

## CHAPTER 3 - USES AND VALUES

### Human Uses

Human use of and values associated with the Wolf Creek watershed appear to have been based mostly upon circumstances and events occurring elsewhere, beyond the immediate bounds of the watershed. Within the watershed there has probably been human activity for thousands of years; however, there is no record that it was considered unique, special, or valued highly above other places for a particular reason by any society. The watershed could be characterized as "unremarkable" given what is known of its role in the course of human events. This is not meant to imply that places and products of the watershed have not been used and valued by individuals or groups of people at various times for housing, subsistence, recreation, or commodity production. The reader is directed to the Cultural Resources (Southard 1994) report in Chapter 5 for an overview of the watershed's history of human activity.

As shown in Chapter 5, the watershed shows very little evidence of prehistoric use or occupation. Native Americans probably traversed the watershed for hunting or gathering activities. Euro-American settlement had its beginnings in the mid-1860s, and settlement progressed with small homesteads as transportation routes connecting the watershed to the Willamette Valley were developed. Small scale agriculture, probably for subsistence, and residency were the primary uses of the settled parts of the watershed up until World War II, when most of the residents left the watershed to work in the cities. Following World War II the watershed became valuable for its timber production and large timber companies purchased most of the private land.

Over the past 30-odd years timber harvesting has been the dominant use of the watershed. Timber harvesting activities progressed generally from east to west across the watershed, as the extensive road network was developed to support timber hauling. Timber harvesting intensified throughout the 1980s and peaked in the early 1990s as the domestic and international market demand for timber began to come into conflict with growing concern over environmental values such as "at risk" wildlife species. Changing social values, domestically and internationally, created an atmosphere of great urgency for timber producers and environmental protection advocates.

With the proliferation of timber haul roads, all parts of the watershed became readily accessible for recreational use. Because there are few recreational attractions compared to other watersheds in the region, Wolf Creek experiences relatively low amounts of recreational visitation throughout most of the year. For about a month each fall, however, big game hunters use the area heavily in search of blacktail deer and elk.

The paving of the Wolf Creek County road and Panther Creek road also made the lands along these roads more attractive for residential development. Private residences occupy most of the 70-odd small (less than 200-acre) private parcels along these roads and more residences continue to be built. Zoning restrictions appear to be the primary limitation to greater densities of residential development.

### Human Values

Values associated with the Wolf Creek watershed include a number of forest product commodities and many nonmarket commodities and social or spiritual values. Members of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians retain an interest in the Siuslaw Watershed for ancestral and cultural reasons.

The watershed's homestead settlement pattern indicates that the eastern portions along Wolf Creek were once valued for the opportunity for freedom and independent living through subsistence farming; however, the brief span of those efforts indicates that such values did not survive the weight of their inherent sacrifices. The continuing residential development near the county roads gives good evidence that the area continues to be valued for its remoteness and rural living opportunities. Most of the current residents' income is derived from sources external to the watershed.

The watershed is also valued for its recreational opportunities including swimming, camping, hunting, fishing, collecting, and riding or driving for pleasure by a widely dispersed population of visitors who reside in the nearby cities and communities.

The watershed contains substantial economic values, predominantly in the form of wood fiber or timber. Of considerably less economic significance are other forest products including firewood, decorative grasses and boughs, Christmas trees, mushrooms, mosses, bark, and burls. The watershed's economic based values are shared by a diverse human population ranging from families of forest and wood products workers to corporate stockholders in distant places.

Another economic value of the watershed is its anadromous fish spawning and rearing habitat. The actual contribution Wolf Creek and tributaries make to the total commercial and sport fishing stocks is impossible to estimate given the limited capabilities of existing information gathering technologies.

Beyond the economic values, the timber products industry has traditions, institutions, and a popular culture through which large numbers of people in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere derive varying amounts of psychological benefit from the existence and utilization of managed forests and forest products. Much of this timber culture may be unaware of the Wolf Creek watershed, but still values it highly as part of a larger system of managed forests in the Pacific Northwest.

A set of social/nonmarket values is manifest within the Wolf Creek watershed by virtue of its location within the Coast Range. A substantial part of the watershed is defined as Late-Successional Reserve in Alternative 9 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (FEMAT 1994) and under the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (ROD 1994). The federal lands within the watershed will be managed to protect and enhance spotted owl and other Late-Successional Reserve species habitat. Society, through a series of actions generated by the Endangered Species Act, has placed a value superior to other local or regional values on species protection over a vast area, which encompasses the Wolf Creek watershed.

## Values in Conflict

Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, competition between traditional local values and national values has resulted in behaviors that could bring some of the worst fears on both sides of the conflict to fruition. In the Wolf Creek watershed, this value conflict has resulted in land management activities that appear almost antagonistic in nature, this is even though they are the product of rational behaviors of people on each side of the conflict reacting to their estimates of the likely actions of the conflicting value holders.

To protect national level values concerning the survival of species and protection of certain types of ecosystems, one side tries to stop old growth timber harvesting wherever possible throughout the region. People dependent on timber harvesting, fearing that legislated protection measures will keep them from realizing the economic returns they feel entitled to from their forest resources, move to harvest as much of their timber as possible before the other side can succeed in its efforts to block them. As the timber owners harvest their stands faster (reducing the total amount of old growth forest), those holding old growth protectionist values redouble their efforts to limit the timber owner's right to harvest his timber. Ever greater urgency is felt by the holders of value systems on either side of the conflict. Principles of sustained yield may give way to the demands of economic survival in such a situation. Some people argue that if society chooses to place a greater value on habitat for late successional species than on the rights of timber owners to realize economic returns from harvesting their forests, then society should compensate the timber owners for the economic opportunities they have been forced to forego. Others argue that society has already paid this bill by subsidizing the private forest industry through management practices followed on federal forest lands.

## Ecological Values

Forest health and productivity are a key to the plant and animal life diversity within the Wolf Creek watershed. The watershed contains high value fish streams, spotted owls, marbled murrelets, and other species that are dependent upon late successional forest habitats. The water quality of Wolf Creek is recognized for its ability to support a variety of aquatic and fish species, including several fish stocks currently deemed "at risk."

The long-term maintenance and sustainability of both the biotic diversity as well as ecosystem health and productivity is an important facet in the current quality of life for today's society. Defining the current status must be done in context with not only a historical perspective but with an eye to the future to gain an understanding of our ability to maintain and sustain these ecosystems and associated values.