

To: Carolyn Freeborn, Jordan Resource Area Field Manager
 From: Jack Wenderoth, ID Team Coordinator for Louse Canyon GMA Wilderness Characteristics Inventory Update
 Date: October 26, 2007
 Subject: Wilderness characteristics inventory update completion; Louse Canyon GMA,

The Jordan Resource Area Interdisciplinary (ID) team assignment to review wilderness characteristics for inventory units located in Louse Canyon GMA has now been completed. Our conclusions described in inventory update narratives were shaped by wilderness characteristic considerations provided to us by BLM Oregon State Office staff. Based on our review, which was conducted between February and October of 2007, we have found that five of the 18 (20 original, reconfigured into 18) previously identified inventory units considered presently meet the wilderness inventory criteria necessary to qualify them as possessing wilderness characteristics. As shown in the summary table below, five areas currently possess wilderness characteristics, one area is deferred, and twelve areas do not.

2007 Wilderness Characteristics Update Summary Table <i>Inventory Units Located within Louse Canyon Geographic Management Area</i> Vale District Bureau of Land Management, Jordan Resource Area						
Wilderness Characteristics Update Unit Numbers and Names	Public Land Acres	Meets Size Criteria?	Meets Natural Condition Criteria?	Meets Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude Criteria?	Meets Outstanding Opportunities for Primitive and Unconfined Recreation?	Does the Unit Possess Supplemental Values?
Starvation Spring OR-036-001	13,180	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Twin Butte OR-036-002	18,754	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Cairn C OR-036-003	13,241	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Oregon Butte OR-036-004	49,002	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Deer Flat OR-036-005	21,272	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Tent Creek Cow Camp OR-036-006	153	No	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pole Creek 036-007	34,196	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Black Butte OR-036-008	12,324	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
High Ridge A OR-036-009	16,363	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Field Creek OR-036-010	12,250	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Antelope Creek OR-036-010	23,967	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Rawhide OR-036-012	17,846	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Steer Canyon OR-036-013	17,121	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Sacramento Hill OR-036-014	9,567	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Coyote Wells OR-036-015	7,146	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Hanson Canyon OR-036-016	16,052	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rattlesnake Creek OR-036-017	16,862	Yes	Deferred	Deferred	Deferred	Deferred
Five Points OR-036-018	4,515	No	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total Acres >>>>>>>>>	303,811					

BLM staff who participated in this wilderness characteristics exercise included the following:

- Bob Alward, retired BLM Vale Recreation Planner, (currently employed under contract)
- Brent Grasty, Vale District Geographic Information System (GIS) Coordinator
- Trisha Skerjanec, Jordan Resource Area Resource Assistant
- Jack Wenderoth, Soils and Hydrology
- Cynthia Landing, Rangeland Management Specialist
- Jon Sadowski, retired BLM Vale Wildlife Biologist (currently employed under contract)
- Eric Mayes, Vale District Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Polly Gribskov (Baker Field Office Recreation Planner) was initially involved in our discussions but after the first few days she was no longer a participating team member. Manuel Berain (Jordan Resource Area Range Technician) provided support for road condition documentation. Garth Ross (Jordan Resource Area Wildlife Biologist) participated in the road condition inventory exercise and he was included in several of our discussions about wilderness characteristics. Because Bill Lutjens (Jordan Resource Area Rangeland Management Specialist) will be involved in this same exercise for the Barren Valley and Rattlesnake GMAs, he was included in our problem solving sessions and discussions. Finally, Shannon Woolery (Contract Database Administrator) assisted us in the assembly of GIS map products.

Staff involved considered the following information for this update exercise;

Wilderness Inventories

- 1978 – BLM Wilderness Inventory Units (unpublished internal BLM documents stored in 6-way case files)
- April, 1979 – Proposed Initial Inventory – Roadless Areas and Islands Which do Not have Wilderness Characteristics. (yellow book)

Wilderness Documents

- August, 1979 – Wilderness Review – Initial Inventory, Final Decision on Public Lands Obviously Lacking Wilderness Characteristics, Oregon and Washington (green book)
- October, 1979 – Wilderness Review – Intensive Inventory - Oregon, Proposed Decision on the Intensive Wilderness Inventory of Selected Areas (grey book)
- March, 1980 – Wilderness Review – Intensive Inventory; Final Decisions on 30 Selected Units in Southeast Oregon and Proposed Decisions on Other Intensively Inventoried Units in Oregon and Washington (orange book)
- November, 1980 -Wilderness Inventory –Oregon and Washington, Final Intensive Inventory Decisions (brown book)
- November 1981 Stateline Intensive Wilderness Inventory Final Decision, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Utah (tan pamphlet)

Other Relevant Information

- Wilderness Inventory recommendations submitted to Vale District by Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) in February 6, 2004.
- Current geographic information system (GIS) data on existing rangeland development projects, vehicular travel routes / roads, land ownership, etc.
- BLM Job Documentation Record (JDR) rangeland project development files.
- 2005 National Agriculture Imagery Project (NAIP) digital images.
- Vale District BLM Transportation Plan Map.
- Field observations made by Jack Wenderoth and Jon Sadowski during the Louse Canyon GMA Rangeland Standards assessment work conducted between July and October of 2000.
- Road maintenance actions reported in association with wildland fire suppression activities.
- Routine grazing allotment visits by BLM Rangeland Management Specialists and Range Technicians.

- Field visits made from spring through summer 2007 by Cynthia Landing and others for the specific purpose of documenting evidence of road maintenance. Cynthia has also provided you a memo which describes the nature of her road inventory activities and documentation which should be considered part of this summary document.

