

CASCADE HEAD SCENERY AND CHANGE: CASCADE HEAD LAW AND OUR EVOLVING UNDERSTANDING OF SCENERY AND LANDSCAPE

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Abstract.—The 9,670-acre Cascade Head Scenic-Research Area (Cascade Head) is a picturesque place of headlands, forested hills, meadows, and estuary on the north-central coast of Oregon. Its dramatic features and changing atmosphere have had a strong appeal for people for centuries. Established in 1974 primarily to ensure protection of its scenic values, its official designation as a Scenic-Research Area came a full decade ahead of the first site in the Congressional system of National Scenic Areas. The Cascade Head Act identifies key qualities and uses of distinct landscape subareas within its boundaries, which form the basis of protection for the Area. This paper highlights Cascade Head's contribution to the evolution of our understanding of scenery as a resource and the new focus it brings for scenery management.

CASCADE HEAD

Cascade Head is a 9,670-acre area of headlands and estuary, edged with hills of forest and meadow on the north-central coast of Oregon. The Salmon River flows from the east into the estuary and the main access road follows the estuary edge west with views of the wide salt marsh, changing water, coastal mists. The Cascade Head landscape is made up of a sequence of spaces following the Salmon River. The large east-west salt marsh is like a huge hall that extends to the mouth of the estuary—a stage-like area facing the Pacific with high headland prospect points to the north and south. The lower slopes have rural houses and some remaining farms, including century-old farms. Off shore, volcanic forms are bird island refuges. Herds of elk travel through the area. Up and down the coast there are other estuaries and rivers, volcanic headlands, and valley spaces leading inland. Cascade Head has dramatic, unique, known, and looked-for Pacific coastal landscape formations (State of Oregon 1973, Roy Mann Associates 1975) (Figs. 1-4).

DESIGNATION AND LAW

Cascade Head's slopes, headlands, and Salmon River estuary were designated as the Cascade Head Scenic-Research Area in 1974. It was one of the few remaining largely undeveloped estuaries on the Oregon Coast.

According to the Cascade Head Scenic-Research Area Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-535), the Area was established “to provide present and future generations with the use and enjoyment of ... the areas, to insure the protection and encourage the study of significant areas ... and to promote a more sensitive relationship between man and his adjacent environment.” The Act, which established the area, is a law that was of a time of the “environment”—a word newly used—and a general recognition and emphasis given to people and environment, people's responsibility and tie to their natural and cultural environment, considering actions' effect on their surroundings, environmental design, design arts, and of the international importance of environmental impacts and responsibilities. Both laws were widely supported, and specifically include people, the practice of design, and the protection of aesthetics and cultural values of our surroundings—our landscapes. NEPA proclaimed that everyone has responsibility for the environment; the Cascade Head law promoted “a sensitive relationship between man and his adjacent environment” and emphasizes a role for people appreciating this place.

Before Cascade Head there were no National Scenic Areas. There were areas designated as scenic within National Forests and labeled scenic along highways. In 1968, there were newly established National Scenic Rivers, National Scenic Trails, and National Scenic Parkways designations. Cascade Head was established during a year-long period (1973-1974) when there were many national scenic river designations and an attempt to establish a scenic area as part of area

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Figure 1.—View of Cascade headland across marsh. Photo by Jessica C. Dole, USDA Forest Service.

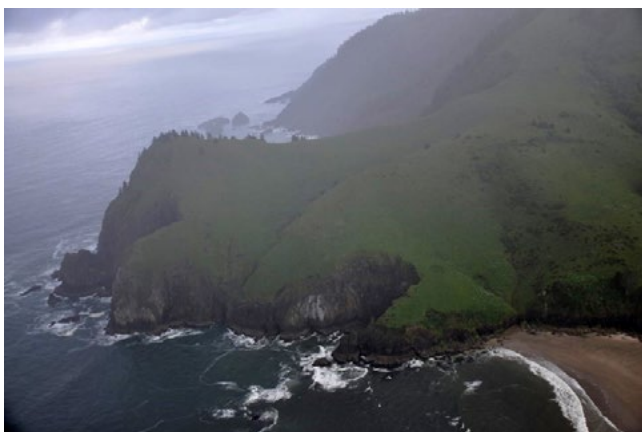


Figure 2.—Cascade Head and the Pacific, viewing north. Photo by Oregon ShoreZone, CC-BY-SA; from Oregon Coastal Management Program, used with permission

