

JAN 28 2010

**WILDERNESS INVENTORY MAINTENANCE
IN BLM OREGON/WASHINGTON**
(Source: Oregon State Office Internal Guidance as of July 2007)

VALE DISTRICT B.L.M.

Year: 2009 Inventory Unit Number/Name: Rocky Basin, 2-17

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

a) Inventory Source: Wilderness Review Intensive Inventory (March, 1980), Pages 33-35.

b) Inventory Unit Name(s)/Number(s): Rocky Basin, 2-17

c) Map Name(s)/Number(s): March, 1980; Final Decision for 30 Selected Inventory Units.

d) BLM District(s)/Field Office(s): Burns District – Three Rivers Resource Area and Vale District-Malheur Resource Area.

2. BLM Inventory Findings on Record:

Inventory Source: Wilderness Review-Intensive Inventory, March, 1980, Pages 33-35.

Unit#/Name	Size (historic acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N
2-17E, Rocky Basin*	5,980	N	N	N	Y

*Other subunits A, B, C, D, and F were all less than 5,000 acres in size.

**FORM 2 - DOCUMENTATION OF CURRENT WILDERNESS
INVENTORY CONDITIONS**

Unit Number/Name: 2-17, Rocky Basin

(1) Is the unit of sufficient size?

Current Unit Acres: 11,360 Yes X No _____

Citizen Information Received: On September 19, 2007, the BLM Burns District received a citizen proposal from the Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) for a 16,684 acre Cottonwood proposed Wilderness Study Area (WSA). ONDA included in their information a narrative report, maps, photos, photo and route logs and GIS data with their route and photo point data, all of which were considered as part of the wilderness inventory process for this BLM unit. The photos submitted by ONDA were taken in July of 2005.

ONDA identified the Cottonwood proposed WSA as having no routes within the area which met their definition of a boundary road. As described below, the BLM also conducted a boundary road determination process and found that several of ONDA's "ways" are still boundary roads. It is BLM's finding that ONDA's Cottonwood proposed WSA is a roadless unit made of four, original, smaller, BLM units identified by the 1979 and 1980 wilderness inventory effort. In addition, ONDA's proposed WSA includes a parcel of public land adjoining the original units on the northeast.

ID-team Meetings: An ID-team consisting of BLM staff from the Burns District met on January 29, 2009, to evaluate this unit. Prior to the ID-team meeting Dave Vickstrom, Wilderness Specialist and Laura Dowlan, Environmental and Planning Coordinator, reviewed ONDA photos to identify those which applied to this BLM unit for review by the Interdisciplinary (ID)-team. The ID-team was also provided with ONDA's narrative and maps as well as BLM's current and past maps and photographs of routes/areas in the unit plus other past inventory descriptions. The ID-team consisted of wilderness, range and planning staff. Wildlife, archaeology, geology and forestry staff were also consulted.

BLM's Boundary Road Determination Process: BLM conducted a route analysis, including a field check to verify the current conditions for the boundary roads identified for the unit. District staff were also contacted prior to the ID-team meeting and provided information about current uses of routes by mining personnel, BLM personnel, grazing permittees, and other publics.

Some of the interior routes not identified as boundary roads may have been mechanically improved or maintained at some point and may be maintained in the future as needed. Most are in a useable condition, but during the field review, relatively regular use was not evident and other supporting information about regular use was not observed in the field or identified in the ID-team meeting. Therefore, these routes were not recognized as boundary roads.

Boundary changes since 1980: The current unit is composed of the original subunit 2-17E which met the size criteria and subunits 2-17A, B and C which were dropped from intensive inventory because they were less than 5,000 acres in size. Subunit 2-17F is not included in the current WIM unit.

The eastern boundary (BLM Road 6266-0-OO, alias ONDA's 217e) is the same except for the southeastern corner where it meets the Mill Gulch Access Road. ONDA's report said the road is a way.

Mill Gulch Access Road, in addition to private and state land and CNTY 302 Road (Altnow-Beulah Lane), is the unit's current southern boundary. The current mining operations are located on the private and state land. The southern end of the west boundary has also changed since Eagle-Picher Mine constructed and maintains the Beede Access Road. This road now accesses private land, a short section of BLM 6263-0-AO (Beede Desert Road), and CNTY 301 (Cottonwood Reservoir Road/ North Cottonwood Road) to the northwest to form the western boundary of the unit. No mining areas are within the inventory unit. An area of approximately 44 acres on BLM lands in Hidden Valley (outside of the southwest corner of the inventory unit) was also excluded because of surface impacts from mining exploration (scarred sampling sites, low-standard access routes, cleared monitoring-well sites).

