

Chapter Ten

The Monmouth/Independence Community Resource Unit

Section One: Baseline Social and Economic Information

A. Community Description

Geographic Features

The Monmouth/Independence Community Resource Unit extends on the north from just south of the town of Rickreall and the Southern Pacific Railroad, on the west between Monmouth and Dallas, taking in Lewisville, on the south to incorporate the settlements of Mitchell, Parker, and Buena Vista, and on the east, the Willamette River. Very near the Polk County line the topography and settlement patterns change, with fewer homes and farms, and a change in vegetation north of the line. Despite modern infrastructure, the river is still a dividing line on the east from a social and cultural perspective. Figure 28 shows a map of this area.

"Monmouth and Independence are joined at the hip."

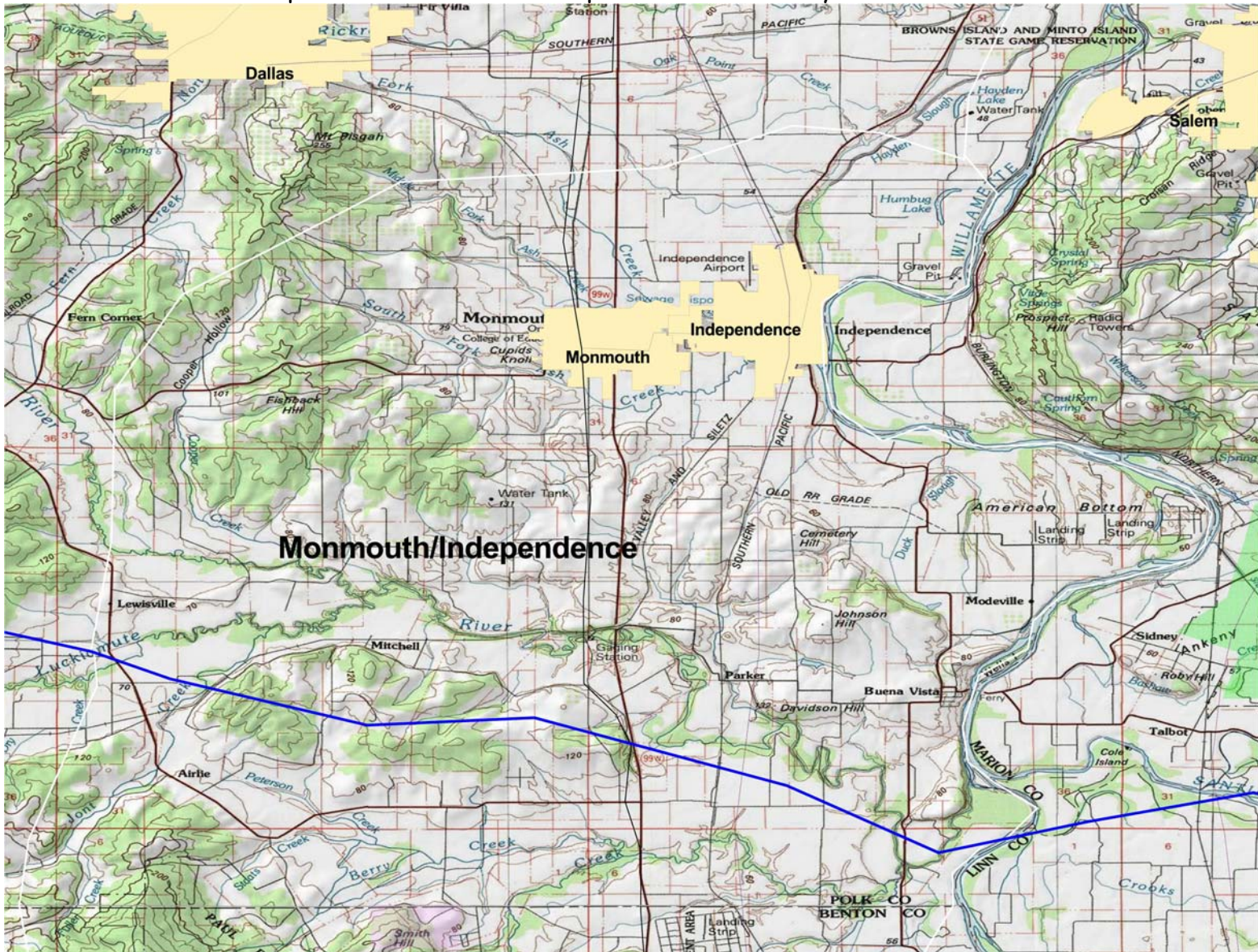
"Independence and Monmouth are like two brothers that love each other but who fight every now and then."

