

ACEC's in Bruneau Land Use Plan – July 12, 2004

Biological Soil Crust ACEC (Carried forward in Alternatives C and D)

Values

1. Relatively undisturbed low elevation Wyoming big sagebrush and salt desert shrub communities.
2. The area is characterized by regionally significant, reference quality biological soil crusts in Wyoming big sagebrush and salt desert shrub communities. The biological soil crusts are the primary stabilizing agents in the highly erodible soils characteristic of the area.
3. The biological soil crusts in the proposed ACEC provide a reference area for scientific study of the functions and values of these organisms.

Threats

1. Current management is maintaining the excellent condition of this area.
2. Proposed expansion of water developments would increase livestock use in the area. Livestock trampling would break up the biological soil crusts and increase soil erosion and cheatgrass invasion.
3. Increased recreational use (primarily OHV) would break up biological soil crusts, provide pathways for the introduction of noxious and invasive weeds, and increase erosion.
4. Cheatgrass invasion of this area would eventually lead to wildfire, which would destroy the values. Cheatgrass invasion has been shown in many studies to be inhibited by a well developed biological soil crust.

Bruneau River ACEC (Carried forward in Alternatives B,C, and D)

Values

1. Important habitat area for California bighorn sheep. The habitat within this proposed ACEC and other canyonlands in southwestern Idaho supports 25% of all the California bighorn sheep in the world.
2. The Bruneau River bighorn sheep population is currently large enough to provide hunting opportunities (currently 13% of hunting permits for California bighorns in Idaho).
3. The Bruneau River historically provided habitat for the federally threatened bull trout. The Jarbidge River supports the southernmost population of bull trout in North America. Bull trout still use the main stem Jarbidge River for fall and winter habitat, and a recovered bull trout population would likely winter in the Bruneau River.
4. The Recovery Plan for the threatened Jarbidge River population of bull trout would likely designate the Bruneau River as critical bull trout habitat.
5. The Bruneau River supports populations of redband trout, which is a State of Idaho and American Fisheries Society species of special concern, and a BLM sensitive species. Recent research indicates one of the greatest threats to redband trout is the loss of connectivity among redband populations and habitats, particularly the loss of redband populations in large streams.
6. The aquatic habitats of the Bruneau River are largely intact with no exotic fish species present, unlike all other large rivers in southwestern Idaho.

7. Hot springs in the lower Bruneau River provide the majority of the habitat for the federally endangered Bruneau hot springsnail.
8. The State of Idaho has designated the Bruneau River as a special resource water to preserve outstanding or unique characteristics and to protect beneficial uses.
9. The Wild and Scenic River (suitable) segment of the Bruneau River provides unparalleled river and whitewater recreational opportunities, and also spectacular canyon viewing, hiking, and exploring opportunities.
10. The proposed ACEC includes 22,767 (Alt B) or 30,382 (Alt C, D) acres of the Bruneau River – Sheep Creek and Jarbidge River WSAs, which are currently managed to protect the wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, opportunities for primitive recreation experience and the special feature of cultural and archaeological values.
11. The Bruneau River is unique in recorded cultural resources sites, including fragile prehistoric sites, historic sites and sites important to the ongoing transmission of Native American cultures. A 1973 inventory indicated the area was heavily utilized prehistorically and that many sites contain “exceptional” values. The aridity of the river canyon is favorable to the preservation of perishable cultural materials. The canyon has also been identified as being eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and should be so designated.
12. Designation as an ACEC would provide for consistent management of sensitive resources across management jurisdictions (the Bruneau and Jarbidge River canyons on the Jarbidge Field Office side of the Bruneau River are managed as ACECs).
13. The Bruneau canyon exposes several gigantic rhyolite flows of the Bruneau-Jarbidge eruptive center associated with the passage of the Yellowstone hotspot, a unique world class geologic feature.
14. Limestone caprock that occurs in the vicinity of Indian Bathtub is a unique fossil formation that consists of the fossil remains of sponges that lived in a barrier reef along Lake Idaho. This formation, and the fact that it is naturally exposed, give the area high geologic and paleontological values, particularly for scientific study. The columns or ‘cylinders’ are visually interesting.
15. There are 10 special status plant species that would be included in the ACEC under all of the action alternatives. They are mainly Type 3 & 4 species. One species (Bruneau River prickly phlox) is endemic to the canyon walls of the Bruneau River.

