

**Appendix D**

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**RESOURCE ASSESSMENT**  
**for the**  
**MINAM**  
**NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVER**

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

**February 24, 1994**

**Prepared by:** */s/ Robin G. Rose* **Date: 10/18/91**  
**Robin Rose, W&SR Team Member**

**Approved by:** */s/ H. Woody Fine* **Date: 10/18/91**  
**H. Woody Fine, W&SR Team Leader**

**Updated by:** */s/ Steve Davis* **Date: 2/24/94**  
**S. Davis, W&SR Team Leader**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter</b>		<b>Page</b>
I.	Executive Summary	1
II.	Introduction	1
III.	Resource Assessment Process	2
IV.	River Description	3
V.	Discussion of Values:	3
	Scenic	3
	Recreational	5
	Geologic/Hydrology	7
	Vegetation/Ecological	9
	Fisheries	11
	Wildlife	13
	Historic	15
	Pre-Historic	16
	Traditional Use, Cultural Values	16
	Other Similar Values	17
	Appendices	18

**MINAM  
NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVER  
RESOURCE ASSESSMENT**

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As a result of the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988, a segment of the Minam River, a tributary of the Willowa 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 Minam River. This resource assessment was completed to identify the river values that are outstandingly remarkable, and determine the significance of values not identified as outstandingly remarkable. The resource assessment will serve as the basis for interim management until the completion of the Minam Wild and Scenic River Management Plan.

On November 29, 1990, a draft resource assessment was sent out 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 Minam River to be Outstandingly Remarkable values: scenery, recreation, geology, fisheries, and wildlife.

As a result of the review of public and agency comments received, only minor clarifications and corrections to the draft were necessary. Minor changes were made in the information on the State Scenic Waterways Program, and the scenery, hydrology, fisheries, wildlife, and historic evaluation discussions. No new information was provided that merited changing the preliminary findings of outstandingly remarkable values in the final document. Therefore, **the Outstandingly Remarkable values for the Minam River remain: scenery, recreation, geology, fisheries, and wildlife.**

On February 24, 1994 this initial document has been revised to include additional information and incorporate changes in the listing of several species under the Endangered Species Act. No changes in the Outstanding Remarkable Values were made.

**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 39-mile segment of the Minam 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 Wild and Scenic Minam River identified in the Congressional Record include: scenery, recreation, geology, and fisheries.

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 is essential for the success of a sound management plan.

The entire Minam River, from its headwaters to its confluence with the Willowa River at the town of Minam, was designated as a State Scenic Waterway in 1970 with passage of the Scenic Waterway Initiative (ORS 390.825(4)). The Scenic Waterway System includes free-flowing waterways considered to possess one or more \*outstanding scenic, fish, wildlife, geological, botanic, historic, archaeological,

and outdoor recreation values of present and future benefit to the public" (ORS 390.805). (See Appendix C)

The segment of river where State and Federal designations overlap is the 39 miles from the headwaters at Minam Lake to the Eagle Cap Wilderness boundary at the north end of Section 4, T.1S., R.41E. The Forest Service, as lead agency for Wild and Scenic River management planning, and the State of Oregon will coordinate planning efforts for the river segment which has this dual designation.

### 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.
- 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

Recreation

Geologic/Hydrologic

Vegetation/Ecological

Fisheries

Wildlife

Historic

Pre-historic

Traditional Use, Cultural Values  
Other River-Related Resource Values

**IV. RIVER DESCRIPTION**

The Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988 designated 39 miles of the Minam River from its headwaters at Minam Lake to the Eagle Cap Wilderness boundary (north end of Section 4, T. 1S., R. 41E.) as Wild and Scenic River. The entire 39-mile segment is within the Eagle Cap Wilderness and was classified as a "Wild" river segment.

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 River management plan development.

The boundaries of the State Scenic Waterway segment, which overlaps with the Federal Wild and Scenic River designation from headwaters to National Forest boundary, are set at 1/4 mile on each side of the river and will not change. The State Scenic Waterway management classification for this portion of the Minam River is NATURAL RIVER AREA (See Appendix C). Additional information about the Oregon Scenic Waterways Program may be obtained from the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department, 525 Trade St. SE, Salem, Oregon 97310.

**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**

High in the middle of the Eagle Cap Wilderness lies Minam Lake, one of the headwaters of the Minam River. This lake, at 7300', is unique in that it is the headwaters for another Wild and Scenic River. The Lostine River flows from the north end; the Minam River flows from the south end.

The south end of Minam Lake was dammed in the late 1910's to deflect the outflow north into the Lostine River. The artificial modification enlarged what was a small natural lake, creating a reservoir to provide irrigation for agricultural lands in the Wallowa Valley. The earthen dams are fairly subtle visually, and the lake and surrounding area retain a predominately natural appearance. Although the river is very small when it leaves springs just below the Minam Lake dam, it gains in volume quickly from numerous substantial tributaries, and within a short distance is a well-established and attractive mountain stream.

Minam Lake lies in a scenic basin high in the Wallowa Mountains, surrounded by rugged 9000 foot plus granitic peaks and ridges. At an elevation just below treeline, the rigors of a subalpine environment are visible in the stunted and windswept forms of the trees. Small stands of Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and whitebark pine are scattered around the basin, punctuated by numerous open rock and talus slopes. High elevation wet meadows dotted with summer wildflowers rim the lake.

The river enters a thick forest as it descends from the lake and within a few short miles emerges into Big Minam Meadows. From this large meadow visitors have unrestrained views of the rugged, glacially-carved landscape. Craggy peaks and barren sawtooth ridges loom thousands of feet above the valley floor. Streams cascade from numerous hanging valleys and cirque basins carved into the surrounding ridges. The natural mosaic of vegetation creates dramatic patterns and textures against the backdrop of light granites.

Panoramic views are the rule in the upper reaches of the drainage, as the river makes a broad sweeping arc through the center of the range, flowing first southeast, then west, and ultimately northwest. Meadows carpet the drainage bottoms and open slopes. Scattered clumps of subalpine fir and spruce encroach into the meadows, and stringers reach up the steep slopes of surrounding ridges. Shrub-dominated communities grow on the geologically unstable slopes where frequent wash outs, debris slides, and avalanches hinder tree establishment. These deciduous shrubs and forbs provide a show of changing colors through the seasons.

