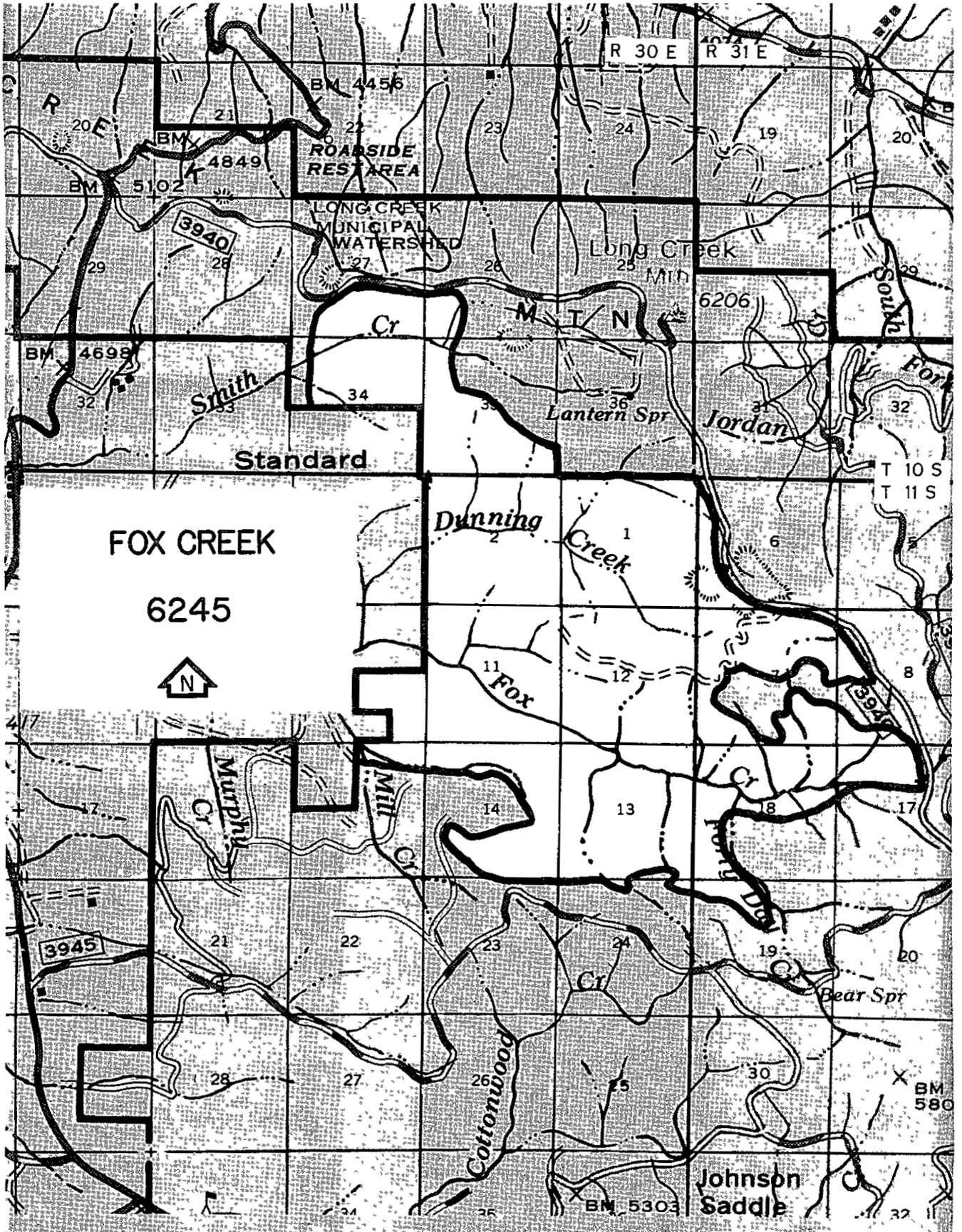


FIGURE C-8



I. FOX CREEK - 5,879 Acres
(RARE II No. 6245)

1. Description

- a. History This area was inventoried in RARE and carried forward into RARE II with some increase in size. Under the John Day Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and RARE II Environmental Impact Statement, this area has been managed for nonwilderness uses.
- b Location and Access The Fox Creek roadless area is located in the northern portion of the Malheur National Forest about 13 miles northwest of John Day, Oregon, in Grant County (T. 10 S., R 30 E , T. 10 S , R. 31 E., T 11 S., R. 30 E., T. 11 S , R 31 E., of the Willamette Meridian).
- c. Geography and Topography This area is located in the headwaters of Fox Creek, Smith Creek, Dunning Creek, and Day Creek, tributaries to the John Day River System. These drainages are narrow and relatively short, except for Fox Creek. The area is primarily south- and west-facing. Elevation varies from 4,700 to 6,000 feet. See Figure C-8.
- d. Geology and Soils Loamy and ash soils predominate. Deeper ash soils are found on north-facing slopes. Bedrock is composed of hard basalt and andesite with some soft to moderately tuffaceous interflow material. The area is covered with Miocene basalt flows.
- e. Vegetation The area is 82 percent forested. Of these acres, 2,000 meet the Pacific Northwest Region's definition of old growth. Lodgepole pine generally occurs within the Fox Creek drainage. Juniper, mountain-mahogany, and ponderosa pine occur on west- or south-facing slopes. Douglas-fir, white fir, and western larch occur on the cool, moist, north-facing slopes. Understory vegetation is primarily elk sedge, pine grass, wheatgrass, huckleberry, and bluegrass.
- f Current Uses The area provides spring, summer, and fall habitat for mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk as well as year-round habitat for small game and other mammals. Fox Creek provides spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead and resident trout.
- The principal recreational use is big-game hunting. Other recreation use is extremely light and may consist of fishing, and viewing and photographing wildflowers and birds. (See Table C-2 for current use figures.)
