



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Coos Bay District Office
1300 Airport Lane
North Bend, Oregon 97459



In Partnership with

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Southwest Region,
Roseburg, Oregon



Dean Creek Wildlife, Inc.
Reedsport, Oregon

September 1998



Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area 1998 Amendment to 1993 Management Plan

0307

September 9, 1998

Dear Sir or Madam:

You will find enclosed a Final Amendment and its Decision Record to the Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area Activity Management Plan of 1993. This amendment specifies management actions for Spruce Reach Island and two houses (known as the east-end ranch house and Spruce Reach house) at the Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area (EVA), three miles east of Reedsport, Oregon, along State Highway 38.

The first document following this letter is the Decision Record, followed by a summary of amendment actions, followed by the Final Amendment. The Decision Record describes changes between the draft and final amendments and rationale for the changes. The Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) are in the draft amendment (unattached to this publication).

This Final Amendment reflects public and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) resource specialists' comments and ideas. The Final Amendment includes management actions that the BLM feels best protect resources while providing opportunities for continued human use in the planning area.

You may appeal this decision within 30 days of the receipt of this decision. The appeal must be filed in writing to this office according to regulations in 43 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations), Part Four. If no one files an appeal, this decision becomes effective in 30 days. Please see the right to appeal section of the Decision Record for more detailed instructions.

If you have questions, please write or call Larry Johnston at (541) 756-0100.

Sincerely,

Mark Buckbee
Umpqua Area Manager

Decision Record for the Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area 1998 Final Amendment to the 1993 Management Plan and Environmental Assessment OR125-96-14

Decision and Rationale

It is my decision to approve the 1998 Final Amendment to the 1993 Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area Activity Management Plan as outlined in the Summary of Amendment Actions and Section Two of this publication. This decision most closely relates to Alternative Two (Proposed Action) of the draft amendment with some changes. I chose management actions from the array of alternatives analyzed in the Environmental Assessment (EA). These changes do not affect the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) published in the draft amendment. This decision reflects public comments on the draft amendment and input from BLM staff specialists.

The following describes the specific changes from the draft amendment published in September 1997. Action 3.2 changed as follows.

Proposed Action	Action 3.2: Build a small facility that retains important characteristics of the Spruce Reach house, and use for meetings, events, environmental education field classes, and other appropriate uses on a reservation basis. Dismantle the present house.
Final Action	Action 3.2: Maintain the Spruce Reach house for five years or until an acceptable plan for the house is developed and undertaken sooner by interested organizations. Enter into a partnership agreement with these organizations. If no acceptable plan is developed within two years, or if an acceptable plan is developed, but no substantial implementation is undertaken within five years, dismantle the present structure, build an interpretive kiosk, provide public access on a reservation basis, and provide for public water and sewage systems.
Rationale	Most of the public comments during the draft comment period favored trying to find a way to save the Spruce Reach house. A site-specific EA would be needed at the time an acceptable plan by interested organizations is approved. If no plan and implementation are successful, then the contingency plan would be implemented. Actions in the contingency plan were analyzed in alternative four of EA OR125-96-14. Constructing a kiosk rather than a small meeting facility was selected for the contingency because public comments indicated event facilities of that type and size were not needed in the area.

Action 3.3 changed as follows.

Proposed Action	Action 3.3: Construct a host site on the island and recruit hosts to provide security.
Final Action	Action 3.3: Construct a host site and recruit hosts to provide security.
Rationale	This change would allow more flexibility in building a host site. If the private property adjacent to the Spruce Reach property is acquired for parking, a host site could possibly be built there.

Action 3.5 changed as follows.

Proposed Action	Action 3.5: Form working partnerships with local organizations (ie: Umpqua Discovery Center, City of Reedsport, Dean Creek Wildlife, Inc., Rhododendron Society, etc.) to market and administer an event reservation system and to help restore and maintain the gardens.
Final Action	Action 3.5: Form working partnerships with local organizations to help restore and maintain the gardens.
Rationale	Since Proposed Action 3.2 was changed, there is no need to market and administer an event reservation system for the Spruce Reach house until an acceptable plan by interested organizations is implemented.

Action 3.6 deleted.

Proposed Action	Action 3.6: Offer a concessionary lease to maintain the Spruce Reach facility and gardens in exchange for a portion of the receipts from meetings, weddings or other gatherings at the facility.
Final Action	Proposed action deleted with no substitution.
Rationale	Since Proposed Action 3.2 was changed, there is no need to offer a concessionary maintenance lease for the Spruce Reach house until an acceptable plan by interested organizations is implemented.

Right to Appeal

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4, and Form 1842-1. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in this office within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the appealed decision is in error.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4939, January 19, 1993) for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision, to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- 1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- 2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- 3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- 4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

Mark Buckbee, Umpqua Area Manager

Date

Summary of Amendment Actions

This document amends the current Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area (EVA) Activity Management Plan of 1993. The changes are required due to additional land acquisition to the EVA, funding, and future expiration of the 1993 plan.

Plan Extension

Action 1.1: Extend the 1993 management plan as amended until completed or additional changes are required. This amendment renews all the 1993 management actions except for those actions discussed below in amendment action 2.1. The environmental impacts discussed in the 1993 environmental assessment (EA) have not changed. A new EA is unnecessary for renewing the 1993 management actions.

East-End Ranch House

Action 2.1: Delete the concept of a visitor center, frontage road, and parking lots for the east-end ranch house as envisioned in the 1993 management plan. Lease the east-end ranch house for concessionary enterprises or find a partnership(s) to share the operational and maintenance costs of the ranch house. A lease or partnership(s) must be compatible with Dean Creek EVA's vision: providing wildlife viewing, natural resource protection, nature appreciation, environmental education, and improving the economy, if possible. A lease or partnership(s) must essentially retain the present appearance of the east-end ranch house and surrounding area.

Spruce Reach Island

House and Gardens

Action 3.1: Acquire the private 2.33 acres of land east of Spruce Reach Island, provided the owner is willing, and develop for parking. Build a utility road and pedestrian/maintenance bridge from this parking area to the island. If unable to acquire the private land, develop parking on the island. Dismantle the present wooden bridge and build a new one from State Highway 38 to the island.

Action 3.2: Maintain the Spruce Reach house for five

years or until an acceptable plan for the house is developed and undertaken sooner by interested organizations. Enter into a partnership agreement with these organizations. If no acceptable plan is developed within two years, or if an acceptable plan is developed, but no substantial implementation is undertaken within five years, dismantle the present structure, build an interpretive kiosk, provide public access on a reservation basis, and provide for public water and sewage systems.

Action 3.3: Construct a host site and recruit hosts to provide security.

Action 3.4: Allow a private river transportation company to anchor its dock at Spruce Reach Island to ferry visitors between the island and Reedsport.

Action 3.5: Form working partnerships with local organizations to help restore and maintain the gardens.

Island Wildlife Habitat

Action 4.1: Allow natural processes to continue working without human intervention on the Sitka spruce stand and wetlands.

Action 4.2: Build a trail for guided interpretive walks within the spruce stand.

Estimated Cost to Implement (Estimates reflect the high end of cost estimate range.)

