

Chapter 13

The Philomath Community Resource Unit

Section One: Baseline Social and Economic Information

A. Community Description

Geographic Features

The Philomath Community Resource Unit extends from the Falls City area north of the Benton/Polk County line, west to the crest of the coastal range including Blodgett, south to the mountains that signal the beginning of the Alsea area, and east to the beginning of the Corvallis development just past "Kneeback Hill." The new Safeway "is not Philomath," said one resident. Figure 36 shows a map of this area.

"The break between the two [Corvallis and Philomath] is probably Ed's Furniture, or maybe Kneeback Hill."

"So much of community identity is where the kids go to school. Philomath schools go past Ed's [Furniture]. All the Blodgett and Kings Valley kids go to Philomath schools so it's the same community. Philomath ends toward Alsea where you go on the mountains."

This is a large unit geographically for a small community but Philomath opens up to wide areas of rural lands for which it is the main community. Much of the rural area, of course, relates to Corvallis and points beyond, but Philomath is their community of place.

Settlement Patterns

Philomath population was 2844 in 1990 and 3838 in 2000, an increase of 26% (Census Data, Table Five). The City Manager stated that Philomath had grown 3% per year during the last 5 years.

Figure 36
Map of Philomath Community Resource Unit

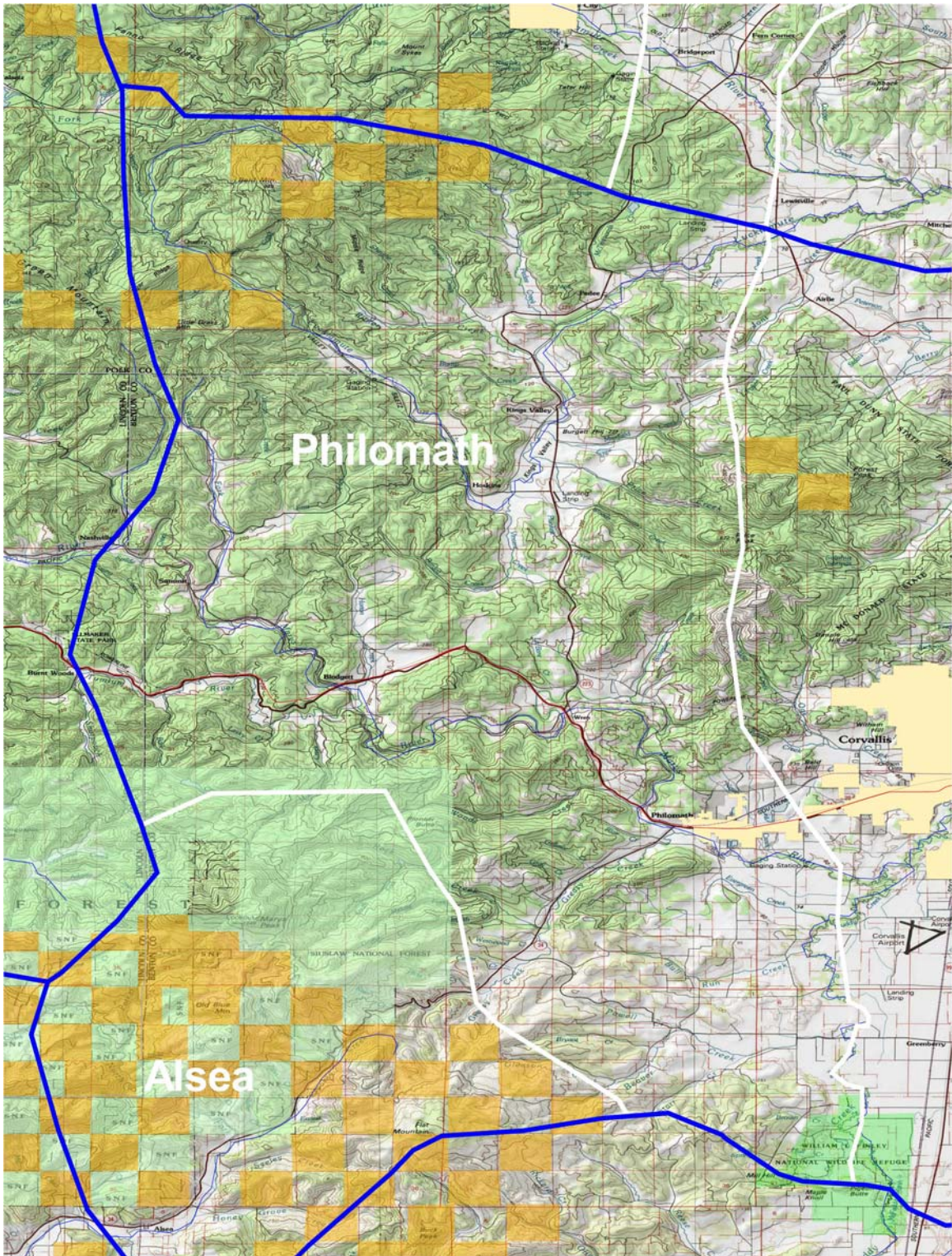


Figure 37
Entrance to Philomath with Mary's Peak in the Background



Philomath, like Corvallis, was born of education. Philomath College, still a landmark building whose symbol adorns the City letterhead, was begun in 1865 as a co-ed school. It was closed in 1929 after serving 6000 students. Philomath was named after the college. Philomath College was vacant in the 1970s and there was talk of tearing it down. People mobilized to prevent that, and it has become the Benton County Historical Museum.

Philomath has been a timber town:

"We were a timber town until the mid-1980s. Now we have some high tech coming in."

"I was born and raised here. My grandfather and father were in the timber business—that's all there was."

"This was a blue-collar town but now it has become commuters."

In the last several years, people who work elsewhere have found Philomath a desirable place to be. Newcomers are said to be people from Corvallis or Albany seeking a better quality of life, more affordable housing, the preferred schools of Philomath, and a slower pace.

