

Workmen Battle Mud, Wolf Creek Highway

By City of Portland

This 1936 photograph shows men building the Wolf Creek Highway, which later was renamed the Sunset Highway (US 26) in honor of a Portland area National Guard unit that fought in World War II. The federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) hired the workers and started the project as part of a national effort to provide jobs for the unemployed. Workers building the highway lived in camps outside of Portland. When it was completed in 1949, the highway brought more tourism to the Oregon Coast.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the WPA with a 1935 executive order. It was one of his New Deal programs that sought to provide economic relief during the Depression. In addition to providing jobs in construction and development projects, such as bridges, roads, and airports, the WPA also paid men and women to produce music, art, theater, literature, and historical texts for the government. The program employed more than 8.5 million workers nation-wide.

Some Oregon politicians and residents opposed the WPA, which ended in 1942, because they believed it was a federal handout that would create a dependent class of citizens.

Further Reading: Barker, Neil. "Portland's Works Progress Administration." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101, 2000: 414-41.

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