

THE OWYHEE LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE PROPOSAL

Wilderness Acreage Summary -- Chart

Appendices

***Note: This draft version of the Proposal has not yet been endorsed by any party.**

I. Goal: To develop and implement a landscape-scale program in Owyhee County that preserves the natural processes that create and maintain a functioning, unfragmented landscape supporting and sustaining a flourishing community of human, plant and animal life, that provides for economic stability by preserving livestock grazing as an economically viable use, and that provides for protection of cultural resources.

II. Overview: The Owyhee Initiative Work Group is developing a package of measures expected to include the following elements:

A. Owyhee Initiative Board of Directors: The Owyhee Initiative Board of Directors (OI Board) will oversee and monitor administration and implementation of the Owyhee Initiative. Its duties will include recommending priorities and seeking funding for projects and programs identified to fulfill the purposes of the Initiative.

B. Science Review: In order to achieve the purposes of the Owyhee Initiative, a process will be established to provide for science review of certain actions by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The science review will be conducted by independent scientists.

C. Conservation and Research Center: Under the direction of the OI Board and in cooperation with partners, the Center will develop, fund and implement the Owyhee Initiative landscape-scale program to review, recommend and coordinate landscape conservation and research projects.

D. Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers: Legislation will resolve status of Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's) by designating some wilderness and releasing others to non-wilderness multiple use management. Propose wild and scenic river designations to achieve specific management to further the overall goals of the Initiative. Legislation will designate wild and scenic rivers to further the overall goals of the Initiative.

E. Travel and Recreation: The BLM will fulfill its responsibility to develop and implement travel plans for the public lands in Owyhee County within specified time frames. The travel plans will include a multiple use trail system that will provide a wide range of recreational opportunities and experiences for all users.

F. Cultural Resources: Owyhee County is rich in history and culture. The cultural and historical resources important to the people and their ancestors must be protected against abuse and desecration, intentional or unintentional. The Initiative will support measures to protect these resources.

III. Owyhee Initiative Board of Directors

A. Purpose: The Owyhee Initiative will establish an on-going collaborative effort to oversee and monitor administration and implementation of the Owyhee Initiative. Its duties include, but are not limited to: recommending priorities for projects and programs identified to implement the purposes of the Owyhee Initiative, seeking funding for such projects and programs, and recommending policy, procedure and guidance on implementation of the projects and programs to the BLM and other agencies having jurisdiction regarding natural resource management and use in Owyhee County. The OI Board will focus on the faithful implementation of the Owyhee Initiative package to fulfill the purposes of the Initiative.

B. Implementation: The Owyhee County Landscape Initiative represents a carefully balanced agreement among the diverse interests represented in the Owyhee Initiative. Several elements of the agreement involve implementation after the passage of federal legislation implementing the Owyhee Initiative package. One of the primary functions of the OI Board will be to serve as the "institutional memory" of the precise understandings that were made in developing the Owyhee Initiative package. Federal agencies charged with implementing the Owyhee Initiative final package will consider the recommendations of the OI Board regarding implementation issues, including but not limited to:

1. Management of wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, and released wilderness study areas;
2. Inventory of wilderness grazing management activities, facilities, and administrative motorized access necessary for existing grazing management and structures and facilities maintenance at the time of wilderness designation;
3. Recreation and access provisions of the Owyhee Initiative final package and Owyhee County Landscape Conservation Act;
4. Any realty actions called for in the Owyhee County Landscape Conservation Act; and
5. Appropriations and expenditures to carry out the Owyhee Initiative.

C. Board of Directors Membership

1. The OI Board will be composed of representatives of the Owyhee Initiative working group at the time legislation establishes the Board of Directors.
2. The OI Board will consult with other agencies as appropriate.
3. If a representative of one of the member organizations resigns from the OI Board, the member organization shall recommend a replacement representative to the OI Board which shall make the appointment to replace the resigned representative.
4. If a member organization resigns from the OI Board, the Owyhee County Board of Commissioners shall recommend a replacement organization to the OI Board. Final selection of the replacement organization shall be made by the OI Board.

