

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

**SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

The unit contains 8,000 acres of BLM land. This acreage figure differs from the 9,150 acres shown in the August 1979 report due to a more accurate calculation of acreage. It is located 12 miles southeast of Big Southern Butte and 14 miles south of Atomic City. This area is generally flat with no more than 300 ft. in elevation change over the entire unit. The vegetative community consists mainly of sagebrush and grasses. Non-native grass species occur in areas that have been subjected to brush control and artificial plantings. These areas contrast dramatically with the sagebrush dominated areas.

**NATURALNESS:**

Vehicle ways are the major impact in the unit. Nine and one-half miles of ways enter the unit, the most substantial trail is six miles long and bisects the unit on a meandering east-west path. There are two small reservoirs in the southeast portion of the unit. A 3,200-acre brush control project within the area has a significant affect on naturalness. The borders between the controlled areas and the sage dominated areas are abrupt and unnaturally linear. Topographic and vegetative screening is insufficient to hide these imprints from casual observation. The unit does not appear to have been affected primarily by natural processes.

**SOLITUDE:**

Desert shrubs and grasses dominate the unit and offer little vegetative screening. Topographic screening is considered minimal throughout the unit. Vehicles traveling the border roads can be seen or heard from nearly every point within the unit and are considered significant outside influences. The unit's small size and lack of vegetative and topographic screening do not afford opportunities that are outstanding.

**PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:**

Primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities include hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and upland game bird hunting. The unit's small size and lack of exceptional or unusual natural features and recreation attractions render the recreation opportunities less than outstanding.

**SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:**

The eastern border road is of both historical and anthropological value. The road, known as Goodale's Cutoff, was an alternative northern route for the Oregon Trail between Fort Hall and Boise. Before the pioneers moved west this same route was an Indian trail. Archaeologists believe this route has several significant sites scattered along it.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:**

Comments that agreed that the unit should not receive further study stated that naturalness is lacking and solitude-recreation is marginal.

Other comments supported further study, disagreeing that the unit lacks naturalness and does not offer opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Some felt that the unit's small size, minimal topographic and vegetative screening, and lack of natural features do not limit solitude-recreation opportunities and therefore, are not justifiable reasons for dropping the unit. Other comments said that the unit should be evaluated together with two adjacent units.

**COMMENT EVALUATION:**

The unit cannot be evaluated as one with two adjacent units since they are separated by roads which meet the BLM's road definition. Reevaluation showed that the unit does not meet the naturalness or solitude-recreation criteria. Human imprints are great enough, both individually and cumulatively to detract from the unit's apparent naturalness.

Opportunities for solitude are limited, due to the unit's small size and minimal topographic and vegetative screening. The lack of screening increases the probability of encountering others within the unit and decreases the opportunity to avoid visual and audible contact with activities outside the unit. This unit is small and lacks the physical characteristics that provide outstanding opportunities for solitude.

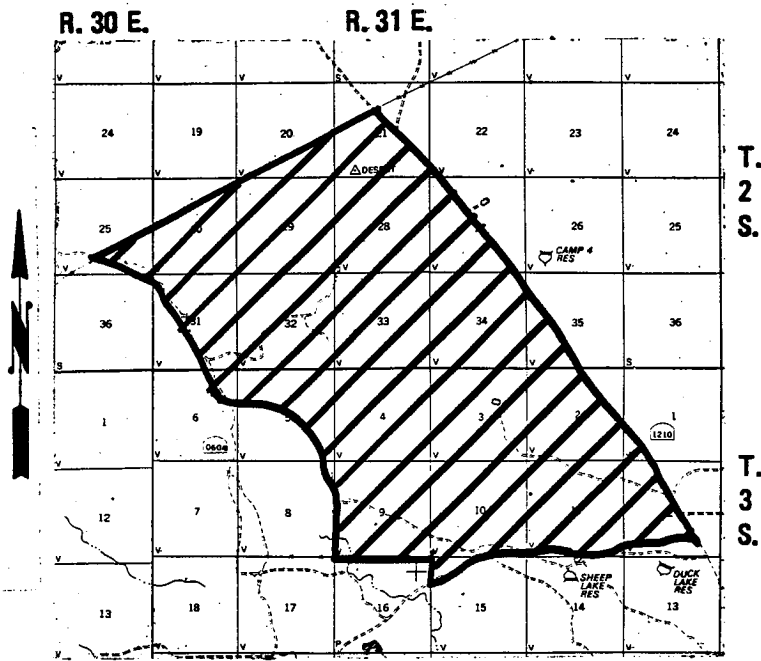
Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are dependent on the area's size and/or natural features that attract primitive use. The unit lacks physical features which attract primitive recreation.

