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Studies
Historical Information
Umatilla National Forest

November 21, 1939

Mr. E. J. Griffith
State Administrator
Survey of Federal Archives
Works Progress Administration
518 Elks Temple
Portland, Oregon

Dear Mr. Griffith:

Further reference is made to your letter of August 9 and to ours of August 14.

In accordance with your request we are returning herewith the histories you sent us for comment. Also attached is a history prepared in this office which may or may not prove to be of value to you in your project. We regret the delay in our reply and trust that we have not greatly inconvenienced you.

May I again express our appreciation of your consideration and the hope that we may receive the "Inventory for the Department of Agriculture for Oregon" when completed.

Very sincerely yours,

/s/ Carl Ewing

CARL EWING
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures

cc: R.F.
Mansfield
Tucker
Tucker
Wehmeyer

UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST

Forest Supervisor

Post Office Building

Pendleton, Oregon

Location

The Umatilla National Forest is located along the Blue Mountain range in northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington. It includes parts of Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Morrow, Grant and Wheeler Counties in Oregon, and parts of Columbia, Garfield, Asotin, and Walla Walla Counties in Washington.

Forest Description

The forest includes the major part of the Blue Mountain range. Elevations range from about 1400 feet to over 6000 feet. The mountains are plateau-like in character cut by deep precipitous canyons whose walls expose many successive lava flows. The forest cover ranges from pure ponderosa pine type at the lower elevations to white fir-larch or lodgepole types above. The timber growth is confined to the gentle foothills and the plateau-like ridge tops with almost no tree growth on the steeper canyon slopes. Large open meadows and scab lands are common throughout the timbered area.

Major drainages of the forest are the John Day, Wenaha, Grande Ronde, Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Tucannon Rivers, and Willow Creek which is tributary to the Snake River.

Forest Contribution to Community Welfare

The Umatilla contributes to the surrounding communities through the mediums of lumbering, grazing, recreation, and watershed protection.

Three major timber companies are operating on the forest, and large numbers of local farmers and ranchers secure their fuel and building materials within its boundaries. The estimated volume of timber on the forest is placed at 5,087,323 M ft. b.m. of all species.

The forest has furnished grazing for domestic livestock since the days of the first settlers. Records on file indicate that just prior to the establishment of the Wenaha Forest Reserve there were somewhat in excess of 275,000 head of grown sheep plus their increase, 40,000 head of cattle, and 15,000 head of horses grazed annually on the Wenaha Reserve alone. This extremely heavy use is no doubt responsible for the present condition of the range. Under Forest Service administration numbers of stock permitted were rapidly decreased until now approximately 88,102 head of sheep and 8,528 head of cattle and horses are grazed on the entire Umatilla Forest, which is nearly twice the size of the original Wenaha Forest Reserve.

Aside from grazing and lumbering, the Umatilla is the watershed which supplies water both for domestic use and irrigation purposes to all surrounding communities, such as Walla Walla, Pendleton, Milton, La Grande, Dayton, Clarkston, Pomeroy and numerous others.

Heavy recreational use, both winter and summer, is made of the forest by residents of the surrounding country.

Big game, both elk and deer, are plentiful, and each year hundreds of sportsmen from all over both states flock to the forest for their annual hunt. The low point in wild game population seems to have been reached about 1905. In reports of that date are found statements such as, "There are quite a few deer in these hills but they are decreasing rapidly. It is also claimed that there is a small bunch of elk here." Increases in numbers of both elk and deer have been constant since about the time the forest was established. In 1938 estimates of game place the population at about 10,000 deer and 7,000 elk.

Administration

The Umatilla Forest is under the direct supervision of a Forest Supervisor with a staff of some twelve persons and with headquarters offices and warehouse in Pendleton, Oregon. The Supervisor's headquarters have been located in Pendleton since their removal from Heppner, Oregon in 1915.

