

R-NW
Natural Areas
Ochoco Divide

The Proposed Ochoco Divide Natural Area

The joint committee on Experimental Forests and Natural Areas recommends the withdrawal of the area described below on the Ochoco National Forest, to be known as the Ochoco Divide Natural Area, as typical of the primeval forest types of the lower slopes of the Blue Mountains in Oregon. Its position in the National Forest and its relation to Beaver Ranger Station, and the Ochoco Highway between Prineville and Mitchell, is shown on the attached map. Part of the proposed area lies on the north side and part on the south side of a low divide separating the headwaters of Crooked River from those of a branch of the John Day River. This one area therefore contains a reasonable amount of two major typical types--mature ponderosa pine and mature larch-Douglas fir. Its shape and position with a view to permanent retention in its virgin condition are ideal and its size reasonably ample.

1. Description of proposed area:

(a) By township, range, and section.

S₂ Sec. 28, S₂ Sec. 29, SE₁ Sec. 30, E₂ Sec. 31, all of Sec. 32, and the W₁, W₂ of Sec. 33, all in T. 12 S., R. 20 E., W.M.

(b) By natural features.

The area suggested straddles a low summit of the southwest extremity of the Blue Mountain range in Wheeler County, Oregon. All boundaries follow section or interior section lines. The area is partly in the Marks Creek watershed which drains into Crooked River and partly in the West Branch watershed which drains into the John Day River. No prominent land features are within the area, the highest point being Carrol Butte, a timbered butte lying near the southwest corner.

(c) Acreage--ownership.

The area contains approximately 1920 acres, all publicly owned.

2. Acreage by dominant cover types:

(a) Timberland bearing commercial stands--1850 acres.

(b) Timberland bearing non-commercial stands--45 acres.

(c) Grassland--45 acres.

3. Physical and climatic conditions:

(a) Elevations range from 4450' to 5200'.

(b) Topography.

The topography of the area, while somewhat broken and uneven, is not rough. There are a variety of exposures and the slopes vary from

10 to 50 percent, averaging about 20 percent. There are no high peaks or deep canyons. The divide is somewhat irregular, and the highest point on the area is nearly a mile southwest of the divide. Gently sloping draws are interspersed with more abrupt slopes.

(c) Soils. Adobe and loam.

(d) Average annual precipitation.

According to A. H. Hodgson's land classification report of 1914, precipitation in the township ranges from 20 to 26 inches. The area being along the summit of a divide would probably have an average annual precipitation of 25 inches, ordinarily falling mostly in the form of snow.

(e) Average annual range of temperatures -50° to 85° F.

(f) Average frost free period: none.

4. Forest values:

(a) Discussion of silvicultural types.

The area comprises two major timber types. Ponderosa pine on the south exposures and fir-larch containing white fir, Douglas fir, and western larch on the north exposures. There may be some relatively small areas of pure stands of either species, but none is of sufficient size to be of significance, as both pine and fir are found to a greater or less extent over the entire area. Ponderosa pine constitutes the bulk of the standing timber and averages 15 M feet B.M. per acre.

(b) Amount and class of timber types.

Ponderosa Pine	Fir-Larch (mature)	Fir-Larch (immature)	Grassland
968 acres	862 acres	45 acres	45 acres

(c) Merchantability of timber.

The timber is mostly unevenaged mature and immature mixed, of merchantable size and quality, reasonably free of defect or disease. Some very good quality pine is found; this is the species of major economic importance. The Douglas fir is mostly sound but is of minor economic importance. The larch is also of fair quality but occurs in small scattered tracts. Considerable white fir is found on the area, and it is all highly defective and commercially unimportant. All species reach development and form stands characteristic of the virgin forests of the Blue Mountains.

(d) Value of timber as protection to watershed.

The timber stand on this area is considered as being of a direct value in the protection of the two watersheds affected. Both Marky Creek and West Branch of John Day River, some of whose tributaries head in this area, are utilized for irrigation; this area therefore has some minor importance to farming communities which are dependent on a regulated runoff of precipitation.

(e) Distribution, extent and character of reproduction.

A good average stand of reproduction is well distributed over the area. Douglas fir, white fir, and western larch form the bulk of the north slope reproduction while ponderosa pine is the chief south slope species. All age classes are well represented.

(f) Extent and severity of fire damage: none other than the usual consequences of periodic surface fires characteristic of these types.

