

**WHEELER COUNTY  
PLANNING  
COMMISSION  
REPORT  
1968**



**COVER PHOTO**

Wheeler County Courthouse

Fossil, Oregon

Erected 1901

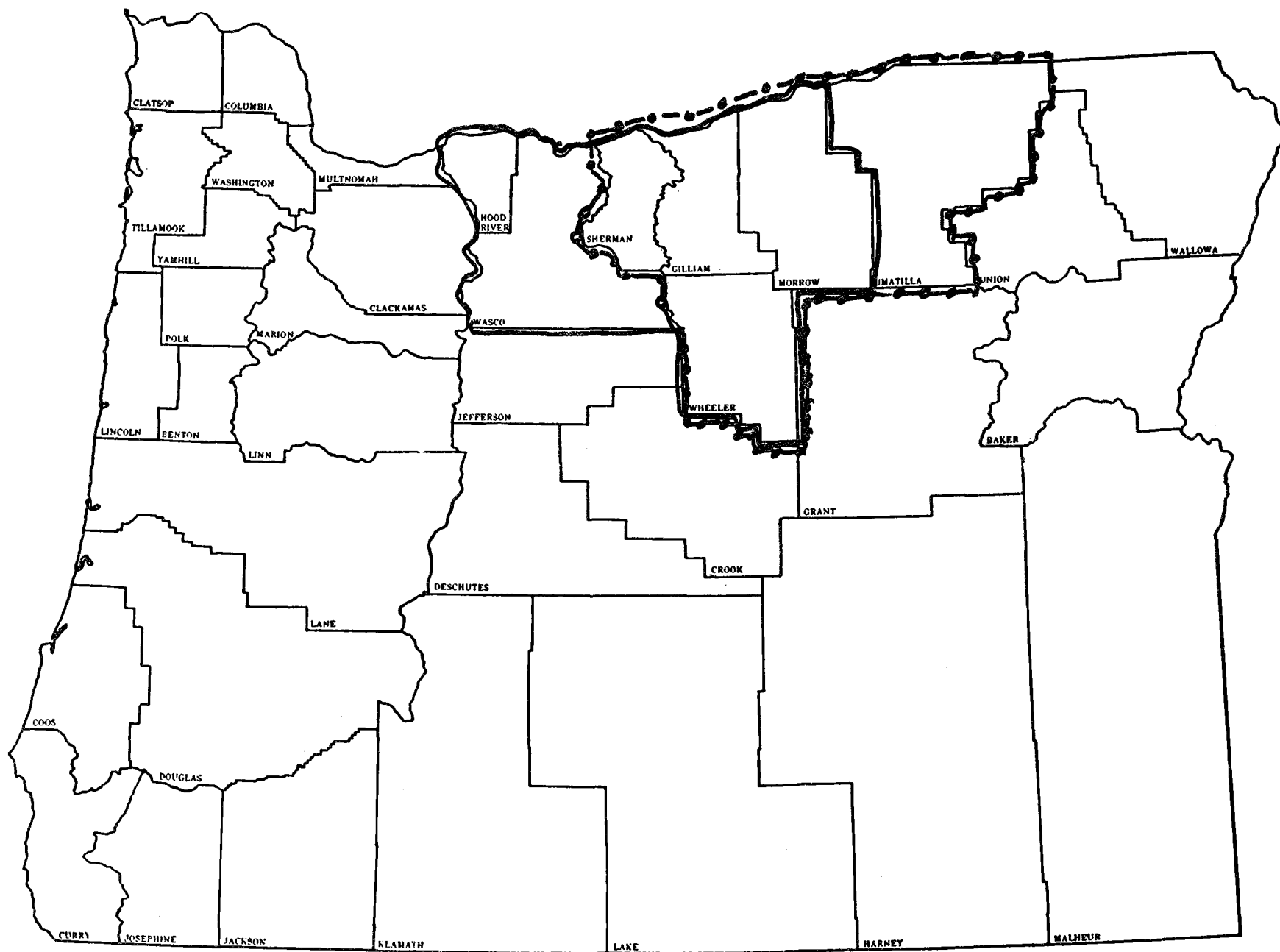
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# LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS



—— BOUNDARY, 18th SENATORIAL DISTRICT

- - - - BOUNDARY, 28th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

# History

Wheeler County was named for Henry H. Wheeler,, who established the first real stage line between The Dalles and Canyon City. From 1864 to 1868 Wheeler drove his 4-horse team and 11-passenger coach across this area inhabited by hostile Indians. At one time during the year 1866, Wheeler was attacked by renegade Snake Indians and barely escaped with his life. During this encounter he was shot through the face but managed, along with one passenger, to escape and make his way back to The Dalles. In later years, Wheeler retired to Mitchell, where he died on his farm on March 26, 1915. The only historical marker in Wheeler County marks the spot where Wheeler was shot.

R. N. Donnelly represented the population in the Oregon State House of Representatives when Wheeler County was created in 1899.

There are now four concentrations of population in Wheeler County. The incorporated Cities of Fossil, Spray, and Mitchell have experienced drastic population decreases in the past 20 years. The unincorporated mill settlement of Kinzua has also declined in population in recent years. There are still many districts which were settlements in the past but exist in name only at the present. They are Antone, Clarno, Twickenham (which very nearly became the county seat), Richmond (several old buildings in this town still remain intact), Calab, Waterman (an old stagecoach stop), Sarvice Creek (erroneously referred to as Service Creek now), Winlock, Waldron, and Burnt Ranch.

Fossil was named for the post office which was established on February 28, 1876. The first postmaster was Thomas Benton Hoover, who also served as the first mayor of the incorporated town (1891). In a very close election held in 1899, Fossil was voted to be the county seat, narrowly defeating Twickenham. Hoover named the town Fossil because of his discovery of many interesting fossil remains, and the town is still world famous for such findings.

Spray was named for its founders, Mr. and Mrs. John F. Spray. Spray became the first postmaster on May 31, 1900. The town was not incorporated until 1958.

The town of Mitchell was named for John Hipple Mitchell, a former United States senator from Oregon (1873-79, 1885-97, 1901-05). It was incorporated in 1893, but the postmaster named the town when the post office was first established in April, 1873.

Kinzua is an unincorporated mill town; its post office was first established in 1928. It was named after a community on the Allegheny River in Pennsylvania and is said to mean a "place of many fishes." A logging settlement called Wetmore located about 11 miles from Kinzua was named for E. D. Wetmore, who was a large stockholder in Warren, Pennsylvania.

As part of the long-range planning of the county, the commission feels that there has been a lack of exploitation of the rich history of the area. Specifically, we believe that the history of the county should be posted so that a visitor might make at least a one-day historical tour of the county. Such posted signs should be worded to encourage the visitor to help with the prevention of vandalism and theft in isolated points of interest.

Museums should be encouraged in all localities within the county and should be constructed and situated so that fire and water damage could be held at a minimum. The committee strongly recommends the compilation of the history of Wheeler County and the surrounding area.

A special commendation is given to the Eastern Oregon Pioneer Association for their continued interest in the field of history. It is hoped that the future County Budget Committees will consider the possibility of some county funds for the purpose of assisting in the preservation and promotion of local history.

All possible avenues of funding for the above projects should be investigated through various federal and state programs.

## Range and Agriculture Report

The land area of Wheeler County is approximately 1.1 million acres. Of this total, 75 percent is privately owned and 25 percent publicly owned. Cropland makes up approximately 35,000 acres of the total, and grassland 950,000 acres.

Because of overgrazing in the past, primarily by domestic livestock, there has been a serious infestation in Wheeler County of undesirable shrubs, grass, and tree species on over 400,000 acres of rangelands.

There has been an increasing dependence of the deer populations in the county on cultivated fields for much of their summer and fall forage. This has caused a substantial reduction in crop yields throughout the county, amounting to one ton of dry matter per acre, and more in some cases.

Marketing facilities located within the county are few. All livestock produced in the county are sent else-

where for processing at an added expense to the livestock grower.

The cost of range-improvement practices is expensive and many range operators are unaware of the benefits that could be provided by various improvements.

Costs of farming operations and taxes have been rising, while the price received for livestock, hay, and grain, the county's chief sources of agricultural income, have remained static.

The number of absentee ranch owners who have purchased land primarily on speculation has increased gradually. In many cases, this has led to real estate values above the potential production of the land and a corresponding increase in taxes for the legitimate farmer.

Increased production of cropland will result from intensified management and the use of technological advancements. Family farms will be strengthened by



the application of proper land-use management, proper crop selection, and the overall application of conservation measures.

The economy will be stabilized through increased productivity. Through the improved use of land, water, and plant and wildlife resources, all persons in the county will benefit. Proper land use will reduce erosion, which in turn will insure clean, unpolluted streams and rivers. Proper land use will also affect available feed for wildlife, the health and living conditions of rural residents and opportunities for recreational areas. Rangelands should be revegetated to the maximum and managed for the sustained productivity of the county.

The area can derive further benefits from increased recreational opportunities and improved hunter-rancher relationships. Proper development will check soil losses both to range and cropland from sheet, gully, and rill erosion. That proper treatment and use of one resource greatly enhances all other resources should be apparent. Greater diversification in the present agricultural program would be beneficial and is expected to occur.

Better acceptance of a program of range improvement such as brush control, spring developments, stock ponds and trails, range seedings, cross fencing, and the proper management of such will increase the value of range resources.

## Recommendations

The committee submits for consideration these needs:

- Closer cooperation between the rancher, the game

commission, and the sportsman. Many areas are heavily populated with deer which cause considerable damage to cultivated fields.

