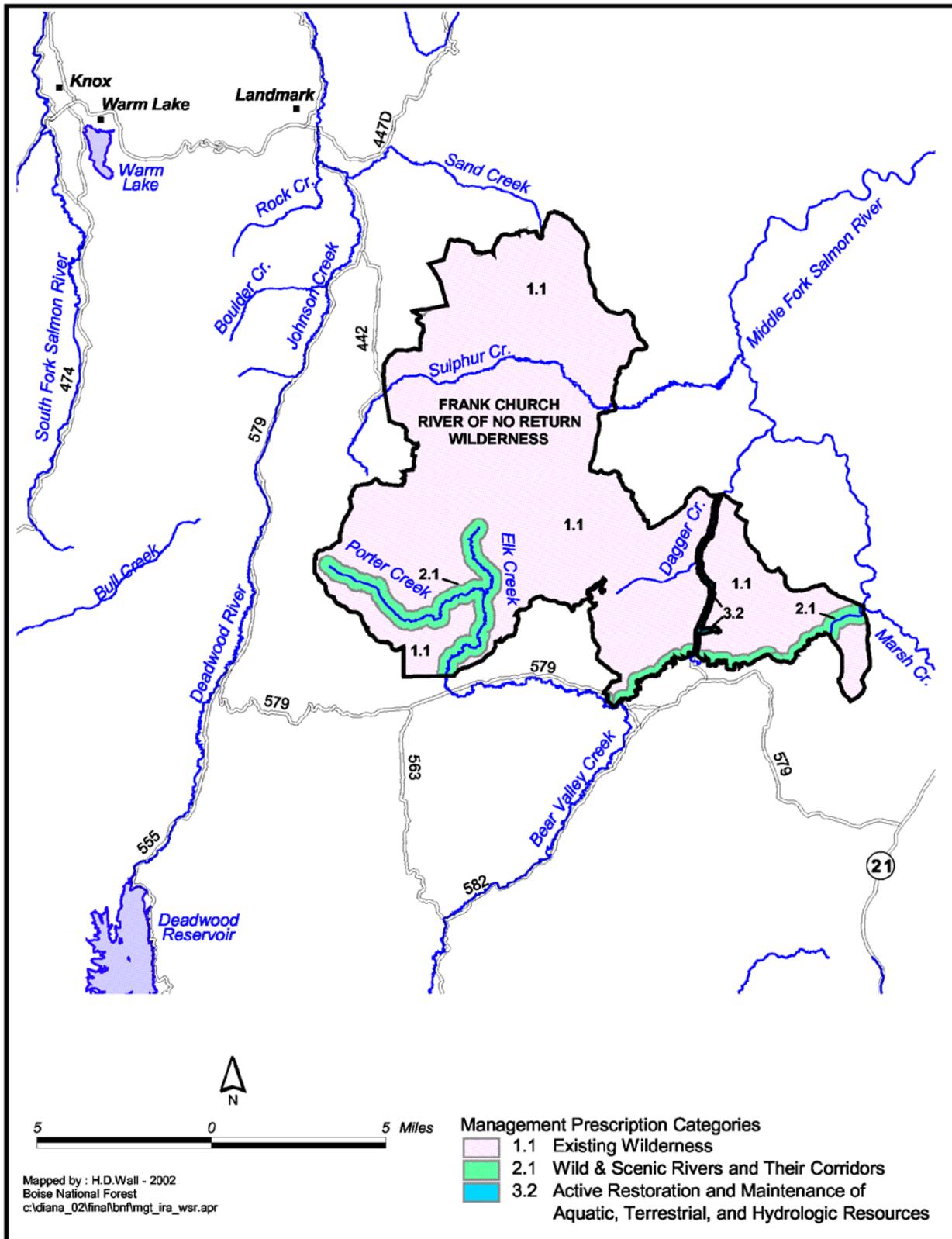


Management Area 22 - Frank Church River of no Return Wilderness Location Map



Management Area 22

Frank Church--River of No Return Wilderness

MANAGEMENT AREA DESCRIPTION

Management Prescriptions - Management Area 22 has the following management prescription.

Management Prescription Category (MPC)	Percent of Mgt. Area
1.1 – Designated Wilderness	100

General Location and Description - Management Area 22 is comprised of lands jointly administered by the Boise and Salmon-Challis National Forest within the Frank Church--River of No Return (FC-RONR) Wilderness Area (see Figure III-23). The area lies in Valley County, and is on the Cascade and Lowman Ranger Districts. The management area is an estimated 64,400 acres, and includes a few small, private inholdings along Sulphur and Dagger Creeks. The area is bordered by more Wilderness and the Salmon-Challis National Forest to the north and east, and Boise National Forest to the west and south. The primary use and activity in this management area is wilderness-oriented dispersed recreation. Created by Congress in 1980, the entire FC-RONR Wilderness (2,417,932 acres) spreads across parts of five National Forests. Management direction for this wilderness area is included in the FC-RONR Wilderness Management Plan, approved March 1985. Each National Forest has incorporated that Management Plan into its own respective Forest Plan. Management Area 22, therefore, only covers the portion of the wilderness area where administration is shared between the Boise and Salmon-Challis National Forest. The management area does not cover wilderness lands within the proclaimed boundary of the Boise National Forest that are solely administered by the Salmon-Challis NF (refer to Figure I-1).

