

COMPLEXITY IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: A CASE  
STUDY ON WILDERNESS DESIGNATION UNDER THE 2009  
OMNIBUS PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT ACT IN OREGON

By

ALEXANDRA FERTIG

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Name, Chair of the Committee

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DATE

Committee: Richard Margerum, Ph.D., Dept. Head of the Planning, Public Policy and Management Program  
Cassandra Moseley, Ph.D, Director of the Ecosystem Workforce Program  
Donald Holtgrieve, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor in Planning, Public Policy and Management Program

## **Abstract**

Since the American West was settled, Americans have sought to preserve a sense of solitude for their experiences on public lands. Many people are fond of recreating in wilderness areas, or just knowing that they exist on the landscape, but not all know the effort behind getting a site designated as a wilderness. The purpose of wilderness areas are to provide areas that are essentially undisturbed by human activity. Some of the typical issues associated with wilderness designation include the conflicting desires of competing user groups, the political climate determining whether a congressional representative will support the wilderness bill, and the bureaucratic processes that the bill must go through to be turned into legislation. As a result of these issues it can take many years, or even decades, to designate a wilderness.

Two wilderness areas, designated in March 2009, present an opportunity to analyze the process of natural resource management decision-making, especially as environmental organizations have begun to gather support for several additional wilderness areas in 2010. The Oregon Badlands is located in central Oregon about 15 miles east of Bend on a landscape characterized by lava flows, dry river canyons, and junipers and other desert plants. The Spring Basin Wilderness is located in central Oregon approximately 20 miles from the town of Fossil.

Through a combination of interviews and document analysis this project explores the question: How do the differences and similarities of the players, motivating factors, and environmental conditions reflected in differences in the process leading to designation for each wilderness area?

The findings of this research suggest that strong leadership, a well planned and executed strategy, local support, resolving issues early, and negotiation among stakeholders helps lead to a successful wilderness designation process. The primary recommendations to come out of this study are to: (1) recruit strong leadership, (2) strategize and work out details ahead of time, (3) organize a “friends” group, (4) identify benefits for all stakeholders, (5) ensure all user groups are involved, (6) identify the “low hanging fruit,” and (7) streamline the land exchange process. These findings and recommendations can be used by groups interested in proposing a wilderness area for congressional designation.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Chapter 1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2. Background</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 3. Literature Review</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter 4. Methods</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Chapter 5. Results</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Chapter 6. Discussion &amp; Recommendations</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>47</b>

## **Appendices**

<b>Appendix A. Interview Guide</b>	<b>A-1</b>
<b>Appendix B. List of Acronyms</b>	<b>B-1</b>



## Chapter 1. Introduction

Many people are fond of recreating in wilderness areas, or just knowing that they exist on the landscape. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary the word wilderness originates in the Old English word “wilddēoren”, meaning a place of wild beasts. The possible definitions include: “a tract or region uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings; an area essentially undisturbed by human activity together with its naturally developed life community; or an empty or pathless area or region.” The 1964 Wilderness Act (Public Law 88-577) defines wilderness as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” All of these definitions indicate places that are minimally affected by human activity. Congress designates wilderness areas and restricts human activities are restricted to non-mechanized human recreation and scientific study; horses are allowed but mechanized vehicles like off-highway vehicles and bicycles are not.

Some of the typical issues associated with wilderness designation include the conflicting desires of competing user groups, the political climate determining whether a congressional representative will support the wilderness bill, and the bureaucratic processes that the bill must go through to be turned into legislation. As a result of these issues it can take many years, or even decades, to designate a wilderness. The wilderness proponent typically spends a great deal of time working with the various stakeholders that will be affected by the designation, and will also be waiting for the right public officials to be elected that will shepherd the bill through Congress. An event that may only happen once every 10-20 years, which makes it important for someone wishing to see an area designated as wilderness to be prepared for that time frame. The Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas present an interesting case study to look at how two wilderness areas recently went through the designation process.

In March 2009, Congress designated seven new wilderness areas in Oregon under the Omnibus Public Land Management Act (Public Law 111-11). Four are located on National Forest System lands on the Mount Hood and Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forests. Three are located on Bureau of Land Management lands on the Medford and Prineville Districts. Wilderness areas were also designated in Alaska, California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, New Mexico, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia.

These recent wilderness designations present an opportunity to analyze the process of natural resource management decision-making, especially as several additional areas have been proposed for wilderness designation this year. Many of these decisions are accompanied by tension and conflict between project stakeholders and special interest groups at the local level, as well as complex political arrangements at the national level. The values and goals of special interest groups, recreational users, federal employees, industry, and government officials do not always align when it comes to how natural resources should be managed. However, in the case of the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designations there was minimal conflict.

This makes further research into these wilderness area designations a unique and interesting case to pinpoint the similarities and differences in the process of natural resource management decision-making.

There is a wide variation in how much conflict surrounds an individual wilderness designation process. This appears to be primarily affected by the gains or losses experienced by the stakeholders involved in the designation process as well as the complexity of these issues. Wilderness designation tends to result in more conflict if the designation effort is perceived to be coming from outside of the immediate community. However, if the wilderness designation will not result in a change to the local citizen's primary use of the area it is less likely to cause conflict (Durrant and Shumway 2004). For example, if the primary uses were activities like hiking there is likely to be less conflict than if the area was used for motorized vehicle recreation. Changes in policies regarding resource extraction as a result of wilderness designation is another type of activity that is likely to cause conflict.

### The Study Areas

The intention of this project is to analyze the process of wilderness designation for two case studies under the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act. The legislation designated a total of approximately 2 million acres of wilderness in nine states for protection in the National Wilderness Preservation System; approximately 197,000 of these acres are located in Oregon. This included the designation of seven new wilderness areas and additions to five existing wilderness areas in the Mt. Hood area. For the purposes of this study two wilderness designations are researched in depth: the Oregon Badlands Wilderness and the Spring Basin Wilderness.

The Oregon Badlands Wilderness (29,301 acres) is located in central Oregon on the Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management (Map 1). The designated wilderness area is about 15 miles east of Bend on a landscape characterized by lava flows, dry river canyons, castle-like rock formations, Native American pictographs, junipers, and desert flora.



Map 1. Study Area Overview

The designation of this wilderness area was supported by environmental organizations including the Oregon Natural Desert Association, local ranchers, and some local and state government officials (ONDA 2009a).

The Spring Basin Wilderness (6,382 acres) is located in central Oregon on the Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management (Map 1). The wilderness area is approximately 20 miles from the town of Fossil and is also near the John Day Fossil Beds. The designation of this wilderness area was supported by environmental organizations including the Oregon Natural Desert Association, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and local landowners. The designation requires several land exchanges to improve access to the site (ONDA 2009b).

### **Problem Definition and Project Purpose**

The wilderness designations under the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act provide an opportunity for researchers to add to the existing literature on the process of reaching natural resource management decisions. Further examination into these cases will add to the knowledge base that describes what aspects of the process make it more likely for stakeholders to reach a common goal or understanding in natural resource management in general, and in wilderness designation in particular.

This project analyzes wilderness designation process through three steps: (1) interviews with project stakeholders about their experience with each wilderness designation, (2) review of the public record related to the wilderness designations, and (3) review of the *Congressional Record* related to each wilderness designation. The question of particular interest is: How do the differences and similarities of the players, motivating factors, and environmental conditions reflected in differences in the process leading to designation for each wilderness area? More specific questions include:

1. What common goals brought stakeholders together?
2. Which stakeholder groups worked together in support of the wilderness designation?
3. What arrangements were made to reach agreement on issues?
4. Where on the continuum between collaboration and negotiation did each of these wilderness areas fall in the process of designation?

## **Organization of This Report**

Following this introduction, this report is organized into six chapters and seven appendices that present background information, past literature, research methodology, findings, and analysis and recommendations for future wilderness designation processes.

- **Chapter 2: Background** provides a brief overview of the Wilderness Act and other information important to understanding the study areas.
- **Chapter 3: Literature Review** provides a summary of selected research items that are related to wilderness values in the United States, policies and strategies for wilderness designation, conflict resolution, and the process of collaboration and negotiation.
- **Chapter 4: Methodology** includes a detailed discussion of the techniques used to obtain and analyze the data used for this project.
- **Chapter 5: Results** provides the results of the data gathering.
- **Chapter 6: Discussion & Recommendations** provides this author's analysis of the research questions asked and outlines a set of planning recommendations that could provide guidance to future persons who wish to see an area designated as wilderness. It also recommends further research that might be conducted on this topic.

## **Chapter 2. Background**

Over one hundred years of decision-making related to the preservation of wilderness preceded the wilderness designations under the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Management Act. Americans have sought to preserve a sense of solitude on public lands since the American West was settled. It is important to first revisit the history of the original 1964 Wilderness Act to understand the history of the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act.

### **Overview of the Wilderness Act of 1964**

Before the Wilderness Act was passed in 1964, the U.S. Forest Service enacted the L-20 Regulation in 1929 to designate Natural Areas for scientific and educational purposes, Experimental Forests and Ranges, for long-term research unaffected by other management, and Primitive Areas “to maintain primitive conditions of transportation, subsistence, habitation, and environment to the fullest degree compatible with their highest public use” (USFS 2010). Under this regulation the U.S. Forest Service ultimately established 14.2 million acres of Primitive Areas and Canoe Areas. However, in 1939 after only 10 years the Secretary of Agriculture issued a series of U-Regulations that replaced the L-Regulations. Under the new U-Regulations, these areas were reclassified as Wilderness and Wild Areas. The U-Regulations defined Wilderness Areas as contiguous blocks of land that were at least 100,000 acres in size and Wild Areas as units between 5,000 and 100,000 acres in size, both without roads, commercial timber harvest, or other similar activities. Like the later Wilderness Act, these regulations prohibited roads, motorized transportation, commercial timber harvest, and facilities like hotels and lodges. These regulations drove the U.S. Forest Service’s wilderness policy for over twenty years, until the Wilderness Act was passed in 1964 (USFS 2010). These policies were precursors to the regulations established under the Wilderness Act, which applied to other federal agencies in addition to the U.S. Forest Service.

Also leading up to the Wilderness Act, the debate over the appropriate use of natural resources began between John Muir and Gifford Pinchot, the later promoted conservation and the former preservation. John Muir, the leader of the wilderness preservationists, founded the Sierra Club in 1892. Muir felt that areas, such as Yosemite, should remain in a pristine condition uninfluenced by active resource management activities. In contrast Pinchot, leader of the conservation movement and first head of the U.S. Forest Service, forwarded the idea of wise use in natural resource management for sustained yields for human benefit. He championed the idea that scientifically trained experts in forestry should make land management decisions rather than politically appointed officials. In addition, public land administration should be supervised by a single federal department due to the interrelatedness of the resources and the tendency for interdepartmental conflicts caused by competing resources users (Hays 1959).

The Wilderness Act of 1964 was enacted to establish a National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) for the permanent good of the people. The Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.) legally defines wilderness as:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.

An area may be designated as wilderness if it appears to have been primarily affected by nature, provides opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation, is over 5,000 acres, and contains ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. Certain restrictions accompany designation of a wilderness area. The Wilderness Act allows for “primitive and unconfined type[s] of recreation” that include hiking, backpacking, and horseback riding. Except for existing private rights, no commercial activities, permanent roads, use of motor vehicles, landing of aircraft, or other form of mechanical transport are allowable in designated wilderness areas in accordance with section 4(c). Livestock grazing in designated wilderness is permissible if established prior to designation of the wilderness. Regulations will be applied in accordance with section 4(d)(4) of the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1133(d)(4)) and the guidelines in Appendix A of the report of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the House of Representatives accompanying H.R. 2570 of the 101<sup>st</sup> Congress (H. Rept. 101-405). Access must be maintained to private property in accordance with section 5(a) of the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1134(a)).

Initially, over 30 million acres of federal land were designated as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The act also established a process for designating additional land. Several presidents added to the wilderness system: President Carter designated 56 million acres as wilderness in 1980, President Clinton designated 58.5 million acres of national forest land as roadless. Most recently President Obama signed a bill designating an additional 2 million acres as wilderness. The system has since expanded to include nearly 110 million acres.

In March 2009, the Omnibus Public Lands Act (Public Law 111-11) designated 52 new wilderness areas and added acreage to 26 existing areas to add a total of over 2 million acres to the NWPS. The Oregon Badlands Wilderness and the Spring Basin Wilderness are the two that will be the subject of further analysis in this document.

