
HUMAN USES

Characterization

Major Human Uses in the South Fork Coos Watershed:

- ? Industrial forestry - timber production.
- ? Federal forest lands are managed following an ecosystem management philosophy.
- ? Agriculture and rural residential are the dominant uses on the bottom lands and the adjacent uplands in Daniels Creek, Coos Mouth and Dellwood Subwatersheds. Agricultural pursuits include dairy farming, keeping horses, and gardens.
- ? Recreational activities include recreational driving, camping, hunting, picnicking, hiking, motorized trail riding, boat and shoreline fishing, and floating the river via non-motorized boats and inner tubes.
- ? Special forest products collection for commercial and personal use.
- ? The river was a major transportation route. River boats made scheduled trips up Coos River until the 1940s, and the river was used for water transport of logs from Dellwood to the bay until the 1980s.

Tribal Uses and Treaty Rights: A reconstruction of the territories and villages in the vicinity indicates that in about 1830 (just prior to the cultural disruption caused by epidemic diseases) the entire South Fork Coos Watershed was occupied by the Hanis Coos tribe (Zenk 1990). Today, the Hanis Coos, along with other nearby aboriginal groups, are members of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians (CTCLUSI).

There are no treaties in force between the United State and the CTCLUSI. Joel Palmer, a duly authorized representative of the U.S. government, and the leaders of many coastal tribes signed the “Coast Treaty of 1855,” which ceded all land in Oregon west of the Coast Range crest to the U.S. The U.S. Senate chose not to ratify this treaty and so it has no legal standing today. These tribes have been treated as a confederacy since their participation in the treaty negotiations of 1855.

The treaties negotiated by Joel Palmer, including the Coast Treaty, did not specify that the Indians retained their aboriginal rights to hunt, fish and gather on the ceded lands, as did the later treaties concluded by Gov. Stevens with Indian Tribes in Western Washington. As well, the 1984 CTCLUSI restoration act (P.L. 98-481) specifically states that it “shall not grant or restore” any of these rights.

In 1993 the Coos Bay BLM District and the CTCLUSI signed a “Memorandum of Understanding” for coordination on management issues in the area of tribal interest. The CTCLUSI identified the entire South Fork Coos Watershed as within this area of interest.

As a key component of their self-sufficiency plan, the CTCLUSI is working to restore a “tribal forest land base,” which is proposed to involve a federal (and possibly federal/private) land transfer. It is not known if any land in this Watershed will be part of any future proposed land transfers.

The Tioga Appendix: Human Uses of the Tioga Creek Subwatershed contains discussion on human use specific to the Tioga Creek Subwatershed, much of which has general applicability to other forested areas in the Watershed. That appendix also contain a Historic Regional Trends section that proves a regional context for early historical events.

Current Conditions

Concerns about endangered species, water quality, forest practices, and the general health of our natural resources has prompted cooperative efforts among private, state and federal entities to work together for improvement of these concerns in Oregon and nationally. Local programs include the Coos Watershed

Association, the federally sponsored “Jobs in the Woods,” the State fish hatchery program called “Salmon and Trout Enhancement Project,” and Citizen Advisory Committees for local land use planning.

The private industrial land owners with a large acreage in the Watershed are Weyerhaeuser and Menasha. Other wood products companies owning land inside the Watershed are Roseburg Lumber, Lone Rock, Seneca, and Georgia-Pacific. The BLM is the major public land managing agency in the Watershed. Coos County manages a block of forest land in Daniels Creek. Weyerhaeuser, Menasha, the BLM and the County Forest, along with numerous small landowners work in cooperation with ODFW and the Coos Watershed Association to provide wildlife and fish habitat. Weyerhaeuser, through a habitat conservation plan, is committed to developing a forest landscape conducive to the dispersal of juvenile spotted owls in the shortest time practical (Beak Consultants Inc. 1994).

Homes are scattered along the Coos River and Daniels Creek hillsides and bottomland at the western end of the Watershed. Estimated population is about 500 people. The cities of North Bend and Coos Bay, with a combined population of over 25,000, are within ten miles of the western boundary. Agricultural activities include dairy farming, small scale ranching, hobby farms, and vegetable raising for home use. The infrastructure for homes includes electricity, private septic sewage systems, and spring fed or gravity flow water sources. The many springs in the area of Daniels Creek allow many of the individual homes to utilize a spring. The county maintained roads provide access all year around. Myrtle Tree County Boat Ramp is located along the South Coos River County Road, just upstream from Daniels Creek. Myrtle Tree Boat Ramp is one of the county’s busiest during the fall, with folks fishing for chinook salmon, shad and striped bass.

