

Tillamook Forest Center



2014 Annual Report

The 2014 Fiscal Year marked the end of our eighth season of operation and the beginning of our ninth season.

Highlights for the year

We saw an increase in visitation, program participation, and gift shop sales over FY '13.

This year's visitation topped out just over 50,000. However, our visitors tell the story the best with many expressing surprise and accolades on the quality of the center and its exhibits, the grounds and building.

The center was staffed by five permanent ODF employees, along with six seasonal ODF employees. Of our six seasonal employees, two are NRS 1 positions, one is an Office Specialist 1 position, one Laborer/Student Worker position, and two Student/Professional Forest Workers (interns). In addition, we were granted two Pacific University work study students which are funded through the Federal Work Study program at no cost to ODF.

A dedicated volunteer cadre provides much needed support, especially in the busy summer season. This year we were supported by 10 volunteers.



Volunteers Bill and Donna Kubicz donated over 3000 hours in their four seasons at the Tillamook Forest Center.

The summer of 2013 was an extraordinary fire season and center staff pitched in to support the effort. Two of our staff were assigned to ODF fire teams and another staff is a pool member.

Three of our five permanent staff were assigned to wildfires for nearly a month during July and August, while the remainder of the staff did an admirable job of running the center with little

noticeable impact to the public. Our permanent staff, seasonal employees and volunteers were extremely flexible and helpful during this period.

As the fiscal year ended, we began another fire season unusually early, with two June fire team deployments that again required support from three of the permanent staff.

Marketing Helps to Attract New and Returning Visitors

A five year marketing plan that has guided the process of advertising the center to prospective visitors was into its fifth year. During the summer of 2013, a new marketing effort was initiated with the advertisement purchase on two digital billboards. One was located along Hwy 26 westbound, just east of the Tanasbourne Town Center, and another was located on TV Highway in Hillsboro.

The Tillamook Forest Center rack card was redesigned and printed. It was distributed and displayed on brochure racks throughout the Portland Metro and North Coast areas by Certified Folder, a contract brochure distribution company.

A number of print ads were also purchased in local news media.

Our public programs were also marketed through local media as well as the center's web site and our Facebook page.

One of our challenges over the years has been the establishment of effective highway signing to attract or guide visitors to the center. To this end, a new welcome banner was installed at the Tillamook Forest Center entrance during the summer of 2013.



A new highway banner greets visitors as they approach the entrance to the Tillamook Forest Center.

Visitation

FY14	50,424
FY13	47,288
Change	3,136 (7% increase)
Average	46,204
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highest October visitation ever• Months with higher-than-average visitation: July, August, October, November, May, and June• Months with lower-than-average visitation: September, March and April

Donations

FY14	\$17,629.47
FY13	\$17,301.17
Change	\$328.30 (2% increase)
Average*	\$9,601.66
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Record high donations in July, August and May• Average donations per visitor amounts was down from \$0.38 in FY13 to \$0.35 in FY14• One potential factor which contributes to donation rates includes if and how the "donation and sales plug" was made during interpretive programs

** Average donations includes five years in which there was no suggested donation for entrance to the center.*

Sales

FY14	\$82,824.34
FY13	\$72,271.27
Change	\$10,553.13 (15% increase)
Average	\$66,021.93
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Record high sales occurred in July, August, November, March, May and June• September sales were approximately average, April sales were below average and all other months were well above average• Improvements in the purchasing decision making and process lead to better inventory levels which helped contribute to better sales• If and how the "donation and sales plug" was made during interpretive programs influences sales

Volunteer Hours

FY14	2,600 hours; \$40,515.34 in value
FY13	1,613 hours; \$34,055.85 in value
Change	987 hours (61% increase); \$6,459.49 more in value
Average	3,640 hours; \$63,662.65 in value
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hours fluctuate greatly from season to season influenced by a number of factors: availability of site hosts; site host schedules; large group volunteer days; benefits from OYCC assistance at no cost in previous years

Website Traffic

	FY14	FY13	Change
Total visits	22,229	20,920	+6.26%
Unique visits (individual visitors)	15,965	14,362	+11.16%
Pageviews	61,095	61,091	+0.01%
Pages/visit	2.75	2.92	-5.88%
New visitors (% of all visits)	70.41%	66.85%	+5.32%
Average duration on site	2:28 (min:sec)	2:32 (min:sec)	-2.94%
Primary cities (new visitors)	Portland (3,214 visitors; 20.53% of total) Hillsboro (1,234 visitors; 7.88% of total) Beaverton (1,224 visitors; 7.82% of total) Seattle (742 visitors; 4.74% of total) Forest Grove (504 visitors; 3.22% of total)		
Top search keywords (new visitors)	"tillamook forest center" (219 visitors; 5.52% of total) "tillamook forestry center" (77 visitors; 1.94% of total) "smith homestead" (24 visitors; 0.6% of total) "smith homestead oregon" (18 visitors; 0.45% of total) "tillamook forest hikes" (15 visitors; 0.38% of total)		
Top referring sources (new visitors)	tillamookforestcenter.org (1,680 visitors; 67.52% of total) oregon.gov (216 visitors; 8.68% of total)		

	velodirt.com (186 visitors; 7.48% of total) m.facebook.com (47 visitors; 1.89% of total) pdxkidscalendar.com (36 visitors; 1.45% of total)
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Private Events