A federal land management agency, organization, or individual citizen can initiate the wilderness designation process by making a wilderness proposal to the U.S. Senate. The bill must be approved by the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in the U.S. Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources in the U.S. House of Representatives. Then, the President either signs or vetoes the wilderness bill. Finally, the Secretary of the Interior must file the map and legal description of the wilderness with the Senate and House of Representatives committees as soon as is practicable after the date the act is enacted.

## **Wilderness Study Areas**

The Wilderness Act established a process for determining the suitability of future wilderness areas. Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) are roadless areas that have the characteristics required for wilderness area designation, but have not yet been designated by Congress. To be designated as a WSA, a site had to be over 5,000 acres, appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, and provide an opportunity for solitude and primitive types of recreation. The Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas were designated as WSAs in 1980.

The BLM must manage the WSA in compliance with Section 603(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Existing rights and grandfathered uses are permitted, however they may only occur at the same level as when the FLPMA was approved. Allowable recreational activities include hiking, camping, backpacking, fishing, hunting, rock hounding, boating, and horseback riding. Allowable activities that have restrictions include recreational vehicle use off of existing travel routes. In addition, issuance of new mineral leases is not allowed. A WSA must be managed to maintain its wilderness characteristics until Congress decides it should be designated as wilderness or released for other management activities. As a result a lot of federal land in the western United States is in a state of management limbo.

## **Process of land exchanges**

Both the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas required land exchanges between the BLM and non-Federal land owners. Land exchanges must be carried out in compliance with section 206 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1716). Both the Federal and non-Federal land must be appraised by an independent and qualified appraiser and agreed to by the Secretary of Agriculture or the Interior and the owner of the non-Federal land. The appraisal must be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions and the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice. If the lands are determined to be unequal then equalization payments shall be made between the parties in accordance with section 206(b) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1716(b)). Alternatively, the acreage of the land to be exchanged may be adjusted as appropriate. In addition, the costs associated with the land exchange—appraisals, surveys, and any necessary environmental clearances—shall be shared equally between the owner of the non-Federal land and the Federal Government. The exchange of land between the two entities shall also be subject to any easements, rights-of-way, and other valid rights that exist on the date of the wilderness designation. A further requirement is that the land exchanges take place within 2 years of the date of the enactment of the Act.

## **The Bureau of Land Management**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages approximately 253 million surface acres as well as approximately 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate, comprising over 40 percent of federally managed land (USDI-BLM 2010b). The BLM was officially formed in 1946 by merging the U.S. Grazing Service with the General Land Office.

The U.S. Grazing Service had been established in 1934 under the Taylor Grazing Act to manage public rangelands and the General Land Office was established in 1812 to oversee the disposition of Federal lands. In 1976, Congress enacted the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) which provided the BLM with its first unified legislative mandate. Under the FLPMA, Congress provided the BLM with a multiple-use mandate for “management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people” (USDI-BLM 2010c). FLPMA established the BLM’s multiple-use mandate, and the mission statement of the BLM now reads:

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for stewardship of our public lands. The BLM is committed to manage, protect and improve these lands in a manner to serve the needs of the American people. Management is based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield of our nation’s resources within a framework of environmental responsibility and scientific technology. These resources includes recreation, rangelands, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife habitat, wilderness, air and scenic quality, as well as scientific and cultural values.

In Oregon, BLM lands have a “checkerboard” pattern in many areas. This is the result of the federal government granting the Oregon and California Railroad (O&C) approximately 3.7 million acres to build the first railroad connecting Oregon with California. The O&C was granted these acres, which were scattered in a checkerboard pattern along a 60-mile wide strip of land between Portland and the California border, to sell to settlers for no more than \$2.50 per acre. This was intended as an incentive to the railroad company to encourage development in the area. However, by 1903 the O&C announced that they did not plan to sell any more of the land which meant they were violating the terms of the grant. So in 1916, the U.S. Congress reclaimed 2.4 million acres of the unsold land. The BLM now manages over 750,000 acres of former O&C land, which still retains the checkerboard pattern. This checkerboard pattern presents a management challenge because federal lands are frequently interspersed with private lands (OHS 2010). The Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas are both affected by this checkerboard land pattern.

The Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas are both located on the Prineville District of the BLM in Oregon. The Prineville District includes over 1.65 million acres of public land scattered throughout central Oregon. The District includes over 385 miles of wild and scenic rivers on the Crooked, Deschutes, White, and John Day Rivers. The primary management emphases are on riparian improvement, grazing management, and steelhead and salmon habitat improvement (USDI-BLM 2010a).

The FLPMA requires that management plans be developed for the various BLM Resource Areas. This is particularly of interest for the Oregon Badlands Wilderness case, as several decisions made in the most recent management plan dramatically affected the wilderness designation process.

The Oregon Badlands Wilderness area is currently managed under the 2005 Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan (RMP). This plan describes the overall vision and goals for land management in the area as well as specific land use allocations and management objectives. The wilderness areas are Special Management Areas (SMAs) under this plan and are managed to maintain wilderness suitability, consistent with the “Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review” (USDI-BLM 1995).

The Oregon Badlands Wilderness is located only 20 miles from Bend, Oregon and receives heavy usage. Prior to adoption of the 2005 Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan the site was heavily used by motorized vehicles, which some felt was damaging the desert ecosystem. This led to conflict between the motorized and non-motorized vehicle user groups. The outcome was that the Upper Deschutes RMP closed the area to motorized vehicles. The RMP has specific objectives to provide designated access points and identifiable non-motorized recreation opportunities to enhance visitor experience, protect resources, and minimize conflicts with adjacent landowners (USDI-BLM 2005).

## **Chapter 3. Literature Review**

This chapter details the key concepts of the literature surrounding collaboration and negotiation in the process of natural resource management decision-making. As this is such a broad topic, the review focuses on the literature relating to wilderness designation and the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.

### **Wilderness Defined**

The term “wilderness” is fairly subjective and can be assigned by one individual to different places with a variety of characteristics. However, in general it refers to a place with wild beasts and without human influence where visitors may feel lost without the accoutrements of civilization. Wilderness can be viewed in two ways, as a mysterious and threatening place or as a place of beauty that can transport a visitor away from the troubles of the modern world (Nash 1973).

There are issues around the size and level of human impacts in defining wilderness. Nash (1973) suggests that wilderness can be viewed as a “state of mind” and the term may be used to define itself, in other words wilderness is what people decide it to be. This is very subjective, however, and is not a concrete definition. So, Nash suggests one solution is to define a place based on a scale ranging from wilderness to civilization. Wilderness being at one end of the spectrum grading to farms and then cities at the other end of the spectrum with increasing impacts from civilization (Nash 1973).

### **Public Perceptions of Wilderness**

The majority of federal wilderness areas are located in the western half of the United States. Due to the West’s frontier history, wilderness areas are important to the population’s concept of place. The American idea of a wilderness area developed in response to the loss of the perceived wildness of the frontier in the West. To make up for the loss of the frontier Americans protect what they perceive to be the remaining patches of a pristine wilderness.

Frederick Jackson Turner first discussed the idea of how the American national identity is tied up with the frontier and wilderness in his 1893 thesis entitled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” Turner discussed how as easterners and European immigrants settled the West they developed the “rugged individualism” of American culture. People wanted to push away from the influence and confines of British society. Thus “wild country became a place not just of religious redemption but of national renewal, the quintessential location for experiencing what it meant to be an American” (Cronon 1996). However, by the 1890s the frontier was disappearing along with part of America’s mystery and identity as “where [man] plants his foot, the harmonies of nature are turned to discords” (Marsh 1965). The idea of the frontier depends on free land and wilderness, and the opportunity of new discovery just around the corner. The disappearance of the frontier and wilderness became the impetus for the wilderness preservation movement.

Wilderness areas became a place to remember America's frontier past and preserve a small piece of that land for the future. In other words "to protect wilderness was in a very real sense to protect the nation's most sacred myth of origin" (Cronon 1996).

A frequently cited reason for wilderness designation is the maintenance of the aesthetics of a place for human enjoyment through spiritual and recreational experiences (Trudgill 2001). Wilderness area designation also provides economic opportunities for local communities by improving tourism in the area (Loomis 2000).

### **Collaborative Ecosystem Management**

During the late 1980s and early 1990s it was increasingly apparent in many western communities that conflict and reliance on adversarial advocacy tactics such as litigation, lobbying, and mass rallies were not working. These were damaging people's sense of community and not necessarily benefiting the long-term ecological health of the natural resources people were fighting over either. The current approaches to decision making were falling out of favor. People realized that all community stakeholders, no matter how different, depended on healthy ecosystems and as such all should be included in decision-making (Weber 2003).

### **Levels of Collaboration**

Collaborative planning is the process whereby stakeholders identify a common mission, combine resources, and work together towards a common goal (Julian 1994). Collaborative efforts have also been defined as partnerships where stakeholder groups participate in natural resource management to build trust and understanding between groups (Wondolleck and Yaffee 1994). Innes (1999) defined them as consensus groups where the process is driven by a shared purpose, is self-organizing, follows the principles of civil discourse, incorporates high-quality information, encourages participants to challenge assumptions, keeps participants interested and at the table, and seeks consensus only after discussions fully explore the relevant issues. Weber (2000) recognized collaboration as a way to reduce conflict among stakeholders, build social capital, and produce better decisions. It is important to consider how the diverse experiences and perceptions of stakeholders shape their management strategies; this is critical when starting to negotiate future natural resource management activities. Joint learning between these stakeholder groups helps individuals to reach a group understanding about what is important to each other (Ravnborg and Westermann 2002). Singleton (2002) observed that when either state or federal agencies attempt to set the parameters for negotiation, local stakeholders view this as manipulation of what was presented as a citizen-based process.

Collaborative efforts include a range of processes and levels of interaction including communication, consultation, conflict resolution, consensus building, cooperation, and coordination. Communication is at the lowest level of interaction where the goal is to share information either in a one-way flow of information from one party to another or in a two-way process. At a median level is conflict resolution where differences are resolved through negotiation, facilitation, or mediation.

Coordination involves a high level of interaction where participants work together interdependently towards a common goal involving mutual adaptation and adjustment (Margerum, in press). It is important to the success of a project to define the type of collaborative effort that is going to be undertaken.

### **Consensus**

Consensus decision-making is where a group seeks to gain the agreement of not only most participants, but also to resolve the issues of minority participants. In other words, the agreement and support of decision by all stakeholders. An important part of consensus-building is the information used to make natural resource management decisions. Innes (1998) describes a situation where experts sit around a table in a stakeholder-based consensus-building process where experts discuss data directly with project stakeholders. In this case the experts sometimes changed their opinion about the implications of the data when challenged with information by project stakeholders. By participating in this way, the information was validated within the group, something that might not have happened if it had just been presented without explanation and discussion. Information only becomes part of a shared knowledge if its meaning, accuracy and implications are discussed by project stakeholders. Discussing the information also changed the stakeholders' attitudes towards the problem. However, scientifically validated information is frequently only a small part of the information that stakeholders use to determine the nature of a problem. Participants' own experiences are also another very important source of information used in decision-making. Using a combination of scientific data and participants experiences allows stakeholders to make sense of the context for the individual problem and help find a way towards a workable solution (Innes 1998).

### **Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution in natural resource management is frequently complex, and often termed "wicked." Wicked problems are systemic, require an ongoing response, and require multilateral action. While it is natural for people to try to solve problems on the basis of what they learned in the past, the solutions of the past for tame problems may not apply to dealing with wicked problems. The challenge with these problems are identifying actions that will "narrow the gap between what is and what ought to be when what ought to be is not agreed on" (Mathews 1999). Lachapelle (2003) identified several barriers to the planning process including: inadequate goal definition, lack of trust, procedural obligations, inflexibility, and institutional design. Any one of these barriers may be enough to prevent a successful planning effort.

One barrier that may be encountered, and that is particularly relevant to this case, is the differences between recreational user groups. Vaske et al. (2007) found that if two groups differ in their value orientations, social values may be the primary cause of conflict; for example, the difference between hunters and non-hunters. However, when groups share similar values interpersonal conflict may be the major cause of conflict as is the case between hikers and mountain bikers.

