

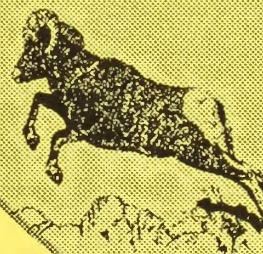


BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Nevada State Office



NEVADA BLM STATEWIDE WILDERNESS REPORT



OCTOBER 1991

Volume II LKO DISTRICT

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ELKO

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WELLS

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ELKO

WINNEMUCCA

BATTLE
MTN.

SHOSHONE-
EUREKA

RENO

LAHONTAN

FALLON

EGAN

ELY

CARSON CITY

WALKER

TONOPAH

TONOPAH

SCHELL

ESMERALDA
SOUTHERN NYE

CALIENTE

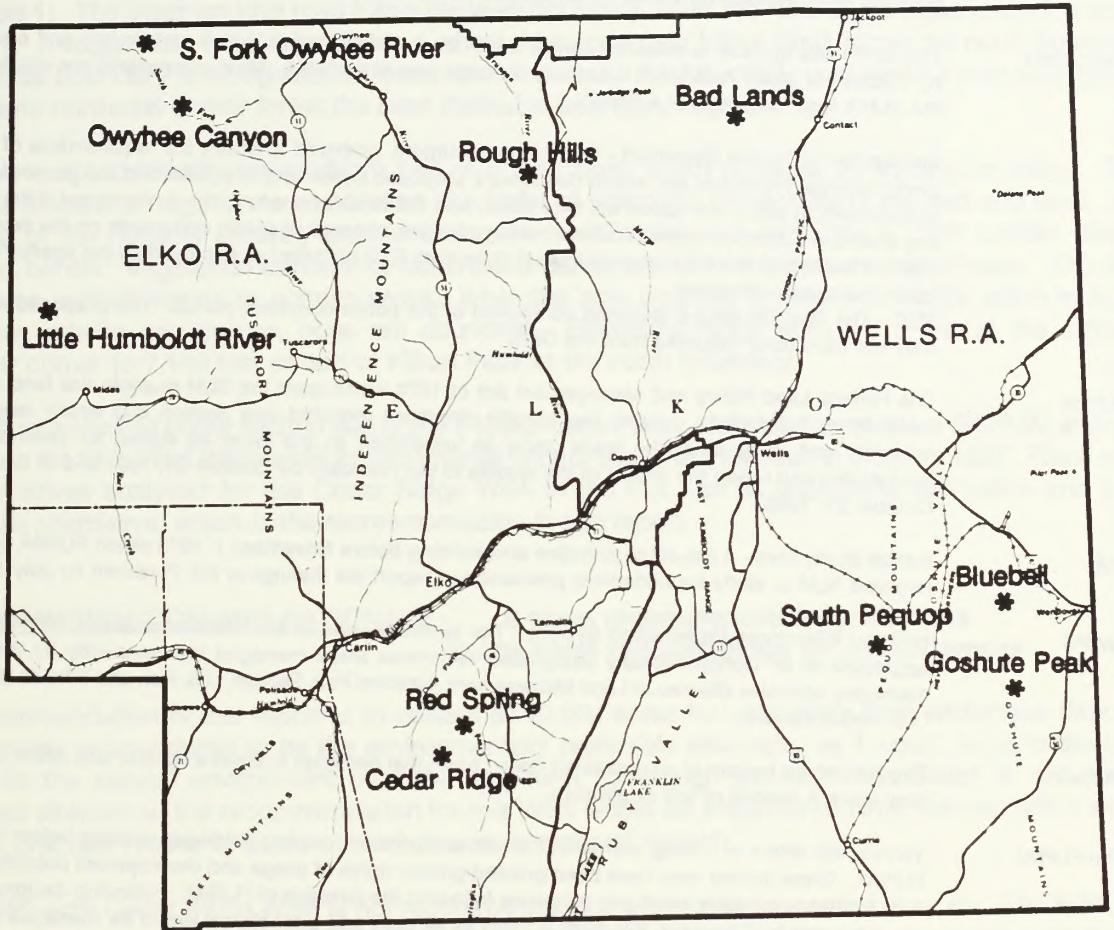
CALIENTE

LAS VEGAS

CLARK

NEVADA
CONTIGUOUS
LANDS

WILDERNESS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AREAS



ELKO DISTRICT

GLOSSARY

Bajada	A broad alluvial slope extending from the base of a mountain range out into a basin and formed by a coalescence of separate alluvial fans.
BLM	Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior.
BOM	Bureau of Mines - A Department of the Interior agency required by FLPMA Section 603 to survey the mineral potential of WSAs recommended for designation as wilderness.
Cherrystem	The term used by BLM to describe narrow linear areas, usually roads, which intrude into and are surrounded by Wilderness Study Area lands but which are not a part of the WSA. Most cherrystems are roads which meet the BLM's legal definition of a "road".
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement - a planning document, prepared to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Protection Act, which describes a proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action, the environment in which the action will take place, and the consequences to the environment if the proposed or any alternative action is undertaken and which provides a record of public comments on the proposal. DEIS - The draft of an environmental impact statement (EIS) prepared or approved by the agency and released for formal public comment. FEIS - The final EIS issued following conclusion of the public comment period. The proposed action may or may not have been modified from the DEIS.
FLPMA	The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 which gave the BLM multiple use land management authority and direction. Among the specific directions included was Section 603 which required BLM to inventory and study all of the lands under its jurisdiction (in the lower 48 states) for potential wilderness designation and report the results of the studies to the President by October 21, 1991 and to the Congress by October 21, 1993.
ISA	Instant Study Area - A natural or primitive area existing before November 1, 1975 which FLPMA Section 603 (a) required BLM to study for wilderness potential and report the findings to the President by July 1, 1980.
NWPS	National Wilderness Preservation System - The term first used in the Wilderness Act of 1964 to describe the aggregate of all Congressionally designated wilderness areas managed independently by the federal land managing agencies (Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service.
Playa	The flat-floored bottom of an undrained desert basin that becomes at times a shallow lake which on evaporation may leave a deposit of salt or gypsum.
Pre-FLPMA	Term which refers to mining claims and leases and livestock grazing privileges existing before the passage of FLPMA. These limited uses have been granted greater rights of usage and development potential within WSAs than similar uses which came into existence following the passage of FLPMA. Following designation of a WSA as wilderness by Congress, this term is moot as all uses and prior claims would be managed as specified in the Wilderness Act of 1964 or the specific wilderness's enabling legislation.
Road	A travel route which has been improved and maintained by mechanical means to insure relatively regular and continuous use. A way maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road. This language is quoted from the legislative history of FLPMA, the House of Representatives Report 94-1163, page 17, May 15, 1976. It is the only statement regarding the definition of a road in the law (FLPMA) or legislative history.
USGS	U.S. Geologic Survey - A Department of the Interior agency required by FLPMA Section 603 to survey the mineral potential of WSAs recommended for designation as wilderness.
WSA	Wilderness Study Area - A specific geographic area which was inventoried by BLM in response to FLPMA Section 603, found to contain wilderness characteristics and designated as a WSA by decision of the BLM State Director. Wilderness characteristics, as defined by FLPMA or the Wilderness Act are 1) At least 5,000 contiguous roadless acres of public lands, 2) Natural, the imprint of man's work must be substantially unnoticeable, 3) Possessing either an outstanding opportunity for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation and 4) May also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value.

CEDAR RIDGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 10,009 acres

The Cedar Ridge WSA (NV-010-088) is located in Elko County, Nevada in the northeastern corner of Nevada. The WSA is located approximately 23 miles south of Elko, Nevada. It is comprised entirely of public lands. (See Table 1). The Sleeman Well road forms the west boundary, while the New Corral Road forms the south boundary. A rugged but easily identifiable 4-wheel drive road over Hilton Peak forms the north boundary, and the east boundary is recognizable from a fenceline road. A faint vehicle way about 1 mile in length on the extreme northeast corner forms the least definable boundary segment.

The WSA is approximately the southern half of a long north-south ridgeline in Huntington Valley. This Paleozoic limestone ridge forms an anticline, the limbs of which dip moderately to the east and west. The east side of the ridge is severely eroded and gullied, while the west side has a short uptilted deeply dissected bench. Vegetation consists of continuous dense stands of junipers and sagebrush. The area contains no surface waters or riparian areas. While the area contains a variety of wildlife which includes mule deer, rabbits and grouse, none are abundant. Elevations range from 5,613 feet at the extreme southeast corner to 7,149 feet on top of Hilton Peak at the north boundary.

The WSA was studied under section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Elko Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement finalized in October 1987. There were two alternatives analyzed for the Cedar Ridge WSA in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative and a no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 0 acres recommended for wilderness 10,009 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation of this report is to release all 10,009 acres for uses other than wilderness (Map 1). All wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change to the natural environment over the long-term. Although the recommendation is not the all wilderness alternative, the recommendation for this WSA would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The 10,009 acre Cedar Ridge WSA is not recommended for wilderness for several reasons. The WSA has a high value for woodland products harvest, a high potential for oil and gas and a moderate potential for uranium and barite. Additionally, the area would be difficult to manage under a wilderness designation. The recommendation emphasizes maintaining access to the entire WSA for woodland products harvest, oil and gas exploration and exploration for barite and uranium. The availability of these commodities is considered more important than the less than outstanding wilderness values that exist in the WSA.

While the Cedar Ridge WSA meets the wilderness study criteria, naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude are limited to small geographic areas within the WSA. Overall, less than outstanding wilderness values dominate the WSA. Unsubstantial but inescapable stumpage from approximately a hundred years of wood cutting is evident throughout much of the WSA. The presence of three allotment boundary fences, especially the ridgeline fence, detract from the naturalness of the area. Within the southern half of the WSA both of the bladed fencelines are obvious intrusions. The quality of solitude is diminished by sights and sounds outside the WSA. Although topographic and vegetative screening throughout much of the WSA provide opportunities for solitude, the area's elevated configuration among adjoining low hills within Huntington Valley leaves it vulnerable to the impacts of sights and sounds of nearby energy exploration,

vehicle traffic on boundary roads and wood harvest activities in the adjacent hills. Added to this are the sounds of low flying military jets within the two Military Training Routes that encompass the entire WSA.

The WSA does not contain any outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Although the WSA could be managed as wilderness, its history of nonconforming woodcutting activities would probably cause numerous woodcutting trespasses, resulting in the need for extensive fencing, signing and vehicle barriers in addition to constant and intensive patrolling.

The area contains a very high value woodland resource of 4,940 acres of pinyon pine and Utah juniper which can annually supply 250 cords of firewood and 500 fence posts under sustained yield management. As one of only three woodland areas close to the Elko community, the demand of this resource is high. The recommendation would make available these resources, helping meet some of the current public demand.

The WSA contains a high favorability for oil and gas and moderate favorability for precious metals, barite and uranium. The recommendation permits access to explore these potential resources.

With release from wilderness consideration, some of the area's wilderness values of solitude and naturalness would be lost due to three anticipated exploratory oil wells. The drill pads and access roads would impact a total of approximately 40 acres of the area. Another 60 acres would be disturbed by seismic line exploration. Approximately 40 acres per year would be further disturbed by firewood harvest and associated overland vehicle travel. Construction of four miles of pipeline with a storage tank and water troughs to improve grazing management would disturb another three acres. Although these activities would impact small acreages, the combination and dispersment of the impacts would be such that the wilderness values that now exist would be lost throughout the majority of the WSA.

