

PUBLIC INFORMATION SHEET

MANAGEMENT OF FOUR MARGINAL AIRFIELDS ON THE
PAYETTE NATIONAL FOREST (BIG CREEK RANGER DISTRICT)
IN THE RIVER OF NO RETURN WILDERNESS

The Forest Service is in the process of examining management direction relative to four marginal airfields. The four airfields which will be addressed are:

1. "Vines Ranch" - This property was purchased by the Forest Service in 1978. (T21N, R12E, Sec. 28)
2. "Simonds" - This property reverted to the Forest Service due to lease relinquishment in 1980. (T20N, R11E, Sec. 9)
3. "Moore Ranch" - This property was purchased by the Forest Service in 1972. (T21N, R11E, Sec. 23)
4. "Mile-Hi" - This is an extremely marginal airfield located largely on National Forest land adjacent to State Fish & Game property. (T21N, R17E, Sec. 21)

None of these airfields are in regular use; none have ever been public airfields; and all are currently considered to be abandoned and have not received maintenance in many years. The four airstrips are located in the Big Creek drainage and in fairly close proximity to one another. There are other airfields in this drainage and within the River of No Return Wilderness which will not be included in this examination. Management of these airfields will be addressed in the Comprehensive Wilderness Management Plan currently being prepared and scheduled for completion in 1983.

In general, the use of motorized equipment (including the landing of aircraft) is contrary to Wilderness management objectives, which stress the preservation of a primitive environment. Air access is permissible and a recognized exception in the Wilderness Act when it occurs at established public or private airfields.

The management concerns which have been identified are:

1. Due to the marginal nature of these airfields, the potential safety hazards are considered high by the Forest Service. What management action is desirable to resolve these potential hazards?
2. Is the quality and integrity of the Wilderness being impacted by the presence of these airfields and their occasional use? Is management action necessary to protect the Wilderness environment from a proliferation of public airfields?
3. Are public airfields desirable at these locations - given the marginal conditions of the strips and the existence of other public airfields in the Big Creek drainage?

The Forest Service has tentatively identified the following management alternatives:

1. No action. The current situation would be allowed to continue and no action would be taken to restrict, limit or encourage use. No maintenance would be undertaken.

2. Prohibit use. This course of action would entail public notification of use restrictions and necessary followup enforcement. The strips would be allowed to revert to a natural state without any physical action to make them unusable.
3. Prohibit use (as per the preceding alternative) and take physical action to make the airstrips unusable.
4. Provide maintenance at a minimal level to alleviate the most hazardous conditions, thereby establishing these strips as public airfields. The practical feasibility of this option is questionable due to limited funding. Safety hazards would remain high even with maintenance, due to the natural limitations of these airfields.

Other concerns or alternatives may be identified by the public response to this notice. The Environmental Assessment addressing this issue should be completed by June 1, 1982. Comments should be received by May 8, 1982. Please consider this management issue and respond to:

District Ranger
Big Creek Ranger District
Payette National Forest
P.O. Box 1026
McCall, Idaho 83638

AIRSTRIPS IN THE BIG CREEK DRAINAGE

- ⊗ Public airfields - not covered by this analysis; management to be addressed in Comprehensive Wilderness Management Plan.
- ✕ Private airfields - not under Forest Service management and not covered by this analysis.
- * Marginal airfields identified in this public information sheet - management direction undergoing analysis.