In a February 21, 1991, letter, the Intermountain Regional Forester adjusted the Challis and Boise National Forests administrative boundaries and responsibilities for the area that is now Boise National Forest Management Area 22. For mapping purposes, this area is still shown within the administrative boundary of the Salmon-Challis National Forest. The Salmon-Challis administers all management functions in this area except those pertaining to term grazing permits and special-use permits. To maintain administrative efficiencies, the Regional Forester decided to leave existing administration of term grazing permits and special-use permits, such as for outfitter and guides, with the Boise National Forest due, in part, to location of the permittees. Because the Boise National Forest shares some administrative responsibilities of this area, it is included in this revised forest plan as Management Area 22.

Access - The main access to the area is from State Highway 21 near Banner Summit to Bear Valley via Forest Road 579, and via Forest Road 568 from Bear Valley to Dagger Falls. A good network of trails occurs within the area.

Special Features - The FC-RONR is the largest contiguous designated Wilderness Area in the continental United States. This area is considered an important aquatic stronghold and is part of the Central Idaho Wolf Recovery Area. Wilderness recreation and fish and wildlife habitat are the primary resources and uses. Segments of Porter Creek and Elk Creek are eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation. These segments are classified as Wild, and comprise 25.1 miles, with river corridor areas of 8,000 acres.

Air Quality - Air quality is usually excellent; this is a Wilderness Area that is remote from any large population centers. However, smoke from wildland fires is not uncommon in the summer months.

Soil, Water, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources - Elevations range from about 6,000 feet on the Dagger Creek to 8,500 feet near Lookout Mountain. The land is characterized by gentle to steep slopes that are weakly to strongly dissected by streams. The surface geology is dominated by Idaho Batholith granitics. Soils generally have low to high surface erosion potential, and productivity is low to moderate. Geomorphic integrity is functioning at risk in some areas due to impacts from historic livestock grazing that have resulted in localized accelerated erosion, upland compaction, and streambank degradation. However, these conditions are improving.

This management area comprises portions of the Sulphur Creek, Elk Creek, and Upper Bear Valley Creek Watersheds in the Upper Middle Fork Salmon Subbasin, which drains into the Middle Fork Salmon River. The major streams in the area are the Middle Fork Salmon River and its tributaries: Elk, Sulphur, Dagger, and Bear Valley Creeks. Small alpine lakes occur in the headwaters reaches of Collie, Porter, and Honeymoon Creeks. Water quality is functioning at risk in localized areas due to sedimentation impacts from historic livestock grazing, compounded by naturally high sediment rates. However, quality is in an improving trend. There are no water bodies that are listed as impaired under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. This area is not associated with a TMDL-assigned watershed.

Spawning, rearing, and migratory habitat occurs for chinook salmon and steelhead in the Middle Fork Salmon River, and in Sulphur, Elk, Bear Valley Creeks, and their tributaries. Aquatic integrity is considered high, and the incidence of introduced fish species is low. This area is an important aquatic stronghold for threatened salmonids in the Columbia River Basin. Spawning and rearing habitat also occurs for bull trout, which are scattered throughout area streams. However, currently there are no known strong populations. Native cutthroat trout are also present. Aquatic habitat is functioning at risk in localized areas due to historic grazing impacts that have caused accelerated sediment and localized streambank degradation.

Vegetation - This high-elevation area largely consists of lodgepole and subalpine fir forests, interspersed with sagebrush, shrublands, and meadows. An estimated 17 percent of the management area is covered by grasslands, shrublands, meadows, rock, or water. Most of this 17 percent is comprised of the Mountain Big Sagebrush, Perennial Grass Montane, and Alpine and Dry Meadows vegetation groups. The dominant forested vegetation groups are Persistent Lodgepole Pine, Warm Dry Subalpine Fir, and Hydric Subalpine Fir.

The Mountain Big Sagebrush group is at properly functioning condition, though fire exclusion and historic grazing impacts have altered structure and species composition somewhat. Older, closed-canopy structure dominates. Alpine and Dry Meadows are functioning at risk because of historic sheep grazing impacts that have removed or set back the sedge component, and fire exclusion that has allowed lodgepole pine encroachment. The Perennial Grass Montane group is functioning at risk because exotic species like cheatgrass are replacing native species in some areas, and this trend is increasing. The Warm Dry Subalpine Fir and Hydric Subalpine Fir groups are at properly functioning condition, although they are at increasing risk to stand-replacing fire due to decades of fire exclusion. However, these groups historically have a lethal fire regime. The Persistent Lodgepole Pine group is functioning at risk due to fire exclusion that has allowed older structural stages to dominate. Stand diversity is low, and the risk of mountain pine beetle infestation and stand-replacing fire is increasing. Riparian vegetation is functioning properly, although livestock grazing impacts have resulted in localized changes in species composition. Exotic plant species are also localized and at low levels.

