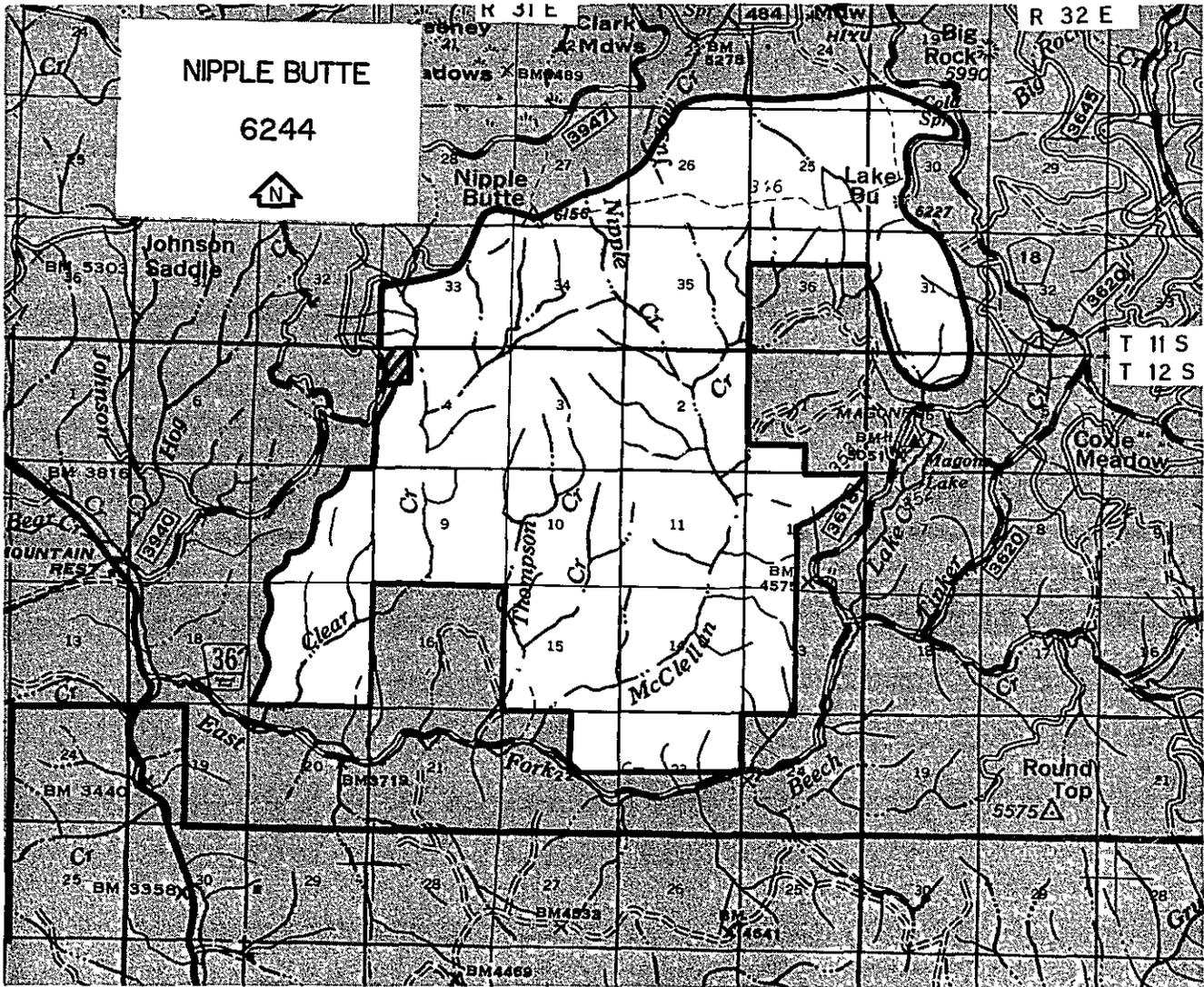


FIGURE C-15





**P. NIPPLE BUTTE - 11,525
Acres (RARE II No. 6244)**

1. Description

- a History** This area was inventoried in RARE and enlarged in the RARE II inventory The John Day Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement designated the area to nonwilderness uses.
- b. Location and Access** The Nipple Butte Roadless Area is in the northern portion of the Forest, about seven miles north of John Day, Oregon. The area is accessed by Forest roads along or near the entire boundary
- c. Geography and Topography** This rugged area is about 6 miles long and 4 miles wide Comprised primarily of steep, mountainous terrain, the rugged area is dissected by Clear Creek and McClellan Creek drainages. Elevation of the area varies from 6,000 feet near Lake Butte to 3,000 feet at the mouth of Clear Creek See Figure C-15
- d. Geology and Soils** Soils in the area are moderately deep, silt loam to clay in texture. The erosion hazard is moderately high to high, the mantle stability hazard is high. Volcanic flow and sedimentary rocks of Eocene age cover much of the area. An associated volcanic plug forms Nipple Butte. Miocene-age basalt flows and water-laid tuffs are exposed in the southwestern portion An associated volcanic vent is located on lower Clear Creek.
- e. Vegetation** This area is 83 percent forested Of these acres, about 2,000 meet the Pacific Northwest Region's definition of old growth. Vegetative cover is varied, with trees in the bottom and lower slopes while ridges and steeper sideslopes are grass covered Juniper, sagebrush, and mountain-mahogany occur on the south-facing, nonforested areas Ponderosa pine is the predominant tree species. It is intermingled with juniper and mountain-mahogany on some upland flats and sideslopes. Other areas support ponderosa pine, white fir, and Douglas-fir with pinegrass and elk sedge ground cover.
- f Current Use** The principal recreation use of the area is big-game hunting Other uses include fishing, bird-watching, photography, hiking, and viewing scenery from Nipple Butte.
- The area provides year-round habitat for mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, bear, small mammals, and birdlife. Clear Creek and McClellan Creek contribute to the flow of East Fork Beech Creek These streams provide spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead and resident trout
- The surrounding area consists of managed National Forest System lands The Magone Lake Recreational Area is adjacent to one point on the eastern boundary
- The major attraction of this area is the opportunity for big-game hunting

**2. Wilderness
Capability**

- a Manageability and Boundaries** The boundary of this area could be adjusted to improve manageability; however, this would reduce the size of the area