Table 1
Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

Within Wilderness Study Area

BLM (surface and subsurface)	10,009
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
Total	10,009

Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary

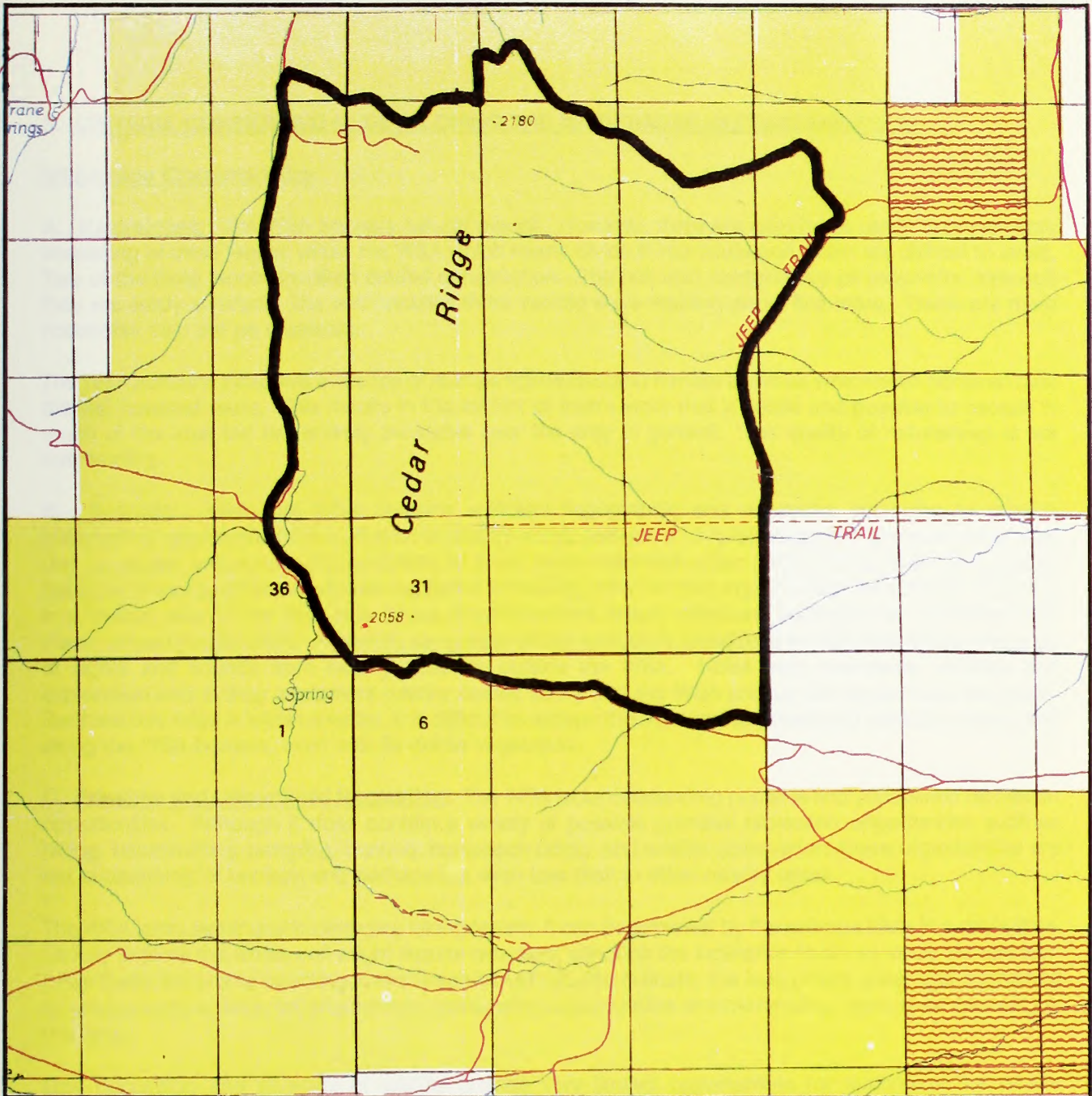
BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	0

Inholdings (state, private)	0
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Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness

BLM	10,009
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	10,009

Inholdings (state, private)	0
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R54E R55E

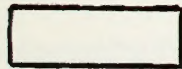
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T29N



RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



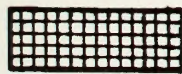
SPLIT ESTATE - NONE



RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS-



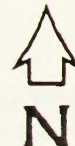
STATE - NONE



LAND OUTSIDE WSA
RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



PRIVATE - NONE



MILES

Cedar Ridge
Proposal

NV-010-088
January 1990



1. Name of the person _____	2. Date _____	3. Signature _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Address _____	5. City _____	6. State _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Telephone _____	8. Zip _____	9. Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness: The WSA appears natural overall. However, there are man-made range improvements consisting of three fences within the WSA which nearly divide it into thirds and which are difficult to avoid. Two of the three fences involved bladed construction. The unit also contains five pit reservoirs, although they are easily avoided. The unit contains three vehicle ways totalling about five miles. These are more noticeable than the pit reservoirs.

The WSA contains extensive evidence of stumps from woodland harvest activities which have occurred over the last hundred years. This results in the imprint of man's work that is subtle and possible to escape in much of the area but not entirely avoidable over the area in general. The quality of naturalness is not outstanding.

B. Solitude: While the WSA contains sufficient topographic and vegetative screening to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude, the quality of this solitude is only fair to good over much of the area due to outside influences. Opportunities to avoid encounters with other visitors in the WSA are possible because of topographic and dense vegetative screening, with the best opportunities for solitude occurring in a limited area on the west side of the ridgeline where deeply dissected drainages are combined with dense pinyon-juniper trees. However, the quality of this solitude is diminished by the inescapable influence of sights and sounds from nearby activities outside the WSA. Noise from chainsaws, vehicles and exploration and drilling equipment nearby carries easily into the WSA and up the single ridge formation. Because this ridge is within a valley, it is difficult to escape the sight of equipment and vehicles outside and along the WSA borders, even with its dense vegetation.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The WSA lacks outstanding primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities. Although it does contain a variety of possible primitive recreation opportunities such as hiking, backpacking, camping, hunting, horseback riding, and wildlife observation, these opportunities are not outstanding or unusual and perhaps are even less than in other nearby areas.

The WSA lacks water and challenging hiking terrain. It can be explored by the average hiker in a day's time. To fully explore the whole unit might require two days, although the inclination to do so would be very low. While there are ample camping areas which would provide solitude, the lack of any water and interesting or unique feature does not present any outstanding opportunities or commanding reasons for camping in this area.

Low population and diversity of wildlife provide very limited opportunities for hunting or for wildlife observation. Horseback riding opportunities are fair to very good although not very challenging nor attractive due to the lack of water. Access is very good from almost any point around the unit.

D. Special Features: The WSA does not contain any features which would significantly contribute to a wilderness experience.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: Wilderness designation of this WSA would add 10,009 acres of the Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Presently, there are seven wilderness areas in the system containing this ecosystem. Since the Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem is moderately represented, adding more areas to the national system with this ecosystem is desirable. Table 2 summarizes the ecosystem information.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>NATION WIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush Province/ Great Basin Sagebrush	7	103,842	59	1,088,540
<u>NEVADA</u>				
Great Basin Sagebrush	7	103,842	38	847,326

B. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: This WSA is within a five hour drive of one Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, Salt Lake City, Utah. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of this population center.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>Utah</u>				
Salt Lake City	20	1,955,799	142	1,826,904

C. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The 1989 designation of Forest Service wilderness created a wide distribution of wilderness areas within the state, and the addition of this WSA would not significantly contribute to the geographical distribution of wilderness within the National Wilderness Preservation System in Nevada.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The WSA could be managed as wilderness but with difficulty. The area contains no private inholdings, cherrystem roads or valid rights which would impair manageability. While the boundary is generally well delineated and uniform, which should aid in manageability, the extreme pressure of nonconforming demands on the woodland resource is anticipated to make long-term management extremely difficult at best. The extent of management effort that would be necessary to effectively contain this pressure is believed to be excessive and somewhat impairing to the wilderness values for which it would be employed. Wood harvesting in the unit has been a long-term historical use. The WSA is within one of only three major public woodland tracts close to Elko and is almost completely surrounded by numerous access routes. With the ease of overland vehicle travel within the WSA itself, the area would require extensive fencing, signing, vehicle barriers, and constant patrols to protect the area's resources.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The WSA has high oil and gas potential and there is substantial industry interest in the area. The WSA also has moderate potential for precious metals and uranium. As of January, 1990 there were no mining claims in the WSA. There were portions of six post-FLPMA mining claims in the southwest corner of the WSA.

These claims were closed in 1985.

The following information is a synopsis of reports by the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology (Quade and Tingley, 1984), the Geology, Energy, and Minerals (GEM) Assessment by Terradata (1983), Elko Area Mineral Resource Inventory (Tingley and Bentz, 1983) and publications as cited in the text.

Stream sediment concentrate samples (Quade and Tingley, 1984) show geochemically anomalous concentrations of barium and occasionally silver in areas draining from Paleozoic limestone terrains within the WSA. The eastern portion is classified as moderately favorable for precious metals mineralization and barite. The Humboldt Formation and possibly most of the Tertiary section comprising most of the WSA is a favorable host for uranium mineralization. The WSA has low favorability or is unfavorable for other locatable minerals.

Seismic oil and gas exploration has been very active near the WSA since 1983. The entire WSA was leased for oil and gas in 1983. Subsequently all of the leases have terminated. Due to high industry interest in the area it is highly probable that the entire WSA would be leased if available for leasing.

Based on favorable oil maturation levels, excellent source rocks, nearby oil production and shows and a favorable structural setting, the USGS/BM report rated the WSA as a prime area for petroleum exploration with high potential. Potential source rocks include Paleozoic marine strata (Chairman Shale, Webb Formation, and Nevada Dolomite) and Eocene lacustrine oil shales of the Elko Formation.

The WSA contains no geothermal features or requisite geologic criteria in the area which would indicate favorability for geothermal resources. The WSA is rated unfavorable for geothermal resources. All other leasable minerals except oil and gas are unlikely to occur in the WSA.

Impacts on Resources

Table 4 on the next page summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for the alternatives which considered, both designation and nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Economic impacts were considered but dropped during the EIS process because any increases in operating costs associated with wilderness designation would be insignificant.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Several comments received during the inventory process and early stages of the EIS preparation provided information used to develop significant study issues and the different alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness values. Much of this information pertained to facts affecting the quality of wilderness values.

During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 29 written comments were received, 16 of which mentioned wilderness. During the two oral testimonies wilderness was not mentioned. Eight of the 16 comments were specific to this WSA. Five commentators supported the proposed action of not recommending the area for wilderness, and three preferred an all wilderness recommendation.

A national environmental association and two individuals proposing wilderness designation commented on the need and value of wilderness and their belief that this area was qualified. A national energy company, an association of mineral interests, a former area resident, and a local conservation association all supported the nonwilderness recommendation based on higher values for uses other than wilderness.

The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency commented on the Elko Wilderness EIS. These agencies didn't have any specific comments or conflicts specific to this WSA. The State of Nevada also provided comments on the Elko Wilderness EIS. The State's position was the Governor's Consensus Letter of November 14, 1985, which concurred with the Bureau's recommendation.

On the Final Wilderness EIS, the Bureau received a comment letter from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency which addressed wilderness recommendations on areas other than this area.

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (No Wilderness)	All Wilderness
Wilderness Values	The area's wilderness values of naturalness and solitude would be lost due to oil and gas exploration and woodland harvest.	Wilderness value of naturalness would be maintained. Solitude would be slightly enhanced on all 10,009 acres of the Cedar Ridge WSA.
Recreational ORV Use	Although the area would be more accessible, recreational ORV use would remain below 200 visitor days annually. There would be no significant impact on recreational ORV use.	Recreational ORV use of 70 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. Five miles of vehicle ways would be closed.
Mineral Resource Actions	Exploratory activities for oil and gas would continue. These include 50 miles of seismic line, 10 miles of road construction and drilling of 3 wildcat wells. No economical discoveries are predicted to result in development.	The area would be withdrawn from mineral entry. Exploratory drilling of 3 wildcat oil wells and 50 miles of seismic line, and construction of 10 miles of access road would not occur. As no economically viable discoveries are predicted, there would be no impact to mineral development.
Grazing Facility Maintenance and Construction	There would be no impact on grazing facility maintenance. New construction of 4 miles of pipeline and a storage tank would take place.	There would be no impact on grazing facility maintenance. New construction of 4 miles of pipeline would be forgone.
Woodland Product Harvest	An annual harvest of 250 cords of firewood and 500 fence posts would occur on a sustained yield 200 year reestablishment basis. Approximately 40 acres per year would be thinned about 60 percent. Over the long-term 3 miles of access road would be built.	Harvest of woodland products would not be permitted.

RED SPRING WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 7,847 acres

The Red Spring WSA (NV-010-091) is located in Elko County, Nevada in the northeastern corner of Nevada. The WSA is located approximately 20 miles south of Elko, Nevada. The entire WSA is comprised of BLM land with no private or state inholdings. (See Table 1). The Twin Bridges to Indian Well road forms the western boundary. The Indian Well to Huntington Creek road forms the southern boundary. Both of these roads constitute easily identifiable boundaries. The northern and eastern boundaries are comprised of alternate one mile long section lines of private property forming a sawtooth boundary which is not easily discernible on the ground.

The WSA is the northern end of the Cedar Ridge. The area is a heavily eroded limestone formation consisting of weathered hills and eroded drainages. The WSA is a densely vegetated pinyon pine-juniper woodland. The area contains one developed spring just inside the northern boundary. The area provides deer winter range for a small herd of mule deer. Raptors and grouse are occasionally encountered, however, the area has a very low population and diversity of wildlife. The elevation varies between about 5500 feet and about 6400 feet.

