

## **B1 WILDERNESS**

### **GOAL**

MANAGE TO PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND IMPROVE THE RESOURCES AND VALUES OF THE FOREST WILDERNESSES, AS DIRECTED BY THE WILDERNESS ACT OF 1964.

### **DESCRIPTION**

The Umatilla National Forest has three designated wildernesses:

1. Wenaha-Tucannon located in the northern Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington. A total of 177,465 acres lies within the wilderness, in three counties in Washington and one in Oregon.
2. North Fork Umatilla located in the northern Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. A total of 20,144 acres is included in the wilderness in two counties in Oregon.
3. North Fork John Day located in the central Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. There are 106,787 acres in the wilderness in two counties in Oregon.

Specific management direction for the Wenaha-Tucannon, North Fork John Day, and North Fork Umatilla wildernesses is summarized in the Forest Plan, Appendix 6.

### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION**

Each of the Forest wildernesses will appear to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of human activities substantially unnoticeable. Natural processes, including fires, will continue to be the primary forces affecting the condition of wildernesses. The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) process will be fully implemented to provide the framework for establishing acceptable and appropriate resource and social conditions (especially the amount and type of use) in wilderness settings. The areas will be managed so as not to have degraded the wilderness attributes for which they were designated. There will be some evidence of human influence due to the existence of valid mining claims and past use; however, mitigation techniques will be utilized which minimize the impact of these activities. The surrounding area will be managed so as not to adversely affect the wilderness resource. Access roads and trailheads will distribute use adequately. Most trails will provide an element of challenge and some risk.

### **MANAGEMENT AREAS STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

#### **WILDERNESS**

General:

Wildernesses will be managed as follows:

1. Provide opportunity for solitude, physical and mental challenge, primitive recreation experiences, education, and research.
2. Maintain the wilderness characteristics in such a manner that ecosystems are unaffected by human manipulation and influences, and plants and animals develop and respond to natural forces.
3. Natural ecological succession including natural fire will be allowed to occur without endangering adjacent lands.
4. Emphasis is on preserving, enhancing, and restoring wilderness character and public values. Protection of the wilderness resource will be the primary criterion used to resolve conflict between resource areas.

5. Use of motors and mechanized equipment is prohibited. Exception can be permitted with Forest Supervisor's approval for emergencies involving life, health, and safety. The Regional Forester must approve all other use of motorized equipment.
6. Pacific Northwest Region objectives for wilderness areas will be used as Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for management of wilderness areas and providing wilderness opportunities for the public.
7. Wildernesses will be managed to prevent degradation. Each wilderness will be kept essentially as wild as it was at the time of classification. Nondegradation will apply to all values of wilderness: social, physical, and biological values. If degradation occurs at specific sites or areas, an equal or greater area will be improved elsewhere to keep overall condition at least as good as it was prior to the new impact. Conditions will be improved in situations where natural processes are not operating freely, or where the values for which the wildernesses were created are impaired. Examples of this situation occur where core areas of the wildernesses do not meet at least Primitive Wilderness Resource Spectrum (WRS) conditions and where popular destination points near the edges of wildernesses (within influence of day-use activities), or heavily-used travel corridors within the core area, do not meet at least Semi-primitive WRS conditions. The impact of mining activities in the North Fork John Day Wilderness is another example of a condition that will be improved.

## RECREATION

### Use

1. Recreation is an appropriate use of the wildernesses to the extent that it does not degrade values established for wilderness.
2. Management action of limiting and/or distributing visitor use will be based on application of the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) process described by Stankey, et al., in The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) System for Wilderness Planning (General Technical Report INT-176) (USDA Forest Service 1985b). The lands within the wildernesses will be assigned to one of the wilderness resource spectrum (WRS) classes described for each wilderness. The management emphasis for each opportunity class is stated in the Managerial Setting portion of the description.
3. Manage the traditional hunting use to protect wilderness characteristics and resources
4. Visitor use will be managed at a level compatible with the wilderness resource to prevent loss of solitude or unacceptable depreciation of the wilderness qualities. The primary emphasis will be on maintaining wilderness conditions, according to specified indicators and standards, rather than a specified amount of use. Tentative capacities for the wildernesses are:  
  
Wenaha-Tucannon - 115,000 RVD/yr.  
North Fork Umatilla - 15,000 RVD/yr.  
North Fork John Day - 85,000 RVD/yr.
5. If indicators do not meet standards established for each wilderness, the following procedures will be used by priority:
  - a. Inform/educate users and correct resource damage;
  - b. Where there is physical site alteration, make the site less appealing or less acceptable, remove evidence of use, naturalize the site, and scatter debris;
  - c. Restrict causative activity by regulations; e.g., party size, length of stay, type of equipment, or pack stock;

