Malheur National Forest
Review of
Areas with Wilderness Potential
March 2010

Aldrich Mountain Roadless Area (#6233)
4,860 Acres

Overview

History*:* The Aldrich Mountain area was inventoried for study as a potential wilderness during the RARE II process under direction in the South Fork Planning Unit Final Environmental Statement and the RARE II Final Environmental Impact Statement.

In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan FEIS allocated the majority of the area to semi-primitive emphasis and some acres to wildlife emphasis. Since Forest Plan approval, there have been no harvest activities implemented within the roadless area.

Location and access: Aldrich Mountain Roadless Area is located along the western edge of the Malheur National Forest, approximately 4 miles southeast of Dayville, Oregon. The area includes all or parts of Sections 33, 34, and 35, T.13S., R.27E., and Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15, T.14S., R.27E., of the Willamette Meridian. Access is very limited. Primary access from John Day, Oregon, is by Forest Road 2150, a well maintained, aggregate surfaced road. Secondary access is from Forest Road 2150039, which is adjacent to the southern boundary plus a primitive jeep track from U.S. Highway 26. Classified roads within the boundaries have been buffered out of the inventory.

Geography/Topography: The roadless area is located in the northern Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. The terrain is extremely varied and primarily consists of steep and broken slopes on the west and south, and steep bench slopes to the north. In Smokey, Oliver, and Jackass Creeks the dominant peaks are Aldrich and Little Aldrich Mountains. Elevations range from 6,950 feet below the crest of Aldrich Mountain to less than 4,350 feet on Aldrich Creek.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: The Aldrich Mountain area is approximately 40 percent forested. Vegetation on the forested west- and south-facing slopes is predominantly ponderosa pine with Douglas-fir and grand fir understories. The ground cover includes elk sedge, pinegrass, and wheatgrass. The forested areas north of Aldrich Mountain are primarily grand fir, Douglas-fir, western larch, and lodgepole pine, with a ground cover of huckleberry, pinegrass and brome grasses. The highest elevations are occupied by subalpine fir and/or alpine sage and other subalpine shrubs and grasses. The drier or nonforested sites on all aspects are vegetated with juniper, sagebrushes, mountain-mahogany, and some scattered ponderosa pine. Ground cover on these sites includes wheat grasses, fescue, and bluegrass. This area has about 1,300 forested acres that meet the Pacific Northwest Region's definition of old growth.

Current Uses: Recreational use of this area is limited by difficult access and the rugged nature of the countryside. The primary use is big-game hunting. Other uses include hiking, horseback riding, camping, photography, game bird hunting, and sightseeing from Aldrich Mountain Lookout. Wildlife in the area is highly varied from spring through fall. Mammals include Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, mountain lion, bighorn sheep, black bear, as well as voles, marmots, and chipmunks. The pine marten may be present in the old-growth forest on the north-facing slopes. Bird species are numerous and include songbirds, raptors, and game birds, such as the blue grouse and mountain quail, and possibly pileated woodpeckers. During winter, elk range on the lower slopes of the north and southwest portions of the area. Native rainbow trout occur in some portions of the streams within this area. One grazing allotment is located within this area.

Appearance and surroundings: The terrain is extremely varied and primarily consists of steep and broken slopes on the west and south, and steep bench slopes to the north. In Smokey, Oliver, and Jackass Creeks the dominant peaks are Aldrich and Little Aldrich Mountains.

Key Attractions: The key attraction in this area is the hunting opportunities found in a remote and rugged terrain.

Inventory Criteria

Although the area is less than 5,000 acres, it meets the criteria for inventoried roadless areas.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Within the area the natural integrity is extremely high because the area is essentially untouched by human activity. The major impacts have been livestock grazing, fire management, and the introduction of a bighorn sheep herd. The effects of grazing show the most impact on naturalness of the area. These impacts include livestock water ponds, salting areas, and cattle trails, all of which are clearly unnatural and evident in their immediate vicinity. The effects of fire suppression are not noticeable to the average visitor. Under more natural conditions, low-intensity wildfires would have maintained a ponderosa pine understory in ponderosa pine stands instead of the continued growth of fir species.

The opportunity for solitude is excellent year-round. During hunting season use increases; however, the remoteness and rugged terrain maintain opportunities for solitude. Most of the area is physically very demanding to hikers and there are no developed recreation facilities. The small size of the area and intrusion of the Aldrich Mountain Lookout and access road limit the possibility of a Primitive recreation experience, unless combined with the area in the Aldrich Scarp or the adjacent Dry Cabin Roadless Area.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: Steep terrain and lack of road access presents challenge to all forms of recreational activities.

Special Features: There is scenic variety in the area ranging from forested benches to deep canyons with open slopes and forested bottoms. The current visual resource variety class for the entire area is "A," distinctive. There are two possible cultural resource sites within the area; one prehistoric and the other historic. There are no other identified sites. However, a traditional foraging area is adjacent to the area boundary. This indicates at least travel through, and possible use by, American Indians and Europeans. There are old mining and cabin sites in the general vicinity, but none are known to occur within this area. There are no known Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant or animal species within this area. There is potential for the sensitive plant species Luina serpentine in areas of non-forested, harsh sites, particularly talus slopes and rock outcrop habitats. Luina serpentine is so limited, both in physical distribution and in numbers of plants, that any impacts to plants are likely to have an adverse effect on the population as a whole.

Manageability and boundaries: The present boundary does not follow natural physical characteristics, but has boundaries logical and easy to locate on the ground. The boundary on the east consists of two north-south roads. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides. On the south, west, and north the boundary is the Forest boundary. All within these limits is in the roadless area except for Aldrich Mountain Lookout and its access road.

Availability

Recreation: The area currently provides roaded natural and semi primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities.

Wildlife: Wildlife in the area is highly varied from spring through fall. Mammals include Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, mountain lion, bighorn sheep, black bear, as well as voles, marmots, and chipmunks. The pine marten may be present in the old-growth forest on the north-facing slopes. Bird species are numerous and include songbirds, raptors, and game birds, such as the blue grouse and mountain quail, and possibly pileated woodpeckers. During winter, elk range on the lower slopes of the north and southwest portions of the area.

Water/Fish: Native rainbow trout occur in some portions of the streams within this area.

Range: There is one grazing allotment within the roadless area. The roadless area has limited use by grazing livestock due to remoteness, steepness of the terrain and limited road access.

Timber/vegetation: There are about 2,495 acres of forested land. These timber stands consist primarily of mixed conifer, multistoried stands. The overstories are about 105 to 180 years old with understories of 70 to 80 years.

Minerals: The area has no known locatable mineral potential and contains no mining claims. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: There are two possible cultural resource sites within the area; one prehistoric and the other historic. There are no other identified sites. However, a traditional foraging area is adjacent to the area boundary. This indicates at least travel through, and possible use by, American Indians and Europeans. There are old mining and cabin sites in the general vicinity, but none are known to occur within this area.

Land use/Special Uses: The Aldrich Mountain Electronics Site has several special use permits for communications related facilities, including radio systems and cell phones. There is a BLM owned lookout that is staffed by the Oregon State Department of Forestry during the summers.

Fire: The Aldrich Mountain area is historically one of the hardest hit by lightning on the Blue Mountain Ranger District each year. The hazard is high to very high. South- and west-slopes are dry with flashy fuels, while north faces have dense concentrations of heavy fuels, primarily rotten white fir. Lack of access currently requires that most fires in the area to be reached by helicopter or smokejumper crews.

Insects and disease: Insect damage from western spruce budworm was widespread north of Aldrich Mountain in the 1990's. At this time, tree mortality across the roadless area is considered insignificant. The species involved are Douglas-fir and grand fir. Grand fir has a high incidence of root rot in larger (12 inches diameter breast height and over) sized trees. Indian paint fungus is present and known to exist in all size classes of grand fir contributing to large amounts of cull volume.

Private lands: There are 200 acres of land managed by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife within the roadless area boundary.

Baldy Mountain Roadless Area (#6242)

6,500 Acres

Overview

History: The Baldy Mountain area was identified in the RARE process and additional area added in the RARE II process under direction in the John Day Planning Unit Plan and RARE II Final Environmental Impact Statement. The 1990 Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated the

majority of the area to wildlife emphasis, some acres to general forest-rangeland management, and a few acres to riparian emphasis and minimum level management. Since the Forest Plan was approved, no additional harvest activities have been conducted in this area although several harvest projects were completed in the past, primarily in the current wildlife emphasis areas and the general forest-rangeland management areas.

Location and access: The area is located in the northern part of the Prairie City Ranger District and bounds the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest on the east (T.13S., R.35½E. and T.13S., R.35E. of the Willamette Meridian). Access is by secondary Forest roads surrounding the area. Reynolds Creek Trail follows Reynolds Creek on the north edge for 1½ miles.

Geography/Topography: The area is within the northern Blue Mountains physiographic province of northeastern Oregon. The slope of Baldy Mountain and adjacent ridges and sub-ridges are broken by two streams: Reynolds Creek and Wildcat Creek (a tributary to Reynolds Creek), which drain into the John Day River.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: About 98 percent forested, the area supports extensive stands of mixed conifers with inclusions of ponderosa pine on the open less steep benches. Steep northern exposures hold dense mixed conifers. Riparian vegetation exists intermittently along Reynolds Creek.

Current Uses: Hunting and fishing are the primary activities in this area, which receives only light recreation use. The area provides summer habitat for deer and elk. Old growth within the area is habitat for the pine marten and pileated woodpecker. Reynolds Creek provides spawning habitat for native fish stocks. The area is within the Reynolds Creek allotment. Cattle rarely, if ever, utilize this portion of the allotment due to dense tree vegetation, steep slopes and lack of access. The Reynolds Creek riparian area receives heavy use along its lower portion.

Appearance and surroundings: The slope of Baldy Mountain and adjacent ridges and subridges are broken by two streams-Reynolds Creek and Wildcat Creek (a tributary to Reynolds Creek), which drain into the John Day River. Baldy Mountain is a landscape feature on the east side of the John Day valley, but is dominated by the Strawberry Mountain area to the west.

Key Attractions: The major attraction of the area is the opportunity for hunting and fishing in an unroaded area with old-growth forest. The mountain top was once the site of the old Baldy Mountain lookout and provides sweeping views of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness and upper John Day valley.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: All ecosystems in the area are intact. However, lack of fire has encouraged fir encroachment under the ponderosa pine stands. Under natural conditions, low-intensity wildfires would have selectively maintained ponderosa pine understories. The area appears very natural to users because the effects of fire exclusion are too subtle to be noticed by most users.

The opportunities for solitude are good particularly near the center of the area, in the lower elevations and within the draws. The primitive recreation opportunities are very limited due to the small size of the area.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: Opportunities for challenge are limited to an area on the north side of Baldy Mountain where mountaineering is a potential activity.

Special Features: Summer steelhead and bull trout are both federally listed fish species found in the area. No other threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant or animal species are known to exist in the area. Approximately 4 miles of stream have been identified that support these fish species. Cutthroat and redband trout populations identified as sensitive species are also found in these streams. Due to the steepness of the slopes around Baldy Mountain and adjacent ridges, the majority of the area is in a low probability zone for the occurrence of cultural resource sites. There is an electronic site and powerline special use near the area.

Manageability and boundaries: The current roadless boundaries would be difficult to manage. Changing the boundaries to exclude roads and past timber sale units and following specific contour lines, roads or stream channels would make the area more manageable. Extending the southern boundary to an existing road would increase the roadless area a minor amount. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: The area currently provides roaded natural and semi primitive motorized potential recreation opportunities.

Wildlife: The area provides summer habitat for deer and elk. The old growth within the area is habitat for the pine marten and pileated woodpecker.

Water/Fish: Reynolds Creek provides spawning habitat for steelhead trout, bull trout, and cutthroat trout.

Range: The Reynolds Creek allotment is within the Baldy Mountain area. Cattle rarely, if ever, utilize this portion of the allotment due to dense tree vegetation and lack of access, except that the Reynolds Creek riparian area receives heavy use along its lower portion.

Timber/vegetation: There are 5,000 acres of forested land, which are tentatively suitable for timber management activities. These timber stands are primarily mixed conifer with some ponderosa pine and lodgepole pine. The average overstory age is 140 years and the average understory age is 65 years.

Minerals: The area has no known locatable mineral potential and contains no mining claims. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: There have not been adequate cultural inventories of the Baldy Mountain area to date. There have been a few cultural resource sites identified, but the majority of the area is in a low probability zone for the occurrence of cultural properties.

Land use/special uses: There are no power withdrawals, irrigation systems, or impoundments within the considerations area. There is an electronic site (Elkhorn Microwave site along ridge – east side) and powerline special-use near the area. There is one administrative withdrawal.

Fire: Fire exclusion has enhanced the development of the fir understory in the pine stands.

Insects and disease: Indian paint fungus is present and may be found in all size classes of the fir species. Much of the Douglas-fir (especially that found on the rockier, drier soils) is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. Mistletoe patches of varying severity can be found. Root rots are present to varying degrees but are not considered a problem. Due to high amounts of Douglas-fir and other fir species in the area, all the timber stands are highly susceptible to tussock moth and western

spruce budworm. Western Spruce budworm is presently in the area, and in some cases is quite severe. Western pine beetle can be found in the area, but is generally confined to a few old-growth ponderosa pine trees of low vigor. Mountain pine beetle outbreaks are occurring in lodgepole pine.

Private lands: There are no private lands within the boundary. Private lands are located adjacent to a portion of the west boundary and within one-quarter mile of the northwest boundary.

Cedar Grove Roadless Area (#6247)

5,640 Acres

OVERVIEW

History: During the RARE II inventory, this area was inventoried as a roadless area because of the uniqueness of a stand of Alaska yellow cedar far east of its native range. The John Day Planning Unit Plan designated it as a Special Interest (Botanical) Area. RARE II designated the area to non-wilderness uses. The 1990 Malheur National Forest Plan and Final EIS allocated 113 acres of this area to Special Interest Area. The 2006 inventory review found over 5,000 additional acres that meet the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Location and access: This area is located in the western portion of the Malheur National Forest about 12 miles southwest of Mt. Vernon, Oregon. Access is facilitated by the Forest Service Road 2150 which parallels the southern boundary of the area and separates it from the Dry Cabin potential wilderness area. To the west, Forest Service roads 2150540 and 2150525 separate it from the Aldrich Mountain potential wilderness area.

Geography/Topography: Located on the northern slopes of the Aldrich Mountain Range, the terrain primarily consists of steep bench slopes to the north with steep narrow canyons. Stream courses include Widows, West Fork Dry, Wickiup, and Buck Cabin Creeks plus other unnamed tributaries.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: This area is mostly contiguous medium to dense stands of grand fir and Douglas-fir and some ponderosa pine at higher elevations with predominantly ponderosa pine mixed with Douglas-fir at lower elevations. The Cedar Grove special interest area contains Alaska yellow cedar far east of its native range. Open meadows and rocky areas tend to be located along ridge tops and some south and west facing slopes. Ground vegetation consists of huckleberry, pinegrass, and Columbia brome.

Current Uses: Recreational uses are primarily big-game and bird hunting, day-hiking, viewing scenery, and enjoyment of a unique, micro-climate and ecosystem. The 1.0 mile Cedar Grove National Recreation Trail is located within the area. Livestock grazing is a permitted use in this area as is permitted hunting outfitter-guiding.

Appearance and surroundings: Currently about 3,550 acres have been affected by the Shake Table complex fire. All levels of burn intensity occurred, however most of this area received high burn severity resulting in 76 to 95 percent tree mortality. This fire has left a strong visual impact on the landscape, with large areas of visible black tree stems and burned ground surfaces. Patches of trees that did not burn entirely are seen as small areas of red-needled trees. Other areas have patches of green trees interspersed with dead and severely scorched trees.

