Archaeological Survey of the Rams Dell Forest, Oregon State University College Forests, Clackamas County, Oregon

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INTRODUCTION

The College of Forestry at Oregon State University intends to harvest timber from the Rams Dell Forest, one of the University’s College Forests. The Rams Dell Forest encompasses 147 acres in the western foothills of the Cascade Range. It lies in the Woodcock Creek drainage approximately 7 miles east of the city of Molalla in Clackamas County (Figures 1 and 2). Applied EarthWorks, Inc., under contract to the College of Forestry, completed an archaeological survey of the Rams Dell Forest for the proposed timber harvest. The harvest area encompasses 95 acres; however, because the forest is relatively small, it was surveyed in its entirety.

Figure 1  Woodcock Creek flowing through the Rams Dell Forest, looking southeast.

1.1  PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Rams Dell Forest lies in the Southeast 1/4 of the Southwest 1/4 and the Southwest 1/4 of the Southeast 1/4 of Section 20, Township 5 South, Range 3 East, Willamette Meridian as depicted on the U.S. Geological Survey Fernwood, Oregon, topographic quadrangle (Figure 3). The Rams Dell Forest drains into Woodcock Creek, which is a tributary of the Molalla River. Woodcock Creek itself crosses the forest, as does a small unnamed tributary. Woodcock Creek flows northwest through a fairly wide and flat alluvial terrace (Figure 4); the unnamed tributary, which joins Woodcock Creek from the south, is incised and lacks an associated terrace.
Figure 2  Rams Dell Forest vicinity in Clackamas County.
Figure 3  Rams Dell Forest location on the U.S. Geological Survey Fernwood topographic quadrangle.
The Rams Dell Forest overstory is primarily Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), and red alder (*Alnus rubra*). The current forest is second growth, as shown by the large old Douglas-fir stumps that are present throughout. These stumps are sparse and spread out, suggesting that it was not a dense old growth forest before it was originally harvested. The understory varies from vine maple (*Acer circinatum*) and California hazel (*Corylus cornuta californica*) to dense thickets of salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) near the creeks. Ground cover consists of salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*), and western sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*). A small section of the forest has been recently harvested, represented by a dense patch of young Douglas-firs that are roughly 15 years old.

### 1.2 BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Background research included an online search of the records stored at the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) by Clayton Lebow (M.A.), a Registered Professional Archaeologist (RPA). No archaeological surveys within the Rams Dell Forest have been reported, and there are no previously recorded archaeological sites within the area. Only one previous archaeological survey has been conducted within 1 mile of the Rams Dell Forest, and there are no previously recorded archaeological sites within 1 mile.

In 2008, SWCA Environmental Consultants completed an archaeological study for the Palomar Gas Transmission Project, a pipeline that would stretch over 220 miles across the northwestern portion of Oregon. A small section of that study was within 1 mile of the Rams Dell Forest. While that effort discovered several archaeological sites, both historic and prehistoric, none are within 1 mile of the forest (Baker et al. 2009; Butler et al. 2009).
1.3 REPORT ORGANIZATION

This report documents Applied EarthWorks’ archaeological survey of the Rams Dell Forest for the College of Forestry at Oregon State University. This chapter introduces and describes the proposed project and project area. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the local physiography, ethnography, and prehistoric and historic settings of the area. Chapter 3 describes the methods used during fieldwork. Chapter 4 presents the results from the survey and offers management recommendations. A bibliography of references cited in the report is provided in Chapter 5.
2

SETTING

2.1 NATURAL SETTING

The Rams Dell Forest is situated in the foothills of the western Cascade Range next to the Willamette Valley. The Willamette Valley is 120 miles long and 20–40 miles wide alluvial trough bordered by the Coast Range on the west and the Cascades on the east. Elevation in the southern section of the Willamette Valley, near Eugene, is about 400 feet above sea level and the northern end at Portland is near sea level. The Willamette River flows the length of the valley and is fed by streams and rivers draining the Cascades and Coast Range. The climate of the Willamette Valley is categorized as warm dry summers and mild wet winters. The lower western Cascade Range is made up of generally gentle west-facing slopes that lead down to the Willamette Valley. The foothills are made up of old eroded volcanic flows of basalts, andesites, and pyroclastic rocks (Franklin and Dyrness 1988).

2.2 CULTURAL SETTING

Little is known of the lifestyles of the native groups that lived within and around the Willamette Valley and the western Cascades. This is due in part to the fact that epidemics of influenza or malaria devastated the native populations during the late 1700s and the early 1800s. As a result much of their cultural ways were never recorded (Aikens 1993). What is known of these groups comes from historic documents written by Euro-Americans during the 1800s and from what has been discovered through archaeological and ethnographic research.

