

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Date Listed: 5/9/2022

NRIS No. SG 100007759

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Sarah Helmick State Park

other names/site number Helmick State Park, Helmick Park

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

street & number 10485 Helmick Road not for publication

city or town Monmouth vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Polk code 053 zip code 97361

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D



4/20/2022

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
 (Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
	2	buildings
2		site
2	1	structure
	2	object
4	5	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION & CULTURE: State park

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION & CULTURE: State park

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: EARTH, CONCRETE
 walls: WOOD, CONCRETE

 roof: ASPHALT, METAL
 other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

Sarah Helmick State Park is the first state park in Oregon; the first of a system that would grow to include 254 parks as of 2021. In 1922, pioneer Sarah Helmick and her son James donated 5.46 acres of their family's homestead to the Oregon State Highway Commission "to provide the traveling public a place to rest or stop overnight".¹ Sarah Helmick State Park, also called "Helmick State Park", is located on the banks of the Luckiamute River near Monmouth, Oregon in Polk County. Sarah Helmick State Park is comprised of 81.72 acres with approximately 15 acres improved for visitor use. While the bulk of the park's acreage is leased for continued agricultural use, the visitor use area of Sarah Helmick State Park is characterized by large, grassed picnic areas featuring Oregon white oak, bigleaf maple, Douglas-fir, and black cottonwood trees. While unplanned and informal, the mature vegetation and inviting picnic areas serve to continue the original function of providing a shaded location for travelers and represent the most defining features of the park. Overall, the park includes 9 resources. There are 4 contributing resources and 5 non-contributing resources. Contributing resources include 2 sites: the park itself (n=1) and the swimming hole on the Luckiamute (n=1); 2 structures: the circulation road through the park (n=1) and a footpath to the river (n=1). The non-contributing resources include: 1 structure, a walking path system (n=1), 2 buildings, the west and east latrines (n=2); and 2 objects, the "Pioneer's Gift" sign and the park identifier sign (n=2). Alterations to the park have been consistent with general maintenance and include only two planned design changes. The first occurred from 1954 to 1958 and included the expansion of the visitor use area from 5.46 acres to approximately 15 acres, the expansion of the circulation road, and the west latrine. The second alteration of note occurred in 1971 when parking areas were modified, curbing (Figure 15) was added to the circulation road, and the east latrine was constructed. These modifications have been in keeping with the historic location, association, feeling, and setting of the property and have not negatively impacted the overall integrity of Sarah Helmick State Park.

Narrative Description

Location & Setting

Sarah Helmick State Park is in the Willamette Valley in rural Polk County less than five miles southwest of Monmouth, Oregon. The surrounding setting of the park has changed little over the last nearly 100 years and remains dominated by working agricultural fields. The park is situated on the banks of the Luckiamute River and directly west of Helmick Road (Old Pacific Highway West/U.S. Route 99/OR Route 99 prior to the designation of east and west "couplets" circa 1950). The entirety of the park property is irregular in shape with boundaries created by the multiple Polk County parcels that have been donated to comprise the property as a whole. The east boundary of the property generally follows Helmick Road with the exception of a small polygon of 2.71 acres west of Helmick Road that is inaccessible to visitors. The north boundary roughly follows the southern toe slope of Helmick Hill bounded by a no longer extant grade of the Valley and Siletz Railroad. The west boundary is created by the USA to ODOT, Gerlach et. al., Larson (2058), and Larson (2059) parcels visibly demarcated by a shift in vegetation from trees and riparian flora to active agricultural fields. The southern boundary is created by the Larson (2058) and Larson (2059) parcels, again marked by a shift from trees to agricultural fields. The approximate 15 acres of improved visitor use area, and focus of this nomination, is bounded by the Luckiamute River to the north and west, by Helmick Road to the east, and parcels Gerlach et. al. and Larson (2059) to the south. Figure 3 depicts the composition of the parcels that make up the Sarah Helmick State Park property as whole. Figure 6 depicts the Sarah Helmick State Park visitor use area and also reflects the historic boundary of the state park during its Period of Significance.

¹ Armstrong, Chester H. Oregon State Parks; History, 1917-1963. Oregon State Highway Department. 1965..

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Sarah Helmick State Park Landscape (Contributing, Site)

The park's leading attraction is the shaded and grassy picnic areas that comprise the 15 acres open to visitor use (Photos 7 through 10). Though the character-defining landscape was not professionally planned or designed but cleared to make a more formal use area, Sarah Helmick State Park is characterized by a sprawling and maintained lawn. The lawn is informally split into four general picnic areas divided by the circulation road and dense thickets of trees and understory species. The lawn is dotted with both permanent and movable picnic tables (Photos 11 and 12), modern park grills, stove shelters (Photos 13 and 14), and modern water spigots that further designate separate picnic areas. Tree species on site include Oregon white oak, bigleaf maple, Pacific yew, Douglas-fir, and black cottonwood trees. In 1965, the park was home to a Pacific yew measuring 37 inches in diameter and "said to be one of the largest of its species known to man"², however, this yew no longer remains.³ Milo McIver State Park now lays claim to the largest Pacific yew tree in Oregon.⁴ Other plant species include, but are certainly not limited to, trout lilies, salmonberry, snowberry, daffodils, and Pacific bleeding hearts, but no formal, designed gardens are present. The park's topography is fairly level except for an incised drainage area at the center of the picnic areas within the circulation system. This drainage area is densely vegetated and largely inaccessible. The Luckiamute River cuts through the park, creating the northern boundary of the visitor use area, and forms abrupt banks about 20 feet in height. Due to the location of the river, portions of the visitor use area often flood in rainy winter months. The park has no constructed irrigation system.

Within this landscape are several picnic areas that collectively support the character of the park's landscape. Inside of these picnic areas are several unique features, such as picnic tables and stove shelters. While some of these features are less than fifty years old or do not retain integrity, they tend to be harmonious with the park's overall character and should be understood as part of the park's overall integrity aspects of feeling and association. The following includes a further detailed discussion of the picnic areas and their features within Sarah Helmick State Park.

Picnic Areas

The picnic areas at Sarah Helmick State Park comprise approximately four areas of the 15 acres open to visitor use. The park features four general picnic areas informally divided by the circulation road and dense thickets of trees and understory species. Picnic areas are characterized by both permanent and movable picnic tables, modern park grills, stove shelters, and modern water spigots. These features within the picnic areas are arranged in a seemingly haphazard way with little symmetry and do not follow a designed layout. Narrow asphalt footpaths wind between these features and lead to and from the parking lot and latrines (visible in Photos 13 and 18). While features within the picnic areas have changed throughout the years, the picnic areas themselves have remained relatively the same since the post-war rehabilitation of the park. Portions of these picnic areas also existed within the first 5.46 acres of Sarah Helmick State Park, but the relationship with other features of the park during that time are not well-documented.

Permanent Picnic Tables, circa 1969 to 1971

While there are other picnic tables within Sarah Helmick State Park, only five are documented in OPRD's *Standard Drawings – Engineering Index* as "Table, 5'-1 1/2" x 8' with Concrete Legs, Drawing Number S-101". This design was used throughout parks beginning in 1969. The design was slightly modified for use in 1971 (Photo 11). Built on concrete foundations, the picnic tables feature two, single wood plank benches on either side of the table, bolted to two formed concrete pedestals. Overall, the pedestals are rectangular but flare slightly at the base. The table itself is made of three wood planks bolted to two

² Chester H. Armstrong. *Oregon State Parks: History, 1917-1963*. 1965.

³ Christina Sweet. *Pers. Comm.* 2021.

⁴ Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. *5 state parks trees to visit on National Love a Tree Day*. 2021.

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formed concrete pedestals in the same but larger shape as the bench pedestals. The two table pedestals, however, feature a rectangular space spanning the length of the pedestal providing a modest decorative element. Figure 13 depicts the table design as shown in the *Standard Drawings – Engineering Index*.

Permanent Picnic Tables

There are also two concrete tables within the park that are not included in OPRD's *Standard Drawings – Engineering Index* but are thought to be of a later date than the picnic tables designed from 1969 to 1971 and so they do not date to the period of significance.⁵ These tables are constructed on a concrete foundation and are made entirely of formed concrete pedestals for the bench and table as well as the bench and table tops (Photo 12). So, while these two tables are not significant features they do not detract from the character of the picnic areas.

Electric Stove Shelters

Sarah Helmick State Park features two electric stove shelters (Photos 13 and 14). Constructed in 1953, these shelters are built upon concrete foundations and are comprised of two square wooden posts supporting a three-plank wooden table and a gabled roof with exposed trusses and cedar shingles. The shelters have been painted brown with the exception of the roof. The shelters offer modern water spigots affixed to one post of the shelter. A square in the concrete foundation has been cut under the spigot and filled with small landscaping cobbles to assist with water drainage. Electric outlets are provided on the posts opposite the spigots. The park once featured three of these stove shelters. The third was apparently demolished sometime during or after the 1990s or early 2000s. As built, these shelters included electric stoves and porcelain sinks. Both features, however, were removed from the remaining shelters seemingly around the same time the third shelter was lost. The loss of the sinks, stoves, and third shelter indicates a loss integrity for these structures. As such, the electric stove shelters do not retain sufficient integrity on their own but they do support the general character of the picnic areas.

Picnic Areas Alterations and Additions

The picnic areas throughout Sarah Helmick State Park have been changed very little and are still representative of the shady rest areas so important to the function of the park. No record of proposed alterations was discovered. The integrity of the picnic areas is intact and the resource contributes to the overall eligibility of Sarah Helmick State Park.

Circulation Road with Parking Areas (Contributing, Structure)

The circulation road at Sarah Helmick State Park creates an approximate half-mile circular loop through the picnic areas (Photos 2 through 6). Although modified in 1971, the alterations to the roadway were such that the location, route, and traffic pattern of the road have remained relatively intact since 1954. The circulation road includes five parking areas throughout its course that provide close access to latrines and picnic areas.

From the entrance gate on Helmick Road (Photo 2), the circulation road trends north before, at a safe distance of anywhere from approximately 60 ft. to 130 ft., following the banks of the Luckiamute River west and south. Upon meeting Larson (2059) parcel, the circulation road straightens and spans the length of the southern boundary of the visitor use area before meeting its beginning at the park entrance. Where parking areas are absent along the road, the average width of the pavement is 30 ft; as narrow as 16 ft. on the northeastern side of the visitor use area before the road trends west and as wide as 37 ft. on the southern straightaway of the road approaching the Pioneer's Gift Sign. The road is paved with asphalt and exhibits concrete curbing throughout.

⁵ *ibid*

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Alterations and Additions

The northern portion of the circulation road overlays a segment of the original road utilized between 1924 when the park opened and sometime between 1948 and 1954 when the park underwent a post-war expansion and rehabilitation. The only available reference to the original road declares it to be a “good entrance road”.⁶ After the post-war expansion, the circulation road was expanded west and south into acreage previously held by Camp Adair to create a larger loop in this new area. The previous southern-most segment of the first road was still utilized until 1971 when maps from the General Improvement Plan propose to “remove old road, repave path, reseed area”.⁷ Photographs indicate that by 1972, this segment of the road had been obscured and was no longer in use for vehicle or foot traffic. A very slight remnant grade can be seen today. Concrete curbs were added as part of the 1971 General Improvement Plan but have not significantly impacted the route or overall intention of the roadway.

The circulation road includes five parking areas that were expanded or added in their current configuration between 1971 and 1972. Prior to 1971, there were three parking areas. Moving counter-clockwise through the circulation road; the first parking area encountered was added 1971 to 1972, the second and third parking areas were broken into two from one single parking area built 1954 to 1958, the fourth parking area was extant 1954 to 1958 and additional curbing was introduced 1971 to 1972, and the fifth parking lot enlarged a smaller, existing lot in 1971 to 1972.

These alterations did not change the overall circulation pattern throughout the park and the road continues in the same general route as established in 1954. The integrity of the circulation road with parking areas is relatively intact and contributes to the overall eligibility of Sarah Helmick State Park.

Footpath (Contributing, Structure)

A footpath leading to the swimming hole on the Luckiamute is one of the early features of the park referenced by State Park Historian W. A. Langille in 1945 and predates the post-war rehabilitation of Sarah Helmick State Park (Photo 15). The path is approximately 340 ft. long, averages a width of 3 ft. and is unpaved. While the exact route of the footpath may have changed slightly over the years, a roughly drawn line on design plans indicate that this has been a primary path for visitors for many years.

Alterations and Additions

There is no record of proposed alterations or any other indicators of alterations to the footpath. The integrity of footpath remains intact, and the resource contributes to the overall eligibility of Sarah Helmick State Park.

Swimming Hole (Contributing, Site)

The swimming hole is another early feature of the park, likely formalized for visitor use sometime between the park’s dedication in 1924 and its mention by Langille in 1945 (Figure 20, Photo 16). The swimming hole, although intentionally dug into Luckiamute, is little more than a sandy beach and a relatively flat area within the river ideal for wading. The feature measures approximately 20 ft by 150 ft parallel to the riverbank. Aside from basic upkeep of this area and changes due to erosion in a natural waterway, the swimming hole has not been drastically modified since first being designated as a water play area.

Walking Path System (Non-Contributing, Structure)

The asphalt-paved walking paths weave throughout the picnic areas of the park. Different variations of these paths are depicted in 1954 to 1958 design sheet and the 1971 General Improvement Plan. Overall,

⁶ Langille. *Helmick State Park*.

