

CHAPTER 2 - USES, VALUES AND ISSUES

This chapter outlines the specific uses, values and issues that are relevant to the South Fork and were used to develop the key questions that are listed in Chapter 3.

A variety of sources provided insight into the uses, values, and issues for this area. They include previous analysis documents; the Willamette National Forest LRMP and other higher level plans; interactions with McKenzie area residents, landowners, and interested individuals; and discussions with state and federal agency personnel.

The Willamette National Forest LRMP identified Strategic Goals (IV 2-3) and Resource Management Goals (IV 3-6). The Strategic Goals include concepts related to diversity, rivers, travelways, old growth and community. These elements are all important attributes of the South Fork of the McKenzie watershed and they provided an excellent starting point for developing the uses and values.

HUMAN VALUES AND USES

There are two management features within the South Fork that directly relate to uses and values. These will be discussed first.

NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

Road 19 (Aufderheide Drive) has been designated as a National Scenic Byway. Views along the byway include the South Fork McKenzie River, Three Sisters Wilderness, Cougar Dam and Reservoir, Rebel Rock, and a number of other natural or human caused focal points. Aufderheide Drive serves as a primary travelway between the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the Willamette River drainage and the McKenzie River drainage.

ELIGIBLE WILD AND SCENIC RIVER

The South Fork of the McKenzie River has been determined to be eligible for inclusion into the wild and scenic rivers system. It has four attributes that meet the criteria for outstandingly remarkable values (ORV's): scenery, recreation, fish and prehistoric sites.

RECREATION

A variety of recreational opportunities are available throughout the watershed. They range from motorized driving along Aufderheide Drive to backcountry camping in the Three Sisters Wilderness. The corridor immediately adjacent to the river is valued for its scenic qualities, its developed campgrounds, and easy accessibility of numerous dispersed camping sites.

Activities that have contributed significantly to many peoples lives include camping, boating, hiking, fishing, mountain biking, bicycle touring, hunting, horseback riding and driving. Winter activities include cross country skiing and snowmobiling. Two new (1994) activities that are very popular are overnight stays in Box Canyon Guard Station and the Indian Ridge Fire Lookout.

Terwilliger Hot Springs is a world renowned hot springs in a natural setting. The Hot Springs is comprised of several hand constructed pools which have been developed with lava rock. This location and experience is valued by thousands of people for its scenic, aesthetic, and spiritual qualities.

Cougar Reservoir is used as a place for recreationists to swim, boat, water ski and fish.

SCENIC AND AESTHETIC

The corridor along the South Fork McKenzie River has long been valued for its scenic and aesthetic qualities. In 1982 a group of concerned citizen's representing various outdoor groups formed a task force to present an alternative management scheme for the area. This plan eventually led to the designation of the South Fork Corridor as a "Special Interest Area" in the

1990 Willamette National Forest Plan. The "cathedral-like" qualities of the old growth as referred to in the task force report is one of the major attractions of this area. Aufderheide Drive has been identified as a premier location in Lane County for fall auto touring. The East Fork is also valued as a scenic drive for many people.

There are many special places within the South Fork including Olallie Mountain, Quaking Aspen Swamp, rock formations along Rebel Ridge, Hidden Lake, and the French Pete area that are valued for their natural beauty and their aesthetic qualities.

Wild fish stocks, which inhabit the South Fork appeal to many for their aesthetic values.

SPIRITUAL

The forests, streams and mountains offer the opportunity for spiritual reflection for many people. A few examples include Terwilliger Hot Springs which is often identified as a place where people have a deeply spiritual experience, and the French Pete area of the Three Sisters Wilderness Area which is a relatively low elevation, large forested drainage with a variety of special places and viewpoints.

EMPLOYMENT

The vegetation within the South Fork watershed is used for a variety of forest products from sawlogs for lumber to floral design products. The South Fork has contributed timber to the local communities since the late 1940's. Firewood has been a popular item for personal use in home heating. More recently a wide variety of vegetation including bear grass, fir boughs, Christmas trees and moss have been offered for sale.

