

ETIC

MIDDLE SNAKE

PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE THE MIDDLE SNAKE RIVER IN SECTION 5(d)  
CATEGORY UNDER THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT

The Middle Snake River, which is the boundary between Idaho and Oregon and Idaho and Washington, possesses unique scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, historical, and archeological values. The Middle Snake River in its present free-flowing state should be evaluated in planning reports by all Federal agencies as a potential wild, scenic, or recreational river pursuant to Section 5(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The limits of the river reach referred to are:

Middle Snake River from Hells Canyon Dam to Lewiston,  
Idaho (107 miles).

The canyon through which the Middle Snake flows is in one spot the deepest in the United States. The river itself is awesome and challenging. It consists of a series of white-water rapids flowing into deep, placid pools. Its shoreline varies from sheer cliffs and great boulders to wide bars and benches.

The Middle Snake Canyon is a unique recreational resource. There are challenging trails carved in steep rock faces and up rugged, narrow canyons. The trails lead to level, easy stretches along the riverside and to numerous campsites on the bars and benches and at the mouth of tributary streams. The river also offers special opportunities for floating and boating on an untamed stream.

Archeological features are a special attribute of the areas along the Middle Snake River. Artifacts, rock carvings, and other signs of historic Indian life are common.

There are thousands of acres of winter and resident game range in the canyon bottoms. Bear, deer, elk, various predators, waterfowl, upland birds, and bald and golden eagles inhabit the canyon. The bottom areas are a vital part of the habitat of some of these species. The river and its tributaries are a high quality fishery for both resident and anadromous species.

## SNAKE RIVER DRAINAGE

### Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Baker, Oregon

#### GEOLOGY

A great lake or inland sea once covered this entire area. Large deposits of material that became limestone, shale, and sandstone were laid down during the eons of time this prehistoric lake ebbed and flowed over the countryside.

In Permian times, about 200 million years ago, a great upthrust by igneous intrusions began. These upthrusts are the granites and older igneous rock you will observe during your journey. As the intrusions occurred, they tilted the beds of sedimentary deposits from the lake sharply upward. Here in the Lime Point vicinity, the results of this action are clearly visible today.

Later, during the relatively recent Tertiary Period of 20-30 million years ago, violent volcanism reformed the western landscape to more what we know it as today. Countless billions of tons of fluid lava ratched from fissures deep in the earth, covering thousands of square miles of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, and altering the original landscape beyond recognition. Repeated outflows were interspersed by periods of cooling, earthquakes, and tremors. Fiery vents spewed pyroclastic tuffs and breccias over the landscape. These in turn were buried under other lava flows layer upon layer. Depths of these deposits are more than 5,000 feet in various locations. This is the Columbia River Plateau we know today. You will be able to observe the many layered results during our trip up the river. Interspersed among these will be the massive intrusions caused by lava as it was pushed up from the depths of the earth.

While this violent activity was in progress, the channels of the original rivers were distorted, twisted, and changed. Various geologists hypothesize that the Snake River once coursed through the Burnt River, Baker, and Grande Ronde Valleys. Others suggest that the Burnt and Powder Rivers once flowed southward to a prehistoric predecessor of the Snake that drained through Nevada and California. In this theory, sinking of the Snake River Basin caused ponding along its course until the lake spilled northward over a low divide near Oxbow into a tributary of the ancient Salmon River. Downcutting lowered the barrier and drained the lake, integrating the Snake River drainage as we know it.

Whatever may have occurred in the far distant past, it is known that in the 20 million or so years since the final volcanic outburst the Snake River has cut down through about 4,000 feet of lavas and granites to its present river channel. It is still carving away through solid rock.

#### EARLY HISTORY OF AREA

Artifacts and petroglyphs found along the Snake River indicate that the area has been inhabited for many centuries prior to the time when recorded history dawned here in the early 19th century. It was inhabited by people quite similar to those

found here by the first white explorers. Due to the ruggedness of the canyon, it is quite apparent that at no time did large populations occupy the area. However, because of the favorable climate and desirability of the area as a wintering place for game, it must have been an extremely favored place for small tribal groups to spend four or five months of the winter season.

