History of the Port of Port Orford

Before the arrival of European settlers, the Port Orford area was inhabited by Tututni people. The Tututni languages were a part of the Pacific Coast Athabaskan language family.

The First European settlers, led by Captain William Tichenor, arrived in 1851. Tichenor, needing to return to the north for supplies, left a group of nine men behind. However, members of the local Qua-to mah tribe reacted with hostility to the newcomers, who were encroaching on their territory. Taking up a position on a nearby seastack, now known as Battle Rock, the settlers were attacked by a band of more than 100 Qua-to-mahs. Twenty-three natives were killed, and two of Tichenor's men were wounded in the ensuing conflict. Soon afterward, a truce was called between the two groups, when the settlers told the natives that they would be leaving in 14 days. For the next two weeks, the settlers did not see any members of the local tribe. However, after the 14th day, an even larger band of natives than the first attacked. During the battle, the chief of the tribe was killed. Retreating with their dead chief, the tribe set up camp nearby. The settlers soon fled north under cover of darkness.

Port Orford was formally founded in 1856. It would serve as a receiving port for mercantile and fishing. The port district was formally set up more than 50 years later, in 1911, and the town became a shipping port for local Port Orford Cedar (Chamaecyparis lawsoniana). The port was sold in 1935, but brought back in 1957. Eventually, Port Orford saw a decline in fishing and the shipping of timber ceased.
The Port of Port Orford harbor that has been in use since the 1850s, and was primarily used for shipping lumber. The first Port District was formed in 1911 and dock construction began in 1919. A breakwater was built in 1971 in an attempt to protect the dock from winter storms. Shoaling became a problem shortly after and dredging became necessary. Although no longer a deep harbor, Port Orford is still home to many commercial fishermen and is used as a harbor of refuge by many during severe storms.

1923 - At 400’X 52’ the SS Frogner was the largest ship to call in Port Orford importing supplies and exporting lumber.

In October 1941, then-mayor Gilbert Gable, frustrated with the poor condition of the state roads around Port Orford, which hampered economic development, suggested that a number of counties along the Oregon and California state border should secede and create the State of Jefferson. This movement came to an end with U.S. involvement in World War II. The port is an open-water dock (no natural protection) and boasts the only dry-dock port of the West Coast. The fishing boats are lifted in and out of the water by operated cranes, set on custom-made dollies and parked in rows on the dock. As a result, it is known as a "dolly dock".

The Port is located right on the Oregon coast, just 75 miles north of the California boarder.

**The Port With No Bar To Cross**

A unique aspect of the Port of Port Orford is the fact that there is no ocean bar to cross. This results in more fishable days per year. Ocean access is gained by use of one of the Port's hoists,
which can lift boats weighing up to 25,000 pounds. Since the Port is situated on the open ocean, moorage in the water is only possible for short periods during calmer weather. Thus all commercial boats from Port Orford have trailers on which they are kept upon the dock. The Port has two hoists available.

**Sports, Fishing, Diving and Kayaking**

The Port has improved parking facilities to include boat and trailer parking spaces and additional automobile parking.

Many ocean sport fishermen favor Port Orford as there is no dangerous bar to cross, and good fishing just a few minutes from the dock. The Orford and Blanco reefs offer excellent bottom fishing in an uncrowned area.

Port Orford is rapidly becoming the dive-site of choice for many Oregon divers. Long noted for its spectacular under-sea beauty, ease of access, diveable shipwrecks, and exceptional visibility, in addition to the close proximity to Nellies and Tichenor's Coves. Dive classes have been conducted by places such as Eugene, Roseburg, and the Medford-Grants Pass area. The Port has restrooms & shower facilities to further accommodate divers. There are outside showers available to clean your gear and inside showers for the use of the public.

Kayaking is becoming more and more popular at the Port with the large and beautiful headland protected by Oregon State Parks full of secret coves, a cultural site, kelp beds, you can paddle through Arch Rock, access to and views of Redfish Rocks Marine Reserve and Humbug Mountain to the south. You can fish from your kayak for Ling Cod, Kelp Greenling, Black Rockfish, and other species of rockfish. You will also see colonies of Cormorants, Black Oyster Catchers, and common Murre's. It is not uncommon to see Gray Whales and Orcas.

The Port is always trying to improve accessibility for all the different users of the Port facilities.

**Geography**

Port Orford is located on U.S. route 101 between the Pacific Ocean and the Siskiyou National Forest, 28 miles (45 km) north of God Beach and 27 miles (43 km) south of Bandon. At 124 degrees, 29 minutes, 53 seconds west longitude, it is the westernmost city in the contiguous United States, though in Clallam County, Washington, there are three unincorporated communities that are farther west than Port Orford: Neah Bay, La Push, and Ozette. According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 1.6 square miles (4.17km), of which 1.56 square miles (4.04km) is land and 0.05 square miles (0.13km) is water.

