

## **Evaluation of Outstanding Remarkable Values for Middle Fork Hood River June 2013**

The 3.7-mile segment of the Middle Fork Hood River from the confluence of Clear and Coe Branches to the north section line of section 11, township 1 south, range 9 east, to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture as a scenic river. This segment was designated under the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (H.R. 146, page 22).

**Mileage:** 3.7 miles

**Free flowing:** Yes

### **Scenic: 3, Substantial**

River flows along the western edge of a lava flow of about 7,000 years in age. This flow provides substantial scenic variety and very unique rockform. Vegetation patterns and stream characteristics are found in other locations in the region yet are still relatively unique. Views and photo attractions are substantial with combination of lava flows, adjacent stream, vegetation, and in places long distance views of the Mt. Hood area. Human alterations are virtually absent, thereby not adversely affecting the visual quality of the area. Based on the above factors, scenic values have a rating of a strong "3".

### **Recreational: 2, Moderate**

Recreation use in the area is currently limited to dispersed day or overnight use primarily by local users. Although the area has a high potential for interpreting volcanic processes that could attract users from around the region to view the attraction, there are no plans to enhance the conservation education in the area. There are no outfitter guide permits currently on record for the Middle Fork Hood River. Numerous down trees and shallows do not make this ideal for kayaking. Outfitter guides in Hood River do not use this stretch of river for rafting, and in fact, the outfitters view it as unsafe. Access for other recreation activities is very limited. There is some hiking in from Parkdale, but that is not substantially an "on the water or river related" activity. Also, there is limited road access to the river. For these reasons, the recreational value was given a rating of "2".

### **Geologic/Hydrologic: 4, Outstandingly Remarkable**

Two major recent geologic processes have shifted the location of this entire segment of the Middle Fork Hood River and illustrate the dynamic nature of the landscape in this area. The upper portion of the river has been diverted to the north and west side of the valley by large debris flow fan deposits created by frequent massive debris flows in Coe and Eliot Branch Creeks. This geologic process is still very active at present. The 7,000 year old Parkdale Lava Flow filled the pre-existing Middle Fork valley and diverted the river to the west edge of the old valley. This basalt lava flow is the youngest lava flow in the Cascades between Mt. Jefferson and Mt. Adams and is unique in that it has a major river flowing along its entire 3.9 mile length. Both of these geologic processes have had and continue to exert major influence and control on the Middle Fork Hood River. The relatively accessible and striking physical evidence for both of these geologic processes within such a short segment of the river is a regionally unique combination of geologic and hydrologic features. For these reasons, the geologic/hydrologic values were given a rating of "4".

**Fisheries: 3, Substantial**

This segment of Middle Fork Hood River provides some high quality habitat for listed or candidate Pacific Northwest (U.S. Forest Service Region 6) threatened, endangered and sensitive species and those species are found within the river. Several Federally listed as threatened salmonid species and their critical habitat are present in the segment of Middle Fork Hood River, including Columbia River bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). Bull trout are considered a unique species because it is the only remaining natural population on Forest. Due to its available access, this segment of Middle Fork Hood River provides opportunities for aquatic scientific study and/or interpretation. In addition, this segment of Middle Fork Hood River is considered to play a part in the Regional recovery of the Federally listed as threatened Lower Columbia River steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and Columbia River bull trout,. For these reasons, the fisheries values were rated a "3".

**Wildlife: 3, Substantial**

The northern portion of the river segment falls within Northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) critical habitat. While most of this river segment does not function as suitable nesting habitat, it does provide an important corridor for dispersing spotted owls. The southern portion of the river segment is within deer and elk winter range, and the northern portion is within severe winter range. This section of the river is also important for deer and elk as a travel corridor between wintering and calving areas. The riparian areas along the river are very high quality due to a minimal amount of disturbance, thereby meeting the biological needs of the wildlife species using the area. Because of the riparian area's importance as an undisturbed area and a travel corridor for wildlife species, wildlife values were rated a "3".