Many social services and associations, as well as the Chamber of Commerce, refer to Monmouth and Independence as a single unit.

Settlement Patterns

Monmouth was incorporated in 1880. In 1990 its population was 6310 and in 2000 it was 7741, an increase of 19%. Independence, incorporated in 1874, had a population of 4482 in 1990 and 6035 in 2000, an increase of 26% (Census Data, Table Two). Monmouth had 2272 housing units in 1990 while Independence had 1539. The median value of Monmouth housing in 1990 was

Figure 28
Map of the Monmouth/Independence Community Resource Unit



\$57,100, while for Independence, it was \$44,800 (Portland State University, Center for Population Research and Census).

Southeast Monmouth has a few new townhouse developments that do not fit the kind of housing that preceded it. Also, the streets in this area are laid out in grid form, while the older areas of town are more random or curve around obstructions. Throughout most of Monmouth, styles and ages of homes are generally intermixed. A few blocks surrounding Main Street are considered the historic area and downtown. Many of the homes here are multi-story, with large old trees in front. Western Oregon University is in the northwest section of town and is fairly disconnected from downtown. Apartment complexes can be seen in areas around the campus and in the historic areas. Appearances would suggest that Monmouth has never had a "boom" and has always grown at quite modest rates.

"To buy a house in the country, you must also purchase at least 80 acres of land. Many farmers around here then lease those lands."

Numerous local people mentioned the old town of Valsetz. It was created solely for the timber industry. Although it is now non-existent, for many residents it is a symbol of their past. People measure how local others are by whether or not they know the story of this town. Boise Cascade drained the Valsetz Lake in the mid-1980s, pushed buildings into the hole and burned it. Logging equipment and structures were still in use until rampant vandalism and violence forced them to permanently close gates. Every year, old Valsetz residents continue to meet once a year in Falls City. Interestingly, most Valsetz residents did not relocate in Falls City. Instead, most people ended up in Dallas and north of Dallas.

Many people believe that Monmouth is dying. This sentiment is partly due to its "dry status", which makes it illegal to sell alcohol within the city boundaries. We heard from a prominent business owner that the business community is trying very hard to overturn that status in the upcoming election. The fifth, and most recent time, people voted on this measure was in 1975. It did not pass because the majority were very involved in churches who until recently controlled local government. A committee of citizens has organized to repeal the town's prohibition status. Those involved are hoping it passes this time around. Thus, Monmouth is unable to attract business.

Catering to university students that stay fairly disconnected from local events, it seems unable to gain traction for itself. The old grocery store in Monmouth was located on the opposite end of town from WOU, which created regular foot traffic through town. Now that influence is lost. The lack of business vitality has affected the real estate business, slowing the sales of homes and bringing down prices.

Monmouth is an encapsulated town, beginning and ending abruptly. People value that it has not sprawled like other communities. One area, called "Gentle Woods," is the more upscale area, located up on the hill by the water tower. The rest is "old town" and not distinguished into smaller areas.

Figure 29
Downtown Independence



Figure 29 is a photo showing downtown Independence. Independence dates from 1874 and currently has 6035 people. In contrast to Monmouth, people felt that Independence was more active, more diverse, more tolerant, and more mixed in terms of socioeconomic status.

"When the mall was built a few years ago [in Independence], people went through a sort of depression. They felt the downtown was lost. In the last several years, residents rediscovered it and put lots of

money into revitalizing it. Independence has a great deal of pride for its historical/downtown district."

An area just outside the Independence airport is called "the flats" where many new houses and a new school have been built. This area is prone to flooding and local people expect flooding to occur within a few years. New developments are also found behind Mendi's Pizza in Independence.

Monmouth and Independence attempted to become one city at some point but the effort foundered because no name worked to rally the support. Although they are very different, there is active and practical cooperation across their borders.

Publics

Working people, primarily associated with the timber products industry, commuters, and education interests make up the major economic publics. Urban people are moving into the communities.

"City people impose their city mentality in the country."

"People from the city move to the country to enjoy the wildlife, but they bring their dogs and then wonder why there's no wildlife."

The elderly and retirement community is not pronounced in Monmouth and Independence. There is an assisted living facility whose residents patronize local businesses.

The area supports an active artist community.

