

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision—2014

Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests



Recommended Wilderness Area

In a Nutshell (Preferred Alternative)

The Blue Mountains national forests includes proposed recommended wilderness. Wilderness area recommendations in the final forest plans are “preliminary administrative recommendation”. Recommendations will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Only Congress has the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.

Existing allowable uses within recommended wilderness areas would continue until Congressional designation.

Definitions

Wilderness: Wilderness are federal “lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” In 1964 about nine million acres of Forest Service “primitive” and “wild” areas in 13 states immediately received permanent protection, and subsequent legislation has added more lands as wilderness.

Evaluation Process: The wilderness evaluation process is a requirement for the Forest Plan Revision process and is outlined in the Forest Service Handbook (1909.12, Chapter 72). The evaluation includes “determining the mix of land and resource uses that best meet public needs.” Additional review applies a three tiered test of capability, availability, and need for each review area. A final consideration states that “areas must provide opportunities and experiences that are dependent upon or enhanced by a wilderness environment in addition to their inherent wilderness quality.”

- **Capability:** The degree to which that area contains the basic characteristics, based on the Wilderness Act that make it suitable for wilderness recommendation.
- **Availability:** Areas meeting the capability requirements are considered potentially available for wilderness designation. The availability is conditioned by the value of and need for the wilderness resource compared to the value and need for other resources.
- **Need:** Determining whether there is a need to recommend a potential wilderness area for wilderness study or designation.



for the greatest good

Document Sections

Recommended Wilderness Area discussion can be found in the *Blue Mountains National Forests Proposed Revised Land Management Plan* in the following sections:

Part 2 – Strategy: pages 76-77

Part 2 – Strategy: page 97, “General suitability matrix for management areas.”

Part 3 – Design Criteria: page 130-133

Recommended Wilderness areas analysis can be found in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in the following sections:

Vol. 1, Chapter 3 – Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences: pages 185-209

Vol. 3, Appendix B – Methodology: pages 323-325

Vol. 3, Appendix F – Wilderness Evaluation: pages 395-426

Supplemental and supporting documentation:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/wallowa-whitman/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5260398>

Wilderness Area Need Evaluation (March, 2010)

Malheur National Forest Review of Areas with Wilderness Potential (March, 2010)

Umatilla National Forest Review of Areas with Wilderness Potential (March, 2010)

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Review of Areas with Wilderness Potential (March, 2010)

FAQs

Are new wilderness areas or additions to current wilderness areas being proposed?

The preferred alternative includes administrative recommendations for additional wilderness. There are 30,400 acres of administrative recommended wilderness on the Malheur National Forest, 40,100 acres on the Umatilla National Forest, and 20,300 on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Alternatives presented within the Blue Mountain National Forests Proposed Revised Land Management Plan vary the amount and location of preliminary administrative recommended wilderness on each forest and the acreage total for each alternative is displayed in the table below.



Recommended wilderness area (Management Area 1B) acreage for each alternative for each national forest

| National Forest | Alt. A | Alt. B | Alt. C | Alt. D | Alts. E and F |
|-----------------|--------|--------|---------|--------|---------------|
| MAL | 0 | 1,160 | 83,810 | 0 | 30,400 |
| UMA | 0 | 1,440 | 248,676 | 0 | 40,100 |
| WAW | 0 | 10,770 | 172,840 | 0 | 20,300 |

What are some key measures leading to the current status?

1. The Wilderness Act (1964): Initially protected 54 wilderness areas (9.1 million acres) across the nation and established a process for adding new lands to the National Wilderness Preservation System.
2. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires that "roadless areas...shall be evaluated and considered for recommendation as potential wilderness areas during the forest planning process..." and that management direction be provided for these areas.
3. Omnibus Oregon Wilderness Act of 1984 – designated wilderness across the state of Oregon; as a result, the 1990s forest plans were not required to review potential wilderness areas.
4. The process for identifying potential wilderness areas is outlined in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70, and has two phases: inventory and evaluation. The wilderness evaluation process is a requirement for forest plan revision process.

What activities are suitable in recommended wilderness areas?

The revised Plan includes a desired condition that provides for uses that are conducive to maintaining the inherent wilderness character of these preliminary recommended wilderness areas. Uses or activities identified in the suitable use matrix of the revised Plan are displayed below:

| Management Area (MA) | Use or Activity | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|--|---------------------------|--------------------|
| | Timber Production | Timber Harvest | Grazing (cattle and sheep) | Motor vehicle use (summer) | Motor vehicle use (winter) | Road Construction | Trail Construction (for motor vehicle use) | Mechanical fuel treatment | Energy Development |
| MA 1A | U | U | S | U | U | U | U | U | U |
| MA 1B | U | U | S | U | S | U | U | U | U |



Who will make the decision to recommend new wilderness?

The decision to recommend wilderness is made by the Regional Forester at the time a decision on the Revised Forest Plan is made.

Additional Resource Information

Events leading to the current forest plan revision status.

The initial review process was completed by interdisciplinary team members and natural resource specialists. The results were made available for public comment in April, 2005.

In 2006, changes were made to the maps and tables to reflect public comment and included further review by resource specialists.

Revisions were completed and included in the proposed action that was distributed for public review and comment in 2010.

Additional comments were received during this public scoping period. As with many national forests and grasslands throughout the nation, roadless area management was identified as being controversial. Response to the draft planning documents showed the same wide range of opinion about roadless areas that has prevailed since the first national Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE): many commenters requested that additional areas be proposed for wilderness designation to protect the value that they attach to wilderness areas. Others requested that no additional areas be proposed for wilderness designation because it would prevent them from participating in the activities that they currently enjoy within those areas. Through public, Federal, state, and local agencies, and Forest Service employees contributions, wilderness area recommendations were identified as being a significant issue that was used as a primary basis for developing the action alternatives presented within the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Revised Land Management Plan for the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forest*.

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