



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

Oregon/Washington

Steens Mountain

Cooperative Management and Protection Area

Annual Manager's Report—Fiscal Year 2014

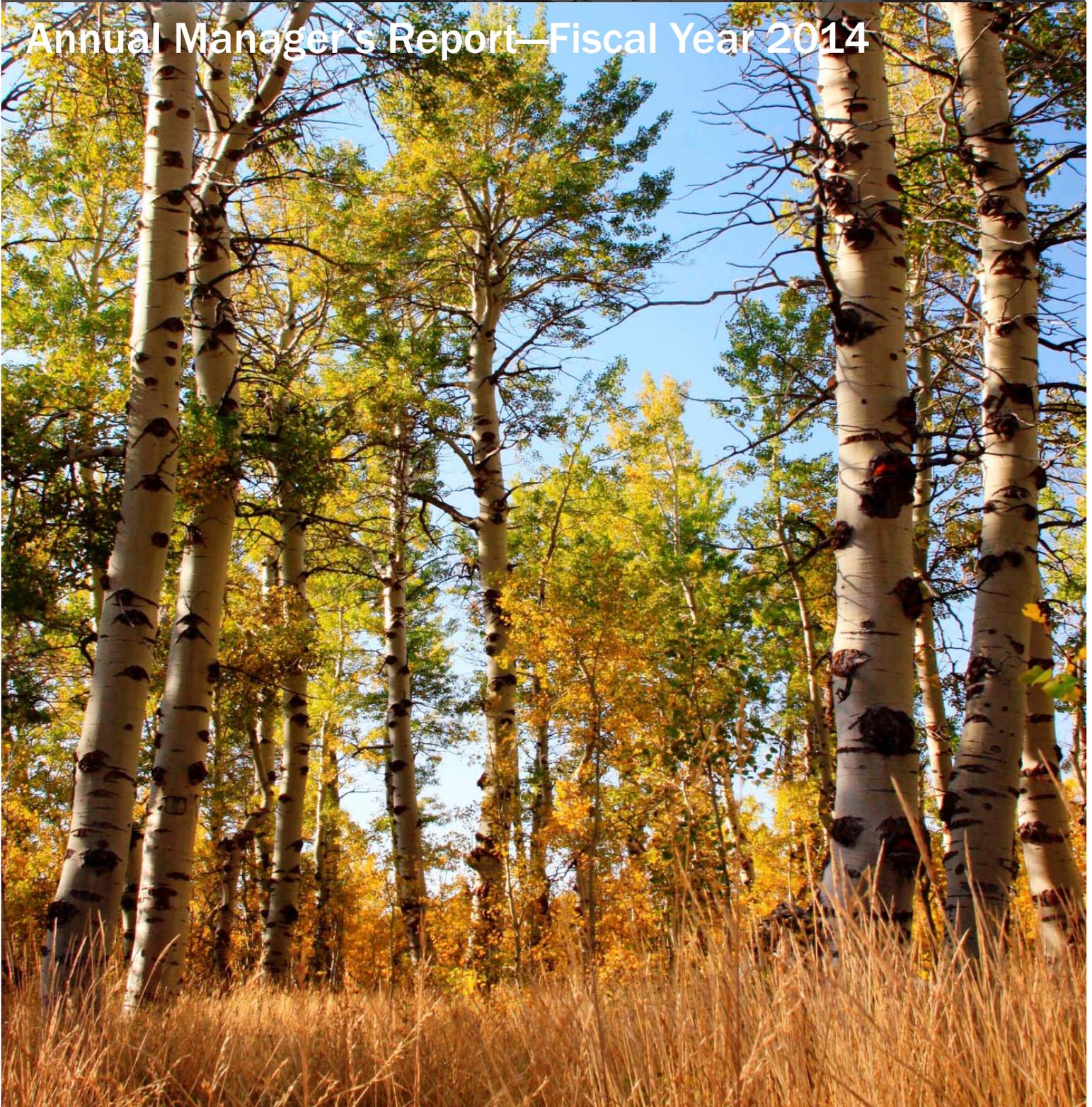


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1 Steens Mountain Profile

Designating Authority

Designating Authority: Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Act of 2000, Public Law 106-399

Date of Designation: October 30, 2000

The Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area (CMPA) is located approximately 65 miles south of Burns, Oregon. Total acreage for the CMPA is 497,160 acres, of which 428,440 are administered by BLM and 68,720 acres are non-BLM.

