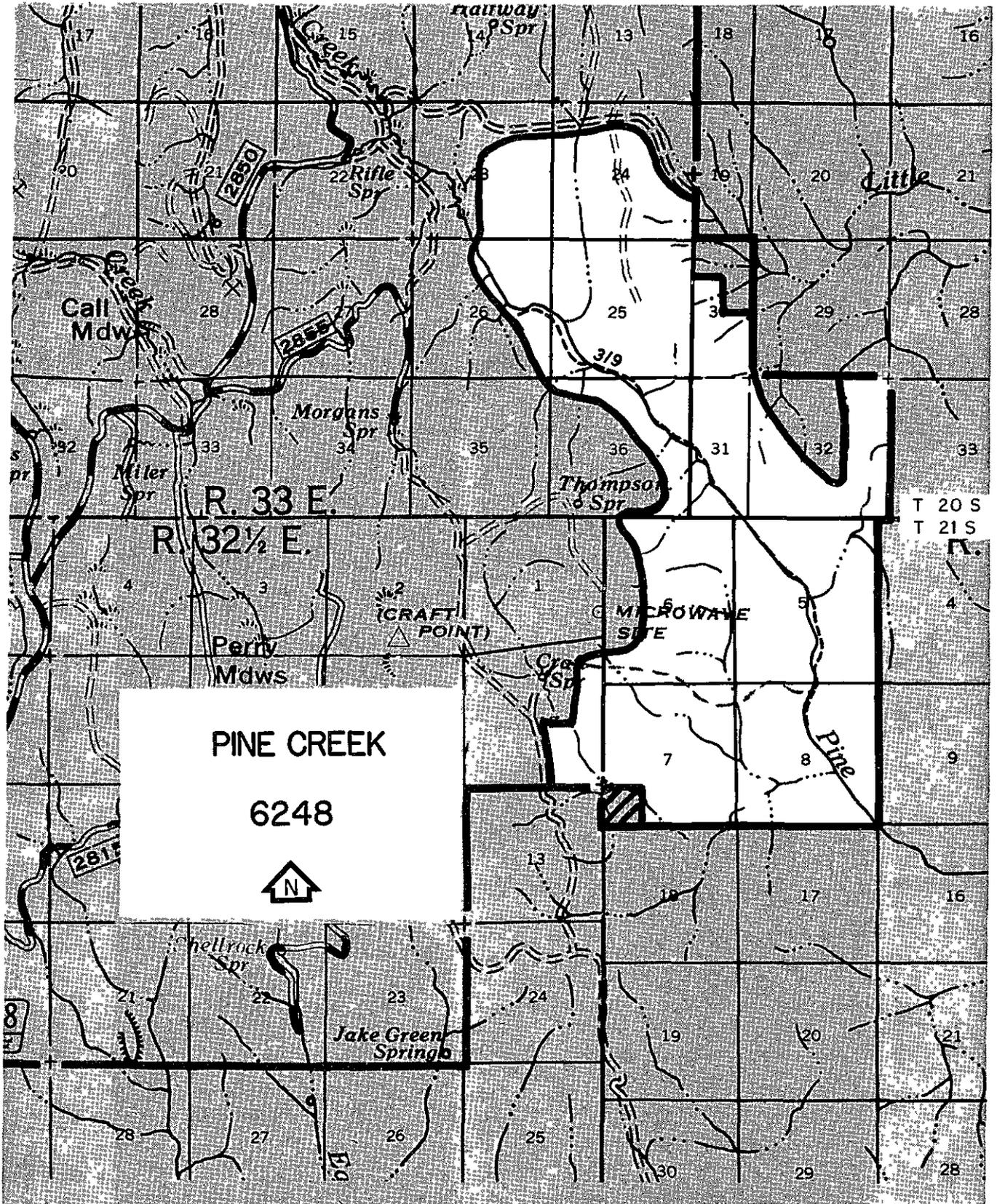


FIGURE C-17



**R. PINE CREEK - 5,420
Acres (RARE II No. 6248)**

1. Description

- a. History** This area was first inventoried late in the RARE II process. It was assigned to further planning in both an addendum to the Silvies-Malheur Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and in the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement because it did not have the advantage of full public review during unit planning.
- b. Location and Access** The area is located near the southern boundary of the Malheur National Forest in northern Harney County, Oregon (T. 20 S , R. 33 E , T. 20 S., R. 33 1/2 E., T 21 S., R 33 E., T. 21 S., R. 33 1/2 E , of the Willamette Meridian). Access to the area consists of unimproved roads to the canyon rims and a trail along the creek in the canyon bottom. See Figure C-17
- c. Geography and Topography** The area consists of the canyon of Pine Creek drainage and some relatively flat table land around canyon rims The south end of Pine Creek Canyon has steep walls with prominent rock outcroppings. The north portion encompasses gentle slopes and broad, flat canyon bottoms.
- The topography of the area consists of a deeply (400+ feet) incised plateau with a narrow valley (50 feet) in the bottom. It is about 1/2 mile from rim-to-rim with benchlike sideslopes in some areas and long, smooth slopes in others. Pine Creek runs southeast through the center of the area. The northern portion of the area has gentle topography compared to the southern portion.
- d. Geology and Soils** The plateau of table land is formed from soils derived from tuffs and breccias. Some of these soils are excessively drained, and they are gravelly and could be plastic when wet. Layers below these clay soils are bedrock composed of hard tuffs, breccias, hard basalt, and andesite which is slightly fractured. The canyon walls are formed of highly stratified and variable bedrocks with a wide range of undefined soil characteristics. The area is covered with Miocene and younger volcanic flows and sediments.
- e. Vegetation** This area is 60 percent forested. About 1,050 of these acres meet the Pacific Northwest Region's definition of old growth. Most of the area is a mixture of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and white fir. Much of the white fir is confined to the north slopes leading into Pine Creek Canyon. Understories are generally Douglas-fir and white fir over grasses and shrubs. The south slopes into Pine Creek are mainly juniper, mountain mahogany, sagebrush, bunchgrass, and scattered ponderosa pine.
- f. Current Uses** Big-game hunting and trout fishing are currently the primary recreation uses of the area. Other uses include camping, hiking, photography, and nature study. All recreation use of the area is light. (See Table C-2.) Access is limited to trails that follow the streamcourses, which are gentle in grade and suitable for the average hiker Approximately 1,200 Recreation Visitor Days occur annually, almost entirely in the semiprimitive nonmotorized ROS class. (See Table C-3.)

