

Saddle Mountains West

OR 134-03

Wilderness Characteristics Inventory Results

Road Inventory Points

 Photo Location

Boundary Features

 Powerline
 Road

Unit Evaluation

 No - Wilderness Characteristics

Surface Jurisdiction

 U.S. Dept. of Defense
 U.S. Bureau of Land Management
 U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 WA Dept. of Natural Resources
 WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Unique ID	Evaluation	Acres
340	N	2659
341	N	2168
358	N	895
Total		5722

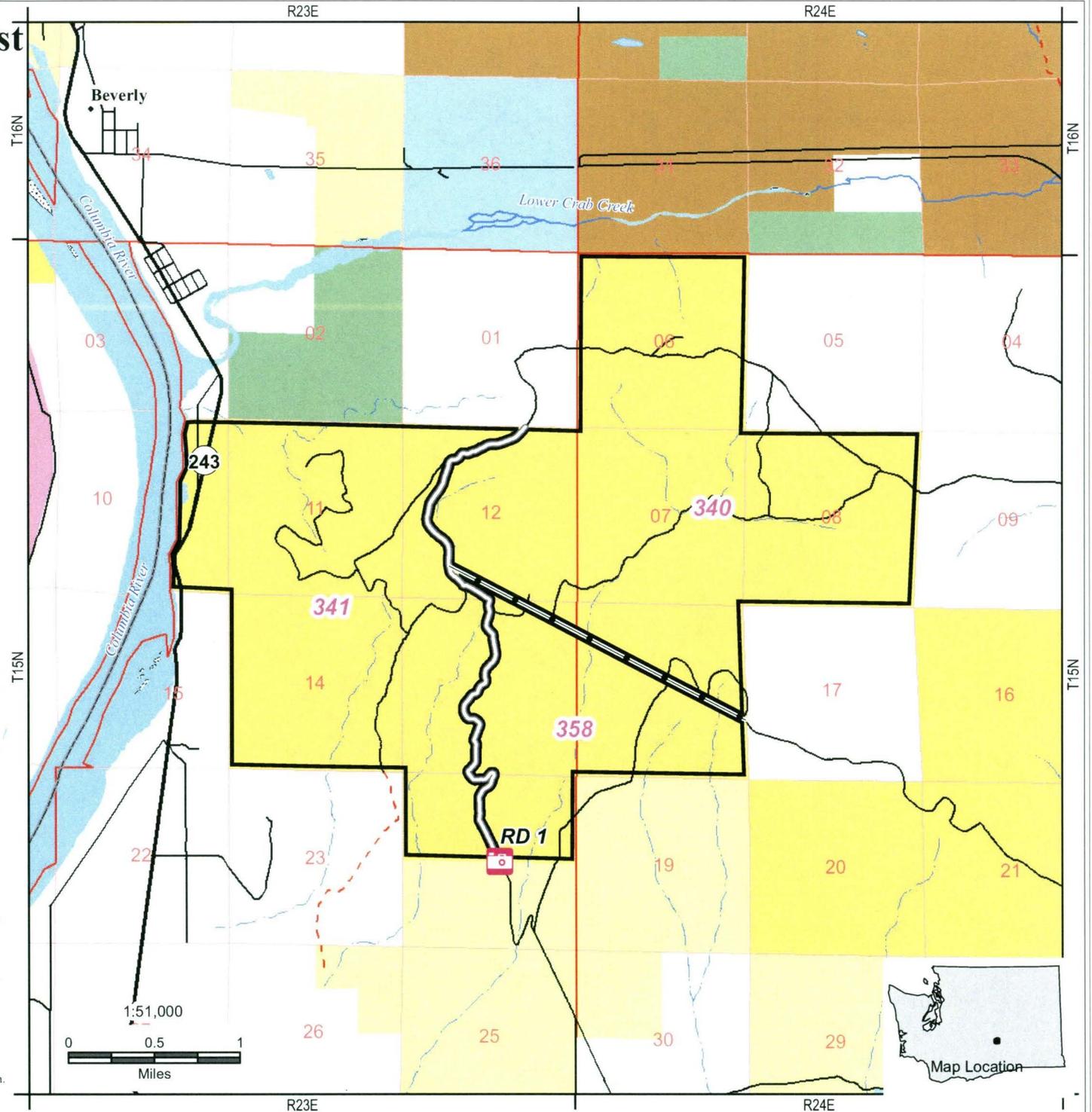
United States Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management
 Spokane District Office
 1103 N. Fancher
 Spokane, WA 99212