\* \* \*



**DECISION:**

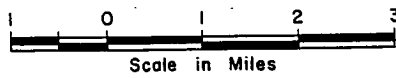
No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. The unit is not identified as a wilderness study area due to a lack of naturalness, and a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation.

**33-6  
RYE GRASS**

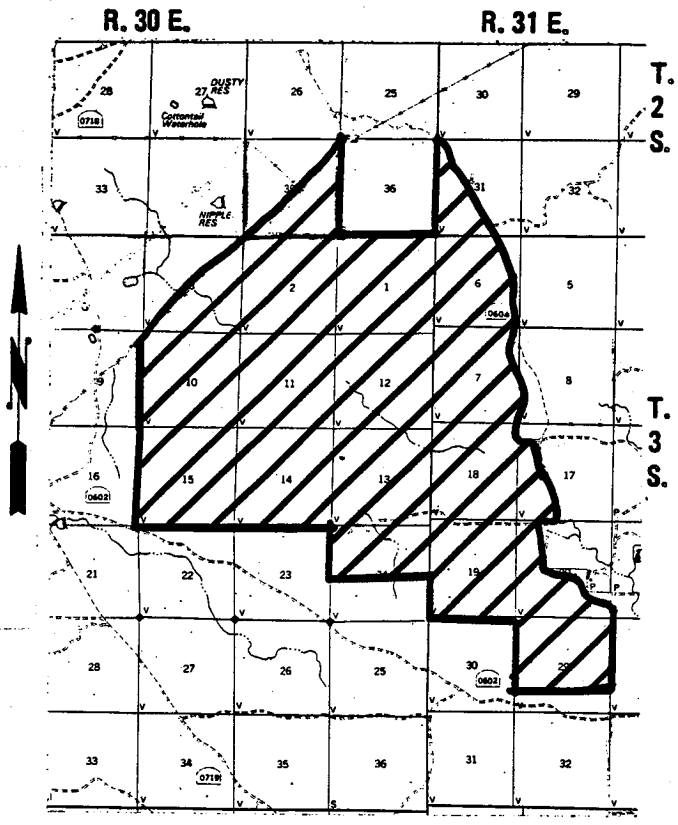


**LEGEND**



-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
-  AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS

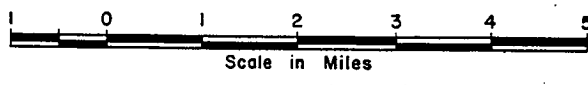


33-7  
COTTONTAIL



LEGEND

-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
-  AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS



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

**SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

The unit contains 9,300 acres of BLM land. This acreage figure differs from the 8,300 acres shown in the August 1979 report due to a typographical error in the August report. The unit is approximately 12 miles south of Big Southern Butte and 14 miles southwest of Atomic City. This unit has little topographic relief, varying a maximum of 300 feet. The area is dominated by low sagebrush with little other vegetation. Part of the unit has undergone brush control and seedings of crested wheatgrass, with these areas contrasting dramatically to the sage-dominated communities.

**NATURALNESS:**

Vehicle ways are the dominant impact on the naturalness of this unit. Seven miles of jeep trails and substantial ways enter the unit, the longest bisects the unit from east to west. Brush control and seeding activities also affect the naturalness of this unit. The border between the natural sage community and manipulated areas is abrupt. Approximately 1/3 of the unit has been seeded, substantially affecting apparent naturalness. Topographic and vegetative screening is insufficient to hide these imprints of man from casual observation. The unit does not appear to have been affected primarily by natural processes.

**SOLITUDE:**

Little topographic or vegetative screening occurs in the unit, significantly limiting opportunities for solitude. Vehicles moving along roads around the unit are clearly visible and are considered significant outside influences. The unit's small size and lack of vegetative and topographic screening does not afford opportunities that are outstanding.

**PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:**

Primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities include hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and upland game bird hunting. The unit's small size and lack of exceptional or unusual natural features and recreation attractions render the recreation opportunities less than outstanding.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:**

Comments that agreed that the unit should not receive further study stated that naturalness is lacking and solitude-recreation is marginal.

Other comments supported further study, disagreeing that the unit lacks naturalness and does not offer opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Some felt that the unit's small size, minimal topographic and vegetative screening and lack of natural features do not limit solitude-recreation opportunities and therefore, are not justifiable reasons for dropping the unit. Other comments said that the unit should be evaluated together with two adjacent units.

