

Wilderness Inventory Unit Index of Documents
Little Groundhog Reservoir OR-036-095, 12 total pages

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

APPENDIX B – INVENTORY AREA EVALUATION

Evaluation of Current Conditions:

- 1) Document and review the existing BLM wilderness inventory findings on file, if available, regarding the presence or absence of individual wilderness characteristics, using Form 1, below.
- 2) Consider relevant information regarding current conditions available in the office to identify and describe any changes to the existing information (use interdisciplinary (ID) team knowledge, aerial photographs, field observations, maps, etc.), and document your findings on Form 2, below.

When Citizen Information has been submitted regarding wilderness characteristics, document the submitted materials including: date of Submission; Name of District(s) and Field Office(s) Affected; Type of material Submitted (e.g. narrative, map, photos). Evaluate any submitted citizen information regarding the validity of proposed boundaries of the unit(s), the existence of roads and other boundary features, the size of the unit(s), and the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics based on relevant information available in the office (prior BLM inventories, ID team knowledge, aerial photographs, field observations, maps, etc.)

Conduct field reviews as necessary to verify information and to ascertain current conditions. Reach conclusions on current conditions including boundaries, size of areas and presence or absence of wilderness characteristics. Fully explain the basis for each conclusion on form 2, including any critical differences between BLM and citizen information.

Document your findings regarding current conditions for each inventoried area. Describe how the present conditions are similar to, or have changed from, the conditions documented in the original wilderness inventory. Document your findings on Form 2 for each inventory area. Cite to or attach data considered, including photographs, maps, GIS layers, field trip notes, project files, *etc.*

Year: 2011 **Unit Number/Name:** OR-036-095 — Little Groundhog Reservoir

**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?

Yes No (If yes, and if more than one unit is within the area, list the names of those units.):

NOTE: There is no existing BLM 1970's wilderness inventory information for this unit.

A.) Inventory Source(s) -- (X) Denotes all applicable BLM Inventory files, printed maps, or published BLM Decision documents with information pertaining to this unit.

Wilderness Inventories

- () 1978 – BLM Wilderness Inventory Units (unpublished BLM documents stored in Vale District case files)
- () April 1979 – *Wilderness -- Proposed Initial Inventory – Roadless Areas and Islands Which Clearly Do Not have Wilderness Characteristics, Oregon and Washington*

Wilderness Decision Documents

- () August 1979 – *Wilderness Review – Initial Inventory, Final Decision on Public Lands Obviously Lacking Wilderness Characteristics and Announcement of Public Lands to be Intensively Inventoried for Wilderness Characteristics, Oregon and Washington* (green document)
- () October 1979 – *Wilderness Review – Intensive Inventory - Oregon, Proposed Decision on the Intensive Wilderness Inventory of Selected Areas* (grey document).
- () March 1980 – *Wilderness Review – Intensive Inventory; Final Decisions on 30 Selected Units in Southeast Oregon and Proposed Decisions on Other Intensively Inventoried Units in Oregon and Washington* (orange document)
- () November 1980 - *Wilderness Inventory – Oregon and Washington, Final Intensive Inventory Decisions* (brown document)
- () November 1981 *Stateline Intensive Wilderness Inventory Final Decision, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Utah* (tan document).

B.) Inventory Unit Name(s)/Number(s)

N/A

C.) Map Name(s)/Number(s)

- () Final Decision – Initial Wilderness Inventory Map, August 1979, Oregon
- () Proposed Decision -- Intensive Wilderness Inventory of Selected Areas Map, October 1979, Oregon
- () Intensive Wilderness Inventory Map, March 1980, Oregon
- () Intensive Wilderness Inventory --Final Decisions Map, November 1980, Oregon.
- () November, 1981 *Stateline Intensive Wilderness Inventory Final Decision, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Utah* (tan document).

D.) BLM District(s)/Field Office(s)

Vale District Office

Jordan Field Office

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):

Inventory Source: See above.

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

*-There was no existing BLM old inventory folder(s) for this unit.

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FORM 2 -- DOCUMENTATION OF CURRENT WILDERNESS INVENTORY CONDITIONS

Unit Number/Name: OR-036-095 — Little Groundhog Reservoir

Description of Current Conditions: [Include land ownership, location, topography, vegetation features and summary of major human uses/activities.]