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Draft - Oct 21, 2011



Year 2010

Inventory Unit Number/Name: Saddle Mountains (OR134-03)___

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

a) Inventory Source: _____

b) Inventory Unit Name(s)/Number(s): _____

c) Map Name(s)/Number(s): _____

d) BLM District(s)/Field Office(s): _____

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):

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics¹:

Inventory Source: _____

Unit#/ Name	Size (historic acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N

FORM 2

Use additional pages as necessary

**DOCUMENTATION OF CURRENT WILDERNESS INVENTORY
CONDITIONS**

a. Unit Number/Name: Saddle Mountains Unit (OR134-03)

(1) Is the unit of sufficient size?

Yes X No

The lands consist of approximately 5703 acres of public lands managed by the Wenatchee Field Office of the Spokane District, Bureau of Land Management (see below for description of why area does not meet size criteria).

The Saddle Mountains area is located in Grant County in Central Washington, about 10 miles south of Interstate Highway 90 and 40-50 miles north of the Tri-city area. It extends in an east-west direction along the crest of the Saddle Mountains from the Columbia Mountains to the Adams county line.

The unit is described as being a large sized block of BLM-administered land on the west end of the Saddle Mountains. To the east of this unit, BLM-administered land exists mainly in a checkerboard arrangement, with private land intermixed with public land. This unit has a contiguous block of public lands, surrounded by a mix of private, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Fish and Wildlife and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife lands (see maps). Paved state highway 243 forms the westernmost boundary of the unit. BLM regularly maintains a gravel road that extends through the unit, dividing it E-W. This road is used by the public, BLM, as access to private land, fire prevention and access to communication sites. A natural gas pipeline cuts across the unit, dividing it N-S. Powerlines also run through the unit, further dividing it N-S. Due to the roads, powerlines and gas pipeline dividing the area, the remaining blocks of BLM-administered land are of insufficient size to meet size criteria.

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS:

The lands are in a semiarid climatic zone. The annual precipitation is between 5 and 9 inches, with the most received between late fall and early spring. Temperatures range from an average minimum of about 20 degrees

Fahrenheit in January to an average maximum amount of about 90 degrees Fahrenheit in July.

Elevation range from a low of 480 feet at the Columbia River to approximately 2,700 feet at Wahatis Peak. The main feature is a plateau with sharp ridge rising about 1600 feet above the Columbia River and agricultural fields to the north and south. Steep cliffs characterize the north side, falling 1000 feet or more to Crab Creek. The southern aspect is more gentle, with grassy hillsides sloping down to agricultural fields. Sand dunes lap the west side of the unit, adjacent to the Columbia River and Hwy 243. These mountains were subject to considerable faulting in the geologic past.

There are several ephemeral stream/drainages on the Saddle Mountains. The most notable is the Rock Creek watershed, located near the west end of T. 15 N., R 23 E., in section 24. This is the only area which has riparian habitat.

Soils that are found here range from very deep and well drained to excessively well-drained (sandy) soils, to very shallow with rock outcroppings. The east facing slopes tend to have deeper soils than the west facing slopes.

