

## **D2 RESEARCH NATURAL AREA**

### **GOALS**

PRESERVE NATURALLY OCCURRING PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL UNITS WHERE NATURAL CONDITIONS AND PROCESSES ARE MAINTAINED, INSOFAR AS POSSIBLE, FOR THE PURPOSES OF: 1) COMPARISON WITH THOSE LANDS INFLUENCED BY MAN; 2) PROVISION OF EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH AREAS FOR ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES; AND 3) PRESERVATION OF GENE POOLS FOR TYPICAL AND RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS AND ANIMALS.

### **DESCRIPTION**

Eight areas have been identified and are managed as research natural areas. Two (Pataha and Rainbow Creek) have been established by Chief's order. The other six candidate areas are: Elk Flats Meadow, Elk Flats-Wenaha Breaks, Kelly Creek Butte, Mill Creek Watershed, Vinegar Hill, and Birch Creek Cove. Establishment reports and management plans for each area may contain more specific constraints or permitted uses.

### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION**

The ecological community will continue to evolve through natural processes. Natural physical, and biological conditions will be maintained, insofar as possible, to preserve the vegetation for which the area was created. Use, except for scientific and educational purposes, will be generally discouraged.

### **MANAGEMENT AREAS STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

Establishment reports and management plans for each area will contain specific constraints or permitted uses.

### **RECREATION**

Recreation activities and uses, including overnight camping, hunting and trapping, and pack and saddle stock use will be discouraged or prohibited if such use threatens or interferes with the objectives and values of the Research Natural Area.

All recreation OHV use will be prohibited.

There will be no onsite interpretive or demonstrative facilities.

Educational use of an RNA may be approved for any group or purpose.

Publicity that would attract the general public will be avoided.

Existing trails will remain and be maintained as long as the RNA objectives are not compromised. Travel should be restricted to the trails.

New trails will not be constructed, unless needed for research purposes.

### **WILDERNESS**

For an RNA(s) established in wilderness, management direction for wilderness will take precedence.

Research on RNA's in wilderness will be related to wilderness.

### **VISUAL**

Retention is the visual quality objective for RNA's.

### **CULTURAL**

Meet Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines.

## WILDLIFE AND FISH

Habitat manipulation and introduction of exotic species of plants, animals, or fish is not permitted.

Snags and down tree habitat will be maintained at naturally occurring levels.

## RANGE

Prohibit grazing of domestic livestock unless it is needed to establish or maintain a specific vegetation type.

Improvements are not permitted; boundary fencing may be required to provide protection to the RNA.

## TIMBER

Timber management use and practices are excluded. Cutting and removal of vegetation is prohibited, except as part of an approved scientific investigation.

Firewood cutting is not permitted.

## WATER AND SOIL

Meet Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines.

For RNA(s) established in municipal watershed(s), management direction for the municipal watershed will take precedence.

In cooperation with the PNW Research Station, rehabilitation plans will be developed and implemented in the event of soil disturbing activities such as fire suppression. Soil stabilization of naturally occurring soil loss or movement should not be permitted unless part of an authorized study.

## MINERALS

Valid claims existing prior to Research Natural Area designation may be developed. Valid claims existing prior to any withdrawal from mineral entry shall be required to have an operating plan providing the least amount of impact. Mineral leases will require 'No Surface Occupancy' stipulation. Research Natural Areas may be recommended for withdrawal from mineral entry in situations where mitigation measures do not adequately protect management area values. The mineral potential of the area shall be assessed before withdrawal is recommended.

## LANDS

RNA's should generally be retained in public ownership. When possible, inholdings may be acquired when they contribute to RNA objectives.

An Establishment Record will be written for each RNA recommended in the Forest Plan. A management plan should be written for each established RNA. The management plan should include analysis of surrounding lands as related to the integrity of the RNA. The only special use permits issued will be those related to research; all others will be denied. Noncompatible existing special uses will be terminated. RNA's are 'Avoidance' areas for utility corridors.

Rights-of-way easements existing before RNA establishment will be honored. Upgrading easements that would compromise the objectives of the RNA will be discouraged. The Forest should recommend against FERC licenses or permits that compromise the objectives of the RNA.

Meet other lands and land use Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines contributing toward RNA objectives.

## TRANSPORTATION/FACILITIES

New transportation facilities are not acceptable.

New facilities shall not be bulk except on valid existing mining claims with approved operating plans, or as required as part of an authorized study.

#### FIRE

For moderate to high intensity wildfires, the appropriate suppression response should emphasize control strategies. Wildfire should be extinguished by the least disturbing means possible.

#### FUELS

If authorized in a management plan, low intensity unplanned fire or prescribed burns may be used as a tool to mimic a natural fire to: (1) Perpetuate the sere and thus the cell(s) the RNA represents; (2) return fire to its natural role in the area; and (3) return plant communities to a condition similar to that existing prior to active fire suppression.

#### PESTS

Action to control insects or diseases will not be taken unless an outbreak will drastically alter the natural processes within the RNA, or if it poses an unacceptable threat to resources adjacent to the RNA. Treatment to control insects and diseases within an RNA will support and promote the basic objective and purposes of establishing the area (FSM 4063.3[8]). Biological methods are preferred.

#### RESEARCH

Research projects and management will be coordinated with Pacific Northwest Research Station. Research will not be approved that will change vegetative or surface character of the area.

#### GENERAL

Research Natural Areas inside of wilderness or municipal watershed will be guided by direction for those areas, in situations where conflicts occur.