Threats

1. Increased recreation use (primarily OHV) is threatening bighorn sheep and their continued use of canyon and bench habitats. Sheep are particularly susceptible to human disturbance during the lambing season.
2. Foot travel in critical lambing areas has potential to affect sheep.
3. Road proliferation which degrades habitats, provides pathways for the introduction of noxious and invasive weeds, increases erosion that potentially elevates sediment delivery to streams, and facilitates increased disturbance of sheep.
4. Increased use of the river will require increased management of boating to preserve the quality of recreation experience.
5. Locating livestock developments in bighorn sheep habitat displaces sheep from habitats they previously used.
6. Increased recreational use threatens Native American cultural sites and historical sites. The Bruneau River has been identified as a potential ACEC in past planning efforts. Site

destruction was cited as an issue in public response to a BLM questionnaire. The cost effective management tool of remoteness to protect cultural sites no longer applies to the Bruneau River because of increased recreational use.

7. Increased recreational use of hot springs threatens the Bruneau hot spring snails and their habitats.
8. Current use of riparian areas and floodplain above the Jarbidge River confluence is contributing to water quality degradation.
9. The limestone caprock and embedded fossils are being heavily impacted by non-permitted removal and damage, from fossil hunters and rock hounds.
10. Fire and OHV disturbance are the main threats to special status plants. Disturbance from OHVs and other recreational activities, weed invasion, and fire are threats to all of the low elevation special status plant populations in the Indian Bathtub/Hot Creek portion of the nominated area. There are no known threats to the Bruneau River prickly phlox.

Camas Creek and Pole Creek ACEC (Carried forward under Alternatives B, C and D)

Values

1. The Camas and Pole creek drainages are well known among local people and others for the unique cultural and historic sites, including petroglyphs; numerous rock alignments; campsites and lithic scatters. The area is important to contemporary Native American cultures. A portion of the proposed ACEC is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Recent cultural resource inventories have identified a larger geographic area of cultural importance needing more intensive management and protection.
2. Pole Creek supports populations of redband trout. Redband trout are a State of Idaho and American Fisheries Society species of special concern, and a BLM sensitive species. The upper end of Pole Creek provides refugium habitat for redband trout as smallmouth bass, an introduced exotic species that competes with redband trout, currently are absent from upper Pole Creek. Streams lacking smallmouth bass are rare in the Owyhee River basin.
3. Redband trout move seasonally between Deep Creek and its tributary Pole Creek and also occupy portions of upper and lower Pole Creek year around. Recent research has shown the importance of tributary streams like Pole Creek to maintaining populations of redband trout in large streams such as Deep Creek as these main stem populations primarily utilize tributary streams for spawning and rearing.
4. Mottled and Paiute sculpin, two fish species that are uncommon in the planning area and have disjunct distributions in southwestern Idaho, inhabit Pole and Camas creeks.
5. Portions of Pole and Camas Creeks are in highly scenic “box-shaped” canyons that are unique to the planning area.
6. Much of the Pole-Camas area is comprised of ecotones between sagebrush/grass habitats and juniper forest that provide highly scenic camping, viewing, exploring and other recreational uses.
7. Portions of Pole Creek support pristine riparian plant communities
8. 18,575 acres within the proposed ACEC are currently managed as Pole Creek and Upper Deep Creek WSAs to protect the wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, opportunities for primitive recreation experience and the special feature of cultural and archaeological values.
9. The area supports several spotted frog populations, which is a Candidate species under the ESA.

10. The area probably supports populations of Mud Flat milkvetch (Type 3), as this species has been documented to the north, east and west. This is a regional endemic.
11. Upland plant communities are generally in good to excellent condition.

Threats

1. Increased recreational use (OHV, hunters, hikers, etc) threatens both Native American cultural sites and historical sites.
2. Increased recreation use can increase conflicts among user groups and may decrease the quality of recreation experiences.
3. The proliferation of roads, which degrades habitats, provides pathways for the introduction of noxious and invasive weeds, increases erosion that potentially elevates sediment delivery to streams, and facilitates increased disturbance of wildlife.
4. Grazing on stream terraces threatens cultural sites
5. Portions of Pole Creek currently receive too high of levels of livestock grazing during the summer resulting in degradation of riparian and aquatic habitats, particularly those used by redband trout for spawning and rearing.
6. Densities of redband trout are low in the Owyhee River basin relative to other river basins in southwestern Idaho. Decreased population abundance contributes to lower probability of populations persisting through time.
7. Successful spawning and rearing of redband trout in Pole Creek is likely critical to the long-term maintenance of the redband trout population in Deep Creek.
8. Exotic smallmouth bass have spread from the Owyhee River and invaded lower Pole and Camas Creeks where they compete with native populations of redband trout, and during periods of low stream flow totally remove (by preying upon) all native minnow species in pool habitats of Pole Creek.