As the river rounds the bend and heads northwest for the remainder of its journey through the mountains, montane forests of mixed species become more prevalent. Spruce, ponderosa pine, larch, Douglas-fir, and lodgepole pine generally carpet the lower half of the valley, with stringers growing higher up the ridges. Meadow openings become smaller, generally limited to the river bottom and frequent snow chutes. Aspens, cottonwood and alder grow on stream banks and rim meadows. Views of the surrounding mountains, otherwise obscured by the forest canopy, are seen from the frequent small openings.

The Minam River loses elevation rapidly in the upper reaches (headwaters to Elk Creek), in a series of rapids, pools, and short falls. Precipitous tributaries join the mainstem every half mile or so, adding volume to the river. The crystal clear pools, falls, deeply incised gorges, and wood debris dams of the mainstem contribute to the visual interest of the area.

Mixed conifer forests become even more dominant and meadows more infrequent in the middle portion of the Minam River drainage (Elk Creek to Red's Horse Ranch). Distant views are generally obscured by the forest canopy. Other attractions provide visual interest, such as the colorful seasonal accents of the deciduous trees and flowering shrubs and forbs, and the swift and wide river itself.

The character of the Minam River canyon changes dramatically near Red's Horse Ranch, where the western-most edge of the granitic Idaho batholith is located. The river leaves the complex geology and granitic peaks of the central range behind here, and enters the basalt dominated plateau lands more typical of the surrounding region. Over the years, the river has cut through layers of stacked basalts, creating a deep canyon with steep slopes. Rock cliffs, dikes, caves, and mineralized outcrops provide visual interest to the canyon. The depth of the canyon reaches 2500 feet from rim to floor, and width varies from 2-1/2 to 6 miles.

Forest and steppe vegetation typical of the surrounding basalt plateaus create strong visual patterns in the lower Minam River canyon. North-slope stringer forests of ponderosa pine, larch, and Douglas-fir contrast with south-slope grasslands. Numerous flats along the river support park-like stands of old-growth ponderosa pine. Well developed cottonwood stands are found along the river bottom. A variety of deciduous trees, shrubs, and wildflowers provide interesting visual accents throughout the seasons.

Evidence of human-caused change is minimal in the Minam River drainage. Only a few visible remnants of early trapping, mining, homesteading, and horse-logging still exist in the river corridor. These include a few rustic log cabins, buildings and dilapidated farm equipment, stumps, and logging camp clearings.

A few private parcels are located in the Minam River drainage within the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area. The Minam Lodge and the rustic lodge and cabins found at Red's Horse Ranch are reminiscent of turn-of-the-century Oregon architecture. Modern improvements on these and other adjacent properties, include fences, gates, two 3,000 foot dirt airstrips, several ponds, corrals, hay barns, cisterns, water lines, fences, and a bridge crossing the Minam River. These improvements are visible for approximately a mile along the river. Developments on other small private parcels located in the lower portion of the Minam are minimal and rustic, and generally cannot be seen from the river or trail. The only access into these areas is by trail or air.

Other cultural modifications that visitors will notice in their travels include constructed trails, directional signs, several log bridges spanning the river, and numerous visitor-established campsites. The Minam River trail follows an abandoned road bed several miles below Red's Horse Ranch. The road is slowly reverting back to a trail-like appearance.

### **Finding**

The designated portion of the Minam River possesses a great deal of diversity in landform, water, color, and vegetation. The variety in the landscape is dramatic and memorable, from the steep glaciated landscape of the upper drainage, to the heavily forested u-shaped valley in the middle portion, and finally to the deeply dissected basalt canyonlands of the lower canyon. The crystal clear river provides constant interest throughout the river corridor, linking the disparate portions of the drainage together in a common theme. Part of the visual uniqueness of the Minam River drainage is that the entire drainage, for its whole length from rim to rim, is essentially undeveloped, presenting a vestige of primitive America. The scenic attributes of the Minam River were recognized in 1970 by its inclusion in the Oregon Scenic Waterway Initiative, one of the original six rivers included in the Scenic Waterways System. The finding agrees with the Congressional record that scenery in the Minam River corridor is an outstandingly remarkable river 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 are not 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 entire designated portion of the Minam River flows through the western half of the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The lower end of the canyon reaches the lowest elevations in the Wilderness, providing a longer use season than is typical for this largely high mountain area.

Recreationists begin visiting the Minam River canyon in early spring, and use continues through the fall hunting seasons. Visitors travel to the area primarily to hunt, camp, horsepack, backpack, fish, and view wildlife. Many people come in pursuit of a wilderness experience, solitude, to practice primitive skills, or just to "get away" from the pressures of daily life.

The Minam River drainage can be reached from several major trailheads located around the perimeter of the Wilderness, providing ample opportunities for trail access. The Minam River Trail (#1673) parallels the river for its entire designated length. This major trail connects to a system of trails that provide access to a large portion of the Wilderness. However, opportunities for cross-country travel still exist for adventurous visitors.

While hiking and backpacking account for a significant amount of use in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, the Minam River drainage is visited by a higher percentage of horse parties. The river corridor provides good forage, water, and campsites for horse parties, and is a good area for long horsepack trips April through November. Hikers and backpackers occasionally travel through the upper portion of the Minam River drainage, usually to complete loop trips in the surrounding high country. The lower Minam is visited less frequently by those travelling on foot, due to difficult access, longer distances, frequent stream fords, and high summertime temperatures.

Except for the elk hunting seasons when use is high in the river corridor, the Minam River generally receives a moderate amount of use. The majority of visitors are from the surrounding region, although some visitors come great distances to recreate in the Minam River drainage.

The Minam River drainage is popular for its high quality, remote hunting experience, and is known regionally as a trophy elk area. The elk hunting seasons are the most popular hunts. Most desirable camps are occupied during this time of year and encounters with other parties on the river trail are frequent.

Minam River is considered to be fair-to-good trout fishing downstream from Red's Horse Ranch, while the upstream portions within the Eagle Cap Wilderness are considerably better. Fishing is fairly light.

The Minam River below Red's Horse Ranch is occasionally floated by adventurous and skilled boaters. The remote access, short duration of high flows, lack of high difficulty class rapids (above Class III), potential for large woody debris and other natural hazards, has limited significant interest in the Minam River for floatboating.

Winter sports are not generally pursued in the Minam River drainage. Snowfall is fairly light in the lower Minam canyon. A minor amount of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing occurs in the upper portion of the Minam River. However, the steep canyon walls, and heavy winter snows create a serious avalanche hazard during the winter months in the higher Wallowa Mountains. These activities should be pursued by those with knowledge in recognizing the natural hazards.