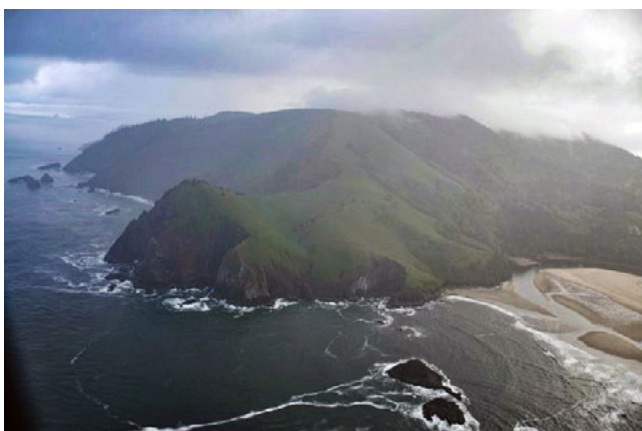


Figure 3.—Cascade Head landscape viewing north, oblique aerial view. Photo by Oregon ShoreZone, CC-BY-SA; from Oregon Coastal Management Program, used with permission.



Figure 4.—Landscape components of Cascade Head: beach, sand spit, river estuary, forested slope, ridgeline, headland, coastline, lava flow, “bird island” refuges, meadow/pasture and farm. These are repeated along the Pacific coast. Photo by Oregon ShoreZone, CC-BY-SA; from Oregon Coastal Management Program, used with permission.

with a proposed Wilderness Area in California. A review of these initiatives reveals that Cascade Head Scenic-Research Area appears to be the first nationally designated area for scenery. The first National Scenic Area came to be about 10 years later.

Cascade Head was recognized in 1976 as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, a landscape that has significance on a worldwide scale.

CASCADE HEAD LAW AND LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

The Siuslaw National Forest has the responsibility of managing the Cascade Head Area, coordinating with the State of Oregon, counties, the Confederations of Tribes, other Federal Agencies, the Nature Conservancy, and private landowners (USDA Forest Service 1990).

The Cascade Head law aims to retain the landscape and restore the estuary, in particular. There is emphasis in the law on avoiding a “substantial change” to the manner or intensity of use of the Area since the time of the Act. Assessment of potential impacts to scenery is part of measuring whether a proposal would create a substantial change and includes criteria that when met can help a proposal to fit with the setting.

The law has several ways of emphasizing specific scenery in the assessment process. Landscape assessment of projects proposed at Cascade Head is to be assessed related to fitting with the specific setting, the site, and the Cascade Head setting overall.

Subareas of Cascade Head Landscape

The Cascade Head Act defines “subareas” of distinct characteristics within Cascade Head and sets scenic character goals—though they are not called that—for them.

Existing subareas (see Figs. 5-9) of Cascade Head have a combination of natural and cultural features such as rural houses, farms and forests. There are also low-key recreation use areas associated with distinct natural features like estuary, meadow, forest, headland, and coastline. These subareas form the basis of the effort to protect the character and the landscape of Cascade Head. The Act defined the qualities that describe these natural/cultural areas within Cascade Head and what is integral to them to retain.