When groups share common goals but differ in the mode by which they experience a setting, for example motorized vs. non-motorized, interpersonal and social values conflict may also be present. Strategies, including user zoning and education, have been used to alleviate these types of conflict.

However, conflict is not necessarily a bad thing as it can be the natural result of complex decision-making processes. The long debates, conflicting opinions, uncertainty, bargaining, and imperfect solutions of democracy can be frustrating to some people. However, the very nature and context of some issues essentially guarantee political conflict, being wicked in nature, as described above. This makes it important to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy conflict in natural resource management decisions (Nie 2003).

## **Leadership**

Effective leadership is important to the success of natural resource management decisions. In successful collaborative efforts, leaders are trusted people with credibility in their community; they are also viewed by others outside of their immediate community as reasonable and open-minded. These leaders are able to “frame” issues in such a way that many diverse stakeholder groups can effectively participate (Singleton 2002).

One, or a few, charismatic individuals leading the process can strongly influence the overall success of the group. A person with the right personality and energy can connect with many diverse stakeholders and bring them to the table. This type of person can explain to the individuals how participating will benefit them and make them feel like it will be an open process. This same type can help keep the process going once the group is formed. These people function as “cheerleader-energizer, diplomat, process facilitator, leader, convenor, catalyst, and promoter” (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). This type of leader either forms naturally, or is recognized as a need to be filled in a group process. In addition, leaders of collaborative processes need to be committed to the process and the accountability of all project stakeholders. These leaders lead through their “reputation, rhetoric, and actions” to show their commitment to the process and gain the accountability of other individuals participating in the project (Weber 2003).

## **Local Support**

### **Grassroots**

Members of local communities frequently come together in support of natural resource management actions they would like to take place on the surrounding landscape, such as was the case for the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designations. These local efforts are termed grassroots ecosystem management, which can be defined as “an ongoing, collaborative governance arrangement in which inclusive coalitions of the unlike come together in a deliberative format to resolve policy problems affecting the environment, economy, and community (or communities) of a particular place” (Weber 2003).

Grassroots environmental management is organized on the basis of place, involves many diverse participants from governmental to loggers to environmentalists, it is initiated primarily at the local level. Participants seek to manage valleys, watersheds, forests, or landscapes as a whole. Grassroots efforts also rely “extensively or exclusively on collaborative decision processes, consensus, and active citizen participation, which means that private citizens and stakeholders often take on leadership roles and are involved directly in deliberative decision-making, implementation, and enforcement processes along with government officials, especially when it comes to how goals are to be achieved” (Weber 2003). Grassroots efforts are located primarily in “rural areas in which local economies are directly and inextricably tied to natural resources” (Weber 2003).

### **Stakeholder Involvement**

Leach and Pelkey (2001), in their review of the empirical literature on what factors affect conflict resolution in watershed partnerships, shed some light onto what makes these types of groups successful. For example, the importance of including a broadly representative group of stakeholders to represent the interests involved in the issue. However, this recommendation also came with the caveat that the number should be kept to a manageable number.

When engaging in collaborative-based decision-making it is important to make sure that the right people are at the table. “The desire is to have discussion, deliberation, and decision making engage the entire spectrum of interests and stakeholders for a particular place, including state, regional, and national interests” (Weber 2003). It is important to remember who natural resource decisions are being made for when coming to a decision. Therefore, the “distribution of participants matters” because the opinions of those affected by a decision will affect the success of implementation. However, not all participants have the same power over affecting final decisions and so just because they are at the table it does not mean that their needs will be reflected in the final outcome. Outcomes need to reflect broad-based accountability (Weber 2003).

When forming a collaborative group it is important to consider whom to include to adequately represent the interests of the area. This requires knowledge of the local population and how they would be affected by different management decisions. People elect to participate in collaborative processes because they believe that specific issues can be addressed by the collaborative’s efforts and that participation can improve the public good by improving quality of life (Samuelson et al. 2005).

If a subset of stakeholders are involved in a decision-making process, the rest of the stakeholders will monitor the process to ensure their best interests are being represented. Stakeholders may initially be more involved until they find they representatives are protecting their interests, or alternately only become actively involved when they feel that representatives are not acting in their interest. In addition, for those involved in the process, stakeholders operating under mutual trust are more willing to collaborate to find a mutually acceptable solution.

Alternately, if they feel that other stakeholders are only trying to maximize their own interest in the process, then they may take on a more defensive role. These situations may clear the importance of social capital, or trust that is built over time among stakeholders that allows for a smoother decision-making process (Focht and Trachtenberg 2005).

### **Local Involvement**

Sabatier et al. (2005) expressed several concerns about the procedural and substantive legitimacy of the collaborative approach related to representation, trust building, effectiveness, and survival. Representation relates to having adequate local and nonlocal representatives present during collaborative decision-making processes. National environmental organizations do not have the resources to place representatives in natural resource decision-making partnerships throughout the country due to the sheer number of these organizations (Kenney et al. 2000; McCloskey 1996; Sabatier et al. 2005). In contrast, some local stakeholders worry that nonlocal interests will dominate the decision-making process (Gottlieb 1989). So, while local stakeholders may agree on a plan, national interests that are not present at the discussions may later block the proposal (Sagoff 1999). Or, vice versa. Ultimately, a fine line must be walked between these two competing concerns about representation. It is critical to establish trust in the collaborative process because if participants view the process as fair then they are more likely to support the outcome whether or not their side wins. The effectiveness of collaborative processes is also a concern. A collaborative plan will only be successful if it offers solutions that can be implemented with results that can be seen by participants and other observers of the process. The collaborative groups must also be able to survive the different institutional structures of the participants, especially governmental agencies, which may make real collaboration difficult (Sabatier et al. 2005).

### **Wilderness Politics**

The political nature of natural resource management decisions, and wilderness designation in particular, makes resolving the related issues complex at the local, state, and national levels. Wilderness designations not only involve collaboration among local stakeholders, but also broader political discussions among politicians at the congressional level. Once a local group develops a proposal at the local level, they need the support of one of their state's congressional representatives to support the proposal in Congress. However, many proposals are brought to Congress and become part of a various deals to get on a public lands bill. It has become increasingly common for wilderness designations to be tied to development bills (Blaeloch 2009). As a result, wilderness advocates get a new wilderness designated in exchange for not opposing a new development in an area, and pro-development groups get approval for a development in exchange for not opposing a wilderness designation. Examples could include development of a new highway or motorized recreation area.

There are specific issues tied to land exchanges, when they are part of wilderness designation, such as was the case with the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designations.

Several significant differences exist in the land exchange process when it is initiated by a federal agency as opposed to a congressional representative. When a public land management agency proposes a land exchange they must follow the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). As part of this process the public must be notified, an environmental analysis must be completed that looks at the significant impacts of the land exchange on the environment, and the final decision is subject to appeal. In contrast, when a member of Congress proposes a land deal there are no public notification requirements, environmental analyses are not always required, and there is no right to appeal the land bill because citizens cannot file an appeal against the U.S. Congress.

A proposal for a land exchange first goes through the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee and the U.S. Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee, first being heard by a subcommittee. In the U.S. House of Representatives, the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, and in the U.S. Senate, the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests. The bill is then heard by the full committee, where it may be edited and voted on for a hearing on the Floor. These types of bills are often heard in batches, the idea being that the House and Congress can move quickly through non-controversial legislation. However, being as this is legislation related to natural resource management these are not always non-controversial issues and can draw some controversy (Blaeloch 2009).

This research study will focus on wilderness designation at the local level. Specifically, the collaboration and negotiation between project stakeholders.

### **Gap in the Literature**

In summary, several of the key issues surrounding wilderness designation include public perceptions of wilderness, collaborative ecosystem management, conflict resolution, effective leadership, local grassroots support, stakeholder involvement, and political interactions.

The recent Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designations present an opportunity to analyze the politics surrounding natural resource management decisions at the local level. The literature has shown that many of these decisions are accompanied by tension and conflict between project stakeholders and special interest groups at the local level as well as complex political arrangements at the national level. The values and goals of special interest groups, recreational users, federal employees, industry, and government officials do not always align when it comes to how natural resources should be managed. In 2006, the Western Governors' Association conducted three case studies looking at "omnibus public lands legislation." One of these focused on the designation of the Steens Mountain Wilderness in 2000 under the Steens Mountain Management and Protection Act. This study describes the management background of the site, stakeholder processes in developing the wilderness designation deal, the political process and circumstances surrounding the designation, and several lingering issues following the designation.

This makes further research into these wilderness area designations a unique and interesting case to document what processes work well for diverse interest groups to reach collaborative management decisions. Further analysis of the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designations will build upon this research by providing insight into the circumstances surrounding other wilderness designations in Oregon.

## Chapter 4. Methods

The purpose of this research project is to collect information on the process of making complex natural resource management decisions under the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act through an analysis of the designation of the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas in Oregon. The study used participant observations and perceptions of the process, collected during interviews and quoted in documents, to compare the two cases. This research examined the patterns of collaboration and negotiation on natural resource decision-making in these cases and compared them to the existing body of literature. Further examination into these cases added to the knowledge base describing what aspects of the process make it more likely for stakeholders to reach a common goal or understanding in natural resource management in general, and in wilderness designation in particular.

The study answered the questions: How do the differences and similarities of the players, motivating factors, and environmental conditions reflected in differences in the process leading to designation for each wilderness area? What common goals brought stakeholders together? Which stakeholder groups worked together in support of the wilderness designation? What arrangements were made to reach agreement on issues? Where on the continuum between collaboration and negotiation did each of these wilderness areas fall in the process of designation?

### Research Approach

I used a qualitative approach with interviews and a document analysis to answer the research questions for this project. The interviews and a document review each informed the other: interviewees were identified during the document review and documents to review were identified by interviewees. Using several sources of data collection—including interviews, newspapers articles, the *Congressional Record*, and other reports—allowed for triangulation of research on the topic.

I selected a qualitative research approach, using interviews and a document review, to answer this study's research questions. I wrote the interview questions to allow for open-ended responses without guiding or biasing their responses, allowing interviewees to answer freely. This methodology provided responses that gave a richer and broader context to tell the story of the wilderness designation process. I structured the interview guide to answer the research questions. By asking these questions the study can help inform the success of future wilderness designations and other natural resource management decisions. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss these findings, discussion, and recommendations.

## **Study Area Selection**

The Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas were selected from 52 new wilderness areas designated under the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act. This list was first narrowed down to the five wilderness areas designated in Oregon. The Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas were selected for several reasons. First, they were designated with relatively little public conflict as compared to the other wilderness areas designated in Oregon, and I was interested to understand what conditions or processes helped limit this conflict. Second, many of the same stakeholders were involved in both designations, allowing a unique comparison of the two cases. Third, the proximity of both cases meant that I could visit the sites and personally interview many of the participants.

## **Interviewee Selection**

I selected interviewees based on their involvement in the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin wilderness designations. Since this research project focuses on the wilderness designation process, I used a purposive sampling method to select interviewees for the study. I obtained names and contact information on organization web pages and through the White Pages of the local phonebook. I selected interviewees from a variety of backgrounds to capture differing viewpoints because participants in favor of the designation have a different perspective than individuals opposed to the designation (Sabatier et al. 2005).

I conducted interviews until “saturation” was reached, after no new themes emerged from the interviews and these themes were well developed in terms of content and perspective. While total saturation was not reached, which rarely happens in research projects, the data provides enough depth and breadth for analysis. Additional data will nearly always improve the analysis, however at some point the research has to be considered enough, that it is sufficient for the purposes of the research project (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Glaser 1978; Glaser and Strauss 1967).

## **Interview Administration**

I conducted thirteen (13) interviews for this study. Interviews were conducted by phone or in-person, lasted approximately 20 to 45 minutes, and used open-ended questions. The interviewees included staff of the Bureau of Land Management, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, Central Oregon Irrigation District, and the Oregon Natural Desert Association; members of the Friends of the Badlands and the Central Oregon Motorcycle and ATV Club; and private landowners involved in the designation.

I asked open-ended questions related to the interviewee’s level and type of involvement in the wilderness designation, their observations on the process and the resolution of any disputes between participants, how they were personally affected by the wilderness designation, and if their expectations had been met since the wilderness designation.

I asked interviewees involved in both wilderness designations to comment on any differences in the process between the two wilderness designations. The interview protocol is included in the appendix of this study (Appendix A: Interview Guide).

