

CRATER LAKE NATIONAL PARK

PRELIMINARY WILDERNESS REVIEW

November 10, 1966

Special Committee on Crater
Lake Wilderness for the
Federation of Western Out-
door Clubs, Friends of the
Three Sisters, Mazamas,
Obsidians, Oregon Cascades
Conservation Council,
Sierra Club, and Wilderness
Society

INTRODUCTION

A special committee representing the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, the Mazamas, the Obsidians, the Oregon Cascades Conservation Council, and the Friends of the Three Sisters Wilderness convened at Crater Lake National Park on July 30, 1966, to review wilderness proposals for the park and the park master plan. What follows is the report of the review and an expression of the consensus of the committee.

THE AREA

The park is a rectangle, about 14 miles wide, east to west, and not quite 19 miles long, north to south. The lake from which it takes its name lies almost in the center of the park. Highways enter from the north, the west, and the south. A former entrance on the east has been closed; however, the east road within the park remains open and is well used. Numerous "administrative" roads were constructed by the CCC. These roads are closed to public use, are--for the most part--not required for the administration of the park, and are subject to closure for wilderness classification. A highway circles the crater rim around the lake.

The highways form a rough cross, with the rim highway forming a circle in the center. For this reason, the park area tends to be divided into five roadless areas: Northwest, Southwest, Southeast, Northeast, and Caldera. Camps, visitor centers, lodges, and the like are in the immediate vicinity of the highways and the lake.

Crater Lake Caldera dominates the park which, for the most part, is a dry but scenically attractive area covered largely by lodgepole pine and dotted with at least eight cones of varying volcanic origins which offer interesting views of Crater Lake rim and the surrounding countryside. Notable among these cones are Mt. Scott (el. 8926) to the east and Union Peak (el. 7698) in the southwest. The headwaters of the Rogue River and a large sphagnum bog, both in the northwest, head a short list of moist areas in the park. The Pumice Desert and the pinnacles formation are also noteworthy features.

The areas away from the lake are not much used nor likely to be so. The woods and meadows are inviting, but an absence of water is likely to prevent a substantial increase in visitation. Much of the area appears to be well suited for cross-country skiing, and this could be a growing recreational use at sometime in the future.

Various streams and springs are located just outside the park boundaries on National Forest lands. In order to establish a suitable wilderness area, these National Forest lands should also be managed in a wilderness condition. But for the lands south of the Southwest roadless area, much of the National Forest lands are roaded and being logged to within about a mile of the park boundaries. Nevertheless, inter-agency cooperation can effect desirable wilderness protection along the boundary area.

PARK WILDERNESS PROPOSALS

The National Park Service has yet to make its recommendations for wilderness areas in Crater Lake National Park. However, the lands in the park have been classified and proposals for wilderness areas have been made by the park staff and the Park Service planning team. With the concurrence of the

Western Regional Office, the Park Superintendent reviewed these proposals with the committee.

The proposed wilderness areas would be four in number, being, for the most part, the four roadless areas discussed above. In general, the wilderness area boundaries parallel the park highways at a distance of about one-quarter mile. In some places, the boundaries have been located on ridge lines or at the lowest edge of bluffs or buttes in order to follow natural boundaries. Most of the existing roadless area is, therefore, being proposed as wilderness. There are three exceptions of note.

In the Northwest roadless area, the eastern boundary follows the crest line until it passes over Red Cone and then gradually returns to the vicinity of the highway. The boundary excludes the Pumice Desert, half of Red Cone, and some exceptionally attractive open country lying just northwest of the lake. The reason for this boundary selection was to preclude the sights and sounds of civilization from intruding upon the wilderness, the excluded area being within the sight of the north highway. The excluded area would, in effect, be a buffer zone.

In the Northeast roadless area, Mt. Scott and the area south of Mt. Scott are excluded from the proposed wilderness area. The exclusion here appears to be inadvertent. Mt. Scott has been classified as a Class IV area, that is, a unique natural area. In Park Service terminology, such a classification is considered to be higher than a wilderness classification. In addition, there is a fire lookout on Mt. Scott, and some question existed as to whether such an installation could exist in a wilderness area. The area south of Mt. Scott was excluded because of a nonconforming use of land near Anderson Spring. However, it appears that a wilderness boundary could bend around the affected location and include a considerably greater area in wilderness.

In the Southeast roadless area, the Wheeler Creek drainage on the east and the Middle Fork Annie Creek drainage on the west have been excluded from the proposed wilderness area. It appears to be necessary for an indefinite time to maintain the use of "administrative" roads in these locations for fire protection. However, if the "administrative" roads are necessary to protect the area, it may be that they are permissible within wilderness under the provisions of section 4 (c) of the Wilderness Act.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations emphasize enlargement of the proposed wilderness areas insofar as is practicable. Specifically, we recommend the following:

(1) That the eastern boundary of the Northwest roadless area be moved to the east to within 100 to 300 yards of the north highway so as to include all of Red Cone, most of the Pumice Desert, and the open country northwest of the lake. The Committee appreciates the desire to have a buffer zone for wilderness but is convinced that the buffer necessarily must be within the wilderness area if it is to afford any lasting protection. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation has revised its wilderness criteria to permit and encourage boundary location to include a buffer. This is the practice followed by the Forest Service. We urge its adoption here.