Red's Horse Ranch, located approximately 14 miles upriver from the Forest boundary, operates as a privately-owned dude ranch, offering meals and lodging, horsepacking, and guided trips. Several other commercial outfitters provide horsepacking and guiding services in the Minam River drainage and surrounding country under special use permit from the Forest Service.

## **Finding**

The quality and diversity of recreational opportunities available along the Minam River corridor makes it a popular area. Major attractions include a variety of recreational pursuits in a Wilderness setting, including backpacking, horsepacking, camping, and hunting. Other river-related opportunities include fishing, photography, sightseeing, and wildlife viewing. Some recreational activities that may exist in the river corridor, were not determined to be part of the OR value. These include boating, kayaking, and recreational opportunities on private land. The finding agrees with the outstandingly remarkable value determination made by Congress of 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 Minam River originates in the heart of the geologically complex Wallowa Mountains. The granitic Wallowa batholith dominates the upper Minam River drainage, and quartz diorite is the predominant rock type. Also visible in places throughout these mountains are metamorphosed greenstones and tuffs, and sedimentary limestones, shales, and sandstones.

Widespread volcanism occurred 15-30 million years ago, which resulted in the formation of basalt plateaus surrounding the Wallowa Mountains uplift. These Miocene Columbia River basalts once covered all or most of the Wallowa Mountains area prior to periods of faulting and uplifts, glaciation, and erosion. The basalt plateau geology typical of the surrounding region becomes dominant near Red's Horse Ranch, where the outer edge of the granitic batholith occurs. Below Red's Horse Ranch the river cuts through stacked layers of columnar basalt lava flows, red scoria, some lighter-colored andesite, and interbeds of sedimentary rocks, sometimes containing narrow coal seams. Feeder dikes from some of the local eruptions can be seen exposed in the older rocks and in the glacially carved granites in the upper drainage. Volcanic rock remnants form basalt caps on some of the surrounding higher peaks such as Brown Mountain and Sturgill Peak. Other interesting features include spires, caves, water spout scars, arches, and talus formations fairly typical of basalt landscapes.

The Wallowa Mountains were glaciated at least three times and perhaps as many as seven times between 11,000 and 500,000 years ago. The numerous cirque lakes, sharp ridges, and jagged peaks in the upper Minam River drainage were created by the sculpting of valley glaciers flowing out from a central point near Eagle Cap Mountain. Glaciers carved the valley, which is steep and nearly V-shaped in the upper drainage, gradually becoming typically U-shaped with a wide, flat valley floor in the middle and lower portions.

As is common throughout the Wallowa Mountains, much of the drainage is geologically unstable, particularly in the upper portion of the drainage. Periods of freezing and thawing make rock slides of varying size a common occurrence throughout the drainage. Flash floods, wash outs, and debris slides

are frequent on the steep canyon walls. Heavy winter snows create avalanches which also contribute to the scouring of slopes.

### *Hydrology*

The natural flow regimes of the Minam River has been slightly altered by modification at Minam Lake. Around 1917, a 14 foot earthen dam was constructed across Minam Lake's outlet on the south end, deflecting the outflow to the north, down the Lostine River. The artificial modification enlarged what was a small natural lake. This lake reservoir was created to provide irrigation for agricultural lands in the Wallowa Valley, as well as to provide some water for domestic use. A small amount of water from springs just below the dam on Minam Lake forms one of the headwaters of the Minam River. Within a short distance, however, the river gains volume from numerous tributaries and becomes well established.

The remainder of the river system, which drains approximately 240 square miles of the Eagle Cap Wilderness, is undeveloped. From Minam Lake at near 7400 feet, the Minam River drops to 2880 feet at the Eagle Cap Wilderness boundary, losing a total of 4500 feet in 39 miles. The river descends at an average gradient of 362 feet per mile in the upper six miles, then slows to a more moderate gradient for the remaining 33 miles.

Interesting stream features are abundant throughout the drainage, including rapids, short falls, plunge pools, narrow incised gorges, islands, and large debris dams. Due primarily to the area's Wilderness designation where natural processes are uncontrolled, natural hydrologic features are near pristine in the upper half of the river. Riparian vegetation is intact, and has been only minimally impacted by recreationists. Frequent log jams and continual additions of large woody debris contribute to the dynamic equilibrium of the river.

The operation of a splash dam between Threemile Creek and Garwood Creek on the Minam River between 1918 and 1924 altered the natural hydrologic features of the lower half of the river. Some natural obstructions were removed to facilitate the log drives. Unconstrained ecosystem processes have contributed to the recovery of the riparian systems and dynamic equilibrium of the river over the past 67 years.

The Minam River runs swift and clear during normal flows. As is typical for a snowmelt-fed stream, natural runoff patterns are seasonal. Peak runoff occurs in spring, generally April to June. Runoff recedes to low flows by late summer, and increases again in late fall in response to the fall rains. Ice damming and ice flows are common occurrences in late winter and spring.

Due to the high elevation of the upper drainage, water temperatures remain cold well into the summer months. Water yield and water quality in the Minam River is considered higher than most other streams in the Grande Ronde Basin. Dissolved oxygen levels are high and suspended sediment concentrations low during normal flows.

### **Finding**

#### *Geology*

The variety of exemplary geologic features in the river corridor merit the recognition of geology as an outstandingly remarkable value. The river corridor displays examples of a variety of geologic processes, including glaciation, volcanism, faulting and folding, and erosion. While none of the features are unique to the region, the geology of the Wallowa Mountains is fairly unique. The combination of glaciated and granitic-dominated geology of the headwaters and the volcanic basalt-dominated lower valley landscape, provides a graphic "textbook" example to study the formative processes of the

Wallowa Mountains. This preliminary finding agrees with the determination made by Congress for this value.

### *Hydrology*

The predominately natural flow regime of the Minam River system is maintained by the numerous unmodified tributaries, a notable feature for a watershed of this size in this region (alterations at Minam Lake only slightly modify the overall flow regime). While hydrologic features of the lower half of the river have been altered from a "pristine" state, for the most part the river's dynamic equilibrium has recovered over the past 60 plus years. The existing hydrologic features of the Minam River are important to the maintenance of scenic, recreation, fish, wildlife, and historic values. The river does not have features unique in the region, nor is it in an unaltered state; therefore, hydrology is determined not to be an outstandingly remarkable value.

