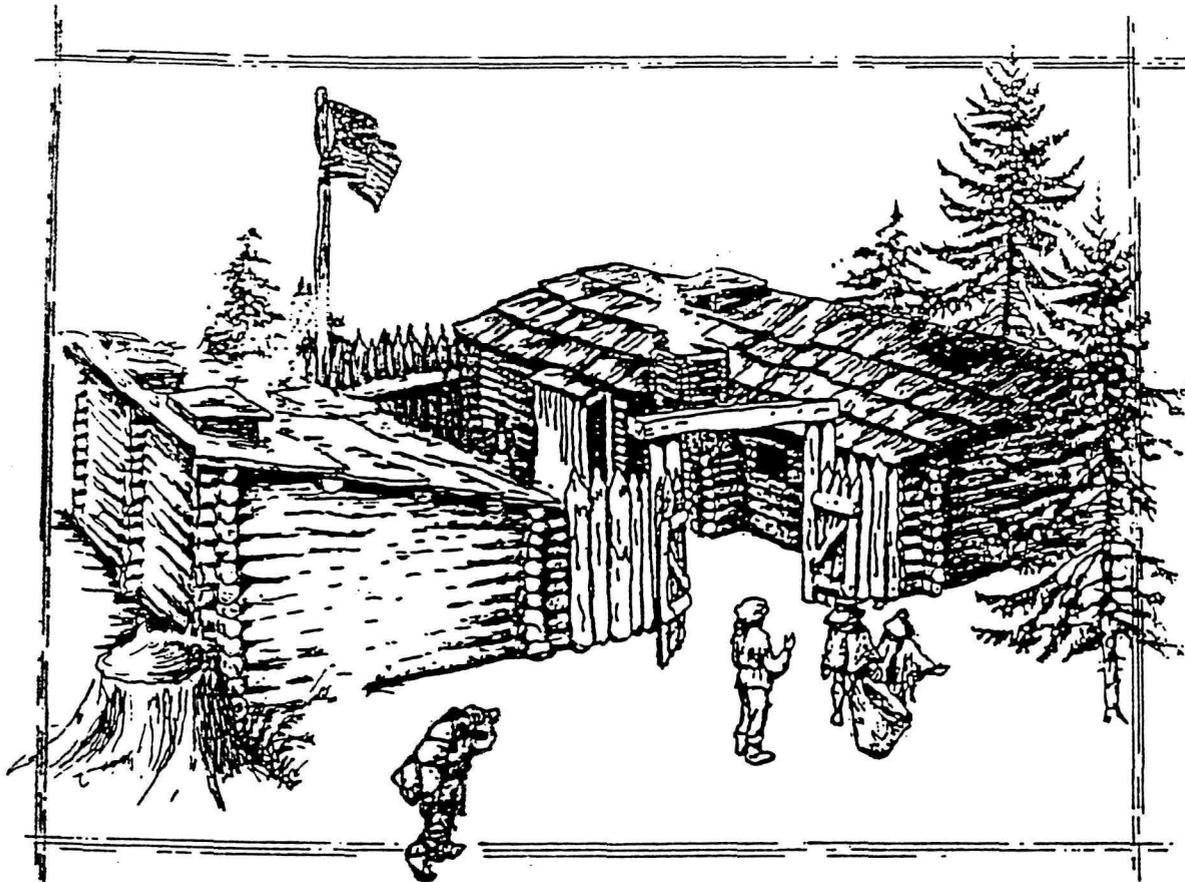


# 1986 Fort Clatsop Visitor Study



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1986 Ft. Clatsop Visitor Survey

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## Executive Summary

The goal of this report is to provide a current picture of visitation to the Ft. Clatsop National Memorial. Specific objectives are to furnish an assessment of (1) who is visiting Ft. Clatsop, (2) characteristics of the visiting public, (3) a description of their visit, (4) an evaluation of services provided by the Memorial, and (5) limited information about Park visitors' travel in the surrounding area.

### Key Findings:

- \*27 percent of Ft. Clatsop visitors were 12 years old or younger; 27 percent were between 30 and 50 years old; 20 percent were 60 years old or older.
- \*75 percent of visitors came with a family group; average group size was 4.3 people.
- \*Average length of stay was 1.7 hours.
- \*Highway 101, Highway 30, and Highway 26 are the primary travel routes to Ft. Clatsop.
- \*44 percent of Ft. Clatsop visitors were from Oregon, 19 percent from Washington, and 13 percent from California.
- \*68 percent of those interviewed were first-time visitors to Ft. Clatsop.
- \*Close to 60 percent of the visitors mentioned an interest in history and/or Lewis and Clark as their reason for visiting Ft. Clatsop.
- \*60 percent of the visitors were familiar with the history of Ft. Clatsop. Books and school were the primary sources of information.
- \*90 percent of the visitors stopped at the Visitor center, 60 percent watched the slide program, 99 percent visited the Fort, 62 percent visited the canoe launching area, and 88 percent observed a living history demonstration.
- \*Evaluations of Ft. Clatsop programs and facilities were very positive.
- \*Visitor trip expenditures in the northern coastal areas averaged almost \$200.

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## Introduction

Visitation to National Park Service Areas, while on the increase, fluctuates from year to year, season to season, and during the week. Visitation to parks, in other words, occurs in "cycles." Therefore, periodic monitoring of visitors provides managers with an update of who is visiting a site and the nature of their visit for a given time frame.

The sociological pulse at Ft. Clatsop National Memorial is intended to provide a current picture of visitation to the area. By tapping into the summer cycle for one August weekend, we can provide the park superintendent and his staff with an assessment of (1) who is visiting the Fort, (2) characteristics of the visiting public, (3) a description of their visit, (4) an evaluation of the services provided by the National Memorial, and (5) limited information about park visitors' travel in the surrounding area.

## Methods

A combination of on-site interviews and mail-back questionnaires were used to gain information from visitors to Ft. Clatsop during the weekend of August 22-24, 1986. The random sample of 200 visitors was divided among a 3-day weekend based on estimates of visitor numbers, with 60 visitors contacted on Friday, 70 on Saturday, and 70 on Sunday, August 24.