D. Procedures

1. Bylaws: The OI Board shall establish by-laws and implementing procedures by which the functions of the Board will be carried out. The bylaws shall contain provisions for public input.
2. Voting: The OI Board of Directors has worked largely by consensus, and shall continue to strive to reach consensus on all decisions. When consensus is not possible, decisions will be made by an affirmative vote of 8 members of the Board.
3. The OI Board may establish subcommittees and other groups, drawing expertise throughout the community, to advise the OI Board or perform functions needed for the implementation of the Owyhee Initiative.

E. Staffing and Administrative Functions: The OI Board will hire an executive director. The executive director will possess strong fundraising and meeting/process management skills and a background in ecology or natural resources management. The executive director will also be capable of motivating participants and keeping positive direction. The executive director's role will be to facilitate OI Board meetings and decisions, help members formulate proposals, secure funding when needed, and assist participants to work together.

F. Evaluation by OI Board: The bylaws of the OI Board will contain a process for evaluating the effectiveness and utility of the Owyhee Initiative.

IV. Science Reviews

A. Purpose: To provide for a process for scientific review of the information utilized by the BLM in developing proposed actions in Owyhee County. The intent of the scientific review is to assure that the best available science is appropriately applied in a timely manner. To this end the OI Board will seek to assure that the review process provides individuals requesting review and the BLM with best available scientific information that they can consider in seeking to resolve the issue in question and to improve future applications of science in the decision-making process. The OI Board will administer the science review process in a manner that provides information useful to the public and uses available funding efficiently.

B. Livestock Management Reviews: Any person who may be affected by a BLM grazing management action or decision may file with the OI Board a written request for scientific review of the study methods, data, and information used by the BLM. Requests for review shall be filed within 15 days of receipt of a signed determination or other appropriate documentation indicating the existence of an issue appropriate for science review. A request for review of preliminary documentation does not preclude an additional request applicable to the subsequent proposed decision if requested within the applicable protest period. Science review is intended to occur prior to issuance of final decision by BLM. However, the fact that a science review has been requested or is in process will not affect the timing of BLM decisions or delay timely action. Unless otherwise determined by the OI Board, scientific review will be

completed within sixty days of the referral.

C. Scientific Reviewers: The OI Board will establish a list of natural resource management experts representing a broad range of fields of scientific expertise in natural resource management. The OI Board, in consultation with the Dean of the College of Natural Resources of the University of Idaho, will determine qualifications for review experts. The experts may be from within or without the state of Idaho. Nominations of experts to be included may be made by the public, by members of the OI Board, by the Owyhee County Commissioners, by educational institutions, and by agencies of local, state and federal government. The list of experts will be sent to the College of Natural Resources of the University of Idaho, and the University may then present additional names of qualified experts for approval by the Board. The OI Board will then send the final list of experts to the Dean of the College of Natural Resources who shall be in charge of implementing the science review.

D. Elements of Review: The OI Board will develop guidelines and procedures for submitting requests for and conducting scientific reviews. The guidelines for requests shall provide for timely submittal relative to the elements of review in question. The request for review for livestock management decisions shall include the specific reasons justifying the review, and shall designate one or more of the following elements of review relevant to the request:

1. Whether the scientific study data and information relied upon by the BLM is scientifically applicable to the intended purpose of the proposed action.
2. Whether the BLM methods and procedures used to obtain the scientific data and information are capable of and adequate to yield accurate and scientifically reliable results.
3. Whether the BLM's interpretation of and conclusions based on the scientific data and information are scientifically supported by the data and information.
4. Whether other available scientific data, information and conclusions dispute the results, information and conclusions used by the BLM to support its proposed action.
5. Whether there are additional management options or alternatives that would reasonably be expected to achieve resource objectives.
6. Whether the Environmental Assessment or other National Environmental Policy Act document(s) reasonably and accurately represent the environmental consequences of the proposed action and other viable alternatives.

E. Application of the Elements of Review

1. The first four elements of review relate to the selection, conduct and interpretation of science by BLM and the value and significance of independent corroborating or conflicting science. These would normally be available for science review early in a decision-making process such as the release of a signed Standards and Guidelines Determination.
2. The last two elements of the review examine whether the best available science is reflected in the alternatives described in the NEPA environmental analysis and whether the analysis of impact of the alternatives reflects the best available science.
3. Deficiencies in regard to the first four elements would very likely lead to deficiencies between the last two elements; however, even if the first four elements were optimal, deficiencies could occur with the last two elements. Therefore, requests to review any or all of the first four elements may be made within 15 days of receipt of a signed determination or other appropriate documentation indicating that the requestor will or may be injured by subsequent BLM action. Requests relative to all elements of review or the last two elements must be made within the time allotted for protest of proposed decisions.

