



Trillium ovatum



Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*)

STEP INTO THE FUTURE, STEP INTO THE PAST | GRAYS HARBOR HERITAGE

Welcome to the Chehalis River Surge Plain

Along this trail, catch a glimpse of the past as well as the future.

You'll travel back 15,000 years to the time when ice covered the land, learn how a missed chicken dinner 150 years ago earned a slough its name, and discover the connection between today's forests and tomorrow's salmon.

This project was funded in part by the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) program of the Department of Natural Resources.

Trail construction by the Cedar Creek Correctional Facility Camp and Washington Conservation Corps crews.



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF **Natural Resources**

- Interpretive Sign
- Viewpoint
- Parking Area
- Toilet
- Trail

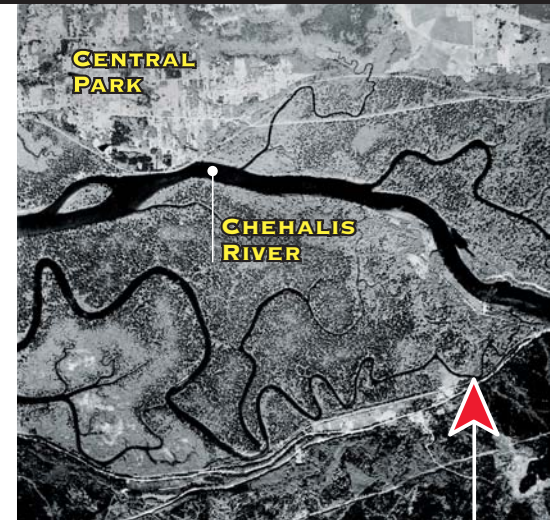


Chehalis River Surge Plain Interpretive Trail

Have you seen trilliums in the spring?

INTERPRETIVE SIGN: PROJECT LEAD: CLARA SULLIVAN, GRAPHIC DESIGN: LISA PANDI

The channel is wide, the river is narrow



Geologists refer to rivers like the Chehalis as “underfit,” because the river is much narrower than its flood plain. They would know that the river had once been much wider just by looking at the above photograph.

You are here

About 15,000 years ago, ice flowed south from Canada, between the Olympic Mountains and Cascade Range. Rivers that normally flowed into Puget Sound were blocked. Lakes formed and drained southwest into the Chehalis River. In time, glacial meltwater also flowed into the Chehalis, temporarily producing a river 20 times larger than you see it today.



What will the river look like in another 15,000 years?



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With a shake and a rattle

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALBERT FARROW, J. A. PHILLIPS III COLLECTION

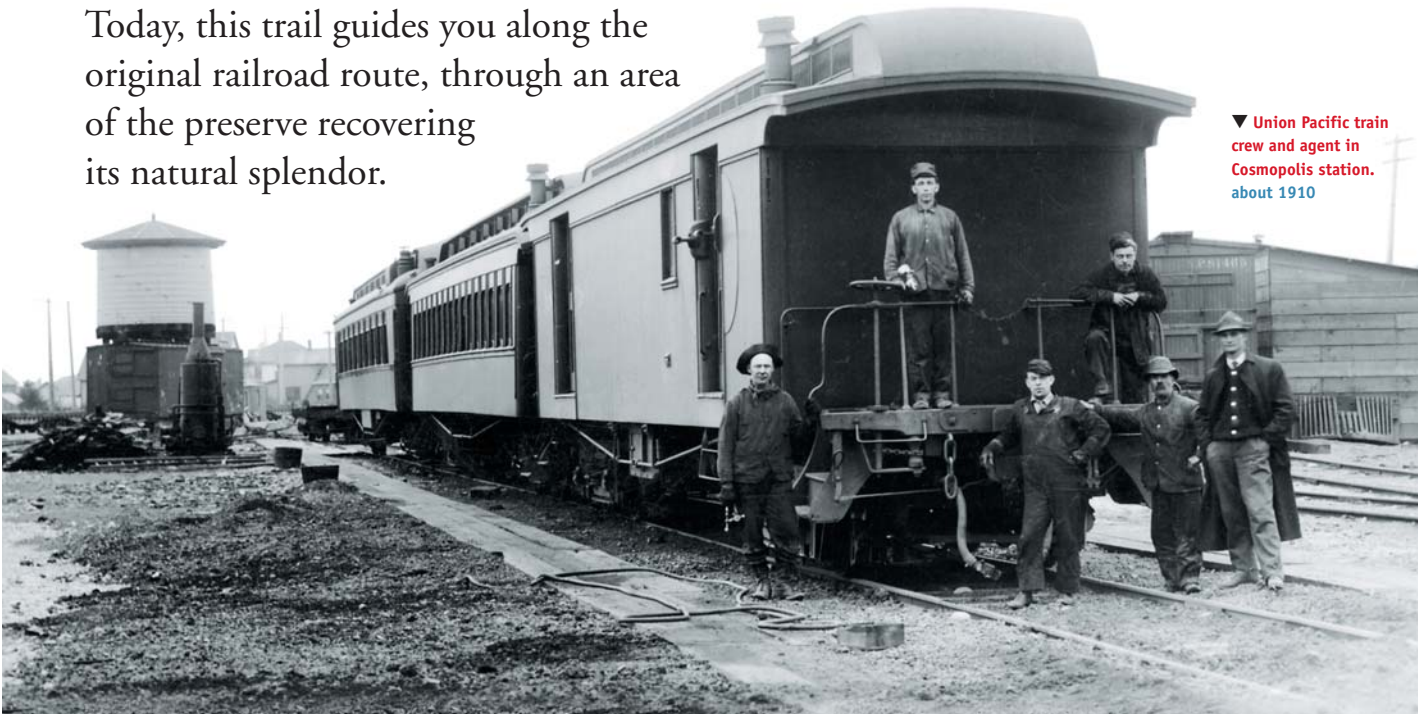
▲ Union Pacific, Northern Pacific, and Milwaukee Road engines at their shared facility in Hoquiam, 1945.