Visitor groups were contacted as they were leaving the Ft. Clatsop Visitor Center by two interviewers from the Cooperative Park Studies Unit at Oregon State University. The interview included a brief description of the purpose of the study, a request for visitors' cooperation, and a suggestion

that the group identify a group spokesperson. This person was given a postage-paid mailback questionnaire to be completed as a group. The name and address of the group spokesperson was requested in the event it was necessary to send a follow-up reminder. Of the 200 groups contacted, 11 refused to provide interviewers with a name and address, and three other groups were traveling and gave no address.

One week after initial contact at Ft. Clatsop, a follow-up reminder letter and a second questionnaire were sent to respondents who had not yet returned their questionnaires (56 percent of the sample). By the survey closing date, 147 questionnaires had been returned, for a 73 percent response rate.

Summary statistics were computed using the SAS statistical package on an IBM-XT personal computer.

#### Demographic Facts

Visitors responding to the survey ranged in age from 15 to 78 years old with a mean age of 45 years (Table 1). Combining these facts with group demographic information, we note that 27 percent of the visitors were children under 12 years old and 20 percent were over 60 years of age. the next two dominant age groups were the 30-39 and 40-49 year old adults.

We would expect this kind of population distribution. The American population is aging with the average age shifting from 25 in 1970 to approximately 35 in 1980.

Other notable demographic characteristics:

- While fifty-five percent of the respondents were male, the total composition of visitors was evenly distributed among males and females.

Table 1. Demographic information, Ft. Clatsop visitors, August 22-24, 1986.

	Number	Percent of total
<b>GROUP INFORMATION</b>		
<u>Age Groups</u>		
< 12 years old	164	27
13-19 years old	82	13
20-29 years old	37	6
30-39 years old	100	16
40-49 years old	69	11
50-59 years old	42	7
60+ years old	<u>120</u>	20
	614	
<u>Sex</u>		
Males	268	50
Females	268	50
<u>Group type (n=148)</u>		
Family	111	75
Friends	17	11
Family and friends	13	9
Alone	3	2
Other (tour group, etc.)	4	3
<u>Group size</u>		
Minimum: 1 person		
Maximum: 67 people		
Mean: 4.3 people		
<b>RESPONDENTS (n=143)</b>		
<u>Age</u>		
Minimum age: 15 years old		
Maximum age: 78 years old		
Mean age: 45 years old		
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	79	55
Female	65	45

Table 1. Continued.

	Number	Percent of total
<u>Education</u>		
Grade school	--	--
High school	34	24
College	71	50
Grad school	37	26
Mean = 15 years		
<u>Marital status</u>		
Married	115	80
Not married	29	20
<u>Spouse employed</u>		
Not applicable	31	22
Yes	66	46
No	46	32

-Fifty percent of respondents had completed college, with a mean educational attainment of 15 years. The visitors, in other words, were well educated with overall educational attainment beyond high school.

- Eighty percent of the group respondents were married and the dominant visitor group type was families -- 75 percent of all visitor groups. Few traveled alone to Ft. Clatsop which again is typical of the way in which recreation publics visit National Park Service (NPS) Areas. The average group size of Ft. Clatsop visitors was 4.3 people.

- Over 50 percent of the visitors were employed, but with the general aging pattern of the United States, the number of people entering retirement is increasing. Twenty-one percent of the respondents were retired (see Figure 1). The present or most recent occupation of 80 percent of Ft. Clatsop visitors was some type of professional position, 18 percent were managerial positions, and 22 percent were other types of occupations such as clerical, service, or sales positions.

### Summary

As the Ft. Clatsop staff prepares its interpretive programs for the future, several facts together may help guide this effort. There is an older population visiting the Memorial. One consequence of an aging population is the larger percentage of retired people who potentially have more time and financial means to travel. As the size of this group increases, the Memorial may see an increase in numbers of these older visitors. Perhaps the expansion of programs of interest to an older population is in order while not ignoring the interpretive programming effort for school age children, another well-represented group at Ft. Clatsop.