One route change which greatly influences the size of the unit is the current identification of the original boundary between the original subunits B and E as a way, rather than a road. ONDA's narrative indicated this route as barely visible, overgrown, rocky, and nearly impassable way (photos HJ26, HJ34, HJ35, HJ39). BLM Photo Points XG-16, photos 52, 53 and XG-20, photos 67, 68) show the route as passable with a high-clearance vehicle, but with extremely steep grades. The route is washed out at a stream crossing in the bottom of Rocky Basin. Portions of this route may be part of the Meek's Lost Wagon Train Route of 1846.

Another route change is the identification of BLM 6263-0-AO (Beede Desert Road), which in its current state, accesses Rocky Basin from the north and south as two cherry-stem boundary roads (BLM Photo Points XG-22, photos 72,73; XG-23, photos 76,77; XG-24, photo 80; XG-25, photos 88, 89; XG-26, photos 91, 92; and XG-27, photos 94, 95. This route is washed out in Rocky Basin but is currently passable for pickups, SUVs, 4-wheelers and off-highway motorcycles (BLM Photo Points XG-18, photos 62, 63 and XG-24, photo 79). The BLM does not intend to maintain this section of the route, as it washes out with annual spring thaws and summer thunderstorms. ONDA's narrative identified this route as 217ae (photo HJ41), and route 217b (photos HJ36 and HJ37).

Current Unit Boundaries: (See BLM Unit Character Map): The routes forming boundaries were driven during field review in 2008 and 2009. All have been mechanically constructed, maintained and improved in the past, and will continue to be maintained as needed to allow for high-clearance vehicle passage for public land users.

The current Rocky Basin inventory unit is composed of BLM lands managed by Vale and Burns Districts.

The following describes the boundaries of Rocky Basin WIM Unit:

- N. boundary: Private land; No Photos
- E. boundary: BLM 6266-0-OO Road (N. of Eagle-Picher mining operations);
ONDA Photos: HJ17, HJ20, HJ23
BLM Photo Pts.: AG-8 thru AG-11; XG-1 thru XG-8
Mill Gulch Road;
ONDA Photos: HJ15, HJ16
BLM Photos: None; Aerial Photo w/ route analysis form;
Private and State lands
- S. boundary: CNTY 302 Road (Altnow-Beulah Lane); Private Land
ONDA Photos: HJ1, HJ2
BLM Photos: None
- W. boundary: Beede Access Road
ONDA Photos: HJ3-HJ6; HJ7 (pr. land), HJ8 (pr. land)
BLM Photos: None
Beede Desert Road
ONDA Photos: HJ36, HJ37, HJ41
BLM Photos: XG-18; XG-22 thru XG-27
CNTY 301 (Cottonwood Reservoir Road) and N. Cottonwood Road
ONDA Photos: HJ9-11; HJ42-44
BLM Photos: None

Interior Boundary Road: BLM 6263-0-AO) (Beede Desert Road) , once a through-route is now two cherry-stem roads entering the west central section of the unit from the north and the south (see previous descriptions under **Boundary changes since 1980**). The ID-team reviewed ONDA photos and based on the team's knowledge of the routes concurred that the route has been mechanically improved or maintained at some point. The north and south sections of the route will continue to be maintained, if needed (excluding the section of the wash-out). The route will continue to be utilized to check range developments, access range condition monitoring sites and provide access to a private 40-acre parcel. The grazing permittee will continue to use the route to check livestock and place salt and mineral blocks at various locations.

(2) Is the unit in a natural condition?

Yes X No N/A

1980 Unit Description: The unit is located six miles northeast of the small rural community of Drewsey. The 1980 Inventory Report noted the unit contained desert lowlands, gently rolling hills and a high, flat plateau with elevations ranging from 3,700 to 5,088 feet. The dominant vegetation is big sage, grass and juniper. The description indicated the presence of the following range developments-six reservoirs, five miles of

fence, six vehicle ways (motorized primitive trails) totaling about seven miles, and fire trails. Subunit 2-17E was the only unit that met the 5,000 acre minimum size criteria, but was not natural due to the number of developments concentrated in the central portion of the area and its relatively small size.

Current Condition Description: The current unit contains more land area, as it combines a number of the 1980 original, smaller subunits to create a much larger-sized unit (see Rocky Basin Unit Character Map). The E-W route which divided the Rocky Basin Unit into subunit B to the north and subunit E to the south is no longer a road and, the Beede Desert Road is now cherry-stemmed due to a washed-out section in Rocky Basin.

