Capacity Analysis: Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers
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Background:
The Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 designated 518,000 acres of public lands in Owyhee County, Southwestern Idaho as Wilderness and 324½ miles of southern Idaho waterways as Wild & Scenic rivers. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is currently preparing a Wilderness and Wild & Scenic River Management Plan. In 2012, interns from BSU conducted an independent recreational public survey and capacity study. The study encompasses 16 different rivers and streams in the Owyhee Wilderness but focuses on the four most widely used by recreationists: the Bruneau, Jarbidge and both the East and South Forks of the Owyhee River.

Our goal is to help the BLM maintain values of the recreational user and the qualities of Outstanding Remarkable Values in the area. Our analysis will help establish any capacity-related concerns for the BLM.

The Goal is to Protect and Maintain Outstanding Remarkable Values:
- Scenic
- Recreational
- Geological
- Fish and Wildlife
- Historic
- Cultural

Human impact and crowds will degrade wilderness experience.

Survey Outcomes:
Suitable flows and solitude are the primary reasons for visiting these Wild & Scenic Rivers.

Recommendations:
Based on the survey results, our analysis focused on important factors such as conditions of campsites, amount of litter, and improperly disposed human waste, to determine both group size and launch frequency. The table below displays capacity recommendation based on those factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>River</th>
<th>Maximum Group Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jarbidge</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruneau</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Fork Owyhee</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Fork Owyhee</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Daily Group Maximum= 3 groups
*Weekly Group Maximum= 5 groups

Wilderness is “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain...”
– National Wilderness Preservation System

Photo Credit: Michael Melford, nationalgeographic.com