



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

OREGON STATE OFFICE
P.O. Box 2965 (729 N.E. Oregon Street)
Portland, Oregon 97208

February 12, 1980

FINAL DECISIONS ON THE INTENSIVE WILDERNESS INVENTORY OF PUBLIC LANDS ALONG THE PROPOSED ROUTE OF THE ALASKA NATURAL GAS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The wilderness review of approximately 62,550 acres of public land in Oregon along the proposed route of the western leg of the Alaska Natural Gas pipeline was initiated in October, 1978. On November 21, 1978, a proposed decision and a 60-day public comment period were announced. Following the close of the comment period on January 21, 1979, all public comments were evaluated, the proposed decision was reviewed and recommendations for the final decisions were prepared. The announcement of the final decisions was delayed pending receipt by BLM of an opinion from the Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor concerning relationships between the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the Alaska Natural Gas Transportation Act of 1976. It stated that the proposed pipeline corridor is not exempt from the wilderness review, and BLM is now announcing its final decisions.

The proposed pipeline route crosses 28 tracts of public land in Oregon. An attached map shows the general locations of the public lands. Two tracts containing more than 5,000 acres of public land, Inventory Units OR-5-1 and OR-5-2, are described in more detail in the attached pages and in separate maps.

The final decisions are to designate a 7,560-acre portion of Inventory Unit OR-5-1 as a wilderness study area, and to eliminate 54,990 acres from further consideration in BLM's wilderness review. The eliminated areas do not have wilderness characteristics and are not designated wilderness study areas. They include a 3,400-acre portion of Unit OR-5-1, the entire 7,640 acres of Inventory Unit OR-5-2, and 43,950 acres located in 26 parcels, each containing less than 5,000 acres.

These decisions are scheduled to be announced in the Federal Register on February 12, 1980, but publication may be a day or two before or after that date. The decisions will become final 30 days after they are published in the Federal Register, unless amended on the basis of new information received as a result of this report, or unless a protest is filed. Any person wishing to protest any of the decisions reported on here must file a protest with this office within 30 days of publication of the announcement in the Federal Register. The protest must specify the area or areas to which it is directed, it must include a clear and concise statement of the reasons for the protest and it must include data to support the reasons.

Public lands eliminated from further wilderness review will be released from the interim management requirements imposed by Section 603(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The interim management policy guidelines will continue to apply to the designated wilderness study area.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the BLM wilderness review.


State Director

FINAL DECISIONS
INTENSIVE WILDERNESS INVENTORY
THIRTYMILE AND O'NEIL UNITS

OREGON

FEBRUARY 1980

Unit Number: OR-5-1

Unit Name: Thirtymile

Description

Size: 10,960 acres. The acreage cited in the proposed decision was in error. There are 205 acres of private land in the unit.

Location: Along the John Day River in Sherman and Gilliam Counties, about 17 miles west of Condon.

Boundaries: The unit is bounded by private land on the east and west and by private land and roads on the north and south.

Physical Characteristics: The unit contains approximately six miles of the John Day River canyon and a small amount of flat to gently rolling upland adjacent to the canyon. The canyon topography is extremely steep and rugged with ridgetops as much as 1,700 feet above the river. Sagebrush and perennial grasses grow on the steeper sites; and sagebrush, snakeweed, forbs, and grasses predominate on some of the gentler slopes and canyon bottoms. Western juniper also grows in the area.

Wilderness Criteria

Size: This unit meets the minimum size criterion for designation as a wilderness study area.

Naturalness: Most of the area of this unit appears natural with the imprint of human works substantially unnoticeable. The road which forms part of the southern boundary parallels a 36-inch underground natural gas pipeline. Most of the disturbed land adjacent to the road and pipeline has reverted to a natural condition. There are several ways located on the plateau above the canyon on the western side of the canyon. There are also some fences and improved springs, but these developments do not significantly disrupt the overall naturalness of the unit.

