

## FFA chapter plants a million tree seedlings

ELMA, WASH. — About 200 teenagers in Elma, Wash., are responding this summer to an unusual request: Wanted — Hard workers. No pay, but great future benefits.

The students, members of the local Future Farmers of America chapter, are reforesting more than 1,200 acres of timberland in an effort to restore the area's primary

natural resource.

"Nearly half the work force of this area is involved in forestry," said Clarence Pearson, Elma High School vocational agriculture teacher and FFA advisor.

"So the work these students complete today could enhance their livelihoods as adults."

Project Timber is part of the national FFA's Building Our American Communities (BOAC)

program. Through the BOAC program, the FFA seeks to improve small and rural communities while building youth leadership.

Last year, the Elma FFA chapter worked more than 18,000 hours with nearby timber companies and small woodland owners, Pearson said. This year, they've already planted nearly one million seedlings.

With seedlings from timber companies and the state of Washington, the FFA advisor estimated the project is already valued at nearly \$300,000. That doesn't include labor, or the value of the forests at maturity.

Community adults also help out by transporting students to woodland sites and assisting as supervisors.

Project Timber began several years ago when local timber companies and individuals called on the FFA chapter for assistance, Pearson said.

"We need more wood all the time," he explained. "We export a lot of logs to Japan. We're also working to grow valuable softwoods, such as Douglas firs, which supply most of the plywood and lumber for the housing and construction industries."

The scientific renewal of forests doesn't stop with large companies, however.

"Though most people believe that large companies own all the timber, nearly 60 percent is owned by individuals," Pearson said. We

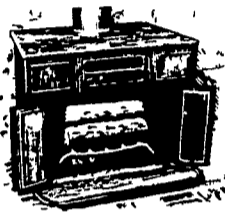
include them in the renewal plan because they are less likely to know how to reforest an area scientifically."

So, while other high school students are vacationing this summer, FFA members in this Northwest community will be at work.

"Reforestation is a year-round project," Pearson said. "After planting, there is the need for animal control, then, more clearing of the land to plant more trees."



Tree seedling is planted by member of FFA chapter in Elma, Wash. as part of BOAC project that features reforesting of some 1,200 acres of timberland with a million seedlings.



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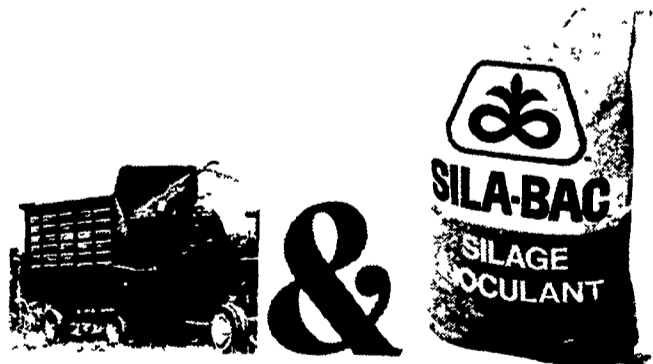
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