

**WILDERNESS INVENTORY MAINTENANCE  
IN BLM OREGON/WASHINGTON**  
(Source: Oregon State Office Internal Guidance as of July 2007)

Year: 2009

Inventory Unit Number/Name: OR-034-121, West River Breaks

**FORM 1: DOCUMENTATION OF BLM WILDERNESS INVENTORY  
FINDINGS ON RECORD:**

**1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area?**

No  X  Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (if more than one unit is within the area, list the names/numbers of those units.):

a) **Inventory Source:** Vale District original wilderness characteristics inventory documents supporting the Northern Resource Area Unit Resource Analysis of the Northern Resource Area Management Framework Plan.

b) **Inventory Unit Name(s)/Number(s):** North Fork Malheur, 3-34

Note: This Wilderness Characteristics Unit was once part of an historical unit which was numbered, OR-03-02-34, and was named North Fork Malheur River. An 8"x11" copied map received from BLM Vale D. O. delineated the unit, but no other inventory information is available. This map is filed in the Wilderness Characteristics Inventory file for the Eagle-Picher Celatom Mine Project with other information received from Vale District Office.

c) **Map Name(s)/Number(s):** Vale District's Northern Resource Area Unit Resource Analysis map.

d) **BLM District(s)/Field Office(s):** Burns District – Three Rivers Resource Area and Vale District-Malheur Resource Area.

**2. BLM Inventory Findings on Record:**

Inventory Source: See above.

Unit#/Name	Size (historic acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N
OR-03-02-34, N. Fork Malheur River	13,100	*See comment, next page	*	*	*

\*BLM is presently not aware of, and is unable to find any documentation of these wilderness characteristics criteria for this original inventory unit (if such determinations were made, at all, at that time). A map and document was found which identified the area by name and number, and only the determined acreage of the unit.

**FORM 2 - DOCUMENTATION OF CURRENT WILDERNESS  
INVENTORY CONDITIONS**

Unit Number/Name: OR-034-121, West River Breaks

**(1) Is the unit of sufficient size?**

Current Unit Acres: 6,265 Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_

**Citizen Information Received:** No citizen information for this unit was received.

**ID-team Meetings:** This unit was not evaluated in the I.D.-team meeting held on January 29, 2009. Bob Alward, contracted Wilderness Consultant in Vale District, was contacted in early March, 2009. He coordinated with the Vale District staff to obtain information for wilderness characteristics. Their input was used to complete the Form 2 narrative. West River Breaks is composed of BLM lands managed by Vale and Burns Districts.

**BLM's Boundary Road Determination Process:** Burns District staff were contacted prior to the ID-team meeting and provided information about current uses of routes by mining personnel, BLM personnel, grazing permittees, and other publics. The Burns District Wilderness Specialist completed a route analysis for one route, the western boundary road of the unit. The Vale District Wilderness Specialist identified four routes which were boundary roads in that district after meeting with Vale District staff. Photographs were taken at points along the west boundary road and at a couple points on an access road branching off this boundary road.

Some of the interior routes not identified as boundary roads may have been mechanically improved or maintained at some point and may be maintained in the future as needed. Most are in a useable condition, but supporting information about regular use was not identified. Therefore, these routes were not recognized as boundary roads. There are no interior, cherry-stemmed boundary roads.

**Boundary changes since 1978:** This is a new unit, so boundaries have changed considerably since the original delineation of the original 13,100-acre North Fork Malheur River Unit. The current, much smaller unit of OR-034-121 is the central portion of the original OR-02-34 unit.

Agency Mountain Unit, OR-034-122, (alias a portion of the "OR-3-4001" in the Vale District wilderness characteristics inventory, and alias "OR-3-4001" in Vale District's 2006 wilderness characteristics inventory maintenance records) is roughly the southern third of the

original unit. The northern third of the unit has been previously dropped. Only the western boundary has not changed, continuing to be BLM Rd 6266-0-OO in the Burns District.

**Current Unit Boundaries:** (See BLM Unit Character Map): Routes forming boundaries have been mechanically maintained, improved in the past and will continue to be maintained as needed to allow vehicle passage for public land users.

The boundaries of West River Breaks Unit are:

N. boundary: Two segments of BLM road and Private land;  
No Photos

E. boundary: Small section of CNTY 577 Rd. and Private land;  
No Photos

S. boundary: BLM road and Private land  
No Photos

W. boundary: BLM 6266-0-OO Road (N. of Eagle-Picher mining operations);  
ONDA Photos: HJ17, HJ20, HJ23  
BLM Photos: Photo Points AG-8 thru AG-11; XG-1 thru XG-8

(2) Is the unit in a natural condition?