There are many packers and guides who make their livelihood guiding on the river and in the wilderness areas. The South Fork below the dam to the confluence with the main McKenzie is especially popular with river guides.

In 1994, three developed campgrounds in the South Fork were operated under a concessionaire permit. This approach will likely continue if shown to be successful.

The South Fork contributes to the commercial fishing industry by providing habitat for chinook salmon production.

The South Fork has been shown to provide many popular locations for still and video photographers.

FLOOD CONTROL, IRRIGATION AND HYDROELECTRIC FROM COUGAR DAM

Cougar Dam is the highest rock fill dam in Oregon, at 452 feet high and 1500 feet long.

Cougar Reservoir provides a source of water used for hydro-electric generation, irrigation, navigation, municipal water sources, and downstream water quality.

DOMESTIC WATER SUPPLY

The South Fork contributes to the domestic water source for Eugene/Springfield through the McKenzie River. The South Fork is also the ground water source for the Blue River water system.

ECOLOGICAL VALUES

FOREST HEALTH AND DIVERSITY

Forest health and diversity with its ability to sustain a wide variety of plant and animal life is a key ecological value within the South Fork. The South Fork contains areas of unfragmented trees, mature or old growth. These forests are home to a wide variety of species.

KEY WATERSHED

The Tier 1, Key Watershed status of the majority of the South Fork watershed plays a role in a regional conservation strategy for maintaining aquatic ecosystems and the species that have evolved in them. Relatively undisturbed habitat, such as exists in the wilderness portion of the South Fork McKenzie watershed, provides valuable information on levels of complexity in aquatic and riparian systems.

Water quality in the South Fork is recognized for its' clarity and benefits to fish, especially chinook, bull trout and native rainbow trout.

ISSUES

Numerous issues were identified and are summarized in five categories:

- 1) Issues associated with the South Fork as a Key Watershed,
- 2) Issues associated with past management activities,
- 3) Issues associated with Cougar Dam,
- 4) Issues associated with recreation use, and
- 5) Issues associated with human demand for outputs.

The full list of specific issue statements is filed in Appendix Table Process 1.

- 1) The South Fork has been designated as a Key Watershed as part of the regional conservation strategy for maintaining aquatic ecosystems. High quality habitat should be maintained.
- 2) Past forest management activities including road construction, cutting and yarding of trees, removal of down wood, and slash treatment have had a variety of potential effects on the aquatic system as well as the terrestrial system.

The aquatic system may have been affected in the following ways:

- potential increases in landslides and surface erosion which could contribute to turbidity and sediment filled pools
- removal of riparian vegetation affecting water temperatures and riparian function
- increased road densities which may be contributing higher levels of sediment and increased peak water flows as well as decreased productivity
- placement of roads within floodplains which could alter the riparian functions and processes

- removal of vegetation and road building to the degree that peak flows could be increased
- removal of down wood affecting channel complexity and pool frequency.

The terrestrial system may have been affected in the following ways:

- amounts, distribution and configuration of forest vegetation may be outside the natural range of variability
- resulting wildlife habitats may be insufficient, isolated, distributed in a less than desirable pattern, or lack specific structural components
- road densities may lead to increased wildlife harassment and poaching
- specific scenic values may be threatened

3) Cougar Dam has had a variety of effects primarily on the hydrologic system and the aquatic habitat. The dam has altered the hydrological regime, the stream channel itself, and the floodplain morphology. The dam has disrupted sediment transport and reduced peak flows as well as changed the natural temperature fluctuations of the water. These altered conditions have affected the habitat for bull trout, spring chinook and other aquatic species. The dam also poses a barrier to the migration of fish species.

4) Heavy concentrated recreation use in the vicinity of the Terwilliger Hot Springs and Cougar Reservoir as well as in dispersed campsites along the South Fork itself may have impacts on riparian functions, as well as on the recreational experience of the Forest visitors.

5) Human and economic considerations are a component of the South Fork. Where sound management can preserve the health of forest land, commodities need to go forward (ROD pg. 3).