

Wilderness Report

A non-profit organization dedicated to protecting wilderness values

March 20, 2019

Elizabeth Burghard
District Manager
Medford BLM
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, OR 97504

Dear Ms. Burghard,

The morning the sun was just up; first light was just striking the top of Chalk Basin on the Owyhee. We were enjoying our first cup of coffee. The sky was clear, the river quiet and peaceful—until the silence was shattered by an insistent background buzzing; an annoying whine that destroyed the peacefulness and quiet of the morning for the next fifteen or twenty minutes. A member of a commercially operated trip camped upstream was piloting a drone up, over and around our camp. And they just would not stop!

Operation of drones is an inappropriate activity within a Wild River management corridor and should not be tolerated! Not only does it disrupt the outdoor experience for everyone in the area it is incompatible with management of the resource in a way that protects wilderness and wilderness values.

The Owyhee and the John Day both prohibit the launching of drones within the wild river corridor. With this precedent, why is the Rogue so far behind in addressing this issue? As a former Forest Service Wilderness River Ranger, I understand that immediate action must be taken to prevent the use of drones from becoming a pervasive wilderness activity.

I request that BLM and USFS managers of sections of the Rogue designated as Wild take immediate action to restrict the use of drones within the wild river corridor and immediately post this information on the river management website and at all launch sites and take-outs.

Based on the attached information concerning the authorities used on the John Day, are there barriers to implementing regulations related to the operation of drones within the wild section of the river before the start of this boating season? If so, what are they?

Are there management considerations that require the Wild section of the Rogue to be managed differently than the Owyhee and the John Day i.e., do different management priorities and authorities apply to management of the Rogue that justify allowing the use of this intrusive mechanical technology? If so, an explanation would be appreciated.

Your response to these questions will be of interest to many members of the rafting community and will be posted on the Wilderness Report website. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,
Arthur Pope
Director, Wilderness Report

Copy: Merv George, Jr., Forest Supervisor