

Appendix C

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

**North Powder
National Wild and Scenic River**

**USDA - Forest Service
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest**

August 1991

Prepared by: /s/Robin Rose
Robin Rose, W&SR Team Member

Date: 10/15/91

Approved by: /s/H. Woody Fine
H. Woody Fine, W&SR Team Leader

Date: 10/15/91

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Executive Summary	1
II. Introduction	1
III. Resource Assessment Process	2
IV. River Description	3
V. Specific Description of Values	3
Scenic	3
Recreational	4
Geologic/Hydrologic	5
Vegetation/Ecological	7
Fisheries	9
Wildlife	10
Historic	11
Prehistoric	12
Traditional Use, Cultural Values	13
Other Similar Values	14
Appendix A Scorp Planning Map - NE Region	
Appendix B North Powder River Corridor Map	
Appendix C North Powder River Vicinity Map	

NORTH POWDER RIVER NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVER

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a result of the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988, a segment of the North Powder River, a tributary of the Powder River in Northeast Oregon, was designated as a Wild and Scenic River (W&SR). Under this act the Forest Service is required to prepare a comprehensive management plan to provide protection of the river values of the North Powder River. This resource assessment is being done to identify the river values that are outstandingly remarkable. The resource assessment will also serve as the basis for interim management until the completion of the North Powder Wild and Scenic River Management Plan.

On March 19, 1991, a draft resource assessment was sent to the public, including other agencies and subject area experts, for review and comment. In that draft document, the preliminary findings of the Forest Service interdisciplinary team determined the following resources of the North Powder River to be outstandingly remarkable values: scenery, and recreation.

As a result of our review of public and agency comments on the draft resource assessment, only minor changes were necessary in the final document. The outstandingly remarkable values for the North Powder River remain: **scenery and recreation**. Although not meriting an outstandingly remarkable finding, the following are determined to be significant values of the North Powder River and drainage: hydrology, vegetation/ecologic, and wildlife. There is inadequate information to make a final determination on fisheries, historic, prehistoric, or cultural values at this time.

II. INTRODUCTION

In 1968, Congress enacted the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and for the first time, established a system for preserving outstanding free-flowing rivers. A six-mile portion of the North Powder River was added to this system in 1988 when it was designated as a National Wild and Scenic River by the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988. As defined by the Act, a National Wild and Scenic River must be free-flowing and have at least one outstandingly remarkable value. The "Outstandingly Remarkable Values" of the North Powder River identified in the Congressional Record include scenery and recreation.

Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Forest Service is required to prepare a comprehensive river plan to provide for the protection and/or enhancement of the river values. This river planning process, of which the resource assessment is one step, will comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning regulations. Through each phase of the planning process, public involvement will be invited, and will be essential for the success of a sound management plan.

III. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This resource assessment serves as the foundation of the river management planning process. The assessment documents the determination of which river related values or features are outstandingly remarkable or contribute substantially to the river setting or to the functioning of the river ecosystem.

The resource assessment process provides a standardized approach to evaluation of values of designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. This assessment will guide interim management, development of the management plan, and determination of boundaries.

Although the determination of value significance is a matter of informed professional judgment and interpretation, this process includes the following steps or verification techniques:

- The use of an interdisciplinary team approach.
- Consideration of uniqueness and rarity at a regional and national level.¹
- Values must be river related in that they owe their existence or contribute to the functioning of the river system and its environs.
- The use of qualitative guidelines to help determine significance.
- Verification by other experts in the subject area.

The resource value categories that have been considered include:

Scenic
Recreational
Geologic/Hydrologic
Vegetation/Ecological
Fisheries
Wildlife
Historic
Prehistoric
Traditional Use, Cultural Values
Other Similar Values

¹ Based partially on the eight geographic regions described in the 1989 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for Oregon. See NE Region Scorp Planning Map. Appendix A.

IV. RIVER DESCRIPTION

The Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988 designated six miles of the North Powder River, from its headwaters near the crest of the Elkhorn Range of the Blue Mountains to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest boundary.

The entire six mile segment was designated a SCENIC RIVER AREA.

