IDAHO NATIONAL GUARD TRAINING AREA INVENTORY:

BUHL TRAINING AREA

By

Robert K. Moseley
Conservation Data Center

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Idaho Department of Fish and Game
600 South Walnut, P.O. Box 25
Boise, Idaho 83707
Stephen P. Mealey, Director

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SUMMARY

The Buhl Training Area lies approximately six miles west of Buhl along the east rim of Salmon Falls Creek Canyon. This small, isolated area is surrounded mostly by agricultural land and a trash transfer station. Native habitats on the site are highly disturbed from past and ongoing activities. No rare species are known from the site or surrounding area, so none were specific targets of this inventory. I found no populations of any rare plant or animals species and no stands of high-quality native vegetation.

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INTRODUCTION

During April 1997, the Military Division of the State of Idaho entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Idaho Department of Fish and Games's Conservation Data Center for the purpose of providing threatened and endangered, and sensitive species surveys on lands utilized for military training activities in the state. The Idaho National Guard utilizes 28 training areas throughout Idaho. Eight training areas were chosen for surveys during 1997, including the Buhl Training Area.

The Idaho Military Division (Idaho National Guard) is responsible for ensuring proper stewardship of natural resources under its jurisdiction through various federal laws and Army regulations. For the scope of work under the MOA, threatened, endangered and sensitive species include any species listed as threatened or endangered under federal or state jurisdiction, species proposed as candidates for listing, and other species deemed rare at local, state, regional or national levels.

The Conservation Data Center (CDC) is the central repository in Idaho for information related to rare plant and animal populations, as well as data on significant ecological sites in the state. These data are organized on maps, manual files, and a series of interrelated computerized data bases encompassed by our Biological and Conservation Data System. These data bases include species and community occurrences, extensive bibliographic material, site specific ecological and management data, ecological monitoring, and others.

The Idaho CDC is a node in an international network of Natural Heritage Programs and Conservation Data Centers that occur in all the United States and in many other areas of the western hemisphere. All Natural Heritage Programs manage data in a standardized format so that data can be aggregated upward in the network for regional-, national-, and continental-scale perspectives of biodiversity protection. The Idaho CDC cooperates with numerous state, federal, county, and municipal institutions, as well as private corporations, organizations, and individuals to accomplish its mission.

METHODS

We used a three-phase approach to field inventories of Guard training areas for rare species and habitats: (1) information gathering; (2) field inventory; and (3) documentation. Each of these phases is described below for this training area.

Information Gathering

As explained in the Introduction, the CDC is the central repository for rare species information in Idaho. CDC biologists collect rare species information and have considerable expertise about habitats in the state. We also have developed relationships with many cooperating institutions over the years who provide us distribution information. In other words, our data bases are being continually updated

with the best information available. The first step in the process involved reviewing our map and computer data bases with help from Fish and Game's nongame biologists. From this review, we developed a target list of rare plants and animals that may occur at each of the training areas. The next step was then to review the literature or expertise of appropriate biologists to develop an inventory protocol for each species.

For the Buhl Training Area no target species were identified. There are no rare plant species known from the vicinity that could have potential habitat on the site. Several rare bat species are known from along Salmon Falls Creek in the canyon, but the training area is not important due to lack of habitat, size, and extent available habitat surrounding the site.

Field Inventory

Field inventories were conducted during the appropriate time(s) of the year, depending on the phenology or natural history of the target species. The training areas are small enough that a complete inventory can be made of the sites. The following types of information were collected during the inventories:

> **Habitat:** If native habitats existed on the training area, the plant association(s) were identified using the *Natural Plant Communities of Idaho* catalog compiled by the CDC. An *Idaho Plant Community Observation Form* was filled out for each occurrence of the plant association at the site. Information collected on this form includes location, size, site quality, land use, community description, successional and structural conditions, and species composition.