We have no employment or business trend statistics specific to the South Fork Coos Watershed. However, economic trends inside the watershed can be inferred from trends for nearby communities, the county, and region. The Oregon Labor Market Information System web site <http://www.olmis.org> has links to regional economic and workforce trends. The regional economic report addressing economic workforce conditions and trends for the Coos/ Curry Region is accessible from the following web page: <http://olmis.emp.state.or.us/olmisj/OlmisZine?zineid=0000010> . The following is from the December 15, 1999 report for Coos County:

- Jobs in the timber and fishing industries have declined sharply in the last 20 years.
- Manufacturing jobs have fallen substantially in the last 10 years.
- Non-manufacturing jobs have risen in the last 10 years.
- The 1999 jobless rate for Coos County averaged 8.7%. Coos County unemployment rates have been among the highest in the state for the last decade often averaging in the 9-10% range.
- Unemployment may average less than 7% in 2000.
- Transfer payments (for example Social Security, Medicare) account for 23% of the county income compared to 17% state wide.
- The 1998 per capita income for Coos County was \$21,332 compared to \$25,912 state wide.

The Oregon Economic & Community Development Department has several web pages profiling the Southwest Oregon Region and Coos County:

- Overview of the Southwest Oregon Region - <http://www.econ.state.or.us/swres.htm>
- Coos County Economic Indicators - <http://www.econ.state.or.us/SWCEICOO.HTM>
- Links to other community profiles in the county and region - <http://www.econ.state.or.us/comprof.htm>
- The Oregon Labor Market information for Coos County is accessible through the Oregon Employment Department web page - http://www.olmis.org/olmis/olmtest.reg_output?p_areacode=000007

Recreational Use: The Burnt Mountain Cabin Recreation Site is situated on the divide between the South Fork Coos and the East Fork Coquille Watersheds with most of the recreation site on the East Fork

Coquille side of the divide. The site covers 40 acres (approximately 2 acres are developed) in section 13, T.27s.,R.10W., Will. Mer. The RMP/ROD includes a proposal to develop the Tioga Creek Recreation Site near the Tioga Creek stream gauge. However, that proposed site was inundated by the 1996 flood indicating that any future improvements there would be at risk of flood damage. Tioga Creek is a popular area for dispersed camping. Sites commonly used for dispersed camping are, quarries, rock stock pile sites, landings and short spurs that were built to access Tioga and other creeks.

The Burnt Mountain-Middle Creek Tie Road (26-10-35.2) and the Burnt Mountain Road (27-11-12.0), which are on the south and southwest boundaries of the Tioga Creek Subwatershed, are part of the “Growing Forest Tour” route. These two roads are also the main access route to the Dornier Fir trailhead, which is in East Fork Coquille Watershed, from the west. These and the other paved roads in the Watershed are regularly used for recreational driving and occasionally for cycling¹.

The level of past and current recreational use in the Tioga Creek/ Burnt Mountain Road area has not be documented, however, casual observation suggests that dispersed camping and day use is increasing. This prompted the RMP/ROD proposal to prepare a “Tioga Basin Recreation Plan.” While there is also an apparent increased use of developed camp sites during the last 20-years, the nearby developed rec sites rarely fill up except during elk season. Future ground disturbing activities on federal lands will be evaluated with respect to meeting the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, Survey and Manage Species and Habitats, and any special designations through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance process.

Weyerhaeuser allows recreational use in summer on weekends and during hunting season on the Millicoma Tree Farm. North Pacific Security Company issues vehicle passes for public use on Weyerhaeuser lands. Day use includes picnics, playing and swimming in the river, fishing, walking, driving for pleasure, wildlife and nature appreciation. Camping permits are issued for hunting season and during weekends in summer. The Dellwood Mainline Road is the only road open to the public. Side roads are closed to public use. Weyerhaeuser may close all its lands to the public if active logging or hauling is occurring or if fire danger is high. The security company estimates they issue 1,000 vehicle passes annually, with 3.5 people per vehicle or about 3,500 visitors. Other private land owners also allow dispersed recreation. There are no large, developed recreation areas on private timber lands and none planned.