I took detailed notes during the interviews, and copies of the notes were offered to the interviewee for their verification to help ensure that I did not misinterpret their responses. I organized the responses to interview questions and incorporated them into the findings to tell the story of how and why each wilderness area was designated and the process that occurred to make that happen. I did not identify any individual interviewee by name in the findings chapter to protect confidentiality. Although, due to the small scope of this study confidentiality was not guaranteed.

### **Document Review**

In addition to the interviews, I reviewed documents related to the two wilderness designations. The documents provided background information and details about the context and processes. They also were a starting point for developing interview questions and identifying interviewees. Documents included the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act, transcripts of the congressional hearings, news articles, and other miscellaneous documents associated with the designation. The 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act provided detailed information on the land exchanges that were a part of both wilderness designations. Articles from the local newspaper articles helped capture the community's feelings toward the wilderness area designations at the time that the decision was being made. Additionally, the economic report by Headwaters Economics provided additional detail into why many members of the local community feel that the Oregon Badlands Wilderness will prove to be an economic benefit to the area.

### **Data Analysis**

I organized the analyses around pre-identified themes that are discussed in the literature review. These themes include public perceptions of the wilderness areas, negotiation between stakeholders, conflict resolution, leadership strategy, and the importance of local support. This helped focus the discussion. Also, several additional themes emerged during the interviews including wilderness designation strategy and findings areas of agreement. I did this by organizing and summarizing similar interviewee responses. Many interviewees provided similar responses to the questions with more specific nuances based on their involvement in the wilderness designation process. The document review provided additional information that I compared with the interviewees and provided additional details related to the theme areas.

I compared the designation process for each wilderness area to identify the similarities and differences between the wilderness designations. Comparing the environmental setting, social context, and designation process of multiple wilderness designation efforts provides insight into how different strategies—based on the unique social and physical characteristics of the area—were used for the same purpose.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of Study Approach**

A strength of the study approach was my selection of interviewees to represent a broad spectrum of the organizations and individuals involved in and affected by the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin wilderness designation process. This allowed for a richer discussion of the designation process in later chapters. While including these interviewees led to a robust sample of those involved in the wilderness designations, others more peripherally involved were left out. These included some environmental organizations, several landowners involved in land exchanges, and citizens of the surrounding communities that could potentially be affected by the wilderness designations. Several potential interviewees declined to participate in the project, primarily potential interviewees who had been against the wilderness designation. In addition, relying on participant self-assessment was a limitation because interviewees may have been less impartial about evaluating the designation process. In addition, the relatively small sample of thirteen interviews is an inherent limitation of this study.

Since this project focused on only two wilderness designations in Oregon it is potentially limited in its applicability to other cases. A study including more cases would have strengthened the recommendations for the processes on future wilderness designations and made it more broadly applicable. For example, these cases involved relatively low conflict and thus might not be generalizable to cases experiencing a higher level of conflict. Also, comparing these cases to several failed wilderness designations would have provided stronger conclusions.

## Chapter 5. Results

The main purpose of this research study is to determine how the differences and similarities of the players, motivating factors, and environmental conditions reflected in differences in the process leading to designation for each wilderness area. The study also seeks to identify what common goals brought stakeholders together, which stakeholder groups worked together in support of the wilderness designation, what bargains were made to reach agreement on issues, and where on the continuum between collaboration and negotiation each of the wilderness areas fell in the process of designation. The following Chapter discusses the findings resulting from data attained from a document analysis and an interview guide noted in Chapter 4. This Chapter discusses the data obtained from interview subjects actively involved in the Oregon Badlands and/or Spring Basin Wilderness designations, as well as any supporting documentation. This section discusses the results in two parts:

- **Overview of Wilderness Areas:** This section will describe the geographical context, unique conditions in the study area, and the history of the designation process. This information will be used to frame the analysis.
- **Findings:** This section will detail the results of the interviews and document review.

### Overview of Wilderness Areas

This section will review the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas.

#### Oregon Badlands Wilderness

The Oregon Badlands Wilderness, initially designated as a Wilderness Study Area in 1980, is located on the Bureau of Land Management's Prineville District in central Oregon. The approximately 29,301-acre wilderness is located approximately 15 miles east of Bend. The wilderness area contains rough terrain dominated by lava flows and dry canyons, Native American pictographs, and junipers (ONDA 2009a). The area has been used for hiking, geocaching, off-road vehicle recreation, and other outdoor activities.

The primary environmental organizations that advocated for designation of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness were Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) and the Friends of the Badlands. ONDA is a 1,200-member organization with a 20-year history of advocacy in the area. The organization's website states that it is committed to "protecting, defending, and restoring the health of Oregon's native deserts for present and future generations" (ONDA 2010). ONDA focuses its efforts on protection of the High Desert in central and eastern Oregon.



The Friends of the Badlands Wilderness is a non-political group of volunteers dedicated toward bringing awareness to the wilderness area, working with ONDA and BLM, and encouraging community involvement by creating volunteer opportunities and stewardship roles to engage people in protecting the area (Friends of the Badlands Wilderness 2010b). The group engages local volunteers in activities including monitoring, trail maintenance, sign inventory, native plant restoration, public contact, and record keeping (Friends of the Badlands Wilderness 2010a).

In one newspaper article ONDA's wilderness coordinator stated that the rapid population growth in the Bend area made designating the Oregon Badlands as a wilderness a top priority (Stahlberg 2007). ONDA worked to gather public and political support for the wilderness designation as well as negotiating the release of grazing permits on the site and land exchanges for "inholdings" within the wilderness study area. There are marmots, bobcat, coyotes, mule deer, elk, antelope, rabbits, snakes, and lizards and over 100 species of birds including prairie falcon and golden eagles. The unique geology of the lava formations was cited as a reason the site is interesting (Stahlberg 2007).

The BLM worked with Friends of the Badlands to get work done that the BLM could not do alone, including restoration and trail maintenance activities. The Friends of the Badlands Wilderness assisted in closing illegal routes, turning existing roads into trails, improving signage, maintaining trailheads, and collecting data on visitor usage. Within the wilderness area there are approximately 50 miles of designated trails with seven different trailheads used to access the area. The site is primarily used for hiking and wildlife watching, although mountain biking and camping are also popular (Stahlberg 2007).

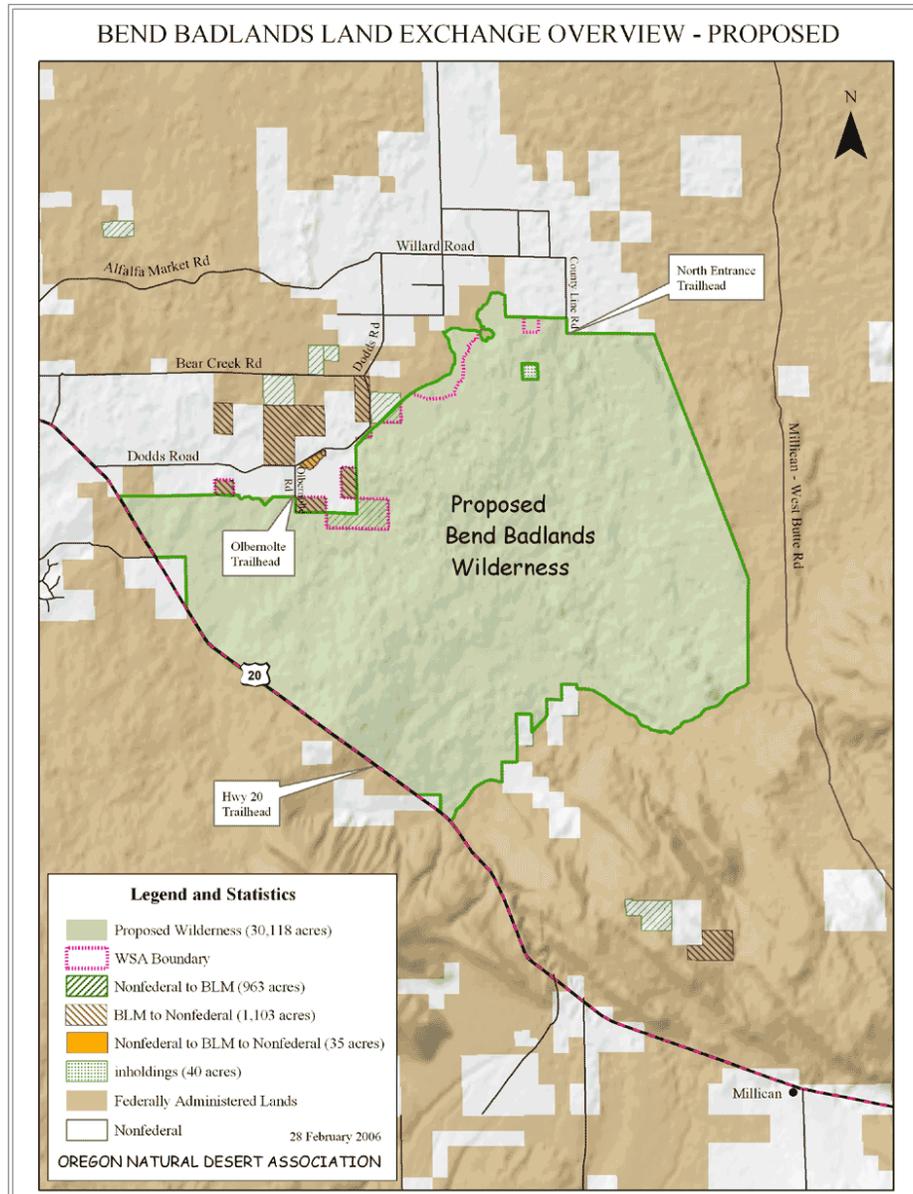
A report entitled 'The Potential Economic Impacts of the Badlands Wilderness in Central Oregon' was commissioned by ONDA from Headwaters Economics in 2007. The report includes information on the socioeconomic trends in the area; the connectedness, migration, and land use in the area; and the economic role of public lands and the potential of wilderness in the area. The report stresses the positive contribution the wilderness area can make to the Central Oregon economy in conjunction with current migration patterns, a commercial airport, and economic diversification in the area. The wilderness area would add to the natural amenities of Bend and the wider region. While the designation of the wilderness area could have a negative impact on forestry and wood products manufacturing and mining it could also benefit the tourism industry, which is buoyed by access to public lands, including Wilderness.



A research study by Kreg Lindberg at Oregon State University-Cascades Campus for Oregon State Parks, summarized in the report, found that scenery was the most important destination characteristic for Baby Boomers. The growing land consumption is a concern as the natural amenities of the region are what is drawing people to the region. A lot of open land in Deschutes County is being converted to low-density residential development outside of incorporated communities, leaving public lands as one of the few remaining areas of open space. The report makes the point that “protecting these landscape values is equivalent to protecting one of the most important ingredients that makes the region’s economy hum—unimpaired natural landscapes.” Ultimately the report makes the point that the demographic and economic trends in the area are changing, and so are its competitive strengths. Adding new recreational areas has the potential to meet the needs of new residents and plan for the impacts of growth on the landscape (Headwaters Economics 2007).

The Oregon Badlands Wilderness proposal reached Congress in 2008 when Senator Wyden (D-Ore) introduced S. 3088 in June. In July 2008, at a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee hearing ONDA’s executive director, among others, submitted testimony in support of the legislation. Several land exchanges would be necessary to consolidate Federal land holdings within the Oregon Badlands Wilderness. A 25-foot wide corridor of land, depicted on the wilderness map, is excluded from the Wilderness to accommodate the existing use of the route for training sled dogs. However, when this use ceases the route will become part of the Wilderness. The act included two arrangements for land exchanges totaling of 931 acres of Federal land that would be exchanged for 804 acres of non-Federal land.

However, it was not until the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act that the area was ultimately designated as a wilderness under the sections 1701 to 1705. Approximately 29,301 acres of land was designated as the Oregon Badlands Wilderness. The 25-foot corridor of land in nonconforming use was maintained and designated as potential wilderness under the Act until such time as the use was terminated, when it would be incorporated into the Wilderness. A land exchange was arranged between a private landowner, Ray Clarno, the Central Oregon Irrigation District and the Bureau of Land Management. The Act planned for the exchange of 906 acres of Federal land for 766 acres of non-Federal land. The private landowner exchanged 239 acres of land for 209 acres of Federal land. The Central Oregon Irrigation District exchanged 527 acres of land for 697 acres of Federal land.



