

CAPE SEBASTIAN STATE PARK
and
CONSOLIDATED FOREST WAYSIDES

Cape Sebastian State Park is situated on the Oregon Coast Highway, the north end of its recently consolidated portion being entered at Mile Post 356.87 and its south end is left at Mile Post 359.52. The highway enters the north side of the detached Colvin tract at Mile Post 355.17, cuts across the northeast corner, then irregularly skirts its east side a half mile or so, with a half mile gap before touching the north side of the consolidated portion. The monumented park road entrance is at Mile Post 358.22, seven and a half miles south of Gold Beach and twenty nine and a half miles north of Brookings.

The several tracts which have been combined and collectively designated as Cape Sebastian State Park are located as follows: In Section 36, Township 37 South of Range 15 West and Section 1, Township 38 South of Range 15 West, deed date September 5, 1925; in Section 31, Township 37 South of Range 14 West, deed date November 20, 1930; in Section 31, Township 37 South of Range 14 West, deed date February 10, 1931; in Section 36, Township 37 South of Range 15 West, deed dates December 10, 1934 and January 22, 1935; in Section 31, Township 37 South of Range 14 West, deed date May 14, 1936; in Section 30, Township 37 South of Range 14 West, deed date July 11, 1936, and the detached Colvin tract in Sections 19 and 30 in Township 37 South of Range 14 West and in Section 24, Township 37 South of Range 15 West, deed date October 12, 1940, all Willamette Meridian, in Curry County,

Oregon, containing a total of 1,058 acres, which includes five forest waysides, adjoining, or made a part of the original Cape Sebastian State Park.

PHYSIOGRAPHY:

Nearly all of the park area lies between the highway and the seashore. The terrain is rough and broken, with deep, steep sided, water worn gulches, very irregularly patterned. There is no extent of level land in the entire area, and few ridges of continuity, as indicated by the many, sharp highway curves. Fronting the ocean, much of the area is open grass land, while the background, rising in places to well over seven hundred feet, is quite generally, heavily forested. There are no water courses of size or consequence.

The outstanding topographic feature, and chief point of interest of the entire park, is Cape Sebastian itself. This famous point is approached by a well oiled road which leaves the highway where the monument stands and circuitously reaches within a few hundred feet of the cape summit which is easily attained over a well graded foot trail. The road is of fair width, steep in places, but entirely safe, if used with a measure of caution.

This bald, spectacular promontory, rising directly from the seashore to an elevation of six hundred ninety four feet (U.S.C. & G.S.), is the highest shore line eminence of the Curry County Coast, excepting Humbug Mountain. Also, other than the high point on the Coast Highway as it rounds Neah-Kah-Nie Mountain, it is the most accessible, high level and wide range view point of the entire Oregon coast. The view from the top of this elevated promontory is a magnificent one. There are visible miles and miles of Curry County's exceptionally picturesque

coast and shoreland, northward as far as Cape Blanco, with the high pyramidal form of Humbug Mountain looming largely in the picture, and southward it is an intensely interesting panorama to and beyond the Oregon line to California's Point St. George. Bashed in the crash and wash of the unrelenting waves of the open ocean that tear at the foot of its seaward slope, it has been undermined until it is almost a sheer precipice, known only to the winging birds, its face continually rolling down to the depths as it is raveled and wasted by wind and rain.

The immediate surroundings on the land side are pleasing open ridges and slopes which lend a sense of expansive freedom.

The north end of this headland also has features of interest. Near its top is a sheer cliff, lower down it is marked by the presence of a mass of immense blocks of talus rock that seem to have been shaken down by some convulsion of nature, perhaps a remote earthquake. Numbers of these are ten or even twenty feet in their greatest dimension, chinked with rock and debris in places where spruce and hemlock trees have found a foothold and grown to be thick of trunk, with dense, depressed and spreading crowns, some single, in groups of two, three or more, sometimes a dozen, affording shelter from the often sharp winds.