Acreage

Total Acres in Unit	428,446
BLM Acres	428,446
Other Federal Acres	0
State and Private Acres*	67,683

*State and Private acres are not part of the total of the unit acres

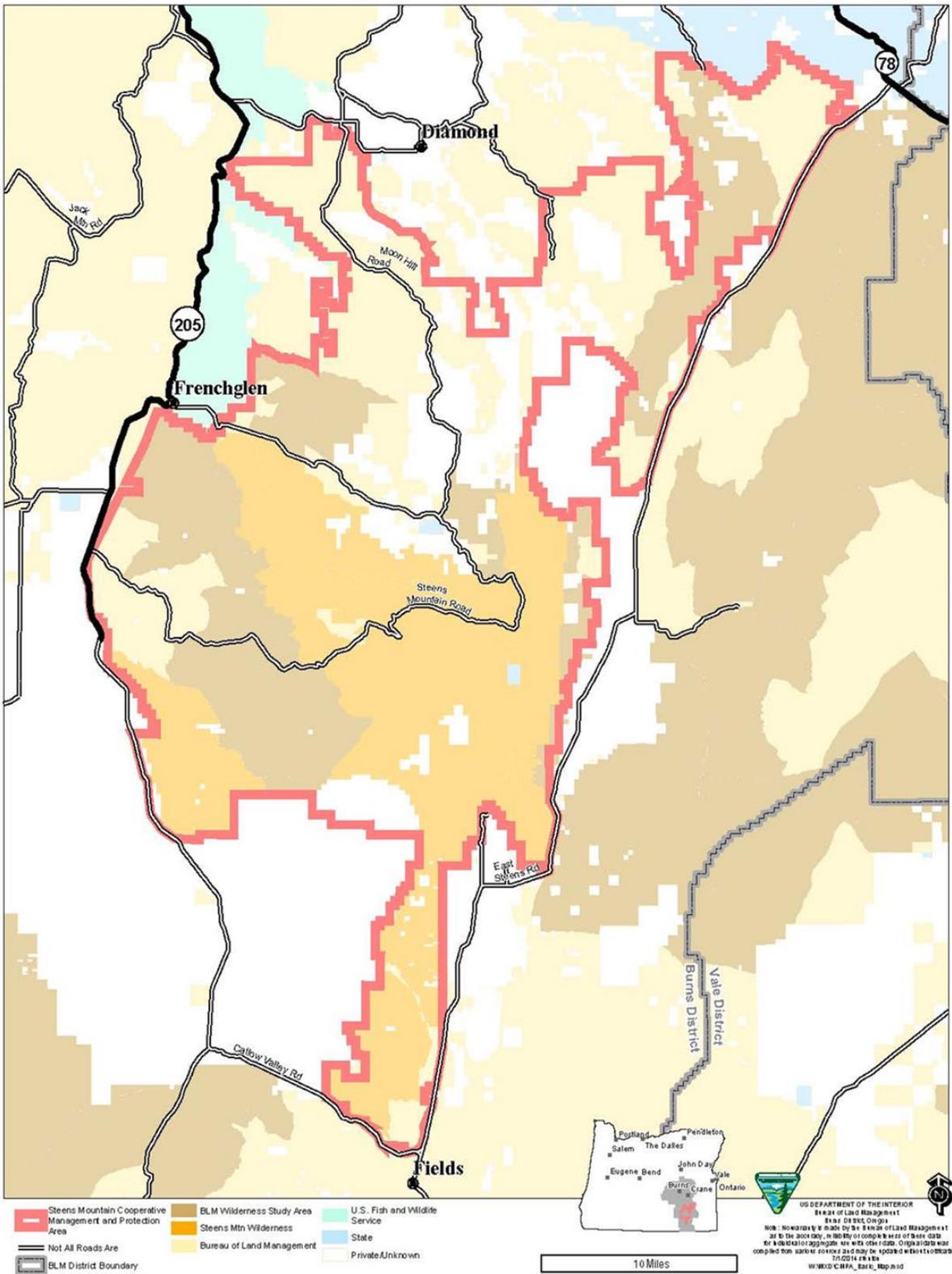
Contact Information

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Field Office Name	Andrews/Steens
District Office Name	Burns
State Office Name	Oregon/Washington

Budget

Total Fiscal Year 2014 Budget	\$702,000
Subactivity 1711	\$702,000
Other Subactivities' Contributions	\$0
Other Funding	\$0

Map of Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area



Managing Partners

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the sole agency responsible for managing the Steens Mountain CMPA.