Source: Oregon Natural Desert Association (<http://onda.org>)

### Spring Basin Wilderness

The Spring Basin Wilderness is also located on the Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management in northern central Oregon. This approximately 6,382-acre wilderness is located about a two-hour drive northeast of Bend. It is also about 15-miles east of Antelope, a town with a population of almost 60 people according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The wilderness area is covered with rock outcroppings, called lahars, formed after multiple eruptions of nearby volcanoes deposited layers of ash, lava, and volcanic mudflows over the area. These rock outcroppings contain the fossils of plants and animals that were trapped during the lava flows. Plant life in the Spring Basin Wilderness is dominated by sagebrush, native bunchgrasses, and western juniper (ONDA 2009b).

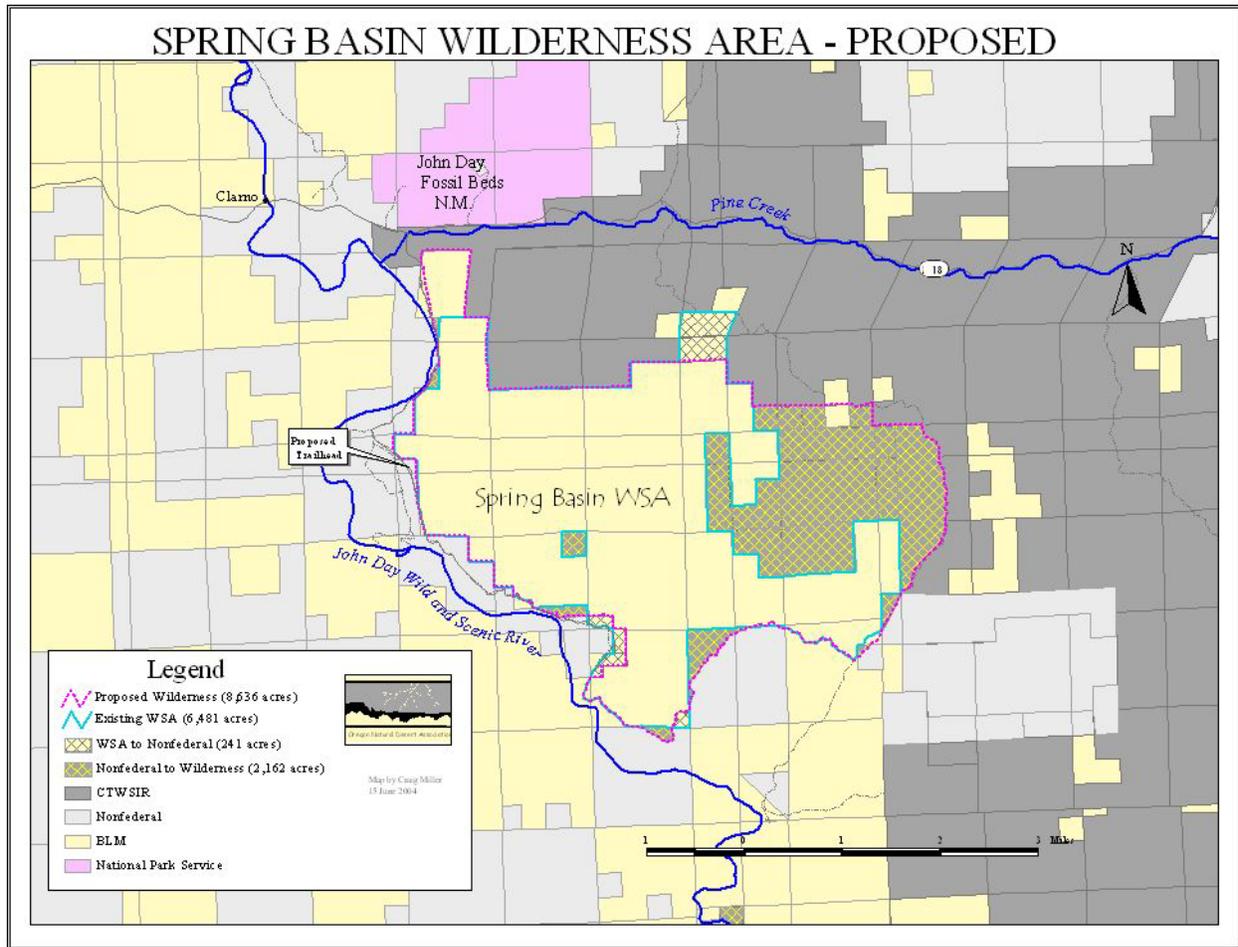
Like the Oregon Badlands Wilderness, ONDA was the primary environmental organization involved in promoting the wilderness designation. However, landowners played a larger role in the designation process in this case. There are four land exchanges involved in this designation as compared to the two in the case of the Oregon Badlands.

The Spring Basin Wilderness is not the only site in the area managed for the protection of natural resources. The area is bordered on the east by the Pine Creek Conservation Area, managed by the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs to restore and protect fish and wildlife, water, and archaeological and geological resources on the property. The project is funded through the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program as partial mitigation for the impacts of hydropower dams on fish and wildlife (Northwest Power and Conservation Council 2010).



The Spring Basin Wilderness proposal reached Congress in 2008 when Senator Wyden (D-Ore) introduced S. 3089 in June. This Senate Bill would have led to designation of approximately 8,661 acres of Bureau of Land Management land. The Act included land exchanges between the Federal government and four separate parties. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs would have exchanged 3,635 acres of land for 3,653 acres of Federal land. Kelly McGreer would have exchanged 18 acres of land for 325 acres of Federal land. Bob Keys would have exchanged 181 acres of land for 183 acres of Federal land. The Bowerman Family Trust would have exchanged 34 acres of land for 24 acres of Federal land. This totals an exchange of 4,185 acres of Federal land for 3,868 acres of non-Federal land. The legislation was ultimately not passed until 2009 after several adjustments were made.

However, it was not until the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act that the area was ultimately designated as the Spring Basin Wilderness under the sections 1751 to 1755. Several land exchanges made the wilderness designation possible. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs exchanged 4,480 acres of land for 4,578 acres of Federal land. A private landowner, Kelly McGreer, exchanged 18 acres of land for 327 acres of Federal land. Another private landowner, Robert Keys, exchanged 180 acres of land for 187 acres of Federal land. Jon Bowerman, another private landowner, exchanged 32 acres of land for 24 acres of Federal land. This totals 4,710 acres of Federal land exchanged for 5,116 acres of non-Federal land.



Source: Oregon Natural Desert Association (<http://onda.org>)

## Findings

This section discusses the findings from my research. Findings are organized by the topic areas that emerged during the literature review and data collection processes. Topic areas include: the reasons for/against wilderness designation, the importance of strong leadership, the influence of local support, how issues were resolved (or not), and what happens after the wilderness area is designated. The importance of strong leadership, influence of local support, and issue resolution were pre-identified during the literature review a

## **Reasons For/Against Wilderness Designation**

### ***Reasons for wilderness designation***

A number of areas in Oregon were identified as Wilderness Study Areas, as required by the Wilderness Act of 1964. As mentioned above, ONDA's mission is "to protect, defend, and restore the health of Oregon's native deserts for present and future generations." To that end they have been involved in lobbying for the designation of wilderness areas in Oregon. The first wilderness they were actively involved in was the Steens Mountain Wilderness, which was designated in 2000.

After the Steens Mountain Wilderness was designated, ONDA members looked at the other WSAs in Oregon to select their next wilderness designation priority. They assessed the opportunities and threats of WSAs in Oregon's high desert, and identified both in the Oregon Badlands. Oregon Badlands was selected for several reasons including its proximity to the Bend urban area, the threats to the quality of the site, and as one member of ONDA stated it was "the low hanging fruit." Members of ONDA felt that the population in Bend was more likely than not to support wilderness designation. One interviewee stated that "if we could not secure the designation in Deschutes County, we would have a hard time designating anything in eastern Oregon." In addition, several interviewees noted that the wilderness is an asset to both recreational opportunities as well as the local economy.

One member of ONDA felt that the Oregon Badlands was under threat due to the easy access provided by the roads surrounding the wilderness. People were defacing the archaeological resources, ATVs were using the site, and people were dumping their trash throughout the area. One ONDA member stated that they were concerned that if they did not do something soon the site would no longer qualify as a wilderness due to the effects of these activities. In addition, adjacent landowners supported the wilderness designation as it could also help deal with the adverse activities that were happening on their land. For example, one landowner wanted to see vehicles removed from the site because fences were being cut down. Some of these issues result from the Oregon Badlands being very accessible. One interviewee stated that people can drive to it from any direction. While this means there is great access for recreation it also meant that people could go dump trash in the area, cut down ancient junipers, and pick up lava rocks to take home and use to line fireplaces according to one member of ONDA. People are not going to do that now that they cannot drive into the site. Many interviewees felt that the Oregon Badlands really needed wilderness designation to protect the area from these activities.

Another topic brought up in the interviews related to how the Oregon Badlands would add to Bend's image, and benefit the local economy. The Oregon Badlands is an "urban wilderness" according to one interviewee, describing it as perhaps not the most incredible mountain that came along but an experience that is available, quiet, and "remarkable in its own way." It adds to Bend's image as an outdoorsy community with a diverse landscape. The Bend area has the Three Sisters Wilderness, Mt. Bachelor, and now the Oregon Badlands Wilderness.

For businesses considering relocation to the area the quality of life that Bend has to offer is very important. It is what sets Bend apart.

As for the Spring Basin Wilderness, most interviewees commented on the fact that Wheeler County is an unlikely place to gain support for wilderness designation. However, the county commissioners did gain a significant amount of support from the adjacent landowners and local community. For one thing, it was a pretty benign proposition. One interviewee noted that the area had been managed as a WSA for the past 20+ years, and there were no or few uses being carried out that were in conflict with wilderness management restrictions. If it had been something that was dramatically different from the current management, there might have been a different response in the community. Another major reason for the widespread support was that, as one interviewee noted, the land exchanges presented an opportunity for the private landowners to make a more economic unit out of their ranches. The land exchanges removed some of the checkerboard land pattern from the area and reduced the amount of fence line that needs to be maintained. This was confirmed by interviews with several of the landowners involved in the land exchanges.

These landowners noted that due to the checkerboard pattern of land at the edge of their property, people were unknowingly trespassing onto their land from BLM land during deer hunting season. With the area designated as a wilderness, hunters can no longer drive up there, as motorized vehicles are prohibited in wilderness areas. Visitors have to go in on foot or horseback. In addition, because of the way the land exchanges were completed the wilderness boundary is now further from one landowner's residence. Ultimately, the land exchanges that were part of the wilderness designation cleaned up a lot of the ownership issues that private landowners had with the BLM.

### ***Reasons against wilderness designation***

The Spring Basin Wilderness designation had very little, if any vocal dissent, however, some members of the local community opposed the Oregon Badlands Wilderness designation. Most notably the motorized vehicle enthusiasts who had formerly been able to recreate in the area. One interviewee stated that they saw the Oregon Badlands Wilderness designation as just another project that would shrink options for motorized vehicle access to public lands. They wanted to keep that option open and available.

While many people supporting the wilderness felt that motorized vehicles were causing damage to the site, one interviewee pointed out that ATV enthusiasts also view the Oregon Badlands as a special place and just do not think that closure is always the best management decision. They just did not see that the Oregon Badlands had the wilderness qualities that were promoted by other interest groups. This interviewee cited the use of the area by sled dogs and the presence of a gravel pit directly adjacent to the site.

The interviewee instead suggested that the area should be conservatively managed with a few designated trails or roads that would allow a great portion of the population to visit the area because now people who cannot walk or hike in can no longer enjoy the area. Only people who are fit enough to walk multiple miles in can enjoy the site now. This interviewee felt that the area should have been protected and managed as a rural area, but with access.

One interviewee noted that they felt that the response of many individuals in the non-motorized vehicle community to motorized vehicles is more emotionally based than factual. While they did acknowledge that there are things that need to be mitigated for when bringing motorized vehicles near animals, engines in the area are not the only problem. The area is also a fly through zone with jets flying overhead frequently. These motorized vehicle enthusiasts just did not want to see motorized vehicles blamed for every problem in the area.