- Further investigation into the economic feasibility of feedlots on individual ranches. Recent studies indicate that some local ranchers who have their own feedlots are making greater profits on their livestock business than those who do not. In addition, the establishment of more feedlots would encourage closer markets, which in turn could lead to higher net prices received by stock owners.
- Exploration of the possibilities for agricultural diversification within the area. Climatic conditions are such that a number of different crops could be grown.
- Accelerated conservation planning throughout the entire area to assist in assessing the farmers' and ranchers' total resources and aiding these people to make wise decisions regarding these resources.
- Land conversion. Land misuse is prevalent, particularly with regard to annual crops for hay and grain production. Marginal lands are being used to produce hay and grain crops on approximately 5,000 acres that should be put into permanent cover. Accelerated erosion hazards and low yields result from this misuse of land.
- Investigation of the potentials for using western juniper in the wood-products industries. This invader is rapidly spreading, occupying a 10 percent canopy cover or more on over 100,000 acres of rangeland in Wheeler County. It has practically no value at the present time.
- Encouraging public land agencies to develop their lands on a multiple-use basis.

## Timber Report

Population has steadily declined in Wheeler County as farms have been consolidated into fewer ownerships over the past 10 years. Sawmills have been closed down as a result of the liquidation of the bulk of privately owned virgin sawtimber. These factors resulted in the egress of young people seeking employment in other parts of the state.

### Log Production

Log production in Wheeler County built up sharply following World War II, reaching a peak production of 120 million board feet in 1952, dropping in 1953, and again rising to over 110 million board feet in 1954. Following 1954 log production declined sharply and rose again in 1959. Since this time, production has been gradually declining. Since 1950 eight sawmills have closed down because of the difficulty of obtaining logs. Log production has shifted from private lands to public lands. The decline in population in Wheeler County followed the shutdown of these sawmills. Privately owned timber land in Wheeler County produced more than 80 percent of the county's log production during the period between 1949 and 1958. The ensuing years between 1959 and the present private saw log production drop to 25 percent of the earlier period. This trend can be expected to continue until second-growth trees attain saw log size.

### Forest Lands

The county contains some highly productive commercial forest lands. Approximately 32 percent of the area of Wheeler County, about 356,580 acres, is commercial forest land. These forests are almost exclusively soft woods, with ponderosa pine occupying 56 percent of the area and associated species 44 percent. Forty-three percent of the commercial forest land is in federal ownership and about 86 percent of the remaining sawtimber is on federal land.

The timber industry in the county is essentially based on old-growth ponderosa pine, representing about 70 percent of the total log production. This is true despite the fact that the ponderosa pine species is less than 60 percent of the total timber inventory. Re-manufacturing of pine lumber has been done outside of Wheeler County except in the north half of the county, where Kinzua Corporation is situated. Forty-five percent of the total sawtimber inventory occurs in trees ranging in size from 11 to 30 inches. Of the commercial forest lands, 16 percent is in seedlings, saplings, or pole-sized timber. A high percentage of the adequately stocked young stands are currently overstocked and producing less than their potential. There has been little incentive to manage properly commercial forest lands in the absence of a market for small saw logs, roundwood products, and chips.

Of the 1,102,130 acres in Wheeler County, 32 percent is in commercial forest lands. The remaining is 19 percent noncommercial forest land and 49 percent nonforest land. Of the commercial forest land, 151,700 acres, or 43 percent, is in federal ownership; and 204,040 acres, or 57 percent, is in private ownership. Other public lands, predominantly those owned by the State of Oregon, amount to 840 acres.

## Saw Timber

Because of the heavy drain of sawtimber from private lands in the preceding two decades, 86 percent of the total sawtimber volume remaining in Wheeler County is federally owned. The public lands can sustain an annual allowable cut of about 23 million board feet. (National Forest 22MM, Bureau of Land Management 1MM). The public agencies are now offering to fill allowable cut. Volumes actually removed are dependent largely upon market conditions.

Several sawmills have shut down in the past two decades because of want of logs, but logging and lumbering still constitute the major source of employment in the area.

Because the industry has been primarily geared to old-growth ponderosa pine, most of the mills are not designed to manufacture second-growth saw logs or roundwood products. Lack of rail facilities in the south end of the county have made it difficult to utilize fully the raw material that is available. The restricted outlets for second-growth saw logs or roundwood products discourages intensive forest management.

Four million board feet of pole-sized timber and lodgepole pine is available from the National Forest Lands within the county, in perpetuity. In addition, private lands are well stocked with young timber. Small saw logs and defective white fir provide an additional source of chipping material suitable for pulping process. It is estimated that approximately 20 million board feet

per year could be available in this type of product.

Of the 157,000 timber-type acres of private commercial forest land, only about 1 percent is not stocked at this time. Approximately two thirds of the private commercial land is in need of release by thinning. In the absence of markets for small saw logs and their products, any thinning done in the next few years will be done by precommercial thinning methods at costs up to \$30 to \$40 per acre. One hundred and eight acres were thinned in Wheeler County last year under share-cost arrangements of the ACP Program.

On the public lands a similar situation exists. Of the 151,700 acres of publicly owned commercial forest land, about 100,000 acres are in need of release. The Ochoco and Umatilla units have thinned about 1,000 acres in Wheeler County in the past five years. It should be pointed out that more intense thinning programs are planned for both these forests in the next five years. To release all of the young stands in a reasonable period of time would require treatment of 30 to 40 thousand acres per year. Growth of these areas without thinning release is only about a quarter of their full potential.

Lack of research on the harvesting of juniper trees is apparent in the state of Oregon. Ranges could be vastly improved and another wood product could be developed if research could prove juniper useful enough to be harvested economically.

## Recommendations

The most important way to develop the full potential of timber resources in Wheeler County is to create outlets for intermediate cuts and young stands. This will require new milling facilities geared to small saw logs, and outlets for low-grade dimension products, chips, veneer, and fiber-board products.

Research on the harvesting and use of juniper needs to be carried out.

# Water Resources Report

## Problems

An amount of water estimated at 1,350,000 acre feet either flows through Wheeler County or is discharged from its watersheds. Of this amount only a very small percentage is consumed within the county. Only 4 percent of the amount actually coming from county watersheds moves during the three-month period from July to September, when irrigation needs are greatest. Usually a severe late season shortage of irrigation water occurs along the tributaries of the John Day river.

The cropland fields along major streams, and particularly along the John Day River, are subjected to periodic flooding, not only during winter and spring runoff, but from high-intensity summer storms. After the flood of 1964-65, practically all the farmers in the county participated in the emergency flood restoration program which ensued. More than \$195,000 of govern-

ment A.C.P. cost-share money was spent to repair damage in the county estimated at between \$1.5 and \$3 million.

Irrigation-water management is not being practiced to the extent that maximum benefit is being made of water applied. Almost all irrigated lands within the county are in need of some improvements to reach maximum water-use efficiency.

Low late-season flows do not support a suitable year-round fish habitat and population in most streams, including the John Day river. August and September flows are only half the minimum flow required. Domestic and municipal water supplies are critically low in some communities within the county during the dry summer months. Not enough stockponds and spring developments are available to give maximum help toward improved range management or to provide the most aid toward reduction of serious soil-erosion losses.

Water-based recreation is extremely limited in the county since streamflows are very low in the summer and fall months and impoundments are so few. The one irrigation reservoir for public fishing in the county consists of less than 20 surface acres. It is overcrowded during late spring weekends and is not adequate for the resident population, let alone tourists or visitors. Seasonal fishing in the major river is about the only water-based sport of any significance in the county.

## Development of Water Resources

Several major benefits could be expected from development of Wheeler County's water resources. These would include at least the following improvements, and possibly others.

A substantial increase in the agricultural income of the farm family in Wheeler County, which has been steadily declining for several years, is probable. If sufficient irrigation water can be developed to provide late-season irrigation, hay yields would more than double, in most cases, on more than 5,000 acres. New acreage could be irrigated, totaling more than this amount. Perhaps most important, a farmer's family would be making a decent enough living to allow him to stay on the land rather than sell out to absentee speculators or investors. By and large these latter have shown little interest in the conservation of the area's natural resources.

A substantial increase in the tourist and recreation business for the county because of the increased number of water-based recreational developments is highly probable. An extremely small proportion of this vast potential within this county has thus far been tapped. It is estimated that by developing water-based recreation we could increase greatly the recreational use of this county.

A more adequate protection from devastating floods which have ravaged this county would be possible. These floods caused between \$1.5-3 million in damage in the winter of 1964-65 alone. One of the only drainages not to receive major flood damage during this period had one of the few reservoirs constructed in this county. In addition, this county is particularly vulnerable to flooding and soil erosion because of the high incidence of summer high-intensity storms.

Development will accomplish a reduction in serious soil erosion loss from not only cropland, but from rangeland and woodland as well. Water volumes could be stored in reservoirs before they could build up to the point of becoming damaging to a major degree.

The long-term objective should be to develop all reservoir sites which are both economically and structurally feasible for irrigation, recreation, and flood control that will contribute to the proper conservation and wise use of Wheeler County water resources and be consistent with the well-being of the people within its boundaries. The primary objective is to obtain as even a flow as possible of clear, clean water on the drainages within the county.

A further objective is to fully explore all ground water possibilities for their suitability in providing a source of both domestic and irrigation water supplies.

To obtain maximum benefit from water applied for production on agricultural lands is another objective.

## Recommendations

- Watershed projects are needed on Butte Creek and Mountain Creek. These projects are needed to provide flood control, land treatment, water development for irrigation, municipal, recreational, and domestic uses. In addition to the above watersheds, there are several other drainages which need additional survey.

- The abundant seasonal flow of water from this county should be utilized to a far greater extent than it is today. There is an ample supply for projected future needs, but comprehensive plans should be made to coordinate the various possible uses. A major purpose of future water development projects in Wheeler County will be the development of adequate water supplies for agriculture and recreation. Of the 41,500 acres of cropland in the county, approximately one fourth is irrigated, and one half of that has a short-season supply. With only 3 percent cropland in the entire county, the need for maximum production on this land is imperative. On the more than 258,000 acres of federally owned land in the county, there are no water-based recreational developments, and only one small pond on private land is available for public use. Since recreation has been assessed as one of the county's biggest assets for the future, water development is very important.