⁷ “Helmick State Park General Improvement Plan.” Oregon State Highway Department Parks and Recreation Division. August 26, 1971.

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the system includes approximately 1,150 feet of improved walking paths. On average, the paths are 8 ft. wide. The current walking path system closely resembles that of the 1971 to 1972 proposed improvements.

Alterations and Additions

The layout of the walking path system as depicted in the 1954 to 1958 design sheet appears to have changed substantially in comparison with the proposed layout of the 1971 General Improvement Plan. Today, the walking path system closely mirrors the proposed layout in the 1971 General Improvement Plan, clearly having been reconfigured at that time. As the modifications to the walking path system occurred outside of the Period of Significance and no longer resemble the 1954 to 1958 design, the integrity of the walking path system is no longer intact and does not contribute to the overall eligibility of Sarah Helmick State Park.

East Latrine (Non-Contributing, Building)

The east latrine was constructed in 1973 (Figure 18 and 19, Photo 17). The building features a front-gabled, standing seam metal roof painted dark brown. The front (west) elevation of the latrine has a privacy wall made of square concrete brick placed in front of the two metal door entrances into the MEN and WOMEN restrooms. The privacy wall does not fully extend to the roof in front of these two doors, however an additional privacy wall made of square concrete bricks and “starfire” style rectangular breeze blocks is present in front of a third metal door leading to a storage area between the two sides of the bathroom. The remaining elevations are fairly nondescript, featuring façades constructed with the same square concrete blocks used in the privacy wall and ventilation on all sides. All elevations are painted the same light brown/tan color.

Alterations and Additions

The east latrine replaced a previously constructed latrine dating from 1953 and shown in Figure 18. Modifications to the 1970s east latrine include the redesign of the privacy walls and the entire external cladding of the structure. Figure 19 predates these changes and depicts the absence of the breeze blocks and a staggered rectangular concrete brick pattern as opposed to the aligned squares present in 2021. Close inspection of this picture suggests that every elevation of the latrine received similar treatment and the aligned square brick appears to create a façade covering the older, staggered rectangular concrete brick pattern. The doors of the east latrine also appear to have been replaced. The date of or reasons for these alterations are undocumented; however, it is worth noting that these changes did not occur long after original construction as suggestion by the use of breeze blocks which were waning in popularity in the late 1970s and certainly more so in the following decades (Tejeda 2021).⁸

West Latrine (Non-Contributing, Building)

The west latrine was built in 1955 during the post-war rehabilitation of Sarah Helmick State Park (Figure 17, Photo 18). The west latrine was built using Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Standard construction drawings. The design was used throughout various ODOT properties for a span of ten to twenty years and therefore not unique to this park.⁹ The Oregon State Historic Preservation Office concurred with a determination of not eligible/non-contributing in 2019.¹⁰ The low-pitched pyramid roof of the west latrine is clad with standing seam metal. The rafters of the roof are exposed in a moderate overhang. The east (front) elevation of the latrine features approximately two feet of exposed concrete wall before transitioning to vertical board and batten siding for approximately 2 ft. before again transitioning to five panels of spaced, horizontal 2 x 2s and vertical bracing both on the exterior of the façade and five vertical, interior braces seen through the horizontal gaps. This style is repeated on all

⁸ Tejeda, Juan. Special Projects Manager with ORCO Block & Hardscape. Email with Jessica Gabriel. October 21, 2021.

⁹ Christina Sweet. Pers. Comm. 2021.

¹⁰ Schwartz, Tracy to Christina Sweet. October 25, 2019.

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four elevations. Metal doors on the south and north elevation lead to WOMEN and MEN restrooms. The latrine is built on an enlarged concrete foundation that connects with pathways around the structure.

Alterations and Additions

The west latrine once featured two privacy walls that mirrored each other on the southeast and northeast corners of the building just outside the restroom entrance doors. These privacy walls mimicked the style of the latrine building with a concrete span at the bottom of the wall transitioning to vertical, brown-painted planks. The privacy walls were built in-line with the roof’s dripline but did not extend to meet the full height of the roof. The vertical planks of the privacy walls were present in 2019 but replaced an earlier, louvered set of walls original to the structure. Additionally, by 2019, previously existing skylights had been removed and the roof had been changed from an asphalt composite to the standing seam metal roof present in 2021. Although exact dates have not been documented, the interior fixtures of the latrine have been “gutted and replaced numerous times”.¹¹ Most recently, the privacy walls present in 2019 documentation had been removed by September 2021.

The removal of privacy walls and changes in material have negatively impacted the integrity of the west latrine. These alterations are substantial enough that the building no longer contributes to the overall eligibility of Sarah Helmick State Park.

Signage (Two Non-Contributing, Objects)

There are two noteworthy signs in Sarah Helmick State Park and neither of them date from the period of significance. These signs include the “Pioneer’s Gift” sign (Photo 19) and the park identifier sign (Photo 1). Of particular note, the “Pioneer’s Gift” sign provides a brief history of the park’s namesake but was installed in 1978 outside the period of significance. The narrative was written in part by State Park Historian Elizabeth Potter and Jeannette Gue of Interpretation Programs.

Park Acreage Additions

In addition to the alterations and additions previously outlined, substantial acreage has been added to the Sarah Helmick State Park property as a whole. The visitor use area, however, has grown much less in comparison from its original 5.46 acres in 1922 to approximately 15 acres today, using only a portion of the acreage deeded to the state from the U.S. Government in 1948. Table 1 outlines the names, acreages, and dates of parcels incorporated into the Sarah Helmick State Park property. To reiterate, of the 81.72 acres of the Sarah Helmick State Park property, only approximately 15 acres of the state park are open for visitor use. The remaining 66.72 acres are leased for continued agricultural use.

Table 1: Parcels Added to Sarah Helmick State Park Listed Chronologically		
Parcel Name	Acreage	Year Added
Helmick-A	5.16	1922
Helmick-B	0.30	1922
USA to ODOT	23.65	1948
Wiest	1.7	1949
Gerlach et. al.	3.6	1979
Larson (2059)	19.6	1985
Larson (2058)	25	1985
Polk County	2.71	1991

¹¹ *ibid*

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Integrity

“The situation of this park in the midst of a stabilized agricultural community assures its continued future use, and fully justifies a somewhat modernized rehabilitation, in keeping with its prestige as Oregon’s first deeded state park.”

- W.A. Langille, first Oregon State Park historian (1945)

Sarah Helmick State Park retains integrity of location. While the park has grown since its opening in 1924 from 5.46 acres to over 80 acres in 2021, the core location of the property has not changed. The original 5.46 acres remain the focal point of the park. Location is integral to the historic significance of Sarah Helmick State Park as this physical spot on the landscape provided, and continues to provide “a delightful, sylvan retreat beside the well known [sic] Luckiamute”.¹² Integrity of setting is also conveyed by the active agricultural fields surrounding Sarah Helmick State Park. These fields continue to represent, support, and protect Sarah Helmick State Park’s historic rural setting “in the midst of a stabilized agricultural community”.¹³ Together with the park’s shaded and grassed picnic amenities, these agricultural fields also contribute to the integrity of association of Sarah Helmick State Park as a historically “popular neighborhood resort”.¹⁴ The continued use of Sarah Helmick State Park as an agricultural oasis demonstrates that integrity of feeling is also intact. The original design, workmanship, and materials of the park have changed over time, but not to the degree that that the historic use of the park as a place “to provide the traveling public a place to rest”¹⁵ has been severely altered or impacted. The circulation road and parking areas, picnic areas, and swimming beach together retain sufficient integrity to convey the intended use of the property as a place to rest and retreat from the “broiling sun” and still allow “the shade of the trees of the park show to full value”.¹⁶ Overall, Sarah Helmick State Park retains integrity sufficient for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

¹² “Greater Helmick Park Assured; Land Increased Five Fold by Federal Gift”. The Monmouth Herald. March 4, 1948.

¹³ Langille. *Helmick State Park*.

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ Armstrong. *Oregon State Parks; History*.

¹⁶ “New Highway on Westside Dedicated”. The Capitol Journal (Salem, Oregon). September 13, 1924.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1922 to 1958

Significant Dates

September 12, 1924: park dedication
1954 to 1958: formalized, post-war park layout

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

Architect/Builder

Oregon State Highway Commission (builder)

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Period of Significance (justification)

The Period of Significance for Sarah Helmick State Park begins with the deeding of the original 5.46 acres by Sarah Helmick and her son James in 1922 and continues to 1958 with the completion of elements proposed in post-World War II expansion and rehabilitation plans. These post-war improvements, originally proposed in 1954, mark the last significant changes to the park's layout undertaken to increase visitor utilization. The post-war site plan created Sarah Helmick State Park as it is experienced today and the layout has changed relatively little since completion in 1958. This Period of Significance reflects the primary period of establishment and subsequent growth of Sarah Helmick State Park as Oregon's first state park.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)
N/A

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8. Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

Sarah Helmick State Park is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the state level under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government. The property was deeded to the Oregon State Highway Commission in 1922 and contains the first land given to the state specifically for park purposes. The creation of Sarah Helmick State Park is representative of a nationwide movement that called for state parks systems to be administered specifically by state agencies (ARG 2005). The popularity and success of Sarah Helmick State Park demonstrated that parks could indeed flourish under state ownership, eventually leading to increasingly larger and more independent state agencies; first by the Oregon State Highway Commission (1921), then as a part of the Highway Department within the State Department of Transportation (1969), next as the State Parks and Recreation Division within the State Department of Transportation (1979), and finally by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (1989). Sarah Helmick State Park is the beginning of an agency that, in 2021, manages 254 parks on 122,847 acres and serves 54.65 million daytime visitors and campers a year.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Immigrants and Growth in the Willamette Valley

The Willamette Valley has been inhabited by the indigenous peoples of Oregon since time immemorial. Sarah Helmick State Park is located in the ratified treaty cession of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon. The Luckiamute, the aboriginal residents of the Luckiamute watershed, were signatories to the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855¹⁷ which ultimately resulted in their forced removal from their ancestral homelands to the Grand Ronde Reservation in 1856. Ethnographies of the watershed identify five villages in the vicinity of Sarah Helmick State Park prior to the removal of tribal members and include Ampalamuyu, Tsalakmiut, Tsamiak, and Tsantuisha on the Luckiamute River and Tsantatawa located south of the river¹⁸. With the arrival of fur trappers and Euro-American settlers via the Oregon Trail in the early 1800s and 1840s respectively, Champoeg was the first Euro-American settlement in the Willamette Valley established in 1841. The Oregon Provisional Legislature created Polk County in 1845. Monmouth, the nearest town to Sarah Helmick State Park, was founded in 1853 and lies approximately 40 miles southwest of Champoeg. Additional information can be found in *The Willamette Valley: Migration and Settlement on the Oregon Frontier* by William A. Bowen, among myriad others.

The Luckiamute River continued to sustain those who lived along its banks; although the utility of the river shifted with the arrival of Euro-Americans. According to references *Timber Up the Luckiamute*¹⁹ and *Splash Dams and Log Drives of Western Oregon*²⁰ the Luckiamute River was extensively used in the transportation of timber in the watershed. From 1853 to 1935, the river was intensely utilized by log drives, splash dams, mills, and steamboats as companies like the Charles K. Spaulding Lumber Company logged massive acreage along the Coast Range for its clientele in the growing towns of the Willamette Valley.

The town of Monmouth in Polk County, Oregon was settled by immigrants originating from Monmouth, Illinois. The settlers were comprised of a dozen families belonging to the Disciples of Christ Church who came to the Willamette Valley with the intention to create a town and college "under the auspices of the Christian Church".²¹ To this end, Monmouth University opened in 1856. The surrounding farmland of Polk County supported Monmouth, although the town "had a more scholastic and religious character than the neighboring town of Independence".²² Like most of the small towns that dot the Willamette Valley, Monmouth's success was directly tied to the agricultural industry outside city limits, despite its pious and collegiate atmosphere. During World War II, this surrounding farmland and the families living and operating in rural Monmouth were

¹⁷ Kappler, Charles J. *Indians Laws and Treaties*, Vol. 2, Treaties. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office. 1904.

¹⁸ Swanton, John R. *The Indian Tribes of North America*. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 145. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office. 1953.

¹⁹ Frantz, W.C. *Pete. Timber Up the Luckiamute*. Hoskins, OR: W.C. Pete Frantz. 1978.

²⁰ Miller, Rebecca. *Splash Dams and Log Drives of Western Oregon*. MA Thesis. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University. 2010.

²¹ McArthur, Lewis A. and Lewis L. McArthur. *Oregon Geographic Names*. Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2003. Pg 656.

²² Jansson, Kyle. "Monmouth." *The Oregon Encyclopedia*. March 17, 2018.

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heavily impacted by the construction of the training base Camp Adair. Although compensated for their property, crops, and livestock, by 1942 the U.S. Government had displaced families, relocated cemeteries, and razed the entire town of Wells for the construction of the 57,159-acre camp²³. Most of those displaced were farmers and “descendants of the pioneers who had crossed the plains in covered wagons to make their homes in the Willamette Valley”.²⁴ These were the very families who had been frequenting Sarah Helmick State Park even prior to its dedication to the state. They found the small park “conveniently located for the entertainment of the local people” and it had “long been a popular neighborhood resort”.²⁵ In 1946, Camp Adair was terminated with the end of the war and various tracts of the camp were returned to civilian and agricultural use. Today, agriculture remains one of the main economic drivers of Polk County.