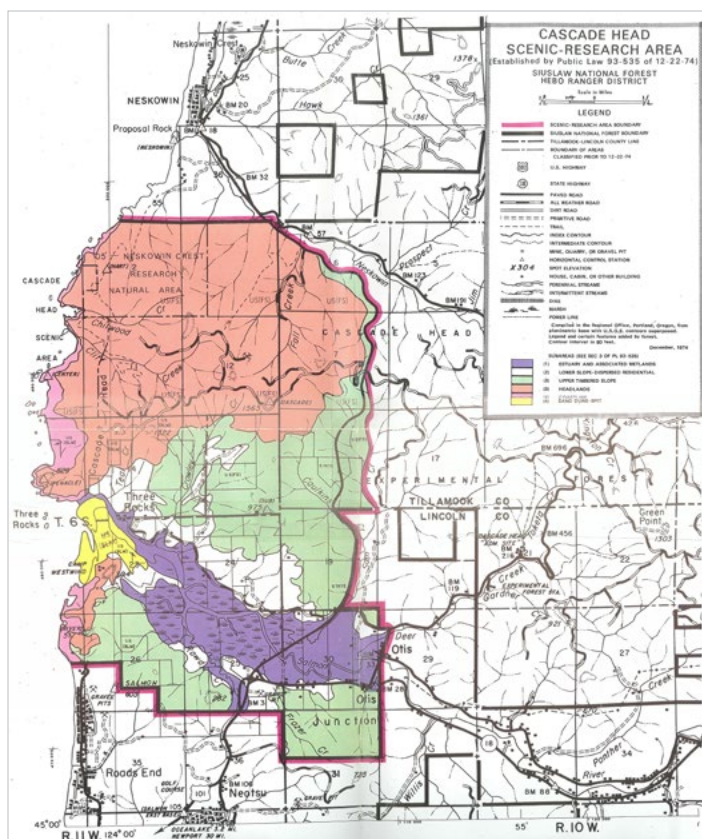


Figure 5.—The Cascade Head Scenic-Research Area subarea map December, 1974. USDA Forest Service https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/siuslaw/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsbdev7_007215

Environmental Design Criteria

There are also “environmental design criteria” set out in the final guidelines by the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (Federal Register 1975), which include requiring a proposal to fit with the color, line, form of the site, and setting without impacting the estuary.

A project must relate to the landscape characteristics of its specific site. The landscape architect assesses the site to determine how it relates to and how to fit with—and minimally impact—its landscape subarea and the wider landscape of Cascade Head.

Each site is assessed based on its own conditions. Environmental design criteria are a way to evaluate whether a proposal will fit with the landscape of the subarea. These criteria also help a project meet standards of retention so that sites will visually appear to be part of the Cascade Head landscape rather than creating noticeable changes to the scenery and natural conditions.



Figure 6.—The south headland subarea and sand spit subarea.
Photo by Nancy Craft, USDA Forest Service.

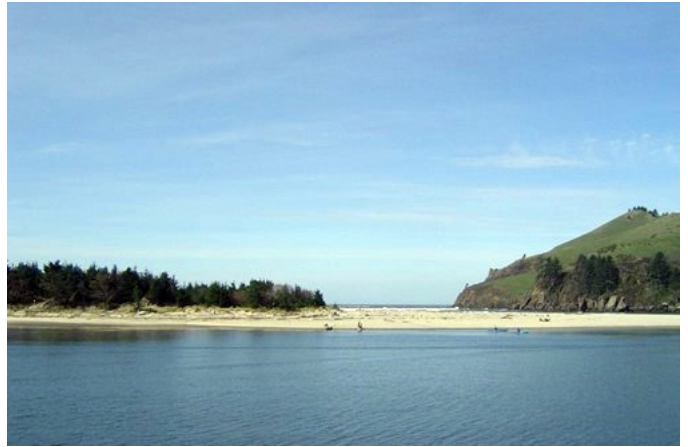


Figure 7.—The sand spit subarea, with the northern Cascade Head headlands subarea to the north. The Pacific Ocean is in view across the mouth of the Salmon River estuary within Cascade Head Scenic-Research Area. Photo by Jessica C. Dole, USDA Forest Service.



Figure 8.—The estuary subarea southeast view at Knight's Park.
Photo by Jessica C. Dole, USDA Forest Service.



Figure 9.—Lower slope dispersed residential subarea in view across the estuary. Photo by Jessica C. Dole, USDA Forest Service.

The environmental design criteria consider aesthetics in an integrated, environmental sense. At Cascade Head, there is the line of tree edge, meadow, pasture boundary, headland, estuary edge, color of tree trunk, texture of spruce and alder forest, and the unknowable gray to green to blue color of water.

Fitting with the characteristics of subarea, some aesthetic considerations are:

- Vegetation line—Whole coastal landscape vegetation line, line of meadow edge, forest edge, line of character area
- Form—The horizontal form of the ridgeline and headlands
- Color—Bark, earth color
- Siting in relation to vegetation patterns and forms and topography
- Environmental aesthetics, such as possible soil effects on estuary

Cascade Head Scenic-Research Area's landscape assessment involves landscape and design understanding—the use of the design arts and aesthetic-environmental stewardship choices to support a landscape. Aesthetic judgment is involved when using Cascade Head's evaluation criteria. The aesthetic assessment process involves people as viewers, as their structures and use are part of Cascade Head landscape subareas. Aesthetic assessment involves people as project proponents—participants in the process of project review and adjustment to meet environmental design criteria.

Retention

Finally, a proposal must meet the visual quality objective, most often of “retention,” where changes do not deviate noticeably from the characteristic subarea (USDA Forest Service 1974, 1995). Figure 10 shows the “sensitive” seen area of the lower dispersed residential subarea, a retention area.

Retention tends to be thought of in two dimensions, by distance zones delineating ridgelines. It represents a landscape area in view bordered by ridgelines, part of the description of three-dimensional landscapes.

