

2020 SWOCC F251 Elliott State Forest "Virtual" Roads and Trails Report



PREPARED FOR

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[http://www.orww.org/Elliott Forest/Recreation/2020 Roads/Report.html](http://www.orww.org/Elliott_Forest/Recreation/2020_Roads/Report.html)

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Front Cover: Southwestern Oregon Community College (SWOCC) F251 Forest Recreation student Sebastian Bartlett and Dr. Bob Zybach, ORWW, hike toward Mill Creek along Indian Point Road on the Elliott State Forest, May 21, 2019. Photo by Hunter Black-Priest, 2019 SWOCC F251.

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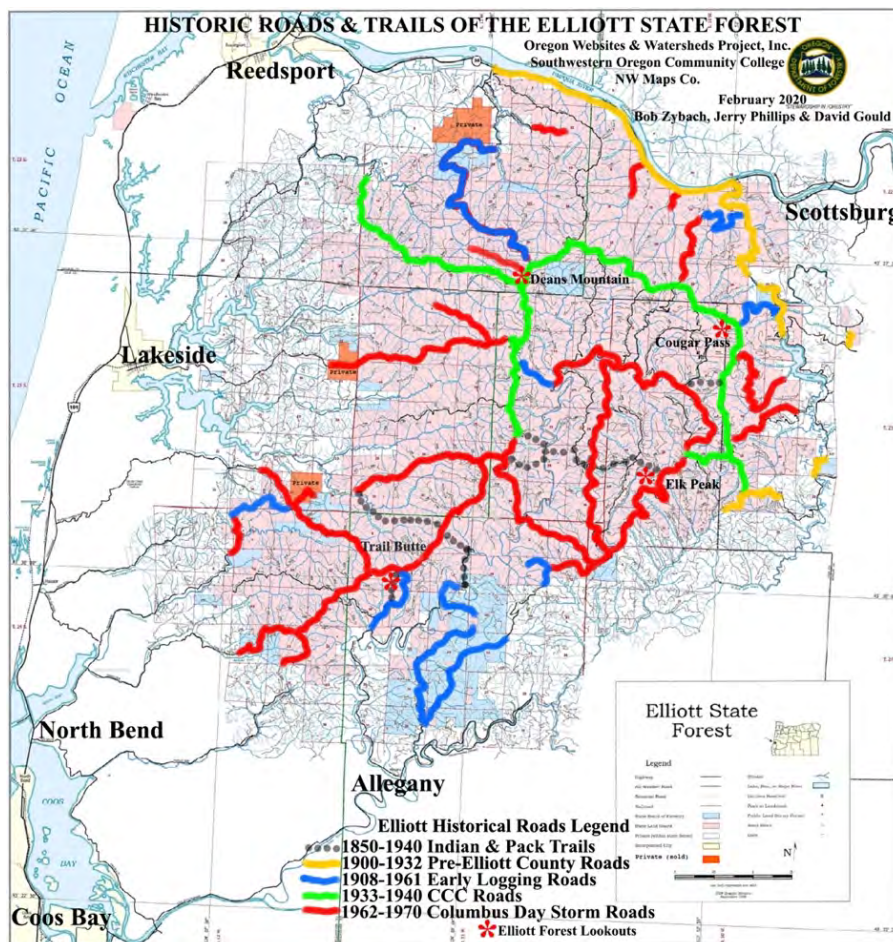
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Introduction. "Distance Learning" and Elliott State Forest Recreation

By Dr. Bob Zybach

It is difficult doing a field trip without actually going into the field; or to do a group project or workshop without actually gathering as a group or working at a shop. The 2020 coronavirus pandemic caused some immediate and significant changes to spring-term plans that had been formalized just a few weeks earlier.

I have been working with Tasha Livingstone and her spring-term F251 Forest Recreation class for the past four years. The focus has been on student group projects related to recreational opportunities on nearby Elliott State Forest: the 2018 class produced the first draft recreation plan ever written for the Elliott (Kronsberg et al 2018); and the 2019 class reviewed and refined the draft plan (Etzwiler et al 2019).



Map 1. Historic Roads & Trails of the Elliott State Forest (Oregon Department of Forestry Graphic Services 1999; Zybach, Phillips & Gould, February 2020).

Both classes participated in a series of either five (2019) or six (2018) four-hour field trips to the Elliott with local experts to witness and experience the topics they were learning about. All finished student work -- including documented field trips - - was put online as ORWW educational websites by both classes for the purposes of refining student Internet communication skills and for sharing with others -- especially future students -- interested in learning more about the Elliott and about forest recreation: www.orww.org/Elliott_Forest/Recreation

The 2018 and 2019 students were consistent in their recommendations that road signs and better road maintenance were priority needs for any recreational or educational uses of the Elliott, and as a matter of public safety. A planning meeting was held at SWOCC on March 10, 2020 to discuss upcoming field trips and workshops for spring-term F251 students, beginning in April. Existing field trip routes, group project design, and lectures were decided to remain about the same as proven successful in previous years, but to shift the study focus to Elliott road and trail histories -- as recommended -- and to consider those relationships to current recreational opportunities and public access needs (Zybach 2018).

A few expected planning people were suddenly absent at the March 10 meeting because of rapidly emerging pandemic concerns and directives at that time. Then, before classes started in April, we were informed that students couldn't be in close proximity to one another (at least in a field trip van); then, shortly after, they couldn't assemble in classrooms, either -- at least for a few weeks; and then, all term. No direct physical contact, much less group projects, classroom lectures, or field trips possible. But they could still take the course online for required credit.

Quick decisions were made. Tasha implemented a community Google.doc file for students to use for collaborating, developing and editing their work in concert with instructors. Everyone was theoretically learning together, but at different times, in different locations, using different computer equipment, and with different WiFi reception speeds -- many of us in rural locations -- and no one with direct technical, library, or field access. But at least we were all working on the same documents with mostly the same Word formatting -- a big improvement from previous years!

McKenzie Peters, NW Maps Co., and I began videotaping "distance learning" lectures as de facto ORWW workshops for the spring-term class with an Android phone and a tripod. These began with me against a wall with a map of the Elliott, or close-ups of the computer screen and were posted to the ORWWmedia YouTube channel for students to view. Online worksheets with links to the

digitized videos, earlier SWOCC student photos and reports, oral histories, maps, articles, books, historical photos and other relevant research materials were posted on the ORWW Elliott Recreation website and distributed weekly to the students.

McKenzie also videotaped David Gould, Jerry Phillips, Nancy Stewart and me on five socially-distanced "virtual" field trips of the Elliott. These replicated the courses taken by the 2018 and 2019 classes, were directly linked to previous student work and ORWW Elliott content, and also posted on YouTube.