- d. close site or area to use until it is rehabilitated or restored to wilderness conditions and suggest alternative areas for use; and
    - e. restrict number of visitors.
6. Information and education contacts will emphasize appropriate wilderness behavior, distribution of use, management goals and objectives, and visitor assistance. Programs will be designed to allow 60-80 percent of the users to read or hear the wilderness message prior to entering the area.
7. Encourage visitors to adopt a 'leave no trace' ethic:
  - a. Use self-contained stoves,
  - b. remove fire circles and scatter remaining charcoal,
  - c. refrain from cutting green trees or limbs,
  - d. practice a Pack-It-In, Pack-It-Out policy, and
  - e. use biodegradable soap and dispose of human waste and waste water from cooking and washing at least 100 feet from streams and lakes.

#### Facilities:

1. Construction, installation, and maintenance of permanent improvements will generally be avoided. Rustic facilities (development level 1) may be added or maintained to preserve and/or protect the wilderness resource. Facilities will be designed and placed to minimize their intrusion upon the wilderness setting and will meet use requirements within limits of acceptable change for the WRS class.

#### Trails:

1. Provide a range of trail difficulty consistent with WROS classes. Trails will generally be managed to provide 'More' and 'Most' difficult opportunities.
2. Trails will be constructed, reconstructed, or maintained at standards appropriate to the WRS setting specified in the Trail Management Plan.

#### Activities:

1. Activities may be restricted or controlled as necessary to preserve the opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation experiences.
2. Contain permanent loss of ground cover to a maximum of 800 sq. ft. per acre in heavily used areas. Revegetation of impacted areas can occur.

#### Recreation Opportunity Spectrum:

The wilderness will be managed to provide the setting, activity, and experience in the Recreation Opportunity categories of Primitive and Semi-primitive Nonmotorized.

Core areas of the wildernesses will generally be managed to meet Primitive WRS conditions, except that heavily used travel corridors may meet Semi-primitive Nonmotorized (SPNM) conditions. Popular destination points near the edges of wildernesses (within influence of day use activities) will meet at least SPNM conditions.

#### Signs:

1. Provide for minimal signing at entrances and key trail intersections. Use standard oak signs for entrances and trail signs.
2. Where activities occur adjacent to the wilderness, the activity will be responsible to locate and post the boundary.

## VISUAL

Preservation and retention visual quality objectives will meet the physical and biological goals for the areas. Preservation is the primary VQO for the wilderness. The retention VQO will apply to management activities (e.g., gas and mineral exploration, range improvements, trail construction).

## CULTURAL

Meet Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines.

Cultural resource sites and structures will be protected until they are evaluated. Sites or structures not qualifying for the National Register of Historic Places will be removed or allowed to deteriorate naturally unless they are:

1. Necessary to support the values set forth in Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act of 1964:  
or
2. Serving administrative purposes as necessary for protection of the wilderness resource (Wilderness Act of 1964 [Section 4(c)]) (U.S. Laws, Statutes, etc. 1964); or
3. Essential to cultural resource management as described in FSM 2323.82.

All structures shall be evaluated for their historical significance. Evaluation should include comparative analysis to determine a property's relative importance.

After evaluation, any decision to maintain, or abandon (but not remove) structures which meet the criteria for the National Register shall be preceded by the process outlined in 36 CFR 800 for comment by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Abandoned structures should be allowed to deteriorate naturally after following procedures outlined in 36 CFR 800, including recording the site to appropriate standards and other mitigative measures described in the concluding Memorandum of Agreement. Any retained or maintained structure shall be managed to have a minimum impact on the wilderness resource.

If it is determined, after historical evaluation, that a structure is not of significance, it shall be removed by a practical method compatible with the goals of this Plan and the site shall be restored to as natural a condition as is practical.

Onsite interpretation will not be done. Interpretation may be done offsite with brochures and audio-visual programs.

## WILDLIFE AND FISH

Wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing are appropriate uses of wilderness.

Wildlife and fish habitat management will be permitted where they conform to the management of the wilderness resource.

Reestablishment of indigenous species is permitted, subject to environmental assessments and Regional Forester approval.

Coordinate with the state wildlife and game agencies to establish user densities that are compatible with the management of the wilderness.