This area provides year-round Rocky Mountain elk habitat with winter range encompassing the entire area. Mule deer use the area during spring, summer, and fall. Canyon rims and walls provide habitat for black bear, prairie falcon, and Canadian geese, and potentially provide habitat for bobcat and turkey vulture. The close association of old-growth forest, sageland, riparian, and cliff habitats provides a wide spectrum of southern Blue Mountain plant and animal species. Pine Creek supports an inland native trout fishery.

Permitted grazing use of the Pine Creek area occurs under one grazing allotment. Current use averages 550 Animal Unit Months each year by cattle. Recreation stock grazing use is generally available in meadows near water.

There are no known hydroelectric withdrawals or any proposed impoundments. Several livestock spring improvements exist, consisting of water troughs and several holding ponds to catch snowmelt. There are no known water measuring sites. Pine Creek produces such a low volume of water that its main contribution is to off-forest irrigation of agricultural lands.

Logging activities are adjacent to the northwest portion of the area. The south end of the area is remote and rugged. The areas in Bureau of Land Management, State, or private ownerships along the eastern boundary of the area support sage, mountain mahogany, juniper, and patches of aspen.

The land west and north of the area has been logged repeatedly. The land east and south of the area is in Bureau of Land Management, State, or private ownership. Some logging has occurred on these lands.

The major attractions of this area are hunting and trout fishing. Trout fishing occurs along the north end of the area where access is best.

2. Wilderness Capability

a. Manageability and Boundaries

There is general agreement that the boundaries of the area should be adjusted. The boundaries of the original inventoried area are difficult to locate on the ground and would be difficult to manage. Moving the boundary to a more easily managed location would slightly increase the size of the area.

b. Natural Integrity

Within the canyons themselves, natural integrity of the area is extremely high. Natural processes have been slightly hampered by human activities.

The major impacts to this portion of the area are exclusion of fire, a trail in the canyon bottom, livestock grazing, a low-standard road in the northern portion of the area, and some scattered water developments for livestock.

Fire suppression in the area has resulted in a gradual change in the understory vegetation from ponderosa pine reproduction to white fir and other tree species. Under natural conditions, low-intensity wildfires would have selectively maintained ponderosa pine in the understories.

c. Naturalness

Overall, the area appears extremely natural to the average user. The effects of fire suppression would not normally be noticed by most users. Foot trails along the streams are maintained to a fairly low standard.

The impacts of livestock grazing remain the most intrusive activity. These appear unnatural to most visitors and would be extremely difficult to mitigate unless grazing were eliminated. They also occur in the portion of the area most likely to receive the most use.