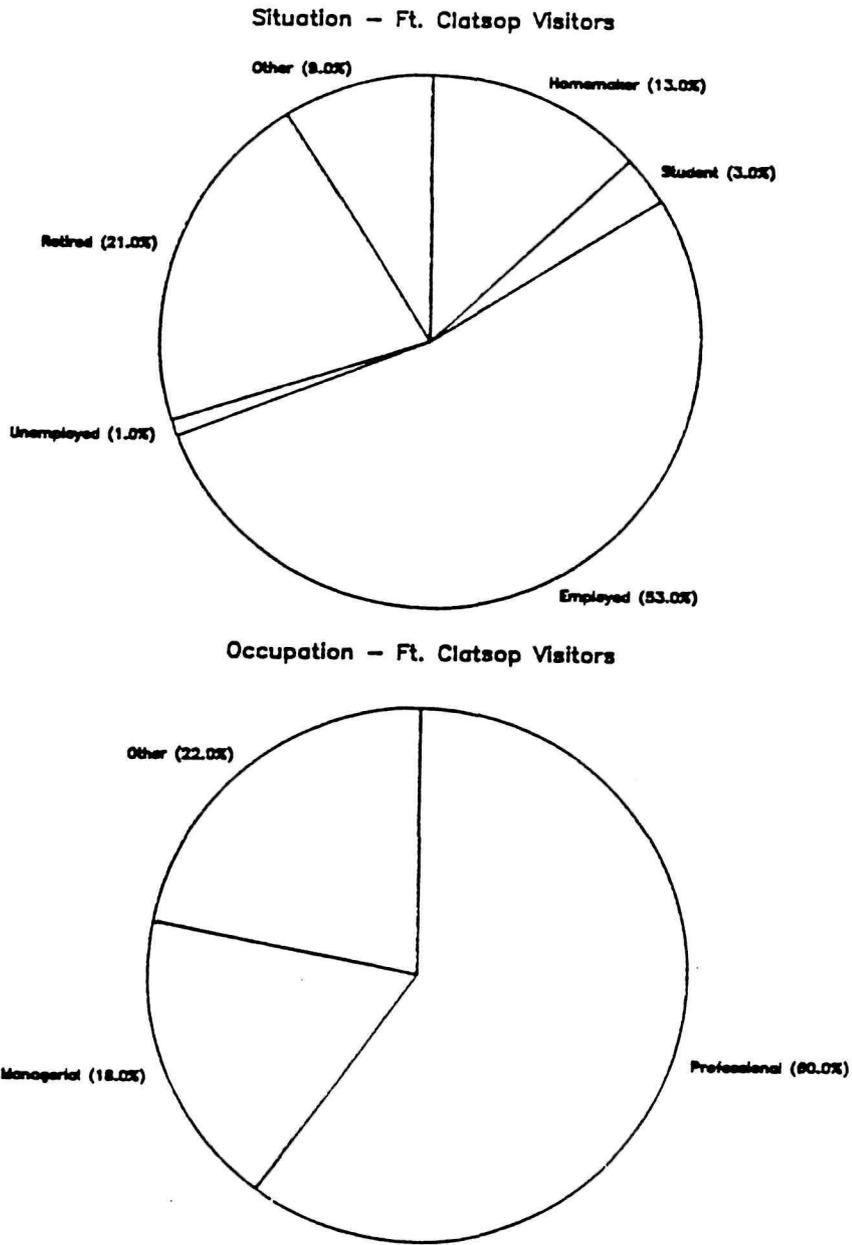


Figure 1. Present situation and occupation, Ft. Clatsop Visitors, August 22-25, 1986.

Visitors to Ft. Clatsop were, for the most part, well-educated professionals coming to the Fort with their families and friends. This too is important to keep in mind when designing interpretive facilities, programs, and educational materials.

#### Nature of the Visit to Ft. Clatsop

Visitors to Ft. Clatsop arrived primarily on three travel routes, Highway 101 (57%), Highway 30 coming from Portland (23%), and Highway 26 connecting with Highway 101 (20%) (see Figure 2).

In response to a management concern, 92 percent of the visitors indicated that the roadside signs were adequate in helping them locate Ft. Clatsop. A reason given by visitors who indicated signs were inadequate was that they had previously been to the Fort and needed no directional signs.

Forty-four percent of the visitors were Oregonians, 19 percent Washington residents, and 13 percent were from California (see Figure 3). If we reflect upon the general recreation pattern for the Northwest, Ft. Clatsop is drawing from a regional population base similar to other national parks in the region. In other words, 76 percent of the visitors were from the contiguous West Coast states.

Looking at the cities from which visitors began their trip to the Fort, we found that almost a quarter of the visitors began their day trips in coastal cities relatively near Ft. Clatsop--Astoria (16%), Warrenton (5%), and Hammond (3%). If we broaden the view, half the trips to Ft. Clatsop originated in Oregon and Washington coastal communities (see Figure 4). The average length of stay for visitors at the Memorial was 1.7 hours.

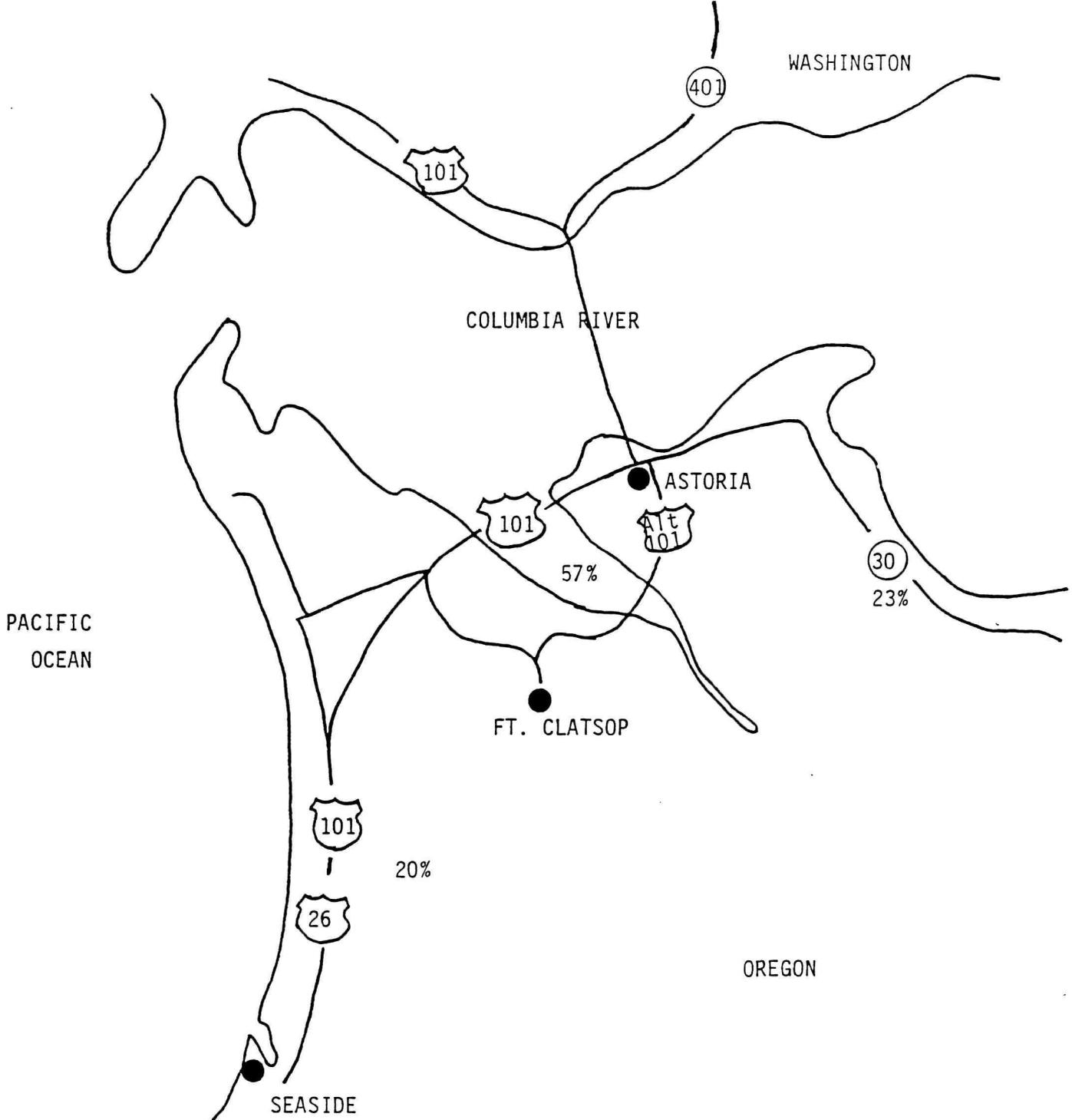


Figure 2. Routes traveled to come to Ft. Clatsop, August 22-24, 1986 (n = 146).

