

Fort Clatsop Schedules Wetlands Restoration

Fort Clatsop National Memorial is located at the convergence of the Oregon Coast Range and the lower Columbia River estuarine wetland system. Approximately half of the 125.1 acre park is fresh water or estuarine wetland. The other half consists of young to mature coastal spruce/hemlock forest. Historically, the park and surrounding area had been impacted and altered by the creation of dikes and other water diversions, land use conversions to agriculture and industrial developments, and intensive forestry practices.

Management of these forests and wetlands is becoming more difficult, due to increasing development and encroachment--impacting the natural and cultural resources of the park. Park plans include restoring the Memorial's wetlands that were altered by diking projects prior to creation of the park. This complex project will consist of removal of all or part of the dikes, construction of new dikes to prevent flooding of adjacent private lands, removal of part of the existing vegetation, possible lowering of portions of the surface topography, and continuous monitoring throughout.

Even if the project is successful and the end result is not an anaerobic quagmire, any such habitat change of this scale will create dramatic changes in the hydrology, soil, flora, fauna (including microbial), and topography (including visual characteristics as well as social perceptions). All of these aspects will need to be carefully addressed in the wetland restoration plan.

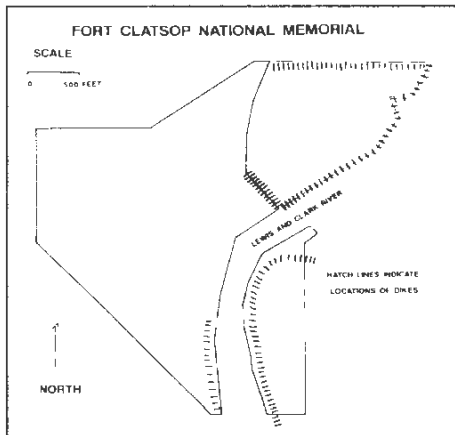
An important concern is that large portions of Fort Clatsop NM's wetlands lie beyond the current park boundary. To begin dealing with these and other issues and concerns, the General Management Plan and Resource Management Plan currently are being rewritten. These draft plans identify the need for boundary expansion and Congressional lifting of the Memorial's current 130-acre boundary ceiling.

These plans, along with several inventory and monitoring projects either recently started or proposed for funding, are the first of a long series of steps in the restoration of the important wetlands of Fort Clatsop National Memorial.

Ek is Resource Management Specialist at Fort Clatsop NM.



Park Ranger, Ricardo Perez (right), and Biological Aid, Doug Johnston, along the Lewis and Clark River Estuary of Ft. Clatsop National Memorial.



The solid line represents the boundary to Fort Clatsop National Memorial; the dashed line represents property planned to be donated to the park by the Fort Clatsop Historical Association.