Key Attractions: The main attractions of the area are the unique stand of trees and the quiet, peaceful, surroundings.

INVENTORY CRITERIA

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

CAPABILITY

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: The natural integrity of the area is extremely high. The major impact is the presence of a high standard, well-maintained trail including constructed wooden bridges within the 113 acre Cedar Grove itself. The area appears to be very natural except for the trail and bridges. Fire suppression activities in 2006 also created some short-term effects including control lines and dozer lines which created swaths through vegetation and ground disturbance. The ground disturbance has been seeded and recontoured and effects are expected to be rehabilitated in the near term (3-5 years).

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: While some of the area is fairly open and easily accessible, the steep terrain and canyons provide ample opportunity for primitive recreation. Vegetation and topography within the center of the area and in the steep canyons provides good opportunity for solitude. The National Recreation trail tends to concentrate use and reduces this opportunity in the immediate area of the Cedar Grove itself.

Special Features: There are no known Threatened or Endangered plant or animal species in the area, however suitable habitat for sensitive plants and animals is present. This area is the headwaters for streams bearing threatened, endangered and/or sensitive fish species downstream from this area. The special nature of the area is the stand of Alaska yellow cedar, offering excellent opportunity for scientific study of a unique ecological feature.

Manageability and boundaries: The boundary of the area does not follow any particular topographic feature and is situated on a side slope. There is little opportunity to modify the boundary. The Forest Service 2150 road winds along Aldrich ridge and parallels the southern boundary of the area with a minimum 300-foot buffer. More primitive Forest roads parallel and form the western and eastern boundaries of this area, again with 300 foot buffers.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: Recreational uses are primarily big-game and bird hunting, day-hiking, viewing scenery, and enjoyment of a unique micro-climate and ecosystem. The area has an undeveloped character with semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation characteristics and naturally appearing lands with high scenic quality.

Wildlife: Wildlife in the area is varied; the most visible being mule deer and elk. There have been mountain lion, black bear, and bighorn sheep within the roadless area. Bird species are numerous and include songbirds, raptors, game birds such as the blue grouse and mountain quail, and possibly the pileated woodpecker. Mammals range from big game to voles, marmots, and chipmunks. Pine martens may be present in the old-growth forests on the north-facing slopes. Elk winter range exists on lower slopes of the northern portions of the area.

Water/Fish: There are no water impoundments or other planned water developments in the area. Wickiup, Widows, Buck Cabin creeks are all fish-bearing streams. These creeks are all designated steelhead critical habitat and Mid Columbia Steelhead, a threatened species, occurs in Wickiup Creek. Westslope cutthroat trout and interior redband trout, both sensitive species, occur in Wickiup Creek and Buck Cabin Creek.

Range: There is one livestock grazing allotment within this area. Potential for increased livestock use is low. Livestock use is limited because of the terrain.

Timber/vegetation: Prior to the fire, the stand was multistoried with an overstory age of 180 and an understory age of 80. Much of this area received high burn severity resulting in 76 to 95 percent tree mortality. This fire has left a strong visual impact on the landscape, with large areas of visible black tree stems and burned ground surfaces. Patches of trees that did not burn entirely are seen as small areas of red-needled trees. Other areas have patches of green trees interspersed with dead and severely scorched trees.

Minerals: The area has no known locatable mineral potential and it contains no mining claims. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: There are no identified opportunities for historical study.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no special use permits located within the area.

Insects and disease: The fire damage has predisposed the remaining trees to bark beetles, the number one biological agent of tree mortality due to wounding by fire. Badly scorched trees are more likely to host successful attacks by western pine beetles, mountain pine beetles, red turpentine beetles or pine engravers. The population increases tend to last 2 to 3 years and then decline. Spruce budworm attacks will likely be reduced in the area due to the lack of live host trees, a more open and warmer environment and the lack of a multi-story forest.

Private lands: There are no non-Federal lands within the area. Private, lands adjoin the roadless area boundary on the north and the far southeast edge.

Dixie Butte Roadless Area (#6243)

8,430 Acres

Overview

History: This area was identified during the RARE process and increased in size during the RARE II process Environmental Impact Statement. In 1990, an FEIS and associated Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was approved for the Malheur National Forest. At that time, the majority of the area was allocated to wildlife emphasis, the rest to general forest-rangeland, riparian area, research natural area, old growth and visual corridors. Between the years 1986 to 1994, approximately 41 acres were harvested primarily in general forest-rangeland and riparian areas. There are 14 miles of classified road found within the roadless area that have been buffered out. Forest Road 2610759 is the longest road in the area, providing access to ATVs along with some high clearance vehicles.

Location and access: The Dixie Butte roadless area is located in the northern portion of the Malheur National Forest in Grant County, about 6 miles north of Prairie City, Oregon (T.12S., R.33E., of the Willamette Meridian). The area has an irregular boundary that lies generally north and east of Dixie Butte. On the north, the boundary runs approximately 1.5 miles from the Middle Fork of the John Day River between Davis and Little Butte Creeks. Between Little Butte and Butte Creeks (approximately 2 miles), the boundary is the Middle Fork. The main access route is Forest Road 2610 which accesses Dixie Mountain fire lookout.

Geography/Topography: This area consists of Dixie Butte (elevation 1.592 feet) and surrounding drainages to the Middle Fork of the John Day River (elevation 4,200 feet) in the north, and drainages to the mainstream John Day River in the south. Dixie Butte is a prominent landmark above surrounding forested areas. Side slopes are steep at higher elevations and bench-like at lower elevations.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: Vegetation on ridge tops and the summit of Dixie Butte is primarily subalpine fir and white bark pine with a ground cover of sagebrush, elk sedge, and fleeceflower. The area is about 94 percent forested with ponderosa pine, western larch, white pine, grand fir, and Douglas-fir, with ground vegetation of elk sedge and pinegrass. Old growth forest occurs on about 460 acres.

Current Uses: Recreational activities in the area include hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, hunting, prospecting, camping, and viewing scenery. Davis Creek Trail #244 allows motorized access to the north eastern portion of the area. In addition, the area provides summer habitat for mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk, and habitat for cougar, bear, bobcat, and other small game and mammals. Butte Creek, Little Butte Creek, Deerhorn Creek, and Davis Creek flow north into the Middle Fork of the John Day River Standard and Dixie Creek flows south into the main stem of the John Day River. All these streams provide resident trout fishing as well as spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead. Some of the streams also provide rearing habitat for Chinook salmon. The area lies within two grazing allotments.

Appearance and surroundings: The surrounding area includes private land, logged forestland, and structures, including a fire lookout on Dixie Butte Summit. Located near the western edge of the area are three highly developed mining sites, at least one of which was active in the recent past. The panoramic view from Dixie Butte is an attraction to visitors, however, access is difficult.

Key Attractions: Hunting opportunities, including motorized hunting access, are probably the primary attraction of the area and, to a lesser degree, the opportunity to view a variety of wildlife.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Mineral developments, livestock grazing, a sheep integrity driveway, constructed roads and jeep trails, timber harvesting, and a motorized trail have impacted the area. The northern arm that extends down to the Middle Fork John Day River (Little Butte Creek) has been railroad-logged in recent history. Dixie Butte Lookout and an electronic site occupy Dixie Summit. A low standard, constructed road accesses these sites. The naturalness of the area has been altered by the many factors mentioned previously. Most of these impacts would not be noticeable to the average visitor. The most noticeable impacts (timber harvest, unimproved roads, livestock grazing, and mineral development) would also require difficult, costly, and/or lengthy processes to mitigate.

Almost no portion of the area is more than 2 miles from a road. The opportunity for solitude in the area is considered moderate. While there are many and varied opportunities for dispersed outdoor recreation, recreation in this area does not lend itself to a primitive experience.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: There are few challenges offered. Perhaps the most challenge would be to cross-country skiers or snowmobilers due to the difficulty of access in the winter.

Special Features: There are no known Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plants or animals in this area. There is an opportunity for historical study of railroad logging, although not many of the physical structures are still in evidence. A similar possibility exists for historic mining activity. However, this area would not be as good as the Susanville and Greenhorn mining districts. There are no known prehistoric cultural resource sites within the area. There is a potential for scientific study of ecological features. A proposed research natural area has been identified near the

summit of Dixie Butte. This area was considered a moderate candidate: the cells it represents were better represented by other potential research natural areas in the Blue Mountains.

Manageability and boundaries: To improve manageability of the boundary, the boundary could be adjusted to follow topographic features, specifically a ridge in the northern portion of the area. Forest Road 2610759 bisects the southwest portion of the area, splitting the roadless area into two parts. In areas where the roads are the exterior boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: Forest Road 2610759 located within the boundary, is a very primitive road, probably an old mining road never constructed to any Forest standard. The portion of the road inside the boundary was closed in 1997, but the closure was never very effective – determined users have bypassed the closure berm and continue to use the road. It is suspected ATV use associated with hunting, is a popular use of this road in the fall. There are also some impacts due to recreational use. There is one maintained trail through the center of the eastern section, Davis Creek Trail 244, which is popular with hikers and motorized recreationists. There are numerous trails along drainages, which are not maintained and appear similar to game trails. There are undeveloped hunter camps throughout the area with associated fire rings, primitive game racks, etc. The area most highly impacted by hunter camps is around Wickiup Springs in the northwest portion of the area along the main access road (T.11S , R.33E., Section 25). This area currently provides roaded natural and semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities. This area provides excellent opportunities for recreational activities in a semi-primitive motorized setting. There are old roads in the area that are native surfaced and best driven with a four-wheel drive or off-road vehicle. This area also provides a popular snowmobiling destination.

Wildlife: The area provides summer habitat for mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk, and habitat for cougar, bear, bobcat, and other small game and mammals.

Water/Fish: Butte Creek, Little Butte Creek, Deerhorn Creek, and Davis Creek flow north into the Middle Fork of the John Day River Standard and Dixie Creek flows south into the main stem of the John Day River. All these streams provide resident trout fishing as well as spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead. Some of the streams also provide rearing habitat for Chinook salmon.

Range: The area lies within two grazing allotments. Grazing impacts include water developments, salt grounds, fences, and the physical presence of cattle. A sheep driveway still exists across the middle of the area from Wickiup Springs to just south of Dixie Butte. The driveway was used to move sheep across the Middle Fork to the Greenhorn Mountain area.

Timber/vegetation: Timber harvesting impacts are old (railroad logging) and extensive. Most of the area is forested land and the stands are overstocked with small trees and contain large amounts of down and standing fuel. Ladder fuels are abundant contributing to a hazardous fire situation. Opportunities for treatment of timber stands are limited by the lack of a transportation system (roads) as most of the original logging was done by railroads.

Minerals: Mining impacts are numerous across the area. The southern portion (south of Dixie Butte) is covered by active claims. Some activity occurs each year in this area. Most of the area north of Dixie Butte does not presently have claims on it. Impacts range from prospect holes to large pits and spoil hanks. This area includes part of the old Quartzburg mining district. Mineralization consists of narrow gold-quartz veins with north-northeasterly strikes found in all of the pre-Cretaceous rocks. Copper-gold-cobalt veins and stringers are found in irregular east-northeasterly trending quartz-tourmaline replacement bodies within the meta-volcanics. Placer gold is found along Davis Creek and the Middle Fork John Day River. Portions of the area have

high and moderate potential for gold, silver, copper, and cobalt. As of the 2005 BLM listing of mining claims, there are no mining claims located within the area. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area. Mineral rights are reserved on several hundred acres.

Cultural: There is an opportunity for historical study of railroad logging, although not many of the physical structures are still in evidence. A similar possibility exists for historic mining activity. However, this area would not be as good as the Susanville and Greenhorn mining districts. There are no known prehistoric cultural resource sites within the area. The old railway system up Little Butte Creek was constructed to yard and haul timber to the sawmill located originally at Bates. The rails and all but a few remnant ties are gone. The only evidence of this past activity is the railroad grade. The grades were designed at a very slight slope (no greater than four to five percent) to accommodate steam engines. This network of railroad grades contouring the terrain at relatively flat slopes provides an excellent opportunity to develop a trail network for mountain bikes, all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, and cross-country skiers. This network could be managed to protect its historic significance, provide interpretation, and provide unique recreation opportunities.

Land use/Special Uses: A telephone line and an electronic site, as well as a road right-of-way occur within this area. One 120-acre administrative site exists in the area.

Fire: The suppression of fire has altered the natural succession of vegetation in the area. Under natural conditions low-intensity fires on pine sites would have selectively retained a ponderosa pine understory.

Insects and disease: Indian paint fungus is present and can probably be found in all size classes of fir species. Much of the Douglas-fir (especially on rockier, drier soils) is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. Mistletoe patches can be found, varying fairly light to quite severe. Root rots can be found to varying degrees but, at present, are not considered a problem. Due to high occurrence of Douglas-fir and other fir species in the area, all the timber stands are highly susceptible to tussock moth and the Western spruce budworm. Western spruce budworm infestation of varying severity is presently within the area. Western pine beetle can be found in the area but is generally confined to a few old-growth ponderosa pine trees of low vigor. Mountain pine beetle outbreaks can be found in lodgepole pine.

Private lands: There are private lands located adjacent to this area.

Dry Cabin Roadless Area (#6236)

12,140 Acres

Overview

History: This area was inventoried during the RARE process and during the RARE II process. Under the South Fork Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and the Environmental Impact Statement for RARE II, this area was allocated to nonwilderness uses. In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated a majority of the area to wildlife emphasis, and a portion to old growth management. Since approval of the Forest Plan in 1990, there have been no harvest activities in this area.

Location and access: Dry Cabin area is located on the northwestern edge of the Malheur National Forest, the south side of the Aldrich Mountain Range, about 10 miles southeast of Dayville, Oregon, in Grant County (T.14S., R.27E., T.14S., R.28E., T.15S, R.27E., T.15S., R.28E., of the Willamette Meridian). Access is via Forest Road 2150 on the north and Forest Road 2150039 on the northwest, Forest Roads 14320, 14024, and 2170042 on the east, and

Forest Road 2170 on the south.

Geography/Topography: The terrain is extremely variable. The dominant landform is long, south and west, with steep side slopes to streams in the bottom. Stream courses include Chickenhouse Gulch and Cabin, Dry Cabin, Todd, North Duncan, and Duncan Creeks, plus many unnamed tributaries. Relief is approximately 3,000 feet from about 6,440 feet below Little Weasel Spring to less than 3,440 feet on Duncan Creek.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: The Dry Cabin area is approximately 77 percent forested. Ponderosa pine is the dominant species associated with Douglas-fir and white fir on the moist sites and white fir, Douglas-fir and western larch on the upper-elevation sites. The Dry Cabin area contains excellent examples of healthy old-growth ponderosa pine and lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, and white fir on approximately 850 acres. These acres meet the Pacific Northwest Region's definition of old growth.

Current Uses: Wildlife is plentiful with high spring, summer, and fall use by many species. These species include wild/free-roaming horses, elk, mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, and possibly bighorn sheep (from the Aldrich herd), as well as many small non-game animals. Bird life is primarily songbirds but includes others such as raptors and game birds. Much of the area includes elk winter range (along the south and southwest portions) and is included in the Murderers Creek Coordinated Resource Management Area. Streams contain both native trout and steelhead. Recreation use is light and consists primarily of big-game hunting. There are minor amounts of hiking, backpacking, sightseeing, and game bird hunting. Most activity occurs on the north end of the unit along the Aldrich Mountains crest. The unit contains portions of two grazing allotments. Availability of water and the terrain generally concentrate livestock use in stream bottoms.

