. They also vandalized animal-research labs at Washington State University in Pullman.

Coronado's terrorism worked, according to a Michigan prosecutor's sentencing memorandum filed in U.S. District Court.

"A terrorist combines violence and threats so that those that disagree with him are silenced, either because they have been victimized by violence or because they fear being victimized," the memorandum said. Although firebombings and property damage ceased for a time after Coronado's capture, fear lingered, the prosecutor wrote.

Coronado's victims, the memo went on, "remain so afraid of the defendant and others like him that they would not speak to the court's own pre-sentence investigator unless he guaranteed their anonymity."

Coronado went to prison for 31/2 years, but eco-terrorism flourished.

Eco-terrorists seem to have struck just about every kind of enterprise having to do with

the environment or animals. They've set fire to everything from an ice-cream plant in Eugene to an offroad motorcycle club headquarters in Littlerock, Wash., to a pharmaceutical company in Fort Collins, Colo.

To almost everyone's amazement, no one has been killed.

There have been close calls, however.

In April 1989, the Animal Liberation Front set timed incendiary devices beneath a meat company in Monterey, Calif., perhaps not realizing that butchers started work at 4 a.m. The morning crew smelled smoke and fled. Only one of the firebombs ignited.

"It was an old building," butcher Manuel Brito recalled. "It could have gone up like a matchbox."

One year later, the Earth Night Action Group toppled power lines near Santa Cruz, Calif., a blackout that caused the failure of Rosina Mazzei's respirator. Paramedics took hours to revive Mazzei, who suffered from Lou Gehrig's disease.

Horton, the night watchman at the Utah trapping store, was standing in an expanding puddle of gasoline the night in 1997 when he chased arsonists away. Police later found the Molotov cocktail the arsonists had apparently planned to use to ignite the fuel.

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"They knew I was in the building," Horton said. "The lights were on. My truck was in front. My lunch bucket and thermos were on the counter where they could see it. They intended to burn me and the building."

Coronado does not now rule out the possibility that someone could be killed — either deliberately or by accident — as crimes in the name of the environment continue.

The African National Congress relied on sabotage for years in its fight against apartheid before making a conscious decision to draw blood, he said. Although he hoped that would never happen here, he was surprised to learn that some Utah activists had been accused of using bombs in their crimes.

I doubt that they had any realization of the intensity or severity of escalating the struggle by using explosive devices," he said. "We don't have the structures in place to support a struggle that uses explosive devices."

Some observers worry what will happen next.

Damitio, the federal agent in Corvallis, is one.

"The old adage is, we're not going to do anything about it until somebody gets killed, " he said. I think it's true.

"There will be much more attention to these issues when someone does get killed. I think we've come very close to that line, and we will cross that line unless we deal with this problem."

Next: The face of eco-terror — who's doing it and why

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Brian Hendrickson of The Oregonian's computer services department built databases for this series. Head librarian Sandra Macomber, assistant head librarian Gail Hulden and researchers Lovelle Svart, Margie Gultry and Kathleen Blythe also contributed.

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Ideologues Drive the Violence

Radical environmentalists and animal rightists, once separate camps with little use for each other, have joined forces and turned eco-terrorism into a persistent threat.

The message to Craig Rosebraugh's Northeast Portland apartment — by phone or e-mail, he won't tell — was brief enough for him to jot down. Then he set about typing me October 1998 announcement about a ski resort arson at Vail, Colo.

The $1.2 million blaze was set, he told The Oregonian and other news organizations, because lynx habitat was being destroyed by the resort's expansion.

Rosebraugh insisted he did not know who had supplied the information to him or committed the crime. But he did say he agreed with the purposes of the Earth Liberation Front, which claimed responsibility for the fire and for which, he said, he was acting as spokesman.

Rosebraugh had been here before.

On June 5, 1997, he'd received similar instruction, purportedly from the Animal Liberation Front, stating responsibility for breaking into Rick Arritola's mink ranch near Mount Angel four nights earlier and freeing more than 12,000 minks. It is believed to be the largest animal release in U.S. history, a freedom sprint in which 4,000 of the minks were clawed or stomped to death in the stampede or vanished.

"This action took place not as an act of ecoterrorism, but as an act of love," Rosebraugh's announcement had stated.

And between Mount Angel and Vail, Rosebraugh spoke on behalf of the ALF and ELF as operatives loosed minks in Washington and Idaho, "liberated" rabbits from an Oregon farm and burned down a slaughterhouse in Redmond and a Bureau of Land Management horse barn near Burns.

At first blush, the 27-year-old Rosebraugh seems an improbable emissary for the eco-terrorisin sweeping the American West. But he emerged as one of several individuals whose actions figured prominently in The Oregonian's investigation of crimes committed in the name of saving the environment. The newspaper's review found 100 major incidents since 1980 that had inflicted $42.8 million in property damage — most of that in just the last three years.

Rosebraugh is a soft-spoken, painfully thin adherent of Mahatma Gandhi and nonviolent social revolution — "Nonviolence as I define it, of course," he says. A vegan, he refuses to eat or wear any animal products. He has been arrested at least 10 times since 1996 for taking part in sit-ins and other civil disobedience to protest animal research and the fur industry. He wears wire-rim glasses and keeps his hair in a short stubble.

Rosebraugh grew up in Tigard, shot birds with a BB gun, fished, ate meat and played soccer well enough to earn a partial college scholarship, which he declined.

He started listening to punk music that espoused animal rights, and later, while at Linn-Benton Community College, he wrote a paper against animal experimentation that earned him an A. In 1990, he joined an animal rights group. He defected from that group in 1996, while attending Marylhurst University, to start a more militant outfit called Liberation Collective.

He now runs the collective from a $750-a-month rented office on the tattered edge of Portland's quaint Old Town.

Law enforcement officers take Rosebraugh and his communiques very seriously. The claims of responsibility by ALF and ELF jibe with evidence uncovered in the ruins left by the attacks. And some investigators privately voice skepticism of Rosebraugh's insistence that he's merely a mouthpiece and not involved.

But those who have tried to interrogate Rosebraugh have been stonewalled — he consistently stands on free-speech rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

"I don't know what I can say other than (the communiques) come anonymously," Rosebraugh said in a recent interview. "For our own safety" — his and those contacting him — "I don't want to know who the people are."

Rosebraugh alleges that a federal agent once accosted him and told him "you're walking a very thin line," and that a federal grand jury once questioned him so aggressively that it aggravated his pericarditis, a heart condition. Still, he remains unafraid of publicly celebrating the illegal deeds of those who say they are saving the environment.

Rosebraugh wishes there were more high-profile arsons such as the Vail blaze. It drew worldwide attention and, he says, showed that a radical environmental movement in the American West was gaining momentum and impact.

"Personally," he said calmly, "I would like to see not only the number of actions increasing, but also the intensity of the actions."

America has always fostered rebels and outlaws. And it has sometimes changed, painfully, through resistance and revolt. The Boston Tea Party. The Civil War. Withdrawal from Vietnam.

But a holy war over the environment? Who is fighting in it?

Just who is sending messages to Craig Rosebraugh — if anyone at all?

Law enforcement's dismal record in solving two decades of these crimes furnishes few answers. But The Oregonian's examination reveals some key influences, personalities and milestones:

The fight for animals: Opposition in the 1960s to medical research on live animals captured popular support, particularly in the Northeast. A feature in Life magazine in 1966, before Craig Rosebraugh was born, revealed the dismal conditions of laboratory dogs, generating the most reader response in the magazine's history. A decade and a half later, a full-page ad ran in The New York Times showing a rabbit with its eyes taped shut and asking readers whether this was the fate they wished for animals.

The public responded. Congress in 1966 enacted laboratory-animal protection laws. And People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. a Norfolk. Va. — based group whose membership surpasses 600,000, was co-founded in 1980 by an Englishwoman, Ingrid Newkirk.

