

## Wilderness Management Review Rogue River

Submitted by: Art Pope

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Report Title: Rogue River

Route: Where did you go? How many days were you camping?

This was a four-day trip down the 34-mile wild section of Oregon's Rogue River.

Summary: 250-word max

The Rogue is a heavily used river dotted with lodges. Jet boat use is allowed on the river below Blossom Bar. Access is through a permit system. Management is shared between the Forest Service (FS) on the upper river and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on the lower river.

Wilderness or Wild River: Rogue River

Management Unit: Medford BLM; section from Graves Creek To Marial  
Rogue River-Siskiyou NF; section from Marial to Foster Bar

Administrative Location: Medford, OR

Head of Administrative Unit: Elizabeth Burghard, District Manager  
Merv George, Forest Supervisor

Trip Report: Grade the success of the management agency with an A to F letter grade. Comments must support letter grades in each category; skip any category on which you do not want to comment.

**B** Access; is resource damage occurring at campsites on trails or at trailheads?

Riverside camps, those prone to annual flooding, were in great shape. Camps on flats and benches were heavily impacted with multiple user trails; they had areas totally divested of vegetation and large amounts of micro-trash. Overall, sites visited were generally clean. Campfire and sanitation impacts were minor.

**C** Management; regulations, permit systems, education, enforcement actions.

Despite a permit system allowing a high level of use the river, retains a wilderness feel—except for the first night when five parties were camped within shouting distance of each other.

Current regulations allow large party sizes—20 individuals on a public trip and 30 on a commercial trip—and place no limit on the number of boats in a party. One group of 15 individuals had a total of 15 boats. Such a large party with so many craft detracts from the feel of wilderness and creates challenges for every party forced to pass them on the river. Given the growing popularity of solo boating, regulations addressing maximum party size should also include limits on the number of craft allowed per party.

**C** Stewardship; are management actions in accord with wilderness values and best practices in wilderness management?

We camped at one site that had a totally unnecessary “portable toilet privacy screen” constructed of plywood and steel. If needed, privacy screens should be the responsible of the user. Management has determined that it will no long replace existing pit toilets as

they reach the end of their useful lives. All toilet privacy screens should be immediately removed as well.

The Rogue has a number of lodges and other private holdings within the wild river corridor. However, it is unclear as to why these lodges are allowed to place private docks in the river which is not private property.

Bears can be a nuisance on the Rogue. However, the addition of battery operated wire and steel bear enclosures is a questionable management decision on a wild river. The very concept of wilderness includes challenge, uncertainty, and interactions with nature. Management's decision to intercede in these interactions is understandable but not defensible in terms of wilderness values.

**B** Wilderness; how well is management protecting the wilderness resource?

The Rogue inherited jet boats and lodges when it was classified as wild. However, the large commercial tour boats coming upriver from Gold Beach detract from wilderness and give the river an amusement park feel. Add that to the fact that the drivers of the Red Boats (Jerry's Whitewater Adventures) have a reputation being less than courteous to boaters. On this trip, despite having the right-of-way, one of the Red Boats headed directly at me on a wide and calm section of river. The driver refused to give way making a clear statement about who he felt owned the river.

\_\_\_ Fire Management, Wildlife Management, Other

On the upper river, we saw dozens of turtles basking on the rocks. Once below Blossom Bar, and into the jet boat section of the river, not a turtle was seen. One has to wonder if the constant wave action of the jet boats, eliminating the opportunity for turtles to lie in the sun, has eliminated turtles from this section of river.