

# PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

## **Location:**

Located in Lincoln County along the central Oregon coast, Newport lies about 135 miles south of Astoria and the Oregon-Washington border, 114 miles southwest of Portland, and 55 miles west of Corvallis (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> It is the largest city in Lincoln County and is the County seat. At the junction of two primary United States highways, Highway 101 and Highway 20, Newport links the Willamette Valley with west coast ports and Asian destinations across the Pacific Ocean via shipping out of Yaquina Bay.

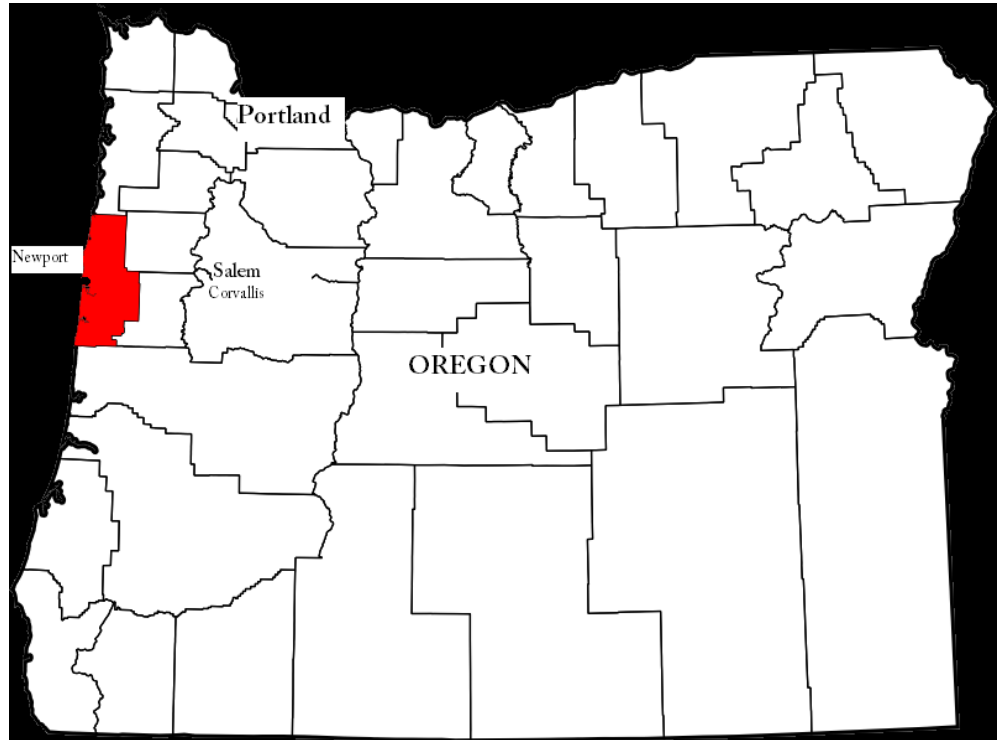


Figure 1

## **Climate:**

The City of Newport has a relatively humid climate, influenced by the proximity of the Pacific Ocean. Moisture-bearing winds from the ocean rise and are cooled as they cross the Coast Range. This creates a coastal marine climate characterized by moderate temperatures and a fairly high amount of precipitation, especially during the winter.