For the purposes of interim management, the Forest Service, as the lead agency, established a corridor width of 1/4-mile on either side of the river. The interim boundary map included in Appendix B, shows private and federal landownership. The final corridor boundary will be determined as part of the Wild and Scenic Rivers management plan development.

V. SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION OF VALUES

SCENIC

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating

The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions within the geographic region. When analyzing scenic values, additional factors such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time negative intrusions are viewed may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over the majority of the river or river segment length and not common to other rivers in the geographic region.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

Starting high on the east flank of the Elkhorn Range, the North Powder River begins as a small mountain stream just below the crest of the range, at an elevation of nearly 7900 feet. The Elkhorn Range is characterized by jagged peaks, cirque basins and subalpine lakes, precipitous streams, and deeply incised glaciated valleys. The North Powder River drainage is exemplary of the glaciated valleys found in the range.

From its headwaters, the North Powder River flows northeast out of the mountains, enroute to the Powder River Valley below. Mount Ruth, Chloride Ridge, Red Mountain, and Twin Mountain reach above timberline and dominate the surrounding skyline. The North Powder descends quickly through the alpine meadows near timberline, and soon enters the subalpine meadows and scattered stands of spire-shaped subalpine fir. Several lake-fed tributaries join high in the drainage, and the North Powder becomes well-established stream within a mile or two of its headwaters.

Approximately a mile or so below the headwaters of the North Powder, the stream enters a thick mixed-conifer forest typical of the mid-elevations of the Elkhorn Range. The river valley bottom is thickly vegetated, dark, and shady. In this portion of the corridor, views are generally obscured by the thick trees and abundant streamside vegetation. Small wet meadows, occasional aspen stands, and shrub-dominated snow chutes break up the continuity of the forest and provide a few spots where sunlight reaches the valley floor. From these openings views of the surrounding peaks, precipitous tributary streams, and dramatic rock outcrops can be seen. Views of the river itself are few and far between, generally obscured by the dense vegetation. Where openings allow viewing, visitors will see a clear, cold stream

splashing over boulders and logs, occasionally settling into quiet pools with granite sand bottoms.

Panoramic views of the entire North Powder River drainage are seen for several miles along the Elkhorn Crest National Recreation Trail, as well as other trails located high in the drainage. Distant views of the drainage are seen from Interstate 84 and Highway 30.

The North Powder River valley displays an overall natural and undeveloped character. Natural patterns created by topography and natural processes such as lightning fires, avalanches, and rock slides, dominate the landscape character. Exceptions to the natural-appearing scene include a primitive wheel track paralleling the river (remnants of the old stage route over the mountains), and minor evidence of prospecting, mining, recreational use, and firewood cutting. A small number of directional signs, two primitive trailheads, and approximately a dozen user-created campsites are the extent of recreational developments in the canyon. In general, cultural modifications are very minor in scale when compared to the entire landscape.

Finding

The North Powder River drainage is exemplary of the high mountain glaciated valleys and general undeveloped attractiveness of the surrounding region. Even though the drainage attracted some interest in the past, noticeable human-caused modifications of the landscape are minor. The overall lack of visible cultural modifications is one of the most significant attributes of the river corridor. Due to its exemplary scenic features and lack of visible modifications, scenery is determined to qualify as an outstandingly remarkable value.

RECREATIONAL

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating

Recreational opportunities are, or have the potential to be, unique enough to attract visitors from outside of the geographic region. Visitors would be willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. River-related opportunities could include, but not be limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observation, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting, and boating.

Interpretive opportunities may be exceptional and attract or have the potential to attract visitors from outside the geographic region.

The river may provide or have the potential to provide settings for national or regional usage or competitive events.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The North Powder River drainage offers a variety of primitive recreational opportunities. Based on field observations and District use records, the corridor receives a light to moderate amount of use estimated at 1000 recreation visitor days.² The majority of visitors to the North Powder drainage are from the local area, although some people travel a considerable distance to hunt in this area.

² Recreation Visitor Days (RVD) are equivalent to one person recreating in the forest for a 12-hour period.