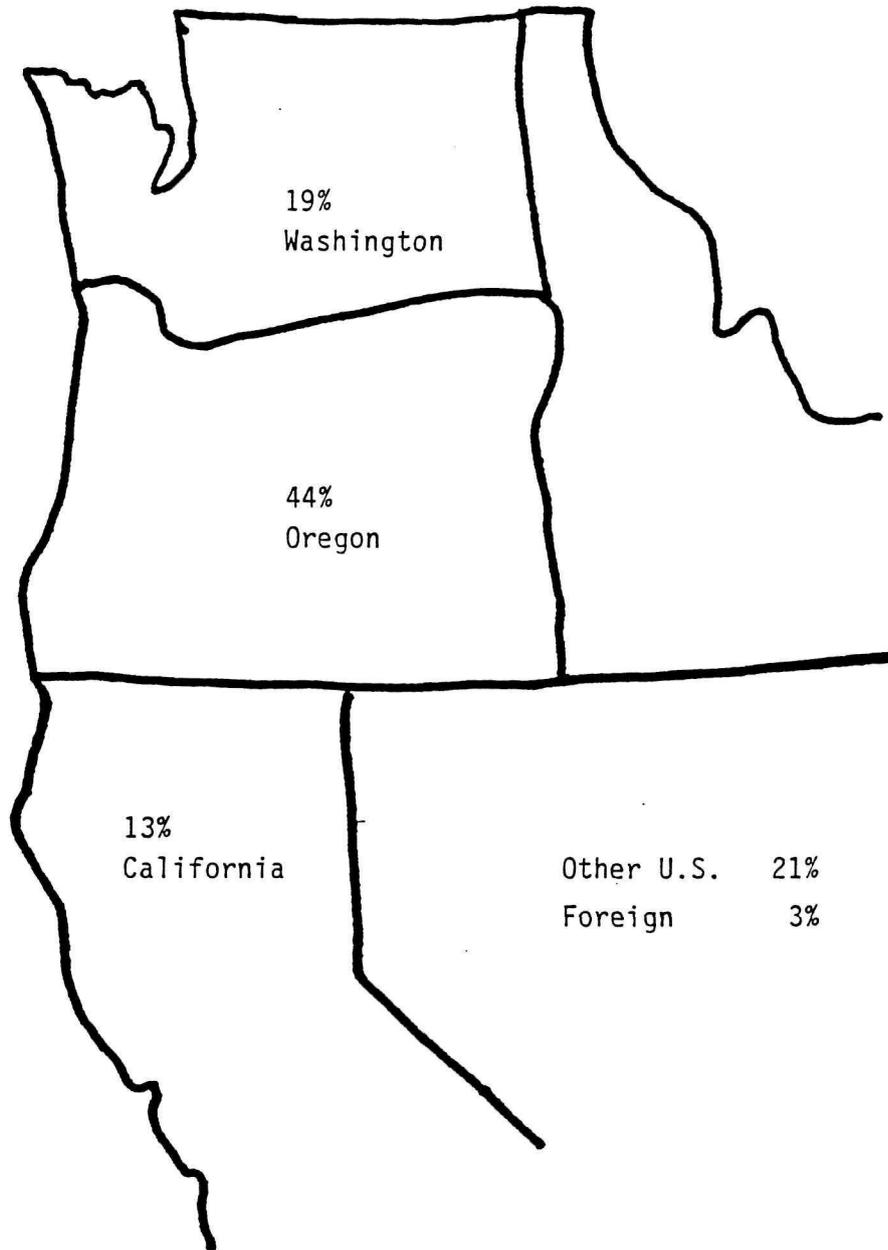


Figure 3 . Resident state, Ft. Clatsop visitors, August 22-24, 1986.  
(n = 145).

