

3.1 Patterns of Land Use

Historical data show that some patterns of land use within the Forest have remained virtually the same throughout the historic era, while others have changed substantially. Most of the trends have been recognized over the years by Forest managers and local residents with an interest in the historical development of Forest Service policies and their application to the Los Padres. Many are common to other National Forests and sometimes to other land management agencies throughout the United States. This overview does not provide any new revelations about patterns of land use, but it does serve to emphasize the import of certain changes and the reasons changes have or have not occurred.

3.1.1 Continuing Uses

In at least two areas of use, mining and grazing, historical patterns have resisted change.

In 1790, a party sent out by Goycochea to search for Indian neophytes who had escaped from Mission Santa Barbara engaged in a little mineral exploration on the side; the same sort of penny-ante mining is widespread over the Forest today. The large companies interested in oil and gas development or commercial mining of the few valuable mineral deposits found within the Forest are heavily regulated and operate in a manner tightly controlled with regard to protection of the environment. But the small-scale activities of both serious and recreational "miners" are relatively uncontrolled. They represent a continuation of policies based on laws designed to protect the public's right to explore for and develop minerals on public lands.

Plans for widespread oil and gas leasing, and the potential for significant amounts of development and production in some areas, will no doubt increase the administrative burden of the Forest. However, the controlled effects of these activities, with avoidance or mitigation of adverse impacts a standard part of each project, may be easier to manage than those related to small-scale mining. Reports of entire families going on mining "vacations" are not unheard of, and these recreationists may be causing subtle environmental changes. The pattern of small-scale mining is unlikely to change, and participants will continue to seek recreation or pursue dreams of riches in the Forest's streams and canyons.

Grazing within the Forest has its roots in the Mexican land grant ranchos and in the homestead period. Throughout most of the historic era, the grasslands of the Los Padres have provided a relatively inexpensive way to expand the grazing range for ranches adjacent to or sometimes within the Forest boundaries. In the early years after the Forest Reserves were established, the Forest promoted policies which had substantial effects on the ranchers' use of public lands for grazing. Forest managers put a stop to the popular practice of intentional burning in the fall to clear lands for pasture and encourage grass growth. The Forest also restricted grazing to numbers compatible with an established carrying capacity, thus cutting down on rampant overgrazing of the land, and also cutting the size of the herds ranchers could maintain.

Once such initial sideboards were accepted, ranchers and Forest managers embarked on a policy of permitted grazing, with modest fees charged for use of Forest land. This policy has survived to the present among agencies involved in management of public land and has thus far resisted attempts to raise fees by those who feel that the government is not obtaining fair market value for use of the land.

In one area, recreation, the use of the Forest has been constant, but the types of activities pursued have changed. This change is discussed in the following section.

3.1.2 Changing Uses

In several areas, the historic pattern of Forest use has changed or is changing.

Use of the Forest for recreation purposes has occurred throughout historic times, although the abundance of references to recreational trips in the early American period reflects an escalation of activities during that era (as well as the emergence of the newsprint media). The early recreationists went on pack trips, hunted, fished, and simply enjoyed the scenery from the back of a horse. Over the years a shift in emphasis has occurred, and the majority of today's Forest users prefer vehicle-related activities, such as car-camping, day-hiking, or "driving for pleasure." However, many visitors still engage in activities that involve solitude and removal from the ordinary experience. Thus, recreation users of the Los Padres embody elements of the traditional as well as the "modern" Forest user.

The need to balance the two types of recreation use represents one of the biggest challenges facing Los Padres management today. This is particularly true in these times of a declining budget, when hard decisions must be made regarding the allocation of fewer dollars than were available in years immediately previous. One solution that has been advanced over the years is implementation of recreation user fees; however, the per person cost of maintaining the developed and remote recreation experiences is hardly comparable, and user fees may not help create the desired balance.

A second area in which patterns of use have changed markedly is transportation. Travel was the most important non-Indian use of the Forest from the time of the Spanish explorers until the land grant era. Compared to the coast or valleys, the interior was not particularly hospitable, but it was often necessary to travel through the Forest to accomplish a given task or reach another destination. Forested lands provided travel corridors for the Indians, the Spanish and the Mexicans.

The development of major highways around the Forest, and eventually Interstate Highways 101 and 5, changed the focus of travel. Rather than passing through the Forest to reach a destination elsewhere, the majority of today's travelers within the Forest have reached their destination (one exception is use of Hwy. 154, which receives large amounts of commuter traffic between Santa Barbara-Goleta and the Buellton-Santa Maria areas). The primary goal of travel within the Forest today (other than vehicle use for administrative purposes) is recreation.

Perhaps the most significant change in management policy has been the gradual shift away from the heavy fire suppression program of the early 1900's. The Los Padres was established with watershed protection as the major management objective, and wildfire suppression was seen as the primary tool for accomplishing that objective. Over the years, the weight of evidence and opinion has shifted to a philosophy which recognizes fire's natural role in watershed management and promotes use of cool, prescribed burning to replicate the natural fire cycle. The result is an emphasis on a fuels management program which fosters a more holistic approach to watershed protection.