The field trip videos were also done with the Android, a tripod, and inexpensive editing software. No schools, libraries, archives, computer repair shops, or even public restrooms were open. There was no budget, advanced warning, good quality equipment, technical expertise, or even an available studio or classroom to work in. David's and Jerry's families were reasonably concerned about their health and risk of being in close proximity to people from the Willamette Valley during the field trips, but everything was somehow completed on time and with surprisingly few problems. Everyone also remained in good health and spirits.



Fig. 1. Wayne Giesy, Jerry Phillips and David Gould, Jerry Phillips Reserve, Elliott State Forest (Photo by Bob Zybach, July 8, 2017).

As a result of the pandemic, the 2020 F251 students did not directly participate in field trips, take their own photos, ask direct questions, or take part in group discussions. Instead, they were forced to use photos and videos taken by McKenzie, myself, earlier students, and others working on these projects; and they needed to rely on the earlier observations, writings and reports of others, including local experts -- now, mostly strangers instead of mentors -- as well.

The ORWW 2020 SWOCC F251 educational project was designed to focus on the Elliott State Forest roads and trails and their historical significance in regard to current and future public access and recreational opportunities. "Historical significance" has important management and use implications that are regulated by state and federal laws. There are two basic definitions of "historical": 1) the record of time during which people have lived in a certain location; and 2) the existing written eyewitness accounts of people for a certain location.

People have lived within and around the current area of Elliot State Forest since "time immemorial" -- more than 10,000 years, at least. This record can be partly told with archaeological research, persistent vegetation patterns, and early historical documentation. A few precontact traditions also persist through family stories and oral histories. So long as people have lived near or within present-day Elliott there have been trails along the streams and ridgelines, with hunting, fishing, camping, and firewood gathering always being a major focus. At some point people began cultivating huckleberries, myrtle nuts, iris and other food and fiber plants along these routes. Butterflies, songbirds, deer, elk and bear quickly followed and populated these creations. This symbiotic relationship between people, fire, favored plants, and native animals likely existed for millennia before the first written records, and was well established and documented during early white immigration.

The documentary history of the Oregon Coast can be said to have generally started with sightings and contact by the James Cook expedition in 1778, or possibly with Francis Drake in 1579. Land-based records for the Elliott area, including written eyewitness accounts, maps, and drawings, began in 1826 with a Hudson Bay Company beaver trapping expedition led by Alexander Roderick McLeod (Davies 1961: 175-212). McLeod kept a detailed daily journal for business purposes and his trapping parties traveled through the area a number of times in the following two years. These visits culminated with a return trip in late 1828 with Jedediah Smith in order to recover valuables -- mostly horses and beaverskins, but also a map and written journal -- and bury the dead from the massacre that had taken

place at the mouth of Smith River a few weeks earlier. Both McLeod and Smith kept daily journals (Sullivan 1934: 112-135).

The next historical record of note was a journal and correspondence of a two-day visit to the mouth of the Umpqua in 1840 by Methodist missionaries Gustavus Hines and Jason Lee (Hines 1887: 93-119). Then, in 1850 a ship sailed into the mouth of the Umpqua and white immigrants from San Francisco claimed 640 acres at the mouth of Mill Creek -- where they soon constructed a home, the namesake sawmill, a shipbuilding yard, and began paying taxes (Phillips 1998: 391-393).

The historical roads and trails and canoe routes of the Elliott State Forest and bordering lands and waters have directed its human history and native plant and animal populations for thousands of years, until now. A detailed written accounting of this landscape begins about 1850, but the actual history of the Elliott begins with its creation in 1930, only 90 years ago. The CCCs, World War II, logging, the Columbus Day Storm, hunting, fishing, political protests, illicit crops, mud-running, camping, reforestation, and the 1982 and 1996 floods and landslides have shaped much of its history since -- and all reflected in its roads and trails and their uses and potential uses today.

The following student reports, despite being written under unique circumstances and without the aid of first-hand observations or discussions, provide an excellent foundation of maps, facts, resources, and recommendations to build from: whether by future Elliott State Forest student visitors, researchers, recreationists, or forest managers. This work is intended to be combined with linked ORWW educational website content, videotaped "distance learning" lectures, and "virtual" field trips for a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the Elliott -- as developed for and by past and current SWOCC F251 students.

NOTE: As this is being written, current 2021 F251 students are also limited by ongoing pandemic restrictions and can't meet in person, attend classes, or take field trips. However, the intervening year has allowed for more "distance learning" practice by everyone, the rapid development of Zoom communications, better video equipment and software, and the added uses of YouTube indexing and closed captioning for the videotaped 2020 field trips. These are still not ideal substitutes for actual field trips, group projects, or personal discussions, but good improvements for future Elliott "distance learning" educational products and their uses. The hope is that these uses will be complementary to actual meetings and field trips, rather than substitutes.

Part 1. The Indian Trail from Allegany to Scottsburg, and Gathering Locations Within, 1826-1900

By Quinn Allen, Evan Johnson and Kevin Ballard

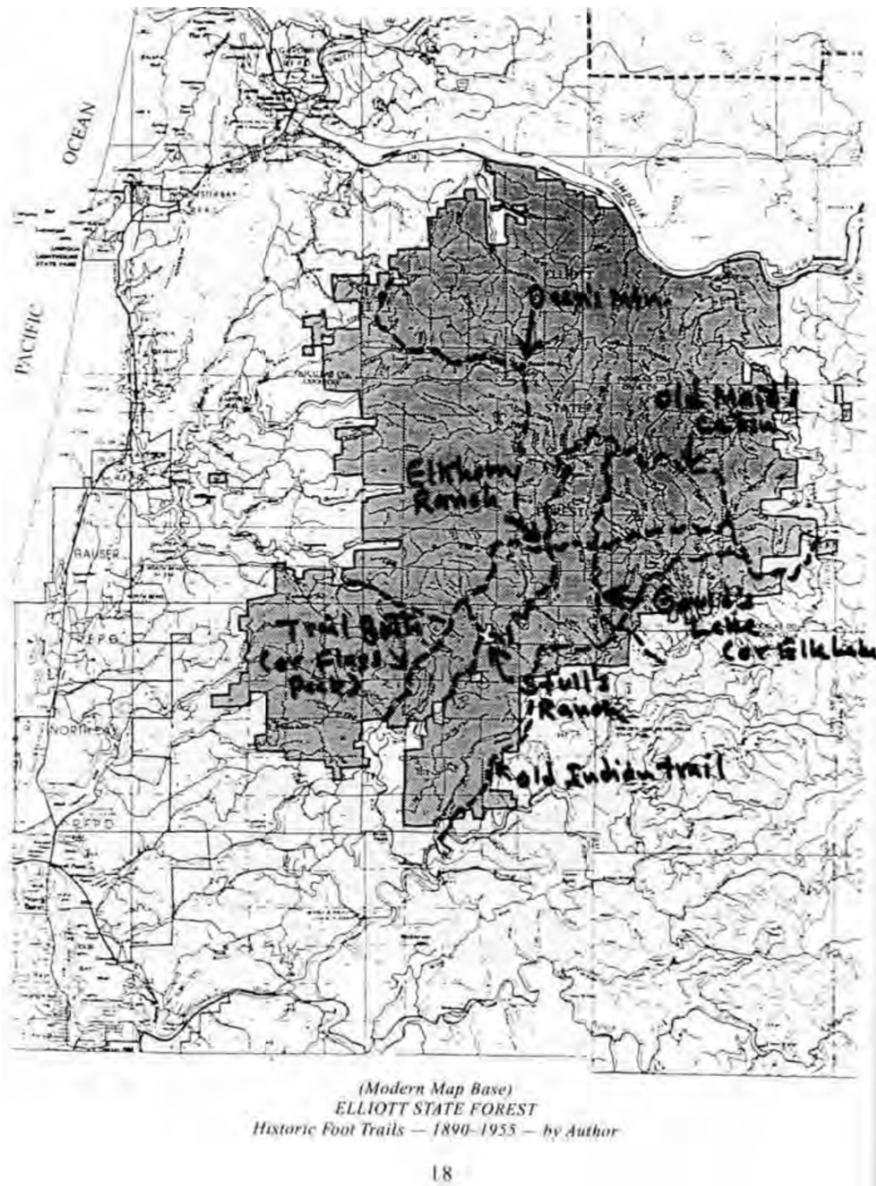
The Elliott State Forest is a large plot of land (about 93,000 acres) located between Reedsport and Coos Bay, Oregon as part of the State Land Board. This forest has an important economic, environmental, and educational contribution to Coos and Douglas counties as it is also part of the Common School Fund (Andrus, et.al 2003: 1).