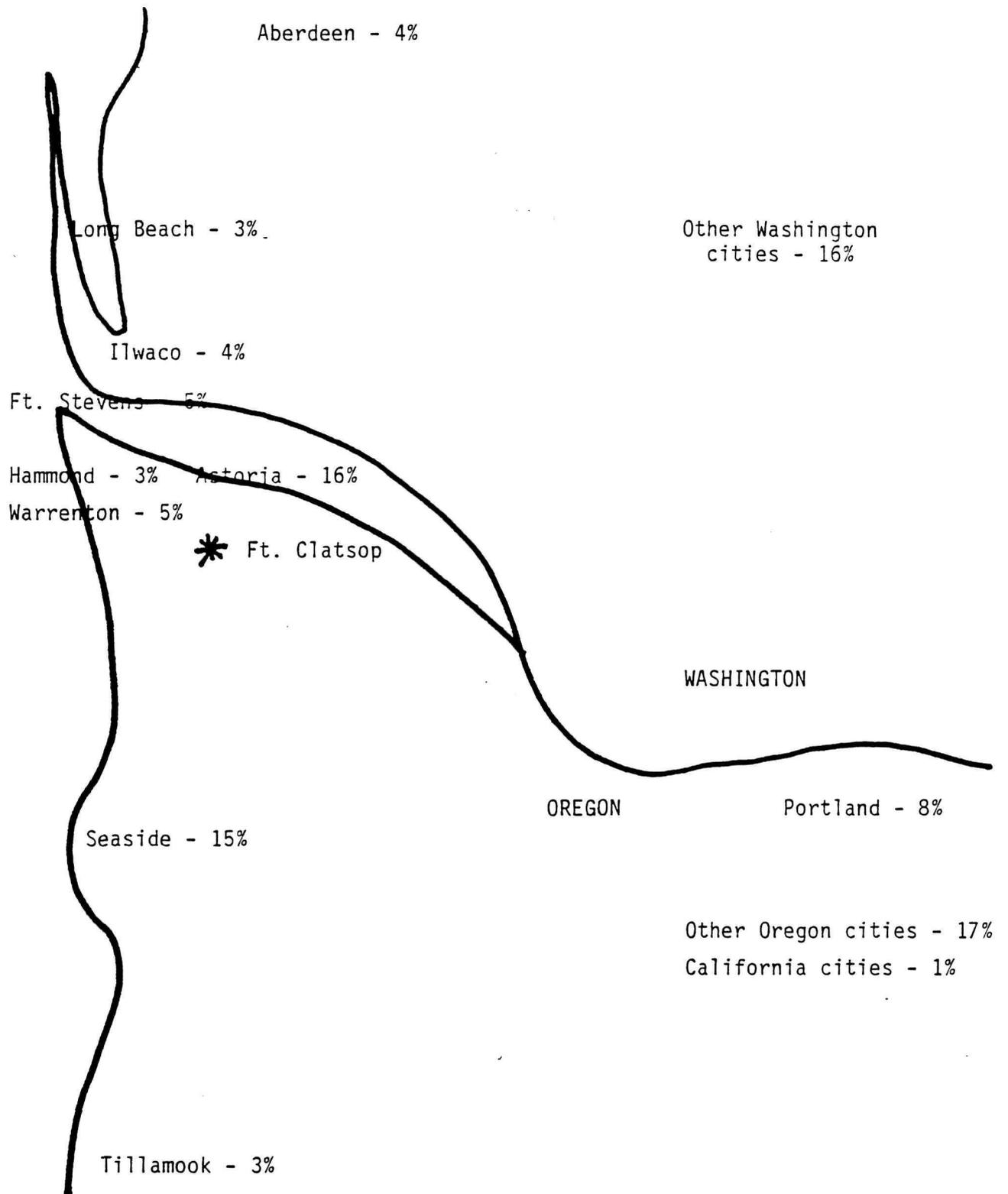


Figure 4. Day trip origins, Ft. Clatsop visitors, August 22-25, 1986 (n = 148).

In a 1986 survey of out-of-state visitors conducted at Oregon's State Welcome centers, the Oregon Coast was identified by nonresidents as the single most popular Oregon travel destination. Approximately 40 percent of the 900 visitors surveyed indicated they spent most of their vacation in Oregon somewhere along the Oregon coast. Of those visitors, 9 percent indicated they spent most of their time on the north coast (north of Gleneden Beach to Astoria). Given the relatively large number of nonresidents contacted at Ft. Clatsop (56 percent of visitors surveyed), Ft. Clatsop is likely attracting some of these nonresident coastal visitors.

Recreational travel beyond a few hours excursion is typically travel with multiple recreation goals. The location of Ft. Clatsop relative to major population centers and coastal recreation attractions suggests that travel to the area is part of broader recreation objectives. Eighty-four percent of the visitors to the area reported that the Fort represented a small part (less than 25%) of their overall travel plans, while eight percent of the weekend visitors said that visiting Ft. Clatsop was a large part or sole purpose for their coastal trip (see Figure 5).

This was the first visit to Ft. Clatsop for 68 percent of the visitors (Table 2). While 32 percent indicated they had visited the area at a prior time, the pattern reflects an extended time frame between visits (75 percent indicated two years or more since their last visit). It should be noted that the frequency of first visits applies only to the group spokesperson and may reflect a decision by the group leader to delegate the task of filling out the questionnaire to someone who had not previously visited Ft. Clatsop. Thus these percentages may be an over-representation of first visits and are under-representing the frequency of past visitation. If the study is repeated, we

Ft. Clatsop Visit—Part of Trip Purpose

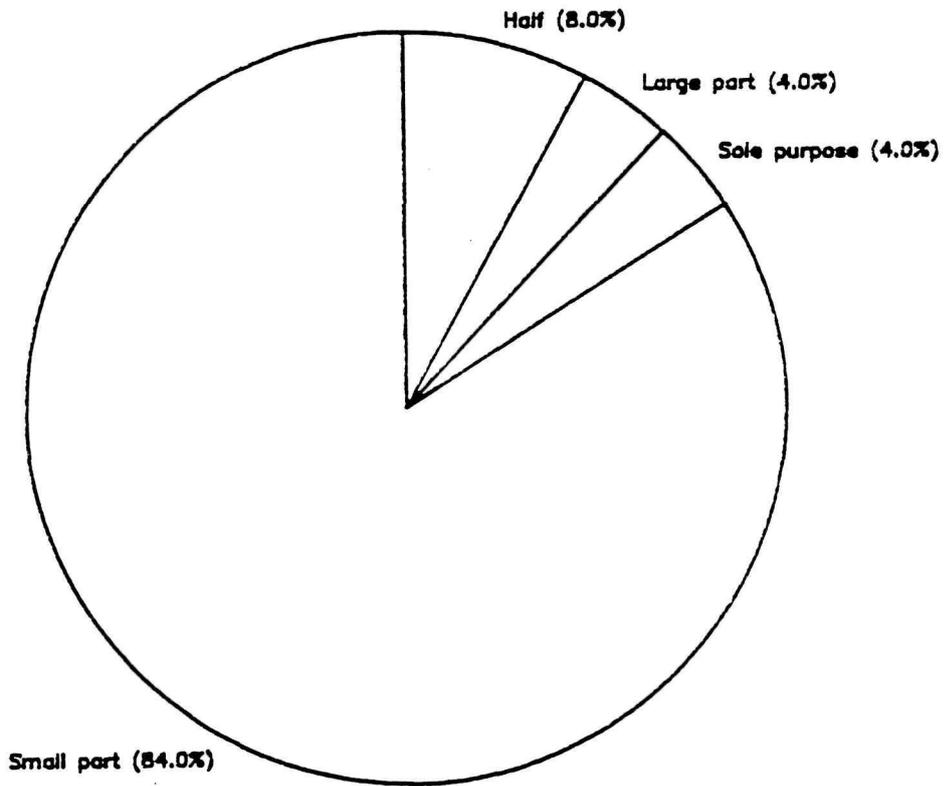


Figure 5. Ft. Clatsop visit as a proportion of coastal trip purpose, Ft. Clatsop visitors, August 22-24, 1986.

Table 2. Repeat visitors, Ft. Clatsop visitors, August 22-24, 1986 (n=148).

	Number	Percent
First visit?		
Yes	101	68
No	47	32
If no, when? (n=47)		
-this year (1986)	4	8
-last year (1985)	7	15
-2-4 years ago	11	23
-5-9 years ago	8	17
-10+ years ago	17	36

would suggest requesting prior visitation of all group members to get a more representative view of first-time and repeat visitors.

The Oregon Coast is rich in history and Ft. Clatsop depicts a significant thread of that history. Northwest residents coming to Ft. Clatsop indicated that their interest in history was their primary reason for visiting the Fort. Almost 60 percent of the August weekend visitors mentioned an interest in history and/or Lewis and Clark as the reason for their visit (Table 3). Another 12 percent indicated that having heard about the programs at the Fort was their reason for visiting.

