

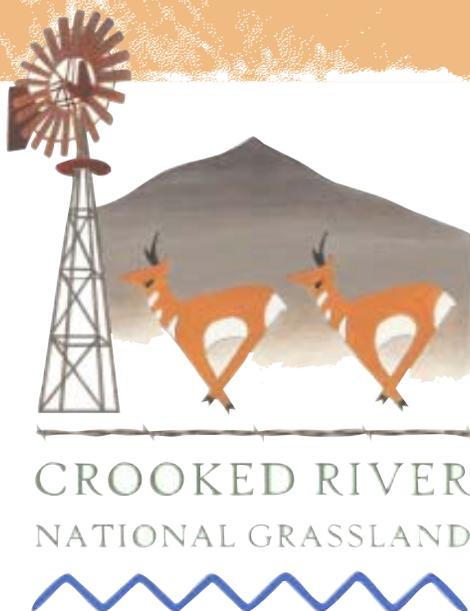
Celebrating 50 years Crooked River National Grassland

Free land - Government gives away millions of acres

Today, this sounds like an internet scam; however, in 1862, it was true. Attempting to settle the Wild West, Congress enacted the *Homestead Act of 1862* authorizing 160-acre parcels of land be given to those willing to settle and cultivate it. Despite the hardships, the promise of free land lured hundreds of thousands looking for a better life. By 1904 nearly 100 million acres had been homesteaded into about 500,000 farms.

During this time, the climate was wetter and milder; homesteaders successfully raised wheat, vegetables and fruit without irrigation. However, in the 1920's and 30's the climate changed and became drier. Lands ill suited to farming had been plowed with shallow plows, wind had scoured sandy soils and hillsides, soils blew or washed away, grasshoppers stripped fields. Homesteaders watched as their crops failed year after year. Combined with the Great Depression these events proved too much to bear. One-by-one farms were abandoned as families searched for ways to survive.

As part of the Federal Emergency Relief Act of 1933, Congress enacted the Land Utilization Program that authorized the purchase of privately owned "sub-marginal" lands, those lands low in productivity or otherwise ill suited for farm crops. The Government continued purchasing these lands and by 1946 had acquired more than 11.3 million



"This celebration is more than just the anniversary of the transfer of the Grassland from the Soil Conservation Service to the Ochoco National Forest. It's a celebration of this place and all the people who loved and lived on this land." Kristin Bail, District Ranger, Crooked River National Grassland.

acres, mostly in the central United States. Once acquired, intensive restoration and development began. Restoring these badly damaged lands also created more than 50,000 jobs; very important as the nation was pulling itself out of the Depression.

Beginning as a sub-marginal land purchase and development effort, the Land Utilization Program evolved into a program designed to transfer land to its most suitable use. As a result, lands

were transferred to the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior – National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

January 6, 1954, the Secretary of Agriculture transferred the administration of the Land Utilization Program lands from the Soil Conservation Service to the U.S. Forest Service. The Central Oregon Land Utilization Project became a Ranger District on the Ochoco National Forest; officially renamed the Crooked River National Grassland on June 23, 1960.

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Through the millenia...

Many Indian tribes and explorers journeyed through, settled and established territories within the Deschutes Basin. This habitation began at least 7,000 years ago.

Peoples known as the Wascopum, Walla-Walla, Tenino, Northern Paiute, Klamath, Umatilla, Grande Ronde and Mollala lived in this area before and during the historic period (1805 to present). Root crops of bitterroot and many lomatium species provided valuable foods, plentiful enough for drying and storage. Nearby, eastern slopes of the Cascade Range offered camas meadows and huckleberry patches. The high desert and uplands supplied mule deer, elk, antelope, mountain sheep, rabbits and waterfowl.

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1954 - 2004

Civilian Conservation Corps

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as one of the New Deal programs during the Great Depression "for the relief of unemployment through the performance of useful public work and for other purposes."



The CCC program had two main objectives: find immediate and useful conservation work for thousands of unemployed young men and provide vocational and educational training for enrollees.



The Lamonta CCC camp was built in 1935. These young men completed conservation projects, cleaned up abandoned homesteads, fixed springs and wells, built stock trail and seeded the land with crested wheat.



The CCC program ended in 1942 and Lamonta was shut down during World War II. Although only remnants remain those hard-working

men left a legacy of restored lands, roads, bridges, trails, fire lookouts and campgrounds.

Note: The few buildings that remain have suffered from vandalism and are no longer accessible to the public. The CRNG is conducting a Facilities Master Plan to help decide what to do with these buildings. If you would like to provide any input, contact the CRNG office.



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1954 - 2004

Free Land (continued)

Today the Crooked River National Grassland manages 112,000 acres to promote development of grassland agriculture and the sustained yield of its resources, including forage, wildlife, water, providing recreation opportunities and protecting cultural resources.

Managing the Grassland is increasingly complex due to increased use and multiple demands on this resource. Trash dumping, unmanaged off-highway vehicle use, invasive noxious weeds, fragmented habitat and vandalism of historic sites and archaeological resources all threaten the health and vitality of Crooked River National Grassland.

The management decisions we make now will shape the future of the Grassland. The CRNG is working on an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and wants your input. You can help shape the future of the Grassland. For more information on how to get involved, contact the CRNG office.

Points of Interest

McCain Orchard Julius and Sarah McCain met and married in Greenwood County, Kansas. In 1877 they moved west and eventually claimed a homestead near Gray Butte in 1886. The McCoins had five children, but only their youngest, Walter, was born on the homestead. The older children rode nine miles to the school at Haystack until the Gray Butte school was built 2 ½ miles away. Julius McCain drove freight teams between Prineville and The Dalles and was often away from home. When Sarah died suddenly in 1888, nine year old Minnie McCain cared for the children whenever Julius was away. You can visit the orchard planted by the McCoins and then hike the Gray Butte Trail.

Gray Butte Cemetary Started by homesteaders in 1893.

Rimrock Springs Members of the Meek Wagon Train camped here in 1845. Today the springs are managed as wildlife habitat. The trail from the parking area leads to viewing platforms overlooking the springs.

Through the millenia (continued)

By 1850, traditional life ways were significantly changed with the introduction of Euro-American culture. Treaties were signed with the US Government and reservation lands were established. Three principal bands, Wascopum, Tiah, and Upper DeChutes and Lower DeChutes bands of the Walla-Wallas agreed to move and settle within the reservation boundary. This became known as the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation.

The Forest Service, in coordination with the Indian Tribes, has trust responsibilities to preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of their heritage, and protect the freedom of American Indians to believe, express, and exercise their traditional religions.

The Crooked River National Grassland works with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to maintain traditional plants and foods, preserve traditional cultural practices and protect archaeological and spiritual sites.



Drought, erosion and insects forced many homesteaders to abandon their homes.

Want to know more?

Contact the Crooked River National Grassland District Office

at 541-475-9272 or visit our website at fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon.com