

# Tillamook Forest Center

*By Doug Decker*

The Tillamook Forest Center, located twenty-two miles east of Tillamook on Oregon Highway 6 (known as the Wilson River Highway), is a visitor information and education center that tells the story of the Tillamook Burn and the Tillamook State Forest.

Owned and operated by the Oregon Department of Forestry, the center has 10,000 square feet of museum space, with exhibits, artifacts, maps, and photographs that document the history of the Tillamook State Forest and present information on its future. A network of themed interpretive trails, river overlooks, and picnic spots provide firsthand learning opportunities, and the center serves as an access point to the Wilson River Trail, the Jones Creek Campground and Day Use Area, and the Smith Homestead Day Use Area.

The adjacent Forest Education Pavilion, set in the trees, is a high-windowed heated classroom that overlooks the river and provides a venue for teaching and learning about forests. A 250-foot suspension bridge leads across the Wilson River with access to the Wilson River Trail. A full-size lookout tower with a replica lookout cabin allows a view into the forest canopy. Educational programs are available for students of all ages.

Development of the center was based on the premise that an understanding of the forest today must be taken in context with its fiery past. The Tillamook Burn scorched 554 square miles of forest across the northern Oregon Coast Range mountains from 1933 to 1951. The entire area was replanted with seedlings between 1949 and 1972. Today, the Tillamook State Forest is managed by the Oregon Department of Forestry.

The architectural design for the Tillamook Forest Center was by the Miller-Hull Partnership Architects in Seattle, with assistance from landscape architects Walker Macy of Portland and interpretive design by Aldrich-Pears of Vancouver, British Columbia. The center opened in April 2006 and cost \$10.7 million, a significant amount of which was raised through gifts, grants, and donations to the Tillamook Forest Heritage Trust.

## Sources

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