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## BLM acquires tract on Wild and Scenic River

**VALE, Oregon** – The Bureau of Land Management has acquired a 640-acre parcel of land containing nearly three miles of the North Fork Owyhee National Wild and Scenic River for just under \$570,000.

This rugged area of southeastern Oregon is renowned for its steep canyon walls, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat. The property, located near the confluence of the Middle and North Forks of the Owyhee River, was purchased by The Nature Conservancy in 2004. The Conservancy purchased the tract when it became available with the intent to maintain the natural, diverse landscape until BLM could acquire it. Congress appropriated funds through the Land and Water Conservation Fund in 2005, and the title transferred at the end of last month. The Conservancy does not make a profit on their transactions, but seeks to recover its purchase price and other direct costs.

“It’s a wonderful example of partnerships in action,” said Elaine Brong, BLM State Director for Oregon and Washington. “Because of The Nature Conservancy’s commitment and willingness to step in and act quickly to purchase and maintain properties until federal funds are available, the public will have the opportunity to enjoy this remote and rugged region long into the future.”

“We are grateful to the previous owners for their hard work in preserving this special place and their interest in making it available to the public. Although this steep and rugged site is marginal for grazing, it is extremely important for wildlife,” said Russell Hoeflich, Oregon director for The Nature Conservancy. “The Owyhee Canyonlands are a tremendous area, and we are eager to work with the BLM and other partners in the careful stewardship of this remarkable landscape.”

The parcel of land was identified in the Owyhee Wild and Scenic River Management Plan developed in 1985. “This has been a long time coming,” said Dave Henderson, BLM Vale District Manager, “and we’re very pleased to see this stretch of country added to the public lands within the river corridor.”

Despite difficulty of access, extreme fluctuations in river levels, and an unpredictable, short timeframe of river flow high enough to support boating, the Owyhee Wild and Scenic River draws more than 16,000 recreational users annually with 34 outfitters permitted on the river system. The river corridor is home to diverse wildlife including mountain lion, bobcat, mule deer, California big horn sheep, sage grouse, ferruginous hawks and redband trout.

