

FORM 1

Inventory Unit Number & Name: OR-056-010/Skeleton

Date Prepared: 11/1/10 & 10/4/11

By: Dave Harmon; Jerry Magee; Berry Phelps

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** (Go to Form 2) **Yes** _____ (if more than one unit is within the area, list the names/numbers of those units.):

(Refer to Appendix 1 for existing BLM plan direction for the Skeleton Area).

FORM 2

DOCUMENTATION OF CURRENT WILDERNESS INVENTORY CONDITIONS

Inventory Unit Number & Name: OR-056-010/Skeleton

Date Prepared: 11/1/10 & 10/4/11 & 07/02/13.

By: Dave Harmon; Jerry Magee; Berry Phelps, Gavin Hoban, Jim Beaupre

- Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics;
- Area Unique Identifier: OR-056-010
-
- See attached map of Skeleton/ Horse Ridge (adjacent) Units.

(1) Is the area of sufficient size?

Yes **X** No ___ N/A ___

Description

The unit contains 7,829 acres of BLM land. The unit is bounded on the east by a combination of paved roads (old and new U.S. Highway 20), and a County dirt road (Stookey Road).

The western and southern boundaries are formed by another County dirt road (Ford Road), and the northern boundary is a combination of road segments and private property that has been subdivided for homes.

In the original inventory, the unit was not intensively evaluated because it was subdivided by at least two east-west trending roads, leaving the subunits far below the 5,000 acre size requirement. These routes have since been closed and have reverted to primitive routes that do not currently meet the road definition.

2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes No N/A

Description:

The unit appears to be in a natural condition, with human imprints found to be substantially unnoticeable. This unit once had a number of actively used vehicle routes crossing the terrain, and was significantly impacted by OHV use, until the south half of the unit was consumed by the 1996 Skeleton wildfire. In 1996-97, BLM implemented a plan to close these routes to vehicular use, placing closure signs at the road entrances along the Skeleton unit's boundary roads, and taking actions to discourage physical travel on the old roads.

The public has observed these closures with few exceptions. Today, they appear to be successfully reclaimed with only very limited unauthorized vehicle route use occurring in some areas. Most of these old vehicle routes are now gradually revegetating in places, have the appearance of wide hiking trails, and do not noticeably detract from the natural appearance of the area.

Evidence of recent use on several unauthorized routes is apparent, one of which accesses an unauthorized dump on the northeastern boundary affecting less than one acre. Two other routes leave the southwestern boundary road, and consist of cross country vehicle use on a closed route and on a newly pioneered route.

There is one grazing allotment within this unit that's actively grazed, with on-going range maintenance. A replacement fence is planned to be installed in the north portion of the unit. There is also an underground water pipeline that distributes water to several troughs within the unit. This pipeline extends 2.4 miles into this unit, but it has vegetation over it and is not discernible to the average visitor. Range maintenance of a small segment of this pipeline north of the southern boundary road recently resulted in vegetation and surface disturbance approximately 100' x 20'. None of these impacts are substantially noticeable outside of the location that's directly impacted, and all can be easily reclaimed.

The juniper forest is generally in a natural condition, but shows some evidence of old stumps where selected trees were cut and removed, most likely for post and firewood use. There were no areas observed where several trees were cut in the past.

The juniper tree stumps are not a dominating feature and are scattered along the old closed routes where vehicles were once allowed to travel. A traveler within this forest has the sense of being in a generally natural setting with many old and picturesque trees and rugged volcanic outcrops dominating the landscape and view shed. Many old growth trees are interspersed with younger trees throughout this portion of the unit.

The area outside of the forest that was burned has no visible evidence of human activity outside of the closed routes that are now naturally revegetating as motor vehicle use has ceased. The two impacted areas noted above result from unauthorized vehicular use, and affect only the immediate area along the travel routes.

There is no evidence of the past fire suppression activities within the unit. Throughout the entire Skeleton unit, there is a sense of being in a natural setting where any evidence of human activity is minimal.

Note: The following information was identified after the original update inventory was completed, through GIS and field review, and coordination with range staff by Gavin Hoban:

- New Information: A replacement fence proposal is underway which follows the original Barlow Cave allotment boundary's north edge. Within the unit, 4.4 miles of fence would be reconstructed. Mitigation for this is replacement fence is to remove approximately 1.9 miles of unnecessary fence within the unit. (9.8 miles of existing internal fence).
- New information: Part of the Arnold canal, including a rock-covered historic cistern adds supplemental cultural features to the unit.
- New information: Pipeline and one guzzler are within the WCIU, but do not reduce overall naturalness of the unit.

Description:

The unit's arid high desert landscape contains a juniper forest in the northern one-third portion. The juniper forest contains widely spaced trees and a mixture of age classes with many older trees probably exceeding 200 years.

The southern two-thirds of the unit were burned by a wildfire in 1996, and contain grasses and shrubs, with few surviving juniper. Basaltic outcrops dot the landscape, and the terrain is generally undulating, providing excellent vistas west to the Cascade Range and east to Horse Ridge.

