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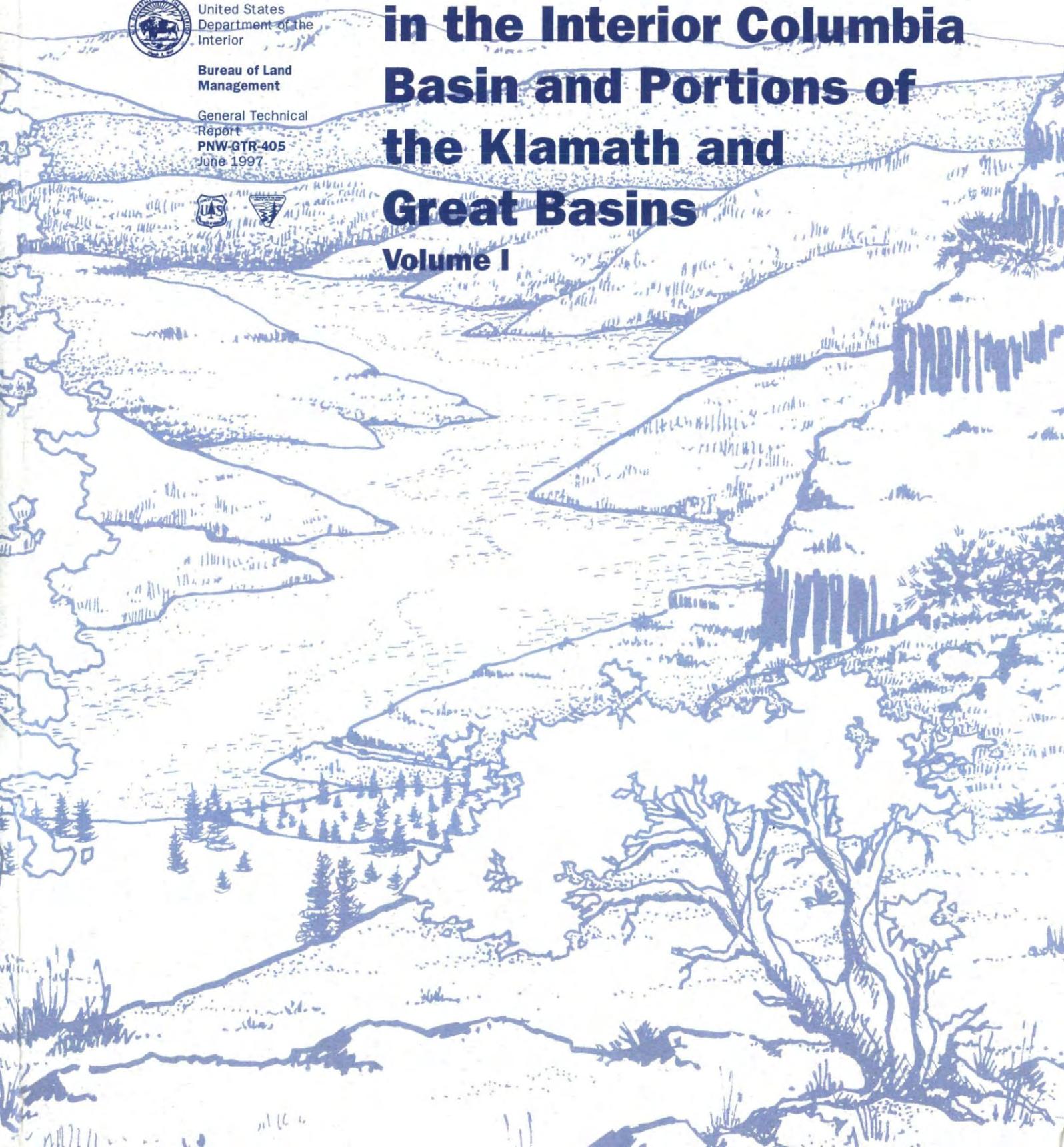
**Bureau of Land
Management**

General Technical
Report
PNW-GTR-405
June 1997



An Assessment of Ecosystem Components in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins

Volume I





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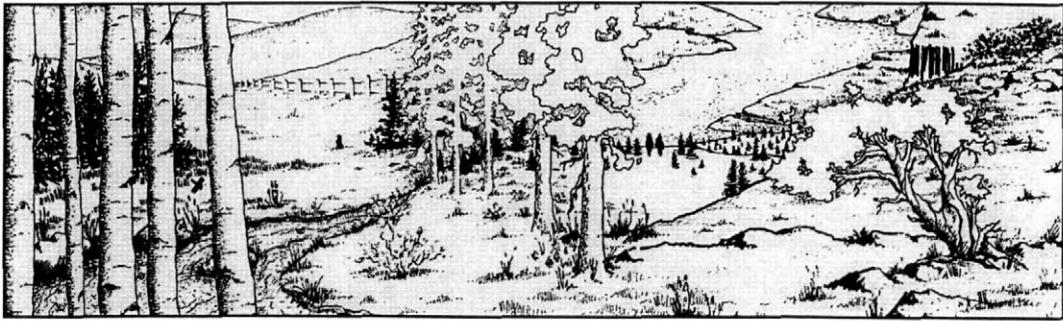


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Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project

This is not a NEPA decision document



An Assessment of Ecosystem Components in the Interior Columbia Basin

And Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins: Volume I

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Volume I contains pages 1 through 335

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June 1997
United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Research Station
Portland, Oregon

Abstract

Quigley, Thomas M.; Arbelbide, Sylvia J., tech. eds. 1997. An assessment of ecosystem components in the interior Columbia basin and portions of the Klamath and Great Basins: volume 1. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-405. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. 4 vol. (Quigley, Thomas M., tech. ed.; The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment).