Twenty-five private event facility rentals were held at the Smith Homestead and nine at the Tillamook Forest Center during the fiscal year (eight afterhours weddings and one trail race event). Smith Homestead rentals generated \$2500 in revenue and Tillamook Forest Center rentals generated \$7,787.50 in revenue for a total of \$9,837.50 for FY14. In addition to these paid events, the Smith Homestead was used for four events and the Tillamook Forest Center was used for eight events sponsored, at no charge, by ODF or partner organizations. Scheduled facility rental tours, primarily for the Smith Homestead, were provided to 16 people during the fiscal year. Numerous unscheduled facility tours were also provided.

Gift shop

Staff developed a process for making gift shop inventory purchasing decisions which helped to ease workflow through the 2013 season close out and preparation for the 2014 season. Reduced available timelines and staffing levels challenged remaining staff to complete all planned work to prepare the gift shop for the 2014 season during the winter closure; but the improved processes greatly reduced the potential impacts of staffing and time limitations.



Promoting the fall and holiday gift shop sales through Facebook advertising and an A-board highway sign helped boost gift shop sales, contributing to record high sales in July, August, November, March, May and June.

During the fall of 2013, staff attended the Portland Gift Show to source potential new vendors. New, local artisans were also sourced through local craft shows and recommendations from staff and visitors. Staff are continually looking for high-quality products which are relevant to the Tillamook State Forest and enhance the visitor’s experience and messages presented through TFC education and interpretation contacts. Items purchased are carefully selected to support the “brand” identity for the center and also to provide a positive revenue stream.

Education Program Participation Summary

School field trips make up the bulk of participation for our education program. This category also includes summer youth programs (day camps), teacher workshops and educational events offered off-site.

Guided programs are developed for specific age groups and are correlated to state educational standards and State Forest Program management messaging. Self-guided groups receive an orientation to the agency and our work and then utilize staff-developed materials to focus student learning on the same messages that are used in the guided programs.

This year's total education program participation was about 9% less than FY '13. Initially we were on track to increase this year over last, however, a substantial number of teachers cancelled during the spring. If all of these schools had been able to attend, we would have garnered approximately 9% (823) more participants. We also did not attend the Portland Children's Clean Water Festival in FY '14 due to staff availability which reduced our participation by another 150-200.

A modified format was implemented for education programs to allow for multiple classes from the same school and age range to attend at one time. This provided an opportunity to host more students with the same number of staff. In order to accomplish this, we began requiring teachers and chaperones to lead a portion of the day's activities on their own.

Offering programs for middle school/ junior high grade levels had been challenging due to the fact that they generally need to bring the entire grade out at once due to the school schedule structure. We had heretofore been allowing only one or two classes at a time, which didn't work for many of the schools. In 2014, we developed a new middle school/ junior high format that allows all grades from the same school to attend at once. This was successfully demonstrated by the hosting of 180 Tillamook Jr. High students on one day last spring.



TFC staff led subject-related stations, including math, arts and literature, physical education, and science, to 180 great students from Tillamook Junior High.

Two forestry education workshops for adults were offered over the year. One was for the OSU Extension Master Naturalist program for which center staff offered a section on coastal forests. The second workshop was an early learner workshop for teachers, offered through the Oregon Natural Resource Education Program.

The James E. Brown Forest Education Grant was awarded to two different groups: The Forest Grove Community School received a grant for their wildlife in the city art project. A display of student artwork was created and displayed at the center.

A second grant was awarded to the Oregon Forest Resources Institute for the development of the Wildfire & Watershed teacher workshop.

Education Program Participation FY '14 (July 1, 2013- June 30, 2014)

Type of Program	# Programs FY '13	# Programs FY '14	Total Participants FY '13	Total Participants FY '14	% Change
Guided Programs: School & Youth Groups	65	46	3115	2873	-7.8%
Self-Guided School & Youth Groups	50	41	2224	2007	-9.8%
Off-site Large Group Events	2	1	317	285	-10-%
Workshops		2		41	
Totals	117	90	5665	5165	-8.8%

Interpretive Program Participation Summary

Interpretive programs are tracked by the following categories: formal programming, informal interpretive contacts and special requests (on-site and off-site).