Ranch House Development

\$335,000

Spruce Reach Island Development

Structure development depends upon future plan and implementation of interested organizations

Other developments

\$677,000

Combined Total Development

\$1,012,000

Yearly Operational and Maintenance Costs for Dean Creek EVA

\$100,000

Table of Contents

Section One - Background Information	1
Purpose and Need for Amending 1993 Management Plan	1
Summary of 1993 Management Plan	1
Legal Requirements	2
Description and History of Dean Creek EVA	4
Public Involvement	7
Current Situation	9
 Section Two - Amendment Actions	 12
Introduction	12
Amendment Actions	12
Implementation	14
 Table 1. Implementation Schedule and Estimated Costs	 15
 List of Maps	
Map 1. Location Map	2
Map 2. Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area (EVA)	3
Map 3. East-end of the EVA	5
Map 4. Spruce Reach Island	6
Map 5. Eastern Portion of Spruce Reach Island	8
 List of Unattached Appendices (Appendices A - E are in the Draft Amendment, September 1997. All appendices can be sent to the reader upon request. Please see last page for instructions.)	
Appendix A. Environmental Assessment Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)	
Appendix B. Spruce Reach Island: Historical Assessment of the O. H. Hinsdale House, Douglas County, Oregon, by Stephen Dow Beckham (Includes photographs of the house and gardens)	
Appendix C. Resource Inventories	
Appendix D. Spruce Reach House Engineering Site Report	
Appendix E. Jenkins Estate Information	
Appendix F. OTAK Evaluation and Cost Estimate Report for Spruce Reach House	

Section One - Background Information

Purpose and Need for Amending 1993 Management Plan

This document amends the current Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area (EVA) Activity Management Plan of 1993. Three reasons force amending the current management plan.

First, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) acquired in 1994 an additional property known as Spruce Reach Island to protect and enhance the EVA. The BLM must amend the Dean Creek management plan to include this tract of public land (maps 1 & 2).

Second, circumstances have changed for the ranch house located at the east end of the EVA (map 2). The 1993 management plan directed the renovation of the east-end ranch house as a visitor center along with construction of a frontage road for safe access to the ranch, at an estimated cost of \$1.1 million. The project has not been funded, and future funding is unlikely. An alternative is to find a use for the house that could help defray maintenance costs.

Finally, the 1993 management plan, as written, will expire during April 1998. This amendment will renew all the 1993 actions except those pertaining to renovating the east-end ranch house as a visitor center, building an access frontage road, and parking lot.

Summary of 1993 Management Plan

The Dean Creek EVA activity management plan was completed in 1993. The plan provides a 50-year vision whose primary purpose was to provide safe wildlife viewing opportunities, environmental education, and nature appreciation for the public. Also, the managing agencies would protect the elk and other wildlife that visit and inhabit the site. A secondary consideration involved improving the local economy, if possible.

The management plan included objectives and actions to implement this vision. A summary of these follows:

Highway Safety: Eliminate conflicts between wildlife viewing and vehicle traffic on Highway 38.

- Construct an access frontage road to the ranch house. (This amendment deletes this action.)
- Provide vegetative visual screening along Highway 38 where necessary. Place appropriate warning signs and repair right-of-way fences.

Habitat Management: Protect and enhance the different habitats at the EVA to provide diversity of wildlife viewing opportunities.

- Manage meadows for high quality elk forage in areas that provide safe wildlife viewing.
- Maintain and enhance wetlands, riparian areas, and upland habitat. This includes using water-control structures, providing nest boxes, reintroducing native riparian vegetation, retaining hardwood trees and snags for diversity and nesting, cutting upland openings for enhanced elk forage, and cleaning ditches of vegetation.
- Restrict human activity to public use areas.

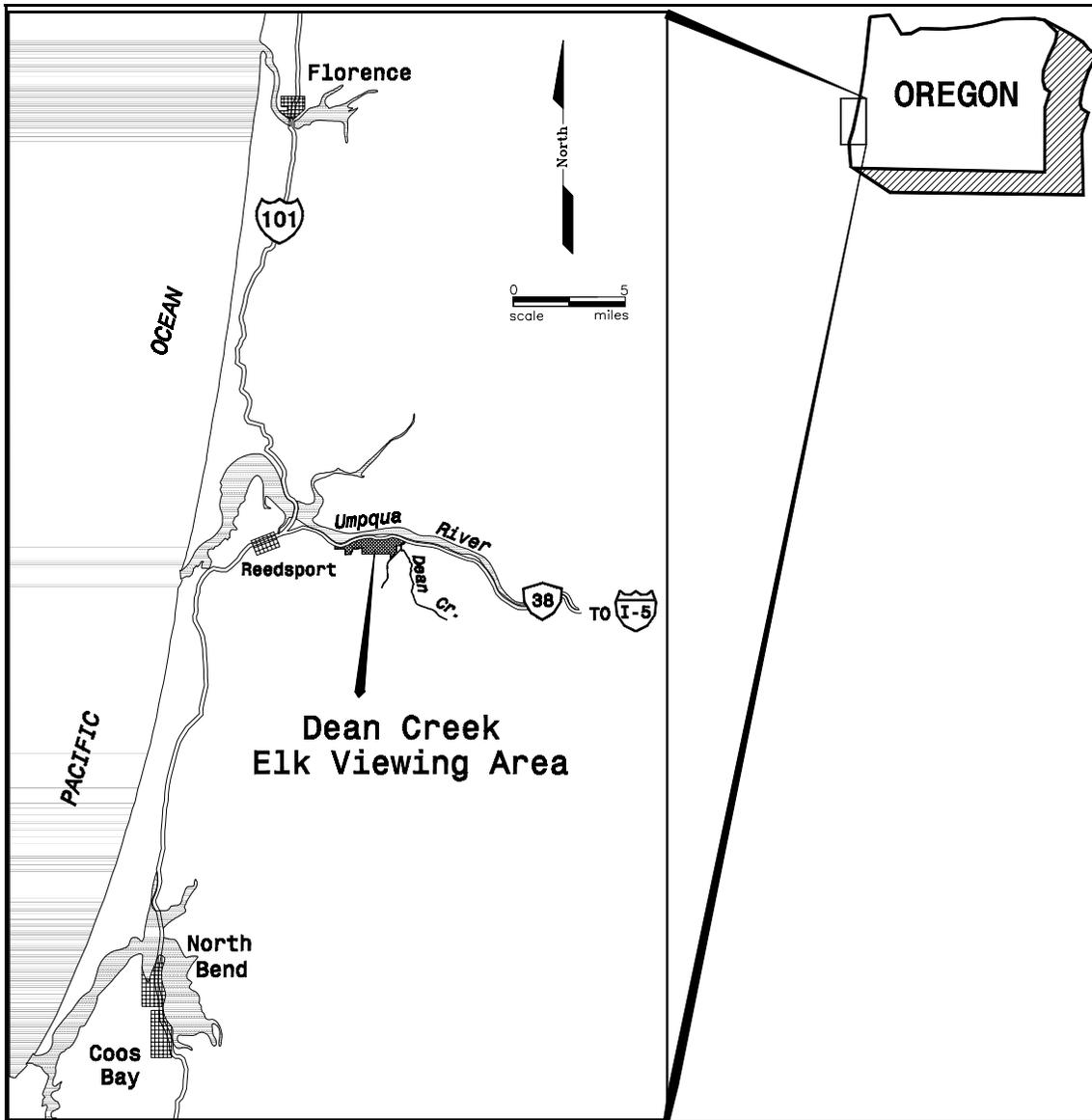
Elk Herd Size: Manage for 60-120 elk by removing excess elk through trapping and transplanting.

Meadow Management: Provide high quality forage through meadow conditioning, hay removal, fertilization, meadow renovation, reseeding and prescribed burning.

Public Facilities: Provide public visitor facilities for safe wildlife viewing and environmental education.