Castle Creek ACEC (Carried forward under Alternative C, SRMA under Alternatives B and D)

Values

1. Habitat area for California bighorn sheep. The habitat within this proposed ACEC and other canyonlands in southwestern Idaho supports 25% of all the California bighorn sheep in the world.
2. Castle Creek supports populations of redband trout. Redband trout are a State of Idaho and American Fisheries Society species of special concern, and a BLM sensitive species.
3. Connections among redband trout populations in several tributary streams are maintained by the redband trout population inhabiting Castle Creek.
4. Castle Creek supports one of the most popular recreational stream fisheries in Owyhee County.
5. The canyon of Castle Creek provides spectacular scenery and canyon hiking and viewing recreational opportunities.
6. The geologic features of the area are highly scenic.
7. The area supports regionally rare deposits of zeolitic soils.
8. This bighorn sheep population and habitat area provides one of the closest opportunities for people from major population areas of Boise, Nampa, and Mountain Home to view bighorn sheep.

9. There are several populations of Janish's penstemon (Type 3) in the eastern portion of the area; the largest population in Idaho is captured in the boundary. Two other special status species occur here.

Threats

1. Increased recreation use (OHV) is threatening bighorn sheep and their continued use of canyon and bench habitats. Sheep are particularly susceptible to human disturbance during the lambing season.
2. Road proliferation which degrades habitats, provides pathways for the introduction of noxious and invasive weeds, increases erosion that potentially elevates sediment delivery to streams, and facilitates increased disturbance of sheep.
3. Locating livestock developments in bighorn sheep habitat displaces sheep from habitats they previously used.
4. This sheep population is located closer to areas with significant levels of human activity than most other populations in Owyhee County. The small size of this "patch" of bighorn sheep habitat relative to other habitat areas places it at greater risk that sheep will abandon the area if human disturbance levels are not properly regulated.
5. Recent research indicates one of the greatest threats to redband trout is the loss of connectivity among redband populations and habitats, particularly the loss of redband populations in large streams that interconnect other streams and populations.
6. Janish's penstemon occurs on 'badlands' type areas, which are attractive to hill-climbing OHV users. Recent surveys in this area indicated that this type of use is increasing rapidly. This species was recently 'upgraded' to a higher conservation status, indicating increasing threats.
7. Several special recreation permits for motorcycle and OHV races have been permitted in this area. These races have been shown to widen trails, increase disturbance, and cause braided trails.

Horse Hill ACEC (Carried forward in Alternatives B, C, and D)

Values

1. Greatest diversity of species and number of populations of sensitive plants in the planning area and possibly the Owyhee field office.
2. Sensitive plant species include: several populations of Type 2 species (Mulford's milkvetch and Packard's buckwheat) and populations of 6 other species (Types 3 and 4).
3. Many populations are in relatively good condition, particularly when compared to populations of the same species in the western Owyhee Front.
4. Significant paleontological resources are found in the area. These include the fossilized remains of mammals such as mastodon, horse, camel, sloth, and beaver which are found in floodplain deposits of the Glens Ferry Formation. Other fossil fauna include the remains of frogs, fish, aquatic birds, and gastropods.
5. Fossilized remains of fishes (about 30 species) found in the lakebed deposits from Lake Idaho (a Pliocene lake) document tropic adaptations more diverse than in any other prehistoric or current grouping of freshwater fishes in North America.

Threats

1. Area is currently closed to competitive racing; but may be opened in the future.
2. Casual OHV use is increasing in this area; particularly in the habitat types where the sensitive plant species occur.
3. Increased OHV activity on highly erodible soils has damaged paleontological and botanical resources.
4. Concentrated livestock use (salt, water troughs, trailing) is negatively impacting sensitive plant populations primarily by altering the soil surface, which increases the abundance and density of cheatgrass.
5. Cheatgrass invasion makes this area more susceptible to fire.