The Saddle Mountains are dominated by big sage brush (*Artemisia tridentada*) and bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spcatum*). Bluebunch wheatgrass dominate the grass community at the higher elevations, while cheatgrass dominates the lower elevations

Several sensitive plant species have been identified as occurring in the area. They are as follows:

Ammannia robusta
Astragalus geayeri
Lomatium tuberosum
Camissonia pygmaea
Mimulus suksdorfii
Minuartia nuttalli var fragilis
Oenothera caespitosa ssp caespitosa
Oxtropis campestris var wanapum
Cryptantha spiculifera
Cryptantha leucophaea
Penstemon Species
Pediocactus simpsonii var robustior

In recent years, the density of invasive diffuse knapweed has increased and become a management concern. The BLM has treated infested areas

as part of its weed management program using a variety of techniques, including biological, chemical, and mechanical means.

The shrub steppe habitat supports a variety of wildlife, including mule deer, coyote, and small mammals including black-tailed Jack rabbits, bushy tailed woodrats, striped skunks, badgers and a great variety of mice, shrews, and bats. Upland birds include chukars, ring-necked pheasants, mourning doves. The land was historical range for Sage Grouse, which have not been found here since the 1980's.

The west and north cliffs are Raptor nest sites. Species include burrowing owls, ravens, rough legged, red-tailed, Swainsons, and Ferruginous Hawk (A federal candidate for listing and also State threatened), prairie falcons, American kestrels, and bald and golden eagles

There are several eligible National Register of Historic Sites located in the unit.

There are several oil and gas leases issued previously by the BLM in the unit, although there has been no development.

Vertebrate fossils and petrified wood have been identified on the mountain.

The BLM issues commercial grazing permits for the lands under Gazing Allotments. There are a number of grazing infrastructures, chiefly fence lines and motorized access routes, which are present and used by the permittee and BLM staff.

Human use of the area is varied and includes rock hounding, hiking, hunting, horseback riding, and OHV use. The area attracts rockhounds from outside of the local area, looking for petrified wood. Actual recreational use numbers are unknown but all activities are dispersed. The area is designated as an OHV open use area, with many roads, routes and trails throughout the unit. Human use also includes maintenance of communication sites, powerlines and pipeline, BLM range and administrative use and access to private land.

(2) Is the unit in a natural condition?

Yes _____ No X N/A _____

Description: Though no recreation facilities are evident in this unit, powerlines, communication sites, and a network of roads and trails crisscross the unit, which is in an open OHV designation. Range fences and improvements are also visible, though only locally noticeable. BLM

maintains 6 miles of access road through the area. Piles of rock characterize petrified wood collection areas. BLM entrance sign and bulletin board are at south end of access road.

(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 X _____ N/A _____

Description: The numerous roads which cross the area, and the open topography with little vegetative screening limit the opportunities for solitude in this unit. OHV use and petrified wood hunting often occurs on weekends throughout the year. Traffic to com. sites, met towers and powerlines also occurs. Mid week has much fewer visitors. Much use occurs along maintained access roads, though vehicles can be seen from a distance across the sparse vegetation.

(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 _____

Description: Yes, opportunities for outstanding primitive and unconfined recreation exist in this area, including hiking, hunting, backpacking, mountain biking, horseback riding. However, the open OHV area renders the unit open to motorized use.

(5) Does the unit have supplemental values?

Yes X _____ No _____ N/A _____

Description: Several State Sensitive and State Threatened plants and one State Endangered plant grow in the Saddle Mountains area:

Ammannia robusta
Astragalus geyeri
Lomatium tuberosum
Camissonia pygmaea
Mimulus suksdorfii
Minuartia nuttalli var *fragilis*
Oenothera caespitosa ssp *caespitosa*
Oxtropis campestris var *wanapum*
Cryptantha spiculifera

Crypthantha leucophaea
Penstemon Species
Pediocactus simpsonii var robustior

In addition, Cultural values of lithic scatters, rock cairns, quarries, talus pits and livestock structures are spread across the unit and the rest of the Saddle Mountains.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: Saddle Mountains West (OR 134-03) _____

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 NA
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:

Team Members:

Diane Priebe, Recreation

Steve Smith, Recreation

Dana Peterson, Range

Nick Stanton, Range

Molly Boyter, Botanist

JA Vacca Wildlife

Brent Cunderla, Geologist

(Names, Titles, Date)

Approved by:

Field Manager

[Handwritten Signature]

Date

10/3/11

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.

