

# Hells Canyon Oregon Scenic Byway



## Corridor Management Plan

January 2004

**HELLS CANYON ALL AMERICAN ROAD NOMINATION  
CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. Document Synopsis

This management guide is a framework for development of the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway System. It does not identify specific sites for construction projects but it provides a strategy which becomes the boundary for all applicable decision making. The process of producing this guide went through a great deal of deliberation when it was formulated in 1993 for the proposal to designate this route as a USFS National Scenic Byway. The document was updated for the nomination as a National Scenic Byway All-American Road. The byway was designated an All-American Road in June, 2000. The most recent update has been accomplished as a result of a deliverable within the FWHA Seed Grant awarded to Eastern Oregon Visitors Association in 2003 administered by EOVA.

Essentially, all of Northeastern Oregon is accessed by this byway. Significance of the area was determined through analysis of an extensive existing condition inventory and through outreach to the public. To qualify as an All-American Road, the highest scenic route designation available through the Federal Highways Administration, an argument was made for the national significance of the byway's intrinsic qualities.

An issue which arose at the outset of establishing this route as a scenic byway was whether increased tourism was desirable or not. Baker County's focus is on tourism as a chief economic strategy. Union County is in agreement about the importance of tourism as a part of their diversified economy. Both of these counties are located on an Interstate freeway. Wallowa County, with dependence on natural resources, is concerned about the health of their economic base and whether they will be able to support the necessary infrastructure for increased tourism. Fear of tourist development changing the character and lifestyle of the county is also a concern. However, over the last eight years, tourism has received more attention in general by the populace and the county government. There is strong agreement in all three counties about wanting to retain the character of Northeastern Oregon. Targeting visitors who appreciate that character is important.

The route includes spectacular typography, natural history, and cultural heritage. Part of that heritage is a romantic attachment to the "Old West," as seen in the ranching lifestyle along the route. Although frequently under attack from some factions and diminishing in number, ranches in northeast Oregon generally exhibit a strong land and livestock ethic. Ranchers recognize the need to continually seek improved methods of managing their operations for optimal longevity and production. The large tracts of farm, ranch and range lands contribute significantly to the scenic quality of the byway. The scenic byway provides an opportunity to preserve this historic legacy by focusing on its value and by being sensitive to the kind of development that occurs in this large landscape.

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **1. Purpose of the Scenic Byway**

The Hells Canyon National Scenic Byway is a system of roads that have been popular tour routes in northeastern Oregon for visitors as well as local people for decades. Outstanding scenery and recreational opportunities are accessed from this 224 mile route. Hells Canyon, the deepest fresh water gorge in the world, and the Wallowa Mountains, sometimes referred to as the "Alps of North America," offer spectacular scenery with diverse landscapes that range from valley meadows and farmland to sage-covered hills, rugged canyon lands to alpine terrain.

Showcasing this special area prompted designation of the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway on April 4, 1992 by Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson. The expanded route received designation as an Oregon Scenic Byway in 1996 and reached status as a FHWA National Scenic Byway, All-American Road in June, 2000. Meeting the needs of recreation users and adjacent communities has been the Forest Service management direction for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest portions of the route. Communities along the byway have traditionally relied on a natural resource based economy. As commodity resources become more scarce, communities turned to tourism to help diversify their economic base. While many residents recognize the potential benefit from increased tourism, they want to control tourism development in ways that protect their rural lifestyle and the qualities that make northeast Oregon a great place to live as well as to visit. Close coordination with communities and businesses along the byway will provide a means of local control over the tourism development.

An increase in traffic has already been felt in communities along the byway due to improvements that have taken place along the route and cooperative marketing of the byway and the region. Support has been received from county and city governments, Union, Baker and Wallowa County designation marketing organizations (Union County Tourism, Baker County Chamber & Visitor Center and the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce), and Eastern Oregon Visitors Association. Extensive support has also been given by the Oregon State Departments of Transportation, Oregon Tourism Commission, Oregon State Parks Department and the United States Forest Service. Residents, businesses, land and road jurisdiction agencies, along with other proponents have expressed a desire to participate in steering development of the opportunities along the byway, and have formed the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee – A sub-committee of Eastern Oregon Visitors Association. All have a vested interest in development and maintenance of the associated facilities and services. The Forest Service and the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association have taken the lead in the planning effort to bring together the many interests, to propose facilities and services with the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee that will provide for the needs of visitors and assist in economic diversification of local economies. This effort is consistent with the Pacific Northwest Strategy, a regional effort of the Forest Service to form partnerships focused on helping resource-dependent communities prepare for and achieve their desired futures. The commissioners of the three counties through which the byway passes have agreed to support this strategy.

## **2. Location**

Hells Canyon Scenic Byway is located in Wallowa, Union, and Baker Counties. It travels around the Wallowa Mountains and to Hells Canyon, touted as the deepest fresh water gorge in the world. Hells Canyon is formed by the Snake River, a tributary of the Columbia River, and delineates the state border between northeast Oregon and Idaho.

One end of the byway leaves Interstate 84 at Baker City on OR State Highway 86, travels through ranching country and the small towns of Richland and Halfway. Ten miles from Halfway, Forest Road 39 (Wallowa Mountain Loop Road) heads north as the main route. A side trip from the byway travels 23 miles from this junction on Hwy. 86 to Oxbow, across the reservoir onto Idaho Power Road 454, to Hells Canyon Dam and to Hells Canyon Creek Recreation Site on Forest Road 3810. This is the entrance to Hells Canyon and the Wild and Scenic Snake River.

Back on Hwy. 86 at the junction, Forest Road 39 heads north onto National Forest land. The route travels through the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, skirting the Eagle Cap Wilderness to the west, until it meets state Highway 350 in the Wallowa Valley. Along this route several side trips leave the main route, providing access to numerous recreation sites. Forest Road 3965 is a two mile paved road that provides access to the Hells Canyon Overlook, a scenic viewpoint with extraordinary vistas of the McGraw drainage and canyon country.

At the Imnaha River, another side trip on Forest Service Road 3955 leaves the byway and heads down the Imnaha Canyon and turns into County Road 727, passing cattle ranches on the way to the town of Imnaha 30 miles away. Here, Forest Road 4240 turns up for 23 miles to Hat point. There is almost a 5000 foot elevation gain from Imnaha to Hat Point with views and facilities along the way. Hat Point is located on the rim of Hells Canyon at an elevation of 6942 feet and provides visitors with a panoramic view of the canyon, the Snake River one mile below, and across to the Seven Devil Mountains on the Idaho side of the river. Hat Point has a rustic campground and a 90' tall lookout tower. Drivers on this side trip can return to Imnaha, then rejoin the byway by driving State Highway 350 from Imnaha to Joseph.

On the main route of the byway, Forest Service Road 39 makes a junction with State Highway 350 and heads west to a junction with Hwy 82 at the town of Joseph. A short side trip south on Hwy 82 takes the visitor to Wallowa Lake and the grave site of old Chief Joseph. Wallowa Lake is nestled at the base near the town of Joseph. This byway spur follows the east edge of the glacier formed lake to the Wallowa Lake State Park and the resort area at the south end of the lake. Following Hwy 82 northwest, the small communities of Joseph, Enterprise, Lostine, and Wallowa are located at the base of the Wallowa Mountains to the south, and vast prairie lands to the north. Here, majestic views of the mountains and valley meadows are dazzling. Information is available at the USFS Wallowa Mountains Visitor Center in Enterprise on the many recreational opportunities in this area. Hwy. 82 winds through the Wallowa Canyon, climbs over the Minam Grade, and passes through the fertile farmlands of the the communities of Elgin, Imbler, Island City and the Grande Ronde Valley before reaching La Grande and reconnecting with Interstate 84.

**(May also want to include reference to HWY 3 as side trip to Chief Joseph Overlook, Napooyee Trail)** Few of the native people, the Nez Perce, have lived in the Wallowa Valley for nearly 120 years. Today, residents of the little town of Wallowa and the Nez Perce are working together to build the Wallowa Band Nez Perce Trail Interpretive Center. A short side trip departing Hwy. 82 at Enterprise, north on Hwy. 3 towards the boomtown of Flora, will take visitors to the dynamic Joseph Canyon Overlook. This was a winter camp site for the Nez Perce, and said to be the birth place of Young Chief Joseph.

\*Please note: The side trips are described here not for inclusion in the designated byway route, which stands alone in the quality of scenery and natural and historical sites, but because this area is vast and contains exceptional natural wonders that can't be viewed in entirety from the route alone. For people wanting to explore the region, the byway serves as the link to these remarkable opportunities to see and experience nature at its most beautiful and dramatic. It is this tremendous natural and scenic environment that makes the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway a destination that can be enjoyed in a long day or explored extensively for an extended period of time.

### **3. Vision**

The land and the people who live in Northeastern Oregon have a story. Throughout the centuries humans have found ways to make their homes in this beautiful and sometimes challenging setting. The Hells Canyon Scenic Byway travels through a remote and rugged region; a place of extremes where the landforms have been the driving force behind the cultural and natural history. The byway furnishes the opportunity to tell this story.

The byway provides safe access to Hells Canyon and around the Wallowa Mountains on a double-lane paved highway through exceptionally scenic country. The route consists of a loop that leaves I-84 at Baker City, encircles the Wallowa Mountains and intersects again with I-84 at La Grande. The scenic drive provides the basis for interpretation that explains the relationship between our cultural heritage and the natural environment. Interpretation is more than a sequence of signs. The written interpretative message is complimented by physical communication that includes road quality, facility maintenance, vegetation management and water quality. How we care for our natural environment, balancing enjoyment and use with longevity and health, foretells the future of this magnificent place.

There are four entry points or portals to the byway. Two are on I-84, one in Enterprise **on Oregon Highway 3** from Lewiston, Idaho in the north, and one at Copperfield, Idaho, **on Highway 71** from the east. These portals will have general information and interpretation about the entire byway experience. From the portals, the route travels through a landscape of changing character. The landforms dictate the variety of experiences found along the route. The 224 mile byway has seven elements which affect each portion of the route: entry portals, signing, interpretation, recreation facilities, scenery, public safety, services and sanitation, and the transportation system. These combined elements create the holistic interpretation of the route. Experiencing the byway will provide people with an understanding of man's use of the land and water from prehistoric times to modern day multiple use. Society has grown, and so have our needs, but the fact that we depend upon the land to sustain us remains much the same.

The purpose of the National Scenic Byway System is to showcase outstanding scenery and to stimulate local economies with tourism. This byway route has been used for years by residents and for destination oriented visitors. The market for expansion is the I-84 traveler or those who are driving for pleasure and have the time to explore the area. Awareness of Hells Canyon and the Wallowa Mountains has increased through regional, national, and international marketing efforts. Numerous articles have been written and several books feature photographs and stories about the byway area. Visitor numbers are increasing and some impacts have been felt.

High quality customer service along the route is essential to providing an experience that visitors will remember. The byway creates opportunities for an increased understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of the area. Visitors will learn that wise land management is critical to meeting the needs of people and society, as is conserving natural processes, biological resources and genetic diversity, and preserving history. Through their Hells Canyon Scenic Byway experience, visitors will develop wise land ethics and a respect for the land, and the people who make their homes here.

### **Goals and Objectives of the Byway:**

- Goal I Showcase the unique, diverse and outstanding scenery in Northeast Oregon.
- a) Apply the scenic quality objectives within public land management actions.
  - b) Complete a viewshed management plan for the byway.
  - c) Work with the county and state highway departments to help capture and maintain the characteristic landscape on the byway.
  - d) Develop a Interpretation Plan that will identify site specific construction projects that will be funded through the Forest Service capital investment program, city, county, and state funding, and Federal Highways Administration funding.
- Goal II Stimulate the local economies of Northeast Oregon in all seasons.
- a) Market the visitor experiences and seasonal opportunities found along the Byway through brochures, promotional materials and advertising.
  - b) Promote seasonal opportunities for small businesses to operate on National Forest land
  - c) Help promote private sector development of facilities and businesses on private land, ie. RV dump stations, farm-based guest houses or bed & breakfast facilities, and encourage the promotion of locally grown products and art.
- Goal III Upgrade and improve public land facilities.
- a) Repair or replace inadequate water and sanitation facilities at campgrounds and waysides.
  - b) Conduct analysis of projected user camping methods (RV, tent, dispersed camping).
- 1) Determine what facilities the agencies need to provide and what the private sector needs to provide.
  - 2) **Coordinate with state highway department to determine highway accessibility.**
  - 3) Construct facilities to meet the demand from the analysis.
  - 4) Encourage construction on private land to help meet the demand.
  - 5) Ensure that long-term maintenance of facilities is included in planning.
- c) Cooperate with the state highway department directional signing

program for identification, intersection, natural feature and town entry signs. Themes and design of the interpretive signs will be suggested by the Architectural Design Guide for the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway, and by consensus gained by the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee in developing the Interpretive Plan for Hells Canyon All-American Road.

Goal IV Maintain the remote and rugged character significant of the rural lifestyle.

- a) Set development and architectural guidelines for the built environment on public lands along the byway to meet the existing rustic character.
- b) Visual quality will dictate road design **consistent with State/ASHTO standards.**
- c) Encourage cities and counties to set, through zoning regulations, similar suggested standards on private land.
- d) Market the entire byway to potential visitors and special interest groups, through development and distribution of brochures, website maintenance, story idea distribution, and advertising.

Goal V Develop the byway around the interpretive themes.

- a) Develop an Interpretive Plan which identifies themes, suggests sites, possible designs, budgets – including contributors, establishes timelines, and shows a maintenance schedule.
- b) The management Strategy addresses these objectives.  
(repeat management strategy here)

### **Intrinsic Qualities and Context Statement**

The **Scenic** quality of the route is of national significance and is truly outstanding from any point of byway. The landscape through which the byway passes is highly diverse, giving visitors the opportunity to view upland range that is covered with sage brush and bunch grasses, lush valleys, Wild and Scenic rivers, dramatic basalt formations, thick forests of pine and mixed conifers, and magnificent peaks that tower to nearly 10,000 feet. In addition, several man-made elements add to the scenic quality in the form of historic barns, homes, churches, and commercial buildings.