## **Strong Leadership**

### ***A strong organization took the lead***

When asked the question “who were the main players in the wilderness designation?” The answer was unanimously that ONDA took the lead in both wilderness designations. One interviewee noted that the wilderness designations were “consistently prodded by the interested parties to Congress.” Mostly by ONDA, “reminding delegation staff that it was out here, supported by the local population, and that there was always a good time to do this.” It was the perseverance of ONDA members and other interested parties that helped Congress to pass these land designations. However, there were some differences between the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas.

In the case of the Oregon Badlands, other names mentioned as being involved in the wilderness designation were the Wilderness Society, the Juniper Chapter of the Sierra Club, other local environmental groups, the BLM, and local landowners. In addition, over 200 local businesses in central Oregon signed on to support the designation. A local landowner also noted that ONDA was working closely with representatives in the Capital to see the Oregon Badlands designated.

In the case of the Spring Basin Wilderness, the main players were ONDA, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, three adjacent landowners, and the Wheeler County Board of Commissioners. These organizations worked together for the better part of 10 years in support of the wilderness designations. They worked together to advocate for Spring Basin’s designation in Congress. In about 2002, ONDA, the Tribes, and three neighboring landowners crafted four separate land exchanges between the federal government and the non-federal landowners. These land exchanges were developed to make sense on the ground in terms of wilderness planning and the eventual enjoyment of the area by the public. The exchanges also provided a natural support mechanism for the wilderness designation on the part of the local community and particularly these neighbors.

The planned land exchanges helped congressional representatives to understand that the local community supported it, providing a solid basis for political support of the designation. Without the local support, and the support of the landowners involved in the land exchanges, the congressional delegation probably would not have backed the project.

### ***Strategy was key***

A topic that came up again and again during the interviews was the importance of strong leadership and a strategy. All interviewees agreed that ONDA took the lead in organizing and campaigning for the wilderness designations. ONDA began their campaign at the grassroots level. ONDA worked with the local communities to increase their awareness about the WSAs. In addition, the land exchanges were planned far in advance of when the actual legislation was passed. This allowed the congressional proponent to move quickly once the right political climate presented itself in Congress. When the legislation was proposed one ONDA member stated that “we did not have any vocal opposition because we had done so much organization in the community and talked to so many people.” The issues were identified and dealt with long before Senator Wyden was on the subcommittee and in a position to propose the wilderness areas for designation. Also, they were strategic about the support they were seeking. It proved critical for them to gain the support of the landowners’ involved as well as influential members of the community. ONDA was also flexible in their strategy. One representative of ONDA stated that they decided to work with Senator Wyden directly after failing to get the support of the local County Commissioners.

For both wilderness areas, the land exchanges were a key factor in gaining support for the wilderness designations. For example, one ONDA member stated that landowners were much more motivated to advocate for the wilderness designation once they had something to gain from the legislation. In both the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin once a couple of landowners heard about what was going on through the local grapevine they also wanted to get involved. The land exchanges “became a popular strategy to deal with local management issues.” “It made for a broader base of support at the grassroots level,” said one member of ONDA.

A member of ONDA stated that the strategy was to secure as much local grassroots support as possible starting with the neighboring landowners. Then, to garner the support of local county courts and the Oregon delegation of Senators Walden, Smith, and Wyden. In addition, the land exchanges were an integral part of gaining the local base of support. ONDA gained a motivated partner to push the legislation through when a local rancher had a stake in the legislation, being able to resolve land ownership issues.

## **Local Support**

### ***There was strong local support***

For both the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designations there was a strong base of local support. This began in the 1980s when some members of “The Badlands Bunch” led fieldtrips out there, wrote a brochure and got a number of articles published in the newspaper about it. Their goal at this early stage was just “to get people familiar with the area” because at the time not many people knew about the Badlands. In particular, one member took schoolchildren on fieldtrips out to the site showing them the rock formations and desert plants. These children would go home excited and tell their parents about it.

Later in the campaign process a lot of support was the result of recognizing the economic value of the Oregon Badlands. Interviewees shared that they got involved because they could see the value in the Oregon Badlands. Bend is a rapidly growing community, and they could see it was important to the community to protect this area. As a growing community it is important to protect the areas that make Bend special. It is not just the small town atmosphere and low crime rate that draw people to area, but also “the pristine surrounding natural areas and world class recreation opportunities.” Businesses went on record, signing letters, as more people began to be supportive. “Economy is very quality of life based in Bend, people move there because of the great quality of life.” People realized that having a wilderness on the edge of town would be a benefit to the community. Then the City Council changed from members who did not support the wilderness, to a new City Council that signed on with their support.

A member of the Friends of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness stated that there was “more of an air of cooperation in central Oregon between different parties, more of a willingness to engage over the past 2 years between all of the differing parties.” A member of ONDA shared that the “overarching thing about the Badlands is that they were able to demonstrate a level of community support that is a model for other campaigns.” Another member of ONDA further elaborated that the “primary ingredient for success is local landowner involvement,” which was key to the success of both cases.

Groups that were against the Oregon Badlands designation included the Central Oregon Motorcycle & ATV Club (COMAC), the Deschutes County 4-Wheelers, and the Oregon State Snowmobilers Association. One interviewee noted that snowmobiles got access to Newberry Monument because they got involved in the process, while OHVs were not involved and did not get access to that site. The interviewee stated “it seemed clear that being involved, putting a face on motorized vehicle recreation helps.” More motorized vehicle supporters were showing up to meetings in the late 1990s when decisions were being made about whether to allow motorized vehicles in the area. However, an interviewee noted that the numbers dwindled after the BLM excluded motorized vehicles under the 2005 Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan.

No interviewees identified any groups or individuals that were outspokenly against the Spring Basin Wilderness designation. However, several of the landowners involved in this area made it clear during interviews that they participated primarily, or solely, because they were interested in the land exchanges. They stated that it made no difference to them if the site was designated as a wilderness. One stating that “I have neutral feelings about the Spring Basin Wilderness; I don’t see it as a particularly bad or good thing either.”

### ***Support of a local “Friends” group***

The Friends of the Badlands Wilderness group was integral to the designation of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness both before and after the designation. The Fobbits, which they are called for short, is a non-political offshoot of ONDA. They are a volunteer group that leverages limited resources by getting volunteers to participate in restoration and education. The Fobbits helped to demonstrate a community presence and dedication to the site, showing that people were willing to get involved in managing the area. Now, after the wilderness has been designated they help out the budget-strapped BLM by looking after they area. As one member of the Fobbits stated, “we are the BLM’s eyes, ears, and boots on the ground of the wilderness.” The Fobbits provide volunteers to do the work that the BLM’s budget cannot provide for.

## **Resolving Issues**

### ***Differences between parties***

While there were a number of issues to work through on both the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness, the most significant issues related to motorized vehicles in the Oregon Badlands WSA. Motorized vehicles were allowed on the area up until 2005, when the BLM eliminated their usage in the area under the Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan.

Nearly every interviewee brought up the issue of motorized vehicle usage in the Oregon Badlands Wilderness as the primary force of opposition to the wilderness designation. The difference being that the non-motorized community felt the area should be closed to motorized vehicle usage, and the OHV users wanting the area to remain open to their use. This conflict happened primarily during the 1980s and early 1990s. This is also when the land exchanges were primarily worked out to create more manageable units for the BLM and the other two landowners. The OHV community went out with petitions and got a lot of people to give their signatures against the wilderness designation.

ONDA and other supporters of the Oregon Badlands tried to come to a compromise with the motorized vehicle community. The goal being to solve other issues for motorized vehicle users in the area in exchange for their neutrality on the Oregon Badlands Wilderness designation. The non-motorized community noted that they had about 600 miles of trail available in an area adjacent to the Oregon Badlands. An area called the Millican Valley OHV Area, that is a destination area for motorized vehicles. The Oregon Badlands was formerly a small part of this trail network, totaling about 10 miles in trails, according to one interviewee.

One member of ONDA shared that they had approached a representative of the motorized vehicle community with an offer. The offer was to carve off a piece of the WSA, near an area called 'Sand Dunes,' that the motorized vehicle community wanted to develop as a campground in exchange for their neutrality on the subject of the Oregon Badlands. However, members of the motorized vehicle community would not agree to that. One member of the motorized vehicle community shared that a major sticking point for them was to keep Route 8 open, the only road that was open when the Oregon Badlands was a WSA. They also had an issue with ONDA including an area called Dry Canyon on the wilderness proposal, even though the WSA did not initially include this area.

However, when the BLM administratively closed the Oregon Badlands to motorized vehicles under the 2005 Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan the subject was no longer an issue in the wilderness designation. Also, a member of ONDA got a small contingent of motorized vehicle users to sign a letter saying that they did not really need the trails in the Oregon Badlands for recreation. That was ultimately helpful to Senator Wyden to show widespread support for the wilderness designation.

Senator Wyden did not move on the wilderness designation until the timing felt right. As one staff member shared, "as an office we had to think about if we went down this road, how ugly was it going to get? Was it really timely?" A turning point was reached when one of the neighboring landowners got tired of the ATVs in the area. He had issues with OHV's going off trail, tearing down fences, bothering cattle, and bothering him. He approached ONDA and they started working together on the land exchanges. The landowner also offered to retire his grazing permits in the Oregon Badlands in exchange for getting motorized vehicles off the land. It was a great benefit to ONDA's campaign to have a rancher on their side. Various sportsmen's groups, hikers, horse riders, Boy Scouts, and other groups were also described as being in favor of the wilderness designation by the interviewees.

Besides the motorized vehicles, there was the somewhat unusual issue of a sled dog racer needing access to the area for training. Rachael Scdoris is a legally blind professional sled dog racer that has won the Iditarod. She uses sled dogs to pull around an ATV with the motor turned off around the Oregon Badlands for her training. No one in the area wanted to deny her access to the area. So, language was written into the bill to allow her to continue this use through her lifetime.

### ***Finding areas of agreement***

While not everyone supported the wilderness designations, some win-win situations were discovered between interest groups that had not traditionally worked together on natural resource management projects. Several interviewees noted that they had first found things they agreed upon and then worked from there. However, these different individuals and interest groups supported the wilderness designations for very different reasons.

The land exchanges were noted as an important factor in bringing people together by many of the interviewees. All of the adjacent landowners that were interviewed for both wilderness areas stated that the land exchanges were the primary or sole reason for their support/involvement in the wilderness designation process. Primarily, the land exchanges allowed the landowners to clean up some of their boundary issues with public lands. In particular, several landowners noted that they had issues with people trespassing on their land in these checkerboard areas. A more streamlined boundary will help limit these issues. In addition, it means less fence line to maintain. One landowner had a popular private boat landing on his property that most people thought was already public property. Turning it over to BLM management as part of the land exchange will absolve him of any liability should someone drown at the site.

One land exchange is between the BLM and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs. They recently purchased several ranches bordering the Spring Basin Wilderness and are managing them as the Pine Creek Conservation Area. A project funded by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). This was especially sensitive, as the Tribes did not want any diminishment to their sovereignty and associated treaty rights. However, they did identify several benefits resulting from the wilderness designation and associated land exchanges. First, the land exchange would benefit the eventually designated wilderness, making it a more watershed type of unit. Areas that are popular with sportsmen and other hunters were added, a good product for wilderness designation. Second, it improved their ability to meet the goals of the Pine Creek Conservation Area. The habitat values that they gained through the land exchanges would improve the conservation area's overall habitat quality. That translates into creditable habitat units for the John Day Dam wildlife mitigation. The BPA meets their mitigation requirements by establishing places like Pine Creek where they fund entities like the Tribes to manage the work. Third, it widened out and blocked up portions of the Wild and Scenic John Day River, also improving habitat management.

Without the land exchanges being part of the wilderness designation, it would have taken over a decade to deal with the boundary issues using other methods. This was a win-win situation for the environmental groups and landowners involved in the project.

### ***Political Issues***

The interviews revealed several political issues surround wilderness designation in this part of Oregon. The majority of BLM land is located in eastern Oregon where BLM's primary economic use is cattle grazing, which many local landowners believe does not impair wilderness. Designation as a WSA does not restrict cattle grazing, so as a result there is not a big economic motive to resolve the wilderness question. As discussed in Chapter 2, WSAs must be managed so as not to impair their future potential to be designated as wilderness. As a result, only 3 WSAs have been resolved in Oregon since the Wilderness Act was passed in 1964, over 50 years ago. BLM land in eastern Oregon does not have the same dynamic as land managed by the U.S. Forest Service because there is not the same motivation for commercial timber harvest that occurs on National Forest system lands.

