



# **Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books)**

*Nancy Langston*

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Across the inland West, forests that once seemed like paradise have turned into an ecological nightmare. Fires, insect epidemics, and disease now threaten millions of acres of once-bountiful forests. Yet no one can agree what went wrong. Was it too much management? or not enough? that forced the forests of the inland West to the verge of collapse? Is the solution more logging, or no logging at all? In this gripping work of scientific and historical detection, Nancy Langston unravels the disturbing history of what went wrong with the western forests, despite the best intentions of those involved.

Focusing on the Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington, she explores how the complex landscapes that so impressed settlers in the nineteenth century became an ecological disaster in the late twentieth. Federal foresters, intent on using their scientific training to stop exploitation and waste, suppressed light fires in the ponderosa pinelands. Hoping to save the forests, they could not foresee that their policies would instead destroy what they loved. When light fires were kept out, a series of ecological changes began. Firs grew thickly in forests once dominated by ponderosa pines, and when droughts hit, those firs succumbed to insects, diseases, and eventually catastrophic fires.

Nancy Langston combines remarkable skills as both scientist and writer of history to tell this story. Her ability to understand and bring to life the complex biological processes of the forest is matched by her grasp of the human forces at work—from Indians, white settlers, missionaries, fur trappers, cattle ranchers, sheep herders, and railroad builders to timber industry and federal forestry managers.

The book will be of interest to a wide audience of environmentalists, historians, ecologists, foresters, ranchers, and loggers—and all people who want to understand the changing lands of the West.

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