**COMMENT EVALUATION:**

The unit cannot be evaluated as one with two adjacent units since they are separated by roads which meet the BLM's road definition. Reevaluation showed that the unit does not meet the naturalness or solitude-recreation criteria. Human imprints are great enough, both individually and cumulatively to detract from the unit's apparent naturalness.

Opportunities for solitude are limited, due to the unit's small size and minimal topographic and vegetative screening. The lack of screening increases the probability of encountering others within the unit and decreases the opportunity to avoid visual and audible contact with activities outside the unit. This unit is small and lacks the physical characteristics that provide outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are dependent on the area's size and/or natural features that attract primitive use. The unit lacks physical features which attract primitive recreation.

\* \* \*

**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, and a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation.

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

#### SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains 18,080 acres of BLM land, with a State land inholding of 640 acres. It is located 27 miles southeast of Arco and 25 miles northwest of American Falls. The topography of the unit is flat or gently rolling with the most prominent feature being the 5,563 ft. Split Top Butte which rises 200 ft. above the surrounding plain. Lava features such as caves, lava tubes and volcanic uplift areas occur throughout the unit. Because of the limited precipitation characteristic of this desert environment, vegetation in the unit is sparse. Big sagebrush is the dominant plant, with a variety of bunchgrasses and forbs scattered throughout the area. In some portions of the unit the natural vegetation has been replaced by artificially planted non-native grasses.

#### NATURALNESS:

Approximately 24 miles of vehicle ways form a major impact on the naturalness of this unit. These ways vary from faint jeep tracks to deeply rutted and frequently used access routes that are very substantial in nature. They criss-cross and bisect all portions of the unit. In the eastern half vegetation has been heavily impacted by brush control measures and mechanical seeding with crested wheatgrass. The linear nature of the seedings between sagebrush and grass creates an unnatural pattern and a substantial impact on the apparent naturalness of the unit. Seven miles of fence in the unit have a minimal impact on the area's naturalness. Major ways, off-road vehicle routes and man-caused vegetative changes have affected most of the unit. Topographic and vegetative screening is insufficient to hide these imprints of man from casual observation. The unit does not appear to have been affected primarily by natural processes.

#### SOLITUDE:

Desert shrubs and grasses dominate the unit and offer little vegetative screening. Topographic screening is considered minimal throughout the unit. Vehicles traveling the border roads can be seen from a large percentage of the unit and are considered significant outside influences. The unit's lack of topographic and vegetative screening does not afford opportunities that are outstanding.

#### PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

This unit provides excellent opportunities for a diversity of primitive recreation activities. The presence of several caves and collapsed lava tubes within the unit provide outstanding opportunities for spelunking. The rolling topography also provides good opportunities for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter as well as hiking and horseback riding during the summer months.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:

Archaeologists have identified several surface lithic scatter sites as well as rock shelters.

This unit has also been identified as critical winter habitat for sage grouse and pronghorn antelope. The unit has several caves, lava tubes and other volcanic features which are important geological, educational and scenic resources.

\* \* \*

#### PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments that supported further wilderness study felt that the vehicle ways, brush control measures and seedings were not justifiable reasons for dropping the unit. They stated that more consideration should be given to the prospect of allowing time for nature to heal these impacts. Also mentioned were opportunities for solitude and recreation and supplemental values. Other comments stated that the unit is not in a natural state, does not offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation and should not be identified as a study area.