A ranch located outside the unit at the mouth of Thirtymile Creek lies below, and is substantially noticeable from, most of the public lands in sections 5, 6, 7, and 8, T. 5 S., R. 19 E. As a result, these lands are exposed to the activities and works of man throughout the year.

Solitude: The extremely rugged topography and the irregularities of the canyons of the river and tributary streams screen visitors from one another. Many secluded spots can be found along the river on sandbars and isolated pockets of flat land. These characteristics afford outstanding opportunities for solitude in most of the unit. Three narrow projections of land in the south part of the unit do not offer outstanding opportunities for solitude because of their narrow and irregular configuration. Visitors in those areas would find it difficult to avoid the sights and sounds of other people.

Recreation: This unit offers outstanding opportunities for river running, canoeing and kayaking along the John Day River. The maze of canyons provide outstanding opportunities for hiking, backpacking and rock climbing. Outstanding opportunities for unconfined recreation activities do not exist on the steep slopes in the narrow, irregular projections in the south end of the unit.

Supplemental Values: There are several known cultural resource sites in the unit. The interesting geological features and wildlife are other supplemental values.

Proposed Decision: Designate a 10,960-acre wilderness study area. (Because of an arithmetic error, the proposed decision incorrectly stated that the unit contained 9,740 acres.)

Summary of Public Comments: Numerous public comments from residents and officials of Sherman and Gilliam Counties indicated opposition to designation of the unit as a wilderness study area. The reasons for opposition included concern about trespass across private property, damage to the natural resources from increased visitor use, and economic loss because of reduction of cattle grazing. A smaller number of public comments supported preservation of the wilderness characteristics of the unit and agreed with the proposed decision.

Final Decision: The final decision is to designate 7,560 acres of the unit as a wilderness study area and to eliminate 3,400 acres from further wilderness review. (See attached map.)

Rationale: The public comments opposed to the proposed decision do not contain evidence to contradict the original determination that a substantial portion of the inventory unit does contain wilderness characteristics. The central question at this phase of the wilderness review is whether an area possesses wilderness characteristics as defined in section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. If an area possesses those characteristics, it is to be designated a wilderness study area. The study phase of the BLM wilderness review will follow the completion of the inventory. During that phase all designated wilderness study areas will be studied in terms of all other existing and potential land uses and values. It will be in that context that most of the issues raised in opposition to the proposed decision for this unit will be considered. It should be noted that the Wilderness Act says that livestock grazing, where it was established prior to passage of the act, shall be permitted to continue, subject to reasonable regulation.

Portions of the inventory unit are eliminated from further wilderness review because opportunities for solitude and recreation are not outstanding. In addition, the works of man are substantially noticeable from some of the lands.

Unit Number: OR-5-2

Unit Name: O'Neil

Description

Size: 7,640 acres.

Location: Two miles east of Redmond.

Boundaries: The unit is bounded by a canal and maintenance road on the west, by private land on the north and east, and by U. S. Highway 26 on the south.

Physical Characteristics: The topography of the unit is relatively flat with occasional low lava outcrops. Western juniper, big sagebrush and rabbitbrush are the dominant types of vegetation.

Wilderness Criteria

Size: This unit meets the minimum size criterion for designation as a wilderness study area.

Naturalness: The unit is crossed by powerlines, natural gas pipelines and ways. Within the unit, near its edges, are rock pits, a clay pit and a rifle range. These various human works are substantially noticeable throughout the inventory unit.

Solitude: Because of its relatively small size, generally flat terrain, and limited topographic or vegetative screening, the unit does not offer an outstanding opportunity for solitude.

Recreation: Recreational opportunities in this unit could include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding and sightseeing. Because of the generally featureless landscape, opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are not outstanding.