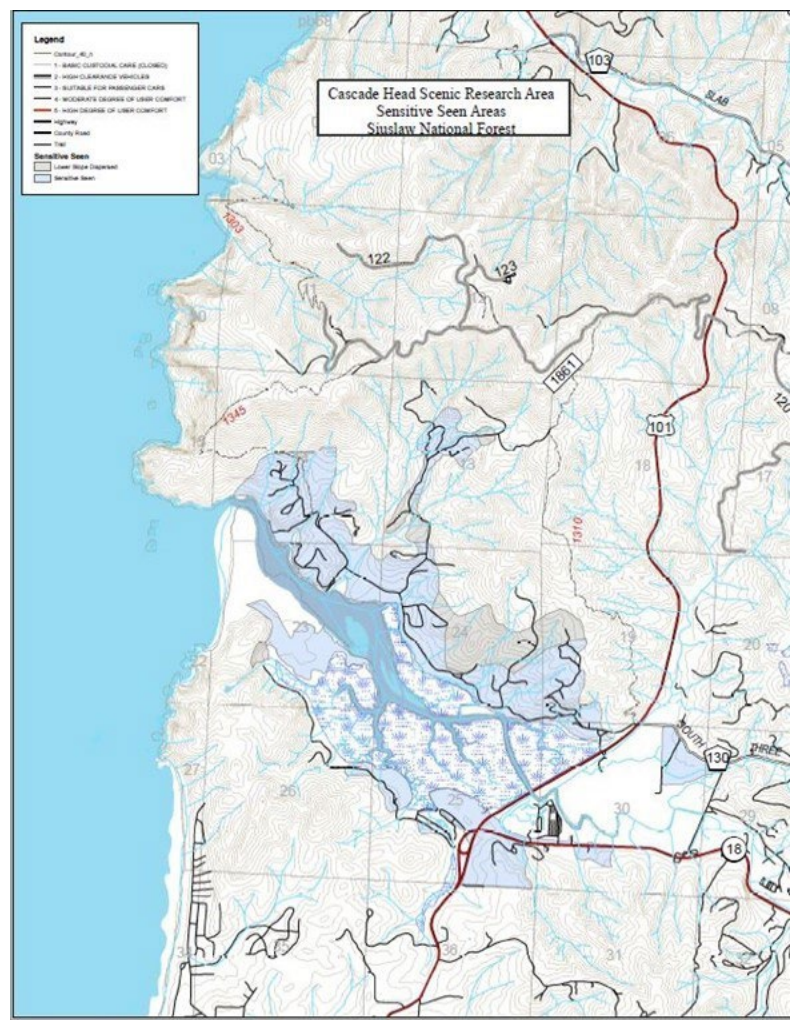


Figure 10.—Showing the viewed area in retention as it relates to the lower dispersed residential subarea and estuary edge, “Sensitive Seen Area.” Map by Laura Hoffman, USDA Forest Service.

Site visits show the particular spaces and prospects of a large landscape, and the details of the setting. During project proposal review, site analysis to understand the landscape and a site—on site—is needed for scenery review.

In this way, the components of the landscape at different scales—site-specific, characteristic, and the larger landscape setting—are evaluated in the Cascade Head assessment process.

CASCADE HEAD LAW AND LANDSCAPE CHANGE

The basis of Cascade Head assessment is evaluating whether a proposed change would create a substantial change to the scenery in a subarea. How it will fit with the pattern in the landscape of the subareas? In evaluating potential effects of a proposed project, it is valuable to think, “What will the landscape at this site be? What will the Cascade Head landscape be?”

The 1977 Cascade Head Scenic-Research Area Management Plan (USDA Forest Service 1977) recognizes that vegetation will change. Development is set at the level of the 1974 inventory of use and existing building, and number of buildable sites at the time of the Act. The Plan took this as a standard point of time for level of development with the possibility of built change, with flexibility. Assessment for scenery impact and relationship to setting is to be done at each proposed site. The line of houses, outbuildings, and barns has a standard of relating to the forest edge set by the characteristic subarea, and has form, color, scale, texture and estuary impact, and vegetation and soil impacts set by environmental design criteria.