The forest is divided into six ranger districts, each of which is under immediate supervision of a District Ranger who is responsible to the Supervisor. The districts are as follows:

Asotin District

Summer headquarters at Clearwater Ranger Station, winter headquarters at Pomeroy, Washington. This district now includes 200,638 acres in Asotin and Garfield Counties, Washington, and Wallowa County, Oregon. In addition to the national forest acreage protection is given to about 34,000 acres of private and state lands outside the forest boundary under agreement with the State Forester. The district is manned by one Ranger and one Assistant Ranger with the aid of six forest guards during the summer season. This district supplies nearly two million board feet of timber products annually mostly in the form of cordwood, posts and poles to the surrounding farming country.

Touchet District

Summer headquarters at Godman Ranger Station and winter headquarters at Dayton, Washington. The Touchet District now includes 161,078 acres in Columbia County, Washington and Wallowa County, Oregon. Approximately 33,000 acres of lands outside the forest boundary are given protection. This district is administered by one District Ranger assisted during the summer months by five forest guards.

Walla Walla District

Summer headquarters at Tollgate Ranger Station and winter headquarters at Walla Walla, Washington. The district covers about 293,496 acres in Walla Walla County, Washington and Wallowa, Umatilla, and Union Counties, Oregon. About 33,520 acres of outside lands are given protection. This district is administered by one Ranger, one Assistant Ranger, and nine forest guards. The protected area included the Mill Creek watershed, which is the water supply for the

city of Walla Walla. The surrounding communities each year look to this district for large volumes of cordwood, mostly from dead timber.

Meacham District

Headquarters year around at La Grande, Oregon. The district covers 153,862 acres in Union and Umatilla Counties, Oregon. Approximately 50,000 acres of outside lands are given protection. The personnel consists of one Ranger and six forest guards.

Ukiah District

Summer headquarters at Ukiah, Oregon and winter headquarters at Pendleton, Oregon. This district includes 261,711 acres in Umatilla, Union, and Grant Counties, Oregon. Approximately 178,000 acres of outside lands are protected. Personnel consists of one Ranger and seven forest guards.

This district carries two large timber sales, the timber going to the Milton Box Company plant in Pendleton, Oregon, and to the Mt. Emily Lumber Company plant at La Grande.

Heppner District

Summer and winter headquarters at Heppner, Oregon. This district covers 298,977 acres in Wheeler, Grant, Morrow, and Umatilla Counties, Oregon. Approximately 550,000 acres of lands outside the forest are given protection. The personnel consists of one Ranger, one Assistant Ranger, and during the summer seasons eleven forest guards. The Heppner District also supports a large timber sale which has been made to the Kinzua Pine Mills Company whose mill is located at Kinzua, Oregon.

History

The Umatilla National Forest in its present form is the result of numerous presidential proclamations consolidating and combining areas previously withdrawn from homestead entry and set aside as "Forest Reserves". The Umatilla National Forest now contains portions of the earlier Wenaha Forest Reserve, Heppner Forest Reserve, Blue Mountain Forest Reserve, Whitman National Forest, and the Wallowa National Forest, which in turn was known as Chesnimnus, Imnaha, and later Wallowa. A brief history of these earlier "Forest Reserves" and their consolidation into the Umatilla National Forest is of interest.

Heppner Forest Reserve

This reserve was created by proclamation of July 18, 1906 from lands withdrawn from entry in 1903 and 1905 lying in T. 4S., Rs. 28, 29 and 30 E., T. 5S., Rs. 27, 28, 29 and 30 E., T. 6S., Rs. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 E., T. 7S., Rs. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 E., and T. 8S., Rs. 25, 26 and 27 E., W.M. Its boundaries remained practically constant until it, along with a portion of what was known as the Blue Mountain Forest Reserve, located in Ts. 9, 10, 11 and 12 South, Rs. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 and 32 E., W.M., was formed into the Umatilla National Forest by proclamation of July 1, 1908.

