

Key Issues and Concerns

Arch Cape Forest & Rainforest Reserve Public Access
March 1, 2023 (DRAFT)

The following list of key issues and concerns is based on the public comments received as part of the *Arch Cape Forest Multi-Resource Management Plan (MRMP)* public comments, staff input from the Arch Cape Water District and North Coast Land Conservancy, and the draft MRMP. These key issues and concerns are compiled for discussion and have not been evaluated.

Water Quality/ Quantity & Water Affordability

Specific water quality parameters that can be impacted by human disturbance and management activities and could necessitate water treatment (which can affect water affordability) include:

- Turbidity (i.e. suspended sediment in water that affects cloudiness/murkiness of water)
- Organic matter/ suspended nutrients
- Temperature which can affect the levels of nutrients in water (water temperature is affected by the amount of shade from vegetation)

Factors that can affect these water quality parameters include:

- Steep slopes
- Erodible soils
- Disturbance (e.g. fire, pest and pathogen outbreaks, landslides, windthrow)
- Roads
- Poorly built trails/social trails
- Motorized vehicle use
- Human and domestic animal waste
- Management practices resulting in disturbance to soil, vegetation, etc.
- Vegetation management

Wildlife/ Habitat

- Properties are located at interface of four distinct habitat types (coastal Western hemlock, coastal Douglas fir, coast-range mixed fir, and marine), supporting relatively high species diversity
- The properties provide important habitat to a wide range of terrestrial and aquatic species of wildlife including Roosevelt elk, deer, black bear, cougar, Coho and steelhead, numerous bird species, and a multitude of insects, fungi, and other organisms.
- The properties are located between large areas of institutional forestland managed by ODF and private companies, Oswald West State Park, and saltwater marine habitat (including the Cape Falcon Marine Reserve) and provide habitat/ecological connectivity.

Plant Communities/Vegetation

- Rare plant communities, particularly in the upper elevation areas of the Rainforest Reserve
- Invasive plant species which can be brought in on footwear, tires, domestic animals

Fire

There are both naturally-caused and human-caused fire, with most fire ignitions in the Oregon Coast Range being caused by human ignition. Fire impacts can include:

- Loss of vegetation and impacts to vegetation/forest complexity which by extension can impact water quality due to erosion, increased nutrients, increased temperature
- Loss of water retention properties of forests
- Aesthetic/visual impacts
- Air quality (during fire events)
- Public safety/ loss of life and property

Historic/Cultural Uses

- Given the long history of local tribes throughout the region, more information is needed regarding cultural resources and any interest in access for cultural uses including, but not limited to hunting, harvesting, and gathering.

Aesthetics/ Visual Resources/ Community Identity

- Arch Cape Forest and Rainforest Reserve provide the visual backdrop to the community of Arch Cape
- These properties contribute to the community sense of place

Recreation

The Arch Cape Forest and Rainforest Reserve properties have been used for recreation by residents of Arch Cape and surrounding communities for decades. The following key issues and concerns are listed below by sub-categories.

Crowding, Over Use, & Recreation Experience

- Over-crowding and associated parking overflow along highway and in neighborhoods
- Concerns about changes to the historic character of the recreational experience of the properties which has been low intensity/low density
- Concerns about increased recreation use and impacts to natural resources (e.g. water quality, sensitive plant communities/species, etc.)
- Potential fee/permit system and impact to liability (if charge a fee, some liability protections are lost)

Sense of Community Ownership

- Sense of “ownership” of the forest by Arch Cape community members as water ratepayers
- Providing public information about the site while not “promoting” public access

Domestic Animals (Dogs & Horses)

- Dogs have historically been taken into the properties – potential issues around dog waste/pathogens and water quality and disturbance to wildlife
- Equestrian use is known to take place on the site (including for hunting). Limited space for horse trailers/staging
- Safety/user conflicts

Hiking

- Likely the most frequent use
- Social/informal trails and paths
- Safety/user conflicts

Bicycling

- Mountain biking – potential erosion
- E-bikes – potential erosion
- Safety/user conflicts

Hunting

- Hunters historically used these and adjacent properties for sport and subsistence hunting
- Elk management, particularly how population/herd size affects vegetation, elk in human developed areas/communities/highway, wallows/sediment/erosion, etc.
- State agency support for management if hunting is permitted (more info is needed from ODFW)
- Safety/user conflicts

Nature Observation

- Opportunities for nature observation are available across the two properties
- Some sensitive/rare plant communities might be attractive for nature observation while there is a need to minimize impacts to these areas

Foraging/Gathering

- Mushrooms, firewood, etc. activities may be taking place (or may be desired activity) for recreation, subsistence, or other purposes

Litter/Human Waste

- Litter and human waste can impact water quality and the recreational experience

Education & Research

- Sensitive plant communities/species (particularly the Rainforest Reserve) and unique interface of several ecological communities
- Watershed and water resource education
- The properties serve as examples of plant succession and forest ecological processes/dynamics and complexity
- The Arch Cape Forest is an example of a community forest which is a growing model for community-based forest ownership and management which itself can be a topic for research
- NCLC has identified several potential research topics for the Rainforest Reserve that focus on conservation

Access Needs (Non-Recreation)

Property access is required for:

- Land managers
- Existing easement holders
- Fire and emergency response
- Other approved activities (including radio repeater station access)