

# Protesters call trimming root of evil

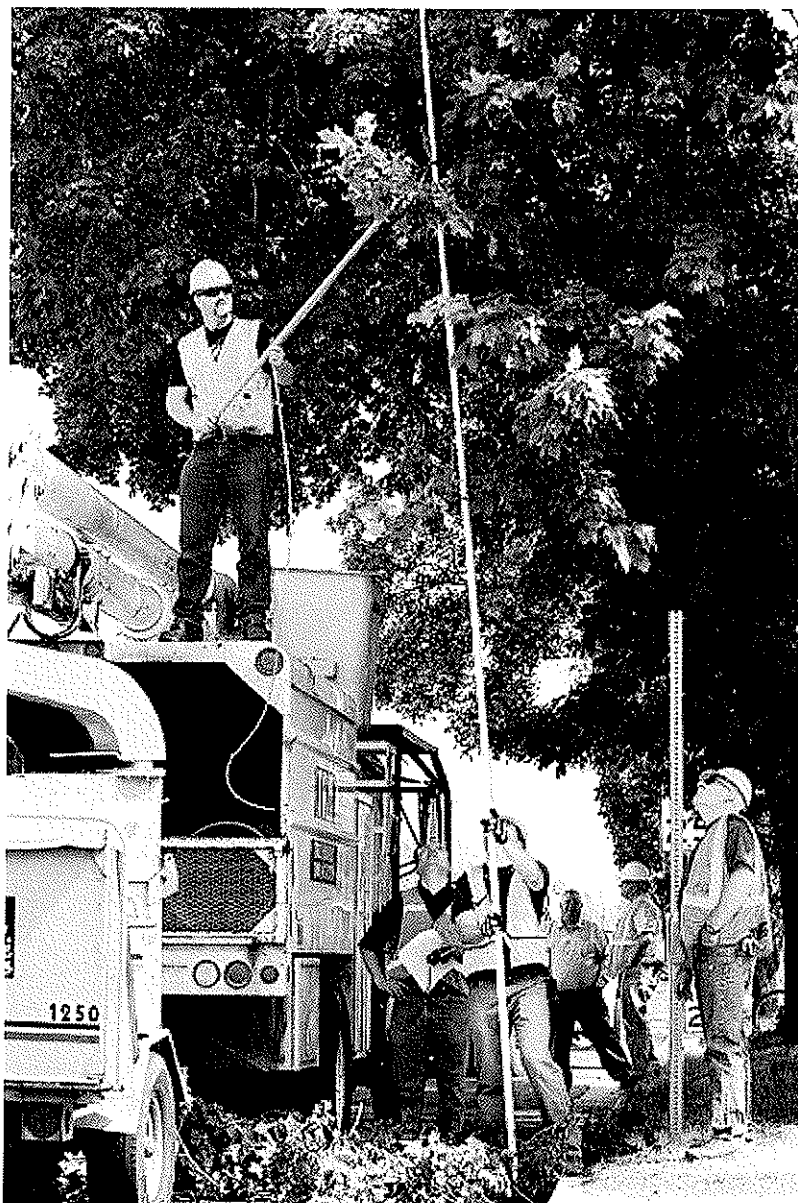
Project to make way for oil refinery equipment traveling on US 95

By Brandon Macz Daily News Staff Writer

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Geoff Crimmins/Daily News



**Geoff Crimmins/Daily News**

Moscow Parks and Recreation staff and T.R.E. Tree Services were shadowed Monday by protesters condemning the trimming of 18 trees along Washington Street to make room for the transport of two loads of refinery equipment by Imperial Oil/ExxonMobil up U.S. Highway 95 and Interstate 90 to its Kearl Oil Sands Project in Alberta, Canada.

T.R.E., contracting with the oil company, was granted the tree trimming permit Friday by Parks and Recreation, which oversaw the work that started at 9 a.m. Monday and finished around 1:20 p.m.

A small number of protesters, many affiliated with the grassroots conservation group Wild Idaho Rising Tide, came out to protest the city's allowance of the trimming, which they said would encourage many more oversized loads to make their way to the sands project, which they see as a pending ecological disaster, using Moscow as an industrial corridor.

Helen Yost, with Wild Idaho, said the trimming was just one example of "corporate privilege over the public good," and the protest was necessary on a larger scale to express

people's dissatisfaction with the oil sands project, which she said would cause tons of pollutants to be expelled into the environment.

"We wouldn't be able to live with ourselves, essentially," she said. "We're trying to stay out of the way, but also make a point to our fellow citizens."

But with traffic limited on Washington Street during the trimming and protesters mounted on the other side of the project, Parks and Recreation director Dwight Curtis said he felt it was necessary to call Moscow Police out to the site.

"It was getting kind of crowded," he said. "We just thought we'd get a (police) presence."

Moscow Police Lt. Paul Kwiatkowski said officers responded to the call to make sure no one got in the way of the trimming, but also to ensure safety for everyone near where branches were falling.

"The sidewalk being as dangerous as it is, we wanted to make it safe for everybody. We got a call saying there was some difficulty here," he said, as a tree was being trimmed across the street from Gritman Medical Center. "It's going to be a long day. We'll leave when we think it's safe and everybody's being socially acceptable."

Protester Greg Freistadt said the trimming was just another representation of how Moscow was essentially a city in the way of the oil company's goal of shipping its refining equipment through Idaho, into Montana and finally to Alberta.

"Somebody's got to stand up against this. It's just too bad that the public's input and interests don't seem to matter much," he said, referring to previous public hearings hosted by the city over the passage of the two, now-permitted oversized loads through Moscow. "It's almost just put on for a show."

Andee Chosch-Pittenger said she felt the trimming was being done in a way that went against the original purpose of their planting on Washington Street, which was to beautify the area, and the branches were only being cut on the side facing the street creating an imbalance.

"By trimming one side, they are accelerating the growth on one side," she said. "If they trimmed the trees like that for me, I wouldn't pay them. As far as I'm concerned, the trees are being violated."

Curtis said half a cubic yard of mulch was produced by the trimming project - to be used at T.R.E.'s discretion - and "things went very smoothly. There were no incidents."

While the oil company could have moved its two loads as early as Monday, Imperial Oil spokesman Pius Rolheiser said the company will need to send its revised plan to ITD later this week, as well as finalize a contract with the Idaho State Police to escort the loads from the Port of Lewiston to the Montana border. Capt. Lonnie Richardson with

ISP's Region 2 in Lewiston said the agency's prior obligations could prevent staff for the loads from becoming available for two to three weeks.

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