



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Vale District Office
100 Oregon Street
Vale, Oregon 97918
<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/vale>

In Reply Refer To:
1220 (ORV000)

MAR 30 2017

Mr. Arthur Pope
Wilderness Report
33190 Bloomberg Road
Eugene, OR 97405

Dear Mr. Pope:

Thank you for your letter dated March 1, 2017 regarding management by the Vale District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within the Owyhee National Wild and Scenic River corridor as it relates to the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones). I appreciate the opportunity to clarify our policies as they relate to drone use.

Drones are a rapidly emerging motorized use on and above public lands. Drone use affects recreation setting characteristics and visitor experiences. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is responsible for regulating civilian use of airspace in the United States. In 2016, FAA finalized rules for line-of-sight drone operation in civilian airspace. The 2016 rule did not include guidance or restrictions for drone use over congressionally designated areas, including Wild and Scenic Rivers. The BLM has not developed a national policy limiting drone use on BLM-managed public lands.

The following information addresses the three questions in your letter.

One, I urge you to issue a citation for this violation and formally issue a request for corrective action and additional guide trailing to the outfitter involved; ROW.

ROW did not violate any policy or stipulation of their authorized use. Unlike wilderness areas that are closed to motorized use by the Act, Agency policy states motorized and mechanized travel within wild and scenic rivers may be permitted, prohibited, or restricted to protect river values. Since the use of drones is new, the Owyhee River plan did not address their use.

Two, I also ask that river regulations be amended to clearly state that the operation of drones within the river corridor is prohibited and subject to fines.

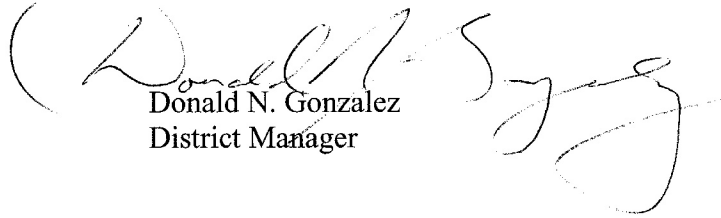
We will evaluate drone use within the river corridor when we update the river plan.

Three, I ask that regulations related to the operation of drones within the wild section of the river be clearly posted at all launch sites.

Once direction for drone use is decided, all launch sites will be posted with the appropriate management direction on drone use.

I appreciate your interest in the management of the Owyhee National Wild and Scenic River. If you have further questions, please contact our Malheur Field Office Recreation Planners Dan Thomas, (541) 473-6266 or Kari Points, (541) 473-6290.

Sincerely,



Donald N. Gonzalez
District Manager