- Future water development projects should include other phases of water use and control, such as flood control; power; domestic and municipal; water for livestock, fish, and wildlife; and pollution abatement.

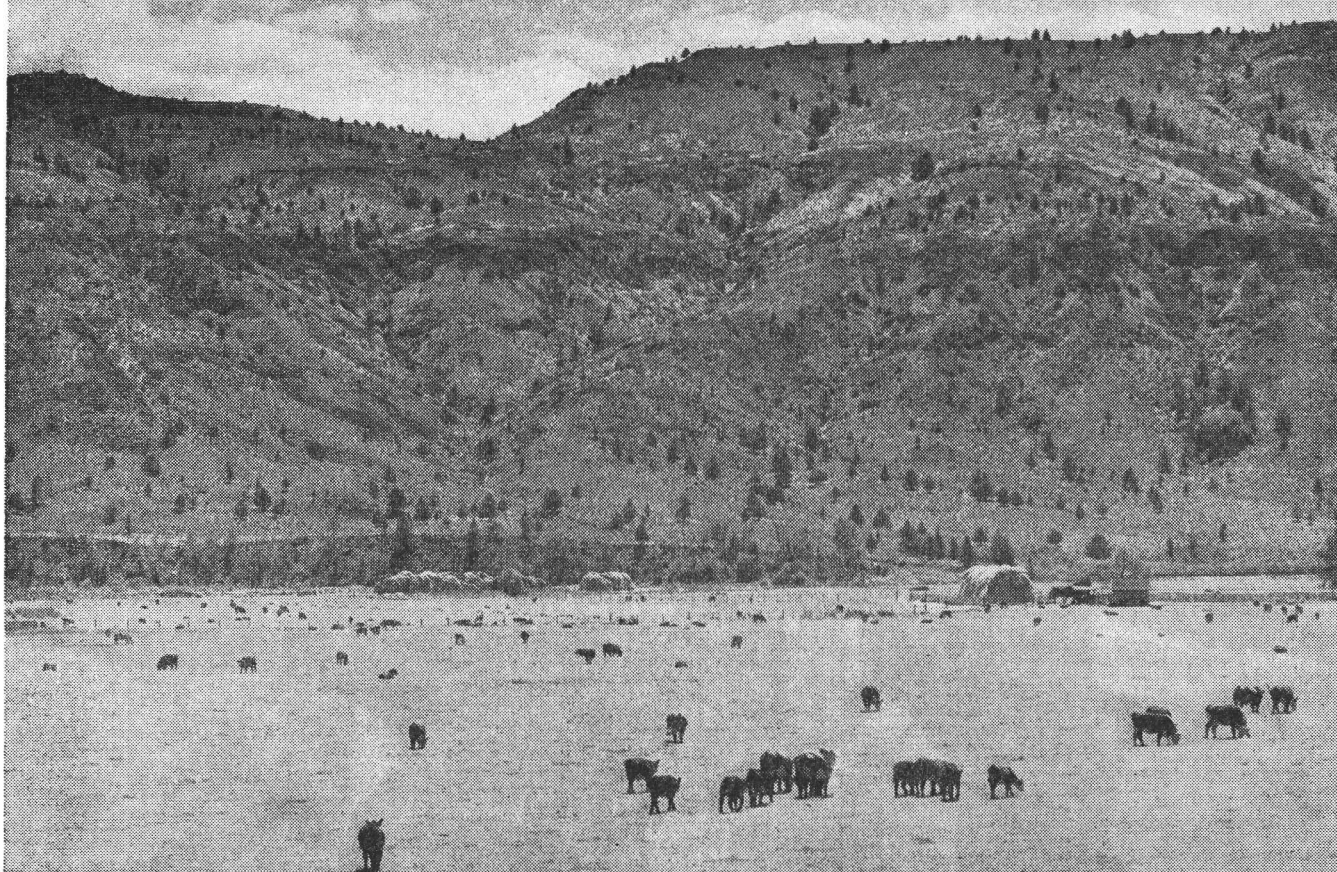
- While much of the county is underlain by material of volcanic origin, which normally has very meager ground water supply, the ground potential has not been established, neither has the possibility of diverting mountain streams with water-spreading systems to help increase late-season flow by using the soil as a reservoir. Much more of this investigative work is needed.

- Spring development possibilities within the county are almost unlimited at all elevations. Relatively few adequate developments have been installed.

- Because of the rugged terrain in this county, potential reservoir sites of any large size are not numerous. There are approximately 20 such sites in the county on side drainages of the John Day River. Nevertheless, the need to have thorough investigation on each and every one for need and feasibility is important. The opportunity for smaller pond sites is numerous.

- The Corps of Engineers is currently investigating a reservoir site in Wheeler County which should have an estimated total storage capacity of 125,000 acre feet. There is a need for close coordination and planning between local people and agency personnel on this type of project.





Beef cattle being raised for market are shown in this typical ranch scene along State Highway 19 near Spray in central Oregon. Cattle are an important part of Oregon's agricultural industry, second largest industry in the state. (Oregon State Highway Department Photo 7097)

## Transportation Report

Wheeler County transportation consists of a system of primary and secondary state highways, county and private roads, a railroad into Kinzua from Condon, one recognized public airfield, and a number of small private airfields. Some suggestions on present conditions and possible improvements follow.

### Primary Highways

There are two primary state highways running through Wheeler County: Highway 19 north and south from Arlington to what is known as the Dayville Junction, and Highway 26 which runs east and west from Portland to points east.

The section of highway between Mitchell and Dayville Junction is outmoded and needs improvements. The sections of Highway 19 between Arlington and Condon, Condon and Wehrli Canyon, the Dyer place, and Cummings Hill, and Spray and the Humphrey's ranch are also outmoded, crooked, and need improvement.

The Oregon State Highway Department has all these sections of road listed as needing improvement in its long-range planning program. The Wheeler County Planning Commission feels that the Highway Department should be urged to consider improvements on these primary market roads, as they are the county's only links with agricultural and industrial markets. Improvements of the last few years on both Highway 19 and Highway 26 are acknowledged, but more construction should be encouraged.

The planning commission realizes that cash reserves for state projects are very low and that federal match-

ing funding is very erratic. However, if proper and continuous pressure is brought to bear, some of these long-awaited projects may be initiated.

The planning commission does not wish to place priorities on the various projects, but it will offer its assistance to any group requesting road improvements beneficial to Wheeler County.

### Secondary Highways

There are two sections of secondary state highways which cross Wheeler County. Highway 218 from Fossil to Shaniko is paved with the exception of about 2 miles east of the Clarno Bridge. Since the road has been oiled, a substantial increase in tourist and agricultural use has been noted.

Highway 207 between its junction with Highway 19 and Heppner is adequately oiled for present traffic. However, this road lacks sufficient shoulder space for safe travel. The section of 207 between Service Creek and Mitchell is inadequate. This section of the road is the only connection between Mitchell and the county seat. It has a large tourist use, especially during the spring, summer, and fall months. Yet the road has about 9 miles of gravel surface right in the middle of this section.

These two sections should be improved by oiling, and a new bridge should be constructed at the Clarno site. Both these needs are recognized in the long-range planning of the Highway Department. Once again, it is felt that support from local groups will hasten the construction of the secondary highways within the county.

## Country Roads

With the exception of the county road to Kinzua and a few abandoned state highways, Wheeler county's roads are surfaced with gravel. We appreciate improvements to the county road system within the past few years made by the County Court and Road Department.

We recommend that oiling be considered for several main market county roads, but we do not attempt to set priorities, since we feel that this is the prerogative of the County Court.

We also recommend that an investigation be made as to the feasibility of the acquisition of the Kinzua road and the Bridge Creek road as far north as the Painted Hills by the Oregon State Highway Department. The Kinzua road has heavy traffic and has proved to be too much of a burden to maintain. The Bridge Creek road to the Painted Hills receives an unusual amount of tourist traffic. It seems to the Wheeler County Planning Commission that the State Highway Department should not create or attempt to maintain a state park without providing reasonable access to that park.

## Other Transportation Facilities

### CITY STREETS

We commend the County Court for offering the various cities in the county assistance by providing crushed rock. The city streets within the county have improved vastly within the last few years. Mitchell streets are almost entirely oiled. Fossil streets are substantially oiled, and plans are being made to improve the street system in Spray.

## Municipalities Report

The cities of Wheeler County have, since 1960, seen a steady decline of population, especially in Mitchell, because of the closing of sawmills and the sale of farms to larger owners, some of whom operate as absentee owners on larger acreages managed by one person with the use of machines.

The city populations in 1960 were: Fossil, 672; Mitchell, 236; Spray, 194. The present populations is: Fossil, 520; Mitchell, 193; Spray, 200, for a population decline of 189. Population in the unincorporated area has also declined from 952 in 1960 to less than 650 in 1967. The decline in population has resulted in a loss of revenue to all the businesses of Wheeler County.

### Problems

The major problems of each incorporated town of Wheeler County are as follows:

#### FOSSIL

- Fossil presently has a population of 520, with approximately 35 families working at the mill and in the woods at Kinzua. A shortage of good housing is partly due to the fact that many old houses are too old to

## RAILROAD

The only railhead within the county is in Kinzua. Because of the recent interest in unusual rail travel, we urge the Kinzua Corporation to consider the possibility of adding a very small passenger facility as a tourist attraction.

