

Year: 2018

Inventory Unit Number/Name: OR-015-010/ Benjamin Lake – East Butte*

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 _____ Yes X (if more than one unit is within the area, list the names/numbers of those units):

a) **Inventory Source:** Wilderness Inventory – Final Intensive Inventory Decisions; USDI BLM - Oregon and Washington, November 1980.

b) **Inventory Unit Name(s)/Number(s):** 1-10/ Benjamin Lake; 1-11/ Chicago Valley

c) **Map Name(s)/Number(s):** Intensive Wilderness Inventory - Final Decisions; USDI BLM - Oregon, November 1980.

d) **BLM District(s)/Field Office(s):** Lakeview District, Lakeview Resource Area.

*Note: Unit name was changed to better reflect values and features found within the unit, and to reduce confusion of similarly named inventory units.

2. BLM Inventory Findings on Record:

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics (if more than one BLM inventory unit is associated with the area, list each unit and answer each question individually for each inventory unit):

Unit #	Size (historic acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N
1-10	16,200	Y	N	N	Y
1-10A*	9,693	Y	N	N	N/A
1-10B*	7,841	Y	N	Y	Y
1-11	7,080	Y	N	N	N/A
1-11*	7,683	Y	Y	N	Y

* The inventory of this unit was updated in 2015. However, due to a State Office-sponsored Wilderness Inventory Consistency Evaluation and subsequent guidance,

the 2015 inventory analysis and findings are being replaced by this current 2018 inventory review. Documentation of the 2015 inventory can be found in the wilderness inventory project record.

Summarize any known primary reasons for prior inventory findings listed in this table:

In 1980, Unit 1-10 was described as a low, rolling landscape with numerous small drainages and very low hills. The vegetation consisted of mixed sagebrush and scattered juniper trees. A large ephemeral lake, Benjamin Lake, and several other smaller ephemeral lakes were noted in the unit. Several primitive “ways” and lakebed pits (waterholes) were noted in the vicinity of Benjamin Lake, along with 2 miles of fence in the northwest portion of the unit that were relatively unnoticeable. Overall, the unit appeared to be in essentially natural condition. The gentle contours and juniper screening offered a degree of solitude in part of the unit. However, because of the limited size of the portion offering solitude and the limited overall size of the unit, the opportunity was less than outstanding. The area offered limited opportunities for hiking, photography, and wildlife observation. The topography and vegetation were found to be similar to that in the rest of the region and did not provide outstanding recreation opportunities. The unit also contained Benjamin Cave, a lava tube cave which offered some potential for limited exploration. The cave was small and did not offer an outstanding opportunity. Supplemental values found writing the unit included archeologic values (though they are not documented) and some geologic interest (Benjamin Cave).

In 1980, Unit 1-11 was described as having a low east-west running low ridge of sagebrush and juniper cover. The unit contained 3 ephemeral lakes and half of a fourth one. Thus, the unit was found to be in a natural condition with the works of man substantially unnoticeable. However, the unit did not offer an outstanding opportunity for solitude because of its narrow shape, small size, and moderate topography allowed only minimal opportunity for a person to avoid others when traveling through the unit. Also, due to its narrow shape and lack of topographic or other significant features which might represent recreation attractions, the unit was found to lack outstanding opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation.

FORM 2

**DOCUMENTATION OF CURRENT WILDERNESS INVENTORY
CONDITIONS**

Unit Number/Name: OR-015-010/ Benjamin Lake – East Butte

(1) Is the unit of sufficient size? Yes X No _____

In 2005, the BLM received a citizen proposal from the Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) for the 196,015-acre Lonesome Lakes proposed Wilderness Study Area (WSA). ONDA included in their information a narrative report, maps,

photos, photo and route logs, and GIS data. All of these materials were considered during the BLM's wilderness inventory update for this area. The photos submitted by ONDA were taken in 2004. They identified this large area as having no interior routes, which met the BLM wilderness inventory definition of a road (see Map, p. 141 of ONDA 2005).

Between 2008 and 2016, BLM staff conducted field inventory in the area as part of a process to update its road and wilderness inventories and to gather additional information to supplement ONDA's wilderness information. This fieldwork included photo documentation of the boundary and interior routes and a re-evaluation of wilderness characteristics for this area. Using both ONDA and BLM photos, field logs, and staff field knowledge, the BLM completed route analysis within the area in 2017.

The BLM determined that several of the routes ONDA identified as "ways" are boundary roads. Lonesome Lakes proposed WSA is not one large roadless unit, but is comprised of several smaller inventory units, which must be evaluated individually.