During the time of the first explorers and trappers, Indian tribes were separated by natural barriers. Hells Canyon, the Seven Devils, and the Wallowa Mountains separated the Shahaptian and Shoshone people. The Nez Perce was a tribe of the Shahaptian people and the Sheep Eaters and Piutes, or Snakes, were tribes of the Shoshone people.

The Nez Perce Tribe lived north of these natural barriers with the exception that they also claimed the Pine and Eagle Valleys, while the Sheep Eaters and Piutes or Snake occupied the country south of the barriers. Although the Nez Perce Tribe claimed all of the territory north of the Powder River, the Snakes and Piutes moved north into the upper reaches of Hells Canyon to winter in small groups there.

Lewis and Clark, the first white explorers, passed through the country considerably north of Hells Canyon.

In 1811, the Wilson, Price, Hunt Expedition of Astor's Pacific Fur Company gives us our first recorded glimpse of the Hells Canyon-Seven Devils area. This expedition split at the Snake River above Hells Canyon because of food shortages. Price crossed the Blue Mountains to the Columbia River near the mouth of the Umatilla River. Donald McKenzie accompanied by a few men continued northward along the east bank of the Snake River. This party eventually arrived at the mouth of the Clearwater River after enduring terrible hardships, but without the loss of a man. His exact route is unknown since he left very little information for the records.

Our first good account of Hells Canyon comes to us second hand from Captain B.L.E. Bonneville through the gifted pen of Washington Irving in the book titled, "The Adventures of Captain Bonneville". During the winter of 1833 and 1834, Bonneville with three men undertook the trip down the west bank of Snake River through Hells Canyon enroute to Fort Walla Walla. After encountering extreme difficulty in the canyon, they finally crossed over the divide to the Imnaha River, followed that river to near its mouth, traveled the hills to Joseph Creek, and arrived at the mouth of the Grande Ronde River. His exact route cannot be determined, but it is evident that he did traverse a considerable portion of Hells Canyon from the description in the book.

The tide of immigration swirled and eddied around Hells Canyon and its flanking mountains. Early trappers apparently avoided the gorge. A later influx of prospectors and miners entered the canyon and discovered a mineralized belt at the head of the gorge and in the southern Wallowa and Seven Devils Mountains. Most of the mineral discoveries were made during the 1870's and 1880's, but with the exception of some placer mining, little was done until the 1890's.

Stockmen began to come into the Snake Canyon in the vicinity of Powder River and Eagle Valley to winter stock in the late 1860's. During the 1870's, there were many permanent residents wherever a little gentle land gave man a chance to settle.

It's commonly believed that Chief Joseph's men, the Nez Perce Indians, claimed and

held all of Wallowa County as their territory. This, however, is not the case. The Snake River Canyon was claimed and held by a small division of the Nez Perce Tribe who gave no allegiance to Chief Joseph, nor to Chief Whitebird of the Salmon River area. This small group held the Snake Canyon from the mouth of the Imnaha River to the upper reaches of Hells Canyon. Their main winter villages were at Temperance Creek, Kirkwood Creek, Kurry Creek, Christmas Creek, and Dug Bar. For many years prior to, and during the Nez Perce War of 1877, this division of the tribe was led by an old chief named Tu-hul-hut-sut. He later joined Chief Joseph and was killed at the last battle in the Little Bear Paw Mountains of northern Montana.

### THE RIVER 1/

The Snake has been a river of many names. The Nez Perce Indians called it Kimooenim, meaning stream or "place of the hemp weed". Captain William Clark named it the Lewis including the Salmon in that appellation. On early maps the Snake above the mouth of the Salmon was called the South Fork of the Lewis. Those who haunted its upper reaches used the Indian name of Shoshoneah, or translated it as "Snake". Wilson P. Hunt's French-Canadian voyageurs dubbed it, "La mudite riviere enragee"-- "The accursed mad river" or Mad River, for short.

The river is slightly over 1,000 miles long. Shoshone Lake in Yellowstone Park is its principal source and, incidentally, within a comparatively few miles are the sources of the Madison and Gallatin Forks of the Missouri, the start of the Yellowstone, the origin of the Green River which is in reality the main stem of the Colorado. A confused raindrop falling in that region has a chance of winding up in the Pacific, the Gulf of Mexico, or the Gulf of Baja, California.

