



## Agent takes forestry to lofty heights Bondi divides time among innovation, leadership and public relations

Thursday, March 04, 2010 9:57 AM

By JOHN SCHMITZ



John Schmitz/For the Capital Press

*Mike Bondi is known as the force behind the annual Clackamas County Tree School, held each March near Oregon City, Ore., on the Clackamas Community College campus. The event has grown from 125 attendees and 16 classes to close to 600 attendees and 68 classes.*

There's a lot more to Mike Bondi than what appears on his orange-and-black business card. In addition to being an Oregon State University forestry and Christmas tree extension agent and the staff chair for OSU's Clackamas County Extension office, the 58-year-old Minnesota native has played a dominant role in the state's progressive forestry sector.

He's also largely responsible for saving OSU Extension in his county. Bondi is perhaps best known today for being the force behind the annual Clackamas County Tree School, held each March near Oregon City, Ore., on the **Clackamas Community College** campus.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the March 20 school, which began at Estacada High School, has grown from 125 attendees and 16 classes that first year to close to 600 attendees and 68 classes today.

Bondi was also the co-founder in 1990 of a non-profit, all-volunteer group called Forests Forever Inc., which owns and manages the 140-acre Hopkins Demonstration Forest near Beaver Creek, Ore.

The property, which was bequeathed to the group by one of Bondi's extension forestry clients, is used to present Tree School field classes.

"It's the only thing like it in the United States, in terms of its structure and how it's put together and what we try to accomplish," Bondi said of the school.

Bondi's innovations go beyond the school. For several years off and on Bondi and fellow OSU Extension forestry agent Rick Fletcher, OSU Extension staff chair for Benton County, have taken groups of forestry-minded people on two- to three-week international forestry study tours.

"We use the extension model of education, but we've taken it beyond the boundaries of our counties and state. We select places in the world where we think the practice of forestry is being done at a high level and places where we can learn," Bondi said.

"We select areas of the world (such as New Zealand, Scandinavia and Japan) where they are intensively managing their forests, where the technological comparisons would be comparable to what we have here in the Pacific Northwest. For a while the globe-trotting foresters visited different lands every other year.

"Then, unfortunately, Rick and I have become consumed by all of the administrative assignments we now have," he said. "We're thinking, though, maybe it's time to focus attention back to that need."

Another feather in Bondi's cap is the leading role he played in getting out the victorious vote that enabled Clackamas County to be accorded 4-H and extension service district status during recent local elections. The move dedicates property taxes to the district and assures continual funding of support staff and office operations.

Bondi also promotes Christmas trees. For the last three years he's hopped a plane to California to promote the virtues of Pacific Northwest-grown Christmas trees in major media there.

Bondi earned a bachelor's degree in forestry management at Iowa State University before traveling to New Zealand under a Fulbright Scholarship to add a master's degree.

He said the biggest changes he's seen since joining OSU have been the emergence of the global marketplace, to include increasing Oregon exports,

and expanding markets for small woodlands timber due to logging restrictions on federal lands.

Mike Bondi

Age: 58

Hometown: Edina, Minn.

Marital status: Married 35 years; wife, Connie; son, Aaron.

Degrees: Bachelor of science in forest management, Iowa State University; master of science University of Canterbury, New Zealand, in forest science

Hobbies: Gardening, stream and lake fishing