- Install viewing decks, interpretive panels, and viewing scopes. Create a brochure and guided walks.
- Use the east-end ranch house as a visitor center. (This amendment deletes this action.)
- Use the east-end ranch house as an environmental center and develop an environmental education curriculum.

Administration: Implement monitoring, research programs, and adequate staffing.



Map 1. Location Map.

Legal Requirements

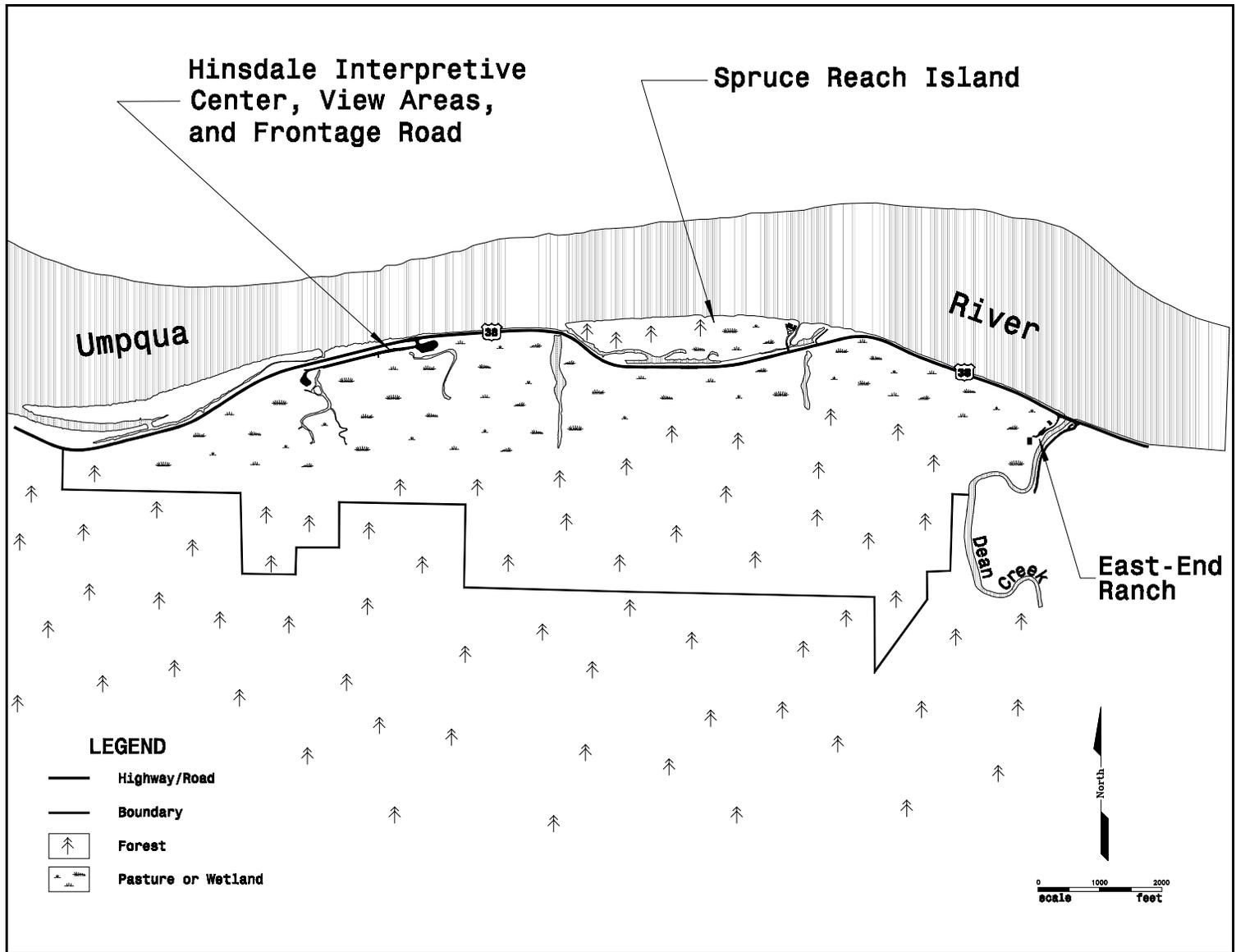
Laws

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires that federal agencies prepare land use plans for all tracts of public lands (Sec. 202[a]). Preparation and ultimate finalization of this management plan fulfills this requirement.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires preparation of an environmental analysis

document on all actions potentially affecting the human environment. This requirement is fulfilled with preparation and publication of the environmental assessment (EA) in the draft amendment.

Dean Creek EVA contains suitable habitat for special status species such as the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and bald eagle. The BLM manages special status species and their essential habitats consistent with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, current recovery plans, and the BLM Manual 6840.06 (Special Status Species Management).



Map 2. Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area.

The BLM must also meet the mandates of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This Act requires all Department of Interior agencies to provide equal access for all people to any developed facility.

Consistency Statement

BLM planning regulations require that management plans be consistent with officially approved resource management plans, as well as regulations, plans, ordinances, and permits of other federal agencies, state and local governments and American Indian tribes with affected resources. This amendment is a general management plan without site-specific projects. As site-specific projects are proposed, BLM will consult with other federal agencies as well as state and local governments and agencies and American Indian tribes for permits, local conditional use approvals, or zone changes as needed.

This amendment conforms to the following required documents:

- Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan and EIS and its Record of Decision (BLM, May 1995)
- Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and its Record of Decision (Interagency, 1994)
- Douglas County Comprehensive Plan

The BLM will obtain the appropriate state and local approvals and permits for site-specific projects to maintain consistency with the Oregon Coastal Zone Management Program.

Spruce Reach Island is zoned as agricultural in the Coastal Resources Plan for Douglas County, a supplement to the Douglas County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Planning Records

The public may view all planning records of this amendment at the Coos Bay District Office.

Description and History of Dean Creek EVA

Description

The Dean Creek EVA consists of a mosaic of meadows, forests, and wetlands providing a variety of wildlife viewing experiences for the public. A herd of 60-120 Roosevelt elk resides as year-round residents. Numerous birds and other wildlife visit or inhabit the area.

Dean Creek EVA starts approximately three miles east of Reedsport, Oregon, along State Highway 38 and the scenic Umpqua River. The site stretches another three miles east along the highway and river.

The site totals nearly 1,095 acres. (An acre is a little less than a football field in area.) Of this total, 470 acres of bottomland encompass meadows and wetlands, 600 acres of upland forest contain mostly 20-40 year-old hardwoods and conifers, and 25 acres contain a 100-year plus stand of mature Sitka spruce trees on Spruce Reach Island. The other half of the island consists of wetlands.

The BLM manages the EVA for optimum wildlife viewing opportunities. Public entry into the EVA is restricted except for designated viewing areas. The BLM mows, tills, reseeds, and fertilizes portions of the meadows on different cycles to improve forage nutrition and palatability for the elk, which is the main attraction of visitors. Portions of the wetlands have been enhanced to provide more standing water for a variety of birds and other wildlife.

Visitors can view wildlife from either pull-outs along the highway or two paved, off-highway viewing areas connected by a frontage road. The main viewing area, known as the O.H. Hinsdale Interpretive Center, has an open-air kiosk with interpretive panels about elk. The other viewing site, at the west-end area, has two decks with interpretive panels about waterfowl and other wildlife. Other man-made facilities include restrooms, viewing scopes, benches, and sidewalks. The viewing areas and their facilities are open 24-hours a day.