A north-south trending ridge divides the unit and creates a long, narrow western portion (less than one mile wide). The well-graded county road (Cottonwood Reservoir Road) which is most of the unit's west boundary greatly influences the naturalness of this area. However, the eastern portion of the unit containing Rocky Basin and surrounding high plateau country makes an area of naturalness southward to where mining operations are obvious.

The unit is within five grazing allotments, the north half in Castle Rock (Vale District) and Cottonwood Creek, the south half in Rocky Basin, Tub Springs-Hart, and Mill Gulch. Fences have been constructed along the eastern and a small portion of the western boundaries. An allotment boundary fence divides the unit from E-W and a number of interior fences divide the allotments into pastures. Pasture fences have generally been built through the center of the unit, but, since much of this area has rough, convoluted topography, these fences are not obvious to the casual observer. There are fourteen small reservoirs with about half of them in the extremely rough, central portion, which are not obvious to the casual observer. The ID-team found that many of these developments and treatments were dispersed enough that the imprint of humans is still appears to be substantially unnoticeable and that the unit is in a natural condition to the average visitor. This finding is generally consistent with ONDA's proposal for their Cottonwood Unit, which they found to be natural as a whole.

The primary human uses in the upper three-quarters of the unit and the surrounding area are associated with livestock grazing while the lower, southern quarter has several mining areas (not depicted on this unit's associated Character Map) that have been developed for the removal of diatomaceous earth. These surface mines are quite obvious to the casual observer. The unit currently has the following developments (**See Unit Character Map**):

- Fences: 20.6 miles
- Reservoirs: 14
- Seedings: 285 acres
- Boundary roads: 23.5 miles
- Non-boundary roads: 8.3 miles

(3) Does the unit have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

Yes No N/A

1980 Unit Description: Subunit 2-17E has topographic diversity, but it is not sufficient to compensate for the general lack of vegetative screening and small size. The subunit does not have outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Current Condition Description: Only that portion of the inventory unit that is in a natural condition is subject to a finding for outstanding opportunities for solitude. This is the central core of the unit (Rocky Basin and some surrounding adjacent unit lands). The size, ruggedness, lack of much vehicular access and few people visiting or using this basin area is conducive to creating a place and atmosphere of solitude. ONDA's report expressed the opinion that the rolling hills, many which are juniper-covered, and scattered canyons offered the topography and vegetative screening to produce opportunities for outstanding solitude.

The southern portion of the unit (about one-fourth) would not offer opportunities for solitude due to the nearby mining operations for diatomaceous earth by Eagle-Picher Mine. The mined areas are not within the inventory unit, but the sights and sounds of mining can be seen and heard from many locations within the unit. This material is locatable, so claims have been posted in surrounding areas.

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

Yes No N/A

1980 Unit Description: The subunit offered opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and hunting; however, these opportunities were not outstanding.

Current Condition Description: Only that portion of the inventory unit that is in a natural condition was considered for outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. ONDA felt the increased size of their proposed WSA enhanced these recreation opportunities to make them outstanding and the geologic features would also provide outstanding opportunities for rock hounding and geologic study.

While the recreation opportunities identified by both BLM and ONDA may be present, their diversity and quality are not unlike that which can be found on public lands in the much of eastern Oregon in the Northern Great Basin region. After reviewing the information submitted, the ID-team found that the recreation opportunities present in that part of the unit which is natural are not unique and do not present characteristics, either individually or collectively, that would result in them being outstanding.

(5) Does the unit have supplemental values?

Yes No N/A

1980 Unit Description: The unit is critical deer winter habitat.

Current Condition Description: The unit provides critical deer winter range and there is evidence of elk and turkeys using the area. There is an isolated, small pine grove along the current west boundary of the Kelly Mine. There are no known Greater Sage Grouse leks in this unit. One lek is in the BLM Cottonwood Creek Unit to the west of the Rocky Basin Unit. It is about two and one-fourth miles from this unit.

ONDA's report noted the presence of ponderosa pine, old growth juniper and water sources which added ecological value and provided excellent habitat for various wildlife species. The report also noted Greater Sage Grouse as a species of concern and that this area may provide prime habitat for this bird. It may also be habitat for the Burrowing Owl, Ferruginous Hawk and Swainson's Hawk, both Federal Species of Concern.