(2) That Mt. Scott and the area south of Mt. Scott to about elevation 6000 feet be included in the Northeast roadless area.

(3) That the Wheeler Creek and Middle Fork Annie Creek drainages be included in the Southeast roadless area.

(4) That the Winema and Rogue River Forest Supervisors be requested to consider and make recommendations for wilderness, back-country, or

special management area classification of the National Forest lands adjoining the proposed park wilderness areas. The areas of greatest concern appear to be (a) the headwaters of the Rogue, (b) the area around and to the south of Thousand Springs (a strip about one mile in width along the entire west side of the park requires protection to meet the need in these and adjoining areas), (c) the upper reaches of Pothole, Scott, and Cavern creek drainages, and the Oregon Desert and Red Blanket Creek areas to the south of the Park.

(5) That insofar as is possible in keeping with minimum requirements for fire protection, all administrative roads be closed to all motor vehicle traffic. The Committee believes that reduction of maintenance to trail standards will suffice for this purpose.

(6) That Park Service and Concessionaire brochures not emphasize the unusual attraction features within the roadless areas where heavy visitation may damage or destroy natural values. Over-use appears to be directly related to public knowledge.

(7) That the areas classified as "unique natural areas" be included in the wilderness insofar as is possible. We understand that "unique natural area" designation is considered a higher classification than "wilderness" area designation. Nevertheless, the Wilderness Act offers greater protection than an administrative designation and will provide greater certainty that those areas will be preserved in their natural condition.

In addition to its recommendations on wilderness, the Committee would also like to take this opportunity to make recommendations concerning the developed areas of the park.

A. The Lake.

Boat use of the lake would appear to be at the highest optimum level at present; indeed, it may be a bit too high. Concessionaire facilities

and other convenience facilities, other than for sanitation, should be relocated near the rim area. The dock area should be a point of departure and return and not a use area by itself. Facilities on the rim should be limited to those essential to the lake visit; refreshments and the like only contribute to crowding and clutter and should be eliminated.

The experience of visiting the lake's surface is certainly worthwhile and we do not recommend discontinuance of such use. However, such use cannot be allowed to create sanitation problems, disrupt the scenic magnificence of the lake's surface, or impair the unspoiled conditions of the lake's walls and islands. Expansion in use could well lead to these results. We recommend that the fisheries resource, apparently entirely exotic, be allowed to die out if such is its natural course.

It might be beneficial to classify the lake area as wilderness and continue only such use of the area as is deemed desirable. Section 4 (d) (1) of the Wilderness Act permits such an arrangement. This would effectively prevent unauthorized use of the area, and would be a reasonable way to manage the lake visitation.

B. The Rim.

While use of the Rim area has not as yet reached the intolerable level of Yellowstone, it has many of the indicators of heading that way. It would probably be in the best interest of the park and of future generations if some of the user facilities were removed from the rim. The store and the cafeteria are particularly discordant and should be relocated as soon as possible.

The store and cafeteria, and perhaps the lodge as well, should be located near the site of the present park headquarters. Indeed, they could be located at the same site and the headquarters removed to a lower elevation. The old lodge makes an extremely pleasant headquarters for a visit to the lake

and might be retained for a time. The campground is attractive, somewhat removed from the rim, and could be retained, but not enlarged. Visitor displays and the information center are appropriate and should be retained.

We cannot emphasize too strongly the urgent need to relocate the store and cafeteria. Their influences and effects are without merit and are extremely disruptive to the park scene.


CONCLUDING REMARKS


The Committee wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to Superintendent Volz and his excellent staff for their courtesy and cooperation. The Committee was impressed with the obvious sincerity and dedication of the Superintendent and his staff to the park and to the national park concept. The Committee wishes especially to emphasize its appreciation for a preliminary review of park wilderness proposals prior to the National Park Service's formal recommendations for wilderness classification. It is the opinion of the Committee that such preliminary review should be a regular proceeding in wilderness classification, and the Committee commends Superintendent Volz for his foresight and initiative.

THE COMMITTEE

Mr. Don L. Hunter	Obsidians
Mr. & Mrs. Holway R. Jones	Oregon Cascades Conservation Council
Dr. & Mrs. Donald McKinley	Mazamas
Mr. & Mrs. Richard M. Noyes	Wilderness Society & Friends of Three Sisters
Mr. Richard A. Osborne	Sierra Club
Mr. & Mrs. Sanford S. Tepfer	Sierra Club
Mr. Price Zimmerman	Wilderness Society
Mr. Rodger W. Pegues	Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs



Flood and Flowing Low Stream boundaries 

Committee's Proposed Boundary 

Union Area 

State Acquiring Specific Emergency Management 