Formal public programs are those that are offered at a specific time and place and are marketed on our website and in media outreach. Formal programs also include guest presenters and special events.

Informal interpretive contacts (guiding or roving) are when an interpreter sets up a station on a particular topic and positions themselves in an area of visitor traffic. They engage with visitors for a few minutes or more and share mission based messaging. It also includes short meet and greet orientations offered to groups that have scheduled to visit the center.



Education and Interpretation Specialist Sara Cahn engages with visitors as she leads a tracking station.

On-site special requests are generally private groups whom have requested a tour or specific program. Off-site special requests are events (e.g.: Tillamook County Pioneer Days) that may include a formal presentation or an informal interpretive station.

All interpretive programs have a forest management message incorporated so that visitors may better understand our forest management objectives.

Interpretive contacts surged by 36% in FY '14 compared to FY '13. 3,886 interpretive contacts were recorded in 2013 and 5285 in 2014. Both formal and informal program attendance increased from the previous year. Formal program participation increased 146%, while informal program offerings and attendance increased 27%. We attribute this increase to excellent early-season training, the setting of expectations for informal guiding and a very dedicated seasonal staff.

This increase in engagement with the public has come during a season where three permanent staff were deployed to fire assignments in the height of the season, leaving the seasonal staff to do the bulk of the interpretive work.

A couple of large tour groups are now making donations to the Trust as they visit the center. This includes the Swedish forest owner groups who now donate \$15.00/person as a way to offset staff costs when they are hosted for tours on our closed days. This garnered about \$750.00 from one visit in May.

Interpretive training

Staff training was conducted in June over the course of four days and included instruction in formal and informal interpretive techniques, customer service, the history of the agency and the work that we do. This is essential and helps seasonal staff become effective in presenting programs to the public. A tour of high use recreation sites in the Hwy 6 corridor was also included to allow staff to better respond to requests for recreation information by visitors.

Interpretive Projects

Tillamook Forest Center staff are also engaged with interpretive projects that benefit visitors to the Tillamook State Forest. The Recreation Guide brochure was updated and reprinted. Progress was also made on a forest orientation and interpretive signing project that will result in sign panels at nearly all recreation sites across the Tillamook and Clatsop state forests.

Interpretive Program Participation FY '14

Type of Program	# Programs Offered FY '13	# Programs Offered FY '14	Total Participants-FY '13	Total Participants-FY '14	% Change
Formal Public Programs	180	267	1260	3106	+ 146%
Informal Interp/Guiding/Stations	82	110	935	1190	+ 27%
Meet & Greet (Group Introductions)	29	15	655	300	- 54%
Guest Presenter Programs	6	2	235	124	- 47%
On-Site Private Special Request	4	4	127	139	+ 9.5%
Off-Site Special Request	1	1	39	34	- 12%
Special Event	4	4	635	*365	- 42%
Totals	306	403	3886	5285	+ 36%

* Participation for our largest event-Return from the Burn was not fully tallied.

Facilities Maintenance

The upkeep of building and grounds at the center is a top priority and visitors often comment on the cleanliness and attractiveness. Facilities staff also maintain the Smith Homestead Day-use Area which receives a lot of summer activity from the general public and from private parties who rent the Learning Shelter there.

One major change in facilities maintenance began during the year with the budgeting for and drafting of a new contract for janitorial services to begin in the Fiscal Year 2015.

We also contracted with the Oregon Youth Conservation Corp from Tillamook. This is an ongoing tradition that helps support this important program where students learn job-related skills and the center benefits from the many projects that these students complete. They developed a short trail between the picnic area and the drain field and built a wood storage shed.

A large public-use building such as the Tillamook Forest Center has a lot of building operation systems that need ongoing care and repair. A number of these components were repaired or replaced including:

- Well house booster pump
- Ozone generator
- Emergency generator
- Air handler hot water recirculating pump
- Air conditioner
- Kitchen sink hot water recirculating pump
- Security camera recording unit
- Roof leaks
- Dishwasher replaced

A few new improvements include the installation of a bottle filler on the water fountain, new recycle bins, fire lane and parking lot striping at the Smith Homestead, and additional metal tables and chairs for the community room deck.

South Fork Forest Camp inmate crews also provided valuable support for a number of projects including: hazard tree falling, construction of a new bookcase, and fabrication of trail signs.

Conclusion

The Tillamook Forest Center is committed to helping visitors of all ages and all backgrounds to learn about and grow in their understanding and appreciation of forests. Education programs and Interpretive programs along with a high quality gift shop and clean, safe facilities all help promote the Center as a great place to visit, enjoy and learn. For more information, visit the center on the web at www.tillamookforestcenter.org.