

KEY FINDINGS

Major faults in the analysis area have produced zones of sheared, fractured and deeply weathered rock. Although the faults are considered inactive today, tectonic uplift is a continuing process along the coastline of the Pacific Northwest, causing streams to actively down cut into the weaker, sheared rock. **Slope instability** is a natural outcome of the combination of weakened bedrock, high levels of precipitation common to the area, and stream incision. The most extensive **landslides** in the area occur in terrain underlain by fine-grained, metamorphic phyllite of the Colebrooke Schist. The deep-seated slump earthflows can encompass entire watersheds, with activity levels within the features from ancient inactive to recent active.

Stream channels in the watershed show the effects of the active terrain they flow through, both in their morphology and in their riparian condition as it changes over the period of aerial photos beginning in 1940. These natural processes may have been augmented by human activities. National Forest lands within the analysis area have received more timber harvest and road construction than typical of other watersheds on the Gold Beach Ranger District. Several Rogue tributaries (seventh fields) have high road densities and prior timber harvest. Even at the larger sixth field level, watersheds have moderately high road and harvest densities, including harvest within the transient snow zone. Stream channels appear to have recovered from any adverse effects of these human activities, but need further evaluation.

The Rogue River below Agness is **important migration habitat** for large populations of coho, fall chinook, spring chinook, winter steelhead, summer steelhead, resident and anadromous cutthroat trout. Coho are Threatened and all of these species are designated Sensitive by the Forest Service.

The mainstem Rogue River below Agness is primarily **migration habitat**. The estuary is important rearing and smolting habitat for all species.

Lobster and Quosatana Creeks are the largest tributaries to the Rogue River below Agness. They provide most of the **salmon and trout spawning and rearing habitat** downstream of Agness. They are addressed in separate Watershed Analyses.

The small tributaries of the Rogue River below Agness are generally too steep and short to provide **fish habitat**. They provide cool water to the mainstem Rogue River, which is important to juvenile fish during summer. The mouths of these tributaries also provide backwater habitat during high winter flows, where fish can escape powerful storm flows in the mainstem.

Fisheries restoration opportunities include prevention of sediment delivery from roads throughout the basin, treatment of disturbed Riparian Reserves and replacement of culverts which are fish impediments.

Meadows and open oak savannas are projected to continue to decrease in size due to vegetative encroachment and lack of high intensity fire events, unless encroachment is reduced through manual methods (girdling trees, cutting and removing trees, etc.) and through burning. This habitat type is very important in maintaining the biological diversity within this watershed.

Bears have damaged trees on approximately 1300 to 1700 acres of managed stands in the Lower Rogue watershed analysis area in the last three to four years. Some plantations, including the Baxter Progeny Test Site, are experiencing up to 100 percent tree losses due to bears. Without

some control over the bear populations and damage, the development of late-successional habitat within this area of Late-Successional Reserve is being moderately to severely inhibited within the watershed analysis area.

Four species that the Endangered Species Act lists as **endangered or threatened** are found within the Lower Rogue Watershed, below Agness. These species are the bald eagle, northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet and the coho salmon.

The watershed has numerous occurrences of **several sensitive plant species**. It is particularly important for Siskiyou Daisy (*Erigeron cervinus*) and Leach's brodiaea (*Triteleia hendersonii* variety *leachiae*), and is the only known Curry County site for Dwarf Downingia (*Downingia*).

Large numbers of **exotic and noxious weeds** have invaded the watershed and are increasing in numbers. Poison hemlock, toxic to both humans and livestock is found in Quosatana Campground and along the Agness Road.

Port-Orford-cedar is an important component of the vegetation in this watershed, particularly in riparian areas. Port-Orford-cedar root disease (*Phytophthora lateralis*) has killed some of the trees in nearly every subwatershed within the analysis area, and continues its slow rate of spread.

Fire has helped to shape the vegetative characteristics within the watershed, as well as any associated effects to dependent wildlife species, within the watershed. Studies indicate that natural fire occurrence was likely to have been of moderate return intervals, of primarily low to moderate severity, with random events of high severity burning. It is generally accepted that Native Americans used fire as a tool of sustenance for the benefit of their group(s). The advent of European settlement likely increased the frequency, size, and severity of fires in the watershed, probably to rates beyond the range of natural conditions. Beginning in the 1940s fire suppression began to reverse this trend, with policies to stop all fires at the smallest possible size. The absence of fire as a natural disturbance agent is leading to conditions more prone to higher severity fire, while creating less diversity across the terrestrial landscape. Current management policies will allow fire to play a more natural role, once studies are completed and plans have been drafted.

The lower Rogue River watershed has provided habitat for human migration and livelihood for thousands of years, and contains both prehistoric and historic sites which represent every **cultural** era in local history.

The Rogue River watershed from Agness to the mouth is a diverse watershed for **recreational use** on the Gold Beach Ranger District. This section of Rogue River corridor receives the highest number of visitors of all watersheds on the District.

Most of the **roads** in the National Forest portion of the watershed were constructed in the decade beginning in the early 1960s. The culverts on these older roads have exceeded their life expectancy and may fail, blocking road access as well as contributing to resource damage. The Agness Road parallels the Rogue River, crossing geologic faults and slump-earthflow features that cause chronic road failures and drainage problems.