1. Is the unit of sufficient size?

Yes X No

Description: Refer to this inventory unit's associated Map 1 for BLM's Unit Little Groundhog Reservoir OR-036-095 location. BLM Unit OR-036-095 does not contain any acreage that was inventoried during the original 1970's inventory. The 5,272 acre unit OR-036-095 in Form 2 is calculated from BLM GIS information. The unit is bounded on its northwest side by an un-numbered BLM Road, on its east and south sides by State of Oregon land parcels, on its west side by Malheur County Road 927 and the utility corridor right-of-way for Malheur County Road 927. The natural-surfaced boundary roads receive mechanical maintenance as needed to keep them passable on a regular and continuous (seasonal) basis.

2. Is the unit in a natural condition?

Yes X No N/A

Description: Given its size relative to the evidence of man-made developments, BLM Unit OR-036-095 appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature to the average visitor. The unit is dominated by an elevated plateau and extended nearly flat terrain that overlooks the break lands of Cherry Creek and the North Fork of the Owyhee River drainages. The plateau contains numerous small drainages in addition to Cherry Creek that flow to the south into the North Fork of the Owyhee River. The unit contains only one other small drainage that flows westward into the main stem of the Owyhee River. Elevation within the unit ranges from 3,880 feet to 4,843 feet, with the upper elevations located mostly in the unit's central plateau area while the unit's lower elevations are located in the unit's southwestern boundary area along the North Fork of the Owyhee River. Sparsely populated vegetation throughout the unit consists predominately of big and low sagebrush with both native and non-native grass species within the plateau.

The river and creek break lands and drainages contain both individual and pockets of juniper trees with native grass understory. Cherry Creek drainage and to a greater extent the main drainage channel of the North Fork of the Owyhee River are populated with numerous species of woody and herbaceous riparian vegetation.

Refer to this inventory unit's associated Map 1 and Map 2 for its human developments. They include 4.9 miles of 6 motorized primitive trails (MPT), 6 earthen reservoirs, 1.0 miles of fence line, and 2 vegetation manipulation treatments conducted in 1961 and 1983. The 1961 vegetation chemical treatment was conducted over approximately 165 acres located in the extreme southwestern portion of the plateau and the 1983 prescribed burn occurred throughout 2,300 acres of the plateau from the eastern end of the chemical treatment and eastward to the western edge of the Cherry Creek breaks. Presently, to the average visitor, the vegetation treatments conducted in the unit appear as a whole, individually and collectively, mostly indistinguishable across the landscape. Because the imprint of humans is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor the unit appears affected primarily by the forces of nature.

3. Does the unit have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

Yes No N/A

Description: BLM's Unit OR-036-095 contains outstanding opportunities for solitude. The outstanding opportunities for solitude are attributed to the isolated, intimate seclusion of canyon lands within the confines of the Wild and Scenic River boundaries of the North Fork of the Owyhee River. The meandering character of the canyons and water courses provides excellent topographic screening between visitor groups traveling close together. The depth of the canyons, combined with limited viewing distances, create a tremendous sense of seclusion or separation for visitors. The length of canyons allows visitor groups to easily find campsites which are out of sight and sound of other groups and to adjust their rates of travel to avoid other groups while floating or hiking.

The cold-desert plateau lands located above the breaks of the North Fork of the Owyhee River canyon have received vegetation altering treatments reducing the natural sagebrush over vast areas of the landscape within the unit. The treated areas on the plateau within the unit contain lower quality and availability of outstanding opportunities for solitude offered to visitors because of the reduced vegetation screening and the natural lack of topographic diversity across the terrain.

4. Does the unit have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?

Yes No N/A

Description: BLM's Unit OR-036-095 contains outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The scenic natural features and diversity of rugged landforms of BLM Unit OR-036-095 attract people interested in hunting, backpacking and river running and secondary activities of sight-seeing, outdoor photography, wildlife viewing, botanical studies, float boating, and fishing.

Within the boundaries of BLM Unit OR-036-095 the North Fork of the Owyhee River has been included within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The miles of

canyons, their diversely and eroded rock landscapes and their steep slopes create a sense of isolation or solitude, thereby enhancing the primitive recreation experience. Visitors traveling in or near the canyons are constantly aware of the forces of nature. Hiking the rugged canyons and plateau without the aid of established trails provides a natural and arduous recreational challenge which heightens the primitive experience.

Talus slopes of the canyons encourage travel both near the river and on the plateau. Recreational use of the plateau areas above the break lands of the river concentrate near the canyon rims. These rimrock areas often offer less arduous hiking conditions than those in the canyons and provide opportunities for spectacular vistas of the canyons below. Hiking on the plateau also provides an opportunity to experience vast, open spaces.