In England in the 1960s and '70s, a legacy of opposition to fox hunts and road-building through Britain's dwindling habitat reached a new level. Obstructionists ruined hunts with loud horns. University experimentation on animals came under siege, too. In 1976, Ronnie Lee, a prominent activist, founded the Animal Liberation Front, a group that promised to disrupt British society by committing sabotage on behalf of all animals — and did.

In 1979, when Craig Rosebraugh was just 7, ALF showed up in the United States: Vandals broke into labs at New York University Medical Center and stole one cat, two dogs and two guinea pigs. ALF, finding American adherents, would take root in the United States, moving westward and graduating from vandalism to arson. Rosebraugh would become a spokesman. Newkirk's PETA would eventually pay the legal defense fees of some key saboteurs.

The fight for wilderness: In 1968, Edward Abbey published "Desert Solitaire," a collection of essays celebrating and bemoaning a Utah wilderness succumbing to development — a sin, he contended, against the planet's ecology. Some of his readers would become leading eco-terrorists. Abbey followed in 1975 with "The Monkey Wrench Gang," his better-known novel, in which protagonists drive around the West burning down billboards and disabling construction equipment. The term "monkeywrenching", today is a staple in conversation among radical environmentalists.

Dave Foreman, a New Mexican, gave up his job in 1979 as chief lobbyist for The Wilderness Society to embark on a grass-roots campaign with a few friends to save Western wild lands. in early 1980, a month before Craig Rosebraugh turned 8, Foreman

— an Eagle Scout and registered Republican — helped found Earth First! The group would use whatever peaceful means was necessary to further its cause. Its motto: "No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth."

In March 198 1, Foreman and associates demonstrated against the flooding of pristine canyon lands by unfurling a long plastic banner down the face of Arizona's Glen Canyon Dam, giving it the appearance of having a massive crack. Earth First! was suspected of sabotaging road work and logging sites throughout the early 1980s. The group, in 1992, inspired an extremist offshoot in England, the Earth Liberation Front, for which Rosebraugh now identifies himself as chief spokesman.

Foreman cites Edward Abbey as a hero and in 1985 co-edited the manual "ECODEFENSE: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching, " still the standard reference for environmental extremists. He also launched the Earth First! journal, the group's radical newspaper, from his home in the Southwest. The tabloid is now published from Eugene.

The fight for animals and wilderness: In 1987, by the time Craig Rosebraugh was 15 and attending Tigard High School, radical environmentalists and animal-rights advocates met near the desert town of Baker, Calif, to disrupt bighorn sheep hunts. They spent their days stalking hunters and cutting loose with air horns to scare away the sheep. At night, they shared triumphs and tears — and tokes of marijuana — over campfires.

The two camps had long looked down their noses at each other. Radical environmentalists, including some members of Earth First!, didn't understand why animal rightists stole lab rats from medical schools but failed to support wilderness protection. They saw the deserts and forests of the West as cathedrals on a planet facing extinction. The animal-rights camp, meanwhile, wondered why environmentalists claimed to care about animals but ate bacon cheeseburgers. Even so, he campfire talks led to the mutual sabotage of elk, bear and bison hunts throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s.

The saboteurs discovered they shared a belief in the concept of deep ecology, a philosophy that human life is not separate from all other life on the planet. They came to see clear-cut forests, open-pit mines, large-scale animal farms, hydroelectric dams, fastfood restaurant chains and medical school labs as symptoms of corporate greed and cruelty.

The movers and shakers among them turned eco-terrorism into the new civil disobedience.

Some of them went in together in 1990 for a $1,900-a-month house in the mountains north of Santa Cruz, Calif., complete with a redwood deck and hot tub for 13. Tenants and visitors became a Who's Who of the West's environmental extreme: Rodney Coronado, who would later mount a multi-state arson campaign against the fur industry, left a federal penitentiary in Arizona in March and moved to Eugene, where he helped edit the Earth First! journal. Jonathan Paul, charged but not prosecuted in the 1986 sabotage of a University of Oregon animal lab, would become a leading saboteur of whale hunts off the Washington coast and now lives in Oregon's Applegate Valley.

Darryl Cherney, an organizer of Earth First!'s anti-logging crusades in the Northern California redwoods, was a guest, along with David Barbarash, a Canadian activist and convicted Animal Liberation Front guerrilla now charged with mailing letters booby-trapped with razor blades to more than 20 hunting guides.

Since 1990, The Oregonian learned in its investigation, these people and their cohorts emerged as leaders of a movement whose adherents cut a wide swath across the West: 62 major crimes totaling nearly $32.9 million in damage. The ski resort fire in Vail, Colo. — announced to the world by Portland's Rosebraugh — was at least the 36th arson or bombing believed to have been carried out by eco-terrorists in that time.

Eco-terrorists have become such a potent threat that some industry groups now keep dossiers on activists and trade e- mails to track their travels. Many are convinced eco-terrorists' actions inspired Theodore Kaczynski, the Unabomber, to kill a California timber lobbyist in 1995.

"We're not talking about dyed-in-the-wool conservationists or environmentalists who really understand the functioning of the Earth," said Teresa Platt, executive director of Fur Commission USA, based in Coronado, Calif. 'We're talking about extremists who say it is morally wrong for us to utilize the Earth. That ... is dangerous." Animal rightists burned Platt in effigy at a demonstration Sept. 17 in San Diego.

Jonathan Paul is plain about why some activists commit crimes to make their point.

"None of the processes work ... like the legal process, litigation," he said last week. "We compare ourselves to the underground railroad, to some guerrilla movements that are trying to free themselves from oppressive governments. The only thing that's different about us is that we expand our thinking to other species and to the planet as a whole."

Since 1980, eco-terrorists have tagged their work in two of three major crimes. They represented themselves variously as the People's Brigade for a Healthy Genetic Future, the Animal Rights Militia, the Earth Night Action Group, Farm Animal Revenge Militia, Earth First, Vegan Revolution and — far more prominently and frequently — the Animal Liberation Front and the Earth Liberation Front.

Taking their cue from the Irish Republican Army and other -guerrilla groups, eco-saboteurs organize into small, tightly knit groups called cells. The cells form without leaders, delegating tasks on a need-to-know basis so that incriminating information goes unshared.

The system plays well into Craig Rosebraugh's assertions that he is clueless about who's doing the crimes.

Example: Roger Troen, a former Portland elementary-school teacher, got an anonymous phone call in October 1986 asking him to help steal research animals from two University of Oregon psychology labs. A few nights later, he helped load 100 rats, 30 mice, 11 hamsters and three rabbits into his aunt's Ford LTD and headed for Portland.

Troen, 68, maintains he did not know his accomplices, who he thinks got his name from an animal-rights group in California and correctly sized him up for his sympathies. He took the stolen rabbits to a friend's place on the Oregon coast, where a veterinarian

discovered their UO tattoos and called police. A judge found Troen guilty of felony burglary, fined him $34,900 and put him on probation for five years. Three other men, including Jonathan Paul, were accused of the crime, but charges were dropped by a Lane County judge who ruled the defendants had been denied sufficient access to prosecution evidence.

Still, some of the big fish among extremists have been caught and tried.

Foreman's undoing was a group of Earth Firsters who in 1987 and 1988 toppled electrical poles leading to a uranium. mine on the south rim of the Grand Canyon and twice disabled skilift towers at Fairfield Snowbowl in Flagstaff, Ariz. A disaffected member of the group leaked plans of its next target to the FBI.

Everyone went to jail but Foreman, who pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy but never served a day. Throughout, however, their crimes looked as if they had been crafted out of Abbey's "Monkey Wrench Gang."

The years 1988 and 1989 slowed Earth First! Key members were jailed. Abbey died. And Foreman — disgusted that his group had gone from rednecks to hippies, hunters to vegetarians, conservationists I to anarchists — quit.

"It wasn't home anymore," Foreman said recently. The organization "didn't teem to have ties to the conservation movement anymore, but was more tied to the urban anarchist and animal rights movements."

