

Chapter 9: Mt. Shasta-Weed, California

Photo: Julia Sizek

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Case study facts

Population (2020): 14,479

Location: Siskiyou County, California

Federal forest lands (47% of study area):
Shasta-McCloud Management Unit, Shasta-Trinity National Forest

Climate:

Average Annual High: 62.7 °F/Low: 37.2 °F
Annual Precipitation: 42.6 inches;
Snowfall: 89.3 inches (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2021)

Approach

We conducted social and economic monitoring of eight rural communities (<10,000 residents) within the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) area. We used a case study approach involving analysis of qualitative interviews (Figure 9.1), literature review, and descriptive summaries of selected secondary data. All interviewees worked in, resided in, or had social or economic ties to the Mt. Shasta-Weed study area. Quotes in these reports are from interviews conducted in 2024. Each case study can be read as a standalone report. Chapter 1 provides a full introduction and methods including case study selection, interviewee sampling rationale, and secondary data analyses.

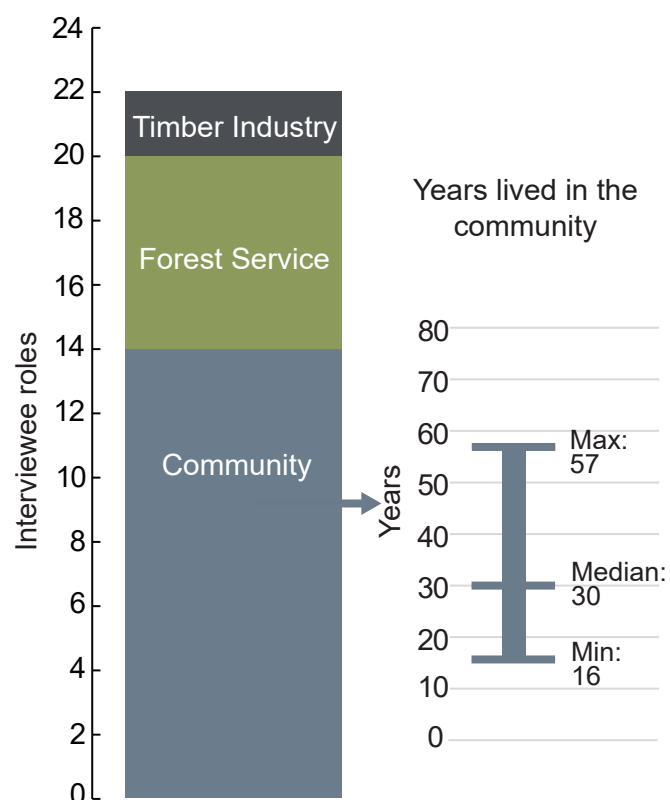


Figure 9.1. Graph of interviewees by role and number of years lived in the community. Our sample included fourteen community members, six Forest Service employees, and two timber industry representatives. Community member interviewees lived in the study area for a minimum of 16 years, a maximum of 57 years, and a median of 30 years.

Study area and geography

The Mt. Shasta-Weed case study focused on the Mount Shasta Ranger District portion of the Shasta-McCloud Management Unit (SMMU) in Northern California. We spatially defined the community as the Mount Shasta and Weed Census County Subdivisions (CCDs) of Siskiyou County, California (Figure 9.2). These CCDs include the City of Mount Shasta (referred to here as Mt. Shasta City to avoid confusion with Mount Shasta the mountain) and City of Weed, as well as unincorporated areas Carrick, Edgewood, and Lake Shastina. Both Weed and Mt. Shasta City are located along the US Interstate 5 (I-5) corridor, which is the major north-south interstate on the West Coast. Mt. Shasta City and Weed are two of the largest communities in Siskiyou County (along with the county seat, Yreka, which is located outside of the study area approximately twenty-eight miles north of Weed). National forest comprises 47 percent of the study area. Forests in this region are diverse and include mixed-conifer communities including white fir, incense cedar, ponderosa pine, sugar pine, white oak, and Douglas-fir grading to red fir at higher elevations. The Mt. Shasta Ranger Station is located in Mt. Shasta City.

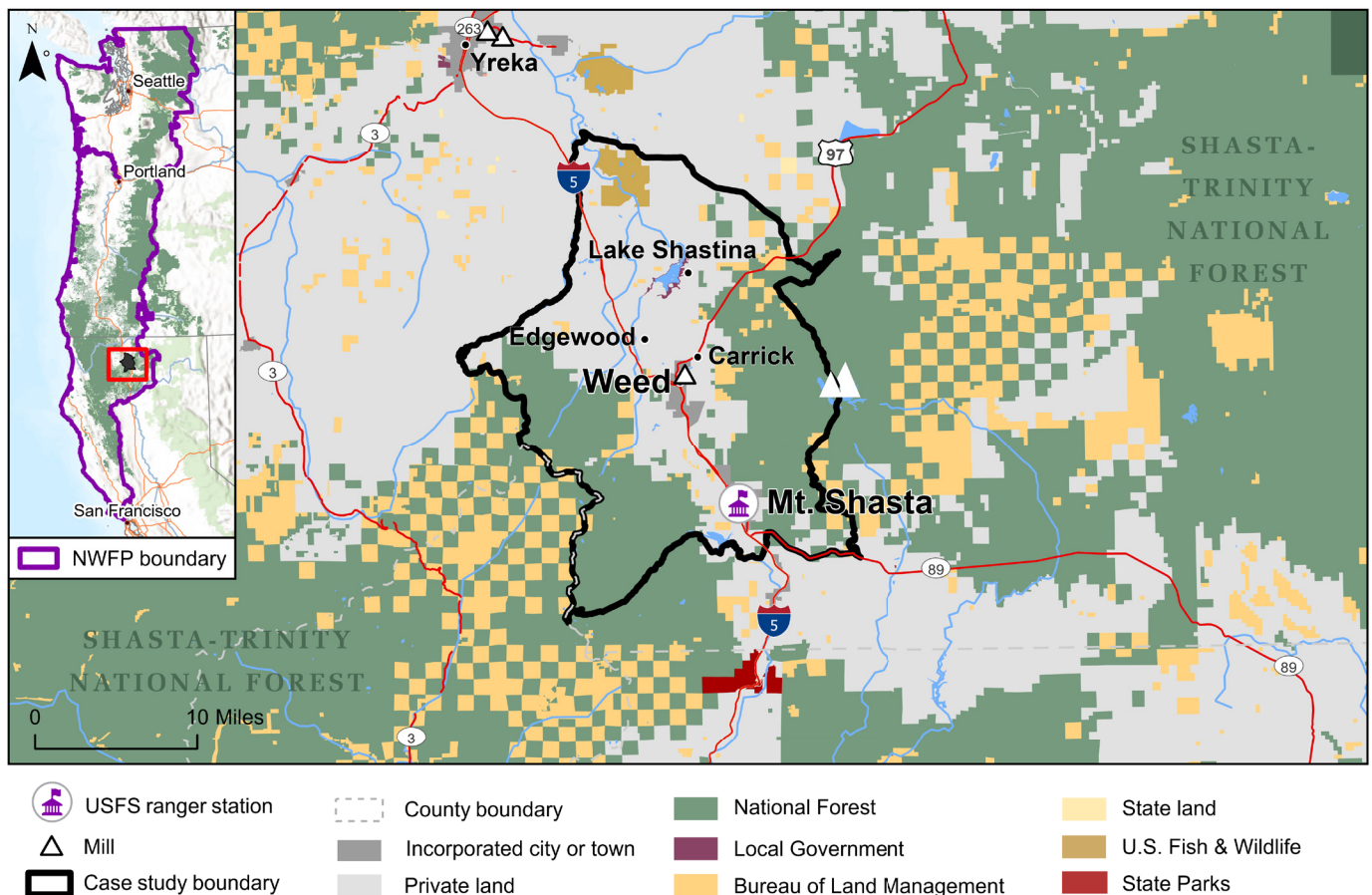


Figure 9.2. Mt. Shasta-Weed community case study area. At the time of data collection, the Roseburg Forest Products veneer plant in Weed was operational. It closed in December 2025.

Shared sense of place

Interviewees suggested that the population of the study area was culturally diverse. As one interviewee put it, “There’s people who describe the area as being one-third New Agers, one-third religious fundamentalists, and one-third ranchers and cowboys. There’s some truth to that.” Interviewees noted that although the communities of Mt. Shasta City and Weed were similar historically, today they are significantly different.

As one interviewee described,

“[In the 1960s and 1970s], There were signs in the windows [that] would say, 'No Hippies Allowed.' This [Mt. Shasta City] was a logging town. People talk about this town and the transformation from a logging town to a tourist town. Weed never was able to do that: turn into a tourist town.”