The BLM determined that the inventory unit is bounded by BLM Road 6121-00 and private lands on the west; 6101-00, BLM interim numbered road 6101-Y0, and private lands on the north; BLM Roads 6101-00 and 6121-C0, BLM interim numbered road 6101-V0, and private lands on the south. A segment of BLM Road 6101-XA, used for access to private property from the east boundary of the unit, was cherry stemmed. Portions of BLM Roads 6101-00 were found to no longer meet the wilderness definition of a road. Due to findings that sections of BLM Roads no longer meet the wilderness definition of a road, two original inventory units (1-10, 1-11) have been combined to form the new unit boundary. This evaluation will focus on these combined units and will hereby be referred to as the Benjamin Lake – East Butte inventory unit.

Thus, based on these boundary and road determinations, the BLM found the Benjamin Lake – East Butte inventory unit to exceed the minimum size criteria at approximately 25,193 acres of BLM-administered lands.

Additional background on the process that the BLM followed during this evaluation is contained in the document, *Wilderness Inventory Maintenance Process for the Lakeview Resource Area, BLM* and in the *Route Analysis Forms*. Both documents can be found in the wilderness inventory file.

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS:

The unit is located approximately 24 miles northeast of Christmas Valley, Oregon. The unit is approximately 10 miles long by 7.5 miles wide and contains one private inholding (660-acres) in the northeast portion of the unit. Topographically, the unit is dominated by a broken, oak-leaf shaped, plateau/table top (250 ft. high), with four consecutive rims (100 ft. high) running from the northwest to the southeast in the

northeast third of the unit. The northeast third of the unit is comprised of East Butte (250 ft.), while the southern third is characterized by an unnamed, 3 mile diameter, round butte (290 ft. high). The unit also contains half a dozen moderate to large ephemeral lake depressions including Benjamin Lake and Chicago Pond (10-30 ft. deep). In addition, the unit contains two lava tube caves. The remaining area includes numerous minor features: lakebeds, buttes, drainages, and rolling terrain (50-100 ft. high). The southern portion opens up to the north end of Browns Valley, while the central eastern boundary includes the western reaches of Chicago Valley. Overall, the unit ranges in elevation from 4,575 ft. along the eastern boundary to 5,122 ft. along the northern boundary. Vegetatively, the northern two-thirds (roughly 15,000 acres) of the unit is covered in moderate to high-density western juniper stands, with old-growth characteristics. The remaining vegetation is scattered juniper, sagebrush, rabbit brush, and grass. A wildfire (unknown date) burned approximately 350 acres in the northwest portion of the unit.

(2) Is the unit in a natural condition? Yes No N/A

The original 1980 inventories found the following man-made developments/disturbances:

Unit 1-10 contained several primitive “ways” and lakebed pits near Benjamin Lake and 2 relatively unnoticeable miles of fence in the northwest portion of the unit. Overall, the unit appeared to be in essentially natural condition.

Unit 1-11 was found to be in a natural condition with the works of man substantially unnoticeable.

In 2005, ONDA found the much larger 196,015-acre Lonesome Lakes proposed WSA to be in a natural condition, primarily affected by the forces of nature (p. 137-138). However, as noted above, the BLM found that this proposed WSA is not one large roadless unit, but is comprised of several smaller inventory units, within which the natural character must be evaluated individually.

The unit currently contains the following man-made developments/disturbances: 350 acres of wildfire, 260 acres of chemical treatments/seeding, 102 acres of mow strips (fuel breaks), 4.5 miles of fence lines, 19.5 miles of motorized routes, 2.5 miles of reclaiming routes, 5 miles of cat line, 8 wilderness therapy group primitive campsites, 5 waterholes, and 1 dam.

Presently, almost 4 decades after the original inventory, these developments are weathered and grown over with herbaceous grasses, sagebrush, and juniper. As a result, developments now fade into the background of the unit and are largely only noticeable at a close distance (1/4th mile or less) and are thus substantially unnoticeable from further distances. The topography and vegetation of the area also plays a large role in screening disturbances and man-made developments. Furthermore, many of the disturbances are located near the perimeter of the unit and,

as such, have a small area of influence. Areas that were seeded or allowed to revegetate naturally have been invaded by rabbit/ sagebrush and have returned to a natural, post fire, appearing condition.

Based on a review of all the available information including photos, staff knowledge, and field review, the BLM concluded that the unit appears in a natural condition where the imprints of man are substantially unnoticeable.