Jacks Creek ACEC (Carried forward in Alternatives B, C, and D)

Values

1. Important habitat area for California bighorn sheep. The habitat within this proposed ACEC and other canyonlands in southwestern Idaho supports 25% of all the California bighorn sheep in the world.
2. Big and Little Jacks creeks support some of the highest densities of redband trout in southwestern Idaho. Redband trout are a State of Idaho and American Fisheries Society species of special concern, and a BLM sensitive species.
3. Big and Little Jacks Creek were identified as an aquatic-habitat stronghold for redband trout. Aquatic habitat strongholds comprise just 17% of the range of redband trout in the Columbia River basin.
4. Recent research has shown that main stem populations of redband trout in large streams such as Big Jacks Creek primarily utilize tributary streams for spawning and rearing, pointing out the importance of managing entire watersheds rather than just individual streams.
5. Streams in this area provide reference examples of natural riparian plant communities, rarely replicated in diversity or scale elsewhere in southwestern Idaho.
6. Uplands in this area include reference quality sagebrush/bunchgrass communities that were proposed to be designated as a Research Natural Area under the previous plan and important sage grouse habitats.
7. Canyonlands of Big Jacks, Little Jacks, Shoofly, and Duncan creeks provide unparalleled scenery and canyon hiking and exploring recreational opportunities.
8. 92,066 (Alt B), 120,713 (Alt C), or 117,817 (Alt D) acres within the proposed ACEC are currently managed as Wilderness Study Areas to protect the wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, opportunities for primitive recreation experience and the special feature of cultural and archaeological values.
9. The Little Jacks and Big Jacks bighorn sheep populations are currently large enough to provide hunting opportunities (currently 20% of hunting permits issued in Idaho). The Little Jacks herd has been an important source of animals for transplanting to other areas.
10. The Jacks Creek proposed ACEC is unique in recorded cultural resources sites, including fragile prehistoric sites, historic sites and sites important to the ongoing transmission of Native American cultures. The area includes four important cultural sites that were identified in the Bruneau MFP for protection: One of these sites is rare on the Boise District, a well-known pictograph site, "Hole in Rock".

11. Spotted frogs, white-faced ibis, and sage grouse, all of which are special status species, inhabit wetland and meadow habitats in the upper Little Jacks Creek basin, and sage grouse are found in sagebrush uplands through much of the Big and Little Jacks Creek watersheds.
12. Mottled sculpin, a fish which is uncommon in the planning area and has a scattered distribution in southwestern Idaho, inhabits the middle to upper portions Little Jacks Creek.
13. Headwater streams are meeting the coldwater biota criteria.
14. Though the areas under Alternatives B and D support a few special status plant species, these are not thought to be critically important sites for preventing listing or maintaining distribution. Alternative C supports more species and populations, but again, these are not critically important sites.

Threats

1. Increased OHV use is threatening bighorn sheep and their continued use of canyon and bench habitats. Sheep are particularly susceptible to human disturbance during the lambing season.
2. Foot travel in critical lambing areas has potential to affect sheep.
3. Road proliferation which degrades habitats, provides pathways for the introduction of noxious and invasive weeds, increases erosion that potentially elevates sediment delivery to streams, and facilitates increased disturbance of sheep.
4. Increased recreation use can increase conflicts among user groups and may decrease the quality of recreation experiences.
5. The introduction of the noxious weed (spotted knapweed) onto private lands at the lower end of Little Jacks Creek poses a threat to native riparian plant communities. In other areas of Idaho, spotted knapweed has taken over riparian areas. Increased use by OHV could spread this weed and others to new areas.
6. Locating livestock developments in bighorn sheep habitat displaces sheep from habitats they previously used.
7. Concentrating livestock use in reference shrub steppe communities and high density cultural resource sites would degrade these areas.
8. Trampling and increased recreational use threatens both Native American cultural sites and historical sites.
9. Current management practices in upper Little Jacks Creek basin are contributing elevated levels of sediment to Little Jacks Creek.

Mud Flat Oolite ACEC (existing designation is 5 acres, expanded and carried forward in alternatives B, C, and D)

Values

1. The area contains several populations of two Type 2 plants (Mulford's milkvetch and Packard's buckwheat) that are in good condition. Two other BLM sensitive plants occur here (Types 3 & 4).
2. Reference quality plant communities including salt desert shrub, 'badlands', and Indian ricegrass/needle-and-thread grass are found in the area.
3. Significant paleontological resources are in the enclosure. These include the fossilized remains of mammals such as mastodon, horse, camel, sloth and beaver which are found in floodplain deposits of the Glens Ferry Formation. Other fossil fauna include the remains of frogs, fish, aquatic birds, and gastropods.