- The area is within one grazing allotment and provides an average of 350 Animal Unit Months annually for livestock.
- This area is very similar to surrounding areas with dense, forested areas intermingled with open, grassy ridges. Ridgetop views of Fox Valley expose a rural, high mountain meadow.
- The major attraction of the area appears to be the opportunity to hunt big game.

2. Wilderness

Capability

- a. Manageability and Boundaries This area is one to three miles wide and four miles long. The boundary of the review area consists of Forest roads and Forest boundary. The area is accessible from all sides. There is an opportunity to improve the manageability of this boundary.
- b. Natural Integrity The natural integrity of the area has been impacted by human activities. The principal impact is also the least noticeable to the average visitor. Fire suppression has altered the natural succession of the area. Under natural conditions, periodic low-intensity fires would have selectively thinned fir species from ponderosa pine stands.
- Grazing impacts in the area include fences, stock water ponds, salt grounds, and some alteration of plant species composition and vigor.
- There is one unimproved road into the center of the area.
- c. Naturalness The most obvious unnatural impacts are the road, fences, and the presence of cattle. Other than these, the area appears very natural.
- d. Opportunity for Solitude There are numerous, sharply dissected draws which provide some vegetative and topographic screening, especially on the north- and east-facing slopes. The small size of the area and the views to surrounding rural areas and developed forest lands tend to reduce opportunity for solitude.
- e. Primitive Recreation and Challenge The small size of the area and the previously mentioned factors limit opportunity for a Primitive or challenging recreation experience.
- f. Special Features No Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant or animal species exist within this area.
- There are no special features or cultural resource sites inventoried. However, this area was a popular summer hunting, fishing, root digging, and berry picking area for the Umatilla, Cayuse, Warm Springs, and Mid-Columbia tribes, so the likelihood of sites is high.