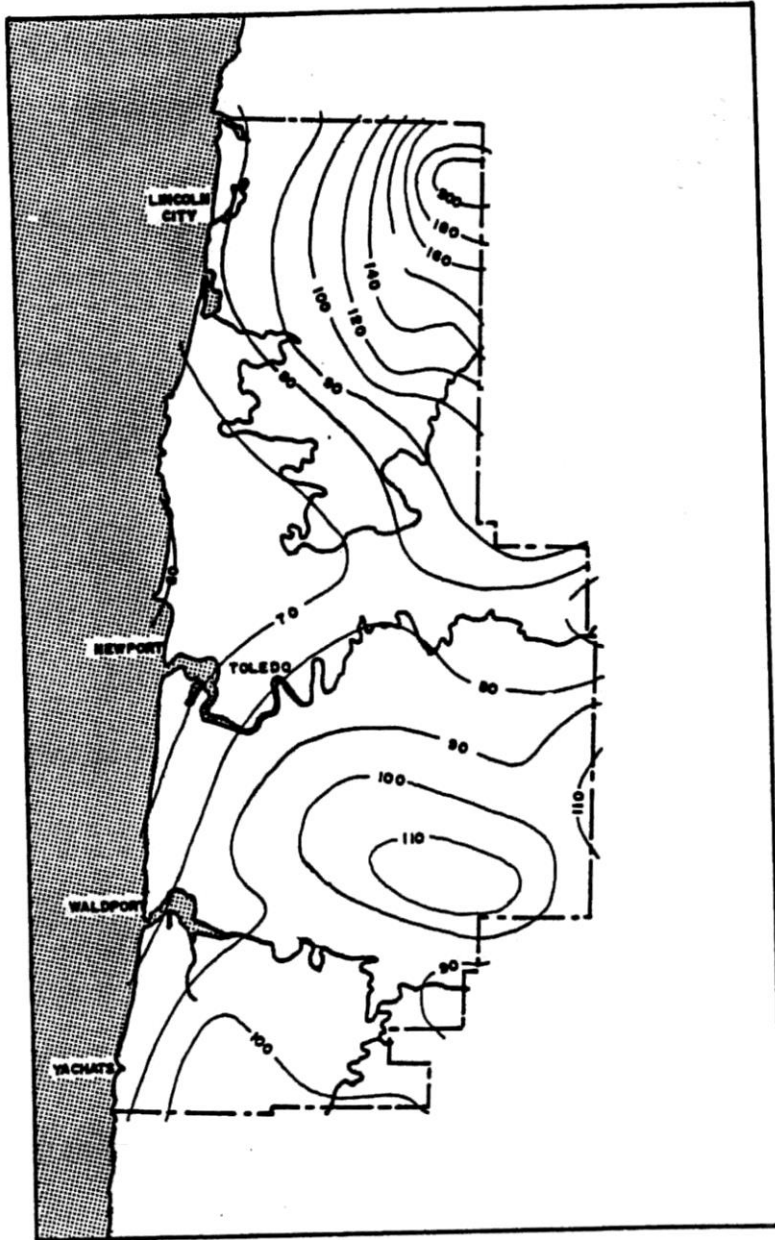
## **Precipitation:**

Air masses that have followed a long trajectory across the Pacific are usually at ocean temperature and saturated with moisture. As they move onshore, contact with

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<sup>1</sup> State of Oregon Bureau of Governmental Research, Preliminary Land Use Plan For the Yaquina Bay Area, University of Oregon, 1969.

Figure 2

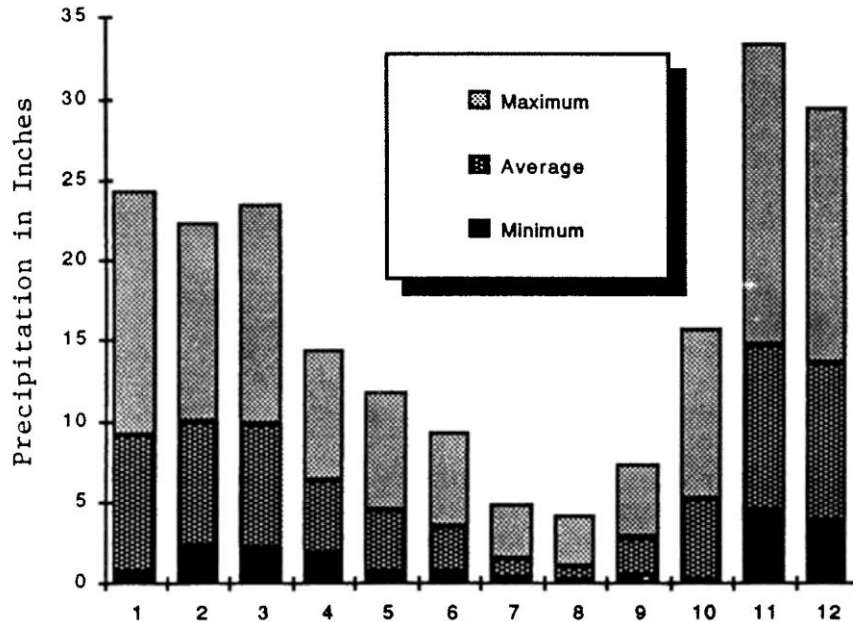


WATER RESOURCES OF LINCOLN COUNTY COASTAL AREA, OREGON USGS 76-90 1977  
INCHES OF RAINFALL PER YEAR

the Coast Range forces the air to rise and cool. This rise is accompanied by a pressure reduction causing condensation and precipitation. Thus, the coastal slope is one of the heaviest annual rainfall areas in the contiguous United States (see Figure 2 on the preceding page).<sup>2</sup>