Diverse and extreme land forms make the route of national **Natural** significance. The Wallowa Mountains are some of the oldest and most dramatic mountains in the northwest. Once the coastline of what is now Oregon and Washington, the mountains were formed by tectonic plate movement. Much later, fissures in the earth's crust were the source of lava that spread across the Columbia River Basin in thick layers which later buckled and folded. The Snake, Grande Ronde, and Imnaha Rivers carved deep canyons through the uplifting basalt to form some of the most extraordinary canyon country anywhere. Glaciers further carved and sculpted moraines and lakes **such as Wallow Lake.**

The **Historical** importance of the area encompassed by the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway is of national significance. The Wallowa Valley was the home of the Nez Perce, famous for their attempted escape toward Canada under the leadership of Chief Joseph. The Powder River and Grande Ronde Valleys were important emigrant stops on the Historic Oregon Trail beginning in 1843. The discovery of gold in the Blue and Wallowa Mountains in the eighteen-sixties brought a major influx of miners and settlers into the region. The area later became a major transportation corridor for trains, trucks and automobiles.

Outstanding opportunities for recreation along and adjacent to the byway make the **Recreational** qualities of regional significance. With elevation changes of over 6,000 feet and landscapes that include semi-arid

range lands, a major river and many small rivers and streams, alpine and forested areas that include the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and the Eagle Cap Wilderness, a large **glacial** lake, the byway offers a huge array of outdoor recreation pursuits. Most small communities along the byway offer historical and cultural activities and attractions.

### **Route Description**

Although the route can be driven beginning from **any** portal point, for the purposes of this application, discussions of the route will assume the driver is beginning from Baker City and traveling to the east, north, then west, ending in La Grande.

Baker City grew up in the latter part of the nineteenth century as a result of the discovery of gold in the Elkhorn Ridge of the Blue Mountains (a.k.a. the Elkhorns) and the Wallowa Mountains. The city has a national historic district that is filled with beautifully restored commercial buildings and homes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Baker City is located at the southern edge of the large Powder River Valley, with the peaks of the Elkhorns to the west and the magnificent Wallowa Mountains to the northeast. The valley is comprised of large cattle ranches, with hay fields and pastures, historic barns and homes, dotting the valley floor. Cattle and horses are commonly seen throughout the year. A wide array of available outdoor recreation and the community's historical significance as a mining town and point on the Oregon Trail have led to a focus on tourism. The National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center is an important first stop when driving the scenic byway and is located just five miles out of Baker City on Flagstaff Hill.

Rising out of the Powder Valley, the route passes into the upland range country; rolling, sage covered hills, dissected by willow edged streams and smaller grassy valleys. The numerous ranches are served by the small, friendly communities of Richland and Halfway. The drive heads toward the snowcapped peaks of the Wallowa Mountains, which loom larger and larger upon approach. Eagle Creek, a Wild & Scenic River, is born in the snow drifts high in the Wallowas and reaches the Eagle Valley crystal clear and icy cold. After reaching the Eagle Valley, at the base of the Wallowas, drivers can choose a short side trip to the shores of the Snake River. Over time, the Snake has carved its passage through uplifting basalt cliffs, forming Hells Canyon. From the top of the Seven Devils Mountains on its eastern rim to the roaring rapids below, Hells Canyon is the deepest fresh water canyon in the world. Brownlee, Oxbow, and Hells Canyon Dams, on the upper end of Hells Canyon, have formed huge lakes that are popular for boating, fishing, water skiing, and camping. Below the lower dam, the water is free, deep, and turbulent, making excellent rapids for rafting and jet boating.

The scenic byway climbs rapidly out of this highly scenic area into the timbered slopes of the Wallowa Mountains. The road journeys in and out of the mixed conifer forests, from cool, shaded north-facing slopes to sunny, open south-facing. A two mile, paved side trip to the Hells Canyon Overlook provides wide vistas of open ridges and forested draws that seem to lead forever into the distance. The magnificent country through which the route ventures forms the transition between canyon lands and alpine forests. The route climbs around the Wallowa Mountains, which are frequently referred to as the Alps of North America. Wildlife is prevalent along the entire route. Drivers should watch for Rocky Mountain elk, mule and white-tail deer, pronghorn antelope, coyotes, bighorn sheep, golden and bald eagles, great blue heron, and a huge variety of small mammals, waterfowl and songbirds. Cougar are increasing in number and permit rare spotting for a lucky few. Mountain goats and black bear can be seen occasionally by people exploring from just off the route.

After climbing over the Wallawas and skirting the Eagle Cap Wilderness, the route drops down into the legendary Wallowa Valley, home of the elder and younger Chiefs Joseph and the Nez Perce Indians. Following two small creek drainages, the route enters the broad and grassy valley, passing several picturesque ranches. Scenic highlights are green pastures, often with cattle and horses, red barns, and towering snow-capped peaks in the background. A favorite with photographers, these scenes have been featured on the cover of the Official Oregon Travel Guide, in numerous national and regional magazines and calendars, and served as the major setting for the mid-nineties movie, *Homeward Bound*.

Joseph is a small community that has developed a huge reputation for art in general and bronze sculpture in particular. The town has three foundries, numerous galleries, an outstanding Native American museum, and a wide variety of high quality shops and restaurants. Next to the city of Joseph and just one mile off the main route of the byway, Wallowa Lake is glacier-formed and flanked by two moraines. This magnificent 5 mile long lake lies at the base of peaks that reach to nearly 10,000' and never lose their snowy caps. The glacier action that formed Wallowa Lake also sculpted the ragged Wallowa peaks, from what would have otherwise been gently rounded tops. At the south end of the lake, visitors will find a popular state park, historic lodge, marina, recreational facilities, and the tramway with the longest single-span in the United States. From trails at the top of the tramway on Mt. Howard, the extraordinary views each into three states. **These trail heads are also accessible from Wallowa Lake State Park.**

The green Wallowa Valley is known for its pastoral scenes and the friendly small communities that serve locals and visitors. The Wallowa Mountains rise 6,000 feet above the valley floor. A Clydesdale draft horse ranch provides another popular photo opportunity, with picturesque historic white barns and verdant meadows forming the setting for the gentle black and white giants. Winding through the valley, the route follows the general path of the Wallowa River and passes through Enterprise, Lostine, and Wallowa before entering the narrow Wallowa and Minam Canyons. Rugged basalt cliffs and a mix of timbered and open faced ridges rise above the sparkling waters of the Wallowa River following it to its confluence with the Wild and Scenic Minam River and on to where it flows into the Grande Ronde River. Many exciting rafting and fishing trips begin at the Minam Boat Launch and continue on to the Grande Ronde and eventually the Snake.

After Minam, the route takes a steep climb up the Minam Grade, then passes through the pastoral Cricket Fat area before dropping into the logging and ranch community of Elgin. Elgin boasts the Historic Elgin Opera House, where visitors can tour and enjoy movies, concerts, and plays on a regular basis. A new RV park and rafting launch is set on the banks of the Grande Ronde at Elgin. A railroad follows portions of the route from Joseph to Elgin. An excursion train offers trips through some of Oregon's most scenic country.

From Elgin to La Grande, the byway passes through Imbler, called the Grass Seed Capital of the World, and crosses the Grande Ronde Valley. This is highly productive farm land and the commercial crops grown on the valley floor and slopes include cherries, apples, mint, alfalfa, wheat, grass seed, sugar beets, and potatoes. Livestock include cattle, sheep, horses, llamas, emus, even miniature donkeys. The twenty-mile long valley is completely surrounded by mountains, and while comparatively temperate in the valley most of the time, winter storms sometimes force travelers to stay in La Grande until the inclement weather passes.

Set on the lower eastern slopes of the Blue Mountains, La Grande is the picturesque home of Eastern Oregon University, Oregon's only full university east of the Cascade Mountains. The University provides concerts, plays, and a variety of cultural events and amenities not often found in a community of its size.

During the mid nineteenth century, immigrants traveling the Oregon Trail used the site of Birnie Park in La Grande as a place to camp and rest up before climbing the Blue Mountains, often referred to in pioneer journals as the most difficult portion of the trip *and* the most scenic. A pretty town, with tree-lined streets and parks, La Grande is a regional center for commerce, education, health care, transportation and government.

### **Intrinsic Quality Assessment, Management and Development Strategies**

The Wallowa Whitman National Forest, Hells Canyon Recreation Area, Union County, Wallowa County, Baker County and the Bureau of Land Management each have a primary responsibility to identify, evaluate, protect, document, manage and review land use plans for their jurisdiction along the route. County planning staff, road departments staff, US Forest Service staff, Bureau of Land Management staff and transportation advocates all play a role in monitoring, developing and managing land use.

On-going public participation in the implementation of the corridor management objectives will be achieved primarily through the public participation process of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Oregon Department of Transportation, Bureau of Land Management, the governing counties of Baker, Union & Wallowa, the cities of Baker City, Richland, Halfway, Oxbow, Joseph, Wallowa, Lostine, Enterprise, Elgin, Imbler and La Grande and the Eastern Oregon Visitor Association. The agencies listed above have processes that provide ample opportunity for interested citizens to comment on proposed plans and projects. The larger the proposed action the greater the amount of analysis and public involvement. Proposed new and revised plans have the most analysis and public involvement, major and minor projects a lesser amount.

Proposals for new or revised plans for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, the Bureau of Land Management and county planning departments have extensive analysis and public hearing involvement. The process typically begins with a scoping meeting open to the general public. A citizen task force or advisory committee representing key stakeholders may also be formed. The task force could include business and property owners along the byway. As a plan develops, additional workshops may be held which are open to the general public. Proposals usually require the preparation of a formal Environmental Impact Statement depending upon the magnitude of the anticipated impact of the proposed action. The statement is circulated for public review and comment. Final plans must include a discussion of how public comments are addressed in the plan.

Proposals for major projects also have an extensive public involvement and analysis process. There may be public meetings and open houses. Key stakeholders are identified through responses to mailings and targeted for involvement and by the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee. Environmental analysis for major projects is in the form of an Environmental Assessment, which is circulated for public comment.

Minor projects, such as burying a power line, have public involvement and analysis. There is written public notice and an effort to identify and involve key stakeholders, such as adjacent property owners. Surveys are done to identify potential impacts on plants, animals and cultural remains.

### **□ Responsibility Schedule**

#### **Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee**

Activities associated with the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway are guided by a committee that is comprised of representatives from each of the land management and road jurisdiction agencies, each county's destination marketing organization, each community through which the byway passes, and and the public

at large. At its formation, any interested person had the opportunity to become directly involved in the committee. The committee developed a structure and operating policies and procedures. The Eastern Oregon Visitors Association contracted a Byway Coordinator to assist and guide the public involvement, communications, byway interpretation and enhancement projects and committee meetings and activities. The byway committee operates as a committee of the EOVA, under its 501 (c) (6) non-profit organization status. (See Attachments: Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee – Policies & Procedures document)

### **Public Involvement**

Public support was generated and input received through public meetings in each county and through a news release which requested public input in the development and updating of this plan. The resulting article was published in the Wallowa County Chieftain, the La Grande Observer, the Baker City Herald, and the Hells Canyon Journal. A steering committee, composed of representatives from each county, was formed to direct decision making in the planning process. This plan was originally developed in 1993 and updated for the National Scenic Byway application process in January, 2000. It was further updated in 2004, after the development, and with the involvement of the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee.

During the process between 1993 and the year 2000, public consensus indicated a focus on the shoulder and winter seasons was desirable to stimulate off-season economies. Retaining the remote and rugged character of the area was the most important issue as that is the feature that attracts visitors to this area and is of the utmost importance to residents. The design and amount of development needs to be sensitive to retaining that desirable characteristic. Residents recognize the potential benefits of tourism but want to protect their rural lifestyle. A theme park or "Disneyland" style of development was not desirable.

In 2004 the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee reiterated the public's desire, by stating that the purpose of the Hells Canyon All-American Road is to promote, preserve, protect, interpret, and enhance the intrinsic qualities of Hells Canyon Scenic Byway showcasing the outstanding scenery and stimulating local economies. To help meet goals associated with this purpose, the Committee formed four working sub-committees: Marketing; Interpretation; Hospitality/Community Ownership; and Grant Development & Finance.

The following information includes the tasks that were performed, the entities responsible and the review schedule in 2004:

#### Intrinsic Quality Assessment, Management and Development Strategies

The Wallowa Whitman National Forest, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, Union County, Wallowa County and Baker County each have a primary responsibility to identify, evaluate, protect, document, manage and review land use plans for their jurisdiction along the route. County planning staff, road departments staff, forest service staff, Bureau of Land Management staff and transportation advocates all play a role in monitoring, developing and managing land use.

Review mechanisms and schedule: Oregon land use laws require counties to do a periodic review of land use plans every ten years. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management conduct periodic high level reviews to determine progress against their goals and objectives. Improvements and protection

projects are assigned priorities and carried out according to an annual work plan and partnership plan each fiscal year.

### Public Participation

In addition to the public participation process of the federal land management agencies, Eastern Oregon Visitor Association has the primary responsibility for maintaining and facilitating a healthy public participation program for the continued input necessary for effective management and development of the byway. With the development of the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee, and its membership structure, county and city governments, land management and road jurisdiction agencies, county destination marketing organizations, local Chambers of Commerce and business organizations, plus local businesses and visitor attractions are included in the activities of the Byway.

Review mechanisms and schedule: The Byway coordinator performs quarterly reviews with the Byway committee. Byway updates have been circulated in the EOVA and Hells Canyon Scenic Byway newsletter and distributed to media sources on a quarterly basis to ensure diverse involvement for the byway.

### Road Review, Highway Design and Maintenance and Commerce Plans

The following entities are responsible for evaluating, reviewing and implementing strategies to ensure that the byway road is designed and maintained for safety and convenience including the needs of bicyclists: Oregon State Police; Baker, Union and Wallowa County sheriffs; Baker, Union and Wallowa County Departments of Public Works; Oregon Department of Transportation; Wallowa Whitman National Forest; Baker, Union and Wallowa County Planning Departments; Baker City, Richland, Halfway, Joseph, Wallowa, Lostine, Enterprise, Elgin, Imbler, Island City and La Grande City Planning Departments.

Review mechanisms and schedule: The road authorities coordinate on a regular basis with law enforcement and the US Forest Service, city and county public works departments to identify and enforce road upgrade and maintenance needs. The Northeast Area Commission on Transportation, of which EOVA – Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee is an ex officio member, assists in coordinating efforts for funding strategies, and cooperatively proposals are developed and projects initiated and managed.