Rodney Coronado, who led the early — 1990s arson spree against fur businesses on behalf of the ALF, admired Foreman. But Coronado, perhaps today's most prominent eco-terrorist, did not share Foreman's apocalyptic belief that people would ultimately ruin the Earth. He thought he could make others see things his way.

A Yaqui Indian, Coronado had grown up with traditional Native American spiritual values. He said he believed that all living things — a tree, a whale, a human — had equal importance. And he was a vegan whose credo was to walk gently on the planet, using natural resources only as necessary.

Coronado was haunted as a boy by TV images of the bloody harvests of baby harp seals in Canada. Upon graduating from high school, he went to work for the, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society to protest the hunts. in 1986, angered that Iceland was killing 200 whales a year for "scientific research" during a moratorium on whaling, Coronado and an associate traveled to Reykjavik and sank two whaling ships.

He escaped to England to sabotage fox hunts. By the time Coronado reached the United States, in late 1986, Iceland's prime minister was calling for his extradition as an international terrorist. But Iceland, perhaps understanding that Sea Shepherd would use the case to put whaling on trial, never charged him.

Coronado's exploits eventually made him a legend.

"He was kind of a mythic character even back then," said Todd Schulke, one of Coronado's old Earth First! buddies. "He was a kid then. But you know, being (in the news) for sinking whaling ships put him in that mythic category."

Foreman and other Earth First! traditionalists differed with Coronado. But Foreman also thought Coronado was extraordinarily brave and dedicated. At the group's 1988

rendezvous, Foreman's last, he applauded Coronado's whale- boat sabotage, introduced him as the next generation of eco-warrior and led the crowd in singing him "Happy Birthday."

Coronado, a newly minted hero among the West's saboteurs, was just 22.

Activists were careful at Coronado's California house. No one discussed actions in the house or in their cars, but instead on walks through the redwoods behind it, said the Canadian activist Barbarash, who stayed there frequently from 1990 to 1994.

Barbarash, who had been a teen-age punk rocker, anarchist and cruise missle protester in his native Toronto, had taken up with animal-rights extremists in the early 1980s. He had been a member of the "Kentucky Fried Five," an ALF cell caught vandalizing a fastfood restaurant in 1987. Barbarash said he traveled the West from 1989 to 1994 in a van, sometimes taking part in crimes. But he refuses to disclose them.

Along the way, he helped to blockade a logging operation in Oregon's Kalmiopsis Wilderness and protested with Earth First! at the Bonneville Dam. Police say he carried phony IDs and a map of U.S. power plants.

Between November 1989 and December 1990, eco-terrorists took credit for nine major crimes in Northern California, all unsolved. They planted incendiaries in six Bay Area department stores that sold fur clothing, brought down power lines at Watsonville and inflicted $1.9 million in damage to three pieces of logging equipment in Boonville.

The onslaught was interrupted in May 1990. A nail bomb exploded in Earth First! organizer Judi Bari's Subaru as she and fellow Earth Firster Darryl Cherney drove through Oakland, Calif., to Coronado's house. Bari's pelvis was shattered, her backbone crushed. Cherney suffered lesser wounds. The pair insisted the bomb had been planted in the car.

Bari, a Baltimore anti-war protester and labor organizer, had helped orchestrate a series of Northern California logging protests. She was among the first in Earth First! to renounce tree spiking, a tactic in which steel or ceramic spikes are driven deeply into trees, making them hazardous at the sawmill. She was conciliator more than warrior.

So it was horrifying to Bari when the FBI accused her and Cherney of knowingly transporting a bomb. But the government never prosecuted her, and the bombing remains a mystery.

The incident spooked many activists. They pointed blame at big timber companies. Coronado and Paul, feeling they might be next, headed to Oregon.

The two men worked for an East Coast animal-rights group, which in late 1990 paid them $10 an hour to document abuses of minks, bobcats, lynxes and foxes on Western fur ranches. The duo posed as prospective fur farmers.

A rancher in Hamilton, Mont., allowed them to copy the addresses of fur businesses in the Northwest. It became a hit list.

Coronado and Paul sneaked back onto several farms at night to collect videotape of animals kept in tiny cages, foxes turning insane circles in confinement and piles of

skinned minks. Coronado filmed a farmer breaking the necks of minks — footage that later aired on "60 Minutes."

But Coronado wanted more: to fight back on behalf of the animals.

In early 1991, Coronado and some accomplices — Paul maintains he was not one of them — scouted targets with night-vision goggles and two-way radios to launch an Animal Liberation Front project titled "Operation Bite Back."

On June 10, 1991, they broke into storage and research buildings of an experimental mink farm at Oregon State University and set at least six timed incendiaries, causing $62,000 in damage. They trashed the lab and spray-painted an ominous message on the wall: "This is only the beginning..."

Five days later, they set a $500,000 fire at a mink-food supplier in Edmonds, Wash. Coronado brazenly appeared on TV news as "Jim Perez," spokesman for a fictitious anti-fur group. It is unclear whether police recognized him as the globetrotting eco-saboteur.

On Aug. 13,1991, Coronado and his crew vandalized three animal research buildings at Washington State University in Pullman. "Perez" quickly issued another press release, this one with a warning to six WSU scientists: "ALF is watching and there is no place to hide."

That December, Coronado set a $96,000 fire at a Yamhill, Ore., building in which Hynek Malecky dried mink pelts and prepared mink food. Coronado phoned the newsroom of a Portland television station to take anonymous credit on behalf of the ALF. The following February, Coronado and company set a $1.2 million fire at Michigan State University and made away with research records. Two students, working late in the building, escaped unharmed.

After the blaze, Coronado, posing as "Leonard Robideau," sent a Federal Express package to a Maryland activist with PETA. But the FedEx account number had expired. The package, turned over to the FBI, contained a videotape of the raid on Michigan State. Agents searched the Maryland activist's home and seized surveillance logs, code names and false identification for Coronado and another activist. They also found two-way radios, night-vision goggles and animal euthanasia drugs.

"We had the FBI all the way through our underwear drawers," said Ingrid Newkirk, PETA's co-founder.

Investigators raided a storage locker that Coronado kept in Talent, Ore. They seized a typewriter ribbon and reconstructed a letter in which Coronado sought money for an arson campaign against the fur industry. As federal authorities closed in on Coronado in October 1992, he and his associates set fire to a Utah State University research station in Millville. That same night, Coronado associates struck a government coyote-research facility in nearby Logan, Utah, and hurled a flaming torch through the window of a USDA supply depot in Pocatello, Idaho.

In early 1993, a federal judge in Spokane sent four of Coronado's friends to jail for refusing to testify against him. One was Jonathan Paul, who turned down an offer of immunity rather than testify against his best friend. Paul's sister, "Baywatch" TV

star Alexandra Paul, marched beneath his jail cell shouting, "Free Jonathan Paul," and their story appeared in People magazine. Jonathan Paul served five months for contempt.

Coronado, captured in Arizona in 1994, drew a 57-month sentence. He became a popular inmate at the federal penitentiary in Tucson, trading the meat entrees from his chow-hall plates for vegetables. His movement martyred him a "prisoner of war."

The arsonist has never identified his accomplices and says he believes they never would have told on him had circumstances been reversed.

Coronado moved in March to Eugene, where he helped to edit the Earth First! journal but, still on probation, lived in a community corrections facility. A few months ago, still wearing an electronic monitoring anklet, Coronado moved to Applegate Valley, just up the road from his friend Jonathan Paul. In August, Coronado returned to Tucson to work as the student-affairs manager of a public charter school attended by Yaqui and Tohono tribal children.

During Coronado's incarceration, Paul maintained a high profile. He was arrested in 1997 demonstrating at the University of California at Davis, where activists were celebrating the loth anniversary of the $3.5 million arson of the school's veterinary diagnostic laboratory.

There, Paul shared a jail cell with a young activist who would soon raise his own profile among the West's extremists: Portland's Craig Rosebraugh.

