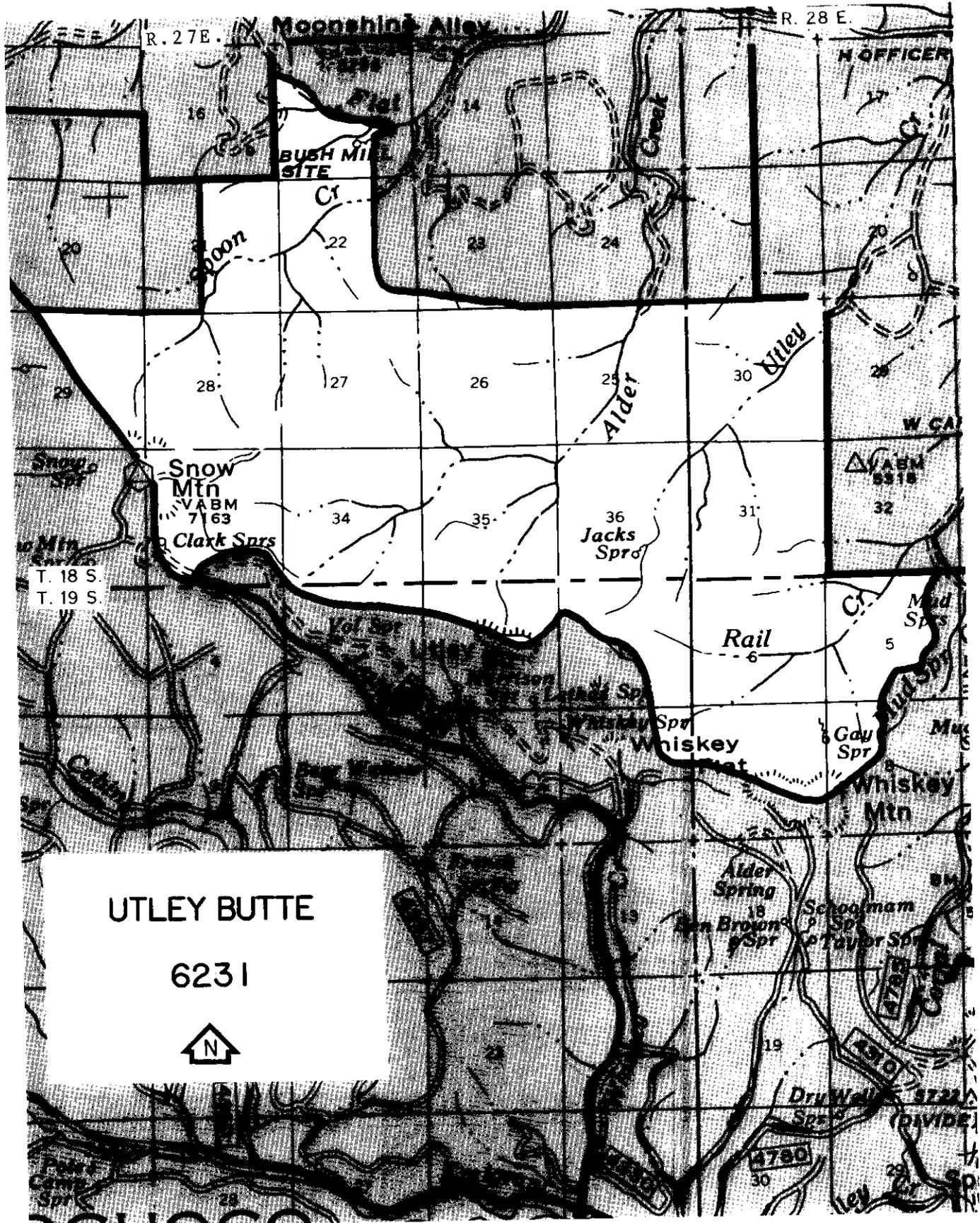


FIGURE C-19



**T. UTLEY BUTTE - 9,945 Acres  
(RARE II No. 6231)**

**1. Description**

- a. History                    This area was inventoried in RARE and enlarged during the RARE II inventory. Under the South Fork Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement, this area has been managed for nonwilderness uses.
- b. Location and Access        The area is located in the southwestern corner of the Malheur National Forest on the Grant-Harney County line, Oregon (T. 18 S., R. 27 E., T. 19 S., R. 27 E., of the Willamette Meridian). Main access routes are Forest road Nos. 4330 and 43, and County Road 47.
- c. Geography and Topography    The Utley Butte area is drained by Spoon, Alder, Utley, Rail, and Corral creeks all tributaries to the South Fork John Day River. The resulting draws are relatively steep near the southern boundary of the area. Snow Mountain (elevation 7,163) on the western edge of the area is the predominant landmark in this area. See Figure C-19.
- The topography of the area can be described as steep, primarily north-facing slopes and flat-topped ridges. Elevation of the area ranges from 5,000 to 7,163 feet.
- d. Geology and Soils            Soils in the area range in depth from 4 to more than 30 inches. There is a combination of soils derived from volcanic ash and loamy or loamy/clayey soils, with the ash soils being more productive. Ash soils are more predominant in the western and southern portions of the area, although they occur throughout. For the most part, the erosion hazard for the area is high; the compaction and displacement hazard is low to moderate. All of the area is covered by Tertiary-age volcanic-rocks, including Miocene-to-Pliocene and Pliocene volcanic flow rocks, and Pliocene welded tuffs.
- e. Vegetation                This area is 77 percent forested. Of these acres, about 3,200 meet the Pacific Northwest Region's definition of old growth. Vegetative distribution on this north-facing area is characterized by trees in the bottoms, on sideslopes, and on gentle flat-topped ridges. Grass and low shrubs are found on steeper sideslopes and rock areas. Ridges and south slopes support ponderosa pine and juniper with a mountain-mahogany understory. Ground cover is usually sagebrush and bunchgrasses. Conifers are primarily confined to north slopes and drainages. Overstories consist of ponderosa pine and fir with some larch; understories are mainly white fir and Douglas-fir with grass and forbs as ground cover. Streamside vegetation generally consists of alder, willow, and some scattered mountain ash. This vegetation is mainly confined to upper drainages since lower drainages have little or no streamside vegetation.