These findings compliment results of a recently completed survey of nonresident visitors to the Oregon Pavilion at Expo 86. That study found that sightseeing and visiting national and state parks were the two activities of greatest interest to nonresident Expo visitors likely to vacation in Oregon. Ft. Clatsop provides many of the natural and historical amenities for which national and state parks are noted.

Consistent with their interest in history and the journeys of Lewis and Clark, familiarity among visitors with the history and purpose of Ft. Clatsop was fairly high (60% of visitors) (Table 4). Multiple sources provided information about the history of the Fort, with books, magazines, newspapers, and school representing dominant sources. Friends likewise provided a critical information source and we should note that this is the case in information exchange about other recreation sites. Informal exchange among friends is often a determining factor to visiting or participating in a specific recreation outing.

Ft. Clatsop staff were interested in the partnership with Ft. Canby State Park. The visitor center there provided 19 percent of weekend visitors

Table 3. Reasons for coming to Ft. Clatsop, August 22-24, 1986. (n=145).

	Number	Percent
Interest in history	65	45
Heard about Ft. Clatsop programs	18	12
Passing interest	16	11
Lewis & Clark enthusiast and interest in history	12	8
Lewis & Clark enthusiast	9	6
Others - i.e., with grandchildren, combination of reasons	17	12
No specific reason	8	6

Table 4. Familiarity of visitors with Ft. Clatsop history, August 22-24, 1986.

	Number	Percent
Familiar with history?		
No	57	39
Yes	87	60
Vaguely	1	1
Learned about Ft. Clatsop from (n=87):		
-books	54	62
-school	40	46
-newspaper or magazine articles	23	26
-friends	22	25
-Ft. Canby Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center	17	19
-brochures	17	19
-TV	9	10
-Chambers of Commerce	4	5
-membership in historic clubs	3	3
-other (previous visit, children Tourism Dept., etc.)	24	27

with information about the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Respective visitor attractions in the Memorial received varying amounts of visitation. Virtually all visitors (99%) visited the fort structure, 90 percent stopped at the Visitors center, 88 percent observed a living history program, 62 percent visited the canoe launching area, and 60 percent saw the slide program (Table 5).

Possible reasons for the relatively lower visitation at the canoe launching area and interest in the slide program are worth noting. The canoe launching area is somewhat removed from the fort area and requires the longest walk, making it somewhat less accessible to older visitors and visitors on limited time schedules. The slide program is shown in an indoor, somewhat confined space, doesn't provide visitors with as much of a "living" atmosphere as other areas of Fort Clatsop, and may not be of as much interest to visitors, particularly children.

When asked about visiting other federal, state, or local areas set aside to commemorate the Lewis and Clark expedition, one-third of the visitors indicated they visited other sites, with the Seaside salt cairns and Ft. Canby being the two dominant attractions (Table 6).

It is not surprising that 60 percent of the visitors were unaware that Ft. Clatsop is part of the National Park System (Table 7). While people hold the System in high esteem, familiarity with a particular area representing the system is not a critical piece of information for most visitors. This is true for some of the larger parks as well.

Visits by Ft. Clatsop visitors to other National Park Service areas is also presented in Table 7, with the large natural areas being the most visited.

Table 5. Ft. Clatsop areas visited, Ft. Clatsop visitors, August 22-24, 1986.

	Number	Percent
Stop at the Visitor Center? (n=147)		
Yes	133	90
No	14	10
Watch slide program (n=138)		
Yes	83	60
No	55	40
Visit the Fort? (n=147)		
Yes	146	99
No	1	1
Visit canoe launching area? (n=147)		
Yes	91	62
No	56	38
Observe a living history demonstration? (n=147)		
Yes	130	88
No	17	12

Table 6. Visitation to other Lewis and Clark commemorative areas, Ft. Clatsop visitors, August 22-24, 1986.

	Number	Percent
Visited other Lewis and Clark areas?		
Yes	52	35
No	95	65
<u>Areas (n=40)</u>		
-Salt cairns - Seaside	13	32
-Ft. Canby	7	18
-Ft. Benton, Montana	2	5
-Pompey's Pillar	2	5
-Arch - St. Louis	1	2
-Lewis & Clark State Park	1	2
-Marine Museum	1	2
-Floyd Monument-Missouri R.	1	2
-Lolo Trail	1	2
-Camp Meriweather	1	2
-Ft. Stevens	1	2
-Ft. Abraham Lincoln	1	2
-Astoria Column	1	2
-Trail Markers	1	2
-Multiple areas	6	15

Table 7. National Park areas visited, Ft. Clatsop visitors August 22-24, 1986.

	Number	Percent
Aware that Ft. Clatsop is a NPS area?		
Yes	58	39
No	89	61
Other NPS areas visited (n=148)		
Olympic N.P.	27	18
Crater Lake N.M.	24	16
Mt. Rainier N.P.		
North Cascades Complex	15	10
Ft. Vancouver N.M.	15	10
Oregon Caves N.M.	9	6
Whitman Mission N.M.	2	1

## Summary

Information about where visitors come from and their knowledge of the Fort and its history can be used in efforts made by Ft. Clatsop staff to let people know about the Fort and its programs.

People who come to the Fort live primarily in the Pacific Northwest and often begin their trips to Ft. Clatsop in nearby coastal communities. This, along with the knowledge that out-of-state visitors coming to Oregon prefer the coastal areas would suggest that Ft. Clatsop staff provide coastal Chambers of Commerce and State Welcome Centers with information about the Fort.

Cooperation with other Lewis and Clark historic areas such as Ft. Canby provides people interested in the history surrounding the Lewis and Clark expedition with valuable information about other historic sites. These efforts should be continued and expanded.

Schools are another important source of information for Ft. Clatsop visitors. Continued cooperation with local teachers and outdoor educational programs will provide children and their families with information about the history of the Fort as well as its present programs.

