Threatened or Endangered Species

Five wildlife species federally classified as threatened or endangered (T/E)under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (50 CFR 402, 43 CFR 870) occur in the Medicine Lodge Resource Area. One range plant proposed for listing under the federal listing process are found in the resource area.

Bald Eagle

The bald eagle has national significance not only because the species is federally listed as endangered but also because it is our national bird. Idaho winters between 400 to 735 birds annually, based on the midwinter bald eagle surveys sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation. Between 78 and 180 of these birds winter in the Medicine Lodge Resource Area along the major river drainages and big game winter ranges.

Fourteen active nesting territories, 3 additional historic nesting sites and two suspected nesting sites are found within the Resource Area. Ten of these active, historic and suspected nesting territories are located on or directly adjacent to BLM lands. Additional potential nesting territories are available for an increasing population leading to a recovered population.

Approximately 62% of the primary habitat is in satisfactory condition and should remain or improve over time. Major conflicts that could physically degrade the habitat are illegal firewood cutting, natural or man-caused fires and increased recreational use at critical areas.

Management direction to maintain this high quality bald eagle wintering and nesting habitat will be directed by the Endangered Species Act, Pacific States Bald Eagle Recovery Plan and a Bald Eagle Management Plan of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Peregrine Falcon

Peregrine nest sites have been established adjacent to BLM-administered land. The main resource that these public lands provide are foraging and resting areas. Management has been to maintain as high an avian prey base as possible and this effort should be continued. Approximately 90% of this foraging area is in satisfactory condition.

Ferruginous and Swainson's Hawk

These two species are being reviewed for possible listing under the Endangered Species Act. Ferruginous hawks nest in the Sage Junction, Table Butte and Crooked Creek area. To date, we know of 16 active nests and there are possibly more in some of the other areas. Three Swainson's hawk nests are known to occur in the Camas-Little Grassy country, with more suspected. All management actions will take these species into account as directed under the BLM/IDF&G MOU (1977).

Whooping Crane

The Whooping Crane "Foster Parent" program at Grey's Lake National Wildlife Refuge has created a situation where Whooping Cranes are now frequenting

traditional sandhill crane areas. These areas are generally in satisfactory condition. Areas where they have been frequently observed are the Island Park area and Camas Creek area.

Grizzly Bear

Grizzly bear use occurs primarily on BLM lands in the Henry's Lake, Donut Hole and Bitch Creek areas. BLM lands are on the outer ranges of the grizzly bear primary use areas. Early spring livestock grazing in the Donut Hole is the only identified conflict with grizzly bear habitat management. This office is following the management guidelines in the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan for the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Approximately 50% of the habitat is in satisfactory condition. Under concentrated management, the habitat could possibly be improved to 67% satisfactory.

Gray Wolf

Gray wolf sightings and tracks (Sellers, per com.) have been reported in the Medicine Lodge and Patelzik Creek areas throughout the last 10 years. Recovery habitat necessary for the recovery of the species was identified by an endangered species report prepared for the Idaho Falls BLM by T. Peterson (1979). The habitat identified is closely related to big game winter ranges and nearby Douglas-fir stands. It is estimated that a small pack of 1 to 3 animals move throughout the area.

Of the 54,303 acres of identified habitat, 52% is in satisfactory condition. The 48% in unsatisfactory condition is large expanses of sagebrush bench tops that are probably used for travel lanes and space requirements (Mech 1970). Those unsatisfactory acres have little potential for improving or providing permanent cover. The critical component is the big game ranges (Thompson, 1952) and the ability of these areas to support abundant game herds.

Oenothera caespitosa var. *psammophila*

This species of evening primrose is known to exist in the sandy soils surrounding the lava outcrops in the St. Anthony sand dune complex (Steele, 1981). The major hazard to the species is ORV traffic. Exact locations of the species are recorded on photos in the Medicine Lodge Resource Area and will be in a graduate student's thesis soon to be printed.

Big Game and Upland Game Birds

Mule Deer

Five primary deer herds utilize the public lands within the Medicine Lodge Resource Area for crucial wintering areas, summer range, migration corridors, fawning grounds, and year long use. These main herds are generally identified as the Tex Creek-Willow Creek herd, Teton Valley herd, Island Park herd, Medicine Lodge herd, and the Big Hole Mtns.-Snake River herd. There are approximately 5,600 deer in these herds, with the Tex Creek-Willow Creek, Island Park and Big Hole Mtn.-Snake River herds being the major populations.

Due to the variety and intermix of uses on the same ranges, general mule deer habitat information was not developed. The key component to all of these herds is the winter ranges. This habitat is addressed under big game winter ranges.