**COMMENT EVALUATION:**

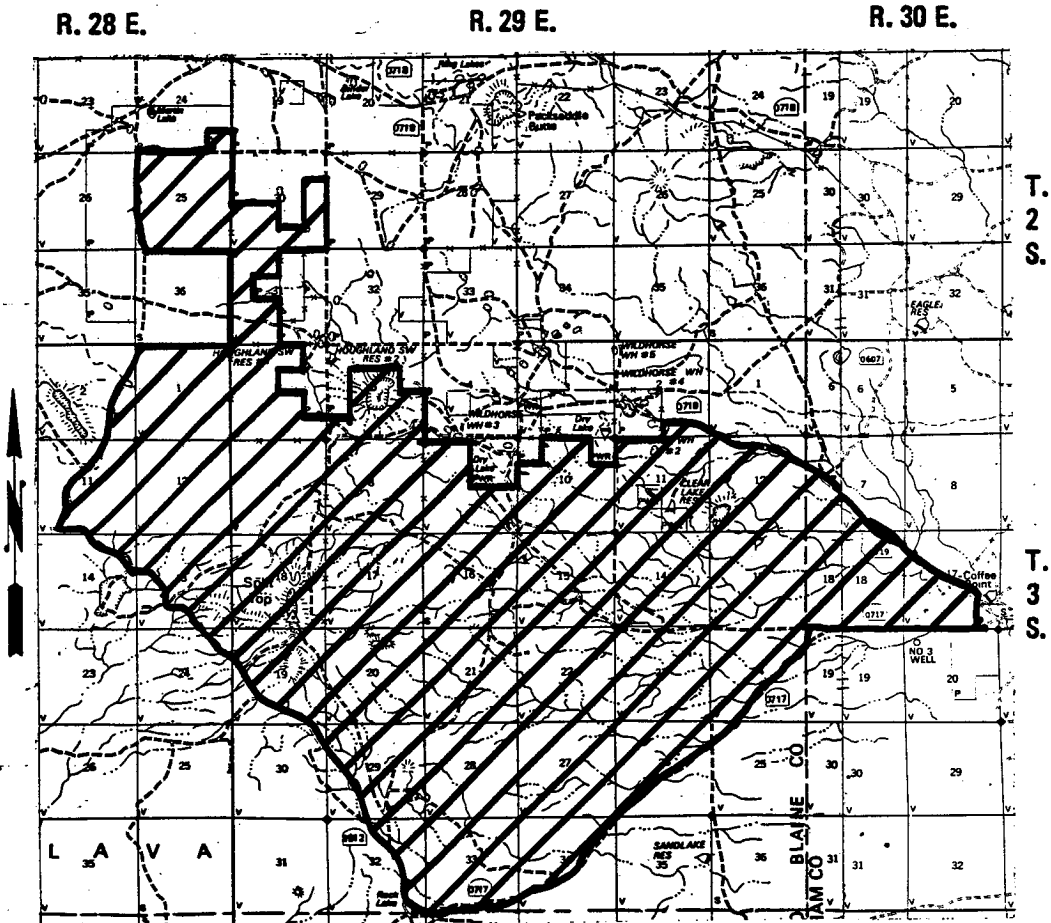
The unit does not meet the naturalness criteria. Vehicle ways, brush control measures and seedings significantly detract from the apparent naturalness of the unit. Comments suggested that the unit be evaluated based on the prospect of allowing time for nature to heal these impacts. This could only take place if the unit as a whole met the naturalness criteria; small areas could be considered for rehabilitation through natural processes or hand labor.

\* \* \*

**DECISION:**

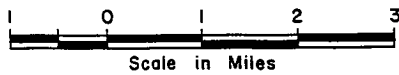
No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. The unit is not identified as a wilderness study area due to a lack of naturalness, and a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude.