County and city planning departments and economic development departments coordinate on a regular basis to update, evaluate and implement commerce plans.

### Visitor Experience and Interpretation Plans

Eastern Oregon Visitor Association in conjunction with the US Forest Service, Travel Information Council of Oregon, Oregon Department of Transportation, county destination marketing organizations, Oregon Tourism Commission, along with advocacy groups and historical societies have the primary responsibility to evaluate, develop, implement and review strategies for interpretive plans to improve the traveler's experience of the byway.

## **Land Use Planning**

### **Oregon Law**

Oregon is well known for its stringent and comprehensive land use planning laws. The state has been considered a leader in this arena since first implementing its land use laws in the early 1970s. The laws are designed to protect open spaces, agriculture, and other natural resource uses and to prevent urban sprawl.

The Hells Canyon Scenic Byway traverses three counties, Baker, Union, and Wallowa, and passes through twelve communities. The 224 mile route is located on a combination of city/county/state lands. (7%), private (63%), BLM (12%), and National Forest (18%) Federal land management prescriptions for the corridor are found in the Wallowa-Whitman NF management plan, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area management plan, the BLM Vale District plan and the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway management plan.

In general, citizens of the three affected counties are concerned about maintaining their high quality of life and rural style of living. Although there is a great need for further economic diversification, particularly in Wallowa County, residents want some control over the type of development that takes place in order to assure that the qualities that make living and visiting in this remarkable area are not compromised unnecessarily. Each county has a strategic plan that spells out the priorities for economic and community development. This plan is required by state law and is used as a part of the state's funding for economic development and compliance with land use planning. Public participation is an important part of formulating and updating the strategic plans.

Review mechanisms and schedule: Oregon land use laws require counties to do a periodic review of land use plans every ten years. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management conduct periodic high level reviews to determine progress against their goals and objectives. Improvements and protection projects are assigned priorities and carried out according to an annual work and partnership plan each fiscal year

### **Outdoor Advertising Control Compliance**

The portions of the route within the federal jurisdiction, 30%, do not allow outdoor advertising. Baker, Union and Wallowa counties sign ordinances comply with the ORS Chapter 37. The county sign ordinances allow outdoor advertising for commercial and industrial zones. The communities along the byway allow on site advertising for businesses. Only 7% of the total combined miles of the byway allow for outdoor advertising. The remaining 63% of the route is designated as exclusive farm use with a small portion of timber grazing and primary forest which do not allow advertising.

All of the counties have sign ordinances that align with the ORS Chapter 377 where applicable. Many of the communities along the route are so small they do not have a specific sign/billboard ordinance other than to refer to the county ordinance which refers to the state ordinance. That ordinance prohibits off-premise commercial signs in all but commercially zoned areas. Some communities have ordinances which address compliance with historical standards.

### **Safety Record**

The safety record of the routes within the byway is favorable. However, the very nature that makes the route exceptionally scenic, its narrow canyons, mountainous terrain, and winding path, make it a road that demands responsible driving. The entire route is comprised of paved, 1.5 and two-lane highways, with lots of curves. This requires drivers to be alert and cautious when passing and to control their speed.

### **Wallowa-Whitman National Forest**

Forest Development Road 39 is classified as an arterial route with restricted uses in winter. It is closed for vehicular use in the winter and is groomed to serve as part of the main snowmobile route between Clear Creek and Salt Creek Summit Snow Park (Oregon State designated Snow Parks). When open, the traffic use is general, with 250 to 300 vehicles per day in summer and fall, the seasons of highest visitor use. Bicycle use is increasing, particularly since the route has been utilized by Cycle Oregon twice, showcasing the Byway to over 5,000 cyclists. The surface is asphalt that is maintained regularly. User safety is of prime importance. Safety hazards will be mitigated through traffic control management. Each year after spring break-up, an annual maintenance plan is prepared which determines the work that will be performed, taking into consideration winter damage and wear. State highways generally clear brush out to 12 feet from the road surface. However, in order to maintain the rural character and scenic quality of the road, the Forest Service clears vegetation only four feet back from the road surface whenever possible without sacrificing safety.

Traditionally, the US Forest Service has not been a "Public Road Agency." Recent agreements with the Federal Highway Administration have allowed the US Forest Service to become a Public Road Agency on special designated routes. None are currently designated but several have been nominated. Road 39 is the top priority for the Wallowa-Whitman NF to receive "Public Road" designation. Extensive upgrades are planned for the US Forest Service portion of the Byway by 2010, given approval of certain appropriations.

The Wallowa Whitman National Forest employs a Scenery Management Plan as a part of the overall Forest Management Plan. This plan also helps guide the government of Wallowa County when making decisions concerning development. The plan is available for review upon request, but is not included within this document.

## **Oregon Department of Transportation 2002**

### **General Review of Road (Safety) Narrative**

This application covers State Highways as well as roads that fall under other agencies. However, this review only covers the state highways within this area. The route covered in this application includes three different state highways. The "Wallowa Lake Highway" or Oregon Route 82 is approximately 70 miles in length. It runs from La Grande to Joseph. The crash rate data is published yearly by the Oregon Department of Transportation. The most recent (2002) edition is the source of the following crash data. Considering the total length of the highway there is an ADT (Average Daily Traffic) of 3248 vehicles and the crash rate (crashes per million vehicle miles) is at 0.70. This is about 14% lower than the "State" average that is 0.81 in 2002 for highway that is classed as "Primary, Rural Non-Freeway" highway. The other highway in this area is the "Little Sheep Creek Highway" which has no Oregon Route number and runs from Joseph to Imnaha. This highway is only about 29 miles in length. Considering the total length of the highway, the ADT is listed as only 372 and the crash rate is 1.00. This highway is classed as a "Secondary, Rural Non-Freeway". The crash rate of 1.00 is slightly higher than the "State" rate of 0.98 for this class of highway.

The "Baker - Copperfield Highway" or Oregon Route 7 and 86 runs from Baker City to the Idaho State Line. This highway is about 70 miles in length. Considering the total length of the highway, the ADT is listed as 960 and the crash rate is 1.26. This is much higher than the "State" rate of 0.81 in 2002 and it is the same class of highway as the Wallowa Lake Highway above.

The Oregon Department of Transportation has created a "Project Safety Management System" that uses several tools to identify and categorize safety problems on Oregon's highways. Two of these tools are the

SPIS (Safety Priority Index System) and the STIP (Safety Investment Program). The SPIS report lists sites with potential safety problems and rates these sites. Each year they publish a list of the top 10% of these sites. The highways listed above and on this application are not listed on the 2003 SPIS Report as having problem sites in the top 10%. The SPIS Report is compiled from accident data from the years 2000, 2001, and 2002. The STIP identifies future highway improvement projects.

There are no plans at this time for any modifications of the roadway along any portion of the route.

Crash rate data is published yearly by the Oregon Department of Transportation. The purpose of this report is to compare the data from an earlier report in 1998 to the most recent data of the year 2002.

The **“Wallowa Lake Highway”** or Oregon Route 82 is classed as a “Primary, Rural Non-Freeway” highway. It is approximately 70 miles in length and runs from La Grande to Joseph. Considering the total length of the highway the data is compared below:

- 1998 the ADT (Average Daily Traffic) was 3175 vehicles, 2002 the ADT was 3248 (up only 73 in 4 years)
- 1998 the crash rate (crashes per million vehicle miles) was 0.78, very close to the “State” rate of 0.71 for that year
- 2002 the crash rate was 0.71. This is lower than the 1998 crash rate and about 14% lower than the “State” average of 0.81 in 2002 for a highway that is classed as a “Primary, Rural Non-Freeway” highway.

The **“Baker – Copperfield Highway”** or Oregon Route 7 and Oregon Route 86 and is also classed as a “Primary, Rural Non-Freeway” highway. It runs from Baker City to the Idaho State Line and is about 70 miles in length. Considering the total length of the highway, the data is compared below:

- 1998 the ADT is was listed as 959
- 2002 the ADT was 960 (up only one vehicle in 4 years)
- 1998 the crash rate was 0.77 up slightly from the “State” rate of 0.71 for that year
- 2002 the crash rate was 1.26. This is much higher than the “State” rate of 0.81 in 2002 and it is the same class of highway as the Wallowa Lake Highway above.

The other highway in this area is the **“Little Sheep Creek Highway”** which has no Oregon Route number and runs from Joseph to Imnaha. This highway is classed as a “Secondary, Rural Non-Freeway”. This highway is only about 29 miles in length. Considering the total length of this highway, the data is compared below:

- 1998 the ADT was listed as only 360
- 2002 the ADT was 372 (up only 12 in 4 years)
- 1998 the crash rate was only 0.25
- 2002 the crash rate was 1.00. This crash is slightly higher than the “State” rate of 0.98 for this class of highway

The Oregon Department of Transportation has created a "Project Safety Management System" that uses several tools to identify and categorize safety problems on Oregon's highways. Two of these tools are the SPIS (Safety Priority Index System) and the STIP (Safety Investment Program). The SPIS report lists

sites with potential safety problems and rates these sites. Each year they publish a list of the top 10% of these sites. The highways listed above and on this application are not listed on the 2003 SPIS Report as having problem sites in the top 10%. The 2003 STIP Report is compiled from accident data from the years 2000, 2001 and 2002 .

Several projects have recently been completed on the Wallowa Lake Highway. Five of these projects amounted to over 11 million dollars in improvements. One project constructed in 1999 on Oregon Route 86 amounted to over 1 million dollars in improvements. Proposed projects listed on the 2000 - 2003 STIP Projects list include over 4 million dollars for various projects on the Wallowa Lake Highway, 950,000 dollars to be spent on the Baker - Copperfield Highway, and over 1 million dollars on the Little Sheep Creek Highway.

The recently completed projects together with the proposed projects should add considerably to the safety of these already relatively safe highways. There are no plans at this time for any modifications of the roadway along any portion of the route

The USFS 39 Road sees little commercial traffic, however, the section of the Byway from La Grande to Joseph is the main arterial in and out of the Wallowa Valley. Drivers on Hwy. 82 share the road with large commercial trucks, cattle trucks, and an occasional piece of farm equipment. Cattle drives sometimes use the roads on many parts of the route and demand patience and caution on the part of drivers who encounter such. As explained in some of the materials that promote the route and recreation in eastern Oregon in general, tourism in this part of Oregon is important to the economy and residents like to share the natural environment with visitors. However, visitors must respect the area's other industries and realize that cattle drives and log trucks are an important part of the culture, heritage, and economy that add to the flavor and aid in the preservation of the area's open spaces and natural beauty.

There are no plans at this time for any modifications of the roadway along any portion of the route.

## **EXISTING CONDITION INVENTORY**

### **A. Physical Setting Area of Analysis**

#### **1. Major watersheds, drainages, canyons:**

Northeast Oregon is known for its rugged mountains and canyons. It is a unique area with elevation changes of 9000 feet. The major drainage is Hells Canyon which is the deepest fresh water gorge in the world. The Snake River flows through this canyon. The Innaha Canyon and Grande Ronde canyon are other prime examples of canyon country.

Major watersheds and drainages in this area occur in the Wallowa Mountains. These drainages eventually empty into the Snake river. On the southern side of the range, Pine Creek and Eagle Creek are the main drainages with North Pine Creek as a tributary. Eagle Creek joins the Powder River, flowing from the Elkhorn Ridge of the Blue Mountains on its way to the Snake River

The Innaha River flows from the eastern side of the range with several tributaries including Big Sheep Creek, Little Sheep Creek and Gumboot Creek. Farther down river in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, Horse Creek drainage is visible from the Hat Point Road.

Several major drainages have water flowing from the northern side of the Wallowa Mountains. The Wallowa River flows from a major drainage into Wallowa Lake and on to the Minam River. Several other waterways from large drainages, flow into the Wallowa along this stretch of river. They include Hurricane Creek, the Lostine River, Bear Creek and Big Canyon Creek. The Wallowa River joins the Minam River which comes from another main drainage. The Grande Ronde River originates in the Blue Mountains and flows through the Grande Ronde Valley. The Minam River, with its waters from the Wallowa Mountains, joins the Grande Ronde River before it reaches its confluence with the Snake River.

2. Physiographic features:

Spectacular variety in topography exist with high alpine mountain peaks, U-shaped glaciated valleys, high plateau areas, deeply dissected canyons and level ground. The Wallowa Mountains and Seven Devils Mountains in Idaho are massive, rugged alpine ranges. Thirty-one peaks in the Eagle Cap Wilderness are over 8,000 feet; the most in an Oregon wilderness. Rolling prairie land and broad valleys accommodate range and farming uses while deep canyons dissect the landscape nearby.

3. Large water bodies:

The Wallowas are characterized by 53 high alpine lakes and numerous streams. Several Wild and Scenic Rivers have head waters here including the Minam and Lostine Rivers which originate from the northern side, the Innaha River from the eastern side and Eagle Creek from the southern side. The largest and most popular Wild and Scenic River is the Snake River in Hells Canyon. Three hydroelectric dams are located on the Snake River creating the Brownlee, Oxbow and Hells Canyon reservoir. Below Hells Canyon Dam the Snake runs wild and free. Another large body of water just south of Joseph next to the Eagle Cap Wilderness is glacier-carved Wallowa Lake. This popular lake provides a variety of recreation opportunities.

4. Elevation zones:

Elevation ranges from peaks near 10,000 feet above sea level in the Eagle Cap Wilderness and Seven Devils Mountains, to 870 feet where the Snake River leaves the National Recreation Area at the north boundary.

5. Area which serves a distinct market group:

The Wallowa Mountains and Hells Canyon NRA are scenic, rugged, and remote areas. Outdoor recreation opportunities abound here and attract recreationists seeking activities related to that type of environment. This rugged beauty also attracts the sector of people that enjoy driving or cycling for pleasure. Several developments enhance scenery viewing along the route.

6. Transportation units:

The Byway route has a combination of road conditions. The State sections are double-lane paved highway. The Forest Wallowa Mountain Loop road 39, is paved, double-lane road. Three of the side trip routes are also paved including the sections to: Hells Canyon Dam and boat launch, Hells Canyon Overlook and the state highway from Innaha to Joseph. The Forest roads down the Innaha River and up to Hat Point are gravel roads suitable for passenger vehicles. Much of the route on National Forest land is winding road which traverses country with steep side slopes. All roads with a maintenance level 3 or above are subject to the Highway Safety Act which means the Forest Service will sign and

maintain these roads for public safety. Much of the route on National Forest land is closed to wheeled traffic during the winter. Road 39 is closed from Salt Creek Summit to Lonesome Saddle, from December to April to wheeled traffic, and becomes a groomed snowmobile route through the mountains.