In the Elliott State Forest there are over five hundred miles of roads and trails, the trails existing long before they were converted to roads from 1930 until around 1960. This introduction will focus on one particular historically traced Native American trail and gathering locations, and possible ceremonial sites of the Elliott State Forest and its inherent potential for recovering and preserving and understanding the life and history of local tribes (USDI National Register Bulletin 1995: 3-6); and is an expansion of Southwestern Oregon Community Colleges' recreation resource management classes of 2018 and 2019 recreation plan drafts. Part of this introduction is based off of Chapter 1, "Forest, Roads, and Trails," (Boyd, et al. 2018: 3-6).

NOTE: These roads are mainly rough gravel, extensive, and have limited to zero signage marking roads. Visitors are advised to have a good sense of direction, bring a detailed map, and come prepared with provisions in case of emergency. This author also recommends always informing someone of the route you plan to take and give an ETA for return.

Imagine, trying to travel to a destination that had no roads or trails. How would you get there? Before 1826 there were no pack trails or automobile accessibility in the Coos and Douglas river basins. The early Native American tribes of the Quuiich (Kelawatset) and Hanis people mostly navigated the extensive waterways by canoe, or by traveling on foot, following mountain ridgelines, swaths of edible vegetation areas, and natural springs. Whether they were following elk trails, or the elk were following their trails, is up for debate.

The junctures of these tidewaters became important locations and developed into campgrounds, communities, and trade centers. This land is steeped in local history and riddled with some tall tales as well. When oral histories are passed down generation after generation things can get a little skewed. What isn't skewed, however, are a few of the ridgeline trails, journal entries from the early settlers, and documented accounts of these trails and their purpose.



Map 2. From Jerry Philips' book *"Caulked Boots and Cheese Sandwiches"* (Phillips 1998: 18). This shows a few examples of how the Native people would follow the ridgelines and waterways of the early Elliot State Forest. Any of these trails hold a high probability of important archaeological resources.

“Most of the ridgeline trails of the Elliott have been turned into logging roads, and the trails that follow riparian zones change drastically according to seasonal flooding, landslides, and other weather erosion. Gathering areas like huckleberry patches, salmonberries patches, myrtle groves, springs, and waterways were connected by foot trails (there is one from Allegany to Scottsburg) and often are still used for camping” (Bob Zybach, personal communication, May 5, 2020).

It is important to preserve the memory of the land, and what it meant to the Native Americans who lived here. There is an account in Lionel Youst’s book, *The Land Above the Falls*, that was recorded and translated in 1942 by anthropologist John Peabody Harrington, from the last of the full-blooded Coos Indians, Lottie Evanoff, who was the daughter of Chief Daloose Jackson. In this account, Lottie details an important portion of the trail that led from Allegany to Scottsburg, and the importance of the journey that it meant to the people of the land above the falls (Youst 2003: 3-5).

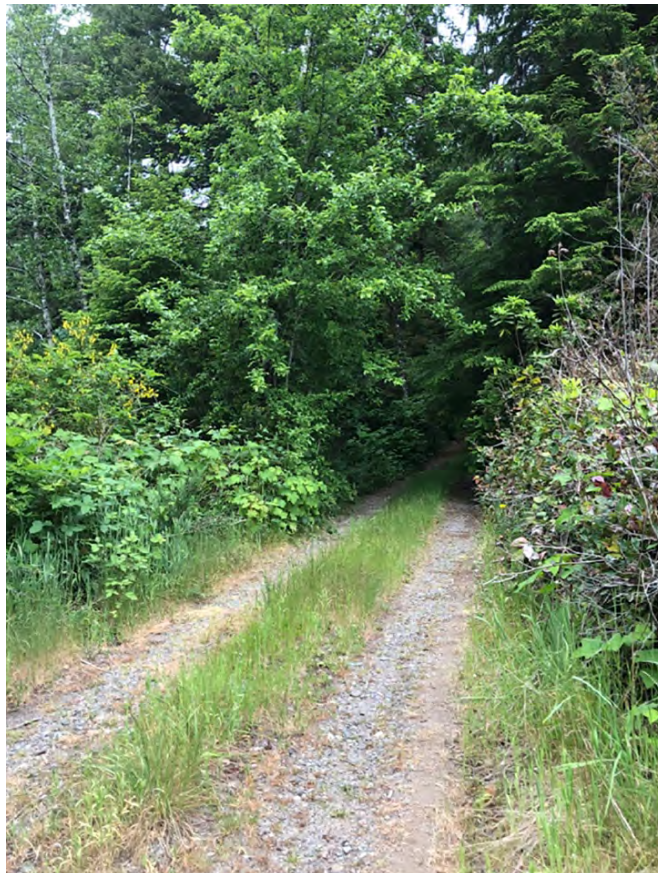


Fig. 2. Indian Point ridgeline road access previously used as a trail route to Johnson Indian Allotment; example of how some Indian Trails were converted into roads (Photo by Tara Boyd, June 4, 2018).



Fig. 3. Indian Trail Spring, a watering hole and camping spot for early Native American Tribes. Could the Stump be somewhere near this resting point along the trail from Allegany to Scottsburg? (Photo by Bob Zybach, October 10, 2017).



