

RARE II

How the last of the country's roadless areas should be put to use

The Forest Service is in the final month of receiving input from persons who have an opinion on how the last of the roadless areas in the country are to be designated for future use. Known as the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II (RARE II), it is the largest federal land planning effort in the history of the Forest Service.

The process is of vast significance in that the recommendations the Forest Service makes, and the final decisions made by Congress, will determine where and how much wilderness will be left intact and what areas will be made available for non-wilderness activities such as logging, mining and motorized recreation.

Environmentalists see the debate as the last major struggle to keep as much of the country's remaining wilderness as possible in its pristine condition. On the other side, people in the timber industry see the present roadless areas in terms of available board feet for logging and related industries, the number one job producers in the state.

There are 11 roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more under study in the Mt. Hood National Forest. The following story takes a look at how those areas will be considered for classification under the RARE II process.

Persons with an interest in how the areas in the Mt. Hood National Forest will be managed in the future are encouraged to write their comments about a specific area to the U. S. Forest Service, P. O. Box 3623, Portland, 97208.

by JOHN KLINE

A heavily used trail winds along the Salmon River across from Huckleberry Mountain and heads south away from developments in Welches and Zig Zag. The trail is marked by exposed tree roots which have been uncovered through years of use by hikers. The Salmon River moves gently through the terrain at this time of year. On

gorge which drains into the river. It traverses through stands of huge Douglas Fir, some at least 300 years old, which are aided in their growth by the 100-plus inches of rain that fall there annually.

There is something unique about the Salmon-Huckleberry area — there are no roads within the 69,000 acres of its boundaries. Environmentalists want to keep it that way. People in the logging industry have their eyes on it as a possible source for timber to bolster what they see as a declining industry in the Sandy trading area.

Caught in the middle of this debate is the Forest Service, an agency of the Department of Agriculture which claims to hold a neutral position. The Forest Service is conducting the RARE II assessment of which roadless areas in the country the public wants to have kept in a wilderness state (as defined by the 1964 Wilderness Act) and which will be made available for timber use, motorized recreation and other non-wilderness activities.

Salmon Huckleberry and 10 other roadless areas in the Mt. Hood National Forest are included in the study.

PAST STUDIES TEDIOUS

In the past, individual parcels of roadless land were studied separately for possible inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The process for each unit was long and drawn out and involved wilderness studies, land management plans, environmental impact statements and, in some instances, considerable litigation in the courts.

Enter RARE II. The Roadless Area Review and Evaluation came into being as the result of a directive from M. Rupert Cutler, the head of the Forest Service. Its purpose is to decide once and for all on a nationwide basis, the disposition of the roadless areas in the country, whether they will remain as

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weekends, fishermen dot the banks and wade knee deep in the water in search of mammoth steelhead which have been reported there.

The trail originates at the end of a paved road in the Mt. Hood National Forest. It is one of the more popular wilderness routes taken by day (and some overnight) hikers in the Mt. Hood Forest. The trail goes through the center of the Salmon-Huckleberry area and leads hikers up through a series of spectacular bluffs overlooking a steep

wilderness or be opened up for development.

There are a total of 1,920 roadless areas in the country totalling 65.7 million acres which are under study for possible inclusion in the wilderness system. The 11 parcels in the Mt. Hood National Forest total 237,363 acres. Salmon-Huckleberry is the largest of those 11.