Botanical Resources - No known populations of Region 4 sensitive species occur within this management area. Blandow's helodium moss, a proposed Region 4 sensitive species, has been found inside the area. Kellogg's bitterroot and Idaho douglasia occur in surrounding areas, and potential habitat and undiscovered populations may exist within the area. No federally listed or proposed plant species are known to occur in the area, but potential habitat for Ute ladies'-tresses, a Threatened species, may occur in riparian/wetland habitats from 1,000 to 7,000 feet. Slender moonwort, a Candidate species, may occur in moderate to higher elevation grasslands, meadows, and small openings in spruce and lodgepole pine.

Non-native Plants - Few noxious weeds and exotic plants have been found within the management area. Less than 10 percent of the area has high susceptibility to invasion by noxious weeds and exotic plant species. The main weed of concern is spotted knapweed.

Wildlife Resources - The area contains an estimated 19,110 acres of key elk summer range, and 360 acres of goat winter range. Lower-elevation Douglas-fir forests provide habitat for a number of Region 4 sensitive species, including fisher and northern goshawk. High-elevation subalpine fir forests provide nesting and foraging habitat for great gray and boreal owls, three-toed woodpeckers, wolverine, lynx, as well as summer range for mammals such as elk, black bear, and mountain lion. Gray wolves were re-introduced near here in 1995 and 1996, and populations likely occur in the area, which is part of the Central Idaho Wolf Recovery Area. The area provides many habitats for migratory land birds. Overall, terrestrial habitat is at or near proper functioning condition. Levels of disturbance and fragmentation are very low.

Recreation Resources - Dispersed recreation such as hunting, fishing, hiking, rafting, and camping occurs throughout Management Area 22. The area is in Idaho Fish and Game Management Unit 34. Although the area is a national attraction, much of the use is limited to the summer and fall seasons due to the remoteness and high elevation. The entire area is considered visually sensitive, and all trails in the area are closed to motorized vehicle use. This area encompasses the only road access to Dagger Falls, which is the main launch site for float trips down the Middle Fork Salmon River. Portions of the Idaho Centennial Trail lie within this management area. Recreation special uses include several outfitter and guide operations.

Currently, most of the Boise portion of the Wilderness provides opportunities for a Primitive recreation (ROS) experience, with the exception of a couple motorized corridors or airstrips that provide Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, Semi-Primitive Motorized, or Roaded Natural experiences. Adjustments to these corridors are currently being addressed in the revised Wilderness Management Plan. The ROS classes are not likely to change in the future because this is a designated Wilderness, and the Wilderness Act would not permit the type or extent of development that could cause a change in ROS.

Cultural Resources - Cultural themes in this area include Prehistoric Archeology, Ranching, Homesteading, Recreation, and Forest Service History. This portion of the Wilderness contains prehistoric sites associated with early Indian occupations in Idaho. These camps were used well into the historic period and the area remains important to the Shoshone and Bannock Tribes. Blood residue analysis from stone tools recovered from archaeological excavations in the area indicates that Indians were hunting deer and a variety of small game. Shortly before the turn of the century, stockmen began to use Bear Valley for summer pasture. This management area also has a unique history associated with speculative homesteading in the 1920s. Dishonest businessmen enticed prospective homesteaders, many of them unprepared for the winters in the area, to settle illegally in Poker and Ayers Meadows. These homesteaders were forced to abandon their cabins, the remains of which can still be seen today.

Timberland Resources - There are no tentatively suited timberlands in this management area because wilderness designation makes this area inappropriate for timber production.

Rangeland Resources - This area is mostly closed to cattle and sheep grazing. There are two active cattle allotments and two vacant sheep allotments. Some limited pack and saddle stock grazing is allowed. An estimated 6,200 acres are considered capable for livestock grazing. These acres represent about 1 percent of the capable rangeland on the Forest.

Mineral Resources – The FC-RONR Wilderness Act prohibits dredge and placer operations in the area. Lode mining claims are subject to determination of valid existing rights prior to approval of any operating plan. The locatable mineral potential is moderate to high. The leasable mineral potential for geothermal resources is moderate. The potential for other leasable minerals is low. The potential for common variety mineral materials is unknown.

Fire Management - No large wildfires have occurred in this area in the last 15 years, except for the Deadwood Fire.

Lands and Special Uses - Special-use authorizations include two airstrips.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

Follow management direction in the FC- RONR Wilderness programmatic and operational plans.