Appearance and surroundings: The terrain is extremely variable. The dominant landform is long, south and west, with steep side slopes to streams in the bottom.

Key Attractions: Attractions include the opportunity to be in wild and rugged country with no intrusions from others. The area offers solitude, peace, and quiet. The area will also continue to be used by big-game hunters.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Natural integrity is extremely high. With the exception of minor, primitive jeep roads, the area is essentially untouched by human activities. The major human impacts have been livestock grazing and fire management. The natural appearance within the area is virtually intact. Human activities are not apparent to the average visitor. The area adjacent to the eastern boundary of the roadless area is in a timber sale. However, this does not interfere with the appearance of the area itself because of the size of the unit and lay of the land. Although there are several roads forming the boundaries of the roadless area, they receive little use. Primary human impacts on the area consist of livestock use and unclassified hunter roads.

The opportunity for solitude is excellent. The exceptions may be during hunting season when the area receives more use and some highway noise from U.S. 26, approximately 5 miles away. Because the area is large and diverse, intervention by other persons is rare. The opportunity for hiking, hunting, backpacking, and riding horses is excellent. There are no maintained recreation facilities such as trails or campgrounds.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: Most of the area is physically demanding because of the steepness and ruggedness of the terrain.

Special Features: There is great scenic variety that ranges from forested benches and broad ridge tops to deep canyons with open slopes and forested bottomlands. Forest stands are open with some very large trees, and many contain large areas with a park-like setting. There are no Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant or animal species within this area. There are no identified cultural resource sites within the unit. However, the probability of both historic and prehistoric properties is high. An identified prehistoric gathering area is adjacent to the northeast boundary and several others are just outside the unit.

Manageability and boundaries: The present boundary follows natural physical characteristics, roads, or the Forest boundary. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: The area currently provides a roaded natural recreation experience, a semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation experience, and a semi-primitive motorized experience.

Wildlife: Wildlife is plentiful with high spring, summer, and fall use by many species. These species include wild/free-roaming horses, elk, mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, and possibly bighorn sheep (from the Aldrich herd), as well as many small nongame animals. Birdlife is primarily songbirds but includes others such as raptors and game birds. Much of the area includes elk winter range.

Water/Fish: There are no present or planned impacts on the water resource in terms of impoundments, or power withdrawals. There is little potential to increase stream flow and little demand for supply other than for livestock use. Todd Creek and Cabin Creek make significant contributions to the local fisheries.

Range: The area contains portions of two grazing allotments. The potential for increased livestock use is low. Terrain and lack of adequate forage (apart from the stream bottoms) are the primary limiting factors.

Timber/vegetation: The area is a mixture of forested and non-forested vegetation types. Many stands have a ponderosa pine overstory with mixed conifer species growing in the understories. The average age of the overstories is 140 years, while the average age of the understories average 75 years.

Minerals: The area has no known locatable mineral potential and contains no mining claims. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: There are no identified cultural resource sites within the unit. However, the probability of both historic and prehistoric properties is high. An identified prehistoric gathering area is adjacent to the northeast boundary and several others are just outside the area.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no currently active Special Use Permits within the area boundary.

Fire: The Aldrich Mountain Range is historically one of the hardest hit by lightning on the Blue Mountain Ranger District. The hazard is high to very high. The south and west slopes are dry with flashy fuels, while the timbered bottomlands have dense concentrations of heavy fuels. Lack of access requires that helicopter or smokejumper crews attack most fires in the area.

Insects and disease: Insect damage from the western spruce budworm is not widespread on the south face of the Aldrich Mountain Range. However, there is a population of the insect present in the mixed conifer stands. Tree mortality across the Forest is considered insignificant and affected timber appears to be recovering. The white fir component in the unit, as with most of the general area, has a high cull factor from root rots in greater than 12-inch diameter classes.

Private lands: There is no private land within the roadless area. Private parcels and Bureau of Land Management lands adjoin the roadless area boundary on the south.

Flag Creek Roadless Area (#6246)
0 Acres

History: This area was first inventoried in 1985. It was assigned to further planning in a Unit Environmental Impact Statement. This roadless area does not meet the criteria for potential wilderness area due to harvests, roads, road buffers, and other developments.

Fox Creek Roadless Area (#6245)
0 Acres

History: This area was first inventoried in 1985. It was assigned to further planning in a Unit Environmental Impact Statement. This roadless area does not meet the criteria for potential wilderness area due to harvests, roads, road buffers, and other developments.

Glacier Mountain Roadless Area (#6239)
16,450 Acres

Overview

History: This area was inventoried during the RARE II process. The Silvies-Malheur Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and RARE II Environmental Impact Statement designated the area to nonwilderness uses. In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated the majority of acres to semi-primitive, motorized uses management. The remaining area was divided into general forest-rangeland, riparian emphasis, old growth, visuals and to minimum level management.

Since the Forest Plan was approved, approximately 17 acres were harvested in old growth, approximately 402 acres were harvested in general forest-rangeland, approximately 485 acres were harvested in visuals, and 24 acres were harvested in riparian emphasis areas. There are approximately 9.5 miles of classified roads that are present within the roadless area boundaries. Since the completion of the Forest Plan, all project activities have been analyzed under its direction and NEPA requirements.

Location and access: This area is located in the eastern part of the Malheur National Forest about 11 miles southeast of Prairie City, Oregon. Approximately three-quarters of the area is within Baker County and one-quarter is in Grant County, Oregon (T.14S., R.35E.; T.14S., R.35 1/2E.; T.15S.,R.35E; and T.15S., R.35 1/2E., of the Willamette Meridian).

Geography/Topography: The area's main feature is a deeply incised, high-elevation ridge running from Little Baldy Mountain in the north, through Glacier Mountain to Sheep Mountain in the south. Although glaciated valleys lie to the east and west with year-round watercourses and rock outcroppings occur at the higher elevations, there are no glaciers in this area. The area is located on the west side of the headwaters of the North Fork of the Malheur River and includes

several tributaries to this system. The north and west portions of the area include the Rail and Deardorff Creek drainages, which are tributaries to the mainstem of the John Day River.

Soils in the area are predominantly of volcanic ash composition. On the northerly slopes, they are two to three feet deep with low mantle stability and high erosion hazard. The mantle stability for south-facing slopes varies from low to moderate and the deeper soils are very productive. At high elevations and along ridgetops, the soils are shallow, nonforested, and only marginally productive. There are many rock outcrops, exposed bedrock, and talus slopes. These soils are easily disturbed and have high rock fragment content. All soils with volcanic ash content have a moderate-to-high susceptibility to erosion. Because of the cool climate and short growing season, there is little vegetative protection at the high elevations of this area. At lower elevations, the soils have a low bulk density allowing them to hold water, reducing the water available for erosion and contributing to the perennial streams in the area. Miocene-age volcanic flows cover all of the area.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: The high-elevation ridges support subalpine vegetation including subalpine fir, lodgepole pine, alpine sagebrush, and elk sedge. The northeastern portion of the area consists primarily of lodgepole pine, which regenerated after the Big Cow Burn of 1939. The 1989 Glacier Mountain Fire and the 1990 Sheep Mountain Fire burned 60 percent of the area. Fire suppression activities created many miles of dozer fireline throughout the area. The area supports primarily Douglas-fir, white fir, western larch, and lodgepole pine. Ground vegetation includes huckleberry, pinegrass, elk sedge, and Columbia brome. Riparian areas contain some meadow vegetation and riparian shrub species.

Current Uses: Big-game hunting and trout fishing are the primary recreational uses of the area. Several trails are found within the area, including Sheep Creek Trail and Horse Creek Trail. These trails are open to mechanized and motorized recreation uses. Remnants of an old trail leading to the vicinity of Baldy Mountain can still be found and recreationists have utilized pieces of it for mechanized and motorized recreation uses, resulting in an identifiable trail in places. Hiking, backpacking, mountain bikes, all-terrain vehicles, motorbikes and camping occur in the area along with enjoyment of subalpine wildflowers and other vegetation, and viewing a 360-degree panorama of scenic vistas. Winter recreation use includes cross-country skiing, ski mountaineering and has included snowmobiling in the past. The area provides spring, summer, and fall habitat for mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk. Bear, coyote, and cougar also inhabit the area. The pileated woodpecker, pine marten, and other species, which utilize old growth, also occur. The streams draining into the upper John Day River drainage support rainbow, cutthroat, and bull trout. The streams draining into the North Fork of the Malheur River support inland native rainbow and bull trout. Deardorff and Rail Creeks also provide steelhead spawning and rearing habitat. The area lies within three grazing allotments; Deardorff, Rail Creek, and Spring Creek. In the Rail Creek allotment, it is unlikely that cattle would drift up into the roadless area. The steep, north-facing, heavily forested slopes of this part of the Deardorff allotment make it inaccessible to livestock. A sheep grazing allotment also utilizes a portion of this area. Past herding has been completed by ATVs.

Appearance and surroundings: This area receives an average annual precipitation of approximately 29 inches. Most of this occurs between October and April in the form of snow, with accumulations up to 5 feet not uncommon. The North Fork Malheur drainage provides water for Beulah Reservoir and downstream irrigation provides water for irrigation the length of the John Day River, as well as for fisheries and recreational uses. The deeply incised drainages are heavily forested, giving way gradually to sparse vegetation and rock outcrops of the four mountains and connecting ridgetops. From a distance, the upper elevations of the area appear to be gray due to the past fire activity. Within portions of the area, dead standing trees show evidence of the past wildfires. There continues to be diversity in vegetation and landforms with the rise in elevation; however, it is not uncommon in the local area. This area is separated from the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness to the west by a paved Forest Service arterial road and about 3 air miles. It is also separated from the Monument Rock Wilderness to the east by a paved

Forest Service arterial road and about 7 air miles. Both designated wildernesses repeat the vegetation and topography of the Glacier Mountain area and contribute to the vistas available from open ridgetops.

Key Attractions: Big-game hunting is a major attraction. The splendid panorama, forested isolation, and perennial trout-bearing streams are also enticements to visitors. This area receives heavy ATV use along the western boundary where the old road accesses flat terrain. The western portion also has several dispersed sites that are heavily used by ATVs during all hunting seasons.

Inventory Criteria

The area meets the inventory criteria for roadless areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Overall, the natural integrity of the area is largely intact, particularly at higher elevations. A history of fire suppression can be found in both upper elevations and at mid-slope in areas, which has led to a gradual succession from ponderosa pine to white fir in some areas. Under natural conditions, low-intensity ground fires would have selectively maintained ponderosa pine in these areas. Grazing effects at lower elevations include concentrations of livestock along streams, salting grounds, dust beds, and cattle trails. Within the interior of the area, Forest Road 1665548, closed to passenger vehicles and converted to a system trail from Sheep Mountain to Little Baldy Mountain, receives heavy use by all-terrain vehicles and is considered part of a larger motorized trail system by recreationists. Because of the fragile subalpine conditions plus the existing motorized use, this closed road, which currently resembles just a wheel track, is not likely to heal for many years. Along this track and scattered throughout the area are fire rings, charred wood, and game racks tacked up from hunter camps. These human placed remnants would not be difficult to repair; however, they are likely to reappear each year. Three low-standard foot trails, which allow motorized use, bisect the area; one north-south, the other trails cross the area in an east-west pattern. Most impacts to natural appearance are scattered throughout the area and could be easily mitigated.

There are many opportunities for solitude within this area, however, during the hunting seasons sounds of motorized use can be heard. The high mountain ridge is well removed from normal activities across the Forest, and most traffic on roads leading into higher elevations would have other destinations. The deeply incised stream courses provide topographic and vegetative screening from all surroundings. There are many opportunities for undeveloped recreation. These activities include camping, hiking, and nature study. However, these activities are limited by the relatively small size of the area and ease of access.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: There is no particularly difficult terrain or challenging aspect located in this unit.

Special Features: Bull trout and steelhead are present and listed as threatened species. There are no other threatened or endangered plant or animal species present in this area. There is habitat for Canada lynx, which is threatened, and the gray wolf, which is endangered. Approximately 27 miles of streams in the area have been identified as bull trout habitat. This headwaters area provides spawning habitat for bull trout and steelhead. There is one sensitive plant species occurring here. There have been no adequate cultural resource inventories of this unit to date. There are a few cultural resource sites that have been recorded including an historic sheep and Forest Service trail that was utilized prior to 1929.

Manageability and boundaries: The original boundaries of this area followed no well-defined boundaries or topographic features. Some adjustments made to the eastern and northern

boundaries of the original area to avoid and exclude past harvest areas and associated roads were recommended along with some minor additions of land that would meet wilderness criteria to improve manageability reduces the overall size of the area. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: The area currently provides roaded modified, roaded natural and semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities.

Wildlife: The area provides spring, summer, and fall habitat for mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk. Bear, coyote, and cougar also inhabit the area. The pileated woodpecker, pine marten, and other species, which utilize old growth, also occur.

Water/Fish: The streams draining into the upper John Day River drainage support rainbow, cutthroat, and bull trout. The streams draining into the North Fork of the Malheur River support inland native rainbow and bull trout. Deardorff and Rail Creeks also provide steelhead spawning and rearing habitat.

Range: The area lies within three grazing allotments; Deardorff, Rail Creek, and Spring Creek. In the Rail Creek allotment, it is unlikely that cattle would drift up into the roadless area. The steep, north-facing, heavily forested slopes of this part of the Deardorff allotment make it inaccessible to livestock. This portion of the Spring Creek allotment is currently grazed every other year.

Timber/vegetation: There are 17,800 acres of forested land tentatively suitable for timber management activities. These trees are growing in multistoried stands with overstories averaging 155 years old and understories averaging 65 years old. Predominant stands of lodgepole pine are also present.

Minerals: There is no known locatable mineral potential and no mining claims. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: There have been no adequate cultural resource inventories of this area to date. Due to the steep slopes, the majority of the area is in a low probability zone for the occurrence of cultural resource properties and the likelihood of their occurrence is low. There are a few cultural resource sites that have been recorded, including an historic sheep and Forest Service trail that was utilized prior to 1929.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no known term special use permits within the area. There are seven administrative withdrawals and some rights-of-way. There are no power withdrawals, irrigation systems, or impoundments within this area.
Fire: Fire occurrence in this area has historically been moderate with occasional seasons of high occurrence. The fuel loads are moderate to high in the lodgepole pine. With the 1989 and 1990 fires, the short-term potential for wildfire has been reduced. Fuel loads are expected to increase substantially as the dead overstory falls and the regenerating understory grows. Fires have historically helped to maintain the ecosystem. .

Insects and disease: Indian paint fungus is present and can probably be found in all size classes of the fir species. Much of the Douglas-fir (especially on rockier, drier soils) is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. Mistletoe patches of varying severity can be found. Due to the high amounts of Douglas-fir and other fir species found in the area, all the timber stands are highly susceptible to tussock moth and the western spruce budworm. Western spruce budworm infestation of varying severity is present in the area. Western pine beetle can be found in the area but is generally confined to a few old-growth ponderosa pine trees of low vigor. Mountain pine beetle can be found in areas wherever lodgepole pine occurs. Root rots can be found to varying degrees but are not considered a problem.

Private lands: The western portion of this area contains approximately two sections of land (1,120 acres) privately owned.

Greenhorn Mountain Roadless Area (#6252), (#14350)

12,630 + 11,280 = 23,910 Acres (total)
Administratively shared with the Wallowa Whitman National Forest

Overview

History: This area was inventoried during RARE and enlarged in the RARE II inventory. The John Day Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement designated the area for nonwilderness uses.

