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Agriculture

Forest  
Service

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National  
Forest

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File Code: 1950/4060-3

Date: March 28, 2008

Route To:

Subject: Proposed Shaketable Research Natural Area

To: Regional Forester

Enclosed is the Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice for the designation of the Shaketable Research Natural Area (RNA). This RNA was proposed in the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1990). The enclosed decision establishes the RNA for perpetuity.

GARY L. "STAN" BENES

Enclosures



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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

U. S. FOREST SERVICE  
BOX 4137  
PORTLAND 8, OREGON

TO : Forest Supervisors - Whitman, Umatilla, Malheur DATE: February 5, 1946  
FROM : Recreation & Lands, Frank B. Folsom  
SUBJECT: U, CLASSIFICATION, Natural Areas

At a recent meeting of the Regional Natural Area Committee, the need for an Eastern Oregon natural area typical of the ponderosa and mixed types was brought out. At present we have no natural area east of the Ochoco. What we need is one or more additional areas which will include both ponderosa pine slopes and north slopes typical of the mixed type of the Blue Mountains.

Possibly such areas can be located within or immediately adjacent to the already existing Blue Mountain Experimental Forest and the Starkey Experimental Range. If this is not feasible, it should be possible to locate some other suitable sites - perhaps one each on the Umatilla, Whitman and Malheur.

While this job is not first priority, it is evident that unless some action is taken before very long, we will have passed up the opportunity to select sites which adequately represent the types we are after. This being the case, it is hoped that you will be able to give the matter attention this year and let us have a report not later than December 1.

Enclosed is an outline of the specifications for natural areas.

*Frank B. Folsom*

Enclosure

*Berry C. Cox*

**DECISION NOTICE/DESIGNATION ORDER**  
**Finding of No Significant Impact**

*Shaketable Research Natural Area*  
*(Forest Plan Amendment #64)*

USDA Forest Service  
Malheur National Forest  
Blue Mountain Ranger District  
Grant County, Oregon

An environmental assessment (EA) that discusses the Shaketable Research Natural Area (RNA) on the Blue Mountain Ranger District is available for public review at the Forest Supervisor's Office, Malheur National Forest in John Day, Oregon.

**DECISION**

I am deciding to select the proposed action as described in the 2005 *Shaketable Research Natural Area Environmental Assessment* (EA). Specifically, I am deciding to designate 385 acres located 15 miles (23 km) southeast of Dayville, Oregon (Figure 1) as the Shaketable RNA. -The legal location of this tract covers Section 13 of T.15 S., R. 27 E., and Sections 17, 18, 19 and 20 of T.15 S., R. 28 E., in Grant County.

This decision is a non-significant amendment to the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and the RNA will be managed in compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and Forest Service Manual direction regarding Research Natural Areas.

**RATIONALE**

My decision to establish the Shaketable RNA responds to the need to preserve an example of a significant natural ecosystem, preserve gene pools for this community type, and provide an educational and research area for study of these ecosystems. This designation formally recognizes that the site is representative of western juniper/low sagebrush/bunchgrass, low sagebrush/Idaho fescue, rigid sagebrush/Sandberg's bluegrass, and bitterbrush/bunchgrass woodland identified by the Oregon Natural Heritage Advisory Council (Oregon Natural Heritage Advisory Council 2003). This site, currently tracked as a proposed RNA in Management Area (MA) 9, would be tracked as part of the MA-9 permanent RNA network.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Public comments on the proposal were invited with a scoping letter to interested parties on May 25, 2005. On October 5, 2005 a legal notice was published in the Blue Mountain Eagle notifying the public that the EA was available for review and comment. One comment was received and is available upon request from the Malheur National Forest.

RNA acres within MA-9 to approximately 1,658 acres. Areas proposed as RNAs in MA-9 were treated similar to designated RNAs under the description, goals and general management standards for the management area. In this respect, the proposed RNAs were anticipated by the Forest Plan to be designated at some future time. The designation of Shaketable as a RNA will not alter the multiple use goals and objectives of the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan identified the area proposed as Shaketable RNA as an important addition to the RNA network, however; the amendment does not effect the establishment of any other proposed RNA.