The homes going in are high-end homes. The blue-collar history of the community is giving way to commuting suburban dwellers.

"Philomath and Corvallis have become one economy but they are still two communities. There used to be cheap property here but that is no longer true."

"I live on a farm near here that used to be my parents. Since the mid-'50s. Of course, I don't farm."

South of Philomath is the small, dispersed and old settlement of Bellfountain, surrounded by green farms, and in the Greenberry Road area, a number of rural enterprises—Tye Wine Cellars, Inavale School, the Forest Service Seed Orchard, Oakridge Farm and Cemetery, Davis Farm.

Publics

The publics of Philomath include traditional families that characteristically have made their living in forest work and timber production. An emerging professional class of people has begun working in the community, although a greater share of them commute to the urban areas. A large segment of Philomath residents now commute to the urban labor markets of Albany, Corvallis, and Salem.

Networks

See Section Two.

Work Routines

Philomath is a community undergoing transition from a timber town to one oriented to the labor markets of Corvallis, Albany, and Salem.

"Traffic has changed direction. Used to be Corvallis people would drive out here and work in the mills. Now people here drive to town for work."

A number of stores tell the story of the decline, tenacity, and continued presence of the timber industry. A timber supply store, Weist Logging, in a small storefront, Miller Timber Services, and Georgia Pacific still operate in the community. Local residents thought that Georgia Pacific was stable and would be around for a while. Other timber operations or wood products businesses have gone—Tree Source (it had three operations including Philomath Forest Products), and Smurfit newsprint.

Major timber owners are Starker Forests, Weyerhaeuser (taking over Willamette Industries' lands), Georgia Pacific, Simpson toward the coast and Thompson's, off Mary's Peak. Starker and Thompson's have the reputation of longer rotations and thinning management programs.

Some mills still depend on larger trees, such as the Hull-Oakes operation in Bellfountain, Georgia Pacific (sawmill and planing mill) in Philomath, Swanson Brothers in Noti, as well as the Weyerhaeuser (formerly Willamette Industries) mill east of Lebanon. Small diameter operations are not very plentiful—Cascade Pacific Industries near Toledo and the mill in Cascadia that does 6-12 inch logs. A Swanson Group operation for small diameter recently shut down near Junction City.