The unit is lightly used by the public, with some elk and deer hunting in the fall, and occasional hiking and bicycle riding occurring. Some selective juniper cutting has occurred in the past in the forested portion.

A small unauthorized trash dump and several recent vehicle routes in closed portions of the unit are minor impacts. The unit is within the Barlow Cave allotment, and is presently grazed by livestock on alternating years.

(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area 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

Description:

The unit possesses outstanding opportunities for solitude. The extensive juniper forest provides excellent vegetative screening in the portion of the unit where it is the dominant vegetative feature. Visitors can readily lose sight of one another in just a few steps, as the broad tree trunks, the forest canopy and volcanic outcrops readily obstruct one's field of vision. A hiker has the sense of being alone and remote from the outside world when hiking through this forested landscape.

In the portion of the unit that was burned, there is little vegetative screening remaining, although some portions contain isolated trees that do provide some visual screening. The dominant vegetative feature is low shrubs and grasses that are at best, waist high. The topography, however, is gently undulating, any flat areas are not extensive, and most outside views encompass the high elevations of the Cascade volcanoes and nearby Horse Ridge.

This low and rolling terrain is bisected by gullies and shallow depressions that provide topographic screening for visitors, and numerous opportunities for seclusion from the sight and sound of others who may be visiting the unit. In addition, the many basaltic outcrops that dot the landscape provide additional screening opportunities.

The size and shape of the unit also add to opportunities for solitude. The 7,829 acre unit averages 3 miles in width and 4.5 miles in length, and the configuration is somewhat rectangular. Visitors can find many intriguing destinations for hiking and camping, and will not be drawn to a common destination.

Considering the Skeleton unit's vegetative and topographic screening, along with its ample size and configuration that is conducive to allowing visitors to easily find remote and secluded areas within the unit, opportunities for solitude are outstanding.

(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area 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 No N/A

Description:

The unit does possess outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. While the public presently is making only limited use of the abundant non-motorized recreational opportunities available in the Skeleton unit, there are many excellent opportunities available for such use which, when taken together, afford an outstanding opportunity.

Hiking and camping opportunities in a highly scenic and expansive landscape are readily available. An individual or small hiking party can travel on trails or cross country within any portion of the unit and enjoy an experience in a remote desert landscape, giving one a sense that few have visited the area before.

World class views of the highly scenic Cascade mountains are visible throughout the non-forested portion of the unit to the west, with the glaciated volcanoes of the Three Sisters, Mt. Washington, Three Fingered Jack, Mt. Jefferson and other peaks looming on the horizon, providing a dramatic visual backdrop and excellent photographic opportunities.

Hiking, rock scrambling and bouldering opportunities are present throughout the unit. The basaltic bubbles and pressure ridges provide interesting vantage and destination points dispersed throughout the unit. As the unit is without surface water, hikers and campers will have to carry water.

Another primitive recreational opportunity includes big game hunting for mule deer, elk, and bird hunting for quail and dove. These hunting opportunities are within a primitive, roadless landscape providing challenges for the visitors that do not exist in more roaded and developed areas. Hunting in this type of landscape was once common throughout the West, but now is becoming increasingly rare.

The existence of several high quality primitive and unconfined recreational opportunities including hiking, camping, rock scrambling, photography and big game hunting combine to offer an outstanding opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation.

(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value)?

Yes No N/A

Description:

The unit has scenic values contributed by the dramatic view of the Cascade Mountain Range that dominates the western horizon. These scenic vistas are visible throughout much of the unit. Geologic values are represented by the basaltic extrusions that are visible throughout the unit, and are evidence of volcanic activity some 80,000 years ago. Additionally, nearby lava caves provide known habitat for the Townsend's big-eared bat, a sensitive species. This unit also contains over 2 miles of the old Arnold Canal and is adjacent to lands containing caves.

Summary of Analysis*

* 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 1610.5-3.

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 N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? Yes No N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? Yes No N/A

Check one:

The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as lands with wilderness characteristics.

The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by (team members):

- Dave Harmon; WO Senior Wilderness Program Lead – November 1, 2010
- Jerry Magee; OSO Wilderness Program Lead – November 1, 2010
- Berry Phelps; Recreation Planner/ Wilderness Specialist – 10/1/10; 12/20/11; June 27, 2013.

- Gavin Hoban; Recreation Planner/Wilderness Specialist – December 20, 2011; December, 11,2012; June 27, 2013
- Jim Beaupre; Recreation Planner – December 20, 2011; June 27, 2013.

Reviewed and Approved by (District or Field Manager):

Name: Molly M. Brown Title: Field Manager

Date: 7/3/13

Appendix 1

BLM 2005 Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan/EIS (pages 118-119 and update of narrative July, 2013).