The Union Pacific and Milwaukee Road locomotives first thundered along this route on August 15, 1910. Seventy-five years later, the trains were gone.

The Milwaukee Road had gone bankrupt and after numerous slides and washouts, the Union Pacific rerouted its trains to the more stable tracks on the north side of the river.

Today, this trail guides you along the original railroad route, through an area of the preserve recovering its natural splendor.



▼ Union Pacific train crew and agent in Cosmopolis station. about 1910



PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFF ASW

▲ South Aberdeen station. 1910–1919

SEATTLE, TACOMA, PORTLAND AND COLUMBIA RIVER ROUTE									
All Tickets Over These Lines are Interchangeable and Will Be Good on any Train									
Time	From	To	Time	From	To	Time	From	To	Time
10:40	Se	Pr	11:00	Pr	Se	11:15	Se	Pr	11:30
11:00	Pr	Se	11:15	Se	Pr	11:30	Pr	Se	11:45
11:15	Se	Pr	11:30	Pr	Se	11:45	Se	Pr	12:00
11:30	Pr	Se	11:45	Se	Pr	12:00	Pr	Se	12:15
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* Note the flag stop at Preachers Slough at 11:20 pm

▲ Preachers Slough had its own station in the early years before World War I when four passenger trains a day ran between Aberdeen and Centralia. Few people had cars in those days and trucks were not yet delivering mail, groceries, or other supplies. By 1921, the automobile dominated personal transportation.



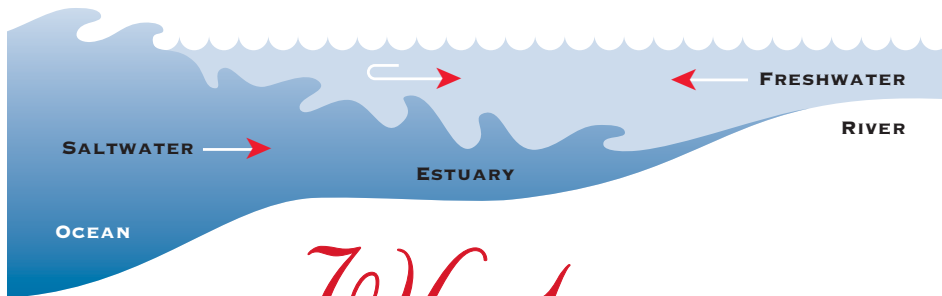
COSMOPOLIS STATION PHOTO AND TIME TABLE COURTESY OF BRIAN FERRIS



The Chehalis River Surge Plain

What do we mean by a surge plain?

When tidewater comes up the river, the salt-heavy ocean water sinks, pushing and lifting the freshwater to the top. The higher freshwater floods the land and spreads out, running backward into sloughs where it remains until the tide changes course.