Hispanics are not highly visible but are an accepted presence in the community. Some stores retain bilingual workers for dealing with Spanish speakers.

Networks

See Section Two.

Work Routines

People in this area make a living in education, agriculture, the timber mill in Independence (recently purchased by Weyerhaeuser), Boise-Cascade, and a new cabinet factory in Independence. A great many residents commute to work elsewhere in the region. Western Oregon University is by far the largest employer in Monmouth with 656 workers, Boise employs 52 and Marr Brothers Barkdust employs 8. By contrast, Central School District employs 310 in Independence, while Marquis Spa manufacturer employs 290, Robert Lloyd Sheet Metal, 100, Boise Cascade, 70 and Franklin Equipment, 35 (Community Profile, Oregon Economic and Community Development Department, 2002). Partnership Living Community, a facility for mentally disabled adults, is also a major employer.

Agriculture outputs in this area consist of grass seeds, Christmas trees, and cattle. Polk County has an extremely high concentration of dairies and they apparently require large amounts of water. Christmas trees are labor and capital intensive and often take 7 years to produce a return. While sheep used to be part of local agriculture, farmers stated that higher numbers of coyotes have encouraged other agricultural choices. Grass seed farmers are struggling at the moment. A few years ago, they experienced a number of years of excellent profits but now the market is not doing as well. The seeds are patented and have to be sold through brokers of that particular brand. Recently, a major seed company went bankrupt and many farmers in the valley had nowhere to sell their seeds. Because seeds are not a food crop, the government rarely supports seed farmers with subsidies.

Independent farms are becoming rare, according to local stories. Strict zoning regulations prohibit alternative uses of the land, favoring the sale of small operations to larger (typically, corporate) operations.

Support Services

People in Monmouth and Independence do not like going to Salem or Lancaster. Some reported even bypassing Salem to work and shop in Portland.

The business association associated with the Chamber of Commerce is said to be as active as it's ever been with people working together on common objectives. This association is putting together a market analysis of unmet business needs in the community.

A citizen task force is spearheading a Monmouth beautification project for downtown through ornamental light posts, painted murals, flower baskets, park benches and trashcans.

It is not legal to buy alcohol in Monmouth. The family, who owned the land some 100 years ago, insisted that the town be kept dry when they gave over the land. When the University was established, the same family would only sell the land if the school agreed to stay dry. Current efforts to have these restrictions lifted have resulted in a ballot initiative in 2002.

Today there isn't a grocery store or restaurant in Monmouth. Dollars that would go to these kinds of establishments instead are going to Independence, Albany, Corvallis and Salem. Waremart Grocery in Independence was able to out-compete the Monmouth grocery because it sells beer and wine, according to residents. Residents noted that the major employers of the area, Western Oregon University, the police academy, and the churches are all tax exempt.

"Monmouth is desperate for tax revenue."

"The ability to serve and sell alcohol would help businesses be more competitive."

Partnership Living Community is a center for mentally handicapped adults. It is a major employer in Monmouth and locals make a point of keeping an eye on its clients when they walk around town. Neighbors Helping Neighbors is a non-profit group dedicated to providing low-income and affordable housing.

Western Oregon University specializes in business, computer science, social sciences, teacher and special education, and creative arts.

The Department of Public Safety, Standards and Training is the state police academy located in the community. True to residents' perceptions, the facility is scheduled to move to Salem in the next few years.

Gentle House, a local historical house, was built around 1880 for the Butler children as part of an original land grant. After being cared for by the Gentle family from 1914 to 1981, it was donated to Western Oregon University Foundation.

Recreational Activities

See Section Three.

B. Themes and Citizen Issues Related to Community Life

Themes

"It takes 20 miles." This theme relates to the common perception that one must go out for needed goods and services but never more than 20 miles.

The bridge over Ash Creek, connecting Monmouth and Independence is seen as a positive symbol for the relationship between the two towns.

This is a face-to-face culture that residents highly value.

Citizen Issues Related to Community Life

Water availability is an issue that affects Monmouth/Independence, as well as other communities in this area. They are looking to acquire water from Adair Village, which, as an old military base, has huge water rights.

Monmouth struggles to achieve a viable tax base. The tax-exempt status of the Western Oregon University precludes them from tax support.

"There's no connection between Monmouth and WOU. People don't communicate and there seems to be no shared interests."

Community Services and Tax Base

"Is this town (Monmouth) dying? Our only grocery store closed a year ago, the police academy is going to be pulled out soon. WOU is the only thing in town. Oh, I guess Boise Cascade rebuilt their office so that looks good."