## AIR FIELDS

There is only one recognized public airfield in Wheeler County. It is located just north of the city of Mitchell on Highway 207. Efforts to improve this airstrip have been made. Continued requests to the state Aeronautics Board should be made to improve air-field facilities within the county.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

There is now no public passenger transportation facility running through Wheeler County north and south. A bus line operates on Highway 26, but only at night and early morning, with stops at Mitchell and John Day. To some extent the feasibility of better service depends upon improvements of major highways in and adjoining Wheeler County. The planning commission is aware of efforts being made in Lakeview and California to initiate passenger service between California and Spokane. Efforts should be made to continue to point out the many advantages of routing such service north by way of Highway 19.

## Conclusions

Improvements of all transportation facilities are brought about by diligent and continual efforts of local citizens. The inadequacy of transportation facilities in a certain area reflect the indifference of the people in that area. We urge service organizations to continue to bring pressure to various agencies and to accelerate efforts to attain major improvements in the transportation system of Wheeler County.

keep in liveable condition. A long-range plan for construction of new and better houses might entice some new people to settle in Fossil, attract settlement by retired citizens, and possibly also interest Kinzua people in purchasing property in Fossil; they would then become taxpayers.

- The city of Fossil has a water problem. The city experiences a shortage of water every summer from its primary source of fresh springs west of Fossil, at which time water must be pumped from a deep well into the water system. The well itself will furnish only about 45 gallons per minute, while the spring, in summer, will furnish 25 to 35 GPM for a total supply of approximately 70 GPM. The supply is adequate in winter months when water use per person is about 85 gallons per day. But in summer, the demand can run to about 300 gallons per person, and this amount requires about 110 GPM. For our present population, during summer months the town is short approximately 30 to 40 GPM. The mayor has recently appointed a committee to make recommendations for increases in price of water to users. Money from the increase is to be used for acquiring

more water by deep wells or new spring locations. The committee recommends that an engineer be hired to help in this planning. Water should be made adequate to provide Fossil for a future population of 800, enough water for all needs.

Fossil has a long-range plan for parks for the recreation of local people as well as for tourists. Starting in 1966, Arthur Glover Park was turned over to a park committee for the purpose of building it up and beautifying it for local and tourist use and pleasure. The future plans should include the planting of trees, building of rest rooms, and planting of new grasses. Approximately \$1,800 in equipment was installed in the park in the summer of 1967. It is recommended that this park be improved as money will allow on a matching fund, until it is adequate for the pleasure and comfort of local people and visitors. It is recommended that upon completion of Arthur Glover Park, use be made of additional park space that is available for planning and building near what is known as the fairgrounds.

Fossil has a tourist attraction that could and should be exploited in the development of fossil beds behind the high school playfield. Opening up these beds from the top so that they will be more accessible to rock-hounds may attract more tourists to the town. Another possibility is the opening up of other fossil beds in the Fossil vicinity.

Fossil businesses have shown a steady Saturday decline, which started when the bank discontinued opening on Saturday mornings. Perhaps business could be restored by a mutual effort by businessmen to have special sales and attractions for customers on Saturdays. If this does not increase Saturday spending, it might be well to look into any other possibility that would increase Saturday business. The problem should be solved by a mutual effort by all businessmen and the Community Club.

## **MITCHELL**

Mitchell, presently with a population of 193, is the only town in Wheeler County with an airstrip that has been considered by the Federal Aviation Agency for development for use by small planes as an emergency landing field. The project has been discussed with the Oregon State Board of Aeronautics, and the planning group feels that it should be given more consideration and not be dropped by the town and planning group, since any airstrip in the county that is accessible and maintained would be a valuable asset to the town.

The Mitchell community feels that with the cooperation of homeowners old houses that are not liveable and are a fire hazard should be torn down and the lots cleaned up. The town of Mitchell is situated on highway 26, between Prineville and John Day. This is a well-traveled road, and the town businesses should all cooperate in establishing a small park or rest area where the tourists could stop and enjoy a little time. The state owns some lots on the creek front. Possibly a plan could be developed where the state would deed some land to the city for a park area development within the city limits. This development would serve tourists, hunters, fishermen, and rock hounds, as well as local citizens.

Painted Hills Park near Mitchell will possibly be developed and would benefit the city of Mitchell. Every effort should be made by the planning committee and Mitchell to keep this plan alive. A special group of Mitchell businessmen should be appointed to work on the project.

In 1957 Mitchell had a population of more than 400 but now has only 193. This large decline was caused by the closing of two sawmills in 1958 and 1959. There should be a long-range plan to entice retiring people into the town to fill some of these vacancies. Mitchell has facilities and room, combined with a rugged and scenic beauty. The main trading area for Mitchell residents is Prineville, and the Planning Commission feels that with final improvements of the Service Creek Road more business could be kept in the county. Completion of this road should be a prime objective of the two towns.

## **SPRAY**

Spray, located on Highway 19 in the John Day Gorge, is the only town that has maintained about the same population since 1960. There is one small sawmill that employs about 15 people, plus the men that work in the woods.

Spray gets its water from wells but does not have storage space for water. Plans are under way to build storage tanks as soon as possible. Spray has no meters for water users.

Users are charged a flat rate of \$4 apiece in winter and \$7 per month in summer. The committee feels that it might be well to look into the installation of meters for the town. Meters should increase the revenue and would make a fairer rate for small users and would eliminate waste of water by many.

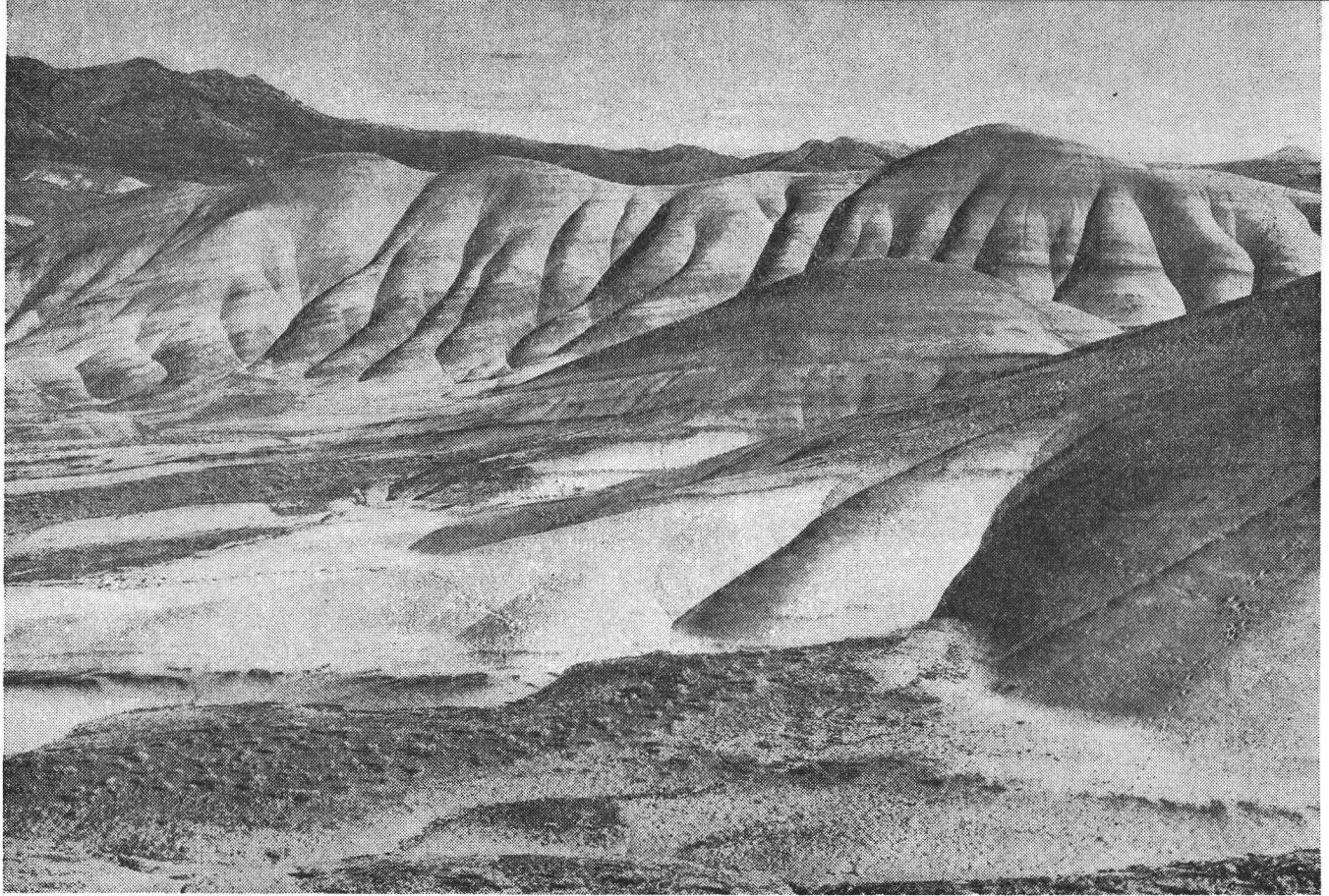
Spray also has a potential park area and plans in the future to build and maintain the park for the townspeople and visitors. Present plans are to build the park with local funds, but the possibility of Bureau of Outdoor Recreation matching funds is also being considered. With the John Day River running next to the town, there is a possibility of building and maintaining dock facilities for boat enthusiasts.

## **OTHER CONCERNS**

The Municipal Planning Committee feels that a major problem is to get the services of a doctor within the county as soon as possible. Medical services might bring more people back to the county, especially those older persons who consider retiring here but feel they need a doctor close by. A cooperative effort by the planning committee should be made on this project.

