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Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Forest Service Gearing Up For Hells Canyon Protection



Initial steps are being taken by the U.S. Forest Service to carry out provisions of new legislation establishing the 662,000-acre Hells Canyon National Recreation Area in the Snake River country of Oregon and Idaho.

Hells Canyon is the most prominent feature covered by the Act signed into law December 31, 1975, by President Ford. The law prevents further damming of the middle Snake River by assuring that the natural beauty, historical and archeological values of the Hells Canyon area "are preserved for this and future generations."

The new law provides Wild and Scenic River System protection for 67 miles of the Snake River downstream (north) from Hells Canyon Dam, and grants immediate Wilderness status for 193,840 acres of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in Oregon, and the Payette and Nezperce National Forests on the Idaho side.

Also in Idaho, a major portion of the Rapid River, including most of the west fork, is added to the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Another 110,000 acres of National Forest will be studied for possible future addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System, and an additional 34½ miles of the Snake River ending downstream at Asotin, Washington, will be studied for possible future inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System.

The Act delineates 336,000 acres of federal and private land as National Recreation Area where limited development will be allowed, and where activities such as ranching, traditional to the Snake River country may be continued.

The law directs that the Secretary of Agriculture must present to Congress, within five years, a comprehensive management plan "which shall provide for a broad range of land uses and developments as are compatible" with the Act. Studies for additions to Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River Systems must also be completed and recommendations made to Congress.

A Forest Service planning team will work closely with the supervisors and staff of the Nezperce, Payette and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests to coordinate planning efforts. Numerous Forest Service specialists will soon begin working in the Area to gather information needed for the management plan and various studies.

The Act directs the Forest Service to provide for full public participation and to consider the views of all interested agencies, organizations, and individuals.

In the interest of efficiency and serving the public more effectively, we are developing a consolidated mailing list of agencies, organizations and individuals concerned with the Hells Canyon NRA. If you wish to be included please write to Ken Johnson, Planning Team Leader, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, P. O. Box 907, Baker, Oregon 97814.

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FOREST SERVICE

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