2. Due to specific on-site analysis, the management area boundaries for the Shaketable RNA (MA-9) would be increased from the 1990 Forest Plan proposal of 375 acres to 385 acres. This change would allow an example of western juniper/low sagebrush/bunchgrass, low sagebrush/Idaho fescue, rigid sagebrush/Sandberg's bluegrass, and bitterbrush/bunchgrass woodland to serve as a benchmark for comparison with areas of similar vegetation that are intensively used. The amendment will increase the RNA network by 385 acres. Shaketable RNA is currently embedded within MA-10 Shaketable Semiprimitive Nonmotorized (SPNM) area, which is also part of the Shaketable Inventoried Roadless Area as mapped under the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (USFS, 2001a). Shaketable SPNM is approximately 8,997 acres and managing an additional 385 acres as MA-9 would only affect 4% of the Shaketable SPNM area.
3. Although the amendment will officially designate the Shaketable RNA, the management prescription for the area would not change from current management. The amendment does not change the goals and objectives for other resources in the Forest Plan. Since the area has been managed under MA 9 since 1990, there would be no expectation of a change in timber, wildland fire or range management. Therefore, anticipated changes brought about by this amendment in the levels of resource activities and outputs projected for this planning period are not expected to be measurable.
4. The amendment is intended to facilitate achievement of management prescriptions for a continuous research natural area (RNA) network. Region 6 developed a network of RNAs designated to "illustrate adequately or typify for research or education purposes, the important forest and range types in each forest region, as well as other plant communities that have special or unique characteristics of scientific interest and importance." This amendment provides for the designation of a RNA for perpetuity.

***Summary: Amendment determination of significance:***

The Malheur Forest Plan was approved in 1990 and is currently in the process of being revised. Amendment #64 will result in permanent designation of the Shaketable RNA, would remain in effect in perpetuity and would be included in any revised Forest Plans as a designated RNA.

The planning area for the Malheur National Forest is about 1.5 million acres (Forest Plan, p. I-2). Under the Forest Management Plan, Research Natural Areas fall into

the research natural area will have no impact for sensitive plant species because there would be no environmental effects. In addition there are no listed aquatic species present within the designated area. There will be no negative impact on sensitive aquatic species.

- 7) The proposed action is consistent with federal, state and local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Legal Notice of this decision will appear in the Oregonian, as newspaper of record for Regional Forester Decisions in Oregon, as well as in the Blue Mountain Eagle, the newspaper of record for the Malheur National Forest. A copy of the legal notice will be mailed to all persons stating interest in the project. Implementation of this decision shall not occur within 7 calendar days following publication of the legal notice in the Oregonian.

## APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to appeal under 36 CFR 217 but does not require notice and comment under 36 CFR 215. Any Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. Written notice of appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeal Deciding Officer, Abigail Kimbell, within 45 days of the date the legal notice appears in the Oregonian. Submit written notice of appeal to:

Chief, USDA Forest Service  
ATTN: NFS Appeals  
14<sup>th</sup> and Independence SW  
P.O. Box 96090  
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090



Regional Forester

April 24, 2008  
Date

DESIGNATION ORDER/DECISION NOTICE

An Order establishing Shaketable Research Natural Area


By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Secretary of Agriculture under regulations 7 CFR 2.42 and 36 CFR 251.23, this is my Designation Order to establish the Shaketable Research Natural Area. The Shaketable Research Natural Area shall be comprised of lands described in the section of the Establishment Record entitled "Location".

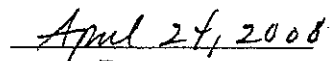
Regional Forester John Butruille recommended the establishment of the Shaketable Research Natural Area in the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan dated May 25, 1990 which is incorporated into this document by reference. That recommendation was the result of an analysis of the factors listed in 36 CFR 219.25 and Forest Service Manual 4063.41. The results of the Regional Forester's analysis are documented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The Establishment Record for the Shaketable Research Natural Area is available to the public.

The Shaketable Research Natural Area will be managed in compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and Manual direction regarding Research Natural Areas. The Shaketable Research Natural Area will be administered in accordance with the management direction identified in the Establishment Record. The Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan is hereby amended to be consistent with the management direction identified in the Establishment Record and this Designation Order. This direction will remain in effect unless amended pursuant to 36 CFR 219.10. This is a non-significant amendment of the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Based on the Environmental Analysis documented in the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, the Environmental Impact Statement, and the Establishment Record, I find that designation of the Shaketable Research Natural Area is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.

The Forest Supervisor of the Malheur National Forest shall notify the public of this amendment and will mail a copy of the Designation Order and amended direction to persons on the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan mailing list.

  
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Regional Forester

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date