
MANAGEMENT PLAN

Sandy River Gorge

Outstanding Natural Area

An Area of Critical Environmental Concern

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management**

**SALEM DISTRICT - OREGON
1717 Fabry Road SE
Salem, Oregon 97306**

MANAGEMENT PLAN

SANDY RIVER GORGE OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA

AN AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Area: 400 acres in three parcels (two 40 - acre parcels and one 320 - acre parcel)

Location and Access:

This ACEC, in the Clackamas Resource Area, lies in Sections 23 and 25 of Township 1 South, Range 4 East, Willamette Meridian. The parcels are within a 6.5 mile roadless river gorge segment of the 12.5 mile long state designated Sandy River Scenic Waterway. The ACEC includes 80 acres in Clackamas County and 320 acres in Multnomah County. The parcels are approximately 10 air miles east of Portland, Oregon, and may be reached by land or water:

By land: Take Interstate 84 east from Portland to the Dabney Park exit where the freeway crosses the Sandy River (just past the Troutdale airport). Proceed south along the river on Hurlburt Road for about seven miles and turn right onto the Gordon Creek Road. Continue on the Gordon Creek Road for about four miles to the junction with the Trout Creek Road. The trail shown on the attached map starts as a little used dirt road blocked by a cable gate about 100 meters southwest of the road junction. The trail affords access to BLM land but is mostly on Nature Conservancy Land.

By water: The put-in for boats and rafts is at Dodge Park four air miles north of the town of Sandy. From Sandy take Ten Eyck Road north past Roslyn Lake to Dodge Park; total distance is about 6 to 7 miles. The ACEC parcels are from one to three miles downstream from the park. There is a take-out at Oxbow Park and at Dabney Park.

Background:

The Nature Conservancy acquired land in the Sandy River Gorge from the Diack families in 1970. Convinced that the six-mile stretch between the Bull Run River and Gordon Creek should be preserved as a single, natural unit, the Conservancy initiated a process that in 1973 resulted in designation of the 12.5 mile river segment from Dodge Park (managed by the Portland Water Board) to Dabney State Park as part of the Oregon Scenic Waterways System. The BLM had withdrawn these lands from the District's timber base prior to this designation, though the lands remain open to mineral entry. By 1978, the Nature Conservancy had acquired additional lands, which, in conjunction with

their other lands in the Gorge, became the Conservancy's Sandy River Gorge Preserve. The three BLM parcels in the Sandy River Gorge Outstanding Natural Area lie between the Conservancy parcels making up this preserve. In 1978, the Conservancy proposed that the BLM nominate an old-growth forest in Section 23 as an Outstanding Natural Area (ONA).

In 1981, the BLM nominated the Sandy River Gorge parcels for ACEC designation based on data acquired through the Oregon Rare and Endangered Plant Project inventories. Because of seasonally concentrated recreation use along the Sandy River shore, the Area was also nominated for designation as an ONA. Such designation recognizes the recreational values of the area while requiring management to maintain generally undisturbed natural conditions. ACEC/ONA designation was achieved in the Salem District Eastside Timber Management Plan Record of Decision in the fall of 1983, with publication of the decision occurring in the January 3, 1984, Federal Register.

History of Use:

While evidence exists that the Sandy River Gorge and adjacent lands were used by prehistoric Indian peoples, no aboriginal sites have yet been recorded on these parcels. The lands in the Sandy River area were part of a much larger territory inhabited by the Chinook people at the time of Euro-American contact.

Lewis and Clark named the Sandy the Quicksand River in 1805, but by 1845, the name had been shortened by Euro-Americans entering and living in the area to the Sandy. Because of isolation in the gorge, some tracts of land were never taken up in homestead claims and most farming was limited to lands above the gorge rim, with settlers occasionally cutting wood below the rim. Three parcels of public land that eventually became the ACEC remained unclaimed in the gorge and were granted to the Oregon and California (O&C) Railroad Company, with numerous other tracts in western Oregon, in 1866 - 1869. In 1916, the unsold O&C grant lands were revested to the federal government due to violations in the terms of the grant and eventually became managed as timber lands by the General Land Office (GLO) and then by its successor, the Bureau of Land Management. Upon revestment, these tracts were withdrawn by the GLO for their potential for power site development, and were not open to sale or disposal to private landowners, thus remaining in federal management over the years.

