

## 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.

## WHITE KNOB MOUNTAINS

### Proposed Action (No Wilderness Alternative)

All 9,950 acres of the White Knob Mountains WSA would be recommended for nonwilderness (Map 5). The lands would be open for multiple use management and development.

#### Livestock and Range Actions

The WSA would continue to provide 852 AUMs for livestock use. Projections beyond existing planning estimates (beyond the 15 to 20 year planning cycle) indicate that it is reasonable to expect that 852 AUMs would be maintained in the future.

Maintenance would continue on 5 spring developments and watering troughs. New range improvements consisting of 880 acres of sagebrush control, two miles of pipeline with one spring development and one trough, and eleven stock watering ponds are planned. Projections beyond existing planning estimates would not change maintenance activities or call for construction of additional livestock or range facilities.

#### Energy and Mineral Resource Actions

It is assumed that three existing lode mining claims along the WSA's eastern boundary would be explored, resulting in one mile of new road and 60 acres of surface disturbance. One gravel pit along the WSA's southwestern boundary would continue to be used as a gravel source for country road maintenance. This would result in five acres of surface disturbance.

Further, it is assumed that there would be one exploratory oil and gas well drilled in Schoolhouse Canyon. In support of this well, there would be two miles of new road constructed and 10 acres of surface disturbance.

#### Recreation Management Actions

The entire 9,950 acres of the WSA would be open to ORV use. 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 associated with mineral development and oil and gas drilling 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), camping (generally associated with hunting), 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 oil and gas drilling and mineral development would be used by hunters to gain

access to the northeast portion of the WSA. Recreation use for these activities would remain below 50 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 recreation use for these activities would increase slightly, but remain below 150 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future.

#### All Wilderness Alternative

All 9,950 acres of the White Knob Mountains WSA would be recommended for wilderness (Map 5).

#### Livestock and Range Actions

See Proposed Action.

#### Energy and Mineral Resource Actions

Subject to valid existing rights at the time of designation, all 9,950 acres of the WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws. No oil and gas drilling would be allowed in the WSA.

The three existing lode mining claims that are expected to become active under the Proposed Action (No Wilderness Alternative) are considered valid existing rights. However, the BLM's Wilderness Management Policy states that prior to commencing operations, a formal validity examination must occur to determine whether or not the claims in question indeed held sufficient quantity and quality of material so that a prudent man could expect to get a reasonable return on his investment. For purposes of analysis, it is assumed that such an examination would show insufficient quantity and quality of material to satisfy the prudent man concept. Thus, the claims would be deemed null and void, and no mining development would be allowed.

#### Recreation Management Actions

The entire 9,950 acres of the WSA would be closed to ORV use, unless such use would be required for maintenance of livestock facilities or operations. The WSA would be open for other recreation activities including hunting, horseback riding (generally associated with hunting), camping (generally associated with hunting), photography, and backpacking. Recreation use for these activities would remain below 50 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 recreation use to increase slightly but remain below 150 visitor days annually. No recreation facilities or trails exist in the WSA and none are planned.

## BURNT CREEK

### Proposed Action (No Wilderness Alternative)

All 24,980 acres of this WSA would be recommended for nonwilderness (Map 6). The lands would be open for multiple use management and development.

#### Livestock and Range Actions

The WSA would continue to provide 3,034 AUMs for livestock use. Projections beyond existing planning estimates indicate that livestock use would remain at that level for the foreseeable future. Eight miles of fence and 5 developed springs would continue to be maintained in support of the livestock management program. New improvements consisting of three miles of pipeline, four troughs, seven reservoirs, and 10 miles of fence are planned. Projections beyond existing planning estimates indicate no change in maintenance activities and no additional range facilities.

#### Energy and Mineral Resource Actions

It is assumed that one exploratory oil and gas well would be drilled in the Short Creek drainage. This would result in one mile of new road being built and 10 acres of surface disturbance for the drilling equipment. While the entire WSA is open to mineral entry, no mining claims currently exist in the area and projections beyond existing planning estimates indicate that no new claims would be filed in the foreseeable future.

#### Recreation Management Activities

The Ellis-Pahsimeroi MFP limits ORV use in the WSA to existing roads and trails. This designation would continue under the proposed action. Recreational ORV use is projected to remain below 100 visitor days annually for the next 5 to 10 years. Projections beyond that point indicate that it is reasonable to expect ORV use to increase slightly but remain below 200 visitor days annually for at least the next 20 years. One mile of new road associated with oil and gas drilling in the Short Creek drainage 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, camping, photography, fishing, hiking, and backpacking. No recreation facilities or trails exist in the WSA and none are planned. However, the mile of new road associated with oil and gas drilling would be used by hunters to gain access in the central portion of the WSA. Recreation use for these activities would remain below 100 visitor days for the next ten years. It is reasonable to expect modest increases in recreation use over time, but projections beyond existing planning estimates (15 to 20 years) indicate use would remain below 200 visitor days annually.

## Partial Wilderness Alternative

The Partial Wilderness Alternative recommends 8,300 acres of the Burnt Creek WSA for wilderness and 16,680 acres for nonwilderness (see Map 6).

### Livestock and Range Actions

See Proposed Action.