## **VEGETATION/ECOLOGIC**

### **Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating**

The river or area within the river corridor contain nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous plant species. Of particular importance are species considered to be unique or populations of federally listed, or candidate threatened and endangered 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**

Plant communities represented in the Minam River corridor range from subalpine meadows and forests to low elevation ponderosa pine forests and steppe grassland communities. The diversity of communities and plant species is high, as is typical of many of the major drainages of the Wallowa Mountains.

The highest elevations in the river corridor occur near treeline. Here, forests of subalpine fir and whitebark pine are interspersed with meadows and grasslands. Other dominant species of this zone are alpine sagebrush, sandwort, fleecflower, needlegrass, lupine, elk sedge, paintbrush, and yarrow.

Progressing downstream and leaving the true subalpine zone behind, montane forests of mixed conifer species are predominate. Major tree species include subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, grand fir and larch. Grouse huckleberry, big huckleberry, pinegrass, and heartleaf arnica are frequent understory species. Several good examples of grand fir old-growth communities are found here. Pacific yew is an understory component of several of the mid to high-elevation mixed-conifer forest communities.

Forest and steppe vegetation more typical of the surrounding basalt plateaus dominates the lower Minam River canyon. Ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest communities typically cover the north-slopes and the flat river bottom. Steppe-like grasslands of Idaho fescue, Sandberg bluegrass, Wyeth buckwheat, and bluebunch wheatgrass are primarily found on the south-slopes. Curl leaf mountain mahogany, snowberry, oceanspray, spiraea and elk sedge are major understory and shrubland community species.

Riparian areas are generally intact throughout the river corridor, with only minor impacts due to recreational use. Wet meadows species include grasses, sedges, rushes, and forbs such as buttercup, aster, cinquefoil, arnica, false hellebore, coneflower, waterleaf, camas, and onions. Well-established cottonwood stands grow in riparian areas in the lower half of the drainage.

Natural forces have primarily shaped the patterns and diversity of plant communities in this drainage. Avalanches, landslides, and lightning-caused fires have created openings and replaced stands, adding diversity to the landscape. The drainage is relatively unaltered by humans, and still presents an overall natural appearance. There has been some effect on the natural succession and mosaic of plant communities in the drainage due to the successful suppression of wildfires. In the lower elevations, where there is more continuous forest cover, fuel build-up and changes in plant composition and stand structure are noticeable. Forest insects and disease common to the Snake River/Wallowa Mountain province are found in the drainage.

While the Wallowa Mountains are generally recognized for having a significant number of indigenous and rare plants, to date only three species which appear on the Region Six sensitive plant list have been discovered growing in the Minam River corridor. Stiff club-moss (*Lycopodium annotinum*) grows in high elevation spruce bogs and seeps. Gooseberry (*Ribes oxycanthoides* spp. *irriguum*) grows on wooded open hillsides of the lower Minam River drainage. Surveys conducted over the past several field seasons have found that these two species are more widespread in the region than previously thought, and they are both currently being considered for removal from sensitive species lists. Pinnate grape fern (*Botrychium pinnatum*) grows in grassy fields with lodgepole.

The river corridor has not been extensively surveyed for the presence of unique plants, therefore it is unknown whether other Federal or State listed or candidate threatened, endangered, or sensitive species are found within the river corridor.

Historical activities within the canyon have had some effects on the natural vegetation of the river corridor. Horse logging during the period from 1918 to 1924 occurred on an intermittent strip of land 1/4 of a mile wide and approximately seven miles long (from Wallowa Creek to Lobo Creek). The subsequent splash damming and log drives of the Minam River also altered riparian vegetation on the river banks. Today, most of the logged areas have naturally reforested and riparian vegetation has reestablished. In fact, most visitors are probably not aware that activities of this type occurred in the Minam River corridor because the area has recovered for the most part.

The lower drainage was heavily grazed by cattle and sheep from the 1880's through the 1940's. Allotments within the Minam River have not been stocked since 1985. Range conditions were showing steady improvement. Heavy elk and deer winter use in the lower canyon has had a noticeable impact on range conditions over the past several years.

### **Finding**

As a relatively natural-functioning environment, the Minam River corridor provides some opportunities for scientific and educational study; however, no known unique ecosystems exist, and there are similar areas outside the Wilderness that are also available for research. The diversity of plant species and communities found in the river corridor is high, typical of the Wallowa Mountains.

Three plants which currently appear on the Region Six sensitive plant list have been found in the Minam River drainage. None of these plants are directly river-dependent and have been found in other drainages in the Wallowa Mountains. Additionally, two of the plants have been found to be more widespread than previously thought and their removal from the sensitive species lists is currently being considered. Therefore, the occurrence of these listed species is not considered to be sufficient to merit an outstandingly remarkable rating. Comprehensive surveys for the presence of unique plants have not been conducted to date; therefore, it is not known if other Federal or State listed threatened, endangered, or sensitive species are located in the river corridor. Prior to any ground disturbing activities within the river corridor, surveys for threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant species will be conducted consistent with Forest Service policies.

Based on the above information, vegetation/ecologic values were not found to qualify as outstandingly remarkable in the Minam River corridor.

## **FISHERIES**

### **Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Rating**

Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of either fish populations or habitat or Native American cultural use - or 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 Present Situation**

#### *Populations*

The Minam River and many of its major tributaries support native wild populations of spring/summer chinook salmon, summer steelhead, bull trout, rainbow trout, and introduced brook trout. Mountain whitefish, squawfish, suckers, and sculpin are present in scattered populations in the river. Freshwater mussels and crayfish are also present. All but brook trout are native to the area.

The Minam River supported several anadromous fish runs historically, including spring/summer chinook, fall chinook, and coho salmon. Coho and fall chinook are no longer present in the Minam River. Spring/summer chinook salmon return to spawn in the Minam River, but are very limited in numbers. The river is currently managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) as a wild stock stream, and the long-term objectives are to maintain native stocks of wild spring/summer chinook salmon and summer steelhead. Mainstem passage problems at downstream dams and harvest are considered to be the major limiting factors to production of wild stocks.

The Snake River spring/summer chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) stocks are currently listed as Threatened by the National Marine Fisheries Service under the Endangered Species Act. Spring/summer chinook salmon and summer steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) are also listed on the Region 6 Regional Forester's Sensitive Species List.

Historically, bull trout populations had a wide distribution in Oregon, but many populations are now extinct or near extinction. Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as Category 2 (candidate species for listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act). Bull trout also appear on the State of Oregon sensitive species list and on the Regional Foresters sensitive species list.