Commercial and recreational smelt fishing have been occurring on the Sandy River since 1907. Commercial smelting is not conducted much above the town of Troutdale. Recreation and logging have had more immediate effects on the Sandy River Gorge ACEC tracts. Log driving has occurred in the Sandy River Gorge since 1895 with the first drive commencing from Brightwood. The last drive occurred during 1925 or 1926, and a common problem through this entire period was piling of logs on the sand bars and the build-up of log jams, which

were occasionally broken up by use of explosives. After 1900, most of the timber material in the drives was processed in the form of railroad ties prior to the drive, and floated as ties. Sawmills, flumes, logging railroads and other facilities were constructed during this logging period in the Sandy River country.

Logging on lands that became the Sandy River Gorge ACEC occurred at three separate times. In 1925, a 10-year timber patent for 200 acres in the north portion of Section 23 was issued to Robert and E. Jarl. Cutting occurred in a crescent shaped area above the gorge rim, with some clearcutting and perhaps high-grading methods used. This area was classified as non-stocked due to this early clearcutting in a reforestation survey in 1959. In 1941, a small sale of cottonwood was made to E. E. Cobb on the 40-acre tract in the NW¹/₄,NW¹/₄ of Section 25. This two-year contract involved a combination of clearcutting and other harvest methods, terminating in 1943. A logging road right-of-way was issued in 1948 to William C. Murphy for an area in the SE¹/₄,NE¹/₄, of Section 23. Some removal of timber may have occurred to facilitate road construction in this right-of-way which terminated in 1950.

Primary Values:

A wide variety of plant communities are found within the narrow gorge. Its nearly vertical igneous and mudstone walls rise abruptly to over 400 feet in elevation. Vegetation within the gorge shows that plant distribution is affected by slope exposure. The cooler, wetter north-facing slopes have denser tree populations while the hotter and drier south-facing slopes support a diverse abundance of herb species.

Five river terraces on two of the BLM-administered parcels harbor a rare example of low elevation old-growth Douglas fir forest. Some of the conifers are reportedly greater than 500 years old. Covering approximately 120 acres on both sides of the river, this remnant old-growth stand is the only known example of its kind in northwestern Oregon. The steep walls of the gorge play a significant role in protecting the stand from wind.

The majority of the ONA acreage is within the ribbonlike one half mile scenic waterway influence zone, characterized by a predominantly unmodified natural environment. Recreation activity opportunities in the ONA include wildlife observations, plant observation and natural study, day hiking, mushroom gathering, fishing for salmon, steelhead and resident trout, hunting, river drifting, wading and waterplay. The ONA offers visitors opportunities to have a high degree of interaction with the natural environment and to experience some sense of isolation from the sights and sounds of other people, though encounters with other users can be anticipated, especially along the river during peak-use periods.

Current situation:

The primary responsibility for preservation of the Sandy River Gorge is vested in the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation. The agency administers the Scenic Waterways Act (Oregon State Park, 1983.) Responsibility for the river and related adjacent lands up to 1/4-mile from each bank are based on specific provisions in the Scenic Waterways Act relating to scenic quality preservation in the Sandy's "Natural River Area" and general provisions for protecting scenic beauty, fish and wildlife, scientific and recreation features. Restrictions are placed on timber harvest, farming, construction and other development activities. In 1972, the State completed a Scenic Waterway Study: Sandy River; and in 1983, issued their Sandy River Gorge Study, outlining management alternatives and recommending better coordination between agencies and citizens.

The 6.5-mile segment of roadless river gorge containing this ONA is in a near-pristine condition. The Oregon Chapter of the Nature Conservancy has compiled an extensive ecological, botanical, and zoological survey of the Sandy River State Scenic Waterway.

Botanical studies have been conducted on the ONA by Reed College's Biology Department from Portland, Oregon. In 1986 the Nature Conservancy established permanent plots to study the unique, low-elevation old-growth forest here. Monitoring has been conducted by the BLM on the Columbia River willow population in the ONA, too.

The Oregon slender salamander (Batrachoseps wrightii), a species endemic to Oregon and limited throughout its range (Oregon Natural Heritage Data Base, 1986), was found in the ONA in 1983 by Reed College student, Lukas.

The only road affecting this ONA is the Gordon Creek Road in Section 23. While there are no trailheads or signs, a hiking trail, almost entirely on Nature Conservancy land, extends from Gordon Creek road to the Sandy River, in Section 23 (see map). Along the shoreline, the concentration of users is low to moderate, depending on the time of year, with the heaviest river use during the summer. Within the ONA interior, concentrations of users is very low (and evidence of users minimal), though the trail shows use by hikers and by recreationists seeking the river. Estimated annual visitation figures for river use are not available. Land based visitation is estimated to be 500 persons per year.

Fire protection for the ACEC is provided by the OSDF, Clackamas-Marion District.