One issue that an interviewee pointed out was that not every WSA in an area is designated as part of a new wilderness. The interviewee also stated that it is a “detriment to the environmental community to not release other areas in a WSA when they designate wilderness.” Releasing a WSA is a congressional decision to no longer consider an area as a potential wilderness, so the area no longer needs to be managed maintain wilderness characteristics. There were originally 7 WSAs in the Steens Mountain area, but only 2 were designated as part of the Steens Mountain Wilderness in 2000. During the designation process the others were not released as WSAs, leaving them in management “limbo.” These areas are still not resolved, being neither wilderness nor part of the regular BLM system of lands.

Interviewees identified several issues that held up the process of designating the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas, notably the motorized vehicle community and the political climate. Evidence of wide-based support had to be collected before it was possible to see the areas designated. When that happened, as one interviewee noted when referring to the Spring Basin Wilderness designation, “the song sheet we were all working off of was a pretty consistent message that Congress was getting every year.” There was really no overt opposition to the Spring Basin Wilderness, which made Congress more willing to support the designation.

### ***Congressional support***

The interesting thing about wilderness is that it is one of the only land management categories that is exclusively the domain of Congress. This means that if people want it enough, “Congress is more responsive to people than to science,” stated one interviewee. “When a community coalesces around an idea Congress has enormous ability to affect that.” Several interviewees noted how important it was to have a legislative sponsor to get the wilderness legislation passed. This was noted both by members of ONDA as well as several landowners involved in the land exchanges.

Getting the support of their local congressional representative was the first step in getting the legislation introduced in Congress. As one member of ONDA stated, “the main thing that other groups can learn from this is to go out on the land yourself, get data, take pictures, GPS areas.” This allows wilderness proponents to go to Congress with enough information to show that they have done the research into the appropriateness of the site for wilderness designation; having the information packaged in a professional manner really helped to communicate the message. In particular, one member of ONDA noted the effectiveness of hiring a GIS specialist to create maps of the area. A sense of whimsy also apparently helps, this member also noted that “cowboy hats also help, they love cowboy hats in D.C.” Which they discovered when they went to attend the oversight meetings in Washington, D.C. that are required by the Federal Land Management and Policy Act of 1976. These meetings were required because Congress wanted to make sure that things were proceeding according to the dates that were set up in the legislation. In addition, wilderness proponents hosted members of the Senator’s staffs on tours of the wilderness areas.

An ONDA member stated that Senator Wyden was supportive of the wilderness designations from the beginning, but that they had to gain the support of Senator Smith and Congressman Walden. The Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wildernesses were the first wilderness areas that were designated by Congress without the opportunity to go through the President to secure a National Monument. ONDA and other wilderness supporters worked with the Oregon delegation to make the wilderness areas viable. After gaining as much local grassroots support as possible with the neighboring landowners and local county commissioners they went on to gain the support of the Oregon delegation. The land exchanges were an integral part of gaining that local base of support that was so compelling to the Oregon delegation.

One landowner observed that “ONDA was working very closely with representatives in the Capital and the right party was in control to make this work for ONDA.” As observed above, the land exchanges and other issues were essentially resolved long before the wilderness areas were designated. “The turning point was just a political judgment in our organization that it was time to move,” stated one member of Senator Wyden’s staff. After the BLM made the administrative decision to ban motorized vehicles from the area, nothing would be taken from anybody by designating the areas. Once that decision was made there were a few more details to be worked out between 2008 and 2009, but nothing material. The time was just right and the wilderness designations got bundled into the Omnibus Bill package. “These come along once every 20 years or so” and are “once in a lifetime” said one interviewee.

### **What happens after the wilderness area is designated?**

Interviewees noted a number of different observations when asked about what they had observed after the wilderness areas were designated. The Oregon Badlands has experienced more changes after the designation than the Spring Basin Wilderness, mainly due to its proximity to a major population center. Many of these changes have been good. The Oregon Badlands Wilderness has had much of the problematic trash removed thanks to the efforts of volunteers for the Friends of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness Group. The Fobbits have also been working hard to reach out to the community and educate them about wilderness recreation. The Oregon Badlands also has a newly developed parking lot and gate, as well as improved trails into interesting sites. However, not everyone is happy with these developments. One interviewee stated that they were disappointed with the development of the trails and said they would have preferred to have the area left in a more undeveloped state so that people could explore freely through the area.

The Spring Basin Wilderness on the other hand has not experienced a huge pulse of visitation. “Life hasn’t looked that much different since it has in the past,” stated one interviewee. However, one BLM employee stated that it will be a challenge to manage until the final land exchange is complete. This is the result of the wilderness boundary changing constantly as different segments of the land exchange are completed. The question is always where the boundary is on any given day.

A number of landowners brought up issues with the land exchanges. While the BLM is working on the land exchanges, they are not moving quickly enough for the landowners. One landowner shared that he had received some paperwork right after the legislation was passed that covered all of the things that had to occur before the land was actually exchanged. “It was a bureaucratic nightmare,” he shared. Another landowner shared that he no longer wanted to be involved in the land exchange after he found out that the required surveys would cost around \$40,000 instead of under \$10,000—the initial price he was quoted. So, instead he plans to sell the property to another landowner involved in the exchange to handle it. Still another landowner expressed frustration that the BLM was unable to accept a registered appraisal that they had paid to have done prior to the wilderness designation. In addition, one BLM employee indicated that there may be some problems with the land exchanges for the Spring Basin Wilderness due to fractional interests. This means that the private landowner may not have direct claim to the full bundle of rights on his property.

## **Chapter 6. Discussion & Recommendations**

The main purpose of this research study was to determine how the differences and similarities of the players, motivating factors, and environmental conditions reflected in differences in the process lead to designation for each wilderness area. The study also sought to develop recommendations for future groups wishing to pursue similar natural resource management objectives. The following Chapter discusses the analysis of the process for both the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designations. First, the discussion revisits the primary research questions. Second, the primary recommendations that came out of the study are discussed in detail below.

### **Findings related to research questions**

Answering the one primary question and four supporting questions outlined in Chapter 1 of this study was the primary focus during the data-gathering phase; therefore it is most effective to breakdown the analysis by research question.

#### **Which stakeholder groups worked together in support of the wilderness designation?**

In the case of the Oregon Badlands ONDA, several other environmental organizations, the Bend community, and local landowners supported the wilderness designation. ONDA, the Wheeler County Commissioners, and local landowners supported the Spring Basin Wilderness designation. In both cases, ONDA played a major role in facilitating the designation. These were both different than the Steens Mountain Wilderness designation that was more of a traditional coalition effort between ONDA, the Sierra Club, and other environmental groups. However, several groups—most notably the motorized vehicle community—did not participate in the wilderness designation process.

#### **What common goals brought stakeholders together?**

The results revealed that the stakeholders involved in each wilderness designation came together for very different reasons. These reasons ranged from wanting wilderness for the inherent personal value for the individual to the more practical realization that wilderness designation would benefit them personally. Some interviewees also indicated that since wilderness designation would not personally affect them, they remained neutral on the subject.

In the case of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness the designation was supported by environmental organizations, a local landowner, the Central Oregon Irrigation District, and many other local businesses and organizations. The Oregon Natural Desert Association led the wilderness campaign. Quite obviously, as outlined in their mission statement, their goal was to “to protect, defend, and restore the health of Oregon’s native deserts for present and future generations.” ONDA has participated in several wilderness designations, and continues to lobby for more. A local landowner, and rancher, with land abutting the Oregon Badlands Wilderness supported the wilderness designation for several reasons.

One of the main reasons was that he felt OHV users were causing damage to the site as well as cutting the fences that he used for his range allotments in the Badlands. He worked out an agreement between ONDA, the BLM, and himself that he would retire his range permits in exchange for his support of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness designation. In addition, the designation helped him to clean up some of the issues he had with his boundary with BLM land. The Central Oregon Irrigation District (COID) also had the goal of cleaning up boundary issues when engaging in the wilderness designation process. An employee of COID also stated that they became involved out of concern that the wilderness designation might negatively impact their management activities. They felt that by becoming involved they could ensure that their interests would be represented. The interviewee stated that it was “advantageous to be involved to ensure our ability to operate and maintain the canal.” He was referring to a canal that was along the boundary of the proposed wilderness, COID wanted to ensure that they maintained their ability to operate that canal. ONDA gained the support of local businesses by initiating a grassroots campaign to gather signatures. Many signed the petition because they felt the wilderness designation would benefit their local recreational opportunities and economy.

One interviewee compared the Oregon Badlands Wilderness to the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area and Wilderness outside of Missoula, Montana. That wilderness was designated in 1980 and encompasses approximately 32,976 acres, managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The National Recreation Area is on the southern end of the site and received the heaviest human use. The Rattlesnake Wilderness is in the more remote portion to the north. The area is just 4 miles north of the town of Missoula (Wilderness.net 2010).

The Spring Basin Wilderness was supported by the adjacent landowners, as well as the Wheeler County Commission. The landowners that were interviewed supported the wilderness designation because it would clean up their property boundary with BLM land. They would give the BLM all of their land within the wilderness boundary in exchange for land outside of the boundary. Participating in the land exchanges means that individual landowners would have less fence line to maintain and manage. In addition, cleaning up the boundaries should also help minimize hunters unknowingly trespassing onto private property during hunting season. Wheeler County is generally conservative and careful about lawmaking involving public lands. Their elected leaders reflect the values and expectation of our population here.

However, it is important to note that not everyone involved in the wilderness designation process was working toward a common goal. While members of ONDA and other members of the surroundings communities supported the wilderness designation for the intrinsic value of wilderness, many of the individuals involved in the land exchanges got involved primarily because they wanted to clean up boundary issues on their properties.

### **What arrangements were made to reach agreement on issues?**

The primary negotiation issues in the both the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designations were the land exchanges between the federal government and other non-federal government entities. Several of the landowners that were interviewed stated that they would not have participated in the wilderness designation process if it were not for the personal benefits of the land exchanges. In addition, in the case of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness one of the local landowners agreed to retire his grazing permits within the Oregon Badlands Wilderness as part of the agreement. Landowners were not motivated by the land exchanges or wilderness designation, but by the opportunities for reducing their land management needs as a result of the exchanges.

### **Where on the continuum between collaboration and negotiation did each of these wilderness areas fall in the process of designation?**

Both of these wilderness areas fell closer to negotiation than collaboration. In the case of both the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designation processes the stakeholders discussed the details of the land exchanges. This was not a truly collaborative effort because not all interested stakeholders were involved at every stage of the process. Julian (1994) defines collaborative planning as the process whereby stakeholders identify a common mission, combine resources, and work together towards a common goal. So, while members of ONDA sought to involve the motorized vehicle community by offering to support development of a recreation site for them in the near vicinity in exchange for their neutrality on the Oregon Badlands Wilderness proposal, they did not agree to this. When this effort did not work, ONDA moved forward with the designation proposal without the support of the majority of the motorized vehicle community. However, they did gain the support of a smaller number of motorized vehicle users that stated they did not really need the trails located in the Oregon Badlands because they had access to other trails in the vicinity. The Spring Basin Wilderness process was closer to a negotiated process with the adjacent landowners and other members of the local community meeting to discuss the details of the wilderness designation. The negotiated approach was a good approach here because ONDA ultimately planned to see the area designated as a wilderness area, significantly limiting the potential management options for the area. They were able to negotiate relatively minor issues such as the land exchanges in exchange for the support of other individuals and organizations.

### **How are the differences and similarities of the players, motivating factors, and environmental conditions reflected in differences in the process leading to designation for each wilderness area?**

One of the primary differences between the two cases is that the Oregon Badlands Wilderness had more controversy, likely due to its proximity to the Bend urban area. One interesting difference that came out of both the interviews and newspaper articles was that more interviewees supported designation of the Oregon Badlands for its intrinsic value.

This was likely due to the fact that the Oregon Badlands was viewed as being in danger due to OHV use by many, leading to an effort to protect it from further impact from motorized vehicles.