In 1990, the FEIS and the Malheur National Forest plan allocated land to wildlife emphasis management, general forest-rangeland management, Special interest Area, and to minimum level management. Since the Forest Plan was approved, approximately 1,700 acres have been harvested, primarily within the general forest-rangeland and riparian emphasis allocations. Prior to 1990, approximately 132 acres were harvested within the general forest-rangeland and riparian emphasis areas. There are 10.6 miles of classified road within the inventoried roadless boundary.

Location and access: This area is located along the northern boundary of the Malheur National Forest, in both Malheur and Umatilla National Forests, and in both Grant and Baker counties (T.10S., R.34E., and R.35E., and T.9S., R.33E., of the Willamette Meridian). Access consists of a Forest Service arterial road along the western edge of the area, with a local road to a lookout within the area. Two other Forest Service roads provide access into the southern and eastern portions of the area. In addition, numerous unimproved roads lead to the perimeters of the area.

Geography/Topography: The Greenhorn Mountains consist primarily of alpine and subalpine vegetation types. The highest elevation is 8,100 feet at Vinegar Hill, while the lowest is 5,200 feet at the mouth of Black Eye Creek. Most of the area on and near ridgetops is undulating terrain of open, alpine meadows. However, below these ridge tops are sharp breaks in the terrain, particularly to the north, with dramatic, sharp rock cliffs dropping away to steep drainages below. This area comprises the headwaters of Granite Boulder, Little Boulder, Big Boulder Creeks, and numerous smaller streams that drain into the John Day River System. The area extends along the divide between the Middle and North Forks of the John Day River, where glacially carved granite meets Columbia basalt.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: A wide variety of rock types are exposed within this area. Permian-age metavalcanic rocks cover much of the Vinegar Hill area; Permian and Triassic-age igneous and sedimentary oceanic rocks are exposed over much of the area. Jurassic-to-Cretaceous-age intrusive rocks are exposed around Sunrise Mountain, Eocene-to-Oligocene-age tuffaceous sedimentary rocks outcrop in a band east of Granite Boulder Creek, and Miocene-age basalt flows cover most of the southern portion. Glacial till covers the head of Granite Boulder Creek and landslide deposits are found on the southeast slope of Vinegar Hill. Most soils consist of a silt loam surface derived from "recent" volcanic ash and a gravelly, cobble structured subsoil derived from glacial activity or various bedrocks. Much of the soil occurs in glacial troughs and is well drained. Volcanic ash soils are the most productive soils on the Forest. These soils have good vegetative and litter cover which protect them from wind and water erosion. If the vegetative cover and litter were broken up by activities such as logging, livestock trailing, or fire, unacceptable erosion could occur (especially on steep slopes at higher elevations). Eroded areas are difficult to re-vegetate because of the short growing season and soils structure. This area is 87 percent forested. Of the forested portions, 2,900 acres meet the definition of old growth in the Pacific Northwest Region. Vegetation on ridgetops and side slopes include meadows of alpine sagebrush, elk sedge, and alpine fescue. Stands of white bark pine, subalpine fir, and spruce

bogs also occur. Upland flats and north-facing side slopes support white fir, lodgepole pine, western larch, and Douglas-fir, with ground covers of pine-grass, elk sedge, and huckleberry.

Current Uses: The area is elk summer range and is also used by mule deer during the summer. The area also provides habitat for bear, pine marten, and bobcat, as well as numerous uncommon smaller mammals. The unique alpine habitat provides an opportunity to view bird life, such as, pine grosbeak and the northern three-toed woodpecker. Many of the streams provide trout fishing opportunities and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat. Clear Creek is particularly important for Chinook salmon production. Big-game hunting and viewing scenery are currently the primary recreational uses of the area, with hunting predominant. Other recreational uses include gold panning and recreational prospecting, fishing, hiking, backpacking, bird watching, photography, nature study, wildflower viewing, horseback riding, rock hounding, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking. None of these latter uses are considered "heavy use" at this time. There are several trails traversing the area as well as opportunities for cross-country travel. The area lies within two grazing allotments, occurring primarily at lower elevations along the perimeter of the area.

Appearance and surroundings: Indian Rock Fire Lookout is located on a high point in the interior of the area and is staffed each summer. The high-elevation views of grassy, open alpine areas and subalpine trees provide a scenic and unusual contrast from adjacent forested areas. Past fire activity in the area has been one of the significant factors in the current appearance of the area which includes blackened snags.

Key Attractions: The major attraction of this area, aside from hunting opportunities, is the splendid 360 degree vista available from high-elevation viewpoints.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: The presence of unimproved roads throughout the area has the greatest impact to the natural integrity of the area. These two-wheel tracks are particularly disturbing to shallow, eroded soils in the center of the area. Motorized vehicle use has been prohibited for 20 years in these areas and the effects are beginning to heal, but their presence is still visible and unnatural to the average visitor. Mineral developments have also impacted the natural integrity of the area. The most widespread impact (prospecting holes) is also the least apparent. The more significant mining impacts are located principally along the southern and eastern portions of the area. Some of these mines have removed soil to mineral rock making the mines quite visible. Some mining exploration continues intermittently, while other mines have not been used since the 1800's. Recreation and grazing use have made minor impacts on the natural integrity of the area. The unimproved roads were used by off-road vehicles in the past. Other recreational impacts consist of low-maintenance trails, hunter camps with fire pits, game racks, etc. The latter are easily removed and their impact is minimal. Grazing use at higher elevations is largely incidental. The most unnatural impact would be the actual presence of cattle. At lower elevations, grazing use becomes more concentrated, though still not heavy. Here, salting grounds and some evidence of cattle use are noticed.

At higher elevations, there is little evidence of grazing. Fire suppression in the area has had an impact on the natural integrity of the north slopes and lower elevation forested area. Vegetative succession has been altered, although it would not be apparent to the average visitor. The area shows some evidence of human use and activities, but these remains substantially unnoticeable. Overall, the area remains a large, relatively, unspoiled tract of land. The most intrusive impacts would be the unimproved roads and mining activity. There is some historic/educational value in the past mining activity.

Topography and vegetation provide a screening effect from activities outside the area. However, the size of the area and distance from the perimeter to the core of the area is generally less than three miles. The result is a moderate opportunity for solitude. The only recreation facilities available are low standard trails. There are outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: The most challenge is presented to cross-country skiers due to the remoteness of the area during winter.

Special Features: The Greenhorn Area would be included within such a district. Even without such designation, there are opportunities for interpretation, and informal study of historical events and uses. There are prehistoric cultural resources within the area. There are no threatened or endangered wildlife species within this area. This area does provide denning habitat for the wolverine along with potential habitat for the lynx. There is one potential peregrine falcon site, though it has not had any historical use and the chance of utilization is marginal. There are two sensitive plant species found here - Listera borealis and Lomatium pastoralis. The area also provides a unique opportunity for scientific study of native plant communities in an alpine and subalpine ecosystem. A potential Research Natural Area has been identified within this area located primarily on the Umatilla National Forest portion.

Manageability and boundaries: Logged areas and roads formed the original boundaries. Logging subsequent to the 1990 Forest Plan increased the amount of activities evident in the southern and western portion of the area. In order to create more manageable and conformable boundaries, much of the area south of the Vinegar Hill Scenic Area boundary was proposed to be dropped, resulting in significantly fewer acres. Existing roads would become a portion of the new boundary. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: The area currently provides roaded natural, semi primitive motorized, and semi primitive nonmotorized recreational opportunities.

Wildlife: The area is elk summer range and is also used by mule deer during the summer. The area also provides habitat for bear, pine marten, and bobcat, as well as numerous uncommon smaller mammals. The unique alpine habitat provides an opportunity to view bird life, such as, pine grosbeak and the northern three-toed woodpecker.

Water/Fish: Many of the streams provide trout fishing opportunities and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat. Clear Creek is particularly important for Chinook salmon production.

Range: The area lies within two grazing allotments, occurring primarily at lower elevations along the perimeter of the area.

Timber/vegetation: There are a variety of forest types in this area. For the most part they have not been impacted by logging, but do show the effects of fire exclusion over the past century. In addition there is evidence of blowdown and there have been several stand replacement intensity forest fires in the 1990s in this area. Portions of the Summit Fire were salvaged; the trees killed by the other fires were left in place. There was some cutting of trees for mining purposes in local areas in the early 1900s.

Minerals: "Numerous gold-silver lode deposits occur within this granitic intrusive and along its edges." (Gold and Silver in Oregon. Bulletin 61. Brooks and Ramp, State of Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries, 1968.). Some people consider this area to have the best

mineral potential of any on the Forest. Most of the area has a moderate potential, and part, a high potential for gold, silver, and copper lode deposits. Prior to the Malheur National Forest Plan in 1990, BLM records show approximately 180 mining claims in the area. In a review of the 2005 BLM records, approximately five mining claims are found in the area. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: There is some historic/educational value in the past mining activity and there are prehistoric cultural resources within the area.

Land use/Special Uses: There is one long-term special use for telephone lines and one 60-acre area withdrawn from mineral entry.

Fire: Fire suppression has had an impact on the northern slopes of the unit causing the vegetation to alter. In addition, the Summit and Reed fires burned portions of this area.

Insects and disease: Indian paint fungus is present and can probably be found in all size classes of true fir. Much of the Douglas-fir (especially on rockier, drier soils) is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. Mistletoe patches of varying severity can be found. Root rots of varying degrees can be found, but are not considered a problem. Due to high amounts of true fir and Douglas-fir in the area, all the timber stands are highly susceptible to tussock moth and the western spruce budworm. A western spruce budworm infestation hit the area in the early 1990's and caused high mortality, which contributed to the intensity of the forest fires that followed. Western pine beetle can be found in the area but is generally confined to a few old-growth ponderosa pine trees of low vigor. Mountain pine beetle outbreaks are occurring in the over mature and overstocked lodgepole stands.

Private lands: There are no non-federal lands within the area boundaries.

Jumpoff Joe Roadless Area (#6252) and (#14249)

2,130 + 5,230 = 7,360 Acres (total)
Administratively shared with Umatilla National Forest

Overview

History: This area was inventoried during RARE and continued into the RARE II inventory. The Umatilla National Forest manages a large part of this roadless area. The John Day Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement designated this area to nonwilderness uses. In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated the area to wildlife emphasis. After the Forest Plan was approved, approximately 580 acres were harvested from the emphasis area due to fire salvage activities associated with the Summit Fire.

Location and access: This area is located on both sides of the northern boundary of the Malheur National Forest and the southern boundary of the Umatilla National Forest in Grant County, Oregon (T.8S., R.32E.; T.8S., R.33E.; T.9S. R.32E.; T.9S. R.33E. of the Willamette Meridian). Access to the area consists of a Forest Service arterial road along the eastern edge of the area. Numerous secondary and local roads lead to the perimeter of the area. There is 0.5 miles of classified road within the Malheur National Forest portion of the inventoried roadless area.

Geography/Topography: The portion of the area on the Malheur National Forest straddles the Big, Deadwood, and Swamp Gulch Creeks and is connected to the portion on the Umatilla National Forest by a narrow strip. The area does not have prominent geographic features and is a series of glacial troughs and outwashes, high elevation rolling ridges, and drainages. Side slopes vary from moderately steep to gentle, primarily westerly facing. The most southerly portion of this

area is immediately adjacent to the Susanville district of the Greenhorn Mountain area gold belt. This area is a continuation of the granitic intrusion, which makes up the Greenhorn Mountain Roadless Area. Surface soil is a silt loam derived from volcanic ash and a cobbley clay loam derived from a variety of bedrock materials. The parent materials are basalt and andesite. Ash soils in this area share the characteristics of volcanic ash soils in the Greenhorn area. Jurassic-to-Cretaceous-age intrusive rocks are exposed over moat of the northwesterly portion of the area. Miocene-age basalt flows cover most of the southern portion. Glacial till covers much of the northeasterly portion.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: This area is 97 percent forested. Of this, 1,300 acres meet the Pacific Northwest Region's definition of old growth. Ridge tops are forested with subalpine tree species. The 1996 Summit Fire burned 2,145 acres within the area. Lower elevations and drainages were heavily forested with grand fir, Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, and western larch. Ground cover consists of huckleberry, pinegrass, and Columbia brome. Small, open areas support alpine sagebrush, elk sedge, and alpine fescue.

Current Uses: The area provides summer and fall range for mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk. The area also provides habitat for bear, pine marten, and bobcat. Trout inhabit Jumpoff Joe Lake as well as portions of Big Creek and Deadwood Creek. These creeks also provide habitat for steelhead spawning and rearing. The area's principal recreation use is big-game hunting and associated camping. Hiking the trail system and snowmobiling in winter are also popular activities. Hiking to fish the tiny Jumpoff Joe Lake is an important experience in this area. Off-road vehicle use occurs in the area. This use is highest in association with big-game hunting. The Malheur National Forest portion lies within one grazing allotment.

Appearance and surroundings: The area does not have prominent geographic features and is a series of glacial troughs and outwashes, high elevation rolling ridges, and drainages. Side slopes vary from moderately steep to gentle, primarily westerly facing.

Key Attractions: Jumpoff Joe Lake is a key attraction for this area.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: The southern portion of the area shows evidence of human use and activities due to the fire salvage operations. Other impacts on the natural integrity of the area include undeveloped hunter camps. These impacts constitute little of the total area and natural integrity is quite high. There are some impacts from grazing. These occur primarily in the southern tip of the area. These consist of dust beds created by livestock in the thick lodgepole pine stands.

The size and shape of the portion of this area on the Malheur National Forest does not lend itself to a high degree of solitude. The gentle rolling and sloping terrain does not add greatly to this opportunity. The very dense lodgepole pine and white fir stands do provide vegetative screening, which offsets these other factors to some degree. During big-game hunting season, the use pattern would make opportunities for solitude very difficult. There are many opportunities for outdoor recreation. These include camping, hiking, hunting, and snowmobiling. However, the opportunities for a primitive recreation experience are limited by the size and shape of the area, the access to the perimeter, and the use pattern.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: This area does not present any uniquely challenging experiences to the average user.

Special Features: There is no known threatened or endangered plant or animal species within this area. There is one sensitive plant occurring in this area. There are no known cultural resources within the area.

Manageability and boundaries: The portion of this area on the Malheur National Forest is narrow and 4 miles long. Due to past wildfire and subsequent timber harvest, the boundaries should be adjusted along the southern portion of the area. South of T.9S., R.33E., Sections 21 and 22, all acres were considered to be non-conforming to wilderness management. In addition to the non-conforming uses, the shape of the area and terrain allow easy motorized access. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: The area currently provides roaded natural recreational opportunities. Hunting is the major recreational use of the area. There are some “unclassified” roads in the Malheur portion of the roadless area – totaling about a mile. Forest Road 4500522 to Bear Paw Meadows, a popular dispersed recreation site, was “decommissioned” in 1999, but was quickly opened back by hunters and is still being used.

Wildlife: The area provides summer and fall range for mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk. The area also provides habitat for bear, pine marten, and bobcat.

Water/Fish: Trout inhabit Jumpoff Joe Lake as well as portions of Big Creek and Deadwood Creek. These creeks also provide habitat for steelhead spawning and rearing.

Range: The Malheur National Forest portion lies within one grazing allotment.

Timber/vegetation: Of the forested acres in this area, 4,000 are tentatively suitable for timber management activities. These trees consist predominantly of mixed conifers with some lodgepole pine growing in multistoried stands. The average overstory age is 150 and the average understory age is 60. The 1996 Summit Fire burned 2,145 acres within the area.

Minerals: The area has a moderate potential for placer gold and vein-type deposits of gold and silver. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area. There are no current mining claims within this area.