Staffing

Position	Full/Part/Seasonal	% Time	Home Office
District Manager	Full	40%	LLORB02000
Assistant District Manager	Full	20%	LLORB02000
Field Manager	Full	80%	LLORB06000
Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist	Full	75%	LLORB07000
Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist	Full	50%	LLORB07000
Planning & Environmental Coordinator	Full	50%	LLORB06000
Wildlife Biologist	Full	50%	LLORB06000
Riparian Specialist	Full	50%	LLORB06000
Rangeland Management Specialist	Full	50%	LLORB06000
Rangeland Management Specialist	Full	35%	LLORB05000
Rangeland Management Specialist	Full	35%	LLORB06000
Rangeland Management Specialist	Full	80%	LLORB06000
Law Enforcement Officer	Full	50%	LLORB02000
Outdoor Recreation Planner	Full	80%	LLORB07000
Realty Specialist	Full	20%	LLORB07000
Outdoor Recreation Planner/Wilderness Specialist	Full	100%	LLORB07000
Public Affairs Officer	Full	20%	LLORB02000
Range Technician	Full	75%	LLORB06000
Recreation Maintenance	Full	70%	LLORB07000
Recreation Maintenance	Seasonal	70%	LLORB07000
Recreation Maintenance	Seasonal	70%	LLORB07000
Steens Mountain Packer	Seasonal	100%	LLORB07000
Seasonal Wilderness Tech	Seasonal	100%	LLORB07000

2 Planning and NEPA

Status of the Resource Management Plan

The Steens Mountain CMPA Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision, dated August 2005, were formally evaluated in 2010 and are currently the managing source documents. Additional implementation and activity plans related to the CMPA are:

- Transportation Plan 2005.
- The Steens Mountain CMPA Travel Management Plan 2007.
- North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project 2007.
- Comprehensive Recreation Plan (CRP). Decision expected in 2015.
- South Steens Allotment Management Plan was completed in 2014.

Status of Activity Plans

The CRP required additional analysis for every route within the CMPA. The process addressed potential administrative route closures and recommendations to not maintain some routes. An Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) decision in September 2014 reopened obscure routes within the CMPA that were closed by a 2009 IBLA decision. Through the CRP, BLM further analyzed the obscure routes to enhance the integration of transportation and recreation planning.

As a result, some routes were recommended to be administratively closed, some left open to the public, and some used for administrative purposes by the BLM, permittees and contractors. Further, one route was recommended as designated for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use. The CRP added this new information into a sub-alternative and released the Environmental Assessment for another 30-day comment period.

The North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project is an on-going activity with juniper treatments being accomplished every year.

Status of the RMP Implementation Strategy

The Andrews/Steens Resource Management Plan was evaluated in 2010. Implementation was found to be on track and no changes were made.

Key National Environmental Policy Act Actions and/or Project Authorizations

Minimum Requirements Decision Guides (MRDG)

- South Steens [Wild Horse] Population Management EA/MRDG
- Nature's Advocate Inholder Access MRDG

- Bone Creek Fire Fence Repair MRDG
- Wilderness Fencing MRDG

Environmental Assessments (EA) that have actions taking place in the CMPA

- Ankle Creek [Livestock] Trailing EA
- South Steens Allotment Management Plan EA (Decision expected in 2015)
- Comprehensive Recreation Plan EA (Decision expected in 2015)
 - Trail Maintenance MRDG
 - Cold Springs Development MRDG
 - Riddle Brothers Pipeline Extension, Section 7 Determination for Wild & Scenic River
- Page Springs Gauging Weir Fish Passage Project EA (Decision expected in 2015)
 - Page Springs Weir Project MRDG
 - Page Springs Weir Project, Section 7 Determination for Wild & Scenic Rivers
- South Steens [Wild Horse] Population Management EA (Decision expected in 2015)
 - South Steens [Wild Horse] Population Management EA/MRDG.
- North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project Final EIS (on-going)
- Natures Advocate Inholder Access EA
- Burns District Vegetation Management EA

3 Year's Projects and Accomplishments

General Accomplishments

- Trail maintenance performed by the Northwest Youth Corps (NYC): The NYC crew worked on four miles of the Blitzen River Trail in 2014. Repairs included removal of brush from the sides of the trail, widening the tread, and re-routing the trail around sensitive riparian areas and onto more stable rocky banks. The crew opened up the four-mile Blitzen River Trail to more visitors by making the trail more accessible to a more generational-visitor base.
- Campground and trail maintenance performed by Oregon Youth Conservation Corps (OYCC): The OYCC crews refurbished kiosks through construction repairs and fresh paint. The crew replaced worn signs throughout the CMPA. The OYCC performed trail maintenance on the upper portion of Nye Trail by widening the tread and clearing brush. The crew repaired the wood pole fence at the South Steens Campground and assisted in many other tasks including general cleanup.
- Fence pulls by Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA): Two scheduled fence pull events took place in 2014. The ONDA pulled approximately 2.25 miles of fence and piled in caches for later removal. The two weeks dedicated to the fence removal project amounted to over 400 hours of volunteer labor.
- No Livestock Grazing Area (NLGA) fences repaired by ONDA: Another ONDA volunteer group assisted in the repair of a portion of the NLGA fence located in the South Fork of the Donner und Blitzen WSA near the Bill Tabor Cabin. The crew built three rock cribs to strengthen the fence and walked the fence-line for four linear miles, removing downed juniper trees that had fallen on the fence.