Yes  No  N/A

**1978 Unit Description:** Not available.

**Current Condition Description:** (See West River Breaks Unit Character Map.) West River Breaks is located ten miles north of U.S. Highway 20 and four miles west of Beulah Reservoir. It is approximately four miles across at its widest point and about six miles long. Two sections of private land are located in the center of the unit. Juniper, sagebrush, and various grass types are the primary vegetation.

Human imprints are associated with livestock grazing. The unit is within five grazing allotments, Cottonwood Creek and Castle Rock in Burns District and Agency Mountain, Castle Rock and Wilbur in Vale District. A number of pastures or portions of pastures of these allotments are located within the boundaries of the unit: Burnt Basin, South Rockpile and Water Gulch in Burns District, and Water Gulch, Water Gulch Fenced Federal Range (FFR), South Rockpile, East Rockpile and Angus FFR in Vale District. Vale District manages the majority of the grazing use in the unit; only the western edge is within the Burns Cottonwood Creek Allotment.

There are 18.9 miles of fences. One extends along the entire length of the unit's western edge for approximately seven miles. There are also 11.3 miles of unit boundary roads and 2.5 miles of non-boundary routes.

Five livestock reservoirs are in this unit, four within the Burns District (three managed by Vale District) and one in the Vale District. A developed spring is located in extreme southeast

corner, and a crested wheat seeding (Beulah Seeding) established in the 1970's in the eastern and southern portions of the unit. Native shrubs and grasses have become reestablished in this disc-planted seeding and the project is no longer obvious to the casual observer. A prescribed burn was conducted in 1961; it, too, is no longer obvious. Three non-road vehicle routes (Motorized Primitive Trails) are present: .95 miles in Vale District; 2.125 miles in Burns District. Overall, due to the limited number, type, and distribution of developments, the unit appears to be primarily affected by the forces of nature with the work of humans substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor.

**(3) Does the unit have outstanding opportunities for solitude?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No   X   N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**1978 Unit Description:** Not available.

**Current Condition Description:** The topography is diverse, being high hills and ridges which drop off eastward to Water Gulch which flows northeast to the North Fork of the Malheur River. Numerous other small drainages cut through this country, flowing northeast towards the river. Vegetation provides little screening. This setting allows for some sense of solitude in some locations, but because of the unit's configuration, with narrow extensions of BLM lands and two 640-acre sections of private land through the center of the unit, outstanding opportunities for solitude are precluded.

**(4) Does the unit have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No   X   N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**1978 Unit Description:** Not available.

**Current Condition Description:** This unit possesses no special or unique values or properties to specifically draw recreationists to the area. The main recreation activities are deer, elk and chukar hunting and some general sightseeing. The diversity and quality of primitive and unconfined recreation are not unlike those which can be found on public lands in the much of eastern Oregon in the Northern Basin and Range. They are not unique and do not present characteristics either individually or collectively that would result in their being outstanding.

**(5) Does the unit have supplemental values?**

Yes   X   No \_\_\_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**1978 Unit Description:** Not available.

**Current Condition Description:** Bull Trout which is a BLM Special Status Species, is found in the North Fork of the Malheur River above Beulah Reservoir. The unit borders the river for about a half-mile.

Note: The segment of the North Fork of the Malheur River above Beulah Reservoir of this 1988 congressionally designated national study river, as amended under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, has been determined to not be administratively eligible or suitable for designation as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This was stated in the Record of Decision for the 2002 Vale District Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan.

### Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: West River Breaks

#### Summary Results of Analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements?  Yes  No
2. Does the area appear to be natural?  Yes  No
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation?  Yes  No  NA
4. Does the area have supplemental values?  Yes  No  NA

#### Conclusion (Check One):

- The area-or a portion of the area-has wilderness character.
- The area does not have wilderness character.

**Prepared by: David E. Vickstrom, Wilderness Specialist, Burns District and  
Robert L. Alward, Consultant-Wilderness, Vale District**

**Wilderness Characteristics Inventory; OR-034-121, West River Breaks**

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**Approved by:**

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*This form documents information that constitutes an inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR parts 4 or 1610.5-2.02*