F. Other Multiple Use Reviews: Any person may request that the OI Board refer a science or technical question for science review. The person seeking science review of a matter shall consult the BLM regarding the question the party seeks to refer to scientific review. In its request to the OI Board, the requester shall describe any points of disagreement identified in its consultation with BLM. BLM will have an opportunity to explain to the Board whether it concurs with the description of the points of disagreement and whether scientific review would provide timely and useful information for informing future actions and decisions. Submission of a request for review will not affect the timing of a BLM action or decision.

G. Referral of Dispute for Science Review: Procedures for implementing the science review shall be established by the OI Board and made available to the public. After review of a request the Board may submit the request to the Dean of the College of Natural Resources at the University of Idaho. The Dean will select from the list of experts three persons to conduct the review. The OI Board will establish a timeframe for completion of each science review.

In considering the disposition of requests for review, the OI Board will consider among other items the significance of the issue in regard to furthering the goals of the Owyhee Initiative.

H. Report: Upon completion of the science review, the Dean will send the findings and report of the science review team to the OI Board, which shall promptly submit the findings and report to the requester, BLM and other interested entities. The BLM, or other interested entities, may respond in writing to the Board, specifically describing how it intends to utilize the findings and report of the science review. The Board shall maintain a public file containing the science review report, any written responses thereto and any Board analysis of the report and responses. The file will be submitted to the BLM for inclusion in an administrative record. The OI Board may seek ways to obtain the greatest possible broad scale benefit from the review process and information generated by the review including but not limited to consultations between the review team and appropriate BLM personnel.

V. Conservation and Research Center

A. Purpose: To develop, fund and implement the Owyhee Initiative landscape-scale program and to review, recommend and coordinate landscape conservation and research projects. This work will include the creation of the Owyhee Initiative Conservation and Research Center. The Center will work with government agencies, universities, citizen groups and individuals to increase the efficiencies, likelihood of success and benefits from conservation and research projects undertaken in Owyhee County. When appropriate, research will be designed to meet peer review scientific standards and be replicable in other areas. As a foundation for the Owyhee landscape-scale program the Center will identify:

1. The current state of scientific knowledge;
2. The scope and status of current ongoing research projects and programs.
3. Information and research gaps;
4. Successful management strategies, research and restoration projects.
5. Appropriate methods of disseminating existing and new research information to administrative agencies and the public.

B. Coordination: Several broad-based citizen groups are already active in Owyhee County. These include but are not limited to the Jordan Valley Cooperative Weed Management Area, Owyhee County Sage Grouse Local Working Group, Owyhee County Natural Resources Committee, and the Basin Advisory Groups. The Owyhee Initiative will supplement, rather than replace, these and other existing efforts. Representatives of citizen groups will be invited to inform and participate in Center projects. The Owyhee Initiative will assist citizen groups by providing them a forum to broaden the support for their project proposals and to coordinate with the multiple agencies and organizations active in the County.

C. Fundraising: In addition to providing coordination and another level of credibility to conservation and research projects, the Center is specifically authorized to apply for and receive grants, donations and appropriations from government agencies and non-government organizations.

D. Center Structure: The Owyhee Initiative OI Board will oversee the Center and have full authority over its operations and finances. The Board has no statutory powers to administer public lands or make regulatory decisions. However, the Board will hold its members and partners accountable to their commitments to the Center's work. The Center shall have an office in Owyhee County.

E. Program Elements: Initial program areas for emphasis by the Center, under the direction of the Board, include the following. The Board may modify, add to, or delete any of these program areas.