The staff may want to examine alternative strategies for increasing slide program attendance and visitation to the canoe launching area. These might include:

At the Visitor Center -

1. Be sure that the program is well announced prior to showing
2. May want to show the slide show on demand when there is an audience in the Visitor Center
3. May want to offer similar 5-minute versions of the slide program in one of the Fort structures

At the canoe launching site -

1. Provide more directional signs
2. At the end of a living history program, promote that site (this is likely already being done)
3. Increase the amount of living history being presented at the canoe launching site in an effort to "lure" more visitors to that area

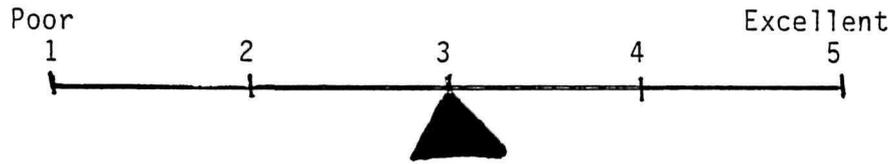
### Evaluation of Services

Overall, visitors' evaluations of their visit to Fort Clatsop were very positive (see Figure 6). On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being excellent), almost all visitor points of interest received at least a 4.5 average rating score with the quality of the exhibits receiving the highest rating (4.7). The slide program at the visitors center received the lowest average rating score (4.0), which may be related to it being relatively less visited than other exhibits and areas of the Fort. If changes are needed, Park staff may want to take a look at the slide program to see if there may be ways, in addition to those mentioned above, to improve the quality of the presentation and perhaps improve visitor attendance.

Visitors were asked if they felt the interpretive services at the Fort met the needs of children. Though half of visitors indicated that particular issue did not apply to them, another 47 percent said "yes" the services met the needs of children (Table 8). Only a few program suggestions reflecting the interests of children were given and those are included in Table 8.

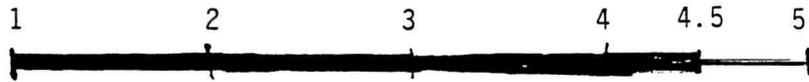
A majority of visitors (58%) were aware of the educational and theme items for sale at the Fort, though a fairly high percentage were not (42%) (Table 8). Park Service staff might consider putting more effort into

Ft. Clatsop Programs Evaluation

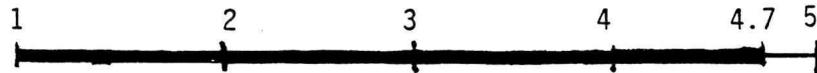


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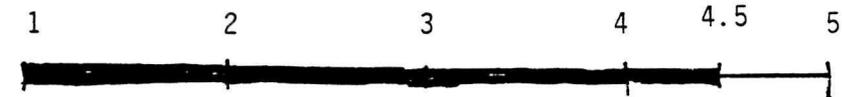
a) Overall visit to Ft. Clatsop



b) Quality of exhibit materials



c) Quality of living history demonstrations



d) Quality of the slide program



e) Quality of other facilities (restrooms, grounds)

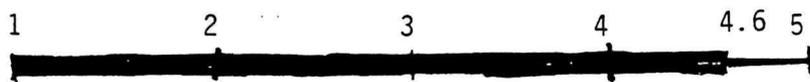


Figure 6. Visitors' evaluations (mean scores) of Ft. Clatsop, August 22-24, 1986.

Table 8. Appropriate services, Ft. Clatsop visitors, August 22-24, 1986.

Did interpretive services meet needs of children?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	70	47
No	2	1
Doesn't apply	75	51

Suggestions for children:

- more slide presentations
- slide program boring to six and under
- make the book by the form of questions and answers
- make it an adult facility that is interpretable by adults to kids
- (teens and up--forget toddlers)

Were you aware of educational and theme items for sale?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	83	58
No	59	42

Additional items:

- kits to actually make some of the items shown: candles, hide tanning, toy (small) canoes, etc.
- picture post cards
- pamphlets free of charge
- tools, artifacts
- information on changes occurring to the land since the trip; i.e. jetty construction
- T-shirts
- books for very young; for children
- posters
- salal berry cake/loaf; trade breads, candles
- a borrowing library for schools

informing visitors about items for sale, such as having interpreters giving living history demonstrations mentioned items that are available. Additional theme related items suggested by visitors are listed in Table 8 and include, among other things, kits to make items shown at the Fort, postcards, period foods, and a borrowing library for schools. Some items mentioned may already be available and visitors were simply unaware that they were for sale.

Travel and Economic Information

Destinations of the weekend visitors to Fort Clatsop are presented in Figure 7. Nearby Astoria was the destination of the largest percentage of visitors (21%), along with Portland (10%) and Seaside (7%). The remaining visitors were traveling to a variety of Oregon and Washington cities after leaving Ft. Clatsop.

Increases in pleasure travel throughout Oregon this past summer reflected the impact of Expo 86 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Comparing 1985 and 1986 figures for the month of August, Oregon's Economic Development Department reported a 13 percent increase in visitors stopping at the State's six Welcome Centers. Ten percent of the weekend visitors at Ft. Clatsop had visited Expo 86 as part of their trip and six percent indicated they would be visiting Expo after leaving Ft. Clatsop (Table 9).

Table 9. Travel to Expo-86, Ft. Clatsop Visitors, August 22-24, 1986.

	Number	Percent
Yes, would visit Expo after leaving Ft. Clatsop (n=146)	9	6
Yes, had visited Expo on this trip (n=147)	15	10