As of November 1987, there are no mining claims and oil and gas leases in the project area. The project area is not classified as prospectively valuable for oil and gas. No known deposits exist in the study area. The area has low favorability for locatable, leasable and saleable commodities.

Management objectives:

To preserve the scenic, botanical, and other natural values for public enjoyment and educational purposes. The relatively undisturbed conditions of the area will be maintained and the area will be managed primarily for natural ecological change.

Management actions and use constraint:

A. RECREATION

1. Publicity directed to the public will be designed to encourage public visitation with emphasis on environmental protection. The location and resources of the ACEC will be publicized in official and scientific circles.
2. When their provision is determined compatible with the trail system needs of the greater Sandy River Gorge area, new segments of hiking trail will be planned, designed, constructed and maintained. Any such trail plans will be coordinated with other government agencies and with the Nature Conservancy.
3. Day use only activities will be allowed within the ACEC. No camping or fires will be permitted.

B. ADMINISTRATION

1. All motorized vehicle use, except that required for emergencies or specifically authorized by BLM, will be limited to Gordon Creek Road (Multnomah County Road 357.)
2. Participate in The Nature Conservancy's coordination management committee for Sandy River Gorge addressing river safety, interpretive and education programs, and other concerns.
3. The ACEC will not be available for timber harvest, timber salvage or road construction.
4. Collecting rocks, plants, plant parts and animals for commercial purposes will be prohibited except by permit or license.

C. FIRE

All fires will be suppressed with minimal environmental impact with the objective of protecting the existing resources of the ACEC and surrounding property. Use of tractors and other heavy equipment will be kept to a minimum. (See attached fire suppression plan)

D. INSECTS, DISEASE, AND FIRE

No control of insects or disease will be carried out unless infestation threatens the ACEC or adjacent forests or unless such control is permitted as a research activity.

E. WILDLIFE

Wildlife habitat enhancement projects may be completed within the ACEC provided they do not significantly alter the natural character of the area.

F. EXOTIC PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Introduction of exotic (non-native) plants and animals will be prohibited, except for the stocking of fish by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

G. RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

1. Research and extensive educational use of the ACEC will be by permit only. Permits will stipulate specific use restrictions and responsibilities of the parties involved. Observational studies will be favored. Study techniques will normally be of a non-destructive, non-consumptive nature.
2. A permanent file including copies of all research permits and related correspondence for the ACEC will be maintained in the Salem District Office. An annual or biennial summary of research use of the District's ACEC's will be prepared by Salem District personnel.

H. COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT

1. Cooperation with Multnomah County Parks, Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation and The Nature Conservancy in the development of a trail system and in the management of river use in this area. This will be addressed in more detail in the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan currently in preparation.

2. As appropriate, adjacent public and private landowners will be contacted for the purpose of discussing fire control, rights-of-way, and recreation use. Cooperative management agreements may be developed.

I. MONITORING

The significant ecological resources of the ACEC will be monitored to determine the condition of those resources and the effectiveness of the management action and use constraints in this plan.

General condition and the effect of human use of the ACEC will be monitored by an annual inspection of the trails and riverbanks. Things to be noted include: trail condition, number of fire rings, litter, and evidence of camping.

Occurrences that will trigger more frequent or intensive monitoring will include natural disasters (wildfire, windthrow, insect infestation, etc.) and human activities that have a significant detrimental effect on the natural condition. These include fire, grazing, camping, etc.