(3) Does the unit (or the remainder of the unit if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) **have outstanding opportunities for solitude?** Yes No N/A

The original 1980 inventory evaluated opportunities for solitude within each unit.

Unit 1-10 was found to offer some degree of solitude in part of the unit due to gentle contours and juniper screening. However, because of the limited size of the portion offering solitude and the limited overall size of the unit, the opportunity was determined to be less than outstanding.

Unit 1-11 was found to lack outstanding opportunities for solitude because of its narrow shape, small size, and moderate topography allowed only minimal opportunity for a person to avoid others when traveling through the unit.

In 2005, ONDA's inventory identified the larger 196,015-acre Lonesome Lakes proposed WSA as having outstanding opportunities for solitude based on sheer size as their proposal is contiguous with other inventory units and therefore no longer stands alone. Juniper stands, ephemeral lakes, canyons, hills, and rim rock located within units 1-10 and 1-11 would offer outstanding opportunities for solitude (p. 139 of ONDA 2005). However, the BLM did not find this proposal to be one large roadless area, but is comprised of a number of smaller inventory units that must be evaluated individually.

The BLM determined that there are several outstanding opportunities for solitude across the unit due to topographic and vegetative screening. Topographically, the unit is dominated by a broken, oak-leaf shaped, plateau/table top (250 ft. high), with four consecutive rims (100 ft. high) running from the northwest to the southeast in the northeast third of the unit. The northeast third of the unit is comprised of East Butte (250 ft.), while the southern third is characterized by an unnamed, 3 mile diameter, round butte (290 ft. high). The unit also contains half a dozen moderate to large ephemeral lake depressions including Benjamin Lake and Chicago Pond (10-30 ft. deep). In addition, the unit contains two lava tube caves. The remaining area includes numerous minor features: lakebeds, buttes, drainages, and rolling terrain (50-100 ft. high). The southern portion opens up to the north end of Browns Valley, while the central eastern boundary includes the western reaches of Chicago Valley. Overall, the unit ranges in elevation from 4,575 ft. along the eastern boundary to 5,122 ft. along the northern boundary. Vegetatively, western juniper stands have greatly expanded in

height, width, and density. The northern two-thirds (roughly 15,000 acres) of the unit is covered in moderate to high-density western juniper stands, with old-growth characteristics. The remaining vegetation is scattered juniper, sagebrush, rabbit brush, and grass. Due to the above-described topographic and vegetative screening throughout the unit, one would easily be able to avoid the sights and sounds of others.

Thus, for the reasons specified above and based on a review of all the available information including (BLM and citizen provided) photos, staff knowledge, and field review, the BLM concluded the Benjamin Lake – East Butte inventory unit possesses outstanding opportunities for solitude.

(4) Does the unit (or the remainder of the unit if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) **have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?** Yes X No N/A

The original 1980 inventory evaluated opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation within each unit.

Unit 1-10 was found to offer limited opportunities for hiking, photography, and wildlife observation. The topography and vegetation were found to be similar to that in the rest of the region and did not provide outstanding recreation opportunities. The unit also contained Benjamin Cave, a lava tube cave that offered some potential for limited exploration. Overall, the unit lacked outstanding opportunities for recreation.

Unit 1-11 was found to lack outstanding opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation due to its narrow shape and lack of topographic or other significant features to attract recreation.

In 2005, ONDA's inventory identified the larger 196,015-acre Lonesome Lakes proposed WSA as having outstanding opportunities for recreation based on sheer size as their proposal is contiguous with other inventory units and therefore no longer stands alone. Juniper stands, ephemeral lakes, canyons, hills, and rimrock located within units 1-10 and 1-11 would offer outstanding opportunities for recreation activities including hunting, wildlife observation, hiking, and horseback riding (p. 139 of ONDA 2005). However, the BLM did not find this proposal to be one large roadless area, but is comprised of a number of smaller inventory units that must be evaluated individually.

The BLM finds the combination and diversity of hiking, horseback riding, backpacking, camping, wildlife observation, exploration, spelunking, scenery, photography, stargazing, trapping, and hunting are exceptional. The BLM determined that options for hiking/ horseback riding the 10 mile length of the unit, hiking/ horseback riding peak to peak across the unit, exploration of caves, and route finding among unit's more than 15,000 acres of moderate to dense, old-growth, juniper stands represent unique opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

(5) Does the unit have supplemental values? Yes No N/A

The BLM found the unit to possess archaeological and geological values as well as the presence of pronghorn antelope, mule deer, elk, various bats, and sage-grouse habitat.