Recreation use in the corridor begins in late spring and continues into the late fall hunting seasons. Visitors come to the area primarily to hunt for big game, fish, camp, ride dirt bikes, drive four-wheelers, sightsee, view wildlife, hike, backpack, and horsepack. Mountain bike use of the road and trails is a relatively new use that is increasing. The river is too small for boating. The steepness of the canyon precludes a significant amount of winter recreation activity.

The river corridor lies near the center of the Twin Mountain Roadless Area, which encompasses most of the Elkhorn Range. The 60,903 acre Roadless Area provides ample opportunities for solitude and experiencing a sense of self-reliance and adventure. The surrounding area also provides opportunities for a quality hunting experience in a remote setting. The existing road paralleling the river to a mile within its source serves as one access to the surrounding area.

A low standard road suitable for four-wheel drive vehicles parallels the North Powder River to within one mile of its source. This road is thought to have been one of the first stage routes crossing the Elkhorn Range. The legislative history accompanying the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act recognized the importance of this road for providing opportunities for motorized use in a relatively primitive setting.

Recreation developments in the corridor are primitive and minimally developed, limited to trails, directional signs, foot bridges, and two trailheads. Trails access Red Mountain Lake, Summit Lake, Meadow Lake, and Lost Lake, and connect to the Elkhorn Crest National Recreation Trail. This latter trail follows the crest of Elkhorn Range, offering extended views of the drainage. There are no developed campgrounds located along the river, although many user-created campsites have been established over the years.

Finding

The North Powder River drainage offers a diversity of primitive recreational opportunities. The area offers a remote, relatively primitive setting, and low amount of use. The North Powder provides a unique opportunity among the W&SR corridors in northeast Oregon to access a relatively primitive setting by four-wheel drive vehicle. The finding agrees with the outstandingly remarkable value determination made in the Congressional Record for the recreational resource.

GEOLOGIC/HYDROLOGIC

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating

The river or the area within the river corridor contains an example(s) of a geologic or hydrologic feature, process, or phenomena that is rare, unusual, one-of-a-kind, or unique to the geographic region. The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, represent a "textbook" example and/or represent a unique or rare combination of geologic/hydrologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial, and other geologic/hydrologic structures).

Evaluation of the Present Situation

Geology

The North Powder River is located in a glacially-carved valley surrounded by the sharp peaks and ridges of the Elkhorn Range. Defined by Twin Mountain to the north and Red Mountain and Chloride Ridge to the south, elevations vary from 8,000 feet along the ridges to 4,000 feet at the river bottom.

Granodiorite of the Bald Mountain batholith is the dominant rock type in the area. Glacial features such as cirques, cirque lakes, glacially-carved peaks, and ridges are seen in the upper drainage. The lower valley is covered with glacial deposits consisting of unsorted rock debris including large fragments and boulders. Glaciers piled up glacial drift in the form of moraines and drift sheets farther downstream. These geologic features and landforms are of interest to many people, but are not unique to the region.

The North Powder River drainage appears to be less mineralized than the west flank of the Elkhorn Mountains. Some remains of prospecting and pre-1930's mining activity, and the stage route to the mining camps on the west flank of the Elkhorns, are still evident in the drainage. A block of mining claims are adjacent to and partially within the W&SR corridor in the upper portion of the drainage. Exploration is currently being conducted for low-grade gold ores and other minerals.

Hydrologic

The North Powder River begins as a very small, snowmelt-fed stream high in the Elkhorn Range. A precipitous stream in the upper six miles, the North Powder drops at an average gradient of 483 feet per mile, descending from the mountains in a series of small waterfalls, rapids, and drops.

Due to the high elevation of the headwaters and abundance of riparian shading, water temperatures remain cold well into the summer months. The North Powder runs clear during normal flows to mildly turbid during high flows. Water quality is excellent. As is typical for a snowmelt-fed stream, runoff patterns are seasonal. Peak runoff occurs in spring, generally in June, and recedes to low flows by late summer. Flows increase again in November in response to fall rains. Minimum and maximum flow levels for the designated portion of the corridor have not been well documented; however, flows at the lower end of the corridor have been estimated to average at approximately 19 cubic feet per second (cfs).³ No known water uses exist within the designated segment.