The Molalla were a small tribe that occupied a large portion of the Cascade Mountains. They would have shared borders with the Clackamas groups to the north, the Upper Takelma and the Klamath groups to the south, the Northern Paiute and Tenino to the east, and the Kalapuya and the Upper Umpqua tribes to the west. The Molalla were divided up into three subgroups: the Northern Molalla, the Upper Santiam, and the Southern Molalla (Beckham 1977:36). The Northern Molalla were centrally located around the Molalla River basin; the Upper Santiam occupied the central section of the Cascades near the Santiam River; and the Southern Molalla were located in the southern Cascades near the Umpqua River (Beckham et al. 1981:85).

The Molalla language is not categorized as part of the same linguistic family as that of the native populations living in the Willamette Valley; it is often referred to as an isolate of the Penutian phylum. Listing the Molalla language as an isolate indicates that the Molalla language was only distantly related to the language spoken by their Penutian-speaking neighbors (Beckham et al. 1981; Minor et al. 1987). Much like the other tribes in the region, the Molalla were stricken by diseases during the late 1700s and early 1800s. In 1841, Horatio Hale, an official linguist for the United States, encountered the Molalla (Molele) and noted: “They were never very numerous, and have suffered much of late from various diseases, particularly the ague-fever” (Hale 1846:214).
The Molalla employed a familial social organization, traveling and wintering together in a family group. During the summer season the Molalla would take advantage of the mountains, hunting and gathering resources in the higher terrain. During the winter season they were known to settle in small villages along rivers on the western side of the Cascades. The Molalla were a hunter-gatherer people that would have harvested roots and berries, hunted elk and deer, and fished for trout, salmon, and steelhead. They intermarried with their neighboring tribes, the Klamath, the Kalapuyan, and the Chinookan, but were only known to have traded with the Klamath (Aikens 1993; Beckham et al. 1981).

In May of 1851 the Molalla signed the Champoeg Treaty, relinquishing the rights to their land in exchange for two reservations. However, the U.S. Senate never ratified the treaty and the reservations were never established. The Molalla signed away all of their land through a new treaty in 1855, and they were moved to the Grand Ronde Reservation. By the late 1800s, the Molalla population had been reduced to less than 80 people (Beckham et al. 1981:94–95).

In the early 1800s, Euro-American fur traders started exploring the Oregon territory and expanding the already existing trade networks established by the native groups in the area. The larger trading companies, such as Hudson’s Bay Company, greatly increased fur trapping in the region. While the fur trade was extending throughout the Oregon territory, settlers began coming from the east to claim a section of Oregon for themselves and take advantage of the growing economy (Beckham et al. 1981).

In 1844, William H. Vaughan claimed a section of land in the upper northeast portion of the Willamette Valley, near what is now known as the city of Molalla. In 1850 Molalla obtained a pioneer post office, although it was located near the site of Liberal. The post office was reestablished in 1875 at what appears to be the same location as the current post office. There are several reports of small sawmills being built during the late 1800s on creeks east of Molalla, such as Hancock Creek. Hancock Creek is said to have been named for the man that built and ran an early sawmill on the creek. This suggests the start of timber harvesting in this area (McArthur 1992).
3
FIELD METHODS

Applied EarthWorks archaeologists Clayton Lebow and Lance Dillon conducted the archaeological field survey of the Rams Dell Forest on February 17–20, 2015. Given the presence of two perennial streams and mostly flat terrain, the Rams Dell Forest was considered to have a high sensitivity for archaeological resources and was intensively surveyed. Although much of the Rams Dell Forest has flat or gently sloping terrain (see Figures 1 and 4), a few areas have slopes that exceeded 20–30 percent (Figure 5). These were considered to have a low archaeological sensitivity and were not surveyed with the same intensity as the flatter ground.

![Figure 5 Example of a slope on the Rams Dell Forest exceeding 20–30 percent.](image)

As shown in Figure 6, survey transects were spaced 20 meters apart in flat and gently sloping terrain. In steeper areas, the survey team made sampling passes rather than attempting an intensive survey. Transects depicted on Figure 6 are not meant to show the precise paths taken during the survey but rather to show the frequency and directions of pedestrian transects. The surveyors took advantage of ground exposed by rodent burrows, game trails, fallen trees, and road cuts.
Figure 6  Schematic of survey transects on the Rams Dell Forest.
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RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No archaeological resources were observed during Applied EarthWorks’ survey of the Rams Dell Forest. With the combination of perennial water, gentle topography, and wide alluvial terraces, the forest was considered to have a high probability for archaeological sites. Consequently, Applied EarthWorks recommends a post-harvest archaeological survey. If an archaeological site is found during timber harvest within the Rams Dell Forest, Applied EarthWorks or the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office should be notified immediately.
5
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