Current Areas of Focus

The following issues came to the forefront during the 2014 year:

In 2014, an environmental assessment was initiated to analyze the installation of a fence around private wilderness inholdings proposed for livestock grazing within the NLGA. An interdisciplinary team was formed to determine various fencing options.

The South Steens Population Management EA was completed in 2014. This EA analyzed a wild horse gather in the South Steens Herd Management Area (HMA). A decision is expected in early 2015. When funds and corral space are available, a gather will be initiated.

Roads, routes, and ways are being considered for closure in the CRP. Motorized access throughout the CMPA is a volatile issue, as there are groups who want all routes closed,

and others who want them open. Public access to areas on the east and west sides of the Steens is limited due to a lack of easement access across private lands. The BLM is currently working with landowners to acquire access as part of the CRP planning effort. The Roaring Springs Rights-of-Way Trade EA addresses access for the west side of the CMPA.

The CRP is an effort that addresses increased recreational opportunities within the CMPA, and the BLM has been in consultation with the Steens Mountain Advisory Council (SMAC), local landowners, and other stakeholders throughout the planning process. A Decision Record is expected in 2015.

An IBLA ruling in September 2014 delayed the CRP decision. The IBLA decision affected the Steens Mountain CMPA Travel Management Plan (TMP) by designating obscure routes open to the public. The obscure routes were analyzed and included in a sub-alternative in the CRP. The sub-alternative has been presented to the public for a 30-day public comment period. The CRP Decision Record is expected to be issued in 2015.

Other Activities:

Chris Miller Memorial Steens Rim Run & Walk, conducted in August 2014, is a 10k Run & Walk on Steens Mountain Loop Road (the highest road in Oregon). The annual Steens Rim Run & Walk (better known as the "Rim Run") is a race unlike any other in the Pacific Northwest. With its high elevation, stunning views and scenery, unpredictable climate, and near steady climb from start to finish, the Rim Run brings a completely new meaning to "challenging 10K."

Steens Mountain Running Camp takes place in July each year. A grandfathered activity founded in 1975, the Steens Running Camp is an outdoor education, recreation, and fitness training camp for high school students. Each year more than 400 high school students from all parts of the United States, including Alaska, and in rare circumstances students from other countries, come to participate in the running camp. This event also provides an avenue to teach students about some of BLM's managed resources. BLM permits two, one-week running camps.

Rehabilitation work took place on Burnt Car road during 2014. As part of a settlement agreement, an effort was made to naturalize the appearance of the road by moving boulders and brush to establish a more sinuous, non-linear look. The ONDA volunteers will complete some of the finer details requiring handwork in April of 2015.

Volunteer Fence Pulls take place throughout the summer months. The purpose of this activity is to roll up fence material within Steens Mountain Wilderness that is no longer needed for management of livestock. Since the designation of the Steens Mountain Wilderness NLGA in 2000, volunteer groups such as ONDA, National Sierra Club, and Oregon Sierra Club have been active participants in the removal of fence. In 2014, volunteers logged over 400 hours of time removing over 2.5 miles of fence material in remote backcountry areas.

The Five Creeks Project is an ongoing landscape restoration project that encompasses 73,500 acres. The objective is to return vegetative communities to historic compositions and reduce hazardous fuel loads. In 2012, the Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI) and CMPA funding supported work throughout the Five Creeks Rangeland Restoration Project. In 2012, work occurred in Units 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Encroached juniper on approximately 566 upland acres were cut and left, 173 acres were cut and piled around riparian areas, 1,438 acres were burned, and approximately 1,130 acres were seeded following burning. Burning activities this year were focused on riparian, old growth juniper, sage grouse leks, and mahogany stands.

Riparian livestock enclosures were built along Smyth and Frog Creek—two perennial, fish-bearing streams. This eliminated livestock grazing along four stream miles. Prior to the enclosures, livestock management along these two streams was incompatible with riparian and fisheries objectives. Along Frog Creek, juniper had historically been cut and left along the channel. This limited livestock access to the stream, but also increased fuel loading at the site. Removing the downed juniper allowed for increased livestock access to the stream. Fencing was completed in October of 2012.

To help with fire protection of Riddle Brother's Ranch Historic District, noncommercial thinning and hand piling was used to reduce hazardous fuels in forest and woodland stands. The Riddle Brothers Ranch juniper management project consisted of noncommercial thinning and hand piling of approximately 40 acres of juniper woodlands in 2012 and 44 acres in 2013. In 2014, 15,000 acres were treated through a combination of burning, cutting, or piling.



Hand line dug by fire crews on western edge of Bone Creek Basin fire perimeter.