Eleven weeks later, Rosebraugh delivered his first message on behalf of the Animal Liberation Front: a $300,000 mink release on Rick Arritola's ranch at Mount Angel.

There is no estimate from authorities or the activists themselves of how many people have committed eco-terrorism.

But it continues. On Mother's Day in Eugene, ALF took credit for torching Childers Meat Co., which cuts and packs meat into portions for institutional use.

The latest known group to enter the terror business is an unlikely crew: a parents' dream team of young men who profess a vegan diet and a commitment to no drugs, no alcohol or tobacco, and no premarital sex. They were the core members of Salt Lake City's "Straight Edge," a crowd driven by hard-core rock bands such as Minor Threat and Earth Crisis. But a few veered from the group's original message of tolerance, health and personal pride and, as anyone can, declared themselves agents of the Animal Liberation Front.

On March 11, 1997, several Straight Edgers drove to the Utah Fur Breeders Agricultural Cooperative in Sandy, which provides food for the state's $20 million-a-year mink industry, and planted five pipe bombs in trucks and an office, lighting hobby-shop fuses. Explosions blew shrapnel 800 feet as the co-op burst into flames. Two families living on the premises escaped without injury.

Hours after the bombing, Dallas antifur activist J.P. Goodwin announced that it was the work of the ALF. But two of the Straight Edgers accused of taking part informed on the others. The informants were convicted, one going to prison and the

other awaiting sentencing; one of their associates committed suicide, and three others were acquitted.

The new crowd's habits worry experienced saboteurs. Paul, citing generational differences, says he threw up his hands in frustration after traveling to Salt Lake to unsuccessfully coach Straight Edgers on the necessity of loyalty — and a willingness to do time if that's the price of silence.

The Straight Edgers' level of violence exceeded that of hard-core saboteurs such as Coronado, who strongly supports arson as a form of property destruction against animal researchers, fur farmers and others whom he accuses of exploiting animals.

Paul advocates arson as long as it doesn't hurt people. And he opposes the use of bombs as excessively dangerous: "I'm not interested in seeing people killed."

Michelle Arciaga, an official with the National Law Institute and an expert on Straight Edge, concluded: "It's just luck, dumb luck, that has kept them from killing someone."

Craig Rosebraugh's musty Portland office is a gathering place for militant animal rightists, radical environmentalists and human-rights activists of varying ages. And Rosebraugh is the person they tend to gather around.

"I think I'm a good bridge between some of the more experienced, older activists and a lot of the newer folks coming on board," he said in a recent interview.

His professional elders, some of them off doing other things, would probably approve.

Dave Foreman lives in Albuquerque, N.M., where he is chairman of The Wildlands Project and a past national board member of the Sierra Club. Jonathan Paul, with whom Rosebraugh shared the jail cell, bought a house in Oregon's Applegate Valley in 1994 and became a leading anti-logging activist in the Siskiyou Mountains; he was arrested last spring while attempting to sabotage the Makah tribe's gray whale hunts at Neah Bay, Wash. David Barbarash was deported to Canada after his 1994 arrest near Paul's California home and this year was named ALF's North American spokesman.

Rosebraugh himself took a break recently from a 25-city protest of primate research centers to accept his diploma from Marylhurst University. This year he listed himself on the Internet as the official press officer of the Earth Liberation Front.

As the bridge between Coronado's generation and the youths now joining the ranks of eco-terrorists, Rosebraugh finds himself in the peculiar position of declaring himself nonviolent while supporting bombings, so long as no one is hurt.

So far, it seems, he's succeeded at the task he set for himself

Next. How eco-terrorist acts have changed America's ways

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Terrorist Acts Provoke Change in Research, Business, Society

Saboteurs' influence extends to vivisection, herbicide use, even filmmaking
By James Long and Bryan Denson

Fur coats have become so controversial that Nordstrom no longer carries them in its East or West coast stores. Nearly half the nation's medical schools have stopped putting students through practice-surgery courses on live animals. Hollywood has come under such pressure to prevent animal cruelty that filmmakers literally cannot hurt a fly.

Things have changed, as well, for those who make a living from the land. Some log-truck drivers make their hauls at night to avoid confrontations. Home Depot stores are labeling some wood products with the pledge that old-growth forests were not the source. Threats have pushed the U.S. Forest Service into limiting the use of herbicide on public lands.

These are among the results of an eco-terrorist campaign in which the land and its creatures are celebrated by saboteurs as sacred. The mounting assault throughout the West has gained force since the late 1980s, as those fighting for wilderness joined with those fighting for animals, vandalizing or setting fire to research laboratories, logging sites and targeted businesses. These incidents have spurred changes in American attitudes and habits.

The changes have not occurred by vote of society or because of new technologies or efficiencies. Some are the direct result of violence mounted by terrorists who elude apprehension and conviction, leaving victims frightened. Over time, victims and potential victims adapt to the threats by changing their ways.

Yet other changes are spurred by large, mainstream groups that latch on to a cause, such as the 600,000-member People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. But the effectiveness of such groups can be linked to efforts by terrorists acting outside the group while enjoying the group's financial support.

It's a strange and historic process of change in America and, particularly, the West.

And the starkest of the changes — those in which the link between sabotage and a new way of doing things is undisputed — have been wrought by animal-rights activists.

The Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association, with some 600 members internationally, including lipstick giants Faberg and Revlon, banded together in the face of demonstrations in 1980 to endow a research institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health dedicated to finding methods to test products without using animals.

U.S. researchers in all fields were using about 40 million lab animals per year when the school's Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing opened its doors. Today, the number is around 15 million animals per year and declining, owing in large part to the center's work.

On June 30, Procter & Gamble, the soapsuds giant, promised to quit testing most of its products on animals, ending a 10-year fight with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. PETA activists had picketed the company and twice smacked its chief executive, John Pepper, in the face with tofu pies. Gillette and Colgate-Palmolive-Peet had already promised to end most animal tests.

Animal-rights controversies have moved Hollywood filmmakers to routinely budget six-figure sums to construct "animatronic" horses and other such surrogates to use in stunts that might injure real animals. Although credit goes to popular animal-protection groups such as the American Humane Association, many officials involved in the changes say crimes by extremists made their job easier.

"It's like good cop, bad cop," said Betty Denny Smith, a Los Angeles activist who ran the association's Hollywood office when it persuaded the industry to protect even cockroaches. "If it wasn't for the extremists," Smith said, "everybody working for humane treatment would look like some kind of kook."

Industry rules that began with reformist attempts to prevent cruelty to horses have expanded until, today, a director who wants to film a cockroach falling off a table must use a pad to break the bug's fall.

"A lot of ideas that used to be considered far-out are becoming mainstream," said Bron Taylor, a professor of environmental studies at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and author of "Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism."

Like it or not, Taylor said, militants whose actions sometimes land them in jail are having an effect even on the moral teachings of mainstream religions. He points, for example, to a draft pastoral letter that the Pacific Northwest's seven Roman Catholic bishops issued May 12 in which they denounce "speciesism," a term coined by Australian philosopher Peter Singer in his 1975 book, "Animal Liberation."

That book launched the modern animal-rights movement and inspired direct-action tactics that have sometimes turned violent. Although the bishops didn't use the word "speciesism" in Singer's sense of equality between animals and humans, "the letter is an example of how Catholic thinking is in the process of evolving," said Russ Butkus, chairman of the theology department at the University of Portland.

According to Butkus, the letter's proposal that all living things have "intrinsic value" might, for instance, require a conscientious Catholic to avoid wearing a fur coat because it requires killing an animal for a garment that is not strictly necessary. A majority of Americans, Taylor points out, already believe that nature has intrinsic value as opposed to value measured in its usefulness to humans.

The bishops' stance on intrinsic value, he said, "is strikingly interesting because that is a moral premise that has been articulated and promoted by the so-called deep ecology movement and its radical vanguard, Earth First!" Earth Firsters have been associated with numerous acts of eco-terrorism since the group was formed in 1980, and some joined animal-rights activists in the late 1980s not only in committing crimes but also in espousing a philosophy of the interconnectedness of all beings and things.

