BIG WOOD ANALYSIS UNIT

DESCRIPTION

The Big Wood Analysis Unit lies north of U.S. Highway 20, east of Willow Creek, west of the divide between the Big Wood and Little Wood rivers, and south of the Sawtooth National Forest. It excludes the Sun Valley Analysis Unit, which encompases the public land on Bald Mountain and the public land north of Sun Valley/Ketchum. It comprises the Big Wood River and Camp Creek drainages and their tributaries, and a small part of the Willow Creek drainage. The public land in the unit is typically found on rolling to steep hills covered by sagebrush and grass. Small areas of Douglas-fir and/or aspen forests are also included. State Highway 75, the "Sawtooth Scenic Route," bisects the unit from north to south. The rapidly growing cities of Bellevue and Hailey are centrally located in the unit. Most of the unit is included in Blaine County, which has strict zoning ordinances and a very active Planning and Zoning Commission. A small part of the unit is in Camas County, which also has an active Planning and Zoning Commission.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

This unit will be managed to protect the watershed resources, wildlife habitat, open space, and scenic values. However, continued livestock grazing, timber harvesting, recreational activities, and mineral development will be encouraged as long as the proposed uses do not significantly reduce the other values.

SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

Lands

Decision Number 1

Retain all public land unless disposal would be in the national interest, and the land meets one or more of the following criteria:

a. The land qualifies under appropriate regulations for lease or sale under the Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act.

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DECISION

A & P Partnership : Land Exchange IDI 28923

Title Accepted - Patent to Issue

Conveyance of the non-federal lands to the United States and satisfactory evidence of title have been filed under the Act of October 21, 1976 (Section 206, 90 Stat. 2756; 43 U.S.C. 1716).

Title to the non-federal lands is accepted. The exchange is approved for patenting as to the Federal lands, and the patent is now being issued. Any deposit made to insure payment of taxes on the offered lands will be refunded upon submission of evidence showing payment of taxes. This evidence can consist of a copy of the paid tax receipt or a statement to this effect from the county treasurer.

Federal Land
Boise Meridian, Idaho
T. 3 N., R. 18 E.,
sec. 26: NW¼NW¼, SW¼NW¼, SE¼NW¼.

Acres: 120.00 acres.

Non-Federal Land
Boise Meridian, Idaho
T. 2 N., R. 18 E.,
sec. 2: E½SE¼
sec. 11: NE¼, SE¼NW¼, NE¼SW¼, S½SW¼, N½SE¼.

Acres: 480.00 acres.

Reservations

Federal Land:
Excepting and Reserving to the United States: A right-of-way thereon for ditches and canals constructed by the authority of the United States, Act of August 30, 1890 (43 U.S.C. 945).

Non-Federal Lands: NONE

Larry R. Lievsay
for M. William Weigand
Unit Leader for Realty Unit

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Utility copies: Case File 943RF

b. The land is needed by a local government entity but does not meet the requirements of the R&PP Act.

c. The land is difficult or uneconomical for BLM to manage or is not needed for any federal program.

d. The land lies within an identified disposal area, as shown on Map BW-1.

Disposal by land exchange will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Priority will be given to acquiring areas that would improve manageability of public lands, protect or expand crucial wildlife habitat, or provide legal and/or physical access to streams, reservoirs, or tracts of public land. Priority areas to obtain private or state lands include: (1) Slaughterhouse-Upper Quigley Creek, (2) Camp Creek-Kelley Gulch, and (3) the deer migration route between Stanton Crossing and Warm Springs Landing.

Lands in the Ohio Gulch area may be disposed of for industrial development consistent with the local land use plan. Each proposal will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Access to public lands in Ohio Gulch and Indian Creek areas will be maintained.

Public lands with significant cultural resource values will be retained in public ownership.

Rationale

The major portions of the public lands in this unit contain many valuable public resources. These include crucial wildlife habitat, water production, recreation values, livestock forage, and minerals.

The lands that are to be disposed of are generally isolated tracts that have lower public values and are difficult to administer.

The flexibility for land exchange allows for enhancing the management of public lands in the public interest. It will allow for a more detailed look at each exchange proposal and an evaluation of detailed resource data, which are not available at this time.

The Ohio Gulch area is the location of the main Blaine County land fill, and is zoned for industrial development. The County government favors making this area available for industrial development. However, most of the potential is on state land.

Decision Number 2

Allow rights-of-way for utility and transportation purposes (both public and private), provided the uses comply with all requirements of this plan. Rights-of-way applications will be examined on a case-by-case basis to determine routes, impacts, and mitigating measures.