In all likelihood, less than a third of the areas under study nationally will be

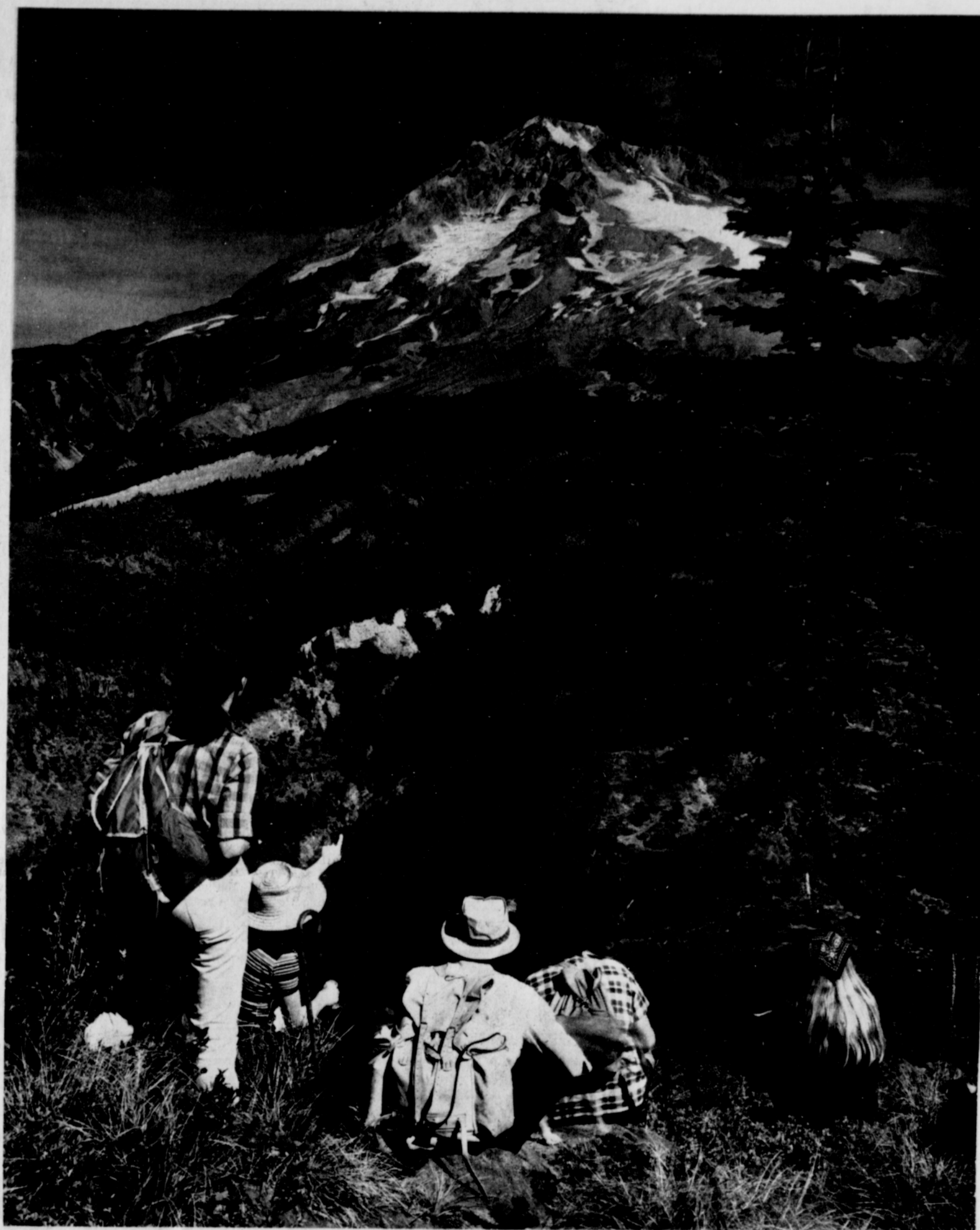
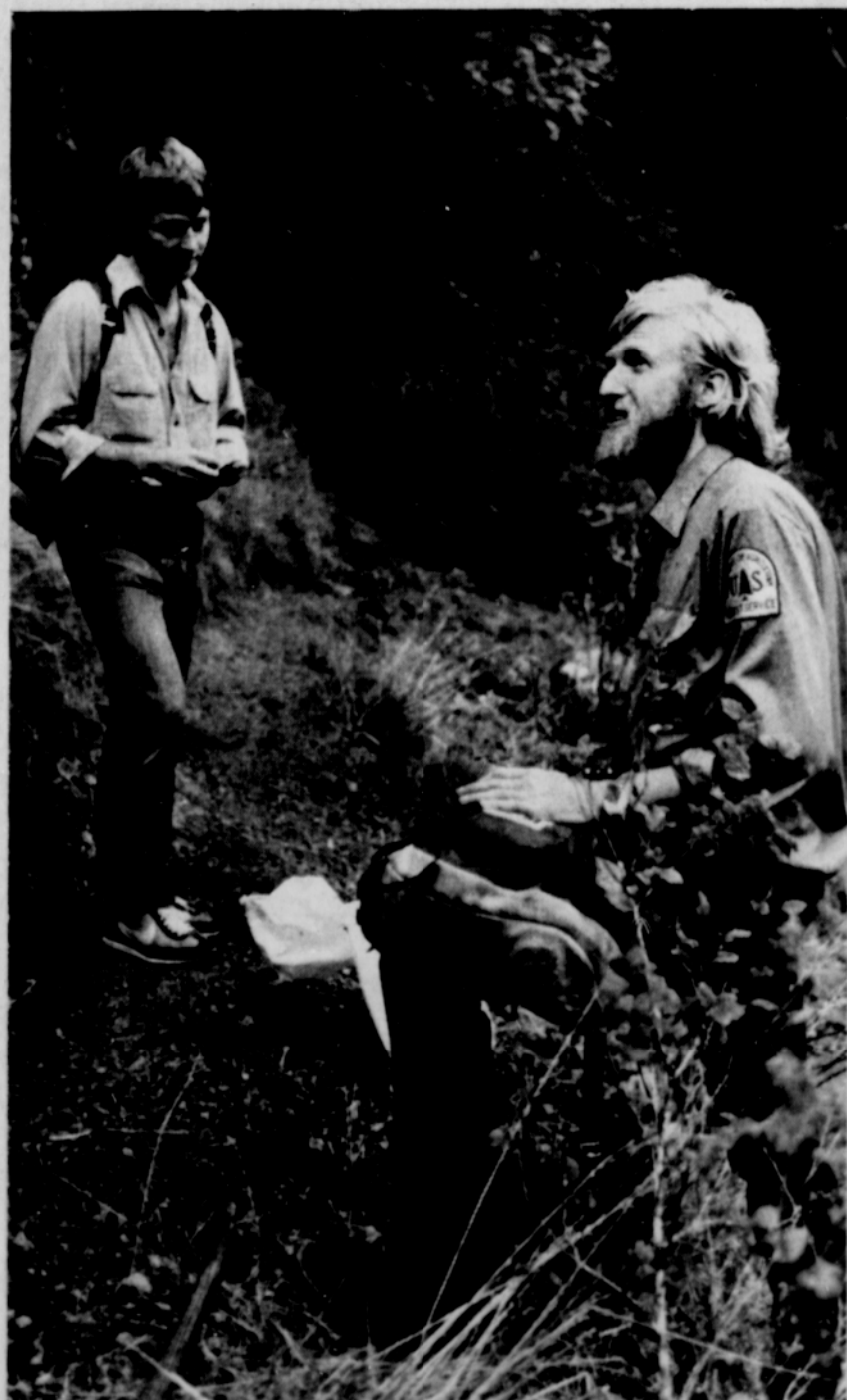