The unit also contains Benjamin Lake Caves, which may qualify as Significant Caves under the Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988, due to the known presence of biological resources and recreational use.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Number and Name: OR-015-010/ Benjamin Lake – East Butte

Summary Results of Analysis:

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

Conclusion (Check One):

 X The area- or a portion of the area- has wilderness character:
(items 1, 2 and 3 must be checked "yes").

 The area does not have wilderness character: *(any of items 1, 2 and 3 are checked "no")*.

Prepared by (Member Names and Titles):



Chris Bishop: Outdoor Recreation Planner

 6/4/18
Date


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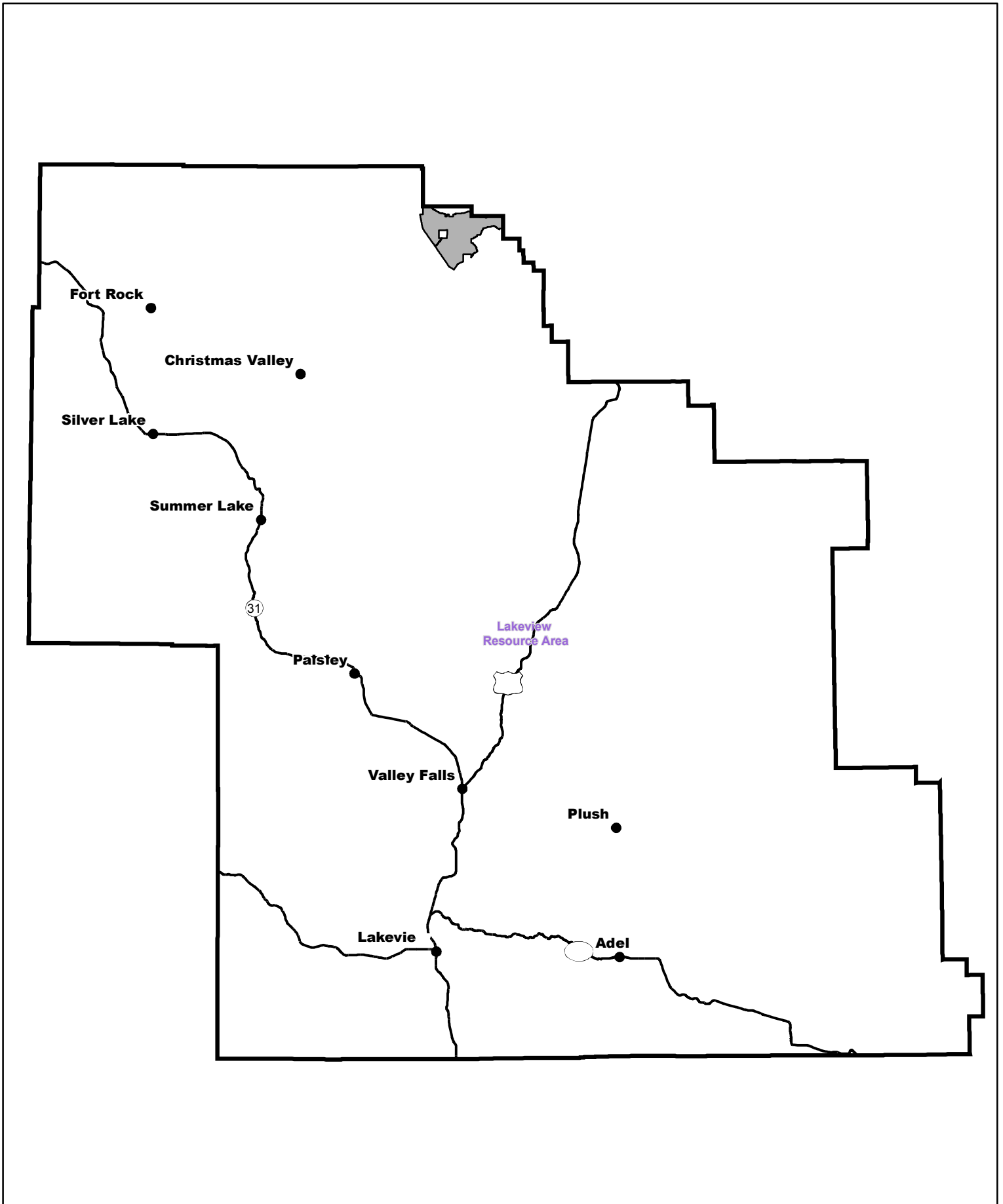
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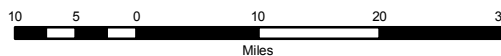

