

Visions of the Future



Frank Church -
River of No Return
Wilderness

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2. Miners have the responsibility to be sensitive to the values associated with wilderness, and this means higher operating costs due to the higher environmental standards and mitigation requirements applicable to wilderness.

3. The Forest Service must recognize the rights to miners and fairly determine how to best achieve the goal of allowing mineral development without permanently impairing the wilderness feeling of nearby undisturbed areas.

4. Mining activities are of finite duration and, with adequate environmental protection and mitigation measures, mining sites will be essentially unnoticeable to the average wilderness visitor.

5. A permanent roundtable of all interests involved in the FC-RONR Wilderness should be established to facilitate communication and coordination of activities and solutions.

University of Idaho A Vision for Science and Education

The University of Idaho purchased the Taylor Ranch on Big Creek in 1969 to serve as a wilderness field station and created a university-wide Wilderness Research Center in 1972, thereby making a long-term commitment to wilderness research and education. The purposes of the Wilderness Research Center and its Taylor Ranch Field Station are to facilitate and support research and educational programs leading to a better understanding of the structure and function of natural ecosystems relatively unaltered by man, man's relationships to them, and their perpetual protection as wilderness.

The Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness (the Frank) is unique in the National Wilderness Preservation System because it contains a university research and education field station deep **within** its boundaries. The long-term commitment of the University of Idaho to maintaining such a remote wilderness research field station provides the potential for the Frank to contribute **more** to scientific understanding of wilderness ecosystems than any other wilderness in America. **Thus, the University of Idaho's vision for the future of the Frank focuses on three elements that will affect wilderness science and education: (1) maintenance of natural wilderness resource conditions and processes, (2) light-handed management to achieve those goals, and (3) supportive policies affecting science and education within its boundaries.** The objectives and policies governing operation of the Taylor Ranch Field Station are consistent with our vision for these wilderness conditions, wilderness management, and wilderness policies affecting science and education.

Wilderness Resource Conditions and Processes

The science and education potential of the Frank depend most of all on the maintenance of natural ecological conditions over its large expanse. A landscape that reflects the evolutionary forces of climate, gene pools, and natural selection must be maintained, with man's influences (e.g. introduction of exotic plants and animals, manipulation of existing wildlife populations, and vegetation management) minimal. Fire must play its natural role as the major ecosystem disturbance integral to the evolution of plants, animals, and the wilderness character of the landscape. Wildlife and fish populations must be naturally-regulating, constrained by natural foods and predators; with their behaviors a result of the complex interactions of naturally-occurring plant, animal, and environmental factors.

Wilderness Management

Wilderness science and education thus depends on management policies that will maintain present and future naturalness of wilderness conditions and processes. This means: wild fires will be allowed to burn within wilderness boundaries, except in the case of threat to life and property as directed in the wilderness fire management plan; wildlife populations will be harvested below a level that interferes with natural regulation, behavior, and predator-prey interactions; commercial and recreation use will be managed within limits of acceptable change in wilderness conditions; and established uses that predate the legal classification of the Frank as wilderness (such as mining, use of aircraft, and private in-holdings), also remain within the bounds of maintaining natural conditions and processes and providing for quality wilderness experiences by other users.

Implementation of wilderness management policies to achieve the above conditions are key. Sufficient management presence is certainly required but it is important that the minimum tool philosophy prevail, i.e. only the minimum, necessary practices, force, regulation, and presence is implemented to meet wilderness objectives.

Wilderness Science and Education Policies

The policies and practices affecting wilderness science and education, and their implementation, can dramatically affect those activities. Obviously if management allows wilderness conditions and natural processes to deteriorate, science and education values are diminished. But, if wilderness management policies unnecessarily limit science and education activity, that will also diminish those values.

We encourage management that maintains and enhances the Frank as the premier wilderness research and educational laboratory in the world. We envision a management philosophy that **welcomes** scientific research and education. We hope that the leadership of the Frank will take pride in seeking out the very best scientific information as the cornerstone of their policy and management decisions. The hallmark of such commitment would be support by the Forest Service for recognition of the Frank as a Biosphere Reserve as proposed four years ago by the Idaho Centennial Commission. Such recognition would require no change in policy but would allow the Frank to join the worldwide register of special places listed in UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program.