The entire six mile designated portion of the North Powder River is without permanent human-caused changes, dams, or water diversions. Stream banks are stable. There is an abundance of riparian vegetation, small islands, braided channels, and woody debris dams. Very minor impacts to the river banks and riparian vegetation have occurred in the dispersed camp sites and at trailheads. Resource damage is occurring in places due to the poor construction and inadequate maintenance of the road and trails. Improvement of drainage structures and fords would reduce the likelihood of sediments reaching the river.

³ Streamflow data was derived by Woody Hauter, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Hydrologist, from information developed in "Watershed Work Plan North Powder River Watershed," Baker Valley Soil and Water Control District and Powder Valley Water Control District, June 1967.

Finding

Geology

While the Elkhorn Range exhibits interesting geologic features and processes, the examples within the North Powder drainage are not unique or rare to the region. The area appears to be less mineralized than the surrounding areas, and received little lasting interest of prospectors during the gold rush era at the turn of the century. The geologic features that are present are important to the scenic values of the drainage, but do not merit a finding of outstandingly remarkable.

Hydrology

The North Powder River is one of few of the undeveloped streams left in the Powder River system, and as such serves as an important example or relic of the original Powder River system. The undeveloped nature of the North Powder River is significant and contributes to the many other river-related values in the corridor; however, the general absence of unique hydrologic features precludes a finding of outstandingly remarkable.

VEGETATION/ECOLOGICAL

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating

The river or area within the river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous plant species. Of particular significance is the presence of unique indigenous and/or federal or state listed threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. When analyzing vegetation, additional factors such as diversity of species, number of plant communities, and cultural importance of plants may be considered.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

An interesting variety of plant communities typical of the Blue Mountains are found in the North Powder drainage. This is due in part to the elevational change of nearly 3000 feet from headwaters to the lower boundary of the corridor. In the high subalpine areas, subalpine fir dominates the scattered forested stands, mixed with some whitebark pine, lodgepole pine and spruce. These stands are interspersed with natural openings of mountain big sagebrush, Idaho fescue, and alpine fleecflower on dry slopes, and small meadows on moist sites.

The lower five miles of the corridor are covered with nearly continuous stands of mixed conifers. The southern slopes of the valley are densely forested with primarily lodgepole pine, and scattered groupings of western larch, Engelmann spruce, grand fir, Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, and subalpine fir. Huckleberry and squawberry are also found on the higher south slopes of the drainage. Sparse stands of mixed conifers are established in the more stable areas on the north slopes, interrupted by numerous avalanche chutes. In these unstable areas, meadows and shrubland communities dominated by snowberry, ninebark, mountain ash, mountain willow, and thinleaf alder are present. Quaking aspen is also found growing in the unstable areas and meadow openings.

In the lower 1/2 mile of the corridor, stands of large-diameter lodgepole pine, western larch, grand fir, Englemann spruce, Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, and subalpine fir can be found. Some trees are thought to be nearly 300 years old.

Natural forces have primarily shaped the patterns and diversity of plant communities in the drainage. Lightning-caused fires have created openings and replaced stands, adding diversity to the forest. There have been periodic outbreaks of forest insects and diseases in the corridor, typical to the region. Mountain pine beetle has eliminated some of the lodgepole pine along the river. Spruce budworm infestations have been active in some of the stands of spruce, grand fir, and Douglas-fir.

Riparian vegetation is generally intact in the corridor. There has been only a minor amount of soil compaction, vegetation disturbance, and tree removal from past activities such as mining, timber harvest, grazing, and recreational pursuits. Most of the drainage is considered not suitable for grazing due to erodible soils, lack of forage, and rugged terrain, and has not been part of a livestock allotment for some time.

The corridor has not been extensively surveyed for the presence of unique plants, and at this time, there are no documented occurrences of federal or state listed or candidate threatened, endangered, or sensitive species within the corridor. A species listed on the Wallowa-Whitman Watch and Review List, *Corydalis caseana* var. *cusickii*, is fairly abundant in riparian areas in the corridor.