J. Todd Forbes
Field Manager


 6/4/18
Date

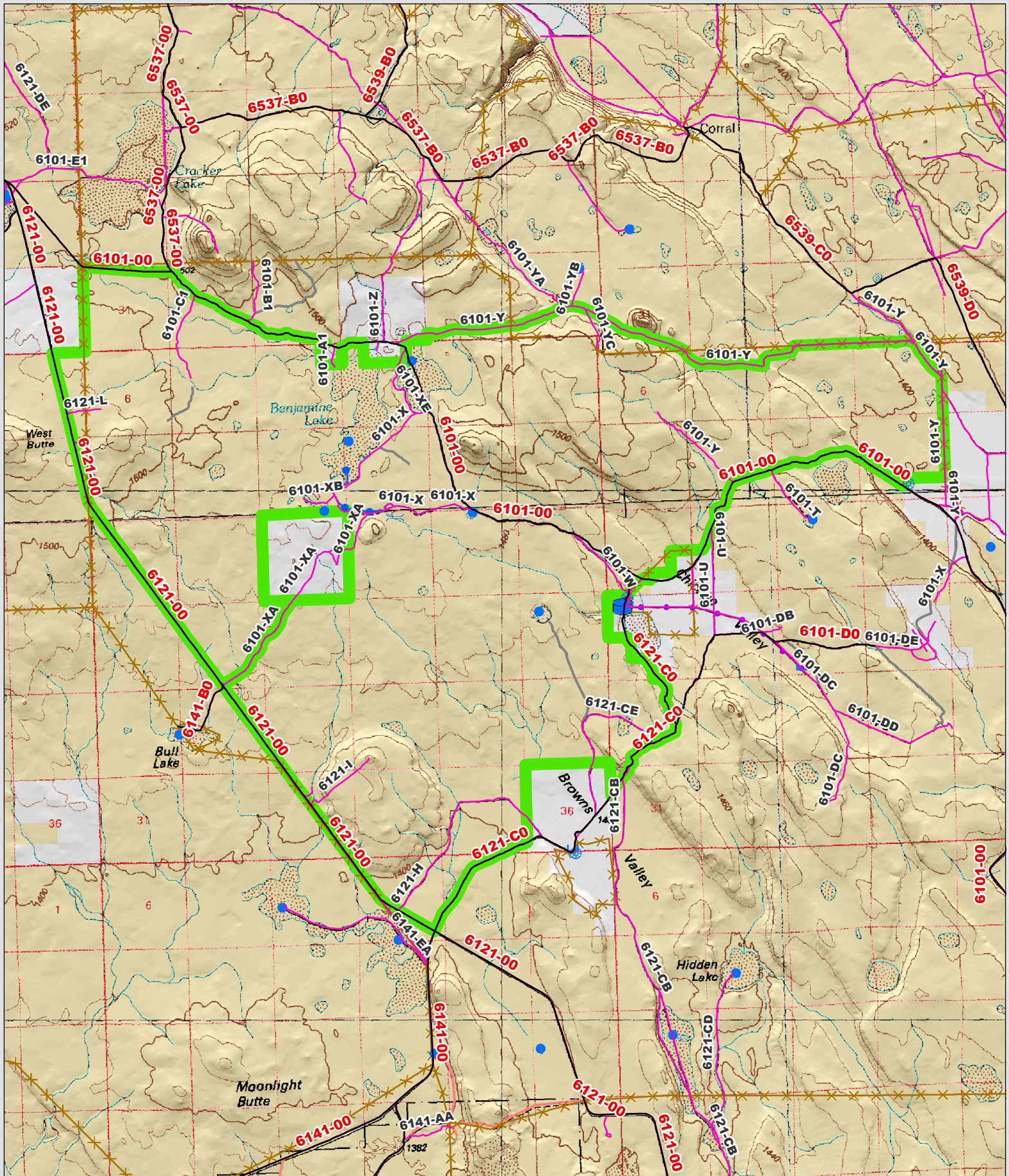
This form documents information that constitutes an inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under 43 CFR parts either 4 or 1610.5-2.



 Wilderness Character Inventory Unit



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Wilderness Character Inventory Unit

Ownership

- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Forest Service
- State
- Private/Unknown

Roads/Trails

- Motorized Routes
- Highways
- Reclaiming Routes
- Interim Routes

Pipelines and Ditches

- Ditch
- Water Pipeline
- Guzzler
- Fences

Water Developments

- Dam
- Reservoir
- Spring Development
- Trough
- Water Diversion

- Water Tank
- Waterhole
- Well - Water

1.5 0.75 0 1.5 Miles

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