Cultural: There are no known cultural resources within the area.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no current special use permits within the area boundary.

Fire: The most recent large fire that occurred in this area was the 1996 Summit Fire. This fire burned 2,145 acres in the area. Fire intensities ranged from pockets of severe intensity to pockets of lesser intensity. With the Summit Fire, the short-term potential for wildfire has been reduced. Fuel loads are expected to increase substantially as the dead overstory falls and the regenerating understory grows. Fires have historically helped to maintain the ecosystem.

Insects and disease: Indian paint fungus is present and can probably be found in all size classes of true firs. Much of the Douglas-fir (especially that found on the rockier, drier soils) is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. Mistletoe patches of varying severity can be found from fairly light to quite severe infestation. Root rots can be found to varying degrees but at this point are not considered a problem. Due to the high amounts of true fir and Douglas-fir in the area, all the timber stands are highly susceptible to tussock moth and the western spruce budworm. A western spruce budworm infestation of varying severity presently exists in the area. Western pine beetle can be found in the area but is generally confined to a few old-growth ponderosa pine trees of low vigor.

Mountain pine beetle outbreaks are now occurring in the old growth and/or overstocked lodgepole pine stands.

Private lands: There is no non-federal land within the area.

Malheur River Roadless Area (#6234)
5,790 Acres

Overview

History: This area was inventoried in RARE and enlarged in the RARE II inventory. The Silvies-Malheur Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and the RAREII Environmental Impact Statement designated the area to nonwilderness uses.

In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated some acres to wild and scenic river management, to general forest-rangeland management, riparian emphasis, big game winter range, visuals, and minimum level management. Since the Forest Plan was approved, no additional harvest activities were scheduled in this area although several harvest projects were completed in the past, primarily within current general forest-rangeland management areas. There are approximately 4.2 miles of classified road within this inventoried roadless area.

Location and access: This area is located near the southeastern boundary of the Malheur National Forest in southern Grant County and northern Harney County, Oregon (T.17S., R.33 1/2E., T.17S, R.34E., T.18S., R33 1/2E., T.18S., R.34E. of the Willamette Meridian). Access to the area consists mainly of several unimproved roads to the forest boundary. A trail along the western edge of the Malheur River at the southern end of the area also provides access for horses and hikers. The Malheur River area is about 7 miles long and 1-1/2 to 2 miles wide.

Geography/Topography: The area is a deeply incised (500 feet) plateau with a generally narrow (50-100 feet), rocky bottom along the Malheur River. On the east side of the river lays a series of steep hills, which rise to the east away from the river. The area consists of the canyons of the Malheur River, as well as some relatively flat tablelands along portions of the Malheur Canyon rim. The canyons are fairly wide and very steep with prominent rock outcroppings, particularly along the southwestern edge.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: Soils in the Malheur River Canyon are those that are generally found on steep slopes of variable aspect. Soil texture varies from clay to loam and some even have a recent volcanic ash surface layer. The bedrock under the surface soils is quite variable. Miocene-age volcanic-flow rocks cover most of the eastern portion of the area with Pleistocene-age basalt flows on the west. Vegetation on the northern and eastern slopes of the Malheur River consists mainly of ponderosa pine over-stories with under-stories of Douglas-fir, grasses and forbs. The area is about 40 percent forested. The tablelands and slopes on the east side of the river generally support some scattered ponderosa pine, juniper, mahogany, sagebrush, and a variety of bunchgrasses. The canyon bottoms extending a short way up the slopes are generally timbered with mature ponderosa pine. The rest of the vegetation is grasses and low-lying shrubs. Small, scattered meadows along the Malheur River support a variety of forbs, grasses, and shrubs.

Current Uses: This area provides year-round Rocky Mountain elk habitat with the lower one-fourth of the area is identified as elk winter range. Mule deer use this area during the spring, summer, and fall. The close proximity of old-growth forest, rimrock, and riparian habitats in this area support a majority of the species found in the southern Blue Mountains. The Malheur River supports an inland trout fishery. Big-game hunting and trout fishing are currently the main recreational uses of the area. Other uses include camping, hiking, rafting, riding, recreational gold

panning, photography, and nature study. However, all recreational use in the area is nominal. Access into the area is provided by a Malheur River Trail 303, a National Recreation Trail, which follows the river course at a gentle grade suitable for the average hiker. This trail provides early season hiking opportunities when many high elevation trails are still snowed in. The Malheur River ford at the northern tip of the area is a very popular dispersed campsite. Most of the area receives light or no use by livestock due to natural barriers, steep slopes, and limited forage. There are two cattle allotments within the area. The tablelands around the canyon rims have been logged and roads have been built throughout the area. In contrast to this, the bottom of the canyon provides a pleasant, remote area with a free-flowing river and views of an undisturbed ecological system.

Appearance and surroundings: The areas surrounding the review area, except for the southern boundary have been logged.

Key Attractions: The major attraction of the area, in addition to the hunting and fishing opportunities has been described as a place to "get away from it all" and to enjoy "peace and quiet without motorized intrusion". Steep rock walls from the canyon rim to the river below may be photographed or used by those willing to find a challenge in rock climbing. The Malheur River is a free-flowing river and a major attraction within the area.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Within the river canyon itself, the natural integrity of the area is extremely high except for fire control and livestock grazing. The history of fire suppression in the area has caused a gradual change in the understory vegetation from ponderosa pine reproduction to white fir and other tree species. Under natural conditions, low intensity wildfires would have selectively maintained ponderosa pine in the understories. Grazing is evidenced by fences, salting grounds, cattle trails, some compaction and vegetative trampling, dust beds, the cattle themselves, and other evidence of their presence along the streambeds. Natural processes have been virtually unhampered by human activity except for the exclusion of fire. Overall, the area within the river canyons appears extremely natural to the average user. Most users would not normally notice the effects of fire suppression. The Malheur River Trail is maintained to a fairly low standard. The impacts of past and present livestock grazing remain the most intrusive activity. These appear unnatural to some visitors and would be extremely difficult to fence on the west side. The impacts also occur in the portion of the area most likely to receive the majority of use.

Within the main canyons, the opportunities for solitude are very high, particularly along the stream bottoms. The depth of the canyons and vegetative cover provide excellent screening. The rim tops offer a limited opportunity for solitude. The views give an impression of a vast, unspoiled canyon area, but there are intrusions from the adjacent tablelands. This is especially true during hunting season. Primitive recreation opportunities are limited due to the narrowness and irregular shape of the area. Topographic and vegetative cover is significant over much of the area, and trails tend to concentrate users in the stream bottoms or on the canyon rims. The Malheur River Trail 303 follows the river from Malheur Ford trailhead to the southern end of the area, with a trailhead located at Hog Flats. The trail is not difficult because it follows the moderate stream grade. The northern boundary of the review area is at the Malheur Ford. In 1999, new accessible facilities replaced the previous primitive facilities. New facilities include an accessible toilet and accessible picnic site. Although use is relatively low at this site, the facilities would not be considered primitive. The new facilities allow for possible concentration of use at this location.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: Climbing out of the canyons during cross-country travel would provide a challenging experience.

Special Features: There is scenic variety both vertically (from rimtops to canyon bottoms) and horizontally, as the vegetation covers change. The federally-listed bull trout is found within the entire length of this portion of the Malheur River. In addition, sensitive species such as the Columbia spotted frog, the Malheur mottled sculpin and redband trout are found in the area. At the Malheur Ford location, a historic splash dam has been identified. In the past, the area immediately adjacent to the Malheur Ford was flooded. Logs were stored in the water and then floated downstream to a mill near Bluebucket Creek. The probability of finding cultural sites is quite high because of fisheries in the Malheur River and the proximity of the area to the Harney Basin and Logan Valley. Several sites have been located during recent surveys.

Manageability and boundaries: The roadless area boundaries are not easily manageable against motor vehicle entry. There is several existing low maintenance level, native surfaced roads that are open and used by the recreating public in addition to past harvest units. Much of the uplands are currently accessed by motorized vehicles. Moving the boundaries to the rims of the river canyons would eliminate much of the human impact and greatly reduce intrusion of outside influences and will add acres that meet criteria on the east side of the river. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: The area currently provides primitive, roaded modified, roaded natural and semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities. The Malheur River, south of Malheur Ford, is managed as “wild” under the management definitions for rivers listed as Wild and Scenic. The trail is the only access along the river bottom.

Wildlife: This area provides year-round Rocky Mountain elk habitat with the lower one-fourth of the area identified as elk winter range. Mule deer use this area during the spring, summer, and fall. Antelope can be found in the table lands. The close proximity of old-growth forest, rimrock, and riparian habitats in this area support a majority of the species found in the southern Blue Mountains.

Water/Fish: Inland native trout and threatened bull trout are abundant in the river.

Range: Current use by cattle is on two different grazing allotments.

Timber/vegetation: There are 2,500 acres of forested land. These timber stands are predominantly ponderosa pine, multistoried stands. The overstories have an average age of 140 years and the understories have an average age of 75 years.

Minerals: The area has no known locatable mineral potential and contains no mining claims. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: The probability of finding cultural sites is quite high because of fisheries in the Malheur River and the proximity of the area to the Harney Basin and Logan Valley. Several sites have been located during recent surveys.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no known special use permits in this area.

Fire: During the last several years, several small fires have occurred in the area. The largest fire burned approximately 280 acres along the breaks of the river. The history of fire suppression in the area has caused a gradual change in the understory vegetation from ponderosa pine reproduction to white fir and other tree species.

Insects and disease: The western spruce budworm is probably prevalent in the Douglas-fir and white fir, as it can be found throughout the Malheur National Forest. It is not known to what degree the budworm has infested this particular area. The Douglas-fir is infected with dwarf-mistletoe to varying degrees and the western pine beetle can be found in the old-growth ponderosa pine located on this tract of land.

Private lands: There are no private ownerships or other ownerships within the boundaries of the area. On the southern end of the unit the Bureau of Land Management, State of Oregon, and private lands are adjacent to the Forest boundary.

McClellan Mountain Roadless Area (#6237)

23,140 Acres

Overview

History: This area was inventoried in RARE and enlarged in the RARE II inventory. The John Day Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement designated the area for nonwilderness uses. In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated the majority of acres to semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation management. The remaining acres were allocated to general forest-rangeland, riparian emphasis, old growth and minimum level management. Since the Forest Plan was approved, approximately 103 acres have been harvested, primarily in the general forest-rangeland allocations. Several harvest projects were completed prior to 1990, primarily within general forest-rangeland management areas. There are approximately 2.8 miles of classified road within the original boundaries of the RARE II area

Location and access: This area is located about 5 miles south of Mt. Vernon, Oregon, in the Aldrich Mountain Range on the boundary of the Malheur National Forest. It overlooks the John Day River valley (T.14S. R.28E., T.1S. R.29E, T.14S. R.30E., T.15S. R.30E. of the Willamette Meridian). Several high standard forest roads provide perimeter access while lower standard roads provide access to Fields Creek Trail 212, McClellan Mtn Trail 216 and Riley Creek Trail 216A.

Geography/Topography: The extremely varied terrain is primarily steep with broken slopes highly dissected with the stream courses. These include Canyon, Miner, Tex, Ingle, Moon (and tributaries), McClellan, Buck Gulch, Riley, and Harper creeks. Dominant high points are McClellan, Moon, Riley, Dead horse, Cinnabar, Ingle, and Coal Pit mountains as well as Fields and Second Peaks, and two other unnamed peaks approaching or exceeding 7,000 feet. Relief is approximately 4,160 feet, from 7,363 feet at Fields Peak to about 3,200 feet at Fields Creek.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: General geologic formations are Fields Creek Formation (a conglomerate of mudstone, shale, graywacke, and tuff) and the Laycock Graywacke (a massive graywacke and tuff formation). Soil types are predominantly gravelly loam and silty loam textured soils, both forested and nonforested. Most of the soil types are loamy and clayey or contain volcanic ash. Nonforested soils are interspersed with large areas of forested volcanic surface soils. Soil depth is variable but is generally 8 to 18 inches. Triassic-age, sedimentary rocks cover most of the area with some foliated, sedimentary and volcanic rocks of Paleozoic age on the east. Cretaceous-age intrusives are found in the central portion, and Triassic-age oceanic crystal rocks cover a large portion of the ground in the northwest portion of the area. This area is 47 percent forested. Of these acres, 1,500 meet the Pacific Northwest Region's definition of old growth. Vegetation on the forested west- and south-facing slopes is primarily ponderosa pine with mixed conifer understories (Douglas-fir and white fir). The ground cover includes elk sedge, pinegrass, and wheatgrass. Douglas-fir, western larch, and lodgepole pine-with a ground cover of

huckleberry, pinegrass and brome. Subalpine fir and/or alpine sage and other subalpine shrubs and grasses occupy the highest elevations. The drier or nonforested sites on all aspects are vegetated with juniper, sagebrushes, mountain-mahogany, and some scattered ponderosa pine. Ground cover on these sites includes wheatgrass, fescue, and bluegrass. Forested areas north of McClellan Mountain are primarily white fir.

Current Uses: Big-game hunting is the primary recreational use of the roadless area. There is limited hiking, horseback riding, game bird hunting, and sightseeing available. The area provides excellent opportunities for backcountry ski-touring, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Several high standard forest roads provide perimeter access while lower standard roads provide access to Fields Creek Trail 212, McClellan Mtn Trail 216 and Riley Creek Trail 216A, which provide recreational access to the area. Wildlife in the area is varied; the most visible being mule deer and elk. There have been mountain lion, black bear, and bighorn sheep within the roadless area. Bird species are numerous and include songbirds, raptors, game birds, such as the blue grouse and mountain quail, and possibly the pileated woodpecker. Mammals range from big game to voles, marmots, and chipmunks. Pine martens may be present in the old-growth forests on the north-facing slopes. Elk winter range exists on lower slopes of the northern portions of the area. Two and one half miles of Riley Creek provide limited trout fishing. Tex, Riley, and McClellan creeks provide steelhead spawning and rearing habitat. There are four grazing allotments. Livestock use is limited because of the terrain.

Appearance and surroundings: The extremely varied terrain is primarily steep with broken slopes highly dissected with the stream courses. Dominant high points are McClellan, Moon, Riley, Dead Horse, Cinnabar, Ingle, and Coal Pit mountains as well as Fields and Second Peaks, and two other unnamed peaks approaching or exceeding 7,000 feet. Relief is approximately 4,160 feet, from 7,363 feet at Fields Peak to about 3,200 feet at Fields Creek.

Key Attractions: Attractions include the opportunity to be in some very wild and rugged country with no intrusions from others. The area offers solitude, peace, and quiet. There are many unusual geologic formations, as well as numerous high-vantage points. The area will continue to be used by big-game hunters.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Natural integrity is very high. There are some primitive jeep trails along the southern boundary of the area. These could easily be separated from the area by a slight boundary adjustment. The effects of grazing have had the most impact on the area's naturalness. Stock ponds are scattered throughout the southern third of the area. Fencing, mostly in the southern portion of the areas, could easily be removed. The impact of the fence is low. The presence of cattle and evidence of their use, such as salt grounds, dust beds, etc., remain the most visible impact. There is some scattered evidence of recreational use, such as primitive game racks and hunter camp areas. These are low impacts and could easily be corrected. There are several foot trails throughout the area. Fields Creek Trail 212, McClellan Mtn Trail 216 and Riley Creek Trail 216A are maintained as hiking trails and are recommended for mountain bike riders. The effects of fire suppression are not noticeable to the average visitor. Under natural conditions, low intensity fire would have selectively maintained ponderosa pine in the understories rather than allowing the conversion to fir species to materialize.

