



Medford BLM Makes Plans for New Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument

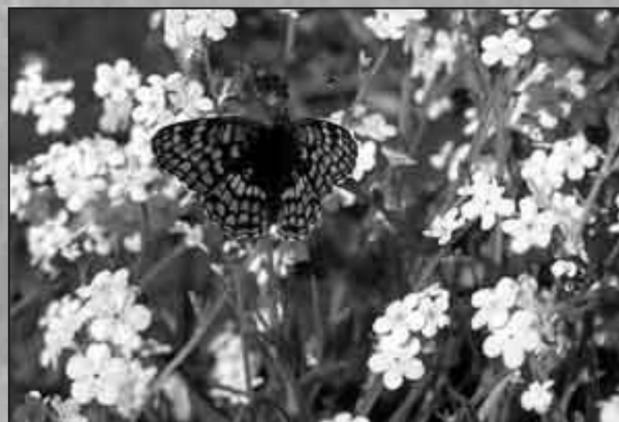


On June 9, 2000, President William J. Clinton established the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in recognition of the area's outstanding ecological values. Towering conifer forests, sunlit oak woodlands, wildflower-strewn meadows, lush wetlands, meandering streams, rock gardens, and steep canyons offer a rich mosaic of habitat for a variety of plants and animals. This extraordinarily diverse landscape results from the monument's location at the convergence of the Cascades, Eastern Cascades Slopes, and Klamath Ecoregions. Unique topography, geology, soils, climate, and vegetation distinguish each ecoregion. The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) mission is to protect, restore and sustain the ecological diversity of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.

The Making of a Monument

Although the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument is new, the BLM has been working toward protecting the region's ecological diversity since the mid-1980s. The 1994 Northwest Forest Plan and the 1995 Medford District Resource Management Plan both identified this area (formerly known as the Cascade-Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area) as a unique place in need of special management. Prior to the creation of the new monument, the BLM had completed work on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan for the Cascade Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area (CSEEA DEIS). While the BLM was working on the area's management plan, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt visited on two occasions to explore the region's remarkable diversity, and to discuss the possibility of a national designation with the area's different interest groups. The Secretary relied heavily on these visits, a video conference with local interest groups, and the analysis in the CSEEA DEIS, as the basis for his recommendation to President Clinton that the area become a national monument. The boundaries of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument are almost identical to the boundaries analyzed in the CSEEA DEIS, with addition of 290 acres and the exclusion of all lands in California.

Plant communities across the monument represent a mixing of the vegetation found in the Great Basin, Cascades, and Klamath Mountains. A rich mosaic of grass and shrublands, black oak woodlands, juniper scablands, coniferous forests, and wet meadows make up the landscape.



Researchers have identified over one hundred butterfly species in selected parts of the monument, representing possibly the greatest concentration of butterfly diversity in North America.

Public Participation is Essential

Over 1000 individuals, organizations, governmental agencies and tribes commented on the CSEEA DEIS. Many of these comments were related to the possibility of a national monument designation. Based on our analysis of the DEIS comments, and the need to develop a management plan specific to the monument, the Ashland Resource Area will supplement the current CSEEA DEIS with a Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument Draft Management Plan/Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft Plan/SDEIS). The BLM will use the comments received on the CSEEA DEIS to help prepare the new management plan. In addition, the BLM is now accepting scoping comments on issues related to monument management for the Draft Plan/SDEIS until August 31, 2000. Scoping comments will help BLM planners focus the analysis of the Draft Plan/SDEIS.

What Will the Draft Plan Accomplish?

The original DEIS for the CSEEA had five wide-ranging alternatives. The presidential proclamation establishing the monument narrowed the scope of possible management alternatives. The new Draft Plan/SDEIS will address issues related to monument management and the directives outlined in the proclamation. Analysis of issues for the Draft Plan/SDEIS will include visitation and interpretive plans, detailed transportation planning, use of the communication site at Soda Mountain, fire management, development and use of a livestock grazing study, and other relevant issues. The Draft Plan will not address issues related to the national monument designation process. The draft plan should be published by December 2000 and will be followed by a 90-day public comment period. Completion of the Final Plan/EIS, including protest resolution and approval of the Record of Decision (ROD), may take an additional eight to twelve months, depending on analysis complexity.



Although the bigger ecological picture is what makes the area extraordinary, the monument encompasses more than its share of stand-alone highlights. Created in 1993, the Mariposa Lily preserve provides protection for Greene's mariposa lily and serves as year-round habitat for blacktail deer and a small elk herd. The preserve is also a showcase for portions of the historic Oregon to California Trail.