

CHAPTER 2

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Since the pattern of future actions cannot be predicted with certainty, assumptions must be made to allow impact analysis to be performed. These assumptions are the basis of the scenarios developed in this impact statement. They are not management plans or proposals, but are believed to represent reasonable patterns of activities which could occur as a result of this action.

APPENDICITIS HILL

Proposed Action (No Wilderness Alternative)

All 21,900 acres of this WSA would be recommended for nonwilderness (Map 4). The lands would be open for multiple use management and development.

Livestock and Range Actions

The WSA would continue to provide 2,300 AUMs for livestock use. Projections beyond existing planning estimates would not change maintenance activities or call for additional construction of livestock and range facilities. Maintenance would continue on 14 existing stock watering sites (including troughs, tanks, and small earthen reservoirs). New range improvements consisting of 500 acres of sagebrush control, one spring development, and one pond are planned. Projections beyond existing planning estimates (beyond the 15 to 20 year planning cycle) indicate that it is reasonable to expect that 2,300 AUMs of use would be maintained in the future.

Wildlife Management Actions

Five hundred contiguous acres of decadent mountain mahogany would be pruned and thinned with chainsaws to stimulate new growth, thereby increasing crucial winter forage for mule deer. Over the long term, the mule deer population would be increased by 30 percent. Prunings and cut trees would be left where they fell.

Energy and Mineral Resource Actions

It is assumed that three gravel pits that had been used in the past would be reactivated. These pits are on the edge of the WSA and all are next to existing roads or ways. No new road construction is anticipated. Material would be removed in conjunction with county road maintenance on an as-needed basis. There would be 15 acres of surface disturbance from these three pits.

While the entire WSA would be open to mineral entry, projections beyond existing planning estimates indicate that no new mining claims would be explored in the next 15 to 20 years. Further, no drilling for oil and gas is anticipated.

Recreation Management Actions

The Big Lost MFP limits ORV use in the Appendicitis Hill WSA to existing roads and trails. This designation would continue under the proposed action. Recreational ORV use is projected to remain below 50 visitor days annually for the next 5 to 10 years. Projections beyond the existing planning cycle (15 to 20 years) indicate that it is reasonable to expect recreational ORV use to increase slightly, but remain below 100 visitor days annually. Three miles of road constructed for timber harvest on the west side of the WSA is expected to be constructed at some time in the future.

The entire WSA would be open for other recreation activities including hunting, horseback riding (generally associated with hunting activities), camping (generally associated with hunting activities), photography and sightseeing. No recreation facilities or developed trails exist in the WSA and none are planned. However, the three miles of road associated with timber harvest would be used by hunters to gain access to the western portion of the WSA. Recreational use for these activities would remain below 100 visitor days for the next ten years. Projections beyond existing planning estimates (beyond the 15 to 20 year planning cycle) indicate that it is reasonable to expect that recreational use for these activities would increase slightly, but remain below 200 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future.

Forest Management Actions

The Big Lost MFP identified 300 acres of Douglas fir for commercial thinning. Interest by Louisiana Pacific has been expressed for this sale. Thus, it is assumed that under the proposed action (no wilderness alternative), this area would be logged, resulting in the extraction of 325 MBF (thousand board feet) of timber. One mile of main logging road and two miles of skid road would be constructed. One additional mile of existing vehicle way would be improved as part of the main logging road. Logging would be done predominantly by a cable logging system.

Partial Wilderness Alternative

Under this alternative, 13,670 acres would be recommended for wilderness and 8,230 acres would be recommended for nonwilderness (see Map 4).

Livestock and Range Actions

See Proposed Action.

Wildlife Management Actions

Under the Partial Wilderness Alternative, thinning of mountain mahogany would not occur. The area identified for thinning lies within the designated wilderness portion of the WSA. Thus, 500 acres of crucial winter range for mule deer would not be improved, and the mule deer population would decrease 30 percent in the long term because of loss of habitat.

Forest Management Actions

Under this alternative, timber management practices would be minimal because all the commercial timber lies within the designated wilderness portion of the WSA, including the 300 acres identified for commercial thinning. No tree cutting, especially timber harvest, would be allowed.

Energy and Mineral Resource Actions

It is assumed that three gravel pits that had been used in the past would be reactivated. These pits are located outside the area recommended for wilderness designation under this alternative. All three of these pits are next to existing roads, so no new road construction is anticipated. There would be 15 acres of surface disturbance from these three pits. Material would be removed in conjunction with county road maintenance on an as-needed basis.

The 13,670 acres recommended for wilderness under this alternative would, subject to valid existing rights, be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws upon designation by Congress. The remaining 8,230 acres would be open to mineral entry. However, projections beyond existing planning estimates indicate that no new mining claims would be explored in the next 15 to 20 years. Further, no oil and gas drilling is anticipated.

Recreation Management Actions

The 13,670 acres recommended for wilderness would be closed to ORV use, once designated by Congress. On the remaining 8,230 acres, ORV use would be limited to existing roads and trails as specified in the Big Lost MFP. Recreational ORV use in the 8,230 acres of nonwilderness is projected to remain below 40 visitor days annually for the next 5 to 10 years. Projections beyond the existing planning cycle (15 to 20 years) indicate that it is reasonable to expect recreational ORV use to increase slightly but remain below 100 visitor days annually.

The entire WSA would be open for other recreation activities including hunting, horseback riding (generally associated with hunting activities), camping (generally associated with hunting activities), photography and sightseeing. Recreational use for these activities would remain below 100 visitor days for the next ten years. Projections beyond existing planning estimates (beyond the 15 to 20 year planning cycle) indicate that it is reasonable to expect that recreational use for these activities would increase slightly, but remain below 200 visitor days annually.

for the foreseeable future. Future recreational use would be expected to be oriented towards the designated wilderness area rather than the lands managed for nonwilderness uses. No recreation facilities or developed trails exist in the WSA and none are planned.

All Wilderness Alternative

All 21,990 acres of the WSA would be recommended for wilderness designation.

Livestock and Range Actions

See Proposed Action.

Wildlife Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, thinning mountain mahogany would not be allowed. The BLM's Wilderness Management Policy specifically prohibits cutting of trees, shrubs, or other vegetative products for non-wilderness purposes. Thus, 500 acres of crucial winter range for mule deer would not be improved, and the mule deer population would decrease by 30 percent in the long term because of loss of habitat.

Energy and Mineral Resource Actions

All 21,990 acres of the WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws, subject to valid existing rights at the time of wilderness designation.

Recreation Management Actions

The entire WSA would be closed to ORV use, unless such use would be required for maintenance of livestock facilities or livestock operations.

The entire WSA would be open for other recreation activities including hunting, horseback riding (generally associated with hunting activities), camping (generally associated with hunting activities, photography and sightseeing). Recreational use for these activities would remain below 100 visitor days for the next ten years. Projections beyond existing planning estimates (beyond the 15 to 20 year planning cycle) indicate that it is reasonable to expect that recreational use for these activities would increase slightly, but remain below 250 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future. No recreation facilities or developed trails exist in the WSA and none are planned.

Forest Management Actions

Timber management practices would be minimal under the All Wilderness Alternative. No tree cutting, especially timber harvest would be allowed. Reforestation, in the absence of natural revegetation, would be prohibited.