

HEUSSER MOUNTAIN BRISTLECONE PINE INSTANT STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 480 acres

The Heusser Mountain Bristlecone Pine Instant Study Area is located in the Egan Range just east of Smith Valley, and approximately 5 miles northwest of the town of Ely, Nevada in White Pine County. It consists of approximately 480 acres of public land. The Heusser Mountain Research Natural Area was designated in 1965 to protect the "unique botanical... characteristics of irreplaceable scientific and recreational values." The Natural Area was intensively inventoried and evaluated in conjunction with the surrounding 32,940 acre roadless review area NV-040-048A. The entire review unit was found to lack wilderness character following intensive inventory completed in December, 1979.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - **0 acres recommended for wilderness **480 acres recommended for nonwilderness****

The Heusser Mountain Bristlecone Pine Natural Area and its contiguous roadless acreage were determined to lack the wilderness characteristic of outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. The study area was recommended for release from further wilderness consideration, and the roadless review area was not designated as a wilderness study area.

The long and short term effects of not designating Heusser Mountain Bristlecone Pine Natural Area as wilderness would be that all uses which previously were compatible with natural area management would continue to be permitted. The area is expected to remain in a natural condition due to the precipitous terrain that would prevent most surface disturbing activities.

3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

A. Naturalness: During the intensive inventory, approximately 24,600 acres, including the Natural Area and surrounding roadless area, was found to be completely natural with "no known imprints of man's work." These lands are characterized by steep mountainous terrain dominated by bristlecone pine and surrounded by pinyon pine and juniper.

B. Solitude: Even when considered with the surrounding area determined to be natural, the inventory unit was considered not to have outstanding opportunities for solitude due to its long, narrow configuration. When the surrounding roadless, natural lands were dropped from further consideration as wilderness, the remaining 480 were determined to lack sufficient size to provide opportunity for solitude.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The intensive inventory unit was determined to have "good, but not outstanding, diversity of recreation opportunities..." The quality of recreation opportunities was said to be further diminished by the presence of heavy smog from a nearby smelter, which has since been destroyed.

D. Special Features: The area contains a moderate cover of bristlecone pine which are considered one of the longest living life forms on earth, but are not particularly unusual or rare.

4. MANAGEABILITY

The area is not manageable as wilderness due to its small size and lack of natural boundaries.

5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES

A minerals report from the U.S. Bureau of Mines and the U.S. Geological Survey was not prepared for this study area.

6. SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Heusser Mountain Bristlecone Pine Natural Area was inventoried along with the roadless review area in which it is located (NV-040-048A) during an intensive inventory conducted in 1979. Most specific comments on this unit mentioned natural conditions and outstanding opportunities. Some cited intrusions and lack of solitude. One stated the unit lacks wilderness criteria, and several noted supplemental values and two listed other resource values. 2,326 general comments stated that the unit meets the wilderness criteria.