- b. **Natural Integrity** The natural appearance of the area has been impacted by grazing, recreation, and fire suppression
Grazing effects include cross-fencing through the center of the area, stock-water troughs, salt and dusting grounds, vegetative trampling, and physical presence of cattle. These impacts are few and well scattered.
- Recreational use impacts include a few fire rings and undeveloped hunter camps with soil compaction and Primitive game racks. There are also several unmaintained trails in the area.
- Fire suppression has altered the natural succession of the area. Under natural conditions, low intensity fire would have selectively maintained ponderosa pine in the understory instead of allowing the encroachment of firs. Most other impacts affect only the immediate vicinity. The effects of fire suppression are not noticeable to average users.
- c. **Naturalness** The natural integrity of the area within the reduced boundary would be fairly high. The natural appearance of the area would be very high.
- d. **Opportunity for Solitude** Although the distance from the perimeter to the core of the area is less than three miles, opportunity for solitude is very good. Topographic screening is provided by highly broken country with rock outcrops and narrow draws with brush and trees.
- e. **Primitive Recreation and Challenge** There are no developed facilities within the area, but the opportunity for Primitive recreation is low. There is little diversity in the area and no particularly challenging features.
- f. **Special Features** There are no Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant or animal species within the area. There are no other special or unique features.
- 3. Availability for Wilderness**
- a. **Resource Potential** This area currently provides roaded modified, roaded natural and semiprimitive motorized recreation opportunities (see Table C-3). It is capable of providing 12,125 Recreation Visitor Days per year (see Table C-4).
- There are 8,200 acres of forested land tentatively suitable for timber management activities. These trees are predominantly mixed conifer species, with some lodgepole and ponderosa pine. Average age of the overstory is 135 years, that of the understory is 65 years. There is a standing volume of 99.64 million board feet (17.42 million cubic feet). With the use of intensive timber management techniques, 394 thousand cubic feet (2,254 thousand board feet) would be contributed to the annual allowable sale quantity in the first decade. The long-term sustained yield capacity from this area would be 467 thousand cubic feet per year.
- The area has no known potential for locatable minerals and contains no mining claims. The U.S. Geological Survey considers the area to be prospectively valuable for geothermal resources but not for oil and gas. There are 11 sections under oil and gas leases.