Rationale

The fast-growing population increases the need for utility and transportation rights-of-way. Locations for rights-of-way are not known at present. Each will be evaluated on its own merits.

Decision Number 3

Do not allow disposal of public lands that include flood plains, riparian areas, water frontage, and water sources, except for public uses consistent with the general management of the area and E.O. 11296 (see Appendix 2). However, the following parcels of land will be available for future material sales and free use permits:

NW4SW4 Section 13, T. 1 N., R. 18 E.
W2NW4 Section 24, T. 1 N., R. 18 E.

Rationale

Riparian areas are generally associated with spring areas and streams, all of which have high wildlife values. Flood plains may serve important hydrologic functions and generally are not suitable for private development. The material sale area is adjacent to existing private material sites and is in a broad alluvial flood plain on the Big Wood River. This section of the river is dry during the summer due to diversion for irrigation. Few wildlife values exist at the present time.

Decision Number 4

Remove all withdrawals from public lands administered by BLM. Obtain water rights on all public water reserves prior to revocation. Remove all classifications made under the authority of the Classification and Multiple Use Act.

Rationale

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) provides adequate protection for the retention of these lands in federal ownership. The 3809 Surface Protection regulations provide for protection of the water and other resources.

Minerals

Decision Number 1

Grant geothermal or oil and gas lease applications, subject to local planning and zoning ordinances, environmental protection stipulations, and other legal or procedural requirements.

Rationale

This area has a good potential for geothermal resources and a low oil and gas potential. Stipulations will adequately protect the surface resources.

Decision Number 2

Establish community pits and free use permit areas, based on local needs, local planning and zoning ordinances, and BLM requirements.

a. Develop Ohio Gulch as a major long-term source of gravel for the upper Wood River Valley. Continue the community pit, consistent with the existing mining plan.

b. Develop the Townsend Gulch material site as a major source of decomposed granite for local government, compatible with local zoning and BLM requirements.

Rationale

The fast-growing population in Blaine County places a large requirement for mineral materials on this area. Decomposed granite is particularly needed for road sanding during the winter months to reduce the hazard of slick roads. Additional needs are for road maintenance and construction.

Decision Number 3

Protect paleontological and geological sites having scientific or educational values.

Rationale

Bureau policy requires the protection of these various resources. At the present time, there are few known paleontological or geological resource values in the area.

Decision Number 4

All areas within the unit will be open to mining exploration and development.

Rationale

This area has some known mineral values and should remain open to exploration. The Regulations will provide sufficient environmental protection for these areas.

Forest Products

Decision Number 1

Intensively manage areas capable of producing timber, Christmas trees, and other woodland products. This will include thinning, disease control, reforestation, and other practices. The following guidelines will be used for all timber harvesting except in case of fire, disease, insect, or other damage in areas where salvage is to be done.

a. No clear cut will exceed 45 acres.

b. Maximum clear-cut widths will be 1600 feet on big game winter range and 1000 feet on summer range.

c. No timber harvest on crucial elk or deer winter range except in case of damage by disease, insects, fire, etc., or unless the harvest would be beneficial to the big game involved.

d. Cut in a mosaic or mottled pattern.

e. Strive for a ratio of 60 percent forage to 40 percent cover in harvested timber stands.

f. Maintain snags for wildlife. An analysis of each timber stand to be harvested will be made to determine the number of snags necessary.

g. Comply with the provisions of the Idaho Forest Protection Act.

h. A 200-foot radius will be left around nests of sensitive bird species. Other nests will be protected to the extent practical.

i. No timber cutting, except for salvage, will be made within the visual influence zone along the Sawtooth Scenic Route (State Highway 75).

In response to the Forest Land Policy Statement signed by Director Burford on 10/14/83 and Instruction Memorandum No. ID-84-65 it has been determined that 658 acres should be returned to the timber production base. These acres were reported in August 1982 as being totally restricted commercial forest lands. The restriction was "no timber harvest on crucial elk or deer winter range except in case of damage by disease, insects, fire, or unless the harvest would benefit the big game involved." This language is directly from the MFP decisions in the Sun Valley MFP. IM No. ID-84-65 contained guidelines that said "restrictions on timber harvest (e.g. percent canopy removal) may be needed to protect needed habitat for various big game species. Complete withdrawals from the CFL base should not be required for protection of winter range habitat." Our response dated January 4, 1984 identified the subject areas as being changed from total restriction to partial restriction under the new guidelines.