The upper Snake skirts the Grand Tetons via Jackson Hole, Wyoming, writhes through its own Grand Canyon at the south end of the Snake range, twists north to a rendezvous with its Henry's Fork before turning southwest to make the big crescent across all of southern Idaho. Crossing the lava plains, it has abrupt drops at several notable falls. For its entire length it can't seem to decide whether to be a moist ramp or a stairway.

Fifty miles past Boise it turns north to assume its function as a state boundary, and just below Weiser, Idaho, plunges into the 15 miles of Hells Canyon from Eagle Bar to Hat Point. The canyon is a slot through basalt and granite that averages 6,600 feet deep--the deepest river gorge in North America. It is flanked on the east by the sombre Seven Devils Mountains and by the Wallows on the west. Some peaks fling themselves skyward 10,000 feet. The fall of the river through the canyon is from 6 to 11 feet per mile.

Few points on the rim are accessible by car. While lacking the color of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado and of the Yellowstone, Hells Canyon has a grim, unyielding grandeur that is magnificent. Although Hells Canyon is arbitrarily designated as confined to the above limits, many consider the sixty-odd miles below as properly belonging to it.

1/ Our thanks go to Mr. Clem Stearns, Pacific Northwest Power Company, for this excellent word picture of the river.

### DESERT POLISH

Looking downstream, you will note that the rocks along the river are black and appear to be coated with tar or black paint. This is termed "desert polish".

Geologists advise us that this is not due to abrasive action and staining by the water as we might assume. Rather it is the result of a combination of wind, humidity, oxidation and sun over years measured in geologic time.

### NEZ PERCE DAM SITE

This is the site proposed for the Nez Perce Dam.

During the past several years there has been much debate by many varied interest groups about power development of the Snake River Canyon.

This site was applied for by one of the interested power groups during the planning period. Their application was denied by the Federal Power Commission in favor of that by another group on the High Mountain Sheep site further upstream.

Note the geological formations at this site. Dam engineers have informed that while a dam is possible at this location, construction costs would be high due to the faulting in the rock. Many of the faults are metamorphosed pyroclastics mentioned in "Geology".

Additional information on dams in this area will be included in the note we'll pass out at the High Mountain Sheep site.

### SALMON RIVER

To the left is the Salmon River joining the Snake. The Salmon is one of the great scenic rivers of the Pacific Northwest and the river bearing the greatest runs of anadromous fish in the Snake River drainage.

From Riggins, Idaho, eastward the Salmon is called the, "River of No Return". This is because while boats and rafts could come down the river, the steep gradient prevented them from going back upstream.

### HIGH MOUNTAIN SHEEP DAM SITE

This is the proposed site for the High Mountain Sheep Dam.

This dam was licensed to the Pacific Northwest Power Company by the Federal Power Commission in early 1964. This licensing culminated the power development debate in the canyon that spanned many years. Since the licensing, only exploratory and planning work has been done by the Company as the license has been subject to litigation since its issuance.

Prior to applying for this site for a high dam, studies were made on a low dam

about a mile above the mouth of Imnaha and another dam, Pleasant Valley, just below Pittsburg Landing. Economics ruled in favor of a single high dam at this location.

Pacific Northwest Power Company is a corporation involving four utility companies: Pacific Power and Light, Portland General Electric, Washington Water Power Company, and Montana Power Company.

The licensing of this site over the Nez Perce site is considered by many interested in fish conservation to be a great victory. This site does not block Salmon River as would the Nez Perce site.

Preservation of the fish run up the Salmon River is sometimes stated as the reason this site was chosen over the Nez Perce site. This is, at best, only partially correct. A major factor that ruled in favor of this location is that this proposed dam, plus a companion dam on the Salmon River--Lower Canyon Dam, would give a better return on the total investment than does a single dam at the lower site.

There are no known plans by any company to apply for or to build the Lower Canyon Dam in the foreseeable future. The lower 70 miles of the Salmon River is one of the streams listed in the Wild Rivers Bill presently being studied by Congress.

You will note the geology in this area lacks the heavy faulting noted below. Dam engineers have advised that these massive igneous intrusions, without layering or faulting, are ideal sites for major dams.

On June 5, 1967, the U. S. Supreme Court remanded the license to the Federal Power Commission for further consideration.

Studies and hearings to determine action to be taken on this section of the Snake began at once and will continue for some time to come.

Pacific Northwest Power and Washington Public Power Supply System have reached an agreement to jointly build and operate the High Mountain Sheep Dam or any other believed by the F.P.C. to be more in the public interest.

The above applicants and the Department of Interior are negotiating an agreement to build a project wherein the two power companies will advance the money for construction of the dam and power plant and the United States government will build, own, and operate the facility and pay for all non-power uses. The money advanced by the power companies would be considered as prepayment for fifty years power production at B.P.A. rates.

This agreement would require approval by Congress as well as Federal financing for non-power uses and benefits.

Several different locations for a project have entered the picture. Appaloosa-Low Mountain Sheep is one; Pleasant Valley-Low Mountain Sheep is another. High Mountain Sheep, Appaloosa or Pleasant Valley dam would create a reservoir with an elevation of 1,510 feet m.s.l.

Today no one knows which project will eventually be selected if one is built on the river.

### MOUNTAIN SHEEP RAPIDS

The Steamboat Imnaha, a 300-ton sternwheeler river boat, broke up in these rapids in 1903. She was built at Lewiston, Idaho, for the Eureka Mining Company that same year and on her fourteenth trip upriver she broke up and sank here.

Steamboats pulled themselves through the swift water by means of a cable fastened in the rocks at the head of the rapids. From a buoy at the foot of the rapids they picked up the cable and windlassed their way through.

On this trip, the Imnaha had ascended the rapids and cast off the cable which drifted past the boat and fouled the eccentric, stopping her engines. Helpless in the current she drifted into Mountain Sheep Rapids where she lodged crosswise at a point only 20 feet wide, broke up and sank. The 41 men aboard reached land safely, but a quantity of mine machinery and one horse was lost.

Another steamboat, the Mountain Gem, was built at Lewiston and plied the river regularly until 1905 when the Eureka Mining Company ceased operations.

### EUREKA BAR AND IMNAHA RIVER

The Eureka Mining Company built a concentrator here about 1898. The foundations still remain. They also constructed a hotel and Tom Purcival, who homesteaded in Eureka Creek, built a saloon.

Considerable tunneling was done in Eureka Creek, at the mouth of the Imnaha River and in Toomey Gulch. The company was mining copper, but was unable to conduct this operation profitably. The operation folded up in 1905.

The buildings were subsequently dismantled by Dobbin and Huffman, pioneer sheepmen on the Snake River, who floated some of the timbers down river to Salmon Bar where they used the material to construct a shearing plant. The remaining timbers were purchased and used by the Forest Service when, in 1930-31, the Cow Creek trail was built. The heavier timbers were used as stringers on bridges across the rims.

A Forest Service trail ascends the Imnaha River Canyon from its mouth four and a half miles to the Dug Bar road just above the mouth of Cow Creek. This trail is heavily used by salmon and steelhead fishermen from September through May each year.

### IMNAHA RIVER

This is the Imnaha River. This part of the canyon will be flooded by the High Mountain Sheep Dam. The water depth here will tower over 560 feet above the present river level at its mouth.

The name Imnaha is from the Nez Perce. It is derived from the name of a Nez Perce sub chief "Imna" with the Indian suffix "ha" added to indicate the territory governed by him.

One of the largest streams within the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, this river is about 65 miles long. It is a major stream for spawning of anadromous fish.

Elaborate systems are being studied to pass these fish around High Mountain Sheep Dam and its pool to maintain the established runs.

This open grassy country offers superb hunting for upland birds, primarily the chukkar partridge, and mule deer.

#### DUG BAR - TIPPETT RANCH

Chief Joseph and the Wallowa band of Nez Perce, with their livestock, crossed the Snake River at this point in June, 1876. This was near the beginning of their historic fighting retreat that ended, some 1,400 miles later, in defeat at the Bear Paw Battlefield in Montana. Though numerous animals were lost in the flooding river, the crossing was effected without the loss of human life.

#### DEEP CREEK

Before 1900, there was considerable gold mining activity on the Snake River. In 1887, 31 Chinese placer miners were camped and working the gravel at the mouth of this stream. They were ambushed and murdered by a group of white men for their reputed hoard of gold. Four men subsequently confessed to having participated in this massacre, but because of the attitude of the local citizenry toward Chinese, they were released without penalty. The U. S. Government finally paid the Imperial Chinese Government over \$250,000 indemnity for this type of atrocity against Chinese Nationals.