White-tailed Deer

Most of the white-tailed deer population is concentrated along the 3 branches of the Snake River. Approximately 300 head reside year long on 8,747 acres of public land in the area. These deer use the high quality river bottom area (93% satisfactory) for cover and food; however, they also use the adjoining agricultural fields for food, which is typical for white-tails (Schmidt & Douglas, 1978).

This population appears to be fairly stable or slightly increasing. Small herds are beginning to be established in the Medicine Lodge Creek area and the Island Park area. These herds were not addressed due to the small size and limited amount of BLM lands being used.

Moose

Moose use of public lands varies significantly with season and condition of the habitat. Summer and winter ranges on the BLM lands in the Medicine Lodge Creek area are in poor condition due to historical and continued overgrazing of the riparian bottoms by livestock. This type of heavy livestock use significantly decreases the moose use of an area (Ritchie, 1978). Improvement of these riparian zones would probably be followed by an increased use by moose and an increased moose population. Riparian areas throughout the rest of the resource area are 82% satisfactory condition and this accurately reflects the condition of the moose range that is associated with on the riparian areas. Winter range conditions for other areas are addressed under Big Game Winter Range.

Rocky Mountain Elk

Elk is the major big game species using BLM-managed lands. Approximately 20,000 AUMs are consumed by 5,100 elk throughout the 4 seasons of use. Seasonally important BLM-managed ranges such as elk calving (Thomas and Toweill, 1982) and spring/fall ranges total 113,197 acres. Approximately 84% of these special habitat areas are in satisfactory condition.

Major calving grounds occur on Sheridan, Big Bend and Antelope Ridges, as well as in the spring ranges in the Crystal Butte Allotment, Patelzic Creek and Irving Creek drainages. These areas are typified by mature Douglas-fir forests with south facing slopes with numerous small clearings and succulent forage. The spring ranges have tall stands of sagebrush intermixed with grass park lands.

Approximately 85% of the acreage listed as big game winter ranges is occupied by elk and 87% of it is in satisfactory condition. The majority of the forage demands are on the winter range areas. Fecal studies coordinated by this office indicate that there is a seasonal shift in the diet from mainly grasses (75%) during the early winter or open winters to browse (94%) during midwinter and severe winters.

Pronghorn Antelope

Approximately 3,300 antelope use the public lands within the MLRA throughout

some portion of the 4 seasons. There are approximately 591,418 acres of general habitat that they disperse on. Of this general range, there are only 35,145 acres of winter range. Construction of Interstate fences and agricultural development has severely limited movement (Spillet et.al. 1967) of this species between some summer ranges and winter ranges. Thousands of acres of suitable habitat are understocked due to these major problems.

Traditional fawning ranges are 78% satisfactory and are in stable condition. Although traditional fawning grounds have been identified, fawning does occur throughout a large portion of the general range.

Most of the 26% unsatisfactory range is due to sagebrush encroachment on summer ranges or large wildfires that burned in 1981. Both of these deficiencies can be rectified with time and project implementation.

Big Game Winter Range

This term was used to identify winter ranges for moose, mule deer and elk because there is a significant amount of overlap and joint use of areas throughout the winter months. Acreage that is strictly moose winter range or deer winter range was identified under this category because their total acreage was small relative to the joint ranges.

The major elk winter ranges are located in Management Areas 5 and 8. Between 1,800 and 2,800 elk winter in the lower portion of Management Area 5. Forage and protection from human harassment is provided through the existing Sands HMP and the associated winter ORV closures. The Tex Creek wintering elk herd averages between 1,400 to 1,800 head. Winter forage for this herd is managed for under the Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area Cooperative Agreement between the BOR, IDF&G and BLM. BOR purchased approximately 10,000 acres in this area for the mitigation of the Teton Dam Project. In addition to the BLM and BOR lands, the IDF&G has purchased several thousand acres adjoining the federal lands. Approximately 87% of the big game winter range is in satisfactory condition and these 2 elk ranges are about 90% satisfactory.

The 13% that is in unsatisfactory condition is primarily concentrated on the deer and moose winter ranges in Management Area 1. Approximately 31% of these ranges in this Management Area are in poor condition. Additional acreage is in a downward trend and will become unsatisfactory soon. Deer and moose winter ranges in the Juniper and Tex Creek areas are in good condition and winter 1,400 and 2,200 deer and 150 and 30 moose respectively.

Major concentrations of deer, elk and moose move onto the South Fork of the Snake River during the winter months. This high value wildlife habitat is managed for under a South Fork Memorandum of Understanding between the BOR, USFS, BLM, USF&WS, and the IDF&G. Approximately 92% of the wintering area on BLM is in satisfactory condition.