This area contains portions of 2 grazing allotments and contributes an average of 750 Animal Unit Months of forage for cattle annually

b. Management Considerations

Indian paint fungus is present and can probably be found in all size classes of the true fir. Much of the Douglas-fir (especially on rockier, drier soils) is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. Mistletoe patches of varying degree can be found, from fairly light to quite severe. Root rots can be found to varying degrees but at this point are not considered a problem.

Due to high amounts of true fir and Douglas-fir, all the timber stands are highly susceptible to tussock moth and the western spruce budworm. Western spruce budworm presently infests the area with varying degrees of severity. Western pine beetle can be found in the area but is generally confined to a few old-growth ponderosa pine trees of low vigor. Mountain pine beetle is currently attacking lodgepole pine.

There is one water transmission use and one telephone/telegraph line through the area.

4. Wilderness Evaluation

The Strawberry Mountain Wilderness is 13 miles south, Monument Rock Wilderness is 40 miles southeast, and North Fork John Day Wilderness is 25 miles northeast. The ecosystems of this roadless area are represented within those wildernesses.

This area lies 20 road miles from John Day, Oregon. The nearest major metropolitan centers are Portland, Oregon (260 miles northwest), and Boise, Idaho (200 miles east).

In the 1979 RARE II study, there were 2,707 comments favoring wilderness, 16 favoring further planning, and 3,415 favoring nonwilderness management. Recent Forest planning public involvement activities resulted in this area receiving a low level of response. Those responses were 3 to 1 opposed to wilderness designation.

The reasons favoring wilderness designation cited natural qualities, scenic and recreation values, and fish and wildlife habitat protection. The reasons opposing wilderness designation cited poor opportunities for solitude and Primitive recreation, and evidence of human activity. It was also stated that resources other than wilderness need to be enhanced through management. Geothermal potential was mentioned. There was some support for continued roadless status.

5. Environmental Consequences

Table C-19 displays the various management area assignments for this area by alternative.

a. Vegetation/Trees

Significant changes in tree size, stand density, and composition will occur in all alternatives, except Alternative C-Modified, as trees are harvested and thinned. The Forested acres will change to a managed forest appearance in Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC. Less forested acres are affected in Alternative I, and fewer yet in Alternative C-Modified. Old growth designated for wildlife will be retained at 920 acres in all alternatives except Alternatives NC, C-Modified, and I. Alternative NC retains 802 acres, Alternative I contains 460 acres of designated old growth. Additional old growth will be retained under Alternative C-Modified in the semiprimitive area, and in the wildlife emphasis area of Alternative I.

For 5,795 acres under Alternative I, timber harvests would be on a non-scheduled basis and would be used only to meet fish and/or wildlife habitat objectives. When timber harvesting is warranted silvicultural prescriptions will be designed to meet these objectives utilizing both even-aged and uneven-aged management techniques. The environmental changes, although similar to those in Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, and NC, as expressed in the above paragraph, would not occur as rapidly as in these other alternatives.