Fig. 4. Huckleberry Point, thick huckleberry patches were likely great gathering locations where Natives would harvest as much to their delight as offered (Photo by Bob Zybach, October 10, 2017).

Many Native Americans still hold a high amount of respect for the earth and its natural belongings, often holding sacred rituals, practices, and rites of passage in areas deemed spiritual, and to this day, you can find traces of these practices in areas these people lived and traveled.

In Lottie's account from her childhood, on the trail from Allegany to Scottsburg, there was a huge, hollow stump that never rotted, that was one of these exact sacred objects the Native people of the Coos revered. Leaving offerings like beads and clothing for continued health, good fortune, and safe travels, the Stump held spiritual significance. The exact location of the stump is lost; however, with clues from Lottie's account, finding it would be retrieving a lost chunk of history and artifacts of significance that may bring descendants of the Coos and visitors alike closer to understanding and connecting the past to the present (USDI National Bulletin Register 1995: 21-24).

Recommendations

These trails and gathering locations are important for understanding and preserving our history.

They originated as the backbone of the Elliott State Forest and were elemental in connecting the surrounding peoples and areas together. Spiritual connections, travel, trade, and gathering of food were all utilized along these ridgeline trails and water access points.

A possible recommendation is to start at the mouth of Marlow Creek, where the beginning of the trail to Loon Lake and Scottsburg is said to have begun, and possibly even attempt to find the famed Stump would be a great way to immerse visitors in an interpretive experience that would bring you back in time and connect visitors to the history of the land and its people. Places that could retain archaeological resources would include The Indian Trail Spring and The Marlow Creek Mound.

Funding for trail clearing could possibly be provided by offering interpretive tours of the Elliott State Forest road systems and scenic viewpoints to help paint the picture of enthusiastically preserving our history, while maintaining that the Elliott continues on its path of education.

Part 2. Pre-Elliott County Roads and Logging Roads, 1900-1930

By Kevin Ballard, Ethan Howard and Regan Lavoie

The Elliott State Forest was established in 1930 to benefit the Common School Fund of Oregon; however, the forest and its resources were being used long before 1930. The forest was used for a variety of reasons prior to being established as the Elliott, ranging from use by the Native Americans of Oregon, homesteading by the early white settlers, recreation such as hunting and fishing, and, of course, logging.

The history of the forest prior to being established as the Elliott has been orally passed down from generation to generation, and some of the history of the forest can still be found today from the remnants of roads. Though with pre-Elliott logging the timber was primarily transported by water, some of the county roads that run through the forest have historical significance from the type of construction that was used to create the roads. Not only are some of the roads around 100 years old, they are important to help the people today understand not only how the early settlers of Oregon travelled prior to paved highways, but how they built the roads on which they travelled. This report will discuss the significance, use, location, and creations of roads of the Elliott State Forest from 1900 to 1930.

Many of the current road systems in the Elliott State Forest were built by the Civilian Conservation Corp (1930's) or built for the timber salvage from the Columbus Day storm (1960's). However, there are still road systems in the Elliott that were used prior to 1930.

On September 5, 1900, a petition and affidavit was established to build a county road through the forest land. The road was to start at the bridge at Glenn Creek Junction and terminate on the summit of the dividing ridge between the waters of Glenn Creek and the waters of Loon Lake. The petition obtained 55 signatures.

Upon approval of the affidavit from the county commissioner the state surveyor, Simon Bolivar Cathcart, conducted a survey of the possible new road and reported his findings back to the commissioner. The commissioner declared, "the viewers report, survey and plat be recorded and that said road as viewed out, surveyed and platted be declared a public highway and the road supervisor open said road for public travel" (Youst 2003: 83).



Fig. 5. Larson photo of Silver Falls and bridge, ca. 1911 (Youst 2003: 86).

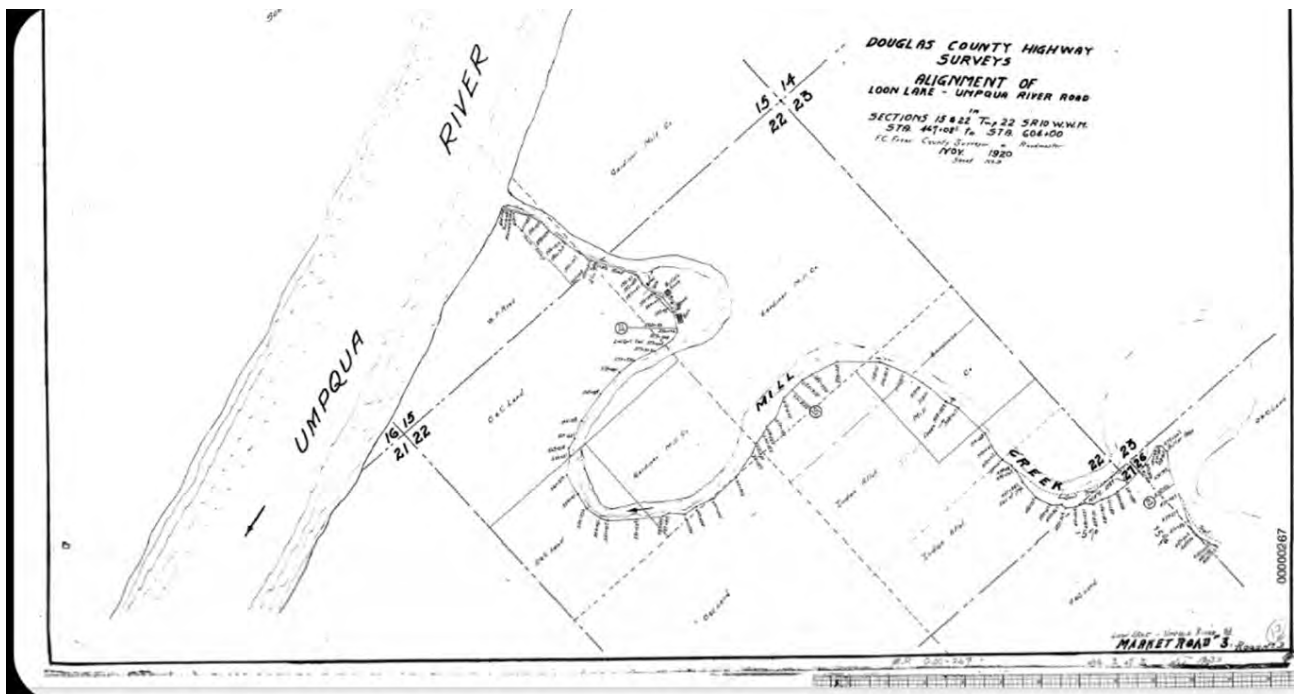
After the railroad was finished in 1916, the county lost interest in maintaining the road. The only maintenance that was done on the road was done by the public that continuously used the road; most likely the same people that risked their life's blasting their way through the bluff (Youst 1934: pg. 84)



Fig. 6. Gould Postcards of Silver Falls, and Bridge ca. 1930

Douglas County Road No. 3: Loon Lake Road

Another important county road is County Road No. 3. In 1900 a community that lived in what is now known as the Elliott State Forest, created a road petition and sent it to the commissioners of Douglas County (Fig. 7). The petition stated the desire to create a county road from Allegany to Loon Lake (14.5 miles).



