

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Objectives

There are many noble reasons for preparing an historical overview for a National Forest. These involve preserving evidence and knowledge of the past, learning its lessons, and using the information gained to plan for the future. All apply to Los Padres National Forest, but the immediate impetus for this document is the need to incorporate historical data into planning future management.

All Forests in the National Forest System are required to complete 50-year Land and Resource Management Plans as a result of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (1974), as amended by the National Forest Management Act (1976). The direction for preparing planning documents includes a requirement that each Forest Plan be accompanied by an overview of the Forest's cultural resources.

In the Los Padres' case, overview documents covering prehistoric cultural resources and Native American concerns were in place as completion of the Forest Plan neared in early 1984. Some were prepared to fulfill Forest planning requirements, while others were either coincidental or related to other planning projects. There was an obvious gap in the area of history, since the only previous description of Forest history had been prepared by William S. Brown in 1945. (43)

Several elements of an overview of Forest history and the Forest's historical resources already existed. These included a computerized inventory of the archival document and photograph collections housed in the Forest Research Archives, Brown's document chronicling events prior to 1945, and the Forest oral history archives of approximately 80 taped interviews. Two areas of information were specifically lacking; first, descriptive data concerning the period from 1945 to the present, and second, a summary and general assessment of changes in land use and land use management during the historic era that could be useful in planning future management. In addition, many of the subjects touched on by Brown deserved more attention.

The Forest chose to prepare an overview that would supplement Brown's description of early Forest history and extend it to the present, as well as provide a general assessment of historical trends in land use and land use management. There were several additional, specific objectives, including: accomplish as complete an overview as possible with limited funds; prepare a readable document, which could be enjoyed by the lay reader as well as used for management purposes; and identify areas where original research is needed, or where so much information exists that a separate thematic study is warranted.

1.2 Methods

The best way to accomplish these objectives seemed to be through use of local knowledge and existing archival material. The Forest contracted with local naturalist and backcountry historian E. R. (Jim) Blakley to do the groundwork for the historical overview. Jim was able to work primarily from his own extensive historical and bibliographic files relating to the Forest (the Blakley Archives), while also using materials made available by individuals in the Los Padres community or found in the Forest cultural resources files and research archives. In addition, Jim's lack of official Forest Service affiliation and his colorful writing style would hopefully ensure an enjoyable as well as informative document.

It was agreed that Jim's draft document would be prepared using a mutually agreed upon outline. The Forest Service would edit the document as deemed necessary and insert data relating to the Monterey Ranger District, since Jim's knowledge and sources of information were limited to the Forest's main division (including the Santa Lucia, Santa Barbara, Ojai and Mt. Pinos Ranger Districts). One consequence is that the material relating to the Monterey Ranger District is minimal or inadequately documented, definitely on a different scale than that for the rest of the Forest.

In addition to completing the draft overview manuscript, the contract called for preparation of a bibliography of pertinent historical documents (see Appendix A) and updating of the Los Padres cultural resources site atlas with information about historic structures and historic archeological sites. All in all, the work requested and accomplished far exceeded the monetary return.

1.3 Organization of the Overview

It is essential that a chronicle and assessment of Forest history not be limited by administrative boundaries. The Los Padres does not exist, or operate, in a vacuum. Throughout the historic era, the state of the Forest has been dependent primarily on the needs and desires of people in the surrounding environs. With this in mind, activities and events are included in this overview which occurred not only within the present Forest boundaries, but also around the edges of the Forest, in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, and even in Washington, D.C. (among other places).

The overview is organized first by chronological periods. This was necessary, since it was intended to show cultural change over time, specifically changes in land use and in the ways the Forest Service manages land. The overlaps that occur between periods are largely the result of transitional events, often those which induced or eased the change from one government to another.

The information available for the most recent period, lumped under "Growth and Development", is understandably more substantial than that for earlier times. This period also has seen the most intense activity within the Forest boundaries and includes the period of Forest Service administrative history. For these reasons, a number of themes were identified as a means of organizing the data. Of course, these themes are interrelated; and the reader should be careful to read the "Growth and Development" section as a whole for that reason. A good example of the overlap involved is the Civilian Conservation Corps, which is discussed in its own section, but also cuts across other themes, such as transportation, communication, and recreation. There is also some overlap with earlier periods, since the roots of some areas of development are in the hispanic period.

The word "Forest" with an upper case F is used throughout the document to refer to the modern Los Padres boundaries. Locations and placenames also usually refer to modern designations, unless otherwise stated.

In general, the reader will be moving from north to south geographically in reading about events associated with a time period or theme; thus, the Monterey Ranger District is usually, although not always, discussed first.