We support science and education policies based on a minimum tool philosophy. But, such policies should recognize the scientific gains possible using modern techniques that are minimally intrusive on the environment such as utilizing solar-powered recording instrumentation. Other practices would impact wilderness conditions more, such as excessive use of wildlife capture and removal to study disease phenomena, thereby reducing the opportunity to study natural processes in response to pathogenic conditions. An overriding, minimum-tool policy that we support is to limit wilderness science and education activity to those projects dependent on the wilderness environment, as opposed to research that could be conducted outside the wilderness.

We intend to observe these guiding principles in the programs of the UI Wilderness Research Center at the Taylor Ranch Field Station, as outlined below.

Taylor Ranch Field Station Objectives and Policies

The objectives of the UI Wilderness Research Center - Taylor Ranch Field Station are to:

1. Promote long-term research into natural phenomena and ecosystem dynamics of wilderness as well as baseline inventory and descriptive studies;
2. Pursue investigation comparing naturally-functioning ecosystems with man-altered environments, thereby yielding information which will lead to improved resource management;
3. Facilitate research to define impacts and limits of wilderness use, investigate ways to minimize such impacts, and evaluate the effects of wilderness management practices;
4. Encourage studies to further our understanding of the human dimensions of wilderness, including aesthetic, cultural, historic, psychological, and sociological values associated with the relationship of people to the natural world.

As naturally-functioning ecosystems are further reduced by human influences and global change, the Frank will assume increasing worldwide significance for research and education. We envision the best scientists and students from all over the world conducting research within the Frank to build a legacy of accumulated knowledge. That knowledge, and its transmission through education, will be useful for wilderness management as well as management of landscapes outside wilderness. This base of knowledge will allow us to monitor and assess global change as a result of natural variation, climate change, and anthropogenic pollution.

Our research and education within the Frank will increase, but will respect wilderness values, using the minimum tool approach necessary to accomplish project purposes. Modern technology has dramatically reduced the intrusion on the environment of scientific data collection, while facilitating discovery of natural processes at levels only dreamed about a few decades ago. We look forward to helping the Frank meet its science and education potential through sensitive operation of the Taylor Ranch Field Station with wilderness-dependent research projects utilizing minimum impact modern technology.

The history of University of Idaho support for faculty and

graduate student research in the Frank spans almost half a century. Wilderness research began on mountain goats in the late 1940's, mule deer winter range conditions in the 1950's, and expanded to other wildlife research such as the renowned mountain lion studies by Dr. Maurice Hornocker, long-term studies of owl community ecology, and other research on forest and range ecology, stream ecology, soils, anthropology, and wilderness recreation. The Taylor Ranch Field Station has hosted over thirty research projects in just the past two decades.

The educational objectives of the Wilderness Research Center are to provide educational programs to disseminate research findings and promote a broader understanding of wilderness resources and wilderness management among the general public, governmental agencies, user groups, and scientists. The University of Idaho offers courses on wilderness impacts, ecology, and management in Moscow, the Taylor Ranch Field Station, McCall, and Clark Fork field campuses and UI Boise Center. These courses attract students, natural resource professionals, and interested public from all over North America and the world. We envision continuing and expanding dissemination of research findings and educational material such as in the *Frankly Speaking* newsletter, professional journals, distinguished wilderness lecture series, short courses, and popular magazines. Our wilderness education programs will feature cooperation and coordination among state and federal agencies responsible for management of the Frank's resources, user groups, and other education organizations, all aimed at embracing Idaho's and the Frank's unique opportunities to contribute wilderness knowledge.

SUMMARY

1. The science and education potential of the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness depends most of all on the maintenance of natural ecological conditions within its boundaries.
2. Therefore, we encourage management policies for the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness that maintain its present and future naturalness, such as managing fire as a natural process integral to this wilderness, managing fish and wildlife population to be naturally-regulating, and managing human influences (e.g. introduction of exotic animals and plants, manipulation of existing populations, and vegetation management) to be kept at a minimum.
3. We advocate a management philosophy that welcomes wilderness-dependent scientific research and education.
4. We envision the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness designated as a United Nations Biosphere Reserve where scientist and students from all over the world will conduct research to build a legacy of accumulated knowledge.
5. We support science and education policies based on a minimum tool philosophy but such policies should recognize the scientific gains possible using modern techniques which are minimally intrusive on the environment.