33-12  
SPLIT TOP

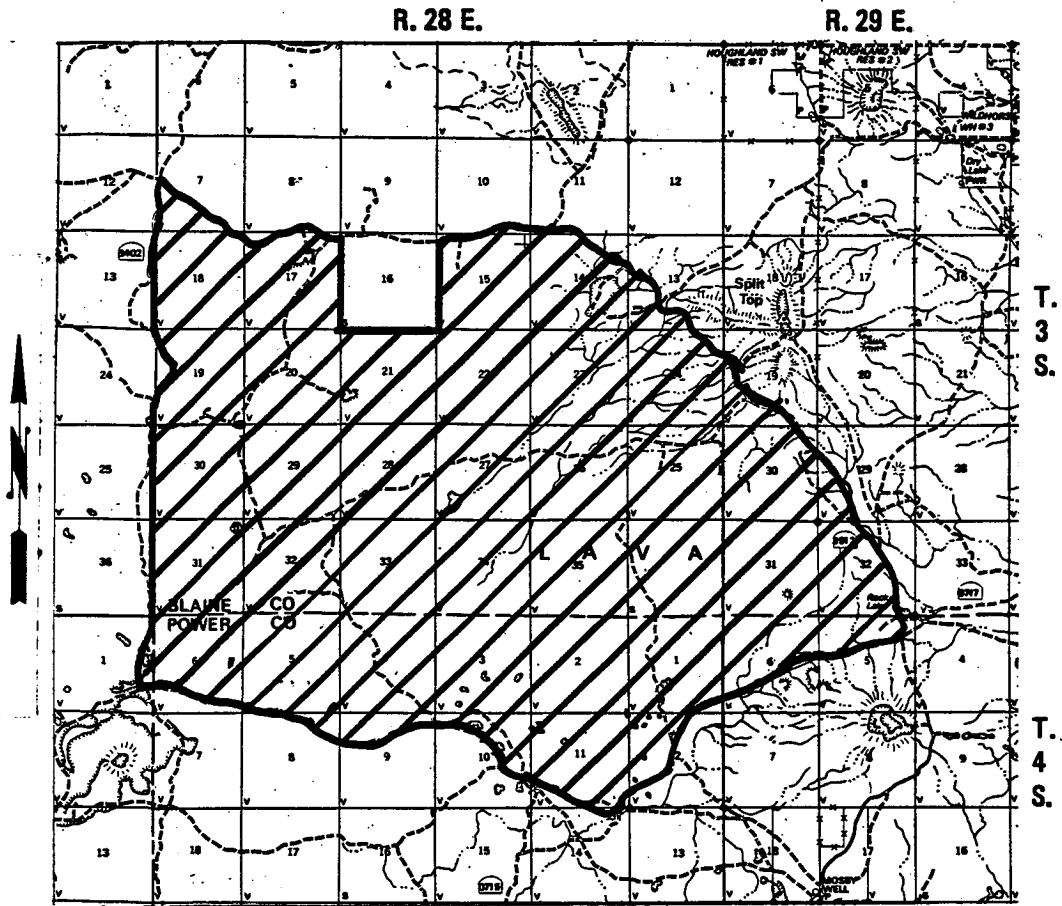


LEGEND



- WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
- ▨ AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS

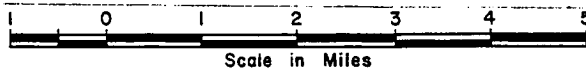


33-13  
BEAR POINT



LEGEND

-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
-  AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS



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

**SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

The unit contains 20,650 acres of BLM land, with a 640-acre state inholding. It is located approximately 15 miles southwest of Big Southern Butte. The topography of the unit is gently rolling with a maximum elevational difference of 400 feet. Several lava outcrops occur throughout the unit. A segment of the Great Rift fracture extends over two miles into the northwest corner. The vegetation is a result of low annual precipitation; Big Desert sagebrush is the predominant species, with a mixture of bunchgrasses and forbs. In some portions this natural vegetation has been interrupted by artificial seedings of introduced non-native grass species.

**NATURALNESS:**

Approximately 20 miles of vehicle ways have a significant effect on the naturalness of this unit. These ways vary in intensity from light duty jeep tracks to very substantial trails that are frequently used and have deep ruts. At least four ways bisect the unit. Off-road vehicle trails are located in most sections of the unit. Four small reservoirs exist within one mile of the boundary roads on all four sides. Over 1/4 of the unit, vegetation has been altered through brush control projects. The borders between these controlled areas and the natural sage dominated areas are abrupt and appear unnaturally linear. Topographic and vegetative screening is insufficient to hide these imprints from casual observation. The unit does not appear to have been affected primarily by natural processes.

**SOLITUDE:**

Desert shrubs and grasses dominate the unit and offer little vegetative screening. Topographic screening is considered minimal throughout the unit. Vehicles traveling border roads can be seen from approximately 1/4 of the unit and are considered moderate outside influences. Despite the lack of topographic and vegetative screening, the unit's large size and excellent configuration appear to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude.

**PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:**

Primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities include hunting, hiking, backpacking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and horseback riding. The unit lacks exceptional or unusual natural features and recreational attractions which renders the recreation opportunities less than outstanding.

**SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:**

This unit has been identified as critical range for pronghorn antelope and sage grouse. Archaeologists have also identified this area as having good potential for sites.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:**

Comments that supported further wilderness study stated that the vehicle ways, brush control measures, seedings and reservoirs were not justifiable reasons for dropping the unit. They stated that more consideration should be given to the prospect of allowing time for nature to heal these impacts. Others pointed out that litter should not be regarded as a problem beyond solution. Also mentioned were outstanding opportunities for solitude-recreation and that these values should outweigh the minimal impacts on naturalness. Other comments stated that the unit is not natural, does not offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation and should not be identified as a study area.

**COMMENT EVALUATION:**

The unit does not meet the naturalness criteria. Human imprints, particularly the vehicle ways and linear seedings, are very apparent throughout the unit.

Comments suggested that the unit be evaluated based on the prospect of allowing time for nature to heal the human imprints. This could only take place if the unit as a whole met the naturalness criteria; small areas could be considered for rehabilitation through natural processes or hand labor.

\* \* \*

**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, and a lack of outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation.