Troubled waters threatened forests: Hells Canyon National Recreation Area

Deborah Waite Richie

The University of Montana

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/4714

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1976

This is an unpublished manuscript in which copyright subsists. Any further reprinting of its contents must be approved by the author.

Mansfield Library
University of Montana
Date: 1988

Signature
TROUBLED WATERS, THREATENED FORESTS:
HELLS CANYON NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

By
Deborah Waite Richie
B.A. University of Oregon, 1981

Presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Journalism
University of Montana
1988

Approved by:

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

Date

December 15, 1988
ABSTRACT

Richie, Deborah Waite, M.A., December 1988
Journalism

Troubled Waters, Threatened Forests: Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (136 pp.).

Director: Charles E. Hood

This thesis comprises a four-part series of articles on environmental conflicts within Hells Canyon National Recreation Area under management of the U.S. Forest Service. Centered on the Snake River where it forms the border between Idaho and Oregon and cuts through North America's deepest gorge, Hells Canyon NRA is a microcosm of public land dilemmas in the west. Logging, development, wilderness, Indian tribal rights and whitewater boating issues converge in a spectacular setting that rivals the Grand Canyon.

Though the Hells Canyon NRA Act emphasizes recreation, natural resource and scenic preservation, the Forest Service appears to be managing the area little differently from its surrounding forests lacking a special designation. Large-scale logging is occurring on the one-third of the canyon country that is forested, while little money has been spent to improve recreation facilities. Jet boats in unregulated numbers race through the wildest portion of the canyon; nonmotorized boats are limited by a strict permit system. A proposed recreational vehicle campground on the river has drawn fire from commercial outfitters. On rangelands, some recreationists have charged the Forest Service with allowing sheep and cattle to overgraze lands at the expense of wildlife.

To gain a broad perspective on complex issues, the author interviewed more than 100 people. Summer, 1988, was spent touring the canyon country and conducting interviews in the surrounding Idaho and Oregon communities. One week in Washington, D.C. permitted interviews with U.S. Senator Bob Packwood, R-Oregon, officials in the national office of the U.S. Forest Service and representatives of national conservation groups.

An analysis section concludes that a change in managing agencies to the National Park Service and a new designation of Hells Canyon-Eagle Caps National Park Preserve would best protect fragile resources now threatened by Forest Service practices.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my late professor and friend, Warren J. Brier; to my committee members, Charlie Hood, Bob McGiffert and Dan Pletscher; and to my parents, Dave and Catherine Richie.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICINITY MAP</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART ONE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH AMERICA'S DEEPEST CANYON IN TROUBLE AGAIN</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDEBAR: WHAT IS A NATIONAL RECREATION AREA?</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART TWO</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOGGING IN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA IGNITES PROTESTS</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART THREE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JET BOATS, DEVELOPMENTS AND GRAZING CONFLICTS DISRUPT CANYON TRANQUILITY</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART FOUR</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS: HELLS CANYON-EAGLE CAPS NATIONAL PARK PRESERVE MERITS STUDY</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDIX</strong></td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIBLIOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART ONE

NORTH AMERICA'S DEEPEST CANYON IN TROUBLE AGAIN

A resounding slap on water breaks the silence of an August day in Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. The chinook salmon heaves himself across shallow riffles and vanishes into the "Blue Hole," a clear pool of the Imnaha River reflecting auburn trunks of ponderosa pines. Below him, more salmon thrash ragged tails to dig nests, a scene repeated annually over centuries.

The deep-chested chinook rests before a final upstream push to the place he was born five years earlier. On this 560-mile journey from the ocean he has lost half his original 75 pounds and changed hues from olive-green to muted red, a signal that the end is nearing. Below the surface of gentle rapids, he and a female will spawn and die.

Mysterious and fragile, the salmon and this recreation area share an uncertain future. Where dams once threatened to block the last of the salmon runs and drown North America's deepest canyon carved by the Snake River, battles now rage over the management of the recreation area by the U.S. Forest Service.
While escaping a fate of being loved to death like some of America's national parks, the remote Hells Canyon has also avoided national scrutiny of its stewardship. It remains one of our least known national treasures. Few Americans outside the Pacific Northwest are aware of the major environmental controversies that beset the area or how dramatically the outcomes of those struggles will shape the area's future. At issue are perplexing questions regarding logging, development, wilderness, cattle and sheep grazing, and Indian tribal rights.

Where the Snake River flows north through Hells Canyon for 100 miles Congress established a vast, 652,488-acre complex that includes the Seven Devils Mountains in Idaho and the Imnaha River canyon in Northeast Oregon. Idaho's Salmon River adds its power to the Snake at the recreation area's northern end.

Hells Canyon is more than 2,000 feet deeper than the Grand Canyon. Basalt cliffs plummet 8,000 feet to the river at the deepest part of the gorge to expose a magnificent geological story dating back 230-280 million years. Thousands of prehistoric Indian sites line the Snake. Here and there, picturesque homesteads from early in this century nestle in tranquil side canyons.
Dramatic shifts in elevation and aspect create a series of habitats supporting 347 animal species. Spotted skunks prowl the rocky rims in moonlight. More than 4,000 Rocky Mountain elk wander in herds over native bunchgrass slopes. Black bears of many hues -- from cinnamon to blonde to dark brown -- pad across hogback ridges. In spring, mountain goats from the Seven Devils Range in Idaho clamber down cliffs to the Snake River past pink bouquets of Snake River phlox, a flower species found only on the Snake and Salmon Rivers. Beneath the waters is the dwelling place of mysterious, primeval sturgeon that may exceed 10 feet.

Chinook born in the upper waters of the Imnaha River grow larger and travel farther than any other salmon in Oregon. To assure that the chinook's complex life cycle continues requires far-reaching management policies designed to protect the Imnaha, Snake and Columbia Rivers, the surrounding lands and the ocean itself.

Congress entrusted the Forest Service to apply such far-reaching management to preserve Hells Canyon's natural and historical values. But regional conservation groups charge that the agency has exploited its lands and waters to provide logs for mills, grazing land for ranchers, and a jet boat

This four-part series examines the still unresolved conflicts that surfaced soon after Congress designated Hells Canyon a National Recreation Area on Dec. 31, 1975. Part one provides an overview of current issues and a summary of past efforts to dam the Snake River and congressional action leading eventually to the 1975 legislation. Part two focuses on logging conflicts. Part three shifts to river corridor dilemmas: the struggle between jet boaters and rafters, the controversy over a planned recreational vehicle campground in the heart of the canyon, and the debate as to how many and where domestic animals should be permitted to graze within the recreation area. Part four proposes one solution.

The Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Act of Dec. 31, 1975, makes clear the mandate of Congress in its first paragraph:

That to assure that the natural beauty, and historical and archaeological values of the Hells Canyon area and the seventy-one-mile segment of the Snake River between Hells Canyon Dam and the Oregon-Washington border, together with portions of certain of its tributaries and adjacent lands, are preserved for this and future generations, and that the recreational and ecologic values and public enjoyment of the area are thereby enhanced, there is hereby established the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area.
The act designated a 194,132-acre wilderness core and three roadless areas for study as possible wilderness additions. Moreover, it added 67 miles of the Snake River and 26.8 miles of Idaho's Rapid River to the Wild and Scenic Rivers system (which prevents dams and limits developments) and required a study of the remaining undammed portion of the Snake River, 34 miles north to Asotin, Washington, as a possible addition to the system.

Further, Congress ordered the Secretary of Agriculture to present a comprehensive management plan within five years designed to carry out seven guiding objectives for Forest Service management:

1. To protect the free-flowing nature of the rivers.
2. To conserve scenic, wilderness, cultural and scientific values.
3. To preserve biologically unique features.
4. To protect fish and wildlife habitat.
5. To protect and interpret archaeological sites.
6. To preserve and restore historical sites.
7. To manage, utilize, and dispose of natural resources including, but not limited to, "timber harvesting by selective cutting, mining, grazing and the continuation of such existing uses and developments as are compatible with the provisions of this Act."

The words "preservation" and "protection" are repeated 10 times within the six-page act. The Forest
Service's interpretation of those two terms has come under attack by different interest groups.

Thirteen years after the act's passage, timber cutting and grazing have proved the most visible activities under Forest Service administration. During the nine years it took for the Secretary of Agriculture to approve a hotly contested management plan, recreation projects designed to allow visitors to enjoy the area's natural beauty were put on hold while timber cutting and rangeland grazing continued.

Logging on the recreation area dominates the concerns of conservation groups, such as Hells Canyon Preservation Council, the Oregon Natural Resources Council and Friends of Lake Fork, who say that the timber cutting is eliminating roadless areas, damaging fish and wildlife habitat and removing the majestic trees that prompted Congress to designate a National Recreation Area. They question why money is spent to build expensive logging roads, while main recreation roads leading to canyon vistas remain in poor condition -- in some cases passable only by four-wheel drive vehicles.

Recreation programs suffered from budget cuts throughout the National Forests in the early 1980s. Hells Canyon, despite its classification as a National Recreation Area, still had to take its share of cuts,

Once-healthy budgets in fields like cultural resources (archaeological and historical programs) were slashed by as much as 75 percent in the early 1980s and only recently started to increase. Hells Canyon lacks a recreation planner, wildlife biologist, wilderness specialist and law enforcement officer. The positions of timber sale administrator and forest silviculturalist remained fully funded during those difficult budgetary years.

Funding woes on all 13 Forest Service national recreation areas prompted Rep. Bruce F. Vento, D-Minn., chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, to request a 1988 General Accounting Office audit. The audit of selected areas, including Hells Canyon, should be completed this spring.
"The NRAs could be the crown jewels of the National Forest system," Vento said in a speech last May to federal recreation managers. "They could be the classrooms that teach thousands of Americans about the mission of the Forest Service. They could be the showcases that convince the American people that National Forests are just as beautiful and just as special as National Parks. Instead, in too many cases, they are neglected step children left to fend for themselves."

The audit coincides with a 1988 Forest Service stated commitment to start promoting recreation areas through its "National Recreation Strategy" that encourages partnerships between public and private sectors and creative ideas to stretch budgets.

More funding for recreation projects has also recently filtered down through the Forest Service ranks to Hells Canyon. Under construction this year are a new headquarters and visitor center in Enterprise, Oregon, as well as the first six miles of the 24-mile, rugged road that climbs 5,000 feet from the tiny town of Imnaha to Hat Point, the premier viewpoint of the Snake River across from the jagged Seven Devils Mountains.

Concurrently, the Forest Service defends its timber sale program on the Oregon side of Hells Canyon as compatible with recreation.
But conservation groups argue that the agency misinterpreted congressional intent by setting a timber sale target and are now violating that target by accelerating logging to salvage dying spruce trees struck by an insect outbreak. The sales could reach even higher levels this year depending on how much of the estimated 310 million board feet of timber damaged in last August’s Teepee Butte fire is logged.

In 1987 and 1988, the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, a coalition of the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Warm Springs and Yakima tribes videotaped areas of the upper Imnaha River tributaries where they believe logging threatens salmon spawning grounds protected by 1855 treaty rights. The courts have interpreted the treaty to mean that the tribes have the right to fish, hunt and gather berries in their ceded areas, which include Hells Canyon, and to ensure that the resources are protected from damaging land practices.

Damaging practices within the recreation area have also been documented by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. In 1982, for example, loggers dragged trees through the Imnaha tributary of Lick Creek as salmon tried to spawn.
"If you want to keep the salmon around, you have to keep the habitat around," said Allen Pinkham, chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee and former commissioner for the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission.

"The treaty is very strong," he said. "We need to exert that power to preserve the fishing -- not just the right to fish, but the right to have the fish back."

A recent lawsuit and constant flow of timber sale appeals from conservation groups, including several from the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, have attracted the attention of the top managers within the Forest Service.

"One of the things that makes Hells Canyon unique is it (the Hells Canyon NRA act) did clearly envision some level of timber production continuing in that area," said George Leonard, associate chief of the Forest Service. "We do have that apparent problem of trying to accommodate two not always consistent objectives, managing primarily for recreation but also continuing to have utilization of the timber resource."

Assailed on one side by conservation groups, the Forest Service is also criticized by the timber industry for failing to make more timber available. Timber company officials contend that Hells Canyon's logging program
is so minor that dead or dying trees continually go to "waste" (falling in the forest instead of becoming lumber). They have lobbied for almost triple the timber sale target that would match the level of cutting on parts of the area during the 1960s. The Forest Service did match that level of close to 20 million board feet annually in 1986.

While logging is the most visible controversy, divisive issues on the Snake River and rangelands have generated other conflicts, even violence.

Forests cover only about one-third of the recreation area. Grasslands cloak the arid canyons, interrupted by trees that penetrate like groping fingers down the wetter, north-facing slopes and side drainages. Slicing through the center of this jumbled canyon country, the Snake River has been saved from dams, but is still threatened by overuse and development.

Within the main river canyon, jet boaters ply the waters at will, while nonmotorized rafters and kayakers must apply for permits six months in advance to use the same river.

Ideal for negotiating the rock-filled Snake, the propellerless jet boats have become an important industry in Lewiston and Clarkston where seven jet boat building companies run a brisk business. As the
boats' popularity on the Snake River grows, so does river crowding and tension between jet boaters and floaters.

One jet boat outfitter, angered by a rafter who "mooned" his noisy jet boat and its passengers, drove his boat into the beached raft hard enough to knock the bare-bottomed man into the air and to injure him slightly.

The heavy two-way traffic on this whitewater river is becoming a growing concern to managers. A sudden course change to avoid a collision can cause a powerboat or a raft to flip.

Most commercial jet boat and float operators, cooperate with each other, however, to make the best of the difficult situation. Some have even joined forces to oppose the Forest Service's planned recreational vehicle campground in the heart of the canyon at Pittsburg Landing. Managers say the improvements will solve overuse there, but some boaters fear the development will only encourage further crowding and intrude upon the wild appearance of the gorge.

On another front, boaters and campers have complained that the Forest Service has failed to prevent cattle and sheep from damaging popular campsites, scenic overlooks and springs. Conservationists and hunting groups have also objected
to the presence of domestic sheep, which infect the wild bighorn sheep with a fatal pneumonia.

Ranchers who lease Forest Service grazing land argue they are good stewards, but fear that the recreation area designation some day may force them out. Other ranchers, forced to sell their Snake River private lands after they were condemned in the early 1970s to prevent subdividing, remain bitter toward the Forest Service and have chosen not to accept offers to lease the ranches they once owned on the Snake.

The most recent canyon controversy ended last November when Congress voted to ban all dam building on the 34 miles of unprotected Snake River, as well as on the Tower Salmon River. Sen. James McClure and Rep. Larry Craig, both Idaho Republicans, introduced legislation in response to a Connecticut-based power company's application to build two dams near Asotin, Washington. The result is full protection from dams on the entire 100 miles of free-flowing Snake River from Hells Canyon Dam to Lewiston.

Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Oregon, the principal architect of the original Hells Canyon bill, also had introduced a bill two years ago to add the 34 unprotected river miles to the Wild and Scenic system, to restrict timber cutting, and to increase the wilderness core from 214,000 acres to about 520,000
acres. He said he intended to finish the task of preserving Hells Canyon that the act has failed to do under Forest Service management. However, the bill lacked enough support from the Northwest delegation to pass.

Local opposition to his bill matched the protests 10 years earlier of those who felt dams and power, not a National Recreation Area, would revive a flagging economy. A fleet of 100 log trucks cruised the streets in protest while Senators Packwood and Mark O. Hatfield, R-Oregon conducted hearings in La Grande, Oregon, in August, 1986.

The original recreation area bill of 1975 had drawn only faint protest from the timber industry, but times have changed as the mature forests dwindle in Northeast Oregon and remote areas become more appealing to logging companies. The logging provision within the act subjects the recreation area to demands for timber to keep area mills running, demands that the Forest Service appears willing to try to meet.

Local satisfaction is the key to judging successful management of recreation areas, said Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson in a recent interview. The proper amount of logging in the recreation area also should be a local decision, he said.
But Packwood has disagreed, maintaining that the "national" label on Hells Canyon suggests a responsibility that goes beyond local, short-term needs.

The Forest Service contends that its management plan protects the values as Congress intended, and achieves a fair compromise between industry and conservation interests. Neither side, however, appears satisfied.

Administering Hells Canyon NRA, which spans two states, three Forest Service regions and three national forests, poses physical as well as political challenges. The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest supervisor oversees the recreation area as part of his larger responsibilities from his headquarters in Baker, more than 100 miles from the main canyon gateways. Hells Canyon is treated as a ranger district with its main office in Enterprise, Oregon, and branch offices in Lewiston and Riggins, Idaho.