One reason for this divergence is that the main road up to Mount Shasta (Everett Memorial Highway) goes directly through Mt. Shasta City. As one interviewee explained, Mt. Shasta City benefits from the fact that the nearby Mount Shasta is a popular international attraction for outdoor recreationists and “New Age” spiritual tourists. Weed, by comparison, was disadvantaged because it is farther away from Mount Shasta and has no direct route to access the mountain.

Speaking about Mt. Shasta City, one interviewee stated, *“We’re a retirement community and we’re a recreation community.”* Mt. Shasta City is also popularly known for its crystal shops and as a tourist destination for people interested in New Age spiritualism.

Although interviewees indicated that Mt. Shasta City had changed dramatically since the 1960s, they also discussed division within the community between some of the newer and older residents. For example, some older, long-term residents strongly identified with the community’s history as a logging and industrial timber town, whereas newer residents had adopted the identity of a tourist town.

By contrast, interviewees described Weed as *“having more lumber industry and working-class people.”* Some Weed residents wished that their City Council was as proactive as Mt. Shasta City in attracting tourism to the town: *“Cities like Mount Shasta are having a resurgence. Whatever they’re doing right, the City Council of Weed needs to go down there and pick their brain.”* Interviewees suggested that Weed’s downtown area posed challenges, since many storefronts were vacant, and in the words of one interviewee, *“really bad slumlords”* owned much of the commercial district. In comparison to Mt. Shasta City, residents of Weed felt that their town was not as vibrant, though they noted some attempts by civic groups to revitalize parts of the town.

Points of interest

Mount Shasta

Mount Shasta is a stratovolcano and officially a “Natural National Landmark” on the southern edge of the Cascade Range. The peak is 14,179 feet above sea level. The mountain is culturally significant to the area’s Indigenous peoples and has been a popular climbing destination since the 1850s.

Ski Park

Mount Shasta Ski Park offers 1400 vertical feet of ski trails. The ski area is located on the south side of the mountain and accessed by Highway 89. It is operated through a Forest Service lease, and was still operating in 2024 (Siskiyou County, 1996; LaFever, 2025). By 2024, the resort also offered mountain biking during the summer months.



Mt. Shasta

The litigation era and the NWFP: a summary of local impacts

In the late 1980s, conservationists began to raise public awareness of the destruction of old-growth forest habitat by logging in the Pacific Northwest. Public protests and legal actions soon focused attention on the northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), whose habitat was threatened. During the “litigation era”, beginning in 1989 with a temporary legal injunction on federal timber sales in the Pacific Northwest and culminating with the implementation of the NWFP in 1994, timber harvest decreased significantly on federal forests in Northern California, western Oregon, and western Washington. This section provides a summary of the direct impacts of these events on the social and economic wellbeing of the Mt. Shasta-Weed study area. In the sections following this summary, we situate these impacts within the study area’s pre-NWFP history (including settlement and post-World War II timber industry) and on-going changes in the community’s wellbeing following 30 years of the NWFP.

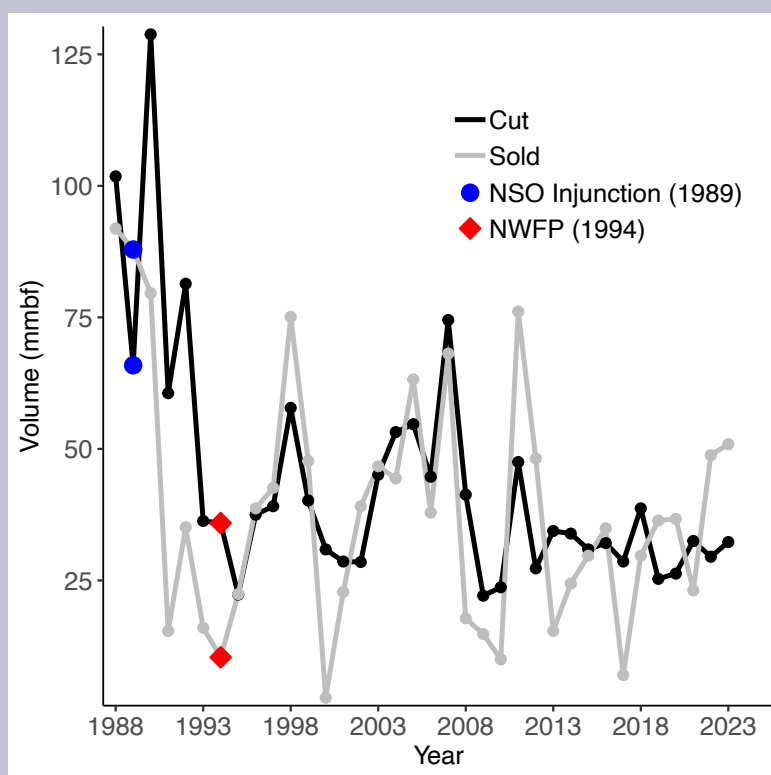


Figure 9.3. Line graph showing timber harvest and sales (“cut” and “sold” volume in million board feet) for the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, federal fiscal years 1988 through 2023. Landmark 1989 temporary injunction on timber sales in NSO (northern spotted owl) habitat in federal forests in the Pacific Northwest and 1994 implementation of the Northwest Forest Plan indicated by blue dots and red diamonds respectively (USDA Forest Service, 2025a).

Following the end of the recession in the early 1980s, timber harvests on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest averaged approximately 125 million board feet (mmbf) annually. Between 1990 and 1995¹ timber harvest fell from a maximum of 129 mmbf to 22 mmbf (Figure 9.3) (USDA Forest Service, 2025a). Harvests recovered slightly over the next few years, but averaged approximately 37 mmbf between 1996 and 2023, representing a 70 percent decline from annual harvests during the 1980s.

Most interviewees in the study area did not believe that the NWFP was the primary cause for the decline of the timber industry in the area. While some interviewees thought that there was local “*resentment about the [Northwest] Forest Plan from a political lens*” in the community, others thought that the spotted owl “*wasn’t the only thing*” that caused the local decline. Four interviewees who had moved to the area in the early 1990s thought that the major period of decline for the timber industry was before they had arrived, noting that, by that time, “*the timber industry... already was pretty much gone.*”

1. USDA Forest Service cut and sold data reported in federal fiscal years.

In the broader region, interviewees thought that a decline in federal timber harvest may have impacted the industry as a whole. As one interviewee mentioned: *“the big shift was... from the late [19]80s through the mid [19]90s. And that was the big reduction in federal timber supply... That volume just fell off a cliff with the listing of the spotted owl and the Northwest Forest Plan.”* This interviewee also noted that the impacts of this decline were greater in Yreka and Happy Camp than Mt. Shasta City: *“Mount Shasta is a little different community. It was not as heavily dependent on timber and logging.”*

Pre-NWFP history

Settlement

Mount Shasta is a territorial boundary and culturally significant for the Indigenous Shasta, Wintu, Pit River, Modoc, and Karuk peoples who inhabited the area since time immemorial. Although the study area may have been visited by Spanish explorers or Mexican colonists between the late 1700s to early 1800s, the first historically documented visit by Euro-Americans was in 1826 by Peter Skene Ogden of the Hudson Bay Company (Jensen, 2015). Fur trappers, military expeditions, and other explorers followed in the next decades using a major north-south Native American trail known as the Siskiyou Trail or the California-Oregon Trail (Mazariegos, 2007).

In 1851, the discovery of gold in Yreka brought a significant group of Euro-American settlers to the Mt. Shasta City area (Duntley, 2015). Miners, settlers, and the United States Government soon violently dispossessed native peoples of the use of their land, actions, which culminated in the 1873 Modoc War which resulted in the incarceration of 163 Modoc warriors in Oklahoma (McNally, 2017). Today, Indigenous peoples of the Mount Shasta are members of federally recognized tribes with various reservations, including the Modoc Nation in Oklahoma and Klamath Tribes in Oregon (which include Modoc peoples), the Pit River Tribe, the Quartz Valley Indian Reservation (which includes Shasta and Karuk peoples), as well as non-federally recognized tribes such as the Wintu tribes.