River running opportunities on the North Fork of the Owyhee River are of exceptionally high quality and considered nationally significant. The challenge and excitement of whitewater rapids add significantly to the boating experience. The unit also provides outstanding hunting of big horn sheep which qualifies the unit as providing opportunities for outstanding primitive and unconfined recreation.

California bighorn sheep habitat is identified in the river corridor, a species dependent upon wildlands habitat for survival. Although the opportunity to hunt Bighorn sheep within the unit may exist, BLM does not find it to be outstanding due to the limited terrain within the area that Bighorn sheep occupy and utilize on a regular basis (e.g., rugged, rocky, cliffy or steep-sloped terrain). Moreover, while this area is included within the identified potential habitat for Bighorn sheep, no local sheep herd is known to inhabit or move through the area within the parcel.

However, this unit does provide outstanding hunting of big horn sheep which qualifies the unit as providing opportunities for outstanding for primitive and unconfined recreation. The present inventory agrees with the 1980 inventory in that while opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation exist, they are not considered outstanding; yet the opportunity for a quality big horn sheep hunt probably did not exist in the late 1970s (due to a stable population not being established at that time) and therefore the unit presently provides for outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

5. Does the unit have supplemental values?

Yes X No N/A

Description: BLM's Unit OR-036-095 contains the North Fork of the Owyhee River Wild and Scenic River corridor that is rich in features including scenic, scientific, wildlife and cultural values. The special features within the corridor contribute to the overall quality of obtaining a wilderness experience.

The canyons of the North Fork of the Owyhee River system are of exceptionally high scenic quality. The combination of moving water, colorful sheer cliffs, grass-covered talus slopes and blue sky creates a dramatic, stark beauty. In places, reddish brown cliffs drop hundreds of feet to the water. These fractured, blocky rock monoliths are tinted with brilliant green, yellow and orange microflora. Near the base of the cliffs, water sometimes seeps from the fractures to nourish small, lush, clinging, deep green plant communities. The monoliths are frequently topped with a multitude of diversely eroded spires. The sheer rock walls often give way to steep slopes covered with a mosaic of red rock rubble and subdued green and yellow sagebrush and grasses.

Sensitive wildlife species found in the Owyhee River corridor system include California bighorn sheep, river otter, and redband trout. Of particular concern is the population of bighorn sheep, a species dependent upon wildlands habitat for survival.

BLM has documented one sage grouse lek within the unit. The bird is a BLM special status animal species.

The North Fork of the Owyhee River corridor contains both historic and prehistoric archaeological sites.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: OR-036-095 — Little Groundhog Reservoir

Summary Results of Analysis:

- 1. Does the area meet any of 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.

The area does not have wilderness character.

Prepared by: Jack Wenderoth 11-16-11
Jack Wenderoth, Planning Contractor

Team Members:

<u>Keri Fredrick</u>	<u>11-16-11</u>
Keri Fredrick, Outdoor Recreation Planner	Date
<u>Aimee Huff</u>	<u>11/16/2011</u>
Aimee Huff, Rangeland Management Specialist	Date
<u>Eian Ray</u>	<u>11-16-11</u>
Eian Ray, GIS Specialist, Contractor	Date
<u>Garth Ross</u>	<u>11/14/2011</u>
Garth Ross, Wildlife Biologist	Date
<u>Brent Grasty</u>	<u>11/16/11</u>
Brent Grasty, GIS Coordinator	Date