Helmick Family

Sarah J. Steeprow (also spelled Stepro and Steprow) was born on July 4, 1823, in Mouckport, Indiana (Figure 14). Henry Helmick was born on September 14, 1822, in Germany. The two married in Burlington, Iowa in April 1845 and left for Oregon the day after their nuptials. The couple, joined by approximately 150 other people in 80 wagons, was led by Captain McDonald and at least partially by Stephen Meek. Sarah celebrated her twenty second birthday on the Oregon Trail. Roughly six months into their journey, the Helmicks lost the entirety of their supplies and possessions in the Cascades Rapids (Cascade Locks). Aided at first by “two friendly Indian” women, and then by a Mr. Ebberts, the Helmicks arrived in Tualatin Plains, ending their nearly 2,000-mile trip on the Oregon Trail.²⁶ Mr. Ebberts gave a portion of his home to the Helmicks while they became established in the Willamette Valley. Sarah worked in housekeeping and Henry as a carpenter, credited with building the first grist mill in Salem about a year after their arrival.

In 1846, Sarah and Henry made their claim on the Luckiamute River approximately 5 miles south of Monmouth, Oregon. After enduring the hardships of their first year improving the land, Henry joined the gold rush and traveled to California in 1849 while Sarah remained in Oregon. Henry returned a year later, unsuccessful in the gold fields. With the enactment of the Donation Land Claim Act in 1850, the Helmicks were allowed to legally claim their 640 acres of Polk County. Sarah and Henry lived together on their property along the Luckiamute, creating a sustainable homestead, for twenty-eight years. The Helmicks recognized the natural and scenic value of their property along the Luckiamute and invited neighbors to picnic along the riverbanks at their leisure. It is possible that this part of the Helmick homestead was unusable for any other function due to the frequent flooding of the Luckiamute River, however this is purely speculation. Any definite record of additional uses of this land by the Helmicks or others were not found. Upon her husband’s death in 1877, Sarah had a home built for herself at 138 Seventh Street in Albany. Sarah and Henry had five children, although two died in infancy.²⁷ Sons James and Lewis and daughter Frances were later joined by six grandchildren, and eight great grandchildren earning her the nickname “Grandma” to family and friends alike.²⁸ Sarah lived to be 101 and died on December 23, 1924.

While it is unclear what, if any of their original homestead remains, the Helmick name lives on in the community due to Sarah’s donation to Oregon. Prior to her death she and her son James donated a total of 5.46 acres of their family’s homestead to the Oregon State Highway Commission in 1922. This land was donated specifically for use as parkland and met the requirements of 1921 legislation that allowed the Highway Commission to acquire rights of way within 300 feet of highway centerline for tree planting and the designation of scenic conservation areas. Sarah Helmick State Park was a precursor to the popularity of state parks in Oregon and among some the earliest state parks nationally as a movement of state-owned and operated parks gathered steam.

²³ Baker, John H. *Camp Adair: The Story of a World War 11 Cantonment, Today Oregon’s Largest Ghost Town*. Newport, OR: John H. Baker. 2003.

²⁴ “Swamp Adair.” Benton County Historical Society. October 18, 2021.

²⁵ Langille. *Helmick State Park*.

²⁶ Nesbit, Virginia. “Sarah Helmick and Helmick Park.” *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Volume 26, Number 1. Pg. 444-447. March 1925.

²⁷ Ingalls, Cathy. “Sarah J. Stepro Helmick.” *Find A Grave*. August 18, 2010.

²⁸ Nesbit. *Sarah Helmick and Helmick Park*.

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The State Park Movement

"It is becoming increasingly difficult for men and women in great cities to go back to the great outdoors and there renew the springs which nourish and sweeten their lives. City parks do not fill the gap. National Parks partly fill this need but they are remote from the great masses of population; consequently, the great movement for State Parks in recent years has come from a realization of the need and of the remedy. The State park [sic] has come to stay."

- Excerpts from the Proceedings of the Second National Conference on State Parks (1922)

There are technicalities to consider in identifying the first state park in the United States. The Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove were ceded to the state of California as parkland in 1864 before being incorporated into Yosemite National Park in 1890. The first, and still surviving, state park to be named as such was the Mackinac Island State Park of Michigan in 1895. However, this park was preceded by "The State Park" of Wisconsin set aside in 1878, that was ultimately sold to lumber companies in its entirety within two decades. For additional consideration, Indian Springs State Park has been maintained by Georgia since 1825, however, did not include the words "state park" in its title until 1931. Indeed, "prototypes of the state park actually started springing up here and there long before the term itself came into use".²⁹ It is far easier to confidently determine that these properties represent the beginnings of a nationwide movement of state parks, now located in all fifty states to the tune of 6,792 parks with over 800 million annual visitors.³⁰

Another certainty is the influence Stephen T. Mather had on the creation and management of state park systems. Mather, the first director of the National Park Service (NPS) in 1916, envisioned state agencies working in cooperation with NPS to create a vast network of national parks. He asked, "who will gainsay that the parks contain the highest potentialities of national pride, national contentment, and national health?".³¹ Bearing this idealism, early parks were typically created to protect and preserve places of natural, historic, or recreational interest. The role of the state was quickly realized as "many of these early preservation projects were accomplished through state legislation or with other direct assistance from the state governments, and thus signified a growing recognition and acceptant of state responsibility in a relative new field of public service".³²

At the first meeting of the National Conference on Parks in 1921, only 19 states recognized this "new field of public service". Preservation and recreation alone were not enough to fully catalyze the state park movement. The Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 and the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1921 led to a boom in road construction throughout the 1920s and ignited automobile tourism in the United States. As automobiles became more affordable and the American middle-class grew, car ownership blossomed and further contributed to the new tourism.³³ A growing number of Americans had disposable income and time and the automobile perfectly reflected a new sense of independence and exploration. In response to this freedom of travel, "developers built roadside camps, then cabins and hotels...small, local attractions popped up everywhere" and all destinations along the route benefitted from the influx of people and money.³⁴ The economic possibilities were so evident that "the automobile fairly launched the state park movement".³⁵ As automobile tourism grew, so did the prevalence of state parks. The "economic potential of state parks as travel destinations, or at least for overnight stopovers, provided a practical incentive for state park development more persuasive for some than merely 'preservation for preservation's sake'" and by the beginning of World War II, state parks existed in all but five states.³⁶

²⁹ Landrum, Ney C. *The State Park Movement in American: A Critical Review*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004.

³⁰ "About Us." National Association of State Park Directors. October 15, 2021.

³¹ *ibid*

³² Landrum. *The State Park Movement in America*.

³³ Gerson, Livia. "How American Tourism Began." JSTOR Daily. June 13, 2016.

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ Landrum. *The State Park Movement in America*.

³⁶ *ibid*

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Despite the support for state parks from national and state governments and their growing popularity, the state park movement was never a cohesive one. Neither Mather nor the National Conference on Parks could bring about a national consensus on exactly what a state park should be and how it should be managed. Roosevelt's New Deal was perhaps the most successful in homogenizing state park systems as the Work Projects Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps built or rehabilitated many parks under a similar design and management style as those utilized by the national park system. Post-war, however, states parks programs expressed and followed "disparate philosophies, management objectives, and recreational offerings" with "diverse approaches and myriad configurations".³⁷ Today, state park programs operate individually and independent of one another, each as different as their home state. Each state park program's history is just as unique. A more in-depth history and discussion of state parks in the U.S. is provided in *The State Park Movement in America: A Critical Review* by Ney C. Landrum.

Oregon State Parks and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

State parks in Oregon have been continuously managed by the state since Sarah Helmick State Park was donated in 1922. Sarah Helmick State Park represents the first land deeded to the Oregon State Highway Commission specifically for park purposes. This land donation was quickly followed by the acquisition of the Bradley State Wayside (north of U.S. Route 30 between Astoria and Portland) and Holman State Wayside (on Oregon Route 22 at the foot of the Eola Hills between Salem and Rickreall) later that year. Older parks under state control did exist before 1922, including the Provisional Government Park at Champoeg (1901) and Sodaville Springs Mineral Spring Park (1890), however, these properties did not officially join the Oregon State Park System until 1943 and 1947, respectively. Sodaville Springs ceased to be a state park in 1972 and was returned to the city of Sodaville.³⁸ This leaves Sarah Helmick State Park as the only park in the system that was there from day one and still continues to welcome visitors under the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department banner.

Support for non-Federal, public lands in Oregon began in earnest with Governor Oswald West. Concerned with the development and accessibility of the Oregon coast, West and the state legislature declared Oregon beaches from the Columbia River to the California border as a public highway in 1913. This ensured the public use of state-owned tidelands as a means of travel *and* recreation. In that same year, the Oregon State Highway Commission was established and originally consisted of the governor, secretary of state, and state treasurer. The commission's primary function was the management of Oregon's public roads, including the newly-designated Oregon Coast, with the secondary task of preserving select natural resources. In the creation of the Oregon State Highway Commission and the designation of state-owned tidelands as public roads, agency management of public land for recreational purposes in Oregon was established relatively early in the state's administrative history. The relationship between roads and recreation in Oregon was also seen in the construction of the Columbia River Highway (built 1913-1916) and some of its associated parklands that were donated to the City of Portland to further protect and enhance the scenic nature of the road. This donated land included property that would later become part of the state system as Benson State Park (1939), Crown Point State Park (1938), and Sheppard's Dell State Park (1940). In 1917, the Oregon State Highway Commission shifted to a citizen body appointed by the governor. Simon Benson, noted Portland businessman, philanthropist, and donator of the aforementioned state park that would eventually bear his name, acted as the first citizen chairman of the commission. The Oregon State Highway Commission represents the first "directors" of a state-operated park system Oregon.

The relationship between road and recreation was further demonstrated by Deschutes County Judge Robert W. Sawyer. Judge Sawyer, who would eventually serve as a member of the Oregon State Highway Commission from 1927-1930, was an early proponent for the retention of forest land along The Dalles-California Highway and the creation of the park at Dillon Falls on the Deschutes River. Judge Sawyer was ultimately encouraged by Stephen T. Mather, the 1921 National Conference on Parks, and the idea that state

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ "Sodaville History." City of Sodaville. October 10, 2021.

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management, legislation, and responsibility could stimulate natural and scenic protection through park lands. The nascent park system eventually received another boost from Governor Ben Olcott. Governor Olcott was initially skeptical of Mather's proposals to create government-managed park systems. He was supportive of a park system, just not one run by the state and did not see the need for a unique operation division. Governor Olcott's mind was ultimately changed by logging operations along Cannon Beach – Seaside Road; on a trip to the coast, he encountered fresh clear cuts highly visible from the roadway. As a result, the 1921 legislature passed portions of Governor Olcott's scenic preservation package that allowed the Oregon State Highway Commission to acquire rights of way within 300 feet of highway centerline for tree planting and the designation of scenic conservation areas. Sarah Helmick State Park, situated along Old Pacific Highway West/U.S. Route 99/OR Route 99 became Oregon's first under the 1921 authorization.

Oregon's state parks were born from the need to create a management system that would preserve the scenic roadways of Oregon and ensure they would not be blighted by the destruction of the state's natural beauty. Governor Olcott's shift in thinking about park management showed a desire to not leave the future of these places to chance. This practical approach brought the national idea government-lead preservation and conservation home to Oregon. With the Oregon State Highway Commission in place and the legislation approved to start acquiring properties, Sarah Helmick State Park became the first; a result of the property being in the right place and available at the right time. While Sarah Helmick State Park represents the first land given to the Oregon State Highway Commission for conservation purposes, it was quickly followed by the purchase of what would become Holman State Wayside, also occurring in 1922. The Oregon State Highway Commission was determined to create and care for what they envisioned as an expanding state park system. In 1925, the Oregon State Highway Commission was granted authority to acquire lands outside of the initial 300 feet right-of-way limit which allowed for more variety in the location, setting, and amenities offered at later parks. This was perhaps the first separation of recreation from roads that would eventually result in Oregon Parks and Recreation Department as its own agency.

Sarah Helmick State Park marked the start of state-operated park system that was beginning to thrive. So much so, that in 1927, the Oregon State Highway Commission was met with additional pressure from the newly renamed National Conference on State Parks and Charles G. Sauers to create a stand-alone state division to manage parks and natural resources. Sauers was a major proponent of state parks in Indiana and a representative of the conference. With successes back in Indiana, Sauers surmised that highway work would distract from park and natural resource management and vice versa. Oregon State Highway Commission chairman H.B. Van Duzer and commissioner Robert W. Sawyer opposed this separation as they feared financial support would be more limited for a stand-alone department that didn't have the stable funding of automobile and gasoline taxes at its disposal. Ultimately, the benefits of separating park and natural resources from the management of state highways became more apparent. In 1929, Governor I.L. Patterson formed the State Parks Commission within the Oregon State Highway Commission and appointed the first Oregon State Parks engineer and superintendent, Samuel H Boardman. Boardman focused heavily on the acquisition of parks during his tenure. By 1936, Boardman observed, "we have the foundation of a real park system. I hope that its standard will never be lowered, and that quantity will never take the place of quality".³⁹

Over the following years, Oregon State Parks were managed by various incarnations of commissions, divisions, and departments. In 1947, the Oregon State Highway Commission authorized the State Parks Division. In 1957, Governor Elmo Smith appointed the State Parks Advisory Committee which shaped park policy within the Oregon State Highway Commission. In 1959, the State Parks Advisory Committee was renamed the State Parks and Recreation Division but remained under the Oregon State Highway Commission. Properties exhibiting historic areas of interest were finally approved for acquisition in 1969. With the creation of the State Department of Transportation, also in 1969, the Oregon State Highway Commission became the Highway Department, of which the State Parks and Recreation Division remained a part of. In 1979, management of state parks left the umbrella of the Highway Department, and the State Parks and Recreation Division within the State Department of Transportation took control. Finally, in 1989, Oregon State Parks were

³⁹ Armstrong. *Oregon State Parks; History*.

