

**DECISION NOTICE
DESIGNATION ORDER
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
WENAHA BREAKS RESEARCH NATURAL AREA
(Forest Plan Amendment)**

**USDA FOREST SERVICE
POMEROY RANGER DISTRICT
UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST
WALLOWA COUNTY, OREGON**

DECISION

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Forest Service Manual, Section 4063, I hereby select Alternative A, as described in the *Wenaha Breaks Research Natural Area Environmental Assessment*, establishing the Wenaha Breaks Research Natural Area (RNA). It shall be comprised of approximately 1,900 acres of land in Wallowa County, Oregon, on the Pomeroy Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest, as described in the section of the Establishment Record entitled "Location".

The Umatilla Forest Plan is hereby amended to change Wenaha Breaks RNA from a candidate RNA to an established RNA. This is a non-significant amendment of the Forest Plan (46 CFR 219.10 (f)). The Wenaha Breaks RNA will be managed in compliance with all relevant laws, regulations, and Forest Service Manual direction regarding RNA's and in accordance with the management direction identified in the Forest Plan.

RATIONALE

My decision to establish the Wenaha Breaks RNA responds to the need to preserve an example of a Forest Cell type not currently adequately represented in the RNA system, preserve gene pools for this community type, and provide an educational and research area for study of these ecosystems. The Wenaha Breaks Research Area was recommended for establishment in the Record of Decision of the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) in 1990. That recommendation was the result of an analysis of the factors listed in 36 CFR 219.25 and Forest Manual 4063.41. Results of the Regional Forester's analysis are documented in the Forest Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, which are available to the public. The Wenaha Breaks area has been re-examined to ensure the environmental effects of establishing it as a RNA have not changed since 1990. This analysis is documented in the attached environmental assessment.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public comments on the proposal were invited with a scoping letter to interested parties on February 9, 2001. Letters were also sent to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Nez Perce Indian Tribe on January 15, 2008. Letters announcing a 30-day comment period were sent on April 11, 2008 to approximately 150 interested individuals, environmental organizations, federal and state government agencies and affected tribes. In response to our request for comments two letters with positive comments supporting this action were received from environmental organizations.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternative considered was Alternative B, the “No Action” alternative, which would continue management of Wenaha Breaks as a candidate RNA. This alternative was not selected because it would only provide short-term protection of the Wenaha Breaks area.

FINDING OF NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

This amendment will be made under the 2008 Forest Service planning regulation (36 CFR 219) which allow plan amendments to be made using the procedures from the 1982 planning regulations during the three-year transition period (36 CFR 219.14(b) (2)). This amendment is being made using the 1982 procedures.

Forest Service Land and Resource Management Planning Manual (FSM 1900, Chapter 1920, Section 1926.51) lists four factors to be used when determining whether a proposed change to a Forest Plan is significant or not significant. The four factors are:

1. Actions that do not significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.
2. Adjustments of management area boundaries or management prescriptions resulting from further on-site analysis when adjustment do not cause significant changes in the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.
3. Minor changes in standards and guidelines.
4. Opportunities for additional projects or activities that will contribute to achievement of the management prescription.

On the basis of the information and analysis contained in the EA and all other information available, it is my determination that adoption of the management direction reflected in my decision results in a non-significant amendment to the Forest Plan.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

It has been determined through the environmental assessment that the proposed action is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. My rationale for this finding is as follows (40 CFR 1508.27):

A. CONTEXT

Although this is an addition to the National system of RNA's, both short-term and long-term physical and biological effects are limited to the local area.

B. INTENSITY

1. The interdisciplinary team addressed direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that are both beneficial and adverse.
2. There are no known effects on public health and safety.
3. There are no known effects on historic or cultural resources, actual or eligible National Register of Historic Places sites, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers. Effects on ecologically critical areas are minimal.
4. Effects on the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial
5. Effects are not highly uncertain, or involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The action is not unlikely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects.

7. There are no known cumulative effects resulting from other actions that are individually insignificant
8. This action will not adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.
9. This action will not adversely affect historic places or loss of scientific, cultural, or historic resources.
10. This action is consistent with Federal, State, and local laws and requirements for the protection of the environment.

IMPLEMENTATION

Legal Notice of this decision will appear in The Oregonian. A copy of the decision notice will be mailed to all persons stating interest in the project. Implementation of this decision may occur immediately after publication of this notice.

APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215.12(e).

/s/ Calvin Joyner

7/29/08

CALVIN JOYNER
Acting Regional Forester

Date