**d Opportunity
for Solitude**

The roads leading to the boundary of the area provide ample access. The opportunity does not really exist to "get away from it all." The southern portion of the area would offer the best opportunity to retreat from human influences, but human influences would still be visible within two miles of the review area.

**e Primitive
Recreation
and Challenge**

Camping, hunting, trout fishing, and limited photography are activities which could take place in this area. There is also limited opportunity for rock climbing. No opportunity exists for water-related activities such as canoeing, boating, or river rafting due to lack of the water volume needed for such activities. The trail along Pine Creek could be an opportunity for a one or two day overnight backpacking trip depending on the desire of the individual. The entire length of the area (barely five miles) limits the hiker to a very short day of recreation. One-day round trips, starting from either end of the review area, would be limited to 10 miles, a rather short day for the dedicated backpacker or hiker.

Location, remoteness, and access to the review area provide little challenge to the more dedicated recreationist.

f. Special Features

The majority of old-growth timber in the area is currently part of the Forest's old growth management system. No Threatened or Endangered Species are known to occur in the area; however, there are potential bald eagle winter roosts near the southern one-fourth of the area. A Sensitive plant species may exist in this area; however, no Sensitive plant surveys have been completed for the Pine Creek drainage.

There are no known opportunities for historical, educational, or scientific studies. No surveyed historical or cultural sites exist. This area was formerly included in the Paiute Indian Reservation. It was also a migration route for tribes between the winter and summer camps. The probability of cultural sites is very high.

**3. Availability
for Wilderness**

**a. Resource
Potentials**

The area currently provides roaded natural, semiprimitive motorized, and semiprimitive nonmotorized recreation opportunities. The area is capable of providing 5,145 Recreation Visitor Days per year. (See Table C-4.)

There are 3,000 acres of forested land tentatively suitable for timber management activities. These stands are predominantly ponderosa pine with some mixed conifer. They are multistoried stands with an average overstory age of 150 years and an average understory age of 75 years. The standing volume amounts to 25.9 million board feet (4.52 million cubic feet). With the use of intensive timber management techniques, 144 thousand cubic feet (824 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 171 thousand cubic feet per year.

No zones of alteration or mineralization were discovered by Bureau of Mines and U S Geological Survey studies, and those agencies concluded that the area had low potential for locatable minerals. There are no mining claims within the area. The U S. Geological Survey does consider the entire area to be prospectively valuable for oil and gas and the southern half of the area to be prospectively valuable for geothermal resources. There are nine sections under oil and gas leases.

b Management Considerations

There have been four small fires in the last 10 years. Natural fuel loading in the area should be less than 10 tons per acre. Very little logging has taken place within the area and only light fuels (grass and sagebrush) cover large expanses of the review area.

The area contains many pine snags which have been killed by western pine beetle. Much of the Douglas-fir is infected with dwarf-mistletoe. On the drier soils, the infection is quite severe.

There are no special-use permits or other special land-use authorizations in the area. The closest other land use is the electronic site on Craft Point (1/4 mile outside the present Pine Creek area boundary). This permit authorizes Pacific Northwest Bell to use the area for a microwave telephone reflector. This reflector can be seen from much of the southern portion of the area.

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

4. Wilderness Evaluation

The Strawberry Mountain Wilderness is 30 miles north, Monument Rock Wilderness is 45 miles northeast, North Fork John Day Wilderness is 75 miles northeast, and Black Canyon Wilderness is 70 miles northwest. The ecosystems of the Pine Creek area are represented to some degree in the Black Canyon Wilderness.

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

In recent Forest planning public involvement activities, this area received a low level of interest. The comments received were in a ratio of 2:4 comments opposed to wilderness designation for every 1 favoring it.

The primary reasons favoring wilderness for this area were to protect wildlife habitat and the natural appearance of the creek canyon.

The reasons opposed to wilderness were that the area lacked opportunities for solitary, primitive recreation in a natural wilderness setting and a stated preference to manage the area as roadless.

5. Environmental Consequences

Table C-21 displays the various management area assignments for the area by alternative.

a. Vegetation/Trees Significant changes in tree sizes, stand density, and composition are expected in the first decade for Alternatives B-Modified and I in which timber stands in this area would be harvested and change the area to a managed forest appearance. These changes would not occur until the second decade under Alternative F. Old growth would be retained on 900 acres for Alternatives F and I. Alternative A may contain additional old growth within the Semi-Primitive Motorized Management Area. In Alternative B-Modified, 600 acres of old growth will be retained at the management requirement level (minimum viable population level).