1. Monitoring: Establish a scientific foundation for a landscape-based research, management and restoration program by implementing coordination between existing monitoring programs and promoting new or revised monitoring programs as needed. This program will address landscape monitoring needs for multiple uses, management program implementation and natural resources in both wilderness and non-wilderness areas. Monitoring will focus on assessing trends in landscape function and integrity. Special attention will be given to landscapes affected by altered fire frequency and subject to invasive species and/or noxious weeds. In addition, monitoring programs will be initiated within wilderness designations relative to compliance with recreational vehicle access, range condition and trend, wildfire impacts, the status of invasive species and noxious weeds and the status and impact of predatory species.

2. Inventory: Establish a scientific foundation for a landscape-based research, management and restoration program by evaluating the adequacy of current natural resource inventories and promoting new or expanded inventories to meet landscape goals. Initial projects may include:
 - a. Coordinate with University of Idaho and BLM for completion of inventory and modeling of western juniper in western Owyhee County;
 - b. Coordinate and review vegetation inventories; and
 - c. Wilderness monitoring and research program.
3. Wilderness Management: Support implementation of wilderness management and inventory elements of Owyhee Initiative and provide independent evaluation of results of those actions.
4. Noxious weed/invasive species control: Support a consistent and cost-effective weed control and prevention program with the goal of establishing weed management areas that provide effective coordination among land managers. Initial projects for the Owyhee Weed Project include:
 - a. Identify relatively weed free areas;
 - b. Identify and quantify the existence of and relative threat from noxious, threatening, or invasive plant species.
 - c. Cost-share weed coordinator; and
 - d. Secure funding to establish additional cooperative weed management areas and develop coordinated prevention and control plans.
5. Fire Management: Restore appropriate fire regimes to maintain and enhance the ecological condition and integrity of the Owyhee Landscape. Initial projects include:
 - a. Implement measures to address expansion of Western juniper and protect sagebrush steppe habitat based on landscape goals;
 - b. Secure alternative forage sources for participating permittees; and
 - c. Ensure research and monitoring from burns or other treatments is communicated to public, permittees and agencies.
6. Species Conservation/Habitat Restoration: Prioritize and help fund conservation and research projects that provide a high probability of success for species conservation and/or habitat restoration.
7. Recreation and Access: Support implementation of recreation and access management elements of Owyhee Initiative and provide independent evaluation of results of those actions.

VI. Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers

A. Wilderness Designation

1. Maps accompanying this document closely approximate the areas to be designated as wilderness and the Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) to be released to non-wilderness multiple use. These Wilderness Areas will be managed in accordance with the management strategies outlined herein and in existing statutes. Some adjustment of wilderness boundaries in small areas may occur to assist in clear identification of the boundary lines and any final boundary adjustments when the official maps are prepared after designation as wilderness.
2. The understandings and intent of the OI with regard to wilderness designation, planning and management of wilderness designation are set forth in the Appendices A and B of this document.
3. The accompanying wilderness proposal maps also show which roads are proposed to be left open and closed. The map is to serve as the legislative record for the roads that are to remain open and the roads that are to be closed.
4. Compensation will be sought for any voluntary relinquishment of private rights and interests on federal land.

B. Wild and Scenic Rivers Designation

1. Maps accompanying this document closely approximate the watercourses to be designated as wild, scenic, and recreational rivers (WSR) under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Designated areas will be managed in accordance with the management strategies outlined herein and in existing statutes. Some adjustment of WSR boundaries may occur to accommodate private lands, and access within the WSR corridors, and final determination of segments to be included. Some further adjustment may occur when official maps are prepared after designation.
2. The intent of WSR designations is to resolve the WSR status of all potential or candidate segments within Owyhee County.
3. The understandings and intent of the OI with regard to WSR status, planning and management are set for the in the Appendix C of this document.

C. Funding: Funds will be authorized to the BLM for development, implementation, and enforcement of wilderness and wild & scenic river management plans. In addition funding may be necessary to accelerate BLM completion and

implementation of the Transportation Plan for the Owyhee Front and subsequent Transportation Plan for the remainder to the County.

D. RS 2477 Assertions: It is expected that Owyhee County will not pursue any further claims to retain any additional open routes in designated wilderness by dropping RS 2477 rights-of-way claims.