The North Powder drainage is relatively undisturbed corridor providing for species travel, genetic transfer, and linkage between old-growth islands and other critical habitats. The potential corridor value increases in significance when considered in conjunction with the North Fork John Day W&SR corridor, which begins on the west side of the Elkhorn Ridge one mile from the headwaters of the North Powder River. The proximity of the two corridors potentially provides a continuous 61 mile long, 1/2 mile wide corridor from the town of Dale to the Powder River Valley, linking a low elevation wildlife area, three Wilderness units, two rivers, and crossing over the Blue Mountains.

Finding

Vegetation in the corridor is fairly diverse. This diversity, however, is typical of the Elkhorn Range. Riparian vegetation is intact and well established within the corridor. The occurrence of stands of old growth near the lower end of the corridor and on the north side of the drainage are also of interest. The value of the North Powder corridor for species travel, genetic transfer, and linkage between fragmented old-growth and other critical habitats is potentially more significant when considered in conjunction with the immediately adjacent North Fork John Day River corridor; however, the level of significance is still to be determined.

Surveys for the presence of unique plants have not been conducted in the corridor to date, and at this time, no federal or state listed or candidate threatened, endangered, or sensitive species are known to occur in the drainage. Prior to any potential ground disturbing activities within the corridor surveys for threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant species will be conducted consistent with Forest Service policies.

Based on the criteria above, vegetation and ecologic values in themselves do not qualify as outstandingly remarkable; however, these values contribute significantly to scenery, recreation, fish, wildlife, and water quality values in the river corridor.

FISHERIES

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating

Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of either fish populations, habitat, or Native American cultural use - or a combination of these river-related conditions. Consideration shall be given for potential as well as existing values.

Populations. The river is internationally, nationally, or regionally an important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species. Of particular significance is the presence of wild stocks and/or federal or state listed threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Habitat. The river provides or has the potential to provide exceptionally high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region. Of particular significance is habitat for wild stocks and/or federal or state listed or candidate threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

Populations

The North Powder River supports moderate numbers of native species including rainbow trout, mountain whitefish, sculpin, and introduced brook trout. It is not currently known whether red-band trout or bull trout inhabit the river. Introduced brook trout diminish the likelihood that a viable bull trout population exists in the river, as brook trout tend to outcompete native bull trout populations. This river does not currently support anadromous fish. The construction of the dam at Thief Valley on the Powder River in 1932 eliminated anadromous fish runs in the river system above the dam. It is considered likely that prior to the construction of the dam anadromous fish found their way into the North Powder River.

Little has been documented about the historic runs, or the Native American use of the fisheries in the North Powder River. Since the river is fairly small and precipitous, it is generally assumed that this reach of the North Powder did not support a significantly large fisheries in the past.

Habitat

The six-mile designated portion is undeveloped and follows a natural flow regime, unaltered by any permanent cultural changes, dams, or water diversions. Comprehensive stream habitat surveys have not been conducted to date by the Forest Service; however, the Oregon Rivers Information System database (ORIS)⁴ provides some general information on this stream reach. Fish habitat is rated as high quality. There is moderate to high diversity of structure, cover, and pool-to-riffle ratio which provide spawning, rearing, and holding habitat for native and introduced species. The river is rated as moderately productive. This rating fits

⁴ The Oregon Rivers Information System (ORIS) Database was an outcome of the Pacific Northwest Rivers Study completed in 1986. It is currently maintained by the Oregon Department of Energy, original coordinator of the Oregon portion of the study.

well with observed substrate conditions, which indicate significant amounts of coarse, granitic sands occur in the river. Despite minor, localized impacts to riparian habitat from past activities, water quality is extremely good. More information will be available after stream surveys are completed during the 1991 field season.

Finding

Moderate populations of native and introduced fish species are found in the North Powder River. At this time it is not known whether bull trout or red-band trout inhabit the river. Introduced brook trout diminish the likelihood that a viable bull trout population exists in the river, as brook trout tend to outcompete native bull trout populations. Fish habitat is in good condition, and considered moderately productive. At this time, not enough is known about fisheries in the North Powder River to merit an outstandingly remarkable finding. More information will be available after stream surveys are completed during the 1991 field season.

