

**A Chronology of Planning, Development, and Controversy  
in the Upper Rogue River Basin**

- 1861** First recorded (by white settlers) flooding of the Rogue River.
- 1865** A wagon road was constructed by the U.S. Army along the upper Rogue River, which ran through what was to become Crater Lake National Park and over to Fort Klamath.
- 1874** First sawmill in the upper Rogue country built on lower Mill Creek near Prospect.
- 1882** Post offices established at Prospect (Deskings) and near Trail on lower Elk Creek (Whelpley).
- 1893** Cascade Range Forest Reserve proclaimed by President Grover Cleveland. It included portions of what is now the Rogue River National Forest, but no funds were provided for management until 1897.
- 1897** First mine in the upper Rogue established on Elk Creek. This was the only mine in the area ever to be of any economic consequence.
- 1898** The headquarters of the Cascade Range Forest Reserve's Southern District were located at Prospect until 1902.
- 1900** A U.S. Geological Survey publication contained estimated volumes of timber for the CRFR. Included in the report were figures for the forest reserve townships of the upper Rogue.
- 1902** Crater Lake National Park established.
- 1908** Crater (changed to Rogue River in 1932) and Umpqua national forests created from the dividing up of the Cascade Range Forest Reserve. Small cabins "ranger stations" were established at Union Creek, Mill Creek, Brown's Cabin, Huckleberry Mountain, and Woodruff Meadow.
- 1909** Oregon Conservation Commission established by the legislature to solidify support for conservation policies in the state (abolished 1915). The legislature also adopted a procedure for initiating and recording water rights for the first time. By this time most of the timber claim "settlers" had left the Prospect area and the Rogue River Timber Company controlled virtually all of the stands on Prospect Flat.
- 1911** Work on a Crater Lake highway begun in the upper Rogue.
- 1912** First water power development constructed at Prospect, which provided limited electrical energy to the area.
- 1915** Oregon State Engineer withdrew all of the unappropriated direct flow of the

Rogue River and its tributaries above Raygold for the purposes of irrigation, power, domestic use, and storage. The Engineer and the Bureau of Reclamation initiated the first study of Rogue projects related to flood control, power, and irrigation. A report was published in February 1916.

- 1917 Passage of the Oregon Irrigation District law.
- 1920 Construction of the Nye Ditch begun near Prospect for irrigation.
- 1922 Union Creek Resort begun; a service station and restaurant were added three years later.
- 1923 COPCO made its own study of the Rogue Basin for potential power development over a three year period.
- 1926 A logging railroad proposed to run from Union Creek to a junction point with the Butte Falls line.
- 1927 COPCO built a second and larger hydroelectric power plant at Prospect. Forest Service district headquarters moved from Trail to Union Creek. Crater Lake Highway was rebuilt to follow much of its present alignment. That winter saw the Rogue's biggest recorded flood until 1954.
- 1929 Legislature prohibited the building of any structure below McLeod Bridge which would interfere with the free passage of migrating fish on the Rogue.
- 1932 An "Alex Sparrow Memorial Parkway" was proposed by Crater Lake Superintendent Solinsky to run from Trail to the national forest boundary at River Bridge. U.S. Geological Survey's Water Supply Paper 638-B inventoried the power potential of the Rogue Basin and described potential dam sites.
- 1933 Additional studies of the basin begun by the Department of Agriculture in cooperation with Jackson and Josephine counties. This was followed by a War Department study in 1935.
- 1934 The Rogue River Timber Company's cutting of stands along a 4.5 mile stretch of the Crater Lake Highway aroused a storm of protest from the public so that the Forest Service eventually acquired an 8000 acre parcel north of Prospect in 1937.
- 1935 Legislature banned all commercial fishing on the Rogue River.
- 1937 Upon Forest Service acquisition of the 4.5 mile stretch of timber along the Crater Lake Highway, the section of road between Prospect and Crater Lake National Park's west boundary became known as the Alex Sparrow Memorial Highway. Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees developed several large recreation sites along the highway during this period, including Natural Bridge, Union Creek, Farewell Bend, and Hamaker campgrounds.