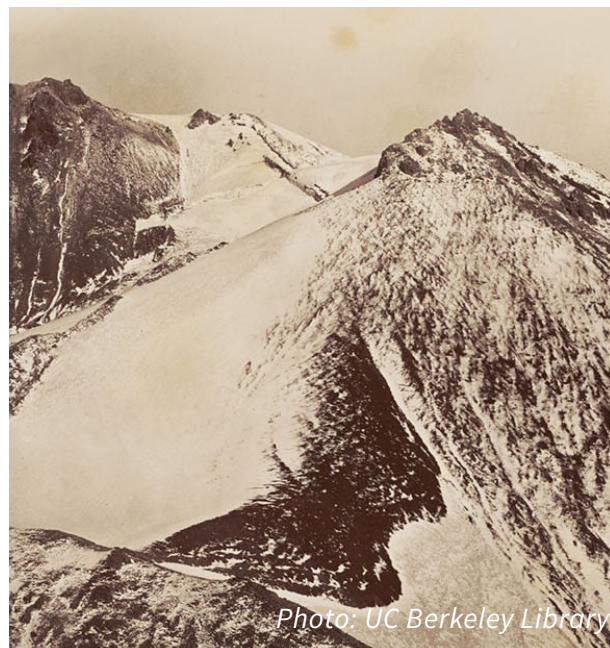
By the early 1850s, pack trains traveled through present-day Mt. Shasta City (then known as Berryvale) as prospectors flooded into the Yreka area (Siskiyou County, 1996). In 1852, William Nobles pioneered a new route connecting the Applegate-Lassen emigrant trail to Berryvale (National Register of Historic Places in Shasta County, n.d.). The Nobles Trail soon became a heavily used east-west wagon route connecting the study area with gold fields in Nevada.

In the 1860s, roads were improved and the North Old Stage Road connected Berryvale with other areas of Northern California. During this period, local businessman, Justin Sisson, ran a stagecoach and established an inn and tavern at Berryvale (Wolf and Orlove, 2008). Sisson also opened a mineral spring resort and founded a fish hatchery. Sisson's efforts and a donation of land led the Southern Pacific Railroad² to build its railroad through the newly laid out townsite of Sisson (previously known as Berryvale and later renamed Mt. Shasta City). In November 1886, the railroad reached the Sisson railhead and by December 1887, the railroad was transporting passengers between Portland, Oregon and San Francisco, California (Mazariegos, 2007). The train brought an increase in tourism and a new wave of settlement (Miesse, 2005).

2. Technically the railroad started as the Southern Pacific, was acquired by the Central Pacific Railroad in 1868 which then leased it to the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1885. The Southern Pacific Railroad operated the line until it was acquired by Union Pacific in 1996.

Early tourism

During the mid-1800s, Mount Shasta gained a reputation among intrepid explorers and mountain climbers as a significant and inspiring climbing destination. By the 1870s, author and conservationist John Muir and Grand Canyon explorer John Wesley Powell, among others, had climbed and publicized Mount Shasta (Miesse, 2005). The earliest economically significant tourism was linked to visits to local mineral springs, both hot and cold (Livingston, 2021). Further development of the study area occurred after the construction of state highways began in 1919. In that year, the Klamath River Road connected the area to the coast and soon after, the forerunner of US 97 connected Weed with Klamath Falls in Oregon (Siskiyou County, 1996). In the late 1920s, roads connecting Mt. Shasta City to Mt. Lassen and Redding were completed (Chapman, 2017; Siskiyou County, 1996, 166).



Mt. Shasta Summit, 1870s

In the 1930s, cultural movements based on mysticism laid the groundwork for an economy in Mt. Shasta City built around spiritual tourism. As mineral springs lost popularity and Shasta's mineral spring resorts closed between 1940s through 1960s (Livingston, 2021), this new wave of tourism proved important for the area's economy. For example, in 1987, New Age spiritual practitioners held a gathering called the Harmonic Convergence at Mount Shasta. The event attracted between 3,000 and 5,000 visitors to the area and is of continuing interest to spiritual tourists.

Winter sports have also been a key part of tourism in the Mt. Shasta area. As early as 1930, Mt. Shasta City created a toboggan slide and ski area (Siskiyou County, 1996). The Mount Shasta Ski Bowl opened in 1958 on the west side of the mountain (Siskiyou County, 1996). This ski area closed in 1978 after long-running financial difficulties culminated with a catastrophic avalanche that destroyed the main ski lift (Wood, 2024; Carlisle, 2021). Mount Shasta Ski Park, a new area on the north side of the mountain, opened in 1985. In the 1990s, there was a proposal to reopen the west side Ski Bowl area, but the Forest Service denied the project after years of public debate and opposition from local Native American tribes (Stienstra, 1998).

Throughout the 1800s and 1900s, hiking and mountaineering continued to be popular activities in the study area. Congress designated the 36,981-acre Mount Shasta Wilderness in 1984 (CUSD Forest Service, 2025b). The wilderness area consists of the upper slopes of Mount Shasta. Fishing has also been a popular recreational activity in the area. In the 1980s, the Sacramento River—which has its headwaters in Mt. Shasta City—was considered one of the top 100 fishing streams in the United States (Siskiyou County, 1996).

Early timber industry

The construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad created a significant demand for local lumber and spurred development of logging companies and small sawmills (Jensen, 2015; “McCloud River Railroad History: Part 1,” n.d.). By the early 1890s, the Siskiyou Lumber and Mercantile Company operated four mills along the railroad in the Mount Shasta area. Logging and milling activities focused on pine species. This company's activities proved foundational for the study area's timber industry after the owners formed the McCloud River Lumber Company and the McCloud River Railroad Company.

In 1897, the McCloud River Railroad Company completed a railroad shortline connecting vast tracks of old-growth pine in McCloud to Mt. Shasta City and the Southern Pacific Railroad. In this same year, the Siskiyou Lumber and Mercantile Company sold one of their lumber mills and 280 acres of timber land, both located in present-day Weed, to Maine lumberman Abner Weed (Wolf and Orlove, 2008). In 1903, Abner Weed then founded the Weed Lumber Company (Wolf and Orlove, 2008). At the time of its founding, Weed Lumber Company owned the townsite of Weed³ and the major businesses and infrastructure, which included a store, banks, hotels, and housing.



Lumber piling machine at McCloud Lumber, 1920

In 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt designated the 1.5 million acre Shasta Forest Reserve. The forest's headquarters were based in Mt. Shasta City. At this time, Mt. Shasta City had two sawmills: the Pioneer Box Company (established in 1900) on the south side of Mt. Shasta City (Amador, 2016; Jensen, 2015), and the Curtis sawmill (established in 1904 and owned by McCloud River Lumber Company) on the north side of the city ("McCloud Customers," n.d.).

In 1916, the Long-Bell Lumber company gained majority ownership of the Weed Lumber Company and retained the company town structure (Marshall-Chalmers, 2022). Long-Bell expanded the Weed mill, and by 1918 the Yreka Journal boasted that it was "the largest mill on the Pacific Coast" (Mann, 2002, p.471). Long-Bell brought logs to the mill from their privately owned timberlands across Siskiyou County (Freeman, 2012).

Long-Bell company positions and housing were segregated by race: Italians, Greeks, Mexicans, and whites lived separately. In the early 1920s, Long-Bell recruited African-American workers from their mills in Louisiana, enticing them to transfer to Weed. Eventually other African-American workers joined them (Mann, 2002). Many were recruited specifically because Long-Bell intended to "import southern social relations to Northern California," which company managers expected would control the workforce and prevent labor unrest (Mann, 2002). As part of this plan, African-American workers were excluded from union membership in the Weed mill (Mann, 2002). While many African-American residents were forced out of Weed in the late 1920s (Mann, 2002), some remained in a neighborhood now known as Lincoln Heights, making Weed a center of African-American life in Siskiyou County (Mann, 2002).

From 1920 to 1950, the "pine region" (which includes Siskiyou County) of Northern California dominated the state's log production (Laudenslayer and Darr, 1990). Much of the timber coming from the area was a direct result of the expansion of the McCloud River Railroad and the mills it serviced, including the Curtis mill in Mt. Shasta City.

Post-World War II timber industry

In 1954, the Shasta National Forest was combined with the Trinity National Forest and renamed the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The forest headquarters were moved from Mt. Shasta City to Redding (USDA Forest Service, 2025c).

3. The city of Weed was officially incorporated in 1961 (Marshall-Chalmers, 2022).

By 1955, Kimberly-Clark obtained the mill and box factory on the south side of Mt. Shasta City (Jensen, 2015). The company retooled the mill, demolishing the original structures and building new mill structures. Around this time (1956), International Paper acquired Long-Bell in Weed and sold most company-owned homes to employees who lived in them (Allen, 1963). Under International Paper, the mill included a door factory, a box factory, and a wood treatment facility (J.H. Baxter Co.) (Marshall-Chalmers, 2022).

In 1957, Marty Cooper built a sawmill on the north side of Mt. Shasta City (“McCloud Customers,” n.d.). Lumber and wood chips were shipped from the Cooper mill by rail. The Cooper mill operated until the early 1970s when it was purchased by P&M Cedar Products who retooled the mill for cedar pencil manufacturing. By this time, with the completion of Interstate 5, the railroad became less important for shipping lumber.