A number of comments by loggers and their family members show the attitudes and lifestyles of this public:

"We need logging. Trees grow old and die. Old growth is rotten on the inside, it must be harvested, too."

"One good thing is that we were forced to replant. If you look at 30 year old stands, now they need thinning."

"My folks had 100 acres. We had to sell it when they died. All we ever did was thin. We'd go in there every 7 or 8 years and thin it again. When it was sold, the new owners cut everything and planted Christmas trees."

"Family saw mills built the town—the new fire hall in the '70s. The high school was built by sawmills."

"There are no jobs left. When I grew up there was a sawmill in every canyon."

"We wouldn't even use Forest Service roads in winter; they were too muddy. The roads were seasonal, then they went to rock, and some went to blacktop!"

"Those towers can cost \$1 million. You have to have armed guards out there. They're going to lighter machinery every day, quicker harvest."

"In the past, there were three mechanics shops servicing the logging industry. They're still here but with just a few workers."

Changes in the timber industry are affecting future options in this area. Starker Forests is a well-known company that developed through the gradual accumulation of 63,000 acres of timberlands initiated by the patriarch, T.J. Starker, who was an OSU forestry professor for many years. The company does not process its logs but depends on marketing them to area mills. It has focused on longer stock rotations, thinning, and lighter touch forestry. The longer rotations, with a higher-grade dimension product as the outcome, have not always proven themselves in the marketplace. The market is going to "oriented-strandboards," using low-grade material for chips. Smaller logs and quicker rotations work well for this market. Specialty products are commanding more market attention than the dimension products of the past. Certification processes to affirm sustainable forestry practice have not yet realized a price premium, although Starker is a member of the American Forests' program. A possible trend may be that certification may be necessary to even get into the market in the future.

The presence of the new economy can be discerned as well. An old rusted warehouse now has a sign, "Architectural Salvage"; Sunrise Bakery and Bike Path have new and used books in addition to bicycles. The Oregon Education Association is located by the school administration building. A number of Hispanic businesses can be observed, notably two small restaurants.

City officials and residents have made some efforts to develop a new job base. An industrial park was begun and Gene Tools, a company doing genetic research, has located there and is apparently happy. Leaders hope that other similar companies will locate there also. An old mill site of Willamette Industries has been vacant for 20 years. The 80 acres may go to development soon. Officials do not believe contamination is a problem at the site. Generally, the economic development efforts have been oriented to high technology, so-called "greener" companies.

The rural areas around Philomath seemed filled with home-based businesses—vineyards and wineries, horse stables, dog breeding, glass studios, and many others. Folks in the very rural areas reported a general decline in agriculture and an immigration of medical people, as in Kings Valley, and other professionals commuting to the urban areas.

City administration reported the major employers for Philomath residents, along with the number of employees, to be:

Hewlett-Packard Co., Hand held calculators	5,800
Evanite Fibert, Battery separators, plastic	244
Philomath Forest, Lumber	150
Georgia Pacific, Wood products	125
Smurfit, Wood products, paper (now gone)	75

Source: Community Profile, Oregon Economic and Community Development Department, 2002.

Support Services

People in the Philomath area pride themselves on having an active community that knows how to get things done. The development of the library is seen as a volunteer "barn-raising" type event.

Philomath is known for "great" schools. The Clemens Foundation was started by the timber family and aids local schools. Residents said the foundation offered free college to Philomath for students who graduated high school in the community. Apparently, there was so much attraction by other families who moved to the community to take advantage of the offer that officials

had to increase the requirements. After being re-stipulated that all high school years must be spent in the community, the requirement was changed again to say that students must attend Philomath from the 5th grade in order to get free college. Its current director, a nephew of the founders, was in the news recently stating the foundation may discontinue the program because the timber industry is not respected and the program has attracted "welfare" thinking (Medford Mail Tribune, 7/1/02).

A number of youth facilities are located in Philomath. In addition to the Philomath Middle School on the south end of town is Clemens Primary School and the Philomath Youth Activities Club, a large, new building.

Bus service was recently begun that links Philomath and Corvallis.

