



Siuslaw National Forest Fun Facts

April 15, 2008

The Siuslaw NF centennial "Celebrating the Siuslaw National Forest 1908-2008" is here. During the coming months, you will be seeing a series of short informational stories called "Fun Facts" about the Siuslaw coming to a computer screen near you. Please join the centennial committee as we share some of the Forest's history, milestone events, interesting people, places and changes over the past 100 years. There will be about one fun fact a week sent out between now and the end of September.

What's in the name . . . "Siuslaw"?

Have you ever wondered where the name *Siuslaw* comes from and what it means?

The majority of national forests and ranger districts across the country have been named for the predominant landscape feature of the area where they are located . . . a mountain, bay, river, lake, or town. When the fledgling Tillamook and Umpqua forests were combined to form the Siuslaw National Forest in 1908, the more centralized Siuslaw River, with its headwaters east of the Coast Range, and meandering to the Pacific Ocean, was selected as the locational icon that unified and identified the new north and central coast forest.

Earlier than 1908, Tillamook, Umpqua and Siuslaw were all derived from Indian names for the places in which these people once lived, and today these names (and others) continue to identify tribes or bands with whom our forest closely works.

But the name Siuslaw . . . does it really mean "far away waters" as is often seen in print? The answer to that question is, No! According to linguist Patty Whereat, herself a member of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, the word Siuslaw was the local name for a small stream entering the North Fork of the Siuslaw River near a major winter village.



Many variations of Siuslaw have been recorded in the journals of early explorers and later anthropologists coming to the area to study local languages and cultures. The Lewis and Clark Expedition learned from local tribes near where they wintered in 1805-06, that the *Shiatuckle* people lived along the lower coast; in 1828, Alexander McLeod of the Hudson's Bay Company identified these Indians as the *Saoustla*; Hale recorded the *Saiustla* in Wilkes' US Exploring Expedition reports.



So, the name that had earlier designated a small stream by a major winter village became the identifier for all the Indians living south of Tenmile Creek (Lane County) to Tahkenitch Lake, the language they shared, the river that supported their winter villages and their culture, the watershed that created the river, and the Forest that now perpetuates the name.

Any way you spell it, it's a good place to be.