The Oregon Rivers Information System database (ORIS) rates the "fish value" of the Minam River as "outstanding" due to the presence of native and anadromous fish. The lower half of the Little Minam River also supports native and anadromous fish, and is also rated "outstanding". Other major tributaries

to the Minam were rated "average" for "fish values", including the upper Little Minam, North Minam River, and Elk Creek.

#### *Habitat*

The Minam River watershed occurs largely in the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The natural flow regime has been slightly modified by a dam at Minam Lake; however, the flow regime in the remainder of the watershed is unaltered. The Minam is a moderate to high-gradient stream with less pool area than the low gradient rivers found further downstream in the Grande Ronde basin. Habitat variety is good, with adequate amounts of deep pools, riffles, and shallow, slow stretches of the river. This provides spawning, rearing, and holding habitat for anadromous fish, native trout, and introduced brook trout. The major tributaries in the drainage also provide spawning habitat for anadromous fish, and spring/summer chinook salmon are found in the lower reaches of the larger tributaries. Anadromous fish are present in the mainstem of the Minam River as far upriver as Trail Creek.

The splash damming that occurred early in the century resulted in some alteration to the river channel. Some clearing of obstructions was done in the lower 20 miles of the river channel to facilitate the log drives. The activity altered streambank vegetation, scoured and redistributed natural sediments and gravels of the river bed. Restoration to a more natural state of dynamic equilibrium has been occurring since the splash dam structure was abandoned and removed.

Recent activities which could potentially impact fish habitat have been fairly limited within the Wilderness. Riparian vegetation is mostly intact along the river banks, except for areas of minor disturbance due to recreational use and the development of trails, bridges, and river fords. Grazing allotments in the Minam River drainage have been inactive since 1985; however, heavy elk and deer winter use in the lower canyon has had some effect on range conditions. Ice damming and ice flows are significant natural processes that also continually impact riparian vegetation, particularly in the lower reaches of the river.

Water temperatures remain cold well into the summer months. Water quality is considered excellent. Dissolved oxygen levels are typically high, and suspended sediment concentrations are low except during high runoff periods. Water yield and water quality in the Minam River is considered to be higher than most other streams in the Grande Ronde Basin. The low water temperatures make the Minam an important contributor to the survival of high value fish, now and in the future.

In general, fish habitat is in very good condition. There is some minor potential for improvement of habitat conditions through improved trail maintenance, relocation of trails located in sensitive riparian areas, and improved management of recreational use in riparian areas.

#### **Finding**

The Minam River supports native runs of anadromous and resident fish species, including spring/summer chinook salmon, summer steelhead, bull, rainbow, and the introduced brook trout. The Minam River's clear, cold, highly-oxygenated water is important to the survival of some of these key species. The Minam River is managed as a wild stock stream by ODFW, with no introductions or supplemental stocking. This finding agrees with the Congressional Record that fisheries is an outstandingly remarkable value on the Minam River.



## **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 or candidate threatened, endangered, and 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*

Many species of wildlife typical to the region inhabit the area, and wildlife populations are diverse and thought to be generally stable. Large mammals inhabiting the area include elk, deer, black bear, and cougar. Other furbearers are found here as well, including bobcat, beaver, fisher, marten, mink, muskrat, otter, raccoon, and native red fox, as well as numerous other small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. A variety of birds can be found along the Minam River, birds of prey, including bald and golden eagles, pileated and other woodpeckers, several owl species, blue and spruce grouse, and many species of song birds.

Although comprehensive inventories have not been completed to determine which State or Federal listed or candidate species are actually inhabiting the area, several listed species have been documented in the river corridor. Peregrine falcon (USFWS listed endangered) sightings have been reported in the drainage, and American bald eagles (USFWS listed threatened) winter as far upstream as Red's Horse Ranch. The black rosy finch (Regional Forester listed sensitive) summer in the upper drainage, and winter in the lower drainage. Harlequin ducks and Northern goshawks, have been observed in the river corridor and are listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as Category 2 (candidate species for listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act). These species as well as the Lewis' woodpecker, which resides in the lower portion of the river corridor, are also listed on the Regional Forester's sensitive species list.

Historically, the Minam drainage supported populations of wolf which are listed as endangered and grizzly bear which have been listed as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act. These populations however have been extirpated from the state. Wolverine use the drainage as a travel corridor and den sites may be present. North American lynx have not been recorded, but habitat exists. Twenty Pacific fisher were released by ODF&W in 1970 but there is no status on current populations. Wolverine, Pacific fisher, and North American lynx are listed by the USFWS as Category 2 (candidate species for listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act).



The Blue Mountain cryptochian caddisfly (*Crytochia neosa*), which occurs in the river corridor, is also listed by the USFWS as Category 2 (candidate species for listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act).

The Minam River area is utilized by a part of a Rocky Mountain elk herd that is estimated to contain some 2,600 animals. The Minam serves as a migration corridor during the winter, and the lower slopes provide important winter range for this species, as well as mule deer. The drainage is known as offering a quality primitive hunting experience, especially for trophy animals.

#### *Habitat*

Wildlife habitat within the Minam River drainage is varied, ranging from high elevation subalpine meadows and forests to low elevation ponderosa pine forests and grasslands. Riparian communities are well developed, and cottonwood and old-growth grand fir stands are particularly notable. The diversity of vegetation, number of natural edges utilized by many big game and non-game wildlife species, minimal human-caused disturbance, and remoteness of the area contribute to the high quality of wildlife habitat found in the drainage.

As mentioned above in the Populations discussion above, comprehensive inventories have not yet been conducted to determine which State or Federal listed or candidate species inhabit the area. However, suitable habitat for several species exists. Peregrine falcon sightings have been reported in the drainage, and American bald eagles use the lower corridor as winter range. The Wallowa gray crowned rosy finch and black rosy finch are summertime visitors in the upper drainage, and also winter over in the lower drainage. Historically, osprey nested along the river. The area is within the historical range of the wolverine, lynx, fisher, grizzly bear, wolf, and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.

Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep are indigenous to the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The species used Big and Little Sheep Ridges and Backbone Ridge as winter habitat until the 1930's. Remnants of the native population were last observed around 1940 in the vicinity of Blue Lake. Since then, efforts to re-introduce bighorns to the Wallowa Mountains have been met with varied success. Twelve bighorns were planted in the Big Sheep Ridge area. The herd now numbers 45 animals, and although they drifted east to Goat Mountain, 5 to 10 bighorn sheep are reported to be utilizing the east ridges and upper tributaries of the Minam River.

