

BLACK HILLS JOURNAL

Janklow will pursue forest suit

By Denise Ross
Journal Staff Writer

Gov. Bill Janklow said Monday that he is pursuing his promised lawsuit against the U.S. Forest Service, even though a new agreement was reached to thin the Beaver Park area.

"Beaver Park is just one little thing. This is a big forest," Janklow said.

Janklow vowed in February that he would sue the federal government over mismanagement of the forest after a series of devastating forest fires in the Southern Black Hills.

On Monday, parties to a lawsuit reached an agreement that would allow the Forest Service to thin trees in Beaver Park in hopes of preventing or slowing a fire in the Northern Hills.

"This forest couldn't be in worse shape," Janklow told the meeting of foresters at the **Western Forestry Leadership Coalition** Monday. "The southern part of it is gone. When we have the right kind of fire, they're going to burn up the rest of the forest, one piece at a time. Our people are going to have to practice running for their lives."

Janklow railed against what he describes as politically-driven forest management rather than scientific decision-making.

"Political decisions are made on the basis of power and might not on any logic," he said. "Nobody calls this a healthy forest. It's only beautiful from a distance. I

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blame the political process."

He offered a hint at his legal approach. Janklow said he planned to put foresters under oath and ask them whether they were allowed to make their own forest-management decision or were ordered to make decisions by Washington politicians.

He talked about poor air quality and its effects on developing lungs of babies and adults with emphysema or



Steve McEnroe/Journal staff

South Dakota Gov. Bill Janklow takes a question Monday from the audience at the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition spring meeting in Rapid City.

asthma.

"My grandchildren are as important as goshawks and are entitled to the same protection as things that fly," Janklow said.

The governors said he was not worried about running out of time before he leaves office at the end of the year. He is amassing documentation to support his case so that once it is filed, it can "proceed without delay," he said.

Black Hills National Forest Supervisor John Twiss said he agreed with Janklow's observation that political in-

fluence is overtaking established forestry practices.

"There is no question that today there is far more political influence than in the earlier part of my career," Twiss said. "It probably never has reached right down to the ranger on the ground like it does today."

He said work by Sen. Tom Dashcle, D-S.D., to set up a local forestry-advisory committee and a philosophy within the Bush administration to bring decision-making back to the local level have the potential to keep the political influence at bay.