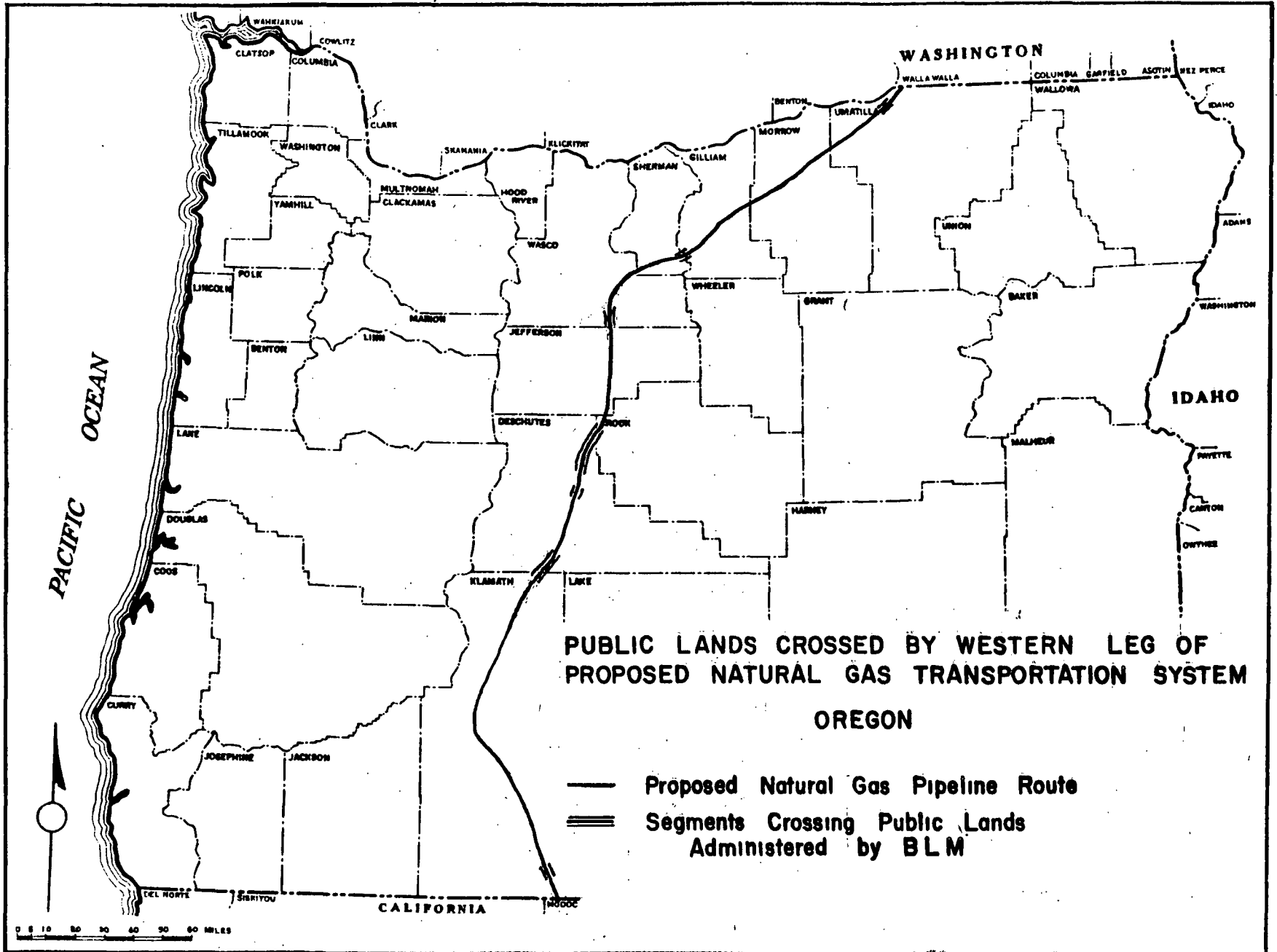
Supplemental Values: None known.

Proposed Decision: Eliminate from further wilderness review.

Summary of Public Comments: All public comments which referred to this unit concurred with the proposed decision.