We estimate that a total of roughly 25 work-months were expended over the course of the Louse Canyon GMA inventory update. This includes time spent by managers, a Department of Interior solicitor, and various staff. It also includes time spent preparing for and meeting with ONDA representatives prior to crafting final narratives. Because this has been a learning process and many of the pathways are now better understood, we expect that the next effort should go much more quickly and be more efficient. The basic steps and estimated amount of time expended for this exercise is as follows, with the expectation that each step requires the participation of 2 to 6 staff personnel;

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| • Initial discussions, draft update narratives, and examination of existing information | 4 weeks |
| • Road inventory field work | 2 weeks |
| • Review by Vale District Managers and Oregon State Office staff | 1 week |
| • Placement of road and digital image information into the District GIS | 4 weeks |
| • Final update narratives after Vale District Managers and Oregon State Office review | 6 weeks |

Relevant Summary Information

- Upon final review of information from historic wilderness documents and files in addition to field assessments conducted in the spring and summer of 2007 the team has updated the current inventory of wilderness characteristics for 18 units within the Louse Canyon Geographic Management Area.
- Wilderness characteristics have been inventoried for the Rattlesnake Creek unit area within the Louse Canyon GMA boundary. This unit will extend into the Rattlesnake GMA to the west because the team agreed with the original inventory call sequence of 1978-1980 that BLM Road 6376-0-00 is not a road but rather a motorized primitive trail. A final call on wilderness characteristics for the entire Rattlesnake Creek unit will be deferred until the Rattlesnake GMA is addressed for Rangeland Health determinations in 2008.
- After considering all the available information, we could not agree with ONDA opinions in the following units:
 - 1) BLM Coyote Wells OR-036-015 unit that is a portion of the citizens Mouse Trap Butte proposed WSA Addition. BLM concluded that the Coyote Wells unit is bounded by existing roads and is separated from the Hanson Canyon OR-036-016 unit by BLM road 6357-0-C0.
 - 2). BLM Twin Butte OR-036-002 unit that is a portion of the citizens Oregon Butte proposed WSA Addition. BLM concluded that the Twin Butte unit is bounded by existing roads and is separated from the Cairn C OR-036-003 unit by BLM road 6354-0-00 and the Upper West Little Owyhee WSA by BLM road 6354-0-A0

- Out of the 18 inventory units considered, the team concluded that 5 (28%) provide outstanding opportunities for solitude, 9 (50%) meet the natural condition criteria, 2 (11%) provide outstanding opportunities for Primitive and Unconfined Recreation, and 16 (89%) meet size requirements and have supplemental values. The team also concluded that while it may be true that 16 units offer recreational opportunities, none of them possess what we considered outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. We asked ourselves if it would be reasonable to assume that an average recreationist would visit the wilderness inventory update areas and our conclusion was no, they would probably not. Hunters and others are known to have visited adjoining WSAs on a regular basis.
- We concluded that portions of the Black Butte and Hanson Canyon unit boundary roads do not meet the definition of a road and therefore they have been reclassified as motorized primitive trails. Because of this finding, the Black Butte and Hanson canyon units are now considered contiguous with the Owyhee Canyon WSA which possesses outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.
- Maps have been created for each of the inventory update units and they are part of this update document. Although the names and numbers shown in the table may not match exactly with initial inventory naming conventions, narratives in update forms 1 and 2 show how these new units relate to initial inventories. We crafted a direct narrative connection between these new areas and existing BLM wilderness-related documents.
- The Vale District transportation plan was used as the team’s default source for defining “roads” in this update. The team concluded that BLM transportation plan roads have either already been maintained at some point by mechanical means else they will be maintained in the future where it becomes necessary. We think it is important to point out that Vale BLM does not routinely resurface all transportation plan roads on a scheduled basis. The Bureau takes this approach in order to keep administrative costs low and avoid further expansion of invasive plants resulting from road grader disturbance.
- Routes appeared quite clearly on the 2005 NAIP digital aerial images and therefore they were valuable current information used in our deliberations.
- ONDA noted in their inventory that vegetation recovery has occurred on some lower elevation roads. However, the team agreed that much of the plant cover present at lower elevations was made up of very low growing plants and thus we disagreed with most of their plant recovery conclusions. ONDA argued in their recommendations that the routes are no longer substantially noticeable but BLM disagrees with this conclusion for most routes. A few instances occurred where the team knew vehicular travel routes have been maintained mechanically which is a deviation from the current transportation plan. However, the exact opposite situation has also occurred. For instance, a few of the original roads have not been maintained and substantial vegetative growth has occurred within the roadbed.
- In general, the team spent a lot of time deliberating back and forth about characteristics and thought many of the update areas did actually possess certain desirable wilderness attributes. However, when the team challenged one another about whether or not those attributes could be considered “outstanding”, the consensus was that it would be difficult to defend such an argument. The team tended to find that the original 1978 – 1980 BLM conclusions about suitability were well justified and conditions have not changed substantially as of this update. At least in the Louse Canyon GMA, the best quality areas that meet all of the condition criteria are within existing Wilderness Study Areas and not outside of their boundaries.

- Supplemental values have been included in BLM inventory units which represents a change compared to the original inventories. The main reason for concluding that new supplemental values are now present is because of the absence of invasive plants and the presence of several important sagebrush obligate species of wildlife. Both of these qualities were considered to be of much less importance 29 years ago when original wilderness inventories were conducted. Most of the area we considered lies within one of the largest contiguous blocks of good quality sagebrush steppe habitat remaining west of the Rocky Mountains.