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granted their own management agency with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. For additional detail, a more in-depth management history of Oregon State Parks is provided in *Oregon's Highway Park System, 1921-1989; An Administrative History* by Lawrence C. Merriam, Jr. Additional historical contexts relating to Oregon State Parks were researched in 2005 in the report *Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Context Statement* by the Architectural Resources Group.

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On February 15, 1922 Sarah Helmick (5.16 acres) and her son James (.30 acres) donated a total of 5.46 acres of their family's homestead to the Oregon State Highway Commission specifically for use as parkland, "to provide the traveling public a place to rest or stop overnight".⁴⁰ The Helmick family had long allowed the local community access to the area, and "even before the tract was given to the State it was popular with the surrounding people for informal gatherings and picnic parties".⁴¹ Although deeded to the state in 1922, Sarah Helmick State Park was not officially opened to the public until September 12, 1924. The delay was due to the park's location on the Pacific Highway West that was still under construction until 1924. A historical resource in its own right, the Pacific Highway West created a more direct and well-maintained route specifically between Monmouth and Corvallis; the roadway was exemplary of the concrete highways being built in Oregon during this era⁴². Fanfare in local newspapers equally touted the completion of the highway and the new park set to finally open along its shoulders. The dedication ceremony at Sarah Helmick State Park also celebrated the completion of the highway and included the drowning of "Old Man Detour" in the Luckiamute.⁴³ At its start, Sarah Helmick State Park included a good entrance road, eight picnic tables, an outdoor stove, pit latrines, and an "old fashioned pump" well⁴⁴ and "spreading maples to shade campers and picnickers".⁴⁵

The original acreage of Sarah Helmick State Park (Figure 8) was surrounded by family farms that had been acquired by the U.S. Government for the construction of Camp Adair. These were the same "local people" who had utilized the park as a "neighborhood resort".⁴⁶ Sarah Helmick State Park nearly suffered the same fate as its neighbors. In 1941, it was proposed to the Highway Commission that Sarah Helmick State Park also be utilized by the War Department and the U.S. Government sought to purchase the park from the state. However, "until they could figure out what they wanted to do"⁴⁷, the War Department and the Highway Commission settled on a permit issued by the commission for use of the park as cantonment in 1942. In April 1943, soldiers from Camp Adair occupied the park and began maneuvers. While all seemed in order, a furious Samuel Boardman, first Oregon state park superintendent, later observed at the park a damaged circle road, damaged grass and trees, latrines a disheveled mess, three picnic tables and six benches missing and fox holes throughout.⁴⁸ Frustrated, Boardman had understood this area "to be posted out of bounds"⁴⁹ and sought \$500.00 to put the park back in order.⁵⁰ For the rest of the war, Camp Adair avoided Sarah Helmick State Park, marking it "OFF LIMITS TO MILITARY VEHICLES" and instead utilized neighboring fields.⁵¹ In 1946, the War Department, siting the park as surplus property, began the process of terminating its permit with the Highway Commission. Confusion arose, however, when Boardman pointed out that the War Department "never had any rights" to the park as it had been excluded from the permit and they had not actually purchased the property. Making matters worse, the War Department did not have record of the permit. This did not stop the U.S. Government from deeding 23.65 acres of previous Camp Adair property to the Highway Commission in February 1948 after the war. Eventually, on July 13, 1949 the Sarah Helmick State Park permit issue was

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ Langille. *Helmick State Park*.

⁴² Mark, Stephen. *Pers. Comm.* 2022.

⁴³ "State Accepts Helmick Tract for Auto Park." Albany Democrat-Herald. September 13, 1924.

⁴⁴ Langille. *Helmick State Park*.

⁴⁵ "New Highway on Westside Dedicated". The Capitol Journal (Salem, Oregon). September 13, 1924.

⁴⁶ Langille. *Helmick State Park*.

⁴⁷ Boardman, Samuel H. to C.B. McCullough. April 15, 1943.

⁴⁸ Boardman, Samuel H. to R. H. Baldock. April 27, 1943.

⁴⁹ Boardman, Samuel H. to J.M. Devers. September 28, 1946.

⁵⁰ Boardman, Samuel H. to R. H. Baldock.

⁵¹ *ibid*

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finally settled. Boardman was unimpressed with the situation and said of the event, it “just rises the hair on the nape of my neck “.⁵²

In 1945, as a post-war survey of existing conditions, park historian W.A. Langille provided a historical sketch of selected state parks to date and noted that Sarah Helmick State Park was in need of repair as “the inevitable result of the lack of help to properly care for the parks during the war-period”.⁵³ Boardman responded with recommendations for all parks included in the historical sketch, but drafted his response for Sarah Helmick State Park with specifics regarding the damage done by the military operations. The recommendations included a central three-way stove, new tables, repaired and painted toilets, a spring, a swimming pool created by fish lattice dams, and the gradient of the park approaches elongated.⁵⁴

A design sheet created in 1954 and revised in 1958 shows how the new acreage deeded by the U.S. Government and recommendations from Boardman were incorporated into proposed improvements (Figure 10). These design plans laid the foundation for Sarah Helmick State Park as it is today. At this time the circulation road was expanded into a portion of the newly deeded acreage. The design sheet also depicts a foot path leading to a sandy beach and swimming hole on the Luckiamute, parking areas, east and west latrine buildings, stove shelters, water fountains, fire rings, walking paths, and picnic tables. Circa 1950s photograph show picnic tables constructed of logs that match those used from 1951 to 1953 in OPRD’s *Standard Drawings – Engineering Index* (Figure 13). A cable and bollard fence lined the circulation road and parking areas. A General Improvement Plan for Sarah Helmick State Park was drafted in 1971 and revised in 1972 and called for the replacement of the east latrine, the expansion of the parking areas and new concrete curbing throughout the length of the circulation road, the relocation of walking paths throughout the park, the removal of the cable and bollard fencing, and an overnight camping area north of the Luckiamute and footbridge providing access (Figure 12). Of these changes, only the camping area was left on the drawing board. These changes in the 1970s brought modest modernizations to the park but left the circa 1950s layout largely intact. The “Pioneer’s Gift” interpretive sign telling the Helmick family story, was installed in the park in 1978.

Faced with potential closures in the 1980s and 1990s due to budgetary concerns, Sarah Helmick State Park survives today with the “prestige of Oregon’s first deeded state park”.⁵⁵ The park was saved thanks, in part, to the utilization of Oregon Lottery funds approved in 1998. The park has hosted Girl Scouts, a 1968 Poor People’s March, numerous family reunions, Oregon State University’s Senior Steakfry, and has even watched the 1984 Olympic Torch pass by. Future proposals for the park include the removal of the west latrine and the construction of a group picnic shelter in keeping with the rustic picnic setting of the park.⁵⁶ Sarah Helmick State Park will host a community picnic to celebrate 100 years of Oregon State Parks on State Parks Day, June 4, 2022.

Ultimately, Sarah Helmick State Park is incomparable as Oregon’s first state park. Similar in design, setting, and feeling to other state parks within Oregon, and even nationally, Sarah Helmick State Park alone represents the beginnings of the Oregon State Park System and the eventual creation of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to oversee and manage these unique areas of scenic, natural, historic, and recreational interest. While the park became Oregon’s first mostly by chance and timing, there are features that make Sarah Helmick State Park unique. The Helmick family had long-allowed their banks of the Luckiamute to be utilized as a community picnic grounds well before they made their donation in 1922. This created a strong connection between the surrounding agricultural community and what would eventually become Sarah Helmick State Park. This connection is still present in the working fields surrounding the park as well as the acres of Sarah Helmick State Park that are leased for agricultural production. Of the parks that quickly followed Sarah Helmick State Park, Holman State Wayside was purchased outright later in 1922 and Bradley State Scenic

⁵² Boardman, Samuel H. to J.M. Devers.

⁵³ Langille. *Helmick State Park*.

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁶ Christina Sweet. *Pers. Comm.* 2021.

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Viewpoint was “obtained by agreement” also in 1922, but the deed was not signed until a decade later. So, not only was Sarah Helmick State Park Oregon’s first, but the first to successfully be acquired via donation. Sarah Helmick State Park is also unique in that it offers users nothing but a shaded spot to picnic, rest, and swim in the Luckiamute; it does not boast to be the site of a significant event in history like Champoeg State Heritage Area or sweeping vistas like Rowena Crest Overlook. Sarah Helmick State Park is very much a park made by and for the people of its community and has managed to survive as a rest stop for citizens and travelers alike, even with the rerouting of 99W approximately 1,600 ft east of the park entrance.

Additionally, Holman State Wayside and Bradley State Scenic Viewpoint have changed operationally since inception. Holman State Wayside that once featured restrooms, picnic tables, and a spring has been closed to the public since 2007. Bradley State Scenic Viewpoint once featured concessions and a caretaker’s cottage, neither of which remain. Sarah Helmick State Park, however, remains largely as it was intended and representative of “Oregon’s first version of a state park...these little pockets along the highways”.⁵⁷

The Oregon Historic Sites Database (OHSD) identifies 34 parks listed in the National Register of Historic Places as properties contributing to the overall eligibility of a historic district. In comparison, the OHSD identifies eight *individually* listed parks in the state. In these individual listings, Sarah Helmick State Park is unique in its Area of Significance of Politics/Government. No other individually listed park in Oregon demonstrates a significant association with the creation of a government agency. Instead, outdoor recreation, entertainment/recreation, architecture, and landscape architecture were found to be the most common Areas of Significance among these properties. Table 2 identifies the eight individually listed parks for further comparative reference.

Property Name	Date Listed	Local/State/National	Criterion/Criteria	Area of Significance
Fort Clatsop National Memorial/Salt Works	1988	National	A, B, & D	Exploration/Settlement, Military, Science, Other: Cultural Anthropology
Cascade Locks Marine Park	1974	State	Not Specified	Architecture, Engineering, Transportation
Lithia Park	1982	State	Not Specified	Landscape Architecture, Other: Outdoor Recreation
Silver Falls State Park Concession Building Area Historic District	1983	State	Not Specified	Architecture, Conservation, Other: Outdoor Recreation
Silver Creek Youth Camp Historic District, Silver Falls State Park	2002	State	A & C	Entertainment/Recreation, Conservation, Landscape Architecture, Social History
Mt. Tabor Park	2004	Local	A & C	Entertainment/Recreation, Landscape Architecture, Community Planning and Development
Laurelhurst Park	2001	Local	A & C	Landscape Architecture
Courthouse Square Park	1987	Not Specified	Not Specified	Exploration/Settlement

⁵⁷ Urness, Zach, “Holman Wayside”. Statesman Journal. July 23, 2019.

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Sarah Helmick State Park
Name of Property

Polk Co., OR
County and State

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Sarah Helmick State Park
Name of Property

Polk Co., OR
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

Sarah Helmick State Park
Name of Property

Polk Co., OR
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 81.72 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>44.783595°</u>	<u>-123.240969°</u>	3	<u>44.783610°</u>	<u>-123.231654°</u>
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	<u>44.776379°</u>	<u>-123.240989°</u>	4	<u>44.776335°</u>	<u>-123.231675°</u>
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary coincides with the legal boundary of Sarah Helmick State Park property and is comprised of parcels that have been deeded to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department for inclusion in the state park property since 1922. The east boundary of the park generally follows Helmick Road with the exception of a small polygon (Polk County parcel) of 2.71 acres west of Helmick Road that is inaccessible to visitors. The north boundary roughly follows the southern toe slope of Helmick Hill bounded by a no longer extant grade of the Valley and Siletz Railroad. The west boundary is created by the USA to ODOT, Gerlach et. al., Larson (2059), and Larson (2058) parcels, visibly demarcated by a shift in vegetation from trees and riparian flora to active agricultural fields. The southern boundary is created by the Larson (2059) and Larson (2058) parcels, again marked by a shift from trees to agricultural fields. The approximate 15 acres of improved visitor use area is bounded by the Luckiamute River to the north and west, by Helmick Road to the east, and the Larson (2059) parcel to the south. The Sarah Helmick State Park visitor use area is comprised of land donated by Sarah Helmick (5.16 acres), her son James Helmick (.30 acres), and 9.54 acres of a larger parcel deeded to the state by the U.S. Government (23.65 acres in total deeded). The approximate 15 acres of improved visitor use area is bounded by the Luckiamute River to the north and west, by Helmick Road to the east, and by the Larsen (259) parcel to the south. Figure 3 depicts the approximate location and layout of the referenced parcels. Figure 4 depicts the Sarah Helmick State Park property and Sarah Helmick State Park visitor use area.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This boundary includes all 81.72 acres and legal tax lots of Sarah Helmick State Park; including the first 5.46 acres and the approximately 15 acres improved for visitor use. The boundary is inclusive of the Sarah Helmick State Park property in its entirety including the Sarah Helmick State Park visitor use area and agricultural lease areas; the inclusion of the agricultural lease areas serves to include all parcels of the park property as well as to capture and preserve the agricultural and historical setting of the rural park. This boundary reflects all areas of historic association with Sarah Helmick State Park.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jessica N. Gabriel, M.A. date 10-31-2021
organization Cascade Cultural Consulting telephone 720-934-2209
street & number 595 Cascade Drive NW email jgabriel@casadecultural.com
city or town Salem state OR zip code 97304