The committee feels that additional straightening and widening of Highway 19, which serves both Fossil and Spray, should be completed as soon as possible. With improvement of this road more travel from central Oregon to Portland via this route can be expected. Even the trucking industry undoubtedly would make use of this road if it were completed. It is also agreed that Highway 207, Service Creek to Mitchell, should be completed as soon as possible. The committees should work closely with other organizations in making regu-





Painted Hills State Park is located northwest of Mitchell via the Burnt Ranch road. Here are shown some of the pastel rock formations which form the Painted Hills. Stratigraphically the basic formation of the Painted Hills is assumed to be from the Eocene-Clarno, so named by John C. Merriam in 1900, who gave its thickness "as not less than 400 feet." The strata are usually gray to buff but sometimes show brilliant coloration in shades of red, green and blue. (Oregon State Highway Department Photo No. 5882).

lar appearances at State Highway meetings, requesting additional work on these roads. The committee feels that it would be well to contact and work with other cities, such as Arlington, Condon, John Day, and Dayville, on these roads. Any improvements made on these

roads will be of mutual benefit to all towns along them.  
 ► Commission Members: J.P. Steiwer, mayor of Fossil; Ed Tilley, mayor of Spray; Mrs. Gunst, mayor of Mitchell. (No committee for Kinzua because it is a privately owned town and is not incorporated.)

## Recreation Report

Wheeler County possesses great potential for recreation which is virtually undeveloped at the present time. The area is only a three-hour drive from metropolitan Portland. Tourist facilities must be available to bring tourists here.

Landowners should assess their own potential recreational possibilities. They can receive assistance in this assessment from the Oregon State Game Commission, the Bureau of Land Management, the Soil Conservation Service, and Oregon State University, as well as from other agencies and private research organizations.

A major problem concerning the development of recreation in Wheeler County is the lack of facilities in all areas of recreation. There are few public campsites available for trailers and campers and at present no public lakes in the county. There are very few overnight accommodations of any kind within the county.

### YOUTH CAMPS

There are two youth camps in the area, one at Camp Hancock and the other at Crystal Springs in the Ochoco Forest. More of these camps should be developed. The

success of Camp Hancock is an example of what can be done with proper direction and development in this field.

### ROCK HUNTING AND FOSSILS

Fossil and the surrounding area attracts rock hounds and geologists alike. There are, however, no local displays of fossil collections. The Painted Hills area should be developed. Efforts to create a national monument in this area as well as in other areas should be continued. Some ranchers in the area charge for various types of rocks. Catering to rock collectors should be considered by the ranchers as an additional source of income. Public as well as private lands should be marked with signs to indicate whether or not the rock hound is welcome.

### GOLF

There is one golf course in the county, maintained by private membership and the Kinzua Corporation. The course is located in the timbered area near the town of Kinzua. Membership is \$25 per year, and visitors are welcome.

## GAME HUNTING

Hunting creates a great influx of tourists during the fall months. Deer populations have generally held up, although because of an increase in the annual deer kill, large antlered bucks are scarce. Hunting on private lands is generally allowed for a fee, ranging from \$5 to \$200 per season. Hunting on public lands causes some problems because of the lack of markings for these areas.

Bird hunting has become more popular in the area with the introduction of the chukar, which has thrived in this area and has become a very popular game bird.

## WATER RECREATION

At the present time there are no lakes open to the public in Wheeler County. The subcommittee recommends and encourages the construction of water impoundments to increase the recreational assets of the county. We join the committees on water use and agriculture in recognizing the overall economic value of such impoundments to the entire county.

More emphasis should be placed on the recreational use of the John Day River. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, riverboating, steelhead fishing, and other water sports could be encouraged through advertising.

## PARKS

The five state camping and picnic areas in the county have not been developed fully and need major improvements. (See Recreation Plan for Ochoco Forest.)

The Oregon State Highway Commission should be urged to request that certain areas be included in a national monument complex as proposed by the National Park Service in its report of 1967 on the John Day Fossil Beds. This area has been in state ownership for a number of years, but development has been negligible.

There is a noticeable lack of park facilities geared for the traveler with trailer or camper. Such facilities should be encouraged both by public agencies and private parties.

## Conclusion

The potential for recreational development in Wheeler County is great. Since progress in this area has been minor, it deserves greater emphasis. It is the feeling of the committee that more parks, water impoundments, and trailer and camper facilities within the county would not only attract more visitors, but also keep tourists in the area for a longer time.

The committee urges the development of rock-hunting areas and the establishment of historical points of interest.

The tourist dollar is all income, with no burdens on schools, or taxes. Wheeler County has not been receiving its fair share of this natural asset. This is partly due to local indifference, but is also partly due to indifference on the part of public agencies owning property in this area. Both factions should become more aware of our needs and the potential boost to the economy.

### Ochoco National Forest Existing and Potential Recreational Areas In and Adjacent to Wheeler County:

#### EXISTING

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Size (units)</i>	<i>Type of development</i>
Wildwood	Sec. 33, T12S, R20E	7 units	Family campground
Ochoco Divide	Sec. 30, T12S, R20E	14 units	Family campground
Crystal Springs	Sec. 5, T13S, R20E	250 people	Organization site
Carroll	Sec. 8, T13S, R21E	3 units	Campground
Derr	SE¼, Sec. 14, T13S, R23E	6 units	Campground

#### POTENTIAL

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Size (units)</i>	<i>Type of development</i>
Mossy Rock	Sec. 28, T12S, R20E	0 units	Campground
Cole Lake	Sec. 5, T13S, R20E	7 acres	Reservoir
Crystal Lake	Sec. 6, T13S, R20E	34 acres	Reservoir
Elkhorn Lake	Sec. 3, T13S, R20E	11 acres	Reservoir
Badger Lake	Sec. 17, T13S, R22E	10 acres	Reservoir
Pisgah	Sec. 5, T13S, R20E	320 acres	Scenic
Black Canyon	Sec. 27, T14S, R25E	880 acres	Observation Site
Wolf Mountain	Sec. 28, T14S, R25E	480 acres	Scenic
Cottonwood	Sec. 4, T14S, R24E	0 units	Campground
Jackson Lake	Sec. 35, R13S, R23E	8 acres	Reservoir
Barnhouse Spring	Sec. 2, T13S, R23E	0 units	Campground

## RIVER EXCURSION

The John Day River is one of the few major streams of the Northwest that is still in a wilderness state. Trails should be developed by both private and public enterprise to allow more accesses to the river. Campsites and parks could be developed along the John Day at small expense. Lack of such development has impeded boating on this river.

### Precautions

Always wear an adequate life vest, properly secured. Always travel with at least one other boat. When you can't see what lies ahead, land and scout from shore. Carry 100 feet of stout line; if things look too rough, let the empty boat down from the bank. Secure all gear and don't overload.

### Boats and Equipment

Rubber rafts — with oars, not paddles — are best for novices. Advertised passenger capacities are twice the practical load limit for this use. To avoid tearing, stow gear off the floor and don't over-inflate. Touring kayaks are stable; racing types aren't. Wooden drift boats are not for beginners. Conventional canoes should be loaded lightly and handled expertly. Keep spare oars or paddles readily available. Don't forget repair materials. Stow everything in G.I. waterproof utility bags, available in surplus stores for about \$4.

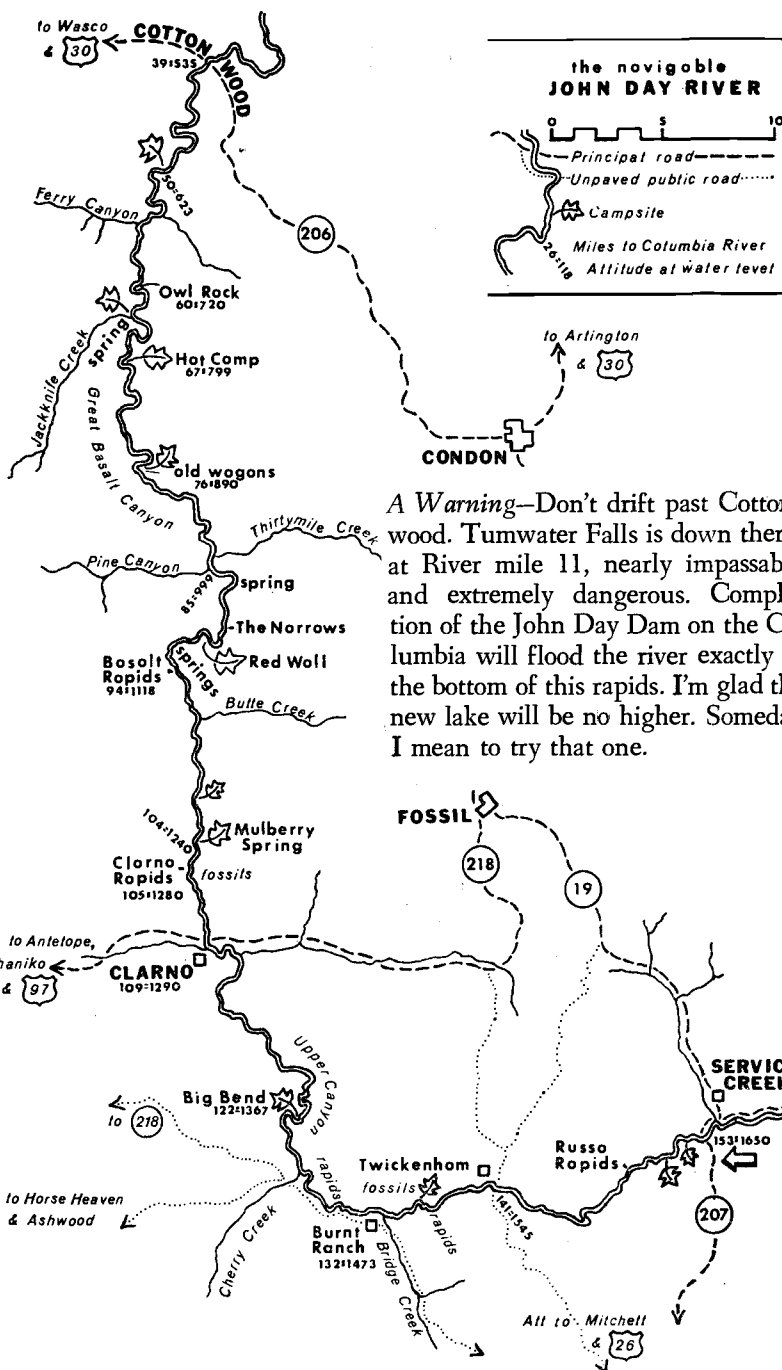
### John Day Rapids

The map notes only the bigger rapids. All of these include submerged rocks, strong chutes, medium to large waves (up to four feet) and require maneuvering and route selection. Smaller rapids or riffles are frequent, yet John Day, except for Clarno Rapids, will disappoint those looking for a "thrill ride." Of the 114-mile trip, no more than four miles altogether can fairly be called rapids. Most is brisk and easy.

