



# OREGON

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## Department of Land Conservation & Development

### **A QUICK SNAPSHOT OF THE SOUTH OREGON COAST**

Oregon's South Coast spans four counties and fifteen cities. In the view of some, the South Coast is unmatched in the United States with a Pacific Ocean public shoreline bordered with spectacular coastal scenery and recreational activities. There are too many parks and campgrounds to list them all here.

#### **About Lane County (includes the coastal cities of Florence and Dunes City)**

Lane County was named for General Joseph Lane, a rugged frontier hero who was Oregon's first territorial governor. Pioneers traveling the Oregon Trail in the late 1840s came to Lane County mainly to farm. The county's first district court met under a large oak tree until a clerk's office could be built in 1852. A few years later, the first courthouse opened in what is now downtown Eugene. With the building of the railroads, the market for timber opened in the 1880s. Today, wood products are still an important part of the economy in addition to high-technology manufacturing and tourism. Lane County government operates under a home rule charter approved by voters in 1962.

Although 90 percent of Lane County is forest land, Eugene and Springfield comprise the second largest urban area in Oregon.

Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, part of the Siuslaw National Forest, extends from Florence in coastal Lane County to the north side of Coos Bay in Coos County.



*Figure 1. Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area*

#### **About Douglas County (includes the coastal city of Reedsport)**

Douglas County was named for U.S. Senator Stephen A. Douglas, Abraham Lincoln's opponent in the presidential election of 1860 and an ardent congressional advocate for Oregon statehood. Douglas County was created in 1852 from the portion of Umpqua

County which lay east of the Coast Range summit. In 1862, Douglas County absorbed what remained of Umpqua County.

Douglas County extends from sea level at the Pacific Ocean to 9,182-foot Mount Thielsen in the Cascade Range. The entire Umpqua River watershed lies within the county's boundaries. The county contains nearly 2.8 million acres of commercial forest lands and the largest stand of old growth timber in the world, which still provides the region's main livelihood. Approximately 25% of the labor force is employed in the forest products industry. Agriculture includes field crops, orchards and livestock. Over 50% of the land area of the county is federal public land.

Coastal Douglas County's communities of Reedsport, Winchester Bay, and surrounding unincorporated areas west of Scottsburg, accounts for approximately 4 percent of the county's overall employment, but it's an integral part of the region's coastal economy.



Figure 2. Winchester Bay

### **About Coos County (includes the cities of Lakeside, North Bend, Coos Bay, Bandon, Coquille, Myrtle Point, and Powers)**

Figure 3. Seven Devils State Recreation Site



Coos County was created on Dec. 22, 1853, from parts of Umpqua and Jackson Counties. It was named after a local Indian tribe, the Coos. It is bounded by Douglas County on the north and east, by Curry County on the south, and the Pacific Ocean on the west. Although exploration and trapping in the area occurred as early as 1828, the first settlement was established at Empire City in 1853. The Territorial Legislature granted permission for the development of wagon roads from Coos

Bay to Jacksonville in 1854 and to Roseburg in 1857. Although a mountainous county, it has areas suitable for agriculture and dairy farming. Timber and fishing are the foundation of the county's economy. The area also produces large quantities of shellfish. Gold mining drew people to explore and exploit the mineral resources of the county during the 19th century. Today there are rich deposits of iron ore, lead and coal that await development. Vacation and recreational possibilities, such as golf courses, the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, and many state parks, attract tourists and provide an economic stimulus.

The International Port of Coos Bay, considered the best natural harbor between Puget Sound and San Francisco, is the world's largest forest products shipping port.

**About Curry County (includes the cities of Port Orford, Gold Beach, and Brookings):**

Curry County is situated along the Pacific Coast in the southwest corner of Oregon. It is bounded on the south by California, on the west by the Pacific Ocean, on the north by Coos County, and on the east by Josephine County.

Named after Territorial Governor George L. Curry, the county was a part of "Coose" County until it was created in 1855. Port Orford was the county seat until 1859 when it was replaced by Ellensburg (later renamed Gold Beach).

Curry County contains valuable standing timber and also offers spectacular coastal scenery, clamming and crabbing, excellent fishing (freshwater and saltwater), upriver scenic boat trips, hiking trails, and gold for the fun of panning. The Port of Brookings is considered one of the safest harbors on the coast.

In 1852 explorers discovered gold and other precious metals in the rivers and along the beaches of this area. Initially settlement in the county was concentrated along the coast and depended primarily on water transportation. The slow development of inland transportation routes kept the county relatively isolated well into the 20th century.



*Figure 4. Curry County coastline*

While there is still some mining of cobalt, nickel, and chromium in the Gasaquet

Mountain area, the economy has reoriented to agriculture and timber. Port Orford cedar (Lawson Cypress) and myrtlewood are important export products. The county has excellent grazing areas for raising cattle and sheep. It also produces blueberries, horticultural nursery stock, and most of the Easter lilies raised in the United States. Vacation and recreational possibilities in the county draw tourists to the area and provide economic diversity.