In 1978, Roseburg Forest Products acquired the Kimberly-Clark sawmill on the south side of Mt. Shasta City. In 1983, Roseburg also acquired International Paper’s lumber and veneer mills in Weed, eventually scaling back the operation to process veneer only. One interviewee described the end of the International Paper period as the town being *“punched...in the gut.”* After Roseburg took over, the interviewee said, *“They immediately started tearing things down. The old mill is just a skeleton out there, now. There’s nothing.”* Soon afterward, Roseburg closed its sawmill in Mt. Shasta City in 1985 and sold the site to the city in 1989 (Jensen, 2015).



Former Roseburg Mill Site, Mt. Shasta

The P&M pencil mill was closed in 1990, and the site was purchased by Dannon and renovated to serve as a water bottling plant (McCloud Customers, n.d.). By 1990, the lumber operation on the Roseburg property in Weed included a lumber mill and veneer plant, processed wood storage yard, and wood-fuel power plants (“J.H. Baxter,” 1990).

Mt. Shasta-Weed after the NWFP

Employment and industry

Interviewees’ perceptions of local employment over the past 30 years were mixed. Five interviewees thought that local employment had decreased, two thought it had increased, and five thought that there was no change. Interviewees frequently commented on the labor market in the area, noting a lack of employment opportunities for younger people. Three interviewees mentioned that the study area had a shortage of electricians and other skilled laborers. Because of the high cost of living, interviewees commented that it has been hard to keep employees in the service and recreation sectors, and that many young people returning to the area worked multiple jobs to make ends meet. Others thought that there was a mismatch between the labor force and the type of work available in the area: *“I saw a lot of people needing to find work. Sometimes they had the skills, but they just needed to be re-tuned a little bit. Other times they didn’t have the skills at all, so the effort was more seeing if we could get them some training instead of just trying to find them a job.”*

For some interviewees, the decline of the timber industry in the study area began prior to the NWFP era with the sales of the mills in McCloud, Mt. Shasta City, and Weed to new owners in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In late 2025 Roseburg Forest Products announced it was closing its veneer plant in Weed, the last major timber processing facility in the study area. The company laid off 140 workers providing them with two months' severance pay and benefits (Roseburg, 2025). The company planned to continue operation of its cogeneration plant opened in 2011. In 2024, (during the 30-year monitoring fieldwork), Roseburg was still operating the mill. At that time, interviewees noted that the City of Weed had never aspired to become anything other than a timber town, unlike neighboring Mt. Shasta City: *"[The town had] the Abner Weed attitude of, 'Don't let any [other] business come in... ride timber as far as you can until it dies.' He wouldn't verbalize that, but that's actually what happened. We rode it until we dropped dead underneath it, like a horse that was exhausted."*

Recreation and tourism

Since at least the 1970s, the increase in recreation-oriented employment, including in the ski industry, has supplemented the declining timber industry. Spiritual tourists have continued to come to Mt. Shasta City to visit the 1987 Harmonic Convergence site as part of New Age religious practices (Huntsinger and Fernández-Giménez, 2000). During the summers, different New Age religious groups frequently hold events. Interviewees commented that spiritualism has attracted visitors and their business to the area: *"We get a huge draw for the spiritual traveler,"* as one interviewee put it.

With the decline of the timber industry in Mt. Shasta City, tourism surpassed timber economically. Interviewees noted that a more recent boom in Mt. Shasta City area tourism began during the COVID-19 pandemic. As one interviewee put it, *"Things changed in COVID. We got an influx of people from outside the area who wanted to recreate in our beautiful area here. That was a little disturbing for locals."* Before the pandemic, however, some interviewees stated that they were surprised by how little the town had changed: *"What's interesting to me is how little Mount Shasta has changed [since the 1990s]... except for the last leg post-COVID. When I moved here in '94 or '95, it blew me away that we were not like Tahoe or Yosemite."* In 2024, interviewees were concerned that Mt. Shasta City would face increasing tourism without being prepared for an influx of tourists. Some were concerned about the environmental impacts of tourism: *"Places are just getting loved to death. People are kind of destroying our most pristine spots around there."* One interviewee said that the town was *"simultaneously not wanting to be like Tahoe while also promoting recreation heavily."* Others thought that City leaders didn't have a clear vision for growth or change beyond the idea that the town is an *"alpine community."*

Ranching and agriculture

After the decline of placer mining along the west side of the Shasta Valley, the area north of Weed has been dominated by agriculture and ranching (Mack, 1960). In 2021, that area was predominantly pasture, grain, and hay (SCFCWDGSA, 2021). Recent droughts have significantly impacted the Shasta River, and minimum flow requirements decreased legally allowed limits for use by local ranchers (Walker, 2022). In protest, the members of the Shasta River Water Association decided to violate a state curtailment order and turned on diversion pumps (Walker, 2022). Interviewees in 2024 commented on this conflict, noting that *"[Water managers] over-promised the water and they cannot deliver on it. And those families feel like they were lied to and now they're losing their farms or ranches."* The interviewee added that, as climatic conditions have changed in the last decades, ranchers have been forced to adapt to warmer and drier conditions.

Cannabis cultivation is another significant economic activity in the study area. While cannabis had been illegally cultivated in Siskiyou County for many decades, the industry shifted after California legalized marijuana cultivation in 2016. The sheriff's office estimated that between 2016 and 2019 approximately 2000 people, mostly Hmong-American, moved to Siskiyou County to cultivate cannabis (Bruinsma, 2024).⁴

Spring water

Bottled spring water represents another post-NWFP industry in the study area, but it has not been without controversy. In 1996, Crystal Geyser plant opened a spring water bottling plant in Weed (Little, 2018; Benda, 2022). In 2016, Roseburg Forest Products, which had been providing water from a spring on its property to Weed residents under a lease for \$1 per year, threatened to sell water rights to Crystal Geyser rather than to continue the lease rights to the town (Marshall-Chalmers, 2022). In July 2016, Roseburg increased the fee to \$97,500 annually (Fuller, 2016[MC1] [ET2]). After a court case and a dispute over ownership of the spring, Roseburg, the city, and Crystal Geyser came to an agreement that resulted in higher water rates for Weed residents (Marshall-Chalmers, 2022; Meyer, 2021).

In Mt. Shasta City, the Dannon Water plant (on the site of the former P&M pencil mill) was purchased by Coca-Cola in 2002. The new owners closed the plant in 2010 and then sold it to Crystal Geyser in 2013 (Little, 2017; Little, 2018). This sale was controversial, with many locals concerned that water bottling would harm the aquifer underlying Mt. Shasta City (Moriarty, 2015). In 2021, Crystal Geyser abandoned the plan to open a Mt. Shasta City facility, and in 2022 the company sold the building to a San Francisco Bay Area-based company that planned to redevelop the facility into a distribution and/or manufacturing center. The new owners are prohibited from bottling water on that site due to a deed restriction added to the property after widespread opposition to the water bottling plant (Benda, 2022).

Demographic and community changes

The overall population of the study area experienced a slight increase between 2000 and 2020 (Table 9.1). The low-income population declined slightly during this period. Younger residents (25-44) also declined slightly as older populations (65 and over) increased from 18 to 28 percent of the population.

In terms of age structure, interviewees corroborated US Census statistics suggesting that the study area was aging. Other interviewees thought that the county had aged as the industries changed, for example, when fewer railroad employees were based in Mt. Shasta City, or the mills in Mt. Shasta City closed, families and working-age adults moved away. However, other interviewees thought that younger families had begun moving to the county during the pandemic, presumably because they were able to work remotely. Without remote work, however, interviewees noted that there were few opportunities for younger people: *"I know that there are young people who want to be here and raise families and have a career here, but there's just a lack of opportunity."*

Consistent with the US Census data showing a decrease in low-income populations, interviewees thought that new people arriving in Siskiyou County were wealthier than current residents. As one interviewee put it, *"there is a tension between locals who have lived here for a long time who are--I'll just generalize-- maybe retired or well-off and don't need to worry about work."* Interviewees

4. The US Census data for the study area show only a modest increase in individuals identifying as "Asian" from 2010 to 2020 period: 318 to 433 individuals (a 36% increase).

described a rural gentrification phenomenon in which “*people who have lived here who can't afford to live here [anymore]*.” Eight interviewees agreed that new people were moving to the Mt. Shasta City and Weed areas, and characterized them as retirees (n=5), remote workers (n=4), and families (n=1) (results not additive, interviewees could mention multiple groups of new people). As elaborated below, interviewees also noted that not all new property-owners lived in town full-time.