VII. Transportation and Recreation Management

A. Travel Plans: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will fulfill its responsibility to develop and implement travel plans for the BLM managed lands outside of wilderness areas in Owyhee County within specified time frames. All public land users are expected to benefit from improved safety, route maintenance, maps, signs, education, and new opportunities provided by establishment of travel route systems. The travel plans and cooperative agreements will be developed in consultation and coordination with the general public, state, and local government entities consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the National Environmental Policy Act. Travel/access issues will be addressed separately in enabling legislation and associated maps for wilderness areas designated under this agreement.

B. System of Routes: Until the BLM has completed travel planning, all recreational motorized and mechanized off-highway vehicle, and mountain bike use will be limited to existing roads and trails, and off-trail cross-country travel is prohibited, except in areas specifically identified as open or closed by the Owyhee Resource Management Plan. Until the BLM has completed travel planning, over snow vehicle use will continue to be managed in accordance with current resource management plans.

C. Schedule: Travel plans will establish a system of designated roads and trails and will limit the use of recreational motorized and mechanized vehicles to these designated roads and trails. Within one year after the date of enactment, the BLM will complete a travel plan for the Owyhee Front. The Owyhee Front is defined, generally, as that area of Owyhee County from Jump Creek on the west to Mud Flat Road on the east and draining north from the crest of the Silver City Range to the Snake River. Within three years after the date of enactment, the BLM will complete a travel plan for federal lands in the County outside the Owyhee Front. The travel plans will include a multiple use recreational route system that provides a wide range of recreational opportunities and experiences for all users while protecting natural and cultural resources. The travel plans will also address over snow vehicle use.

D. Authority: Travel management under this section will not affect BLM's authority to manage or regulate off highway vehicle uses as specified under 43 C.F.R. 8341.1(b), which provides: "Any person operating an off-road vehicle on those areas and trails designated as limited shall conform to all terms and conditions of the applicable designation area." The limitation of motorized and mechanized travel to existing or designated routes will not apply to vehicles used for fire, emergency, law enforcement, or other purposes listed in 43 C.F.R. 8340.0-5(a)(1)-(5).

E. County/BLM Cooperative Agreements: A cooperative agreement between Owyhee County, the County Sheriff and the BLM will establish a collaborative search and rescue program. The BLM and Owyhee County will also establish a cooperative agreement to monitor and implement travel management on all BLM administered lands in Owyhee County. Funds will be authorized for search and rescue operations, and the, implementation and enforcement of Travel Plans, in Owyhee County.

F. Designation of Routes: The Travel Plans will be based on resource and route inventories, will include designation of routes and route systems that are open or closed, and will include, but not be limited to the following management approaches - trail construction, (including reconstruction), road and trail closure, seasonal closures or restrictions, types of use allowed, restoration of disturbed areas, monitoring, maintenance, maps, signs, education and enforcement. Travel Plans will consider whether a road or trail is appropriate.

G. Geographic Coverage: The BLM Travel Planning will ensure that all areas of the county, even those currently remote and little used by the public, are included and incorporated into the plans in order to provide for management of anticipated growth in recreational use of these lands, and to develop a system to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities and experiences for all users.

H. Department of Parks and Recreation: The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) may be involved in the implementation of the Travel Plans. The Owyhee Initiative work group is interested in the involvement of the IDPR as an education partner, trail host and trail maintenance partner.

I. Elements and Funding: The concepts of completed travel plans within specified time frames; enforcement of regulations; cooperation between government entities; establishment of route systems; and limiting in the interim recreational motorized and mechanized Off Highway Motor Vehicle use to existing roads and trails, prohibiting off trail cross country travel, are essential elements in proper management of public lands in Owyhee County. Additional funding must be made available to assure timely and successful completion of travel plans and implementation of travel management programs.

VIII. Cultural Resources

Owyhee County is rich in history and culture. The cultural and historical resources important to the people and their ancestors must be protected against abuse and desecration, intentional or unintentional. There are opportunities to increase knowledge of cultural resources, to monitor influences from outside forces such as recreational activity and to improve the inspection and supervision of major cultural sites. Inventory and monitoring programs that identify and document cultural sites and their condition over time would assist in assuring the preservation of these sites. Such programs would help to focus resources that would assure compliance with prohibitions against destruction and or removal of cultural items as well as preventing inadvertent negative impacts. The Initiative will support a broad rang of measures to protect these cultural sites and resources.



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