Upland Game Birds

Seven species of upland game birds occur in the resource area. These are sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, blue grouse, ruffed grouse, ring-necked pheasant, Hungarian partridge, chukkars, and Rio Grande turkey.

Sage grouse are the most widespread and heaviest hunted species. Approximately 74% of the general habitat is in satisfactory condition. Brood rearing habitat is in poor condition and could be having an effect on local populations (Oakleaf, 1971). The 40% unsatisfactory brood rearing areas are a result of heavy livestock grazing and use on riparian areas and wet meadows. The 26% unsatisfactory general range is primarily due to heavy mountain sagebrush encroachment on summer range or wildfires that burned 100% of the brush component off large acreages.

The Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, which were widespread throughout the Great Basin, are now restricted to isolated populations. The only two huntable populations left in Idaho are in the Junipers and Willow Creek-Gray's Lake Outlet country. Of the habitat left, approximately 90% is in satisfactory condition. The 10% unsatisfactory range is due to heavy brush encroachment and livestock grazing on the chokecherry stands. The impact of both of these factors is well documented in the literature (Miller and Graul, 1980; Hart et al. 1950; Parker, 1970; Zeigler, 1979). Historical ranges within the resource area possibly can be reclaimed to suitable habitat by using control burning, reduced livestock grazing and implementing grazing systems.

Ring-necked pheasant and Hungarian partridge are found in the lower precipitation areas associated with agricultural development. The BLM lands in some of these areas are the only permanent vegetation that persists and provides winter cover. Approximately 78% of this habitat is in satisfactory condition. The unsatisfactory habitat is a result of agricultural trespass and past overuse by livestock.

Rio Grande turkeys have been introduced to the Snake River. The habitat they are presently in is 90% satisfactory. The adjoining habitat they they should occupy as their numbers increase will be of the same quality.

Bighorn Sheep

Several areas within the resource area historically were occupied by bighorn sheep and provided red meat to the earlier trappers and settlers (Russell, 1862). Most of these populations were driven from their ranges as white men brought in the livestock grazing industry (Geist, 1971). Due to reintroductions of this species by IDF&G, former ranges are being reoccupied. Expansion of these herds is expected due to improvement of the native range through land management. Approximately 80% of the ranges now used for wintering are in satisfactory condition.

Mountain Goat

Mountain goat use on public land is confined to winter and spring use. The wintering area is 100% satisfactory due to its remoteness and high quality winter forage. General maintenance programs should continue to provide this high quality habitat.

Waterfowl

Waterfowl habitat varies from use on major river systems to scattered stock ponds and ephemeral impoundments. The majority of the concentrated waterfowl nesting is done by mallards, gadwal and Canada geese along the South Fork of

the Snake River. Goose nesting structures have been placed on the islands in this area and in some years provide 70 to 80% of the known successful nesting.

The majority of the habitat associated with the river systems is in satisfactory condition. Most of the duck nesting habitat surrounding stock ponds is unsatisfactory. This unsatisfactory habitat is due to overuse by livestock grazing and could be resolved with exclosures on the dams or inlets to the ponds.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

Water quality throughout the Medicine Lodge Resource Area is generally excellent on order one and order two tributaries and is good on order three tributaries. As the stream order increases toward level four and greater streams such as the Snake River, quality drops to fair and poor levels. Sediment is the main contributor to low water quality. The majority of streams on public lands in the planning area are order one and order two tributaries.

Riparian quality throughout the Resource Area is generally good to excellent and is in stable or upward trend except for Management Area One (see Table 3-1). Livestock grazing, sensitive soils and high spring runoff are the primary contributors to riparian degredation in the planning area. Because the tributaries on public lands in the planning area are generally of low order, a degraded riparian zone generally would imply corresponding sediment degredation of water quality.

Table 3-1
Riparian Habitat Condition

Miles of Stream	Condition Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
85	10%	22%	28%	37%

In Management Area One, many of the streams on public lands show long-term impacts of livestock grazing. Those impacted streams include Middle Creek, Edie Creek, Irving Creek, and Deep Creek. Permittees report a history of riparian loss on these streams and a decline in fish populations in all streams except Deep Creek.

At one time there were many beaver ponds on these streams but the beaver were trapped out or moved out of these drainages. A long term reduction in riparian livestock grazing impacts would be required to return the fishery in these streams to previous levels.

On the West Fork of Indian Creek, a fire in 1981 released a one year flush of primarily channel sediments which deposited in the central portion of the West Fork. The fire does not appear to have accelerated upland erosion, but because of loss of several short stretches of riparian vegetation, there has been some increase in bank sloughing. The presence of many beaver dams has trapped much of this increased sediment load. Presently, riparian willow and birch regrowth is good, but at least two additional years protection is required before they will be of sufficient size to withstand grazing pressure. The fire's disturbance to this watershed was light to moderate and recovery is well underway. Upland cover has made an excellent comeback.