Reference Conditions

Humans have interacted with, and consequently altered, the ecosystem for several thousand years. Human activities varied over time, producing different “reference conditions,” depending on the period of time examined. Our knowledge of past activities is limited, especially in periods prior to Euro-American settlement. It certainly appears that prehistoric human uses were relatively stable for long periods of time, and the greatest changes in human use have occurred during the last 140 years.

Prehistoric Resource Use: The Coos made extensive use of the tidal flats. They gathered numerous mollusks and crustaceans, especially during the late winter/early spring minus tides. Smelt also was an important food source obtained from some ocean beaches. In late spring (May/June) the able-bodied tribal members left their coastal/estuary winter villages for the upper reaches of Coos Bay and the limit of tidewater along the Coos River, where they obtained eels and the spring anadromous fish run. Eels were trapped. Salmon also were trapped, speared and hooked. Many were smoked and dried for later use. During the summer months, fishing and gathering were the most important activities. The streams

¹ Burnt Mountain Road east of the turn off to the Dornier Fir (27-11-12.0 and 28-8-16.0); Burnt Ridge Road (26-9-31.0 and 27-9-24.0); Tioga Tie Road (26-10-36.0), and Tioga Creek Road (25-11-28.0)

and estuaries provided various non-anadromous fish throughout the summer. Camas and other root crops were gathered, both from meadows along the coast and inland (particularly Camas Valley). Many of these resources also were dried and stored for future use. With the abundance of other resources, there was no necessity to actively hunt deer or elk (Beckham and Minor 1980). Instead, the Coos caught most of their elk in deadfalls. These traps were large pits, some nearly ten feet deep, with pointed stakes extending upwards from their bottom. They were dug along game trails and carefully camouflaged. Since the creation of these pit traps would have been a relatively time-consuming activity, it seems likely that they would be reused, so that this trapping activity would tend to reoccur in the same place every year. This suggests that land mammal hunting did not normally involve mobile hunting parties stalking or ambushing game anywhere throughout vast sections of forest (Beckham and Minor 1980). More likely, they repeatedly visited the same series of pit locations to see what “dropped in”, much as modern trappers check their trap lines. In the fall, the anadromous fish runs were again available. As well, numerous types of berries became ripe. Blueberries, and black and red huckleberries were gathered in sand dunes along the coast, and small strawberries were found in coastal meadows. On the forest margin, blackberries, thimbleberries, salmonberries and western blackcaps were obtained. With the onset of the winter rains in late fall, people again returned to their coastal villages where they lived until the spring fishing again started the cycle of the seasons.

Transportation: The watercourses were the first “highways” in the Watershed. American Indians and early Euro-American settlers used canoes to come and go throughout the Watershed. Later, launches and steamers provided transportation to the head of tidewater just past Dellwood. River boat traffic between Dellwood and Marshfield (now Coos Bay) carried milk, mail, and children to and from school. The last of these river boats, the *Welcome* and the *Favorite* operated until the 1940s (Beckham 1990). The number of houses facing the river with docking facilities testifies to the important role of transportation the river had in recent history. It wasn't until 1934 that the first logging roads were constructed into the Watershed, and until the 1940s that the road system was expanded to provide access to a large portion of the Watershed forest lands.

Log Transport: Development of the timber industry in Coos County began with the first Euro-American settlements in the 1850s. The first timber harvests were on lands adjacent to Coos Bay. By the 1880s, the accessible timber around the bay was exhausted and logging activities shifted to Coos River, and eventually up into the South Fork Coos Watershed. Transporting logs to Coos Bay sawmills proved to be the main limiting factor for the early loggers. Initially, only those forest lands with river access could be economically cut. Logs from those early harvests could only be transported during winter freshets that generated sufficient water flow to float the logs to the sawmills. This met log drives had to be coordinated with the weather. Winter freshets were used to drive logs on the West Fork Coos River at least as early as 1906 (Beckham 1990). The shift from bull teams to steam power allowed loggers to work farther away from the rivers. A railroad line was built up Daniels Creek in 1889 and eventually over Blue Ridge to transport logs to the Coos River. Sometimes loggers would use cables to drag logs for up to 2 miles using relays of steam donkeys set a half mile apart (Anonymous 1911). Still typically the last leg of a log's journey from the woods to the mill was by water.