The WSA was studied under section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Elko Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement finalized in October 1987. There were two alternatives analyzed for the Red Spring WSA in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative and a no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 0 acres recommended for wilderness 7,847 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation of this report is to release all 7,847 acres for uses other than wilderness (Map 1). All wilderness is the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change to the natural environment over the long-term. Although the recommendation is not the all wilderness alternative, the recommendation for this WSA would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The 7,847 acre Red Spring WSA is not recommended for wilderness for several reasons. The WSA has a high value for woodland products harvest, a high potential for oil and gas and a moderate potential for uranium and barite. In addition, the area would be difficult to manage under a wilderness designation. The recommendation emphasizes maintaining access to the entire WSA for woodland products harvest, oil and gas exploration and exploration for barite and uranium. The availability of these commodities is considered more important than the less than outstanding wilderness values that exist in the WSA.

While the Red Spring WSA meets the wilderness study criteria, naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude are limited to small geographic areas within the WSA. Overall, less than outstanding wilderness values dominate the WSA. Unsubstantial but inescapable stumpage from approximately a hundred years of wood cutting is evident throughout much of the WSA. The quality of solitude is diminished by sights and sounds outside the WSA. Although topographic and vegetative screening throughout much of the WSA provide opportunities for solitude, the area's elevated configuration among adjoining low hills within Huntington Valley leaves it vulnerable to the impacts of sights and sounds of nearby energy exploration, vehicle traffic on boundary roads and wood harvest activities in the adjacent hills. Added to this are the sounds of low flying military jets within the Military Training Routes which overlie a portion the WSA.

The WSA does not contain any outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Although the WSA could be managed as wilderness, its history of nonconforming woodcutting activities would probably cause numerous woodcutting trespasses, resulting in the need for extensive fencing, signing and vehicle barriers in addition to constant and intensive patrolling.

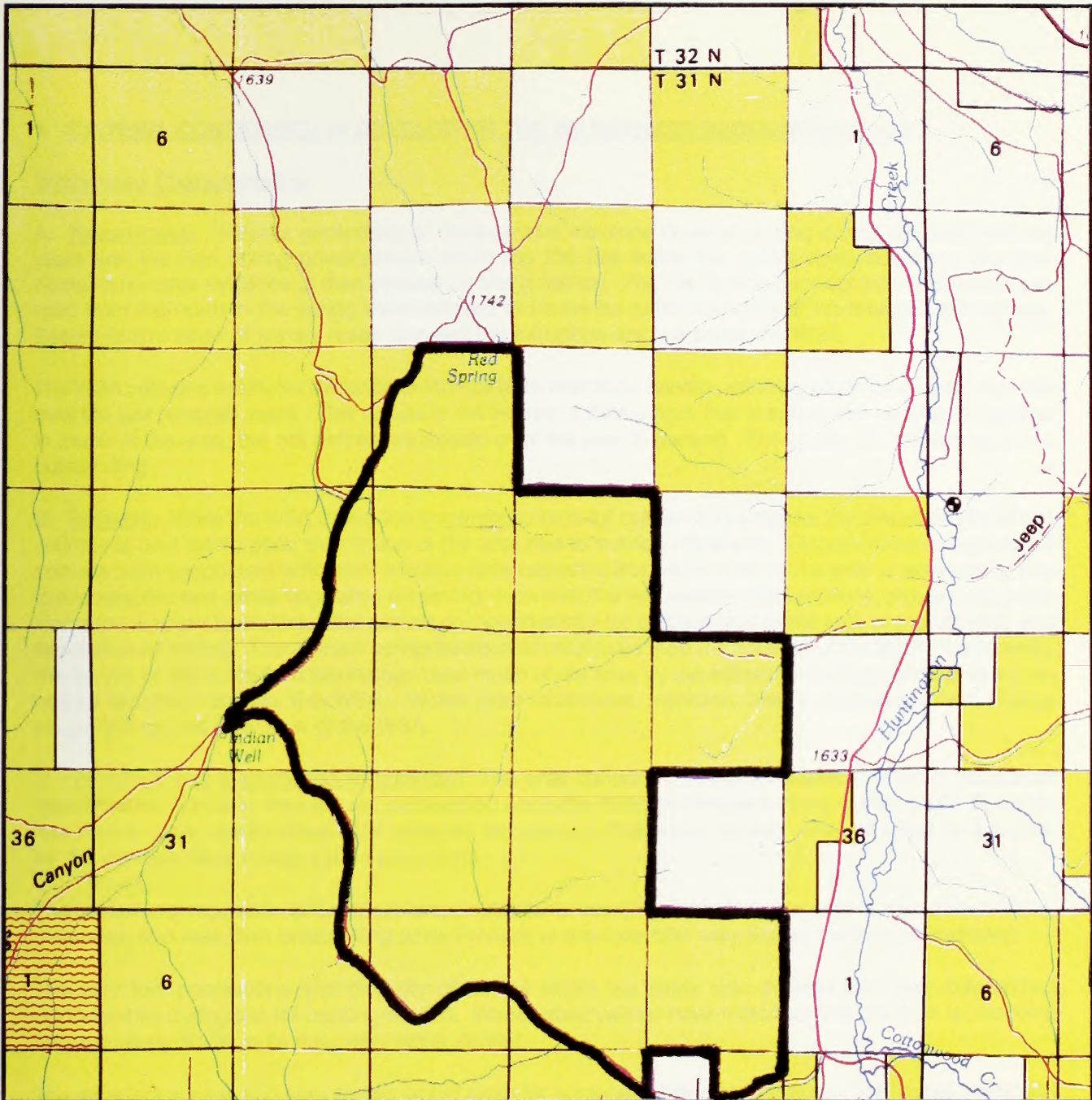
The area contains a very high value woodland resource of 3,200 acres of pinyon pine and Utah juniper which can annually supply 150 cords of firewood and 320 fence posts under sustained yield management. As one of only three woodland areas close to the Eiko community, the demand for this resource is high. The recommendation would make available these resources, helping meet some of the current public demand.

The WSA has a high favorability for oil and gas and moderate favorability for precious metals, barite and uranium. The recommendation permits access to explore for these potential resources.

With release from wilderness consideration, some of the area's wilderness values of solitude and naturalness would be lost due to three anticipated exploratory oil wells. The drill pads and access roads would impact a total of approximately 40 acres of the area. Another 60 acres would be disturbed by seismic line exploration. Approximately 40 acres per year would be further disturbed by firewood harvest and associated overland vehicle travel. Construction of four miles of pipeline with a storage tank and water troughs to improve grazing management would disturb another three acres. Although these activities would impact small acreages, the combination and dispersment of the impacts would be such that the wilderness values that now exist would be lost throughout the majority of the WSA.

Table 1
Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	7,847
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
inholdings (state, private)	<u>0</u>
Total	7,847
 <u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>	
BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended For Wilderness	0
 inholdings (state, private)	 0
 <u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>	
BLM	7,847
Split Estate	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	7,847
 Inholdings (state, private)	 0



T32N
T31N

T31N
T30N

R54E R55E

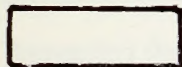
R55E R56E



RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS - NONE



SPLIT ESTATE - NONE



RECOMMENDED FOR
NONWILDERNESS-



STATE - NONE



LAND OUTSIDE WSA
RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS - NONE



PRIVATE - NONE



MILES

Red Spring
Proposal

NV-010-091
January 1990

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness: With the exceptions of the extensive evidence of wood cutting during the past hundred years and the Red Spring development, which lies 230 feet inside the WSA's north boundary, the area contains no other evidence of man's presence and is natural. The Red Spring development, and the access road from the north to the spring were believed to be on the north boundary at the time of the Inventory. Recent examination of survey notes revealed the intrusions are just inside the WSA.

The WSA contains extensive evidence of stumps from woodland harvest activities which have occurred here over the last hundred years. This results in the imprint of man's work that is subtle and possible to escape in much of the area, but not entirely escapable over the area in general. The quality of naturalness is not outstanding.

B. Solitude: While the WSA meets the screening criteria for outstanding solitude, the overall quality of this solitude is only fair to good over much of the area due to outside influences. Opportunities to experience solitude from encounters with other primitive area recreationists within most of the area is outstanding due to topographic and dense vegetative screening. However, the two eastern most sections, plus several areas along the western boundary, offer almost no opportunities for solitude due to the lack of topographic and vegetative screening. These areas comprise approximately one third the acreage of the WSA. Additionally, the quality of this solitude is diminished over much of the area by the influence of sights and sounds from nearby activities outside the WSA. Noise from chainsaws, vehicles, nearby exploration and drilling equipment carries into most of the WSA.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The area contains a variety of possible primitive recreation opportunities, however, they are not outstanding nor is the diversity unusual and the quality is perhaps even less than in other nearby areas. The area has few areas of challenging terrain. The unit could be explored by the average hiker in less than a day's time.

The terrain and vegetation allow ample areas suitable for camping. However, the lack of water, short hiking distances, and less than outstanding attractiveness of the area offer very limited reasons for camping.

The very low populations and diversity of wildlife within the study area provide less than outstanding opportunities during the fall hunting season. Winter observations have indicated that the WSA is providing approximately 50-75 mule deer with winter habitat.

The excellent access and easy terrain would allow for horseback riding for pleasure. The limited availability of water, less than outstanding scenery and shortness of trails would provide much less than an outstanding riding experience.

D. Special Features: The WSA does not contain any features which would significantly contribute to a wilderness experience.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: Wilderness designation of this WSA would add 7,847 acres of the Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). Presently within the NWPS, there are seven wilderness areas which contain this ecosystem (see Table 2). Since the Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem is moderately represented, adding more areas to the national system with this ecosystem is desirable.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>NATION WIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush Province/ Great Basin Sagebrush	7	103,842	59	1,088,540
<u>NEVADA</u>				
Great Basin Sagebrush	7	103,842	38	847,326

B. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five hour drive of one Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), Salt Lake City, Utah. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of this population center.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Center	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>Utah</u>				
Salt Lake City	20	1,955,799	142	1,826,904

C. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The 1989 designation of Forest Service wilderness created a wide distribution of wilderness areas within the state, and the addition of this WSA would not significantly contribute to the geographical distribution of wilderness within the National Wilderness Preservation System in Nevada.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

While the WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation, the area could, with difficulty, be managed as wilderness.

The area contains neither private inholdings nor valid rights which would impair manageability. Due to a post inventory boundary re-examination, it has been discovered that the developed Red Spring and its access road are inside the WSA rather than on the outside of the north boundary. While this would present some slight site specific management problems, it would not preclude the maintenance of the spring.

The extreme pressure of continued nonconforming demands on the woodland resource by firewood cutters is anticipated to make long-term management extremely difficult. The extent of management effort which would be necessary to effectively contain this pressure is believed to be excessive and somewhat impairing to the wilderness values for which it would be employed. Wood harvesting in the unit has been a long-term historical use. The WSA is within one of only three major public woodland tracts close to Elko and is almost completely surrounded by numerous access routes. With the ease of overland vehicle travel within the WSA itself, the area would require extensive fencing, signing, vehicle barriers and constant patrols to protect the area's resources.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The WSA has high oil and gas potential and there is substantial industry interest in the area. Much of the WSA also has moderate potential for precious metals and/or uranium.

The following information is a synopsis of reports by the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology (Quade and Tingley, 1984), the Geology, Energy, and Minerals (GEM) Assessment by Terradata (1983), the Elko Area Mineral Resource Inventory (Tingley and Bentz, 1983) and publications as cited in the text.

The dominant physiographic feature is a north-trending low rounded ridge of Miocene Humboldt Formation sedimentary strata and Permian limestone. The strata generally dip moderately to the east. The major structural feature is a high angle normal fault trending north-south in the north central portion of the WSA.

As of April, 1990 there were no mining claims or any evidence of mineral development in the WSA. Most of the area is rated moderately favorable for uranium. The WSA is rated moderately favorable for barium. The WSA has low favorability or is unfavorable for other locatable minerals.

The entire WSA was leased for oil and gas in 1983. Subsequently all of the leases have terminated. Due to the high industry interest in the area it is highly probable that the entire WSA would be leased if available for leasing. Seismic oil and gas exploration has been very active near the WSA. Based on favorable oil maturation levels, excellent source rocks, nearby oil production and shows, and a favorable structural setting, the U.S.G.S. (Sandbert, 1983) rated the WSA as a prime area for petroleum exploration within the Paleozoic marine strata (Chairman Shale, Weeb Formation, and Nevada Dolomite) and Eocene lacustrine oil shales of the Elko Formation.

The WSA contains no geothermal features or requisite geologic criteria in the area which would indicate favorability for geothermal resources. The WSA is rated unfavorable for geothermal resources. All leasable minerals except oil and gas are unlikely to occur in the WSA.

Impacts on Resources

The following comparative impacts table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for the alternatives which considered both designation and nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (No Wilderness)	All Wilderness
Wilderness Values	The area's wilderness values of naturalness and solitude would be lost due to oil and gas exploration and woodland product harvest.	Wilderness value of naturalness would be maintained. Solitude would be slightly enhanced on all 7,847 acres of the Red Spring WSA.
Recreational ORV Use	Although the area would be more accessible, recreational ORV use would remain below 350 visitor days annually. There would be no significant impact on recreational ORV use.	Recreational ORV use of 125 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. Approximately one half mile of vehicle way would be closed.
Grazing Facility Maintenance and Construction	There would be no impact on grazing facility maintenance. No new construction is planned and maintenance would not change.	There would be no impact on grazing facility maintenance. No new construction is planned and maintenance would not change.

Table 4 Continued
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (No Wilderness)	All Wilderness
Mineral Resource Actions	Exploratory activities for oil and gas would continue. These include 50 miles of seismic line, 10 miles of road construction and drilling of 3 wildcat wells. Since no economic discoveries are anticipated to occur, there would be no mineral development.	Exploratory drilling of 3 wildcat oil wells and 50 miles of seismic line, and construction of 10 miles of access road would be foregone. As no economical discoveries are predicted, there would be no impact to mineral development.
Woodland Product Harvest	An annual harvest of 150 cords of firewood and 320 fence posts would occur on a sustained yield 200 year reestablishment basis. Approximately 40 acres per year would be thinned about 60 percent. Over the long-term 2 miles of access road would be built.	Harvest of woodland products would not be permitted.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Economic Impacts were considered but dropped during the EIS process because any increases in operating costs associated with wilderness designation would be insignificant.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Several comments received during the inventory process and early stages of the EIS preparation provided information used to develop significant study issues and the different alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness values. The Te-Moak Bands of Western Shoshone Indians, the permitted grazing operators on the allotment which includes Red Spring WSA, passed a resolution through the South Fork Community Council on September 26, 1987, opposing the wilderness designation of this area because of maintenance responsibilities for fences and water wells and access needs.

During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 29 written comments were received, 16 of which mentioned wilderness. During the two oral testimonies wilderness was not mentioned. Eight of the 16 comments were specific to this WSA. Five commentors supported the proposed action of not recommending the area for wilderness, and three preferred an all wilderness recommendation.

A national environmental association and two individuals proposing a wilderness designation, commented on the need and value of wilderness and their belief that this area was qualified. A national energy company, an association of mineral interests, a former area resident, and a local conservation association all supported the nonwilderness recommendation based on higher values for uses other than wilderness.

The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency commented on the Elko Wilderness EIS. These agencies did not have specific comments or conflicts specific to this WSA. The State of Nevada also provided comments on the Elko Wilderness EIS. The state's position was the Governor's Consensus Letter of November 14, 1985, which concurred with the Bureau's recommendation.

On the Final Wilderness EIS, the Bureau received a comment letter from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency which addressed wilderness recommendations on areas other than this area.

LITTLE HUMBOLDT RIVER WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 42,213 Acres

The Little Humboldt River WSA (NV-010-132) is located in Elko County, in the northeastern corner of Nevada. The WSA is located 65 miles northwest of Elko, and about 3 miles north of Midas, Nevada, on the eastern flank of the Snowstorm Mountains. The WSA is comprised of 42,213 acres of BLM land with 480 acres of private inholdings. (See Table 1).

About half of the WSA's boundaries are delineated on the ground by roads and fences. The remainder of the boundary follows legal boundaries. The north half of the eastern boundary is formed by a fence. The south half of the eastern boundary, beginning where the boundary leaves the fence, follows prominent landmarks to the western boundary of the SE 1/4 of section 29, T.40N., R.46E., and follows this legal subdivision boundary until intersecting a jeep trail. The WSA boundary follows this jeep trail south, intersecting with the main southern boundary road in Oregon Canyon. Beginning in section 6, T.39N., R.46E. and ending in the SW 1/4 of section 2, T.40N., R.44E., the boundary heads in a northeasterly direction, following a combination of dirt roads and legal subdivision boundaries between public and private lands. From here, the remainder of the WSA boundary follows a dirt road north, then east to the northeast corner of the WSA.

The WSA is primarily in the upper drainage basin of the South Fork Little Humboldt River, situated between the middle slopes of the Snowstorm Mountains on the west, Castle Ridge on the east and Owyhee Bluffs on the south. The WSA is characterized by rolling hills and benches of sagebrush and grassland dissected by steep-walled narrow twisted canyons. The main features are the South Fork Little Humboldt River, Winters Ridge, Castle Ridge, Snowstorm Flat, Brush Creek, Winters Creek, Oregon Canyon, Snowstorm Creek and First Creek. Elevations range from 5,079 feet to 7,722 feet. Canyons are over 400 feet deep in places and contain dense stands of willow, aspen, and wild rose. Numerous wildlife species including deer, antelope, sage grouse, chukar, quail, golden eagles, prairie falcons, American kestrels, California bighorn sheep, and Lahontan cutthroat trout, occur in the WSA.

The WSA was studied under section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Elko Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement finalized in October 1987. There were four alternatives analyzed for the Little Humboldt River WSA in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative, a no wilderness alternative, a partial wilderness alternative where 28,386 acres were recommended for wilderness and 13,827 acres were recommended for nonwilderness and a partial wilderness alternative, the recommendation of this report, where 29,775 acres were recommended for wilderness and 12,438 acres were recommended for nonwilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 29,775 acres recommended for wilderness 12,438 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation of this report is to designate 29,775 acres as wilderness and release 12,438 acres for uses other than wilderness (Map 1). All wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. Although the recommendation is not the all wilderness alternative, the recommendation of for this WSA would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The 29,775 acre area is recommended for wilderness designation because it contains diverse ecosystems with high wilderness values and excludes areas with higher competing resource values, manageability concerns and less than outstanding wilderness values. The recommended wilderness area contains a spectacular, twisted deep canyon and creek drainages in addition to volcanic mesas, high rocky ridges and wide undulating plains.

The area recommended for wilderness contains magnificent contoured deep canyons with a flowing river and creeks lined with dense aspen groves, willows, and wild rose vegetation. High populations of diverse wildlife which include California bighorn sheep, mule deer, Lahontan cutthroat trout, pronghorn antelope, chukar partridge, sage grouse, California quail, a variety of hawks, eagles and other raptors provide a unique setting to experience high quality solitude and overall naturalness. Opportunities to observe wild and free roaming horses are outstanding. Recreational opportunities are highly varied with exceptional photographic settings, big game and upland bird hunting, challenging hiking, horseback riding and rock climbing, fair to good fishing, and good opportunities for primitive camping.

The recommended wilderness area contains two inholdings. A 40 acre parcel located at the southern end of the recommended wilderness area has no developed access, nor does it appear one would ever be necessary as the area appears to be too rugged for development. Its primary use appears to be for grazing. A 160 acre parcel, located at Castle Place towards the northern end of the recommended wilderness area, is connected to lands outside the WSA by a cherry-stem road. It contains a corral, and its primary use appears to be recreational. Neither the corral nor the cherry-stem road are substantially noticeable within the recommended wilderness. The recommended wilderness area contains one other cherry-stem road. While this road is more noticeable within the WSA than the first road, it is visible from less than one third of the recommended wilderness area. None of this road is visible from the highly scenic canyon areas. These rugged cherry-stem roads are lightly used and their impact on a wilderness experience within the majority of the area is insignificant. If either inholding is acquired through purchase or exchange, the acreage would be considered as wilderness. Appendix 1 lists all inholdings as well as additional information.

Within the area recommended for wilderness, USGS has identified two areas with the potential for zeolites and one area with potential for gold. Wilderness values in all three areas are considered higher than the mineral potential. An area of high potential for zeolites occurs along the South Fork of the Little Humboldt River drainage which contains the WSA's highest wilderness values for outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Another area of moderate potential for zeolites occurs in the northeast corner of the WSA. Zeolite, an abundant mineral, is used for a variety of processes such as water purification, pollution control, deodorizers, soil conditioners, animal feed supplements, pollution control, radio active waste disposal, catalysts and drying agents for freon refrigeration equipment. It is not considered a strategic or priority mineral. Mineral tests for the zeolites indicate low quality deposits which, coupled with the extreme distance from a marketplace, make a viable economic development unlikely. In addition, any loss of any zeolite deposits due to wilderness designation would not cause a local or national shortage due to its abundance in other parts of the country. Therefore, based on the value of zeolite, wilderness values in the potentially mineralized areas, especially those values along the South Fork of the Little Humboldt River which contains the highest wilderness values including habitat for the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout, are considered far more important than a mineral that is not priority or strategic and is readily abundant elsewhere.

Within the area recommended for wilderness USGS has also identified an area of moderate potential for gold along the South Fork of the Little Humboldt River drainage. Rock testing along the river contained anomalous amounts of arsenic and mercury, suggesting the presence of gold. However, these findings are not considered significant enough to outweigh the outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation along the river drainage and the need to retain the integrity of the river drainage throughout the entire area recommended for wilderness.

While the boundary of the recommended area is easily identified and able to be marked on the ground, very little of the boundary consists of physical topographic barriers to prevent cross-country vehicle travel. However, the general ruggedness of the area and the internal canyons would discourage most cross-country travel.

The Little Humboldt River WSA has long been known for its magnificent natural canyons, wildlife, and wild horse herds. Throughout the wilderness inventory and study, public support for wilderness designation was high. The rugged nature of the area, which helped keep it in its natural condition, also contributes to the ease of managing the area for wilderness. It is not expected that any nonconforming but allowable uses would degrade its wilderness character.

Area A is not recommended for wilderness because of a combination of high mineral potential and less than outstanding wilderness values. Due to its westward tilt towards the Snowstorm Mountains, its narrow configuration and the lack of sufficient topographic and vegetative screening, Area A does not offer outstanding opportunities for solitude from outside sights and sounds. The area is a probable extension of the mining district to the south and contains a high potential for gold. Industry interest in this area is high as it contains approximately 320 post-FLPMA mining claims. This mineral potential, coupled with the less than outstanding wilderness values, led to the recommendation for Area A.

Areas B and C, which were combined for analysis due to similar characteristics, are not recommended for wilderness due to mineral potential, irregular boundaries formed by private lands, inholdings and cherrystem roads. New information from USGS upgrades the mineral potential from moderate potential to high potential for gold. Although the entire B and C areas were not studied by USGS, there is a high probability that the zone extends further than shown on the map. Although both areas are substantially natural overall, they lack the vegetative and topographic screening to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. The recommendation also considered that sights and sounds from anticipated mineral development on inholdings and adjacent private lands would adversely impact naturalness and solitude.

Both D areas were not recommended for wilderness for similar reasons. They contain less than outstanding wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude, private lands form irregular and hard to manage boundaries and are substantially influenced by traffic along the WSA boundary road due to the lack of topographic screening in relation to the road.

Area E is natural but lacks any topographic or vegetative screening from the adjacent road. Additionally, the terrain is conducive to cross-country vehicle travel, and it is anticipated that over the long term this would result in the loss of the area's naturalness. For this combination of reasons, the area is not recommended for wilderness.

Table 1
Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	42,213
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	<u>480</u>
Total	42,693
 <u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>	
BLM (within WSA)	29,775
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land recommended for wilderness	29,775
 Inholdings (private)	 200
 <u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>	
BLM	12,438
Split Estate	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land not recommended for wilderness	12,438
 Inholdings (private)	 280



R44E

R45E

T41N

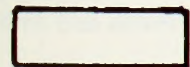
T40N



RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS -



SPLIT ESTATE - NONE



RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS -



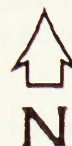
STATE - NONE



LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



PRIVATE -



MILES

Little Humboldt River Proposal

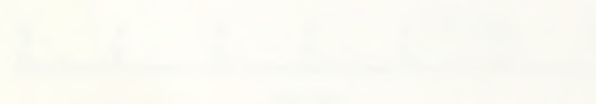
NV-010-132
February 1990



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11

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Scale 1:50,000

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness: The WSA generally appears natural. Although man made facilities exist, they are possible to escape in much of the WSA. Four ways totalling 14.0 miles extend into the WSA. Twenty three miles of barbed wire fence are found throughout the WSA. Approximately half of this fencing, 10.7 miles, was constructed in 1984 for enhancement of riparian vegetation along the South Fork Humboldt River. Much of this fencing consists of short segments constructed across draws and canyons to control impacts on the river riparian zone from wild horses and livestock and is not noticeable. Also within the WSA are 5.4 miles of pre-FLPMA fences and 7 miles of post-FLPMA pasture fences.

B. Solitude: Opportunities to experience solitude in the Little Humboldt River WSA are outstanding within portions of the area. Vegetative screening is excellent along the main stream and its side creeks. Vegetative screening is poor to moderate, at best, over the rolling hills, flats, and mesas of the rest of the WSA. Topographic screening is better than outstanding in the canyons and creek drainages, and when combined with the vegetative screening, provide over 10 miles of canyons to experience superior solitude even under high concentrations of use. Areas in close proximity to cherrystem roads, inholdings and deeply intrusive private land tracts where mineral and other activities are anticipated over time, would have reduced opportunities for solitude. The remainder of the WSA has moderate opportunities for solitude due to moderate to good topographic screening.

The recommendation for this WSA would eliminate most of those areas with poor opportunities to experience solitude (see additional discussion in the Recommendation and Rationale section). The topography, vegetation, and size at over 45 square miles, would provide outstanding opportunities to experience solitude over most of the area.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The deeply dissected, narrow twisted volcanic canyons, and creek confluences, with their spire-like formations, offer outstanding opportunities for photography, rock climbing, hiking, fishing, hunting and exploring. The mouths of the creeks offer equal attractions away from the main canyon.

A significant opportunity exists in viewing and photographing wild and free roaming horses. The area contains almost equal amounts of winter and summer wild horse range. The lack of vegetative screening, wide flat mesas and rolling hills between the entrenched creeks, all of which normally detract from wilderness values, are an enhancement for viewing wild horses. The year round presence of the bands somewhere within the unit is unique. An estimated 150 to 200 wild horses exist within the unit, with the peak in the summer.

Opportunities for hiking vary from fair in the flats to very difficult within the canyon area. Trips would average two to five days.

Excellent opportunities for camping exist among the aspens along the streams. Good camping opportunities occur within the canyon areas. Fair to poor camping opportunities are present within the northern third of the unit as limited sheltered sites along the river and the lack of water away from the river limit this activity.

Prior to pasture fence construction, the presence of wild horse trails provided excellent horseback riding opportunities. The area does not present itself to horseback riding within a wilderness setting currently, but if these temporary fences are removed it could again provide three-day trips.

The river provides good fishing opportunities for Lahontan cutthroat trout. The population averages about 400 of these trout per mile of stream. The unique riparian habitat of the unit supports an outstanding diversity of large and small game and upland birds.

The rugged high rock formations combined with the good condition of riparian areas support a high population of cliff-nesting raptors, providing outstanding opportunities for viewing and study. Prairie falcons and golden eagles nest within the WSA. Chukar and valley quail are concentrated along the drainages.

D. Special Features: The WSA provides a unique area for the study of a transition zone containing portions of the southern Owyhee Cold Desert and the lower slopes of a Basin and Range aspen forest without the typical pinyon pine and juniper woodlands. Within the northern portion of the WSA, Artemisia packardiae, a rare sagebrush of concern to the Nevada Native Plant Society, is thought to occur.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: Wilderness designation of this WSA would add 42,213 acres of the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Presently, only four wilderness areas in the system contain this ecosystem and two of them are within Nevada. Since the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem is represented to such a limited extent, adding more areas to the national system with this ecosystem is desirable. Table 2 summarizes the ecosystem information.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>NATION WIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush Province/ Sagebrush Steppe	4	131,199	138	4,356,340
<u>NEVADA</u>				
Sagebrush Steppe	2	86,907	34	1,252,442

B. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: This WSA is within a five hour drive of two Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Reno, Nevada, and Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>Idaho</u>				
Boise	22	937,766	172	5,127,039
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	45	4,967,230	175	6,945,487

C. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The 1989 designation of Forest Service wilderness created a wide distribution of wilderness areas within the state, and the addition of the Little Humboldt River WSA would not significantly contribute to the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System in Nevada. However, the wilderness values inherent in the WSA justify its addition to the NWPS.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The entire WSA is manageable as wilderness. There are no pre-FLPMA claims or other rights which would preclude management. There are three inholdings without access which could require a future access. These three parcels, which are situated near the boundary of the WSA, could require constructed access which would slightly reduce wilderness values in their immediate vicinity. However, this would not involve more than a few hundred total feet of road, and it would not result in other WSA lands becoming unmanageable.

The portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness would have less management concerns over the long term. The recommended boundary would remove three cherrystem roads and two cherrystem reservoirs, three inholdings, four intrusionary tracts of private land, and miles of irregular WSA boundary which are extremely difficult to locate in the field. While the recommended wilderness boundary would include two inholdings, two cherrystem roads and riparian and livestock management fences, it is believed that this area could be managed over the long term for the maintenance of wilderness values and opportunities with a normal level of resource management effort.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for the Little Humboldt River WSA in 1988 (U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1732-B).

The Little Humboldt River WSA occupies a broad upland basin surrounded on the west, south, and east by ridges. The South Fork of the Little Humboldt River has incised a narrow canyon that longitudinally bisects the WSA. The study area is a transition zone between the Snake River Plain volcanic zone and the faulted and deformed sedimentary and igneous rocks of the Basin and Range Province. The WSA is underlain by a complex, interlayered sequence of volcanic rocks that were erupted between about 10 and 15 million years ago. The oldest rocks are rhyolitic flows and tuffs and lesser amounts of ash-rich sedimentary rocks and andesitic flows, dikes, and tuffs. These rocks were cut by steep faults that produced a large, north-trending basin. Ash-flow tuffs were erupted into this basin forming the widespread tuff of the Little Humboldt River. About 10 m.y. ago, basalt flows erupted near the northeastern edge of the WSA. Active faulting during volcanic activity produced a complex relation between volcanic units and various fault systems.

Different parts of the study area have a high, medium, or low resource potential for disseminated gold deposits and for zeolites in tufaceous sedimentary rocks (see Mineral Favorability Table 4). The study area does not have any known economic mineral resources. Altered and fractured rocks, numerous quartz veinlets, and geochemical anomalies indicate that some of the older volcanic rocks at the southeast end of the study area near Brush Creek and along the western margin near Snowstorm Creek have a high resource potential for disseminated gold deposits. An area along the South Fork of the Little Humboldt River was hydrothermally mineralized and has a moderate resource potential for a disseminated gold deposit. The remainder of the study area has a low potential for volcanic-hosted disseminated gold deposits. As of October, 1989 there were approximately 400 post-FLPMA mining claims, most if not all of which are in the northwest and southeast corners of the WSA.

Tufaceous sedimentary rocks in the northeastern part of the WSA have a high or moderate resource potential for zeolites. The remainder of the study area has a low potential for zeolites.

The WSA has a low resource potential for other minerals, oil and gas, geothermal energy, and sand and gravel.

Table 4
Mineral Favorability of the Little Humboldt River WSA

Metals	M14D	4	D	Au, Ag
	M24C	4	C	Au, Ag
	M43B	3	B	Au, Ag
Geothermal	Entire WSA	1	B	
Uranium/Thorium	Entire WSA	1	A	
Coal	Entire WSA	2	B	
Oil and Gas	Entire WSA	2	B	
Tar Sands/Oil Shale	Entire WSA	1	C	
Limestone	Entire WSA	2	C	
Bentonite	Entire WSA	2	C	
Diatomite	Entire WSA	1	B	
Zeolites	M34D	4	D	
	M53B	3	B	
Barite	M1, M2	2	B	
Turquoise	M6	1	B	
	Entire WSA	2	A	
Perlite	Entire WSA	1	B	
Phosphate	Entire WSA	2	A	
Paleontology	Entire WSA	1	B	

LEGEND: Favorability of the Geologic Environment to Contain GEM Resources

- Class 1 - Unfavorable
- Class 2 - Low Favorability
- Class 3 - Moderate Favorability
- Class 4 - High Favorability

- Confidence Level A - Insufficient data or no direct evidence.
- Confidence Level B - Indirect evidence available
- Confidence Level C - Direct evidence but quantitatively minimal.
- Confidence Level D - Abundant direct and indirect evidence.

Impacts on Resources

The following comparative impact table (Table 5) summarizes the impacts on the pertinent resources for all the alternatives considered.

Table 5
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (Partial Wilderness)	Partial Wilderness (Commodity Production)	All Wilderness	No Wilderness
Wilderness Values	Wilderness values in the 29,775 acres designated would be retained including naturalness and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation and solitude would be retained. On the 12,438 acres not designated as wilderness, there would be a reduction of naturalness and opportunities for solitude.	Wilderness values in the 28,386 acres designated would be retained including naturalness and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation and solitude would be retained. On the 13,827 acres not designated as wilderness, there would be a reduction of naturalness and opportunities for solitude.	All wilderness values would receive long term protection due to Congressional wilderness designation. There would be a slight improvement in naturalness, opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation and solitude on 42,213 acres.	There would be a reduction in naturalness and opportunities for solitude on 43,213 acres because of continued ORV use, new mineral exploration activities, and rangeland development projects.
Recreational ORV Use	Recreational ORV use of 130 visitor days annually would be displaced by wilderness designation of 29,775 acres. The impact of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. On the 12,438 acres not designated, recreational ORV use would increase not exceeding 350 visitor days annually. About 10.5 miles of vehicle ways would be closed.	Recreational ORV use of 120 visitor days annually would be displaced by wilderness designation of 28,386 acres. Impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. On the 13,827 acres not designated, recreational ORV use would increase not exceeding 350 visitor days annually. About 10 miles of vehicle ways would be closed.	Recreational ORV use of 140 visitor days annually would be displaced by wilderness designation of 42,213 acres. Impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. About 14 miles of vehicle ways would be closed.	There would be no impact on recreational ORV use.
L a h o n t a n Cutthroat Trout Habitat	Wilderness designation would preclude mineral exploration and range development activities which might affect LCT habitat through increased siltation. Mitigations imposed on mineral exploration and livestock facility development will limit siltation in the areas not designated to minimal amounts. The LCT population would not be affected.	Wilderness designation would preclude mineral exploration and range development activities which might affect LCT habitat through increased siltation. Mitigation imposed on mineral exploration and livestock facility development will limit siltation in the areas not designated to minimal amounts. The LCT population would not be affected.	Wilderness designation would preclude mineral exploration and range development activities which might affect LCT habitat. LCT habitat would be maintained and the LCT population would be unaffected.	Stipulations on mineral and rangeland activities designed to protect LCT habitat would permit only minimal increases in siltation of LCT habitat and LCT populations would not be affected.

Table 5 Continued
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (Partial Wilderness)	Partial Wilderness (Commodity Production)	All Wilderness	No Wilderness
Mineral Resource Actions	The 29,775 acres of wilderness would be withdrawn from mineral entry and leasing. Approximately 50 miles of seismic exploration line on a 7,500 acre northern portion of the area would not be possible. On the 12,438 acres not designated, exploration activities consisting of 19 miles of access road and 1,200 feet of bulldozed trench would occur on a 5,911 acre area of high potential for gold and silver in the southwest and southeast portions of the area.	The 28,386 acres of wilderness would be withdrawn from mineral entry and leasing. Approximately 50 miles of seismic exploration line on a 7,500 acre northern portion of the area would not be possible. On the 13,827 acres not designated, exploration activities consisting of 20 miles of access road and 1,300 feet of bulldozed trench would occur on a 7,300 acre area of high potential for gold and silver in the southwest and southeast portions of the area.	The entire 42,213 acres would be withdrawn from mineral entry and leasing. Mineral exploration activities and the possible development of potential resources would be precluded. Projected seismic lines and exploration trenches would not occur eliminating impacts to 14,800 acres.	The entire 42,213 acres would be open for mineral entry and leasing. Approximately 20 miles of access road and 1,300 feet of bulldozer trench would be constructed as a result of exploration on 7,300 acres of high potential for gold and silver on the southwest and southeast portions of the WSA. Approximately 50 miles of seismic line would occur on a 7,500 acre northern portion of the WSA.
Grazing Facility Maintenance and Construction	There would be no impact on grazing facility maintenance. Construction of 13.3 miles of fence and vegetative treatment of 9,240 acres would not occur. On the 12,438 acres not designated, 7.3 mi. of new fence and vegetative treatment of 2,780 acres would occur.	There would be no impact on grazing facility maintenance. Construction of 13.2 miles of fence and vegetative treatment of 8,640 acres would not occur. On the 13,827 acres not designated, 7.4 mi. of new fence and vegetative treatment of 3,380 acres would occur.	There would be no impact on grazing facility maintenance. Construction of 20.6 miles fence and vegetative treatment of 12,020 would not occur.	There would be no impact on grazing facility maintenance. Construction of 20.6 miles fence and vegetative treatment of 12,020 would occur.
Private Inholdings	There would be no impacts to two private inholdings, 200 acres, within the area recommended for wilderness.	There would be no impacts to two private inholdings, 200 acres, within the area recommended for wilderness.	There would be no impacts to five private inholdings, 480 acres, within the area recommended for wilderness.	There would be no impacts to five private inholdings, 480 acres.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

There were no social or economic issues identified with the study of this wilderness study area.

Summary of WSA-Specific Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Several comments received during the inventory process and early stages of the EIS preparation provided information used to develop significant study issues and the different alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness values. Much of this information pertained to facts affecting the quality of wilderness values.

During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 29 written comments were received, of which 16 mentioned wilderness. The 2 oral testimonies did not involve wilderness. Of the 16 comments, 10 comments were specific to this WSA. Three commentors supported the proposed action of recommending 29,775 suitable for wilderness and 12,438 for nonwilderness, two commentors opposed wilderness designation, three commentors supported designating all 42,213 acres of the WSA as wilderness, and two commentors supported designating more than 42,213 acres for wilderness.

The eight commentors supporting the Bureau's recommendation or advocating more wilderness included three local individuals, two non-local individuals, one local conservation group and two environmental groups. These commentors cited wilderness values of the area as supporting rationale.

A national minerals coalition expressed concerns about the mineral potential of the area.

The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency commented on the Elko Wilderness EIS. These agencies had no comments specific to this WSA, except for the EPA. The EPA suggested disclosing the criteria used to determine the 12,438 acres of nonsuitable area.

The State of Nevada also provided comments on the Elko Wilderness EIS. The State's position was the Governor's Consensus Letter. While the State concluded that the canyon area's high wilderness values outweighed other values, there was concern with the manageability of the rolling uplands and inclusion of inholdings, roads and ways, and some mineral potential. The State suggested support of some smaller area closer to the canyon rim.

Local government entities are generally opposed to all wilderness designation.

On the Final Wilderness EIS, the Bureau received a comment letter of November 25, 1987 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency which specifically addressed the wilderness recommendation of the WSA. The EPA endorsed designating 29,775 acres of the Little Humboldt River WSA for wilderness as it offered the best protection for air and water quality.

APPENDIX 1
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS
WITHIN AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION

<u>Legal Description</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>	<u>Number of Owners</u>	<u>Type of Ownership by Estate Surface Estate Sub-Surface Estate</u>	<u>Presently Proposed for Acquisition</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition</u>	<u>Estimated Costs of Acquisition Land Processing</u>
Parcel #1 T.41N., R.45E., MDM Sec. 23, N1/2SW, SESW Sec. 26, NENE	160	1	Private	No	Exchange/ Purchase	\$9,600 \$5,500
Parcel #2 T.40N., R.45E., MDM Sec. 23, SWSE ²	40	1	Private	No	Exchange/ Purchase	\$2,400 \$5,500

¹The estimated costs listed in this Appendix in no way represent a federal appraised value of the lands, but are rough estimates based upon sales of lands with similar characteristics to those included in the USA. The estimates are for the purpose of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring non-federal holdings and in no way represents an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimates.

²The parcels listed are part of an ongoing exchange for High Rock area private minerals of approximately 5,000 total acres.

ROUGH HILLS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 6,685 acres

The Rough Hills WSA (NV-010-151) is located in Elko County, Nevada in the northeastern corner of Nevada. The WSA is located approximately 65 air miles north of Elko, Nevada. The WSA includes 6,685 acres of public lands and 200 acres of private inholdings. (See Table 1).

The east and west boundaries are primarily formed by fenced private property as well as approximately half of the southern boundary. The extreme southwestern corner of the WSA boundary is formed by a couple of hundred feet of the Annie Creek Road. The northwestern boundary is formed by unmarked public and private land boundaries. The majority of the northern boundary adjoins the Humboldt National Forest. The Charleston to Deer Creek Forest Service Road, from Copper Creek north to the forest boundary, comprises the WSA boundary in the northeastern corner. Short, intermittent segments of this road, private land boundaries, fencelines and a short section of another road in the extreme southeastern corner of the WSA comprise the remainder of the boundary.

The rectangular shaped WSA is an island-like formation of rhyolite flows, domes, plugs and volcanic tuffs situated between the Cornwall and Charleston Basins. The topography of the WSA is extremely mountainous and includes eight drainages and over two miles of the Bruneau River. While not forested, the drainages on the east side contain aspen communities and the higher elevations contain isolated pockets of aspen and dense stands of mahogany. Sagebrush is the dominant plant species, but the WSA contains many meadow, bitterbrush, serviceberry and other shrub communities. The WSA contains numerous springs in addition to the creeks and the river. Abundant and diverse wildlife are present. The WSA is approximately four miles west of the Jarbidge Wilderness Area.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Elko Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement finalized in October, 1987. There were two alternatives analyzed for the Rough Hills WSA in the EIS: a no wilderness alternative and an all wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 6,685 acres recommended for wilderness 0 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate all 6,685 acres as wilderness (Map 1). This is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long-term. This recommendation will further apply to any additional inholding acreage acquired through purchase or exchange with willing landowners.

The Rough Hills WSA is recommended for wilderness because it is natural and it contains outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

The rugged diversity of cliffs, peaks, canyons, ridges, domes, creeks, springs and the Bruneau River provide varied vegetative communities of mahogany, chokecherry, aspen, bitterbrush, serviceberry, meadows and sagebrush, all of which are free of the evidence of man and offer outstanding scenic quality.

The topographic screening within the WSA is outstanding with its high ridgelines, peaks and numerous winding drainages and canyons. The numerous aspen groves and mountain mahogany stands provide good vegetative screening in many areas and in combination with the topography offer outstanding

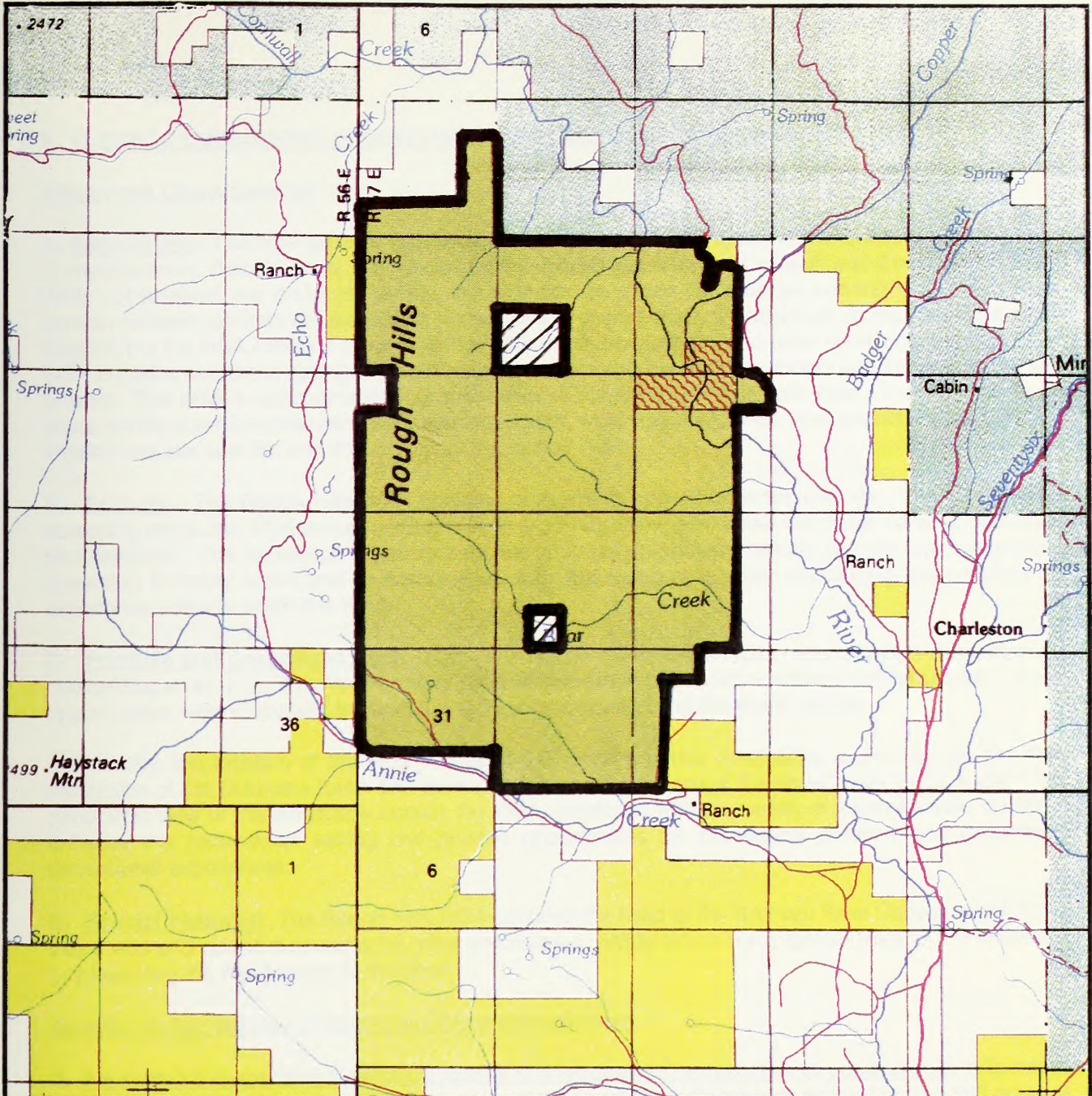
opportunities to experience solitude within the WSA.

Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation exist in the WSA. The variety of quality opportunities available include backpacking, camping, hiking, horseback riding, upland game bird and mule deer hunting, wildlife observation, sightseeing, photography, rock climbing and fishing. The Bruneau River provides excellent opportunities for gold panning as well. The numerous springs dispersed throughout the WSA provide outstanding opportunities to view wildlife.

Conflicts with other resource uses are essentially nonexistent. Mineral and energy resource potentials are low. The WSA contains two mining claims and no mineral leases or developments which would cause manageability concerns. Livestock grazing will be allowed to continue. There is one rangeland improvement which consists of a developed spring just inside the southern boundary of the WSA. The only vehicle way consists of .8 of a mile route in Inez Gulch in the extreme southwestern corner of the WSA. The Inez Gulch way is periodically utilized in livestock operations and occasionally by deer hunters, and the utility of this vehicle way is extremely limited. The two inholdings in the WSA are used for livestock management purposes (Appendix 1). It is not anticipated that these inholdings will require constructed access for livestock management. Should the manner of use of the 40-acre inholding on Bear Creek change in the future, an access road could be required which might result in future conflicts with wilderness values. The 160-acre private inholding in Jungle Basin is considered undevelopable, and therefore has minimal potential to cause future conflicts.

Table 1
Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	6,685
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (private)	<u>200</u>
Total	6,885
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>	
BLM (within WSA)	6,685
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	6,685
Inholdings (private)	200
<u>Within the Area Recommended for Nonwilderness</u>	
BLM	0
Split Estate	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	0
Inholdings (private)	0



R56E R57E

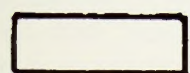
T44N
T43N



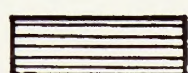
RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



SPLIT ESTATE - NONE



RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS - NONE



STATE - NONE



LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



PRIVATE - NONE



MILES

Rough Hills Proposal

NV-010-151
January 1990

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were spent in the field
collecting specimens.

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for processing.

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3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness: The WSA appears natural overall. The rectangular shaped WSA is an island-like formation of rhyolite flows, domes, plugs and volcanic tuffs situated between the Cornwall and Charleston Basins. While not forested, the drainages on the east side contain aspen communities and the higher elevations contain isolated pockets of aspen and dense stands of mahogany. Sagebrush is the dominant plant species, but the WSA contains many meadow, bitterbrush, serviceberry and other shrub communities. The WSA contains numerous springs in addition to the creeks and the river. Abundant and diverse wildlife are present. The WSA is approximately four miles west of the Jarbidge Wilderness Area. There are only two areas, on the south boundary and southwestern corner, within the WSA which have imprints of man. These imprints are site specific and do not impact the overall WSA.

B. Solitude: The Rough Hills WSA contains outstanding opportunities for solitude. The topographic screening within the WSA is outstanding with its high ridgelines, peaks and numerous winding drainages and canyons. The numerous aspen groves and mountain mahogany stands provide good vegetative screening in many areas and in combination with the topography offer outstanding opportunities to experience solitude within the WSA.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The Rough Hills WSA, in spite of its compact size, offers an outstanding array of quality primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities within its rugged terrain. These opportunities were discussed in detail in the Recommendation and Rationale section.

Additionally, the location of the eight thousand foot peak provides contrasting views between the high mountains of the Columbia Basin and the basin and range province of the Great Basin to the south. The panoramic view of the landscape outside the WSA, combined with the variety of internal scenic qualities, enhance the recreational setting and provide opportunities for exceptional primitive and unconfined recreational experiences.

D. Special Features: The Rough Hills WSA contains the head of the Bruneau River Canyon which turns into a wild and scenic river some 20 miles downstream. While this is not a special feature, it is important to preserving the headwaters of the river.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: Wilderness designation of this WSA would add 5,700 acres of the Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem and 985 acres of the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Presently, only portions of seven wilderness areas in the system contain the Great Basin Sagebrush Ecosystem and only four contain the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem. Since both of these ecosystems are represented to such a limited extent, adding more areas to the national system with these ecosystems is desirable. Table 2 summarizes the ecosystem information.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>NATION WIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush Province/ Sagebrush Steppe	4	131,199	138	4,356,340
Great Basin Sagebrush	7	103,842	59	1,088,540
<u>NEVADA</u>				
Sagebrush Steppe	2	86,907	34	1,252,442
Great Basin Sagebrush	7	103,842	38	847,326

B. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: This WSA is within a five hour drive of two Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Salt Lake City, Utah and Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of these population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>Utah</u>				
Salt Lake City	20	1,955,799	242	1,826,904
<u>Idaho</u>				
Boise	22	937,766	172	5,127,039

C. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The 1989 designation of Forest Service wilderness created a wide distribution of wilderness areas within the state, and the addition of this WSA would not significantly contribute to the geographical distribution of wilderness within the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) in Nevada. However, the wilderness values inherent in this WSA justify its addition to the NWPS.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The compact regular shape, lack of cherrystem roads and lack of any conflicting uses which would substantially impair or degrade its wilderness values make it reasonably certain that the WSA could be managed for wilderness in the long-term. The Rough Hills WSA is a solid block of public land. Two private inholdings, totalling 200 acres, are within the its boundaries. The 160 acres in Jungle Basin are considered undevelopable, while the 40 acre inholding on Bear Creek has the potential to be developed. Both parcels are presently utilized in conjunction with livestock grazing operations, and this use is anticipated to continue over the long-term. Should an unanticipated change in use occur requiring developed access to the Bear Creek parcel, the impacts to wilderness values would not significantly impact values as a whole in the WSA.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

In 1987, U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines prepared an assessment of mineral resource potential and known mineral resources. Even though the WSA is in close proximity to three mining districts, the WSA has no history of mining other than minor, unrecorded production of two ounces of placer gold near the northeast corner. The WSA has a low mineral resource potential for undiscovered metasomatic gold, silver, tungsten, molybdenum, and copper, disseminated gold and silver, placer gold, barite, tin, sand and gravel, uranium and thorium, and oil and gas.

Despite scattered geochemical anomalies in the WSA, the geologic, geochemical and geophysical evidence indicate that the WSA has low mineral resource potential and that the extent of mineralized rocks is extremely limited. As of January 1990, there were two post-FLPMA mining claims in the WSA. A Plan of Operations under 43 CFR 3802 has been filed. Other than placer gold, no mineral deposits similar to those that occur in the nearby mining districts are known within the WSA. The depression-era placer deposit is limited to a perched deposit of about 3,00 cubic yards of gravel with an average value of less than \$1.00 per yard and 3,500 cubic yards of gravel with an average value of less than \$0.10 per yard. While the grade and volume of placer gravel is insufficient to be of commercial value, it probably is of interest for recreational panning.

Impacts on Resources

Table 4 summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all of the alternatives considered.

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

	Proposed Action (All Wilderness)	No Wilderness
Wilderness Values	All wilderness values would receive long term Congressional protection. All wilderness values would be maintained. The area's naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would improve.	There would be a reduction of the area's naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation due to exploratory core drilling for mineral resources and new access roads.
Recreational ORV Use	Recreational ORV use of 130 visitor days would be displaced annually. Impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.	There would be no impacts on recreational ORV use. Recreational ORV use would increase slightly, but would remain below 100 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future.
Mineral Resource Activities	The 6,685 acres would be withdrawn from mineral entry and mineral leasing. Construction of 2 miles of access road for exploratory drilling would not occur.	The entire 6,685 acres would be available mineral entry and mineral leasing. Construction of 2 miles of access road and exploratory core drilling could occur.
Grazing Facility Maintenance and Construction	There would be no impact on grazing facility maintenance. Construction of a 3 mile allotment boundary fence across the WSA would not be permitted.	There would be no impact on grazing facility maintenance. Construction of a 3 mile allotment boundary fence across the WSA would occur.
Private Inholdings	There would be no impacts to the two private inholdings, 200 acres, within the WSA.	There would be no impacts to the two private inholdings, 200 acres.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

There were no social or economic issues identified with the study of this WSA.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public Involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. The initial Inventory decision to drop Rough Hills because of weak wilderness values was reversed as a result of numerous public comments contending it contained outstanding wilderness values. Re-examination determined that the area did contain outstanding naturalness, solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities.

During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 29 written responses were received, of which 16 mentioned wilderness. The two oral testimonies did not mention wilderness. Of the 16 comments, 8 were specific to the Rough Hills WSA. Seven commentors supported the proposed action of recommending the area for wilderness. One commentor was opposed due to the area's mineral values.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Geological Survey, Fish and Wildlife Service and Environmental Protection Agency commented on the Elko Wilderness EIS. However, the comments were not specific to the WSA. The State of Nevada also commented on the Elko Wilderness EIS. The state's position was the Governor's Consensus Letter of November 14, 1985, which concurred with the wilderness recommendation, although there was concern about the two private inholdings and the area's pre-mineral survey rating of moderate mineral potential.

On the Final Wilderness EIS, the BLM received a comment from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which addressed wilderness recommendations specific to the Rough Hills WSA. EPA endorsed designating all 6,685 acres as wilderness which offered the best protection for air and water quality.

APPENDIX 1
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS
WITHIN AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION

<u>Legal Description</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>	<u>Number of Owners</u>	<u>Type of Ownership by Estate Surface Sub-Surface Estate</u>	<u>Presently Proposed for Acquisition</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition</u>	<u>Estimated Costs of Acquisition Land Processing</u>
Parcel #1 T.44N., R.57E., MDM Sec. 4, SW1/4	160	1	Private	No	Exchange	\$9,600 \$6,500
Parcel #2 T.44N., R.57E., MDM Sec. 29, SE1/4SW1/4	40	1	Private	No	Exchange	\$2,400 \$5,300

The estimated costs listed in this Appendix in no way represent a federal appraised value of the lands, but are rough estimates based upon sales of lands with similar characteristics to those included in the USA. The estimates are for the purpose of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring non-federal holdings and in no way represents an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimates.

The parcels listed are part of an ongoing exchange for High Rock area private minerals of approximately 5,000 total acres.

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BLUEBELL WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 55,665 acres

The Bluebell WSA (NV-010-027) is located approximately 95 miles east of Elko, Nevada and 10 miles southwest of West Wendover, Nevada in the northern extension of the Goshute Mountain Range. The entire WSA is BLM land with no split estate or private inholdings. The WSA is generally oblong in shape, measuring approximately 14 miles at its longest point and eight miles at its widest point. The majority of the WSA's boundary is formed by dirt roads. The southern boundary is formed by the Morgan Pass Road. The eastern and western boundaries are each formed by an unnamed dirt road which roughly runs along the foothills, paralleling the mountain range. The northern WSA boundary is formed by private lands except where the boundary follows a dirt road for 1/4 mile.

The WSA consists of steep, mountainous topography, with numerous canyons radiating from the central ridgeline of mountain peaks. At the lower elevations, the area supports a pinyon-juniper ecosystem, while small stands of mixed conifer forests can be found at the higher elevations. Elevations range from 5,300 feet in the foothills to 8,000 feet on the ridgeline. The WSA is within a major raptor migration route where thousands of raptors migrate south each year.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Wells Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement finalized in July, 1987. There were five alternatives analyzed for the Bluebell WSA in the EIS: a partial alternative where 41,324 acres would be designated as wilderness and 14,341 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, a partial alternative where 25,830 acres would be designated as wilderness and 29,835 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, a partial alternative where 48,308 acres would be designated as wilderness and 7,357 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, an all wilderness alternative and a no wilderness alternative. The recommendation of this report, which is different than the proposed action in the final wilderness EIS, is to release all 55,665 acres for uses other than wilderness. The recommendation considers new minerals information from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) received after completion of the final wilderness EIS.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 0 acres recommended for wilderness 55,665 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to release all 55,665 acres for uses other than wilderness (Map 1). All wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long-term. Although the recommendation is not the all wilderness alternative, the recommendation for this WSA would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. The recommendation differs from that stated in the Final Wells Wilderness EIS due to mineral potentials.

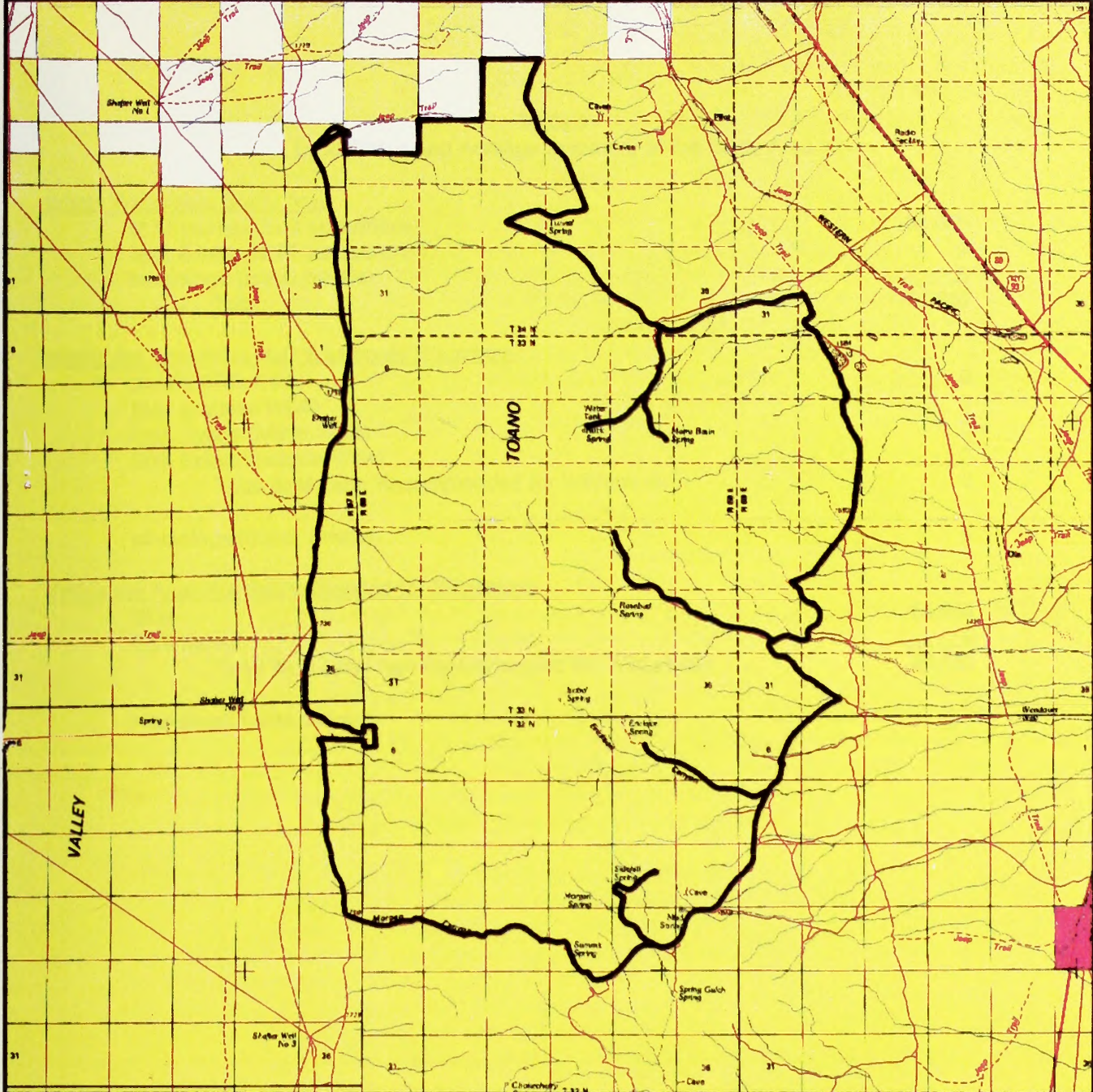
The entire WSA is recommended for nonwilderness because of mineral potential, the possible expansion of a limestone quarry into the northern portion of the WSA and less than outstanding wilderness values in the northern part of the WSA. Also considered was the recommendation for the Goshute Peak WSA adjoining the southern boundary of this WSA, and containing similar types of wilderness values. Because of its size, the Goshute Peak WSA, the majority of which is recommended for wilderness, better represents the outstanding wilderness values that exist in the Goshute Mountain Range.