> **Rare Plant or Animal:** If a rare species was encountered, an *Idaho Rare Animal Observation Form* or *Idaho Rare Plant Observation Form* was filled out for each occurrence at the site. Information collected on these forms include location, population size and quality, land use, and habitat description. The location was mapped on a USGS 7.5' quadrangle.

> **Vascular Plant Species:** A complete list of vascular plants was made during the inventory. No voucher specimens were collected, but most species were identified using technical floras.

In the case of the Buhl Training Area, late May was chosen as the optimum time to conduct the field inventory. Inventories were on conducted May 29, 1997. One day proved sufficient to inventory the entire site.

<u>Documentation</u>

The first step in documenting the field surveys is to process the field data into various modules of the Biological and Conservation Data System (BCD) of the CDC. Here they contribute to the centralized information base about rare species, habitats, and managed areas in the state. The pertinent modules are described below.

Training Area: General training area information is entered into the *Managed Area* module of BCD. Information on location, ownership and management responsibility, site description, land use, references, and management description are included in this computerized record. The boundaries of the area are mapped on the CDC's base set of USGS quads for the state. They are also digitized and added to the Managed Area layer in the Department's GIS.

Habitats: Similar to rare species populations, occurrences of plant associations are entered into the *Element Occurrence* module (both species and communities are "elements" of biodiversity, hence the generic name element occurrence). Using field data from the Plant Community Observation Form*,* information for each plant association occurrence is kept on map, computer, and manual files. The computer file contains numerous fields under such headings as Location, Status (quality, dates of observation, etc.), Description, Protection, Ownership, and Documentation (sources of information about an occurrence).

Rare Species: As described above, populations of rare species are also cataloged in the *Element Occurrence* module of BCD, with similar information to natural communities. Field data from the Rare Animal or Rare Plant observation forms are used to populate the data base records.

Characterization Abstracts are used to produce status reports for each rare species encountered. Status information for vertebrate animals is abstracted in the *Vertebrate Characterization Abstract* (VCA), while the plant abstract module is referred to as the *Plant Characterization Abstract* (PCA)*.* Each characterization abstract record contains both global (rangewide) as well as state-specific information. The exception is if the species is endemic to Idaho, in which case only global information is used.

The next step is to use these data bases, supplemented with other information and personal knowledge, to generate this summary report of the inventory.

RESULTS

Training Area

The following description was adapted from the Managed Area record for the Buhl Training Area (BCD record M.315; Appendix 1):

The training area is located about 6 miles W of Buhl, and 6 miles north of Castleford. The area lies on the canyon rim above Salmon Falls Creek, and extends to the east for 1 mile. Except for a very small portion at the western end, this rectangular area is mostly flat or gently rolling basalts of the Snake River Plain. Numerous disturbances, such as trash dumps, rifle range, many dirt roads, big and little excavations, irrigation ditch, and old foundations, have degraded the native sagebrush-steppe vegetation (probably *Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis/Stipa thurberiana*) to *A. tridentata wyomingensis/Sitanion hystrix* or *A. tridentata wyomingensis/ Bromus tectorum*. A strip of *Artemisia arbuscula* occurs were bedrock is near the surface on the canyon rim. The cliffs at the edge of the Salmon Falls Creek canyon add diversity to the area. The training area is surrounded by agricultural land on three sides and the canyon on the west.

Habitats

As mentioned above, most of the training area has been highly degraded and little native habitat remains. Only small patches of *Artemisia arbuscula/Poa secunda* and possibly *A. tridentata wyomingensis/Sitanion hystrix* resemble native communities. Most of the site is very weedy.

Rare Species

No rare plant or animal species were found during the inventory and no potential habitat was observed.

Vascular Plant Species

I observed 47 vascular plant species at the training area during May 1997, including trees, shrubs, forbs (mostly), and grasses and sedges. The list appears in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1

Managed Area Basic Record

Buhl Training Area (M.315)

Managed Area Basic Record
BUHL TRAINING AREA
#315

Location

County: Twin Falls
Quadrangles: Balanced Rock, Buhl
Township, Range, Section:
009S 013E   25   S2S2

Description

Located about 6 miles W of Buhl, and 6 miles north of Castleford. The area lies on the canyon rim above Salmon Falls Creek, and extends to the east for 1 mile. Except for a very small portion at the western end, this rectangular area is mostly flat or gently rolling basalts of the Snake River Plain. Numerous disturbances, such as trash dumps, rifle range, many dirt roads, big and little excavations, irrigation ditch, and old foundations, have degraded the native sagebrush-steppe vegetation (probably *Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis/Stipa thurberiana*) to *A. tridentata wyomingensis/Sitanion hystrix* or *Artrw/Bromus tectorum*. A   strip of *Artemisia arbuscula* occurs were bedrock is near the surface on the canyon rim. The cliffs at the edge of the Salmon Falls Creek canyon add diversity to the area. The training area is surrounded by agricultural land on three sides and the canyon on the west.
Acres: 160.00

Stewardship

Manager:
Idaho Army National Guard
4715 S. Byrd Street
Boise, ID   83705

Management:

The area is highly degraded and used primarily for target practice and as an access point to the Salmon Falls Creek canyon. The Idaho National Guard uses the area as a shooting range. Moseley made a species list of vascular plants and inventoried for potential habitats for rare plant and animal species during visits in 1997.

Elements

Plant Communities:
None

Rare Species:
None

References

Moseley, B. 1997. Field notes for the Buhl Training Area (M.USIDHP*315).

Record Maintenance

Edition: 97-10-24

Edition Author: L. Williams

File Note: A managed area file is maintained at the Idaho Conservation Center, Department of Fish and Game, Boise.

Appendix 2

Vascular Plant Species List

Buhl Training Area

Vascular plant species observed by Bob Moseley, May 1997.

* = non-native species

TREES
Elaeagnus angustifolia   Russian olive
Salix amygdaloides   peachleaf willow

SHRUBS
Artemisia arbuscula   low sagebrush
Artemisia tridentata var. *tridentata*   basin big sagebrush
Artemisia tridentata var. *wyomingensis*   Wyoming sagebrush
Chrysothamnus nauseosus   gray rabbitbrush
Grayia spinosa   spiny hopsage
Rhus trilobata   sumac
Rosa woodsii   Wood's rose
Salix exigua   sandbar willow

FORBS
Antennaria dimorpha   pussytoes
Asclepias speciosa   milkweed
Astragalus malacus   shaggy milkvetch
Astragalus purshii   Pursh's milkvetch
Castilleja chromosa   paintbrush
Calochortus nuttallii   mariposa lily
Chenopodium album   goosefoot
Cirsium arvense   Canada thistle
Chorispora tenella   chorispora
Descurainia pinnata   tansymustard
Erigeron pumilus   daisy
Grindelia squarrosa   curlycup gumweed
Helianthus annuua   sunflower
Lactuca seriola   prickly lettuce
Lepidium perfoliatum   perfoliate peppergrass
Machaeranthera canescens   hoary aster
Phlox hoodii   Hood's phlox
Phlox longifolia   longleaf phlox
Polygonum aviculare   doorweed
Rumex crispus   curly dock
Salsola kali   Russian thistle
Sisymbrium altisimum   tumbling mustard
Solidago canadensis   goldenrod
Taraxacum officinale   dandelion
Thelypodium laciniatum   thelypody
Tragopogon dubius   salsify
Typha latifolia   cattail

GRAMINOIDS
Agropyron cristatum   crested wheatgrass
Agropyron spicatum   bluebunch wheatgrass
Bromus tectorum   cheatgrass
Elymus cinerius   basin wildrye
Eremopyrum triticeum   annual wheatgrass
Phalaris arundinacea   reed canarygrass
Poa secunda   Sandberg bluegrass

Oryzopsis hymenoides   Indian ricegrass
Sitanion hystrix   bottlebrush squirreltail
Stipa thurberiana   Thurber's needlegrass