3. Availability for Wilderness

- a. Resource Potentials The area currently provides roaded natural and semiprimitive motorized recreation opportunities (See Table C-3). The area is capable of providing 10,798 recreational visitor days annually (See Table C-4.)
- There are 4,100 acres of forested land tentatively suitable for timber management activities. These trees are growing in multistoried stands of predominantly mixed conifer species with some lodgepole and ponderosa pine. There is a standing volume of 53.37 million board feet (9.33 million cubic feet). With the use of intensive timber management techniques, 197 thousand cubic feet (1,127 thousand board feet) would be contributed to the annual allowable sale quantity in the first decade. The long-term sustained yield capacity from this area would be 234 thousand cubic feet per year.

This area does not provide any opportunity to increase or improve big-game winter range. Retained in an undeveloped state, this area has the potential to contribute forested old growth in a distribution pattern which would benefit wildlife such as pileated woodpeckers.

The area has no known potential for locatable minerals and contains no mining claims. The U. S. Geological Survey considers the northern part of the area to be prospectively valuable for oil and gas and the entire area to be prospectively valuable for geothermal resources. There are 11 sections covered by oil and gas leases.

b Management Considerations

Indian paint fungus is present and can be found in all size classes of true fir. Much of the Douglas-fir (especially that on rockier, drier sites) is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. Root rots can also be found to varying degrees but at present are not considered a problem.

Due to the high amount of Douglas-fir and other fir species in the area, all the timber stands are highly susceptible to tussock moth and the western spruce budworm. Western spruce budworm infestation of varying severity presently exists within the area. Western pine beetle can be found in the area, but it is generally confined to a few old-growth ponderosa pines of low vigor. Mountain pine beetle can be found in the lodgepole pine.

One right-of-way and one water transmission special-use permit exist in the area.

4. Wilderness Evaluation

The Strawberry Mountain Wilderness is 15 miles south, Monument Rock Wilderness is 40 miles southeast, North Fork John Day Wilderness is 30 miles northeast, and Black Canyon Wilderness is 30 miles southwest. The ecosystems of the Fox Creek area are represented in those wildernesses.

This area lies about 20 road miles from John Day, Oregon. The nearest major metropolitan centers are Portland, Oregon (260 miles northwest), and Boise, Idaho (200 miles east).

During the 1979 RARE II process, this area received 113 comments favoring wilderness, 2,582 favoring further planning, and 3,384 in favor of nonwilderness management.

In recent Forest planning public involvement activities, this area received the lowest number of comments of any area on the Forest. These comments opposed wilderness designation 14 to 1.

No reasons were given by those supporting wilderness designation. The reasons given by those opposing wilderness designation included the effects of human activity in the area, lack of primitive recreation opportunities, and difficulty in managing the area as wilderness. There was some support for continued roadless area management for the purpose of fish and wildlife habitat protection.

5. Environmental Consequences

Table C-12 displays the various management area assignments for this area by alternative.

- a. **Vegetation/Trees** Tree sizes, and stand density and composition will change more in Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC than in Alternative C-Modified, since more acres are available for timber management. About 600 acres of old growth will be retained in all alternatives and that amount is expected to remain unchanged. An additional 1,400 acres of old growth will be provided in Alternative C-Modified. The actual acres affected by timber harvest would vary between these alternatives. In Alternative F, approximately 280 acres would be affected in the first decade.
- b. **Vegetation/Grass and Shrubs** In Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC, forage for wildlife and livestock is expected to increase on forested areas where timber harvests and stocking level control occur. Significant increases are expected in forage production on north-facing slopes as openings of tree canopies by shelterwood and/or clearcut occur. The long-term effect on this transitory area is a gradual decrease in forage as tree canopies again close and shade the understory. Seeding of introduced grass species will provide higher quality forage and change the composition of forage plants. Native forage species of elk sedge, pinegrass, brome, and wheatgrass will also increase in vigor and density naturally as timber stands are opened.
- In Alternative C-Modified forage production is expected to remain at present levels and may decrease as Douglas-fir and white fir further encroach under the ponderosa pine
- c. **Wilderness** In Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC, users would see motorized vehicles, timber harvest activities, and new timber access roads in all or most of the area. The area would eventually have a managed-forest appearance with human activities evident. Future wilderness consideration would be foregone by the end of the first decade.
- Alternative C-Modified would restrict such development but motorized vehicle use would be allowed. Future wilderness would remain a possibility in Alternative C-Modified.
- d. **Recreation** Hunting would continue under all alternatives as the primary recreation activity. Alternative C-Modified would provide a semiprimitive motorized recreation opportunity and offer a more natural environment to users than other alternatives on all or most of the area.
- In all alternatives except Alternative C-Modified, the recreation experience would be a roaded modified recreation opportunity. Road access would be available to more kinds of vehicles over a longer period of time each year.
- e. **Scenery** The naturalness of the area would be maintained in Alternative C-Modified. Under Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC, viewers would see evidence of a managed forest including clearcuts and shelterwoods. The long-term effects on scenery would be less old growth to view, more access roads, and less naturalness.
- In Alternative C-Modified most of the present scenery would be maintained and no significant changes are foreseen barring a major outbreak of insects, diseases, or catastrophic fire.