Table 9.1. US Census and American Community Survey demographic estimates for 2000, 2010, and 2020. See Appendix D for complete citations.

	2000	2010	2020	Trend
Total population	13,362	13,365	14,479	Increased
Low-income population*	5,150	5,047	4,754	Decreased
% Low-income population	39%	38%	33%	
Population aged 25-44	3,043	2,747	2,851	Decreased
% Population aged 25-44	23%	21%	20%	
Population aged 65 or older	2,408	2,712	2,037	Increased
% Population aged 65 or older	18%	20%	28%	
*For low-income population, 2010 is an ACS 5-year estimate for 2008-2012 and 2020 is an ACS 5-year estimate for 2018-2022.				

Housing

All twelve community interviewees who commented on housing agreed that housing availability and affordability decreased over the last decades, with eight interviewees noting a lack of housing availability and five noting high housing costs. Seven interviewees noted that they thought vacation homes or short-term rentals were negatively impacting the housing market. Two interviewees pointed out that there were few construction contractors to build or renovate houses in the area.

In 2014, the Boles fire destroyed 157 residences in Weed housing as well as eight commercial structures (Marshall-Chalmers, 2022; Gabbert, 2014). In 2022, the 3,939 acre Mill Fire destroyed 144 structures in Weed. Most of these structures were homes in the historically Black neighborhood of Lincoln Heights. In the fire, two residents were killed and three injured (Marshall-Chalmers, 2022). The fire began as a structure fire at the mill from inadequate fire suppression in a hot ash facility, and quickly spread through the dense Lincoln Heights neighborhood (Serrin, 2022; Marshall-Chalmers, 2022). Roseburg Lumber, whose mill operations caused the blaze, settled a lawsuit from Weed residents for \$7.25 million in 2023 (Roseburg Forest Products Co., 2023).

The fire was devastating for the Black community of Weed, and many residents of the Lincoln Heights neighborhood chose to move away after the fire (Marshall-Chalmers, 2022). One interviewee thought that *“probably over 75% of the people that were affected in the Mill Fire are out of this area now, and they probably will never come back.”* Interviewees thought that those impacted by the fire moved to live with younger generations in other areas, and that many displaced by the fire wouldn’t rebuild because they lacked insurance or because of the small lot sizes in Lincoln Heights: *“they were smaller when they were company houses. They were right next to each other”*. Interviewees mentioned that they were saddened by the loss to Weed’s history and in the community: *“Those buildings will never be rebuilt. I’m gonna have to rely on the pictures... at the museum to enjoy and reminisce about the good old days of what it looked like in Weed.”*

Interviewees also noted that they saw housing shortages related to other fires in the region, for example, the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise, CA, the 2018 Carr Fire, and the 2022 August Complex in Redding. As one interviewee said:

“When 800 homes burned, people have to go somewhere. They’ll call up Aunt Millie in Mount Shasta... They might look around and be looking for a home here to buy and say, ‘Well, I could move here.’ ...These fires and the decreased availability of homes due to the fires—it just exacerbated the problem.”

Housing shortages were compounded during the pandemic as new people moved to the area or bought second homes. One interviewee said: *“[The fires] created a need for building new homes and a crunch where there wasn’t really enough capacity in construction. Then, there are people from when the whole COVID thing happened. People wanted to escape the city...It’s a vacation home for them.”*

Interviewees also noted that they believed a shortage in long-term rental housing was related to the increase in real estate investment and short-term rentals. For example, three interviewees mentioned that Bethel Church (Redding) had begun investing in both commercial and residential real estate and that this decreased local rental availability. Other interviewees noted that some long-term rentals were converted to short-term rentals or second homes. An online search in October 2024 yielded nearly 200 short-term rentals within the study area.

Two interviewees explained that local opposition to new construction was preventing the growth of affordable housing within Mt. Shasta City. As one interviewee said, *“Within Mount Shasta City, at least, there is a contingency of people that are against affordable housing. They hang onto this idea that the town would never change or get bigger. It’s difficult for developers to know what they’re gonna get into.”*



Photo: Julia Sizak

Rebuilt homes in Lincoln Heights

Community services

Eight interviewees thought that services (including restaurants, health care, gas stations, grocery stores, and personal or business services) had decreased over the last 30 years, while two thought that there had been no change, one was not sure, and one thought that services had both increased and decreased depending on the sector. Services most notably declined in Weed, which, as of 2024, had many vacant storefronts in the downtown area. As one interviewee who grew up in Weed stated, *“It's hard to view this town now as to when I was a kid and grew up in it. It's a completely different town. There is very little vibrancy to it [today].”* Another interviewee from Weed thought that the decline mostly had to do with broader changes rather than the mill: *“I've seen a lot of businesses go under. I don't think that's due to the... the mill or the logging part of it. I think it's more due to, you know, the Internet and Amazon.”* While downtown Weed has been suffering, there have been new developments at the South Weed highway interchange, including a new gas station, new grocery store, and fast-food restaurants.

Mt. Shasta City has a more active downtown district, though some interviewees thought that it had become less active over time:

“I would say that when I first moved to Mount Shasta, the community felt a little bit more vibrant. There was a bookstore, there was a record store, and there were more cafes. And then the 2008 crash happened, and then also the internet...[and] online businesses.”

Interviewees noted that there was less diversity in services in Mt. Shasta City, as storefronts have turned over from businesses like department stores to crystal shops. As one interviewee put it: *“We used to have more locally owned stores and more services being available. But now, one thing that Mount Shasta City is known for is its crystal shops... The reason they're able to have such big spaces is that they do a lot of their selling online.”* Interviewees also thought that businesses catering to locals—rather than tourists—may not be able to make it long-term because of the greater spending power of tourists.

While Mt. Shasta City has a hospital, it does not have complete services for cancer or dialysis patients, who must drive to Redding. Even though the study area has four full-service supermarkets, some interviewees reported that they traveled to Redding or Oregon to shop for groceries. Current amenities are summarized in Figure 9.4.

Interviewees noted that school funding in Mt. Shasta City and Weed had always been low, attributing it to low property taxes, low enrollment, charter schools, and loss of timber receipts. However, of counties in California receiving Secure Rural Schools funding, Siskiyou County received the most in 2023, \$4.1 million (Jones, 2024).



Lake Siskiyou

Photo: Julia Sizak

4 FULL SERVICE SUPERMARKETS

Mt. Shasta: Ray's Food place and Mt. Shasta Supermarket
Weed: Grocery Outlet and Ray's Food Place



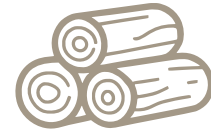
1 FOREST SERVICE RANGER STATION

Mount Shasta Ranger Station, Shasta-Trinity National Forest



0 TIMBER PROCESSING FACILITIES*

Roseburg Forest Products veneer plant closed December 3rd 2025



3 COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINICS

Weed: Weed Health Center
Mt. Shasta: Mercy Medical Center and Mt. Shasta Health Center



2 POST OFFICES

Weed: 7.5 hours, 5 days/week
Mt Shasta: 7.5 hours, 5 days/week



2 LIBRARIES

Weed Branch Library and Mt. Shasta Branch Library



Figure 9.4. Community amenities in the Mt. Shasta-Weed study area. Includes: four full-service supermarkets (other locations that accept SNAP benefits, such as gas stations or convenience stores, not included), one Forest Service ranger station, zero timber processing facilities*, three community health clinics, two post offices, two libraries. *At the time of data collection, the Roseburg Forest Products veneer plant in Weed was operational. It closed in December 2025.

Community governance

Both Mt. Shasta City and City of Weed are incorporated, though few interviewees spoke highly of the city council in either town. Interviewees mentioned that they thought the city councils were not very involved or did not have the capacity or vision to implement positive change in the area. Interviewees identified community groups in Weed, including the Weed Community Resource Center and Weed Revitalization Coalition, that run local youth programs and have helped build a community skatepark. Interviewees in Weed also mentioned the involvement of the Ford Family Foundation in increasing community capacity.

Community relationship with the Forest Service

Of the twelve community members who commented on the relationship between the Forest Service and the community, three thought that the relationship was negative, one positive, two thought that there were both positive and negative relationships in different parts of the community, and two thought that there was not a relationship between the Forest Service and the community. Additionally, three interviewees commented that they thought the local Forest Service was understaffed.

Three interviewees mentioned that community members were dissatisfied with the Forest Service because of general sentiment against government and land managers. As one interviewee noted,

“From logging too much, to not logging enough, to the recreation permits, to law enforcement, I think there's a general anti-establishment [view] here...People who live in Mount Shasta tend to kind of live on the fringes. They're not doing an eight-to-five and working in a cubicle. There's a lot of independent thought.”