Beneath some of the larger blocks of stone, early aborigines apparently found shelter. This is evidenced by the smoke blackened overhang and the presence of pelagian kitchen middens, possibly of neolithic age, as they are now two hundred feet or more above the present seashore. From the top of the ridge, near where the park road ends, a graded foot trail begins, descending some four hundred feet,

vetical distance, down the steep side of a deep depression, then leads into the talus rock where the improvised shelter and kitchen middens were found. Here is an opportunity for the archeologist and geologist to determine the period in which these shell fish eaters used this primordial shelter, now two hundred feet above the sea. Altho the aboriginal sea coast dwellers who subsisted on shell fish were not given to carrying their food any great distance from the marge of the sea, there is nothing to indicate that they did not at this location. It is also quite possible, as in other places, that the shore land has been uplifted from its ancient level since the shell was cast aside.

While there is no great mass of shell refuse, there is more than enough to dissipate the thot that its site was the temporary hideout of renegade natives during the Indian troubles of the 1850's.

To the North of where the trail enters the talus, the grass slope descends steeply into a deep depression that drops away to the sea level, its opposite side rising again, to become a rough, wooded surface that is, for a short distance, out of the park area. The small band of elk that frequent the Buena Vista State Park, also range here and on into the Cape Sebastian area, where they are quite often seen from the apex of the park road, or other points in the vicinity.

From the bronze-capped triangulation point at the top of the cape, a foot trail follows the crest of the crumbling, knife-edge ridge that leads southward. The seaward side has a few living spruces, but most of them have been fire killed. Similarly they mark the gradual descent of the trail for a quarter mile or so, then the ridge broadens out and falls away steeper and steeper ending at Hunter Cove. When the ridge broadens, the trail trends toward the ocean, down thru a grove of

fire stricken spruce of good size, some alive, some dying, others dead and down, soon to enter a thrifty growth of sapling lodgepole pine, then switch-backs down the side of the pine clad slope, to touch the brink of a sea worn chasm and on down to a most delightful, nearly flat, surface of an acre or two, with a covering of grass and low shrubbery, that is water bound on three sides.

On its northerly side is the narrow, picturesque, wave worn chasm, twenty to thirty feet wide and upwards of two hundred feet long, into which the incoming seas drive with fascinating fury, only to be beaten back by the almost perpendicular cliff that marks its end, and sullenly retreat in a smother of foam for a new onslaught with each recurring wave. The outer, ocean side is an exposure of naked, sloping rock from the chasm southward to the hook point. Midway on this front is an easily approached "spouting horn", that emits weird, startling blasts, frequently of hair raising intensity when close by. Along the land edge of this bared rock is a fringe of thick based spruces, limbed to the ground with unusually long, heavy branches that fend the ocean winds. Rounding the jutting, hooked rock point to the south side of this small but charming park retreat, is the, comparatively, quiet water of Hunter Cove which is partially sheltered by Hunter Island, lying four or five hundred yards, southward from the shore of the point, its almost flat, grass covered surface of thirty or forty acres, rising one hundred thirteen feet above tide.

Leaving this small park area and following the perimeter of the cove eastward, the ridge end rises to a steep point, a trickle of water flows from a hillside spring, the point is passed and the shore rounds to a fine beach, where a small stream crosses and discharges into the cove. This beach is said to yield clams and the cove has a reputation for its

for its sea fishing and its many crabs of size and quality. Unfortunately there are no boats available in the near vicinity.

Sheep graze on the open slopes of the park land between the sea-shore and the highway.

FOREST:

The park forest is made up of the usual coast conifers, Douglas fir, Grand or White fir, Lodgepole pine, Western Red cedar, an occasional Port Orford cedar and Western yew. There are also Tanbark oak, Laurel (Myrtle wood), Madrona, Broadleaf maple, Cottonwood, Alder, Willow and Chinquapin. The Douglas fir is the dominant tree and the one most commonly used for lumber and fuel. This tree attains good size, but is generally limby, and the lumber product is mostly low grade material, but enough uppers are obtained for local use. Splendid specimens of myrtle and tanbark oak are to be seen in this group of parks, but there are no outstanding groves of either of these two species.

There are many tall, stately firs and spruces of large diameters, and these with the admixture of other varieties of conifers and various indigenous hardwoods, present a wayside forest of high present and future **sylvan** value, which provides an essential, stabilizing forest cover that gives needed support to the steep and slippery, shale hillsides. Denudation of these roadsides would be deplorable from an esthetic point of view, and most unfortunate for the care and maintenance of the highway.