Alternatives A, C-Modified, and NC would not result in harvest of the suitable forested acres. These tree stands would progress through natural successional cycles and add to the 600 acres of old growth available.

b. Vegetation/Grass and Shrubs The greatest change in forage for livestock and wildlife would occur in those alternatives with timber harvest activities. Grasses, forbs, and shrubs would increase as openings in tree canopies occur and tree stands are thinned. Seeding of introduced forage species would provide higher quality and quantity of palatable plants. Native forage species would increase in vigor and density as timber harvest activities occur. Changes as the result of Alternative F would not occur until the beginning of the second decade. In Alternatives A, C-Modified, and NC, no timber harvest will occur and little change in vegetation will result.

c. Wilderness Timber harvest activities and road construction will virtually eliminate the area from wilderness consideration in Alternatives B-Modified, F, and I. Future wilderness consideration would remain possible under Alternatives A, C-Modified, F, and NC for the first decade, and for Alternatives A and NC after the first decade of the planning period. This area is recommended for wilderness designation in Alternative C-Modified.

d. Recreation The future recreation opportunity will be from roaded modified in Alternatives B-Modified and I, and, after the first decade, Alternative F. Semiprimitive nonmotorized recreation opportunities will be provided in Alternatives A and NC, and after the first decade in Alternative F. Within a roaded modified setting, the effects would be increased vehicle use including off-road vehicles along Pine Creek Trail. Visitors would also be likely to see vehicles on access roads along the canyon rims. Within the semiprimitive nonmotorized and wilderness settings, users would experience natural surroundings without motorized intrusions. The major recreation attractions of hunting and fishing would remain unchanged.

e. Scenery Because the area is 60 percent forested, the greatest effect would be in those alternatives which allow timber harvest activities (Alternatives B-Modified, F, and I). In these alternatives, the viewer would see a managed forest appearance, fewer old growth trees, more access roads, and more human influences. In Alternative F, effects on visual resource quality would not occur until the beginning of the second decade. In Alternatives A, C-Modified, and NC, the present scenery would remain unchanged.

- f. **Wildlife** Effects on old growth and snags are greatest in those alternatives which allow timber harvest. Alternatives B-Modified, C-Modified, F, and I would retain 900 acres of old growth ; in alternatives with timber harvest (Alternatives B-Modified, F, and I), only that amount will be retained. Although present levels of old growth and snags will decrease in these alternatives, habitat needs of wildlife species will be met through the application of standards. All of the area is included within elk winter range. In those alternatives which allow timber harvest, hiding and thermal cover will decrease while forage will increase. Under Alternative F, old growth, snags, and thermal cover will decrease and forage will increase after the first decade.
- g. **Water, Riparian, Fisheries** Pine Creek is the only year-round stream in the area. All alternatives will protect this resource through standards. Increased accessibility and use will occur with road construction. In alternatives allowing timber harvest (Alternatives B-Modified, F, and I) these changes will occur in the first decade, in Alternative F, after the first decade.
- h. **Cultural Resources** All alternatives will protect cultural resources through the application of management standards. The alternatives which allow timber harvest (Alternatives B-Modified, F, and I) have the greatest risk of inadvertent damage to the resource as well as the greatest opportunity for discovery of the resource. These risks and opportunities would not occur under Alternative F until the beginning of the second decade.
- i. **Soils** All alternatives will protect the soil resource through application of management standards. The alternatives which allow timber harvest (Alternatives B-Modified, F, and I) have the greatest risk of inadvertent damage to the resource. This risk would not occur under Alternative F until the beginning of the second decade.

TABLE C-21
PINE CREEK MANAGEMENT BY ALTERNATIVE

Management Area	NC ^{1/}	Alternatives				
		A	B-Mod	C-Mod	F	I-Preferred
1 General Forest	N/A	10	1,686			
2 Rangeland	N/A	7	2,014			
3 Riparian Areas	N/A	1	23		21	21
4A Big-Game Winter Range					3,296	3,296
4B. Big-Game Winter Range enhancement						
5 Bald Eagle Winter Roost	N/A		906		906	906
6A Strawberry Mountain Wilderness						
6B. Monument Rock Wilderness						
6C Pine Creek				5,420		
7 Scenic Area						
8. Special Interest Area						
9. Research Natural Area						
10 Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	N/A	5,400				
11 Semi-Primitive Motorized						
12. Developed Recreation						
13 Old Growth	N/A		600		900	900
14. Visual Corridors						
15 Unit Plan Wildlife Emphasis Areas						
16 Minimum Level Management	N/A	2	191		297	297
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	5,420	5,420	5,420	5,420	5,420

^{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.