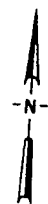
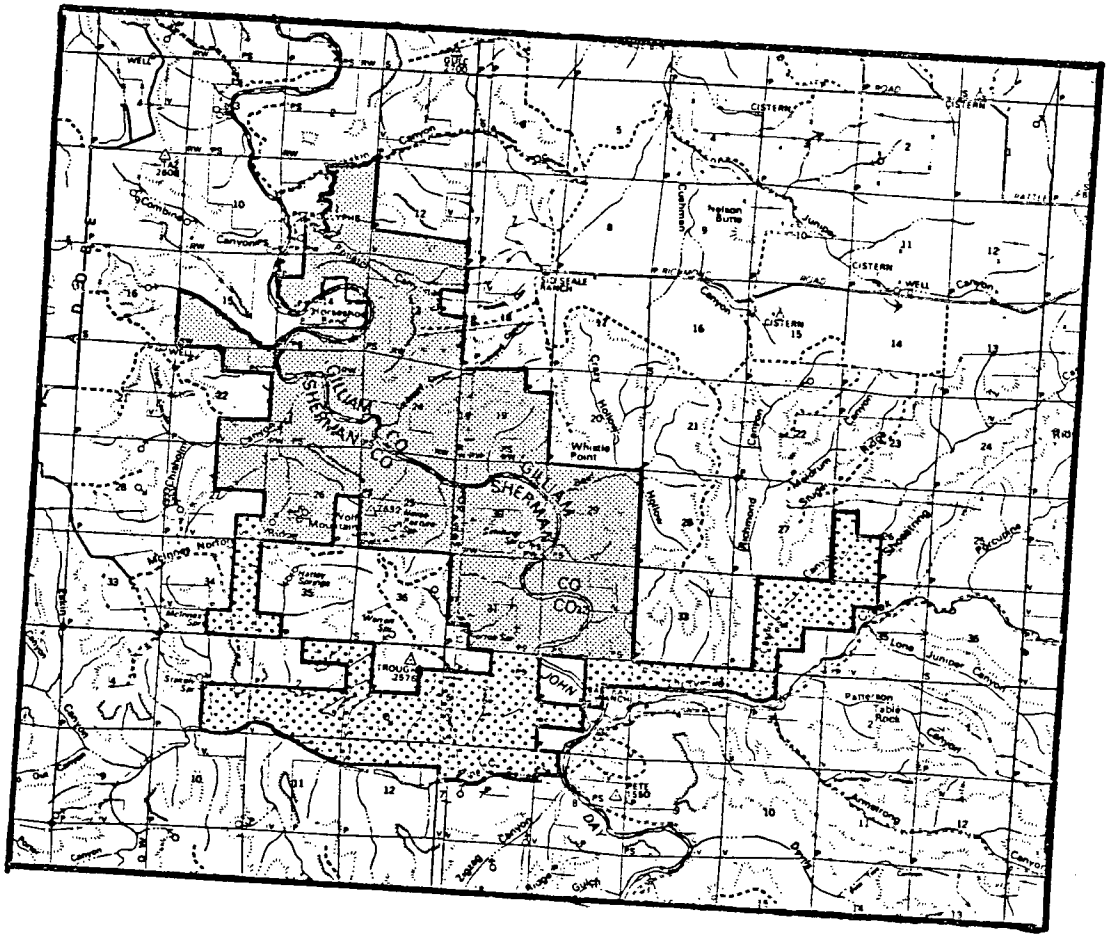
Final Decision: Eliminate from further wilderness review.

Rationale: The inventory unit does not possess wilderness characteristics, as explained above.