In Management Area Five, Sand Creek, because of its location in the sand dunes, has a very sensitive riparian zone. Cattle in the upper watershed have continuously prevented vegetation stabilization of the sand dune banks. There is a heavy sediment impact downstream each spring runoff season. Fencing of the upper riparian zone should prevent a large portion of this sediment impact once banks have stabilized.

In Management Area Eight, the Soil Conservation Service with the Soil Conservation District has been funded for a "208 Water Quality Project" to cover the entire Willow Creek watershed. Presently, the SCS has chosen to improve a sequence of subwatersheds. The subwatersheds chosen to date have not contained large tracts of public land. As further subwatersheds are funded for the SCS effort, the BLM will work with the SCS and conservation district to plan improvement projects. The BLM will also work with Fish and Game to assess fisheries habitat and water quality.

Based on recent inventory efforts in the Willow Creek watershed, results have shown little impacts to water quality from BLM grazing practices. Impacts appear to be primarily from agricultural practices on private lands or from erosion on sensitive soils. Riparian vegetation condition on BLM is generally good to excellent in the Willow Creek drainage.

WATERSHED AND SOILS

For the Medicine Lodge Resource Area as a whole, the present erosion situation is within normal and acceptable levels. Both wind and water erosion problems occur in localized areas. The major causes of erosion have been livestock grazing, wildfires and fire suppression activities, ORV use, and agricultural development. Because of these activities, the soils in the area have been subjected to varying degrees of soil loss and accumulation, which result in a lessening of soil productivity in some areas and enhancement in others. The soil associations in the planning area are described in Appendix C.

The Kelly Canyon area near the Snake River above Heise has been used by ORVs and some erosion problems exist. The public lands near Victor, Idaho are a watershed for municipal water. The southern portion, 1,380 acres, is closed to grazing. At the present time, no problems exist.

The Sand Creek drainage is located within sensitive sandy soils on basalt plains with migrating sand dunes along the upper watershed. This watershed shows accelerated upland erosion due to cattle grazing. Cover is easily removed, resulting in blowing and drifting sands. Subsequent channel sedimentation and sediment transport are also at high levels.

The majority of public lands within the SCS Willow Creek 208 area are located on steep canyon walls or on steep mountain terrain. These areas have a high to very high erosion potential. Existing cover is generally good to excellent on these areas and there is little evidence of extensive gulleying, rilling or other surficial erosion features. The erosional trend appears to be stable to upward at this time due to excellent precipitation levels during the 1982-1984 period. Any erosional impacts to public lands within the Willow Creek drainage appear to be resulting from poor agricultural practices on the benches above the BLM-managed canyon wall areas. These impacts generally

involve deep gulley cut formations which originate from high runoff, rilling and gulley formation on the privately owned bench lands. The Willow Creek 208 program is primarily aimed at maintaining adequate cover on these cultivated benchlands. The BLM plans to monitor for grazing impacts and evidence of increased erosion during low precipitation periods, and will work with SCS to eliminate any specific erosional problems.

RECREATION AND ORV MANAGEMENT

The Medicine Lodge Resource Area offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping, off-road-vehicle (ORV) riding, float and power boating, nature trail hiking, and others. This wide range of opportunities is possible because most public lands are accessible and they offer a variety of settings that are suitable for different recreation activities. The preferred setting is important in planning for the recreational use of the public lands because it correlates closely and defines the nature of recreation actitivities.

The BLM and Forest Service have adopted a system called the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. This system provides a method of identifying recreation opportunities available on the public lands and a means to plan for the long-term maintenance of the required settings.

For this RMP, the different settings available on public lands in the Medicine Lodge Resource Area were identified. The results were coordinated to be consistent with settings established in the land management plan for the Targhee National Forest where public lands adjoin the Forest. The settings were formulated using factors such as remoteness, size, amount of landscape change and development, the evidence of other people, and the degree of management control. The ROS opportunity settings and descriptions are listed below and to what degree they occur in the Resource Area.

Primitive: Large areas more than three miles from the nearest point of motorized access and use, having unmodified landscapes, where there is little evidence of other people, and are free from management controls. None in planning area.

Semi-primitive Non-motorized: Areas of moderate size at least one-half mile from the nearest point of motorized access and use, having mostly natural landscapes, where there is some evidence of other people, and where there are few management controls. None in planning area.

Semi-primitive Motorized: Areas of moderate size near primitive roads and trails, having mostly natural landscapes, where there are often evidences of other people but numbers remain low, and where management controls are evident but not dominant. There are 52,280 acres in the planning area.