The Minam River area is considered a premiere reservoir for big-game species. In particular, it is known for providing excellent habitat for cougar. Solitude, along with the food availability make the lower Minam very important habitat for this species. ODFW biologists feel that the lower Minam population was responsible for the resurgence of the cougar population in northeastern Oregon.

The river corridor provides high value summer and winter range for Rocky Mountain elk, and mule deer. The higher elevations of the drainage provide summer range, while slopes of the lower corridor serves as winter range. The river bottom is also occasionally used as a migration corridor and feeding area in severe winter weather.

Some changes in natural wildlife habitat conditions have occurred due to a variety of historic activities, livestock grazing, and current recreational uses. Natural rehabilitation has taken place in most cases. The suppression of wildfires has also altered the natural mosaic of wildlife habitat to some extent. However, wildlife habitat is in excellent condition.

#### **Finding**

The variety and importance of wildlife habitat in the Minam River drainage and its resulting species diversity, and the existence of habitat for several Federal and State listed threatened, endangered,

candidate and sensitive species and species of regional importance, qualifies this resource to be considered an outstandingly remarkable value. The expanse of designated wilderness provides habitat for species which require a large area for their survival. The lower river corridor is used by wintering American bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and several species of locally unique finches. The preliminary finding is that wildlife is an outstandingly remarkable value in the Minam River corridor.

## **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 in, or are eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Evaluation of the Present Situation**

Some historic cultural resource sites exist throughout the Minam River corridor, including evidence of Native American use, followed by Euro-American mining, trapping, homesteading, and livestock grazing.

A number of Native American tribes visited the Minam River drainage during historic-times, following the traditional patterns of use that were established prior to the coming of the Euro-Americans. The name Minam is derived from the Indian "E-mi-ne-mah", which means "valley of the roots", giving us a hint of the importance this river drainage held for Native Americans.

The Minam River drainage is within the ceded boundaries of the Nez Perce Tribe. Members of the Nez Perce Tribe regularly travelled to the area to camp, fish, hunt, and gather in historic times. Other tribes utilizing the river corridor included the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla). Several significant Native American trails traversed the area, and ridgetops received regular use as dispersed summer camps. However, little physical evidence of historic Native American use of the Minam River is known to remain today.

Early Euro-American use of the Minam River drainage left a fairly subtle impact on the landscape. Visitors may see the rare remnants of old trapper and miner cabins along the river. Observant visitors may also notice the fairly subtle traces of the historic logging that occurred from 1918-1924. All that is visible today are stumps and small clearings, the splash dam site (approximately 6 miles above Red's Horse Ranch), and logging camp sites. The operation of a splash dam on the Minam River is considered to be unique in the area, and it is the only splash dam site documented in the Wallowa Mountains. All that is readily visible at the splash dam site today is the clearing the backwater covered.

The Land Ranch, one of three homesteads established on the Minam River, was homesteaded about 1886. Little remains at the site except a few buildings and rusting farm implements. Red's Horse Ranch was occupied as early as 1880 by a trapper, later by horse and cattle ranchers. Despite some modern additions and improvements, Red's Horse Ranch still retains an overall rustic character. The third homestead, Minam River Lodge, was established around 1890.

Early maps of the Minam River record the presence of a number of Forest Service guard stations. Only one guard station exists today and continues to be used as an administrative site. Remnants of old telephone lines are occasionally seen along the river, relics of the historic administration of the area.

## **Finding**

There are a number of historic features present in the Minam River corridor which visitors would find interesting. The splash dam site on the Minam River is the only such site documented in the Wallowa Mountains. Opportunities to interpret historic sites are limited to off-site settings because the river is entirely within Wilderness. Although the splash dam site is significant, overall, historic cultural resources were found to not merit an outstandingly remarkable value rating. Cultural resource surveys will be completed prior to any management activities. In the meantime, known and discovered sites are protected under existing statutes, regulations, and policy.

## **PRE-HISTORIC**

### **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 in, or are eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Evaluation of the Present Situation**

The Minam River drainage falls within lands ceded by Nez Perce Tribes. Evidence from prehistoric sites indicate Native Americans used the area for an undetermined period of time. Written and recorded historic sources likewise report the use of the Minam River drainage by Native Americans primarily for summer camping, fishing, hunting, and food gathering purposes. The river corridor was periodically and seasonally visited by other cultural groups, including the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla) and possibly to a lesser extent by Northern Paiutes and Shoshone-Bannocks. Surveys on National Forest land completed to date in the river corridor have identified only a few prehistoric sites; however, the potential for discovering significant sites is considered high.

## **Finding**

The few identified prehistoric sites are not notable for the geographic region. Since extensive cultural resource inventories have not been completed it is undetermined what level of significance prehistoric use had in the corridor. Because all major drainages in Northeastern Oregon were utilized by Native Americans, in the absence of known rare, one-of-a-kind, or sites with unusual characteristics or exceptional human interest value(s), the prehistoric cultural values do not, at this time, meet the criteria for 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 management 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 Minam River drainage is included within the ceded boundaries of the Nez Perce Tribe. As described in historic and prehistoric discussions above, the river corridor was regularly visited by small groups of Nez Perce, and several other tribes, including the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (Umatilla, Cayuse, Walla Walla), and possibly the Northern Paiute and Shoshone-Bannock in historic and pre-historic times. 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**

No extensive cultural resource inventory has been completed in the Minam River corridor and no regionally unique sites have been identified by the tribes at this time. However, there is much interest in nearly all of the drainages in Northeast Oregon by the various tribes as having special cultural value associated with their history and present-day activities. This is especially true of those rivers having anadromous fish runs, like the Minam River. Traditional Use, Cultural Values are found to be important in the Minam river corridor; however, these values were not found to be outstandingly remarkable as they are fairly typical of other rivers in the region.