Normal annual precipitation at Newport is about 65 inches, most of which occurs as rain. Because of seasonal changes in ocean temperature, air temperature, and wind direction, precipitation follows a definite seasonal pattern. The wettest months are from November through March, when about 70% of the total occurs. Figure 3 shows minimum, mean and maximum monthly precipitation at Newport for the period of record, 1978-1991.

Figure 3



Monthly Precipitation at Newport (1978-81)

Snow is an unusual event in Newport, averaging only one to two inches a year. The surrounding mountains and mountain passes can, however, experience deep snow in the winter months. Even in those areas, though, snowfall is intermittent and occurs only in the higher elevations.

<sup>2</sup> ibid.

## Temperature:

Temperatures are moderate, ranging between an average January temperature of 44° and an average July temperature of 56°--a difference of only 12°. <sup>3, 4</sup> Extremes extend from 0° to 90°. The average annual growing season is 250 days.

## Wind:

The Oregon coast is exposed directly to winds that move off the ocean on shore. Prevailing winds are generally from the west, with a southwesterly component during the winter and a northwesterly component in the summer. Wind velocities average 10 to 15 miles per hour, but higher gusts are not uncommon. The strongest winds ordinarily develop during the winter months, while summer winds are normally lower in velocity.

## Humidity:

Because of the constant onshore movement of moist, marine air, relative humidity is high and distinguished by very little seasonal or diurnal change. The annual average high, frequently in the morning, is approximately 90% as compared to the average low of 70%, ordinarily during the warmest part of the day. <sup>5</sup>

## Vegetation:

"Three major vegetation communities are found within the Yaquina Bay Estuary. Each is discussed below...

"Shore Pine - Spruce Community:....As dunes begin to stabilize, and enough organic material is deposited within the surface layers, vegetation communities will begin the succession process.

"European beach grass was planted in the South Beach area to encourage dune stabilization in the 1930's. Partly due to that action and due to natural processes, the South Beach area now exhibits the best representatives of the shore pine and spruce communities....Besides European grass, typical flora is seashore peavine, maritime peavine and seashore lupine.

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<sup>3</sup> ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission, The Oregon Coast Level B Study of Water and Related Resources, 1976.

<sup>5</sup> ibid.

"Coastal shrub communities (peavine, lupine, willows, huckleberries, etc.) rapidly evolve into forests typically composed of shore pine and sitka [sic] spruce. The less common constituents of the successional tree development are the Douglas fir (in well protected environs) and western hemlock or western red cedar in low, moist older forests. The coast pine is the primary feral stage of the tree succession, and sitka spruce and Douglas fir become the dominant species due to their superior growth capabilities and their longevity.

"Riparian Community: The riparian floral communities are typically scattered in narrow bands, and are fairly inconsistent in the Yaquina Bay area. Typical species involved in this community are sitka spruce, red alder, Douglas fir, vine maple, black cottonwood, willow and blackberry. Some riparian communities are very small (1 to 2 meters wide and 3 to 4 meters long) and are comprised of but two to four species. Riparian communities act as important buffers for water users, as cover for water access, and as food sources for many wildlife species. The smaller riparian zones occur along the perimeter of portions of Idaho Tide Flats, and along Sally's Bend down to Oneatta Point on the north shore of the river. Small draws just upland from the bay areas, where moist enough, have thick stands of riparian vegetation. These draws are composed primarily of red alder, indicating a fairly recent disturbance of the natural land vegetation.

"Strong stands of riparian flora occur in the upper reaches of the marsh lands and sloughs. In those areas where the...high marsh ends and the land begins sloping upwards into the hills, very healthy stands of riparian vegetation occur. Spruce, fir, alder, and maple can be found in mixes, towering high above the marsh."<sup>6</sup>

An examination of an aerial photograph produced by the Army Corps of Engineers and by CH2M HILL indicates no significant areas of riparian vegetation outside of the coastal shorelands zone.