Opportunities for solitude are excellent. The deep canyons, vegetation, and rough, broken terrain, provide excellent screening from distractions. The area is large enough to reduce the chance of human interaction. The opportunities for primitive hiking, hunting, backpacking, and similar

activities are good. There is great scenic variety; ranging from forested benches to deep canyons with open slopes and forested bottomlands. Located within the unit are 13 possible cultural resource sites (eleven prehistoric and two historic). There are no other identified sites. This indicates travel through, and use by, American Indians and Europeans. There is at least one old mining and cabin site in the area.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: The steep, rugged terrain is physically demanding although not particularly challenging.

Special Features:
There are no threatened or endangered species present within this area. One sensitive plant species is found here. An area in the northeastern portion of McClellan Mountain has been identified as a high priority candidate for proposal as a Research Natural Area.

Manageability and boundaries: The present boundary does not follow natural physical characteristics in many places and often is located mid-slope. These characteristics prevent easy location on the ground. Boundary changes on the eastern portion of the area would improve manageability and could separate many of the impacts of human activity. They would also reduce the size of the area. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: The area currently provides roaded natural, semi-primitive motorized, and nonmotorized recreation opportunities. Fields Creek Trail 212, McClellan Mtn Trail 216 and Riley Creek Trail 216A are maintained as hiking trails and are recommended for mountain bike riders.

Wildlife: There have been mountain lion, black bear, and bighorn sheep reported within the roadless area. Bird species are numerous and include songbirds, raptors, game birds- such as the blue grouse and mountain quail- and possibly the pileated woodpecker. Mammals range from big game to voles, marmots, and chipmunks. Pine martens may be present in the old-growth forests on the north-facing slopes. Elk winter range exists on lower slopes of the northern portions of the area.

Water/Fish: There are no present or planned impacts on the water resource in terms of Impoundments, power withdrawals, nor are there any measuring sites. Two and one-half miles of Riley Creek provide limited trout fishing. Tex, Riley, and McClellan creeks provide steelhead spawning and rearing habitat.

Range: The potential for increased livestock use is low. Terrain is one limiting factor. There are four grazing allotments. Livestock use is limited because of the terrain.

Timber/vegetation: The timber stands in the area are multistoried and consist primarily of mixed conifer. Average overstory age is 160 years and the average age of the understory is 75 years.

Minerals: The area has no known locatable mineral potential. An old mercury prospect, covered by one mining claim, is located on Cinnabar Mountain at the northeast corner of the area. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: Located within the unit are thirteen possible cultural resource sites (eleven prehistoric and two historic). There are no other identified sites. This indicates travel through, and use by, American Indians and Europeans. There is at least one old mining and cabin site in the area.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no current special use permits within the area boundary**.**

Fire: The Aldrich Mountain Range is historically one of the hardest hit by lightning on the Blue Mountain Ranger District making the fire hazard high to very high. The south and west slopes are dry with flashy fuels, while the north faces have dense concentrations of heavy fuels. Lack of access requires that helicopter or smokejumper crews attack most fires in the unit.

Insects and disease: Insect damage from the western spruce budworm is widespread on the northern face of the Aldrich Mountain Range. At this time, mortality is considered insignificant and the trees appear to be recovering. Species involved are Douglas-fir and white fir. The white fir component has a high cull factor in the greater than 12-inch diameter classes from root rots.

Private lands: There are no lands of other ownership within the roadless area. Private, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODF&W) managed lands adjoin the roadless area boundary on the north.

Myrtle Silvies Roadless Area (#6232)

10,930 Acres

Overview

History: This area was inventoried in the RARE process, and RARE II Environmental Impact Statement. Under the Silvies-Malheur Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement, the area has been managed for nonwilderness uses. In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated the majority of acres to semi-primitive, nonmotorized management. The remainder of the area was allocated to general forest-rangeland, riparian emphasis, big game winter range, and minimum level management. Since 1990, there have been approximately 31 acres harvested from the area, primarily within the semi-primitive non-motorized area. Prior to 1990, there were over 217 acres harvested primarily in the semi-primitive, non-motorized allocation. There are 7.2 miles of classified road within the inventoried roadless area that have been buffered out of the roadless area.

Location and access: The area is located near the southern boundary of the Malheur National Forest in northern Harney County, Oregon (T.19S. R.30E, T.20S. R.30E., of the Willamette Meridian). Access consists of unimproved roads to the canyon rims, trails along Myrtle and West Myrtle Creeks in the canyon bottoms, and the "Silvies River Jeep Trail," a four-wheel drive, two-track road, which extends approximately 3 miles. This road will soon be decommissioned.

Geography/Topography: The area consists of canyons of the Silvies River and Myrtle Creek drainages. The canyons are fairly wide and very steep with prominent rock outcroppings. The area is a deeply (600 feet plus) incised plateau with a narrow valley (50-200 feet) in the bottom. The canyons average one mile from rim-to-rim, with bench-like side slopes in some areas and long, smooth slopes in others. The plateau of tablelands at the top of the canyons is formed from a resistant cap of welded tuff about 30-50 feet thick. Below this is a slope-forming water-laid ash deposit about 40-60 feet deep. Further below this is a ledge-forming layer of basalt. Finally, below this basalt is another layer of welded tuff and another ash deposit. These latter layers are permeable materials and where they meet impervious basalt, ground water seeps to the surface. Below these, and for the remaining 400-500 feet, lies a series of slope-forming tuffs. On the north- and east-facing slopes, particularly, boulders and blocks of the welded tuff persist from the top of the canyon sidewall to the bottom. The basalt flow also frequently produces a talus slope of loose rock and soil. Miocene-age, volcanic-flow rocks, outcrop in most of the canyon area, with Miocene- to Pliocene-age, tuffaceous sediments located in the canyon toward the south. Pliocene-age, welded tuff is exposed in higher elevations, and some Pliocene-age, tuffaceous sediments are found in the extreme southern portion of the area.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: This area is 75 percent forested. According to the Pacific Northwest

Region's definition of old growth, about 200 of these acres are old-growth forest. Side slopes on the west side of Myrtle Canyon have pine and fir with a grass and shrub understory. The east side of Myrtle Canyon is ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir with grass and sedge. Also found on the east side are numerous areas of juniper, sagebrush, and bunchgrass. The north slopes along the Silvies Canyon support ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir with fir understories intermingled with mountain-mahogany.

Current Uses: Big-game hunting, and fishing for trout and small-mouth bass are currently the primary recreational uses of the area. Other uses include Silvies River rafting or canoeing during the spring high-water periods, picnicking, camping, hiking, recreational gold panning, photography, and nature study. All recreational use in the area is light. Access is limited to trails that follow the stream courses. These are generally at a gentle grade and suitable for the average hiker. This area provides year-round Rocky Mountain elk habitat with winter range encompassing the entire area. Mule deer are in the area during spring, summer, and fall. The canyon rims provide habitat for black bear, bobcat, Canadian geese, prairie falcon, and turkey vulture. The area provides for a wide spectrum of wildlife viewing, as the canyons support riparian, cliff, and mountain habitat (including old growth) in close proximity. Most bird and mammal species associated with the southern Blue Mountains can be found in the area. The area lies within four grazing allotments.

Appearance and surroundings: The canyon bottom provides a pleasant, remote area with free-flowing streams and views of an undisturbed ecological system. The canyon walls range from rock walls to smooth side slopes. Myrtle Creek has large old-growth forest stands, while the Silvies River canyon has more open slopes and stringers of trees. The predominant high points adjacent to the area are Burnt Mountain Lookout (abandoned) and West Myrtle Butte Lookout (currently in service during fire season). The southern boundary of the area is adjacent to private land.

Key Attractions: The major attraction of this area, in addition to hunting and fishing opportunities, is simply a place to “get away from it all“and enjoy “peace and quiet without motorized intrusions”. Some talus slopes are visible from the creek bottom.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Within the river canyons themselves, natural integrity of the area is extremely high. Natural processes have been virtually unhampered by human activities, with the exception of trail maintenance, livestock grazing, fire management, one unimproved road, and camping and associated activities. Fire suppression in the area has caused a gradual change in the understory vegetation from ponderosa pine to white fir and other tree species. Under natural conditions, low intensity wildfires would have selectively maintained ponderosa pine in the understories. The effects of grazing in the area are mostly concentrated along streams. They include fences, salt grounds, cattle trails, some compaction and vegetative trampling, dust beds, the cattle themselves, and other evidence of their presence along the streams. There is one unimproved Jeep track for several miles along the Silvies River. This is utilized for only 1 mile until after spring runoff, at which time it is possible to travel an additional 2 miles of the track with off-road vehicles. This road will soon be decommissioned. The impact of the unimproved road along the Silvies River is localized to that area. Overall, the area appears extremely natural to the average user. Most users would not normally notice the effects of fire suppression. Foot trails along streams are maintained to a fairly low standard. The impacts of livestock grazing remain the most intrusive activity, unnatural to some visitors, and would be

extremely difficult to mitigate unless grazing were eliminated. Livestock grazing occurs in the portion of the area most likely to receive a majority of visitor use.

Within the canyons, opportunities for solitude are very high, especially along stream bottoms. The depth of the canyons and the vegetative cover provide excellent screening. Rim tops offer limited opportunity for solitude and viewing of the canyons. The views give an impression of a vast, unspoiled canyon area, but intrusions from the adjacent tablelands occur (especially during hunting season). The narrowness and irregular shape of the area limits overall, primitive recreation opportunities. Topographic and vegetative cover is significant over much of the area, and trails tend to concentrate users in stream bottoms or on canyon rims. Trails are the only recreation facility present and they are low standard. They are not difficult. However, as the trails follow the moderate stream grade, the lack of facilities and access do tend to increase opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: Challenge to physical ability would be classified as moderate to high, particularly for the areas with rock cliffs and very steep slopes.

Special Features: There is scenic variety both vertically (from rim tops to canyon bottoms) and horizontally as the scene changes among microhabitats. Much of the timber in the canyons provides old growth habitat. No threatened or endangered species are known to use the area; however, there is a potential for bald eagle winter roosts at the mouth of both Silvies and Myrtle Canyons. Sensitive species are known to occur in the area and includes redband trout, Malheur mottled sculpin, Columbia spotted frog, and Lomatium ravenii.

Manageability and boundaries: The boundaries of the original inventoried review area are difficult to locate on-the-ground and would be extremely difficult to manage. Minor boundary adjustments would include moving the boundary to the Canyon rims, excluding known open roads and public use areas. Using existing roads as boundaries would improve the ability to locate and manage the area. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: Currently the area provides roaded modified, roaded natural and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities.

Wildlife: Most bird and mammal species associated with the southern Blue Mountains can be found in the area.

Water/Fish: There is one ditch or canal right-of-way that was retained for the "Bennett Cabin" property when it was deeded to the Forest Service. There are no planned power withdrawals, proposed impoundments, existing irrigation reservoirs, or distribution systems. Fish bearing streams in the roadless area include Myrtle Creek and the Silvies River. Both streams provide limited fishing opportunities due to poor habitat features, water quality and water diversions that reduce water flows. Both streams support a wide diversity of small fish except for common carp, which grow to 20 inches or more. Surveys have determined the presence of eleven native and seven introduced fish species in watershed.

Range: The area lies within four grazing allotments.

Timber/vegetation: There are 7,200 acres of forested land. These trees are predominantly ponderosa pine and mixed conifer species growing in multistoried stands. The average age of the overstory is 140 years old and the average age of the understory is 60 years old.

Minerals: The area has no known potential for locatable minerals and contains no mining claims, although four claims are located close to the eastern boundary. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: Native Americans occupied both Myrtle and Silvies Canyons at various times. A cultural resource survey was conducted in Myrtle Canyon in 1980 finding isolated chips and flakes, but no historic sites were found. There is a high probability of locating additional prehistoric sites in the Silvies River Canyon because of its proximity to Silvies Valley. The canyon bottoms along Myrtle and West Myrtle Creeks also have as high potential for locating cultural resources.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no special-use permits or other special land use authorizations in the area.

Fire: Fire suppression in the area has caused a gradual change in the understory vegetation from ponderosa pine to white fir and other tree species. Under natural conditions, low intensity wildfires would have selectively maintained ponderosa pine in the under stories.

Insects and disease: The Western spruce budworm can be found throughout the entire area. In those areas inhabited primarily with fir, infestation is quite severe. Much of the Douglas-fir is infected with dwarf-mistletoe, especially that found on the drier slopes of Myrtle Canyon. There are several pine trees that have been killed by western pine beetle.

Private lands: There are no known non-Federal lands in the review area

Nipple Butte Roadless Area (#6244)
12,860 Acres

Overview

History: This area was inventoried in RARE and enlarged in the RARE II inventory. The John Day Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement designated the area to nonwilderness uses. In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated the majority of the area to wildlife emphasis. The remaining area was allocated to general forest-rangeland, riparian emphasis, big game winter range, old growth and minimum level management. Since the Forest Plan was approved, approximately 107 acres were harvested, primarily within the general forest-rangeland and wildlife emphasis allocations. Several harvest projects were completed prior to 1990, primarily within general forest-rangeland management areas. There are approximately 3.3 miles of classified road within the inventoried roadless area.

Location and access: The Nipple Butte Roadless Area is in the northern portion of the Forest and about 7 miles north of John Day, Oregon. Forest roads along or near the entire boundary allow access into the area.

Geography/Topography: This rugged area is about 6 miles long and 4 miles wide. The area is comprised of steep, mountainous terrain, and is dissected by the Clear Creek and McClellan Creek drainages. Elevation of the area varies from 6,000 feet near Lake Butte to 3,000 feet at the mouth of Clear Creek. Soils in the area are moderately deep, and silt loam to clay in texture. The erosion hazard is moderately high-to-high. The mantle stability hazard is high. Volcanic flow and sedimentary rocks of the Eocene age cover much of the area. An associated volcanic plug forms Nipple Butte. Miocene-age basalt flows and water-laid tuffs are exposed in the southwestern portion of the unit. An associated volcanic vent is located on lower Clear Creek.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: This area is 83 percent forested. Vegetative cover is varied with trees in the bottom and lower slopes, while ridges and steeper sideslopes are grass covered. Juniper, sagebrush, and mountain-mahogany occur on the south-facing, nonforested areas. Ponderosa pine is the predominant tree species. It is intermingled with juniper and mountain-mahogany on some upland flats and sideslopes. Other areas within this tract of land support ponderosa pine, grand fir, and Douglas-fir with pinegrass and elk sedge ground cover.

Current Uses: The principal recreation use of the area is big-game hunting. Other uses include fishing, bird-watching, photography, hiking, and viewing scenery from Nipple Butte. In addition, Nipple Butte Trail 346 offers motorized access to the area. There is year-round habitat for mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, bear, small animals, and birdlife. Clear Creek and McClellan Creek contribute to the flow of the East Fork of Beech Creek. These streams provide spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead and resident trout.

Appearance and surroundings: The surrounding area consists of managed National Forest System lands. The Magone Lake Recreational Area is adjacent to one point on the eastern boundary.

Key Attractions: The major attraction of this area is the opportunity for big-game hunting.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Grazing and recreation have impacted the natural appearance of the area. Grazing effects include cross fencing through the center of the area, stock-water troughs, salt end dusting grounds, vegetative trampling, and physical presence of cattle. These impacts are few and well scattered. Recreational use impacts include a few fire rings and undeveloped hunter camps, with soil compaction and primitive game racks. There are also several non-system trails in the area. Fire suppression has altered the natural succession of the area. Under natural conditions, low intensity fire would have selectively maintained ponderosa pine in the understory instead of allowing the encroachment of firs. Most other impacts affect only the immediate vicinity. The effects of fire suppression are not noticeable to the average user. The natural integrity of the area within the reduced boundary would be fairly high and the natural appearance of the area would be very high.