Driving around Hells Canyon's perimeter would take a very long day. The winding 450-mile journey could start at Lewiston, where one could head south through Idaho to Grangeville, Riggins, New Meadows, Council, and Cambridge; then west across the Snake River to Halfway, Oregon; north to Joseph and Enterprise; and finally back to Lewiston via Asotin, Washington.
Each perimeter community depends on a portion of the recreation area for tourism and makes special demands of the Forest Service. Among the towns are:

* Lewiston, the largest city of the Hells Canyon communities with 28,000 residents, sprawls along the banks of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers and takes pride in its claim that it is the West's most inland seaport. Hailed also by some as the jet boat building capital of the world, Lewiston is understandably interested in the development of Hells Canyon as a river resource. Turmoil over logging on the Oregon side seems inconsequential here, compared to conflicts involving jet boat and rafting industries.

* Riggins, a town of 520 people on the banks of the Salmon River, has evolved swiftly over the past six years since the sawmill burned down to become a mecca for guided river rafting, fishing and horseback trips. Pack trip outfitters use the nearby Seven Devils Mountains of Idaho, part of the Hells Canyon wilderness. The Riggins Chamber of Commerce views a plan for better access and campgrounds at Pittsburg Landing (about 45 miles northwest of Riggins) as a boon to its tourism business.

* Halfway (pop. 380), at the southern end of the recreation area, also strives for new sources of income to replace a declining number of logging jobs. Two
bed-and-breakfast inns and a llama outfitting company indicate a shift toward tourism dependent on Hells Canyon and the Eagle Cap Wilderness, to the north of Halfway. Some community members are also watchdogs of Hells Canyon’s management. A local conservation group, Friends of Lake Fork, has joined a suit against the Forest Service to stop a timber sale within the upper reaches of Lake Fork roadless area, part of the National Recreation Area.

* Enterprise (pop. 2,000) and Joseph (pop. 1,000) fall in the homeland of the Nez Perce Indians, the Wallowa Valley, which is sixty-five miles north of Halfway via the twisting Wallowa Mountain Loop Road. The primary income sources remain logging, ranching, farming and government jobs. The valley supports three small lumber mills that purchase some timber from the recreation area. Here, the logging issue has become most heated.

* Imnaha, with fewer than 30 inhabitants, forms the central gathering place of the 180 people residing in the verdant Imnaha River valley surrounded by the recreation area. Some of those residents feel vulnerable to changes imposed from outsiders on a traditional ranching lifestyle. Social and political activities revolve around the Imnaha Tavern, also where tourists stop for a cold drink after braving the
treacherous road to Hat Point. The bartender and owner, David Tanzey, estimates that 2,000 to 3,000 visitors stop in each summer.

In addition to the demands of isolated communities bordering or within the recreation area, the Forest Service must contend with dismayed visitors, many of whom expect paved roads, interpretive signs, campground programs and other amenities found at national scenic attractions like the Grand Canyon or Yellowstone.

For instance, a couple from Quebec landed in the town of Imnaha as part of a Western park tour last summer. They were lost and confused.

"Hells Canyon," James H. Bough says with a French accent, leaning over his low-slung sports car. "It's far and not easy to find."

His companion, Monique Vachon, points to her Canadian Automobile Association guide book that shows Hells Canyon as a logical stop enroute from Mt. St. Helens National Monument to Glacier National Park. Even the guide's sketchy map showed a paved road to the Hat Point scenic overlook.

The trip proved long and arduous. Upon arrival in Enterprise, they couldn't find the National Recreation Area headquarters, harbored behind a side door of the post office. Following directions from a gas station attendant, they had driven 30 miles farther only to
discover in Imnaha that the Hat Point road is best traversed in a four-wheel-drive or high clearance vehicle.

Inside, a postmistress with a merry face ringed in grey curls chats with four elderly women. A native of Imnaha, Janis Wortman is accustomed to confused tourists stopping in.

"You see people drive to the Hat Point turnoff and come to a screeching halt," she says. "They just turn around. "It's a shame they made it into a National Recreation Area and then didn't take care of it."

The road to Hat Point, the major vista over the canyon, is in worse shape than before the area was designated. This year's planned improvement has come so late that Imnaha residents are skeptical about the benefits of having a recreation area in their backyard.

To those who labored to halt the onslaught of dams and to preserve the surrounding canyons, something seems amiss. They see the Hat Point road as only one example of many expectations unmet since the recreation area was established.

"I don't think the Forest Service is qualified to run national recreation areas," said John A.K. Barker, a drama professor at Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston and river outfitter.
Barker dove into the Hells Canyon battle in 1972 as a main organizer of the Coalition to Save the Snake, composed of Northwest fishermen, conservation groups and fishing industries such as Bumble Bee Seafoods, Inc.. The group's goal was simple: Keep the dams off the Snake River. Jack Hemingway, eldest son of Ernest Hemingway, was the first chairman of the coalition. Barker succeeded him.

"We were somewhat naive at the beginning," Barker said, frowning as he recalled past battles.

He had assumed that the Forest Service could follow the Hells Canyon NRA Act. Now he questions whether the Forest Service has the necessary commitment. He points to its opposition to a special designation for Hells Canyon throughout five years of bills before Congress. For example, following hearings largely favoring the Senate bill for a National Recreation Area in 1974, the deputy chief testified in Washington, D.C. that the agency needed 60 days to prepare an alternative, a delay that prevented passage of a bill until the next year.

Barker contends that Forest Service managers have proved reluctant stewards lacking the vision to preserve the immense, yet fragile national recreation area. He dislikes the agency's recreation priorities, such as devoting $2.1 million to a recreational vehicle
campground at Pittsburg Landing, while existing campsites are poorly maintained, old historic buildings are neglected and hiking trails are overgrown with poison ivy.

"They might as well build a Burger King, or better yet a Baskin Robbins," Barker said of the Pittsburg project.

The idea of seeing Winnebagos parked on the river corridor galls Barker, who fought to prevent private-land subdivisions along the Snake and helped write the legislation he thought would protect the corridor.

Barker said that he wished he and others had pushed harder for specific language regulating powerboats, establishing more wilderness and limiting timber cutting. Such issues paled at the time alongside the spectre of a giant concrete plug.

Packwood remembers how narrowly the canyon escaped several major dams proposed in the 1960s by private and public utilities. Scrapping over which power company would be allowed to build the dams gave frantic preservationists just enough time to mount their successful opposition.

"It was like hanging on the edge of a cliff with your fingernails trying to pull your way back up," Packwood said.
The dam builders had strong momentum to develop hydropower to its fullest in the 1950s and 60s. In 1955, Idaho Power Co. secured the Federal Power Commission's approval to build dams in upper Hells Canyon at three sites -- Brownlee, Oxbow and Hells Canyon Creek. All three were eventually constructed, flooding some of the most challenging whitewater rapids in the country. The last of them, Hells Canyon Dam, now marks the division between reservoirs and the 100 miles of free-flowing river north to Lewiston, Idaho.

The commission’s approval of Idaho Power’s license angered public power supporters, who backed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ proposal for a single, 700-foot-high dam to be built at Hells Canyon Creek. The mammoth dam would have created one reservoir equal to all three of Idaho Power’s projects. The public power group -- the National Hells Canyon Association -- appealed the commission’s decision.

A future congressman led the battle for a High Hells Canyon Dam throughout the 1950s. He was Al Ullmann, then a real estate broker in Baker, Oregon. Surprisingly, in 15 years he would shift his position 180 degrees to become Sen. Packwood’s House of Representatives ally in the fight to protect the canyon from dams. He would also be a source of compromises
that added timber cutting provisions to the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area final bill.

Idaho Power emerged the victor in court battles that had not prevented the private company from working around the clock during 1956 on the earthen Brownlee Dam.

That same year, Ullman was elected to the House of Representatives and vowed to make the federal High Hells Canyon Dam his top priority, despite Idaho Power's claim to the site. Congress had the power to supercede the private dams by approving the high dam, even if it meant flooding the partially built Brownlee Dam. Oregon's Sen. Wayne Morse also wanted the federal dam and even introduced a bill that passed 45 to 38, but failed in the House. The federal proposal died.

The allure of constructing technical masterpieces that would harness the fierce Snake River to provide millions of kilowatts overshadowed some minor concerns that Brownlee, Oxbow and Hells Canyon Dams would harm the world's second largest chinook salmon and steelhead runs. As many as 40,000 to 50,000 salmon spawned in the mainstem of the Snake upstream from the Hells Canyon Dam site.

Engineers for Idaho Power appeared confident that the fish trap they had constructed below Brownlee Dam
to transport the thousands of salmon around the barrier would save the salmon runs.

Then something went wrong. Just when Idaho Power prepared to celebrate the completion of Brownlee Dam in 1958, technology failed. First, the trap fell apart just before the returning fish arrived. In a desperate attempt, company officials scooped fish by hand into plastic bags to be trucked around the dam. The few that survived managed to spawn upriver, but when their offspring migrated downstream they were ground to pieces in the turbines, passing right through a plastic "skimmer" designed to divert the fish for transport.

The fish could not be saved after all, and the image of thousands upon thousands of dying chinook salmon eroded public faith in dam builders' ingenuity. The upriver Snake run was dead as Idaho Power went on to build Oxbow and Hells Canyon Dams. Only the fisheries of the Salmon and Imnaha Rivers remained to face imminent dam threats.

Even after this tragedy, power companies continued to vie for licenses within Hells Canyon, identified as having four of the five best dam sites remaining in the Northwest.

Objection to dams surfaced, however, when several Eastern Oregon chapters of the Izaac Walton League (a national conservation group) condemned the Nez Perce
Dam and High Mountain Sheep proposals of Pacific Northwest Power Company. Either of these dams would have flooded most of the remaining free-flowing Snake through Hells Canyon. Since the Nez Perce Dam would block both Imnaha and Salmon River fisheries, the High Mountain Sheep, which would block only the Imnaha, was viewed as the lesser of two evils.

Opposition was still limited to minor protests when once again a public power company decided to compete against a private company. Washington Public Power Supply System, in 1960, first failed in its bid for the Nez Perce site and then filed on the High Mountain Sheep site, seeking to replace Pacific Northwest Power under a public preference clause of the Federal Power Act. Again, the public versus private rights to building dams entered the courts and this time went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.
The 1967 decision of the Court changed the course of Hells Canyon's history. No longer was the question where to build the dams, but whether to build any dams at all. Chief Justice William O. Douglas wrote in his majority opinion:

The test is not solely whether the regions will be able to use the electric power. The test is whether the project will be in the public interest. And that determination can be made only after an exploration of all issues relevant to the "public interest," including future power demand and supply, alternate sources of power, the public interest in preserving reaches of wild rivers and wilderness areas, the preservation of anadromous fish for commercial and recreation purposes, and the protection of wildlife.

The Court sent the High Mountain Sheep Dam question back to the Federal Power Commission for more public hearings. Two years later, in January 1970, responding to this new idea of preserving Hells Canyon instead of damming it, Sen. Packwood introduced a Hells Canyon National River bill, written by Brock Evans of the Sierra Club with the help of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council. The Idaho group formed soon after the Supreme Court decision and eventually grew to 2,000 members. That first bill would have taken in a 714,000-acre swath on both sides of the canyon with extensions up Idaho's Salmon River and Washington's Grande Ronde River.
"I remember Brock Evans taking out a felt pen and drawing on big highway maps," Packwood said in an interview, arcing an imaginary boundary in the air with his own pen.

Evans, now vice president for national affairs at the National Audubon Society, best recalls the inspiration that drove him to think bigger than simply prohibiting dams. As he talked, the muscles of his shoulders and forehead relaxed. He leaned back amid clutters of paper and an array of pink phone messages that lined his desk like alarm signals for wilderness and rivers in trouble. For a few minutes, the office walls in Washington, D.C. seemed to melt away.

It was May 1967, at a meeting on the Puget Sound. Evans was fresh out of law school and new to his Sierra Club job.

"In came this emissary from darkest Idaho from across the rivers and across the deserts and across the mountains to where the white people were in this big city," he said.

The emissary he spoke of was Floyd Harvey of Lewiston, whom some have hailed as the father of Hells Canyon preservation. Harvey operated a power boat outfitting from a lodge on leased Forest Service land deep within the canyon.
"He told this tale and the club’s executive said, ‘Okay Evans. You’re staff and Idaho is part of your turf. Look into it.’

Getting to Hells Canyon seemed an awesome first task to the Seattle-raised Evans, who still had visions of covered wagons crossing the plains.

He rode on Harvey’s power boat to his Willow Creek camp among pines and below a strangely beautiful alum mineral deposit that oozes from a steep slope like ocher paint. Evans returned to explore by horse, foot and raft.

"I was stunned by the impact of the place, he said. "I had never been on a great, living river before,"

At Willow Creek, Evans and fellow conservationist Cliff Merritt debated what designation would best fit the continent’s deepest gorge and one of its largest rivers. The surrounding cliffs, plateaus, sweeping grasslands, upland forests, jagged peaks and alpine lakes convinced them that Hells Canyon should be a national park.

"I’ve seen a lot more since then and haven’t changed my mind," Evans said.

That first bill of 1970 was close to a national park in its preservation emphasis, except that it allowed hunting. Evans acquiesced to this provision,
wishing to avoid a reenactment of the bruising battle between preservationists and the hunting lobby over the proposed North Cascades National Park.

From 1970 to 1975, Evans lobbied Congress, negotiated with the Idaho and Oregon delegations, and rallied fellow conservationists to support the bills as they continued to be debated in Congress and in public hearings.

"Brock Evans was very instrumental and he was just a young pup attorney out of college," Harvey said in an interview in the basement office of his Lewiston home, where he now runs a telephone paging business.

Evans paid a similar compliment to Harvey: "Floyd was a real fighter."

Harvey hung on with bulldog tenacity from 1960 until 1974. Nothing would have swayed him from pursuing his struggle to save the canyon, until one day in 1974 he returned to his lodge at Willow Creek to find it a smoking wreck, burned by arsonists who saw him as a threat to getting the dam built.

"I was damned upset," Harvey said. "I just dropped out of society for several years."

After 10 years of fighting the legal system, two of the three men who burned his lodge confessed, but he has collected little of the $219,000 awarded to him. He remains bitter and seems happiest when speaking of
river days when he listened to Arthur Godfrey and Burl Ives swapping ballads that echoed off the canyon walls above Willow Creek.

"One night, Arthur Godfrey and I dragged out mattresses and just the two of us slept out beneath the stars," he said. His walls display photos of the lodge, his boat in the rapids and the famous people who came to see why Hells Canyon should be saved. In one photo, Harvey doesn't look much different than he does now, standing by the river in a striped shirt and baggy shorts, his bald head shining in the sunlight. He's grinning and next to him is Burl Ives, looking like the Santa Claus of the Snake River.

He saved the boxes of letters from people who had written to him after trips, vowing to see that the canyon remained in its natural state.

"I'd always give them a little lecture around the campground and tell them what they could do to preserve the canyon," he said. Without knowing how a conservation battle ought to be fought, in a time when there were no guidelines, Harvey started a national letter campaign directed toward Congress, invited dignitaries on free river trips and even paid to fly Hells Canyon Preservation Council members back to testify in Washington, D.C.
His dedication to a cause that at first seemed impossibly lopsided came from one simple idea about Hells Canyon that was rarely brought up in the height of power company battles:

"It was put there over millions of years and someone wanted to destroy it in seven," Harvey said. "You just don't do that to places that mean that much to a lot of people."

It wasn't easy, however, for Harvey to make the decision to advertise a hidden paradise.

"You had a lot of mixed emotions," he said. "First off, you liked to enjoy the peace and solitude, the roar of the rapids, the free flowing water, but there wasn't any way you could protect that without showing people what there was. You had to take a lot of people up there. They encouraged other people to come."

Harvey gained such a national reputation that he appeared on TV's popular "To Tell the Truth" program. There, he said that people had to do something about Hells Canyon immediately if there were to be a future at all. The canyon had become symbolic of a race to develop and subdue nature at any cost, a race that Harvey felt was immoral.
"You felt like you were fighting everything all at one time -- the Forest Service, all the bureaucracies from the Coast Guard to the Corps of Engineers," he said. "You were fighting the power producers and always the banker to keep him from foreclosing. It cost me thousands of dollars a year just to keep the dams out."

Harvey said he had troubles with Forest Service employees in the demands put on him as a commercial outfitter with a lease for Willow Creek. He had little patience for them, except Wade Hall. He remembers Hall bringing in a string of horses for his guests, Godfrey and Secretary of Interior Walter Hickel.

Now 80 years old, Hall speaks slowly in a husky voice, but his blue eyes peering from behind thick glasses are alert. After retiring in 1972 from 46 years spent working mostly in range conservation for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, he continues to volunteer for the same forest. Hall also served as liaison officer between the Forest Service and Pacific Northwest Power Company in 1966 to develop an agreement on what mitigation would be required should the High Mountain Sheep Dam be built. While Hall remained friendly to the power company people, he openly tried to thwart their success by developing a 30-minute slide show on the beauties of an undammed Hells Canyon and taking influential people on horse trips.
"I'm sure it had quite a lot to do with the creation of the National Recreation Area," he said.

At the same time, Hall, like his superiors in Washington, D.C., believed that the land surrounding the river would be better off without a special recreation classification. He also dislikes the current management plan that prevents construction of an 80-mile paved rim road on the Oregon side.

"You see, with the rim road, the tourist could get in his car in Baker or in Enterprise this morning and go out there, drive the length of that doggone ridge reveling in that scenery, come back to Enterprise or Baker all in one day without harming the country one darn bit," he said. "And they would leave with a memory they would enjoy the rest of their lives."

He and several other people in Baker continue to lobby for a rim road that is staunchly opposed by conservation, outfitting and hunting groups who say the road would intrude on a great haven for elk, deer, bear and other wildlife.

The rim road idea was kept alive by Rep. Al Ullman, when he persuaded Oregon senators, Packwood and Mark O. Hatfield, and Idaho senators, Frank Church and James McClure to adjust the wilderness boundary in the bill's final version.
Ullman's influence on the bill reflected a working relationship with the Forest Service, according to John L. Rogers, who served as Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor from 1961 to 1975. Ullman introduced a 750,000-acre Hells Canyon National Forest Parklands bill in 1972, announcing that he had changed his view toward the canyon as the perfect place for a dam. The bill included a specific provision for an Oregon rim road and left all administration of the area up to the discretion of the Forest Service.

The effect was to modify the Senate's National Recreation Area bill to include some of Ullman's concepts. It took three more years for the final Hells Canyon NRA act to succeed against a still powerful dam lobby.

"We down here in the Forest Service office in Baker were the ones that started to plant that idea of a National Recreation Area," Rogers said during an interview in his Baker home. The Chief's office was hard to convince, he said, but Rogers felt strongly that Hells Canyon deserved something more than river protection, yet less than all wilderness. He also believed the Imnaha River should be included in a bill to prevent too much development there.

"I made my reputation by violating the rules," Rogers said as he lit his pipe. "I was a very, very
strong supporter of doing something in there. I just hated to see that country put under water. There aren't many places like that left in this world. We started casting about on how to stop it. We found a solution and got it done.

"All you have to do is look at Brownlee and Hells Canyon reservoirs; they're not attractive. That country down to Hells Canyon dam used to be real nice. Up there at Brownlee, the hillsides are all slumping into the reservoir. It's just a pond with dry slopes, no trees, no nothing."

Rogers had also wrangled with Idaho Power in the 1960s when the company started building power lines from the dams across Forest Service land without permission. When he discovered the power company planned to clear-cut along the Imnaha River through the popular Blackhorse campground, Rogers would not stand for it.

"That kind of ticked us off," he said. "We said, 'The hell you can. You will go where we want you to go.'"

His sense of responsibility extended to carrying out a federal decision to condemn properties along the Snake River corridor in 1974, the year before the bill's passage.
Until that time, much of the Snake River corridor was the property of large landowners who had succeeded in buying out smaller ranches after the Depression. But the future looked shaky for them with the possibilities of their lands becoming part of a giant reservoir or of a National Recreation Area. Political changes came during a tough period in the livestock industry. Local newspapers reported that predators and the complexities of running a business centered in the remote canyon jeopardized operations.

Lem Wilson, the first landowner to act, offered the Forest Service his property for $300 per acre, what he deemed a fair price for prime riverfront lots. The agency refused, pointing out that fair market value was about half his asking price.

Farther down the canyon, another landowner subdivided 28 lots next to Wild Goose Rapids, historic Nez Perce fishing grounds. John Barker sounded the alarm when he testified in Washington that development on the Snake River corridor could destroy its integrity, which Congress was seeking to save.

Before the end of 1972, Senators Packwood and Church secured $4 million in appropriations to buy lands within the canyon. Wilson, however, refused the Forest Service market value offer and started selling lots to highest bidders.
Rogers recommended to the regional forester that the agency use its right of eminent domain to buy Wilson’s property and that of any others who refused to sell at appraised values.

The eventual prices paid for the lands were determined in local courts at twice the assessed value of the four main properties. According to Barker, the proceedings got so convoluted that Wilson was paid for his sheep twice, once by a private company who purchased the animals and the second time by the federal government, who included the value of Wilson’s animals in the overall land price.

The remaining rancher, who owns a small piece of river corridor on the Oregon side, said that his neighbors upriver had not intended to become developers, but were victims of decisions made by outsiders.

"We were happy with what we had, which was all in livestock, but we thought if we were going to get condemned that was like being sent to jail," said Don "Biden" Tippett, a descendent of one of the oldest area ranching families. "We had put our whole life in there. We were at least entitled to get out something that we could barter on."
Tippett’s land on Jim Creek (below the mouth of the Salmon River) was spared after the government’s purchase money ran out.

"We would rather have been alone as far as the dams were and everything else," he said. "We would even have liked to keep the people out as far as we were concerned."

Later, at a 1976 dedication parade in Enterprise marking the creation of the new National Recreation Area, Tippett’s rancher brother Doug helped shoulder a coffin symbolizing the death of pioneering life in the canyons.

McClure, at another 1976 dedication in Lewiston, predicted a rough planning period ahead. Like Ullman, he had shifted from a pro-dam to a pro-preservation position.

He said, as reported by the Lewiston Morning Tribune: "The legislation that created the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area is the outgrowth of local and national pressures, pressures that tear policy makers in every direction. The NRA is the result of compromising those various forces."

He also said, "There will be a whole lot complaining about the mismanagement and the misregulation of the Forest Service, if I have any guess. But if you make everybody mad, you’re probably
right. If you don't make anybody mad, then nobody's paying attention."

At least part of what McClure predicted came to pass. Fourteen appeals were filed on the Forest Service's first attempt to produce a management plan in 1981. Appeals took in a wide range of objections from jet boaters saying the plan would unfairly limit power boat use, to environmental groups protesting the lack of wilderness recommendations. The Forest Service national office reported that Hells Canyon had become the most controversial planning area in the system.

A revised decision by the Forest Service Chief Max Peterson in 1982 drew even more appeals. In a final 1984 decision, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, John B. Crowell, Jr., a former timber company executive, amended the Forest Service plan to permit "shelterwood cutting" as a valid interpretation of the act's allowance for "timber harvesting by selective cutting." Rather than cutting selected trees in a forest, shelterwood cutting removes most of the trees from a block of land, leaving some standing to shelter new seedlings. Later, the big trees are cut and only the young saplings remain. In a separate decision the year before, 1983, Crowell had lifted all regulations on private jet boat use.
The plan divides the area into land management zones, sets a logging target of seven million board feet (about 1,400 log truckloads) annually, restricts nonmotorized boats to five group launches per day with no such restrictions on powerboats, establishes recreation development priorities, and allows cattle and sheep grazing to continue much the same as before the recreation area existed.

The Forest Service has marched ahead with its hard-won plan of 1984 that instead of settling nine years of debate, has provoked increasing conflicts, from the depths of the canyon to the forested plateaus.

Meanwhile, the salmon still swim the waters of the Snake, Salmon and Imnaha Rivers, saved by those who rose up against dams. Yet the salmon's future remains tenuously balanced. Existing dams on the Snake and Columbia Rivers and fishing pressure take heavy tolls. Silt and higher water temperatures from timber cutting and road building above rivers pose cumulative dangers to the clear, cool waters the fish require. Wild salmon may be viewed as a barometer for the health of the land, rivers and ocean. Hells Canyon, too, may be a barometer for the welfare of national treasures under Forest Service jurisdiction.
SIDEBAR

WHAT IS A NATIONAL RECREATION AREA?

The U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service may appear similar to many Americans. Both public land agencies manage wilderness areas, forests and mountain peaks. Yet, the distinctions between the two are significant. For instance, visitors to national forests may be surprised to see logging, which is banned from national parks.

The Forest Service operates under a broad "multiple use" directive allowing logging, mining, grazing and hunting, whereas the Park Service was established specifically to preserve natural areas and make them available for people's enjoyment. The Forest Service is in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Park Service is in the U.S. Department of Interior.

Defining national recreation areas proves more difficult. Congress never passed a national recreation area act. Instead, the 17 recreation areas under the Park Service, 13 under the Forest Service and one under the Bureau of Land Management have only loose ties based on outdoor recreation. Each area is managed under its own special law.

Yet, certain patterns that suggest some common qualities have emerged since Congress designated Lake
Mead, Nevada, the first National Recreation Area in the 1930s. Within the Park Service, nine are centered on reservoirs and five are in metropolitan areas, such as Golden Gate in San Francisco and Gateway in New York City.

Three Forest Service recreation areas embrace reservoirs -- Allegheny in Colorado, Flaming Gorge on the border of Utah and Wyoming, and Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity in California. The remaining 10, however, range from the spectacular Hells Canyon and the Sawtooths (in Idaho) to the Oregon Dunes on the Pacific shoreline, to Virginia's Mount Rodgers, which offers exhibits depicting early American history.

Recreation areas usually have less of a preservation mandate than do national parks, and address people's developed recreation needs first. Managers at a recent National Recreation Area conference in Sun Valley suggested that the areas become education centers to teach people ethics they should know when visiting the more fragile national parks and wilderness areas.

According to a guiding policy statement from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in 1963, recreation areas need have only "natural endowments well above the ordinary" and should be within easy driving distance of urban areas. North America's deepest gorge, containing
one of the country's major rivers, the Snake, surpasses the first requirement and doesn't meet the second. The large cities nearest to Hells Canyon -- Boise and Portland -- are several hundred miles distant.

In fact, the decision to make Hells Canyon a national recreation area had more to do with politics than with policy. The act was a compromise between wilderness proponents on one hand, and developers and users on the other. The final bill included a 194,132-acre wilderness core within its 652,488 acres.

Hells Canyon could have been a "National River" or a "National Forest Parklands" or it could have been set aside under a 10-year moratorium on building dams. Those possibilities were proposed in the early 1970s by Idaho and Oregon Congressmen who opposed dam projects in the canyon. In 1973, Idaho's Sen. Frank Church, pointing to the model of the 1972 Sawtooth National Recreation Area, suggested the recreation area designation. The label stuck.

One board member of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council had agreed to the name with great reluctance. "It's like calling the Notre Dame Cathedral the Notre Dame Recreational Hall," he said.

Conservation groups now favoring a re-designation of Hells Canyon to a National Park Preserve (a National Park in which hunting is allowed) argue that the
recreation area label in combination with Forest Service policies have promoted abuses, such as excessive logging on the upper forests and unregulated jet boating on the river.

The agencies managing recreation areas must follow the mandates of individual acts, but they also apply their own policies to come up with the best way to meet objectives.

For example, Forest Service tradition has cultivated many career foresters within the agency who tend to view logging as compatible with recreation, or as a means to achieve recreation goals. In contrast, the Park Service, lacking the tree-growing tradition, tends to leave forests alone.

There are administrative differences as well. Park Service superintendents report directly to a regional director. Forest Service area rangers report to a national forest supervisor, who reports to a regional forester. Recreation areas under the Forest Service are lower in the hierarchy than are those supervised by the Park Service.

National Recreation Areas, then, vary from one to the other depending on Congressional acts and on the agency in charge.
LOGGING IN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA IGNITES PROTEST

When the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area was established in 1975, many of its proponents believed the legislation provided protection from large-scale logging operations that might diminish the area's natural beauty and disturb its fragile ecosystem. But today, on the Oregon side of North America's deepest canyon, the chainsaws are running.

Logging in Hells Canyon NRA is a major activity and accelerating this year as the U.S. Forest Service gears up to salvage trees from a spruce bark beetle epidemic and a major fire.

In fact, timber cutting is the most visible form of management here. During the recreation area's first 12 years, 1976-1987, the Forest Service sold 78.6 million board feet of timber, while completing few noticeable recreation projects. The first signs marking entry points to Hells Canyon did not appear until 1984. The agency this year started constructing a visitor center in Enterprise and improving the rugged road to the canyon's premier overlook, Hat Point. Nearby communities had expected those projects to be undertaken soon after the act passed.
The managers have used timber sales to achieve recreation improvements, such as widened trailheads and vista clearings, because the timber program consistently has the money other programs lack. Starting in 1982, the Forest Service cut recreation and wildlife budgets nationally, not sparing its 13 National Recreation Areas.

Hells Canyon, managed as part of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, has only 67 percent of the funding it had in 1980. The greatest reductions were made in the areas of recreation, range and wilderness.

Conservation groups charge the Forest Service with treating the recreation area as if it were no different from the surrounding national forests and circumventing the intent of Congress by cutting trees to produce volume for mills rather than to improve recreation. Also, the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission has vigorously objected to timber sales above the Imnaha River, critical to wild salmon and steelhead fisheries.

The three most active conservation groups are the Oregon Natural Resources Council, Hells Canyon Preservation Council and the Friends of Lake Fork.
"You can't drive on any road on this National Recreation Area that has trees alongside of it without seeing stumps, slash piles, skid trails or ripped-up vegetation," said Ric Bailey, Enterprise member of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council, the Northwest group that led the effort to establish the recreation area and then re-formed in 1987 to challenge management practices.

Conservation groups have appealed every major timber sale without success. They are suing the Forest Service to stop a sale and challenge the recreation area's management plan. Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Oregon, introduced legislation in 1985-86 to limit timber cutting and expand wilderness, but the bill failed to pass.

Forest Service managers steadfastly maintain that the timber sale program is a fair compromise between logging and conservation interests. They believe their management plan for Hells Canyon ensures that timber sales are in keeping with the law setting aside the 652,488-acre area on the Oregon-Idaho border for protection of its free-flowing rivers, history, fish, wildlife, unique ecosystems and recreation opportunities. The law allows timber-cutting by selective means (no clear-cuts), mining and grazing if compatible with all other provisions.
"We feel we are harvesting pretty conservatively already," said Bruce McMillan, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest planning officer in charge of resolving timber sale appeals. "We would let down people who support the plan if we cut less timber."

The dilemma of managing a national recreation area that allows logging may not be easy to resolve. The Forest Service faces pressure from communities in Oregon more reliant on timber and agriculture than on tourism. There's pressure also from timber companies, which are running out of commercial trees to cut on the surrounding forests and are eyeing forested areas in the recreation area with greater interest than they did a decade ago. Meanwhile, the managing agency has a mandate from Congress to protect the natural beauty of Hells Canyon.

Confrontations over logging may surprise people whose perception of Hells Canyon is confined to the Snake River corridor. Dominating the canyon depths are volcanic cliffs, bunchgrass slopes, and streams cloaked in lush hardwood trees and poison ivy. The Seven Devils Mountains in Idaho rise rough and craggy from the heart of the canyon to a height of more than 9,000-feet. Much of the country between the Idaho and Oregon rims is protected wilderness. Centuries-old ponderosa pines
cluster in small groves along an Oregon bench trail midway between rim and canyon floor.

Beyond the wilderness on the Oregon side evergreen forests flourish on moist, north slopes and in the upper Imnaha River canyon. Though the Forest Service has allocated just 12 percent of the recreation area for timber cutting, the targeted area represents half the available forest lands and encompasses the fragile watershed areas of the Imnaha River, producer of Oregon's biggest spring and summer chinook salmon. More than 700 chinook returned from the ocean to spawn in the Imnaha River in 1988.

Timber cutting areas also include forests within sight of the main scenic roads and some of the most majestic ponderosa pines and Douglas firs.

From the perspective of conservation groups appealing timber sales, a logging-oriented agency is managing a national resource to please a few local mills and in doing so is slowly destroying the natural and historical values Congress intended to protect. Conservationists argue that the logging already has done considerable damage and cite horror stories such as the following:

* 1982 -- Loggers dragged massive trees through the Lick Creek tributary of the Imnaha River as salmon attempted to spawn.
# 1985 -- Large, rectangular clear-cuts near the scenic Hat Point Road appeared as a result of a sale intended only to salvage dead trees uprooted by storms. A Portland television news team filmed loggers clear-cutting live trees within this former roadless area on Horse Creek, which flows into the Imnaha River.

# 1987 -- Greener Corrals, a well-known historic campsite, was destroyed when used as a log landing.

# 1988 -- The Skook timber sale in the upper Imnaha watershed eradicated a historic trail and removed old growth pines, larch and standing dead trees important to woodpeckers and owls. Engineering mistakes caused some new roads to be built at twice the width specified in the contract. (Skook timber sale provided 3.2 million-board-feet of prime timber to Boise Cascade Corporation.)

# 1988 -- The Forest Service chose to virtually clear-cut Lick Creek Campground to remove dying spruce trees rather than move campsites to a location where campers would be safe from falling trees. The agency decided that campers would stay there despite the clear-cut.

Tim Lillebo, Northeast field coordinator for the Oregon Natural Resources Council, contends that ill-conceived and poorly executed timber sales are
degrading Hells Canyon's scenic qualities at an alarming rate.

The recreation area's timber sale program has exceeded an annual target of seven million board feet every year since its controversial management plan was approved in 1984. The Forest Service in 1986 sold 21.5 million board feet of green and salvage timber. This year's spruce bark beetle outbreak and major forest fire promises accelerated logging of trees that are dead or dying -- a justified emergency increase, according to the agency.

Lillebo said that he suspects the Forest Service will continue to find more "emergencies" to keep the cut above a slated level that is already too high. The self-imposed target that adds to the timber sale quota of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest places a logging mandate that Congress never intended, he said.

Seven million board feet of timber may not seem like much compared to the five billion board feet cut annually from the national forests of Oregon and Washington. However, one million board feet equals about 200 log-truck loads. That means an average of 1,400 truckloads per year leave this partially forested recreation area where scenic values are supposedly protected by Congressional mandate.
"The timber sales take place in some of the areas of highest value to recreationists and to wildlife," Ric Bailey said. "They build roads. They skid trees with cable yarders and tractors. They emphasize the removal of old growth and log large sales; one of them was over 13 million board feet."

While some cut-over areas look better than heavily logged lands beyond its borders, plans to return every 10 to 15 years to take out more trees will replace ancient forests with a younger forest lightly sprinkled with old giants.

Those long-term effects fit the Hells Canyon management plan that states logging should promote "healthy stands of diverse tree species, sizes and age classes."

To those who dislike the entire timber section of that plan, a healthy forest should reflect natural processes, not manipulation by chainsaw. Where foresters have viewed logging as a tool to clean up the forest and remove diseased, sick trees, conservation groups criticize what often seems to them to be a messy and artificial aftermath.

The 1987-88 Cold Grave timber sale illustrates how differently the Forest Service and the conservation groups view the same area. The Hells Canyon staff points proudly to the sale as an example of its ability
to sensitively log spruce forests that grow typically in boggy sites near streams and springs.

Even so, Gerald G. Magera, timber sale project officer for the recreation area, acknowledges that despite extra precautions taken on the sale, heavy logging equipment sank into frost-covered grounds and churned through a spruce bog.

"I don't care who you are," Magera said. "You'll have some things happen no one would predict."

Yet visitors to the Cold Grave timber sale last June suggested that such mishaps seem to happen with regularity. One forester, assigned to another part of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, commented that the logging fell below standards he maintains on his district to prevent harming wet meadows and streams.

Piles of lopped branches, like errant beaver lodges, revealed efforts to tidy up the mess along the road to Duck Lake Campground, a popular site on the recreation area's southern end. On supposedly protected streamsides, logged spruce had smashed aspen trees. The scars of cut trees hitting wet meadows stood out as brown, muddy slashes.

An elderly couple from Halfway looked at slash piled in the midst of crushed alder trees and huckleberry bushes.
"Look at the mess they made just to yard out two trees," Carl Pollard said.

"We used to come up here every week when it was a little green park," said Marlene Pollard. "Now look at it." She pointed to muddy tracks where a log skidder had sliced through the pine grass.

"The objectives for Hells Canyon NRA should not be timber management," said Mike Higgins, the tour leader and president of Friends of Lake Fork, a conservation group based in Halfway. "If the spruce dies, leave it alone. Let the trees fall naturally and become nurse trees for future stands."

Higgins' organization has persuaded the adjacent Pine Ranger District outside the recreation area to suspend logging plans in the Lake Fork roadless area above Halfway. Friends of Lake Fork argues that logging in the watershed would reduce important late-season flows for irrigation (unlogged forests hold and slowly release water) and endanger a thriving elk herd. Yet, the portion of the roadless area that extends into the recreation area is now part of the Duck Creek timber sale and will be logged. It is ironic, Higgins said, to see the area outside a National Recreation Area better protected than what lies inside.

Friends of Lake Fork, the Oregon Natural Resources Council and Hells Canyon Preservation Council sued the
Forest Service in June to stop the Duck Creek sale. After losing in U.S. District Court, they are appealing to the Ninth Circuit. If the suit is successful, the court could order a new management plan.

"Congress intended something above and beyond the existing Forest Service policies in Hells Canyon," argues Gary K. Kahn, one of two attorneys for the plaintiffs. The suit charges that the Forest Service failed to develop special regulations as required by the Hells Canyon NRA act.

Kahn once served on the legal staff of the Forest Service but left in 1987 because he said he was uncomfortable defending old growth timber sales he felt were "morally wrong." Despite the loss in District Court he believes the Duck Creek appeal has a strong chance of succeeding. He contends that the National Environmental Policy Act prohibits selling spruce beetle sales one at a time without studying the entire affected area.

The lawsuit marks the latest in a series of attempts by conservation groups to change policies through more than 30 timber sale appeals. Some appeals have gone as far as the Forest Service Chief's office in Washington.

Sen. Packwood joined the conservation groups' efforts when he introduced a bill that would
capped timber cutting at one million board feet annually, more than doubled the existing 214,000 acres of wilderness, and added the lower 33-miles of the Snake River to the Wild and Scenic River system.

Strong local opposition to his bill from Oregon mill towns near Hells Canyon—Enterprise, Joseph, La Grande and Baker—failed to sway Packwood, who argued that the timber sale reduction would affect only 1.5 percent of total mill capacity. However, he dropped the bill after failing to garner the support of the Northwest delegation or strong interest from the national environmental groups.

But local dissatisfaction with his proposal did not surprise Packwood, who pointed out that most of the great parks were opposed by local interests.

"If the sole criterion is going to be local opinion and only the Senator from that state can decide what to do, I would have no voice in expanding the Redwoods park or I would have no voice in voting on a Cape Cod National Seashore," he said in a recent interview.

Packwood still leads all other congressmen in his expressed concern for the canyon's future. Often when addressing an environmental issue, he speaks of the passage of the Hells Canyon NRA Act as one of the three or four premier achievements of his 20-year career.
Although his 1986 bill failed, he recently succeeded in obtaining the first major recreation appropriation since the bill's passage.

While conservationists have supported the planned visitor center and scenic road reconstruction, they have said the projects should be accompanied by a change in the timber sale program.

"People will have better facilities in which to enjoy a less desirable place," said Andy Kerr, Oregon Natural Resources Council's associate director for conservation.

Too often, he said, the Hells Canyon staff fails to recognize the aesthetic impacts of stumps and skid roads on tourism. A case in point is the experience of a ranching couple from Halfway who were disappointed by their first visit to the McGraw lookout, the best viewpoint of Hells Canyon from the south:

"We worked so hard here the first few years we never had a chance to look over the edge of the deepest canyon in America," said Catherine Light. "We were pretty excited to take our picnic lunch and drive up there. Then, we saw stumps and logging roads all along the main road, even on the rim itself. It's so cut-over I don't even want to take my friends and relatives there to see Hells Canyon. We were appalled."
And this is more than just a problem of esthetics. Too many roads and too much logging can harm rather than enhance fish and wildlife, as the Hells Canyon act requires. Silt spills off roads into streams. Cutting trees by streams reduces shade and that in turn raises water temperatures. Salmon and trout require clear, cool waters. More directly, as in the Lick Creek instance, logging equipment in the stream can prevent salmon from spawning.

Building roads into remote country intrudes on the solitude of big game and threatened species such as the wolverine. Logging reduces hiding and thermal cover essential to elk and deer in arid canyons.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has criticized the Hells Canyon staff for building too many roads, mostly used for logging. The Forest Service lists 725-miles of maintained roads. This works out to an average of three miles of road per square mile over the 150,000 acres of the recreation area outside of wilderness and roadless country. The department pressured the recreation area managers to follow their own management plan, which requires closing Jeep roads out to the prime elk country of Lord Flat -- a mosaic of meadows, thick forests and grassy ridges.

While carrying out the timber sale portion of the management plan, the Forest Service has not acted on
other parts of the plan, some directly related to logging. For instance, it installed only one of five water quality stations required by the plan to monitor the effect of logging on fish habitat in the Imnaha.

The Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, in recent appeals of timber sales on the recreation area, has demanded that the Forest Service install the monitoring stations and develop a special salmon and steelhead plan for the Imnaha River to ensure protection of a watershed vital to a larger recovery plan for wild fish on the Snake, Salmon and Columbia rivers.

Too often, conservationists contend, foresters cannot comprehend why anyone would object to logging roads intruding into the Imnaha River watershed and roadless areas, campgrounds being clear-cut, or trees cut on the canyon rim and along scenic drives.

In the recreation area’s first 12 years, four of the five top administrators were specialists in timber management, not recreation.

"We don’t have recreationists managing our tree farms," Bailey said. "Why do we have tree farmers managing our recreation area?"

Frustrated by what he believes is the Forest Service’s ideological barrier, Tim Lillebo contends that the area must be placed under the control of a
different agency, one without the logging orientation. In November, the Hells Canyon Preservation Council took the first step when it voted to endorse a National Park Preserve study proposal.

Attacked by some groups for allowing too much logging, the Forest Service also has taken heat from timber companies that apply pressure for higher volumes of timber.

"Timber from the NRA is desperately needed," contends Gary L. Johnson, logging manager for Ellingson Timber Company, a family-run operation in Baker that employs 185 people to process 60 million board feet of timber annually.

Ellingson, the company that logged the Cold Grave timber sale, cut its operations by half several years ago after reductions in the lucrative ponderosa pine sales in Northeast Oregon occurred. Johnson said that lack of timber is forcing companies also to travel farther. Cold Grave was about 80 miles from the mill.

The three mills closest to the recreation area -- Sequoia Forest Products, Rogge Lumber Inc., and Boise Cascade Corporation-- are in Wallowa County. Each needs 25 to 30 million board feet of timber annually to operate.
"You can't depend on something like the NRA for timber," said Bruce Dunn, head forester for Sequoia in Joseph.

Dunn cited appeals and delay on Forest Service lands as obstacles to achieving a reliable supply. Last year 65 percent of Sequoia's timber came from private lands.

Distances have prevented Sequoia from taking a more active interest in the recreation area's timber sales that fit its needs for logs up to 24 inches in diameter. For example, the Top sale, high on the canyon rim, offered small trees, but was too far away to be profitable, Dunn said.

Rather than withdrawing the uneconomical sale, the Forest Service included Top as part of a profitable old-growth ponderosa pine sale, Skook. Boise Cascade Corporation got the bid.

Boise Cascade has proved to be the timber company with the greatest influence on Hells Canyon policy. Its lobbyists obtained special timber language in the 1975 act to ensure Congress recognized logging as a valid activity where it had existed.

Paul Morehead and Brian E. Carper, both employees of Boise Cascade in Joseph, Oregon, are two of the most vocal proponents of increased logging on the recreation area.
Carper, a saw filer from Joseph and former president of People First (formed to oppose Sen. Packwood's 1986 Hells Canyon bill), said that the recreation area could sustain triple the level of present logging without hurting the area, as long as clear-cutting was avoided.

For ten years prior to its congressional designation, an annual average of 17 million board feet of timber was logged from places now within the recreation area. Carper and others believe that level is appropriate and needed to keep mills operating in the future.

"The environmentalists' claim that the Forest Service is over-harvesting is just an outright lie," said Gerald Perren, former manager of the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce.

Perren dismisses the possibilities of tourism ever replacing logging as a significant source of revenue, and cites a 1982 economic study by Dr. Fred Obermiller of Oregon State University showing money generated by recreation a distant third behind timber and agriculture revenues in Wallowa County. Not only has the recreation area proved damaging to the timber supply of the county, Perren said, but Forest Service policies prevent the removal of enough big, older trees to keep the stands healthy.
From the perspective of managers, the timber program is a modest one that if anything leans toward interests of conservation groups. Caught between the timber industry, which wants 17 million board feet annually and conservationists, who want one million board feet, the Forest Service has compromised with seven.

"One of the compromises of this NRA is the timber compromise, as plain as the nose on your face," said Robert M. Richmond, supervisor of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

All timber sales, however, are driven by recreation benefits, not optimum timber production, he added.

For example, the controversial Skook sale that was logged last year has improved recreation by removing diseased and older trees, according to Steve Fletcher, Hells Canyon silviculturalist. Appeals of the sale by conservation groups and the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission were denied by the Forest Service chief. Then, in late 1986, the Forest Service removed metal spikes from trees in the sale, after receiving an unsigned letter warning them not to proceed with logging. Spikes can damage chainsaws and pose hazards to sawyers.
Touring the Skook sale after the logging had been completed last spring, Fletcher defended the timber sale that removed large ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and larch trees from a park-like forest on gentle slopes near the Imnaha River. When the slash piles are burned and grasses grow high around the stumps, he said, the logging will be barely noticeable.

"All the trees we cut here are the ones we judge would not be alive in 15 years," he said. "All we’ve done is duplicate what was out here. We’ve left some parts of the forest thick and others open."

It is frustrating, he said, to hear conservationists’ claims that the Forest Service ruined the area for recreation and wildlife.

"Look at the deer still here," he said. "People have said we would hurt wildlife. Well, you see it hasn’t. Listen to the birds. They’re chirping and happy. They like this."

Ron Bonar, Hells Canyon former assistant area ranger, believes that the logging practices may not be an obvious benefit, but will become so in the long term.

"If you were in the middle of building a house and someone told you it looked like an ugly place to live, you would tell them to wait until after it’s finished before deciding," Bonar said.
A timber sale is the same way, he said, adding that "good" logging on the recreation area has proved to be a constructive tool for stretching a tight budget.

Bonar, who transferred to a timber job on the Wallowa-Whitman last summer, still has several of his timber sale projects slated to start this year.

"One of my pets is a timber sale to create campsites," he said. The proposed Campsite timber sale would involve building side roads and log landings off the main North Pine Creek road (near Halfway) in key spots to benefit campers and would still make an economic timber sale.

The Trailhead Visual Improvement timber sale at Saddle Creek trail will beautify the site by cutting what he called "bad trees," those with large knots, forks in the tops, or badly tapered.

"Mark the worst to cut and leave the best," he said. "You sweeten the pot by getting rid of the worst now."

Part of the problem, according to Bonar, is that people don't see forestry logic or trust the Forest Service.

"We have inside knowledge, but an outsider comes in and says we didn't do it right," he said.
Hells Canyon's management plan ensures protection of fragile natural values, managers maintain. They have preserved 10 percent of old growth forests from logging to ensure protection for certain wildlife species. All timber sales require that 60 percent of the standing dead trees needed for woodpeckers be left standing.

Sales designed to remove dying trees from the spruce bark beetle, such as Duck Creek, leave as much as 60 percent of spruce in streamside areas to protect fisheries. The adjacent Wallowa Valley Ranger District has proposed a spruce salvage program of 40 million board feet this year, double what the recreation area has slated.

Before logging starts, prehistoric or historic sites are excluded from the sale. Greener Corrals, a well-known camping spot, destroyed in the Cold Grave sale, was apparently less than 50 years old, thus not qualifying under federal standards as an historic site, according to Bruce Womack, chief archaeologist for Hells Canyon.

Faced with continuous timber sale appeals, the Forest Service has denied each one, defending decisions as being in line with the management plan slated to be in effect for another 10 years.

"If conservation groups want less harvest, maybe there's no room to compromise," Bruce McMillan said.
Yet even some of the timber interests view the appeals as indicating some change is needed.

"The abundance of appeals only on this NRA indicates that the problem is not in the way that the sales are put up but with the plan," said Larry Cribbs, who works for Eagle Trucking in La Grande and also represents the group SOS (Save our Snake from Wilderness).

Conservation groups such as Hells Canyon Preservation Council hold that the problem lies both in the individual timber sales and the plan. They would favor horse logging, which leaves fewer scars on the land, as a means to clear a vista or remove trees about to fall in a campground.

While the Forest Service differs strongly in that interpretation of the Hells Canyon NRA act, Supervisor Richmond said a change in staffing this fall may make some differences in "tailoring" timber sales for recreation objectives. The new area ranger, Ed Coles, and assistant, Jim DeHerrera, have degrees in recreation instead of forestry, as the previous leaders had. Any changes, however, would fall within the management plan constraints that sets the annual timber sale target.

Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson urged recreation area managers assembled in Sun Valley this
October to be innovative and competitive to "showcase" their areas as part of his new "National Recreation Strategy."

"We simply can't afford traditional bureaucratic managers on our NRAs," he said, adding that local satisfaction is the best measure of success.

So far, national conservation leaders remain skeptical.

"If change means less logging, there won't be any change," said Brock Evans of National Audubon Society. "What change has meant so far is turning more campgrounds over to KOA. That's what the National Recreation Strategy is all about."

Certain events culminating this year, however, may force the Forest Service or Congress to resolve the Hells Canyon NRA timber controversy.

A new visitor center and improved road to Hat Point, when finished, should increase both tourism and accompanying attention to evident logging conflicts.

Meanwhile, more timber is under consideration for logging in 1988 and 1989 than ever before, because of the combination of a spruce bark beetle epidemic and the Tepee Butte fire, which damaged 310 million board feet of timber, according to Forest Service figures. The accelerated logging program, designed to salvage trees while they are still commercially valuable, could
unify conservation groups in protest, as well as timber industry groups in support.

The Duck Creek lawsuit appeal to the Ninth Circuit is expected to be heard within the next few months. The result could either affirm existing policies or require a new plan.

Finally, the idea of making Hells Canyon a National Park Preserve that would outlaw logging appears to be gaining favor as a formal proposal from regional conservation groups.
JET BOATS, DEVELOPMENT, AND GRAZING CONFLICTS DISRUPT CANYON TRANQUILITY

Viewed from an airplane, the Snake River seems to wend a tranquil course through Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. The view does not suggest the violence of the rapids below or the intensity of the struggles developing between those who wish to make the most use of this magnificent gorge and its surrounding rangelands and those who want to see it protected from development.

Should your plane fly low over the gorge your pilot could point out the confluence of the Salmon and Snake Rivers, where three years earlier an angry jet boat outfitter, Ernie Duckworth, had throttled his boat up against a raft, knocking over the man who had "mooned" the jet boat to protest motors on a federally designated Wild and Scenic River.

Midway through the canyon, where 5,000-foot rims recede and reveal a wide valley, archaeologists are excavating a prehistoric city, the first step in a plan to develop a recreational vehicle campground at Pittsburg Landing. Several jet boat and nonmotorized outfitters have joined on this issue to oppose the development.
Soaring above a series of side canyons draining into the Snake River, you may see cattle or sheep upon one ridge and bighorn sheep or Rocky Mountain elk on the next. Ranchers facing difficult economic times struggle to carry on a traditional lifestyle that conservationists charge is degrading the land for wildlife and recreationists.

Jet boats, the Pittsburg Landing development and ranching controversies exemplify the dilemma of providing for wants of people while preserving the values that made Hells Canyon worth saving from dams.

From preservationists' view, North America's deepest canyon merits establishing a true wilderness river on this 100-mile, free-flowing stretch of the Snake, the largest watercourse still predominantly wild in the lower 48 states. They envision a canyon intact, not overrun by power boats, not fractured by improved roads and development, and not trampled by cattle and sheep. Conservation groups like Hells Canyon Preservation Council see short-sighted policies influenced by local politics obscuring that vision.

A private jet boat operator can step in a boat any day of the year in Lewiston and drive south, upriver, as far as navigation skills allow. Commercial jet boats are limited only in number of outfitting permits, not boat numbers.
Float parties, meanwhile, are limited to five launches per day (with a maximum of 30 people per party) from Hells Canyon Dam, May through September. Two launches are reserved for commercial float outfitters. A lottery system allocates private permits each February followed by a first-come, first-served waiting list.

"The situation is tailor-made for animosity," said Pete Gross, a river guide for Northwest Dories and 12-year veteran of running trips through Hells Canyon. "It's taken concerted efforts by both parties to respect each other and be courteous."

Float parties never see the rafts, dories or kayaks two days in front of them, but the same jet boats may zip by each day on a five-day float trip from Hells Canyon Dam to Heller Bar, just below the mouth of the Grande Ronde River.

"Jet boating is a unique opportunity," said Bert Bowler, regional fish manager for the Idaho Fish and Game Department. "It's like driving your off-road vehicle into the wilderness."

The free rein of jet boats in the canyon reflects political tinkering of Sen. James McClure, R-Idaho, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture attorney.

"McClure isn't one to sit by and idly watch the Forest Service do something he doesn't like," he said.
"He's the titular regional forester for Idaho, or better, 'the Chief.'

McClure had intervened on behalf of jet boaters in a 1983 appeals' resolution by then Assistant Secretary of Agriculture John B. Crowell, Jr. The Forest Service originally had proposed a river management plan that would outlaw jet boats on the most dangerous section of whitewater in the upper river during the busy season and limit numbers on other parts of the designated "wild" section, the uppermost 33 miles. At McClure's request, the restrictions on jet boats were removed from the plan.

The final plan favoring jet boaters also prevented any regulation changes before 1985 and only with documented proof of problems with the system. Just this year, Hells Canyon managers have taken the first step to document problems through an in-depth, visitor use survey.

The high-speed boats add an obvious element of danger to the river's whitewater thrills. Ernie Duckworth, who has run both a jet boat tour service and a boat building company, said that Duckworth Boats of Lewiston sells 28 boats per month. Inexperienced operators are afraid to slow down through rapids and can create problems for rafters.

"They make a heckuva wake," he said.
He attributed his own violent encounter with a rafter to a long, 15-hour day on the river and the outrage he felt toward rafters attempting to ruin his customers' trip. The outbreak cost him the temporary loss of his Forest Service operating permit.

He sold his business this fall to Myrna and Wally Beamer of Lewiston. Beamers' Heller Bar Excursions now operates 11 boats, the largest holding 47 people, and carries about 9,000 people annually up and down the Snake River.

The increased numbers of commercial jet boats on the river and the growing popularity of motorized boat recreation from Lewiston is accelerating river crowding.

Customers on Steens' Wilderness Adventures combination horseback and float trips consistently rave about the scenery and complain about jet boat traffic, said Jim Steen of Joseph, Oregon.

"When you see as many as 48 jet boats go by in one day, people wonder why they aren't restricted," Steen said, adding that one day he was unable to find a place to pull his rafts over for lunch; every beach held a parked, private jet boat.

As beaches become increasingly rare, competition for the best campsites grows.
Hells Canyon Dam marks more than the division of the wild river canyon from the reservoir. The last to be built of the three dams that together wiped out the upper Snake River salmon runs and some of the best whitewater in the country, this final dam exerts an ominous influence on the wild river canyon below. Granitic sands originating in mountain peaks flow down the Snake River only to wash up against the concrete dams. Beaches below Hells Canyon Dam, lacking replenishment, are turning into boulder fields. Dam-controlled water levels that fluctuate from 5,000 cubic feet per second to 30,000 hasten erosion.

Fire rings, bullet shells and garbage often litter the beaches and grassy benches after a holiday weekend when jet boat use is highest.

"Campsites are a lot dirtier on this river," said Northwest Dories guide Lonnie Hutson, who also runs the Middle Fork of the Salmon and the Rogue, Colorado and Green rivers.

Northwest Dories of Lewiston, once a part of Martin Litton's Grand Canyon Dories, is known for its minimum-impact standards applied to every river, no matter what the regulations. The guides carry out all waste and pride themselves on leaving sites cleaner than when they arrived.
The river managers on Hells Canyon apply outdated camping rules that do not match the high levels of use, contends Hutson. Maintaining toilets, fire pits and picnic tables is also expensive for a river management program constantly facing budget shortages, he added.

Arthur L. Seamans, assistant area ranger who manages the river from a Lewiston office, said campsite crowding is the most serious problem and has more than once led to shouting matches and fist fights.

Yet, a campsite reservation system approved in the management plan has never been funded. The system would cost $23,000 annually for employees at each end of the wild and scenic river corridor.

The recreation area’s river management program has a history of budget woes that make it hard to monitor the five float parties per day that launch from Hells Canyon Dam and an unknown number of unregulated jet boats. Seamans estimates that more than two-thirds of all traffic is jet boats.

Budget cuts starting in 1983 cut river patrols in half, Seamans said. A five-day per week jet boat patrol was financed this year through a supplemental fund. The river ranger must be both law enforcer and resource manager, which forces him often to concentrate on law over camp clean-up and environmental education.
John A.K. Barker, Hells Canyon Preservation Council board member and a river outfitter from Lewiston, criticized the choice of expensive jet boats over rafts or dories to patrol the river. The $25,000 boats require as much as $100 worth of gas per day.

Despite the speed and distance made possible by the powerful boats, enforcement of rules and protection for a wealth of prehistoric and historic sites on the river is inadequate, Barker said.

The extensive jet boat use appears to be hastening the removal of artifacts from the canyon, he said. While vandals may enter the canyon by any kind of craft, he said it takes a heavy powerboat to remove large, heavy antiques like anvils and stoves from the early 20th century.

Vandals have damaged 182 prehistoric sites, representing 80 percent of the best sites in the canyon, said Bruce Womack, chief archaeologist for the recreation area. During the construction of Hells Canyon Dam in the 1960s, the worst looting took place, but grave-robbing and defacement of petroglyphs continues. One solution, he said, would be to hire one or two people on each side of the river to monitor sites and educate visitors.

Barker said recreation area managers appear reluctant to take the steps necessary to limit jet
boats in order to protect natural and historic values. The present high use guarantees more vandalism and campsite abuses, he said.

"The Forest Service is ruining the recreation quality of the river," he said.

From the agency perspective, motorized boats are a justified activity that pre-dates the recreation area. Managers also contend with a powerful jet boat lobby from Lewiston and Clarkston.

Managers have had to work with an unwieldy management plan that differs from the original proposal to limit motorized traffic. They say, too, that river regulations on camping and jet boat numbers cannot be changed without thorough study, which they lacked funding to do until this year.

Currently, the Forest Service manages jet boats on portions of two other rivers that have "wild and scenic" designations: the Salmon River in Idaho and the Rogue River in Oregon. The Snake, however, is the only river with jet boat use on its entire free-flowing length.

Powerboats in Hells Canyon date to the late 1920s, when the mail boat ran upriver weekly to deliver supplies to some 250 ranching families.

For 25 years, Dick Rivers of Lewiston drove the mail boat up canyon, always allowing time to chat with
lonely sheepherders hungry for news of the outside world. That era may be gone forever, but it established a strong precedent for motorized access, the retired boatman said. When the Forest Service had proposed in 1982 to outlaw jet boats from the upper section of the river, he questioned what difference a dam would have made if motorized boaters lost access to the river anyway.

"Back in '79 or '80 people were packing guns down here," said Gary Armacost, owner of Hells Canyon Adventures, the only jet boat and raft business operating from Hells Canyon Dam. "There was so much antagonism brought on by this knuckle-headed kind of process for planning that everybody was mad. The powerboaters said, 'All right, by god, if I ain't going down the river you ain't either.'"

Those favoring the unregulated system argue that many powerboaters spend only the day or stay in the few privately owned lodges on the lower canyon section, and therefore do not crowd campsites.

Dealing with floaters on the river can also be a trying experience, powerboaters say. Often they must wait half an hour for a rafting party to move off a boat dock when jet boats can be launched in minutes. They wait, too, at the base of rapids for floaters to
pass by and must constantly be alert for kayaks and other small crafts.

A private trip of Earth First! environmental activists this summer made waves within the Hells Canyon powerboat community when kayakers temporarily blocked a jet boat from coming through a stretch of whitewater. An Earth First! participant said that same boat had passed too fast and close to them earlier in the day.

Those who run jet boat outfitting businesses resent charges that the motorized boats abuse and exploit the wild Snake River of Hells Canyon.

"This is not a wilderness river," Armacost stressed. "Powerboats are a big part of the river and always will be."

Powerboats play a vital role in carrying out the mission of a National Recreation Area, Armacost said. Visitors who drive to the dam to see the continent's deepest canyon can experience its true magnitude by taking a half-day jet boat trip with him, he said. Otherwise the view from the dam is a limited one.

Hikers benefit from his jet boat transportation business that allows them passage by steep cliffs to the start of a 25-mile river trail on the Idaho side. Armacost even transports llamas for the Halfway outfitting business, Wallowa Llamas.
Large jet boat outfitters boost Lewiston's tourist industry, while informing visitors of the historical importance of Hells Canyon, Myrna Beamer said. Her five captains, like water-borne tour bus drivers, give spirited talks to passengers about the early Indians, miners and homesteaders.

Both commercial and private jet boaters participate in a voluntary annual weekend river clean-up sponsored by the Forest Service. Commercial operators also must pay 3 percent of their gross revenues to the agency, and some question why the $30,000 collected annually from outfitters on the Snake River goes to the U.S. Treasury, not to the canyon's maintenance.

What money comes in benefits few people, Armacost said. He questioned why the Forest Service spent $45,000 on a boat dock at Hells Canyon Dam, even though it has provided him a site to tie his jet boats overnight. He would rather see cleaner camps and better protection for old homesteads, he said.

Disagreement over the Forest Service's spending priorities has unified some members of the jet boat and rafting communities. The two factions may only reluctantly share the waterways, but they have a common concern that the canyon remain free from garbage and detracting developments.
A proposed recreational vehicle campground at Pittsburg Landing in the heart of the canyon would jeopardize this wildest section of the Snake River, they say. Twelve Hells Canyon river outfitters have written letters this fall that will be sent to Oregon and Idaho Congressmen requesting the $2.1 million fund slated for Pittsburg be re-allocated to improve trails, build interpretive sites along main roads only, enhance fisheries and take care of existing campgrounds.

"The Forest Service can't even take care of the problems there now, like illegal outfitting," said Myrna Beamer. She believes improving the 15-mile rugged road from Whitebird, Idaho, to Pittsburg Landing will make river crowding worse. The Beamers are satisfied with the existing take-out facility at Pittsburg, which they now use for some trips.

Although the Pittsburg development was approved in the Hells Canyon management plan, Curt Chang, owner of Northwest Dories and coordinator of the letter campaign, said the Congressmen could still stop the project. Final campground designs will not be completed until September, 1989.

Sen. McClure recently showed interest in Hells Canyon preservation when he introduced a successful bill this fall to ban dams on the lower 33-miles of the Snake River below the Wild and Scenic section.
Meanwhile, a two-year excavation of ancient pithouses in the way of the Pittsburg development started in July. The outfitters have stated that the rich prehistory of Pittsburg Landing will be threatened by removal of artifacts and that inviting more people will encourage vandalism of some of the canyon's finest early Indian petroglyphs.

On this shadeless, alluvial bench 33 miles downstream from Hells Canyon Dam and 75 miles upstream from Lewiston, prehistoric people wintered in a mild, low-elevation climate. On summer days, however, temperatures can soar to a brutal 115 degrees.

"It's a hot, miserable place to camp in the summer," Barker said, adding that retaining a simple launch and take-out site for trips is the only sensible use. Currently, about half the float trips end there after a three-day trip from Hells Canyon dam. Jet boaters also launch and unload at Pittsburg.

The Forest Service chose the location most visible to river runners to place the first 20 of 40 proposed campground spurs and a parking lot for 25 vehicles with jet boat trailers. That choice further rankled the outfitters.

Managers, however, defend the project as a solution to a troubling use problem. On a busy weekend, Seamans said, he has seen as many as 60 vehicles parked
at Pittsburg, where existing developments are limited to one outhouse, three campsites and a small parking area.

Seamans would have preferred a less obtrusive site, but the choice was eliminated when archaeologists discovered a prehistoric burial ground there. By consolidating campground, parking launch and boat docks, he said, at least impacts would be less overall. Planting black walnut trees (a non-native species) and a natural rise in the land will help screen some of the sites from view of river runners who might be offended by the sight of campers, trucks and trailers, he said.

The Riggins Chamber of Commerce has strongly supported the developments that would benefit the guiding and outfitting businesses that are the town's economic mainstay, according to Bob Abbotts, chamber president.

A developed Pittsburg Landing also fits with Congress' intent to ensure excellent recreation opportunities and interpretation of prehistoric and historic sites, said Robert M. Richmond, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest supervisor in charge of the recreation area.

The dig is one of the five largest archaeology projects ever undertaken by the Forest Service and has
attracted national media attention, including an article in The New York Times. The ongoing excavation of 5,000-year-old pit houses may unearth significant findings that could shed light on these mysterious predecessors of the Nez Perce Indians, Richmond said.

Nez Perce Tribal Council members and the Nez Perce National Historical Park staff met with Richmond at the dig this summer to discuss possibilities for a cooperative program to interpret history from primitive man to the modern ranchers who operate the Circle C Ranch near Pittsburg.

The Forest Service purchased the Circle C and two other ranches by condemnation in the early 1970s to prevent the owners from subdividing river lots. Recreation area managers have tried unsuccessfully to find a permittee to occupy the actual ranch headquarters, although a permittee does run cattle on the allotment. Richmond said he still hopes to see invested federal money maintain buildings that could serve as a tribute to the grittiness of ranchers who thrived in a remote part of the world.

The proposal for Pittsburg also reflects the Forest Service policy of striving to please ranchers who lease grazing land on the recreation area. The Pittsburg development would not affect cattle numbers there and the ranch permittee would be compensated for
some loss of grazing space with a new feed storage building. To minimize the loss of rangeland, the agency proposes to exclude the 500 cattle that graze each winter and spring only from the campground and from a small area containing Indian petroglyphs.

Such concessions to ranchers misinterprets the Hells Canyon NRA act, according to some conservationists. While grazing -- like logging -- is listed as a traditional use, it must be compatible with recreation goals.

"The cow manure was so thick this summer around a picnic table near Dug Bar, you couldn't step around it," said Loren Hughes of La Grande, Oregon, a member of the Izaak Walton League, a national conservation group concerned about public land grazing abuses.

Hughes, who has taken horse trips in Hells Canyon for 30 years, said the National Recreation Area designation has done nothing to stop overgrazing and enhance wildlife as Congress intended. The Nee Me Poo National Historic Trail, instead of preserving the ancient Nez Perce path, has become a cattle thoroughfare, he said. Ranchers drive cows down from the high country in Oregon via the trail to winter on the river by Dug Bar, one of the three places within Hells Canyon NRA also accessible by rough road.
Meanwhile, wildlife prospers on the one part of the canyon lacking sheep and cattle. For example, two Oregon domestic sheep allotments (110,000 acres total) have been vacant since 1979 and are now attracting thousands of elk that feed on knee-high bunchgrass all winter along the steep river canyon. Rather than convert unprofitable sheep allotments into a wildlife preserve, the Forest Service would prefer to see a return of domestic grazing and has advertised several times for permittees to fill the Cherry Creek allotment (the smaller of the two).

The Forest Service contends it has an obligation under law to protect the ranching lifestyle as well as wildlife species. The enabling act calls for "protection and maintenance of fish and wildlife" in one section and in another recognizes ranching and grazing as "traditional and valid uses." In still another section, however, the act states that grazing must be compatible with the act's other provisions.

"We want to keep and maintain ranching and livestock production as a viable use on the NRA," said Tom Johnson, zone range manager for Hells Canyon.

Yet the Forest Service appears to have difficulty handling the existing 18,000 cattle and sheep on the recreation area. The agency has completed less than one-third of the management plans needed to supervise
the leased ranching operations. Without such plans, managers cannot systematically improve overgrazed creek bottoms, springs and flat benches hit hardest by domestic animals.

Most rangeland is holding its own -- not always the best after years of intensive grazing in the early part of the century -- with a certain percentage going downhill, said Bob Barney, a Hells Canyon NRA range manager. Where cattle and sheep overgraze, the native bunch grasses disappear to be replaced by the less nourishing exotic cheat grass and weeds. Barney fears the encroaching weeds and already has noted knapweed and skeleton weed advancing on the Idaho side.

Just keeping up with the high turnover rate of its 32 permittees (more than half have changed hands in the past 15 years) has prevented the managers from concentrating on solving grazing problems, Johnson said.

The permittees often tell range managers burdened with paperwork what is happening, according to Don "Biden" Tippett, a rancher on the lower end of Hells Canyon.

Forest Service funding for range has followed the same national pattern as other non-timber programs of sharp declines in 1982 followed by some modest increases in the last two years. The managers chose not
to reduce grazing numbers to a manageable number for a range budget too meager to pay for much field supervision of permittees.

As with Pittsburg, certain expensive projects have received higher priority over day-to-day operations, Hughes said.

For instance, the Forest Service recently built a large lambing shed for the one domestic sheep permittee on the Oregon side of Hells Canyon at Temperance Creek. The shed adds an unnecessary structure to the wild river corridor, Hughes said, and is unfair to other users. He suggested that the money would have been better spent stabilizing dilapidated homesteads so they could be used as shelters for hikers and horseback riders who frequent the recreation area's wilderness.

Subsidizing the Temperance Creek permittee also prolongs a largely unprofitable business of sheep ranching that endangers a critical wildlife species, bighorn sheep, he said.

The 4,000 domestic sheep herded each spring from the canyon bottoms near Temperance Creek to the high ranges of the adjacent Eagle Cap Wilderness represent only a fragment of the bands that used to straggle over Northeast Oregon and western Idaho. Yet the remaining band presents a continual problem for bighorn sheep
reintroduced into Hells Canyon within the last 20 years.

When bighorns mingle with domestic sheep, as they are apt to do, they always become infected with a bacterial pneumonia. Just as Native Americans had no resistance to smallpox introduced by white settlers, bighorns cannot withstand the pneumonia, said Vic Coggins, Enterprise district wildlife biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

A straying domestic sheep from a range band may have caused last year's die-off of bighorns in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, when the Lostine herd of 100 dwindled to 33, he said.

Bighorns roamed the canyon country for thousands of years until meeting a comparatively swift demise when domestic sheep entered Hells Canyon 100 years ago. The small, reintroduced bighorns (about 120 sheep among three bands) are starting to flourish in places and have spread into the vacant Cherry Creek allotment.

"It's a clear-cut issue," Coggins said. "If you have domestics, you can't have bighorns."

The Snake River Wildlife Management Unit (taking in about 60 miles along the Oregon side of the canyon from McGraw ridge to the Imnaha River) is 94 percent public land and therefore appears a logical place to
manage first for the needs of wildlife, like bighorns, Coggins said.

But Forest Supervisor Richmond is unconvinced of a clear priority of wild over domestic species in Hells Canyon. He has delayed a bighorn sheep transplant program developed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to evaluate its fairness to domestic sheep ranchers. The program includes a proposal to move bighorns into both vacant canyon allotments.

Barney said in one case a ranch improvement may benefit wildlife. The new lambing shed may reduce shepherders' need to kill predators that have threatened lambs born on the open range, he said. He also suggested moving cattle into the vacant canyon allotments to avoid the problems with domestic sheep and bighorns mingling. Although the allotments are generally too steep for cattle, the animals can find interspersed gentle benches and valleys.

Despite the efforts of Hells Canyon managers to encourage ranching, locating people willing to graze cattle or sheep in remote country is getting tougher, said Jack McClaran, a rancher from the Imnaha River country on the Oregon side of the recreation area.

He said the Forest Service has made appealing offers to lure ranchers to the vacant canyon allotments, which the agency believes should be filled,
but the frontier spirit is fading with the modernization of ranching.

While the creation of Hells Canyon NRA has not yet affected the 70-year-old McClaran ranch, he said the wilderness designation on the river corridor and the purchase of private land by the Forest Service proved a major blow to other ranchers.

"Even though you could stay, the reality of it was that everyone who had owned private property there felt disenfranchised," he said. "They could stay there under a special use permit, but nobody did."

It would be difficult, he said, to accept the lifestyle dictated by the rugged canyon country without some feeling of ownership to bind the rancher to the land.

"The kind of people that would be attracted and would go to that country and live that kind of life aren't the kind of people who want someone telling them what to do all the time," he said.

McClaran sometimes wonders why his family still goes on ranching, bowing to the changes.

"If we thought there was a serious threat to grazing in the NRA we would be preparing to get out," he said. "We don't. We think that the guarantee in the law, plus our historic experience, knowledge about the
country allow us to do it in a way that is acceptable and doesn’t damage the country. We’ve become pros."

The extreme elevation gradients that allow ranchers to graze animals all winter in the milder temperatures of the low country without supplemental feed also require a disciplined schedule of moving cattle off spring range in time for grass to grow all summer. McClaran said he has seen “starry-eyed” newcomers arrive, reveling in the romantic life of the western cowboy. He usually gives them about five years before they are driven off by some natural disaster, such as an avalanche, that wipes out cattle.

The ones who remain learn to thwart some dangers, he said. For example, ranchers commonly kill predators like coyotes, cougars and bears to save calves or lambs. He believes predators, and elk, deer and domestic animals can coexist, but only by maintaining the right balance.

Mary Marks, a plucky, 71-year-old widow, also has rANCED CATTLE for many years from the private lands along the Imnaha River and on the surrounding recreation area. She said longtime ranchers have tended the lands well, ensuring that each year enough grass would grow back for another year’s grazing. She bristled at the charges of some conservationists that cattle and sheep grazing has degraded the land.
"I don't feel like we have misused this land," she said. "Why would we when it is our livelihood?"

Her views embrace a common philosophy among the Imnaha community that ranchers are not out to rape the land, because they must stay there and pass on the tradition to their children. They already are forced to withstand the grazing of elk and deer on their private lands without compensation, she said. The recreation area designation has added the threat of a different emphasis that hangs like a dark cloud over them.

Finding a balance between a preservationist and development view has proved difficult for the Forest Service.

A few recent signs of change suggest that the agency is attempting some modest steps to address river and range management problem by:

* Calculating total use on the river for the first time through its visitor study. This should prove invaluable in revising a conflict-ridden management plan.

* Developing a five-year action plan to combat the worst range overgrazing under the leadership of a recently hired zone range manager.

* Inventorying historic buildings within the river corridor wilderness to identify which buildings are in greatest need of stabilization. This year, the Forest
Service restored the old Carter mansion on Kirkwood Creek and the Slate Creek cabin.

* Adding to displays at the one river museum on the old Len Jordan homestead of Kirkwood Creek.

* Reconstructing portions of at least five trails within the wilderness.

* Participating in a wildlife project to reintroduce peregrine falcons on the Snake River breaks.

The main conflicts, however, remain unresolved and complicated by the constraints of the agency's own management plan and dual mandates of the congressional act.

Tensions are mounting among users. The high numbers of jet boats, which may increase with improved access to Pittsburg Landing, pose a threat to the preservation of scenic and natural beauty. Vandalism of prehistoric sites and homesteads continues without adequate enforcement. Grazing of domestic animals perpetuates a tradition, but degrades springs and grass benchlands used by recreationists, as well as endangering the bighorn sheep.
ANALYSIS: HILLS CANYON-EAGLE CAPS NATIONAL PARK
PREPARE MERITS STUDY

A possible solution to conflicts within Hells Canyon National Recreation Area could also be the long-term remedy for economic woes of communities tied to declining timber and agriculture industries.

Combining the Hells Canyon NRA with the adjacent Eagle Cap Wilderness of Northeast Oregon into a one-million-acre National Park Preserve would almost instantly boost the tourism potential of this region. The term National Park, with or without the "preserve" ending, elicits images of America's greatest natural wonders -- Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon and Yosemite.

The "preserve" concept has been applied to 10 areas in Alaska that possess the superlative scenery and unique natural qualities that merit National Park status. Two such preserves in the lower 48 states have set a precedent outside Alaska.

Preserves recognize the values of high quality hunting and the accompanying revenues to surrounding communities. Hells Canyon is already managed for trophy elk hunting. Hunting groups have helped fund bighorn sheep and mountain goat reintroductions. Guided hunting trips are increasing in both Hells Canyon and the Eagle
Politically and economically it makes sense to add the "preserve" qualification to this proposal.

The National Park Service has a Congressional mandate "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

It would be essential to emphasize that preservation mandate in drawing up plans for a National Park Preserve in delicate country, now threatened under the differing "multiple use" mandate of the U.S. Forest Service.

A properly designed park preserve would ensure protection for fragile resources by limiting development, halting logging (except for some firewood cutting) and phasing out grazing. Special provisions could be included in the legislation to pay and re-train loggers and ranchers.

The change in name, too, would make a stunning difference in national recognition and accompanying tourist dollars, based on the experiences of communities surrounding national parks.

Nevada's Great Basin National Park, added to the system in October 1986, provides an excellent example of how small rural communities far from interstate
highways have benefited from a new park. Tourism has jumped 85 percent in the two years over past visits to what was formerly the Wheeler Peak Scenic Area under the Forest Service and the tiny Lehman Caves National Monument. As a result, annual net tourism revenues to the town of Ely (4,700 people) have risen by $5.5 million. The tiny town of Baker at the park's entrance -- which had once vehemently opposed the park -- is now building resorts and expanding motels to serve visitors.

A Hells Canyon-Eagle Caps National Park Preserve would diversify the economies of surrounding communities confronted with declining jobs in logging and ranching. At the same time, the traditional lifestyles could continue in areas outside the preserve.

This park preserve proposal has appeared before, but deserves a fresh look at a time when Congress appears to be more receptive to expanding the park system.

More park bills were introduced all in one year, 1988, than in any time over the past ten years, a sign that interest is growing. The chamber of commerce office in Ely, Nevada, reports a regular flow of phone calls from community leaders throughout the West asking for ideas to help develop their own park proposals.
Under the Reagan administration only six units were added to the park system. Meanwhile, total visitation to National Park Service areas reached 330 million in 1982.

Competition for new national park designations will undoubtedly be fierce, but the case for a Hells Canyon-Eagle Caps park preserve is compelling. Combining the 652,488-acre Hells Canyon NRA and the adjacent 364,325-acre Eagle Cap Wilderness in Northeast Oregon enhances the attractiveness of the proposal.

The dramatic shifts in landscape from the 10,000-foot glacially sculpted Eagle Caps to the depths of North America's deepest canyon and rising again to the 9,000-foot Seven Devils Mountains in Idaho create diverse life zones supporting 349 wildlife species and 29 kinds of fish.

Bald and golden eagles glide above the Snake River joined by newly reintroduced peregrine falcons. Unconfirmed reports of grizzly bears within the canyon are not ignored by wildlife biologists who point out the vast wild country could hide such surprises. The largest and farthest runs of spring and summer chinook salmon spawn in the Imnaha River. Within the Snake River, giant sturgeon bask in deep pools.

In addition, close to 1,000 prehistoric sites are scattered along Snake River shores. Trails of the Nez
Perce Indians, abandoned mines and early settlers' homesteads depict more recent history.

About 85 percent of the proposed area is now roadless, which means the preserve would help meet the country's greatest future recreation demands for backcountry, wildlife viewing and hiking, a prediction based on Forest Service trend research.

By limiting roads to only the best viewpoints, such as Hat Point and Buckhorn Lookout, the roadless country can remain wild and the preserve would be protected from overuse. Also, the more new parks added to the system, the better the use can be distributed to alleviate some of the pressures on the classic destinations like Yellowstone.

In a sweeping proposal for new National Parks this year, the National Parks and Conservation Association states: "Our wild lands are shrinking, and some of the roadless domains west of the 100th meridian could provide the cores of what may be the last generation of great natural national parks."

Hells Canyon NRA is listed as one of 86 potential new National Parks by the parks association, a national non-profit group. The Sierra Club also has listed Hells Canyon as one of its top candidates for a new National Park in the Northwest.
Both Hells Canyon and the Eagle Caps fall within the Columbia Plateau, a region identified by the National Park Service as one of the most significant and least represented natural history areas within the park system. One of the key reasons the Great Basin National Park proposal succeeded was that it, too, filled an important void within the system that attempts to represent major ecosystems.

Oregon has only one national park -- Crater Lake. Idaho has none. If designated, the Hells Canyon-Eagle Caps park preserve would become a natural stopping point for visitors driving from Glacier National Park in Montana to the popular Oregon coast via the scenic highway that follows the Lochsa and Clearwater rivers to Lewiston, the northern gateway to Hells Canyon. Or those driving on I-84 between Yellowstone National Park and Mount Rainier or Olympic national parks could take a 150-mile loop off the interstate. Distance from main interstates has never proved a problem for tourists, as the Grand Canyon, Glacier and Great Basin National Parks illustrate.

Support for the park concept within rural communities surrounding Hells Canyon is tentative but growing. The Hells Canyon Preservation Council in November endorsed a proposal for a National Park Service study.
Two years earlier, a pro-development group called People First! joined with a conservation group, the Oregon Natural Resources Council, to endorse the concept of a National Park Preserve for Hells Canyon-Eagle Caps. Differences over paved road proposals and boundaries dissolved the partnership, but the temporary union between fierce rivals remains an encouraging sign of community receptiveness.

Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Oregon, the same year, also supported a National Park Preserve as a possible solution to conflicts in Hells Canyon. The Observer, a La Grande daily newspaper, favored a Hells Canyon National Park as a better solution than Packwood's proposed legislation that would have limited timber cutting and expanded wilderness without changing managing agencies.

The first formal National Park proposal for Hells Canyon dates to 1939, but the extravagant praise of early explorers could well be a park endorsement. For instance, Captain Benjamin L.E. Bonneville in the spring of 1833 wrote about Hells Canyon:

The grandeur and originality of the views presented on every side beggar both the pencil and the pen. Nothing we have ever gazed upon in any other region could for a moment compare in wild majesty and impressive sternness with the series of scenes which here at every turn astonished our senses and filled us with awe and delight.
The park service's 1939 recommendation disappeared during the throes of World War II, but in 1970 the idea resurfaced in the form of a National River bill designed like a National Park with emphasis on blocking dams from flooding Hells Canyon.

The proposed union of Hells Canyon with the Eagle Caps invites other creative ideas to enhance the economic health of the region whose spectacular scenery and rich past may be its greatest asset.

Historian Alvin B. Josephy, Jr., an authority on the Nez Perce Indians who spends each summer living near Joseph, Oregon, suggests expanding the Nez Perce National Historic Park based in Idaho to its rightful sites within the Wallowa Valley, the summer homeland of Chief Joseph.

Not a true national park, the Nez Perce park is managed in conjunction with other federal authorities and comprises 24 wayside stops interpreting both Nez Perce history and that of the early explorers and settlers. Other proposed sites, such as the Wallowa Lake Nez Perce burial grounds, exist in northeastern Oregon.

"It's ridiculous," Josephy says. "We have a Nez Perce National Historic Park and the homeland of Chief Joseph is left out of it."
Chief Joseph's flight with his people from the Wallowa valley in 1877 has become renowned as one of the most heroic and tragic episodes of the western settlement era. Josephy predicts that more than 10,000 tourists would follow the Nez Perce series of interpretive sites each year.

The new National Park Preserve and Nez Perce National Historic Park could easily coordinate interpretation of the Nez Perce story. Already the Nee Me Poo National Historic Trail, marking the route of Chief Joseph, crosses Hells Canyon. Thus far, the trail lacks any interpretive markers.

Without better protection for the existing natural and historic treasures, especially within Hells Canyon, the National Park Preserve qualities will dwindle away. Communities facing existing and predicted declines in timber and agriculture jobs would then have few new revenue opportunities.
An editorial in the Wallowa County Chieftain newspaper 55 years ago provides a close-to-home history lesson for the communities tucked between the alpine Wallowa Mountains and the forests and grassland rimrocks of Hells Canyon:

Chesnimnus ridge from Snake River to Joseph Creek is a great pleasure ground that should be preserved in its native beauty. It is worth most to the county now and for all future years as a primitive forest area with cattle, deer and elk feeding. It is a beautiful park all made to order, showing how nature works when man does not interfere.

The editor’s suggestion went unheeded and Chesnimnus has become one of the more heavily roaded and logged parts of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

History also demonstrates that when all the mature timber is logged from an area, the timber companies move on. Without a Redwoods National Park protecting the mighty groves and providing steady income to the surrounding communities, nearby residents would be left with stumps and a bleak economic future. Meanwhile, the earth’s grandest trees would have been cut down.

The natural beauty of Hells Canyon is at stake now as logging continues to decimate small, magnificent
forests of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, larch and spruce.

Displacing some logging where opportunities exist, however, as in Hells Canyon NRA, is definitely a concern and one that Congress has solved in places like the Redwoods. There, the surrounding counties and the state of California receive annual payments compensating for any loss of revenue from logging, following the expansion of the park in 1978. For instance, Humboldt County receives about $1.3 million in lieu of taxes annually. Congress also funded programs to re-train loggers for other occupations. The park service has received $33 million over the past decade to hire local loggers to plant trees on cut-over lands and to improve stream passage for salmon and steelhead.

Most of this park preserve proposal would have little effect on the logging industry. The average harvest of timber from the recreation area, set at seven million board feet annually, represents less than two percent of the volume needed to keep area mills running. The rest comes from more productive, surrounding forest lands.

Yet, closing off the option of cutting trees on the one-third of Hells Canyon that is forested merits some compensation. A retraining program would help
communities faced with an unstable future as mills become more automated and offer fewer jobs, while mature timber on the forests dwindles.

The future of ranching is a more difficult problem and may require some compromises rather than the complete elimination of grazing, because many of the Imnaha River private landowners require the adjacent grazing lands of Hells Canyon to continue traditional ranching. Yet, their cattle feedlots pollute the river and pose a continuing threat to chinook salmon. An invaluable fishery would benefit if ranchers shifted to less destructive sources of income, such as growing fruit trees in the mild, low elevation climate or leading guided trips into the surrounding wild country.

If cattle and sheep grazing were limited, herds of elk and deer, bears, cougars and other wildlife would prosper and the ecosystem would be allowed to operate more naturally, in keeping with a National Park Service philosophy. More abundant wildlife would provide even better opportunities for a growing horseback and llama outfitting business. Already, some ranches within Hells Canyon NRA, such as the Pallette Ranch on the Imnaha River, have shifted emphasis from grazing to outfitting.

On the Sawtooth National Recreation Area in Idaho, two ranchers requested that their large cattle
allowments be changed to a dude ranching permit that has proved to be more lucrative.

A National Park Preserve would breathe fresh life into a troubled area where no one seems satisfied with the management, particularly of Hells Canyon.

Conservationists protest excessive logging and grazing, unregulated jet boats on the river and funding of expensive single projects like the Pittsburg Landing recreational vehicle campground when basic needs like trail and campsite maintenance are not met.

Those who favor increased development are also disgruntled with the progression of events over the 12 years since Hells Canyon became a National Recreation Area. The Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce, for example, has felt cheated that the Forest Service has taken so long to fulfill a promise to improve the road to the canyon's premier vista point at Hat Point. Communities, too, have felt alienated from the head manager of Hells Canyon located in Baker, Oregon, 100 miles from Enterprise and 180 miles from Lewiston.

Congress made a good-faith effort to protect the recreation, natural wonders and history of this deepest gorge, but the designation has failed.

The very label "National Recreation Area" given to Hells Canyon invites misinterpretation of Congress' intent to preserve the area. The title suggests
unlimited recreation. Most National Recreation Areas are in cities or surrounding large reservoirs that are better able to withstand heavy use.

Natural values need be only "well above the ordinary," according to the government's National Recreation Area policy statement issued in 1963 from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. The designation would appear appropriate for areas lacking the glamorous scenery of National Parks. Both Hells Canyon and the Sawtooth NRAs -- the two largest recreation areas managed by the Forest Service -- stand out as anomalies. One rivals the Grand Canyon, the other the Grand Tetons. Neither has received the funding or recognition of a national park.

Not only do Hells Canyon and the Sawtooths possess all the required glamor of national parks, the areas also embrace delicate resources that cannot tolerate the intense levels of use that many National Recreation Areas often endure.

Hells Canyon and the Sawtooths became Forest Service recreation areas as a compromise between those who wanted a wilderness or park emphasis and those who favored development. The Forest Service then applied its traditional mandate of "multiple use." The National Park Service would have applied a different "preservation" policy.
The institutional philosophy of the Forest Service has detracted from a preservation mandate within the Hells Canyon NRA Act. Congress listed goals of preserving natural beauty, history, archaeology, and ecologic values. Instead, managers have paid greatest heed to the minor sections listing timber cutting and grazing as allowable uses. Congress also added to difficulties by stating that logging, mining and ranching are traditional and valid uses and in another section making it clear that those activities may continue only if compatible with other provisions.

The Forest Service interpretation of the act reflects a professional forester's view of the natural world where timber cutting always seems to benefit recreation and wildlife.

"We (foresters) confuse a forest of healthy trees with a healthy forest," stated David A. Publicover, a forester who worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Instead of seeing wild forests as places where insects, snags, and broken-topped trees play important natural roles, foresters see them as "diseases in need of a cure," he wrote in the Society of American Foresters' magazine.

That basic philosophy has guided Hells Canyon NRA managers in their reactions to the spruce bark beetle epidemic and to the 60,000-acre Tepee Butte fire of
September 1988: Both beetle and fire signal the need to cut trees.

In contrast, the National Park Service, tends to take an ecological view. Where Glacier National Park published a brochure on the mountain pine beetle as a naturally recurring insect that benefits the forest by thinning out weaker trees, Hells Canyon NRA published an article on the spruce bark beetle that started, "A killer is loose in the area..."

Even the associate chief of the Forest Service, George Leonard, reflected the same attitude toward natural outbreaks of disease and insects in an interview last summer: "Frankly, there is no way to control the spruce bark beetle except through timber harvesting." He added that logging the dead trees would best protect Hells Canyon's recreation values.

Beyond its guiding philosophy, the Forest Service has another incentive to sell timber. As economist Randal O'Toole says in his 1988 book, "Reforming the Forest Service," the agency wants to make the most of its budget. It promotes employees who excel in selling high volumes of timber. Since timber and grazing bring in revenues that can be counted in dollars and cents, the incentive exists to log and graze to receive more money for operations.
The National Park Service, lacking that kind of mandate, finds another means to demonstrate its need for higher budgets: recreation.

Columnist Russ Sadler of The Oregonian said in a speech to the Oregon Natural Resources Council this fall that when more people visit National Parks, Congress gives them more money. When more people visit the National Forests, it just means more garbage for the Forest Service to collect.

"There is no reward for the Forest Service to emphasize recreation over timber management," Sadler said. "Money still follows the trees. Not surprisingly their institutional behavior follows the money."

When the Reagan administration started cutting natural resource programs, recreation fared poorly within the Forest Service and timber budgets remained intact. Hells Canyon lost integral positions, such as a recreation planner and wildlife biologist.

The designation of recreation areas as subunits of National Forests also buries them far down in the Forest Service budget. Hells Canyon is directed by an area ranger who reports to a forest supervisor, who then reports to a regional forester, who in turn reports to the chief in Washington, D.C.

Within the Park Service, recreation areas are directed by superintendents, more the equivalent of a
forest supervisor. It is much easier for Congress to appropriate funds directly to the park service recreation areas.

To be sure, budget deficits on Forest Service recreation areas are becoming less of a problem under the recent "National Recreation Strategy" that stresses "showcasing" special areas within the Forest Service.

But that strategy is doomed if all it does is toss money at campground development and paving roads. The agency would benefit from studying Aldo Leopold's chapter on recreation from his 1949, A Sand County Almanac, where he concluded:

Recreational development is a job not of building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind.

The replacement of Hells Canyon's forester managers with rangers schooled in recreation, while a step in the right direction, needs to be accompanied by major changes in the timber sale program, grazing, jet boat and development policies. So far, the Forest Service has not shown any intention of welding its National Recreation Strategy to a Leopold ethic that would promote strong preservation standards to help achieve high-quality recreation on the National Forests.
A Forest Service philosophy of placing local needs ahead of national concerns also adds to the troubles in Hells Canyon. Since forests have often provided trees to lumber mills, both the tradition and local pressures exert a strong, pro-logging influence.

The needs of local people certainly must be considered in managing any new National Park Preserve. At the same time, a broader view is required. Sixty-three million Americans live in rural areas and have stewardship for 90 percent of our natural resources. The 183 million Americans who live in cities deserve a voice in what happens to national scenic treasures.

Often, the broader view means emphasizing non-extractive ways of making a living. By protecting forests and rangelands from overuse, in the long run both local and national needs can be met.

At least two communities near Hells Canyon and the Eagle Caps have already started a transition to new revenue sources that depend on wild rivers, wilderness and scenery. The main businesses that line the streets of Riggins, Idaho, for example, are river rafting and horseback outfitters. In Halfway, Oregon, a llama outfitting business and two bed-and-breakfast inns rely on visitors coming to see the nearby spectacular scenery.
People within these communities also have shared excellent promotional ideas, such as developing a wayside view of Hells Canyon off the Wallowa Mountain Loop Road near Lonesome Saddle. Though the Forest Service has paved this road through the recreation area between Enterprise and Halfway, tourists now have no special vantage point from which to view the canyon they have come to see.

Ideas for enhancing the spectacular scenery of the high Wallowa mountains and deep canyons of the Snake and Imnaha River should be exchanged among all communities. A National Park Preserve proposal shaped by local and national experts provides that opportunity.

If a proposal is to move forward, the congressional delegations from the affected states must approve a Hells Canyon-Eagle Caps National Park Preserve study.

When a study is authorized, timber cutting must be curtailed. If salvage logging occurs this spring on the scale that is proposed, the National Recreation Area's chances of qualifying as a National Park Preserve may be considerably weakened. Congress could include a provision in the study to halt the logging. Once again, a precedent exists: Logging was stalled during the park
A proposal for the North Cascades National Park in Washington.

A study for Hells Canyon-Eagle Caps should also include expert advice on how to solve existing dilemmas such as the jet boat versus raft conflicts on the Snake River and how best to interpret and protect old homesteads, prehistoric sites, threatened and endangered plants, fish and wildlife.

Asking Oregon or Idaho congressmen to seek funds for a National Park study would not commit communities to supporting a park preserve. Instead, the study could prove a significant step toward self-determination and a chance to avert the disasters that have struck other rural communities that failed to diversify from economies dependent on traditional logging, ranching or farming. A park preserve for Hells Canyon-Eagle Caps should reflect both community and national desires.

Opposition to any change in federal land ownership is to be expected from some local people. The greatest national parks were opposed vehemently by those adjacent residents who feared change. The fight to save Hells Canyon from dams faced what seemed insurmountable odds in the late 1960s. It took a coalition of local and national support to win. The stunning victory places Hells Canyon NRA as one of Packwood's top
accomplishments during his 20-year tenure as U.S. senator.

Packwood is still committed to the preservation of Hells Canyon and would welcome the chance to better protect the area. He has already endorsed the concept of combining Hells Canyon with the Eagle Caps as a park preserve. It should not be difficult to convince him to introduce a study bill once he sees evidence of a mounting park campaign.

Sen. James McClure, R-Idaho, has shown recent concern for Hells Canyon's future when he introduced the successful November, 1988, bill giving permanent protection against dams for the lower 33 miles of the Snake River extending downstream from Hells Canyon.

Rep. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, who introduced the same bill in the house, wants a National Park in Idaho and helped form a park study commission for the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Opposition from wealthy landowners in Sun Valley may make the Hells Canyon-Eagle Caps National Park Preserve a better choice. That's why the Sierra Club listed Hells Canyon as its first park priority for Idaho.

Regional environmental groups have proved their expertise in mounting successful campaigns. A prime example is the passage in November of the Oregon Rivers
Initiative that greatly expanded the state's wild and scenic river system.

Hells Canyon Preservation Council is now planning its campaign -- starting small with slide shows to present to chambers of commerces and brochures. But just as the original council reached out nationally, so will the recently re-formed group need to make the proposal a high priority outside the region.

No matter how small the decreases in logging and grazing from a park preserve, any loss will guarantee protest from some loggers and ranchers. The council might do well to emphasize the possibilities for in-lieu taxes and re-training programs that would be a great asset separate from the preserve.

North America's deepest canyon and the Eagle Cap Wilderness -- beloved mountains of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas -- together pose a striking proposal for national groups to endorse. But the spectacular qualities, especially within Hells Canyon NRA, cannot endure much more logging that promises to be increasingly devastating as soon as this year.

People need to recognize what is at stake in a remote corner of the Northwest. Just as Floyd Harvey of Lewiston once brought Burl Ives, Arthur Godfrey and countless other people into the depths of Hells Canyon to show them what a dam would flood, so park preserve
advocates will need to spread the wonder of scenes like this one:

You are standing on a canyon rim -- Buckhorn Lookout at sunset -- watching shadows sweep like an ocean tide across Horse, Lightning and Cow creeks, the Imnaha River and beyond to the Snake River; ridge upon ridge of exposed geology both harsh and yielding. Hummingbirds buzz among wildflowers at your feet. Somewhere below, warblers sing along verdant streams and elk calves frolic among bunchgrasses. The Seven Devils Range rests upon the southeast horizon like a sleeping stegosaurus. To the southwest, the Eagle Caps radiate a peach glow as canyons deepen to maroon, then black. You feel a light, cool breeze and hear a coyote's howl carried across a vast, wild landscape.
Public Law 94-199

94th Congress

An Act

To establish the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area in the States of Oregon and Idaho, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That (a) to assure that the natural beauty, and historical and archaeological values of the Hells Canyon area and the seventy-one-mile segment of the Snake River between Hells Canyon Dam and the Oregon-Washington border, together with portions of certain of its tributaries and adjacent lands, are preserved for this and future generations, and that the recreational and ecologic values and public enjoyment of the area are thereby enhanced, there is hereby established the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area.

(b) The Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (hereinafter referred to as the "recreation area"), which includes the Hells Canyon Wilderness (hereinafter referred to as the "wilderness"), the components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System designated in section 3 of this Act, and the wilderness study areas designated in subsections 8(d) of this Act, shall comprise the lands and waters generally depicted on the map entitled "Hells Canyon National Recreation Area" dated September 1975, which shall be on file and available for public inspection in the office of the Chief, Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture. The Secretary of Agriculture (hereinafter referred to as "the Secretary"), shall, as soon as practicable, but no later than eighteen months after the date of enactment of this Act, publish a detailed boundary description of the recreation area, the wilderness study areas designated in subsection 8(d) of this Act, and the wilderness established in section 2 of this Act in the Federal Register.

Sec. 2. (a) The lands depicted as the "Hells Canyon Wilderness" on the map referred to in subsection 1(b) of this Act are hereby designated as wilderness.

(b) The wilderness designated by this Act shall be administered by the Secretary in accordance with the provisions of this Act or in accordance with the provisions of the Wilderness Act (78 Stat. 890), whichever is the more restrictive, except that any reference in such provisions of the Wilderness Act to the effective date of that Act shall be deemed to be a reference to the effective date of this Act. The provisions of section 9(b) and section 11 of this Act shall apply to the wilderness. The Secretary shall make such boundary revisions to the wilderness as may be necessary due to the exercise of his authority under subsection 3(b) of this Act.

Sec. 3. (a) Subsection 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (82 Stat. 906) is hereby amended by adding at the end thereof the following clauses:

"(11) Rapid River, Idaho.—The segment from the headwaters of the main stem to the national forest boundary and the segment of the West Fork from the wilderness boundary downstream to the confluence with the main stem, as a wild river.

(12) Snake, Idaho and Oregon.—The segment from Hells Canyon Dam downstream to Pittsburgh Landing, as a wild river; and the
section from Pittsburgh Landing downstream to an eastward extension of the north boundary of section 1, township 5 north, range 47 east, Willamette meridian, to a scenic river.

(16 USC 1274 note.) The segments of the Snake River and the Rapid River designated as wild or scenic river areas by this Act shall be administered by the Secretary in accordance with the provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (82 Stat. 906), as amended, and the Secretary shall establish detailed boundaries of the Snake River segments thereof in accordance with subsection 2(b) of that Act. Provided, That the Secretary may not undertake or permit to be undertaken any activities on adjacent public lands which would impair the water quality of the Rapid River segment: Provided further, That the Secretary is authorized to make such minor boundary revisions in the corridor as he deems necessary for the protection of such facilities as are permitted under the applicable provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (82 Stat. 906).

Sec. 4. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, or any authorization herefore given pursuant to law, the Federal Power Commission may not license the construction of any dam, water control, reservoir, powerhouse, transmission line, or other project work under the Federal Power Act (41 Stat. 1063), as amended (16 U.S.C. 791 et seq.), within the recreation area: Provided, That the provisions of the Federal Power Act (11 Stat. 1063) continue to apply to any project (as defined in such Act), and all of the facilities and improvements required or used in connection with the operation and maintenance of said project, in existence within the recreation area which project is already constructed or under construction on the date of enactment of this Act.

(b) No department or agency of the United States may assist by loan, grant, license, or otherwise the construction of any water resource on federal lands which would impair the water quality of the Rapid River or the Snake River. The Secretary may not license the construction of any dam, water control, reservoir, powerhouse, transmission line, or other project work under the Federal Power Act (41 Stat. 1063), as amended (16 U.S.C. 791 et seq.), within the recreation area: Provided, That the provisions of the Federal Power Act (11 Stat. 1063) continue to apply to any project (as defined in such Act), and all of the facilities and improvements required or used in connection with the operation and maintenance of said project, in existence within the recreation area which project is already constructed or under construction on the date of enactment of this Act.

Sec. 5. (a) Section 5 (a) of the Act of October 2, 1968 (82 Stat. 906), as amended, is further amended by adding the following new paragraph:...

Sec. 6. (a) No provision of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (82 Stat. 906), nor this Act, nor any guidelines, rules, or regulations issued hereunder, shall in any way limit, restrict, or conflict with present and future use of the waters of the Snake River and its tributaries upstream from the boundaries of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area created hereby, for beneficial uses, whether consumptive or nonconsumptive, now or hereafter existing, including, but not limited to, domestic, municipal, stockwater, irrigation, mining, power, or industrial uses.

(b) No flow requirements of any kind may be imposed on the waters of the Snake River below Hells Canyon Dam under the provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (82 Stat. 906), of this Act, or any guidelines, rules, or regulations adopted hereunder.

Sec. 7. Except as otherwise provided in sections 2 and 3 of this Act, and subject to the provisions of section 10 of this Act, the Secretary shall administer the recreation area in accordance with the laws, rules, and regulations applicable to the national forests for public outdoor recreation in a manner compatible with the following objectives:

1. The maintenance and protection of the free-flowing nature of the rivers within the recreation area.
2. Conservation of natural scenery, cultural, scientific, and other values contributing to the public benefit.
3. Preservation, especially in the area generally known as Hells Canyon, of all fossil and paleontological species and occurrences biologically unique including, but not limited to, rare and endemic plant species, rare combinations of aquatic, terrestrial, and atmospheric habitats, and the rare combinations of outstanding and diverse ecosystems and parts of ecosystems associated therewith.
4. Protection and maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat.
5. Protection of archeological and paleontological sites and interpretation of these sites for the public benefit and knowledge.
6. Preservation and restoration of historic sites associated with and typifying the economic and social history of the region and the American West.

Sec. 8. (a) Within five years from the date of enactment of this Act the Secretary shall develop and submit to the Committees on Interior and Insular Affairs of the United States Senate and House of Representatives a comprehensive management plan for the recreation area which shall provide for a broad range of land uses and recreation opportunities.

(b) In the development of such plan, the Secretary shall consider the historic, archeological, and paleontological resources within the recreation area which offer significant opportunities for archeological research. The Secretary shall inventory such resources and may recommend such areas as he deems suitable for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Secretary's comprehensive plan shall include recommendations for future protection and controlled research use of all such resources.

Sec. 9. The Secretary shall, as a part of his comprehensive planning process, conduct a detailed study of the need for, and alternative routes of, scenic roads and other means of transit to and within the recreation area. The Secretary shall consider the alternative for upgrading existing roads and shall, in particular, study the need for and alternative routes of roads or other means of transit providing access to scenic views of and from the Western rim of Hells Canyon.

Sec. 10. The Secretary shall review, as to their suitability or nonsuitability for designation as wilderness, the areas generally depicted on the map referred to in section 1 of this Act as the "Land Flat-Soums Point Plateau Wilderness Study Area", and the "West Side Reservoir Plateau Wilderness Study Area", and the "Mountain Sheep Wilderness Study Area", and report his findings to the President. The Secretary shall complete his review and the President shall, within five years from the date of enactment of this Act, advise the United States Senate and House of Representatives of his recommendations with respect to the designation of lands within such areas as wilderness. In conducting his review the Secretary shall comply with the provisions of section...
3(d) of the Wilderness Act and shall give public notice at least sixty days in advance of any hearing or other public meeting concerning the wilderness study area. The Secretary shall administer all Federal lands within the study areas to prevent their possible future designation by the Congress as wilderness. Nothing contained herein shall limit the President in proposing, as part of this recommendation to Congress, the designation as wilderness of any additional area within the recreation area which is predominately of wilderness value.

(c) In conducting the reviews and preparing the comprehensive management plan required by this section, the Secretary shall provide for full public participation and shall consider the views of all interested agencies, organizations, and individuals including but not limited to, the Navajo Tribe of Indians, and the States of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The Secretaries or Directors of all Federal departments, agencies, and commissions having a relevant expertise are hereby authorized and directed to cooperate with the Secretary in his review and to make such studies as the Secretary may request on a cost reimbursable basis.

(f) Such activities as are as compatible with the provisions of this Act, but not limited to, timber harvesting, by selective cutting, mining, and grazing may continue during development of the comprehensive management plan, at current levels of activity and in areas of such activity at the time of enactment of this Act. Further, in development of the management plan, the Secretary shall give full consideration to continuation of these ongoing activities in their respective areas.

Sec. 9. (a) The Secretary is hereby authorized to acquire such lands or interests in land (including, but not limited to, scenic easements) as he deems necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Act by purchase with donated or appropriated funds with the consent of the owner, donation, or exchange.

(b) The Secretary is further authorized to acquire by purchase with donated or appropriated funds such lands or interests in lands without the consent of the owner only if (1) he deems that all reasonable efforts to acquire such lands or interests therein by negotiation have failed; and (2) the total acreage of all other lands within the recreation area to which he has acquired fee simple title or lesser interests therein without the consent of the owner is less than 5 per centum of the total acreage which is privately owned within the recreation area on the date of enactment of this Act: Provided, That the Secretary may acquire scenic easements in lands without the consent of the owner and without restriction to such 5 per centum limitation: Provided further, That the Secretary may only acquire scenic easements in lands without the consent of the owner after the date of publication of the regulations required by section 10 of this Act which define the circumstances under which such lands are being used, or are in imminent danger of being used, in a manner incompatible with such regulations.

(c) Any land or interest in land owned by the State of Oregon or any of its political subdivisions may be acquired only by donation. Any land or interest in land owned by the State of Idaho or any of its political subdivisions may be acquired only by donation or exchange.

(d) As used in this Act the term “scenic easement” means the right to control the use of land in order to protect aesthetic values for the purposes of this Act, but shall not preclude the continuation of any farming or pastoral use exercised by the owner at the date of enactment of this Act.

(e) The Secretary shall give prompt and careful consideration to any offer made by a person owning land within the recreation area to sell such land to the United States. The Secretary shall specifically consider any hardship to such person which might result from an undue delay in acquiring his property.

(f) In exercising his authority to acquire property by exchange, the Secretary may accept title to any non-Federal property, or interests therein, located within the recreation area and, notwithstanding any other provision of law, he may convey in exchange therefor any federally owned property within the same State which he classifies as suitable for exchange and which is under his administrative jurisdiction: Provided, That the values of the properties so exchanged shall be approximately equal, or if they are not approximately equal, they shall be equalized by the payment of cash to the grantor or to the United States as the circumstances require. In the exercise of his exchange authority, the Secretary may utilize authorities and procedures available to him in connection with exchanges of national forest lands.

(g) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary is authorized to acquire mineral interests in lands within the recreation area, with or without the consent of the owner. Upon acquisition of any such interest, the lands and/or minerals covered by such interest are by this Act withdrawn from entry or appropriation under the United States mining laws and from disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral leasing and all amendments thereto.

(h) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any Federal property located within the recreation area may, with the concurrence of the agency having custody thereof, be transferred without consideration to the administrative jurisdiction of the Secretary for use by him in carrying out the purposes of this Act. Lands acquired by the Secretary or transferred to his administrative jurisdiction within the recreation area shall become parts of the national forest within or adjacent to which they are located.

Sec. 10. The Secretary shall promulgate, and may amend, such rules and regulations as he deems necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Act. Such rules and regulations shall include, but are not limited to—

(a) standards for the use and development of privately owned property within the recreation area, which rules or regulations the Secretary may, to the extent he deems advisable, implement with the authorities delegated to him in section 9 of this Act, and which may differ among the various parcels of land within the recreation area;

(b) standards and guidelines to insure the full protection and preservation of the historic, archeological, and paleontological resources in the recreation area;

(c) rules for the control of the use of motorized and mechanical equipment for transportation over, or alteration of, the surface of any Federal land within the recreation area;
(d) provision for the control of the use and number of motorized and nonmotorized river craft: Provided, That the use of such craft is hereby recognized as a valid use of the Snake River within the recreation area; and

(e) standards for such management, utilization, and disposal of natural resources on federally owned lands, including but not limited to, timber harvesting by selective cutting, mining, and grazing and the continuation of such existing uses and developments as are compatible with the provisions of this Act.

Sec. 11. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 4(d)(2) of the Wilderness Act and subject to valid existing rights, all Federal lands located in the recreation area are hereby withdrawn from all forms of location, entry, and patent under the mining laws of the United States, and from disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral leasing and all amendments thereto.

Sec. 12. The Secretary shall permit hunting and fishing on lands and waters under his jurisdiction within the boundaries of the recreation area in accordance with applicable laws of the United States and the States wherein the lands and waters are located except that the Secretary may designate zones where, and establish periods when, no hunting or fishing shall be permitted for reasons for public safety, administration, or public use and enjoyment. Except in emergencies, any regulations of the Secretary pursuant to this section shall be put into effect only after consultation with the appropriate State fish and game department.

Sec. 13. Ranching, grazing, farming, timber harvesting, and the occupation of houses and lands associated therewith, as they exist on the date of enactment of this Act, are recognized as traditional and valid uses of the recreation area.

Sec. 14. Nothing in this Act shall diminish, enlarge, or modify any right of the States of Idaho, Oregon, or any political subdivisions thereof, to exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction within the recreation area or of rights to tax persons, corporations, franchises, or property, including mineral or other interests, in or on lands or waters within the recreation area.

Sec. 15. The Secretary may cooperate with other Federal agencies, with State and local public agencies, and with private individuals and agencies in the development and operation of facilities and services in the area in furtherance of the purposes of this Act, including, but not limited to, restoration and maintenance of the historic setting and background of towns and settlements within the recreation area.

Sec. 16. (a) There is hereby authorized to be appropriated the sum of not more than $10,000,000 for the acquisition of lands and interests in lands within the recreation area.

(b) There is hereby authorized to be appropriated the sum of not more than $10,000,000 for the development of recreation facilities within the recreation area.

Approved December 31, 1975.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

HOUSE REPORT No. 94-607 accompanying H.R. 30 (Comm. on Interior and Insular Affairs).

SEBATE REPOT NO. 94-153 (Comm. on Interior and Insular Affairs).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 121 (1975): June 2, considered and passed Senate.

Dec. 12, Senate concurred in House amendment, amended in lieu of H.R. 30.

Dec. 19, House concurred in Senate amendments.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Newspapers


_____., "Investing in the future of the NRA," Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, 1988, p. 3.


_____., "Sides draw lines over Hells Canyon issue," The Observer, Aug. 19, 1986, p. i.


Periodicals


Public Documents


Published Reports


Turner, Charles H., *Defendants’ Memorandum in Opposition to Motion for Preliminary Injunction and Trial Memorandum*, to the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon in the suit; Oregon Natural Resources Council, Hells Canyon Preservation Council,

Unpublished Reports


Interviews

Armacost, Gary, owner and manager of Hells Canyon Adventures, a jet boat and raft tour business operating from Hells Canyon Dam, at Oxbow, Oregon, June 25, 1988.

Backstrom, Steven, co-owner of Wallowa Llamas, an outfitting business, at Halfway, Oregon, June 23, 1988.


Bough, James H., tourist from Quebec visiting Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, at Imnaha, Oregon, July 18, 1988.

Bowler, Bert, regional fish manager for the Idaho Fish and Game Department, at Lewiston, Idaho, April 29, 1988.


Carper, Brian E., saw filer for Boise Cascade Corporation and former president of People First, at Joseph, Oregon, July 6, 1988.


Carr, Mary Anne and Ed, owners of the Clear Creek Bed and Breakfast, at Halfway, Oregon, Sept. 15, 1988.

Chang, Curt, owner and manager of Northwest Dories, a commercial outfitting company that offers trips on the Snake River in Hells Canyon, at Lewiston, April 29, 1988.


Cribbs, Larry, Eagle Trucking employee and active member of the group SOS (Save Our Snake from wilderness), at Halfway, Oregon, June 23, 1988.


Fletcher, Steve, silviculturalist for Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, day tour of the recreation area, July 15, 1988.


Harvey, Floyd, one of the founders of Hells Canyon Preservation Council and instrumental in preservation
efforts during the 1960s and 70s, at Lewiston, Idaho, April 28, 1988.


Hughes, Loren, conservationist and active member of Izaak Walton League, at Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, May 10, 1988.


Johnson, Hazel, retired rancher who lived within Hells Canyon for more than 40 years, at Enterprise, Oregon, Aug. 31, 1988.


Kahn, Gary K., one of two attorneys for conservation groups who filed suit against the U.S. Forest Service to stop a timber sale in Hells Canyon, at Menucha, Oregon, Sept. 11, 1988.

Killer, Keith, conservation officer for the Idaho Fish and Game Department, Lewiston, Idaho, April 29, 1988.

____, on Snake River in Hells Canyon, April 30-May 1.


Light, Catherine C. and David M., ranchers near Hells Canyon National Recreation area, at Halfway, Oregon, July 1, 1988.


Orth, Gene, graduate wildlife student concerned about overgrazing by domestic animals within Hells Canyon, at Enterprise, Sept. 17, 1988.


Pollard, Carl and Marlene, retired couple from Halfway, Oregon, concerned about logging within the recreation area, at Hells Canyon National Recreation Area tour of Cold Grave timber sale, June 26, 1988.


Vachon, Monique, tourist from Quebec visiting Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, at Imnaha, July 18, 1988.

Witty, Ken, fisheries biologist for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and expert on Hells Canyon National Recreation Area legislative history, at Enterprise, Oregon, June 21, 1988.


Wortman, Janis, part-time post office employee and native of Imnaha, at Imnaha, July 18, 1988.

Telephone Interviews


Tippett, Janie, rancher who lived within Hells Canyon National Recreation Area at Dug Bar on the river, at Enterprise, June 29, 1988.

Letters


Evans, Brock, to author from Washington, D.C., June 2, 1988.


Speeches