- 1938 The Bureau of Reclamation made supplemental water storage studies in the Rogue Basin. A report was published in 1940.
- 1941 Bureau of Reclamation surveys began with a staff of 22 but within three years this shrank to 4. By 1944 the BuRec had expended \$150,000 for studies in the Rogue Basin.
- 1945 A postwar boom resulted in the Prospect area being host to 11 small sawmills and eight tie mills. The "gyppo" era was short-lived, however, because by 1950 the area had only three mills.
- 1946 Oregon State Parks Director Samuel Boardman made loud criticism of COPCO's liquidation of some timber holdings around Mill Creek Falls. This was done after the company promised that the timber would be left on the stump when it had constructed a diversion dam below the falls. The Forest Service and Park Service joined in the informal protest. Boardman asked for the parcel as a state park but COPCO refused and begged forgiveness. The Abbott Creek RNA was designated to study a mature stand of sugar pine.
- 1947 Department of Interior began to exert heavy pressure upon the National Park Service to administer a number of dam sites developed by the Bureau of Reclamation as recreation areas. NPS Director Newton Drury was adamantly opposed to the idea, stating that national recreation areas would divert badly needed funds and manpower away from the truly superlative natural and historic areas managed by the agency.
- 1948 Public Law 80-841 authorized the NPS to make studies in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers concerning the recreational and archeological resources contained in the river basins of the United States. Although the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Oregon State Game Commission produced a report dated April 29 called "Preliminary Report on the Fishery Resources of the Rogue River in Relation to Plans A and B of the Bureau of Reclamation," the NPS estimated on March 31 that \$15,000 would be needed to study recreation in the Rogue Basin.

Controversy surrounded several Bureau of Reclamation proposals in the western United States. Two projects (Glacierview in Montana and the Upper Colorado Basin in Utah and Colorado) had most of the spotlight nationally, but arguments flared over the fate of the Rogue Basin at a public meeting held in Medford on June 8. Both BuRec proposals would have dammed the Rogue Basin in 23 places. The main difference between Plans A and B was that in "A" the Rogue would have a high dam at Lewis Creek, a smaller dam near Trail, and a power plant at Reese Creek. In Plan "B", dams were proposed for Lost Creek, Lake Creek, and McNeil Creek. In the upper basin, both proposals would have dammed five tributaries for power.

The timber industry in the Rogue Basin at this time was said to have employed four times the number of people it had in 1940 (6400 vs. 1460). In 1939 Jackson County had 16 mills, whereas eight years later there were

110. By 1949 there were 170 mills and cutting had increased to 553 million board feet annually, over twice the calculated sustained yield figure of 200 million board feet. In response to the increased cutting, the Rogue River National Forest placed stream buffers of 100 to 200 feet along the river for 38 miles (from Boundary Springs to Prospect). Other streams in the upper basin were to have a 50 foot buffer and the Alex Sparrow Memorial Highway was to be a scenic corridor 500 feet in width. The Rogue River National Forest also consolidated its Prospect and Union Creek ranger districts.

1949 The Bureau of Reclamation dropped Plan B. In response, the Oregon Legislature amended the 1929 law by moving its prohibition on dams eight miles downstream to just north of Shady Cove. This would have permitted construction of the Lewis Creek and Trail dams in Plan A. The opposition to the dams described Plan A as converting the Rogue into a series of tanks and valves over almost the entire basin; the NPS reacted by recommending that the basin be zoned and its ecology be studied in a comprehensive manner to better assess the full costs. Plan A was estimated to cost \$90 million but power production was considered the only revenue source with which to pay the difference between what would be a feasible price to the irrigationists (who have to pay for the reclamation works) and the full cost of the dams, whose appeal was largely irrigation. The Rogue Valley, however, had a surplus of power through the COPCO plants at the time, so Plan A was difficult to justify on these grounds.