Although the distance from the perimeter to the core of the area is less than 3 miles, opportunity for solitude is very good. Topographic screening is provided by highly broken country with rock outcrops and narrow draws with brush and trees. There are no developed facilities within the area, but the opportunity for primitive recreation is low.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenge: There is little diversity in the area and no particularly challenging features.

Special Features: There is no threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant or animal species within the area. There are no other unique species or features.

Manageability and boundaries: In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: This area currently provides roaded modified, roaded natural and semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities.

Wildlife: The area provides year-round habitat for mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, bear, small animals, and birdlife.

Water/Fish: The East Fork of Beech Creek lays immediately to the south of the area. It is identified as a fish bearing perennial stream. The East Fork empties into the main stem of Beech Creek within 1 mile of the area.

Range: This area contains portions of two grazing allotments.

Timber/vegetation: There are 8,200 acres of forested lend tentatively suitable for timber management activities. These trees are predominantly mixed conifer species, with some lodgepole and ponderosa pine. The average age of the overstory is 135 years and the understory is 65 years old.

Minerals: The area has no known potential for locatable minerals and contains no mining claims. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: There are numerous sites recorded within the area. Most of these sites have been evaluated for significance.

Land use/Special Uses: There is one water transmission use and one telephone/telegraph line through the area.

Fire: Fire suppression has altered the natural succession of the area. Fuel loadings are uncharacteristically high as a result of suppression efforts and coniferous insect and disease caused conifer mortality.

Insects and disease: Indian paint fungus is present and can probably be found in all size classes of the true fir. Much of the Douglas-fir (especially on rockier, drier soils) is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. Mistletoe patches of varying degrees can be found from fairly light to quite severe. Root rots can be found to varying degrees but at this point are not considered a problem. Due to high amounts of true fir and Douglas-fir, all the timber stands are highly susceptible to tussock moth and the western spruce budworm. Western spruce budworm presently infests the area with varying degrees of severity. Western pine beetle can be found in the area but is generally confined to a few old-growth ponderosa pine trees of low vigor. Mountain pine beetle is currently attacking lodgepole pine.

Private lands: There are scattered private landholdings along the southern boundary of the area. Most of these are along the 36 road, with one entire section, Section 16., T.31E., R.12S., being a private holding.

North Fork Malheur Roadless Area (#6241)

0 Acres

History: This area was first inventoried late in the RARE II process. It was assigned to further planning in a Unit Environmental Impact Statement. This roadless area does not meet the criteria for potential wilderness area due to harvests, roads, road buffers, and other developments.

Pine Creek Roadless Area (#6248)

5,090 Acres

Overview

History: This area was first inventoried late in the RARE II process. It was assigned to further planning in both an addendum to the Silvies-Malheur Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement, and in the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement because it did not have the advantage of full public review during unit planning. In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated the majority of the area to big game winter range and remaining allocations included riparian emphasis, bald eagle winter roosts, old growth and minimum level management. Since the Forest Plan was approved, no harvest activities were completed in this area. There are approximately 5.7 miles of classified roads buffered out of the inventoried roadless boundaries.

Location and Access: The area is located near the southern boundary of the Malheur National Forest in northern Harney County, Oregon (T.20S. R.33E., T.20S. R.33 1/2E., T.21S. R.33E., T.21S. R.33 1/2E., of the Willamette Meridian). Access to the area consists of unimproved roads to the canyon rims and a trail along the creek in the canyon bottom.

Geography/Topography: The area consists of the canyon of Pine Creek drainage and some relatively flat tableland around canyon rims. The south end of Pine Creek Canyon has steep walls with prominent rock outcroppings. The north portion encompasses gentle slopes and broad, flat canyon bottoms. The topography of the area consists of a deeply (400+ feet) incised plateau with a narrow valley (50 feet) in the bottom. It is about one-half mile from rim-to-rim with bench like side slopes in some areas and long, smooth slopes in others. Pine Creek runs southeast through the center of the area. The northern portion of the area has gentle topography compared to the southern portion. The plateau of tableland is formed from soils derived from tuffs and breccias. Some of these soils are excessively drained, and they are gravelly and could be plastic when wet. Layers below these clay soils are bedrock composed of hard tuffs, breccias, hard basalt, and andesite, which is slightly fractured. The canyon walls are formed of highly stratified and variable bedrocks with a wide range of undefined soil characteristics. The area is covered with Miocene and younger volcanic flows and sediments.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: This area is 60 percent forested. Most of the area is a mixture of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and white fir. Much of the white fir is confined to the north slopes leading into Pine Creek Canyon. Understories are generally comprised of Douglas-fir and white fir over grasses and shrubs. The south slopes leading into Pine Creek are mainly vegetated with juniper, mountain mahogany, sagebrush, bunchgrass, and scattered ponderosa pine.

Current Uses: Big-game hunting and trout fishing are currently the primary recreation uses of the area. Other uses include camping, hiking, photography, and nature study. All recreational use of the area is light. Access in the interior of the area is limited to the Craft Cabin Trail 319 that follows the stream course, which is gentle in grade and suitable for the average hiker. In addition, there are low standard, native surfaced roads that are currently open and used by recreationists on the east side of the area.

Appearance and surroundings: Logging activities are adjacent to the northwest portion of the area. The south end of the area is remote and rugged. The areas in Bureau of Land Management, State, or private ownerships along the eastern boundary of the area support sage, mountain mahogany, juniper, and patches of aspen. The land west and north of the area has been logged repeatedly. The land east and south of the area is in Bureau of Land Management, State, or private ownership. Some logging has occurred on these lands.

Key Attractions: The major attractions of this area are hunting and trout fishing. Trout fishing occurs along the north end of the area where access is best.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Within the canyons themselves, natural integrity of the area is extremely high. Natural processes have been slightly hampered by human activities. The major impacts to this portion of the area are exclusion of fire, a trail located in the canyon bottom, livestock grazing, a low-standard road in the northern portion of the area, and some scattered water developments for livestock. Fire suppression in the area has resulted in a gradual change in the understory vegetation from ponderosa pine reproduction to white fir and other tree species. Under natural conditions, low-intensity wildfires would have selectively maintained ponderosa pine in the understories. Overall, the area appears extremely natural to the average user. Most users would not normally notice the effects of fire suppression. Craft Cabin Trail 319 along the stream is maintained to a fairly low standard. The impacts of livestock grazing remain the most intrusive activity. These appear unnatural to most visitors and would be extremely difficult to mitigate unless grazing were eliminated. These impacts also occur in the portion of the area most likely to receive the most use.

The roads leading to the boundary of the area provide ample access. The opportunity does not really exist to "get away from it all". The southern portion of the area would offer the best opportunity to retreat from human influences, but human influences would still be visible within two miles of the review area. Camping, hunting, trout fishing and limited photography are activities that could take place in this area. There is also limited opportunity for rock climbing. No opportunity exists for water-related activities such as canoeing, boating, or river rafting due to lack of the water volume needed for such activities. The Craft Cabin Trail along Pine Creek could be an opportunity for a 1- or 2-day overnight backpacking trip depending on the desire of the individual.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenges: Location, remoteness, and access to the area provide little challenge for the more dedicated recreationists.

Special Features: The majority of old-growth timber in the area is currently part of the Forest's old growth management system. No Threatened or Endangered Species are known to occur in the area. A sensitive plant species may exist in this area, but sensitive plant surveys have not been completed for the Pine Creek drainage. The sensitive redband trout and Columbia spotted frog are found in the area. There are no known opportunities for historical, educational or scientific studies. Two prehistoric sites were found within this area in past archeological surveys. This area was formerly included within the boundaries of the original Malheur Reservation, which continued north to the summit of the Strawberry Mountain, and east to Monument Rock. It was also a migration route for tribes between the winter and summer camps making the probability of cultural sites very high.

Manageability and boundaries: The boundaries of the original inventoried area are difficult to locate on the ground and would be difficult to manage. In addition, there are roads currently open and used by recreationists on the east portion of the area. A more manageable boundary would be one that follows the river rim and roads. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there is an interior Class I-V road, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides. On the west side of the area, there are additional acres that could be added to the area.

Availability

Recreation: Currently the area is almost entirely in the semi-primitive nonmotorized ROS class. Altogether, the area currently has the ability to provide roaded natural, semi-primitive motorized, and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation opportunities.

Wildlife: This area provides year-round Rocky Mountain elk habitat with winter range encompassing the entire area. Mule deer use the area during spring, summer, and fall. Canyon rims and walls provide habitat for black bear, prairie falcon, and Canadian geese. This area also could potentially provide habitat for bobcat and turkey vulture. The close association of old-growth forest, sage land, riparian, and cliff habitats provides a wide spectrum of southern Blue Mountain plant and animal species.

Water/Fish: Pine Creek produces such a low volume of water that its main contribution is to off-forest irrigation of agricultural lands. Pine Creek does support redband trout.

Range: Permitted grazing use of the Pine Creek area occur under one grazing allotment.

Timber/vegetation: There are 3,000 acres of forested land. These stands are predominantly ponderosa pine with some mixed conifer. They are multistoried stands with an average overstory age of 150 years and an average understory age of 75 years.

Minerals: Bureau of Mines and U S Geological Survey studies discovered no zones of alteration or mineralization. Those agencies concluded that the area had low potential for locatable minerals. There are no mining claims within the area. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: There are no known opportunities for historical, educational, or scientific studies. Two prehistoric sites were found in past archeological surveys. This area was formerly included within the boundaries of the original Malheur Reservation, which continued north to the summit of the Strawberry Mountain, and east to Monument Rock. It was also a migration route for tribes between the winter and summer camps making the probability of cultural sites very high.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no special-use permits or other special land-use authorizations in the area. There are no known hydroelectric withdrawals or any proposed impoundments. Several livestock spring improvements exist, consisting of water troughs and several holding ponds to catch snowmelt. There is no known water-measuring site. The closest other land use is the electronic site on Craft Point (1/4 mile outside the present Pine Creek area boundary). This permit authorizes Pacific Northwest Bell to use the area for a microwave telephone reflector. This reflector can be seen from much of the southern portion of the area.

Fire: There have been several small fires in the last several years. Very little logging has taken place within the area and only light fuels (grass and sagebrush) cover large expanses of the review area, although there is heavy fuel loading in the canyon.

Insects and disease: The area contains many pine snags, which have been killed by western pine beetle. Much of the Douglas-fir is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. On the drier soils, the infection is quite severe.

Private lands: There are no private lands within the boundary, however, private lands are found adjacent to the area.

Shaketable Roadless Area (#6218)

8,340 Acres

Overview

History: This area was inventoried in RARE and enlarged in the RARE II inventory. Under the South Fork Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and RARE II Environmental Impact Statement, the area was managed for nonwilderness uses. In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated the majority of land to semi-primitive, nonmotorized uses, and the remaining area to the proposed Shaketable research natural area. Harvest activities were not scheduled in this area and none have occurred. There are approximately 2.7 miles of classified roads within the original boundaries of the area that are buffered out of the inventory.

Location and access: Shaketable roadless area is located on the western edge of the Malheur National Forest, approximately 12 miles southeast of Dayville, Oregon, in Grant County (T.15S. R.27E., and T.15S. R.28E., of the Willamette Meridian). Access is available to most of the area. Primary access is by Forest Road 2170 on the north and Forest Roads 2490 and 2490090 on the east. These roads are well maintained. Access is also available by jeep trail on the west and a low-standard local road on the south (Forest Road 2490269).

Geography/Topography: The terrain of this area varies from flat plateaus to deep canyons. Most of the area consists of steep side-slopes with stream courses in the ravines. The remainder is relatively flat upland. High points are Shaketable and Timber Mountain. Several steep canyons containing Thorn, Murderers, South Fork Murderers, Bark Cabin, Crazy, Corral Gulch, and East Fork Corral Gulch creeks dissect the unit. Relief is approximately 1,565 feet, from 3,360 feet on Murderers Creek to 4,924 feet on Timber Mountain. General underlying geologic formations are Columbia River group basalts and andesite in the west and north, with vester formation conglomerates to the east and south (See Figure C-18). Soil types are predominantly loamy and clayey, nonforested soils with a wide variety of characteristics. There are also some areas of deep volcanic ash soils. Most of the area is covered by Miocene-age basalt flows. Some Triassic-age oceanic crystal rocks are found along the southeastern edge.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: The Shaketable unit is about 31 percent forested, which is scattered throughout the area. Concentrations of timber types are on Timber Mountain, the north slopes of Shaketable, and the canyons of Crazy and South Fork Murderers Creeks. Ponderosa pine is the dominant species, with Douglas-fir and white fir on the more protected sites. Ground cover in forested area is primarily pinegrass and elk sedge. Juniper, mountain-mahogany, sagebrushes, wheatgrass, fescue, bluegrass, and wild onion occupy the nonforested lands.

Current Uses: Although access is good, this area does not receive a large amount of recreational use. The principal use is big-game hunting. Horseback riding, off-road vehicle use, fishing, camping, and bird watching are other activities that occur here to a limited extent. There are native trout in the streams. Murderers Creek is an important steelhead spawning and rearing habitat for the John Day River System.

Appearance and surroundings: The area lies within one grazing allotment. The principal area of livestock use is on Timber Mountain and the eastern portion of the area. The entire area also lies within the Murderers Creek Coordinated Resource Management Unit and Murderers Creek Wild Horse Territory.

Key Attractions: The primary attraction of the area is the opportunity for solitude in undeveloped canyon country. Unusual rock formations and the creek canyons offer interesting geologic sites.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Approximately 60 percent of the area has been impacted by human activity, and natural integrity of the area is low. Impacts include jeep trails, fences with evident clearing, wildlife guzzlers, livestock and their salt grounds and water developments. The canyons of Crazy, Thorn, and Murderers Creeks are virtually untouched. Bark Cabin and South Fork Murderers Creeks have trails along their lengths.

The opportunity for solitude over the entire area is low because of the ability to see maintained roads and traffic from most of the unit. There is very little vegetative screening; although there is some relief provided by the topography. There is little or no opportunity for primitive recreation. Most of the area is visually common to this physiographic type.

Primitive, Recreational Opportunities and Challenges: There are distinct locations within this area that provide some challenge and scenic variety due to the steep, rugged side-slopes and changes in vegetation along the streams.

Special Features: There are five possible cultural resource sites (one historical, four prehistoric) within this area. There is high probability of other sites because of the travel through and use of the area by both American Indians and Europeans. One sensitive plant species, the Eleocbaris bolanderi, may occur in this area. There is a potential for scientific study of ecological features and a candidate research natural area has been identified in the area. This area is considered a good representative of low sage communities in the southern Blue Mountains.

Manageability and boundaries: The present boundary primarily follows natural or human-made characteristics. There are areas where there are cross- or mid-slope locations. The nature of the surrounding locale (maintained roads, timber sales, etc.) makes expansion of the area difficult. Creating a more manageable boundary would increase the size of the area. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there is an interior Class I-V road, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: This area currently provides roaded modified, roaded natural, semi-primitive motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities.

Wildlife: Wildlife is varied and includes Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, mountain lion, black bear, antelope, and wild horses. Birds in the area include songbirds, raptors, and game birds such as mountain quail, chukar, and mourning dove. The entire area provides winter range for elk and deer.

Water/Fish: There are native trout in the streams. Murderers Creek is an important steelhead spawning and rearing habitat for the John Day River System.

Range: The area lies within one grazing allotment.