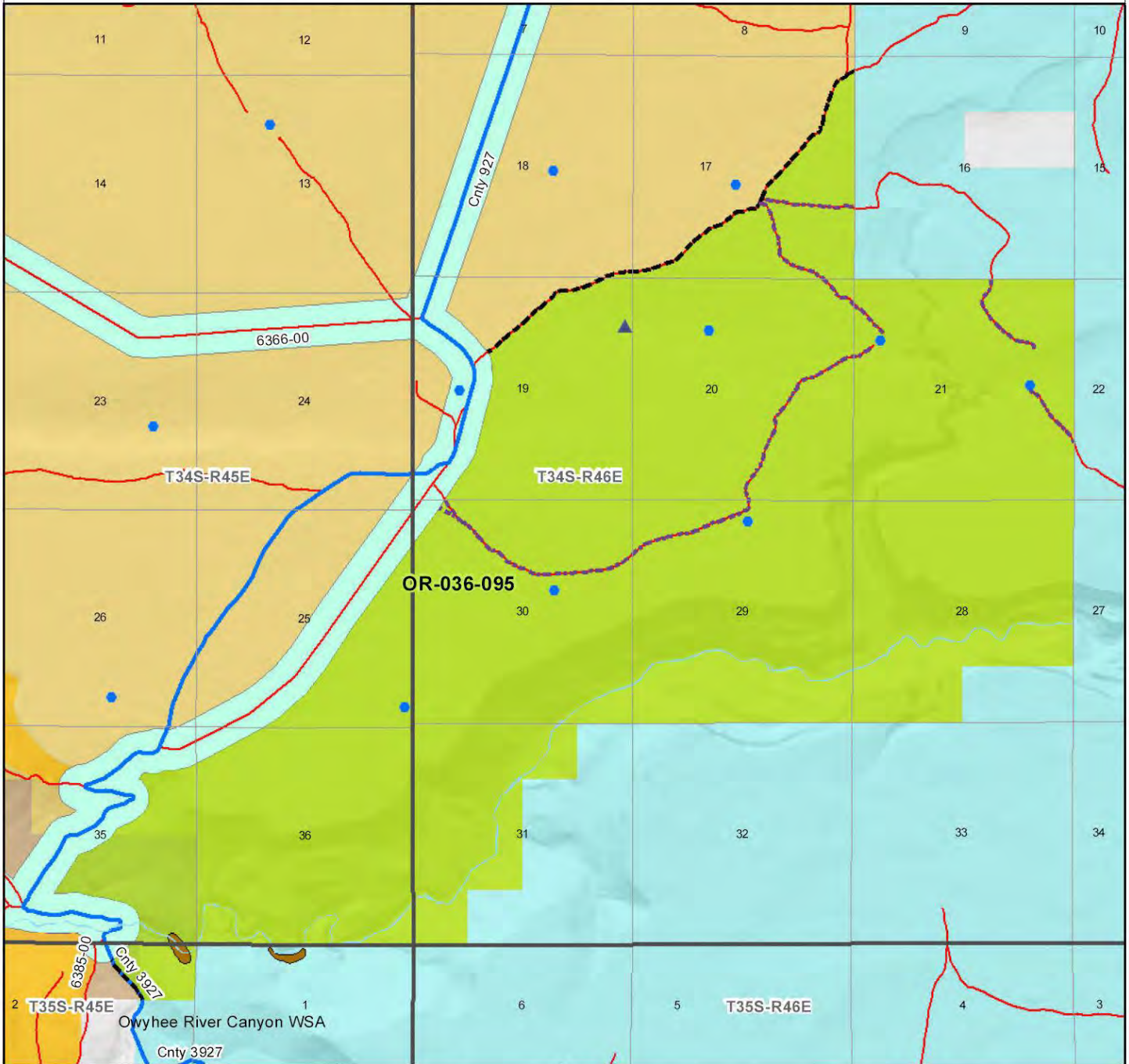
Approved by:

Carolyn Erebhorn 11/28/2011
Carolyn Erebhorn, Jordan Resource Area Field Manager 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 either 43 CFR parts 4 or 1610.5-2.

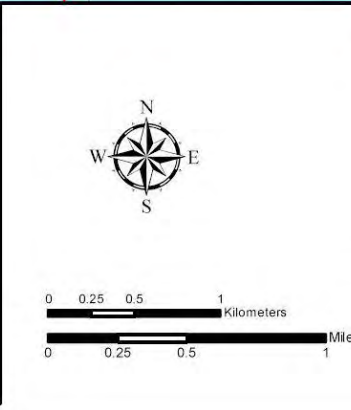
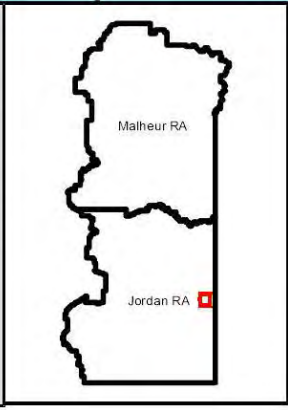
Wilderness Characteristics - Overview

Little Groundhog Reservoir - OR-036-095 - Map 1 of 1



Legend

Developed Spring	Boundary Road
Wildlife Guzzler	Motorized Primitive Trail (MPT)
Earthen Reservoir	Discontinued Use
Pipeline	Routes - Outside Wild Char Unit
Trough	County
Fence	Major Highway
Storage Tank	BLM Numbered & Other Routes
Surface Mining Disturbance	Land Ownership
Sage Grouse Lek	Bureau of Land Management
Special Status Plant	State
BLM Wild Char Inventory Unit	Private
Wilderness Study Area	Other Federal Land
Mineral Material Site	
Road/Utility Right-of-Way	
Major Water Body	



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

VALE DISTRICT
November 2, 2011

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