"The lack of a grocery store, pharmacy and neighborhood shopping centers makes it hard to attract newcomers."

Section Two: Communication Strategies

A. Informal Networks and Communication

The general gathering places and sources of information in the community are the following:

- Burgerville in Monmouth, old timers meet in the morning from 8 to 10 a.m.
- J's Restaurant
- Amador's Alley and Andy's Café, both in Independence, host many meetings of local community clubs.
- Lenora's Ghost is a bar/restaurant in Independence that serves as a gathering place.
- The library has several bulletin boards that are kept up-to-date, some with Spanish language flyers, which are used by community groups about local events.

The following gathering places and communication sources are oriented to public land users and outdoors people:

Rick's Café is a key gathering place in the community, frequented by older local residents, users of the forest, and community members in general. It contains a large bulletin board packed with local information. A chalkboard nearby announces local sentiments ("Friends don't let friends drink Starbucks."). The place has a comfortable ambience with large windows, a couch, sitting area, and areas filled with newspapers and magazines. A long time resident, Richard Bunsu, drops into Rick's Place virtually every morning at 10 a.m. He was a bartender in Falls City and currently lives in Monmouth. He is a colorful figure involved in wide range of local activities. He is a part owner of the River Gallery in Independence, and a fly tyer in his free time.

Richard is well known as a fly-fishing expert and local artisan. He is very well connected to Independence and Falls City.

Ray's barbershop is a key communication spot in the community. Ray knows virtually everyone that comes to his shop and has access to all spectrums of the community from college students to old timers. He is known for his expertise in hunting and fishing. Ray picks up a wide variety of BLM and ODF maps in Salem on a regular basis and has them in his shop.

Jon's Bike Shop in Monmouth is a key communication node for mountain biking enthusiasts.

The Bi-Mart on Highway 99 serves a very large customer base with a diverse product selection. It is one of two outlets for hunting and fishing licenses. The sporting goods manager there is very connected with the recreationists of the community and can identify favorite spots, key individuals, and so on. He moves information in the community around sportsmen and recreation issues. He goes to the Salem BLM office and Oregon Department of Forestry to update information for his clients.

Employees of the Windermere Real Estate office take an annual fishing trip.

Certain extended families get together a few times a year to hunt.

Locals use the outdoors section of the Salem Statesman Journal for information about recreation. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife use a computer system to update the public on changes to hunting and fishing regulations. This is an effective way to communicate to recreational publics, and both Bi-Mart and the farming cooperative store in Rickreall use the system. Information on gate closures is handled word-of-mouth.

B. Formal Groups and Communication

Figure 30
Organizations With Interest in Public Lands in Monmouth/Independence

Organization	Contact Information	Mission
Luckiamute Domestic Water Cooperative Board	Howard Pope [285] 8585 Suver Road Monmouth, OR 97362 (503) 838-2075	
Archery Club		
Legacy Forest Project	Renna Hoover Western Oregon University 345 N. Monmouth Monmouth, OR 97362 (503) 838-8000	Protects historical trees in town; plants new ones
Santiam Flycasters	Located in Salem	Sportsfishing
<u>Dallas Itemizer-Observer</u> web site	http://www.itemizerobserver.com/	Links to all the towns, organizations; good information.
Luckiamute Watershed Council	Sean Burgett 810 Parry Road Falls City, OR 97361 (503) 787-5016 luckiamute57@yahoo.com 2 nd Thursday, 6 p.m., Monmouth Volunteer Hall	Watershed restoration
Pedee/Ritner Creek Watershed Council	Chris Vandenberg 12503 Pedee Creek Road Monmouth, OR 97361 (503) 838-5126 wombatsyn@proaxis.com	Watershed restoration

Section Three: The Public Lands Perspective

A. Uses of and Orientation to Public Lands

The most popular recreational activities are fly-fishing, hunting, boating and cross-country biking. A lot of local people like to fish off the "East Slope" of the Coastal Range, like the Luckiamute River and the Siletz River. Hunting is more oriented to ducks and geese than elk and deer. Bow hunting and archery target shooting are also popular. An archery club and tie-flying businesses support these interests.

The residential areas of the communities sported large numbers of boats and RVs. While a few were very nice, most were modest in size and cost, small fishing boats and the like.

A key aspect of local recreational activity is the large amount of private industrial forestland. Beyond Weyerhaeuser and Boise-Cascade lands are BLM lands. Although concerns and conflicts exist over the gates in the area, local people also have had lots of practice in working out these issues with private landowners and with BLM.