In contrast, Spring Basin was not open to motorized vehicle use and several interviewees noted that they did not see use changing in the area all that much as it transitioned from a Wilderness Study Area to a designated Wilderness Area. Another similarity seems to be the lack of competing interests for these lands. In other words, there were relatively simple win-win scenarios in these cases. Even in the Badlands case, where the OHV crowd was not happy, the decision to ban them from the area had already been made, so the Wilderness designation did not involve a conflict over their access.

Some of the main similarities between the two cases were the land exchanges, which were a driving force in gaining local support for the designations—especially for the Spring Basin Wilderness. The Spring Basin Wilderness involved four land exchanges between the BLM and local landowners. Due to the rural character of the area these were some of the primary individuals affected by the wilderness designation, and the land exchanges were beneficial to them in simplifying the management of their land. In the case of the Oregon Badlands, land exchanges also cleared up some of the boundary issues between the BLM and private property. Another major similarity was the support of the Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA). ONDA was active in both wilderness designations, in particular the Oregon Badlands Wilderness. In many collaborative natural resource management activities a single charismatic leader takes the lead to promote an action; in the case of these wilderness designations an organization was a driving force behind this coordinated effort.

## **Recommendations**

The results of this research study provide an example that may be useful for environmental organizations who are initiating a wilderness area designation. This case, as well as the existing literature, indicates that several characteristics make a wilderness designation process more likely to succeed. A list of seven recommendations is presented below. These recommendations are based on the successful efforts behind the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness area designations. These recommendations are divided up into two categories: recommendations for organizations or individuals who are proponents of a potential wilderness designation and for the Bureau of Land Management.

## **Recommendations for Wilderness Proponents**

### ***Recommendation 1: Recruit Strong Leadership***

Nearly every individual interviewed as part of this study identified the Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) as the main player in the wilderness designation process. Further, when asked who else they would recommend for an interview the individual nearly always identified at least one of the two main ONDA members that were responsible for the wilderness designation process by name. This reflects the importance, also noted in the literature, of having a strong and identifiable leader behind the process. A good leader provides the vision and continuing motivation to keep a process moving forward (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000).

However, good leadership is not enough, there also needs to have good credibility within the community and be perceived as reasonable and open-minded (Singleton 2002). Interviewees repeatedly brought up the point that ONDA members had worked tirelessly to see the area designated. They followed a strategy and were adaptable to changing conditions in the area.

### ***RECOMMENDATION 2: STRATEGIZE AND WORK OUT DETAILS AHEAD OF TIME***

A considerable amount of strategy went into the designation process for the two wilderness areas, the Oregon Badlands Wilderness in particular. The campaign for the Oregon Badlands Wilderness designation began in the 1980s, with a group called the 'Badlands Bunch' and a local schoolteacher taking local children on fieldtrips to the Badlands area to gain the support of both the children as well as their parents. The motorized vehicle issue was resolved several years before the wilderness area was proposed to Congress. The details of the land exchanges were also worked out between the parties prior to the wilderness area being proposed in Congress. In addition, ONDA promoted the area extensively in the community and gathered signatures from many local businesses and clubs to show congressional representatives that the wilderness designation had a broad basis of support in the area. This preparation, which began over 10 years before the site was actually designated, allowed the bill to be passed relatively smoothly once it was proposed in Congress. This was also the case with the Spring Basin Wilderness designation. The land exchanges were worked out ahead of time, and the local community was vetted to identify any major issues they would have with the designation, of which there were none. This type of preparation allowed the two wilderness areas to be designated with minimal conflict in 2009. Any issues were worked out years before the Omnibus Public Land Management Act was passed in Congress.

### ***Recommendation 3: Organize a “Friends” Group***

The Oregon Badlands was different from the Spring Basin Wilderness in that the site is maintained by the Friends of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness (the Fobbits) group. The mission of this group is to “restore, protect and preserve” the site. This group has been responsible for various stewardship tasks such as cleaning up the trash on the site, performing trailhead maintenance, sign installation and repair, removing obsolete barbed wire fencing, monitoring vegetation and wildlife, acting as boundary and trail patrols, and reporting any unusual or illegal activity. The Fobbits are a non-political group, different from ONDA. They have been very valuable to the Bureau of Land Management by serving as their “eyes and ears on the ground.” In the designation process, the work that this group did helped show Congress that the local community was dedicated to seeing the area designated as a wilderness.

While the Spring Basin Wilderness does not have a “Friends” group it does not appear as though this hindered the wilderness designation process in that case. The difference in situation between the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas is such that it was not strictly necessary. The Oregon Badlands is much more heavily visited than the Spring Basin Wilderness. Likely because it is located in a much more remote part of the state and it is not as necessary for a group to assist in maintaining the site. This is something to consider when looking at other potential wilderness designations, areas with higher visitation rates and human impacts may be more appropriate areas to support a “Friends” group than less visited areas.

### ***RECOMMENDATION 4: IDENTIFY BENEFITS FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS***

In recent years, wilderness designations have begun to be tied to other benefits to the local community as a strategy to gain broad support, or at least neutrality, for wilderness designations. This negotiation technique was identified in Blaeloch (2009), which described how in around 2000 wilderness designations began to be tied to land-use legislation that went beyond the wilderness’ boundaries.

Conservationists began to enter into negotiations with stakeholders that were typically against wilderness designation, like ranchers, local politicians, developers, and off-road vehicle enthusiasts. Like in the case of the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designations, the actual designation is only one part of the bill. Tying the wilderness designation to something like a land exchange or a land development project can gain support from a broader segment of the public. One interviewee even suggested tying the designation of one WSA to the release of another area as a WSA. This would mean one area gets designated as a wilderness while another is released from that option to be used for other land management priorities.

In the case of the Oregon Badlands, Spring Basin, and Steens Mountain Wilderness designations complex land-use deals were developed to gain the support of diverse groups. In the case of the Steens Mountain Wilderness, 104,000 acres of Federal land was traded for 18,000 non-Federal acres, and 97,000 of the 170,000 acres were designated as cow-free (Blaeloch 2009).

A total of 906 acres of Federal land was exchanged for 766 acres of non-Federal land in the case of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness. In the case of the Spring Basin Wilderness 5,116 acres of Federal land was exchanged for 4,710 acres of non-Federal land. These land exchanges will allow the private landowners and Federal government to more efficiently manage their land. As mentioned earlier, much of Oregon is affected by the checkerboard pattern left by the O&C Railroad. These land exchanges will help to clean some of those issues up by reducing the amount of fence line needed by individual landowners and also hopefully decreasing the number of accidental trespassers from public land onto the surrounding private lands.

There are many other potential benefits that wilderness designation can be tied to, such as: a proposed road development or freeing up an alternative recreation site for development for motorized recreational vehicle usage. However, not all support the idea of making these bargains to accomplish wilderness designation. Blaeloch (2009) discusses how these deals can water down the quality of wilderness that is acquired and that they can result in potentially damaging project being approved.

#### ***Recommendation 5: Ensure all User Groups are Involved***

It is important that all interested stakeholders are identified and invited to be a part of the wilderness designation process. Building on previous recommendations, this allows for the wilderness proponents to develop a strategy after identifying and resolving any issues that may hinder passing the wilderness proposal. By working with the local community early ONDA identified the motorized vehicle issue as the primary obstacle to seeing the area designated as wilderness. While this issue was somewhat resolved by changes in BLM's management of the Badlands prior to the wilderness designation, other groups interested in designating a site might take another approach. It would have built more social capital in the community if ONDA and the motorized vehicle community had been able to work out a compromise that satisfied all of the stakeholders in regards to the details of the wilderness designation.

#### ***Recommendation 6: Identify the 'Low hanging fruit'***

Several interviewees indicated that part of ONDA's strategy to get wilderness areas designated in central Oregon was to identify the 'low hanging fruit.' In other words, identify the WSAs that would be easier to get through the wilderness designation process. Some of the criteria that appear to have made these cases low hanging fruit include:

- Potential landowner benefits that would support land exchange
- People willing to help with management after designation (like the Friends of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness group)
- Local support or lack of local opposition
- Immediate threat to the wilderness characteristics of the site
- Potential conflicts reduced by previous management decisions
- Areas where current management is similar to wilderness management

This is not an exhaustive list of criteria, but a good starting point when considering which areas an organization wants to support through the wilderness designation process. Each situation is a little different, and there may be different characteristics of an area that also make it a good opportunity for wilderness designation.

## **Recommendation for the BLM**

### ***RECOMMENDATION 7: STREAMLINE THE LAND EXCHANGE PROCESS***

A number of interviewees that were involved in the land exchange process brought up their frustration with how time-consuming and cumbersome the process has been. Since, this was a major selling point for a number of individuals involved in the wilderness designations and had the added benefit of dealing with boundary issues to make the wilderness areas more contiguous management units, it would be beneficial to streamline the process. This may be done in one of two ways. The BLM could find a way to streamline the process; however, this is unlikely to happen soon due to budget and staffing cuts. Another possibility would be for environmental organizations, like ONDA, to use their resources to assist the landowners with the paperwork and other components of the process.

## **Further Research**

While this research attempts to support the existing literature and fill in a gap with regards to collaboration in the wilderness designation process, further research in the field is valuable. Since this research is based solely on the observations of stakeholders in two wilderness designation cases, supporting this study with further research on multiple cases of wilderness designation would be helpful to further determine what makes wilderness designations successful. Further research into additional cases would also allow for application of the findings to a broader audience.

Carrying out a study looking at cases where a wilderness designation process was not successful would provide a valuable comparison to what made these cases successful. It would help provide insight into what factors about the process, as well as the overall environmental variables, make a designation more likely to be successful. This type of study would help identify if the process carried out by the leader is the major factor for success, and how local variables can change the outcome.

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## **APPENDIX A – Interview Guide**

[Introduction is in Appendix D.]

### **Introductory Question:**

- Tell me about your job.
- How did you get involved in this wilderness designation?

**To gain insight into why the interviewee wanted to see the area designated questions will be asked such as:**

- What was your role in the process?
  - Did you attend meetings, write letters, lobby government, etc.?
- What was your interest in the project?
- How long were you involved in the process for designating the wilderness area?
- Why did you want / not want the area designated as a wilderness?
  - Do you see it as a benefit to the local economy? If yes, how so?
  - Do you think wilderness designation will increase the quality of user's recreational experiences?
  - Will you personally benefit from the designation? How will the broader community benefit?

**In order to uncover the process of the wilderness designation questions will be asked such as:**

- Who were the main players in the wilderness designation?
  - Who led the wilderness designation process (convening meetings and campaign efforts? Was it an individual, an organization, or several individuals/organizations?
- Where there any significant differences or disputes in the process?
  - Can you describe those differences?
  - Which was the most significant?
  - Who expressed those different viewpoints?
  - Were the issues resolved?
  - How were they resolved? If not, why not?
- Reflecting on the process that was used:
  - What about the process worked well (or could be used as a model)?
  - What about the process could have been improved?

**If the participant was involved in more than one of the wilderness designations questions will be asked such as:**

- What were the differences in the wilderness designation processes between the cases?
- Was one process better than the other?
  - If so, why do you think that was? If not, why not?

**If the participant works for the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management:**

- Has your agency begun the process of developing a wilderness plan yet?
- Are the same people involved in that process, as in the wilderness designation process?
- Are you running into any issues or problems as you develop this plan that did not arise during the wilderness designation process?
- Have the land exchanges officially taken place yet? (for the Oregon Badlands and Spring Basin wilderness areas)

**If a private citizen:**

- What are your expectations now that the wilderness area has been designated?
- Have your expectations been met?

**Both federal employees and private citizens:**

- Have you been satisfied with the outcomes of the wilderness designation?
- Is there anything else important about this project that I have not asked about you about today?

## **APPENDIX B – List of Acronyms**

ATV	All-terrain vehicle
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BPA	Bonneville Power Administration
COID	Central Oregon Irrigation District
COMAC	Central Oregon Motorcycle & ATV Club
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
Fobbit	Friends of the Oregon Badlands Wilderness
GPS	Global Positioning System
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NWPS	National Wilderness Preservation System
O&C	Oregon and California Railroad
OHV	Off-highway vehicle
ONDA	Oregon Natural Desert Association
RMP	Resource Management Plan
SMA	Special Management Area
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
WSA	Wilderness Study Area