Wildfires consumed 20,000 acres within the CMPA in 2014. Two different fires managed as a Type 2 fire complex were designated the South Steens Complex Fire. The Bone Creek portion of the fire burned over 4.5 miles of allotment fence. Bone Creek Road, the access road used to fight the fire was damaged and required some rehabilitation after the fire. The work was performed with on-site equipment and consisted of removing the berms created by dozers and installing water bars where necessary. A fire-

line was dug on the extreme western edge of the fire in the wilderness by two, 20-person hand crews. The fire-line was rehabilitated with water bars after the fire was suppressed.

The Steens Mountain Loop Road was graded and maintained three times during the 2014 recreational season. The road was graded in the spring and fall, and during the South Steens Complex Fire, to repair damage done to the roads from fire engines, crew transports, heavy equipment transports, and other assets assigned to the fire.

Education, Outreach, and Interpretation

Interpretive signs at overlooks, trailheads, and campgrounds explain the history and meaning of geological structures, trails, and facilities within the CMPA. Kiosks in campgrounds provide additional information concerning local outdoor interests such as horseback riding, hiking and fishing. Brochures providing information on local areas are also distributed to local businesses throughout the community. Maps of the area can be obtained at the BLM Burns District Office.

The 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act presented an opportunity for the district archeologist to present historic and cultural significance of Steens Mountain Wilderness. The event was attended by both locals and non-locals, with a wide range of ages represented. Trail maintenance on Blitzen River Trail was performed after the presentation, and lunch was provided to all working volunteers.

In 2014, an effort was made to refurbish the signs and information kiosks in and around the CMPA. The OYCC crews replaced damaged signs, maps, information sheets, and repaired and painted kiosks bringing new life to the campgrounds, overlooks, and trails. The kids learned cultural significance by working with archeological technicians at the Gap Ranch, who were rehabilitating an historic Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) building. They learned the importance of wildlife management by maintaining aspen fences and installing water guzzlers.



OYCC Crew varnishing CMPA portal sign on the North Loop Road

Partnerships

The Steens Mountain Advisory Committee (SMAC) is a collaborative group from the community formed by the Steens Act. In 2013, the BLM worked closely with the SMAC to resolve issues while finalizing the CRP. In 2014, the SMAC provided recommendations for inholder access issues, and formed a sub-committee to meet with local landowners concerning access to recreation sites.

Volunteers



Volunteers at the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act placing stones in a boggy area of the Blitzen Trail

Volunteers removed approximately 2.5 miles of barbed-wire fence from the Wilderness in 2014. Four different groups from ONDA and the Sierra Club, both national and local chapters, participated. The Backcountry Horsemen Club completed work on installing steel corrals at the South Steens Equestrian Campground. They also cleared brush and trees from the lower section of Nye Trail and portions of Little Blitzen Trail. Youth groups such as the NYC and OYCC provided services for campground and trail

improvements. The BLM also coordinated route maintenance and improvements with the Harney County Four-Wheelers Club, a group dedicated to OHV activities.

Land (or Interests in Land) Acquisitions

Acquisition of the Brandis Parcels occurred in 2013. The acquisition added 33.92 acres to the Wilderness area and the BLM-administered lands in the CMPA. No new lands were acquired in 2014.

4 Science

Science

Life history of the Redband Trout is an on-going research project conducted by Ben Ramirez of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife. The study is being conducted on the main stem of the Donner und Blitzen Wild & Scenic River in the Wilderness. Requests for additional fish and vegetation studies have been received in 2014.

The Wildland Juniper Management Area continues to focus on research, experimentation, and demonstrations of varying treatment methods to control uncharacteristic expansion of juniper woodlands.

5 Resources, Objects, Values, and Stressors

Steens Mountain Wilderness Area

The Wilderness Area occupies two distinct parcels totaling 170,203 acres, of which 94,959 acres are a No-Livestock Grazing Area. The No-Livestock Grazing Area (NLGA) extends beyond the wilderness for a total of 97,229 acres (2,270 acres outside the Wilderness).

Objectives:

- Manage public visitation in the wilderness to provide naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation, and other features including ecological, geological, scientific, educational, scenic, and historic values.
- Accomplish necessary projects and activities occurring in wilderness with the minimum tool or requirement needed to achieve a desired result. The chosen tool, equipment, or structure is the one that least degrades wilderness values temporarily or permanently.
- Manage livestock grazing in wilderness under the stipulations of the Congressional Grazing Guidelines (HR 101-405 Appendix A).
- Provide for the level and type of commercial services necessary to enable the public to use, access, enjoy, and understand the recreational and other values of wilderness, emphasizing opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation, inspiration, and solitude.
- Allow for a level of reasonable access for the use and enjoyment of private inholdings while protecting the wilderness values.
- Manage to prevent and exclude motor vehicle and mechanical transport intrusions into the wilderness either on closed roads or off of roads, except where authorized by permitted use or during emergencies.