"The forest is a maze [of different ownerships]. You really don't know where you are if you are moving around in the forest. There are gates, trails and roads that go through one another's properties."

Four-wheel driving is also a popular pastime. The sport has a reputation for damaging public lands. Many residents voiced the belief that four-wheelers are more aware than they have been in the past and now attempt to avoid damage.

"I think they work with private owners to get permission. But they will still drive on land that doesn't have a gate."

The Independence area conducts a yearly Salmon Run to raise money for scholarships in the visual arts. The event generated \$4000 last year. The event is sponsored by art galleries who sell foam board salmon shaped fishes

for \$25. Buyers decorate the fishes to be put on display for the summer salmon run in Independence.

Monmouth Parks and Recreation Department hosts a free boat safety class and does a variety of outdoor programs.

A student from Western Oregon University heads the "Legacy Project" to protect historical trees and plant new trees in town. Monmouth was recently designated a "Tree USA" town.

Residents in this area have been very active in watershed restoration work from a very early period. Partly from fishing and other recreational pursuits, and partly from an embedded ethic of land stewardship, people here seem to have taken recovery work seriously. In the 1980s, the creeks and streams were becoming heavily "channelized" by farmers to avoid flooding and property line changes brought about by meandering waterways. In addition, the grass seed and Christmas tree farms apparently use a lot of chemicals. The outcome for fish and water quality was not positive. Local activists saw the problem as fragmented or contradictory laws and regulations implemented by several agencies that did not communicate. A whole range of groups, projects, and events have been spawned by this experience.

The favorite mountain biking places for local enthusiasts is referred to as the "patchwork area", shown on the ODF map of the Western Oregon Protection District. It is an area of extremely mixed ownership between BLM and private timber companies that is located just along the north rim of the Rickreall Ridge. The Molalla River trails through the McDonald Forest outside Corvallis, and areas of the Siuslaw National Forest are popular as well. Mountain bikers in this area use private lands extensively. Boise Cascade lands are known as "higher trails."

Bikers seem to have personal relationships with the local land managers of the private timber companies, as well as with the Salem office of the BLM.

"I don't hesitate to call them if I have a question or to get permission to use their land. Sometimes we work on trail maintenance projects."

Bikers say they don't use the Cascades much. Silver Falls is too far to go, although places near Lyons and Mill City are used. Information regarding places to bike, conditions of the trails, and trips are passed word-of-mouth. The local bike shop in Monmouth ("Jon's") is a communication node for bikers in the area and it is networked with other bike shops in Salem and elsewhere around information of common interest. A core group of bikers meets twice a week for informal rides in the area.

Bikers' message to the Forest Service is that they (bikers) "try to tread lightly." They described methods, workshops and information sessions in which people are taught how to disperse water from the center of a trail and other techniques.

"There are still guys that like to skid and do stupid things, but most people are conscious of how they impact the land."

The sporting good manager at Bi-Mart offered these insights into where people like to go. A favorite fishing spot off of Mistletoe Road, off Highway 51, is known as "Social Security Hole" because oldtimers like it. The Paul Dunn area of the State Forest is valued for deer hunting and hiking. Families use Holman State Wayside for its swimming hole (the old territorial road of the 1850s passed through this wayside). The Lewisburg Road area in the Siuslaw National Forest is valued for hiking, mountain biking and running. [212] Salmon fishing is popular in the Van Doser Corridor, about 35 minutes up the coast. The Three Rivers area near Mary's Peak is popular for fishing.

Many residents still like to "get lost in the woods" and will drive over toward Valsetz for this purpose. It sounded like a recreational activity in its own right. The lands in this area are mostly Boise-Cascade and it is a favorite shooting area. People still like to take the "main line" road (Fanno Peak Road) from Falls City to the coast.

Boise-Cascade and other industrial landowners have an "open land policy." The public has open access to their lands unless fire risk is high or the weather, timber harvests and road conditions create safety concerns. Vandalism is a constant concern of the companies, particularly when expensive contractor equipment is left at timber harvest sites.

Boise-Cascade has signs posted throughout their lands prohibiting campfires, overnight camping and smoking. The company issues firewood permits sporadically from January to June, based on one load, one family. People call the company information lines to see if permits are available week-to-week and permits can be obtained from the company or from the grocery store in Falls City. Boise currently offers no permits for special forest products but feels it must respond to public demand soon. They reported excess time by BLM in issuing similar permits and they are concerned that permitting will become a drag on their time as well. Liability concerns, however, are the most serious impediment to special forest products permitting.