A landscape has, of course, constant change and various patterns and instances of change. At Cascade Head, there are vegetation changes between areas of marsh, meadow, pasture, alder, and spruce forest. There are changes in tide, sea level, the flooded and not flooded marsh of the estuary, and changes in the free flow of creeks, partly caused by past diking and highway construction. As all along the Pacific coast, there are areas in the tsunami zone. There is evidence of the 1700 tsunami at Cascade Head and of a king or surge tide—a single higher tide that happens sometimes on the coast, this time apparently about 10 feet above usual high water. Edges of the estuary change. Animals’ movements, number, and concentration have seasonal changes. Three elk herds are seen up north on the lower slopes of the headlands, to the east and the south. They have been seen crossing the estuary from different directions, to pass each other and play in the water. There are butterflies on the high meadows, where photographers and artists and botanists go.

People’s movements, concentrations, dispersal, and sensibilities have patterns and change. There have been changes of ownership of land, with some private land

becoming public land, and changes to roads, highways, bridges, and adjacent land. With the constant flux of tide, the atmosphere changes through the day and year, with coastal zone atmospherics—fog, cloud, wind—a visible part of the landscape. This is an east-west landscape, and the long light changes through the day.

Ownership of the estuary and some estuary edge land has changed since the Act’s passage, with more land in public ownership and in restored condition. In some areas, the density of development has increased. These changes were anticipated in the Management Plan. There has also been a large area of adjacent land that seemed likely to be densely built now; instead, it has become local open space. Some farm pasture has been lost, and some pasture and meadow was expected to be lost as dikes are removed and marsh area is restored.

The views within Cascade Head are largely the same or more natural appearing than 40-some years ago when the Area was established.

As with any landscape, Cascade Head has layers of associations and meanings and their aesthetic qualities. For thousands of years, people from local Tribes have been attached to this place. About 300 years ago, Spanish explorers traveled the coastline; about 300 years ago, there was a tsunami that cut through a sand bank visible today. Farmers settled on the edges of the estuary about 150 years ago. A number of creeks and roads within Cascade Head have the names of farmers. There are some farms, barns, actively used and remnant fence, and dikes. A large 100+ year-old dairy barn and hillside pasture are in picturesque view from the scenic highway. Some farms are gone now.

Spectacular landscapes, as Cascade Head, have the typical or representative landscapes within them that are important and meaningful. These common, representative, typical landscapes relate to people’s lives in a landscape and our essential ties to a landscape and place, showing time and giving meaning in landscape (see Figs. 11 through 14).

At Cascade Head, cultural features of the landscape such as feature names, early use and associated landscape forms, historic barns and adjacent pasture, and people’s ties to this place (particularly local Tribes) need greater recognition and inclusion as part of the landscape in practice and as the Management Plan is updated.



Figure 11.—View from Highway 101, National Scenic Byway; note white barn dating from 1910 and pasture. Photo by Jessica C. Dole, USDA Forest Service.



Figure 13.—View from an old farm road, toward Cascade Head. Photo by Jessica C. Dole, USDA Forest Service.



Figure 12.—View from an old farm road, now a trail, at Cascade Head. Photo by Jessica C. Dole, USDA Forest Service.



Figure 14.—Bird island refuges, a representative landscape feature of Cascade Head as part of the Oregon Pacific coast. Siuslaw National Forest photographic archive.

CASCADE HEAD LAW AND OTHER LANDSCAPES

The idea that people are associated with a landscape, that landscape decisions are site based and multi-scaled, and that aesthetics are environmental can be found in Cascade Head law. These ideas merit more thought in further landscape assessment there and for other landscapes, particularly consideration of the people that are part of a landscape.

The subareas defined in the Cascade Head Act have a distinct appearance and specific qualities that the Act sets out as the appearance to retain in the management of Cascade Head. This idea can be further developed for any large landscape, for a landscape at any scale, including spatial, experiential, natural, and cultural qualities, and defining distinct landscape “character areas” (Figs. 15-17). Design criteria can be developed to retain the characteristic appearance and qualities of distinct landscape character areas.

We can broaden our aesthetic-environmental understanding of scenery assessment for changing landscape. There are characteristic patterns and variation from them (“variety” is not a meaningful goal for landscape). Thinking about the flux at water’s edge, for example, we can look at the consistencies of pattern, with points and times of variation, following the line of the water’s edge through the landscape, then how and why it varies. We can assess and respond to site and setting pattern and have variation from that pattern in landscape.