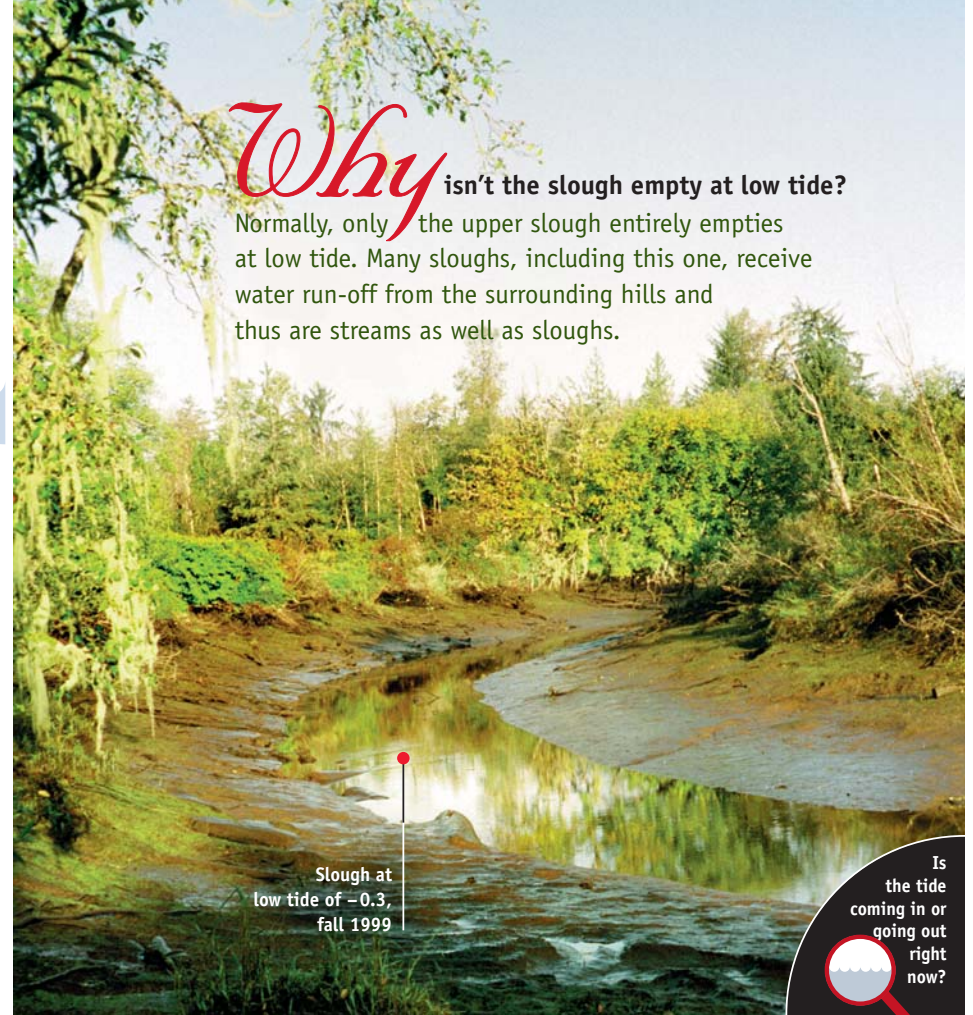


What makes this surge plain special?

This is one of the few places left where the mixing of saltwater and freshwater occurs naturally. The coming together of saltwater and freshwater in a natural way creates a flood control zone for man, a unique plant community and habitat for fish and other wildlife.

Why isn't the slough empty at low tide?

Normally, only the upper slough entirely empties at low tide. Many sloughs, including this one, receive water run-off from the surrounding hills and thus are streams as well as sloughs.



Slough at low tide of -0.3, fall 1999

Is the tide coming in or going out right now?



SALMON FRY

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Long shadows, cool waters, young salmon

Letting trees grow tall and thick, drop their leaves, age gracefully, and finally fall into the slough helps young salmon (fry) survive. The long shadows cool the water, and the fallen trees create quiet pools where fish can rest and feed.

SALMON WEIR

This sketch of Indians fishing in the Chehalis River with a weir was made by a member of the Charles Wilkes expedition in 1842. A weir is a fence usually made of wood that is placed in a river that directs the fish into a gap fitted with a basket that serves as a pen for easy capture.



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If you were a salmon fry, where would you hide?