Philomath Community Foundation is a non-profit organization that catalyzes community improvement projects.

Mary's River Grange remains a viable grange dedicated to agricultural lifestyles.

Philomath is known locally and regionally as a community with lots of volunteer labor. Everyone had a story about how this was done, or that place was built, using local residents, and often, local dollars. Timber companies are attributed with establishing a climate where it was considered normal to do your part for your town. So many of the companies made contributions of money, labor, and materials to develop the community. The Hull, Clemens, and Starker families were known as philanthropists who gave locally first. The fire hall and library are attributed to the community spirit developed over the years.

What is remarkable about the volunteerism of Philomath is that it was at its strongest in the 1990s, five to ten years after the decline of timber, when one would expect the town to be reeling with economic hardship.

There has been talk in the community about an improved highway—"55 from I-5 to the sea" is the motto. Residents are concerned because this highway would by-pass Philomath and hurt the town economically that depends increasingly on highway traffic.

Recreation Activities

See Section Three.

B. Citizen Themes and Issues Related to Community Life

Citizen Themes

1. "We lost our job base." This theme permeates community life. People are still adjusting to the decline of timber and to the newcomers in their community who work elsewhere.
2. "Environmentalists moved in and ruined everything." The same gentleman said, "We were overcutting, but they went too far."

Citizen Issues Related to Community Life

Community and Economic Development

"There's a big push to do industrial lands conversion. People want cleaner and greener enterprises."

"Benton has to change. We need something more than the college and Hewlett."

"Now the taxes are high, I don't see how anyone can live here."
[Especially for long-term families]

"Salvage trees should be taken. Look at all that bug kill on [Highway] 58 in the McKenzie. It's just sitting there."

"We need thinning sales!"

"Farmland is being lost to houses. The best farmland is along the river and that is becoming houses."

A community civic center is one of our goals."

Section Two: Communication Strategies

A. Informal Networks and Communication

Paul's Diner; young families; the owner is involved in restoration activities.

Terry Selby at the High School does outdoor education.

B. Formal Groups and Communication

Figure 38
Organizations With Interest in Public Lands in Philomath

Organization	Contact Information	Mission
The Oregon Trail Riding Association	Amy and Barry Krohn (541) 754-3266	Horse trail development
Philomath Community Foundation	(541) 929-5166	Catalyzes community projects
Mary's River Grange		
Association of Oregon Loggers	Salem 1-800-452-6023	Advocates for interests of timber workers
Philomath Chamber of Commerce	2395 Main St. Philomath, OR 97370	
Mary's River Watershed Council	Sandra Coveny 611 NW 17 th Avenue Corvallis, OR 97330 (551) 758-7597	
Willamette Restoration Initiative	PO Box 13026 Salem, OR 97309 (503) 375-5686	Funding land tour on sustainable practices

Section Three: The Public Lands Perspective

A. Uses of and Orientation to Public Lands

Recreation is both a pastime and an economic activity. While the timber and blue-collar town engaged in social activities, "make do" recreation, and active uses of the outdoors, the commuting town is more oriented to "entertainment" and organized events and activities. It is a more educated population with more income.

"Recreation is big and will stay big."

Fishing remains extremely popular.

"A lot of people use the boat ramps on the Siuslaw River, especially in winter."

A number of facilities cater to horse interests. The Tanglewood Tack Shoppe features eastern and western riding. Crescent Valley Stables, Harmony's Training Center, Inavale on Airport Road, OSU Equestrian Center, and the Oregon Trail Riding Association. The facilities seem mainly oriented to breeding and trails, with the trails being on private lands or on industrial timberlands. Horse people typically go on a periodic basis, perhaps yearly, to wilderness areas or other high country sites for extended trips as well. Their interests with public lands relates especially to maintaining access.

Local nurseries say the demand for native stock is rising and is unlikely to go away. Native perennials are the hardest to get. Nursery grown natives are preferred in the market than native stocks gathered on site, so it appears public lands are not directly related to this economic activity. However, continued education about the importance of using native species through Forest Service programs is desired.

The Oregon Department of Forestry has a district office in Philomath. It has a reputation of direct community involvement and it is active in offering technical support to Watershed Councils.