Timber/vegetation: There are 1,755 acres of forested land tentatively suitable for timber management activities. These trees are growing in multistoried stands consisting of both ponderosa pine and mixed conifer species.

Minerals: The area has no known locatable mineral potential. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: There are five possible cultural resource sites (one historical, four prehistoric) within this area.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no current special use permits within the area boundary.

Fire: Fire risk is moderate to high because of the flashy fuels, relatively dry sites, and prevailing winds. There is a high amount of lightning activity in the area, especially in the higher elevations of Timber Mountain and Shaketable.

Insects and disease: There is some insect damage in the area. There are also root rots present in the white fir.

Private lands: There are no non-Federal lands within this area. There is a section of land managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife adjacent to the southeast corner.

Siver Creek Roadless Area (#6235) located on Ochoco NF administered by the Malheur National Forest

0 Acres

History: This area was first inventoried in Rare II. It was assigned to further planning in a Unit Environmental Impact Statement. This roadless area does not meet the criteria for potential wilderness area due to harvests, roads, road buffers, and other developments.

Strawberry Mountain Additions (#6238B)

4,000 Acres

Overview

History*:* Portions of the Strawberry Mountain Addition parcels were inventoried for study as a potential wilderness during both the RARE I and the RARE II processes. In the John Day Land Management Plan FEIS signed December 29, 1978, the Strawberry Mountain #6252 inventoried roadless area was allocated to further planning by the Decision. In the final RARE II FEIS, (January 1979) portions of the Strawberry Mountain RARE II further planning areas were recommended for incorporation into the wilderness preservation system – the remaining acres were recommended for nonwilderness management. In 1984, 35,000 additional acres adjacent to the original wilderness established in 1964 were added to the wilderness preservation system resulting in a total of 69,350 acres being designated as Strawberry Mountain Wilderness. The Strawberry Mountain Addition parcels that were recommended for non-wilderness management under the RARE II 1979 FEIS were not re-evaluated as Appendix C Roadless Areas under the Malheur Land and Resource Final Environmental Impact Statement of 1990.

In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan FEIS allocated the majority of the areas recommended by the RARE II 1979 FEIS decision as non-wilderness management primarily to visuals emphasis with a smaller acreage to wildlife emphasis.

Location and access: Strawberry Mountain Addition parcels are located along the southern edge of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness, starting approximately 9 miles south of Canyon City, Oregon, and ranging easterly along the boundary for approximately 20 miles. The parcels include parts of Section 1, T.15S., R.31E.; parts of Sections 4, 6, 8, 9, 16 and 17 T.15S. R.32E.; parts of Sections 12, 13, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 33 and 34, T.16S. R.33E.; and parts of Sections 19,

26, 27,28, 29, and 30, T.15S., R.34E., of the Willamette Meridian. Roads are adjacent to many of the parcels; therefore, there may be vehicle access to the boundaries of some parcels, although in many cases access may only be possible via high-clearance vehicles. Primary travel routes to this general area from John Day, Oregon, are by Forest Roads 15 and 16; well-maintained, paved roads. Secondary access to these parcels is by a variety of forest roads off those primary routes.

Geography/Topography: The Strawberry Additions are located in the northern Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. The terrain is extremely varied and primarily consists of steep and broken slopes.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: The Strawberry Addition parcels reflect the vegetation found in the adjacent Strawberry Mountain Wilderness. Vegetation on the forested slopes on the western end of the wilderness (primarily within T.15S., R.31E. and R.32E) is predominately a mix of dry forest, pine and Douglas-fir intermixed with sagebrush and bunchgrass in the nonforested sites within lower elevations. Parcels within T.15S., R.33E. are predominately a mix of whitebark pine, subalpine fir and lodgepole pine in the upper elevations. Parcels within T.15S., R.34E. include stands of subalpine fir and lodgepole pine in the higher elevations. As elevation drops the stands become a mix of grand fir, Douglas-fir and western larch. Stands within this mix may have been affected by the High Roberts Fire of 2002, exhibiting scorched and dead trees. The drier or nonforested sites on all aspects are vegetated with juniper, sagebrushes, mountain-mahogany, and some scattered ponderosa pine. Ground cover on these sites includes wheat grasses, fescue, and bluegrass.

Current Uses: The majority of the recreation uses can be found within the designated wilderness area to the north. The primary use of the Strawberry Addition parcels is incidental dispersed use associated with big-game hunting since there are roads adjacent to the parcels. Wildlife in the area is highly varied from spring through fall and reflects the wildlife found in the wilderness. Mammals could include Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, mountain lion, black bear, as well as voles, marmots, and chipmunks. The pine marten may be present in old-growth forest on north-facing slopes. Bird species are numerous and include songbirds, raptors, and game birds, such as the blue grouse and mountain quail, and possibly pileated woodpeckers. Grazing allotments are also located within this area.

Appearance and surroundings: The terrain is varied and primarily consists of steep slopes.

Key Attractions: The key attraction in this area is the hunting opportunities found in a remote and rugged terrain.

Inventory Criteria

Although the parcels are less than 5,000 acres, they meet the criteria for inventoried roadless areas since they are adjacent to the existing Strawberry Mountain Wilderness.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Within the area the natural integrity is extremely high because the area is essentially untouched by human activity. The major impacts have been livestock grazing and fire management. The effects of fire suppression are not noticeable to the average visitor. Under more natural conditions, low-intensity wildfires would have maintained a ponderosa pine understory in ponderosa pine stands instead of the continued growth of fir species.

The opportunity for solitude is excellent year-round. Spring and fall opportunities are limited by snowfall amounts, particularly within the parcels within T.15S., R.33E. and R.34E. where snowfall

can be measured in feet during heavy snow years. Hunting seasons may increase use; however, much of the dispersed hunting currently occurs in the adjacent wilderness. Most of the area is physically very demanding to hikers and there are no developed recreation facilities. Where there are adjacent roads, the small size of the parcels would most likely provide a roaded natural experience changing to a semi-primitive recreation experience further from the roads and closer to the adjacent Wilderness. These recreation opportunities may be motorized or nonmotorized depending on the terrain and the current management strategy in each parcel.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenges: Steep terrain adjacent to road access presents challenge to all forms of recreational activities.

Special Features: There is scenic variety in the area ranging from forested benches to deep canyons with open slopes and forested bottoms. The visual resource in these parcels is, for the most part, “high public value.” There are two known cultural resource sites within the area. There are no known Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant or animal species within this area.

Manageability and boundaries: The present boundary does not follow natural physical characteristics. Boundaries that follow existing roads would be easy to locate on the ground and would require a 300-foot buffer next to the road(s). In areas where there are interior Class I-V roads, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides. Midslope boundaries or boundaries that do not follow natural terrain features would be difficult to manage.

Availability

Recreation: The area currently provides roaded natural and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation opportunities.

Wildlife: Wildlife in the area is highly varied from spring through fall. Mammals include Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, mountain lion, bighorn sheep, black bear, as well as voles, marmots, and chipmunks. The pine marten may be present in the old-growth forest on the north-facing slopes. Bird species are numerous and include songbirds, raptors, and game birds, such as the blue grouse and mountain quail, and possibly pileated woodpeckers.

Water/Fish: Native rainbow trout occur in some portions of the streams within this area.

Range: There are grazing allotments within these parcels which have limited use by grazing livestock due to remoteness, steepness of the terrain and limited road access.

Timber/vegetation: There are about 2,495 acres of forested land. These timber stands consist primarily of mixed conifer, multistoried stands. The overstories are about 105 to 180 years old with understories of 70 to 80 years.

Minerals: The area has no known locatable mineral potential and contains no mining claims. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: There are two known cultural resource sites within the area.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no known special uses within these parcels.

Fire: Fire occurrence by lightning is fairly widespread across the Forest, including in these areas. The hazard is high to very high. South- and west-slopes are dry with flashy fuels, while north faces have dense concentrations of heavy fuels, primarily fir. Where roads do not provide access, most fires in the area would be reached by helicopter or smokejumper crews. Wildfire has likely impacted part of these parcels, particularly in R.34E. from the High Roberts Fire.

Insects and disease: Insect damage from western spruce budworm was widespread in the area in the 1990's. At this time, tree mortality across the roadless area is considered insignificant. The species involved are Douglas-fir and grand fir. Grand fir has a high incidence of root rot in larger (12 inches diameter breast height and over) sized trees. Indian paint fungus is present and known to exist in all size classes of grand fir contributing to large amounts of cull volume.

Private lands: There are no known private lands within the roadless area boundary.

Utley Butte Roadless Area (#6231)

10,830 Acres

Overview

History: This area was inventoried in RARE and enlarged during the RARE II inventory. Under the South Fork Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement, this area was allocated to non-wilderness uses. In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated most of the area to wildlife emphasis and some to old growth management. Since the Forest Plan was approved, approximately 6 acres have been harvested from the area primarily within the current wildlife emphasis areas. There are 0.50 miles of classified road that have been buffered out of the inventoried roadless area.

Location and access: The area is located in the southwestern corner of the Malheur National Forest on the Grant-Harney County line in Oregon (T.18S. R.27E. and T.19S. R.27E. of the Willamette Meridian). Main access routes are Forest Roads 4330 and 4300, and County Road 47.

Geography/Topography: Spoon, Alder, Utley, Rail, and Corral creeks drain the Utley Butte area (all tributaries to the South Fork John Day River). The resulting draws are relatively steep near the southern boundary of the area and the western edge of the area. The topography of the area can be described as steep, primarily north-facing slopes and flat-topped ridges. Elevation of the area ranges from 5,000 to 7,163 feet. Soils in the area range in depth from 4 to more than 30 inches. There is a combination of soils derived from volcanic ash and loamy or loamy/clayey soils, with the ash soils being more productive. Ash soils are more predominant in the western and southern portions of the area, although they occur throughout. For the most part, the erosion hazard for the area is high while the compaction and displacement hazard is low to moderate. All of the area is covered by Tertiary-age volcanic-rocks, which include Miocene-to-Pliocene and Pliocene volcanic flow rocks, and Pliocene welded tuffs.

Vegetation/Ecosystem: This area is 77 percent forested. Vegetative distribution on the north-facing area is characterized by trees in the bottoms, on side-slopes, and on gentle flat-topped ridges. Grass and low shrubs are found on steeper side-slopes and rocky areas. Ridges and south slopes support ponderosa pine and juniper with a mountain-mahogany understory. Ground cover is generally sagebrush and various bunchgrasses. Conifers are primarily confined to drainages and the northern slopes. Overstories consist of ponderosa pine and fir with some western larch. Understories are mainly white fir and Douglas-fir with grass and forbs as ground cover. Streamside vegetation generally consists of alder and willow. This vegetation is mainly confined to upper drainages since lower drainages have little or no streamside vegetation.

Current Uses: Big-game hunters are offered an experience considerably different from that of hunting on intensively managed forestland. At present, recreation use is limited to hunting during the fall and some hiking and sightseeing during other seasons. There is suspicion that motorized users access this area from private lands. In addition, forest roads may be open to motorized traffic on the north end of the area.

Appearance and surroundings: Snow Mountain is the predominant landmark in this area (elevation 7,163 feet). The area provides scenic diversity in vegetation types with changes in elevation and aspect. There is additional variety provided between streamside and hillside views.

Key Attractions: The major attraction of this area is the large ponderosa pine. In addition, the roadless area offers opportunities for solitude, to "get away from it all", and to enjoy "peace and quiet without motorized intrusions." The main viewpoint is Snow Mountain Lookout. Various species of big game animals are available for hunting, and viewing.

Inventory Criteria

This area meets the inventory criteria for areas with wilderness potential.

Capability

Naturalness and Undeveloped Character: Within the draw bottoms themselves, natural integrity of the area is extremely high. With the exception for the extreme northern portion of the area, natural processes have been virtually unhampered by human activities. The major impacts in this portion of the area are livestock grazing, hunting camps, the Alder Creek Trail (not maintained), and an unimproved road on the ridge west of Alder Creek. Forest personnel estimate this road has not been used in more than 15 years and portions of it have been completely obliterated. The effects of grazing in the area are mostly concentrated along streams. These effects include fences, salt grounds, cattle trails, some compaction and vegetative trampling, dust beds, the cattle themselves, and other evidence of their presence along the streams. The area appears extremely natural to the average user, with the impacts of livestock use remaining the most intrusive activity. These would appear unnatural to most visitors and would be difficult to mitigate unless grazing were eliminated.

Within the area the opportunities for solitude are very high, especially along stream bottoms. The experience of spaciousness and solitude is somewhat diminished by the adjacent management activities. Opportunities for undeveloped recreation exist in the form of hiking, hunting, backpacking, and wildlife viewing. The lack of facilities and access tends to increase opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation. Primitive recreation experiences are limited by the size of the area and the intrusion of adjacent management activities.

Primitive Recreational Opportunities and Challenges: Challenge to physical ability is moderate for cross-country travel.

Special Features: Some designated old-growth stands exist within the Utley Butte area, but there are no records of threatened or endangered species using this area, and there are no potential bald eagle roost sites. Sensitive species observed in the area include redband trout and Columbia spotted frog. One cultural resource site has been located, but this site would be very limited. There may be some opportunities for scientific and educational studies, but a recent review by the Area 3 Ecologist relative to research natural areas states that, “While Utley Butte contained nice old-growth trees in good stand configurations, I did not believe the ecological condition of the component types was healthy enough for serious consideration (as a Research Natural Area).”

Manageability and boundaries: The boundaries of the area have been adjusted to exclude the already developed land areas. For the past 20 years, the land south of the area has been extensively logged. In areas where the roads are the boundaries, a 300-foot buffer would be next to the road(s). In areas where there is an interior Class I-V road, there will be a 300-foot buffer on both sides.

Availability

Recreation: This area currently provides roaded natural, semi-primitive motorized, and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation.

Wildlife: This area provides year-round Rocky Mountain elk habitat with approximately 2.5 square miles of elk winter range within the area. Mule deer use the area during spring, summer, and fall. Old-growth and mature forests provide habitat for pileated woodpeckers, goshawks, and bear.

Water/Fish: Spoon Creek is a major contributor to water flowing into the South Fork John Day River. The portions of Spoon, Alder, Utley, Bull and Rail Creeks within the area are all free flowing and undisturbed, and they support redband trout populations.

Range: The area lies within one grazing allotment.

Timber/vegetation: Commercial timber species are ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, white fir, and some western larch occurring on 6,900 acres of forested land. These trees are growing in multistoried stands. Ponderosa pine is generally 200-300 years old, while fir is between 100 and 200 years old.

Minerals: The area has no known locatable mineral potential and contains no mining claims. There is no existing geothermal or oil and gas leases in this area.

Cultural: One cultural resource site has been located, but this site would be very limited.

Land use/Special Uses: There are no known special use permits in the area. There are no planned power withdrawals, proposed impoundments, existing irrigation reservoirs, or distribution systems.

Fire: There have been several small fires in the area over the last several years and fuel loading in the area ranges from low to extreme.

Insects and disease: Indian paint fungus is prevalent and can probably be found in all size classes of the true fir. Much of the Douglas-fir (especially on rockier, drier soils) is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. Mistletoe patches of varying degree can be found from fairly light to quite severe. Root rots can be found to varying degrees but, at this point, it is not considered a problem. Due to high amounts of white fir and Douglas-fir trees in the review area, all the timber stands are highly susceptible to tussock moth and the western spruce budworm. The western spruce budworm is present in the area and, in some cases, is quite severe. Western pine beetle can be found in the area but is generally confined to a few old-growth ponderosa pine trees of low vigor.

Private lands: There are no known non-Federal lands in the review area although there is private land that borders the area.