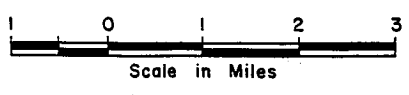
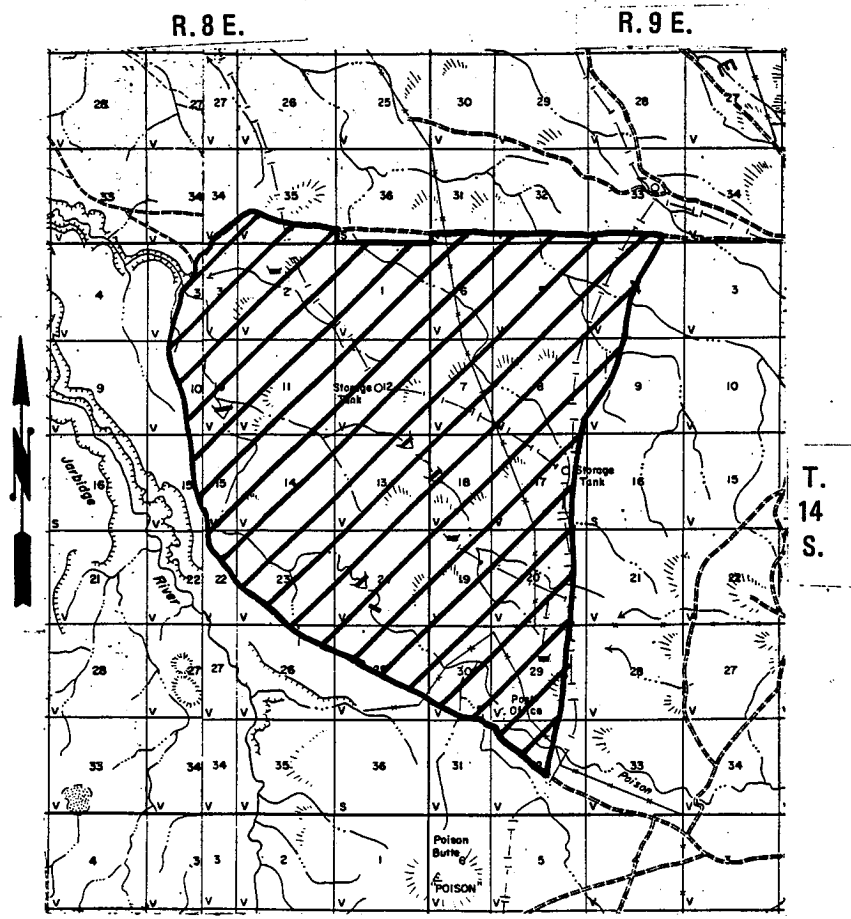




17-12

POISON CREEK



LEGEND

-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
-  AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS

## 17-12 POISON CREEK

The April, 1980 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

### SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains 13,532 acres of BLM land. The unit is roughly square, four miles on a side, and is located west of the Clover-Three Creek Road 48 miles southeast of Bruneau. The unit is a relatively flat plateau cut on its western edge by Poison Creek. The creek canyon is relatively broad, open and not deeply incised. In a few locations rock faces extend from the plateau to the canyon bottom. The unit is dominated by northern desert plant species.

### NATURALNESS:

The eastern two-thirds of the unit contains a concentration of developments, including two road and pipeline systems, one extending across the unit in the northeast; a substantial north-south fence line across the unit; three fences and an associated way in the southeast corner; and ten water developments. These range developments are judged to be substantial due to their frequency and lack of topographic and vegetative screening adequate to hide these imprints. Only in the extreme west of the unit, in an area of about 6,000 acres near Poison Creek, is human influence judged to be substantially unnoticeable. One subunit in the northeast contains less than 5,000 acres.

### SOLITUDE:

The 6,000 acre portion of the unit that meets the naturalness criteria offers minimal vegetative screening due to dominance of northern desert plant species. Topographic screening is poor on the plateau and only fair within the Poison Creek drainage. The lack of relief and poor vegetative screening, combined with the small size of the unit that retains its natural character, render the opportunities for solitude less than outstanding.

### PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

Recreation opportunities include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, camping, hunting, wildlife observation and photography. However, these opportunities are not considered outstanding since the Poison Creek drainage and associated plateau are not considered significant natural features or recreation attractions. Challenge associated with primitive recreation in the area is not considered significant.

\* \* \*

### PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments that specifically addressed unit 17-12 and supported the proposed decision to drop the unit agreed that the unit did not offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or for primitive recreation, but also felt the unit was not natural. Specific reasons given for considering the area unnatural including the existence of reseeding, fences and water developments as well as external influences from boundary roads. Comments opposed to dropping the unit felt that the BLM had improperly evaluated the opportunity for solitude by depending too heavily upon the influence of topographic and vegetative screening.

### COMMENT EVALUATION:

#### Naturalness:

The conclusion remains that the western portion of the unit is natural because the imprints of man are so widely scattered that they are not substantially noticeable in the area as a whole. It is also recognized that the imprints of man in the eastern half of the unit are substantially noticeable because of their concentration.

#### Solitude:

The BLM does not rely solely upon topographic and vegetative screening to evaluate solitude. Decisions are made by evaluating the relationship of topographic and vegetative screening to the overall size of a unit.

It is generally recognized that the lack of topography and tall vegetation does limit the opportunity to achieve solitude (to avoid the sights and sounds of others in a unit as well as external influences) unless the area involved is relatively large. Low vegetation on flat to relatively flat terrain can provide excellent screening if given a sufficiently large enough area to allow other visitors or external influences (such as vehicle traffic on boundary roads) to blend or disappear into the landscape. Low vegetation on flat terrain does give a sense of remoteness or vastness to an area, adding to the solitude experience.

The determining factor as to whether a solitude experience can be considered outstanding is the opportunity of visitors to escape the sights and sounds of others in a unit of a given size as well as vehicle traffic along boundary roads or other external influences. If a unit is not large enough to allow a realistic amount of visitors to disperse and achieve the blending effect of flat, open, sagebrush areas, the opportunities for solitude cannot be considered outstanding. The natural portion (western portion) of unit 17-12 is not considered large enough to provide sufficient dispersion and landscape blending of a realistic amount of visitor use. Therefore, the opportunities for solitude are not considered outstanding.

\* \* \*

**DECISION:**

No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. The unit is not identified as a wilderness study area due to a lack of naturalness in portions of the unit, and a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation.

18-1 WILDHORSE

The April, 1980 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains 7,472 acres of BLM land with a patchwork of private ownership in the southern portion along the Wildhorse River. Configuration is irregular; the unit varies from 1/2 - 2 1/2 miles wide and is seven miles long. It is located along the east side of the Snake River just downstream from Brownlee Dam. The unit is comprised of a high ridge and steep slopes between the Snake River at Brownlee and the Wildhorse River. About three miles of the Wildhorse River are within the unit. The riparian zone is dominated by cottonwood and associated shrub species; the ridge and slopes contain desert shrub species, mountain mahogany and ninebark thickets and pockets and stringers of fir and pine.

NATURALNESS:

The unit is essentially free of human imprints. A road associated with the power line that forms part of the western boundary isolates about 200 acres on the northwestern edge.

SOLITUDE:

Density of vegetation is extremely variable. Within the pockets of fir and pine, screening is generally good. Most of the ridgetop and open slopes offer only minimal vegetative screening. Topographic relief provides good screening except on the broad ridgetop. Steep, broken slopes are characteristic. However, the power line and Oxbow Reservoir are significant external influences that are clearly visible from the ridgetop and from large areas on the upper, open slopes. Pockets within the unit offer opportunities for solitude due to the broken nature of the slopes, but the combination of small size, poor configuration, significant external influences and only poor to moderate screening render them less than outstanding.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

While the unit may offer somewhat challenging cross country travel over its rugged terrain and a moderately good recreation experience on the lower Wildhorse River, these natural features are not considered exceptional or unusual enough to provide outstanding primitive recreation, considering the unit's small size and the short section of river it contains. The extremely poor configuration of the unit confines the recreationist to an irregular corridor of use and prevents an outstanding primitive recreation experience.

SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:

The unit contains significant scenic and ecological values. Ecological values include important sharp-tail grouse habitat, reported elk winter range, large populations of black bear and critical mule deer winter range.