Every day, typical landscapes have essential value, as seen even within such a distinctive landscape as Cascade Head. The rating of landscapes in the national scenery assessment processes can give attention to the fundamental cultural values and subsistence value of those landscapes designated in scenery mapping as “common” or “minimal” (USDA Forest Service 1995). These typical or representative landscapes have profound beauty of their own, that people recognize. The national landscape assessment systems have evolved in response to landscape needs, originally a response to protect natural landscape quality, and there has been great effort to include the cultural and a broader view of aesthetics in landscape assessment. They have given attention to the

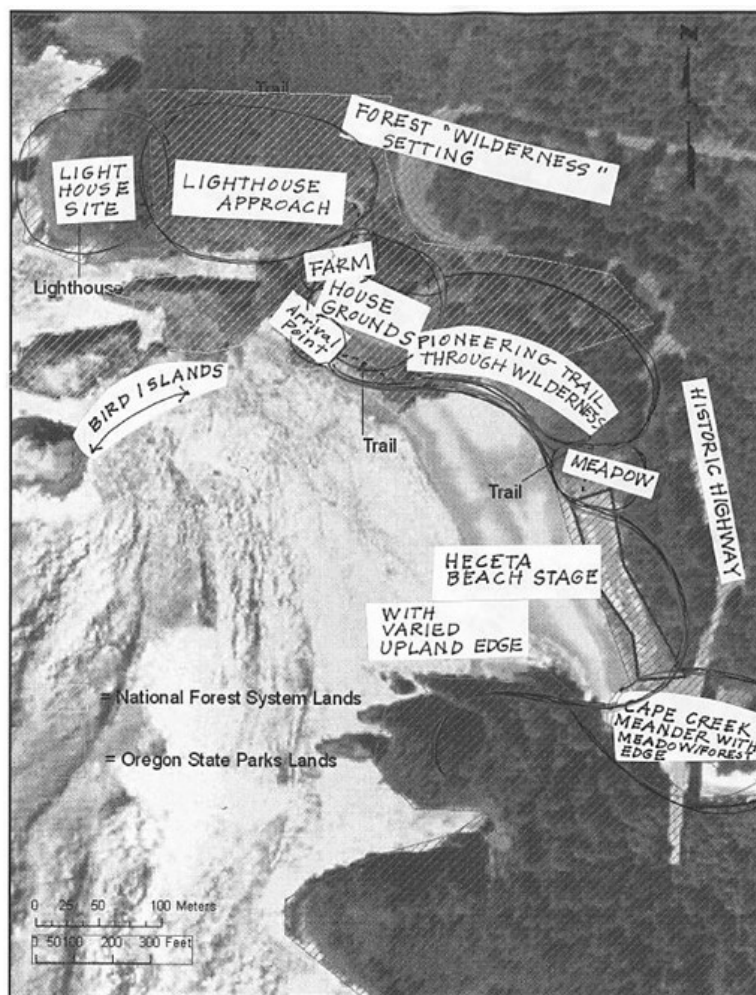


Figure 15.—Landscape character areas. The meadow character area is near the center right of the map. Illustration on aerial photo by Jessica C. Dole, USDA Forest Service.



Figure 16.—The meadow character area, which is a viewing point. Photo by Jessica C. Dole, USDA Forest Service.



Figure 17.—The Heceta Beach character area, with distinctive, Pacific coast landscape features, including volcanic formations, bird islands, and headlands. Photo by Jessica C. Dole, USDA Forest Service.

representative built features—over time—of common landscapes as having aesthetic meaning and value. Let's recognize the common landscapes themselves now and attribute to them their real value to people as part of our national landscapes.

CONCLUSION

The Cascade Head Act was one of the first pieces of Federal legislation that gave scenery specific standing in the law. Cascade Head Area is part of advancing ideas about landscape, where the aesthetic is considered as part of environmental considerations, as part of protecting it as a distinct landscape.

Cascade Head Scenic-Research Area law recognized people as part of the environment and provides for people a chance to study, appreciate, value, and fit in with this special place as it is an environment. It set provisions to protect landscape character, though that word is not used, that included people. The value of the area centers on people's experience of it. Cascade Head evolved the sense of scenery management to be people and experience of a landscape. In managing scenery, we can now look at landscapes on an experiential and essential level, as people experience landscape—forms, spaces, change, and meanings—retaining areas within landscapes that combine the natural and cultural features.

Cascade Head contributes to the evolution of scenery understanding and management. The Cascade Head Act, with the subareas and environmental design criteria, protect the landscape areas with their distinctive features and scenery of Cascade Head in a manner that is inherently site specific. It considers landscape, and people in the landscape, aesthetically—an environment. It has worked well to manage the Area and is an important step in evolving a deeper understanding of scenery and landscape.

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