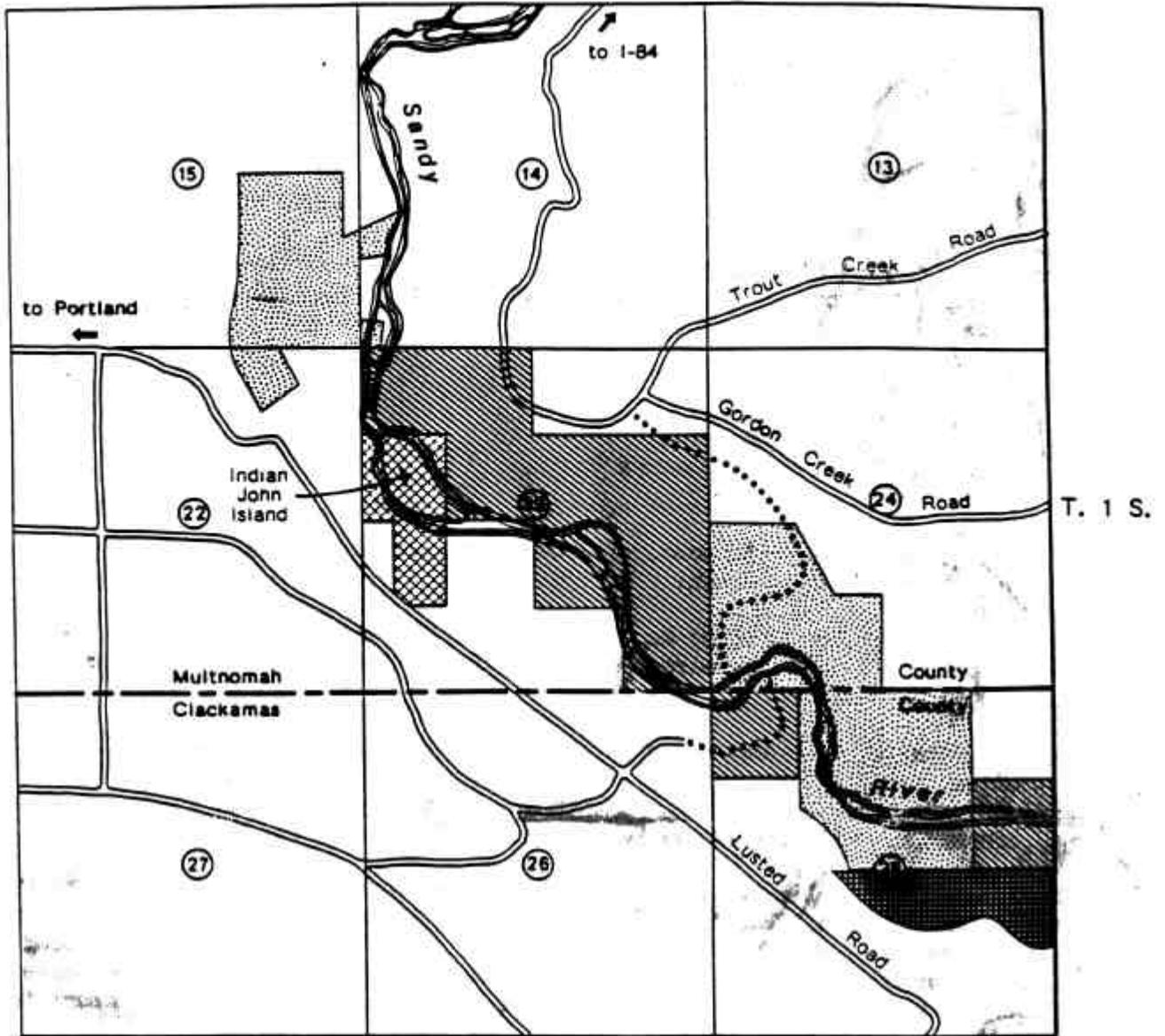
For further information concerning wildlife, botany, recreation, etc. refer to the Sandy River Wild and Scenic River Management Plan.

Note: This plan will be periodically revised if monitoring data or other information indicates the management objective is not being met.

PETE SCHAY & JIM IRVING
Prepared by

Steve Dale
Approved - Area Manager

April 14, 1992
Date



R. 4 E.

LEGEND

-  Sandy River Gorge Outstanding Natural Area, An Area of Critical Environmental Concern Bureau of Land Management land
-  The Nature Conservancy land
-  Oregon State Parks land
-  Multnomah County land
-  Private land
-  Existing roads
-  Existing trails

Scale: 2" = 1 mile

Fire Suppression Plan
for
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Clackamas Resource Area - BLM
Clackamas - Molalla Protection District - OSDF

The primary value of the three Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is botanical. All ecosystems are being protected for educational and scientific purposes.

The three ACEC's are:

Williams Lake - 90 acres

Scosap Meadows - 400 acres

Sandy River Gorge - 400 acres

(See attached maps)

All fires, regardless of cause, will be suppressed as on any Bureau of Land Management land, except that:

The BLM will be notified of a fire by the OSDF at the time of initial dispatch and a BLM Resource Advisor will be assigned to monitor the suppression effort.

All fires will be suppressed with minimal environmental impact with the objective of protecting the existing resources of the ACEC and surrounding property. Use of tractors and other heavy equipment will be kept to a minimum, as will use of aerial fire retardant.

This plan does not limit suppression to hand methods only in any part (primary or caution zone) of an ACEC, but the intent is to discourage use of heavy equipment that can severely affect the environment. The Incident Commander and Resource Advisor must consider the advantages and disadvantages of different suppression techniques and make a decision that favors protection of the plant communities involved.


District Forester
OSDF


Clackamas Area Manager
BLM

1/5/87