Map 3. Douglas County Survey of "Market Road #3," November 1920.

Douglas County Road No. 2: Umpqua River Highway 38

Equally important as the two county roads listed above is County Road No.2, now known as Highway 38. Unfortunately, after speaking with the Douglas County surveyor's office I was not able to obtain the same level of information that I obtained regarding Glenn Creek Road and County Road No. 3. However, I was able to establish that Highway 38 was in fact a County Road prior to 1930.

When looking at the Glenn Creek Road there are a few factors that make this a historically significant road. The first and most obvious factor would be the age of this road. The construction of this road took place not just 50 years ago, but over 100 years ago. The other factor is the style of construction of this road. This road was built long before there was fancy equipment that is used in the construction of roads today. A few dedicated men worked many long days constructing this road through the bluff with hand tools and risking their lives by propelling down the bluff to set the dynamite charges that blasted the path through the bluff.

Recommendations

I do not have any recommendations for County Road No. 2 since it is now a highway that is maintained by the Oregon Department of Transportation.

I do not have any recommendations for County Road No. 3 except to continue maintenance on what is now known as Loon Lake Road.

My recommendations for Glenn Creek Road would be to continue maintenance, as well as add a sign near the bluff that was blasted out for the road to pass through describing the construction that took place in order for the road to be created, as well as establish the road as a historically significant road.



Fig. 8. Southwestern Oregon Community College Natural Resources Instructor, Tasha Livingstone, with 2019 F251 Forest Recreation Students (L-R) Sebastian Bartlett, Koby Etwiler, Hunter Black-Priest and Amelia Harvey, Golden Falls, May 28, 2019 (Photo by Anne Farrell-Mathews, May 28, 2019).

Part 3. Deans Mountain and CCC Roads, 1930-1962

By Evan Johnson, Regan Lavoie and Quinn Allen

Deans Mountain Lookout was a fire lookout estimated to have been established in 1914 by the first inhabitant. Materials were sourced locally, and the original lookout was built just well enough to achieve its purpose. This was one of the first lookouts to be constructed in the Siuslaw National Forest, a matter of great significance because of how susceptible to forest fires the Pacific Northwest area is (Phillips 1998: 82-83).

A lookout in a position with great visibility meant that potentially devastating forest fires could be caught very quickly and stopped before causing massive damage to surrounding areas. Local papers announced the lookout's construction as a deeply important addition to the safety and security of the forest and the people. Despite the establishment of the lookout being so vital to the security of the local area, the lookout itself was connected to civilization only by a trail on a ridge on the eastern side of Dry Creek and was not connected to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) road system in 1934 (Phillips 1998: 82).

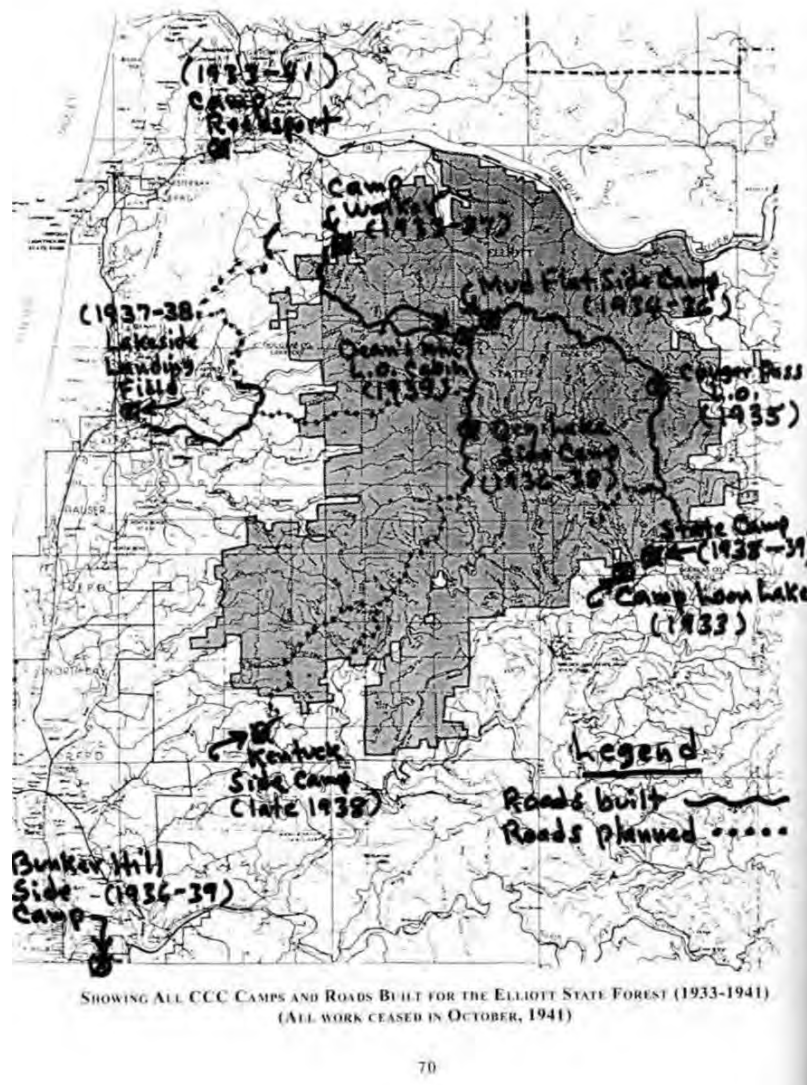


*Jennie Walker at Dean's Mtn. Lookout, in 1917.
Note that the materials for each of the first three buildings there
had to be brought in on pack horses. The CCC access road
finally reached Dean's Mtn. in 1934. This photo is from the
Yaquina Tollefson collection, and is used here with permission
from her daughter, Margery Finley.*

Fig. 9. Jennie Walker at Deans Mountain Lookout, 1917 (Phillips 1998: 83).

This means that the Deans Mountain Lookout predates the CCC, which began operation in 1933, and was established so soon after the invention of the "Osborne Firefinder," invented in 1914, that the original shack did not come equipped with one and instead utilized a compass in order to find where a fire was beginning (Phillips 1998: 83).