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Sarah Helmick State Park
Name of Property

Polk Co., OR
County and State

- **Regional Location Map**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Tax Lot Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

Sarah Helmick State Park
Name of Property

Polk Co., OR
County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Sarah Helmick State Park
City or Vicinity: Monmouth
County: Polk **State:** OR
Photographer: Jessica N. Gabriel, M.A.
Date Photographed: October 2021

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0001)
Looking north, Sarah Helmick State Park entrance sign

Photo 2 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0002)
Looking west/northwest, Park entrance with gates

Photo 3 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0003)
Looking east, Circulation road with parking area

Photo 4 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0004)
Looking southwest, Circulation road with parking area

Photo 5 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0005)
Looking northwest, Circulation road with parking area

Photo 6 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0006)
Looking east, Circulation road with parking area

Photo 7 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0007)
Looking north/northwest, Lawn and picnic area

Photo 8 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0008)
Looking south, Lawn

Photo 9 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0009)
Looking west, Picnic area

Photo 10 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0010)
Looking northwest, Lawn, picnic area, and parking area

Photo 11 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0011)
Looking west/northwest, 1969 – 1971 Concrete picnic table

Photo 12 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0012)
Looking east, Post 1971 Concrete picnic table

Sarah Helmick State Park
Name of Property

Polk Co., OR
County and State

Photo 13 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0013)
Looking west/northwest, Stove shelter (1 of 2)

Photo 14 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0014)
Looking north/northeast, Stove shelter (2 of 2)

Photo 15 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0015)
Looking west, Footpath to Luckiamute River swimming hole

Photo 16 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0016)
Looking west/northwest, Luckiamute River swimming hole

Photo 17 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0017)
Looking northeast, East latrine

Photo 18 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0018)
Looking west, West latrine

Photo 19 of 19: (OR_PolkCounty_Monmouth_SarahHelmickStatePark_0019)
Looking north, Pioneer's Gift sign

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sarah Helmick State Park

Name of Property

Polk County, OR

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

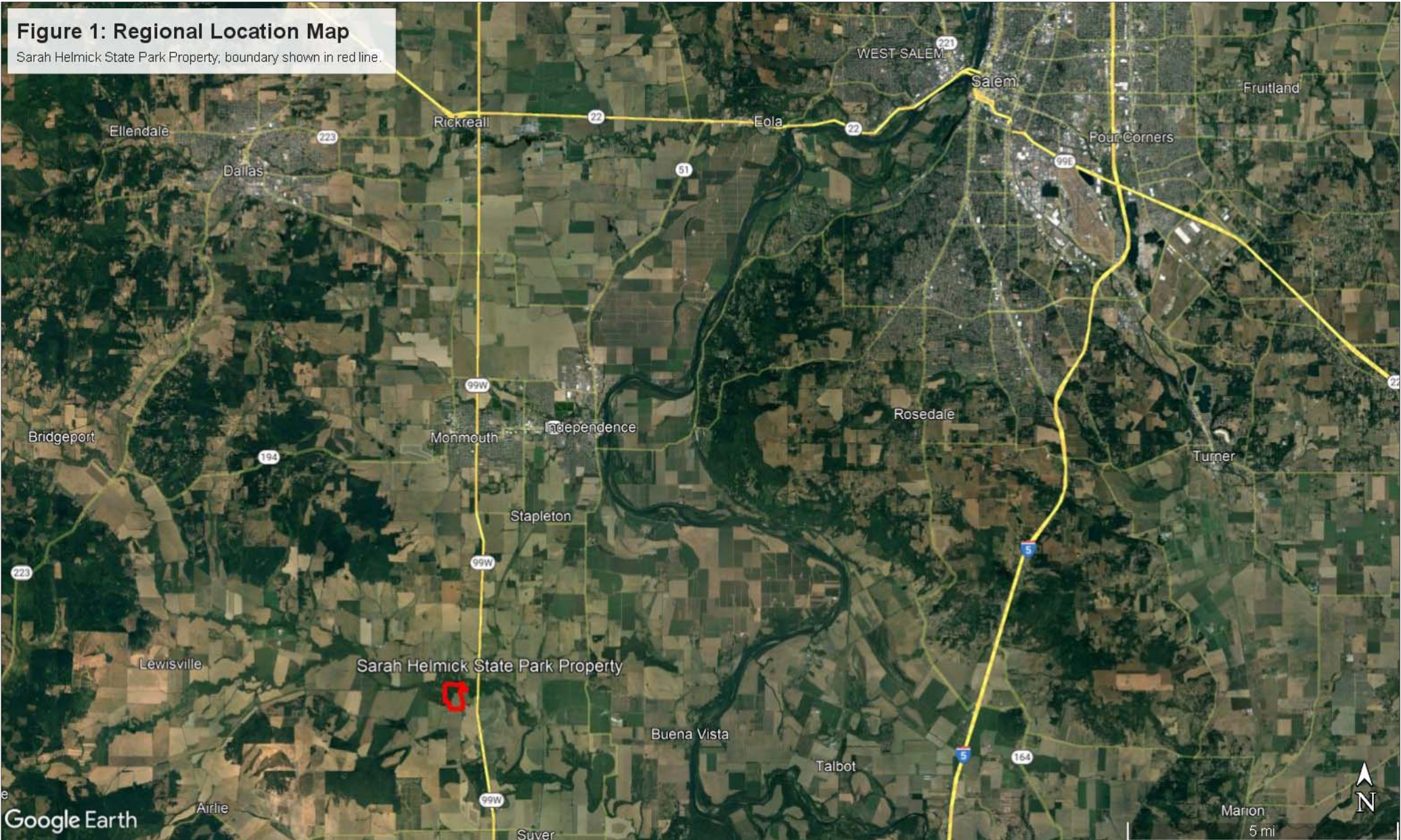
Section number Additional Documentation Page 27

List of Figures

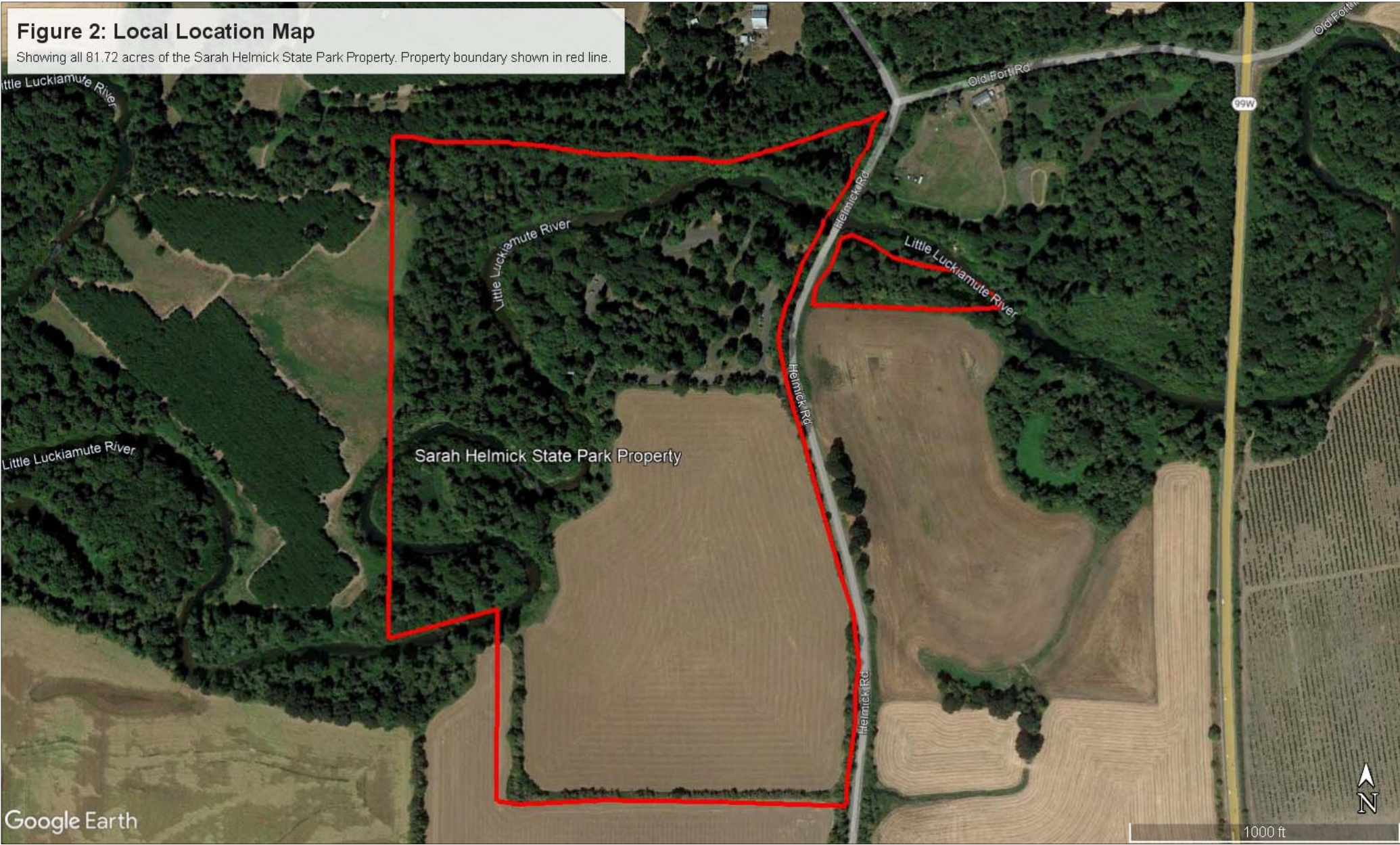
(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.

- Figure 1:** Regional Location Map
- Figure 2:** Local Location Map
- Figure 3:** Approximate Parcel/Tax Lot Map
- Figure 4:** Sarah Helmick State Park Property and Visitor Use Area
- Figure 5:** Sarah Helmick State Park Property and Visitor Use Area (with bounding coordinates box)**Figure**
- 6:** Sarah Helmick State Park Visitor Use Area (Historic Boundary)
- Figure 7:** Site Plan
- Figure 8:** 1922 Site Plan
- Figure 9:** 1936 Site Plan
- Figure 10:** 1954 Site Plan, revised 1958
- Figure 11:** Undated Proposed Site Plan, post-1949 and pre-1971
- Figure 12:** 1971 General Improvement Plan
- Figure 13:** *Standard Drawings – Engineering Index*
- Figure 14:** HISTORIC PHOTO Portrait of Sarah Helmick circa 1910
- Figure 15:** HISTORIC PHOTO Curbing, photo taken April 14, 1972
- Figure 16:** HISTORIC PHOTO Looking west showing southern visitor use area boundary at left
- Figure 17:** HISTORIC PHOTO West latrine, March 1957
- Figure 18:** HISTORIC PHOTO East latrine, April 1953
- Figure 19:** HISTORIC PHOTO East latrine shortly after construction, circa 1973
- Figure 20:** HISTORIC PHOTO Luckiamute swimming hole, circa 1990