Roaded Natural: Areas near improved roads, having naturally appearing, but modified, landscapes, where there are other people, but interaction is low to moderate, and management controls are subtle. There are 438,082 acres in the planning area.

Rural: Areas along major travel routes having modified landscapes, where other people are frequently encountered, and where management controls are easily seen. There are 146,400 acres in the planning area.

There are no primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized settings identified in the Resource Area. This is primarily due to the great number of roads, trails and landscape types that provide motorized access throughout.

Outdoor recreation resources on government-administered lands in the region attract visitors from local communities, throughout the U.S., and internationally. Major attractions include Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and the outstanding fishing and hunting that are offered throughout the region. The BLM-administered lands in the Resource Area, while not containing the major recreation attractions, do play a significant role in the regional recreational setting. They add another dimension to the available recreation opportunities by providing generally unrestricted settings for dispersed activities.

According to the 1983 State Outdoor Recreation Plan, visitor use in the six county Medicine Lodge Resource Area is estimated to increase as much as 50% by the year 2000. Growth estimates are attributed primarily to a projected increase in population.

To be responsive to increased recreational use and demands, BLM has identified key areas within the Resource Area where intensive management is needed to maintain recreation opportunities and other resource values. These areas are called special recreation management areas and include the Snake River System and the St. Anthony Sand Dunes. The two areas comprise about eight percent of the Resource Area. The remaining 92 percent is identified as an extensive recreation management area where significant recreation opportunities and problems are limited and intensive management is generally not required. Table 3-2 shows these management areas and the major developed and undeveloped BLM recreation sites.

Most of the recreation sites in the Resource Area are undeveloped and offer few visitor services. The most popular and heavily used areas have deteriorated because of litter, inadequate sanitation and uncontrolled vehicle use. During the peak camping, fishing and hunting seasons, the Resource Area has not had sufficient facilities to meet demand, especially along the Snake River, at the St. Anthony Sand Dunes and near popular camping and fishing streams.

The 1983 Idaho Outdoor Recreation Plan shows that in the six county planning area there is a projected need for more developed recreation facilities, both in the short (1990) and long-term (2000). The major facility needs where BLM could be the supplier include picnic areas, campgrounds, hiking trails, and boat access sites. Only a small part (less than 1 percent) of the projected needs could be met if all the identified BLM recreation sites were developed to capacity.

The planning area contains two short hiking trails that offer nature study opportunities. One is located on North Menan Butte, and is an undeveloped and rugged trail. The other is named Cress Creek Nature Trail and is along the Snake River near Heise. It has been proposed as a possible addition to the National Recreation Trail System. Both trails have been used extensively by local schools as outdoor classrooms to study a variety of topics related to natural resources.

TABLE 3-2

Recreation Management Areas
and
BLM Developed/Undeveloped Use Sites

Management Area/Site	(D)Developed (U)Undeveloped	Primary Recreation Activities	ROS[2] Settings
Snake River System (SRMA)[1]		Boating,fishing,hunting, camping,picnicking,ORV riding,hiking, nature study	SPM, RN, R
Kelly's Island Campground	D	Camping,fishing,picnicking	
Wolf Flat Campground #1	U	Camping,fishing,picnicking	
Wolf Flat Campground #2	U	Camping,fishing,picnicking	
Wolf Flat Campground #3	U	Camping,fishing,picnicking	
Poplar Boat Landing	D	Boating	
Swan Valley Access	U	None	
Lorenzo Access	U	Boating,fishing	
Wolf Flat Boat Landing	U	Boating,fishing	
Cress Creek Nature Trail	D	Hiking,nature study	
N. Menan Butte Nature Trail	U	Hiking,nature study	
St. Anthony Sand Dunes (SRMA)[1]		ORV riding,camping, picnicking	SPM, RN, R
Poleline Road Access	U	ORV access	
Egin Lakes Access	U	ORV access,camping	
Red Road Access	U	ORV access,camping	
Medicine Lodge (ERMA) [1]		Hunting,fishing,ORV riding,camping,firewood gathering	RN, R
Medicine Lodge Creek Campground #1	U	Camping,fishing	
Medicine Lodge Creek Campground #2	U	Camping,fishing	
Medicine Lodge Creek Campground #3	U	Camping,fishing	
Camas Creek	U	Camping,fishing	
Kepps Crossing	U	Camping,fishing	
Willow Creek	U	Camping,fishing	

1. SRMA: Special Recreation Management Area
   ERMA: Extensive Recreation Management Area
2. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Settings (ROS):
   R=Rural
   RN=Roaded Natural
   SPM=Semi-primitive motorized

A short six-mile segment of the proposed Continental Divide Scenic Trail traverses public lands near Monida Pass on the Idaho-Montana border. The trail has not yet been designated, but a 1977 study and EIS shows that it has good possibilities of being added to the National Trail System. When designated, a trail management plan would be prepared and implemented. It would prescribe managment actions necessary to maintain the integrity of the trail over the long term.