When such an important structure is originally built under the context of urgency, which in this context being that the Great Fire of 1910 woke many foresters up to the reality that catastrophes will occur, the quality of the structure is often not as high as it would have been if it were built in a time where it was not as rushed. For example, the original building was nothing more than a thrown together cabin built by the lookout himself, not built by an engineer or other qualified professional.



Map 5. CCC Roads and Camps, 1930 to 1940 (Phillips 1998: 70).

This does not detract from why the site is of significance, but rather highlights that if something such as this were to stay the same throughout many years it would be meaningless. The Dean Mountain Lookout is important because throughout its history it continued to change and evolve with outside influences. To accommodate one such influence, the Firefinder, the lookout shack was rebuilt to have a cupola added on top to house it (Phillips 1998: 83-84). From around 1920 through 1952 the lookout endured multiple additions and re-buildings, evolving from the cupola-bearing cabin until it resembled a “guard station” (ibid.: 86).

It wasn't just the exterior of the lookout that changed over time, but the important services it provided had changed as well. After the attack on America at Pearl Harbor by the Japanese in World War Two, the Deans Mountain Lookout was directed to be used as a lookout for a new kind of danger, the danger of attack from the enemy. In 1942, the following year from the attack, two men were assigned to serve the purpose of the Aircraft Warning Service detection system, a service to the country to help defend from those who would wish to do harm.

Suddenly the Deans Mountain Lookout wasn't just a local lookout that stopped forest fires, it was a bulwark against the threat of enemy attack, a nationally important station that could change whether or not thousands of American lives could be lost in another attack by the Empire of Great Japan. Thus, the significance of the Deans Mountain Lookout ascended from protecting people locally and regionally, but to being a place of national importance (Phillips 1998: 88).

Aside from *why* the Deans Mountain Lookout is important, it is wise to look at *how* the Deans Mountain Lookout is used otherwise. The lookout existed somewhat in pre-industrial conditions, not being accessible by automobile and without easy access; this is vital to understanding how radically it has changed over time. The Elliott, as a whole, has a lot of verticality, it is not easy to traverse flatland that an amateur hiker could pass through without at least a dedicated effort, and lookouts by nature must be in relatively harder to access areas in order to serve their purpose of having a clear view of the surrounding area.

The lookouts posted there before automobile access were reliant on themselves and subject to the weather. If one were to attempt to make minor or significant repairs to the original building, they would have had to use a ten-mile trail on horseback in order to pack materials from their source to the site, and under the oppressive and unpredictable Oregon coast weather; we can be mostly sure that there have been times in which transport of necessary materials and supplies were made impossible (Phillips 1998: 84).

In the 1930s' the lookout was connected to a new and constantly improving road system built by the CCC, allowing for automobile access, meaning that it took around fifteen years for the lookout itself to reach the industrial era. Suddenly the access to the lookout is no longer tied to elements out of control such as the weather and is now more in the hands of lookouts themselves. Communication between lookouts improve, as does the safety of the forest in direct proportion. Radios were not installed until the end of this decade and start of the next, so communication was limited to telephone.



Sandstone rock drilling and blasting was a major activity during the construction of the Scholfield-Umpcoos Ridge Roads. Hardhats were unknown, but some wore "pith helmets" such as this man has. Surprisingly, injuries were uncommon. —Photo courtesy C.F.P.A. files

Fig. 10. CCC Road Builders, ca. 1936 (Phillips 1998: 55).

In 1936 another revolutionary development for the Deans Mountain Lookout, the panoramic photo program, made touchdown there. Using panoramic photos with markings allow for higher quality of communication between lookout and dispatch, creating a much more effective means of coordinating responses to emerging fires. Shortly after this the entire lookout was rebuilt, much more efficiently and of higher constructional quality than the original buildings, this was just in time for the transition to being a vital instrument in homeland defense.

The final major modification to the lookout was in 1963, where a small cabin was added on top of the lookout tower. After this point, the usefulness of the lookout was surpassed by air patrol and the combined watchfulness of the general public, now more well equipped with the ability to quickly report fires. The structure itself was less used from that point forward, until being demolished in 1991 (Phillips 1998: 86-88). It does not need to stay that way!



Fig. 11. Foundation remnant from 1930s Dean Mountain Structure, November 8, 2017 (Photo by Bob Zybach).

Recommendations

I recommend that the original structures are rebuilt as true to history as logistically possible. The lookout itself lived and served the land for 77 years by providing safety and should live again as tangible history that the public can interact with. By reaching out to various historical societies and fire lookout associations, the funding for materials, knowledge of historical building practices, and potential volunteers could result in the resurrection of the Deans Mountain Lookout.

The foundation remains of the lookout and can be used as a piece of living history, connecting us now to the century past, letting us see what they saw, and feel what they felt looking over the Elliott in a building as hardy as the land itself. A plaque does not do the brave men and women who stood as stewards of the forest justice, but a revival of the true essence of the lookout will.

If one lookout could build it without road access and only hand tools, surely we can rebuild it with access to tools far beyond what they had. I was confused about how this lookout is significant today before writing this, but now I realize that the importance is that it isn't significant today, and that the importance is in changing that.

Part 4. Columbus Day Storm: Salvage Logging Road Network, 1962-1970

By Regan Lavoie, Quinn Allen, Ethan Howard

The Columbus Day Storm road networks construction started in 1962, which makes its roads old enough to be considered historically significant (SHPO 2013: 11-12). These roads were built in response to the most well-known storm to hit the West coast in the last 100 years. I personally have never met any local that was living here during the Columbus Day Storm who does not vividly remember it. The entire road network also lies within the Elliott State Forest, which is named after Oregon's first state forester, Francis Elliott, making it connected to a regionally famous person.

The Columbus Day Storm road network is a series of roads added to the Elliott State Forest in response to the damage the 1962 Columbus Day Storm had caused. Most of the new roads were added in the southern half of the forest, providing access to previously inaccessible areas. Because of the rare and powerful southeast winds of the Columbus Day Storm, many trees had fallen, and the trees did not have supporting roots to help keep themselves upright from winds from that direction.



Coos Bay Forest Management Personnel - 1968

From left to right:

George Gresham, Julian Miller, Cliff Mann, Bill Spores, Chuck Tyler, Lee Oman, Jerry Phillips, Dick Stritt, Ken Humbert, Dan Goltz, Colen Reinecker, Hank Rambo, Roy Peairs, Steve Jacky, Glen Tillitt, Ray Leighty, George Shore, Phil Barth, Dave Brown, Dave Stere, Dave Smith and Chuck Goodwin.

Fig. 11. Elliott State Forest Management Crew, 1968 (Phillips 1998: 290)



Oregon State Forestry Dept. Photo

Fig. 13. ODF Elliott Columbus Day Blowdown, Oct. 1962 (Phillips 1998: 252).



U.S. Forest Service Photo

Fig. 14. USFS Columbus Day Blowdown, October 1962 (Phillips 1998: 253).