The CRP is being completed to better manage dispersed recreational opportunities. A decision is expected in 2015. Minimum Requirements Decision Guides are being used to analyze actions in the Wilderness and protect wilderness characteristics. Cattle no longer graze within the NLGA and the boundary fence is currently maintained. Special recreation permits provide a way to manage commercial and group operations in the CMPA. Access for recreationists and inholders is addressed through the travel management plan, the CRP, and guidance from the Steens Act.



Little Blitzen Gorge in the Steens Mountain Wilderness

Lush grasslands grow within NLGA. Recreation is a popular pastime along the Loop Road. Trailhead registers show that visitors are enjoying their time in the Steens. Volunteer groups keep coming back to do work every summer. An initial Wilderness Character Monitoring effort occurred in 2013, which will provide baseline for subsequent 5-year reports. Monitoring efforts continued in 2014, with an emphasis on primitive campsites and visitor encounters.

Steens Mountain Wilderness Area Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Upward

Steens Mountain Wilderness Area Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
428,446	170,203	170,203	170,203

Stressors Affecting Steens Mountain Wilderness Area

- Drought: Dry conditions, lower than “normal” snowpack.
- Motorized Traffic: Vehicles on the Loop Road spread weeds along its length.
- Invasive Weeds: Noxious weeds are spreading within the CMPA.
- Juniper: Invasive juniper trees are spreading beyond historical ranges.

Wild Horses: Wild horse populations are growing and competing for resources with cattle.
Inholdings: The increasing population of wild horses is moving into the NLGA. Motorized access to inholdings is a primary issue with inholders. Fencing around inholdings is also an important topic of discussion.

Riddle Brothers National Historic District

Objective:

- Stabilize, restore, or reconstruct significant historic structures to retain historical value and to provide public safety and recreational and interpretive opportunities.

The Buildings and grounds are kept maintained. A camp host lives onsite to provide interpretive talks and after hour’s security. The CRP will provide potable water for the camp host, visitors and some fire suppression capability.

The road leading to the grounds was improved in early 2013 by surfacing with gravel. In 2014, a grey water sump was installed at the Host Cabin. The portion of graveled road was graded in 2014. Visitation is steady.



Historic Ranch House and out buildings at the Riddle Brothers Ranch

Riddle Brothers National Historic District Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Upward

Riddle Brothers National Historic District Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
428,446	1,120	1,120	1,120

Stressors Affecting Riddle Brothers National Historic District

Drought:	Dry conditions increase fire risk at the ranch house area.
Motorized Traffic:	Vehicle traffic is limited at this time. Road improvements have been completed on the first half of the road from where it intersects Steens Mountain Road; however, the second half of the road to the ranch is not passenger car friendly. Most visitors park their car at the gate located halfway to the ranch and walk the rest of the way.
Invasive Weeds:	Noxious weeds are a concern.

Redband Trout Reserve

Objectives:

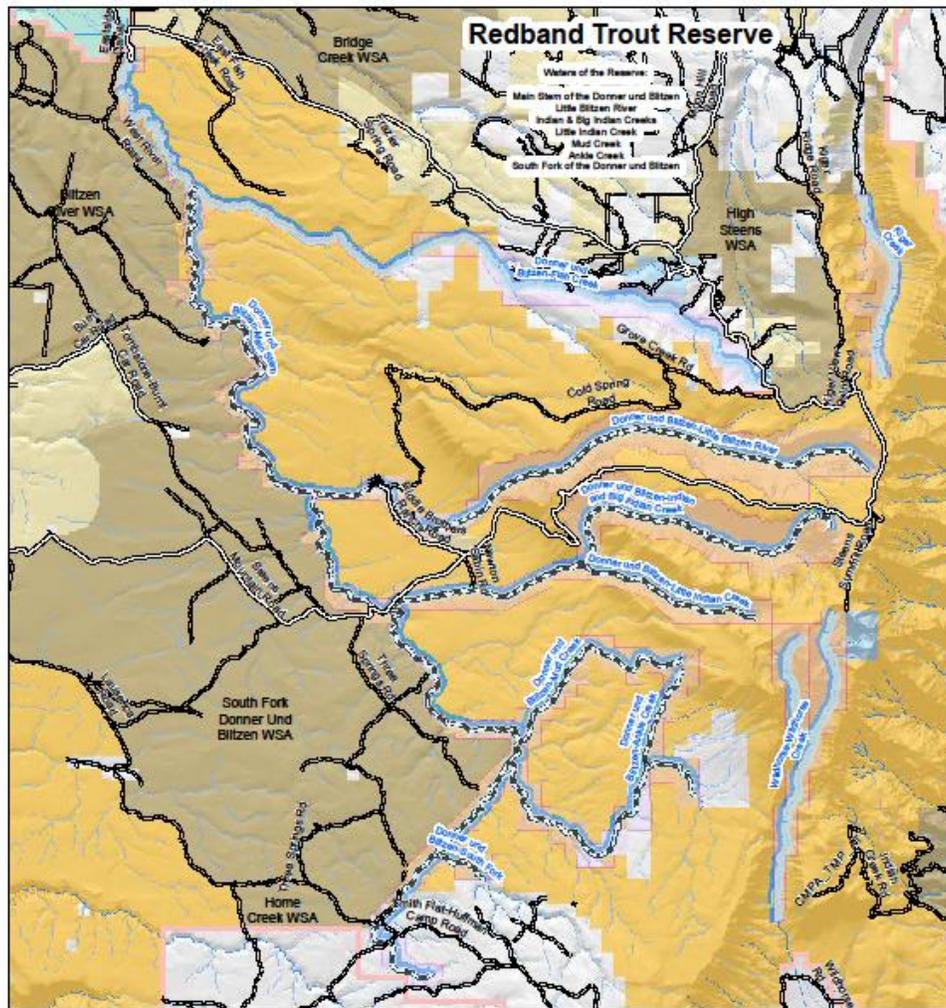
- Define the RTR boundary.
- Maintain genetic integrity of redband trout in the RTR.
- Increase the distribution and abundance of redband trout in the RTR through maintenance or restoration of habitat quality and quantity.