The first splash dam in Southwest Oregon was built in the Coos Subbasin in 1884. However, the first splash dam on the South Fork Coos River was the first Lower Dam constructed by the Coos River Boom in 1940. A freshet took that dam out the following winter. The company built a second Lower Dam in 1941 on a different site. In April 1942, road builders up the river from the dam set off a blast that knocked out a brace behind the dam causing the dam to fail. A third Lower Dam was built in the summer of 1942. The Coos River Boom Company operated that dam for 15 years. In 1943, Tioga Dam was constructed. It was the largest and last operating splash dam in the Pacific Northwest. With its spillway 52 feet above the river surface, it was nearly three times higher than the typical splash dam. See figures 1, 2, and 3 in this section. Menasha Wooden Ware Company operated the dams from 1953 to 1956, when the Oregon legislature banned the practice of splash damming for running logs. The splash damming era ended when the Tioga Dam was burned in December 1957 (Beckham 1990). Water transport, in the form of small tug boats towing log rafts from Dellwood to the North Bend Weyerhaeuser Mill, continued until the early 1980s.

Euro-American Settlement: Permanent dwellings are confined to the bottom lands on the west end of the Watershed today. However, in the late 19th and first half of the 20th century, a few people settled in Tioga Creek and on the broad ridge tops in the Callahan area.



Figure 1 The original caption for this photo read as follows:

This picture was taken by Carrol M. Dunbuar on August 25, 1949. The scene shows the logging splash dam built and operated by Irwin-Lyons Lumber Company. This dam is located in Sec. 7, T.26S., R.9W. Just below the point where Williams River and Tioga Creek join to form the South Coos River. This dam is used for summer log storage with logs being splashed to tidewater in the fall. Logs put into the dam in the winter are splashed currently. The old growth timber in the east end of the South Coos River Administrative Unit will probably be sent to tidewater via this dam. The splashing dams on the South Coos River are operated under license by the State of Oregon through the Public Utilities Commission, giving other timber owners a means of sending their logs to tidewater.

Dams such as this one are being fought by the Oregon State Game Commission and Sportsmen Association. Possibly no new dams will be built because of such opposition, though existing dams will be allowed to operate until the investment has been amortized. The cost of this dam was \$80,000.00.



Figure 2 Logs behind the Tioga Dam on the South Fork Coos River. Photograph likely taken before 1952.



Figure 3 Logs in the back water behind the Tioga Dam. Date of photo is unknown but likely before 1952.

Synthesis and Interpretation

Causes of change between historical and current human uses:

- ? Modern Euro-American culture has replaced Native American culture with all that implies for landscape patterns.
- ? All weather roads have replaced trails and cross country travel. Access to the South Fork Coos Watershed is faster and easier. Movement inside the Watershed is also facilitated by good roads. Access is no longer limited by difficult travel conditions. It is no longer necessary to live inside the Watershed to use its resources.
- ? Increased human population both locally and globally have resulted in increased demand for resources. This has resulted in once abundant resources like wood and salmon becoming scarce, which in turn has led to conflicting management objectives.
- ? The real value of wood has increased making entry for timber removal economically attractive and high utilization standards possible.
- ? Federal land policy has changed significantly over time from active disposal to benign neglect to active economically driven extraction to ecosystem management. These changes were in response to changes in the public's values and to the constantly changing understanding on how forests function.

The rural atmosphere remains in the small outlying and informal communities, throughout the Coast Range. Dependence on fishing and timber related jobs is diminishing. Forestry practices, stream quality, and endangered species have gained national attention. It's been acknowledged past forestry and agricultural practices, and intensive fishing are among the factors causing the decline of several fish species. Western Oregon is considered a leader in cooperative efforts among government agencies, private industry and local citizens to repair, maintain or improve the condition of our natural resources. Many dedicated citizens are demonstrating their commitment. Although the economic picture for this region is changing, the rural atmosphere in this Watershed is expected to remain for the foreseeable future.

Recreation and natural processes: The location of the proposed Tioga Creek recreation site was inundated by the 1996 flood. This site is also the only known location of mature Oregon ash trees on BLM land in this Watershed. The Burnt Mountain Recreation Site is located on a ridge top away from perennial streams.

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