Indian writings can still be seen at the rear of the old dugout against the cliffs. For years these were assumed to be Chinese, but examination by experts indicate they are Indian rather than Chinese.

#### PITTSBURG LANDING

There are numerous stories of the origin of this name. One version is that it was named for the steamboat Pittsburg, built at Weiser, Idaho, about 1900 for the upper Snake River trade. Deciding this to be unprofitable, an attempt was made to traverse the Grand Canyon of the Snake River in order to use the boat in the upper Columbia.

Descending the rapids above here, they hit a bluff, damaging the bow of the boat, and it was necessary to beach the craft at this point to make repairs. This required two weeks time, and the journey was undertaken again successfully. The Pittsburg plied the upper Columbia and lower Snake for many years after this incident.

Another version credits the name to the fact the steam gunboat Pittsburg, enroute up the river to aid in the Snake Indian War, was damaged on the rocks and put in here for repairs.

The flat above the high water line of the High Mountain Sheep pool has been suggested recreation complex when the dam is built. A road from Whitebird, Idaho, provides the only good access to the proposed reservoir on the Idaho side.

### SHEEP GRAZING

Since early settlers began wintering stock in the Snake River canyons, grazing of domestic stock has been an important use.

In the country you will see today four permittees graze about 12,000 sheep from November 1 until June 15, each year.

The method of operation, that has been standard for several years, is unique and much easier on the range resource than any other that has been developed to date.

Effort is directed at even distribution of stock and elimination of trampling and trailing damage.

The sheep are not herded but turned loose to roam almost at will. They are fenced in by snow on top of the divide and by the river on the east. Natural barriers and short stretches of fence between them control movement north and south. This has resulted in even distribution of grazing use and almost complete elimination of trailing. Areas that were overused in the past are rapidly improving and the entire range has a marked upward trend.

In a typical operation, the sheep are brought into the fall range by November 1, and after bucking the sheep are scattered in small bunches throughout the range. The only attention given is to keep salt on the range, much as one would when salting cattle, and to break up and rescatter any bunches (200 head or thereabouts) of sheep that form. About February 15, the sheep are gathered at the headquarters ranch and sheared.

The sheep are kept at the ranch where shelter and supplemental feed is available for about one week after shearing. This is a critical period, for rain or snow on the sheep may kill them in the period between shearing and "tempering".

After the tempering period, the sheep are again scattered on the range where they are handled as before until after lambing. Special effort is made to stay away from the sheep during lambing. Disturbance may cause ewes to leave their newborn lambs when if left alone they would not do so.

Late in May, the sheep are gathered, the lambs marked, the bands "made up" and herded about two weeks before going to summer range.

In addition to this being the best range management system devised to date, canyon sheepmen say this type of management has allowed them to stay in business when conventional systems requiring much more manpower in this rough country, would not have allowed them to survive.

### THE WHEELBARROW WOMAN

An interesting story of the Upper Hells Canyon concerns a lady by the name of Roxy Dunbar, who came into the canyon during depression years of 1932 and 1933. Her belongings consisted of two bundles of a size and weight which made it impossible for her to carry both at the same time. She traveled by carrying one bundle forward a short distance, lay it down, return for the other and bring it up to the first, thus continuing her weary way. Mrs. Baker, a resident of the area, gave her a

wheelbarrow when she stopped at her place. She thus continued down the canyon without the necessity of having to "leapfrog" her two bundles. Roxy Dunbar thus became known as the "Wheelbarrow Woman". She progressed to the mouth of Leep Creek where Mr. Van Cleave resided. At this time he was very sick and she stayed to nurse him toward recovery. He later died and she stayed on at the ranch putting up the hay, doing other necessary work, and making only infrequent trips to town. Mr. Van Cleave's children assisted her financially because of what she had done for their father. It is said that she had been told that the weather was always nice in the canyon and winter was never severe. Where she came from, no one seems to know and she never told her story. One day, after several years' residence, she disappeared without leaving information as to her destination. Nothing further was ever heard about her.