The Supervisor's Office for the Heppner Forest Reserve was located at Heppner, Oregon. Personnel appear to have been:

D. B. Sheller, Supervisor in 1906
Thos. Chidsey, Supervisor in 1907 and 1908
O. A. Stafford, J. W. Ellis, Leo Neal, and Sylvanus Wright, Rangers.

Blue Mountain Forest Reserve

The part of the Blue Mountain Forest Reserve, which at this time helped form the original Umatilla National Forest, was created by proclamation of March 2, 1907, from lands withdrawn from entry in 1906 and 1907.

There were few changes in the Umatilla National Forest from its creation in 1908 until July 1, 1911, when by proclamation of June 10 by President Wm. H. Taft, the southern division of the forest (which had previously been the Blue Mountain Reserve) became a part of the Malheur National Forest, and the portion of the Whitman National Forest which had once been the Blue Mountain (east) Forest Reserve became a part of the Umatilla. The Blue Mountain (east) Reserve had been established with headquarters at Sumpter, Oregon, on March 15, 1906, from lands withdrawn in 1902. This area was later increased by withdrawals of 1906 and 1907 and was decreased by eliminations of 1902, 1904, 1907, 1908, and 1910. The reserve lay in Ts. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 S., Rs. 32, 33, 33½, 34 and 35 E., W.M. On July 1, 1908, by Executive Order the Blue Mountain (east) Reserve became a part of the Whitman National Forest and so remained until it was transferred to the Umatilla in 1911.

Wenaha Forest Reserve

No important changes in the Umatilla are recorded from 1911 until November 5, 1920, when the Wenaha Forest Reserve, which by this time was known as the Wenaha National Forest, was made part of the Umatilla National Forest.

The Wenaha Forest Reserve was created May 12, 1905, by proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt from lands withdrawn from homestead entry in 1902 and 1903. Small areas were released from the reserve in 1907 and 1910, and in 1910 approximately 1½ sections of land were transferred from the Wallowa to the Wenaha. The Wenaha Forest Reserve included most of T. 9N., Rs. 40, 41, 42 and 43 E.; T. 8N., Rs. 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44 E.; T. 7N., Rs. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44 E.; Ts. 4, 5, 6N., Rs. 38, 39, 40, 41 and 42 E.; T. 3N., Rs. 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40 E.; Ts. 1 and 2 N., Rs. 36, 37 and 38 E.; T. 1S., Rs. 36, 37 and 38 E.; T. 2S., Rs. 37 and 38 E. From 1910 until the Wenaha Forest Reserve was united with the Umatilla National Forest by presidential proclamation of November 5, 1920, there were few changes in land status or boundaries. The headquarters office for the Wenaha was located at Walla Walla throughout the existence of the Reserve.

Mr. J. M. Schmitz appears to have been "Ranger in Charge" for about the first two years after the creation of the Reserve in 1905. He then was given the title of "Supervisor". He was followed in 1918 by Mr. L.E. McDaniels, who was Supervisor for about a year and then retired to head up a large sheep outfit, turning the administration of the forest over to K.P. Cecil who was Acting

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Supervisor until John C. Kuhns became Supervisor in 1919. Rangers on the Wenaha from 1905 to 1920 included:

F. X. Drachbar	J. H. Russell
Earl Park	Frank E. McDonald
Elmer Thomas	Sam R. Woods
Perry Young	A. J. Graden
George V. Stevenson	F. W. Kendall
W. H. Kendall	R. A. Bottcher
James R. Davis	Albert Baker
Lumbermen:	H. D. Foster
	H. M. Coan
	Geo. A. Bright
Clerks:	Shirley Buck
	Lester B. Jacobs
	Martin N. Unser
	(Miss) M. I. Cooley
	Edith Younkrantz

Although there have been numerous small additions to the Forest by exchange, purchase, and gift, there have been no major changes from 1920 to the present date.