f Wildlife

Old-growth timber and snags would be available to nongame wildlife to a greater extent in Alternative C-Modified than in other alternatives. All alternatives will retain adequate old growth to meet management requirements for indicator species such as pine marten and pileated woodpecker. Management standards would adequately protect key habitats for all wildlife under all alternatives.

All alternatives, except Alternative C-Modified, would reduce the amount of mixed conifer old growth and thereby improve the cover/forage ratio where forage is deficient. Improvement in available wildlife forage would improve summer habitat for deer and elk. The area does not provide any big-game winter range.

g. Water, Riparian,
Fisheries

Riparian vegetation, anadromous fish habitat, and water quality would be least affected by Alternative C-Modified, and most affected by Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC. Although management standards would adequately protect these resources under all alternatives, there would be increased accessibility and use of these resources as a result of timber harvest and road construction.

h Cultural Resources

All alternatives are similar in effects on cultural resources. There is no discernible difference between alternatives when considering existing regulations, laws, and management standards. Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC present the greatest risk of inadvertent damage to the resource. They also present the greatest opportunity for discovery and interpretation of cultural resources.

i. Soils

Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC present the greatest risk of inadvertent damage to the soils as well as acceptable amounts of compaction as a result of harvest activities. All of the alternatives adequately protect the resource through application of management standards.

TABLE C-12

FOX CREEK MANAGEMENT BY ALTERNATIVE

(Acres)

Management Area	NC ^{1/}	Alternatives				
		A	B-Mod	C-Mod	F	I-Preferred
1. General Forest	N/A	2,930	2,918		2,938	2,938
2. Rangeland		773	833		777	777
3. Riparian Areas		316	311		290	290
4A Big-Game Winter Range						
4B Big-Game Winter Range Enhancement						
5. Bald Eagle Winter Roost						
6A. Strawberry Mountain Wilderness						
6B Monument Rock Wilderness						
6C Pine Creek						
7 Scenic Area						
8 Special Interest Area						
9 Research Natural Area						
10 Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized						
11. Semi-Pimitive Motorized Developed Recreation				5,879 ^{2/}		
13 Old Growth	N/A	600	600		600	600
14. Visual Corridors		756	851		832	832
15 Unit Plan Wildlife Emphasis Areas						
16 Minimum Level Management		504	366		442	442
17 Byram Gulch Municipal Supply Watershed						
18. Long Creek Municipal Supply Watershed						
19 Administrative Sites						
20. Wildlife Emphasis Areas with Scheduled Harvest						
21 Wildlife Emphasis Area Non-Scheduled Harvest						
22. Wild and Scenic River						
TOTAL ACRES	N/A	5,879	5,879	5,879	5,879	5,879

^{1/}The Timber Management Plan upon which the No Change Alternative is based was developed in 1979. The plan was not an integrated plan and consequently did not address all resource uses and outputs in an integrated manner. As a result, these acreages are not available

^{2/}Included in this is 600 acres of dedicated old growth.