Off-road-vehicle use occurs on public lands throughout the Resource Area. Motorized vehicles generally provide a means of transportation for hunting, fishing, sightseeing and other recreation activities. Recreational ORV riding has become increasingly popular and is concentrated on the St. Anthony Sand Dunes, the Stinking Springs-Kelly Canyon areas and at Kepps Crossing on Willow Creek. Use on the dunes has generally been limited to the open sands and long-term damage has not occured. Increasing use in the other areas is causing soil erosion and scarring. These indiscriminate tracks have degraded the scenic quality, particularly near the Snake River around Stinking Springs.

North Menan Butte is the only area closed to ORV use and totals 1,120 acres. Seasonal closures to motorized travel include 21,580 acres located near the St. Anthony Sand Dunes and Market Lake. Closures are from December through March to protect wintering big game herds. The remaining 625,119 acres in the Resource Area are open year-round.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Aesthetic values of the public lands have become increasingly important to the American public over the past several years. These values have been reflected in the planning and management of the public lands through BLM's Visual Resource Management System. The system establishes criteria for the identification and classification of scenic quality and the degree of public concern toward that quality, and defines management objective classes for alteration of the visual resource. The classes indicate the overall significance of the visual environment by showing the degree of acceptable change within a landscape and setting forth standards and measures necessary to reduce or eliminate visual impacts. The following is a description of the four management classes found in BLM's Visual Resource Management System.

Class I The objective of this class is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. Areas include those where the goal is to provide a landscape setting that appears unaltered by man.

Class II The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape features must be low and not attract attention to the casual observer.

Class III The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape features must be moderate but not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant features of the characteristic landscape.

Class IV The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change may be high. Changes may dominate the view and be the

major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt will be made to minimize impacts.

An inventory of scenic quality and landscapes that are sensitive to change has identified what management classes will be adopted throughout the resource area. The resource area contains about 134,000 acres (26%) to be managed as Class II and the remaining 374,300 acres (74%) as Class III. Class II landscapes comprise areas that possess high scenic quality and are in highly visible locations. They include most of the South Fork, Henry's Fork and main Snake River system, North Menan Butte, Victor watershed, sand dunes northwest of St. Anthony, Medicine Lodge Creek, Monida Pass, Willow and Gray's Creek canyons, and foothill land along the Targhee National Forest boundary. Class III landscapes comprise the remaining public lands in the resource area and include areas of low to moderate scenic quality that normally are not seen by the general public.

Management objectives for both Class II and Class III areas will be met through the application of standard operating procedures (see Part I). Procedures include a review of individual projects for impacts on visual resources and measures that will be taken to meet the class objectives. In some cases, actions may be taken to enhance the visual quality and bring a specific site up to the standards of the class in which it is located.

WILDERNESS RESOURCES

The wilderness inventory for the resource area identified four units as wilderness study areas (WSA). They include Sand Mountain (21,100 acres), Table Rock Islands (380 acres), Pine Creek Islands (155 acres) and Conant Valley Islands (235 acres).

The following is a discussion of the wilderness resources for the WSAs. Because of the many similarities between the three island WSAs, they have been combined and are referred to as the Snake River Islands.

Sand Mountain

Naturalness - Impacts on the apparent natural character of the WSA include vehicle ways, livestock fences,a small deer trap, intermittent vehicle tracks on the sand, and litter. About 32 miles of vehicle ways enter and cross the WSA. Most are no more than trails that are difficult to follow, lack definition and are obscured by encroaching vegetation. Off-road vehicle tracks on the dunes are temporary impressions in the sand that disappear quickly when the wind blows. The short segments of livestock fence that total 5 miles, the deer trap and litter are all insignificant, and are absorbed easily within this large area.

Influences on naturalness outside the WSA include views of St. Anthony and the sights and sounds of rural vehicle traffic and agricultural activities. These influences are most imposing near the WSA's southeastern and eastern border and from higher vantage points where topographic screening is minimal.

Outstanding Opportunities - Opportunities for solitude exist throughout most of this relatively large area. It measures about ten miles from east to west and five miles from north to south and has a fairly good configuration.