WILDLIFE

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating

Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either wildlife populations, habitat, or Native American cultural use - or a combination of these conditions.

Populations. The river or area within the river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique or populations of federal or state listed or candidate threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Habitat. The river or area within the river corridor provides exceptionally high quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance, or may provide unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for federal or state listed and candidate threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

Populations

A wide variety of wildlife typical to the region inhabits the area including Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, black bear, cougar, bobcat, coyote, and other small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. A large variety of birds can also be found in the drainage, including raptors, woodpeckers, owls, grouse, and a variety of small birds. The area is very important and highly productive summer range for Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer.

The corridor has not been extensively surveyed for the presence of unique or listed species. There are no documented occurrences of federal or state listed or candidate threatened, endangered, or sensitive animal species inhabiting the North Powder River drainage. However, potential habitat for several species does exist in the corridor.

Habitat

Wildlife habitat within the North Powder drainage is varied, and includes rock outcrops and cliffs, sub-alpine meadows and forests, mid-elevation mixed conifer forests, shrublands, and wet and dry meadow communities. Snags are abundant in the drainage. The area is very important and highly productive summer range for Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer. Stands of old growth trees and largely intact riparian plant communities occurring within the corridor provide important wildlife habitat. Riparian zones are considered to be the most critical wildlife habitats in the Blue Mountains, utilized by nearly 300 species of wildlife.⁵

As mentioned under the Populations section above, inventories have not yet been conducted to determine whether state or federal listed or candidate species are known to inhabit the drainage. However, potential habitat for several species exists.

Wildlife habitat has been impacted to a minor extent by past activities, including mining, grazing, timber harvest, fuelwood cutting, and recreational pursuits.

The North Powder drainage is a relatively undisturbed corridor providing for species travel, genetic transfer, and linkage between old-growth islands and other critical habitats. The potential corridor value increases in significance when considered in conjunction with the North Fork John Day W&SR corridor, which begins on the west side of the Elkhorn Ridge one mile from the headwaters of the North Powder River. The proximity of the two corridors potentially provides a continuous 61 mile long, 1/2 mile wide corridor from the town of Dale to the Powder River Valley, linking a low elevation wildlife area, three Wilderness units, two rivers, and crossing over the Blue Mountains.

Finding

Wildlife habitat is found to be a significant value in the North Powder River drainage. The corridor and surrounding roadless area provide highly productive and diverse of summer range for Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer. The diversity of vegetation, number of natural edges utilized by many big game and non-game wildlife species, lack of human-caused disturbance, and low traffic level contribute to the high quality of wildlife habitat found in the drainage. This coupled with the existence of old growth stands and riparian communities elevate wildlife habitat to a significant value. The value of the undisturbed corridor for species travel, genetic transfer, and linkage between fragmented old-growth and other critical habitats is potentially significant when considered in conjunction with the North Fork John Day River corridor; however, the level of significance is still undetermined.

HISTORIC

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating

The river or area within the river corridor contains a site(s) or feature(s) associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that was rare, unusual or one-of-a-kind in the region. A historic site(s) and/or feature(s) in most cases is 50 years old or older. Of particular significance are sites or features listed or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

⁵ Wildlife Habitats in Managed Forests in the Blue Mountains of Oregon and Washington, USDA, Forest Service, Sept., 1979, Agriculture Handbook No. 553.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

Several cultural resource sites exist in the North Powder River corridor, including evidence of Native American use and old mining activity. However, since surveys have not been completed in the corridor, the extent of cultural sites is not known.

The Elkhorn Range was utilized in historic times by members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) for fishing, hunting, and religious purposes. The corridor was also periodically and seasonally visited by small groups from several cultural groups, including the Nez Perce, Shoshone-Bannock, and Northern Paiute. The North Powder River drainage falls within CTUIR's ceded boundaries.