The following stands totalling 658 acres are considered a partially restricted portion of the timber production base. This does not conflict with MFP decisions.

Subunit/Block	Stand Numbers
2404	0330 through 0400
2450	0410 and 0420

Ervin Cowley

Ervin Cowley, Monument Resource Area Manager

8/12/85

Date

Charles G. Hazier

Chuck Haszier, Shoshone District Manager

8/12/85

Date

Rationale

The timber stands in this area have a potential to produce needed timber, Christmas trees, posts and poles, and firewood. Future wood product needs will increase with the increasing population. The guidelines will prevent excessive damage to other resources.

Decision Number 2

Make areas available for small sales (less than $500) of firewood, posts, and poles. These areas could include noncommercial stands, timber sale slash areas, and thinning or disease control areas where the harvested trees would otherwise not be merchantable.

Rationale

These wood products are in much demand in this area. The demand will continue to increase as the population increases.

Decision Number 3

Develop Christmas tree sale areas where suitable trees are available and harvesting can be closely controlled. Sell other vegetative products, such as cones, boughs, and cuttings, if a demand exists and such sale would be consistent with other managment objectives.

Rationale

Demand exists for Christmas trees in this area, but there are insufficient trees to provide commercial numbers. Availability of Christmas trees and other forest products on public land is limited and would have to be closely controlled to avoid adverse effects on other resources.

Livestock Forage

Decision Number 1

Stock and manage the grazing allotments according to the proposed action in the Sun Valley Grazing Environmental Impact Statement, as summarized and updated in the Rangeland Program Summary (RPS). Tables from the current RPS are enclosed as Appendix 3, summarizing the stocking rates and other management. Grazing Management may be changed based on monitoring and/or

findings of environmental assessments, consistent with other provisions of this land use plan. Changes will be documented in revisions of the RPS.

Rationale

Livestock grazing is the major use within this analysis unit. It is a very important segment of the local economy, and can be managed for sustained yield and multiple use. The selected grazing management has been subjected to comprehensive analysis in an environmental impact statement, and is consistent with the public comments received.

Decision Number 2

Brush control, seeding, water developments, fencing, and other range improvements will be implemented as described in Table B, Appendix 3, contingent on sufficient funding levels. These improvements, and any others proposed, will be subject to an environmental assessment and cost-benefit analysis prior to final approval.

Rationale

Range improvements of all types are needed to improve range condition in some areas. These include livestock management facilities such as fences, water developments, and cattleguards, as well as land treatment.

Decision Number 3

Allotments may be divided or combined to meet the needs of the livestock industry and/or to improve livestock management.

Rationale

Changing requirements for livestock operators may require combining or splitting allotments for improved management of the range or to meet management objectives.

Decision Number 4

Conversions from sheep to cattle and from cattle to sheep will be allowed within the inventoried carrying capacity and will take into account range suitability, manageability, wildlife habitat, and other factors. An environmental assessment will be completed to evaluate the details of each specific proposal.

Rationale

There is a continuing trend to change livestock operations from sheep to cattle. Care must be taken to ensure the change from sheep to cattle will not damage the range or wildlife habitat. The range inventory takes into account suitability, palatability, and diet.

Decision Number 5

Increased forage will be allocated to livestock on a nonrenewable basis for a minimum of five years, during which monitoring must confirm the permanent nature of the forage before increasing the active preference.

Rationale

This procedure will allow monitoring of the increased stocking rate through utilization and trend studies. It will allow increased use with much more flexibility to evaluate the effects of the use.

Decision Number 6

Vegetation manipulation may be done under the following guidelines:

a. Brush may not be removed in crucial elk or deer winter range unless an analysis indicates it will not adversely affect the elk or deer.

b. In sage grouse areas, the Western States Sage Grouse Committee's guidelines will be used (see Appendix 1). Guidelines may be modified by local area, e.g., mosaic patterns within a two-mile radius of strutting grounds.

c. Proposed treatments will be designed to have as little adverse impact on the visual resources as practical (see VRM for classes).

d. Proposals to use chemical sprays will be cleared through applicable BLM requirements and reviewed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Rationale

Much of the vegetation manipulation will be accomplished with controlled burns or modified suppression plans. However, all other techniques of brush control are available to meet particular needs. The guidelines will minimize adverse impacts on other resources.

Watershed

Decision Number 1

Maintain sufficient vegetative cover to protect public lands from accelerated erosion. Minimize soil compaction and disturbance due to livestock grazing, timber harvest, and construction and maintenance of all facilities. Consider time of year for the use, select techniques that are less disturbing, etc.

Rationale

Most of this unit is hilly to mountainous. Because of the steep slopes, extreme care must be taken not to increase erosion and reduce productivity.

Decision Number 2

Minimize stream sedimentation by stabilizing deteriorating streambanks. Improve to at least fair condition all riparian areas, and reduce sediment from high source areas such as mine tailings, poorly located or designed roads, areas of active channelling, etc.

Rationale

There are several streams in the unit. Water quality is generally good. Most of the streams drain into irrigation reservoirs, and any increase in sedimentation will shorten the life span of the reservoirs. Many of the streams are also good fisheries, which would be adversely effected by sedimentation.

Decision Number 3

Protect all ground water recharge areas. Uses that would adversely affect ground water quality or quantity, or reduce artesian pressure, should be restricted.

Rationale

Ground water quality and quantity are important for irrigation and domestic use within and outside the unit.

Decision Number 4

Protect all developed springs from livestock use at the water source.

Rationale

These water sources are important for all of the public land uses. The protection of the source areas will make a more dependable water supply, protect important wildlife habitat, and reduce the likelihood of spreading disease in livestock.

Wildlife

Decision Number 1

Provide forage for big game animals as listed in Table BW-1 at the end of this section.

Rationale

This forage allocation will allow for an increase in big game numbers as projected by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. The public lands only supply a proportionate share of the needed forage. The remainder will be produced by private and state lands. Competition for forage between big game and livestock is only about 7 percent based on dietary overlap.

Decision Number 2

Manage major deer migration routes to minimumize impedance to big game. Facilities such as fences, right-of-way facilities, and buildings will be constructed in such a way as to have a minimal effect. Bureau fencing specifications will be used, which are designed to minimize impacts on big game habitat. Particular emphasis will be placed on maintaining the migration route between Stanton Crossing and Hot Springs Landing.

Rationale

The big game migration routes are important for the maintenance of healthy populations. These corridors can be managed with a minimal impact. The Stanton Crossing-Hot Springs Landing migration route is essential to the Picabo deer herd. Most of the deer that winter in the Picabo Hills migrate through this area during the spring and fall.

Decision Number 3

All crucial deer and elk ranges will be managed for the needs of the animals, within the allocation limit. Vegetation manipulation, including timber harvest, will only be done where there are minimal adverse impacts on the crucial habitat.

Rationale

All crucial habitats are essential for the survival of the expected populations. Disruption of these areas can cause severe hardships, including starvation, for the big game.

Decision Number 4

All seedings in wildlife areas will have a seed mixture that provides forbs and shrubs (if needed and adaptable) and a mixture of appropriate grasses.

Rationale

Seed mixtures, particularly with appropriate forbs and/or shrubs, will increase the value of the area for wildlife as well as increase livestock forage and stabilize soil conditions.

Decision Number 5

Riparian areas will be given special attention. All riparian areas in poor condition will be improved to at least fair condition. All others will be maintained or improved.

Rationale

Riparian areas are particularly important to a large number of wildlife species. These areas are also very productive for livestock forage and, if abused, can cause severe erosion and sedimentation problems.

Decision Number 6

Streams will receive special attention. Appropriate management techniques will be used to improve stream bank vegetation to at least fair to good condition.

The major streams are:

Big Wood River	Little Poison Creek	Quigley Creek
Camp Creek	Poison Creek	Rock Creek
Croy Creek	Little Beaver Creek	Kelley Creek
East Fork Big Wood River	Big Beaver Creek	

Rationale

Many of these streams presently have fish populations or have the potential for a fishery. The goal is to improve an area in poor condition or with erosion problems to improve habitat quality. All of these streams provide important water sources, and adjacent riparian areas provide important wildlife habitat.

Decision Number 7

Protect raptor habitat to the extent practical.

Rationale

Raptors are an important segment of the wildlife population. Some species are particularly sensitive to man's presence.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Decision Number 1

The Big Beaver-Little Beaver Crucial Elk Winter Range will be managed as an ACEC. (see ORV #1) (Wildlife decision #3)

Rationale

This area provides winter range that is crucial to the survival of one of the most productive elk herds in the state. Cow-calf ratios of 100:65 have been observed. Only positive comments were received on this proposal from the public contacts. This designation will give special attention to the area while maintaining multiple use and not putting unreasonable restrictions on the other users of the public lands.

Total acreage 6282.92
all public land
EC 6/6/84