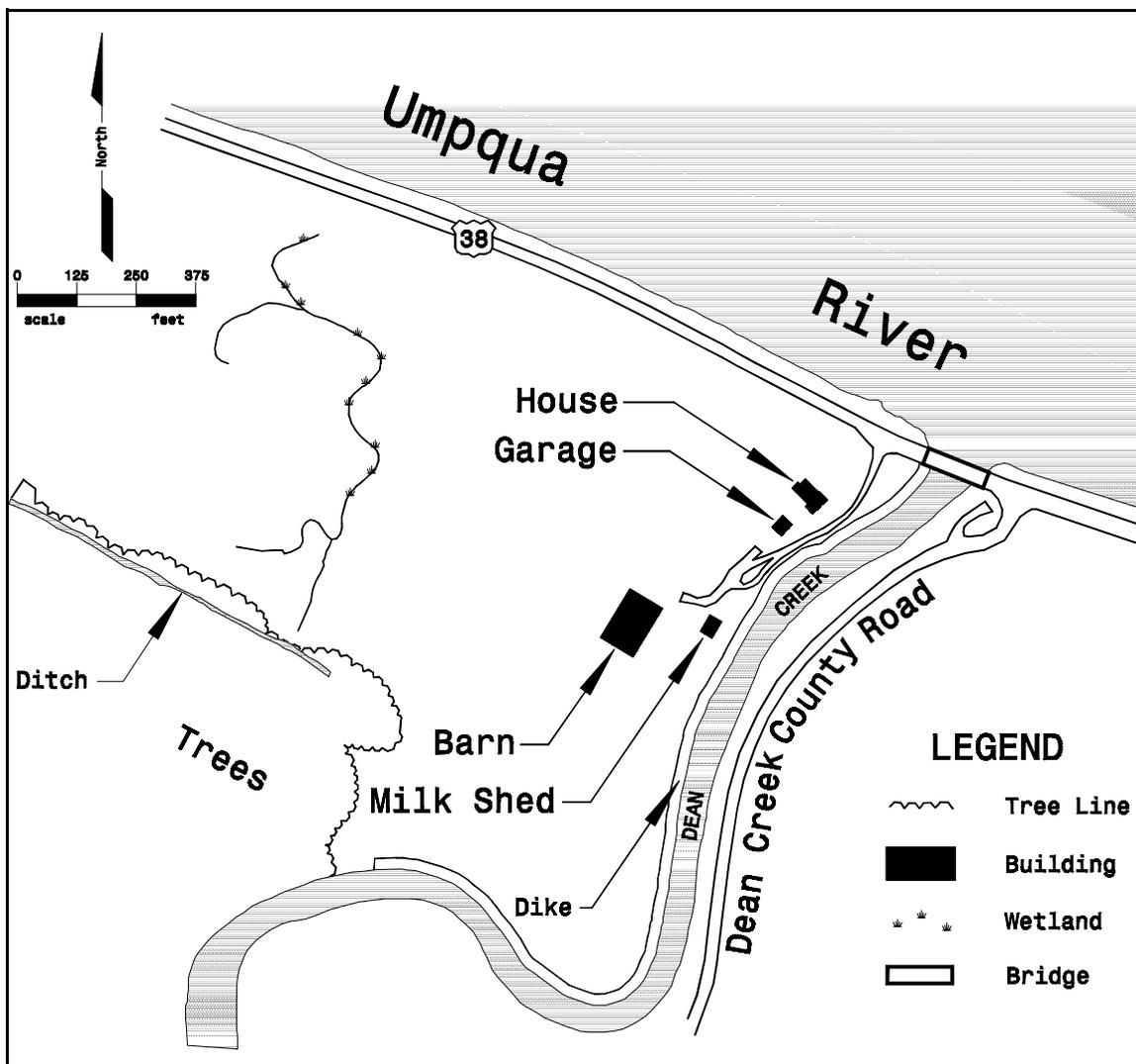
In 1995, approximately 175,000 visitors entered the main viewing areas, according to BLM road counters. In 1996, that figure increased to about 190,000 and in 1997, 219,000. Part of the increase may be explained

by the newly installed flush restrooms. These restrooms accommodated about 64,000 visitors in 1996. Chapter three of the 1993 management plan gives more details about visitor use and demand.

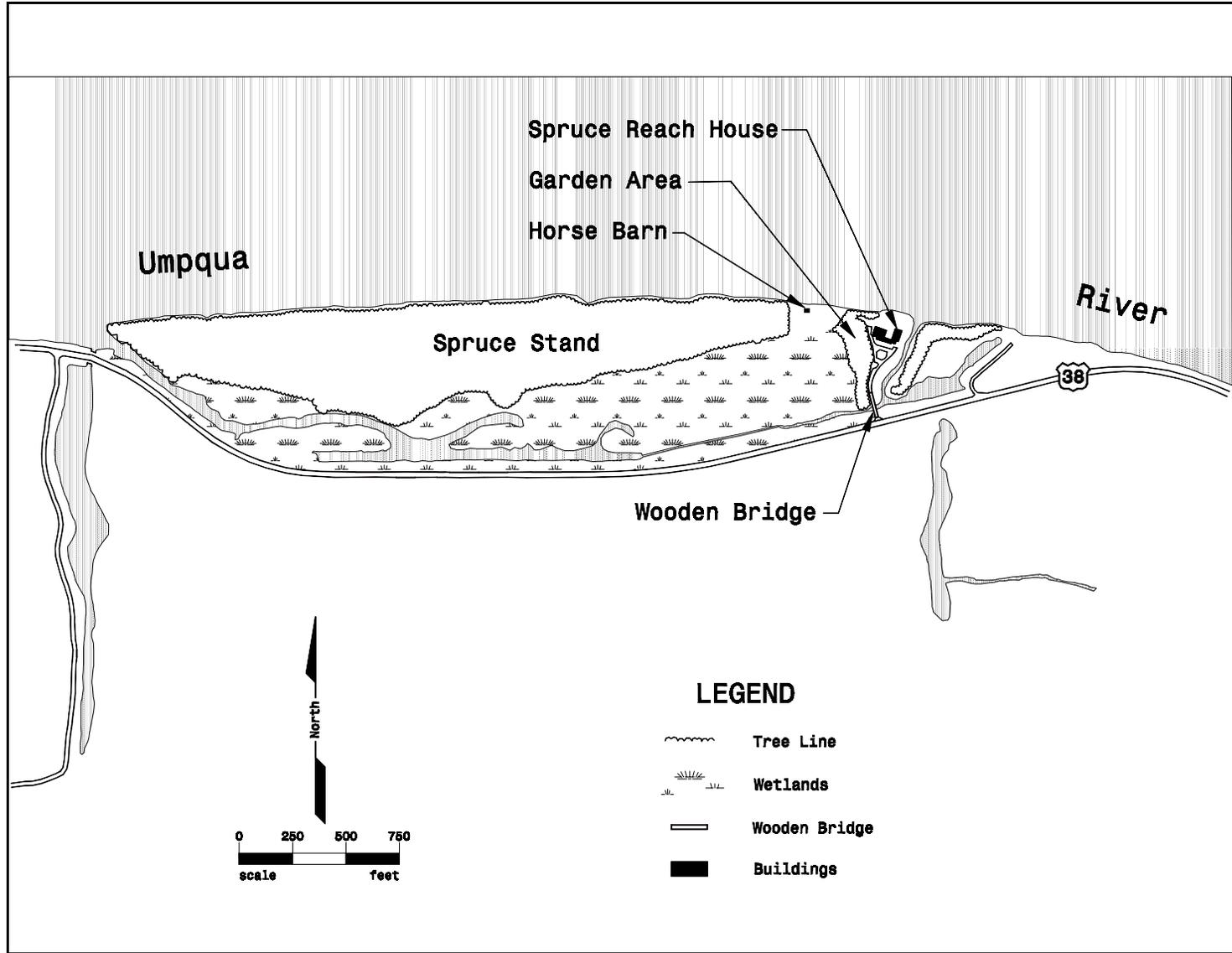
The BLM maintains two large, empty houses, home sites for previous owners. One structure, known as the east-end ranch house, is located at the east end of the EVA (map 3). This 3,500 sq. ft., two-story house includes a two-car garage. This house needs repairs to meet present building codes. A site host lives behind the garage in a travel trailer and helps with general site maintenance and security.