Unlike much of the rest of the Elkhorn Range, this drainage did not receive the lasting attention of early prospectors and miners. The North Powder valley does have a number of pre-1930's mining sites located there. The primitive road found paralleling the stream today is thought to be a portion of an old stage route to early-day mining camps located high on the west flanks of the Elkhorn Range. Although it appears on maps produced near the turn of the century, little is documented about the history of this road. The river corridor had also been used as a driveway for sheep in the past. Prior to the gold rush era, it is likely that early day trappers traveled the river corridor. Beyond these few pieces of information, historical accounts of activities in the North Powder River drainage are limited.

Finding

Aside from the early establishment of a stage route over the Elkhorn Range in the North Powder drainage and some prospecting, the area seems to have escaped the attention or interest of Euro-Americans during historic times. There is not enough information to determine whether this value qualifies as outstandingly remarkable. Cultural resource surveys have not been conducted in the corridor, therefore, the existence of significant historic sites is unknown. Cultural resource surveys will be completed prior to any potential ground disturbing activities. Known and discovered sites are protected under existing statutes, regulations, and policies.

PREHISTORIC

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating

The river or area within the river corridor contains a site(s) where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Americans. Sites must be rare, one-of-a-kind, have unusual characteristics or exceptional human interest value(s). Sites may have national or regional importance for interpreting prehistory; may be rare and represent an area where a culture or cultural period was first identified and described; may have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups; or may have been used by cultural groups for rare or sacred purposes. Of particular significance are sites or features listed or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Elkhorn Range was utilized in prehistoric times by members of the CTUIR for fishing, hunting, and religious purposes. The corridor was also periodically and seasonally visited by small groups from several cultural groups, including the Nez Perce, Shoshone-Bannock, and Northern Paiute. The North Powder River drainage is included within CTUIR's ceded boundaries. Although site specific cultural resource surveys have not been conducted, it is likely that prehistoric sites exist.

Finding

Since cultural resource inventories have not been completed in the North Powder River corridor, it is undetermined what level of significance prehistoric use had in the corridor. Based on surveys conducted in other portions of the Elkhorn Range, it is apparent that the area was used by prehistoric cultures, and it is anticipated that prehistoric sites exist. At this time there is not enough information to determine whether this value qualifies as outstandingly remarkable. In the meantime, known and discovered sites are protected under existing statutes, regulations and policy. Cultural resource surveys will be completed prior to any potential ground disturbing activities.

TRADITIONAL USE, CULTURAL VALUES

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating

The river or area within the river corridor contains regionally unique location(s) of importance to Indian tribes (religious activities, fishing, hunting, and gathering). Locations may have unusual characteristics or exceptional cultural value being integral to continued pursuit of such activities. Locations may have been associated with treaty rights on ceded lands or activities unprotected by treaty on ceded lands or in traditional territories outside ceded lands.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Elkhorn Range was utilized in historic and prehistoric times by members of CTUIR for fishing, hunting, and religious purposes. The North Powder River is included within CTUIR's ceded boundaries. In historic times other cultural groups visited the area as well, including the Nez Perce, Shoshone-Bannock, and Northern Paiute. Native Americans still travel to the area to hunt, fish, camp, and gather, continuing the traditions established prior to the coming of Euro-Americans to northeast Oregon.

Finding

To date No cultural resource surveys have been completed in the North Powder drainage by the Forest Service and no regionally unique sites have been identified by the tribes at this time. However, there is much interest in nearly all the drainages in Northeast Oregon by various tribes as having special cultural value associated with their history and present-day activities. At this time, it is undetermined whether or not this value will have status as an outstandingly remarkable value. The tribes will continue to be consulted throughout the Wild and Scenic River management plan development.