Elevated Quaternary marine terraces deposited during the last major interglacial period have given rise to topographic features surrounding the area. The Port Orford Heads State Park is located in Port Orford on a scenic headland where the historic Coast Guard lifeboat station operated from 1930 to 1970.
The city is adjacent to Cape Blanco, a headland consisting of the Cape Blanco terrace dated at 80,000 years old, and is considered by many to be the westernmost point in the contiguous U.S. (However, this is disputed; see Cape Alava in Washington.) The city is located north of Humbug Mountain, which is considered to be the tallest mountain in the contiguous U.S. to descend directly into an ocean. Garrison Lake, a 130-acre (0.53 km) freshwater lake that is annually stocked with trout, is a natural lagoon that exists within city boundaries, along with a large amount of wetlands.
Mission Statement:

*We are stewards of public trust who;*

- Provide ocean access for commerce and recreation.
- Retain current businesses and attract new ones.
- Build our Port’s financial strength.
- Increase and diversify our operating revenues.
- Make the highest and best use of our financial tools, people, and property assets.
- Improve our region’s special quality of place.
- Create diverse means for regional economic well-being.

Overall Goals

Marine Property and Facilities

- *Shoaling problem.* The first mission of the Port of Port Orford is to provide ocean access to not only our commercial fleet but sport fishermen as well. Because of Federal budgetary constraints dredging of ‘low use ports’ (under 100m tons/yr) is being discontinued. However with help from the State of Oregon in purchasing dredge equipment the Port will take on the additional expense of operation and maintenance of the equipment to provide sufficient water depths at the dock for safe boating.
For the long term the Port is actively pursuing breakwater modifications that will alleviate the shoaling problem and relieve the Port and federal government of the expense of dredging.

Additional breakwater repair; part of the breakwater project would be to widen a 150’ section of the breakwater that doesn’t protect the end of the High Dock, this area of the dock is vulnerable to 25’+ waves.

Three times since the high dock was built in 2002 there has been substantial damage to several buildings caused by waves and flooding at this unprotected area of the dock. The 2007 storm triggered an emergency declaration in many parts of the state, financial assistance from FEMA was invaluable in helping the Port put itself back together.
• Capital Equipment Reserve Fund; The Port will continue to fund this at $20,000/yr, with the primary purpose of replacing the 25 ton crane.
• The Port will budget to stabilize the bluff to protect the Electrical Building.
• The Port will budget to resurface the parking lot.

**Industrial Property**

**Port of Port Orford Cannery Redevelopment Project**

The current standing cannery building was constructed at the turn of the century and rebuilt in the early 1940’s. At the present time due to its present condition it is un-insurable. Engineers have advised the Port District that it is beyond repair. The Port also contains a failing sewage lift pump station incapable of supporting its current load volume, let alone a new facility.

The vision of this project intends to replace the old dilapidated cannery building of approximately 10,000 square feet with a new commercial facility and to revitalize our once vital waterfront. It is to be a multi-use facility with at least 10,000 sq. ft. of the new building designed to accommodate a constant flow of fresh sea-water. This fresh seawater system has been in operation at the Port for 12 years. One thing that sets this building apart is the fresh running salt water and the experience and knowledge of professionals that operate it.

The new facility is expected to include approximately 20,000 square feet of space on or near the existing site. It is expected that the design will have approximately 10,000 square feet of fish and seafood processing. NorCal is intended to act as the “anchor” tenant for the new Cannery facility, and has committed to occupying this space. NorCal is one of the Port’s long term commercial seafood buyers, specializes in marketing and distribution of live seafood products such as fish, red sea urchins, and Dungeness crab. Other ‘Live’ operations have expressed interest in the new building. Proposed are: red sea urchins, organic sea vegetables and aquaculture. It is expected that these commercial seafood processing businesses, with accompanying retail enterprises, and the Port’s offices and other rental space will occupy the other 10,000 square feet of the new facility. It is also the intent of this project to include historical, scientific and natural surrounding education and outreach.

The Port holds the key to the natural beauty of Port Orford and provides services for the fishermen which are the main economic driver for the area. The types of jobs that will be created from the new cannery redevelopment project at the port will be living wage jobs crucial for the local community.
Port of Port Orford 1940’s

Port of Port Orford – 2011
Proposed New Cannery Redevelopment Facility

ARIAL OF BUILDING

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
Adventure tourism is a growing Oregon phenomenon. Its devotees include tourists who want to hike, climb, bike, paddle, surf, and dive their way through an entire vacation. With the thought of a new cannery redevelopment project immersing at the port, many commercial-retail tenants have submitted letters of interest to establish a business to fit these eco-tourism needs. In addition, the Port of Port Orford is responsible for attracting charter boats, sport fisherman and the guided fishing industry from the Coos, Curry, Douglas, Josephine, and Jackson county areas. Sport and guided fishing attracts overnight guests that make a significantly larger contribution in terms of spending and economic impact.

Recently Port Orford has been privileged in being the anchor for the new Wild Rivers Coast Scenic Bikeway. Bike Oregon says, “the 60-mile ride is anchored in the quaint fishing hamlet of Port Orford, the oldest town on the Oregon coast. Here you can count on a great cup of coffee, and you’ll find quiet, locally owned hotels and eclectic art galleries. A 17-mile stretch of the Bikeway travels through the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest and along the Elk River, a nationally designated Wild and Scenic River, past pools teeming with native salmon and trout and a beautiful old-growth forest in the Grassy Knob Wilderness”. A visit to the Elk River Fish Hatchery along the way is a welcome stop. The Port of Port Orford would like to see an inclusion with the new cannery redevelopment project and the coastal bike routes.

Within the Port District during the past two years we have seen the addition of the Cape Blanco Country Music Festival and the Pacific Gales golf course project. The music festival alone brings in upwards of 20,000 people to Port Orford. We see this as another opportunity to share our small fishing port and develop the eco-tourism that is becoming so prominent.