Near the east-end ranch house, the BLM and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) use a large barn to store equipment and other materials used at the site. The house, when acquired, included five other farm buildings. Four of those buildings have been removed or salvaged and sold to the public. The remaining one, the milk shed, will be demolished.

The second house sits on the east end of Spruce Reach Island, a 56-acre island just north of Highway 38 (map 4). This 5,500 sq. ft. house needs extensive repairs to meet current building codes. Next to the house is a garden with native and exotic botanical species. Although this garden has been neglected for years,



Map 3. East-end ranch house site.



Map 4. Spruce Reach Island.

many local residents consider the house and gardens a scenic wonder and worth saving. Also nearby is a small horse barn. A wooden bridge connects the island to the mainland and Highway 38.

Appendix B gives more details about the Spruce Reach house and gardens. Chapter two of the 1993 management plan and Appendix C give more details of the natural resources and facilities of the EVA.

The BLM manages the EVA in conjunction with its sponsoring partners: ODFW and Dean Creek Wildlife, Inc. ODFW manages the wildlife, while Dean Creek Wildlife, Inc., a non-profit volunteer organization, helps with fund raising and planning efforts.

History

The concept of an elk viewing area evolved in the early 1970's from efforts spearheaded by Dean Creek Wildlife, Inc., public sentiments, and ODFW. The concept of an elk habitat area with safe viewing opportunities for the public is now a viable reality. Acquisition of private properties abutting natural boundaries into federal ownership assures viable habitat for elk and other wildlife as well as easier administration of visitor facilities. Basic visitor facilities have been built to accommodate the viewing public.

The Dean Creek EVA developed from three different land exchanges. In 1987, the BLM acquired the 923-acre Washburn ranch; 1991, the 116-acre Alderwood (Wooley) ranch with a ranch house and several farm buildings near the east end of the present EVA; and in 1994, the 56-acre Spruce Reach Island, from the Hinsdale family. The BLM acquired this last property, with support from its partners, to further protect and enhance the EVA with Spruce Reach being considered an integral part of it.

Preparation of this plan amendment began in 1996, when Dr. Stephen Dow Beckham, noted Oregon historian and author, was contracted to write an historical assessment of the house and gardens on Spruce Reach Island. Dr. Beckham is considered an expert in assessing properties for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

The assessment had a dual purpose. First, the assessment could serve as a valid research document

for interpretive material. Second, it answered the question: Do the Spruce Reach house and gardens meet NRHP criteria? Dr. Beckham concluded that the Spruce Reach house and gardens do not meet any of the criteria for nomination. He said, "the site has not been entered into the Douglas County cultural and historic resources inventory, a measure of its lack of perception as noteworthy." (Appendix B)

Public Involvement

Public involvement in this amendment process began in April and May 1995 when the BLM held two open houses on Spruce Reach Island. These events acquainted the public with the island's resources. During May and June 1995, two more public meetings were held in Reedsport.

When the scope of this amendment was expanded to include the east-end ranch house, two additional public meetings were held in Reedsport during April 1996 to consider the integration of both Spruce Reach Island and the ranch house.

A summary of public opinion from these open houses and meetings follows:

- Keep the overall appearance of the EVA essentially the same. Keep the present landscape of Spruce Reach Island intact, including the house and gardens and the ranch house.
- Renovate only a portion of Spruce Reach house due to overall projected renovation costs.
- Keep Spruce Reach Island open for public use.
- Manage the ranch house and Spruce Reach house in a low key, low cost, and low impact manner that produces feasible results.
- Use Spruce Reach house as a visitor center for the EVA.
- Consider appropriate commercial uses or partnerships to share operational and maintenance costs of both houses.
- Save the Spruce Reach gardens and house for local meetings, conferences and weddings - similar to the

Jenkins Estate near Beaverton, Oregon or the Big K Ranch near Elkton, Oregon.

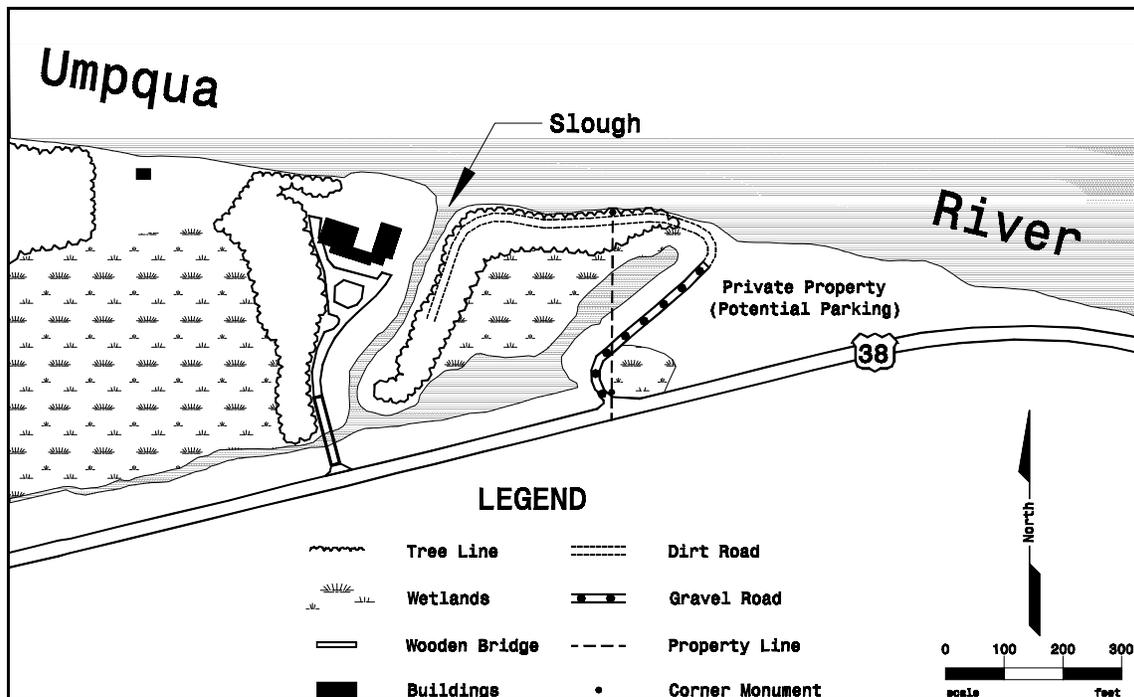
- Use Spruce Reach Island for education, interpretation, and wildlife viewing.
- Use Spruce Reach Island for a campground, boat launch, picnic area, or other intensive recreation facility.
- Tie Spruce Reach Island to Reedsport's history and the river. People favored river access by boat to the island.
- Do something useful now with both houses instead of waiting for a large inflow of funding.
- Sell the east-end ranch house along with two to ten acres and use the proceeds to help renovate the Spruce Reach house. (This would require special language in the legislation; otherwise, any sale proceeds would go directly to the U.S. Treasury.)
- Keep the east-end ranch house in public ownership. (A future neighbor acquiring the site could create an eyesore or generally oppose the vision of the EVA.)