- f. Current Uses                Big-game hunters are offered an experience considerably different from that of hunting on intensively managed forest land. At present, recreation use is limited to hunting during the fall and some hiking and sightseeing during other seasons. (See Table C-2.)

This area provides year-round Rocky Mountain elk habitat with approximately 2.5 square miles of elk winter range within the area. Mule deer use the area during spring, summer, and fall. Old-growth and mature forest provide habitat for pileated woodpeckers, goshawks, and bear. Spoon Creek, Alder Creek, Utley Creek, and Rail Creek support native trout populations.

The area lies within one grazing allotment. Current use averages 700 Animal Unit Months annually by cattle.

There are no planned power withdrawals, proposed impoundments, existing irrigation reservoirs, or distribution systems. Spoon Creek is a major contributor to water flowing into the South Fork John Day River. The portions of Spoon, Alder, Utley, and Rail Creeks within the area are all free flowing and undisturbed.

The major attraction of this area is the large ponderosa pine. In addition, the roadless area offers opportunities for solitude and to "get away from it all" and to enjoy "peace and quiet without motorized intrusions." The main viewpoint is Snow Mountain Lookout.

The area provides scenic diversity in vegetation types with changes in elevation and aspect. There is additional variety provided between streamside and hillside views. Various species of big game animals are available for hunting, viewing, and photography.

## 2. Wilderness Capability

### a. Manageability and Boundaries

The boundaries of the area have been adjusted to exclude the already developed land areas. For the past 20 years, the land south of the area has been extensively logged.

### b. Natural Integrity

Within the draw bottoms themselves, natural integrity of the area is extremely high. Except for the extreme northern portion of the area, natural processes have been virtually unhampered by human activities. The major impacts in this portion of the area are livestock grazing, hunting camps, the Alder Creek Trail (not maintained), and an unimproved road on the ridge west of Alder Creek. Forest personnel estimate this road has not been used in at least 15 years and portions of it have been completely obliterated.

The effects of grazing in the area are mostly concentrated along streams. They include fences, salt grounds, cattle trails, some compaction and vegetative trampling, dust beds, the cattle themselves, and other evidence of their presence along the streams.

### c. Naturalness

The area appears extremely natural to the average user. The impacts of livestock use remain the most intrusive activity. These would appear unnatural to most visitors and would be difficult to mitigate unless grazing were eliminated.