In the spring and early summer the Curry County roadsides boast several flowering shrubs. The most conspicuous being the colorful rhododendron with its abundance of richly hued blossoms. These are preceded by the sweet scented, native azalea and the delicately perfumed ceanothus, commonly called blue lilac. Some of the finest specimens of the latter are particularly plentiful along the forested

section of the highway in the Cape Sebastian park, a short distance south of the park monument, where they are of exceptional size and richly flowered with their sweet scented blossoms.

Spring comes early along the Curry County coast and, early in this season, the open Cape Sebastian area is every where flowered with wild iris. The first ones appear in the sheltered gulches that are open to the southwest, later wherever the sunshine is at all prolonged. Soon, they are abundant in all their attractive hues which range from a delicate lavender to a deep blue.

The varieties of herbaceous flowers growing along the coast line are neither so numerous, nor so attractive as the inland flowers and those present are eclipsed by the more attractive native flowering shrubs which seem to attain perfection in the soil and climate of this locality.

It is worthy of note, that in the extreme south end of the county, there is a resurgence of a former prosperous bulb growing industry that is reaching an unprecedented volume and yielding almost unbelievable returns to a section of the state that prosperity for too long had passed by.

IMPROVEMENTS:

The improvements in this park area were the work of CCC forces, operating from the Gold Beach camp located at the southern outskirts of the town. It was the first state park CCC camp devoted exclusively to state park development.

The camp was built in October, 1933 and occupied in the Second Period, October 15, 1933 to April 15, 1934, after moving down from Crater Lake in time to escape the early snows of the highlands. Like all state park camps, it was operated under the direction of the San Francisco Office of the National Park Service, which exercised supervision over

all the plans and also the conduct of the work performed.

The camp was moved to Wyeth on the Columbia River at the end of the Second Period and returned to Gold Beach at the beginning of the Fourth Period in October 1934. At the end of this period the camp was closed and discontinued.

The major improvements in the grouped Cape Sebastian area were as follows: Forest improvement, 244 acres; fire hazard reduction, roadside, 35 miles; fire hazard reduction, other, 96 acres; fire breaks, 0.4 miles; landscaping, undifferentiated, 11 acres; landscaping, roadside 22 miles; foot trails 1.6 miles; monument and sign, 1 only; park road, 0.8 miles; seed collection, conifers, 62 bushels; seed collection, hardwoods, 442 pounds and tree planting 100 acres, more or less.

This tree planting was of Port Orford cedar, with a few pines, on the open land adjacent to the cape. It is believed that none survived.

GRAZING:

Between the ocean side and the highway there is an expanse of grass land where sheep are allowed to pasture. Sheep husbandry is an unobtrusive, but highly important industry in this county and open park lands suitable for grazing have been leased at nominal sums.


W. A. Langille
State Park Historian

May 8, 1944

CAPE SEBASTIAN STATE PARK

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

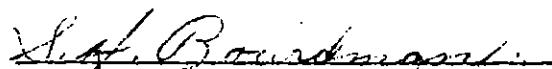
Picnic facilities should be provided (2 tables) on the southwest corner of the park where there is a narrow flat bench bordering the ocean. Two tables should be constructed in the rock grotto located in the northwest corner of the park. These tables should be made of rock.

Soil erosion has started in a number of places in the park. These should be stopped by either planting seed or bush material. Sheep pasturage is permitted in the park. The number of sheep should be held to the minimum. The remainder of the park roads unoiled should be oiled. A herd of elk range the park. A game refuge should be established with Myers Creek at its mouth being its south boundary, thence east three miles, thence north to its intersection with Hunters Creek, thence west to the ocean.

Waysides both north and south of the park proper need careful supervision from a wayside growth condition. Also fire protection.

There should be a caretaker stationed at Cape Sebastian to care for the park and its bordering waysides - the Colvin wayside and ocean tract, Buena Vista wayside.

A wind protected observation house should be erected for the patrons of the park on the promontory at the end of the road which overlooks the ocean at the edge of the bluff.


E. H. Boardman
State Parks Superintendent