(g) Suitability of area for practical forest management.

The tract so lies at the headwaters of the drainage on either side of the divide up which logging will inevitably proceed that it can be easily administered and protected without interference from timber sale operations or without inconvenience to the orderly exploitation of adjoining national forest lands. There is no occasion for the timber on this tract to be cut for local purposes, for there is abundant and more accessible timber for free use, sales to settlers, etc.

(h) Character and extent of present uses of timber. None.

5. Grazing Value:

The area is now all grazed by cattle, and falls in two allotments separated by a drift fence. Most of the tract lies north of the drift fence that separates the Prineville from the Mitchell cattle.

(a) Numbers of stock grazed under present conditions.

- (1) Cattle and horses--71 cattle.
- (2) Sheep--none.

(b) Average dates grazing seasons open and close.

- (1) Cattle and horses--June 1 to October 1.
- (2) Sheep. (Not grazed on area.)

(c) Present condition of land used for grazing.

- (1) Percentage understocked--none.
- (2) Percentage stocked to normal capacity--100%.
- (3) Percentage overstocked--none.

(d) Effect of overgrazing.

A small portion in the northeast corner of the area has been overgrazed to a slight degree, but not to such extent that it need be considered as seriously affecting runoff, permanent grazing value, or timber production.

6. Mineral Value:

(a) Present

Although geological indications for the occurrence of cinnabar (as compared with other similar areas in this vicinity) are present, and considerable prospecting has been done in the past, no claims of promise have been found to date.

(b) Prospective.

A number of mineral claims have been located within a strip approximately 1/4 mile wide extending from Beaver Ranger Station in a south-westerly direction completely across the area. Several prospect holes have been dug and two shallow shafts put down with no indication of any commercial ore having been found. Practically no development work has been done on the area within the past two years.

On July 22, 1951, Mineral Examiner Wm. H. Friedhoff, in company with Supervisor Harriman and Ranger Blevins, traversed the entire area under question and made examinations of ore found on the various claims. The following is quoted from Mr. Friedhoff's report of July 25, 1951: "I therefore feel that there is nothing in the present clamor excitement to justify abandonment of this site as a natural area, although realizing that there is some chance of a mine being developed here. This element of chance exists on any area that might be chosen in the west."

7. Value of area for public uses other than those above enumerated:

(a) Hydroelectric power--none.

(b) Reservoir development in interest of irrigation--none.

(c) Public recreation.

A regularly established Forest Camp (Wildwood) is maintained on the east side of the Ochoce Highway contiguous to the proposed natural area. This area satisfies the needs for such camps in this vicinity and it is not anticipated that there will ever be need to enlarge this camp to the west side of the highway.

It is hoped that the timber between the proposed natural area and the highway will be left as a scenic strip with only such cutting as is necessary to protect or beautify the highway. The scenic strip would thereby act as a buffer to the natural area and absorb any transient trespass that there might be along the immediate highway border. There is considerable deer hunting in this section in the fall of the year.

(d) Other uses.

None except a stock drift fence already mentioned as shown by map attached.

8. Transportation facilities, roads, trails, railroads, navigable streams:

None except old summit trail which crosses the area but is seldom used. The Ochoce Highway crosses the extreme southeastern corner of the area for about a quarter of a mile. The area is therefore readily accessible.

Some consideration has been given by the Bureau of Public Roads to the relocation of the Ochoce Highway between Prineville and Mitchell.

A survey up Marks Creek and over the divide (which would presumably cross the natural area near its west end) was made, but it is reported that this location has been definitely abandoned by the B. P. R. Instead, it is the plan to make minor changes in the location of the present highway over the present route. This would consist in smoothing off curves and would not move the roadway more than 200 feet from its present location. No interference in the natural area from road construction need therefore be feared.

3. Public sentiment--attitude toward addition and reasons therefor:

Setting aside this tract as a natural area would not affect the public in any way unless it be closed to grazing or hunting or both. The withdrawal of the relatively small amount of timber from sale would inevitably be some disappointment to the timber sale operator contemplating an operation on either side of the divide, but no operations are now contemplated.

The Forest Supervisor has received letters approving the establishment of this area from G. R. Jackson, President of the Mitchell Commercial Club, and G. W. Woodruff, Secretary of the Forestry Committee of the Prineville Businessmen's Club. These represent the two communities closest to the tract.