- Acquire the privately-owned 2.33 acres east of Spruce Reach Island for parking (map 5).

The draft amendment with proposed management actions was published in late August 1997. The BLM held two public meetings during September 1997 in Reedsport. The proposed action to dismantle the present Spruce Reach house and build a small building for meetings, events, and environmental education field classes became the most controversial issue. At the meetings, the BLM heard a strong desire to preserve the Spruce Reach house because of its historical value to the Lower Umpqua River communities.

At the request of the public, the BLM extended the comment period to contract with a third-party architectural and engineering firm to analyze the house's condition and estimate refurbishing costs. OTAK evaluated the condition of the house, and at the instruction of the BLM, estimated costs for converting the house to a Bed-and-Breakfast commercial leasing venture. OTAK estimated that such a venture would cost \$980,980 (Appendix F).

All told, the BLM gave five extensions to the comment period to allow the public time to comment on the draft amendment and OTAK's report as well as to explore



Map 5. Eastern portion of Spruce Reach Island showing the adjacent private property.

other feasible ideas to preserve the Spruce Reach house. During the comment period, the BLM held four open houses.

The Friends of Spruce Reach Island, Inc., a non-profit local group formed to save the Spruce Reach house, also held a two-day open house which attracted 650 people. The Friends group held a series of meetings to explore other feasible ideas for the house. An invited BLM representative attended several of their meetings.

The BLM received 50 comment letters with various opinions and information. The Friends of Spruce Reach Island, Inc., also submitted a petition with 1,462 names voicing support to preserve the Spruce Reach house. The comment period ended June 1, 1998.

Current Situation

East-End Ranch House

Renovation

The empty and unused east-end ranch house does not meet current building codes for public use. The house is being upgraded as funding becomes available. Recently a new furnace, heating ducts and electrical panel were installed. The windows will be replaced, and vinyl siding installed. Additional renovation is needed to meet building codes.

Sewage and Drinking Water

The east-end ranch house will need a new sewage system since the existing one does not meet code. A replacement system will be installed during 1998.

The gravity piped water system comes from a dam and holding tank on a stream about ¾ mile away from the house. This system, installed in 1976, adequately serves the water needs of the site host and a neighbor. The system reportedly has not gone dry during summer droughts, but the water level has been low. Upgrading this system, a well, or another system is needed to provide reliable public drinking water.

Security Concerns

The BLM and ODFW have a sizeable investment of materials and equipment in the garage and barn. The

host(s) on the site provides adequate security, and no incidents of theft have occurred.

Vehicle Access

Access to the east-end ranch house is directly off Highway 38 by a short gravel road on a dike that holds back the waters of Dean Creek. An adequate turn lane exists for the present traffic exiting eastbound to the house. No turn lane exists westbound. Highway traffic can be heavy and fast at times.

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

Elk frequently use the lowland meadow adjacent to the east-end ranch house site. The nearby forested upland is a key area for calving locations and elk and other wildlife movement. When the meadow becomes saturated during the wet season, waterfowl will use the area. The east-end ranch house site has no suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, or bald eagle.

Opportunities

The east-end ranch house would offer an ideal setting for environmental education and study. (The ranch house could have been rented during 1997 to a research group if the sewage system had met building codes.) The area is readily accessible to many different ecosystems: the Umpqua River, wetlands, sand dunes and beaches, forests and uplands. The house is large, and in reasonable condition. Nearby Reedsport offers a full range of facilities. The house could offer a business opportunity compatible with the EVA's vision and help the local economy.

Also, the Coastal Environmental Learning Center Report (1995) recognized the opportunity for environmental education and study at the east-end ranch house as well as on Spruce Reach Island.

The study proposed the east-end ranch house as a satellite educational center with a picnic shelter, parking, and nature trail on Spruce Reach Island. However, funding has not become available.

Spruce Reach Island

House Renovation

The Spruce Reach house does not meet building codes for public use. The site condition survey report (Appendix D) indicates extensive renovations are needed. To bring the house up to building codes without substantially altering the current appearance may prove difficult, if possible at all.

Major problems include extensive dry rot, insect damage, and under-designed construction. The house needs rewiring and insulation. The decks need to be replaced as well as the cedar-shingle siding.

Potential Flooding

Spruce Reach Island and the east-end ranch house sit very low in the Umpqua River flood plain. In the past the island has been flooded. Evidence shows that Spruce Reach house had water in it during the 1964 flood. During the flood of late 1996, portions of the island were flooded. No water entered the house, although the garage had about six inches of water in it. The water covered portions of the gardens with a maximum depth about 2-2½ feet.

It may be necessary to build a foundation under the house and other flood-proof construction to meet Executive Order (EO) 11988, Flood Plain Management. This EO directs federal agencies to avoid development in 100-year flood plains wherever possible. If development or rehabilitation of structures must occur in 100-year flood plains, the BLM must apply acceptable flood protection measures.

Sewage

Reportedly, the former owner built a drain field for sewage on the island near the house. Whether this system can be incorporated into a larger system to accommodate public needs remains unknown. It appears that a drain field or other sewage system is feasible on the island.

Drinking Water

Past owners of the island obtained potable water from the same water system that now serves the ranch house. However, the old water line that ran through a tide gate broke shortly after acquisition making potable water

unavailable on the island. A new water line under the highway would be needed to reconnect to this or another system.

Security Concerns

Vegetation hides almost the entire Spruce Reach house from the highway. Unauthorized access has resulted in theft of items on two occasions. No host resides on the property.

Vehicle Access

The developed portion of Spruce Reach Island (area encompassing the house, gardens, and horse barn) is quite small in area, hemmed in by wetlands west and east of the developed site, a slough, and the stand of spruce trees (map 5). Access to the island is by a one-lane wooden bridge from Highway 38. There are no turn lanes in either direction on Highway 38. Highway traffic can be heavy and fast at times. Public comments indicated a desire to avoid substantially altering the appearance of the island, especially around the house and gardens.

Near Spruce Reach Island to the east is a 2.33-acre parcel of private land with access and without structures (map 5). Access is directly off Highway 38. There are no turn lanes in either direction. The parcel of land could accommodate a parking lot if the landowner was willing to sell or trade. This private land contains about ¼ acre of wetland. A slough cuts across the private and public properties.

The Federal Highway Administration has recommended that the existing wooden bridge be closed to public vehicle access. The November 1996 floods further damaged the bridge by moving one end of the bridge off its foundation. The present bridge will have to be replaced.

River Access

During 1995, the owners of Umpqua Jet Adventures (UJA), a jet boat company in Reedsport, proposed picnic stops for its passengers at Spruce Reach Island. UJA would anchor its dock at Spruce Reach Island and provide picnic tables and sanitary facilities for its passengers. This proposal was strongly supported by the lower Umpqua communities and Douglas County government. An Environmental Assessment and

Finding of No Significant Impacts were completed in 1995.

Recent marbled murrelet surveys have revealed that Spruce Reach Island is occupied habitat for this federally listed threatened species. It will be necessary to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to determine if protective measures are warranted. Once this process is completed, and if UJA can successfully complete other state and federal permitting requirements, the BLM would issue a Special Recreation Permit to UJA for a three year period, permitting picnic stops on the island.

