

FEB 23 1976



# Forest Service News

## Pacific Northwest Region

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2-20-76

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### 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 itself, North America's deepest gorge, 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.

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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, said Theodore A. Schlapfer, Pacific Northwest regional forester, USDA-Forest Service.

"We hope to assure continuation of a long-existing way of life in this remote and beautiful land," the Regional Forester declared.

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. It is anticipated that numerous Forest Service specialists and others will begin working in the canyon area this spring to gather information needed for the management plan.

Special attention will be given for protection of the many unique values in the area, Regional Forester Schlapfer assured. Few persons realize that they are subject to penalty for the removal or destruction of historic or archeological sites on federal lands, he pointed out.

The public will be kept informed of planning activities as they progress. Suggestions and information will be sought from land users, interested citizens, and organized groups throughout the planning process, Regional Forester Schlapfer said.



# HELLS CANYON NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