### d. Opportunities for Solitude

Within the area the opportunities for solitude are very high, especially along stream bottoms. The experience of spaciousness and solitude is somewhat diminished by the adjacent management activities.

e. Primitive  
Recreation  
and Challenge

Opportunities for undeveloped recreation exist in the form of hiking, hunting backpacking, and wildlife viewing. The lack of facilities and access tends to increase opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation. Primitive recreation experiences are limited by the size of the area and the intrusion of adjacent management activities. Challenge to physical ability is moderate for cross-country travel.

f. Special Features

Some designated old-growth stands exist within the Utley Butte area. There are no records of Threatened or Endangered Species using this area, and there are no potential bald eagle roost sites. No Sensitive species were located during a field analysis for the proposed Spoon Creek Timber Sale.

One cultural resource site has been located. Opportunities for interpretation of this site would be very limited.

There may be some opportunities for scientific and educational studies, but a recent review by the Area 3 Ecologist relative to research natural areas states that, "While Utley Butte contained nice old-growth trees in good stand configurations, I did not believe the ecological condition of the component types was healthy enough for serious consideration (as a Research Natural Area)."

3. Availability  
for Wilderness

a. Resource  
Potentials

This area currently provides roaded natural, semiprimitive motorized, and semiprimitive nonmotorized recreational opportunities. (See Table C-3.) It has the potential to provide 10,725 Recreation Visitor Days annually. (See Table C-4.)

Commercial timber species are ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, white fir, and some western larch occurring on 6,900 acres of forested land tentatively suitable for timber management activities. These trees are growing in multistoried stands. Ponderosa pine is generally 200-300 years old while fir is between 100 and 200 years old. Volumes range from about 8 thousand board feet per acre to over 20 thousand board feet per acre. There is a standing volume of 78.42 million board feet (13.71 million cubic feet) of timber. With the use of intensive timber management techniques, 331 thousand cubic feet (1,893 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 393 thousand cubic feet per year. The white fir is infected with Indian paint fungus and would yield very little volume.

The area has no known locatable mineral potential and contains no mining claims. The U.S. Geological Survey considers the area to be prospectively valuable for oil and gas but not for geothermal resources. An industry respondent has identified the area as having moderate potential for oil.

b. Management  
Considerations

There have been 20 small fires in the area over the last 10 years. Natural fuel loading in the area ranges from low to moderate.

Indian paint fungus is prevalent and can probably be found in all size classes of the true fir. Much of the Douglas-fir (especially on rockier, drier soils) is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. Mistletoe patches of varying degree can be found, from fairly light to quite severe. Root rots can be found to varying degrees but, at this point, it is not considered a problem.

Due to high amounts of fir trees and Douglas-fir in the review area, all the timber stands are highly susceptible to tussock moth and the western spruce budworm. The western spruce budworm is presently in the area and, in some cases, is quite severe. Western pine beetle can be found in the area but is generally confined to a few old-growth ponderosa pine trees of low vigor.

There are no known non-Federal lands in the review area.

#### 4. Wilderness Evaluation

The Strawberry Mountain Wilderness is 45 miles northeast, Monument Rock Wilderness is 70 miles northeast, North Fork John Day Wilderness is 85 miles northeast, and Black Canyon Wilderness is 35 miles northwest. The ecosystems of the Utley Butte roadless area are not particularly well represented in any of these areas.

The nearest major metropolitan centers are Portland, Oregon (300 miles northwest) and Boise, Idaho (180 miles east).

In the 1979 RARE II study, there were 2,701 comments favoring wilderness designation, 29 comments favoring further planning, and 3,401 comments favoring nonwilderness management. In recent Forest planning public involvement activities, this area received a low level of response. Those responses were in a ratio of 2.8 opposing wilderness designation to every 1 favoring it. A timber sale proposed for part of this area was appealed.

The reasons favoring wilderness for this area were wildlife habitat protection and Primitive recreation value. Watershed protection and natural character of the area were also mentioned.

Reasons opposing wilderness were the presence of logging activity in the nonconforming areas now removed from the area, a preference for management as a roadless area, and the value of the timber resource.

#### 5. Environmental Consequences

Table C-23 displays the various management area assignments for this area by alternative.