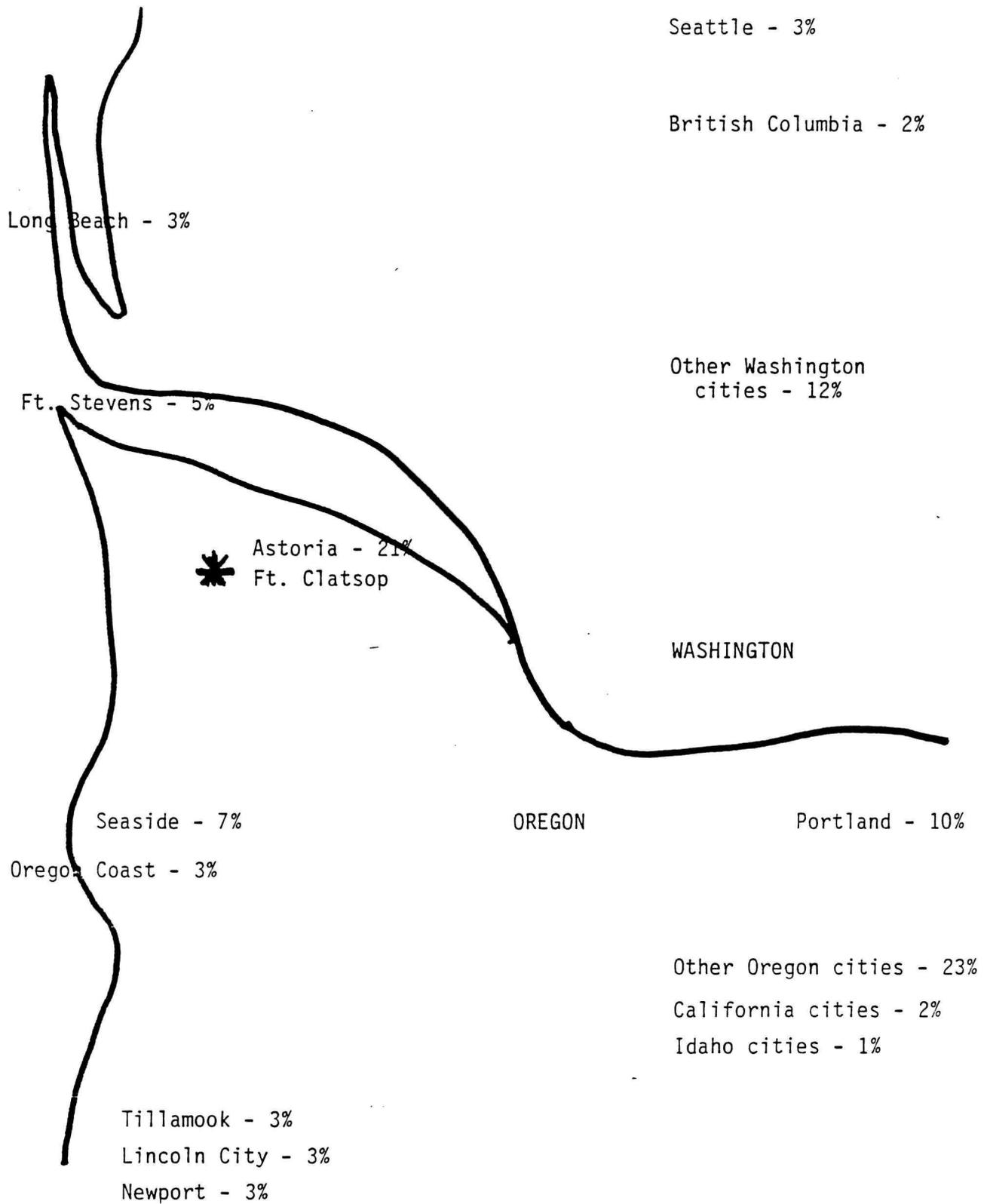


Figure 7. Destinations after leaving Ft. Clatsop, Ft. Clatsop visitors August 22-25, 1986 (n = 143).

Expo 86 is but one example of the impact of tourism and travel on local economies. In a study completed by the U.S. Travel Data Center (1986) for Oregon's Economic Development Department, it was estimated that U.S. travelers spent more than \$2.5 billion dollars in Oregon during 1985 and Oregon's coastal counties, excluding the coast portions of Lane and Douglas counties, attracted \$370 million in traveler spending, which led to nearly 9,000 jobs in 1985.

On a smaller scale, weekend visitors to Ft. Clatsop were asked to estimate trip expenses both in and outside the coastal area. Lodging, restaurants, retail trade, and transportation expenses made up the largest proportion of expenditures both in and outside the coastal area (Table 10). Average trip expenditures in the coastal area for visitors was almost \$200. Because more than eighty percent of visitors contacted indicated that the visit to Ft. Clatsop was a small part of their total coastal trip purpose, that impact of Ft. Clatsop on the coastal economy is not likely to be great, but it undoubtedly contributes to overall tourist spending, particularly transportation, restaurants, and perhaps lodging expenses.

Visitors traveling fairly long distances to visit the Fort, such as those coming from Seattle, Portland, and Newport will undoubtedly spend money for transportation and food, and perhaps lodging as well. The fairly high percentage of retired visitors (21%) would suggest a potentially sizeable group of travel trailer and motorhome travelers who may not spend a great deal on lodging, but have transportation and food expenses which would contribute to local coastal economies.

Table 10. Expenditures, Ft. Clatsop visitors, August 22-24, 1986.

	<u>In Coastal Area</u>		<u>Outside Coastal Area</u>	
	Dollars	Percent of total	Dollars	Percent of total
Hotels and motels	7,765	30	3,335	18
Restaurants & taverns	6,872	27	3,038	16
Retail trade	5,104	20	3,116	17
Transportation	3,201	12	7,455	40
Other lodging	977	4	1,209	6
Amusement services	677	3	298	1
State, federal local agencies	508	2	212	1
Marine services	101	<1	--	--
Charterboat services	353	1	72	<1
Other	70	<1	8	<1
Total	\$25,626		\$18,785	
Mean	\$197		\$145	

## Conclusions

Results of our weekend survey of Ft. Clatsop visitors are intended to provide a current picture of visitation to the area. This report summarizes information on the demographic characteristics of visitors; from where, how, and why they came to Ft. Clatsop; their evaluation of the various programs at the Fort; and their expenditures and additional travel plans after leaving Ft. Clatsop. Suggestions are given on how Ft. Clatsop staff might use information gained in the survey in planning and implementing future programs and activities at the Fort.

In addition to the information presented above, there are several points to keep in mind:

- When interpreting and applying results of the survey, we must keep in mind that this was a one-weekend survey. It was not intended to be representative of all Ft. Clatsop visitors, but was designed to provide a "pulse" of visitation to the area.

- Should Ft. Clatsop managers identify the need for conducting a similar study either on a larger scale or perhaps by doing a series of "pulses" throughout a season, the staff here at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit would be very interested in cooperating with Fort staff in designing and implementing the survey.

- A particularly noteworthy finding of this survey was the important role that Ft. Clatsop plays in providing historic information about the Lewis and Clark expedition. People come to the Fort primarily because of an interest in that history and Ft. Clatsop is a valuable resource for both Oregon residents and nonresidents.

- It is also important to point out the positiveness and even excitement of visitors regarding the quality of the programs and facilities at Ft. Clatsop. They commented particularly on the value of the living history demonstrations.

- We would very much like to thank the staff at Ft. Clatsop for their encouragement and support in designing the questionnaire and conducting the survey.