Topographic screening is provided by the abrupt elevational changes and the many pockets and bowls in the dunes. Influences on solitude outside the WSA include sights and sounds of rural traffic, agricultural activities and views of St. Anthony. These influences are most noticeable near the WSA's southeastern border. However, views of the expansive sand dunes and Grand Teton Mountains tend to overshadow these influences. Throughout most of the WSA ample spots for seclusion are available.

Quality, diversity and challenge combine to make primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities outstanding. Hiking, horseback riding, camping, wildlife observation, photography, and cross-country skiing are among the possible activities. The quality of the activities is enhanced by the exceptional and unusual sand features, scenic views and interesting plant and animal communities. The lack of reliable water, extreme temperatures and the rugged terrain make all the activities challenging.

Supplemental Values - The WSA provides crucial wintering habitat for large mammals, including elk, moose and deer. The elk herd in particular is dependent on the western portion of the WSA. The herd migrates from as far away as Yellowstone National Park and Montana.

Two rare species of primrose are known to exist in the dunes: one has been listed as endangered and the other proposed. The barren sand also provides habitat for a species of tiger beetle that is found only in one other place in the world, the Bruneau Dunes near Mountain Home, Idaho.

The relative uniqueness of these non-coastal dunes provides uncommon scenic and geologic value. All of the lands within the WSA have been proposed as a National Natural Landmark to recognize these values.

Snake River Islands

Naturalness - Impacts on the apparent natural character of the islands are livestock grazing, litter and fire rings left by recreationists and human activity and development nearby. Livestock grazing is the most significant impact and has affected islands 25, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35, and 47 (See maps in Appendix E for the location of the islands by number). Grazing has reduced some thick island vegetation, creating open spaces more suitable for camping and spring waterfowl nesting. Litter and fire rings are found on the larger islands where camping is possible. Offsite influences appear the most dominant on islands 48-57, where highway 26 is nearest the river and traffic can be seen and clearly heard from the islands. The use of automobiles for stream bank rip-rap is of some significance, particularly on island 54 where over 30 junk cars line the river's bank. From island 16 to island 35 a gravel road parallels the river, but has little impact because it is sporadically used and is screened well by dense vegetation.

Outstanding Opportunities - Opportunities for solitude vary and are affected by the size and vegetative cover on a particular island and proximity to outside influences. On fifteen of the 39 islands a combination of vegetative screening and relatively large size contribute to opportunities for solitude. The remaining 24 islands can provide some opportunities to feel alone, but because of their small size and thinner vegetative screening, it would be difficult for a visitor to avoid contact with others or outside influences.

The major outside influences include highway 26 and nearby developments, vehicle traffic on the gravel road between island 16 and island 35 and the presence of motorboats throughout the entire river segment.

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are numerous and of high quality. Fishing from and around the islands is the most popular activity and is directly related to the excellent cutthroat trout fishery in the South Fork. The river channels along the islands offer challenge for boaters to test their skills on swift flat water. Primitive camping is available on several of the larger islands where there are grassy openings in the thick vegetation. The abundance and diversity of wildlife on the islands offer good deer and waterfowl hunting and excellent chances to observe and photograph several wildlife species, particularly bald and golden eagles. All of these recreation values are enhanced by the spectacular scenery found along the river corridor.

Supplemental Values - The most important supplemental value of the islands is wildlife habitat. They provide sites for bald eagle nesting and roosting and hunting sites for other raptors. Elk depend on the islands for forage in the winter, while deer and moose use them year round. The islands are of great importance as nest sites for the Canada goose. Geese prefer island nesting because it is relatively free from predators.

NATURAL HISTORY

Unusual and unique geologic features and important vegetative communities on public lands in the Resource Area are viewed as valuable natural history sites. One natural history area has been designated and is the 3,800 acre Menan Buttes National Natural Landmark. Public lands within the landmark include the North Menan Butte and total 1,120 acres. The landmark was identified and designated primarily because it is a unique geologic feature; a rare and well preserved series of volcanic cones composed mainly of tuff (compacted volcanic ash) that erupted through the water-saturated Snake River flood plain.

The public lands on North Menan Butte have been closed to grazing and ORV use to protect the area's natural values. However, ORV use continues because management and enforcement actions have not been sufficient. If not stopped, unauthorized ORV use and the damage it is causing could threaten the eligibility of the landmark status.

The St. Anthony Sand Dunes, totaling 27,350 acres, has been proposed as a National Natural Landmark. The area contains the largest and most spectacular dunes in a natural condition in the Columbia Plateau Region. The presence of a large sand dune this far inland is rare and makes the area geologically significant. Biological values are also important. Plant life is represented in all stages of succession and includes an endemic species of sand primrose.

Animal life ranges from the rare tiger beetle to wintering herds of mule deer, elk and moose. These factors have identified the dunes as nationally significant and deserving identification as a National Natural Landmark. A study on the area was completed and submitted for review to the National Park Service in 1982. Designation is pending the results of this review.