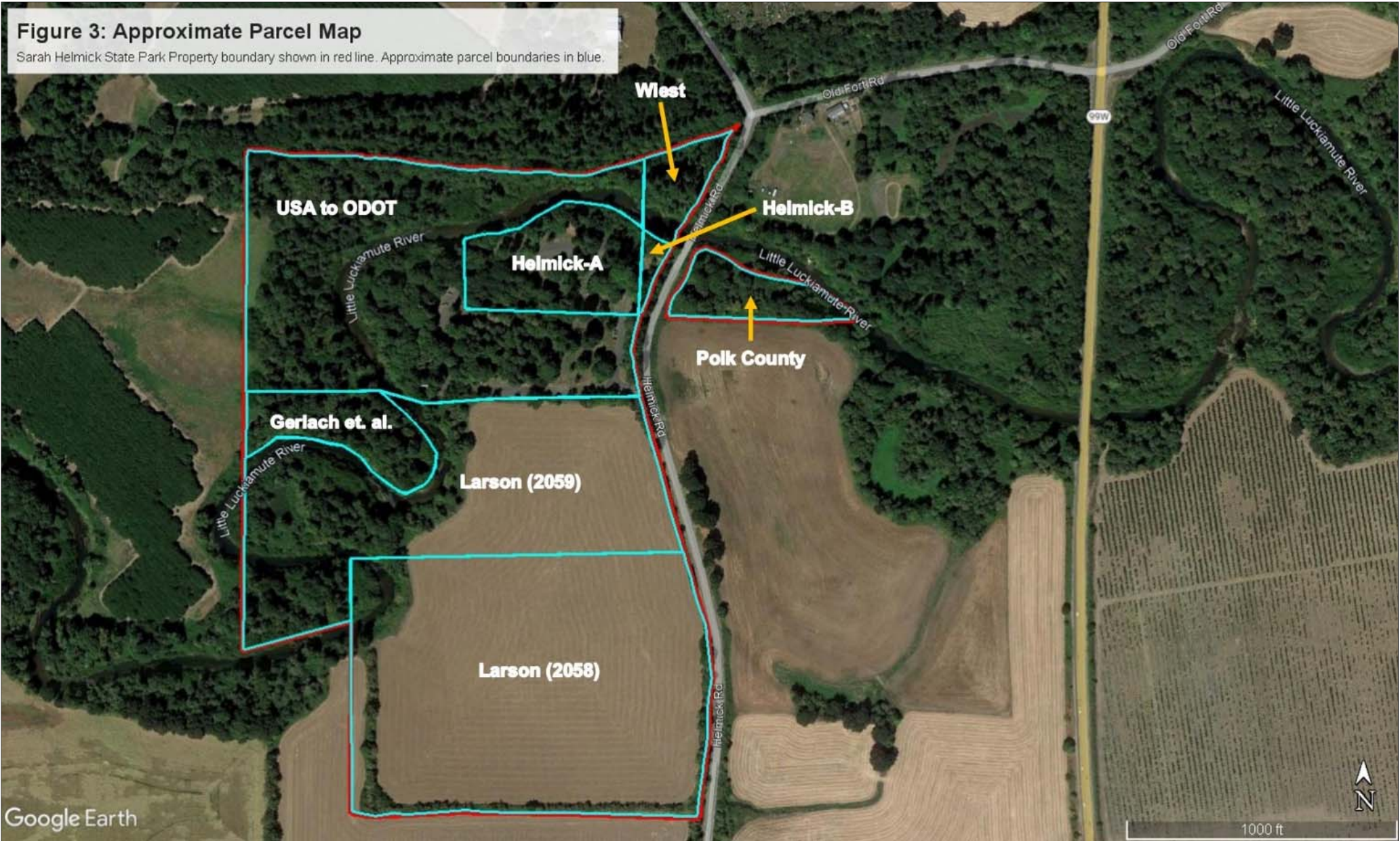
Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR
Figure 1: Regional Location Map



Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR
Figure 2: Local Location Map



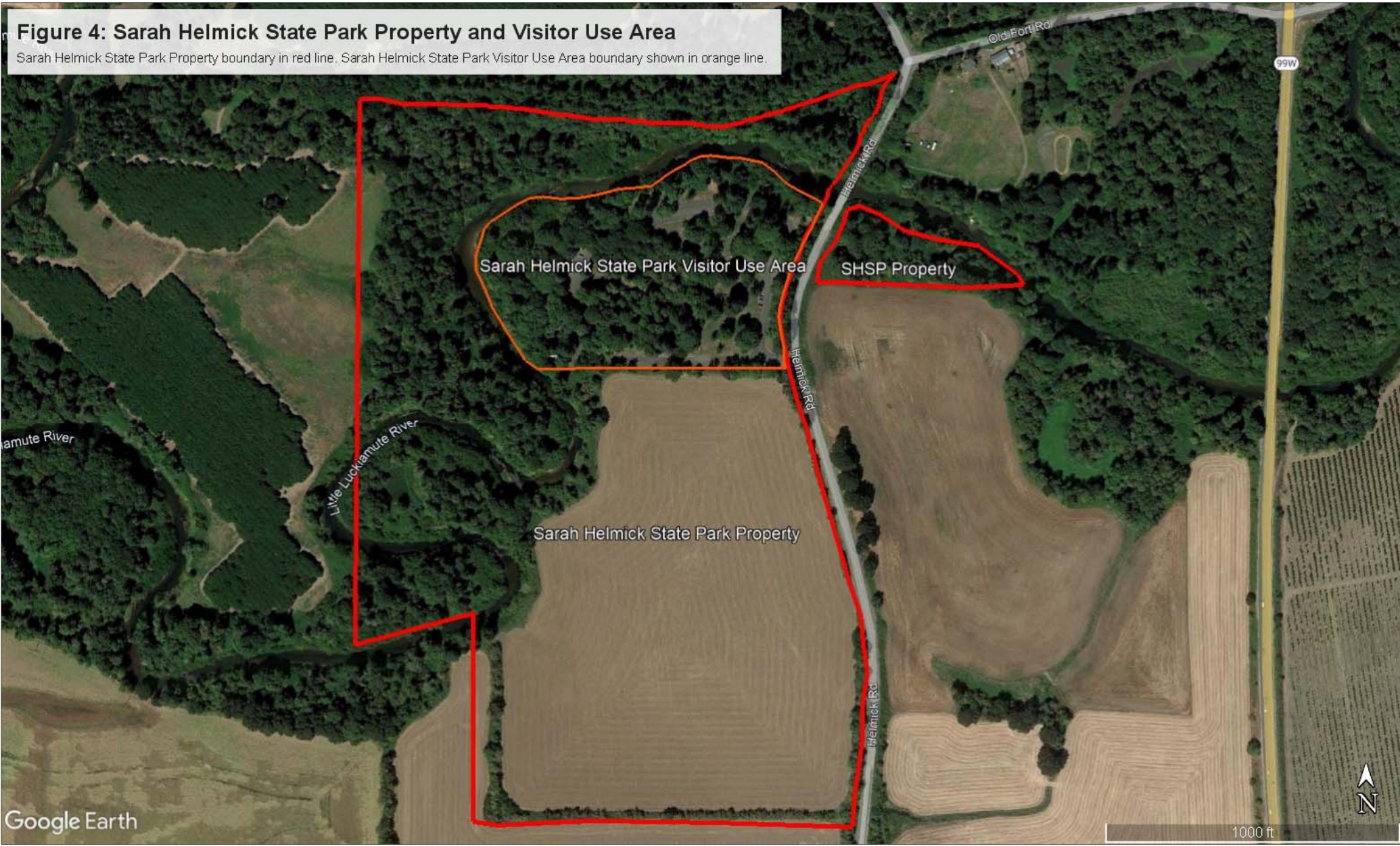
Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR
Figure 3: Approximate Parcel/Tax Lot Map



Sarah Helmick State Park

Polk County: OR

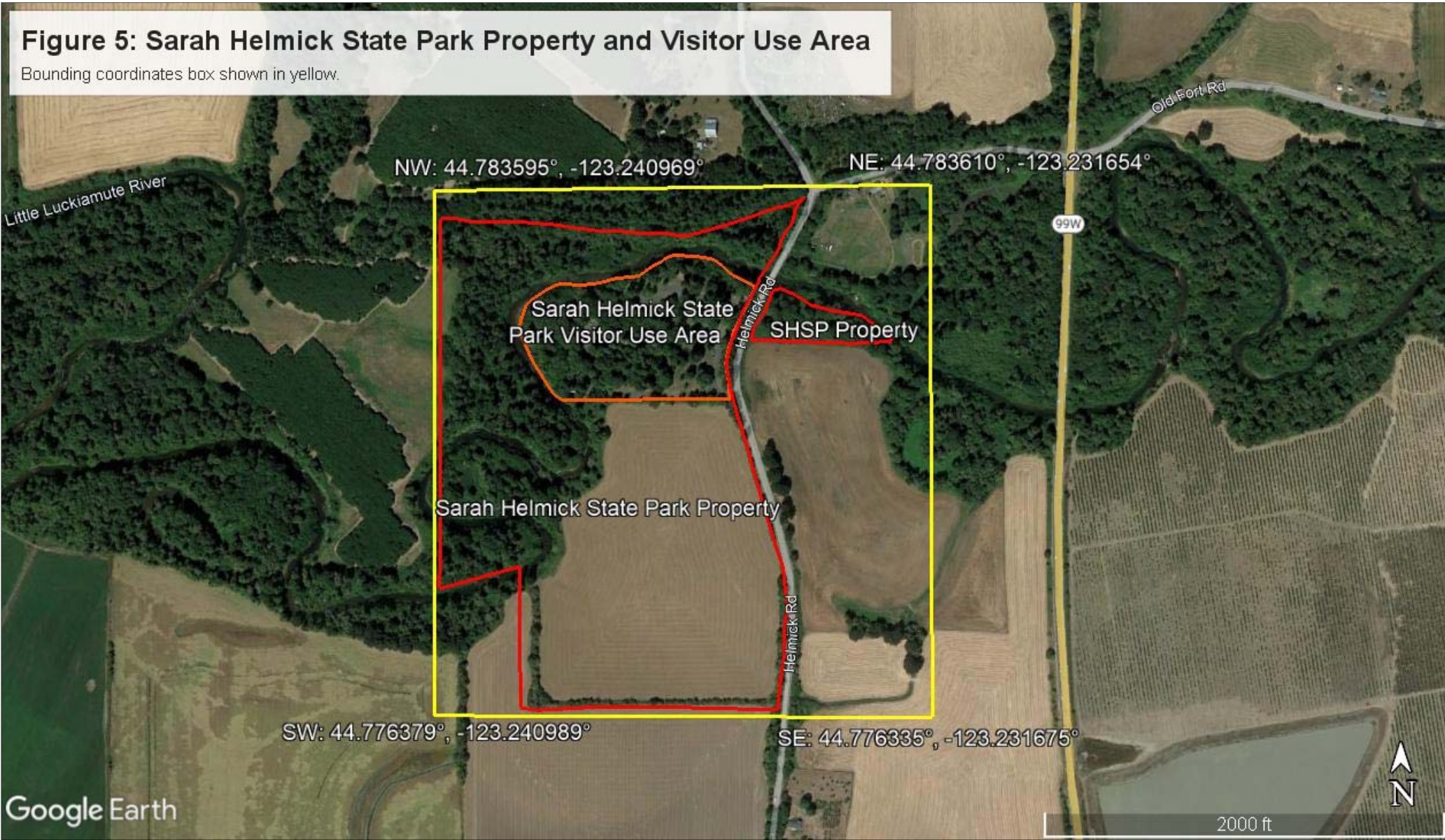
Figure 4: Sarah Helmick State Park Property and Visitor Use Area



Sarah Helmick State Park

Polk County: OR

Figure 5: Sarah Helmick State Park Property and Visitor Use Area



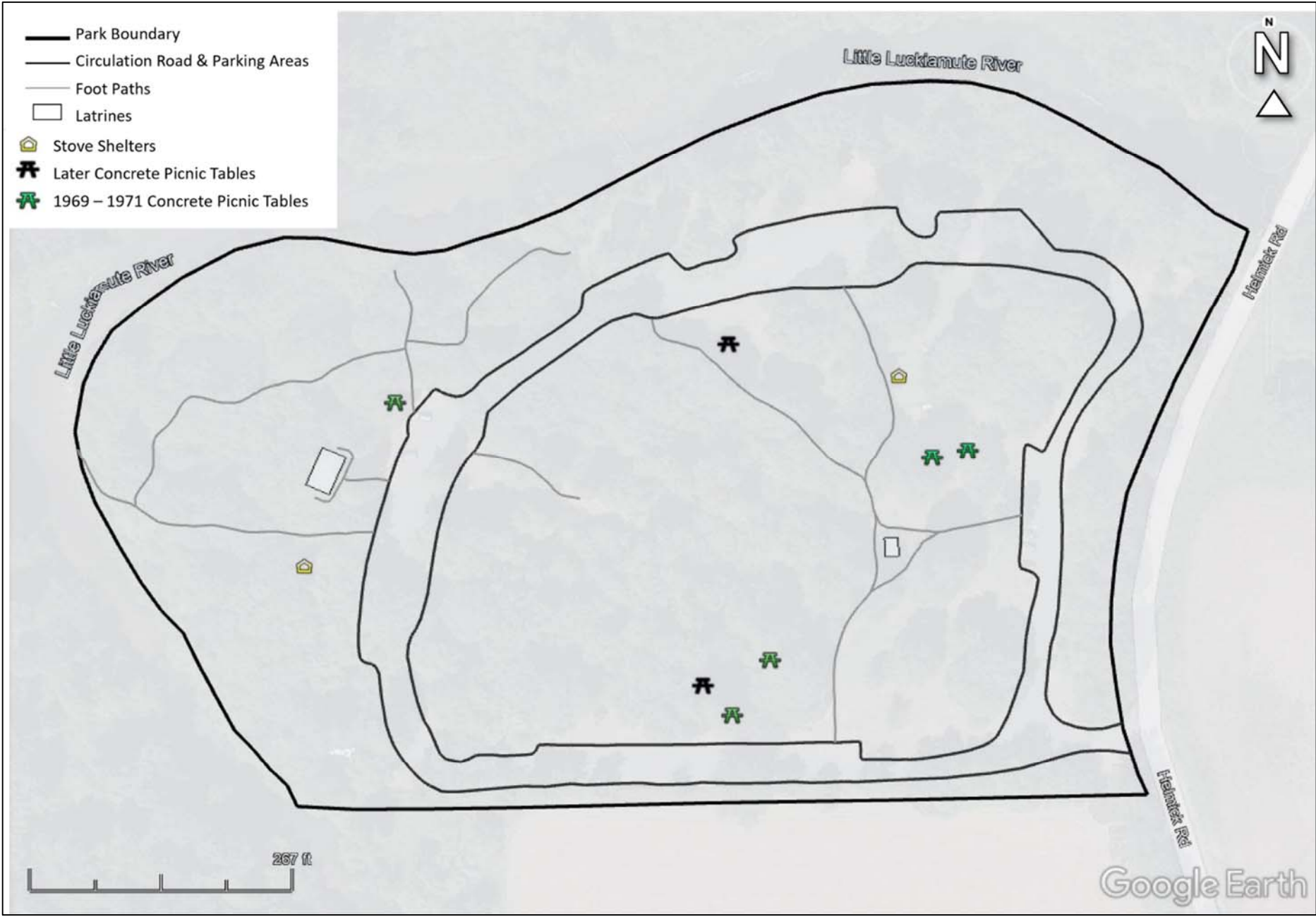
Sarah Helmick State Park

Polk County: OR

Figure 6: Sarah Helmick State Park Visitor Use Area (Historic Boundary)