- b Vegetation/Grass and Shrubs The greatest change in forage for livestock and wildlife will occur within forested areas and will be most extensive in Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC. In areas supporting fir trees, there will be a large increase in forage production with a long-term gradual decrease as tree canopies again close and shade the understory. Seeding of introduced grass species will provide higher quality and quantity of palatable plants and change the present species composition. Native grasses, shrubs, and forbs will increase naturally as tree canopies are opened and thinning occurs in harvested areas.
- c Wilderness Future wilderness consideration will be foregone by the end of the first decade in all alternatives except Alternative C-Modified, as timber harvest activities occur and access roads are constructed. Alternative C-Modified would allow for future wilderness consideration on 11,525 acres.
- d. Recreation In all alternatives except Alternative C-Modified, the recreation experience would be roaded modified with expectations of increased vehicle use. The effect on big-game hunting, the primary recreation activity, is expected to be greater hunter success in the short term as hiding cover is reduced by harvest activities and easier road access is created. The opportunity for a nonmotorized hunting experience will be decreased as new access roads are traveled by more hunters. Alternatives C-Modified and I offer a semiprimitive motorized recreation opportunity which would provide a more natural setting to users. Under Alternative I, the recreation experience would be semiprimitive motorized on 5,795 acres with the remaining acres under roaded modified. Road access during periods other than summer months would be limited by weather. All alternatives would permit motorized vehicles, including snowmobiles and motorbikes.
- e Scenery In all alternatives except Alternative C-Modified, viewers would see a managed forest, less old growth, more access roads, and less naturalness. Alternative C-Modified would remain natural-appearing over time.
- f. Wildlife Alternative C-Modified would have the largest acreage of old growth retained and the most wildlife snags. Snag levels are expected to be at 100 percent in Alternative C, 20 percent in Alternative B-Modified, 60 percent in Alternative I, and 40 percent in Alternatives A, F, and NC. The old growth designated in Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, and NC would meet management standards. About one-half of the area is within elk winter range. Hiding and thermal cover in the winter range would be equally affected by all alternatives except Alternative C-Modified. In Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC, harvest activities would reduce hiding and thermal cover and increase forage.
- g. Water, Riparian, Fisheries Clear Creek and McClellan Creek are the watercourses most affected by all alternatives except Alternative C-Modified. Management standards would adequately protect these resources under all alternatives; however, there would be increased accessibility and use as a result of timber harvest and road construction.

h Cultural Resources Alternatives with the greatest amount of development present the greatest risk of inadvertent damage to the resource. Because of the greater activity, they also present the greatest opportunity for discovery of resources. There is no discernible difference between alternatives when considering existing laws, regulations, and management standards which specifically protect them.

i. Soils Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC present the greatest risk of inadvertent damage to the soils as well as acceptable amounts of compaction as a result of harvest activities. All of the alternatives adequately protect the resource through application of management standards.



TABLE C-19
NIPPLE BUTTE MANAGEMENT BY ALTERNATIVE

(Acres)

Management Area	NC ^{1/}	Alternatives				
		A	B-Mod	C-Mod	F	I-Preferred
1 General Forest	N/A	1,778	4,883		4,910	2,695
2. Rangeland		1,484	755		704	567
3 Riparian Areas		751	738		687	260
4A Big-Game Winter Range			3,004		3,019	825
4B Big-Game Winter Range Enhancement						
5 Bald Eagle Winter Roost						
6A Strawberry Mountain Wilderness						
6B. Monument Rock Wilderness						
6C. Pine Creek						
7. Scenic Area						
8 Special Interest Area						
9. Research Natural Area						
10 Semi-Primitive Non-motorized						
11 Semi-Primitive Motorized				11,525		
12 Developed Recreation						
13 Old Growth	N/A	920	920		920	460
14. Visual Corridors		329	370		362	
15 Unit Plan Wildlife Emphasis Areas	N/A	5,333				
16 Minimum Level Management		930	855		923	923
17 Byram Gulch Municipal Supply Watershed						
18 Long Creek Municipal Supply Watershed						
19 Administrative Sites						
20 Wildlife Emphasis Areas with Scheduled Harvest						
21 Wildlife Emphasis Area Non-Scheduled Harvest						5,795
22 Wild and Scenic River						
TOTAL ACRES	N/A	11,525	11,525	11,525	11,525	11,525

^{1/}The Timber Management Plan, upon which the No Change Alternative is based, was developed in 1979. The plan was not an integrated plan and, consequently, did not address all resource uses and outputs in an integrated manner. As a result, these acreages are not available.