Russo begins on a left turn and runs against a dark, vertical wall. Homestead, below Twickenham, follows a sharp 'S' turn around a basalt pinnacle. Burnt ranch, a mile below that landmark white house at Bridge Creek, resembles Russo. Whitewater continues for a mile. Clarno, long, complex and fast, dropping 40 feet a mile, is the trip's major problem. Scout it from the west (left) bank, landing well above the first sharp plunge on a blind 'S' turn, four miles below Highway 218 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile beyond a river-bank outcropping of colorful Clarno earth. The trickiest part,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile farther, follows a divided channel. It is easy to line from the left bank and only good boatmen should attempt to run it. Guides respect it. Don't take chances here; recovery of people, gear, and upset boats is difficult. Basalt follows a left turn as the canyon narrows and deepens. Run right of center. Rapids continue to Red Wall.

### Volume of Flow

By the end of May, most years, the snows of the Blue Mountains, the Strawberries and the Ochocos have melted and the John Day subsides quickly. When the volume of flow drops much below 1,500 cubic feet per second, the going is slow; between 2,500 c.f.s. and 12,000 c.f.s. is ideal, the lower figure yielding a four m.p.h. current, the higher, seven m.p.h. The ESSA River Forecast Center at 220 NW 8th Ave. Portland,



A Warning—Don't drift past Cottonwood. Tumwater Falls is down there at River mile 11, nearly impassable and extremely dangerous. Completion of the John Day Dam on the Columbia will flood the river exactly to the bottom of this rapids. I'm glad the new lake will be no higher. Someday I mean to try that one.

can predict the run-off accurately several weeks ahead. All the rapids except Basalt become easier as flow increases.

### Camping

Expect warm to hot weather in late May and early June — but it can rain hard. Firewood is not always plentiful. In this dry country, build small fires on the beach only. River water should be boiled or treated with chlorine before drinking; any clear spring with a visible source is probably safe. Secure the boats at night — it's a long walk out.

### Car Shuttle Solution

Don Culver, at the Service Creek store, will keep your car off the highway and deliver it to Twickenham (plan one day), Burnt Ranch (two days) Clarno (three days) or Cottonwood (seven days), charging \$10.00 for this service.

Above courtesy of L. L. Thompson.



# Education Report

## Problems

Educationally, Wheeler County has a unique problem. With relatively few students scattered widely throughout the county, schools of a size adequate to provide comprehensive education programs and services are difficult to establish. It is true that small schools have some inherent advantages—certain strengths on which the school district should capitalize—e.g., personal relationships with students, more parents known by teachers and vice versa, greater student participation in activities, smaller classes, and more time for independent study. However, a number of problems typical of small high schools can be noted in Wheeler County schools:

- Classroom teachers with four or five preparations are probably not competent in all areas.
- Instructional materials and equipment are often inadequate.
- Specialized teaching facilities need improvement.
- Curricular offerings are limited (art, music, vocational courses, etc.).
- Career guidance and counseling services are inadequate.
- Lack of student exposure to culture and aesthetic experiences is apparent.
- Studies show that students are less challenged by some courses or less enthusiastic about their future value.
- Teacher turnover tends to be greater than in large schools.

No inexpensive way can be found to provide an appropriate education for the youth in remote areas with small schools.

The Wheeler County Planning Commission gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of the Wheeler County Intermediate Education District Board, R. M. Boyles, chairman, for this report. It was compiled and formulated by the Bureau of Educational Research at the University of Oregon, at the request of Wheeler County public schools. The Planning Commission has adopted only the conclusions and recommendations of the report, which represents only a portion of the complete study made by the Bureau of Educational Research.

Members of the Intermediate Education Board, acting in behalf of Wheeler County citizens, are to be commended for their desire to provide the best education possible and for seeking assistance with educational challenges that at times seem almost insurmountable. Problems related to sparseness of pupil population give every indication of increasing rather than decreasing, as indicated in the enrollment projections of the study. Fortunately, the study reveals — in Chapter III on finance — that Wheeler County has more than the state average of financial resources available to support schools—a higher true cash value per student than the state average. On the other hand, a lower millage for the support of schools has been levied in Wheeler County than the average for all the districts in the state. This provides a favorable financial situation on

which efforts to improve the educational offerings can be based.

## Plans

Three alternatives seem possible for improving educational opportunities in Wheeler County. Reorganization and consolidation of small school districts into a larger unit seems to be one solution. A larger system can offer more comprehensive curriculum and more specialized teacher personnel services. These three are presented as Plans 1, 2, and 3.

### PLAN 1

Consolidate into one administrative unit Fossil, Mitchell, and Spray school districts, *plus* the attendance area of the Condon School District in Gilliam County.

### PLAN 2

Consolidate Fossil, Mitchell, and Spray school districts into one administrative unit.

Under either of the above provisions: (a) Leave the elementary pupils in their present schools (1-6); and (b) Provide a new centrally located high school (7-12) facility to which these students would be bussed, OR enlarge the high school facilities at one of the larger present plans, and construct dormitory facilities for students too remote to be bussed and transport others.

### PLAN 3

Consolidate Fossil, Mitchell, and Spray school districts but continue to use present facilities. This would require: (a) Provisions of shop facilities and-or more diversified facilities at each high school; (b) provision of home economics facilities at Mitchell and Spray; (c) development for better physical education facilities at all schools; (d) provision of additional special personnel to service youth at the three local schools — specifically the following:

- A curriculum coordinator, who is also trained as an instructional materials consultant, to develop training for all staffs, secure appropriate audiovisual and other instructional equipment, and aid in the selection of a broad library of resource materials (films, filmstrips, television, books, etc.).
- A vocational counselor and resource teacher to provide a variety of vocational training experiences for students, as well as to provide leadership for vocational counselling and to plan field trips.
- A fine arts resource teacher to conduct enrichment classes and bring appropriate cultural experiences and arrange field trips to supplement local school experiences.
- Traveling teachers to provide instruction in special areas, such as homemaking.

(e) Adequate financial support to provide field trips for all students to such places as the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, the Oceanography Laboratory at Newport, Tektronix, the Art Museum in Portland, the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, the Agricultural Experimental Farms around Oregon State University, the Northwest Water Resources Laboratory, a large

plywood and paper operation, etc. (Such experiences can become strong motivational devices for students.) (f) Provision of "summer school sabbaticals" for teaching staff members who remain with the district, to make it possible for those with numerous subject preparations to become better qualified in areas of lesser competence.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland has a special program entitled "Improving Education in Small Schools." The thrust of this program is to assist in individualizing instruction in small schools. Self-instructional systems using such media as films, tapes, slides, and programmed materials are being developed by the laboratory in cooperation with Washington State University. Attempts are being made to "package" courses in speech and industrial arts (plastics, electronics, and welding). Still under way are efforts to develop courses in physical science, advanced mathematics, and Spanish.

It is quite possible that future action of the state legislature and the services of the I.E.D. Commission will improve the educational situation for such areas as Wheeler County, provided that appropriate communication is established. Likewise, it is possible that federal aid can be of some assistance.

Good educational programs, under favorable circumstances, today are expensive. Good educational programs under the unusual circumstances existing today are projected for tomorrow in Wheeler County require a *much* higher investment per pupil due to the very low popu-

lation. There seems to be little question as to the challenge which Wheeler County citizens must meet.

## PLAN 4

Another alternative\* being discussed within the county would involve the Spray District either contracting with District 21 to assume the educating of their high school students at Fossil, or consolidating the two districts into one administrative district. Present Oregon law requires a minimum of five high school teachers, regardless of enrollment. Since Spray enrollment has declined to about 25 students, the cost per student is \$1,210, compared to \$660 in Fossil per student.

Since 60 percent of transportation costs are refunded by the state, much of the present \$47,000 Spray High School cost could be saved by transporting under some plan to Fossil.

School District 21 at Fossil has invited Spray to contract for a one-year trial, at no charge, the educating of their high school students. If these two districts pooled their assets, students from both towns would benefit from a higher quality school program. Offsetting the benefits of tax saving and better education would be the inconvenience at Spray caused by an additional 1½ hours per day on a school bus and the loss of the high school within the community.

The Spray School Board is studying the Fossil proposal before arriving at a decision.

\*This alternative is not a part of the report of the Bureau of Educational Research at the University of Oregon.

# Housing Report

This report is based on a survey conducted by the housing sub-committee of the Human Resources Committee and on statistics from the "Resource Analyses of Grant and Wheeler Counties." The survey was conducted in 1967 and represents 184 households. The statistics found in the "resource analyses" were gathered in 1960.

## Problems

### CONDITION OF HOMES

Thirty-four percent of the housing units in Wheeler County are unsound. To be considered unsound, houses are dilapidated, deteriorating, and without all plumbing facilities. Approximately 160 housing units were standing vacant year-round in 1960. Additional housing units have been vacated since that time. Numerous housing units, as well as other buildings, are considered eyesores in the community's natural rugged and scenic terrain.