7. Private lands:

Approximately 190 of the 314 miles of the Byway route and its side trips is surrounded by private land. This land is contained primarily in large valleys on three sides of the Wallowa Mountains. Agriculture in the form of cattle ranching is the major use of this land. Logging, farming, and mining also are activities here.

8. Relationship to congressionally designated areas:

The Byway travels around and through two Congressionally designated areas. The Eagle Cap Wilderness in the Wallowa Mountains and Hells Canyon National Recreation Area have been set aside by Congress as special areas. Designation of the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway System helps to showcase these outstanding areas.

## **B. Visual Resource Management and Recreation Opportunities**

### 1. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum:

The ROS for WWNF National Forest land traversed by the Byway falls into the roaded natural and rural classifications. In the Rural class setting, the sights and sounds of human activity are readily evident. Levels of use vary, but do not reach those concentrations of the Urban class except at specialized and developed sites. While the characteristic landscape is often dominated by human-caused geometric patterns, there is also a dominant sense of open, green-space. Road 3955 down the Imnaha River travels through Federal and private land. This particular section is classified as Rural.

The rest of the Byway on National Forest land falls into the Roaded Natural category. This class is characterized by predominantly natural-appearing settings, with moderate sights and sounds of human activities and structures. The overall perception is one of naturalness. According to this classification, evidence of human activity varies from area to area and includes improved highways, railroads, developed campgrounds, small resorts and ski areas, livestock grazing, timber harvesting operations, watershed restoration activities, and water diversion structures. Roads and motorized equipment and vehicles are common in this setting. Density of use is moderate except at specific developed sites, and regulations on user behaviors are generally less evident than in the Urban or Rural classes.

Outdoor recreation opportunities on sections of the byway that are not on National Forest land are also diverse, ranging from river rafting on the Wallowa, Grande Ronde and Snake Rivers through roadless areas, to camping in rustic or developed Oregon State and County parks. It is easy to find remote and unpopulated areas in which to enjoy nature and solitude. Or, if preferred, visitors to the byway can golf at golf courses in Enterprise, Island City, Union, and Baker City. They can swim in lakes or several public or private pools, bowl, try miniature golf at Wallowa Lake, La Grande or Union, drive go-carts and bumper boats at the Wallowa Lake resort area, or use the many trails and back country roads for motor cycles and off-highway vehicles. Horseback riding is popular in the area and there are numerous outfitters offering a wide variety of experiences. Active Backcountry Horsemen groups helping to build and maintain trails in the high country. Three area resorts serve downhill & cross-country skiers. Most of these activities are commercial operations which contribute to the economic viability of the

region. Some organized recreation events are operated by non-profit organizations, including horse shows, polo tournaments, cross-country ski and snowmobile events, golf tournaments, bike races and an annual tri-athlon.

## 2. Visual Resource Management:

Visual Quality Objectives are designed to provide measurable standards for development of US Forest lands. They are represented by five terms which can be defined as visual resource management goals. The objectives are: Preservation, Retention, Partial Retention, Modification and Maximum Modification. Each objective describes a different degree of acceptable alteration of the natural landscape based upon the importance of aesthetics. The degree of alteration is measured in terms of visual contrast with the surrounding natural landscape. This project falls primarily into Retention and Partial Retention goals. Very little Modification exists.

Character type describes an area of land that has common distinguishing visual characteristics of land form, rock formations, water forms and vegetative patterns. Character types are used as a frame of reference to classify physical features of a given area as to their degree of scenic quality. The project area occupies the Blue Mountain and Wallowa Types.

Distance zones are divisions of a particular landscape being viewed. They are used to describe the part of a characteristic landscape that is being inventoried or evaluated. The three distance zones are: Foreground - 3000' to ½ mile, Middleground - ½ to 4 miles, and Background - 4 miles to the horizon. All of these distance zones apply to the project area.

Variety Classes are obtained by classifying the landscape into different degrees of variety. This determines those landscapes which are most important and those which are of lesser value from the standpoint of scenic quality. Those with the most variety or diversity have the greatest potential for high scenic value. There are three variety classes which identify the scenic quality of the natural landscape. Class A is distinctive, Class B is common, and Class C is minimal. The Wallowa mountains fall into the Wallowas Character Type where the Variety Classes include Distinctive and Common Classes without any Minimal Class. The rest of the project area falls within all three variety classes.

Sensitivity Levels are a measure of people's concern for the scenic quality of the national forests. Three sensitivity levels are employed: Level 1 - Highest, Level 2 - Average, Level 3 - Lowest. The seen area along the Byway is a Level 1 where concern for scenery is high.

## C. Natural Attractions

### 1. Water:

Eagle Creek - Wild and Scenic Eagle Creek flows from the south side of the Wallowa Mountains. Fishing is popular on this river and recreational gold panning is permitted at Eagle Forks Campground.

Powder River - The Powder River originates in the Elkhorn Ridge of the Blue Mountains and flows through Baker/Powder Valley to the Snake River at Brownlee Reservoir. Wildlife viewing is a favorite activity along this river. The byway travels along the river, and beaver and geese are commonly seen on the river.

Snake River - A tributary of the Columbia River, this large Wild and Scenic River flows through Hells Canyon. Many water and land related recreation opportunities exist along this waterway. It is a favorite with floaters and jet boaters.

North Pine Creek - This major drainage along the Byway route has fishing and camping available.

Imnaha River - The Imnaha River flows through a major drainage from the Wallowa Mountains to the Snake River. It is a Wild and Scenic River with fishing, picnicking, and camping as main activities. Its crystal clear waters serve as important spawning habitat for the anadromous steelhead and chinook salmon.

Lick Creek - Lick Creek is a tributary of Big Sheep Creek with fishing and camping along its banks.

Wallowa Lake - This nearly symmetrical glacier-carved lake is just a mile south of Joseph. Chief Joseph and his friendly Joseph Band of Nez Perce lived near here in the mid-1800's. Today, the Wallowa Lake recreation area includes a State Park, tramway, and a variety of other visitor attractions.

Wallowa River - This river winds through the Wallowa Valley, tumbling past ranches and communities. Frequently viewed from the byway, the river is joined by the Minam River at Minam. Here, where the highway crosses the converging rivers, a popular launch point exists for rafters floating the Wallowa and Grande Ronde Rivers. These are also components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. A state park is situated down river two miles from the launch site.

Grande Ronde River - This river originates in the Blue Mountain range and flows through the Grande Ronde Valley. The river is popular for fishing through much of its course and provides outstanding rafting in the lower reaches. The Grande Ronde River is joined by the Wallowa River on its way to the Snake River. The Lookingglass Fish Hatchery is near the junction of the two rivers.

## 2. Geologic Features

Clover Creek Formation - Clover Creek greenstones are the oldest rocks in the Wallowas. They were exposed when the Wallowas were uplifted and are visible in the mountains.

Martin Bridge Formation - Marble and limestone are found here. This formation found in the Wallowas is part of the Wallowa Terrain. It is a land mass that over eons moved 3000 miles across the ocean by plate tectonics, from an area near China. Sea animal fossils have been found in this limestone, located 1000 feet above sea level and 350 miles from the Pacific Ocean.

Hurwal Formation - Slates, shales and sandstones are typical of this formation found high in the Wallowa Mountains.

Wallowa Batholith - Granite is found in the Wallowas where it was exposed by uplifting action.

Columbia River Basalts - Widespread volcanism layered much of northeastern Oregon with lava flows 17 million years ago. This lava covered the land with layers from 50 to 200 feet in thickness. 38 different layers can be viewed in the lower Imnaha River country and over 20 layers can be seen from the town of Imnaha. Columnar Basalt is an impressive pillar formation found in some of the layers.

Shield Volcanoes - After the end of the basalt flows the Findley Buttes were formed. They are shield volcanoes or vents, where the lava poured out forming cones on top of the flow.

Glaciated Landforms - The Wallawas were glaciated at least three times and perhaps as many as seven times. The Bennett Glacier scoured the West Fork of the Wallowa River for almost 20 miles, was 2,000 feet thick, and left a nearly perfect terminal moraine which today encloses Wallowa Lake. The other major drainages in the Wallawas are also glaciated landforms.

Ash Depositions - Volcanic ash covered the country with 6-12 inches of ash after the Glacier Peak and Mt. Mazama eruptions. Much of this ash eventually gathered in drainage bottoms and low pockets. Our most productive forested plant associations result on deposits of these ashy soils. Examples of these ash deposits can be seen in cut banks along the highway between Joseph and Imnaha.

Tectonic Activity - The southern part of Hells Canyon and Pine Valley lie on the Wallowa-Olympic Lineament which is a fault zone running from the Olympic Peninsula through the Wallawas to a point somewhere near Vale, Oregon. This is a very seismically active area and many small faults have been active in the last hundred years. Several active landslide areas exist in the area and along the reservoirs to the south. The Hole in the Wall landslide closed the highway between Baker City and Halfway when it slid across the road and into the Powder River a few years ago. The highway was relocated and provides a good view of this landslide and the natural healing that is now taking place.

### 3. Scenic Views and Landmarks

Indian Rock Viewpoint - A barrier free observation deck, restrooms, and shelter overlooking the Grande Ronde Valley and across to Eagle Cap from Mt. Emily in the Blue Mountains north of La Grande. This is a side trip from the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway.

Flagstaff Butte - Located near Eagle Creek, this site has outstanding views of the Eagle Cap, the Elkhorn Mountains and the Baker and Grande Ronde Valleys.

Road 66 - This route is a scenic loop from Halfway to Road 39 on the Byway. It is a high elevation drive past Fish Lake, Twin Lakes and several campgrounds. In the winter it is a groomed snowmobile route with views of the mountains and canyons.

Snake River - Following the Snake River through Hells Canyon Reservoir, Hells Canyon Dam and on into the canyon as a Wild and Scenic River is an impressive experience. From the boat launch down, the river rushes on its way through the rugged, towering walls of the canyon.

Hells Canyon Overlook - A dramatic view of canyon country is enjoyable from the overlook at the head of McGraw Creek. Trails, picnic tables and accessible toilets are available. Interpretive signs were installed in 1993. Farther down Summit Ridge, McGraw Lookout provides another view of the canyon.

Seven Devils Mountains - The Seven Devils Mountains of Idaho can be seen from a pullout on the sharp corner at the top of Gumboot.

Harl Butte - Another top of the mountain site with a lookout that has beautiful views is Harl Butte. This is located 18 miles off the Byway route on Road 3930 east of the Wallawas.

Hass Owl Loop - Road 3915025 is a scenic ten mile loop with views of rugged Big Sheep Canyon, The Wallowa and Seven Devils Mountains. It begins at Salt Creek Summit. In the winter, this is a groomed snowmobile trail.

Wallowa Mountains - Spectacular, rugged mountain peaks are a dominating view from the Wallowa Valley and Baker Valley. The mountains from the northern side resemble the Rocky Mountains.

Wallowa Lake - Glacier carved Wallowa Lake sits at the base of the Wallowa Mountains which provide a Switzerland like backdrop.

Joseph Canyon Overlook - Joseph Canyon is located on State Highway 3 between Enterprise and Lewiston, Idaho. This is another prime example of canyon country.

Pastoral Views - All along the Byway route, through the Baker Valley to Halfway, the Imnaha Valley, the Wallowa Valley and the Grande Ronde Valley, are cattle ranches and farms in a pastoral setting.

Baker City - Discovery of gold in 1861 brought a rush of miners and homesteaders to the Baker Valley and mountains. Baker City was know as Queen City of the Mines after incorporation in 1874. Its population was larger than Boise or Spokane at the time. Today it is the Baker County seat with a population of 9,200. There are lodging accommodations, restaurants, museums, a city pool, a National Historic District in the downtown, and a full service hospital.

National Historic Oregon Trail Center - Located at Flagstaff Hill east of Baker City. This outstanding interpretive center honors the many pioneers who passed this way on the Oregon Trail.

Richland - The town of Richland, located in Eagle Valley, was named after its good soil. It was incorporated in 1897 and today has a population of 181. Services include several restaurants, a motel, grocery stores and 911 services. There are no medical facilities.

Halfway - The town in Pine Valley was established as a midway location in the valley between the towns of Cornucopia and Pine. It was later named Halfway and recently gained national notoriety for temporarily taking the name of Half.com to promote an internet company. Today it is a gateway to Hells Canyon with the last available services until Wallowa Valley. The population in this town is 365. It provides restaurants, grocery stores, several lodging facilities and a nurse practitioner for medical needs. Activities include a crab feed, the Baker County Fair, 2 rodeos and a winter snow carnival. Halfway has several feet of snow in the winter and snowmobiling is a popular pastime.

Cornucopia - The Cornucopia mines were some of the most productive gold mines in Oregon employing up to 700 men during its peak. More than 300 people lived there when it was incorporated as a city around 1885. It had two general stores, a hotel, post office, two saloons and a school. The mining operations were sold in 1961 to a Pittsburgh corporation and are being looked after by a local resident. Cornucopia would be a ghost town were it not for a few summer homes in the area. Some buildings remain but are located on private property. This is one of the few mines which has continued operating.

Lick Creek Guard Station - The historic Lick Creek Guard Station and associated buildings were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1030's. The site is now listed on the National

Register of Historic Places and continues to serve as a working guard station during the summer months.

Big Sheep Canal - Originally constructed in 1903 by pick and shovel to divert water from the head of Big Sheep Creek to Wallowa Valley farms, the canal was later modified to produce hydroelectric power as well.

Salt Creek Summit - This site makes a comfortable rest area on the Byway and serves as a summer trailhead and winter snow park. Picnic tables and restrooms are situated in this large parking area and a warming shelter has been constructed for winter activities.

Canal Fire - The 23,000 acre Canal Fire of 1989 is visible on both sides of the Byway route. Salvage logging and replanting of the area has taken place. Over time, the burn will provide an excellent opportunity to view the response of wildlife and vegetation to fire, and may well increase opportunities to view wildlife in the area.

Chief Joseph Monument - Overlooking Wallowa Lake is a monument dedicated to Old Chief Joseph. His remains were reburied here in the ancestral homeland of the Wallowa band of Nez Perce Indians.

Joseph - Joseph was the first county seat in 1887, was incorporated in 1879, and renamed Joseph after young Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce. Joseph sits nestled against the Wallowa Mountains with a population of 1,260. Ranching, farming and logging have been historic uses of the area. In the last two decades, several bronze foundries have become successfully established and many of the stores have become art galleries catering to the tourism industry. Joseph has restaurants, a grocery store, pharmacy, post office, schools, a museum, bowling alley and a medical clinic. Joseph hosts the PRCA Chief Joseph Days Rodeo, the Bronze-Blues & Brews Festival, and the Oregon Mountain Cruise Car Show.

Enterprise - Enterprise is the Wallowa County seat of government and has a population of 2,050. All services are located here including a theater, outdoor swimming pool, medical clinics and a full service hospital. *Enterprise hosts Hells Canyon Mule Days and the Wallowa County Fair.*

Wallowa Mountains Visitor Center - The administrative offices for three USFS ranger districts are located in this complex in Enterprise where detailed recreation information can be obtained. Interactive exhibits and dioramas depicting the Diversity and Adaptation of the Land, in four life zones, are accessible for all ages and abilities.

Lostine - This town was incorporated in 1903 and today has a population 230. This small farming community has a post office, store and restaurant, and several second hand stores. Lostine hosts the Lostine Flea Market around Independence Day for their summer celebration.

Wallowa - Wallowa is located near the lower end of the Wallowa Valley. It was incorporated in 1899 and today has a population of 745. Ranching and logging are the lifeblood of this town. The only lumber still operating in the county is located near here. The headquarters of the Wallowa Union Railroad, which runs the Eagle Cap Excursion Train and a freight operation is located in Wallowa. Wallowa has schools, churches, stores, restaurants, a motel and a medical clinic for services. On the Fourth of July the city has its celebration called the Old Fashioned Fourth of July Festival. The TamKaLiks Celebration each July is a Nez Perce PowWow and Friendship Celebration.

Elgin - Elgin is located along the Grande Ronde River, north of the Grande Ronde Valley, with timber, agriculture and tourism as the main industries. Food, lodging and the Historic Elgin Opera House are found here. A popular crab feed is held every year in February and the Elgin Stampede Rodeo in July is always a favorite. This town was incorporated in 1891 and has a population of 1770. It has a new riverside RV park and raft launch site.

Imbler - Set at the north edge of the fertile Grande Ronde Valley, Imbler is known as the grass seed capital of the world. A large production of high quality grass seed is marketed throughout the world. This small community has a population of 325 and provides a cafe and grocery store.

Island City - Island City's population is 750. Originally, a single flour mill was Island City's prime industry but today businesses on the "Island City Strip" merge with the town of La Grande. The La Grande Country Club with a nine-hole golf course and tennis courts is located here.

La Grande - The largest city on the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway, La Grande is the hub of Union County and of Northeast Oregon. There are many choices of lodging and dining facilities, entertainment in downtown clubs, movie theaters, and sports and cultural activities at Eastern Oregon University. All services are located here including a full service hospital, an airport, and bus service. The population of La Grande is 12,795.

Oregon Trail Interpretive Park at the Blue Mountain Crossing - Located west of La Grande at Interstate 84, exit 248. This beautiful, forested site contains the best remnants of wagon ruts from the Oregon Trail migration. The interpretive park is open May through September and offers trails, interpretive panels, restrooms, and picnic facilities.

#### 4. Unusual Vegetation:

On the large scale, the fact that there is such a diversity of vegetation due to the elevation extremes makes this area unusual. The vegetation varies from that found in a semi-arid environment to that in alpine conditions. With these differences comes a deeply dissected landscape with different aspect, soil and moisture condition. Great variety exists which creates the vegetative mosaic found here.

The Wallowa Mountains resemble a high elevation island located between the Rocky Mountain, Cascade Range and Great Basin geographical provinces. The different species which exist within these three provinces converge in the Wallowas, resulting in the large number of different plants found there. Mountain ranges such as the Rockies and Cascades allow plant species to migrate along the range during periods of warmer or cooler climate while the Wallowas are surrounded by lower elevation country, effectively trapping higher elevation plants. These conditions have resulted in a number of species which have evolved in the Wallowas and are found nowhere else.

Following the Siskiyou Mountains of southwest Oregon, the Wallowas have the second highest number of rare plant species in the state. The Wallowa primrose, Oregon bolandra, bank monkeyflower and Cusick's camas are among the unique plant species found in the area. Pentstemons are a favorite for wild flower viewers. As many as 20 species can be seen within a day.

Another unusual vegetative pattern found here is the biscuit scabland. Mounds of soil surrounded by trenches of cobbles almost look like moguls in the snow. Different plants are found on the mounds than on the cobbled areas. This type of configuration is found on ridge tops and was thought to have

been formed during the freezing and thawing periods of the ice age. Other theories say it has to do with wind and water action in more recent times.

#### 5. Climatic Relief:

The diverse landscape of northeastern Oregon creates a major variation in climate over relatively short distances. The major influence to the regional climate comes from the Cascade Mountains nearly 200 miles to the west. The mountain range forms a barrier against the modifying effects of moist winds from the Pacific Ocean and as a result, the climate of this area is essentially continental and dry. Light precipitation, low relative humidity, rapid evaporation, abundant sunshine, and wide ranges in temperature are characteristic, but there are marked local differences in temperatures and precipitation due to local topography.

Winters are quite severe above 6,500 feet; warm summers and moderately severe winters occur at mid-elevation plateau areas; and hot summers and mild winters occur at low elevations in the deeper canyons. Precipitation varies from 10 inches in the lowest elevations of the canyons to 65 inches in the high mountains which may be located only 3 miles apart in places.

The heaviest precipitation is generally in the winter months, but there is a secondary maximum in May and June. Average winter snowpacks above 5,000 feet elevation exceed 61 inches in depth. Summer rainfall commonly occurs with convectional storms promoted by strong isolation and masses of cool air that cross the Cascades and spread over the area at high elevation. The associated lightning storms are an important factor in the inception of forest fires.

Generally, the normal temperatures for the warmest and coldest months differ by as much as 50 degrees F. Above 6,000 feet elevation, mean January temperature is around 14 degrees F., while in areas below 3,000 feet mean January temperature is around 30 degrees F. Mean summer temperatures below 3,000 feet range from 80-90 degrees F. In the deep canyons, daily maximums often exceed 100 degrees F. Above 6,000 feet elevation, July temperatures average 54 degrees F.

#### 6. Cultural/Historic Resources:

Many prehistoric and historic sites exist in this area. Evidence of prehistoric occupation in Hells Canyon is easily found in the river corridor. Pithouse sites, pictographs and petroglyphs are scattered down along the river where Native Americans spent their winters. Old mining towns and homesteads still have some remaining buildings that stand as reminders of earlier years in the surrounding area. Due to the sensitivity of archaeological sites, visitors have not been invited to very many of them. Inventory, evaluation and monitoring are ongoing management activities. Several interpretive opportunities have been developed and others are being considered for development. The National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center near Baker City and Kirkwood Ranch are the two most popular developed interpretive sites while many communities have museums that share local Oregon history.

#### 7. Ongoing Management Activities:

Anadromous fish migration was heavily affected when dams were build on the Columbia and Snake Rivers for hydroelectric power. As a result the Corps of Engineers is helping the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife restore those fish runs. Several hatchery facilities trap adult fish and spawn them;

eggs are hatched, smolts raised and later released into lakes and streams. Wallowa Hatchery in Enterprise has fish year round. They raise trout to legal size and release them into Wallowa Lake and in area streams. There are satellite facilities at Big Canyon Creek and Little Sheep Creek which are on the Byway route. These facilities trap steelhead, spawn them, and release smolts that are transferred from the Irrigon Hatchery near Hermiston. These facilities are staffed during the spring months from March through May. On the Imnaha River downstream from the mouth of Gumboot Creek, is a Fish Weir where spring chinook salmon are trapped. This facility is staffed part time in February and March for smolt acclimation and release. During the summer from May through September adult fish are trapped and held at the facility. Visitors are welcome at this site which has interpretive information. North of Elgin, the Lookingglass Fish Hatchery works to restore Chinook Salmon to the Grande Ronde River Basin. Visitors are welcome at this remote and scenic facility.

#### **D. Existing Recreation Facilities**

Virtue Flat - A four season, six square mile, Off Highway Vehicle recreation area is administered by the BLM near Highway 86 and Baker City. There is a staging area with accessible toilets, parking and a loading ramp; a kidney track, 1/4 mile drag strip, roads, trails and an open off-road area to recreate in.

Eagle Forks Campground - A FS campground on the Pine Ranger District located at the confluence of Little Eagle Creek and Main Eagle Creek. This site has 7 camping units, 2 restrooms and a hand pump. This is a low elevation campground with early access, and it provides a cool forested setting for campers who want to be close to fishing on the reservoirs. Martin Bridge Trail #1878 begins near this campground and travels along Eagle Creek.

Ollokot Campground - This campground is a FS fee campground located on the Imnaha River, in an open park like stand of old growth ponderosa pine. This improved campground has paved access, a campground host, garbage service, 12 campsites and 1 group site. There are 2 old outhouses and 2 accessible restrooms, tables, fire rings, and a hand pump. Season of use is June - November and length of stay is 2-3 nights. This site is being used as a rest stop on the Byway for visitors traveling through and repeat campers. It also has fishing day use.

Blackhorse Campground - A FS fee campground located in a forested setting on the Imnaha River. This site has paved access to 16 campsites with tables, fire rings, 6 outhouses, and garbage service. This older campground is in fair condition. Nine of the sites have working water faucets from a spring fed system. Season of use is June - November with the length of stay being 3-4 nights primarily with repeat visitors.

Cloverdale Campground - A FS campground located on the Imnaha River. This site has 10 undefined campsites, tables, fire rings, piped water, and 4 outhouses. This is a non-fee site with many repeat visitors. The season of use is May - December with length of stay being 3-4 nights.

Cloverdale Cabin - This former small Guard Station that was not being utilized is now a winter snowmobile warming hut under an MOU agreement with the Gambler Snowmobile Club.

Hidden Campground - A FS fee campground with garbage service located on the Imnaha River. There are 10 campsites, 4 outhouses, piped water, tables and fire rings. The season of use is May - December with the length of stay being 3 nights.

Evergreen Campground - A FS non-fee campground with 7 dispersed campsites located on the Imnaha River. There are tables, fire rings and 2 outhouses. Season of use is May - December. This site has low visitation but when used it usually has a group staying for 3-4 nights.

Indian Crossing Campground - This is a FS fee campground with a campground host, and garbage service located on the Imnaha River. This campground is dissected by the river. It has 15 sites, 4 outhouses and a hand pump for water. A major new expansion is planned for this campground and will include a horse camping area. Season of use is May - December with length of stay being 3-4 nights.

Indian Crossing Trailhead - Located next to the campground this trailhead provides parking, hitch racks and a loading ramp. It accesses Duck Lake Trail #1875 and South Fork of the Imnaha Trail #1814. Adjacent to the trailhead is a Special Use site with horse facilities, under permit to an outfitter.

Fish Weir - A fish weir for capturing anadromous chinook salmon located on the Imnaha River, has accessible toilets, paved paths and interpretive signs. It is hosted from June - August during the fish runs. There are daily visitors with a length of stay of 45 minutes. Season of use is June - November.

Lick Creek Campground - A FS fee campground located on the Byway, this campground provides paved access to 12 campsites with garbage service, tables, fire rings and 4 outhouses. 8 sites have piped water. Season of use is May - November with length of stay being 1-5 nights. This site is used as a fishing area and as a rest stop on the Byway.

Lick Creek Trailhead - Located 4 miles from the Byway this trailhead provides a loading ramp, hitch rail, information board and parking for 2 vehicles. It accesses the Lick Creek Trail #1809 into the Eagle Cap.

Tenderfoot Trailhead - Located 3 miles up Big Sheep Creek this trailhead accesses the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The trailhead was burned in the Canal Fire and a helicopter landing site was built at the trailhead. Undefined parking makes turning around difficult, and parking space is limited to 4 vehicles. Trailhead reconstruction planning has been done but has not been completely designed due to lack of funds.

Salt Creek Summit Recreation Site - Located on the Byway this is a year round facility. It includes a paved parking area for 50 vehicles, an accessible restroom, picnic tables and a warming hut. This is a winter recreation SnoPark with access to Nordic ski trails and a groomed snowmobile trail system. In the summer, it is a trailhead into the Eagle Cap Wilderness and the mountain bike trail system. Winter length of stay is 1-2 nights; summer use is 15 minutes to 3 hours.

Snowmobile Hut - A warming hut under an MOU with the Gamblers Snowmobile Club, is located on Road 3915100 about ½ mile from Salt Creek Summit. This is a good sized cabin with outhouse facilities.

Ski Tents - Wall tent accommodations for Nordic skiing are available by reservation. They are located in Big Sheep drainage and on Ferguson Ridge under an MOU agreement with the Eagle Cap Nordic Ski Club. These are overnight facilities with access to the Nordic trail system.

McCully Trailhead - Located near Ferguson Ridge Ski Area this trailhead includes a loading ramp, hitch rail, 2 portable outhouses and parking for 4 vehicles.

Ferguson Ridge Ski Area - A downhill ski area serviced by a ½ mile T-bar lift and a rope tow. It provides 5 ski runs and some powder skiing. This facility is a non-profit ski at your own risk facility that is open on weekends and holidays from December - March.

Wallowa Lake Resort Area - Located adjacent to Wallowa Lake and the scenic Wallowa Mountains, this resort area offers food, lodging, horseback rides, water sports, mini golf, go cart tracks, galleries and shops, a Boy Scout Camp, a State Park and the steepest tramway in North America. This tram to the top of Mt. Howard, provides a spectacular view of the Wallowas and the Wallowa Valley from 8300 feet. Two miles of hiking trails at the top of the tram ride provide access to the viewpoints.

Wallowa Lake Trailhead - Located at the end of the road, this trailhead has a loading ramp, hitch rails and parking for about 6 trailers and 50 vehicles. This heavy use trailhead accesses the Eagle Cap Wilderness by the East Fork Wallowa Trail #1804 and the West Fork Wallowa Trail #1820.

Wallowa Lake State Park and Campground - This major campground has 211 campsites, flush toilets, showers, 2 accessible restroom buildings, a marina concession, boat moorage, and picnic area. Season of use is year round with the average length of stay being about 4 days. The peak season runs at 100% occupancy from the end of June through the third week in August and on holiday weekends.

North End Wallowa Lake Boat launch - The State Marine Board funds this site through Wallowa County. There is a boat ramp, and 2 outhouses with accessible restrooms. There is an unsupervised swimming area roped off that is adjacent to the boat launching facility. The season of use May to November.

Hurricane Creek Trailhead - This FS trailhead is located at the end of the road up Hurricane Creek. There are hitch rails, a loading ramp, an outhouse and parking for 6 vehicles. This trailhead accesses the Eagle Cap Wilderness by the Hurricane Creek Trail #1807.

Wallowa Mountains Visitor Center - Located on top of the hill in Enterprise, this facility serves as the administrative office for three Ranger Districts, and includes a large visitor center. New interactive exhibits for all ages and abilities attract visitors. Living history demonstrations are part of the summer schedule.

Wallowa Fish hatchery - This is a trout hatchery in Enterprise where legal rainbow trout are raised to 8-10" for release in area lakes and streams. There is also a steelhead program with smolts, and adults that are trapped and spawned. This site is staffed year round and has fish all the time. Visitors are welcome.

Lostine Canyon Trailheads - Lilyville and Two Pan are trailheads for access into the Eagle Cap Wilderness from the Lostine Canyon. There are loading ramps, hitch rails and outhouses at these sites. Season of use is June - November. There is also a Special Use site where an outfitter provides day rides and pack trips.

Lostine Canyon Campgrounds - There are 6 non-fee campgrounds and a picnic area up the Lostine River Canyon. There are tables, fire rings and outhouses at these sites.

Bear Creek Facilities - The Boundary Campground and Bear Creek trailhead with horse facilities are up this drainage, out of Wallowa.

Big Canyon Fish Hatchery - This is a satellite hatchery for the Wallowa Hatchery in Enterprise. Smolts which are raised in Irrigon Hatchery are held here and released in the spring. Adults are trapped and spawned if needed.

Big Canyon Facilities - There are 2 trailheads up this drainage and a campground. They are Bear Wallow Campground and trailhead, and Cougar Ridge trailhead. These sites have horse facilities at the trailheads.

Wallowa River/Fountain Rest Area - A small Oregon State Park rest area along the Wallowa River in the canyon provides a pullout with 1 non-accessible outhouse which is open year round. Recently a short interpretive trail has been completed from this site, and plans are underway to upgrade to a vault toilet, and possible interpretive pannels.

Wallowa Lake State Highway Forest Wayside - This is a state rest area along the river with picnic tables and accessible restrooms. This facility is open year round.

Minam Boat Launch - This state facility is located near the Minam Store where many rafting and fishing trips begin. It consists of a boat ramp and 2 outhouses.

Minam State Park - This state park is 2 miles from the Byway on the Wallowa River, downstream from where it is nearly doubled in size by merging with the Minam River. The park consists of 12 primitive fee sites with tables, fire rings, 2 outhouses and garbage service. Season of use is April to October with length of stay 1-2 days.

Wildlife Flat Trailhead - This is a co-op trailhead with ODFW at Minam. There is a loading dock and hitch rail at this site. This trailhead accesses the Eagle Cap Wilderness.

Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area - Located directly southeast of La Grande off I-84, Exit 268, the marsh has a nature trail and auto tour which offer a chance to walk through natural meadow and seasonal wetlands. A variety of birds, waterfowl, and wildlife can be seen any time of year. Hiking is also allowed on the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation addition west of Foothill Road.

Morgan Lake - 3 miles southwest of La Grande. C Avenue to Morgan Lake Road, walk around the lake. City owned campground and picnic sites.

Telephone Ridge - From La Grande travel north on Second Street past the Union County Fairgrounds. Continue on Fox Hill Rd past the county land fill 4.5 miles to FS 3120. Travel north for 4.5 miles to FS 180; park there. 5 mile bicycle, ATV, motorcycle and hiker trail on old road. Elevation 4200 to 5500'. Trail map available.

Lookingglass Trail - NW of Elgin on OR Hwy. 204. From Woodland campground, walk 0.3 miles northwest on OR Hwy. 204 then 1 mile east on road FS 3725. Turn left on road FS 3701 and descend north to the trailhead, five miles from OR Hwy. 204. Descend to Lookingglass Creek, 3050'. Ascend two miles northwest along the creek, leaving the creek at 4000' to continue ascending northwest.

Reach OR Hwy. 204 at Spout Springs, 5450'. Turn left (east) 2 miles to the starting point at the campground. 20 miles RT.

Rock Springs - 20 miles southeast of OR Hwy. 82, take FS 62 between Elgin and Minam Summit. Minam Lodge is appx. 8 wilderness miles from the trailhead. NFP

Oregon Trail Interpretive Park at the Blue Mountain Crossing - located west of La Grande in the Blue Mountains, this site contains some of the best examples of the Oregon Trail wagon ruts. It has a ½ mile paved barrier free trail, hiking trails, interpretive signs, a historic logging exhibit, and living history presentations on weekends and summer holidays. There is ample parking, accessible restrooms and a picnic shelter. Located fourteen miles from the byway at exit 248, off I-84.

Many additional campgrounds and trailheads lead into the Eagle Cap Wilderness and areas of the Blue Mountains, within a few miles of the byway. Complete information is available from the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest district offices at La Grande, Enterprise, Halfway or Baker City.

## **E. Other Resource Considerations**

### **1. Vegetation Patterns, Health and Vigor, Harvesting Programs:**

Landscape diversity has created a mosaic of vegetation. Different life zones exist with elevation and climate differences varying from a semi-arid desert to alpine terrain. Aspect and soil type in the deeply dissected landscape also affects the type of vegetation growing there. Repeated natural and human caused disturbances have occurred and contributed to a mix of plant communities in varying stages of succession short of climax. Weed control is a vital concern of all three counties through which the Byway passes, and each county is enacting weed control policies.

Forest health is currently a management concern. Through the lack of natural fire coupled with an extended drought, overstocking has occurred with less tolerant species. Insects and disease have taken their toll on the trees. This situation is not likely to change very much unless the reasons that caused this to happen are dealt with.

Restoring health and vigor to the forest is a complicated process at this point. Timber management styles vary between districts. The Hells Canyon NRA operates with an uneven-age management style while the other districts operate on even-age management styles with visual concerns and the use of fire is a complicated process that is being addressed. An IRA is being proposed for the upper Imnaha drainage. All the different issues will be discussed including the Byway visuals. As a result of poor forest health the potential for catastrophic fire has increased in this area.

### **2. Slopes, Soils, Drainage Patterns, Flood plains, Riparian Zones:**

Slopes - Varied terrain is one of the distinguishing characteristics of this area. Slope varies from flat ground to 100%. This also occurs in close proximity to each other, with high mountains surrounded by broad valleys, flat meadows and deeply dissected canyons.

Soils - Soils in the area are quite variable and may range from those which are thin, rocky, low-productivity ridge top scablands to those in which there are deep ash accumulations. Soil differences result from variations in climate, topography, parent material, vegetation and time. The greatest influence to soils in this area has come from ash deposited primarily from Mt. Mazama and Glacier Peak approximately 6,600 and 12,000 years ago. Locations where these deposits are thick are typically very productive growing sites. Perhaps of equal impact, especially in the northern dissected basalt

plateau, has been the deposition of loess from the central Washington channeled scablands region following the recession of the Continental Glacier. These deposits have virtually blanketed the entire area but over time much of the material has been eroded away by wind and water. Continued weathering of the Basalts and other rock types at high elevations in the Wallows and low elevations in the canyons has resulted in a mixing of wind-borne ash and loess with rocky colluvium in many areas. Consequently soils here fall under one of the following broad categories:

- a) Residual - derived in place from predominately bedrock or colluvial rock materials.
- b) Ash-Loess - derived from deposited and accumulated ash and/or loess over older buried soil material.
- c) Mixed - derived from colluvium, ash and/or loess mixed well in surface layers over older buried soil material.

Drainage Patterns - The Wallowa Mountains have an excellent water storage capacity. Heavy snows that fall in the winter months provide water during the dry summer months. Over two-thirds of the precipitation in the mountains comes from the winter snowpack. The headwaters of many rivers are located here: Eagle Creek, Pine, Imnaha, Lostine, Wallowa and Minam Rivers. The high country peak runoff occurs in June and July while at lower elevations in the Snake River Canyon, runoff is between March and June. Timing and duration of this runoff affects the summer irrigation water supply. Dams were built on many of the lakes during the 1950's to raise the water level to increase the irrigation season. Many, many miles of irrigation ditches are supplied by these waters. These waters also provide important water quality for drinking, fish and wildlife habitat, livestock, and recreational uses.

Flood Plains and Riparian Zones - Riparian areas have a high water table and wet soils, where only water loving vegetation grows. These areas provide many important functions. They act as natural sponges, help maintain soil structure, allow water infiltration, and reduce bank erosion. Streamside vegetation shades and directly contributes material to the streams and also contributes to aquifer recharge. Stored water is then available during drier periods to maintain and improve minimum flow levels. A major benefit of this aquifer recharge is maintenance of year-round stream flow.

In the upper reaches of the streams and rivers in the Wallows, the water quality and riparian conditions are excellent. Some of the rivers drop in quality when they get to areas with multiple use. These riparian areas have pressure from different resources. Roads, residential and commercial development, agricultural production, mining and livestock grazing have had their impacts. Modern forest management calls for maintenance of buffer strips along these areas to protect fisheries, domestic water supplies and recreation water use. Fencing exclosures have been constructed along some streams to protect these riparian areas from domestic grazing. Rehabilitative vegetative plantings and placement of woody debris have been implemented in these exclosures.

### 3. Wildlife and Fisheries:

Wildlife - Northeast Oregon has the largest tracts of land designated as wilderness in the state: a high mountain environment and a canyonland. This provided unique habitat for wildlife not only by its size but also in its elevational differences. Maintaining and enhancing this wildlife habitat for viable populations of all existing native and desired non-native vertebrate wildlife species is a management goal. Many species of terrestrial vertebrate wildlife live within this area which is also noted for its hunting. Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, black bear, cougar, bighorn sheep, turkeys, grouse and chukar partridge are species for which there is a hunting season. Over the years several species of wildlife have been extirpated. Reintroductions have occurred for the sharp-tailed grouse, turkeys,

bighorn sheep, mountain goats and peregrine falcons. Habitat improvement through burning of less vigorous range, has increased the vigor and broad mix of vegetation for several of these species. Riparian areas have been fenced in many locations and specific old growth timber stands have been protected to maintain some of the wildlife habitat. The Byway provides a good opportunity for viewing wildlife along the route. Some controversy has developed as reintroduction of the wolf to the area is being considered, and several sightings have occurred. Additionally, Oregon citizens passed bills that no longer allow hunting of cougar with the aid of dogs. The apparent increase in cougar population is of concern to local citizens and some livestock producers.

Fisheries - There are forty-two known fish species found in Northeast Oregon. Most noted in this area are a variety of both anadromous and non-anadromous salmonids. Included in this list are spring, summer and fall chinook salmon, summer steelhead, rainbow trout, brook trout, cutthroat trout, golden trout, lake trout, bull trout, lake whitefish and mountain whitefish. Because of their need for relatively pure water, these fish are considered management indicator for water quality. Coho and Sockeye salmon were at one time found in Wallowa river, but are now considered extinct. Snake River Sockeye salmon were listed as an endangered species in December 1991, and Snake River spring, summer and fall chinook salmon were listed as threatened in May 1992. Bull trout, which are found in several clear mountain streams in the area are currently being reviewed for proposed listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Different factors affect the anadromous fish during their life cycle which begins in many rivers in this area. These fish spawn and rear in freshwater, grow to maturity in the ocean, and return to freshwater to reproduce and to die. Predation, and commercial and recreational fishing in the rivers is one area of loss. The spillways and turbines kill many smolts as they continue their downstream migrating through the dams. Once reaching the ocean, their numbers are affected by commercial fishing, predation and other natural factors. Upstream migration past dams may create passage problems to many fish. Additionally degraded conditions in spawning and rearing habitat have reduced the overall number of returning fish.

The complex life cycle, as well as their significant commercial value, make the Pacific salmon highly vulnerable to the actions of modern human activities. Changes in water quality caused by agricultural, municipal, industrial and mining actions; over harvest; diversion of spring and summer runoff for irrigation; riparian habitat loss due to logging, grazing and road building; and direct and indirect effects of dams all have contributed to the decline of the Pacific salmon. In our area, habitat analysis is ongoing and any developmental projects will need to be evaluated in relation to fish habitat needs. Generally, any kind of development needs to be at least 100 feet from water.

#### 4. Cultural/Historic

Native People - Hells Canyon has been a wintering area for prehistoric populations for almost 7,000 years. These people were drawn by the relatively mild winters and abundant wildlife. The canyon is on the boundary between the Great Basin and the Columbia River Plateau, two major areas of Native American culture. The primary occupants early in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century were the Nez Perce Indians from the Wallowa and Imnaha valleys. Shoshone-Bannock, Northern Paiute and Cayuse Indians were also frequent visitors. Numerous archaeological sites exist in the canyon today ranging from rock art to winter "pithouse" villages. The Wallowa Valley was a significant religious and cultural center for the Nez Perce., Umatilla and Cayuse Indians and remains so today.

Beginning in the mid-1700's, small pox, which was introduced by European explorers and trappers, swept through Native American cultures in the northwest and elsewhere wiping out entire populations. Emigrants followed on the Oregon Trail through this country in the mid-1800's. By 1860, gold had been discovered and miners flocked to the southern side of the Wallowa range. Remote Wallowa Valley was settled in the 1870's, to a large extent as a result of agricultural opportunities. Hells Canyon was one of the last places to be settled. Nearly 100 families built cabins by the turn of the century. They grazed cattle and sheep in the uplands during the summer and fall, and wintered them in the canyon bottom.