Animal-rights beliefs that have entered the mainstream are having an effect on public education in Oregon. Four years ago, Bob Doltar, a teacher at Grant High School in Portland, scheduled his biology class to dissect frogs — and a student slipped away with all 100 of the critters and released them into Laurelhurst Park.

"He just didn't think it was right to kill the frogs," Doltar said. "And he was a kid with a strong science background."

Doltar then developed a computer program to simulate frog dissections for the small but growing number of students who object to cutting a real animal. "We haven't dissected a frog since," he said.

BioLab Frog, as Doltar's invention is now known, is one of dozens of animal-simulation programs used even in medical schools all over the country. According to a 1998 survey by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, an anti-vivisection group, 62 of 126 U.S. medical schools no longer offer live-animal courses at the pre-graduate level. The Harvard, Yale, Stanford and University of Washington schools of medicine are on the list.

"I would guess that the last lab (at the University of Washington) using live animals would have been 10 years ago," confirmed Dr. Melvin Dennis, chairman of the university's Department of Comparative Anatomy. Animal-rights protests were a major factor, he said.

"There were a couple of situations with a couple of the labs where there were confrontations, and the people (researchers) decided to stop the labs," he said. In 1986–87, about a dozen UW medical students, backed by The Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), protested a second-year course in which they were required to cut open the chests of sedated, living dogs to observe drug effects on the beating heart. Afterward, the students were required to cut the dogs' hearts out.

A dozen or so students boycotted the class and complained to school officials that the instruction was cruel and would desensitize students to inflicting pain on future patients. PAWS and other animal-rights militants joined the protest, and the instructor canceled the class in September 1987.

"There wasn't really a time where the school said, 'OK, we're gonna change this policy,' " Dennis said. "What happened was, over a period of years there would be individual people who were teaching individual courses, who would decide either because animal-rights activists were putting pressure on them or because they saw a better method, or for whatever reason, to stop the courses. I would imagine that was the way it happened all across the country."

Like Dennis, most academics interviewed were hard-pressed to say exactly when things changed — just that they had.

The refusal of two veterinary students to perform vivisection at Washington State University in 1990 prompted the school to pioneer alternative methods of training surgeons that include having them eat with chopsticks to develop manual dexterity.

Likewise, medical schools that encounter animal-rights pressures are relying more on computer simulators and dummies to allow pre-graduate students to develop skills

in everything from pharmacology to suturing. The Oregon Health Sciences University School of Medicine still gives its students a limited amount of training with live animals but has moved away from emotionally appealing species such as dogs to less appealing ones, like rats.

The school switched its pre-graduate surgery course from dogs to pigs a decade ago — then abolished the pig course, too, although it still has students cut into anesthetized pigs to practice procedures such as arterial catheterization. Although pigs have drawbacks — their anatomy isn't as similar to a human's as a dog's is — their less appealing public image makes it easier to for the school to use them for instruction.

"Sometimes," said Dr. Bryan Ogden, associate director of comparative medicine, "a pig isn't the very best model, but that is an impact of what some of the animal-rights people have done."

Researchers, he said, are advised to consider the public-relations aspects of different species of animals when designing a study. "We make sure that the (researchers) are aware of the fact that there are some political issues associated with using certain animals," he said. "And if they can possibly do so, they should stay away from that.

"We try to use animals lower on the phylogenetic tree. If you ask a question that can be answered in a dog or a pig, you might use a pig. Or if it can be answered in a mouse versus a pig, you use a mouse. And on down."

Although OHSU has never been attacked, Ogden said it had spent nearly $250,000 in recent years to provide extra security for its labs because of Animal Liberation Front arson and vandalism at other West Coast research facilities. The school, he said, began reinforcing its facilities following a 1986 ALF raid at the University of Oregon in which intruders inflicted $61,000 damage on two psychology labs and released more than 100 animals.

The raid was but one of several that had caused medical schools throughout the West to worry.

On Christmas Day in 1983, ALF militants broke into the Harbor-UCLA Medical Center's Research and Education Institute and stole 12 dogs that were being used to test heart pacemakers and study cancer and diabetes. And on Dec. 9, 1984, ALF raiders hit the City of Hope National Medical Center in Duarte, Calif., stealing 36 dogs, 11 cats, 12 rabbits, 28 mice and 13 rats. The attack ruined years of research and caused at least $400,000 in damage.

Then, on April 20, 1985, ALF intruders broke into labs at the University of California at Riverside and freed 467 research animals, including a baby monkey whose eyelids were stitched shut to test a sonar device for blind human babies. Damage, not counting the lost research, came to $683,000. Then came the University of Oregon raid, followed on April 15, 1987, by an arson attack on the University of California at Davis' veterinary diagnostic laboratory, which was then under construction. The arsonists caused $3.5 million in damage, and ALF graffiti was found on university vehicles.

In April 1989, vandals hit four science buildings at the University of Arizona, setting fires, trashing furniture and equipment, and stealing or freeing 1,231 mice, rats, rabbits,

guinea pigs and frogs, to the tune of $250,000. Graffiti credited the ALF and proclaimed that "animal reasearch (sic) is scientific fraud!"

In August 1991, ALF vandals broke into professor John Gorham's office at the Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine in Pullman, piled up 35 years of his research notes and drenched them with acid. Gorham had been working on what was then a little-known ailment, transmissible spongiform encephalopathy — mad-cow disease — which can show up in humans as Jakob-Creutzfeldt disease, a fatal brain condition. Gorham's work recently led to the first pre-clinical test for spongiform disease in sheep, a development with implications for humans. Gorham was able to reconstruct some of his work but lost irreplaceable data, setting portions of his research back two years.

ALF proudly took credit for its attack on Gorham and issued a press release threatening the semi-retired scientist and others by name.

"Davis Prieur, John Gorham, Fred Gilbert, David Shen, William Foreyt and Mark Robinson, beware," the release said. "ALF is watching and there is no place to hide. Until coyotes, and other animals live free from the torturous hand of humankind, no industry or individual is safe from the rising tide of fur animal liberation."

Rodney Coronado, who admitted complicity in the string of ALF attacks that included the raid on Gorham's offices, was released from federal prison in Arizona this year and moved briefly to Southern Oregon. About $29,000 of Coronado's legal bills was paid by the mainstream group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, according to PETA.

Yet PETA insists it is not a terrorist group. Ingrid Newkirk, its co-founder and director, characterizes assaults such as those upon Gorham as merely "direct action" and Coronado as a person of the highest ethical caliber.

OHSU's bills haven't stopped with outlays for boosted security. Until Jan. 6, 1997, the Yamhill County Animal Shelter had quietly sold 10 to 20 research dogs per month to the school for $75 each, putting the proceeds into the county-run shelter. About 150 other dogs had to be put to death each month at county expense, and officials figured that the dogs going to the medical school were no worse off.

In 1995, however, Portland People for Animal Rights raised objections. It was a quiet campaign that involved appearances at commission meetings and letters to editors. On Jan. 6, 1997, the sheriff decided to halt the sales. Now the shelter puts the dogs to death at county expense, and the medical school is forced to buy dogs elsewhere at prices as high as $650.

Terrorism has also had an effect on what the nation considers to be environmentally acceptable.

Andy Siino, a Northern California redwood logger, avoids main highways and tries to do his hauling at night ever since activists pipe-bombed three of his trucks in a storage yard in April 1995. "I could haul dead bodies and nobody would say a thing," Siino said. "But put a redwood between those stakes and, oh boy!"

Home Depot, the nation's largest home-supply chain, has started requiring redwood vendors to label boards with an independent laboratory sticker assuring customers they are not buying lumber from old-growth trees. And labels are beginning to appear on products such as doors and windows to verify that the wood was responsibly grown and harvested, Home Depot spokeswoman Amy Friend said.