1950 On February 6, Interior Secretary Oscar Chapman withdrew 9200 acres of USFS land along the Crater Lake Highway near Union Creek from mineral entry. Much of the area around Union Creek and along Elk Creek had been tied up in mining claims as a way to secure the timber. The ensuing public controversy over mineral versus surface timber rights may have contributed to the Multiple Use Mining Act's passage in 1955.

The Bureau of Reclamation submitted a report on the Rogue Basin to Chapman on February 28 but its release was delayed until more data could be assembled. Chapman's response was due to the Rogue Basin controversy threatening to become a national issue, like the debate over Dinosaur National Monument which had resulted in the resignation of NPS Director Drury. In addition, a number of BuRec projects in other areas were attracting attention because of cost overruns. On October 4, the NPS and several other bureaus were directed to conduct further studies to assess the costs associated with implementation of Plan A.

1952 Oregon Governor Douglas McKay was appointed as Secretary of the Interior by the newly elected President, Dwight Eisenhower.

1955 McKay released the BuRec report of 1950 on April 15 and wrote that the unfortunate incident of unilateral planning by the agency from 1947 to 1950 would not be repeated. Meanwhile, Congress appropriated funds for an Army Corps of Engineers study of the Rogue Basin in response to the flood event that struck the entire west coast north of San Francisco in 1954. Congress

also adopted legislation recognizing fish and wildlife enhancement, water supply, water quality control, and recreation as potential purposes of federal water projects. After investigating 36 possible reservoir sites in the Rogue Basin, the Corps selected three (Lost Creek, Applegate, and Elk Creek) that they believed would provide cost effective multi-purpose benefits.

- 1956 McKay resigned as Interior Secretary in March, largely because of the negative publicity surrounding western water projects such as the one near Dinosaur National Monument.
- 1962 Congress passed the Flood Control Act (P.L. 87-874) on October 23. It authorized construction of three multi-purpose dams in the Rogue Basin, to be built by the Corps. These were to be at Lost Creek, the upper Applegate, and on Elk Creek.
- 1965 The National Forest road system had extended into most of the upper Rogue's tributary drainages by this time.
- 1967 Construction of Lost Creek Dam began. It was justified as providing flood control, power, water supply, irrigation, recreation, fish and wildlife enhancement, and other benefits such as requiring the Crater Lake Highway to be relocated and shortened by 1.2 miles.
- 1968 Archeological survey work was carried out at Lost Creek under contract from the National Park Service.
- 1969 Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act.
- 1971 Cole Rivers fish hatchery begun as mitigation for the loss of anadromous fish caused by dam construction on the Rogue and Applegate rivers. The hatchery was completed two years later.
- 1972 Environmental statement for the Lost Creek project issued on May 8.
- 1973 Preliminary work on the Elk Creek dam begun. This phase took place over the next five years. Congress passed the Endangered Species Act.
- 1974 Flooding in the Rogue Basin stimulated federal support for the Applegate project.
- 1975 Construction at Lost Creek was temporarily stopped when Oregon Governor Bob Straub and the state's Water Policy Review Board dropped their support of the project. An EIS supplement was prepared by the Corps so that work could continue.
- 1977 Lost Creek dam completed. Meanwhile the Applegate project appeared on President Jimmy Carter's list of water projects scheduled for discontinuance if stronger economic justification could not be found.

- 1978 Construction of the Applegate dam begun by the Corps and completed three years later. The Upper Rogue River Trail was completed and designated as a National Scenic Trail.
- 1980 A 22,000 acre expansion of Crater Lake National Park authorized by Congress. Much of the acreage was formerly managed by the Rogue River National Forest and had been found suitable for designation as wilderness in the Forest Service's RARE II study.
- 1986 Construction of Elk Creek dam begun on the same day that an appeal was filed by the Oregon Natural Resources Council.
- 1989 Elk Creek dam construction halted. Initial funding of \$50,000 was secured for an economic study of the Rogue Basin's fishery.
- 1992 First surveys to be conducted in the Rogue Basin economic fishery study.

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