

Public opinion sought on Rare II designation

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After the period for public input ends Oct. 1, the Forest Service will analyze the comments and prepare its recommendations. The final environmental impact statement will be issued by January, 1979 and will propose the roadless area for inclusion in one of the three classifications listed above.

In making comment to the Forest Service, it is important to read the Draft Environmental Statement (DES), the state and area supplement and map. When referring to an area, the appropriate number must be used for identification of the area and comments should pertain to 1) individual roadless area, 2) approaches for developing a decision, 3) criteria to be used for developing a proposed course of action plus any other comments or information you feel would be helpful to the Forest Service.

Following is a brief description of each of the roadless areas in the Heppner Unit of the Umatilla National Forest, including information about wildlife, resources and acreage. The number following the name of the area is that used by the Forest Service in the DES.

TEXAS BUTTE—06258
An area covering 14,039 acres, Texas Butte is the largest undeveloped area in the Heppner Unit. It is estimated to have 266 million feet of timber with fir stands on the north slopes and high quality pine and other species

on the south slopes. The area has an annual programmed harvest of 4.2 million board feet providing 95 jobs annually. A major Rocky Mt. Elk summer range, over 1,000 animals use the area for solitude, breeding, feeding, resting and rearing their young. A watershed for Upper Rhea Creek, the area also drains into Wall and Skookum

creeks where minor steelhead and trout fisheries are located. The old growth forest also provides habitat for numerous wildlife species including the great grey owl, pileated woodpecker, goshawk, Cooper hawk, bear, cougar, and others.

KELLY PRAIRIE—06257
A 9,500 acre tract containing 146 million feet of timber

volume with an annual harvest of 2.5 million board feet providing 57 jobs annually. Kelly Prairie is very similar to Texas Butte in wildlife values, as elk summer range and watershed for Wilson and Potamus creeks. The area in the north is predominately lodgepole pine with ponderosa located in the southern half. Mountain pine beetle infestation is heavy and industry feels it may reach epidemic proportions. The area is the largest prairie in the area—about 400 acres—and is used heavily by elk and deer for calving and rearing the young.

SKOOKUM—06270
Containing 11,229 acres of land, Skookum is estimated to have an annual timber harvest of 400,000 board feet providing about nine jobs annually. The area serves as important winter range for both elk and deer and is one of the last remaining natural areas for that use. Pine beetle infestation is heavy.

POTAMUS—06269
Potamus is comprised of 5,197 acres with about 24.5 million feet of timber volume with an annual harvest of about 400,000 board feet providing nine jobs annually. The area is comprised of steep canyons and stringers of timber used by elk and deer for winter range with excellent forage. High quality ponderosa pine and old growth fir line the canyon bottoms and draws. Pine beetle infestation is moderately high.

BALONEY BASIN—06561
A tract containing 4,849 acres of land and about 16 million feet of timber volume. Annual harvest from Baloney Basin is estimated at 200,000 board feet annually, providing for four jobs. Some old growth timber of not particularly high quality, the area is winter range for elk and deer, again with excellent forage.

HELL'S HALF ACRE—06268
Located at the headwaters of Willow Creek, southeast of Cutsforth Park, Hell's Half Acre is comprised of 2,975 acres. The area has an annual programmed harvest of 1.3 million board feet and provides about 29 jobs annually. Industry has classified the area as a high timber production unit, and, at the same time is considered an ideal natural setting for recreationists. The area has a high value as watershed for a sizeable drainage and the area also contains a large amount of unique geological features such as fossils, Indian artifacts.

RARE II Oregon Roadless Area Review and Evaluation



Logging, big game can co-exist in Rare II areas, industry reps say

Calling for a non-wilderness designation for each of the six RARE II areas in the Heppner Unit, industry believes that a land management plan can be developed that will allow select logging and still preserve big game habitat.

"Industry has and continues to support the wilderness program," said Allen Nistad, General Manager of Kinzua Corporation in Heppner. But Nistad points out that "half of the area's timber supply is threatened with the wilderness designation proposals."

Based on Forest Service timber volume figures, if all six RARE II areas in the Heppner Unit were classified wilderness, it would result in a possible loss of 204 jobs; an annual loss of 9 million board feet of timber.

Nistad points out further economic loss to the community if the areas receive wilderness designation, as Morrow County receipts from timber sales could be cut in half. The county received about \$350,000 as its 25 percent share of timber receipts from national forest lands in 1977 and Nistad projects that receipts could reach one-million dollars annually because of the projected increase in stumpage prices.