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

Spruce Reach Island provides a variety of wildlife habitats. About 25 acres of the island have 100-year plus Sitka spruce trees (map 4). These trees reach to 150 feet in height and to four feet in diameter, along with large spruce snags and pockets of small hardwoods. This stand of trees provides habitat and perching sites for a variety of forest birds. A short, non-maintained trail leads into the spruce stand. These trees, as well as the gardens consisting of exotic trees and plants, are subject to strong wind damage. About a dozen trees of various sizes were blown down during the last two winters.

The wetlands provide habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, aquatic mammals (beaver, muskrat, and nutria), and amphibians. The wetlands produce large quantities of invertebrates that serve as food sources for many wildlife species.

A variety of song birds also use the island. Black-tailed deer and elk have been observed on the island. Elk use the island for hiding, thermal cover, and travel corridor. Other wildlife known to use the area include coyote, black bear, bobcat, bat species, raccoon, skunks, small rodents, and reptiles.

Spruce Reach Island contains suitable habitat for special status species such as the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and bald eagle. Bald eagles and osprey are seen in the area of the EVA and Spruce Reach. A bald eagle nest has been observed across the river within ½ mile of the island. The spruce stand is an occupied site for marbled murrelet. To comply with the Biological Opinion from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the BLM must protect known murrelet habitat

within a ½ mile radius of such sites. This requirement will affect many potential uses on the island.

Several active great blue heron nests exist within the spruce stand. These nests are scattered along the length of the island, and are difficult to see from the ground below due to the large intervening trees. The Coos Bay RMP (Resource Management Plan) requires a 250-yard no-disturbance buffer around great blue heron colonies from February 15th through July 31st.

No known habitat exists for special status botanical species on Spruce Reach Island.

Community Interest

During the public involvement process, it was apparent that the locals of the lower Umpqua River feel a special relationship with Spruce Reach Island, its house, and gardens. O.H. Hinsdale is still remembered as a local community leader. The house and gardens, although neglected for years, still hold interest.

Opportunities

Spruce Reach offers the same opportunities as the east-end ranch house previously discussed. In addition, Spruce Reach Island has about 25 acres of wetland and about 25 acres of large spruce trees for possible wildlife viewing opportunities (map 4).

Some members of the public suggested that the BLM could model Spruce Reach Island after the Big K Ranch near Elkton, Oregon, or the Jenkins Estate near Beaverton, Oregon. The Big K Ranch is privately owned. The Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation District owns the Jenkins Estate. The Big K Ranch offers vacation accommodations. Both enterprises offer accommodations for meetings, weddings, and other gatherings.

The readily accessible 68-acre Jenkins estate is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Recreation District found the estate in poor condition when it was acquired in 1975, and started gradually to renovate it. Not all the buildings have been done yet. The estate serves a major metropolitan market, providing a tranquil and scenic place for weddings and meetings. Most of its revenues come from wedding parties. However, the estate is not self-supporting (Appendix E).

Section Two - Amendment Actions

Introduction

This document amends the current Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area (EVA) Activity Management Plan of 1993. The following issues, objectives, and amendment actions were developed from public and BLM staff input. Detailed site specific projects may need further analysis and environmental documentation prior to implementation.

Nine actions comprise the amendment program to resolve three issues and to accomplish management objectives identified in the planning process.

Amendment Actions

Plan Extension

Action 1.1: Extend the 1993 management plan as amended until completed or additional changes are required. This amendment renews all the 1993 management actions except for those actions discussed below in amendment action 2.1.

Rationale: The 1993 management plan, as written, will expire during April 1998. The management actions of the 1993 plan and this amendment will have a ten year target for accomplishment. Implementation will continue beyond the target date until completed or until the plan is again amended. The environmental impacts discussed in the 1993 environmental assessment (EA) have not changed. A new EA is unnecessary for renewing the 1993 actions.

East-End Ranch House

Issue: *What should be done with the east-end ranch house, and how should safe public access be provided to it?*

Objectives: Manage the east-end ranch house to defray operational and maintenance costs. Keep the appearance of the ranch house and surrounding area essentially intact.

Action 2.1: Delete the concept of a visitor center, frontage road, and parking lots for the east-end ranch house as envisioned in the 1993 management plan. Lease the east-end ranch house for concessionary enterprises or find a partnership(s) to share the operational and maintenance costs of the ranch house. A lease or partnership(s) must be compatible with Dean Creek EVA's vision: providing wildlife viewing, natural resource protection, nature appreciation, environmental education, and improving the economy, if possible. A lease or partnership(s) must essentially retain the present appearance of the east-end ranch house and surrounding area.

Rationale: The public suggested two management options for the east-end ranch house: sell it and use the proceeds to refurbish the Spruce Reach house, or keep the east-end ranch house in federal ownership. Selling the east-end ranch house was rejected as being a viable option. Strong public support, which is lacking, would be needed for this option to succeed. The sale proceeds would not be enough to renovate the Spruce Reach house. The appearance of the east-end ranch house has been of concern for many. Sale could result in degradation of the physical appearance of the structure. Covenants are not a viable option for transfer of federally administered land. Besides being contrary to BLM's policy there is no mechanism to enforce once title is passed.

The public has expressed the desire to keep the appearance of the east-end ranch house as it exists, have something done soon with the house that was low cost, yet feasible, and explore appropriate commercial uses or partnerships.

The east-end ranch house has remained empty since acquisition. Visitor center renovation funds have not been forthcoming. Future funding appears unlikely. Although the BLM has completed some upgrade work on the house through its normal annual budget process, more upgrade work is needed.

Possible scenarios under this action include, but are not limited to: partnerships with local, state, or federal agencies or educational institutions, a bed and breakfast, or business offices. The use must conform to the Coos Bay BLM District Resource Management Plan (RMP, 1995), which allows leasing only for recreational purposes. The RMP would need amending to allow business leases not compatible with recreation, ie: business office space, etc.

This action also presents an access solution that avoids major highway construction and costs. The present road to the east-end ranch house should be adequate for anticipated traffic under the above scenarios. A certain access threshold must be exceeded (so many vehicles entering, so many vehicles exiting per day) before the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) requires turn lanes on a highway. ODOT may require a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) before making a decision. ODOT would make a determination through its access permit process. A low key, low impact use of the east-end ranch house has a good probability of meeting this requirement.

Adoption of this management action would result in reduced costs overall.

The BLM will continue to work with the Oregon Department of Transportation to resolve safety issues at the Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area. One safety issue involves safe public wildlife viewing along State Highway 38 other than at the present off-road viewing areas. The concept of a frontage road with a small parking lot to the ranch house attempted to solve this safety issue for the east-end of the EVA. This amendment action does not preclude possible alternatives to provide safe viewing areas along Highway 38. Possible solutions could involve improved pullouts along the highway or even a frontage road. Any solution would be analyzed in a site-specific EA.

Spruce Reach Island - House and Gardens

Issue: *What should be done with the Spruce Reach Island house and gardens, and how should safe public access be provided to them?*

Objectives: Use the Spruce Reach house and gardens for public enjoyment and a useful purpose. Retain the character of the Spruce Reach house and gardens.

Action 3.1: Acquire the private 2.33 acres of land east of Spruce Reach Island, provided the owner is willing, and develop for parking (map 5). Build a utility road and pedestrian/maintenance bridge from this parking area to the island. If unable to acquire the private land, develop parking on the island. Dismantle the present wooden bridge and build a new one from State Highway 38 to the island.