3.2 Effects on Contemporary Forest Management

The effects of historical patterns of land use on contemporary Forest management are many. This section does not attempt to list even the majority of those impacts. However, several episodes in Forest history cropped up more than once in preparing this overview, and those deserve special mention because of their obvious effects on current management.

Homestead and patented mining claims have shaped the current pattern of private holdings within the Forest boundaries (inholdings), creating a mosaic that has myriad effects on Forest management. The presence of these non-Forest affiliated uses are not characterized here as good or bad, but they have certainly increased the Forest's administrative load. The effects can be seen especially in the landline location, land acquisition and rights-of-way programs. Also, and perhaps more important in the long run, decisions concerning Forest sponsored or permitted activities must consider the potential effects on these inholdings and thus on any residents living on private lands within the Forest.

In one case, the potential effects of homesteads on the Forest were not realized at least in part due to an even older land allocation system, the Mexican land grants. This is, of course, the case of the Rancho Sisquoc and the Sisquoc/Manzana homestead district. By blocking access through ranch property to the homesteads, the ranch owners put a final nail in the homestead coffins and helped shape the western boundary of the San Rafael Wilderness. Today, the San Rafael includes popular hiking trails along the Sisquoc River and Manzana Creek which might not be a part of the Wilderness area if the homestead district had survived.

The 1957 Forest Service-U. S. Army interchange of lands in southern Monterey County has directly influenced land use in that area. The Forest Service acquired prime recreation land at the southern end of the Big Sur Coast while giving up land on the interior side of the Santa Lucia Range. As a result, the coastal area is now part of a recreation area of national importance. Had the area been in private ownership, its character would no doubt be very different today; the same would be true had military management continued.

The strong historical pattern associated with grazing in the Forest continues to affect Forest management and the fee schedule for grazing permits. The draft Forest Land Management Plan (Sections 3.17 and 4.17, in preparation) recognizes the importance of grazing allotments to the small, economically-dependent ranches within or adjacent to the Forest and the potentially disastrous effects for the ranchers and the small ranch lifestyle should the allotment system be substantially modified.

3.3 Data Gaps

A number of gaps in the existing information were identified during preparation of this overview. Most are fields which lend themselves to thematic studies. Each is appropriate for further study, either because of

- . its potential for providing information of importance in understanding the history of growth and development of the Forest and, consequently, the future course of Forest management

or,

- . its potential for providing information related to the study of historic archeological sites or structures.

The following themes should be further researched and documented in amendments to this overview or separate thematic studies.

- 1) The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) era, which is important for increased understanding of past management decisions as well as the significance of CCC-related archeological sites or structures.
- 2) The western Santa Ynez Range homesteads, which were so numerous on both northern and southern sides of the range that their pattern dictated the location of Forest boundaries in that area.
- 3) The names and locations of early Ranger District headquarters and other early administrative sites; this has particular import for assessing the significance of certain administrative structures in light of current studies of administrative site needs (the Administrative Sites Needs Assessment Process, or ASNAP).
- 4) Early Recreation Residences, especially clusters of residences, which may date from the earliest days of the National Forests and were encouraged at first as a means of increasing recreation use of the forests; such a study is needed particularly in light of the current policy against renewing long-term recreation residence permits.

The above is by no means an exhaustive list. This overview is intended to provide a baseline document which will make identification of additional data needs easier and support data acquisition as a continuing part of the Forest's planning process.

3.4 Application of Past Lessons to Forest Planning

Unfortunately, the preparation of a historical overview in itself does not embody the analysis necessary to apply history's lessons to future management. In that sense, this document fails to fully achieve one of the initial objectives, that of providing a "...general assessment of changes in land use and land use management that could be useful in planning future management." However, several instances can be cited in which the overview supports the analysis of environmental effects of proposed management alternatives found in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest Land Management Plan. These are in the areas of

- . the historical pattern of grazing within the Forest and the potential effects of changes in that pattern on small, economically-dependent ranches and the lifestyle associated with such ranches

- . the gradual change in the philosophy associated with fire management, seen in the fact that the proposed prescribed burning program drives other resource management activities in most alternatives (including the preferred alternative) considered in the Forest Plan
- . the shift in recreation use to a majority preference for vehicle-related activities, and the need to balance recreation management between such uses ("developed site recreation") and the continuing desire for a more primitive experience by other users.

In addition, there are immediate, technical applications of the overview's information, some of which were evident before the document was completed. (The case in point being identification and location of an historic structure of importance to the Forest Cadastral Surveyor because of an earlier surveyor's "call" to one of the building's corners). Such specific uses of the data are expected to occur frequently in the future.

Finally, this overview should give current and future generations of Los Padres users a sense of the rich heritage of the Forest and an enhanced understanding of the fact that no public land management agency operates only within its administrative boundaries.