"In the 1963 Blowdown Edition of the Western Conservation Journal, W. D. Hagenstein, at that time chairman of the Timber Disaster Committee Northwest Forest Pest Action Council, writes on the subject of the Columbus Day Storm. Mr. Hagenstein estimated that some 17 billion board feet of commercial timber had been felled over an area of 30 million acres in five hours." (Phillips 1998: 253)

Most of the trees that fell were younger, meaning that there was a large amount of sapwood in the fallen trees and had the potential to rot faster than older trees would. There was also a large worry about the potential for a bark beetle infestation that would start with the fallen trees and then spread to trees that were still standing causing even more damage. This meant the downed trees needed to be salvaged quickly, and the Forest Manager in charge of this monumental task was Everett Hunt, who had started in the position only six weeks prior to the storm (Phillips 1998: 251-254).

Before the storm there were only about eighty miles of logging roads within the Elliott Forest, but to be able to reach all the areas that needed to be salvaged they had to construct an additional two hundred miles of road. Because of the speed at which these roads needed to be constructed and with the added complication of minimal funding, the roads that ended up being built started out as very simple dirt roads with little engineering. This allowed the cost to be reduced to \$10,000 per mile (Phillips 1998: 252).

Roads continued to be built in this way as more areas needed to be reached within the Elliott. 1968 marked the milestone of the completion of the all-weather transportation system and a total of \$5,500,000 invested up to this point. A lot of this money went to road maintenance as well as making improvements, such as putting gravel on the previously dirt roads (Phillips 1998: 289).

Jerry Phillips spent almost his entire career involved in the management of the Elliott State Forest. He has written and documented the definitive 414-page history of the Elliott – “Caulked Boots and Cheese Sandwiches: A Forester’s History of Oregon’s First State Forest, “The Elliott” (1912-1996),” and describes the Forest during the late 1940s “in [OSU Forestry] college literature” as “an undeveloped State-owned forest . . . dedicated to educational purposes.” His book ends in 1996 with the observation “that this Forest is at once both aesthetically pleasing to most all visitors and economically very productive.”



Fig. 15. Jerry Phillips, Elliott State Forest manager & historian (Zybach 2017: 13)

If the Columbus Day Storm road network had not been made out of necessity because of the storm, it's hard to say when those roads would have been constructed, or when the state would have been able to actually use the resources of the area.

Another important role these roads played was how they affected the timber market due to the collection of surplus logs after the storm. After the recovery of fallen trees, there was more timber than the local market was able to purchase and, because of this, timber started to be sold to Japan to get rid of the extra. The purchase of the excess logs dramatically increased the amount of timber that was being exported, going from exporting 146 million board feet of raw logs in 1962 pre-salvage, to 295 million in 1963, and 365 million board feet exported in 1964 (Phillips 1998: 253-254).

The amount that Japan wanted to have exported to them did not slow down after the surplus had been sold, creating a more competitive market and driving the price of timber up. The increased value of timber allowed the state to use those added profits toward schools and the construction of more roads (Phillips 1998: 253-254). While the Elliott was not the sole source of all this extra timber it did contribute a sizable amount, and that was made possible by the construction of the Columbus Day Storm network of roads.



*The Upper West Fork Millicoma — near Cougar Creek.
This was the Elliott's first riparian buffer strip, arranged by Everett Hunt, as an adjustment to the 1962
Fish Creek No. 1 Timber Sale. He "just felt it was the right thing to do." —Photo by Author.*

Fig. 16. West Fork Millacoma Streamside Buffer, 1962 (Phillips 1998: 260).

Recommendations

For future recommendations I think these roads should continue to be maintained as gravel roads with the goal of keeping them in a good enough condition that they don't require four-wheel drive to travel on. I think keeping them gravel is more cost effective and keeps the area feeling more primitive compared to paving the roads. I also think adding an interpretive sign that explained why the Columbus Day Storm road network needed to be built so quickly, as well as show how much damage the storm caused locally. I think it would also be great to add a map on this sign similar to Map 1 that color coded the different roads, giving the general time period that they were built. To go along with that color coded map, there could be either colored markers next to the numbered road signs or a small amount of colored paint on the road marker itself to identify what historic road system the road you're currently on is a part of.

Part 5. Cougar Pass Lookout and Elliott Roads & Trails, 1970-2020

By Ethan Howard, Kevin Ballard and Evan Johnson

The CCC Cougar Pass forest lookout was built in 1935 and was active through 1985. It was used as a fire lookout tower, capable of spotting fires from miles away and giving exact coordinates and information to the firefighters on the ground. This was the last active lookout on the Elliott State Forest (Phillips 1998: 92-94).

The Cougar Pass forest lookout spotted and helped communicate on at least three huge fires during its time of use. In 2013 the Cougar Pass Lookout was listed in the National Historic Lookout Register. Its description in that register is, “The first structure on this site was a 30' L-4 wooden tower built in 1935. That was replaced with the present 50' treated timber tower with live-in Amort cab, which is presently occupied by packrats only.”



Fig. 17. Cougar Pass Lookout Tower, February 21, 2020 (Video-clip by Dave Sullivan).

By keeping this location on the national registry, it will help it receive preservation benefits and incentives. Without it being on this list, there is no telling what would become of this historic site in the next ten years; the odds are it would rot away and be nothing but a pile of old lumber. With its status on the national registry, there are certain measures being taken in order to keep it standing and plans to help rebuild and preserve it while keeping it as traditional as possible. One plan is to completely disassemble it and number/measure each board used in order to cut everything out of the same material and rebuild it to its original state (Sullivan and Zybach 2020: Home).



Map 6. Location of Cougar Pass Lookout in relation to Loon Lake (Sullivan and Zybach 2020: Location)

This would result in creating a brand new but original lookout. We need to preserve this historic site in order to allow the future generations to come visit and learn the ways of the past before satellite imagery and new technology. Without the preservation of this site, it will soon be a memory to the older generation who once knew of its location and job; without visitors coming to see the tower and learn about its significance, it would soon be forgotten forever (Sullivan and Zybach 2020: Home).

The Cougar Pass Lookout is located in the northeastern part of the Elliott State Forest. According to Cougar Pass Lookout Education Center (Sullivan and Zybach 2020:Location) it originally cost the Coos district \$2,467 or equal to \$46,168.73 today, which is surprisingly less than you would think when constructing a new building. Even going back to the value of money at the time, it was an extremely low amount. They had to take just about every short cut that they could find, such as nailing the base together instead of bolting it. The lookout was made very cheaply, but they had to get it done with the amount of money they had. Even though it was made improperly, it is still holding its own and supporting itself to the best of its ability.