The Corvallis Municipal Watershed is located on Mary's Peak, and the City draws on Willamette River water as well.

A logging program is still going on in the schools where students are offered instruction in forest employment.

Mary's River Watershed Council meets in Philomath and appears made up equally of local landowners, natural resource professionals, and townspeople. The group seemed to have good working relationships and a history of successful projects. The Willamette Restoration Initiative funded its June land tour of sustainable practices. The Council has a small grant program for helping landowners and groups, and conducts data collection, analysis and monitoring of certain watershed functions. They draw on OWEB and EPA funding. It also recently co-sponsored a "Watersheds, Wetlands, and Wineries" celebration at Tye Wine Cellars. Benton County Soil and Water Conservation District has been active with the Council. The Forest Service reportedly has not been. Finally, the Council has been in communication with other nearby Watershed Councils (Long Tom, Luckiamute, and others) and they are exploring regional coordination for some projects.

Forest Service ties did not seem extensive with the exception of Mary's Peak management.

"I'm not too sure where the closest Forest Service office is. I know Alsea's closed and I don't know if Corvallis has an office or not."
[Storeowner]

"We haven't used Rural Assistance dollars for a few years. I think the last project was to improve north 13th street 6 years ago." [City administrator]

People from Corvallis and Philomath have felt included in the management of Mary's Peak, and other nearby lands. For signage, vandalism, winter closings, historical preservation, citizens feel consulted and supported.

"This has been an active relationship."

B. Citizen Issues Related to Natural Resource Management

Many people, particularly those involved in outdoor education and youth activities of one kind or another, consistently brought up their interest in more outdoor education in the region by the Forest Service.

Residents who have traditionally engaged in timber management practices have a number of criticisms about Forest Service management. The general argument is that environmental voices have too much influence, and that conflicting laws and changing administrations prevent effective management. Because timber receipts in the past came back to local counties to support roads and schools, timber people feel that the "payments to counties" program of the last couple of years is "hush money" because it de-couples timber production from financial support of communities. Of course, the big item is that the Forest Service does not put out timber sales.

"We tried advisory committees to develop timber sales after the [Northwest] Forest Plan, but they didn't work. Access to the courts is too easy."

"The Siuslaw can produce 300 MMBF [million board feet] a year that could be cut. Our hope is that federal forests will come back to a reasonable level of cut."

"If current management doesn't change and some timber harvest allowed to happen, it is a recipe for fire, insects, and disease."

"Frivolous law suits hurt. Environmentalists infiltrate the Forest Service and meanwhile dead and dying material is not harvested."

Smaller timber production facilities:

"The biggest problem with the decline of federal timber is that the big boys dictate supply and demand. Isn't it ironic that they have in common with environmentalists an incentive to keep things shut down?"

"Big timber landowners control the supply. The Forest Service trees in the past helped smooth the price curves. As a medium-sized company, we are barely holding on."

"The timber sale process is too cumbersome, too structured. It is cost prohibitive. 'Must build 5 miles of road,' 'Must do own environmental report.' The system is bogged down in paperwork."

Some residents have valued the more recent timber management philosophy of the Siuslaw:

"Siuslaw timber sales maybe shouldn't return. These soils are more sensitive than most and slides in the past were common. The Forest shifted to lighter touch management and it's a good thing."

Mary's Peak

"Signage at Mary's Peak was a real problem. They finally got them up and then vandals did them in. They had to do them again. When the toilets were vandalized, the community was outraged."

"Nobody liked it when they closed the peak [Mary's Peak] in the winter. Once people understood the costs, then it was OK."

On the proposed move the Siuslaw National Forest Supervisor's Office (see chapter on Corvallis):

"The move is bad. Keep managers close to the land. It sends the wrong signal. They already closed Alsea. The Siuslaw Forest is 600,000 acres—an area that size deserves its own administrator." [Timber industry representative]

General

"The Forest Service could really push education on native species. People still don't get why that's important."

C. Management Opportunities

The last chapter on Final Recommendations outlines opportunities to address interests in timber production and in outdoor education.

This page intentionally left blank