"Douglas Fir - Trailing Blackberry Community: This association is represented by a wide variety of vegetation, and occurs in many different forms. The indicator species is principally Douglas fir, with an understory primarily composed of blackberry, salal and sword fern. Associated tree species are often western hemlock, sitka [sic] spruce, grand fir, western red cedar, big leaf maple and red alder. Other woodstemmed species found in the understory include salmonberry, vine maple and huckleberry.

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<sup>6</sup> Wilsey and Ham, Yaquina Bay Resource Inventory, Oregon State University Marine Science Center, 1977, p. 9-1 to 9-4.

"The potential variety is considerable, depending on the past and present environmental influences. Areas recently logged revegetate with an alder dominance for an overstory. Land subjected to fire may reestablish with conifers and alders, depending on the heat of the fire, the extent of the burn and the reclamation activities, etc. The deciduous (primarily alder) canopy will retard fir growths for up to 80 years before the successional stage takes over. As the Douglas fir stage matures, the deciduous species (alder, huckleberry, etc.) will phase out, allowing for the growth of the shade-tolerant conifers (red cedar, hemlock, and spruce). Eventually the fir forests give way to climax forests of western hemlock and sitka spruce. The Yaquina Estuary has several different stages of the fir-blackberry community, primarily due to constant human interference. Logging has occurred throughout the slopes of the bay and river, with each cut area currently representing a slightly different stage of the floral process."<sup>7</sup>

### Significant Natural Vegetation Areas

Mike Miller Park in South Beach lies about one mile inland from the sea at an elevation of 100 feet. Consisting of 40 acres, it is described as follows: The southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 20, Township 11 South, Range 11 West, of the Willamette Meridian in Lincoln County, Oregon.

Owned by Lincoln County, the site is one of the few remaining uncut stands of old growth western hemlock and Sitka spruce along the northern Oregon coast. There is a tall shrub understory of salal, red huckleberry, evergreen huckleberry, and salmonberry. Some of the trees are up to four feet in diameter and are over 125 feet tall. It is the last of any appreciable size in Lincoln County, and it appears undisturbed. The lack of other old growth stands in the area makes this stand significant, especially in providing a geographic diversity of old growth sites along the coast. The proximity of this site to Newport provides easy access for outdoor education and nature study.

### Conflicting Uses

Land to the east is outside the city's urban growth boundary (UGB) and carries the Lincoln County designation of T-C/"Timber Conservation." As such, no conflicting uses exist or are likely to occur as long as that zoning is maintained.

Lands to the north, west, and south are outside the city, also, but within the UGB. They have been designated "industrial"

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<sup>7</sup> ibid., p. 9-1 to 9-4.

on the city's Land Use Plan Map and are currently zoned I-P/ "Planned Industrial" under county zoning. As these lands are mostly vacant, there is a potential for conflicting uses (industrial uses that produce noise, dust, and vibration, which may adversely affect the vegetation in and the enjoyment of Mike Miller Park).

Once identified, an analysis of the economic, social, energy, and environmental consequences of allowing the conflicting uses is required by state law. The economic section of this plan identifies a need for an additional 23 acres of commercial/industrial land. It would not be to the economic advantage of the city to prohibit development on adjacent lands; that would make an already identified shortage of land worse.

Because the South Beach area has been designated as the city's future employment base, a great deal of time and money has been spent towards that end. Sewer, water, and street systems have been planned and partially built to accommodate expected growth. To prohibit development on adjacent properties now would require new investment toward whatever area was chosen to make up the difference. Once again, this would be of a negative economic consequence to the city.

Energy expenditure so far has been minimal as most infrastructure expansion and development has been for existing development to the north. Those projects and areas are far enough away that they will not impact Mike Miller Park. However, as the area around Mike Miller Park develops, more infrastructure will need to be provided. The construction of those facilities requires the expenditure of energy. Building onto existing facilities would require less energy, though, than expanding into new areas. Since the basic infrastructure has started in South Beach, this would require less effort and therefore less energy than redirecting commercial/industrial growth into areas that do not have basic infrastructure.

Environmental concerns center more on the park. As stated earlier, Mike Miller Park is one of the few remaining stands of uncut old growth timber. Habitat is provided for plants and animals, and a wetland has been identified as a high value area in the "Wetlands Conservation Plan for South Beach, Oregon." <sup>8</sup> Mike Miller Park, then, is environmentally important.