FINAL DECISION-INTENSIVE WILDERNESS INVENTORY OF LANDS
ALONG THE PROPOSED ALASKA NATURAL GAS PIPELINE ROUTE

INVENTORY UNIT OR-5-1

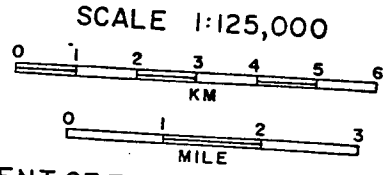


LEGEND

- DESIGNATED WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
- ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER WILDERNESS REVIEW

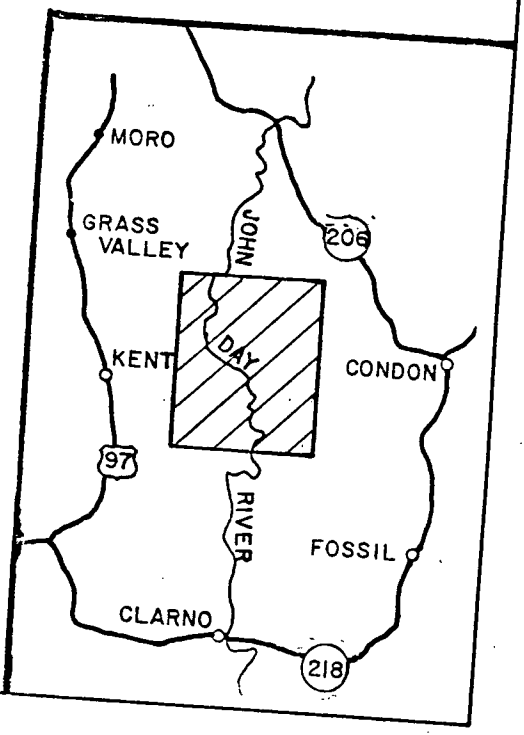
OWNERSHIP

- Bureau of Land Management - V, PWR, PS, RW
- State - S
- Private - P



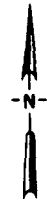
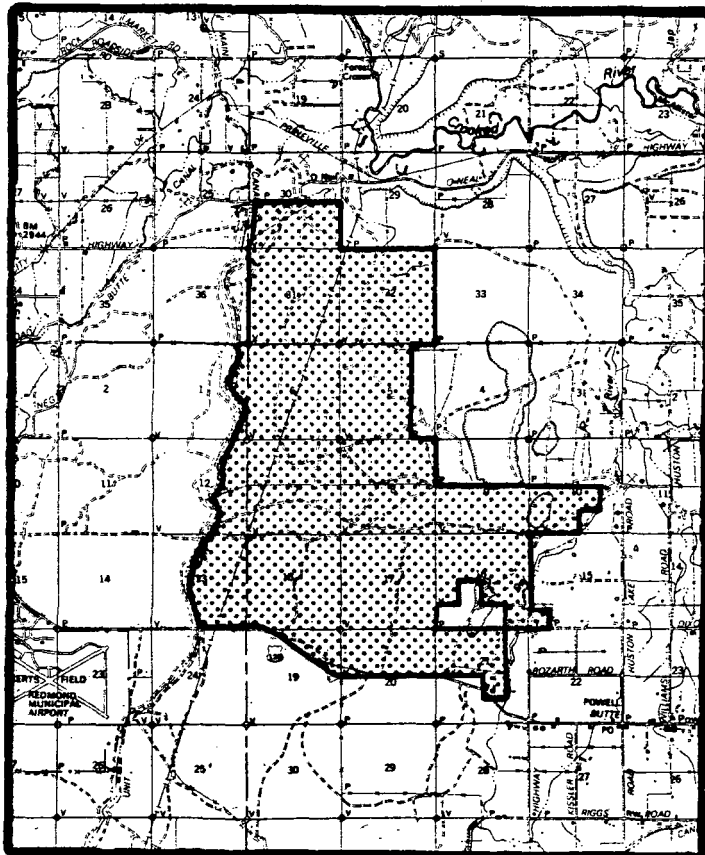
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
OREGON

FEBRUARY 1980



FINAL DECISION-INTENSIVE WILDERNESS INVENTORY OF LANDS
ALONG THE PROPOSED ALASKA NATURAL GAS PIPELINE ROUTE

INVENTORY UNIT OR-5-2



SCALE 1:125,000



LEGEND

 DESIGNATED WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

 ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER WILDERNESS REVIEW

OWNERSHIP

Bureau of Land Management - V, PWR, PS, RW

State - S

Private - P

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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