Progress Report - October 29, 1987
- Trout plan North Fork Middle Fork Willamette
  - Management plan adopted by the Commission 1979

  - Managment objectives are being met, although we have not monitored the trout population (objective 2) recently. Angling pressure is light.

1979 adopted

FISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

NORTH FORK OF MIDDLE FORK
WILLAMETTE RIVER

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Fish Division
August 1979

NORTH FORK, MIDDLE FORK WILLAMETTE RIVER SYSTEM
FISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The North Fork is a moderate-sized tributary originating at Waldo Lake and entering the Middle Fork Willamette near the town of Oakridge (Fig. 1). The river and its tributaries contain approximately 160 miles of trout producing water. The habitat is generally capable of producing a good trout population.

Native cutthroat and rainbow are present throughout the system and brook trout, having moved out of Waldo Lake, are found a short distance downstream.

In July 1979, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission accepted the Department's recommendation to continue to manage the North Fork, Middle Fork Willamette River for wild trout. The Commission concurrently imposed a fly angling only restriction to fishing in this stream.

HABITAT

The watershed is owned primarily by the US Forest Service who plans to manage the timberland on a multiple-use and sustained yield basis.

Stream productivity, as measured by conductivity readings, is low. As a result, growth of fish is slower than in waters with higher conductivities. Stream gradient ranges from moderate to steep with cascades and falls common in the main stem and tributaries. Forty-three miles of the main stem average 35 feet in width. Maximum water temperatures do not exceed 68 F in the summer. Riparian vegetation is in good condition. The major barrier to upstream fish passage is a 30-foot dam at RM 1.5. The best spawning gravel is located in the main stem above RM 12 and in the lower portions of the tributaries. Streamflow is relatively stable with flows at the confluence with the Middle Fork averaging 105 cfs in late summer and 2,000 cfs in the winter.

FISH POPULATIONS

Anadromous species are not present in the system and have not been since construction of Lookout Point Dam in 1953. The trout population is dominated by rainbow below and cutthroat above RM 25. Brook trout have moved downstream from Waldo Lake to RM 41. Whitefish, although not abundant, are found from the mouth to RM 39 and suckers are present to RM 18. No population estimates have been made in the main stem or tributaries.

Samples taken in 1975 and 1976 from wild trout in RM 20-39 show:

(a) Cutthroat in the upper river, above RM 25, are smaller than the rainbow in the lower river.

(b) Lower river trout (primarily rainbow) reach 6 inches at age 2.