Peter Nowack, marketing director of the Beaverton-based Certified Forest Products Council, which issues environmental labels, says Home Depot's decision to "go green" is putting tremendous pressure on manufacturers to furnish products that will pass environmental muster. The council's membership now stands at about 150 manufacturers and is growing exponentially, Nowack said.

Nowack has no doubt that "a certain amount of environmental pressure" led many companies to embrace green policies. But self-interest, he said, has become the chief motivator as American culture has become greener.

Sometimes, acts of eco-terrorism have produced on-the-spot results. On May 4, 1980, about 100 people confronted a 14-person Forest Service crew as it sprayed 2-4-D herbicide on brush near Takilma, in Southern Oregon's Josephine County.

Some carried knives or clubs. Spitting and throwing rocks and garbage, they surrounded the crew and a few sheriff's deputies and Forest Service law enforcement personnel until the local district ranger signed a paper promising not to spray herbicide in that area for one year.

Public opposition to the use of herbicides was so great that the Forest Service, soon after the incident, revised its spraying guidelines to severely restrict the use of 2-4-D herbicide in the Northwest.

That incident was joined by other dangerous efforts to produce instant protections for the environment.

On April 27, 1980, the Forest Service discovered a contractor's spray helicopter sabotaged on its pad at Cave Junction, not far from Takilma. Someone had cut electrical wires around the engine, sawed through fuel lines and tampered with the chopper's hydraulics.

A year later, an arsonist spread gasoline on another herbicide helicopter — this one leased to Publishers Paper Co. — and burned it to a pile of junk near Newport. Two masked women claimed responsibility in a videotape delivered anonymously to a Portland television station.

In yet other instances, eco-terrorist attacks seem barely to merit the label yet do enough damage to change a tradition and a way of life.

In March 1995 and September 1997, Bruce Kent, a cattle rancher in Fallon, Nev., lost two cow camps to arsonists. In the first incident, an old bunkhouse and a cookhouse went up in flames. Somebody threw the appliances from the cookhouse into a stream and shot up the place with a shotgun. More than two years later, Kent discovered his other cow camp burned: a 10-foot-by-50-foot trailer, two cabins, two power poles, a pump house, a horse barn and a generator house.

The damage for both incidents hit only $40,000. But the scars left behind were costlier. For years, Kent said, the camps had been left open in case anybody happened along and needed a place to stay for a day or two.

"Whoever stayed just replaced any groceries they used, and whatnot," he said, "and made sure the door was shut. That's the way it always was out here."

But no longer, he said. Calls to his answering machine were angry, anonymous attacks on cattle ranching. For him, the trust is gone.

The faceless terrorism in the American West is a modern phenomenon. But its roots go back more than a century to an uproar over an English dog.

A medical professor at the University of Norwich took the dog to class one day and showed how he could induce an epileptic fit by feeding it absinthe. The students raised a melee and forced the professor to free the dog. Queen Victoria appointed a royal commission inquiry, and Parliament in 1876 passed Britain's groundbreaking Cruelty to Animals Act.

Congress refused to pass anything similar in the United States until a Dalmatian named Pepper came along in 1966 and ran politicians up a tree. Pepper, a family pet, disappeared from her back yard near Philadelphia in July 1965, and her owners spotted her in a newspaper photo being unloaded, with two goats and several other dogs, from an animal dealer's truck in New York. Before the family could rescue Pepper, they learned she'd been euthanized following an experiment in Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx.

Rep. Joseph Y. Resnick, D-N.Y., introduced a bill to outlaw petnapping. But the bill went nowhere until Christine Stevens, president of the Animal Welfare Institute, got involved.

Stevens was a shrewd Washington insider and the wife of Roger L. Stevens, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. She handed a photograph of an emaciated lab dog to a friend, Henry Luce, publisher of Life magazine. Luce ordered a photo article, "Concentration Camps for Dogs," which ran in Life on Feb. 4, 1966. The piece generated more mail, Luce later told her, than anything the magazine had ever published.

Some 80,000 letters also flooded Congress, and soon House members were scrambling to sign Resnick's bill. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act into law on Aug. 24, 1966. Besides discouraging pet theft, the law mandated better living conditions for certain lab animals and put the U.S. Department of Agriculture in charge of enforcement.

For the next three decades, more laws and regulations followed, covering everything from endangered species to the welfare of Tennessee walking horses and the quality of road-kill that could be fed to carnivores. The government threw a protective arm around whales, polar bears, marine mammals and endangered plants, and outlawed dogfights.

The 1970s also saw the beginning of reforms in laboratory experimentation and research, due to a retired longshoreman and labor organizer named Henry Spira. The Belgian-born Spira launched what became known as the Great Mascara War after

reading Peter Singer's "Animal Liberation" and taking a course from the Australian animal-rights philosopher at the New York Museum of Natural History.

Using the rough tactics of the New York docks, Spira led hundreds of demonstrators into the museum to protest its experiments on the sexuality of kittens. After that, he took on the cosmetics industry, forcing it to give up lab tests on rabbits for the certification of eye beautifiers.

The Draize Eye Test was the gold standard for checking the irritancy of beauty products such as eyeliner, which made billions for the cosmetics industry. Technicians would put the cosmetic in the rabbits' eyes to see whether it caused injury — satisfying government safety requirements.

"Henry (Spira) knew that rabbits were cute and would get a lot of sympathy, so he began campaigning to replace the Draize test with other things," said Alan M. Goldberg, director of the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing at Johns Hopkins University.

Spira ran an ad in The New York Times in 1980 showing a rabbit with its eyes taped over, and a caption saying, "How many bunnies does Revlon blind for beauty's sake?"

As New Yorkers contemplated the shocking ad, Spira dressed in a rabbit costume and led 300 picketers in front of Revlon headquarters. Revlon and similar companies that made up the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association then made a $1 million grant to the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health to start what is now the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing.

In two decades, the center has overcome what Goldberg calls "huge resistance" in the biomedical community and replaced animal tests with cell-sample tests, computer simulations and data banks. Not all animal tests have stopped, he acknowledges, but he says the center can take credit for helping to drastically reduce the number of animals used in experiments. Now, he said, companies can use chemical data banks to check chemical irritancy "instead of a new rabbit every time."

In 1985, as animal-rights militants repeatedly struck at medical labs in the West, Congress amended the Animal Welfare Act to require researchers to pay attention to the psychological, as well as physical, needs of animals. Dogs had to be exercised. Primates had to have fresh toys.

In Hollywood, every gnat, flea or whale that appears in front of a camera is protected by something more than federal rules: The creatures have a union contract.

"I wrote a film once," recalled veteran Hollywood screenwriter Tim Metcalfe, "and one of the lead characters was supposed to have an emotional phone call, and a spider would crawl across his desk, and he was supposed to smash the spider. But they (the American Humane Association) said we couldn't kill the spider."

The director had to bring in a stunt spider, film it crawling on the desk, stop the camera, let the trainer remove the spider, substitute a prop, then roll the camera again and let the actor smack the prop.

In another film, "Kalifornia," the villain was supposed to flick a cockroach onto a sizzling grill in a restaurant. "They would not allow this, believe me," Metcalfe said. So a stunt roach was filmed crawling on the counter, then replaced by a fake roach that was duly flicked.

Hollywood's animal-welfare rules have evolved over nearly 60 years from a humane code into animal-rights regulations shaped by the new kind of activism that has turned medical labs into mini-fortresses and spawned civic votes on fur coats, as happened recently in Beverly Hills.

The original Hollywood animal code grew out of a 1939 ruckus in which the makers of "Jesse James" pushed a horse off a cliff and killed it, infuriating moviegoers. Studio moguls panicked and turned to the Hayes Office, Hollywood's self-censorship authority, which appointed the American Humane Association to oversee animal stunts. That arrangement lasted until the Hayes Office disbanded in 1966.

For 13 years, Hollywood animals were on their own until another blunder incurred the public's wrath. While shooting "Heaven's Gate," filmmakers blew up a horse with explosives. Actors joined the protest, and in 1980 the Hollywood Producers' Guild and the Screen Actors Guild inserted an animal-protection clause in their collective bargaining agreement, bringing back the American Humane Association to police moviemaking.