## RANGE

Grazing of domestic livestock is permitted at places and approximates levels established prior to the effective date of wilderness classification. A level 'B' or 'C' strategy for range can apply. Sustained livestock grazing may be reduced if damaging to the resource. Existing livestock management improvements may be maintained. Structural range improvements may be built only when necessary to protect the resource (not to increase capacity).

Permittees will be encouraged to install and replace range improvement facilities with native materials where practical.

All grazing areas within the wilderness will be designated as livestock grazing allotments. Objectives for the allotment management will be consistent with resource conditions in the assigned WRS. As a minimum, managers will:

1. Establish recommended grazing dates, based on range readiness checks,
2. Determine capacity, condition, and trend, and
3. Monitor actual use levels.

Use of supplemental feeds for recreation livestock will be encouraged over open grazing. Encourage use of feeds that are free of nonindigenous and noxious weed seed.

#### TIMBER/VEGETATION

Timber harvest is not permitted.

Natural ecological processes of plant succession will be encouraged to occur, including ecological systems dependent on the natural role of fire.

Live trees may be utilized for administrative purposes.

Fuelwood gathering is restricted to onsite use in conjunction with recreation and authorized activities.

Geological and mineral surveys may be performed by the US. Geologic Survey and Bureau of Mines.

#### WATER AND SOIL

Protect full natural flow of streams within the wildernesses, except for valid water rights existing at the time of classification.

Water developments may be authorized by the President where such developments are deemed necessary.

Meet Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for Soil and Water.

#### MINERALS

The wilderness is closed to mineral entry and mineral leasing, subject to valid existing rights.

Occupancy, structures and use of motorized and mechanized equipment related to mining activities are permitted to the extent allowed by law and regulations. Every reasonable effort should be made through the Operating Plan to minimize their effect on the wilderness resource, compatible with rights of claimants and lessees.

#### LANDS

Acquisition of private parcels of land within the wilderness boundary is a high priority.

Wildernesses are an 'Exclusion Area' for utility corridors.

Rights-of-way and nonrecreational special uses will be managed in conformance with the Wilderness Act and capacity objectives.

Nonconforming uses established prior to wilderness designation will be administered so as to minimize their impacts. New nonconforming structures (temporary or permanent) and uses are not permitted

#### TRANSPORTATION

Roads are not permitted except for those with legally established rights.

## AIR QUALITY

Forest activities outside the wilderness will be conducted to protect the clarity of the air to maintain visibility standards

Where manageable or negotiable, identify and mitigate outside influences adversely affecting air quality within wildernesses. The air quality related values will be identified when a Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) action that may impact the wilderness is received.

## FIRE

Fire will be considered an inherent part of the general wilderness ecosystem. All naturally-occurring ignitions within wilderness are prescribed fire until declared wildfire.

All wildfires will receive an appropriate suppression response. Suppression actions may include surveillance, confinement, containment, or control depending on fire location and burning conditions.

Low impact suppression measures will be applied. Some forms of mechanized equipment may be used if the result is to lessen the long-term physical and social impact on wilderness areas from suppression actions.

Prescribed fires may be used as a tool to manage ecosystems within the wilderness in accordance with management plans for each wilderness (FSM 2324).

## PESTS

Monitor the levels and activities of pests normally associated with wilderness and old growth ecosystems. Most insect and disease agents do not normally pose threats to adjacent lands; effects of endemic levels will be accepted as naturally-occurring phenomena.

Suppression activities for insect and disease outbreaks may be permitted with Chief of the Forest Service approval to prevent loss within wilderness and/or unacceptable resource damage to resources in adjacent areas. Favor biological methods when available. Management of insects and diseases will follow direction in FSM 2324.1.

## GENERAL PROCEDURES

### EMERGENCIES

1. Motorized equipment and mechanical transport may be allowed when an emergency condition exists involving human health and safety (FSM 2326.1).
2. Removal of seriously ill injured, or deceased persons will be considered an emergency justifying landing of an aircraft. For emergency helicopter landings, natural openings will be utilized where possible rather than cutting new openings.
3. Responsibility for search and rescue of lost or injured visitors is held by the county of jurisdiction (County Sheriffs). The Forest Service will provide assistance within its capacity as requested. The Forest Service will provide for other considerations including limiting the impact of operations on wilderness values to a minimum.
4. Public communications from inside wilderness will be restricted to emergencies.

### RESEARCH

Research may be conducted when:

1. Necessary to support values set forth in Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act; or,
2. It cannot be accomplished outside the wilderness; and,
3. It is done in compliance with the protection of the wilderness values and wilderness experience of visitors.