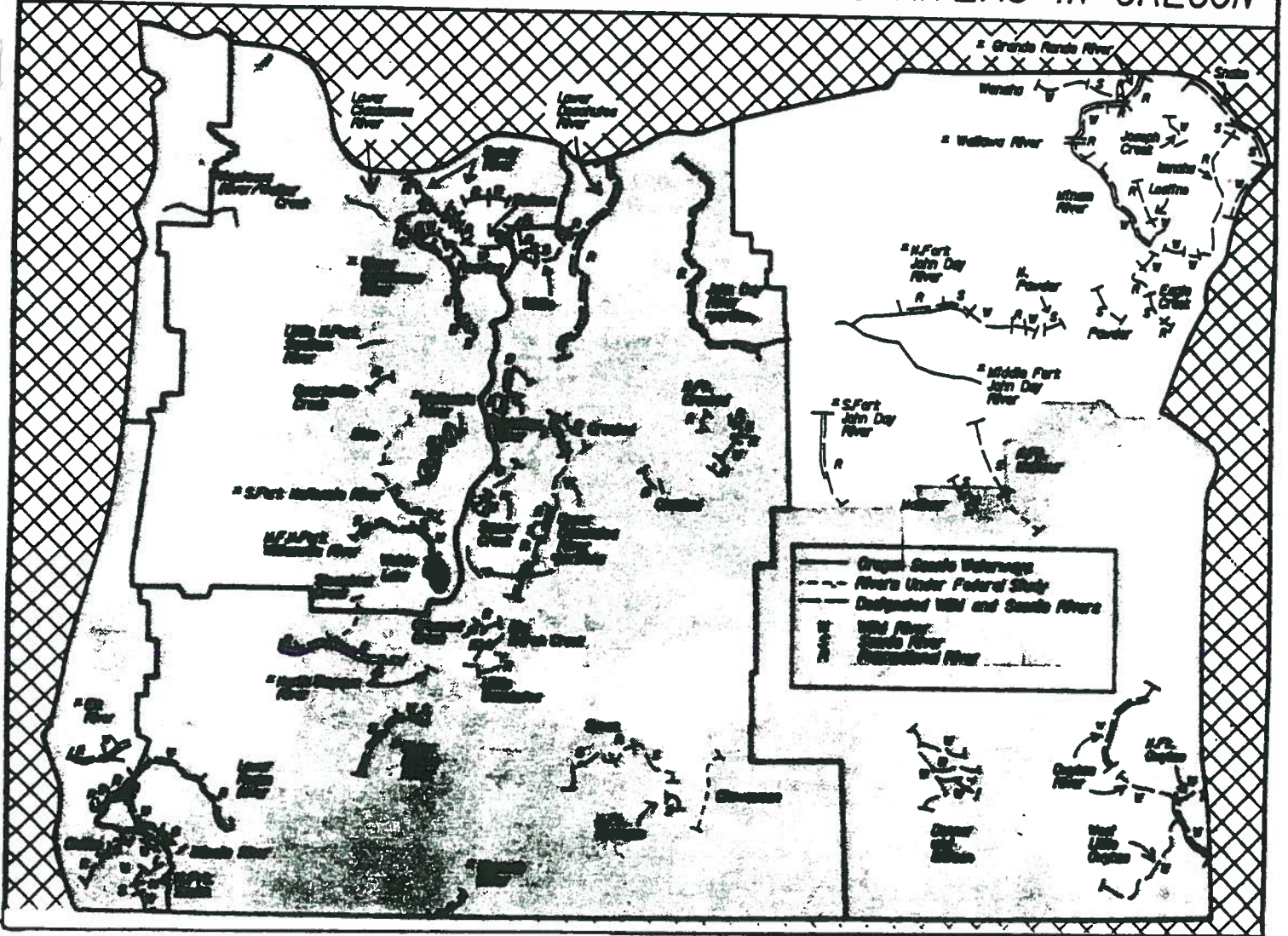
OTHER SIMILAR VALUES

Additional river related values were considered during the assessment process. Preliminary information on other values was considered as well as responses to the draft suggesting other significant value(s) (biodiversity, genetic transfer). Other resource values were included in the discussions of the major value areas, if notable. At this time, none have warranted an outstandingly remarkable value status, but they will continue to be evaluated throughout the management planning process.

APPENDIX A

OREGON SCORP PLANNING REGION NUMBER 12 NORTHEAST OREGON

OREGON STATE SCENIC WATERWAYS AND FEDERALLY DESIGNATED WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS IN OREGON





NORTH POWDER NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVER

CLASSIFICATION

SCENIC RIVER AREA 6 MILES

Note: Interim corridor boundary extends 1/4 mile from average high water mark on each side of the river. Final boundary will be developed during the river management planning process.

Scale: 1 inch = 1 mile