It is the last remaining lookout in the Elliott State Forest, and very well could be the last remaining on any State Forest land. These lookouts were and are an important part of Oregon forest history and management, and particularly for the years 1910 to 1975. The lookout tower building boom reached its climax in the 1930s and continued through the 1950s. By 1953, a survey showed over 5,000 lookout towers across the country. Each tower would house a fire watcher who kept watch for smoke off in the distance (Sullivan and Zybach 2020: History). This strategy was very effective since the lookout towers gave you a bird's eye view of everything around you, and made it capable of spotting smoke from miles away. The Cougar Pass Lookout spotted and stopped some huge fires in its time of usage.

The Pacific Northwest still has over 400 lookout towers, and a few of these have paid firewatchers each summer. The remaining towers have become popular tourist destinations, and some are rented out to people who want a weekend getaway. After other methods of observing fires became available, most lookouts were neglected and eventually disappeared through rot, vandalism, or deliberate governmental removal.

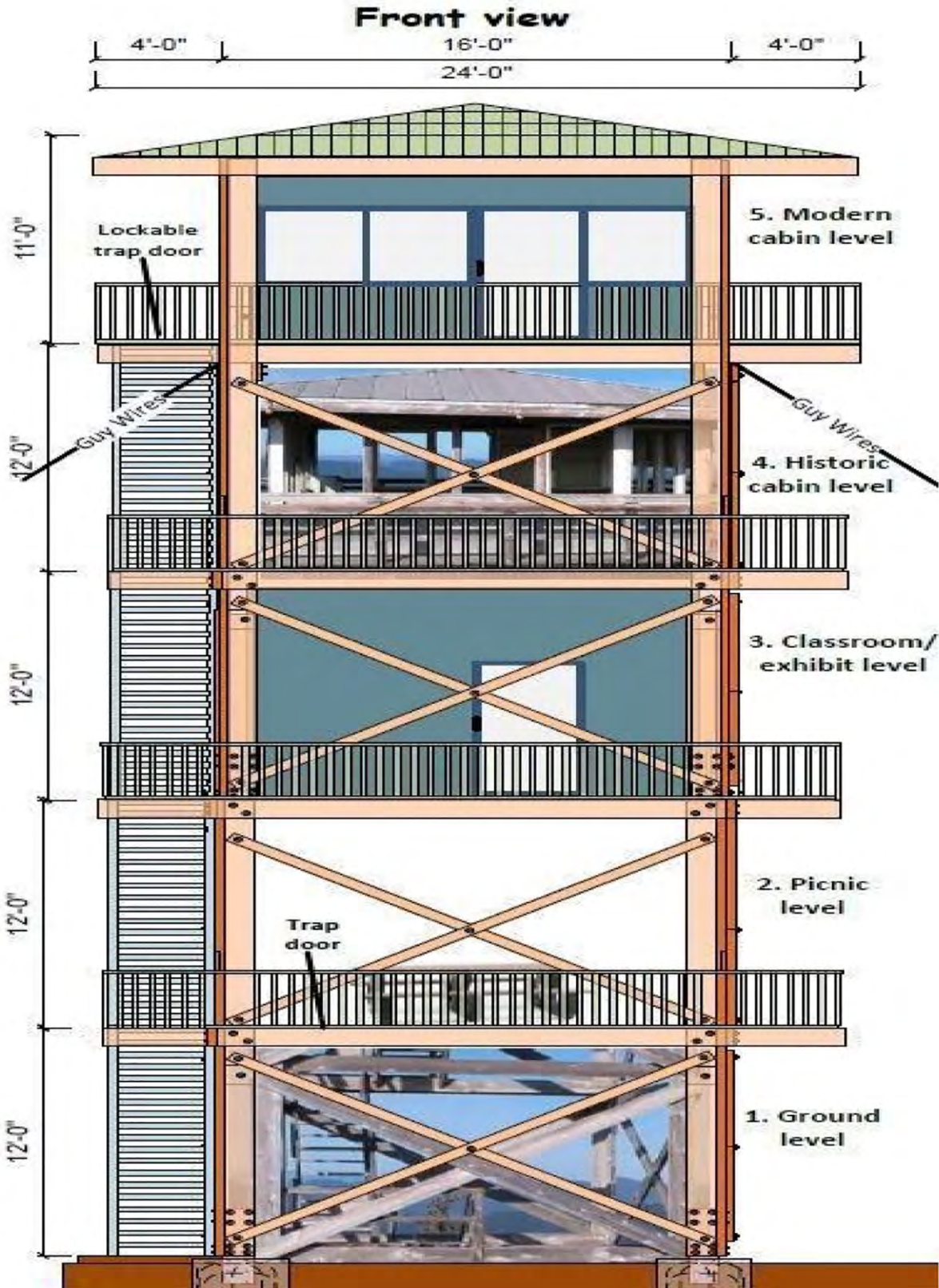


Fig. 17. Sandbox Designs sketch of proposed Cougar Pass Lookout Education Center (Sullivan and Zybach 2020: Plans).

That is why it is so important that we preserve the one that we have so close to our homes, we are extremely lucky that it is still in the shape it is in and not a pile at the base. The Cougar Pass tower is a 60-foot-high tower with a 14 ft. X 14 ft. cabin on top, the tower was built when the CCC road construction reached and passed the point where the tower stands. It was a very important lookout, because it looked over a lot of high fire risk country. Northeast and southeast from there lay tens of thousands of acres of steep country, covered mostly by young, second-growth fir and slash, which could go up in seconds. The lookout was manned annually for fifty years and was the last active lookout on the Elliott. Cougar Pass was named by an Ash Valley big game hunter, who reportedly killed a number of cougars in this vicinity. The lookout was also used as a radio relay site in its later years of service, around the 1970's (Sullivan and Zybach 2020: History).

Recommendations

I believe the first step that we need to take for the visitors is the advertising of the site. I have now lived in Coos Bay for two years and have visited frequently for the years prior. It was not until this class that I heard about this historic location. The Elliott's road system is not marked out to this location, and it would be very easy for someone to either get lost or give up trying to find it all together. Along with getting the name out there and attracting people to this spot, it should be restored to at least a visitable state. There are currently plans in circulation on the full remodel of the tower, taking no shortcuts in making it as original, yet high quality as possible.

Cougar Pass Lookout Education Center's project plans are to completely disassemble the tower, numbering and measuring every board as they go. Once they have it all down and marked, they are going to remake the exact layout as the original, out of the same material to keep it original. If they were to follow through with this plan, it would allow for the visitors to get the full experience of what it was like to climb to the top, look at the vast forest in front of you. It is something that, without the reconstruction, could never again happen on the Elliott. Their overall goal is for the Cougar Pass lookout to be a world-class cultural and education center (Sullivan and Zybach 2020: Home).

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Fig. 19. McKenzie Peters, NW Maps Co., videotapes Jerry Phillips and David Gould during interview at Jerry Phillips Reserve, Elliott State Forest, April 29, 2020 (Photo by Bob Zybach).

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