Because of the closeness to the city proper, Mike Miller Park provides a readily available area for nature study and other scientific and educational opportunities. This provides Newport

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<sup>8</sup> Scientific Resources, Inc., "Wetlands Conservation Plan for South Beach, Oregon," 1990 (DRAFT).

residents with a social amenity that is valuable to the livability of the area.

The general conclusion from the above analysis is that it is important to protect Mike Miller Park, but it is equally important to allow adjacent industrial/commercial property to develop. The city must create a mechanism to accomplish both those goals.

First, when the property within the UGB but outside the city is annexed, it should be zoned I-1/"Light Industrial." The intent and purpose of this zone, as stated in the Zoning Ordinance, is: "...to provide for commercial and industrial uses that can be located near residential or commercial zones. Uses that are associated with excessive noise, dust, vibration, or fumes shall be prohibited." <sup>9</sup>

Currently, all industrial uses are conditional in the county. The city is a notified agency, so we have the opportunity to respond on a case-by-case basis for compatibility. The city will use the procedure outlined below for comment to the county.

Once in the city, each project will also need to be reviewed for compatibility. The city shall therefore use the procedure for development within 200 feet of Mike Miller Park.

- A. The following uses are permitted outright subject to buffering requirements outlined in C, below:
  - 1.) Warehouses.
  - 2.) Public utilities.
  - 3.) Public parks or other open space.
- B. All other uses are conditional, subject only to the buffering requirements contained in C, below, and a finding that the proposed use will not adversely affect Mike Miller Park.
- C. Buffering Requirements.
  - 1.) For any development on land adjacent to Mike Miller Park, the following yard requirements are effective between the improvement and the park land boundary:
    - (a) Residences - 20 feet.
    - (b) Parks or other open space - 0 feet.
    - (c) For all other uses - 30 feet.

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<sup>9</sup> City of Newport, Zoning Ordinance (No. 1308, as amended), 1982, p. 18.



Buffer yards shall be maintained in a natural state or, if altered, landscaped. Also, if altered, a fence at least six (6) feet high shall be constructed along any property line abutting Mike Miller Park.

- 2.) For other yards, setbacks and buffering in the underlying zone shall apply.

### Other Sites

Other sites that could benefit from the retention of natural vegetative cover are floodplains, geologic hazard areas, and areas of excessive slope. The city owns and maintains open space areas, and South Beach State Park is another area that is characterized by natural vegetation (especially on the foredunes).

### **Mineral Resources:**

The only known mineral resource within the City of Newport is the Yaquina Head Quarry. This quarry was originally opened by the city in the 1920's and sold to a private party in the 1940's. The site has been purchased by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and is no longer an active site. The plan is to reclaim the property.

### **Scenic Views:**

Newport has several scenic views that are of exceptional aesthetic quality. The Yaquina Head Lighthouse, Jump-Off Joe, and numerous other sites exhibit extraordinary scenic views. A complete inventory of outstanding sites in Newport is contained in the document entitled Inventory of Oregon Coastal Beach Access Sites, prepared by the Benkendorf Corporation for the State of Oregon.<sup>10</sup> Those sites are incorporated into this plan by reference. There are no conflicting uses on or near those sites. They shall be preserved or enhanced as the areas develop or redevelop.

### **Conclusions:**

The City of Newport and its environs are characterized by a marine climate and its associated flora and fauna. There are several significant natural areas that have been identified in this section that need protection from urban encroachment.

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<sup>10</sup> Benkendorf and Associates, Inventory of Oregon Coastal Beach Access Sites, 1989.

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**GOALS/POLICIES**  
**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

**Goals: To protect and, where appropriate, enhance the natural and scenic beauty of the Newport area.**

Policy 1: All state, county, and city parks within the Newport urban growth boundary shall be protected with appropriate zoning.

Policy 2: The City of Newport shall develop and, when necessary, update the Parks and Recreation Plan contained in this comprehensive plan. Park land acquisition and development shall be consistent with this plan.

Policy 3: Identified natural and scenic areas of exceptional value shall be protected. The city shall use the adopted comprehensive plan for an inventory of such areas. The city shall study appropriate regulations consistent with this policy (i.e., as it deals with private property).

Policy 4: The City of Newport shall participate with local, state, and federal agencies to meet environmental statutes.