4. Fossilized remains of fishes (about 30 species) found in the lakebed deposits from Lake Idaho (a Pliocene lake) document trophic adaptations more diverse than in any other prehistoric or current grouping of freshwater fishes in North America.
5. Significant cultural sites – evidence of long term use by Native Americans.
6. The unique geologic features of the area are a scenic focal point of the Owyhee Uplands Backcountry Byway.
7. Unusual oolitic outcroppings provide habitat for sensitive plant species.

Threats

1. The area is currently closed to all motorized vehicles; however, this temporary designation could change. Increased OHV activity would severely damage sensitive plant species populations and paleontological resources that occur in the enclosure.
2. Existing mining claims for oolite in the area could be developed resulting in significant surface disturbance and negative impacts to a variety of resources (botanical, cultural, paleontological, visual).
3. Erosion currently threatens cultural sites.

Mulford's Milkvetch (Carried forward in Alternative C, SRMA in Alternative B and D)

Values

1. Mulford's milkvetch is the plant of highest conservation concern in the Owyhee Field Office and the Bruneau planning area.
2. Mulford's milkvetch is a Type 2 species of high conservation concern across its range. The populations in the Bruneau planning unit are at the eastern edge of the plants' range.
3. Mulford's milkvetch is a regional endemic. It occurs in small populations in southwest Idaho and in Malheur County.
4. The areas identified as the proposed ACEC have been thoroughly surveyed for special status plant species. Most of the potential habitat in this general area (the northern portion of the Bruneau planning area) has also been surveyed. This indicates that the areas identified for ACEC designation are the only areas that currently support Mulford's milkvetch.

Threats

1. The areas identified under this proposal as supporting Mulford's milkvetch are in fair, poor, or very poor condition.
2. Drought and cheatgrass invasion are the principle natural threats in this area.
3. Livestock grazing, OHMV use, and a sand/gravel mine are the principle land-use related threats.
4. Monitoring has shown that many of these populations are declining due to various identified (listed above) and potentially unidentified causes.

Sugar Valley Badlands (Carried forward in Alternatives B, C, and D)

Values

1. Sensitive plant species include: Packard's buckwheats (Types 2 and 4) and Janish's penstemon (Type 3).
2. Condition of plant communities is good to excellent; some are of reference quality.
3. Selenium-rich soil supports rare and peripheral plants and vegetation communities.
4. The area supports good condition biological soil crusts, though they are fragmented.

Threats

1. The area is adjacent to a high traffic road with abundant access for OHV use.
2. Casual OHV use is increasing in this area, particularly in the habitat types where the sensitive plant species occur due to their sparse vegetation.
3. Off-trail OHV activity on these highly erodible soils has damaged the botanical resources and the soil structure through the destruction of the soil crusts.
4. Concentrated livestock use (salt, water troughs, trailing) is negatively impacting the flat portions of the area primarily the bottomlands and drainage-ways.
5. The areas in #4 have subsequently been invaded by cheatgrass.
6. Cheatgrass invasion makes this area more susceptible to fire.

Three Tables ACEC (Carried forward in Alternative C, SRMA in Alternatives B and D)

Values

1. Significant cultural values are present. The Bruneau MFP identified two prehistoric big game hunting complexes for protection in the area currently proposed for the Three Tables ACEC. Cultural values in the vicinity of these sites represent not only hunting and procurement strategies but a full range of human behavior for an estimated 7,000 year period. This cultural area continues to be important to the ongoing transmission of Native American culture.
2. Good to excellent condition reference vegetation communities are found throughout the area. These include a wide range of sagebrushes and their associated species, both grasses and forbs. The sagebrush species include: Basin big, Mountain big, Owyhee, silver, low, and alkali. The communities occupy a variety of upland ecological sites such as loamy and shallow clay pan sites and ephemeral wetlands.
3. Mud Flat milkvetch (Type 3) also occurs here.

Threats

1. Cultural sites are highly visible; becoming more well known and are thereby threatened by a variety of activities ranging from increased recreational use and wanton destruction by well meaning groups interested in Native American religious sites.
2. Changes to livestock grazing management and increased recreational use could potentially degrade plant communities and introduce exotic species.