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## [USA: Genetically engineered trees destroyed at Oregon State University](#)

In mid-March, 2001 concerned Oregon State University (OSU) students and alumni targeted three GE test sites where Poplar and Cottonwood trees were being grown by Steve Strauss, a forestry professor at Oregon State University and the founder of the Tree Genetic Engineering Research Cooperative.

According to an open letter sent after the action to professor Straus, the test plots "at these places were independently assessed and found to be a dangerous experiment of unknown genetic consequences".

The letter continues saying: "We ringbarked or cut down 90% of your trees at OSU's site at the Peavey Arboretum. At OSU's tract near Half Moon Bend of the Willamette River we eliminated 60% of the trees. Lastly, every tree was cut down in one test plot at OSU's Agricultural Experiment Station in Klamath Falls. In all, over 1200 of your GE research trees were destroyed."

Oregon State University is the number one university in the world for GE tree research. Among other studies, OSU experiments with engineering Monsanto's Roundup Ready herbicide into the cells of poplar trees.

This action by the OSU students comes just weeks after the ELF burned a research cotton gin in Visalia, California. Since November 1998 there have been over 40 anti-genetic direct actions in North America. The direct actionists maintain that biotechnology is completely unnecessary and is being developed at the expense of human and ecological health solely to increase the profits of large multinational corporations.

Concerning the questions about hybrids in general, the mass replacement of native forests with ecologically unstable monoculture hybrid tree farms is defined as a gamble with terrifying consequences. The only selection traits for what to breed into these hybrids are economical ones, so therefore the non-GE hybrid tree farms are considered to be an ecological threat.

In this respect, the open letter says: "Some of the trees we targeted may have been hybrids and not technically GE. However, your Tree Genetic Engineering Research Cooperative (TGERC) focuses on hybrid poplars as its method for delivering modified genes into its frankentrees. All of the program's research on the Populus genus is used for the goal of patenting and commercializing GE trees."

Therefore, "your exploits with TGERC are socially and environmentally unacceptable. You claim to be undertaking basic independent studies to address environmental concerns, but that claim is belied by the millions of dollars

your program receives from huge timber corporations to develop fast growing supertrees for them."

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