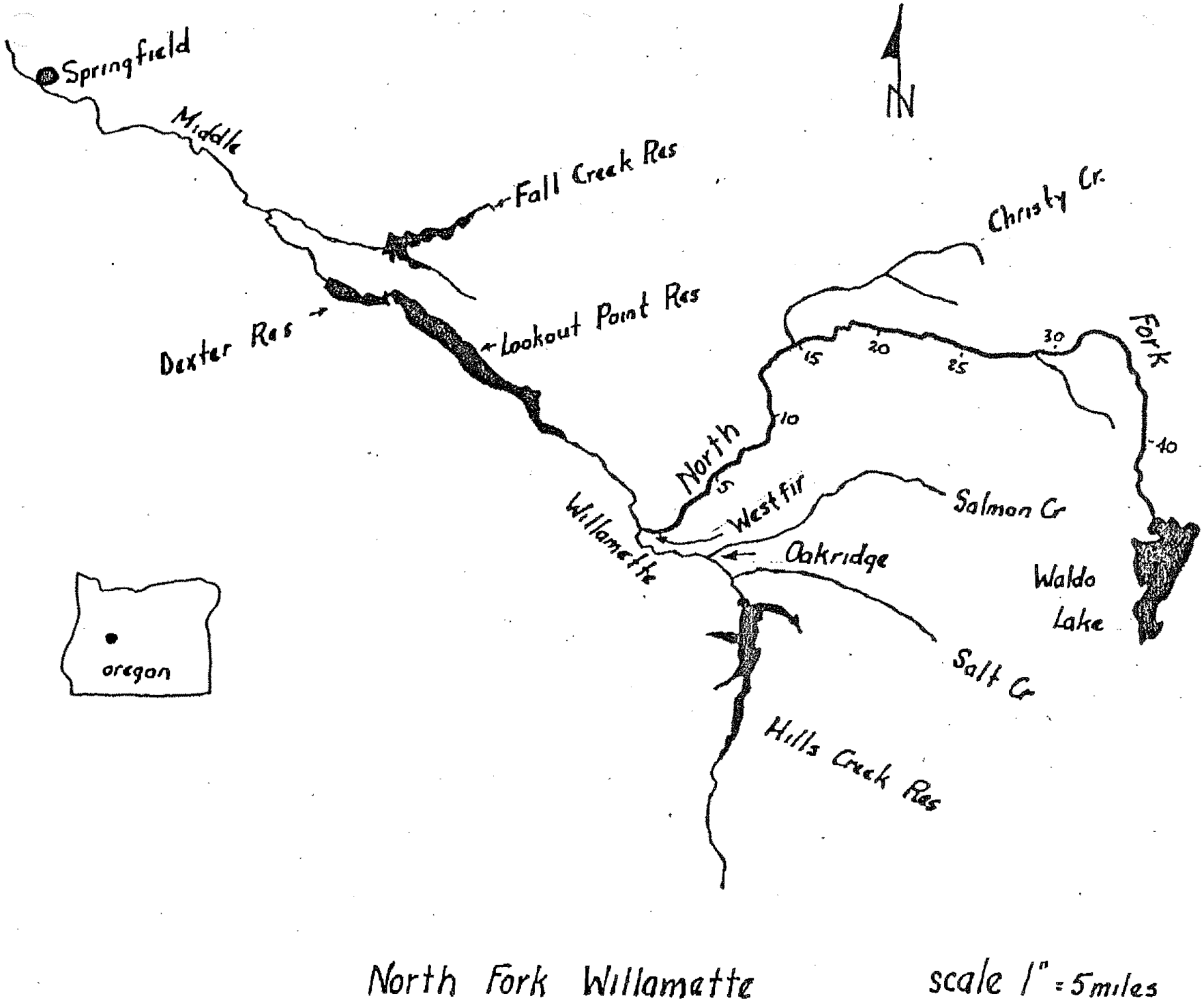

Fig. 1. North Fork Willamette

(c) Upper river trout (primarily cutthroat) reach 6 inches at age 3.

(d) Rainbow from age 2 on are larger than cutthroat.

Approximately 50% of the rainbow mature at age 4 at an average length of 9.6 inches, while 86% of the cutthroat mature at age 3 at an average length of 7.6 inches.

FISHERY

Public access to the lower 34 miles of stream is good as an all-weather road parallels the stream. There is no road access along the uppermost 10 miles and trail access is poor along the tributaries.

Deletion of the yearling trout stocking in 1974 has reduced angling pressure on opening weekend from a high of 100 cars to an average of 9 cars (19 in 1979); however, pressure is now rebuilding.

A statistical creel sampling program was carried out from April 24 through September 30, 1976, with the following results noted:

(a) An estimated 2,700 anglers fished the stream with a landing rate (kill plus release) of 1.3 trout per hour.

(b) More trout were released than kept.

(c) Catch composition was 53% rainbow and 47% cutthroat.

(d) Bait anglers comprised 39% of the anglers interviewed, fly anglers 25%, and 36% used various combinations.

(e) Two percent of the anglers creeled a limit of fish while 71% caught none.

(f) The period April-May accounted for 40% of the angler effort but only 10% of the trout catch.

OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain and/or improve riparian habitat by applying existing laws and regulations and working closely with land management agencies.

2. Determine size distribution, trout numbers, and trout conditions by sampling a representative site or sites during late summer.

3. Encourage voluntary catch and release angling.