Then came an incident that brought animal-rights activists down on the American Humane Association and resulted in new rules that have changed radically what the world sees on movie screens.

During the filming of "Project X" in 1985 and '86, trainers used snakes to scare chimpanzees and get desired facial expressions. Bob Barker, a Hollywood game-show host and animal-rights activist, went on the air with complaints, and soon the town was filled with militants, including Gary Francione, then director of Rutgers University's Animal Rights Law Center.

The Rutgers professor accused the trainers of beating the chimps with blackjacks, as well, a charge that was never proved but which helped propel the mainstream Humane Association into writing rules that eventually outlawed even flyswatting.

Nothing, today, can be hurt onscreen. "Not even a maggot," said Ginny Barrett, who took over the Hollywood office in 1997. The reason for the inclusiveness, she said, is that "we didn't want to be mired in a continual debate as to which creatures should be protected and which shouldn't."

The rules have affected what it costs to shoot a movie. When Mel Gibson made "Braveheart," the budget included at least three $140,000 animatronic horses that could be ridden into stakes and "killed" in a battle scene. Previously, Barrett said, a producer would "take three or four old nags that are headed for the glue factory, and it would cost you a couple grand."

Barrett's office sent representatives to the sets of 820 movies last year to make sure animal rules were followed. Under the contract, she can close down a production "if we

feel there is intended mistreatment." Mistreatment can include failure to provide dogs with sufficient air conditioning.

Jules Sylvester of Los Angeles has become a millionaire in the expanding business of stunt creatures. When filmmakers were shooting "Men in Black" with Tommy Lee Jones, they hired him to help stage the biggest roach-stomping scene in the history of Hollywood — without provoking protest.

Sylvester showed up with 2,500 real roaches in an air-conditioned box, plus a few dozen dead roaches for close-ups, along with dozens of mustard packs to slip under the dead roaches for memorably revolting stomping. After the filming, Barrett's office verified that all 2,500 live roaches were rounded up, counted one at a time, then returned to their air-conditioned quarters unhurt.

"It sounds nuts," Sylvester said, "because everybody knows if you've got a real bug in your house, it's dead meat. But in Hollywood you have to draw the line because the next time it might not be just a fly. It might be a mouse. Or a rat. Or a cat. It goes up from there. So it's all or nothing."

Next: What law enforcement and Congress can — and cannot — do about eco-terrorism.

Can Sabotage Have a Place in a Democratic Community?

Experts say it tears at society; some extremists say it's how to get change

Sabotage intended to save the environment and its creatures raises fundamental questions about how terrorism fits, or does not fit, in a free society. And it raises yet more questions about America's willingness and capability to limit the assaults and protect the public.

The Oregonian chronicled 100 incidents since 1980 that inflicted nearly $43 million in damage. Lawmakers, historians, prosecutors, agency managers, philosophers — all have distinct interpretations of the mounting phenomenon. But all return to the fact that eco-terrorism is a crime that tears at society's fabric while defying easy classification and prosecution.

"It is a very serious problem," said U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore. "We are either a nation of laws or a nation of the politically-correct-of-the-moment. There are avenues for redress and reform. To resort to taking the law violently into one's hands is something a democracy can never tolerate."

But can't it?

The Pacific Northwest withstood rocky times in the 1980s as old-growth logging spurred lawsuits, protests and eco-terroristic assaults on logging equipment and, through the placing of spikes in trees, sawmills. President Clinton in 1994 signed a Northwest Forest Plan that ultimately reduced the cut on public lands by about 80

percent. Public sentiment against clear-cutting and old-growth logging is increasingly widespread.

Protests in the 1960s — some of them destructive — against American involvement in Vietnam were persistent enough to make the war politically insupportable across a broad spectrum of America.

As Oregon's Senate President, John Kitzhaber drove a car with the bumper sticker "Hayduke Lives!" — after the character in Edward Abbey's novel "The Monkey Wrench Gang," in which ecosaboteurs destroy structures they feel despoil the West. Kitzhaber, who has said he disapproves of Abbey's politics but embraces Hayduke's spirit, has pushed hard for fish habitat protections and argued this month to his fellow Northwest governors that removal of federal Snake River dams to save salmon is worth full examination.

If there is a subliminal wink of support by some citizens to changes wrought by outlaw deeds, it does nothing to simplify the problem posed by increasingly destructive and sometimes violent actions.

Bron Taylor, the Wisconsin-based author of "Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism," says conflict comes with rapid change.

"We're talking less than two decades in which concern for biological diversity and fear that we might be threatening the very life-support systems upon which we depend has been catapulted into public consciousness," he said. "Ideas that are being floated, such as dam dismantling, would have been unheard of a few decades ago. All of this is in the wake of increasing public recognition that it's not just extremist voices who are speaking about a global human-caused extinction crisis."

John Pock, a Reed College sociologist, takes an even longer view. He says eco-terrorism falls within a religious tradition of protesting against the establishment from a stance of moral superiority.

Believing they were right, Martin Luther and John Calvin "consistently violated not only the secular law but ecclesiastical law, which was much worse," Pock said. Modern society, he said, would have never evolved without the Protestant revolution.

But eco-terrorism as a morally driven, righteous assault is precisely what scares David Schwendiman, an assistant U.S. attorney in Salt Lake City who this year successfully prosecuted two extremists for firebombing a Utah mink-food plant. He says eco-terrorists promise no breakthroughs to society, only grave threat.

"Hayduke ... that's where it all comes from," he said. "In literature and fiction, it's entertaining. In real life, it's damaging. It's an act against the public order... These are organized, programmatic, ideological acts of consummate violence that are very dangerous. If you let one group use force to impose its will upon everybody else, that just throws democracy out the window."

Smith says the perpetrators should be put away.

"I fear we're not aggressively pursuing eco-terrorists in the same way we pursue abortion bombers," he said. "They're both criminals, and both deserve vigorous prosecution and punishment."

The trouble is in finding them. The Oregonian's examination of eco-terrorism shows a defining pattern of anonymity among perpetrators that law enforcement agencies often find impossible to penetrate.

David Tubbs, special agent in charge of the Salt Lake City region of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, is the agency's former national chief of counterterrorism, with experience in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and 1996 Montana Freemen standoff. He cites the Animal Liberation Front, on whose behalf Rodney Coronado launched a number of arsons, as a model of "invisibility."

ALF, Tubbs said, is "not a formed group like you know who the head is, who the officers are, who the constituents are." Attempting to open a case against ALF, he said, is "like trying to grab Jell-O."

Other federal agencies have had similar experiences.

The U.S. Forest Service, whose vast landholdings in the West are often the stage for ecoterroristic crimes, infuriated U.S. Rep. Helen Chenoweth on May 18 at a congressional hearing she conducted on eco-terrorism. The agency and others, it seemed, were unwilling to call ecoterrorism a sufficiently documented and serious public issue.

In response to Chenoweth's request for a report on the agency's efforts to combat eco-terrorism, William Wasley, the Forest Service's law enforcement chief, issued a one-page reply playing down the problem — something the Idaho Republican declared "an insult" to her subcommittee.

Chenoweth, who has proposed making eco-terrorism a federal crime, said in a later interview: "Environmental extremists have time and time again damaged the property of farmers, ranchers, miners, loggers, manufacturers and homeowners. I consider that a serious problem.

"You cannot solve the problem solely through legislation. We need to get much more serious in investigating these crimes and prosecuting individuals who commit them."

Classifying the crimes is the first of many challenges facing law enforcement.

When someone breaks into a medical research laboratory and steals or destroys records, the crime is classified as a burglary, not an animal protest. A toppled power line becomes a property crime, not a statement against development in pristine wilderness.

"An arson goes into the arson file," said Lt. Dave Eddy, who investigates extremist crimes for the Michigan State Police. "If you ask me about eco-crime, I can't show you a database."