Rationale: The public wants Spruce Reach Island to remain open for public use without substantially altering the island. Except for funding, access to the island is the most limiting constraint.

Acquiring the private 2.33 acres east of Spruce Reach Island offers a good solution for safe public access with the least environmental and visual impacts to the island. Visitors could access the island by walking along the utility road next to the river and crossing over the slough to the island on a single lane bridge. Acquisition of the private land must be at fair market value as required by law. A certified, professional appraiser would perform the appraisal.

If the private land cannot be acquired, BLM would develop parking on the island. This offers the only other reasonable option for safe access to the island, but with much more visual and environmental impacts. The present house and gardens could severely constrain the number of parking spaces, and hence, constrain the possible uses for the present house (Action 3.2). Parking near the spruce stand could impact the great blue heron, marbled murrelet, and other wildlife. Filling wetlands for additional parking would increase construction and environmental costs. It is unknown if busing visitors to Spruce Reach Island would be a long-term viable marketing strategy as most visiting people may prefer to be near their vehicles.

ODOT may require a Traffic Impact Study and turn lanes for safe access to either scenario. The access threshold, however, may not be reached under this action. For reasons discussed under the rationale of Action 2.1, turn lanes may not then be required by ODOT.

A parking lot south across Highway 38 also was considered, but rejected. Elk habitat would be permanently lost in the bottom lands, and the area's appearance would change, something the public has opposed. Elk travel routes through this area could be affected. Building a pedestrian bridge over Highway 38 would add to construction costs. Anticipated visitation could not justify the additional costs.

Action 3.2: Maintain the Spruce Reach house for five years or until an acceptable plan for the house is developed and undertaken sooner by interested organizations. Enter into a partnership agreement with these organizations. If no acceptable plan is developed within two years, or if an acceptable plan is developed,

but no substantial implementation is undertaken within five years, dismantle the present structure, build an interpretive kiosk, provide public access on a reservation basis, and provide for public water and sewage systems.

Rationale: Most of the public comments during the draft comment period favored trying to find a way to save the Spruce Reach house. A site-specific EA would be needed at the time an acceptable plan by interested organizations is approved. If no plan and implementation are successful, then the contingency plan would be implemented. Actions in the contingency plan were analyzed in alternative four of the EA.

Action 3.3: Construct a host site and recruit hosts to provide security.

Rationale: Making a major investment on the island presents a security concern. An on-site host would provide security and help to prevent vandalism. A similar on-site host arrangement has worked well at the ranch house the last four years. This solution would require a trailer pad with hookups. As worded, this action would allow flexibility in building a host site, either on the island or off. If the private property adjacent to the Spruce Reach property is acquired for parking, a host site could possibly be built there.

Action 3.4: Allow a private river transportation company to anchor its dock at Spruce Reach Island to ferry visitors between the island and Reedsport.

Rationale: The public favored river access by boat to Spruce Reach Island to emphasize Reedsport's river transportation heritage. The Umpqua Jet Adventures Company hopes to anchor a dock at Spruce Reach Island and transport passengers there for picnics. This proposal has not been finalized. The weather and seasons would limit this mode of transportation.

Action 3.5: Form working partnerships with local organizations to help restore and maintain the gardens.

Rationale: Assuming normal budgets and staffing, it is expected that assistance will be needed to help in restoring and maintaining the gardens.

Spruce Reach Island - Wildlife Habitat

Issue: *How should the habitat for wildlife, including special status species, on Spruce Reach Island be managed to minimize conflicts with human activities?*

Objectives: Establish a habitat management system that will protect wildlife, including special status species, on the island. Provide wildlife viewing, environmental education, and interpretive opportunities, if possible.

Action 4.1: Allow natural processes to continue working without human intervention on the Sitka spruce stand and wetlands.

Rationale: This habitat management system offers the best long-term viable habitat for wildlife.

Action 4.2: Build a trail for guided interpretive walks within the spruce stand.

Rationale: In keeping with the theme of the EVA, Spruce Reach Island should be available for wildlife viewing, education, and interpretation.

The BLM may need to impose restrictions to human entry into the spruce stand to protect the great blue herons and marbled murrelets from disturbances during a good part of the year. Guided trail walks and a host on-site would help assure that the trail would remain unused during the restricted-entry seasons.

Implementation

Table 1 lists the implementation schedule for the amendment actions and estimated costs. Estimates reflect the high end of the cost estimate range.



Table 1. Implementation Schedule and Estimated Costs (1998 dollars)

Amendment Action	Phase	Development \$ Costs	\$ Operations (per year)
Plan Extension			
1.1 Extend the 1993 management plan.	1	Note ¹	Note ²
East-End Ranch House			
2.1 Lease the east-end ranch house to concessionaires or find partners to share operational and maintenance costs. Follow the EVA's vision. Retain the present appearance.	2		Note ²
• Renovate house.	1	47,000	
• Develop water system.	1	288,000	
Spruce Reach Island - House and Gardens			
3.1 Acquire the private 2.33 acres of land east of Spruce Reach Island, provided the owner is willing, and develop for parking.	1	431,000	
Dismantle the present wooden bridge. Build a utility road and pedestrian/maintenance bridge from this parking lot to the island.	1	172,000	
3.1 If unable to acquire the private property, develop parking on the island.	1	343,000	
Dismantle the wooden bridge; build a new bridge from Highway 38 to the island.	1	238,000	
3.2 Maintain the Spruce Reach house for five years or until an acceptable plan for the house is developed and undertaken sooner by interested organizations. If no acceptable plan is developed within two years, or if an acceptable plan is developed, but no substantial implementation is undertaken within five years, dismantle the present structure, build an interpretive kiosk, provide public access on a reservation basis, and provide for public water and sewage systems.	2	54,000 ³	Note ²
3.3 Construct a host site and recruit hosts.	2	10,000	Note ²
3.4 Allow some form of river transportation to ferry visitors between the island and Reedsport.	3	NA ⁴	Note ²
3.5 Form working partnerships with local organizations to help restore and maintain the gardens.	1	NA ⁴	Note ²

Amendment Action	Phase	Development \$ Costs	\$ Operations (per year)
Spruce Reach Island - Wildlife Habitat			
4.1 Allow natural processes to continue working without human intervention on the Sitka spruce stand and wetlands.	1	NA ⁴	
4.2 Build a trail for guided interpretive walks within the spruce stand.	3	10,000	Note ²
Totals		1,012,000	100,000⁵

¹ Refer to 1993 management plan implementation costs.

² Refer to 1993 management plan operational and maintenance (O&M) costs. Operational and maintenance costs included in total Operations costs below.

³ Refers to contingency plan costs.

⁴ No federal government development costs involved.

⁵ Includes total O&M costs for Dean Creek EVA.

List of Unattached Appendices

Please telephone or write to the following address to obtain these Appendices.

Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Larry Johnston
1300 Airport Lane
North Bend, Oregon 97459

Telephone: (541) 756-0100 ext. 461

- Appendix A. Environmental Assessment
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
- Appendix B. Spruce Reach Island: Historical Assessment of the O. H. Hinsdale House, Douglas County,
Oregon, by Stephen Dow Beckham (Includes photographs of the house and gardens)
- Appendix C. Resource Inventories
- Appendix D. Spruce Reach House Engineering Site Report
- Appendix E. Jenkins Estate Information
- Appendix F. OTAK Evaluation and Cost Estimate Report for Spruce Reach House