

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision

Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests**Background**

The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.7 (c)(2)(v)) directs the agency to identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation during the forest planning process. This process occurs in four primary steps: inventory, evaluation, analysis, and recommendation as described in procedures found in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12, Chapter 70.

The primary function of the evaluation step is to evaluate, pursuant to criteria set forth in the Wilderness Act of 1964, the wilderness characteristics of the lands included in the inventory. All lands included in the inventory must be evaluated. The Responsible Official may divide or consolidate lands identified in the inventory into grouped areas for the purpose of evaluation and may vary the scope of the evaluation based on the specific characteristics of each area or portions thereof.

Opportunities for public and governmental participation when evaluating lands identified in the inventory are scheduled to occur in early 2025. The Responsible Official is not required to carry all lands evaluated forward for further NEPA analysis as potential recommendations for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Methodology

Evaluation of wilderness characteristics was conducted in two steps; first, a coarse-scale evaluation of the manageability of the boundaries of each area included in the inventory, followed by a fine-scale evaluation.

Many of the areas included in the inventory contained crenulated, undulating, complex boundaries, and/or narrow peninsulas and isthmuses that would not be practical to manage to protect wilderness characteristics (see Figure 1 for an example). For such areas, the scope of the evaluation (course-scale) was limited to manageability; no other wilderness characteristics were evaluated. All other areas were included in fine-scale evaluation in the Blue Mountains Wilderness Evaluation Report.

Figure 1