Unit Name and Number: Rocky Basin, 2-17

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
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: David E. Vickstrom, Wilderness Specialist

Unit Name and Number: Rocky Basin, 2-17

Team Members:

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Willie Street, Range Specialist, Burns District Date

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Bill Lutjens 2/8/10
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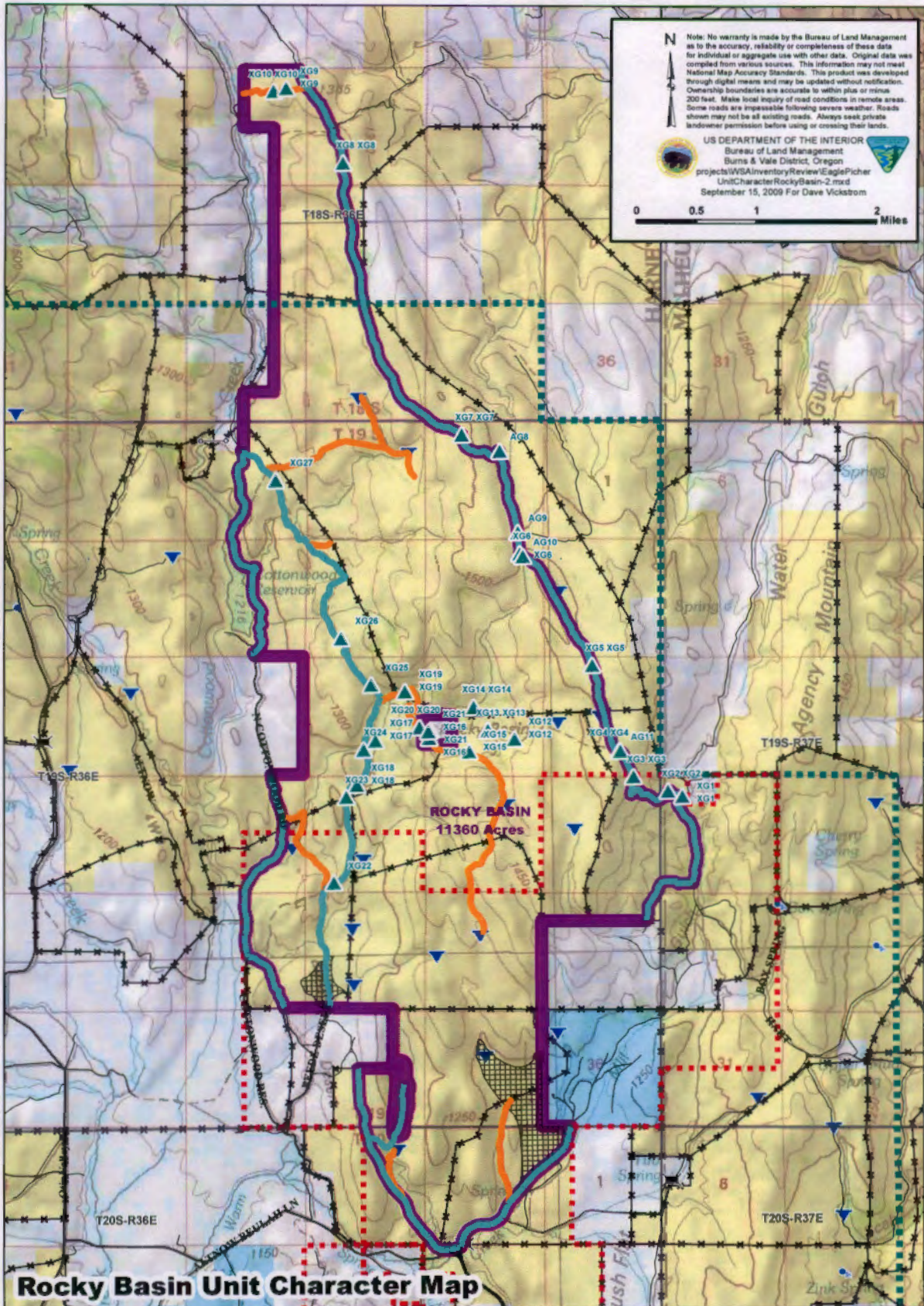
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This form documents information that constitutes an inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR parts 4 or 1610.5-2.02



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UnitCharacter\RockyBasin-2.mxd
September 15, 2009 For Dave Vickstrom

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Rocky Basin Unit Character Map

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rocky Basin Unit | MPO Boundary | Paved Road |
| Rocky Basin Unit Boundary Roads | Resource Area Boundary | Non-Paved Improved Road |
| Rocky Basin Non-Boundary Routes | CATTLE GUARD | Non-Boundary Routes |
| Seedings 285 Acres | GATE | Bureau of Land Management |
| BLM Photo Points | RESERVOIR | Wilderness Study Area |
| FENCE | SPRING | Private (White) |
| | WATERHOLE | State |