H. C. OBYE, Junior Forester,
February 25, 1955
Amended December 12, 1955.

Approved:

(5) W. O. Harriman 1-9-34
Forest Supervisor

(5) T. J. Manger 1-15-34
Director

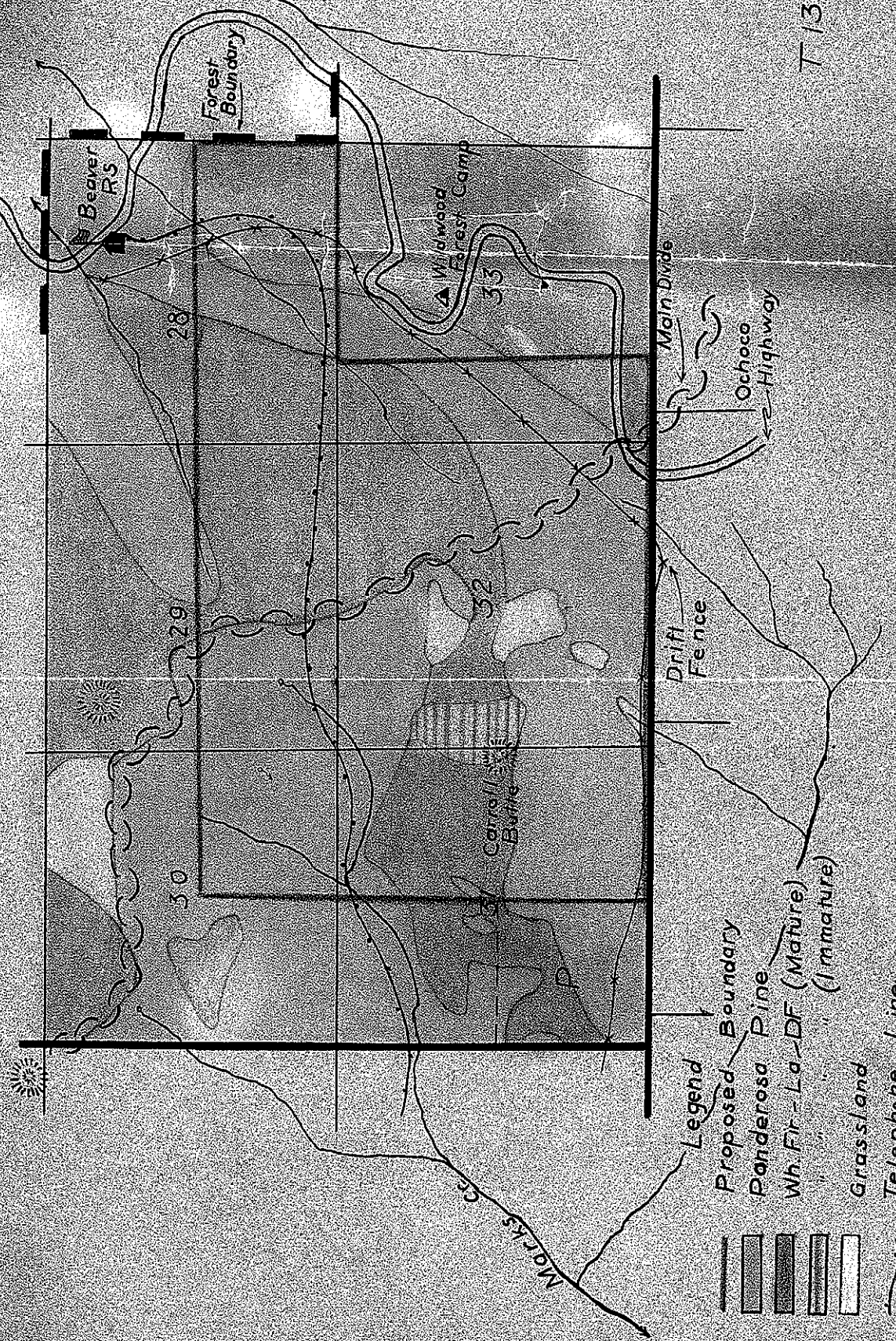
(5) C. J. Buck
Regional Forester

R = NW
Natural Areas
Ochoco

R 20 E., WM

T 12 S

T 13 S



- Legend
- Proposed Boundary
 - Ponderosa Pine
 - Wh. Fir-La-DF (Mature)
 - " " (Immature)
 - Grassland
 - Telephone Line

Map prepared
by G. B. ...