Photo courtesy of Donald Lowe



CLARK HANSEN of the U.S. Forest Service explains RARE II to hikers.

included in the final wilderness plan. There are now 16.6 million acres in the National Wilderness Preservation System (1.2 million in Oregon), a long way from the wilderness goal of the Renewable Resources Program sent to Congress by President Ford in 1976. That program calls for a total of 25-30 million acres of national forest wilderness by the year 2000. Rare II is an attempt to speed up the process.

The Forest Service released a draft environmental statement in June on the areas which have been designated as possible lands to be included in the wilderness system. It is now in the process of taking public input on that assessment.

The cutoff date for sending in comment to the Forest Service is Oct. 1. After that, the Forest Service will consider the input and come up with final recommendations to Congress by January of next year. Congress will then take up the matter and will determine which areas will be designated wilderness.

The outcome of the issue will not come easily. Debate on which areas to include could go on for many months, and possibly years in the courts if conservationists or persons in the logging industry are not satisfied with the decisions made by Congress.

3 CATEGORIES

The draft environmental statement released by the Forest Service suggested three descriptions for the roadless areas under study. They are: wilderness, non-wilderness and further study.

"Wilderness" areas would remain as

they are now with some changes in their management by the Forest Service to ensure their pristine nature. Visitors would be allowed to walk the land but no motorized vehicles would be permitted.

"Non-wilderness areas" would be opened up for what the Forest Service terms multi-use purposes: logging, mining, road building and motorized recreation.

The "further study" classification would postpone the decision until additional data could be gathered on an area.

A number of conservationists are afraid that the Forest Service is moving too hastily with the RARE II process. According to Bill Bakke of the Oregon Environmental Council, the Forest Service does not have enough information on the areas in Mt. Hood

Forest to make a sound decision.

"The real resource values of these parcels aren't really known," he said. "The Forest Service will be making evaluations on the classification for these areas with incomplete data."

Environmentalists are concerned that opening large amounts of previously unroaded areas will create severe changes in the lay of the land and streams that pass through. They argue that road construction, logging and developed recreation in steep and fragile areas will bring about erosion and sedimentation of streams, deterioration of water quality and a hindrance to fish and wildlife.

On the other hand, persons in the logging industry feel they need to retain national forest land in timber productivity in order to maintain present levels of production.

RARE II areas in Mt. Hood National Forest.

AREA	ACRES
EAGLE	41,200
LAKE	10,900
BIG BEND	11,000
MT. HOOD ADDITIONS	11,600
WIND CREEK	6,088
SALMON-HUCKLEBERRY	68,800
TWIN LAKES	5,385
BADGER-JORDAN	27,382
BULL OF THE WOODS	34,300
OLALLIE	8,673
MT. JEFFERSON ADDITION	1,100
TOTAL	226,428

Hagenstein said that in a state where nearly half the population relies on forest products for employment, additional wilderness cannot be justified. He added that if all Oregon's roadless areas (3.1 million acres) were designated as wilderness, the state would lose more than half a billion board feet of annual timber harvest and 18,480 timber and timber-related jobs.

W. D. Hagenstein, executive vice president of the Industrial Forestry Association, has stated that none of the roadless areas in Oregon should be designated wilderness. He said additional wilderness designations should be considered only after the Forest Service determines that Congressional goals for national forest timber production under the Resources Planning Act can be attained without logging them.

The final designation of the lands in Mt. Hood National Forest will not be known until Congress makes its decision. The Oregon Environmental Council, an organization of 70 conservation groups in the state, is promoting the idea of including only four of the 11 roadless areas in the Mt. Hood Forest.

The four areas are Salmon-Huckleberry, Eagle 41,200 acres, Bull of the Woods (45,235 acres) and Badger-Jordan (27,382 acres). See map.

Next week, The Post will take a look at how the decisions which may come out of RARE II could affect the Sandy area. Roger Deaver of the Zig Zag Ranger District will address the Sandy Area Chamber of Commerce on that subject at a breakfast at Griff's on Monday at 7 p.m.