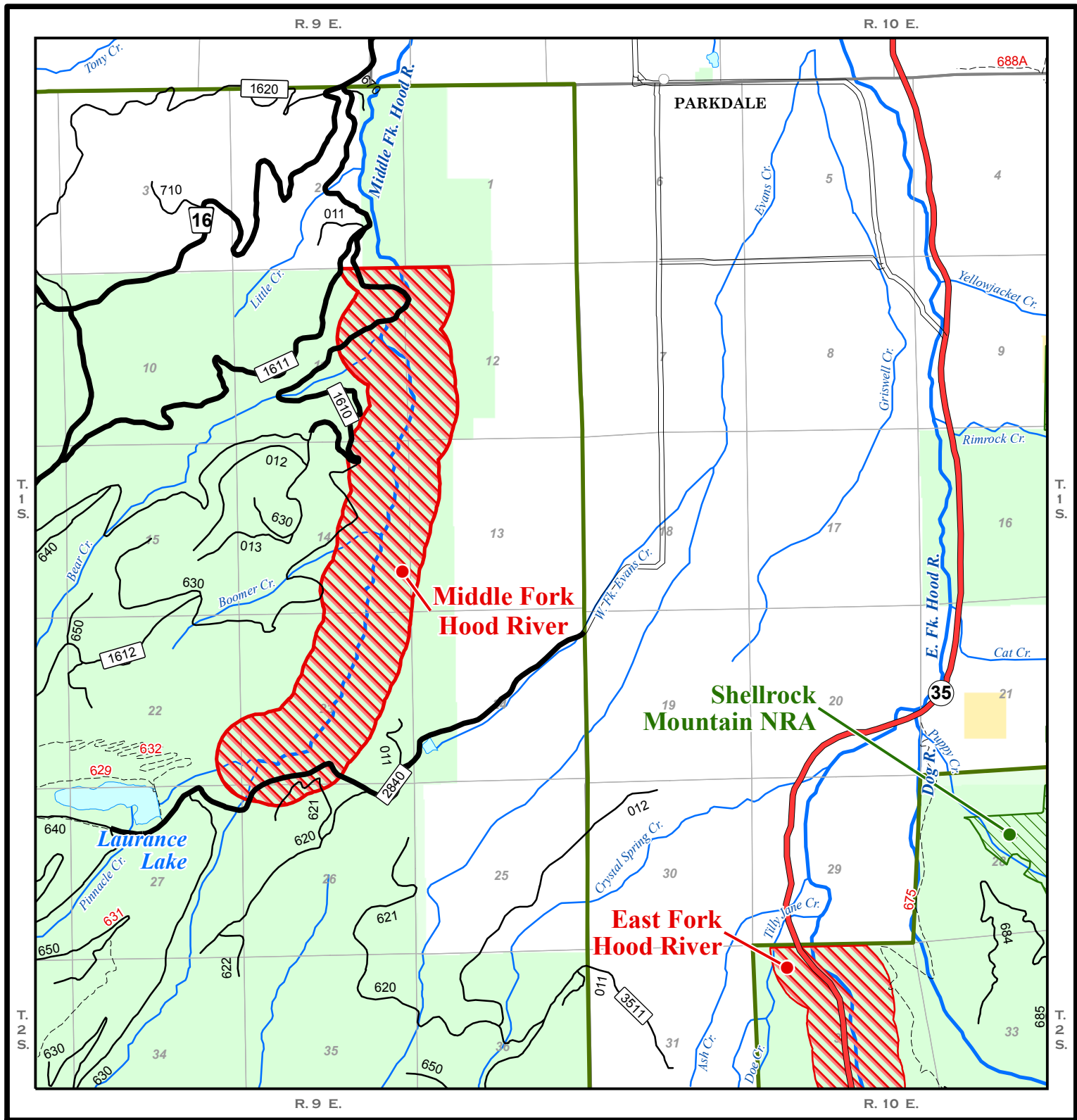
**Ecological/Botanical: 3, Substantial**

The Middle Fork Hood River corridor encompasses high quality habitat for riparian associated Pacific Northwest (U.S. Forest Service Region 6) threatened, endangered and sensitive botanical species. Extensive botanical surveys have not been conducted within the 3.7 river segment so it is unknown if listed species are present. Suitable habitat for the only two federally listed/federal candidate plant species documented on the Mt. Hood National Forest (*Pinus albicaulis*, FC and *Howellia aquatilis*, FT) is not present within this segment.

The portion of the basalt lava flow area situated within the river corridor is ecologically unique in our region. The area contains unusual combinations of plant communities, in various successional stages, which are developing in response to harsh conditions on the lava field and subtle environmental influences of the bordering river. The unusual diversity of micro- and macro-habitats and associated plant communities throughout the lava flow provide an undisturbed display of natural processes occurring within the river segment. For these reasons the ecological/botanical values are rated a high "3".

**Historical/Cultural: 1, Low**

There are no known sites identified within the river corridor though the area has not been surveyed extensively. Due to the high use of the area by big game wildlife species, there is the possibility of prehistoric transient hunting camps within the corridor. Because of the lack of sites found at this time and the potential for additional sites being found is considered moderate to low, the historical/cultural values were rated a high "1".



## Wild and Scenic Rivers - Middle Fork Hood River

Prepared at the request of U. S. Senator Wyden - August 3, 2007

### Additions

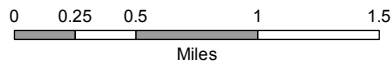
- Middle Fork Hood River
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness Areas

### Existing US Forest Service

- Mt. Hood NF
- Wilderness
- Lakes
- River
- Creeks
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Trails
- FS Paved Roads
- All Other FS Roads

### Base Data

- Highways **35**
- Paved Roads
- Private Land
- BLM Lands



Trails: **631**      Arterials: **16**  
 Locals: 023      Collectors: **5550**



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