It appears that a sufficient number of homes with reasonable rental rates are available in Wheeler County. However, the quality of the majority of these rentals is somewhat less than desirable. The rental problem cannot help being detrimental in attracting new persons to the community.

Economic conditions and the decreasing population trend in the county are such that many Wheeler County residents hesitate to buy homes and most will not

undertake building a new home. Fifty percent of those responding to the 1967 survey indicated they did not intend to reside in Wheeler County by 1978; this would explain some of the reluctance to buy or build a home. Forty percent of those intending to remain indicated that they planned to remodel their existing homes. Very few residents are interested in obtaining information on financing housing even though they are dissatisfied with their present housing conditions. It appears that some stimulation to Wheeler County's economy will necessarily precede plans for many new housing units.

Renters and many homeowners alike have found that some areas of their homes need improvement: the bathroom and kitchen are the two rooms most frequently mentioned. Storage space, porches, walks, floors, interior wall finishes, exterior paint, and landscaping are commonly mentioned by the occupant as undesirable.

Frequent requests were made in the 1967 survey for help and information pertaining to remodeling, floor coverings, storage, landscaping, wall coverings, and window treatment. Those requesting the information preferred that it be supplied as written material rather than special classes or lectures.

A review of the numerous economic opportunities programs reveals that it is doubtful if Wheeler County would qualify for any federal housing programs because of the sparse population and the limited number of

real poverty cases. Individuals, however, might find financing available through the Farmers Home Administration if they are interested in building a moderately priced home and are unable to obtain financing from another source.

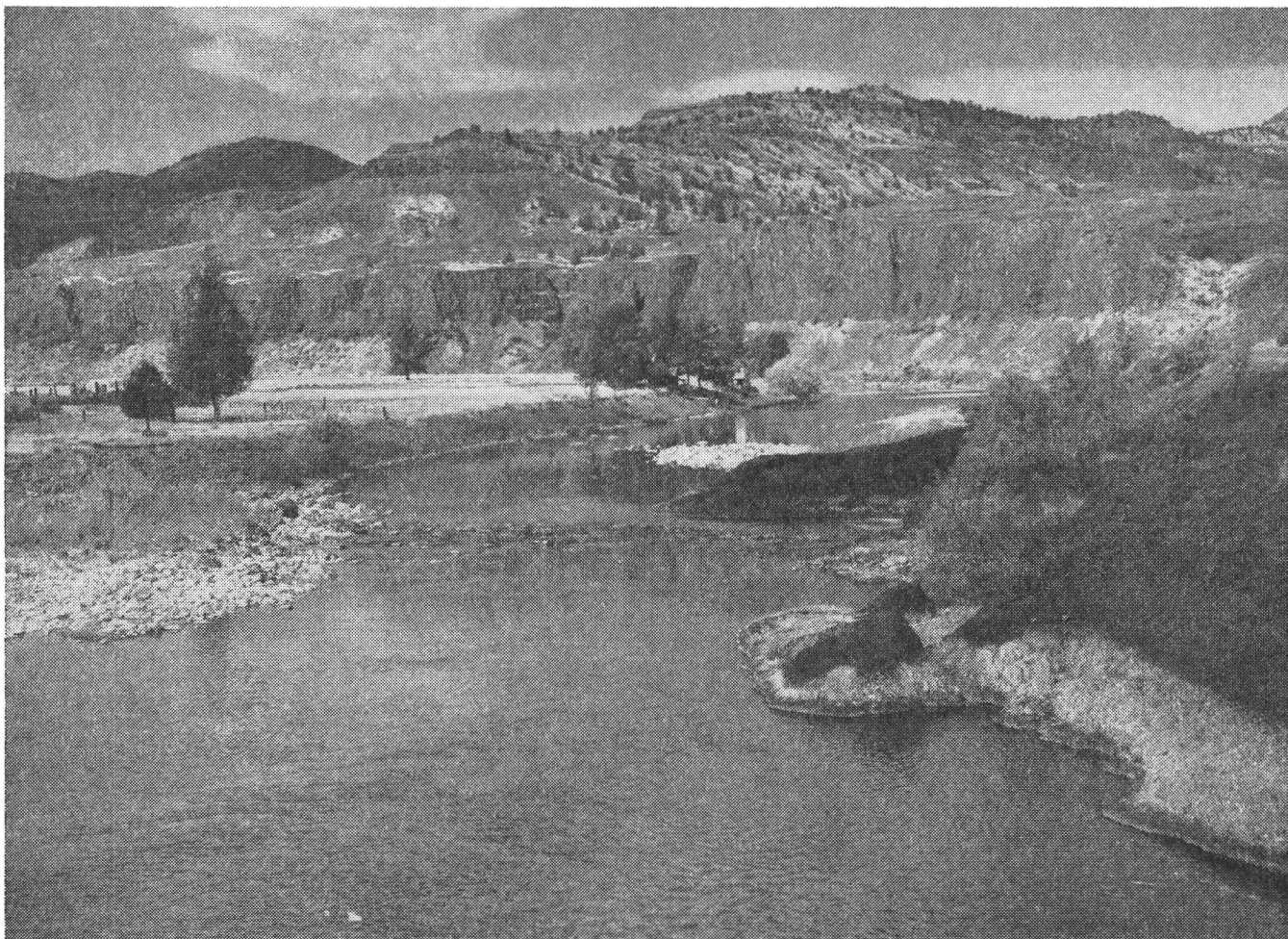
## LANDSCAPING

Numerous improvements in landscaping have been noted by the committee: the grounds at the Spray School, in Fossil Park, the potted trees along the city streets, improvements in several publicly owned buildings, and removal of dilapidated buildings. All of these improvements help to encourage other residents to remove eyesores from their properties and give each member of the community a little more pride and respect in Wheeler County.

Individuals feel that home landscaping cannot be improved until water shortage problems are solved by the various communities. Little incentive is offered for planting flowers or vegetable gardens and lawns when the water supply during the summer months is so limited and controlled that irrigation is not possible. Another factor mentioned by residents in the survey pertained to the unavailability of any water at local cemeteries. Many felt the overall landscape would be improved if water were available in these areas.

## Recommendations

- Residents should be encouraged to remove eyesores from their property. City and county officials should assist these persons in any way possible.
  - Where eyesores pose a public nuisance, a fire hazard, or hamper rodent control, the city and county officials should take necessary steps to maintain health and safety.
  - Continued improvements on city streets should be made by cleaning out weeds and brush from ditches and repairing sidewalks.
  - City officials should take the necessary measures to provide an adequate water supply so that residents will have sufficient water for irrigation purposes.
  - The Extension office should be a center for reference materials pertaining to all aspects of housing which would be available for use by individuals. The public should be notified of this service.
  - Educational materials or classes should be made available on storage, landscaping, window treatments, exterior paint, floor materials and care, interior wall finishes, and remodeling.
- Committee Members: Sherla Collins, chairman, Mitchell; Lois Walker, Fossil; Lorraine Cherry, Mitchell; Cella Norton, Mitchell; Pauline Russell, Spray.



The John Day River winds through a region rich in geologic history, probing a past that goes back more than 75 million years. Flowing north through Central Oregon's vast Columbia River basalt plateau, the river has exposed some of the world's most productive fossil beds, including the John Day mammal beds and the Clarno nut beds. The region also abounds in rugged scenery and is popular with rock hunters and deer hunters alike. (Oregon State Highway Department Photo 6681)

# Youth Report

The Youth Committee, acting under the Human Resource Committee of the Wheeler County Planning Commission, submits the following study of Wheeler County's youth, their attitudes, needs, and opportunities.

The committee surveyed the 153 students of the three high schools in the county, inquiring about their attitudes and plans, in order to have a more complete picture of their needs. The questions were in the following categories: home, activities, general interest in learning, family life, work and money, and youth today. The results of the survey follow.

## Home

Ninety-seven percent of the youth surveyed lived at home with both parents; 85 percent of their parents were in the 30-50 age group; 16 percent of their parents had some college or were college graduates; 15 percent of their parents had only an eighth grade education or less; 66 percent of their mothers worked part- or full-time away from home; 80 percent of the students ate well-balanced meals.

The committee felt that the very high percentage of two-parent homes was reflected in the youths' attitude. The high percentage of working mothers did not seem to be noticeably reflected in the survey.

## Activities

### SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Ninety-three percent participated in high-school activities which included the following clubs and organizations: Letterman's Society, Girls' Athletic Association, Pep Club, Drill Team, Girls League, Future Teachers of America, chorus, band, Honor Society, school paper and school annual, and the Student Council. The committee concludes that there seem to be enough school activities.

### OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The greatest number of out-of-school activities listed by the students involved groups of friends. Other organizations included 25 different 4-H groups throughout the county, involving 130 young people, starting at age nine. Church youth groups, The American Legion Juniors Auxiliary, the Boy Scouts, the Cub Scouts, and the Little League. The 7 percent who did not participate lacked time, interest, and transportation. The youth seemed quite satisfied with their out-of-school activities.

### SUMMER ACTIVITIES

The most popular summer activities including working away from home for pay, working at home with and without pay, camping and vacation trips, "just having fun," and general social activities. Eighty-seven percent of the young people surveyed felt they needed a swimming pool in the county. Seventy-eight percent were satisfied with the way they spent their free time.

In addition to the activities surveyed, there are vacation Bible schools, active 4-H groups, Junior Rodeo, Bit n' Spur, and swimming lessons in Condon (Milt Boring takes a bus of Fossil and Kinzua children once a week to Condon for swimming, and also for a two-week Red Cross swimming course). Kinzua has a full-time recreation director and a program each summer of organized activities including baseball, softball, golf, tumbling, swimming, Ping-Pong, and pool. We feel that the new playground equipment installed in the Arthur Glover Park in Fossil in the summer of 1967 was a great step forward and is being well utilized. The committee strongly recommends an organized summer recreational program in Fossil, directed by a college youth, that consists of *more* than athletics, such as crafts and games. There is also a definite need for a pool in Wheeler County.

