

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

Area Unique Identifier **OR 02-86 B** Acreage 5,200

(If the inventory area consists of subunits, list the acreage of each and evaluate each separately).
In completing steps (1)–(5), use additional space as necessary.

(1) Is the area of sufficient size? (If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check “Yes” and describe the exception in the space provided below),

Yes X No

Note: If “No” is checked the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check “NA” for the remaining questions below.

Description (describe the boundaries of the area—wilderness inventory roads, property lines, etc.): This unit evaluation is being performed in response to a citizen proposed Wilderness Evaluation received from Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) in February 2023. The area is irregularly shaped, with one long northern boundary, Burnt Car Road. The northeast region is separated from Blitzen River Wilderness Study Area (WSA) by the little-used Tombstone Road, which dead-ends after just over two miles. A closed road continues west from this junction, known as Tombstone Canyon Trail, providing access for a grazing permittee (Roaring Springs Ranch), to a reservoir, then swings south and west until meeting South Steens Road, which forms the rest of the unit boundary at the south and west end. Unit is separated from OR-86-A by Route 8244-0-KO or E2A, a faint, little-used route, and E2B, a short cherry stem route or “way” to a reservoir in private land at the south end. Much of the north, west, and south boundaries are adjacent to the Blitzen River WSA. There are 2 reservoirs in the central portion and 2.4 miles of fence in the far southern portion of the unit. There are 4 small private inholdings within the boundaries of the unit. The areas were surveyed thoroughly by trained, professional staff for wilderness characteristics. Over 25 photo points were established on site visits over the summer of 2023. BLM staff and management Dory Seeley, Kyle Wanner, Dean Reese, and Don Rotell visited the area on 8/14/2023, discussing the specific wilderness characteristics of the parcel per BLM Manual 6310 (Conducting Wilderness Characteristics on Public Lands).

(2) Does the area or a portion of the area appear to be natural?

Yes X No N/A

Note: If “No” is checked the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check “NA” for the remaining questions below.

Description (include land ownership, location, topography, vegetation, and summary of major human uses/activities): The unit is located in the foothills of the west slope of Steens Mountain. Topography is gently sloped, with varied topography, ranging from open sagebrush steppe to the southeast, to broken rimrock interspersed with dry, shallow canyons to the north and west. Vegetation type ranges from grassland, dominated by sagebrush, perennial grasses and forbs, to juniper woodland in the western portion. It is surrounded on three sides by WSA. The route that bisects the unit from section A is not used, so does not affect its natural character. There are four small private inholdings, with a long history of cattle grazing in this unit by the permittee (Roaring Springs Ranch). There are 2 reservoirs within the unit and 2.4 miles of fence. Popular human activities include wildlife viewing, wild horse viewing, wildflower viewing, photography, hunting, hiking, bicycling, stargazing, birdwatching, and camping. The unit falls entirely within the Steens Priority Area of Conservation (PAC) for Greater Sage-Grouse and is designated as Greater Sage-Grouse Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA). There is one occupied lek within the boundaries of the unit. It is part of the South Steens Herd Management Area (HMA). There has been some recent juniper thinning in the western portion, with noticeable juniper stumps and slash piles. This does not substantially alter the natural character of the area and is temporary. The area appears natural, with the works of humans not substantially noticeable on the landscape.

(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 (describe the area's outstanding opportunities for solitude): The unit is surrounded on three sides by WSA. The route that bisects the two subunits doesn't affect opportunities for solitude, as it is closed and gets very little use. The western portion of the unit has vegetative screening from tree cover, and there are numerous ravines and rimrock areas where the opportunity for solitude is outstanding. The eastern portion of the unit is open grassland, sage-steppe habitat. This portion of the unit is vast; its sheer size, combined with its contiguousness with WSA lands to the west and south, renders this portion as having outstanding opportunity for solitude as well.

(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

Note: If "No" is checked for both 3 and 4 the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "NA" for question 5.

Description (describe the area's outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation): The unit has outstanding opportunities for hunting, including prime deer and antelope. Permits for these hunting opportunities are highly sought after and are considered by

hunters to be among the prime tags in the country. This is an iconic landscape, with excellent views, and magnificent night sky viewing, in the heart of one of the crown jewels of the southeast Oregon landscape, the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management Protection Area. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are outstanding in this unit.

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

Yes X No N/A

Description: There are excellent opportunities for wild horse viewing. The area is within the South Steens HMA. It is in Greater Sage-Grouse PHMA. It falls within the CMPA. The area is rich in archaeological resources. There are at least 30 identified archaeological sites within the boundaries of the unit, some dating as far back as archaic times.

Summary of Analysis*

Area Unique Identifier **OR-02-86 B** Acreage 5,200

Summary

Results of analysis:

(Note: explain the inventory findings for the entirety of the inventory unit. When wilderness characteristics have been identified in an area that is smaller than the size of the total inventory unit, explain why certain portions of the inventory unit are not included within the lands with wilderness characteristics (e.g., the inventory found that certain parts lacked naturalness)).

- 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 land with wilderness characteristics.

The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by (team members):

Dean Reese - Outdoor Recreation Planner (Wilderness) WILLIAM REESE Digitally signed by WILLIAM REESE
Date: 2023.10.16 11:31:12 -07'00'

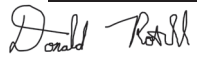
Dory Seeley - Outdoor Recreation Planner DORY SEELEY Digitally signed by DORY SEELEY
Date: 2023.10.16 14:38:19 -07'00'

Kyle Wanner - Outdoor Recreation Planner KYLE WANNER Digitally signed by KYLE WANNER
Date: 2023.10.16 12:55:44 -07'00'

Don Rotell - Andrews/Steens Field Manager  Digitally signed by DONALD ROTELL
Date: 2023.10.18 11:15:58 -07'00'

Reviewed by (district or field manager):

Name: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

 Digitally signed by DONALD ROTELL
Date: 2023.10.18 11:16:50 -07'00'

* 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.