Other interviewees thought that community members had a strong sense that Forest Service shouldn't have as many restrictions on public lands, and that *“the Forest Service is too restrictive and too protective of the land.”* Partner groups interviewed also noted that they thought that the Forest Service was very protective of the national forest.

Other interviewees thought that local frustrations were due to Forest Service understaffing, and that the Forest Service had less community presence in 2024 than in the past. Interviewees noted that there was limited enforcement of violations on the forest, and that Forest Service staff no longer were able to attend public-facing education events and festivals due to low staffing levels.

We asked community interviewees about their views on Forest Service management priorities (Figure 9.5). A majority of interviewees suggested that they believed the Forest Service was prioritizing management for wildfire resilience while the remainder were uncertain. Fewer people thought that the Forest Service prioritized science in its planning processes and most interviewees were unsure if the Forest Service was prioritizing management for climate change. The majority of interviewees thought that the Forest Service did not prioritize local community well-being. Sixtyfour percent thought that the Forest Service placed a low priority on incorporating public opinions into their planning processes.

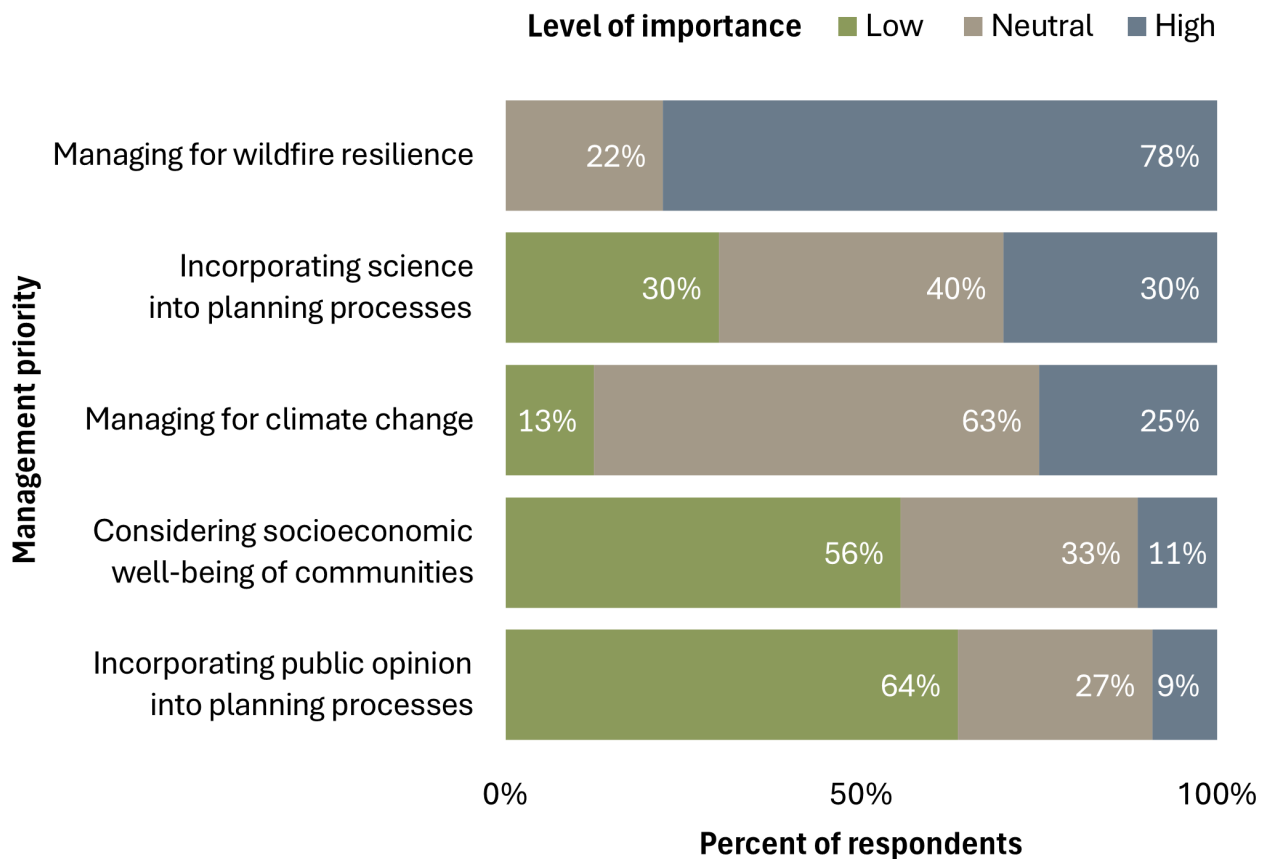


Figure 9.5. Community perception of Forest Service management priorities (n=11). Bar graph segments represent the percentage of interviewees indicating level of importance (Low, Medium, High) of each management priority.

Community relationship with national forest lands

Interviewees ranked water, recreation, tourism, and hunting and fishing as the most important uses of the national forest (Figure 9.6). Timber was ranked as the least important use of the national forest.

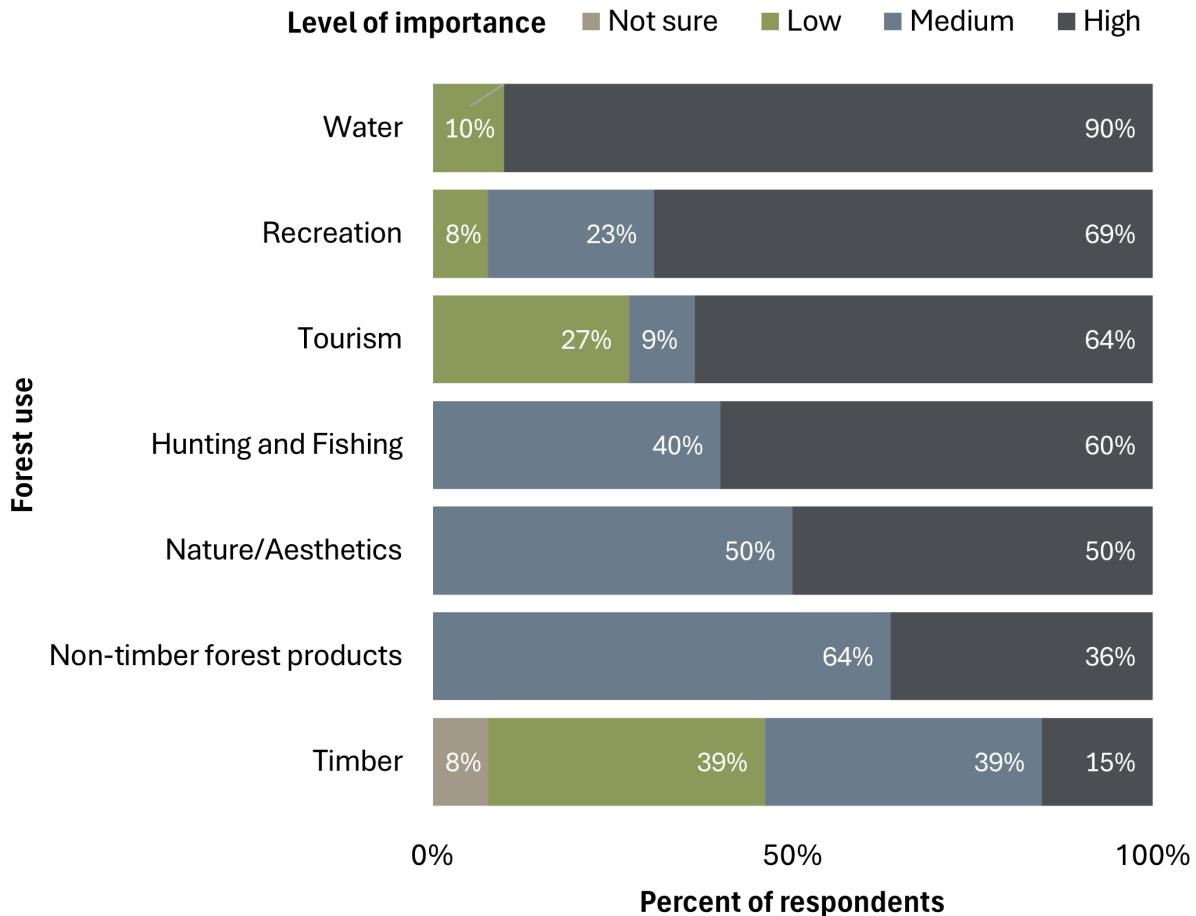
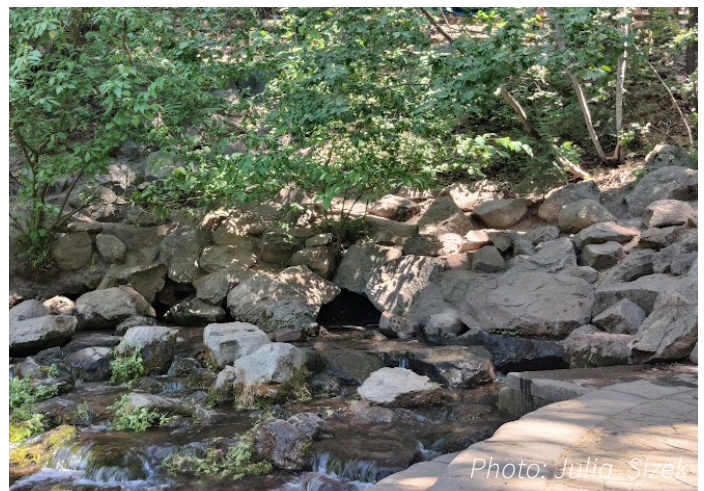


Figure 9.6. Importance of national forest uses to community (n=11). Bar graph segments represent the percentage of interviewees indicating level of importance (Not sure, Low, Medium, High) of each forest use to the community.