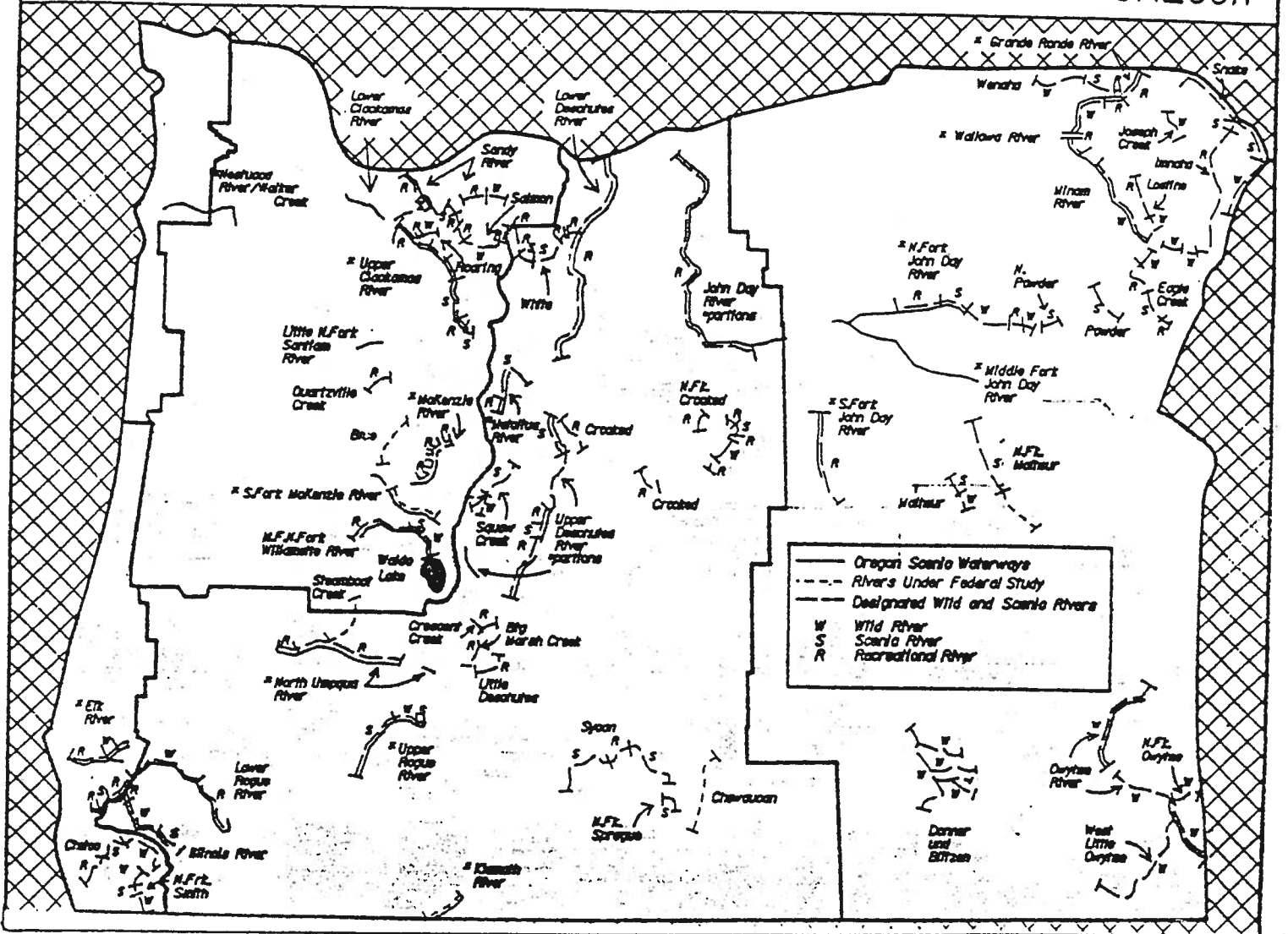
### **OTHER SIMILAR VALUES**

Additional river-related values were considered during the assessment, including scientific and educational values, water quality (see Geology/Hydrology, Fisheries discussions), and biodiversity (see Vegetation/Ecologic discussion). Separate discussions were not developed for these values. However, all river-related values will continue to be evaluated through the management planning process.