At present no Research Natural Areas have been established in the Resource Area. Research Natural Areas are sites where natural process are allowed to predominate and which are protected for the primary purposes of research and education. Three areas have been examined by the Idaho Natural Areas Coordinating Committee and have been recommended for formal identification and management. They include Menan Butte (340 acres), St. Anthony Sand Dunes (1420 acres) and Game Creek (857 acres). These sites were identified because of their relatively natural vegetative communities, and because there would not be significant conflicts if they were managed as Research Natural Areas.

South Fork of the Snake River Potential Addition to the National Rivers System

A 61 mile stretch of the South Fork of the Snake River is listed on the National Rivers Inventory. The inventory was completed in August 1980 and identifies potential additions to the National Rivers System. Three classifications are possible for rivers under the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542); wild, scenic and recreational. A preliminary assessment of the South Fork indicates that it would qualify as both scenic and recreational. This assessment is based on criteria established in the Final Revised Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification and Management of River Areas (Federal Register, Sept. 1982. See Appendix D).

This document and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act describe the general characteristics of rivers to be included in the system.

The Act and "Guidelines" state that to be eligible for inclusion in the System, the river segment must possess one or more "outstandingly remarkable values" and it must be "free-flowing." The guidance additionally requires that the river segment be of sufficient length and flow to be managed to protect values for which it would be designated.

The South Fork is an outstanding remaining link in the Snake River System that is free-flowing. Even though the flows are regulated by Palisades Dam, the 61 miles to the confluence with the Henry's Fork is unimpounded. Other rivers have been added to the National Rivers System that are controlled by upstream and downstream reservoirs and some have been recommended for designation. A nearby example of this is the Snake above Palisades to Grand Teton National Park, which is controlled by Jackson Lake Dam. It is therefore concluded that Congress did not intend to exclude river segments because their flows are controlled by reservoirs and the South Fork qualifies as free-flowing.

There are several unusual, unique and exceptional values that can be described as "outstandingly remarkable" along the South Fork. Scenic vistas include pastoral settings backdropped with mountain ranges, a spectacular canyon with sheer rock walls that open onto a mature flood plain, and densely vegetated islands and banks. The river corridor provides enjoyable and relaxing opportunities for motor and float boating on swift flat water, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, and nature study. These activities are enhanced by both outstanding scenery and fish and wildlife resources. The South Fork is one of Idaho's highest valued fisheries and is well known as a blue ribbon cutthroat trout stream. Canada geese and a variety of ducks nest along banks and on islands. The river's cottonwood riparian zone is considered Idaho's most important ecosystem (USDI, 1980). It provides critical habitat for

nesting and wintering bald eagles and crucial habitat for wintering big game such as elk, deer and moose. Prehistoric sites 8,000 years old have been documented along the river as well as historic evidence of early settlers and explorers to the region.

The South Fork is considered to be of sufficient length and flow to be managed as part of the National Rivers System and the factors "free-flowing" and "outstandingly remarkable values" appear to be met or exceeded. This leads to the conclusion that the South Fork is eligible for inclusion in the System.

Table 3-3 "Preliminary Assessment of Classification," presents criteria from the Final Revised Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification and Management of River Areas. It shows the degree to which these criteria appear to be met for three segments of the South Fork.

TABLE 3-3

South Fork of the Snake River
Preliminary Assessment of Classification

Classification Criteria	RIVER SEGMENTS		
	Palisades Reservoir to Conant Valley Powerline	Conant Valley Power-line to Riley Diversion	Riley Diversion to Henry's Fork Confluence
Water Resources Development	Bank rip-rap and channel modifications; free of impoundment.	None; free of impoundment.	Diversions, irrigation canals, rip-rap, channel modifications and unobstructive levees.
Shoreline Development	Residential, commercial and agricultural development present. Presence of domestic livestock grazing.	Largely primitive. Some farm and dispersed private dwellings. Presence of domestic livestock grazing.	Some dispersed private dwellings and agricultural develop ment. Presence of domestic live stock grazing.
Accessibility	Readily accessible by road. Roads parallel river in many places.	Accessible in places by road. Generally inconspicuous "South Fork Road" parallels river from Anderson Diversion to Burns Creek.	Accessible in places by road, particularly along levees and where highways bridge river.
Water Quality	Water quality in all segments is sufficient to support high quality fisheries and is suitable for a variety of water-based recreation activities.		Lower than other segments because of run-off from cultivated field and return ditches.
Segment Length	15 miles	23 miles	23 miles
Preliminary Classification	Recreational	Scenic	Recreational