The Assessment of Ecosystem Components in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins provides detailed information about current conditions and trends for the biophysical and social systems within the Basin. This information can be used by land managers to develop broad land management goals and priorities and provides the context for decisions specific to smaller geographic areas. The Assessment area covers about 8 percent of the U.S. land area, 24 percent of the Nation's National Forest System lands, 10 percent of the Nation's BLM-administered lands, and contains about 1.2 percent of the Nation's population. This results in a population density that is less than one-sixth of the U.S. average. The area has experienced recent, rapid population growth and generally has a robust, diverse economy. As compared to historic conditions, the terrestrial, aquatic, forest, and rangeland systems have undergone dramatic changes. Forested landscapes are more susceptible to fire, insect, and disease than under historic conditions. Rangelands are highly susceptible to noxious weed invasion. The disturbance regimes that operate on forest and rangeland have changed substantially, with lethal fires dominating many areas where non-lethal fires were the norm historically. Terrestrial habitats that have experienced the greatest decline include the native grassland, native shrubland, and old forest structures. There are areas within the Assessment area that have higher diversity than others. Aquatic systems are now more fragmented and isolated than historically and the introduction of non-native fish species has complicated current status of native fishes. Core habitat and population centers do remain as building blocks for restoration. Social and economic conditions within the Assessment area vary considerably, depending to a great extent on population, diversity of employment opportunities, and changing demographics. Those counties with the higher population densities and greater diversity of employment opportunities are generally more resilient to economic downturns. This Assessment provides a rich information base, including over 170 mapped themes with associated models and databases, from which future decisions can benefit.

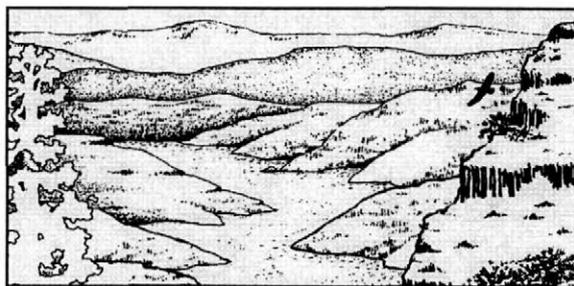
Keywords: Columbia basin, biophysical systems, social systems, ecosystem.

Preface

This document represents a substantial portion of the work of the Science Integration Team (SIT) of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP). This product results from the efforts of literally hundreds of scientists and technical specialists. The SIT provided leadership to the entire effort that took more than three years to complete. Summaries of the work and synthesis products, *An Integrated Assessment of the Interior Columbia Basin and portions of the Klamath and Great Basins* and *Status of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project Summary of Scientific Findings*, appeared before the formal publication of this document. Combined, these pieces constitute the Scientific Assessment of the Interior Columbia Basin and portions of the Klamath and Great Basins. The Assessment benefitted greatly by interactions with the ICBEMP Environmental Impact Statement Team members and Project Leaders. The open process undertaken through this effort represented a first for such a scientific endeavor. We learned a great deal from the many individuals and groups who took interest in and participated in the many open meetings and presentations held. The products are better because of this openness.

The leadership of Charlie Philpot, Denver Burns, and particularly Tom Mills during the closing months of the process, helped the SIT through the significant internal and external political process that surrounded the ICBEMP process and products. We recognize that existence of the document is a result of Jodi Clifford's efforts and persistence in organizing, coordinating, and editing.

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Acknowledgments

Literally hundreds of individuals have contributed to this publication. We thank all those who contributed to any portion of the overall Assessment effort. Individual chapters have included acknowledgments specific to that component of the Assessment. Editing and assembly of these chapters has been an enormous effort. Jodi Clifford, Liz Galli-Noble, Kathy Helm, Lynn Starr, Ann Marie Walker, Shari Whitwell, Lisa Meabon, Mary Carr, Ellen Eberhardt, Laurienne Riley, Tracy Noel, Cindy Dean, Heidi Bigler Cole, Kathy Campbell, Connie Gilbreath, Eloisa Munden, Dan Mayer, Minnie Williams, Kelly Wenzlick, Krista McHugh, and Berna MacIntosh have all contributed to this task. Irene Stumpf and Shari Whitwell created or edited many of the graphics. Traci McMerritt provided the cover design. Managing data, maps, tables, and databases for the Assessment was the specific responsibility of the Spatial Analysis Team: Becky Gravenmier, Terry Locke, Arthur Miller, Andy Wilson, Thang Lam, Dave Gilde, Mike Dana, Cary Lorimor, and Dora DeCoursey. Undoubtedly, we have failed to recognize many who made significant contributions to the Assessment, we apologize for any oversights.