##### a Vegetation/Trees

Significant changes in tree sizes, stand composition, and density will occur in all alternatives except Alternative C-Modified. On the 5,967 forested acres, the predominantly ponderosa pine forest will become predominantly mixed conifer through natural succession and timber harvest activities in all alternatives. The actual acres affected by timber management activities will vary between alternatives. Alternative F would harvest approximately 940 acres in the first decade.

- b. Vegetation/Grass, Forbs, and Shrubs      The greatest change to grasses, shrubs, and forbs results from timber-harvest activities. These naturally occurring forage species would increase as timber harvest and thinning open the tree canopy. Seeding of introduced grass species would increase the quality and quantity of palatable forage species. There would be little change in Alternative C-Modified, although forage will decrease in quantity as tree stands become more dense.
- c. Wilderness      The opportunity for future consideration of wilderness potential will be foregone by the end of the first decade in Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC through timber harvest and roading activities.
- d. Recreation      The recreation opportunity provided by this area in Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC is roaded modified. Visitors would see and hear increased vehicle use, including off-road vehicles, and more evidence of human activity such as roads. In Alternative C-Modified this area would provide semiprimitive motorized recreation opportunities. This setting would favor off-road vehicle and motorized as well as nonmotorized use in a natural setting.
- e. Scenery      All of the Alternatives except Alternative C-Modified would alter the appearance of the area from its natural state to a managed forest setting.
- f. Wildlife      All of the alternatives would retain at least 900 acres of old growth; in Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, and I, only that old growth will be retained in the area. In Alternative C-Modified the forested acres will continue through natural succession and contribute to the old growth available. Snags will also be more prevalent in Alternative C-Modified than in other alternatives, although all will provide for a minimum level of snags necessary to support wildlife dependent on such habitat. About 10 percent of the area is in elk winter range. On the forested acres within that area, timber harvest activities in all alternatives except Alternative C-Modified will decrease the hiding and thermal cover for big game, while increasing the forage available.
- g. Water, Riparian, Fisheries      All alternatives protect these resources through management standards and all except Alternative C-Modified provide increased use and improvement opportunities for these resources through improved access.
- h. Cultural Resources      All of the alternatives protect these resources through application of laws and management standards. Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC constitute the most potential for inadvertent damage to the resource as well as the most opportunity for discovery.
- i. Soils      All of the alternatives protect the soil resource through management standards. Alternatives A, B-Modified, F, I, and NC present the most risk of damage to the resource.

Table C-23

## UTILEY BUTTE MANAGEMENT BY ALTERNATIVE

(Acres)

| Management Area                                    | NC <sup>1/</sup> | Alternatives |       |       |       |             |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
|                                                    |                  | A            | B-Mod | C-Mod | F     | I-Preferred |
| 1. General Forest                                  |                  | 5,807        | 5,166 |       | 5,195 |             |
| 2. Rangeland                                       | N/A              | 1,930        | 2,063 |       | 1,926 |             |
| 3. Riparian Areas                                  |                  | 624          | 614   |       | 572   |             |
| 4A. Big-Game Winter Range                          |                  |              | 634   |       | 637   |             |
| 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-Primitive Motorized                       |                  |              |       | 9,945 |       |             |
| 12. Developed Recreation                           |                  |              |       |       |       |             |
| 13. Old Growth                                     | N/A              | 900          | 900   |       | 900   | 900         |
| 14. Visual Corridors                               |                  |              |       |       |       |             |
| 15. Unit Plan Wildlife Emphasis Areas              | N/A              |              |       |       |       |             |
| 16. Minimum Level Management                       |                  | 684          | 568   |       | 715   |             |
| 17. Byram Gulch Municipal Supply Watershed         |                  |              |       |       |       |             |
| 18. Long Creek Municipal Supply Watershed          |                  |              |       |       |       |             |
| 19. Administrative Sites                           |                  |              |       |       |       |             |
| 20. Wildlife Emphasis Areas with Scheduled Harvest |                  |              |       |       |       | 9,045       |
| 21. Wildlife Emphasis Area Non-Scheduled Harvest   |                  |              |       |       |       |             |
| 22. Wild and Scenic River                          |                  |              |       |       |       |             |
| TOTAL ACRES                                        | N/A              | 9,945        | 9,945 | 9,945 | 9,945 | 9,945       |

<sup>1/</sup>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.