The Redband Trout Reserve begins at the confluence of Fish Creek and the Donner und Blitzen and continues upstream to the headwaters of the Donner und Blitzen WSR and its tributaries. The Steens Act created the NLGA, and in 2004, the last of the cattle were removed from the area.

Creation of the NLGA allowed stream banks to heal and the waters to run clearer. Riparian growth provides stream shading, allowing the waters to run colder.

Redband Trout Reserve Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Upward



- Redband Trout Reserve *
- Non-Paved Improved Road
- Natural/Unknown Road Surface
- Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area
- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- State
- Private/Unknown
- Steens Mtn Wilderness
- Wild and Scenic River
- Bums District Wilderness Study Areas
- Wild and Scenic River Corridors

* The Steens Act of 2000 defined the Redband Trout Reserve in the following terms: The Reserve consists of the Donner and Blitzen River in the Wilderness Area above its confluence with Fish Creek and the Federal riparian lands immediately adjacent to the river.

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
Bums District, Oregon

Note: No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data was compiled from various sources and may be updated without notification.



W:Wilderness
1/15/2015 12wilcox

Map of the Redband Trout Reserve at the Steens Mountain CMPA

Redband Trout Reserve Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
428,446	100 miles	100 miles	30 miles

Stressors Affecting Redband Trout Reserve

Drought: Water quality is affected by low water volumes and heat. Redband Trout are affected by increased water temperatures.

Wild & Scenic Rivers

Objective:

- Maintain the free-flowing character, protect, and enhance the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) of the designated WSRs.

The Steens Act created the NLGA and in 2004 the last of the cattle were removed from the area.

Creation of the NLGA allowed stream banks to heal, and the waters to run clearer. Riparian growth has allowed the waters to run colder. Water quality has improved.



Main Stem of the Donner und Blitzen Wild & Scenic River at the Bill Tabor Cabin crossing

Wild & Scenic Rivers Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Upward

Wild & Scenic Rivers Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
428,440	105 miles	105 miles	105 miles

Stressors Affecting Wild & Scenic Rivers

Drought: Water quality is affected by low water volumes and heat.

Wildland Juniper Management Area

Objective:

- Evaluate different treatments and management strategies for plant communities dominated by western juniper. Establish a series of demonstration areas within the 3,267-acre WJMA for technology transfer and public education.

The Steens Act created the WJMA for the purposes of experimentation, education, interpretation and demonstration of active and passive management intended to restore the historic fire regime and pre-settlement native vegetation communities on Steens Mountain.

The series of demonstration areas in the WJMA is on going.



Typical scenery found in the WJMA, with Steens Mountain in the background

Wildland Juniper Management Area Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Wildland Juniper Management Area Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
3,267	3,267	3,267	3,267

Stressors Affecting Wildland Juniper Management Area

Restoration of historic fire regimes in the CMPA is specified in the Steens Act.

Uncharacteristic juniper encroachment is altering ecological processes, including fire effects. The WJMA was established to provide an opportunity to demonstrate current management actions and evaluate applicability of new or untested management techniques.

Steens Mountain Loop Road

Objective:

- Manage roads and ways within the CMPA consistent with Route Management Categories and Maintenance Levels. Maintain or enhance the values for which the Loop Road was designated a National Backcountry Byway.