The Luckiamute Watershed Council, a fairly new watershed council, includes Monmouth, Independence and Falls City. Its activities includes grant development to study macro-invertebrates and for a scientific watershed assessment. Public participation has been low and members consider the lack of community support the group's biggest obstacle.

B. Themes and Citizen Issues Related to Natural Resource Management

Themes

Residents confuse the U.S. Forest Service and Oregon Department of Forestry.

Residents express common confusion about land ownership patterns, often saying they are not sure what land they are on at any given time.

Long-time users of the forest in this area feel it has become overcrowded in the last few years leading to a widespread sense of loss.

The local grapevine sometimes has its facts wrong but information that comes through the networks tends to be trusted and unquestioned. River closures, locked gates, and general access issues are commonly churned over in the gossip mill because the facts rarely hit the public sphere.

"Life includes floods along the river." Older residents expressed a tolerance for the periodic flooding that so alarms newcomers. They say newcomers should accommodate the river and resist trying to change it. What used to be a natural, common occurrence is today considered a threat.

"Whereas the river was once the focal point of culture [because agricultural activity associated with hops and orchards unified the valley in production and social events], now children growing up a few miles away are oblivious to its presence."

Citizen Issues Related to Natural Resource Management

Recreation

"It's getting harder and harder to fish around here. The streams close to Monmouth either have no fish or have had access restricted. The Siletz River now is closed to fishing. The spots that are left are overcrowded."

"Access is more and more of a problem." [common]

"Some of the well-used biking trails are poorly maintained. Motor vehicles are sometimes where they are not supposed to be, there is litter in the forest, and access to privately owned land is a problem. Even so the Forest Service has been doing a great job." [Mountain biker]

"I'd like to see a map showing mountain bike trails. A few students from OSU have been working on this but haven't gotten very far. Most people know how to get maps from BLM and the Forest Service."

"The upper part of the Siletz River is now closed to fishing so the native gene pool can be restored. How long does 'indefinitely' last?"

"The Siletz River that runs through the Valley of the Giants, protected BLM land, has been closed at the north fork."

"It is a constant frustration to guess when gates are opened and closed. If you travel up to Boise Cascade land, you are always susceptible to being locked in."

"The rivers and forests are really feeling overcrowded. It's difficult to go anywhere in the forest without seeing another person. This is very different from just a few years ago when you still felt free in the Oregon woods."

"The rules have been tightened up for fishing. You are no longer allowed to use artificial bait in the Willamette. It's similar to Camp Adair. Lead bullets are now prohibited. Instead, only steel bullets can be used. A lot of people still don't understand about lead."

Off-Road Vehicles

Sometimes getting access to BLM lands is a problem. Sometimes the locked gates protect private lands.

"There are a lot of four-wheelers who are tearing up the land."

Forestry Practice and the Timber Industry

"Private landowners aren't replanting trees within the timeframe required by law."

"Weyerhaeuser already cut American jobs to create mills in South America. Are they going to do that to the Willamette mill now that they own it?"

Water and Open Space

"There's been discussion in the paper about dredging the Willamette River to allow the paddle wheeler to float down to Albany."

"Some folks have been trying for some time to build a greenway around the Willamette River, west of Salem. More and more property

owners are developing right to the river's edge, which is starting to cause mass erosion."

"Once you're past Valsetz, the forest is 'dirty'—lots of vandalism and littering. If you're east of there, the forest is 'clean.'"

C. Management Opportunities

Communication Opportunities

The Forest Service could make use of the computer system of Fish and Wildlife to inform forest users of changing conditions.

Bi-Mart does not carry any maps from the Forest Service or Department of Forestry. The U.S. Oregon Atlas and Gazetteer by DeLorme is a preferred map brand. Efforts could be made to provide maps to private outlets with broad public contact.

The Forest Service could consider developing a few outlets for its maps, brochures, and any other function for which people would have to visit an office. We were told that local people do not use the Forest Service office outside Dallas or the Fish and Wildlife office off Highway 99 because both of these stations are notorious for being closed or having infrequent hours.

Action Opportunities

People who grew up in this region have had long practice in dealing with gates and access issues because of the presence of large industrial timberland owners. As the Forest Service and the BLM begin grappling with these issues on a region-wide basis, stories from these local residents would provide ideas for how to structure management options culturally so that they would blend in and also work.

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