Nearly all U.S. law agencies record crimes the same way, without regard to motive, to fit FBI definitions in the bureau's annual Uniform Crime Reports. As a result, no law agency has a definitive record of how much eco-terrorism is really going on.

"We have animal-rights groups that violate the law, and we know they're out there," said John Russell, spokesman for the U.S. Department of Justice. "But building a

credible case is difficult. You have to have intention and probable cause. Evidence and witnesses are hard to come by."

Asked why crimes in the name of the environment or animals had been so difficult to track and prosecute, Schwendiman, the assistant U.S. attorney, was blunt:

"There's an ideology that makes it very difficult ... to get (suspects) to provide information. They operate in very small units. They operate only with people that they believe they can trust implicitly. They operate with people who are accomplices in the same crime — who would be punished at the same level as anybody else involved in the crime.

"They're very practiced at deception. They wear shoes that are bigger than their feet. They wear gloves. They wear clothing that no one would be able to describe if they had to, it's so common. They dispose of the clothing. They wear ski masks. They switch license plates, borrow cars that can't be identified. They simply strive to leave no trace."

But Schwendiman also says he believes that the government's difficulty in addressing ecoterrorism is compounded by weak federal laws and an unwillingness by the FBI to get more involved.

The toughest federal code on the books addresses terrorism, and it requires prosecutors to prove a plot by a group to influence others or overthrow the government. That's hard to do. No eco-terrorist network or group has yet been targeted and charged in such a way; prosecutors instead go after individuals on narrower charges that describe the crime.

"I personally would find no need to rely on the terrorism statute when other statutes would suffice," said Stephen Peifer, an assistant U.S. attorney in Portland. "You try to pick statutes with elements that are easier to prove without getting bogged down in a legal wrangle." He cites, for example, arson statutes as "very straightforward."

One federal law employed against eco-terrorists is the Animal Enterprise Protection Act, passed in 1992. It makes it an offense, punishable by up to a year in prison, to physically disrupt an animal enterprise and cause the owners to lose $10,000 or more. And it provides penalties of up to life imprisonment for killing someone.

But this law is criticized as inadequate.

Sens. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, and Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., are pushing to toughen the statute's prison time from one to five years for the lesser offenses.

And it's yet another reason Schwendiman feels the FBI lags behind.

"The FBI's not going to put a lot of effort into a misdemeanor violation, because they're not a misdemeanor outfit — they're a felony outfit," he said.

The FBI's Tubbs strongly disputes Schwendiman's assessment of his agency's commitment to solving eco-terrorist crimes. He says the FBI, owing to the loose structure of eco-terroristic groups, is forced to investigate individuals — but that the individuals can be quite elusive.

"In Vail, Colorado, we were very involved with ATF (the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) on that case," he said. "But you have to have something more than ghosts to go after."

No arrests have been made in the $12 million Vail arson, which occurred on Forest Service property and was claimed by the Earth Liberation Front.

But the incident had impact within the FBI.

The agency's director, Louis Freeh, had told the European media in 1998 that eco-terrorism wasn't on his "radar screen." But in February of this year, four months after Vail, amid passionate concern by Hatch and other senators, Freeh testified to a Senate subcommittee that "the most recognizable singleissue terrorists at the present time are those involved in the violent animalrights, anti-abortion and environmental-protection movements."

Curiously, a year before Freeh publicly dismissed eco-terrorism and well before the Vail arson, the FBI's Domestic Terrorism Analysis Unit generated an internal report on terrorism waged to protect animals. Titled "The Animal Liberation Front: Tactics, Trends and Patterns of NationalRegional Networking," the 1997 report concluded that ALF was posing a serious and escalating problem, Schwendiman said.

The FBI's terrorism unit declined The Oregonian's request for an interview.

Democratic Congressman Peter DeFazio may represent Oregon's most environmentally charged and sensitive constituency. His district encompasses portions of national forests outside Eugene where logging was a mainstay, as well as the University of Oregon community in Eugene, a hotbed of environmental activism.

Yet DeFazio finds no gray area when it comes to eco-terrorism — he gives no wink of quiet support or tolerance.

"It's indefensible," he said. "To commit destructive terrorist acts, even for the best cause, is not acceptable to society. We have other ways of bringing about change, through legislation, litigation, protest — peaceful protest — effective organizing."

The Australian ethicist Peter Singer, whose 1975 book, "Animal Liberation," launched the animal-rights movement, reaches a like conclusion:

I think our cause is going to win because we're right, because we have the moral high ground," he said from his office at Princeton University. "Those who misguidedly use violence to achieve their end are undermining the cause. I can understand their impatience, but you can only succeed by persuading a majority of the people, in the long run."

But some environmental extremists say democracy just isn't democratic enough — that their views go unrepresented or, at best, take too long to sink in and halt what they view as irreversible damage to the natural world. And they say they are incited by police, who have in recent years peppersprayed peaceful protesters; and by the death last year of Earth First! activist David Chain, who was crushed when a California logger felled a tree.

Jonathan Paul, a veteran saboteur in Southern Oregon who advocates the use of arson to inflict damage to property, told The Oregonian he prefers sabotage because,

among other things, America's legal system fails to produce environmental protections fast enough.

Tim VerHey, the assistant U.S. attorney who successfully prosecuted Rodney Coronado for a historic string of eco-terrorist crimes across the American West, wonders whether democracy is sufficiently inclusive.

"This is just my personal opinion, as a citizen," he said. "I think people are getting a sense that nobody is listening to them and they don't have any control over our government or any decisions that are being made. And they get frustrated and decide to take things into their own hands and try to change it, if they can, by force."

Michelle Arciaga, a Salt Lake City gang specialist with an interest in those drawn to ecoterrorism, says she likens young people today to those from the 1960s.

"The kids in the '90s, they're very passionate, they want a cause," she said. "There's no place for them in politics. They want something they can make a difference in, and this is one of those things that offers this to kids. Groups like ALF and the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals are saying to young people: 'Go do something. Just do it. Get involved.' "

She cites the Internet as playing a key role in broadening the discussion among young people — and also in offering lessons on how to raid a fur comparry, how to build a milk-jug firebomb.

The trend since 1990 toward escalation goes as officially unrecorded as eco-terrorism itself and, for the most part, undiscussed.

But Jeffrey Simon, a former Rand Corp. terrorism specialist who runs his own consulting firm, Political Risk Assessment Co., in Santa Monica, Calif., says The Oregonian's finding that crimes have escalated in severity and value fits a pattern.

"In any terrorist group, there's this tendency to escalate," he said. Terrorists are frustrated if they think the public isn't attentive enough, "so there's an incentive to try something different," he said.

That's precisely what scares James N. Damitio, a U.S. Forest Service special agent in the Siuslaw National Forest in Southern Oregon.

"The actions have been spread over a long period of time and over a wide area," he said. "Perhaps we have had, for the most part, local impacts. When you're not dealing with large losses, you don't get large news coverage — and you don't get large attention. If you don't get large attention, you don't get your message out."

Damitic, now worries that unchecked sabotage will kill someone.

"I think we've come very close to that line and we will cross that line unless we deal with this problem," he said.

Although eco-terrorism goes officially unrecorded, some think it surpasses The Oregonian's finding of 100 key incidents in the American West since 1980.

G. Davidson Smith, a counterterrorism specialist with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, says numerous eco-terrorist strikes are covered up by vIctims.

"They don't want copycat activities," he said. "They don't want the attackers to know they were successful or that the attack bothered them."

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The Oregonian. <landrights.org/ALRA.oregon.eco-terrorism.htm>
Part 1. The Violence: Eco-terrorists wage war in the West, and Oregon is at the center of it. (9/26/99)
Part 2. The Saboteurs: Who they are and why they act outside the law. (9/27/99)
Part 3. The Effects: Damages and sustained threat have changed life in the United States. (9/28/99)
Part 4. The Debate: Law enforcement and government leaders worry about escalation. (9/29/99)