Mountain Pine Beetle infestation in the Blue Mountains worries the lumber industry and conservationists alike and most fall behind the theory that only select cutting of

infested areas will stop the beetle.

Kelly Prairie, Texas Butte, Potamus and Skookum are infested with the pine beetle that is destroying a large amount of lodgepole pine and showing up with frequency in old-growth ponderosa pine stands.

"We've adapted our logging practices to move our loggers to wherever the infestation occurs," said Nistad. With Kinzua Corporation's new \$5-million sawmill in Heppner starting operations this week, the company will be able to utilize the small, beetle-infested logs in its operation rather than let the timber lay wasted and further spreading the beetle.

Nistad feels the area and its people can best be served with a non-wilderness rating for each of the RARE II areas, putting them into the Heppner Unit land management plan.

"In this way, local input from professional resource people such as Fish & Wildlife agents, hydrologists, soils specialists and others would provide protection of all the associated resources," said Nistad.

He draws an example from the 554 million feet of timber on the six areas under review:

"If the lands were in full timber production, the allowable cut could be projected at 22.16 million feet annually.

"However, the Forest Service computes an annual harvest of 9-million feet annually from these lands. The difference can be accounted for by removing from timber production the thickets needed for wildlife habitat, stream bank protection, scenic road easements, soil concerns and unique areas."

"Each of the areas have been subjected to intensive study to determine whether or not they meet the criteria for wilderness or non-wilderness classification," said Nistad, "using the ratings established by the Forest Service—along with industry rating systems—we recommend all six areas for non-wilderness classification."

Environmental statement not broad enough wilderness proponents argue

Conservationists and proponents of a wilderness classification for all or part of the six RARE II areas in the Heppner Unit feel the Draft Environmental Statement (DES) released by the Forest Service in June, doesn't tell the whole story.

Glen Ward, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Biologist, stated, "The RARE II DES appears to be biased and slanted towards total resource development" and points out what he considers to be glaring omissions.

"In the Oregon DES the 'Evaluation of Predominant and Significant Recreation Use Patterns' was completely left out of the section dealing with Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wheeler counties, even though deer and elk hunter expenditures amounts to \$1, \$1,398,000 in the Heppner Wildlife Management Unit alone," said Ward. "These values were not included as an annual economical asset to the area in the report so that these values may be weighed with development values."

Ward points out that no economic values were given for watershed areas; trout and steelhead habitat and production; grazing values for deer and elk and recreation.

"Locally, RARE II alternatives that include low timber producing areas into wilderness classification have been rated low in the Wilderness

Attribute Rating System and consequently do not meet the wilderness criteria determined by the U.S. Forest Service," said Ward.

"The RARE II process divides industry, livestock growers, recreationists and conservationists because of the extreme alternatives presented in the Draft Environmental Statement," said Ward.

Ward doesn't think that enough public input will be received from private citizens to result in a wilderness classification for any of the areas in the Heppner Unit. Ward feels that choices for selecting some wilderness designation are extreme and the average citizen, unconcerned with resource development will find difficult to consider any wilderness alternatives.

"If the alternatives can be selected to be compatible with local needs, then the RARE II process will be beneficial for most of the people living in the vicinity of those public lands," said Ward.

Beryl Stillman of Heppner, Project Manager for the Elk Foundation Association, agrees. "Portions of the Draft Environmental Statement weighing values of development are biased and slanted." "Our local undeveloped areas are quite small but they have many values which we cannot merely throw away to be completely developed,

roaded or logged," said Stillman.

Conservationists agree that if habitat is maintained for the Rocky Mountain Elk, other unique forms of flora and fauna will survive too, and Stillman maintains that unless roadless, undeveloped areas are preserved the elk population and hunting benefits could diminish.

Five of the six areas—Texas Butte, Kelly Prairie, Skookum, Potamus and Baloney Basin are important elk winter and summer ranges. Stillman says that elk have shown time and again the need for solitude and escape from human encroachment.

"The old growth timber in these areas provide thermal cover for the elk, much needed in both winter and summer ranges," said Stillman, "and once it is gone you'll never see the big trees again."

Logging and development also erodes special ground cover, thickets and scrub trees that wildlife use for cover and feeding, according to Stillman.

Ward and Stillman agree that the area has reached its peak in elk production with current land management practices. The Heppner Unit herd totals about 3,000 ani-

mals in the spring with a fall population of about 3,800. The conservationists are concerned that unless some of the old growth timber and heavy ground cover are left, the elk population or hunting permits would decline.

"Based on the scope of the logging since 1972, input on wildlife has been lacking," said Ward, "and we'll ask for more emphasis on wildlife preservation and road closures."



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