Water

Interviewees were uniformly proud of their local water, with one interviewee stating “*Every town claims to have the best water. But we [Mt. Shasta City] have the springs at City Park.*” These springs form the headwaters of the Sacramento River. The water travels through a series of lava tubes on the mountain to reach the mouth of the spring where local residents can collect water for home use (Kinkade, 2014). As noted above, efforts to capitalize on Mount Shasta spring water have caused controversy within the community.



City Springs, Sacramento Headwaters

Recreation

Interviewees suggested that the most popular outdoor recreation activities were: hiking (n=8), mountain biking (n=6), skiing (n=5), fishing (n=3), hunting (n=3), off-highway vehicle use (n=3), camping (n=2), and water recreation (n=2). Popular recreation areas noted by interviewees were Mt. Shasta (including the Bunny Flat area), McCloud waterfalls, Lake Siskiyou, and Castle Lake. Interviewees mentioned a decline in the quality of fishing recently. Interviewees attributed this decline to *“pollution and overgrazing by cattle”* and recent drought. Hunting was also popular, but more concentrated on the eastern side of the mountain.

The Forest Service issues approximately 5000-6000 permits to climb Mount Shasta each year (USDA Forest Service, 2023). Fees for climbing permits have been controversial among the mountain climbing community. One interviewee recalled that at public meetings about the change, *“People were inappropriate: yelling at people and cussing... When stuff like this [proposed permitting change] happens, people are very opposed to any sort of rules or changes. Like, ‘We’ve done it this way forever. I’m not gonna pay my money. I’m not gonna get my permit for that.’”*

The Forest Service also recently changed the commercial guiding permitting process. One interviewee with knowledge of the local recreation industry mentioned that the newest changes allowed for more outfitting companies to hold permits on the mountain, but that these new permittees were not locally owned and operated: *“Now, we have these outfitter companies operating on the mountain who don’t live here, who aren’t involved here...who don’t have the expertise or the knowledge base to be leading trips up there.”* The interviewee thought that allowing non-local companies to hold permits would hurt locally owned businesses by increasing competition from out-of-area trip leaders.

In 2024, mountain biking was on the rise in the Mount Shasta area. The Mount Shasta Trail Association, a local nonprofit, was working on a plan to build 100 miles of new trails in the area around Mt. Shasta using professional trail builders. Interviewees described these efforts to make Mount Shasta a mountain biking destination, and noted that there had been *“a dramatic increase in bike traffic and desire [for more trails]”* in recent years.

In terms of trail maintenance, interviewees noted that some areas—like the popular Bunny Flat and Castle Lake areas—were overcrowded and suffering the ecological impacts of overvisitation. Others thought that a lack of trail maintenance was hindering local use of trails. Dumping in popular areas was also an issue for interviewees.



Castle Lake

Photo: Julia Sizak

Non-timber forest products

Interviewees did not rank non-timber forest products as an important forest use in the study area. The Shasta-Trinity National Forest is the largest national forest in California and comprises 2.2 million acres. Consequently, it is difficult to extract meaningful understanding of the importance of non-timber forest products from national forest-level cut and sold reports. Nevertheless, it is worth noting, that between 2013 and 2023, the forest sold 63,773 Christmas Tree permits (at \$10 each), a comparatively large number for the NWFP area (USDA Forest Service, 2025a).

Timber

Between 2013 and 2023 the Mt. Shasta Ranger District sold 10 timber sales. Only four sales were for volumes greater than 320 thousand board feet (mbf). Larger sales ranged from 8,267 mbf to 3,697 mbf and were sold to businesses located near Redding approximately 75 miles from Mt. Shasta City (USDA Forest Service, 2023).



Pile of logs (Roseburg), Weed

The few interviewees who described logging as an important issue thought that it was deeply divisive in the community. As one interviewee put it, *“I think there's a big contingent here that would be very upset if there was more logging. There's another big contingent that says, ‘You have to open everything up to logging and mining and drilling.’”* Interviewees also frequently mentioned that the type of logging would be essential to determining how a project would fare in the public view: *“I do, though, think that, if the main purposes were forest health and fire mitigation, I think the community would be more open to it. But if it's just to log and be revenue for the Forest Service, I think some community members would be pretty pissed off.”* In general, the community only favored projects with a clear link to wildfire risk reduction.

Wildfire and other forest disturbances

Wildfire

Fifteen interviewees directly mentioned wildfires as an important disturbance in the local forest. As noted above, two recent wind-driven fires have destroyed residences and businesses in Weed (Marshall-Chalmers, 2022). As one interviewee mentioned when asked about recent changes in the region, *“I think the single biggest effect on the area is the mega-fires.”* Interviewees most frequently mentioned how wildfires impacted home insurance (n=5), housing (n=4), mental health (n=4), air quality (n=4), tourism (n=3), and caused evacuations (n=4).

There have also been forest fires on federal lands that impacted local communities. In February 2006, an escaped prescribed burn caused the Hotlum Fire, which burned over 3000 acres after red flag conditions drove the fire out of the planned area (USDA Forest Service, 2006). This fire was described by Forest Service staff as a turning point in fire and fuels management: *“That forever changed the way that we managed the north side of the mountain in that we no longer prescribe burn out there. We haven't since, not even piles.”*

The 2021 Lava Fire burned 26,409 acres northeast of Weed (CalFire, 2021). The fire began near lava tubes on the mountain, and, although managers thought that the fire had been extinguished, it rekindled during the night. When the fire rekindled, it prompted widespread evacuations in Lake Shastina, Carrick, and unincorporated portions of the county, though ultimately only 23 structures (14 of which were homes) burned in the fire (KOBI, 2021). This fire was controversial: CalFire (state agency) blamed the Forest Service for mismanaging the fire. As one interviewee noted, *“There was a lot of finger pointing and blaming. That was kind of not behind closed doors. It was out in the public.”* Interviewees mentioned that, though the relationship between the Forest Service and CalFire was quite bad during the Lava Fire, it had improved since that time.

Interviewees noted that local attitudes toward fire mitigation had changed as wildfires stopped being events and instead became “*fire season*”:

"Prior to [having a] fire season, you couldn't cut a tree down in this town without people losing their minds. Once we got threatened by fires, people are far more open to logging operations, particularly around fire mitigation. If you drive up the Everett Highway, which goes up to Bunny Flat, last fall they did a mountain thin (which was really a clear cut). If that had happened 10 years ago, people would have lost their minds. Yeah. Now it's like, 'Oh, good. They did another clearing.' I think people would rather see the forest harvested and logged than burned."

Increasing public acceptance of fire mitigation has allowed the Forest Service to undertake more projects. Although community members are more open to seeing mitigation work today, there remains some local controversy because of local perceptions of the spiritual nature of the mountain: *"It's just been so difficult to implement anything [for fire mitigation] up on the mountain because of the spiritual nature of it and the Native American uses on the mountain. A lot of people feel very strongly about not altering the landscape on the mountain."* While public opinion has moved to favor wildfire mitigation projects, interviewees were not sure that projects would be able to be completed. The South Fork Sacramento project, scheduled for implementation in December, 2023 (USDA Forest Service, 2024) was still under debate while research was taking place in 2024.