## General Interest in Learning

The boys were most interested in being better athletes, learning to keep a car in good condition, and making repairs on electrical equipment; whereas the girls most wanted to sew and cook well and take care of babies. Both sexes were interested in improving their communities and in developing better recreational programs. Twenty-five percent would like to do something they are not now doing. There is a definite need for education of a practical nature that is not being filled.

## Family Life

The youth surveyed show that the things they did together with their families for pleasure were often trips and sports events; they seldom went to picnics, parties, and movies. The survey revealed that by and large parents consider the opinions of their children, but still make the majority of decisions. The young people feel that parents do not follow through with threatened discipline; however, they feel their parents love and care about them. The majority of youth are allowed weekends and some school evenings out. Ten high school boys and five high school girls own and maintain cars and drive them to school. The majority of parents still control family cars, and use of them depends on mutual understanding. Most are satisfied with their own arrangements.

## Work and Money

Sixty percent of the boys and 46 percent of the girls surveyed earn money by working and spend it for extras, school supplies, and clothes. Many save some of it. The majority of the boys have summer farm jobs, and 97 percent have done some working during the last year. Ninety-nine percent of the girls have done some work for pay within the last 12 months (mostly babysitting). Twenty-eight of the high school young people had paying jobs during the school year. This committee feels that those who have a strong desire to work can find employment.

# Youth Today

## PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The majority of youth surveyed would like to go on to school, although at this point many are undecided. The boys showed most interest in professional work; however, the largest single interest was mechanics. Eighty-three percent of their fathers helped with job planning. The girls surveyed showed most interest in nursing, teaching, secretarial and beautician work. Thirty-seven percent of the girls were guided by their mothers, 27 percent by their fathers, 27 percent by close friends, and 9 percent by others.

## PERSONAL PROBLEMS

School, money, the future, and the opposite sex figured highest in personal problems of high school aged youth.

## MILITARY SERVICE

Fifty percent of the boys were undecided about their attitudes toward military service. Forty percent were looking forward to it, and 10 percent disapproved. The Draft Board indicates that 21 boys were eligible for service registered in Wheeler County; 50 percent of these are classified at 1A. Twenty-three percent as 2S

(student deferment); 4 percent are ID (enlisted); 4 percent ID (reserved); 4 percent are 4A (sole surviving son); 4 percent are IY (unacceptable for service except in emergency); 11 percent are ISH (still in high school).

## JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

The county judge of Wheeler County had only 12 juvenile cases this past year. Six were for traffic violations, and six were for possession of beer and other alcoholic beverages. None of these repeated their offenses. Juvenile delinquency on the whole is not a major problem in Wheeler County.

## Recommendations

The committee recommends the following:

- That the young people be given help and guidance in exploring ways to improve their communities.
- That the committee explore with young people ways to improve career planning.
- That youth organizations such as 4-H and other organized groups identified in this report be encouraged to study the areas of greatest concern to young people.
- Committee Members: Harriet Calverley, Fossil, chairman; Ann Steiwer, Fossil; and Olive Reade, Spray.

# Welfare Report

## Programs

Perhaps the most controversial program for which tax monies are expended in Wheeler County as well as throughout Oregon is welfare. It appears that a great deal of the criticism and comment about the welfare program come from a poorly informed or misinformed citizen. The general public expects that the welfare recipient be meek, humble, and without pride. When the recipient is not, the criticism begins.

This sub-committee on welfare found that Wheeler County is indeed lucky to have a conscientious welfare staff as well as a concerned county welfare board. It is satisfying to realize that these fine people work to eliminate any misuse of funds and at the same time keep the information they possess in confidence. The confidential manner in which welfare programs operate are certainly required to preserve the rights and dignity of the individuals on the welfare program.

The cost of the welfare program is high in Wheeler County in comparison with other counties in the state. Old-age assistance and aid to dependent children are the two programs which are most costly. Old-age assistance expenditures rise rapidly with increasing cost of nursing-home care. Medical expenses cause the cost of both the old-age assistance and aid to dependent children programs to increase greatly.

A frustrating situation exists in which several of those people receiving nursing-home care under welfare programs could be cared for under the social security Medicare program. First, however, the nursing home itself must qualify under the Medicare regulation. None

of the four nursing homes closest to Wheeler County is able to qualify for the Medicare program. The costs involved in meeting Medicare requirements make it prohibitive for a small nursing home.

Many injustices result. People entitled to Social Security Medicare payments are instead forced to accept welfare. Small nursing homes find it increasingly difficult to operate, and small counties like Wheeler find Medicare little relief to their welfare budgets. It certainly appears that all those needing help the most—the confined elderly, the small nursing home, and the small county—will have to await adjustments in specifications at the federal level.

Two programs to care for children are available in Wheeler County. Fortunately the county does not have any need at present for the use of the foster care program. Foster care is extremely expensive to operate. Aid to dependent children provides for a child who otherwise has not support. The subcommittee feels that no one would deny food and clothing to children under the age of 18.

There are presently 42 households receiving public assistance in Wheeler County. It seems that all welfare payments are far below requirements for a minimum standard of living.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- That action be taken by the Wheeler County Court and Wheeler County Technical Action Panel to change the regulations so that it is feasible for small nursing homes to meet requirements for Medicare patients.
- That welfare workers speak to local groups and organizations about the general aspects of the welfare



program so that residents have an opportunity to become better informed. No information of a confidential nature would be discussed.

- That each individual find out the facts before making misleading, unjust, or derogatory comments about the welfare program or its recipients.

➤ Committee Members: Sue Couture, chairman, Fossil; Rollene Fulton, Fossil; Elizabeth Madison, Spray; and Janet Phillips, consultant, Condon.

## Surplus Commodities

The program for issuing surplus commodities to Wheeler County residents is not a welfare program. Welfare personnel have been asked to assist with this program only to reduce administrative costs. The surplus commodity program contributes to keeping families and individuals independent, in their own homes, and financially capable of caring for themselves.

Requirements for qualifying for surplus foods are quite strict, although some persons in the county who might be eligible do not choose to apply. There are a number of reasons some people apparently are not taking advantage of commodities: they feel that this is a welfare program; some commodities are packaged in large quantities not practical for individuals or for two persons; some foods available are not familiar items; since all commodities are kept in Condon, picking them up is difficult.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the Extension service work with the welfare staff and by various means teach recipients of commodities to use less familiar foods.

- That the county court investigate problems pertaining to transporting commodities to various parts of the county.

## Senior Citizens Report

The senior citizens subcommittee applied for and received a federal grant from the state program on aging. With these funds and matching county funds the committee conducted a survey of senior citizens in Wheeler County. The information in this report is based on the survey and on personal observations of the subcommittee and survey team. The survey team, which consulted 171 persons over 60 years of age found many of these people employed, at least on a part-time basis. Some were still farming their own ranches. Only in a few cases were those who desired work unable to find it.

Most senior citizens considered themselves in fair to good health. The survey team observed that 90 percent of the persons surveyed were physically capable and financially able to care for themselves with little outside help. The majority were interested in community activities and were active in local organizations. Some of those surveyed helped other senior citizens in the area who were not as able to provide for themselves. Many indicated they would be willing to help other senior citizens who were in need. Various sources reported that a few older people in the community were receiving anonymous assistance from members of the community when they were financially unable to meet their needs.

To many the greatest disadvantage for a senior citizen living in Wheeler County was the lack of medical facilities. There is no doctor residing in the county. Spray and Fossil have the services of a doctor one-half day each week. The closest hospital is 47 miles from any town in the county, and there is no nursing home in the county.

However, only 10 of those persons over 60 surveyed felt the medical services available to them were poor. The vast majority rated their medical services at fair to good. Perhaps these older people are so accustomed to traveling distances for medical services that they think little of it. Each town in the county provides ambulance service, which also might be a factor in the

apparent acceptance of present medical facilities, or those persons needing frequent medical attention may have already moved out of Wheeler County. The subcommittee does feel that the lack of medical services will deter other senior citizens from moving into the county.

The greatest problem of many of the senior citizens in Wheeler County is loneliness. This is especially true of older people who are somewhat confined to their homes or to a nursing home. Attendants at the nursing homes indicate that many Wheeler County patients receive few callers other than their families and little mail. Senior citizens who do not drive or who are physically impaired frequently mentioned that they would like an opportunity to visit with other people.

The greatest interests of the senior citizens were recreation, crafts, and educational classes. Many were interested in belonging to a group for social activity rather than service. However, in most local organizations many of the dependable, hard-working members are senior citizens.

During the past year the survey team and committee have found some resentment among a few persons over 60 at being classed as senior citizens. The great majority of older people, however, have found a pride and satisfaction in being included as a part of the long-range plans for Wheeler County. It was the intention of the subcommittee to make sure our valuable resource of older people was included in the county's planning for the coming 10 years.

## Recommendations

The committee recommends that,

- A booth for the sale of handicrafts made by senior citizens be provided at the county fair by some local organization as a service project.

- Members of the local communities take individual responsibility for visiting senior citizens who are confined to their homes or in nursing homes and provide



transportation to community activities for senior citizens who do not drive.

- The county court take appropriate action for providing transportation of surplus commodities to those qualified senior citizens who do not drive.
- The county court investigate employing the services of a Vista worker to coordinate and work with the senior citizens and their programs and problems.

- A home visitation program be established by the Vista worker, Extension office, county nurse, or interested individuals to keep in touch with those senior citizens especially desiring a frequent visitor.

- Cooperation of community organizations and individuals with the local senior citizens clubs be continued.

- Committee Members: Dorothy Schmelling, chairman, Fossil; Rev. S. Schmelling; Ida McConnell, Veda Fitzgerald; Pat Adams; Mary Reade; and Evelyn Fitzgerald.