An improved gravel-surfaced road that loops through the high country of the Steens.

The loop road is well maintained. The Rooster Combs portion of the road was rebuilt in 2013 to make it wider and install a vehicle berm on the precipice side. Routine maintenance was performed on the road in 2014.

Steens Mountain Loop Road Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Upward

Steens Mountain Loop Road Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
56 miles	56 miles	56 miles	56 miles



Recently maintained section of the Steen Mountain Loop Road

Stressors Affecting Steens Mountain Loop Road

Vehicle traffic: The Steens Mountain Loop Road receives relatively high vehicle use. Counters used to monitor use have proven unreliable due to sensitivity, not only to passing vehicles, but also to dust, rain, fog, and snow, thereby skewing the results. Maintenance activity on the road is a better indication of use. Heavy use causes “washboarding” of the roadbed. A grader is stationed on the road throughout the visitor use months to keep the road maintained.

Drought has hindered maintenance efforts. The dry, dusty road is difficult to grade because the surfacing does not pack well, requiring more maintenance than would be necessary if there were more moisture in the roadbed.

Invasive weeds proliferate along the roadside throughout the length of the Steens Mountain Loop Road. Vehicle traffic continues to carry and disperse noxious weed seeds.

Wilderness Study Areas

Objective:

- Manage existing WSAs so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness.

There are five WSAs within the CMPA that are managed to the non-impairment standard.

No new installations have been created and no old installations have been removed. Lesser used primitive routes within the units are becoming less defined on the ground over time, while others retain their footprint.

Wilderness Study Areas Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Wilderness Study Areas Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
428,440	118,500	118,500	30,000



Intersection of primitive routes in the South Fork Donner und Blitzen WSA

Stressors Affecting Wilderness Study Areas

- Climate Change:** Drought and wildfire are influencing the character of the WSAs.
- Invasive Weeds:** Noxious weeds are a concern.
- Competition for Resources:** Wild horses are competing with permitted cattle for water and forage. Water developments in drier areas reduce stress.

6 Summary of Performance Measure

Resources, Objects, and Values Status Summary Table		
Resource, Object, or Value	Status	Trend
Steens Mountain Wilderness	Good	Upward
Riddle Bros. National Historic District	Good	Upward
Redband Trout Reserve	Good	Upward
Wild & Scenic Rivers	Good	Improving
Wildland Juniper Mgmt. Area	Good	Stable
Steens Mountain Loop Road	Good	Upward
Wilderness Study Areas	Good	Stable

7 Manager's Letter

The Comprehensive Recreation Plan Environmental Assessment was completed in 2014 and distributed for a final 30-day comment on January 12, 2015. The BLM's proposed action identifies some routes within the CMPA as closed; some are to be left open to the public; and some used for administrative purposes by the BLM, permittees, and contractors. Further, one route would be designated for Off Highway Vehicles (OHV). A Decision Record is expected in March of 2015. The plan further includes additional trail designations, vehicle parking areas accessing wilderness, two equestrian campgrounds, informational signs, and installation of additional vault toilets. Projects will be evaluated, with adaptive management driving their implementation as funding becomes available.

The BLM stepped up its visual trail and campsite monitoring efforts in 2014 with the hiring of seasonal staff. Monitoring will be expanded even more in 2015 with the installation of additional thermal sensing trail counters and vehicle counters.

The CMPA has 90 miles of designated trails, and the district does not have an official trails maintenance crew or dedicated trails maintenance funding. However, each year 1-3 miles of trail are maintained by paid youth crews such as the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps and Northwest Youth Corps. Funds have been requested to increase these efforts through 3 youth groups in 2015.

Volunteer efforts have been another area of focus for the recreation program. The BLM supplies volunteers with training, tools, and personal protective equipment to repair or build new fences and remove older fence caches. Their efforts enhance the naturalness of the Wilderness and were celebrated in 2014 with National Public Lands Day and 50th Anniversary of Wilderness events.

The BLM's National Conservation Lands System will be implementing a new signage program in 2015 to include a new "common look and feel" format. The district has developed a sign plan to request funding for replacement of most signs throughout the CMPA.

Looking forward, the future of the Steens looks positive. The Steens Mountain CMPA is a popular destination that is sought by many who enjoy the myriad of recreational opportunities that it has to offer. There are issues to tackle, drought, fencing, Greater sage-grouse habitat, public access, inholder access, wildfire, noxious weeds, grazing, wild horses, and competition for resources. However, we are fortunate to have a dedicated Advisory Council and enthusiastic partners and volunteers to assist with their resolution. Efforts continue to grow the recreational program within the CMPA through better planning, youth programs, and community support.



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

Steens Mountain

Cooperative Management and Protection Area

Bureau of Land Management
Burns District Office
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January 30, 2015

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