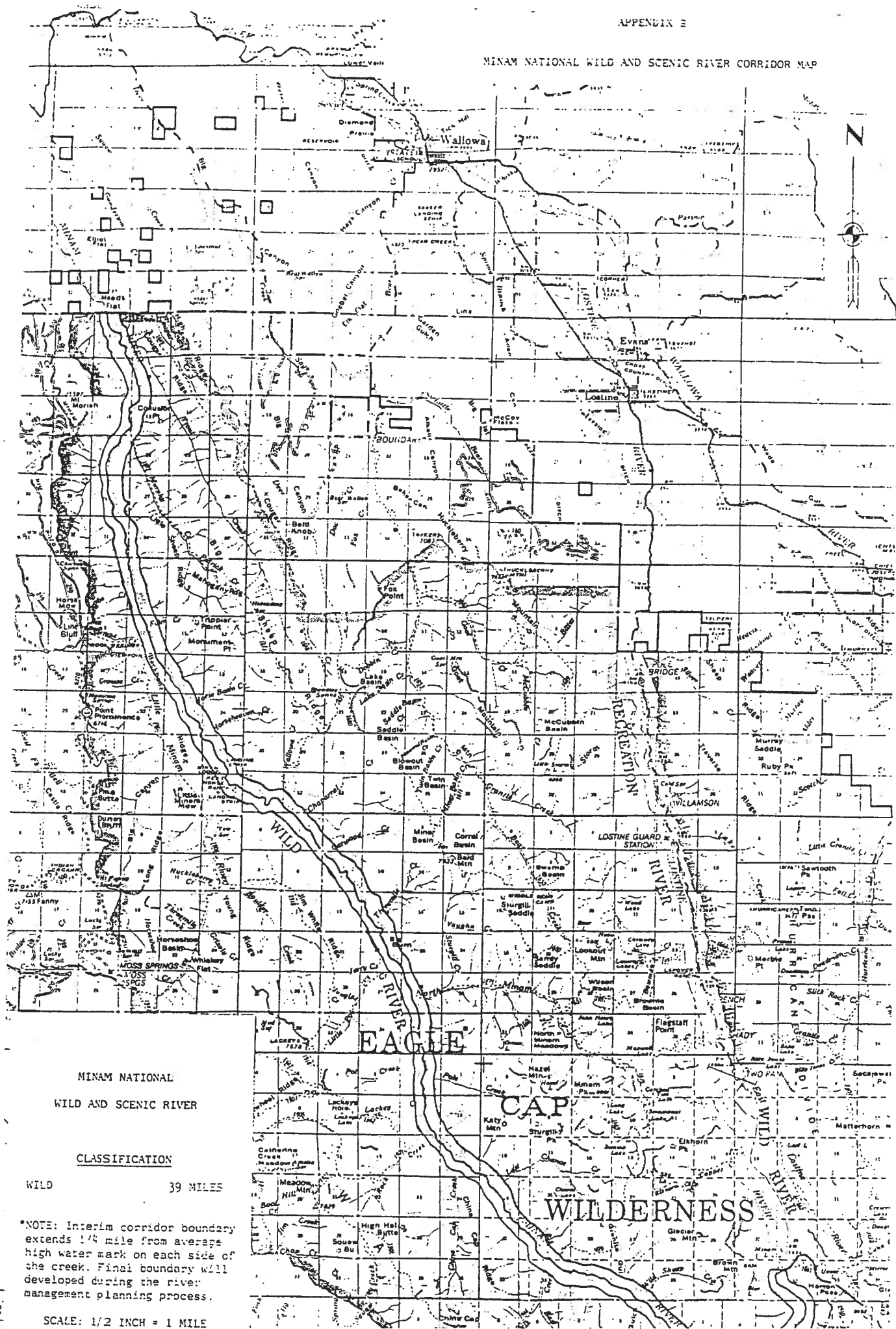
APPENDIX A

OREGON SCORP PLANNING REGION  
NUMBER 12  
NORTHEAST OREGON

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



MINAM NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVER CORRIDOR MAP



MINAM NATIONAL  
WILD AND SCENIC RIVER

**CLASSIFICATION**

WILD 39 MILES

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

SCALE: 1/2 INCH = 1 MILE

## APPENDIX C

### *Oregon Scenic Waterway Program*

#### **Background**

The Oregon Scenic Waterway Act was established by a ballot initiative in 1970. The original Oregon Scenic Waterways system created by the Act included 496 free-flowing miles of six rivers.

Rivers can be added to the system through designation by the Governor or the legislature. Such actions have added significant mileage of five rivers, as well as Waldo Lake, to the Scenic Waterways system since passage of the original Act.

Rivers can also be added to the system by the citizens of Oregon. In 1988, Oregon voters passed the Oregon Rivers Initiative (Ballot Measure #7), which added 573 river miles to the system. There are now one lake, and segments of 19 rivers (1148 miles), in the State Scenic Waterways system.

#### **Program Goals**

The scenic waterway program promotes cooperative protection and wise use of rivers in the system by all agencies (federal, state, and local), individual property owners, and recreation users. Program goals are:

- To protect the free-flowing character of designated rivers for fish, wildlife, and recreation. No dams, reservoirs, impoundments, or placer mining activities are allowed on scenic waterways.
- To protect and enhance scenic, aesthetic, natural, recreation, scientific, and fish and wildlife values along scenic waterways. New development or changes of existing uses proposed within a scenic waterway are reviewed before they may take place.
- To protect private property rights. The Act discourages unsightly structures or inappropriate development that could be a nuisance to neighboring landowners or even depreciate property values. It prohibits pollution and the disturbance of adjacent surface lands by placer mining. It also prohibits public use of private property without explicit consent of the landowner.
- To promote expansion of the scenic waterway system. The Act sets up a process for adding new rivers to the system and establishes criteria for candidate rivers.
- To encourage other local, state, and federal agencies to act consistently with the goals of the program. Oregon State Parks reviews plans and decisions made by other agencies to ensure consistency with the scenic waterways program.

#### **Administration**

Scenic waterways are administered under the authority of the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission (ORS 390.805 to ORS 390-925). Administrative rules (OAR 736-40-005 to 736-40-095) have been adopted to govern the program. In addition to the general rules governing the program, specific rules are generated for management of each river segment in the system. These rules are created through the management planning process, and tailored to the actions necessary to maintain the existing character of the designated river corridor.

The Act and the Commission's rules require the evaluation of proposed land use changes within one-quarter mile from each side of the river for their potential impacts on aesthetic and scenic values, as viewed from the

river. Property owners wanting to build roads or houses, develop mines, harvest timber, or other similar projects, must provide written notification to the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department. Parks evaluation of the project will be coordinated with other natural resource agencies (federal and state) having regulatory responsibility and with the local jurisdiction. Parks relies on its river classification and administrative rules for each segment of the scenic waterway to determine whether the proposed project is incompatible or inconsistent with the designated classification. State Parks will work with the landowner to reach a mutually satisfactory resolution of any conflicts. Where such a resolution cannot be reached, the Commission must decide, within one year of the original notification, whether to pay the property owner for the land or the development rights.

Other local and state agencies must comply with the scenic waterway law and rules. Parks also works closely with federal agencies to assure their actions are compatible with scenic waterway law, rule, and resource management recommendations.

### ***Classification and Management of the Minam River State Scenic Waterway***

The entire Minam River, from Minam Lake downstream to its confluence with the Wallowa River, was one of the six rivers designated a State Scenic Waterway in 1970 with passage of the Scenic Waterway Initiative (ORS 390.825(4)). Therefore, it was not necessary for State Parks to complete a resource analysis for this river. Classification for the Minam was done as part of the administrative rule implementing the initiative. The regulations described below apply to the land within one-quarter mile of each bank of the river, as measured on a map.

From Minam Lake to the boundary of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (Section 4, Township 1S, Range 41E), the Minam is classified as a Natural River Area. A Natural River Area is generally inaccessible except by trail or river, with primitive or minimally developed shorelands. A Natural River Area may include an occasional lightly traveled road, residence, or other improvement, as long as the visual impact is limited to the immediate vicinity. Existing uses on private land may continue, but the management goal for the corridor is the preservation and enhancement of its primitive character.

Most of the land within the Minam River Natural River Area is public land, managed by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, and included within the Eagle Cap Wilderness. However, there are several private inholdings. On some of these lands, activities and structures associated with ranching are evident, but the corridor retains a generally natural aspect.

From the boundary of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest to the Wallowa River, the Minam is classified as an Accessible Natural River Area. An Accessible Natural River Area is a relatively primitive, undeveloped area. The primary difference between this classification and the Natural River Area classification is greater accessibility, which may be by rail as well as by lightly traveled road. Other than access routes, the overall impression of the landscape is the same for both classifications. The management goal for Accessible Natural River Areas is the preservation or enhancement of their essentially primitive scenic character, while allowing public outdoor recreation use.

Most of the land within the Minam River Accessible Natural River Area is privately owned, with a few publicly owned parcels managed by the Forest Service or BLM. Most of the area is managed for timber production and grazing.

The above is as general description of the administration of the Minam River Scenic Waterway. Landowners are responsible for complying with State rules as they apply to the landowner's specific situation. Anyone having questions should contact Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department for more information.