Because of the risk of high severity fire in the area, portions of the Shasta-McCloud Management Unit were designated as priority landscapes under the Wildfire Crisis Strategy (WCS) (USDA Forest Service, 2022). The Forest Service was allocated additional funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, 2021) to conduct fire mitigation work on two projects covering most of the Western side of the Shasta-McCloud Management Unit (USDA Forest Service, 2022). Interviewees thought that the priority landscape designation was a recognition of what local managers already knew: *"We know that fire is always the driver, and it has always been here for the last 24 years. We live in a fire environment, and there's just more emphasis now on protecting.... communities [and] private timber lands."*

Air quality

Wildfire smoke has also had significant effects on the community. Because summer is the busy season for recreation and tourism, smoke from fires has impacts on local well-being: *"When we have big fires like that, and the smoke hanging in the air for weeks, everything is depleted. Nobody's out there doing anything. Nobody's coming to stay in the hotels, buying things, coming to the museum, whatever it might be."* Interviewees also noted that some events normally scheduled for the summer or fall have been rescheduled to the spring to avoid smoke.

Other forest disturbances

In addition to wildfires, interviewees mentioned pest-induced tree die-offs (n=5), landslides (n=3), and droughts (n=2) as disturbances that impacted the nearby national forest. The specific die-off noticed by interviewees was the red and white fir zone die-off from drought and insect kill, which is highly visible from Mt. Shasta City. As one interviewee said, *"it's so visually noticeable. You can go away for three weeks and then come back and go, 'Oh my God, there are more orange trees out there.'" Land managers noted that action to prevent the die-off should have taken place earlier: "By the time it [the die-off] showed up, it was too late... To me, it should be the eye-opening opportunity to talk to town and say, 'Hey, we should have been in here 20 years ago, thinning this out.'"*

However, community members have long resisted thinning activities or timber sales on the mountain; as one person put it: *“The mountain has been such a sacred place for so long. Nobody really planned any timber sales or activities up there. Everybody's kind of an ostrich with a head in the sand.”* Interviewees also noted insect-related tree death elsewhere in the area around Mount Shasta but thought that these areas were not being treated due to lack of funds: *“[A Forest Service employee] said, ‘Number one, I don't have the people to even do anything. I don't have the equipment.’ At the federal level, the resources aren't there to deal with [insect infestations].”*

There have also been several debris flows (landslides and mudflows) on the mountain, some of which have impacted infrastructure in Mt. Shasta City, including a subdivision and the local high school. Glacial melt on the mountain, tree die-offs, and wildfires all cause more severe debris flows. Consequently, these debris flows have become worse in recent years. As one interviewee summarized, *“[debris flows] are completely natural, but there are clear correlations in data that show an increase in frequency and events since temperatures started to warm.”*

Community futures

When asked about the next ten years, interviewees mentioned that they saw climate change (n=4), water (n=3), housing (n=2), wildfire (n=2), and recreation (n=1) changing the most in their community. Interviewees thought that the climate in the Mt. Shasta area was changing: *“the heat, the low humidity, the fire risk, and these trees are stressed and dying.”* Another interviewee agreed with this sentiment, saying: *“We're basically a desert state here.”* Interviewees were concerned about what climate change might mean for the winter ski resort, which is located on a south-facing slope. As one interviewee discussed, *“All the data shows that in 50 years, we're not going to have snow at that elevation. Or even 20 years. It's not sustainable for them.”* Looking toward the future, interviewees were concerned about how climatic changes would affect both the forests and their towns.



Photo: Julia Sizek

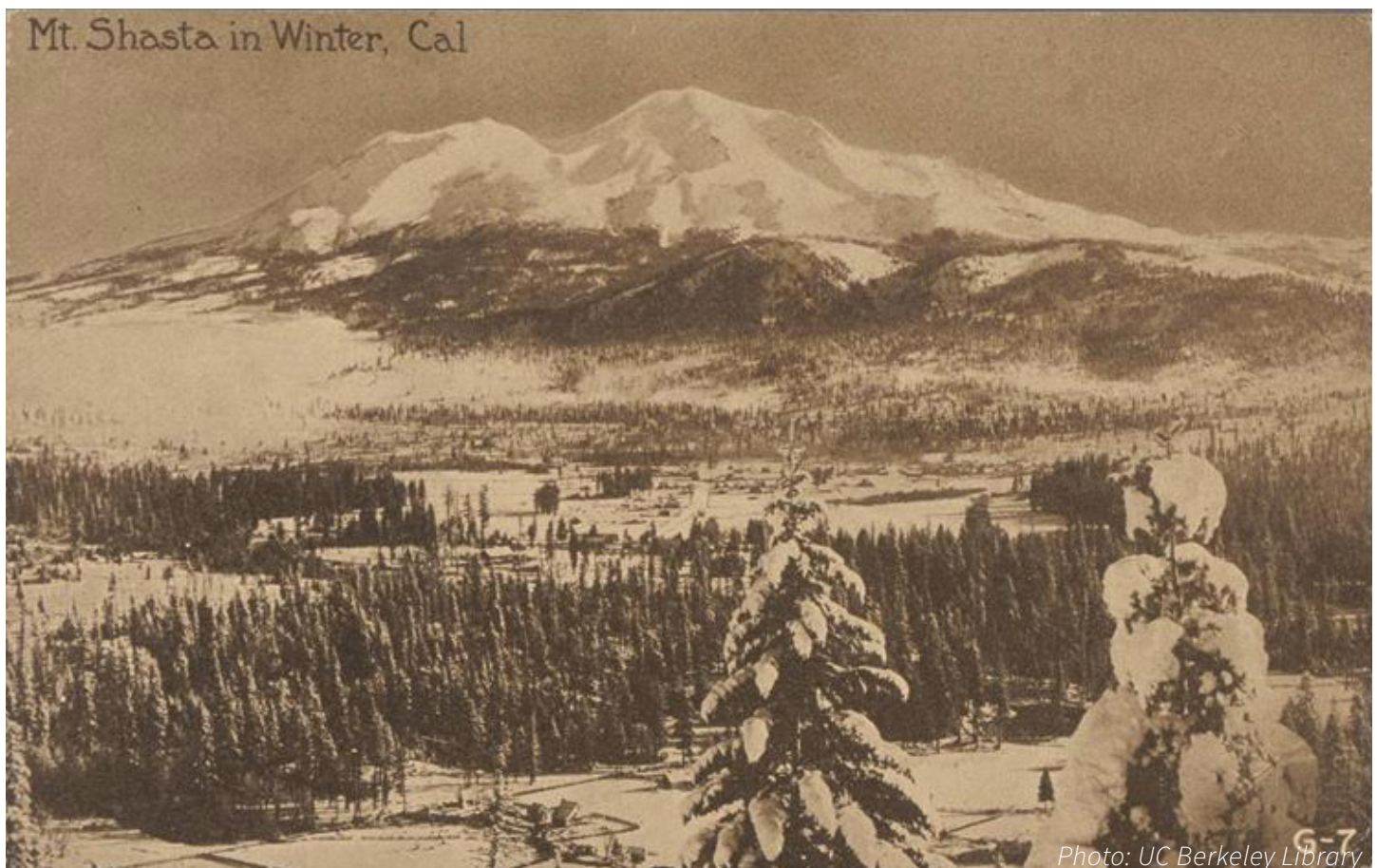
Homes in Lincoln Heights

Conclusions and case study highlights

By the late 1980s, timber processing capacity in Mt. Shasta City had collapsed and did not seem likely to return, with or without the NWFP. Most interviewees did not link the community's social and economic well-being to the implementation of the NWFP and some suggested that the timber industry began to decline by the 1970s and early 1980s. In Weed, Roseburg Forest Products continued to be an important employer through 2025. However, the Weed veneer and cogeneration plants did not accept roundwood and since at least 2013, Roseburg Forest Products had not purchased timber from the Mount Shasta Ranger District.

Mt. Shasta-Weed key forest management takeaways

- Water provisioning and water quality is of critical importance to local residents.
- Recreation, tourism, and aesthetics are key forest values for the community.
- The strongest support among local communities is for forest management with a clear link to wildfire risk reduction.
- The increasingly visible effects of climate change—pest-induced tree die-off, debris flows, and wildfire—strongly inform residents’ perceptions of federal forest management.
- Despite their similar beginnings and geographic proximity, Mt. Shasta City and Weed are currently on divergent trajectories. If the Forest Service continues to be concerned with the social and economic wellbeing of the study area, the two communities will require different types of engagement and support from the agency.



Postcard of Mt. Shasta in winter, 1910-1915

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Photo: Julia Sizek

Thinned plantation on Everett Memorial Highway

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EDITING AND REVIEW | James Johnston, Stephanie Schneider

EXTERNAL REVIEW | Jeff Vance Martin, Pacific Southwest Research Station

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS | Mark D. O. Adams, Pacific Northwest Research Station

FUNDING | Funding for this monitoring provided by USDA Forest Service Region 6, agreement number 23CS11062756039

LAYOUT/DESIGN | Marissa Sorlie

We extend our thanks and appreciation to interviewees from Mt. Shasta-Weed who shared their experiences with us.