\* \* \*

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments that specifically addressed unit 18-1 and supported the proposed decision to drop the unit felt that the area lacks outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation because of minimal vegetative screening, and that the area contained imprints of man on the unit's naturalness. Comments requesting that the area be identified as a WSA indicated that (1) despite minimal vegetative screening the unit offered outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and (2) that wildlife values warranted the area's protection as a natural area.

COMMENT EVALUATION:

Naturalness:

Contrary to public comment, the unit is essentially free of human imprints, with the exception of the area directly adjacent to the powerline on the northwest edge.

**Solitude:**

The proposed decision states that the unit's lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude was based upon more than the limited amount of vegetative screening in the unit. The primary reason the unit was felt to lack outstanding solitude was that the unit's configuration and topographic layout made it difficult for one to escape significant external influences in large areas of the unit where vegetative screening was minimal. Small pockets of solitude are recognized to exist in the unit because of steep relief and small stands of timber, but these areas are not large enough to provide adequate escape from external influences.

**Primitive Recreation:**

Though it is recognized in the proposed decision that the unit lacks outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation, the evaluation of recreation opportunities is not based upon the presence of vegetative screening. The opportunity to achieve a quality primitive and unconfined recreation experience is dependent upon the availability of exceptional or unusual natural features or recreation attractions in combination with the size and configuration of a unit. The configuration of this unit severely restricts or confines the mobility of a visitor to narrow corridors of use. This confinement in combination with no unusual or exceptional natural features renders the opportunities for primitive recreation less than outstanding.

**Supplemental Values:**

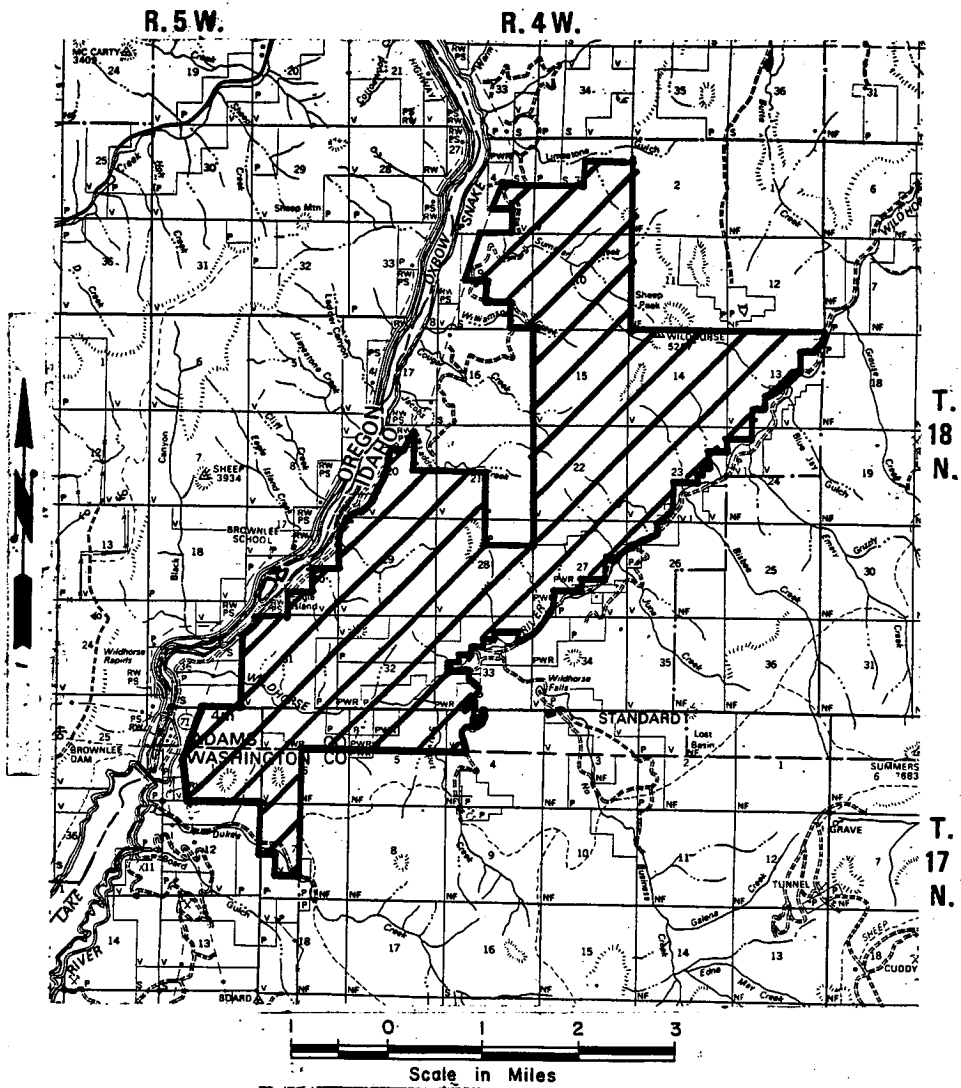
As stated in the proposed decision, it is recognized that the area possesses important wildlife values. However, identification of an area is not based entirely on the supplemental values; other characteristics must also be present.