### Energy and Mineral Resource Actions

Subject to valid existing rights at the time of designation, the area recommended for wilderness would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry and leasing. One exploratory oil and gas well would be expected to be drilled in the Short Creek drainage, within the area recommended non-suitable. This would result in one mile of new road and 10 acres of surface disturbance.

The area recommended nonsuitable would remain open for mineral entry and leasing. However, no mining claims presently exist in that area and projections indicate that none are likely to occur in the foreseeable future.

### Recreation Management Actions

The 8,300 acres recommended for wilderness would be closed to ORV use, once designated by Congress. On the nonsuitable 16,680 acres, ORV use would be limited to existing roads and trails as specified in the Ellis/Pahsimeroi MFP. Recreational ORV use in the 16,680 acres of nonwilderness is projected to remain at below 40 visitor days annually for the next 5 to 10 years.

## All Wilderness Alternative

The All Wilderness Alternative recommends the entire 24,980 acres of the Burnt Creek WSA for wilderness (Map 6).

### Livestock and Range Actions

See Proposed Action.

### Energy and Mineral Resource Actions

All 24,980 acres of the WSA would be withdrawn from mineral entry and leasing, subject to valid existing rights at the time of wilderness designation.

## Recreation Management Actions

The entire 24,980 acre WSA would be closed to ORV use, once the area was designated by Congress, 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.

## COMPARATIVE IMPACT SUMMARY

<u>WSA</u>	<u>WILDERNESS VALUES</u>	<u>MINERAL RESOURCES</u>	<u>ORV USE</u>	<u>MULE DEER WINTER RANGE 1/</u>	<u>FORESTRY 1/</u>
<u>Appendicitia Hill</u>					
Proposed Action (No Wilderness)	Naturalness and Solitude lost or impaired on 1,515 acres in short-term; long-term loss or impairment on 1,315 acres. No legal protection of wilderness values on 21,900 acres.	21,900 acres open to mineral entry and leasing.	Minor increase in vehicle accessibility; no significant impacts. ORVs limited to existing roads and ways on 21,900 acres.	500 acres of winter range improved by mechanically thinning decadent mountain mahogany. Population increased by 30 percent (360 deer).	300 acres (325 MRF) of Douglas-fir commercially thinned; logging on remaining 570 acres of commercial forest land unlikely in foreseeable future.
Partial Wilderness	Wilderness values retained on 13,670 acres. No legal protection on 8,230 acres, but no development or impairing use is anticipated on this portion. Impacts to solitude and naturalness would not occur on 1,315 acres.	13,670 acres closed to mineral entry or leasing. 8,230 acres open to mineral entry and leasing.	15 visitor days annually would be displaced from 13,670 acres closed to ORVs. Insignificant impact due to similar or superior opportunities on nearby public land. ORV use limited to existing roads and ways on 8,230 acres.	500 acres of winter range improvement foregone. Long-term reduction of mule deer population by as much as 30% (360 deer).	325 MRF harvest foregone; logging on remaining 570 acres of commercial forest land also foregone, but sales are unlikely in the foreseeable future.
All Wilderness	Wilderness values retained on 21,900 acres. Impacts to solitude and naturalness would not occur on 1,315 acres.	21,900 acres closed to mineral entry or leasing.	50 visitor days annually displaced from 21,900 acres closed to ORVs; insignificant impact due to similar or superior opportunities on nearby public land.	500 acres of winter range improvement foregone; long-term reduction of mule deer population by as much as 30% (360 deer).	325 MRF harvest foregone; logging on remaining 570 acres of commercial forest land also foregone, but sales are unlikely in the foreseeable future.
<u>White Knob Mountains</u>					
Proposed Action (No Wilderness)	Naturalness and solitude lost or impaired on 980 acres. No legal protection of wilderness values on 9,950 acres.	9,950 acres open to mineral entry and leasing.	Minor increase in vehicle accessibility; 9,950 acres open to ORVs. No significant impacts.		
All Wilderness	Wilderness values retained on 9,950 acres; impacts to solitude and naturalness would not occur on 980 acres.	9,950 acres closed to mineral entry and leasing.	50 visitor days annually displaced from 9,950 acres closed to ORVs; insignificant impact due to similar or superior opportunities on nearby public land.		
<u>Burns Creek</u>					
Proposed Action (No Wilderness)	Naturalness and solitude lost or impaired on 975 acres; no legal protection of wilderness values on 24,980 acres.	24,980 acres open to mineral entry and leasing.	Very minor increase in vehicle accessibility; no significant impacts. ORVs limited to existing roads and ways on 24,980 acres.		
Partial Wilderness	Wilderness values retained on 8,300 acres; no legal protection on 16,680 acres. Naturalness and solitude lost or impaired on 975 acres.	16,680 acres open to mineral entry and leasing. 8,300 acres closed to mineral entry and leasing.	35 visitor days annually displaced from 8,300 acres closed to ORV use; insignificant impact due to similar or superior opportunities on nearby public land. ORV use limited to existing roads and ways on 16,680 acres.		
All Wilderness	Wilderness values retained on 24,980 acres. Impacts to solitude and naturalness would not occur on 975 acres.	24,980 acres closed to mineral entry and leasing.	100 visitor days annually displaced from 24,980 acres closed to ORV use; insignificant impact due to similar or superior opportunities on nearby public land.		

1/ This issue relevant to Appendicitia Hill WSA only.