On-going archaeological programs include: inventory, evaluation and monitoring of sites. Interpretive centers are located at Kirkwood on the Snake River, near Wallowa at the Wallowa Band Nez Perce Trail Interpretive Center, near Flora at the Joseph Canyon Overlook, at Flagstaff Hill near Baker City where the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center can be found, and the Oregon Trail Interpretive Park at the Blue Mountain Crossing off I-84 out of La Grande. Recent interpretive development was installed at Hat Point, the Hells Canyon boat launch and on Summit Ridge at Hells Canyon Overlook II. Summit Ridge was a major migration route for Native Americans and numerous archaeological sites are located there. Another major prehistoric site is at the boat launch at Hells Canyon Creek, with evidence of a village, rock shelter and rock art nearby. Data recovery has been done and testing and evaluation has occurred. This is a wonderful opportunity to interpret prehistoric occupation along the Byway.

Ranching and Range Lands - The development of the tri-county area was to a large extent the result of agricultural opportunities that arose when mining provided a nearby market for products. Ranching has been a significant lifestyle in the area since early settlement. Lush mountain meadows, and native bunchgrass slopes and ridgetops have been utilized for many years by livestock and wildlife. Use of forage by domestic livestock began as early as 1730 with the Nez Perce Indian horses, and with their cattle by 1840. History of settlement reveals homesteaders began grazing cattle in the 1870's. This grazing use was heavy until policies placed regulations on grazing. Range management practices came into effect and many changes have occurred through the years.

Managing forage resources has become more complex as it takes into account other resource uses such as recreation and wildlife. Rangeland improvements such as cattle guards, fences, and water developments have been constructed to facilitate livestock use and distribution. Management systems which incorporate pasture rotations and intense riding to evaluate the range condition are also methods used in managing the land. Today ranching has become a combination of old western knowledge and traditions blended with modern day computerized technology. The US Forest Service and ranchers work together to maintain and improve this valuable resource, the result of which contributes to the economic base of the rural communities.

Much of this country is still grazed by livestock and the Byway travels through some public grazing allotments, as well as private range lands. Livestock still may be encountered in the road and visitors may have the opportunity to view a cattle or sheep drive as stock are being driven to different pasture areas.

In the byway valleys, milder climates and fertile soil make byway country very productive. Farming operations raise a wide variety of feed, seed, and specialty crops, including sugar beets and potatoes. Orchards produce cherries, apples and peaches for commercial use.

Fire - Fire control facilities include two zones, and an air tanker base. The NE Oregon Interagency Dispatch Center at the La Grande airport is an air tanker base and a satellite smoke jumper base. It functions as the fire dispatch coordinating center and the northeast Oregon fire cache.

The La Grande Ranger District has an agreement with the state run Northeast Oregon Dispatch for initial attack on their district. North, in Enterprise, the Wallowa Fire Zone is responsible for Wallowa Valley and Eagle Cap Ranger Districts and the Hells Canyon NRA. This encompasses 1.5 million acres which is the largest fire zone in the continental United States. Two engine stations and a helitack base operate on the Wallowa Zone, and one engine from the Burnt Powder Zone is stationed at Halfway. Fire detection occurs using aircraft and lookouts.

Fires are primarily caused by lightning strikes during the relatively dry months of July, August and September. Early in the nineties, years of drought created extreme fire conditions. Coupled with a high incidence of insects and disease, and a lack of natural fire, forest health was in poor condition. The potential for large scale fires increased dramatically with the volume of dead and dying timber. Better snowfall in recent winters helped the dry conditions, but such weather patterns are cyclical.

Forest Health is playing a major role in a new fire action plan. More large scale prescribed burns ranging from 100 to 1000 acres are being planned to help control tree density, stand type, and fuel loads. It has also become increasingly apparent that fire is an integral part of the ecosystem processes.

The fuels program is increasing responsibilities to include wildlife habitat improvement burns. 800 acres of grass, forbs and brush were burned to improved the range for elk and big horn sheep in 1992. This is in addition to their regular program of reducing fuels after logging operations.

Things to think about in relation to fire and the Byway:

- Fire potential has increased with the bug killed timber especially in the Gumboot vicinity.
- The topography and vegetation on the Halfway side, from the state highway up to Lonesome Saddle, would be an area that fire would travel in quickly.
- The potential for man caused fires increases with more people visiting the area.

Recreation – As our society becomes more urbanized, our population is desiring more opportunities to recreate in a natural setting. Exercise and mind relaxing activities are ways to reduce the stress that comes from working. People are seeking change from the working atmosphere and are looking to outdoor experiences to meet those needs in many cases. Northeastern Oregon provides the largest tracts of land in the state that are protected from development for recreational and ecological reasons. Most of the Wallowa Mountain range was included in the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Hells Canyon was protected by a National Recreation Area designation which includes a wilderness area. The large bodies of water on state and BLM land offer water based recreation opportunities. Currently, visitors are coming to these areas to enjoy the many outdoor opportunities available.

The Scenic Byway has provided opportunities for another sector of visitors; the driving and cycling - sightseeing public. The All-American Road designation have drawn more attention to the area and increased visitor traffic considerably. Renovations and additions to recreation facilities in US Forest Service, State Parks and BLM sites and facilities in recent years, along with an increase in privately offered products and services, have improved the capacity and quality of facilities, making the area better able to handle the increased use.

## **II. Social Setting**

### Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Economic Contributions

The Tourism industry has become a key economic contributor for the state of Oregon, and a viable partner to the more historic industries in eastern Oregon. The Oregon Tourism Commission's 2002 "Oregon Direct Travel Impacts" stated the following contributions to the eleven county region of eastern Oregon.

|                                     |                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| · Total Visitor Expenditures        | \$280.3 million                                                       |
| · Total Payroll or Earnings         | \$ 73.1 million                                                       |
| · Total Employment for 11 Counties  | 5,190 people                                                          |
| · Total State Tax Contributions     | \$ 9.9 million                                                        |
| · Total Local/Lodging Tax           | \$ 2 million                                                          |
| · Annual Change between 1991 & 2001 | 5.2% increase (for the seven county region)                           |
| · Travel-Generated Employment       | 5.9% of people in eastern Oregon are employed by the visitor industry |

In surveys of respondents to the 2003 advertising campaign conducted by Jennie Tucker - Research and Analysis, for EOVA, the following results were tabulated:

- Average Daily Expenditure per Travel Party (2.5 ppl.) = \$286 per day (\$112 pp)
- \$83.10 on Lodging
- \$59.33 on Meals
- \$40.69 on Gasoline
- \$36.00 on Food Stores
- \$18.76 on Entrance Fees
- \$48.33 on Shopping

### Visitor Profiles 2004

The EOVA conducts an annual visitor survey of those people who responded to the EOVA advertising and requested information. This survey has been conducted annually since 1993, and the profile of the visitor to eastern Oregon has varied little.

- Residents of Oregon, Washington, California, and Idaho make up the majority of visitors
- Most are married and have three (2.5) people in their travel party, traveling by automobile in 77% of the cases & 19% travel by RV
- Nearly all of the respondents have a graduate degree, or have attended college
- The average age of the respondent is over 58 years of age, with a combined family income of over \$55,00 annually
- The top three activities in which visitors participated are: Sightseeing, Visiting Oregon Trail sites, & camping/hiking/outdoor activities, which tied with Shopping
- 92% of the respondents who visited eastern Oregon indicated they had an excellent or very good positive experience, with no negative responses
- 39% of respondents actually visited Eastern Oregon, and 80% indicated the EOVA materials aided in their travel planning

Increased advertising of the byway has brought good response. We are seeing more people from the Mid-West and Canada, in addition to the above markets, who are asking specifically about visiting the Hells Canyon All-American Road. Requests for byway maps and information and visits to the byway web site have shot up.

### Statewide Travel Patterns of Oregon Residents

Oregon residents averaged more than nine overnight trips during recent years, six within the state, 3.3 out of state. The bulk of these trips were recreational in nature: 71% of the trips outside the state and 83% of those within the state.

Oregon residents make use of an automobile or RV for nearly all of their travel within the state: 83.6% use their own auto, and another 13% use an RV or travel trailer. Instate trips by residents tend to be fairly short, averaging 3.5 nights. This is approximately half the average length of stay of out-of-state visitors.

Residents use commercial accommodations for somewhat under half of their trips, with the figure slightly lower for pleasure trips. Oregonians make extensive use of public campgrounds as accommodations for a quarter of all trips and an additional 5% of trips use a commercial campground.

Overnight travel tends to be fairly focused, with nearly two thirds reporting only one primary destination. The comparable figure for visitors to the state is about half this amount. Residents are less inclined to wander as a travel pattern than are visitors from out-of-state.

Day trips are more common for Oregon households than overnight trips, with an average of 11 such trips during the past year. The purpose of day trips is recreational for about 75%.

The most popular destinations for resident overnight travel are the coast, the Central and North Coasts in particular, followed closely by Central Oregon. Eastern Oregon gets only 7% of the travel nights spent in Oregon, and that is spread across nearly half the state.

The most common recreation activities of out-of-state visitors are relaxing/sightseeing (72.2%) and visiting friends or relatives (68.3%) which are also the most common activities of Oregon *resident* visitors. Other common activities are picnicking (48.5%), going to a restaurant or club for entertainment (38.7%), hiking (37%), or attending a fair or festival (36.4%).

#### Demographic Characteristics and Resident Travel

Income has the most significant influence on out-of-state overnight travel. Resident households with incomes over \$50,000 per year take an average of 6.8 overnight trips outside the state per year, nearly double the average of 3.3.

Income has a much weaker effect on overnight travel within the state. All households above an income of \$20,000 appear to travel with about the same frequency.

#### Oregon Trail Market Study

The Oregon Tourism Division 1991 Oregon Trail Market Study was prepared by Bardsley and Neidhart Inc., prior to development of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center near Baker City, Oregon. Information from this study is relevant to the market analysis for Hells Canyon Scenic Byway because this site is located on the Byway. It has become an extremely popular facility and has the potential to direct visitors to opportunities available along the Byway. According to this study, interest in historical sites and attractions is extremely high among travelers surveyed. Over half of Oregon travelers and nearly two-thirds of western states travelers say they are very likely to visit an historic site or attraction if it was in an area they were traveling. That group was considered the target market for historic attractions in this analysis. Since this document was originally compiled in 1996, an additional four Interpretive Centers have been constructed across the state along the Historic Oregon Trail. In

total, centers now are operating in Ontario, Baker City, Pendleton, The Dalles, and Oregon City. Each center has its own perspective and unique way of presenting the stories of the Oregon Trail experience and settlement. The Oregon Trail Interpretive Park at Blue Mountain Crossing, a National Forest attractions near La Grande, has also been added to the list of historic attractions / interpretive centers.

In a "Market Readiness" Study conducted by Larry Harvey and Associates for The Oregon Trail Preservation Trust and Eastern Oregon Visitors Association, the two competitive market advantages for the region continued to be the Oregon Trail and Hells Canyon. The Byway ties those two visitor products together with a national "branding" campaign that assisted in the increased awareness and traveling of the Byway.

### Demography

With the exception of gender, the target market for historic attractions is indistinguishable from the broader traveler market. In Oregon, women constitute 57% of the historic attractions market, and the western states target market is 53% female.

### Preferred Vacation Activities

The target market is similar to the broader traveler market in terms of its preferences in vacation activities. Relaxing and sightseeing tops the list of preferred activities (mentioned by 63%) of the western states market and 48% of the Oregon market), followed by outdoor recreation (camping, hiking, and fishing) and visiting friends and relatives. Visiting restaurants, bars or clubs, shopping, visiting historic attractions, swimming and walking round out the top ten favored activities.

### Importance of Attractions Features

On a scale of one to ten, with ten being "extremely important," scenic attractions received a score of 8.5, from the Oregon market and 8.4 from the western states market. Outdoor recreation opportunities scored 6.7 for Oregon and 7.1 for visitors. Family restaurants, motels/hotels or inns, and grocery stores scored over 6.0. Tent camping facilities scored 4.8 for Oregon and 5.5 for visitors.

### Ancillary Interests

One in four respondents in the target market say they would remain in the area another day or two after visiting an historic attraction to enjoy natural and scenic attractions, biking or hiking trails, a festival, carnival or fair, a dance, theater or music show, and fishing. 7% of the western states and 6% of the Oregon target market would remain another day or so if they could not see all attractions in one day.

### Capitalizing on I-84 Traffic

Since most travelers are very or somewhat likely to visit an historic attraction that is in an area where they are traveling (94% of western state and 88% of resident travelers), the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center can attract a large percentage of I-84 traffic by cross-selling with other local attractions and the Byway. On average, Oregonians are willing to drive 207 miles, one way. Urban travelers are willing to drive slightly further - 212 miles. On a day trip, urban travelers are willing to drive 111 miles, one way.

The Eastern Oregon Visitors Association is a regional destination marketing cooperative. The organization combines the financial resources and personnel of the counties, communities, interpretive centers, attractions, and businesses of eastern Oregon and along the Oregon Trail in order to promote the areas to visitors. The organization has been successful in raising awareness of what eastern Oregon communities, environment, culture, and byways have to offer vacationers. EOVA has been

instrumental in increasing visitor traffic within its constituency, and has acted as the primary voice for the eastern Oregon tourism industry since 1991. The mission of the organization is to promote a high-quality tourism experience that emphasizes the unique heritage, culture, and natural resources of the region, while enhancing the economic value and quality of life of its citizens. EOVA has identified “Scenic Byways” as an important market niche to pursue annually through media advertising, printed materials, and via the website.

### **Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Market Area**

Hells Canyon Scenic Byway is located in the northeastern corner of Oregon, on the border with Washington and Idaho. Several population centers are located within three hours traveling distance of the Byway.

Numbers are taken from 2000 Census population Totals:

| City                            | Population (Approx.) | Miles from Closest Byway Portal |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Tri-Cities, WA                  | 125,467              | 120                             |
| Hermiston, OR                   | 13,154               | 80                              |
| Pendleton, OR                   | 16,354               | 52                              |
| La Grande, OR                   | 12,327               | 0                               |
| Walla Walla, WA                 | 29,686               | 94                              |
| College Place, WA               | 7,818                | 92                              |
| Lewiston, ID/Clarkston, WA area | 38,241               | 88                              |
| Pullman, WA                     | 24,675               | 118                             |
| Moscow, ID                      | 21,291               | 118                             |
| Baker City, OR                  | 9,860                | 0                               |
| Ontario, OR                     | 10,985               | 72                              |
| Payette, ID                     | 7,054                | 65                              |
| Boise, ID                       | 185,787              | 133                             |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>                   | <b>502,787</b>       |                                 |

There are six metropolitan areas located between four and seven hours traveling distance from the Byway:

|              |           |     |
|--------------|-----------|-----|
| Boise, ID    | 110,000   | 133 |
| Spokane, WA  | 178,500   | 200 |
| Portland, OR | 509,610   | 260 |
| Salem, OR    | 110,400   | 310 |
| Seattle, WA  | 518,000   | 340 |
| Eugene, OR   | 117,160   | 370 |
|              | 1,543,670 |     |

Unless otherwise noted, these population figures are for the cities themselves. Large populations are located in suburbs of the metropolitan areas and rural populations affect the smaller cities so that overall numbers are actually much larger than indicated for the market area.

At the time of the byway designation, user information was gathered from visitor log books located at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, Hells Canyon Creek Recreation Site, Kirkwood Historic Ranch and Museum, Wallowa Mountains Visitor Center, ODFW's Imnaha Fish Weir, Hat Point Lookout, and from data gathered by the BLM on the Three Reservoir area, and state data on Wallowa Lake State Park.

The majority of visitors to all of these sites come from Oregon, Idaho, Washington and California. Almost all 50 states were represented individually at each site. International visitors were from about 54 different countries according to the visitor logs. Canada, Germany, England, Japan, and Australia recorded the highest numbers. The German language market has seen significant growth in eastern Oregon in recent years.

Northeastern Oregon is a destination area with the Wallowa Mountains, Wallowa Lake and Hells Canyon as focal points. Many visitors who come are destination oriented. Market groups who are attracted to the area include sightseers, history buffs, and those who recreate in the outdoors. Younger people seem to frequent the wilderness and a substantial number of people who are over 50 visit the campgrounds. Age statistics have not been gathered for this area but undoubtedly they are similar to state statistics in this category.

### **ROS Class Social Setting**

Social settings are described as the interactions between user groups within an opportunity setting. They play an important role in determining the types of experience that can be realized, and whether or not a satisfactory recreation experience is achieved. The ROS classification along the physical route is Rural through state and private land, and Roaded Natural through National Forest land. The Rural criteria indicates the frequency of contact is moderate to high in developed sites, on roads and trails, and water surfaces, while moderate away from developed sites. The Roaded Natural criteria indicates the frequency of contact is moderate to high on roads and low to moderate on trails and away from the roads.

### **. User Patterns**

## **1. Use patterns in Undeveloped Areas**

### Popular Areas and Types of Use

- \*Eagle Cap Wilderness - hiking, horseback riding, hunting, camping
- \*Eagle Creek - fishing, camping, hunting
- \*Three Reservoir Area - water based use
- \*Hess Road - sightseeing, hunting
- \*Homestead Wilderness Study Area - hunting
- \*Snake River - rafting, jet boating, fishing
- \*North Pine Creek - fishing, camping, hunting
- \*Pine District Roadless Area - hunting, fishing, camping
- \*Imnaha River - fishing, camping, hunting, sightseeing
- \*Lick Creek - hunting
- \*Big Sheep Canyon - hunting, wood and mushroom gathering
- \*Hat Point Road - hunting, hiking, camping, horseback riding, sightseeing
- \*Hells Canyon Wilderness - hiking, horseback riding, hunting, camping
- \*Lostine Canyon - camping, hiking
- \*Wallowa River - fishing, rafting
- \*Minam River - camping

### Densities, Group Sizes

The majority of dispersed camping that occurs on National Forest land is in groups; families or hunters. Generally, camping sites are spread out and have adequate screening. Maintenance occurs as needed.

### Resource impacts

Resource impact is evident especially along waterways. Some camping sites are located too close to the water, especially with the fisheries concerns along the Imnaha River. Sites which are too close are experiencing bank stability problems and erosion. Along Eagle Creek impacts involve trampled vegetation, loss of downed wood and woody debris, road impacts in wet areas and from driving indiscriminately off roads. Many campgrounds have or are undergoing renovation, moving the user facilities back at least 100' from river and stream banks.

Most of the dispersed use occurs during hunting season and many times these are large groups. Heavy use along the reservoirs occurs during the summer months. Several problem areas exist. Dealing with human waste in large camp areas is a concern that will be addressed in the future.

□

## **MARKETING STRATEGY**

### **Tourism**

Tourism is the third largest industry in the region behind wood products and agriculture. Many small businesses and industries have evolved in the region in an effort to capture the potential economic benefit of the tourism market. Each of the counties and cities along the route is engaged in product development projects such as improvements to shopping areas, art galleries and bronze foundries, entertainment and recreation venues, and heritage interpretation and attractions. Several years ago, the tourism professionals and businesses in the counties realized they would have to combine their efforts and financial resources to be able to market the area and compete as a tourism destination.

This commitment led to the establishment of the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association (EOVA). EOVA is a tourism marketing organization currently comprised of the nine counties of eastern Oregon: Malheur, Grant, Baker, Union, Wallowa, Umatilla, Gilliam, Grant, and Morrow, along with Oregon State Parks Department, National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, Idaho Power Corp., Oregon Trail Electric, Baker and Umatilla County Commissions, and Malheur County Economic Development. Each county has representation on the EOVA Board of Directors and the organization is very active in soliciting partnerships from private businesses, non-profit organizations and government agencies. Charter and Sustaining members of EOVA are actively involved in the planning and marketing of the tourism product, of which scenic byways play a very large role. The Hells Canyon Scenic Byway provides some of the most spectacular scenery in the country and is also the main thoroughfare through the northeast corner of Oregon. Along with the cooperative investment and involvement with EOVA, destination marketing organizations in Baker, Union, and Wallowa counties and the US Forest Service are pursuing individual marketing strategies for the Byway. A distinct advantage with the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway is that a portion is within the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. This alone attracts attention from people around the world who enjoy outdoor recreational activities.

### Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee

In 2004, Eastern Oregon Visitors Association, along with the assistance of a FHWA Seed Grant, formed the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee to act as the vehicle, which promotes, preserves, protects, enhances, and tells the stories of Hells Canyon All-American Road. Committee members include county and city governments, land management and road jurisdiction agencies, county destination marketing organizations, local Chamber of Commerce, businesses and visitor attractions located along the Byway. The group has four sub-committees or teams that conduct and help administer projects related to the Byway. These teams are: Marketing, Interpretation, Hospitality / Community Ownership, and Grant Development / Finance. Currently the group is actively pursuing projects in all four areas, and has been greatly aided by the awarding of the 2003 Seed Grant.

Utilizing market research gathered by the Oregon Tourism Commission, Eastern Oregon Visitors Association, and the 3 county DMO's, Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee has put into place a marketing plan that appeals to the targeted market profiles of people most likely to enjoy exploring the Byway. The Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee works closely with the Oregon Tourism Commission and EOVA to coordinate efforts that cooperatively promote the Byway experience.

## Marketing Goals

The overall marketing goal for the byway is to increase awareness of the extraordinary scenic, natural, and historic quality of the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway, draw visitors to the route, and to increase the economic impact of tourism on the communities through which the byway passes.

### Marketing Accomplishments:

In 2004 the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway-Drive a Northeast Oregon Adventure, a 4 color fold out map and brochure, was reprinted with the assistance of the county DMO's and the US Forest Service.

In 2004, Hells Canyon Scenic Byway was the featured byway on the wrap-around cover of the all-new state scenic byways magazine. A six page description of the route is included.

Placement of the HCSB brochures is the responsibility of the byway DMO partnership. The partnership pays for placement of the brochure in all State Welcome Centers and distributes it to visitor centers around the state and businesses along the byway. The brochures are sent as fulfillment to requests for information generated by byway specific advertising. In addition, they are included when appropriate in information packets sent out by Union County Tourism, the Baker County Unlimited, and the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce.

The HCSB has it's own web site, [www.hellscanyonbyway.com](http://www.hellscanyonbyway.com), which is prominently shown in all advertising and publications.

The HSCB partnership has ensured that accurate and interesting content about the byway is included on the NSB site, [www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org).

A scene from the byway is featured in the inside cover of all 2004 Mobil Guides to National Scenic Byways and is described in the Mobil Guide To National Scenic Byways of the West and the Mobil Guide to All-American Roads.

The HCSB was chosen as a feature article in the 2004 spring/summer issue of Travel Oregon.

A byway map was published by a partnership of the Baker City and La Grande newspapers and the HCSB marketing partnership in 2004, which provided the opportunity for byway businesses to advertise in conjunction with the byway.

In 2003, the partnership began an advertising that brought over 6,000 responses.

In 2004, the partnership placed advertisements in Sunset Western edition, Journies and VIA AAA Magazines, Travel 50 & Beyond, Northwest Travel, the Oregon Attractions Guide, and newspapers in Boise, Tri-Cities, and Portland and responded to over 10,000 resulting requests for information. It is hoped that the marketing campaign can continue in 2005.

### Logo and theme development:

A logo was developed that has been utilized on the Oregon State Scenic Byway signs, brochures, Byway Boosters window decal and other promotional materials.

Scenic Byway Designation Achievement Timeline:  
Forest Service National Scenic Byway designation in 1994  
Oregon State Scenic Byway Designation in 1996

Designated as an All American Road in 2000.

**Public Relations Actions:**

Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee (HCSBC) story ideas and press releases are regularly presented to travel and lifestyle publications and group marketing venues. The purpose is to generate articles in regional and national travel, outdoor recreation, and leisure publications such as those for RV, motorcycle, bicycle, wildlife viewing, snowmobile, sports travel, geological, historical, and group tour niche markets. We will continue to pursue more articles in publications for these general and niche markets.

Promote using sites along the route as settings in regional and national television and print advertising campaigns. Continue to work with the Oregon Film & Video Office following possible location leads.

Byway route recognition and depiction on national and state maps and in all area, regional, and statewide publications is an on-going activity.

Present the byway on the world wide web via several local, regional, state, and national web sites. Ongoing submissions and updates; reciprocal links.

**Media Advertising Actions:**

Continue coordination and cooperative advertising between the tourism marketing and development entities for the three impacted counties whenever prudent. The byway is a destination and should be marketed cooperatively as such. To do this requires investment from each of the county destination marketing organizations and coordination by the Byway Marketing Contact.

**Research Tours:**

Participate as a region in research tours for group tour and receptive operators, travel writers, and other user groups.

**Interpretation Goals**

To develop, implement, and maintain a premiere wayfinding and interpretive system, that safely engages and educates the byway visitor through a series of signs, kiosks, and monuments that incorporate a thematic “family” of stories about the Byway.

**Interpretation Strategies:**

The Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee is working with a contracted company to develop an interpretive plan for the entire byway. In 2004, that plan is in its second draft. Specific projects have been selected for the first phase of completion and the committee is pursuing grants for implementation. The Interpretation sub-committee is working on this aspect. In 2005, EOVA / HCSBC will again seek funding assistance from the FHWA to implement Phase II of the Interpretation Plan. A “Conceptual” plan was completed in 2003 by Sea Reach, under contract with the Oregon Travel Information Council.

Visitor Facilities:

The Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee is identifying needs and is working with the various road and land management jurisdiction agencies to build or improve visitor comfort facilities such as restrooms, campgrounds and interpretive sites.

Signage:

Scenic Byway portal signs are currently located at each end in La Grande and Baker City.

Scenic Byway assurance signs are dispersed at regular intervals and points of decision along the route, placed in such a way as to not interfere or disrupt the viewshed of the byway. The US Forest Service worked with the Travel Information Council of Oregon to develop the prototype signs for the state scenic byways system. This byway was designated as a test route for these prototype signs.

Information Kiosks:

Information kiosks, wayfinding markers, and interpretive panels will be constructed at selected sites along the route. Ideal locations are: Halfway, Richland, Baker County Unlimited offices, La Grande, Wallowa Mountain Visitor Center, Wallowa Lake area, rest areas, Visitor information centers, key interpretive sites for various intrinsic value explanation, and communities along the route. An information display for the route was installed at the Baker County Unlimited Visitor Center in Baker City.

**Hospitality / Community Ownership Goals**

To engage the Byway communities, their businesses, attractions, and frontline workers in the importance of the Hells Canyon All-American Road and provide a friendly and knowledgeable work force to greet the Byway visitor.

Hospitality Training:

Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee, along with the destination marketing organizations from the tri-county area conducted hospitality trainings for over 300 frontline workers located in communities along the Byway during 2004 with the assistance of the Seed Grant Coordinator.

Byway Booster Program:

Along with the hospitality training, employers were given recognition of their support of the Byway if they sent employees to the trainings by receiving a Byway Boost window decal.

**Grant Writing and Sustainable Finance Goals**

To continue to seek various funding sources to assist in the on-going activities of Hells Canyon All-American Road to allow the purpose of the Byway to prosper.

(The purpose of the Hells Canyon All American Road is to promote, preserve, protect, interpret, and enhance the intrinsic qualities of Hells Canyon Scenic Byway showcasing the outstanding scenery and stimulating local economies.)

Grant Writing:

Several grants are being pursued including:

- FHWA Transportation Enhancement Program – Interpretation signs & toilet facilities

- FHWA – Scenic Byway Funds – Seed Grant\*\* for continuing the administration & coordination of the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee and an Interpretation Grant to complete and implement Phase II of the Interpretation Plan

**\*\*Byway Activity & Communication Coordination:**

The Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Committee is seeking funding to continue the contracting of a Byway Coordinator. The coordinator has made great strides over the last calendar year to coordinate communication and cooperation between partners, involve the public, coordinate byway enhancement projects, apply for grants, and develop the byway committee and establish its relationship with the parent organization, the EOVA. It is essential to the success of the byway that these activities continue under the leadership of an experienced and proven byway coordinator.

**Other Financial Support:**

Various private businesses, including regional banks, chain companies, and non-profit organizations are being solicited for on-going, sustainable support.

□

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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|                                          |                                                 |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
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| Connie Pound-Lewis, Executive Director   | Baker County Visitor & Convention Bureau        |
| Kurt Wiedenmann, Planning Staff          | Wallowa Whitman National Forest                 |
| Jimmie Roberts, Forest Engineer          | Wallowa Whitman National Forest                 |
| Teresa Penninger, Transportation Planner | Oregon Department of Transportation             |
| Kay Doern, Administrative Assistant      | La Grande/Union Co. Visitor & Convention Bureau |
| Rutter, Administrative Assistant         | Baker County Visitor & Convention Bureau        |
| Yasha Holiday                            | Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce              |
| Orville Gaylor, Traffic Signs Engineer   | Oregon Department of Transportation             |
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