\* \* \*



**DECISION:**

No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. The unit is not identified as a wilderness study area due to a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation.

18-1  
WILD HORSE



LEGEND

-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
-  AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS



The April 1980 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

This unit was identified as a Wilderness Study Area on August 10, 1979, based on the results of the accelerated wilderness inventory conducted for the Agricultural Environmental Statement. Re-evaluation of this unit is necessary in order to assure consistency in the application of wilderness review criteria between the earlier and more recent decisions. Obvious inconsistencies currently exist, particularly with regard to the manner in which naturalness, external influences, configuration, and outstanding opportunities were assessed in the earlier inventory.

#### SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains 21,380 acres of BLM land, with four non-federal inholdings, totalling 1,040 acres. The unit has an irregular triangle shape, approximately eight by five miles. A dead-end road providing access from the south to 160 acres of private land within the body of the unit lies outside the unit boundary. This road penetrates two-thirds of the distance across the unit. The dominant natural features of the unit are the mountains and drainages associated with the Mount Bennett Hills.

#### NATURALNESS:

The unit was judged to be substantially natural in character in the original decision. It was recognized that there are some imprints of man - fences, developed springs and ways - in the unit. Re-evaluation shows that the wide distribution of light imprints leaves the area's apparent natural character intact. About 3,000 acres in three areas in the southern portion are judged to contain substantially noticeable imprints of man - chiefly developed springs and access routes - due to their concentration in a relatively small area.

#### SOLITUDE:

In the original decision the unit was judged to offer outstanding opportunities for solitude, chiefly due to the relief and natural features associated with the mountains and drainages within the unit. However, the factor of configuration and its effect on the opportunities were not considered adequately. Reevaluation shows that patterns of dead-end roads and non-federal lands that create constricted areas of public lands, and narrow configurations may cause severe impacts on opportunities for solitude and recreation. Reconsideration of the unit in these terms shows that the pattern of two dead-end roads from the south and non-federal lands in the central portion of the unit in effect creates three narrow, north-south corridors within the unit, varying from 1-2 miles in width and 3-6 miles in length. The extreme northern portion of the unit contains about 4,500 acres of contiguous public land in a rectangular configuration. Due to the effect of these narrow corridors, it is judged that it is more difficult for the user to find a secluded spot than was indicated in the original decision. The small size and long, narrow shape of each of these corridors reduces the effective size of the area where the user may find seclusion. In spite of the moderately good screening provided by natural features within the unit, the internal configuration is judged to render opportunities for solitude less than outstanding.

#### PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are limited by the narrow, confined corridors of travel possible between dead-end roads and non-federal lands. Only in the northern portion is travel more or less unrestricted, but the small size of this portion, combined with the corridor effect present in the majority of the unit, is judged to render opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation less than outstanding.

\* \* \*

#### PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments that specifically addressed unit 19-1 agreed with the proposed decision to drop the unit from further wilderness consideration, because the unit lacked naturalness and did not offer outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

#### COMMENT EVALUATION:

##### Naturalness:

Contrary to public comment, the unit is judged to be substantially natural, with the exception of a small area containing a concentration of man's imprints.

\* \* \*

#### DECISION:

No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. The unit is not identified as a wilderness study area due to a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation.