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Dr. John Ehrenreich, Dean  
College of Forestry, Wildlife,  
and Range Sciences  
University of Idaho  
Moscow, Idaho 83843

Dear Dr. Ehrenreich:

It was a pleasure to visit with you, though briefly, in Moscow with Chuck Wellner. I hope we shall have an opportunity to renew that discussion.

Enclosed is a copy of the talk I gave in Sandpoint and in Lewiston. By referring to the map in the back of each of my reports for the two Primitive Areas, the areas described will be made clearer.

Very sincerely yours,

*Joel L. Frykman*

JOEL L. FRYKMAN  
Consulting Forester

Enclosure

A REVIEW OF THE IDAHO AND SALMON RIVER BREAKS PRIMITIVE AREAS  
AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLASSIFICATION OR DECLASSIFICATION

By Joel L. Frykman  
Consulting Forester, Ogden, Utah

October 4, 1973

1. The Idaho and Salmon River Breaks Primitive Areas are a major area of Idaho composed of 1.5 million acres of mountain country through which the Middle Fork of the Salmon River and the mighty Salmon River flow. The two Primitive Areas, plus the partially roaded and largely undeveloped country surrounding them, are larger than the States of Rhode Island, Delaware, and Hawaii combined and larger than either of the States of Vermont, New Jersey, or Massachusetts.

The two Primitive Areas are rich in resources; 1.5 million acres of land, water, timber; plentiful fish and game (including elk, deer, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, salmon and steelhead); an undetermined mineral value, and scenery.

Who will use this bounty, who will have access to it, and how much is a burning question certainly for the people of Idaho but also for many people throughout our nation.

To find out what these resources were, what condition are they in, and how much, the Idaho Resource Development Council of Boise, Idaho, a group composed of the Associated Industries, Associated Taxpayers, Idaho Cattlemen's Association, Farm Bureau, Idaho Mining Association, State Chamber of Commerce, State Grange, Woolgrowers Association, and the Southern Idaho Forestry Association contracted with a Consulting Forester, Joel L. Frykman, of Ogden, Utah, to make a study of the area. This study was made in 1969 and the reports prepared and delivered to the Council in early 1971.

2. By comparison with the high mountain plateau country of Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and the Southwestern States, the Primitive Areas lie at relatively low elevations. The highest peak is 10,052 feet in elevation and the lowest level within the Areas, 2,000 feet, is on the Salmon River near Mackay Bar. The Chamberlain Basin lies near 6,000 feet in elevation. The geological formation is largely granite, a part of the Idaho Batholith, but a fourth of the Idaho Primitive Area is composed of volcanic formations.

Sections of the entire area in lower Middle Fork, lower Camas and Loon Creeks, Middle Indian Creek, Ship Island Lake, Cathedral Peak, lower Big Creek, much of Sabe Creek, and the main Salmon River below the mouth of the Middle Fork to Rattlesnake Creek are rough and rocky with numerous cliffs. The balance of the country is not unusually rough, in fact, much of the topography has moderate slopes.

3. These Areas were examined by horseback over 1,100 miles of trails, by small plane, by helicopter, and from aerial photographs. The field examination was made in July and August 1969. Hourly observations were recorded about water quality, watershed conditions, stream bed conditions, view quality, game animals and bird life seen, trail conditions, fire hazard; use of area by people, aeroplanes, boats, horses, and pickups; insect and disease conditions on timber and past damage, loggability, timber types, quality of timber, stand size, slope percent, elevation, and commercial vs. noncommercial stands of timber. These data were compiled into tables and included in the report.

Out of 8-1/2 weeks of continuous riding and detailed sampling of these Primitive Areas, I personally spent nearly 5 weeks examining the area riding

20 to 35 miles a day. Dr. Moore, my assistant, covered the remainder of the area. The reports are based not only on visual observations but are based on detailed recordings at hourly intervals of what was seen, observed, and measured.

Color photographs were taken of salient features and points of interest that would depict conditions observed.

Timber volumes were determined by an expert photogrammetrist who applied photo sampling techniques to aerial photographs and adjusted photo sampling of timber data from plot data measured by the U. S. Forest Service. Through his work, it was possible to develop volumes of timber by species, timber types, size classes, acreage of productive and nonproductive forest land, acreages of other cover types, and areas of slope percents.

This is an expansion of the Forest Service sampling and resulted in a better more detailed measure of timber volumes and other timber characteristics than produced by Forest Service plot data alone.

4. Three-fourths of the use of the Salmon River Breaks Primitive Area was associated with the use of the Salmon River for boating and fishing. One-fourth of the visitor use of the Idaho Primitive Area was for hunting game. Of the whole area 38 percent of people use watercraft and/or fish, 25 percent camp, and 22 percent hunt.

Since the Middle Fork is now classed as a Wild River, only float boats and no motors may be used. The principal boat traffic begins at Dagger Falls and descends the river to the mouth ~~out~~ the Salmon River, a 6-day trip. The principal use of the Salmon River is by jet or power boat but in combination with float boats the river craft use is heavy.

There were 44 outfitter licenses issued by the Outfitters and Guides License Board to serve the two Primitive Areas.

There are 24 landing fields and strips. The U. S. Forest Service fields at Indian Creek, Cold Meadows, and Chamberlain Basin will handle DC-3 craft. The balance are mostly small fields or strips, a few on National Forest lands but mostly on private and some State of Idaho land. The fields on many private tracts are essential to use of these lands. It provides the residents or dude ranchers easy ingress and egress and ready access for guests, to food and other supplies, and to weekly mail service.

There are only 344 acres of private land on the Salmon River Breaks but there are 8,465 acres of State of Idaho and private land, about equally divided, on the Idaho Primitive Area.

The use of these lands varies greatly. Many tracts have airstrips used principally by the landowners for themselves or their guests. Developments vary from very little to numerous homes and an operating sawmill at Pistol Creek, Harrah's million dollar development at the Middle Fork ranch, large guest house and cabins at the Flying B; big ranching spread, lodge, and guest houses at the Flying W; and a hydro-electric plant at the Whitewater ranch. Many of the places produce hay for livestock and have tractors, mowers, pickups and jeeps. The people have developed a life style that fits the country. Without the aeroplane to bring in equipment, food, and supplies, the style of living would change a good deal.

Outside of the private developments, the outfitters, who are licensed and assigned hunting units by the State, have headquarter camps and hunting camps located throughout these Primitive Areas. These camps are authorized by permits

United States.

While distances to market, i.e., existing sawmills is quite long, hauling sawtimber 100-150 miles by truck is not uncommon today. All we need is road access and the timber of these areas included in these two Primitive Areas can be readily marketed.

Insects and diseases have taken a horrible toll of this great resource as the timber is largely mature and overmature. Much timber should long since, 40-50 years ago, been harvested.

While one can see timber losses everywhere caused by insects, diseases, porcupines, windthrow, fire, and old age, gradual conversion of old growth timber to younger stands and more intensive management will largely overcome these losses. Under nonmanagement of timber, true of wilderness management, such heavy losses will continue.

The standard dictionary states that environment is "whatever encompasses one's surroundings or external circumstances collectively." While to a few people totally immune to their surroundings except some preconceived ideas about solitude or remoteness from man, great timber losses are the normal processes of nature. On the other hand, people have completely altered the face of the earth and make great demands upon its resources. We can ill afford to countenance the great losses of wealth indicated by the timber losses of the past in these Primitive Areas. We have ample areas in National Parks where the natural processes of nature may be studied without setting aside billions of board feet of potentially valuable commercial timber for nonmanagement and heavy future losses. To be surrounded by heavily diseased and insect infested timber to me sets up a totally unsatisfactory environmental situation.

e. Recreation

Estimating or evaluating recreation resources is not easy to do.

Actual use as an indication of recreation values is not an indication of potential values. The visitor numbers reported by the U. S. Forest Service for 1969 was 286,000. Of this total 38 percent used watercraft or fished, 25 percent camped, and 22 percent hunted. Relatively few people visit the area for scenic values, solitude, hiking, or study.

An estimate made of view quality rated the majority views ordinary with outstanding views found largely along the Middle Fork and the Salmon Rivers where most of the people who visit the Areas are found.

The main recreation attraction of these Areas for the average person is to float the Middle Fork and the Salmon River and to fish these streams, plus Big Creek, for salmon and steelhead. Hunters use a much broader area for elk, deer, goat and sheep hunting.

The Forest Service figures for visitor use for 1970 through 1972 are as follows: 1970 - 277,300, 1971 - 268,000, and 1972 - 295,800, revealing no major change over 1969 data.

6. Slides - about 38

7. Management Proposals

All of Pistol Creek, Indian Creek, Marble Creek; Mahoney, White and Norton Creeks; Monumental Creek, Rush Creek; most of Big Creek, Cottonwood, Disappointment, and Chamberlain Creek drainages; and the southern portion of drainages above the breaks of the south side of the Salmon River and all of the country lying above the breaks on the north side of the Salmon River are proposed for exclusion from consideration as wilderness. This is a total of 1,007,326 acres

(846,445 acres in the Idaho and 160,881 acres in the Salmon River Breaks Primitive Areas) would be returned to full multiple use management.

These areas are where the principal timber and mineral values are and they are the least desirable areas from a recreation standpoint.

Included in a unit suitable principally for Recreation Area designation with some wilderness values is a 579,098 acre block. Included in a Recreation Area would be the east side of the Middle Fork Canyon from Little Loon Creek down to Hospital Hot Springs, all of the Middle Fork Canyon below Hospital Hot Springs and lower Big Creek, all of the present Primitive Areas below the breaks of the Salmon River. We propose the following additions to the Recreation Area: Loon Creek to the Transfer Camp, including Indian Creek, Cottonwood Creek, and Cabin Creek drainages; a small area at the head of Clear Creek, Lake and Shaft Creeks, Horse Creek below Bronco Creek, and a Section of the South Fork of the Salmon River in lower Prophyry Creek to the mouth.

This area would include the principal recreation values and most of the canyon country in a Recreation Area. The Middle Fork is already classified a Wild and Scenic River and no change is recommended, except that the western side of the Middle Fork from the southern boundary of the Idaho Primitive Area to Little Loon Creek could be changed to Recreation River to permit access along the west side of the River.

This Recreation unit would include all of the Middle Fork within the Primitive Area now designated Wild and used by float boaters and all of the main Salmon River from the Middle Fork to Little Five Mile Creek now used extensively by boat floaters and jet boats as part of the Recreation Area.



The entire Primitive Areas are not really untrammled by man. The river traffic on the Middle Fork has had to be controlled, the river traffic on the Salmon River is considerable; there are 24 airfields or strips, many on private or State of Idaho lands; these strips are frequently used of necessity by the people who live there and have developed a life style of their own; the private landowners have hay cutting and handling equipment, tractors, jeeps, and other equipment; there is mining and/or exploration in the Big Creek and Monumental Creek drainages; there are numerous hunter camps used annually by necessity to harvest big game and the camps are sometimes semi-permanent and probably should be made permanent; jet boats have become a necessity to properly use the fish, game, and scenic resources of the Salmon River; and the Forest Service needs permanent installations to administer the area. The area is not untrammled and there is no logical reason to try to make it so.