

RECREATION ACCESS TRENDS

Private roads that were once open to the public are often no longer available for access to public land as private landowners place gates across these private roads. Recreational use of public lands has joined grazing and timber management as a primary use. Limitations on public access to scattered public lands and a transportation system that does not accommodate changing user needs has contributed to resource damage and increased the incidence of trespass on private lands.

Reduction in access has occurred as roads across private lands are decommissioned and open roads are not repaired. The location and distribution of scattered BLM lands require public land users to become familiar with adjacent private ownership patterns and routes open for public use. The fact that some BLM lands are isolated from public access has also led to trespass. Patterns of land ownership frequently leads to confusion by recreational users and sometimes in intentional trespass on privately owned lands. The Johnson Heights area accessed by Squaw Creek Road experiences some of the most persistent hunter-landowner conflicts in the planning area. The many isolated BLM parcels in this area are coveted by hunters and some attempt to cross private lands at the end of public access in order to reach these lands.

Some ranches that in the past afforded neighbors access to BLM managed lands have been divided or bought by “outsiders” who often manage for fee hunting. These changes in land ownership exacerbate the already limited access. This represents a change in landowner mindset, since they have historically allowed the public to drive on private roads to reach public lands.

While the public at large may be excluded from enjoying BLM managed lands surrounded by private lands, the Private landowners and their guests frequently use OHVs to access public land for deer, elk, sheep and upland bird hunting.

Similarly commercial hunting guides pay a fee to gain access to public lands through private property. Some motorized users have attempted to access public lands through private property with and without landowner permission.

Motorized use is no longer available to the public in the Spring Basin WSA. This 5,982 acre area is located near the east bank of the John Day River, approximately 3 miles south of Clarno. In past years, motorized use occurred on approximately nine miles of undeveloped vehicle routes in this area. This access requires crossing a 40 acre parcel of private land, which has been closed to the public by the landowner.

RIGHTS-OF-WAY AND EASEMENTS

BLM land in the planning area has 249 miles of easements and 129 miles of granted Rights-of-way involving roads and utilities.

Easements are acquired by the BLM in order to use the land of another for a special purpose or access. Rights of way are granted by the BLM to others for various purposes which include easements, leases, permits, or licenses to occupy, use, or traverse public lands. Rights-of-Way are authorizations for reservoirs, canals, ditches flumes, laterals, pipes, pipelines, tunnels, and other appurtenances for the storage and distribution of water; pipelines and other systems for the transportation of distribution of liquids and gases other than water or oil; transportation and distribution systems, and storage

facilities for solid materials; systems for generation, transmission, and distribution of electric energy; communications systems; roads, highways, trails, and other transportation facilities; and other systems and facilities which are in the public interest.

WITHDRAWALS

A withdrawal is a management tool used to implement resource management planning prescriptions. Withdrawals also represent a means to transfer administrative jurisdiction from one federal agency to another. In addition they are used to close public lands to some or all of the public land laws or mineral law, or to dedicate land for a specific public purpose. The restrictions generally segregate the lands from some or all of the public land laws and some or all of the mining and mineral leasing laws for a specific period of time. Examples might include a dewatering limiting river flows or a withdrawal might close an area to non-metalliferous mining (cement quality limestone, diatomite etc.), but open to metal mining (gold, silver, mercury etc.).

In the 1960's federal inventories withdrew land along the John Day River anticipating the need for future hydroelectric dam sites.

Currently the John Day Basin has spring, mineral, and power site withdrawals scattered throughout the planning area.

LAND OWNERSHIP

"People are moving in and staying. They don't need the land to make a living."
[Gilliam County Resident- JKA, 2006]

The Western landscape is dominated by open spaces broken by numerous plateaus, mountain ranges, occasionally fences and an increasing amount of urban and suburban areas. Historically, urban areas of the west specialized in the acquisition and distribution of products produced from the surrounding farms, ranches, and forests. The larger ranches were slowly divided and our modern transportation system was developed. Many urban centers are now surrounded by suburban areas, which are then bordered by hobby farms adjacent to public lands.

In the John Day Basin planning area this transition from large landownership to a more fragmented ownership pattern has occurred more slowly than in many parts of the west. Many communities maintain a remnant dependency on the surrounding lands and have yet to fully experience the transition to a Western landscape characterized by suburban areas, and small farms surrounding urban areas. Settlement patterns are however changing, as long-time ranches are bought by wealthier urbanites who often purchase for recreation or conservation purposes (JKA, 2006).

Ownership across the John Day Basin Planning area is dominated by Private landholdings which comprise 59 percent of the total 5.4 million acre planning area. USFS and BLM land make up 33 percent and 8 percent of the plan area respectively. State land, Indian Affairs, National Park, and Army Corps of Engineers make up less than 1 percent of plan area ownership (See Map 1 and Figure 32).

The southern and eastern portions of the planning area contain a high proportion of public lands dominated by US forest Service land. These areas are characterized by USFS land in the higher elevations and BLM land in the lower elevations and drainages.