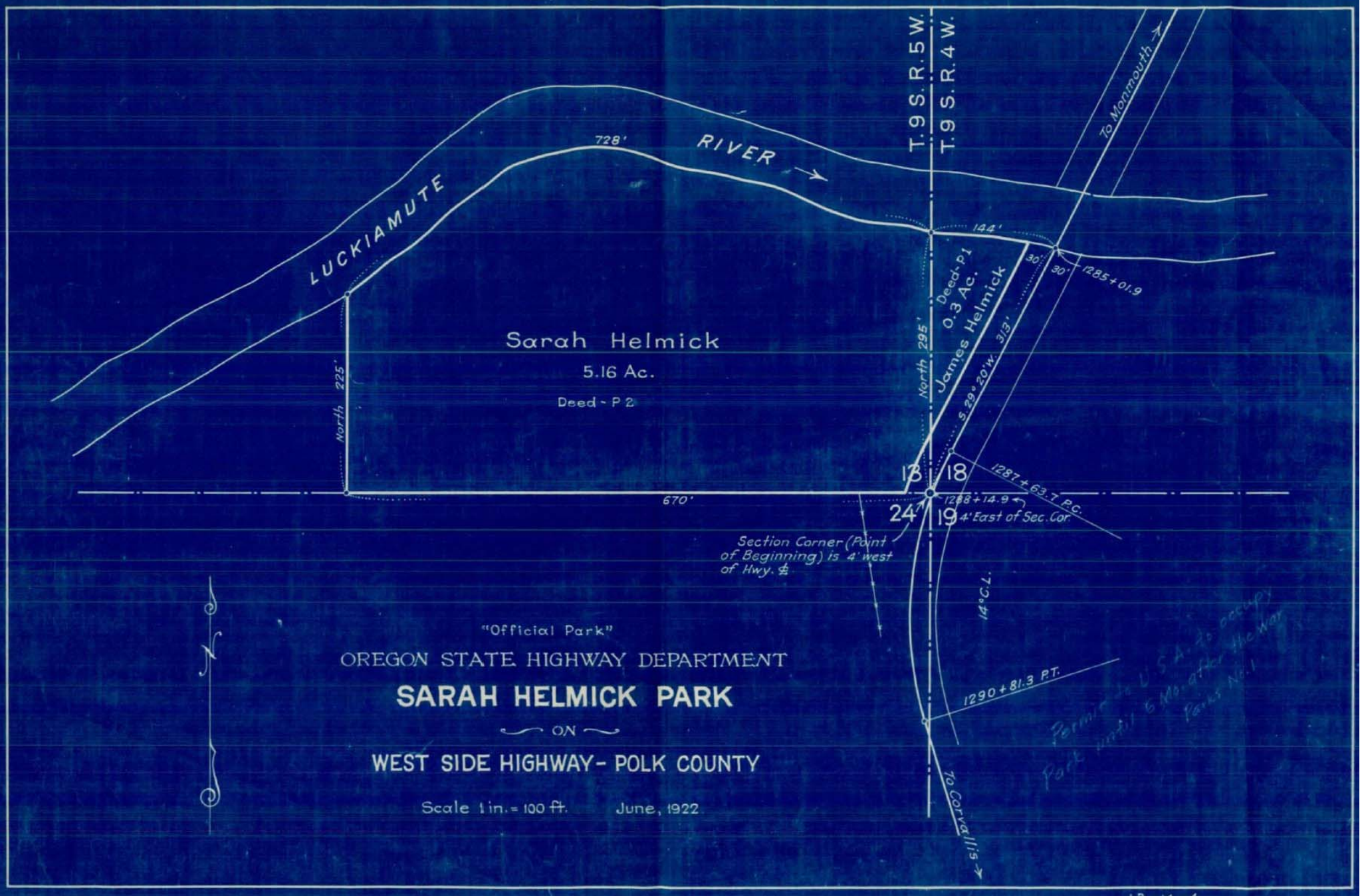
Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR
Figure 7: Site Plan



Sarah Helmick State Park

Polk County: OR

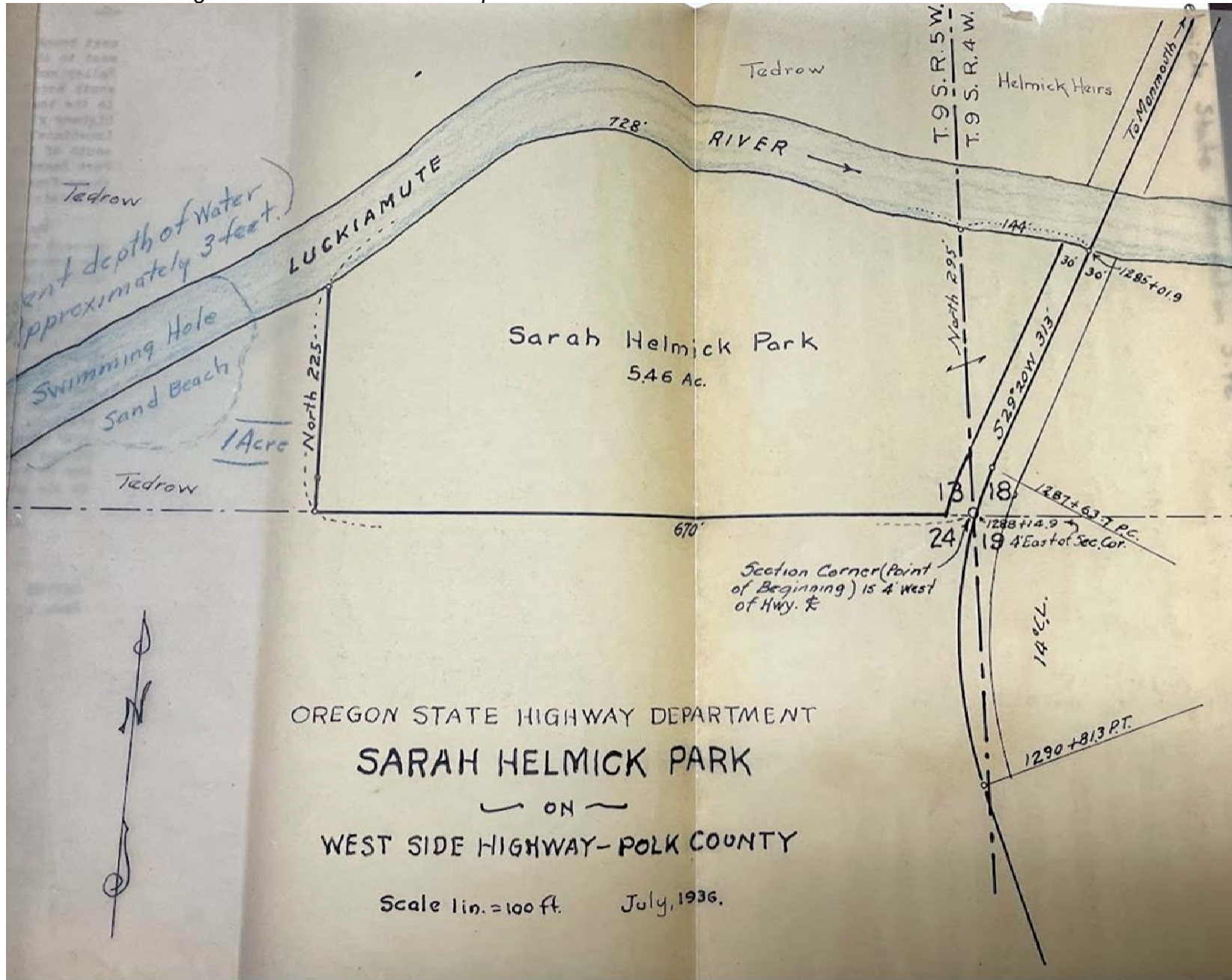
Figure 8: 1922 Site Plan. Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.



Sarah Helmick State Park

Polk County: OR

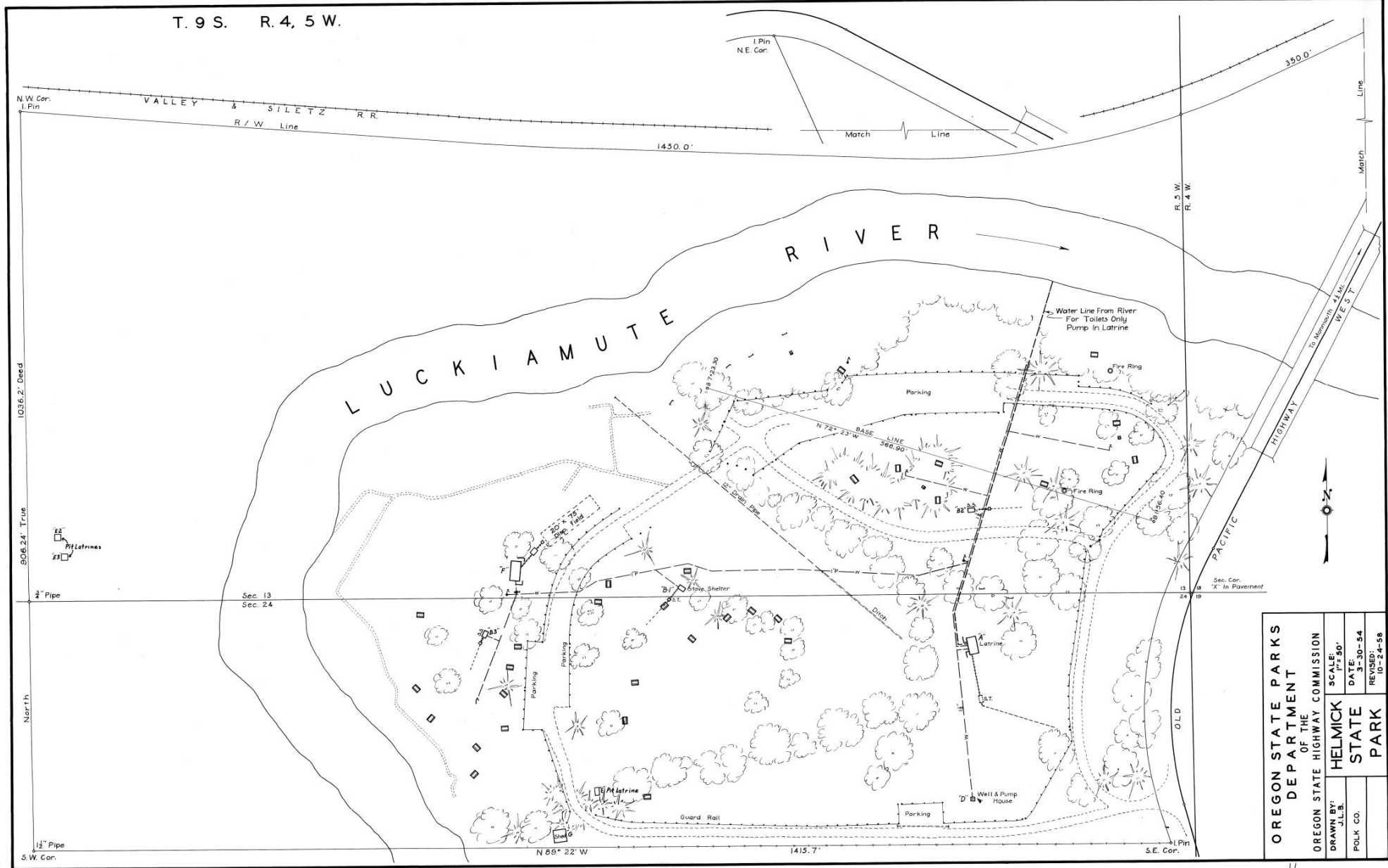
Figure 9: 1936 Site Plan. Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.



Sarah Helmick State Park

Polk County: OR

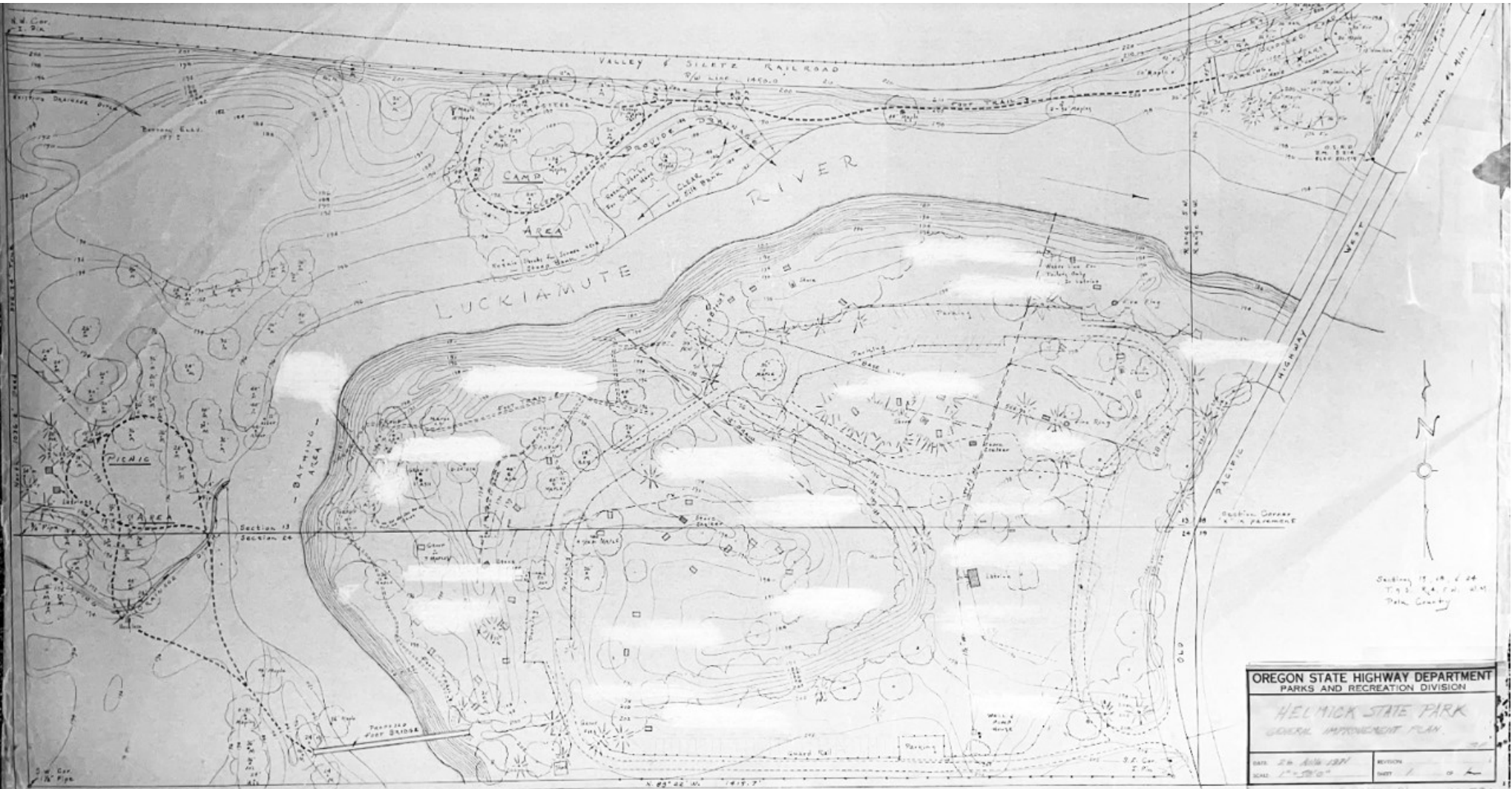
Figure 10: 1954 Site Plan, revised 1958. Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.



<p>OREGON STATE PARKS DEPARTMENT</p> <p>OF THE OREGON STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION</p>		SCALE: 1" = 50'
		DATE: 3-30-54
DRAWN BY: J.L.B.	POLK CO.	REVISED: 10-24-58
<p>HELMICK STATE PARK</p>		

**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**

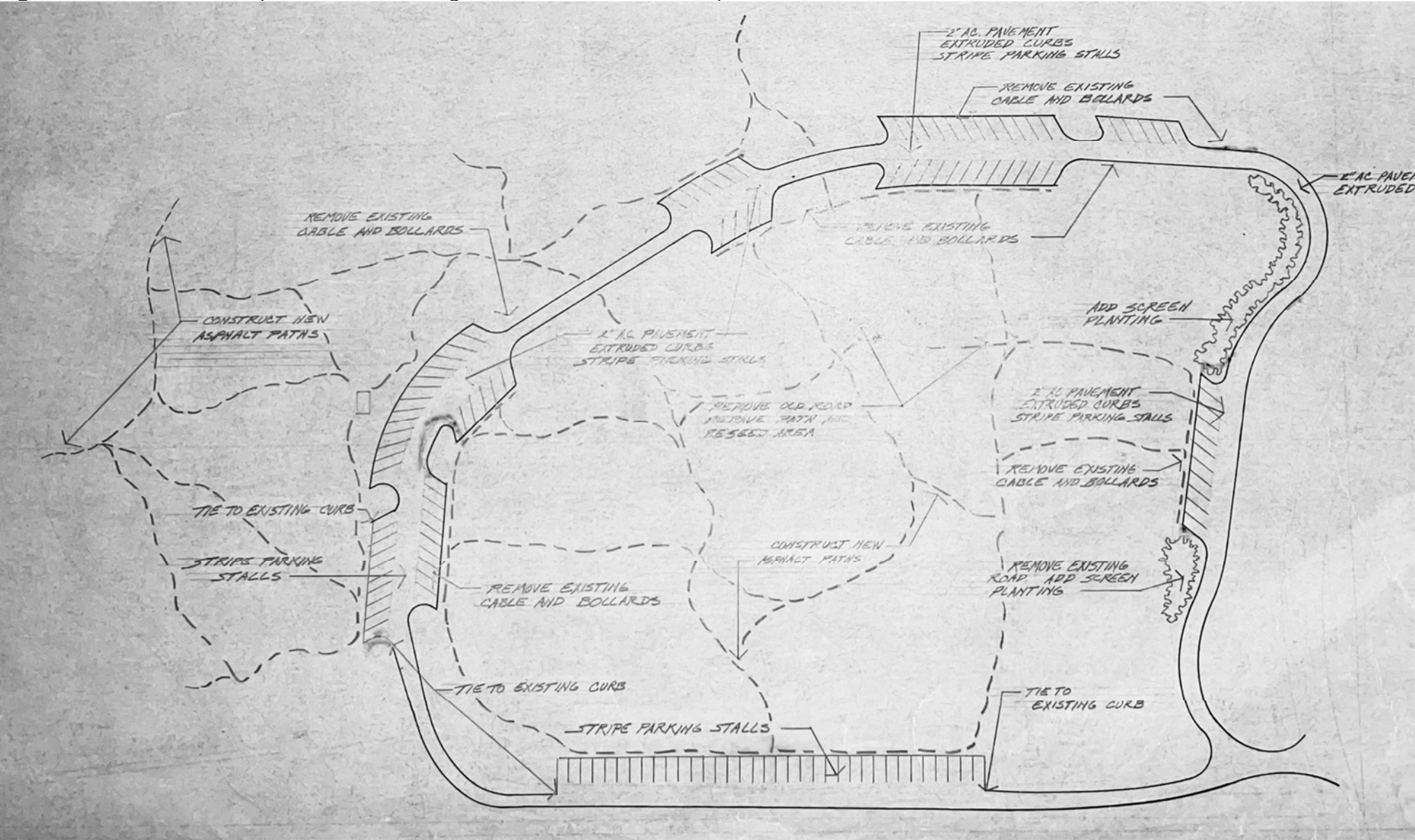
Figure 11: Undated Proposed Site Plan, post-1949 and pre-1971. Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.



Sarah Helmick State Park

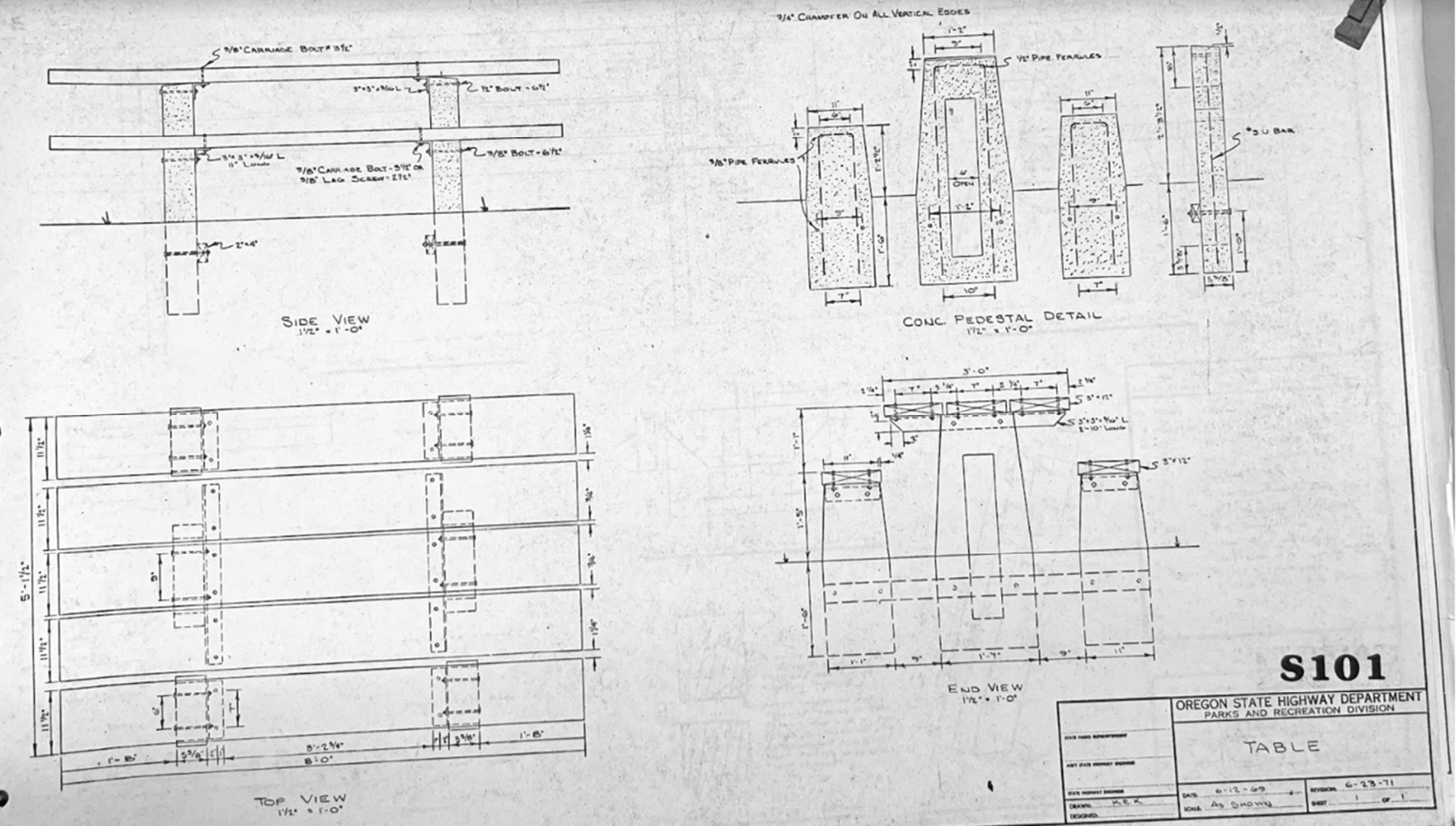
Polk County: OR

Figure 12: 1971 General Improvement Plan. Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.



Sarah Helmick State Park
 Polk County: OR

Figure 13: Standard Drawings – Engineering Index. Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.



Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR

Figure 14: HISTORIC PHOTO Portrait of Sarah Helmick circa 1910. *Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.*



Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR

Figure 15: HISTORIC PHOTO Curbing, photo taken April 14, 1972. *Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.*



Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR

Figure 16: HISTORIC PHOTO Looking west showing southern visitor use area boundary at left. *Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.*



Figure 17: HISTORIC PHOTO West latrine, March 1957. *Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.*



**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**

Figure 18: HISTORIC PHOTO East latrine, April 1953. *Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.*



Figure 19: HISTORIC PHOTO East latrine shortly after construction, circa 1973. *Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.*



Figure 20: HISTORIC PHOTO Luckiamute swimming hole, circa 1990. *Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Archives. Sarah Helmick State Park Folder.*



**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**



Photo 1 of 19: Sarah Helmick State Park entrance sign. Looking north.



Photo 2 of 19: Park entrance with gates. Looking west/northwest.

**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**



Photo 3 of 19: Circulation road with parking area. Looking east.



Photo 4 of 19: Circulation road with parking area. Looking southwest.

Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR



Photo 5 of 19: Circulation road with parking area. Looking northwest.



Photo 6 of 19: Circulation road with parking area. Looking east.

**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**



Photo 7 of 19: Lawn and picnic area. Looking north/northwest.



Photo 8 of 19: Lawn. Looking south.

**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**



Photo 9 of 19: Picnic area. Looking west.



Photo 10 of 19: Lawn, picnic area, and parking area. Looking northwest.

**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**



Photo 11 of 19: 1969 – 1971 Concrete picnic table. Looking west/northwest.



Photo 12 of 19: Post 1971 Concrete picnic table. Looking east.

**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**



Photo 13 of 19: Stove shelter (1 of 2). Looking west/northwest.



Photo 14 of 19: Stove shelter (2 of 2). Looking north/northeast.

**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**



Photo 15 of 19: Footpath to Luckiamute River swimming hole. Looking west.



Photo 16 of 19: Luckiamute River swimming hole. Looking west/northwest.

**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**



Photo 17 of 19: East latrine. Looking northeast.



Photo 18 of 19: West latrine. Looking west.

**Sarah Helmick State Park
Polk County: OR**



Photo 19 of 19: Pioneer's Gift sign. Looking north.