BLM Planning Direction for the Horse Ridge & Skeleton Recreation Areas

The Skeleton Fire area will be managed for motorized use on a few main roads, much as it has been prior to this RMP. Roads may be retained or previously closed vehicle routes reopened only to the extent necessary to create a loop road from the Gosney Road access and U.S. Highway 20 access.

The remaining vehicle routes in the area may either be closed and rehabilitated or converted to non-motorized trails, to provide various trail loops and connect to non-motorized trails in the Horse Ridge area. Trails on Horse Ridge will be developed to serve a variety of non-motorized users; however separated trails for different users may be considered at the area management plan level.

Objective R – 2: Provide designated access points (includes entry points, parking areas, trailheads, and/or staging areas) to enhance visitor experience, protect resources, and minimize conflicts with adjacent landowners.

Rationale:

The Skeleton Fire and Horse Ridge areas are high use trail areas that have one trailhead established by BLM through an ARRA fund grant on the north side of Horse Ridge. This trailhead is used year-round by mountain bike riders. There still is a lack of lack designated trails, leading to private land trespass. Opportunities remain to develop a non-motorized trail map for the Horse Ridge and Skeleton areas to increase communication of regulations and increase awareness of resource concerns in the area.

Guidelines

1. Designate adequate access to parking and user information for non-motorized trail use in the Horse Ridge and Skeleton Area.
2. Maintain and improve conditions at South Millican Horse Camp by clearly defining boundaries, signs and trail information. Consider increased development if multiple user groups can be served.

Objective R – 3: Manage off highway motorized vehicle use on BLM administered land to provide visitor satisfaction, protect natural resources, provide visitor safety, minimize conflicts among public land visitors and adjacent

land owners and integrate opportunities with adjacent land management agencies.

Rationale:

Smaller areas of BLM administered land are less suited for motorized trail development, unless linked with trail systems in larger, adjacent public land blocks.

Allocations/Allowable Uses;

1. See RMP Maps 3 and 14 for Travel Management Allowable uses within the Horse Ridge Recreation Area.

Guidelines

1. The Skeleton Fire area is designated as Non-motorized recreation emphasis.
2. Designated roads in the Skeleton Fire area will form a loop system that allows for recreation use, including special events.
3. Trail dependent special recreation events (trail rides, races, etc.) are allowed on designated roads or trails. A maximum of 2 events (motorized or non-motorized) may be held per month, with events up to 2 days long allowed. Each permitted event must be separated by at least 12 days with no scheduled events.
4. Reroute dead-end roads in the area south of U.S. Highway 20 and north of Old Highway 20 (T18S, R14E, Sec. 30, 31,32; T19S, R14E, Sec. 5, 4, 3, 10; T18S, R13E, Sec.25) to create several interconnected loops and eliminate deadends along the south side of U.S. Highway 20.

Upper Deschutes Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (pg. 119)

Objective R – 4: Provide identifiable non-motorized recreation opportunities to provide visitor satisfaction, protect natural resources, and minimize conflicts among public land visitors and adjacent land owners.

1. The Horse Ridge area is designated as Non-motorized Recreation Exclusive (Recreation Emphasis) (see RMP Map 4) and managed for year-round non-motorized trail use with a designated trail system (see RMP Maps 3 and 14).
2. The BLM administered land bounded by U.S. Highway 20 on the east, Rickard Road on the south, and private lands to the west and north is designated as Non-motorized Recreation Exclusive (Recreation Emphasis) and managed for non-motorized trail use on a designated trail system.

3. The area between U.S. Highway 20 and the old highway is designated Non-motorized Recreation Exclusive (Recreation Emphasis) and managed for non-motorized trail use on a designated trail system.
4. The Skeleton Fire area is designated as Non-motorized Recreation Emphasis (see RMP Map 4) and managed for year-round non-motorized trail use with a designated trail system.
5. Vehicle routes may be realigned or closed to create a trail network for non-motorized use that provides loops and connections to Horse Ridge and the Skeleton Fire Area.
6. Designate any vehicle routes in the Skeleton Fire area that will remain Closed to motor vehicles as non-motorized trails if they meet the needs of the non-motorized trail system. The designated trail system will be designed and managed to differentiate it from roads, and to reduce redundant access points, avoid trespass, and avoid sensitive resource areas. Construct additional trails as needed to complete a system that offers loops of varying lengths.
7. Develop non-motorized trails on Horse Ridge that avoid private parcels and allow continuation of existing trail use. Closed vehicle routes in the Horse Ridge area needed for a non-motorized trail system will be converted into trails for non-motorized use.
8. Designated trails will be located outside the Horse Ridge RNA.
9. Trail dependent special recreation events (trail rides, races, etc.) are allowed on designated roads or trails. A maximum of 2 events (motorized or non-motorized) could be held per month, with events up to 2 days long allowed. Each permitted event will be separated by at least 12 days with no scheduled events.
10. Provide a designated trail link from Horse Ridge trails to the existing culvert trail crossing under U.S. Highway 20.