**H-6300-1-WILDERNESS INVENTORY MAINTENANCE
IN BLM OREGON/WASHINGTON**

APPENDIX C – ROAD* ANALYSIS

(Factors to consider when determining whether a route is a road for wilderness inventory purposes.)

Wilderness Inventory Area Name and Number (UNIT_ID): __ Saddle Mountains West (OR 134-03)

Route Name and/or Identifier: __ Rd 1 (Main Saddle Mtns Rd)

(Include Transportation Plan Identifier, if known, include route number supplied by citizen information when available)

I. LOCATION: refer to attached map _____ and BLM corporate data (GIS). List photo point references (where applicable):

II. CURRENT PURPOSE OF ROUTE:

Examples: Rangeland/Livestock Improvements (stock tank, developed spring, reservoir, fence, corral), Inholdings (ranch, farmhouse), Mine Site, Concentrated Use Site (camp site), Utilities (transmission line, telephone, pipeline), Administrative (project maintenance, communication site, vegetation treatment).

Describe¹: __ Recreation public use, BLM range & administration, powerline & com site maintenance, access to pvt.

III. ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY:

Is a road right-of-way associated with this route? Yes __ No __ Unknown __X__

¹ Include estimate of travel for the stated purposes, e.g., trips/day or week or month or year or even multiple years in some facility maintenance cases.

IV. CONSTRUCTION (Is there evidence that the route was originally constructed using mechanical means?)

Yes No

Examples:

Paved _____ Bladed Graveled Roadside Berms _____
Cut/Fill _____ Other _____

Describe: _____

V. IMPROVEMENTS (Is there evidence of improvements to facilitate access?)

Yes No

By Hand Tools _____ By Machine

Examples:

Culverts _____ Stream Crossings _____ Bridges _____ Drainage
 Barriers _____ Other _____

Describe: _____

VI. MAINTENANCE (Is there evidence of maintenance that would ensure continued use?):

A. Is there Evidence or Documentation of Maintenance using hand tools or machinery?

Yes No

Hand Tools (Y/N) _____ Machine (Y/N) _____

Explain: Grading & graveling

B. If the route is in passable condition, but there is no evidence of maintenance, would mechanical maintenance with hand tools or machines be approved by BLM to meet the purpose(s) of the route in the event this route became impassable?

Yes No

Comments: Public access, powerline/com site
access _____

VII. REGULAR AND CONTINUOUS USE:

Yes No

Describe evidence (e.g., direct: vehicle tracks observed, or indirect: evidence of use associated with purpose of the route, such as maintenance of facility that route accesses) and other rationale for whether use has occurred and will continue to occur on a *relatively* regular basis (i.e., regular use relative to the purpose(s) of the route). Vehicle tracks observed, road has been recently & regularly used. _____

VIII. CONCLUSION:

To meet the definition of a road, items IV or V, *and* VI-A or B, *and* VII must be checked yes.

Road: Yes No

Explanation:

Evaluator(s): D. Priebe Date: 3/2010

* **road:** An access route which has been **improved and maintained** by **mechanical means** to insure **relatively regular and continuous use**. A way maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road.

a. **“Improved and maintained”** – Actions taken physically by people to keep the road open to vehicle traffic. “Improved” does not necessarily mean formal construction. “Maintained” does not necessarily mean annual maintenance.

b. **“Mechanical means”** – Use of hand or power machinery or tools.

c. **“Relatively regular and continuous use”** – Vehicular use that has occurred and will continue to occur on a relatively regular basis. Examples are: access roads for equipment to maintain a stock water tank or other established water sources; access roads to maintained recreation sites or facilities; or access roads to mining claims.

Frame 1. W. Saddle Mtns Entrance TRD



Frame 2 : W. Saddle Mtns West End View