Early in the wilderness study process it was thought that all potential mineral conflicts had been avoided through adjustments in the wilderness recommendations. However, it became apparent through assay results of exploration drilling approved by BLM that a mineralized zone of gold resources was situated in the southern portion of the WSA within the area recommended for wilderness. Although available data was not sufficient enough to delineate the mineralized area, estimate its value or change the proposed action in the EIS, the data was considered sufficient enough to include an analysis in the final wilderness EIS projecting impacts to wilderness values from mining activities. These projections included an open pit mine with associated roads, tailings dumps, etc.

The majority of the southern portion of the WSA is not recommended for wilderness due to mineral values (Map 2). Subsequent to the final wilderness EIS, the USGS/USBM mineral resources survey (U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1725-C) indicates an additional 9,500 acres in the southern portion of the WSA contains identified resources (actual resources) of disseminated gold and high and moderate potential for disseminated gold resources (Plate 1, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1725-C). As required by the wilderness study process, a re-evaluation of the EIS proposed action was conducted, taking into account both the new minerals information and the previously known wilderness and other values. A determination was made that the new minerals information was, in conjunction with exploration results known to BLM, sufficient enough to warrant changing the recommendation. Based on known interest, it is expected that the minerals in the southern portion of the WSA will be developed and the wilderness values lost on approximately 10,000 acres.

The northern portion of the WSA is not recommended for wilderness because of possible expansion of the limestone quarry north of the WSA. The limestone is of high quality and extension of the existing quarry is likely following release of the adjacent lands. Wilderness values would be lost on 300 acres. The impacts of quarrying would be heard and seen from the higher elevations near Tunnel Spring and the lower elevations adjacent to the expansion area. This would impact an additional 2,000 acres.

The area just north of Rock and Morris Basin Springs is not recommended for wilderness because of good potential for metallics. In this area the need to allow for exploration and development of potential gold resources outweighs the wilderness values. Wilderness values on two acres would be impacted. Consideration was given to recommending for wilderness those acres left after the areas of identified, high and moderate mineral potential were deleted. However, the wilderness values within the majority of these acres do not have sufficient integrity to continue under a wilderness recommendation. The no wilderness recommendation for the southern portion of the WSA removes the area with the highest wilderness values. The southern portion of the WSA, where the highest minerals values occur, also contains the highest wilderness values, including the area's highest peaks and ridges and most rugged terrain. Wilderness values north of the mineralized area become more subdued as elevations decrease.



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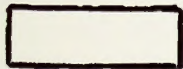
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RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



SPLIT ESTATE - NONE



RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS



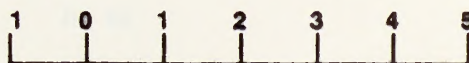
STATE - NONE



LAND OUTSIDE WSA
RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



PRIVATE - NONE



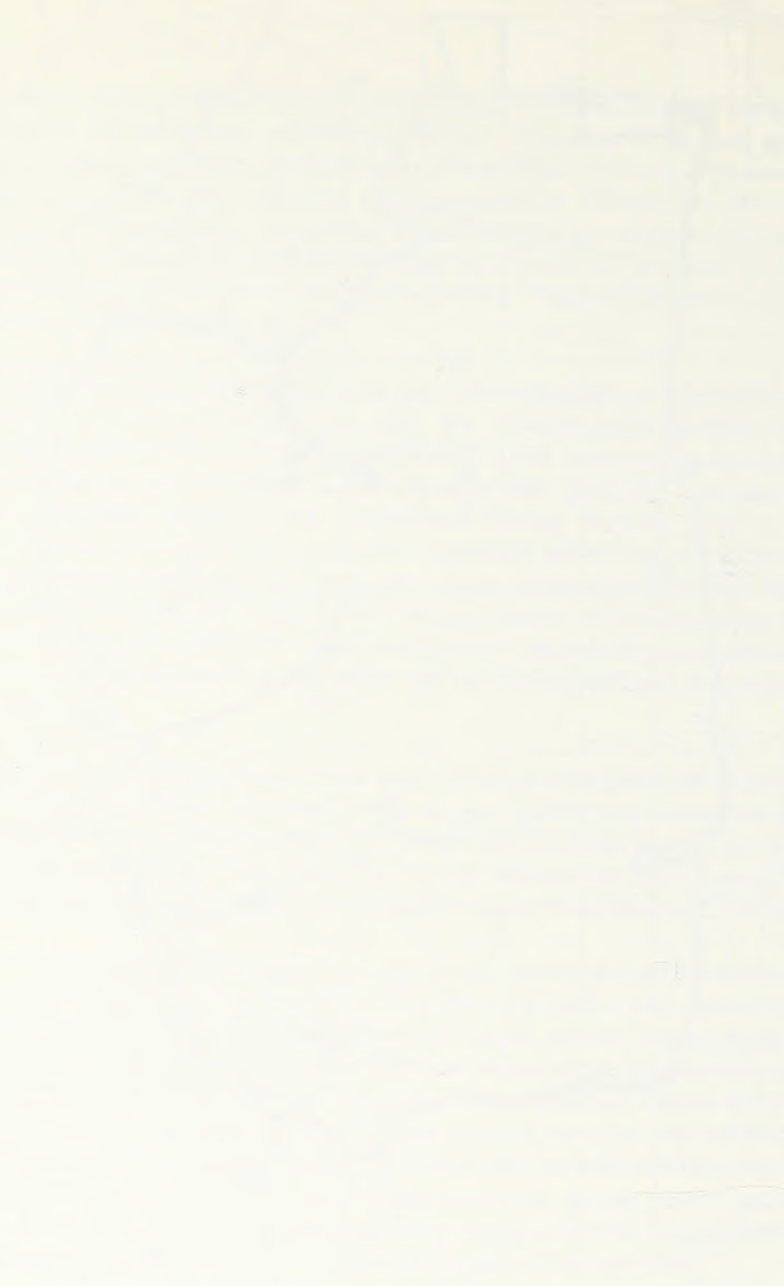
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Bluebell
Proposal

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January 1990

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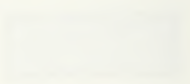
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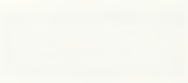
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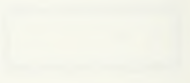
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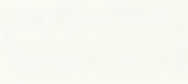
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






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Table 1
Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	55,665
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	<u>0</u>
Total	55,665
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>	
BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	0
Inholdings (State, Private)	0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>	
BLM	55,665
Split Estate	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	55,665
Inholdings (state, private)	0

EXPLANATION

[Identified resources of common sand and gravel are present in small areas throughout both the Bluebell and Goshute Peak study areas. Both study areas have low resource potential for energy sources]

-  Area with identified resources of gold
-  Geologic terrane having high mineral resource potential for gold, certainty level C
-  Geologic terrane having moderate mineral resource potential for gold, certainty level B
-  Geologic terrane having a low mineral resource potential for gold, certainty level B
-  Areas with identified resources of limestone and also having a high resource potential for high-purity limestone, certainty level C
-  Geologic terrane having moderate mineral resource potential for phosphate, certainty level B
-  Geologic terrane in the southeast part of the Bluebell study area that has a low resource potential for tin, tungsten, molybdenum, beryllium, uranium, and thorium, certainty level B
-  Boundary of oil and gas leases, hachured toward leases

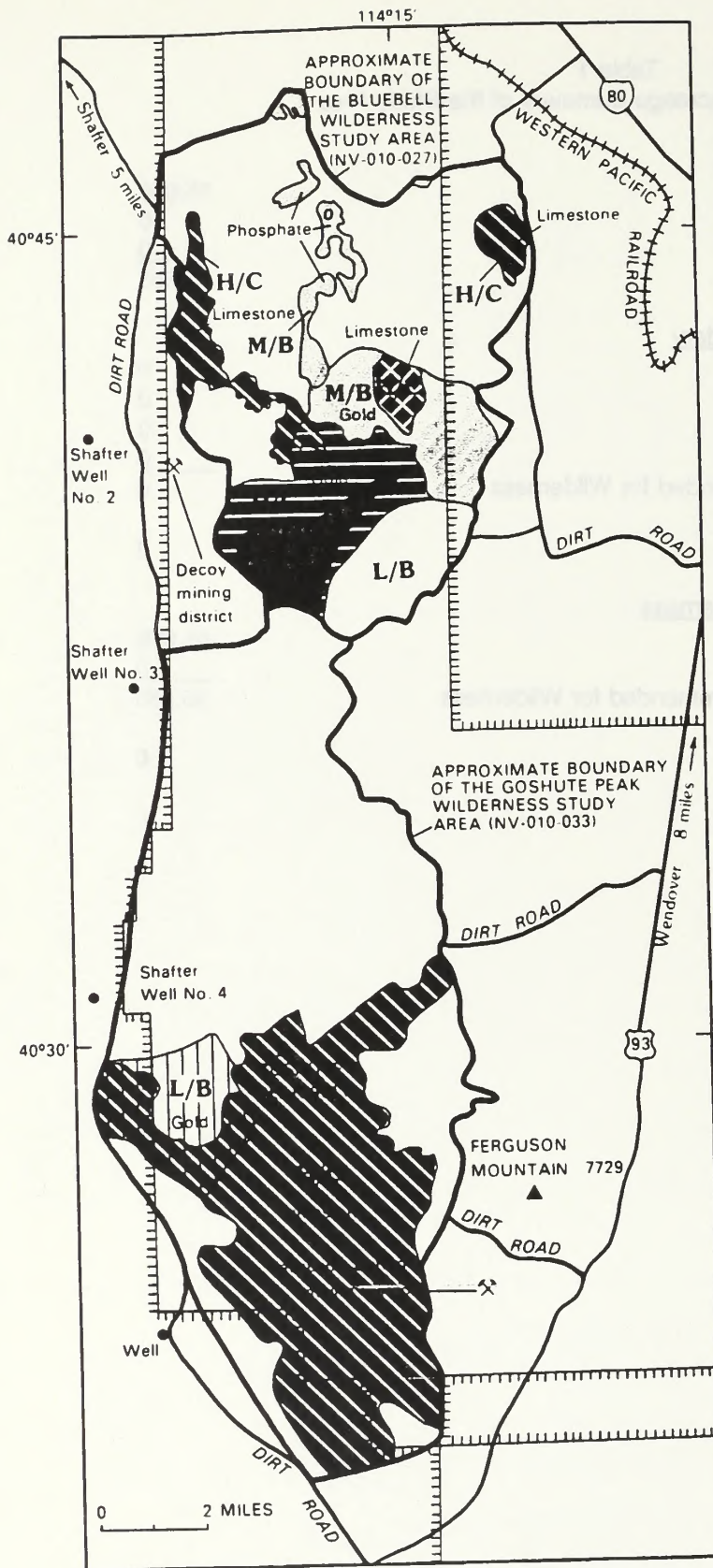


Figure 2. Map showing areas of mineral resource potential in the Bluebell and Goshute Peak Wilderness Study Areas, Elko County, Nevada.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness: The WSA consists of steep, mountainous topography, with numerous canyons radiating from the central ridgeline of mountain peaks. At the lower elevations, the area supports a pinyon-juniper ecosystem, while small stands of mixed conifer forests and bristlecone pine can be found at the higher elevations. Elevations range from 5,300 feet in the foothills to over 8,000 feet on the ridgeline. The WSA is in a major southern migration route for thousands of raptors. While the majority of the WSA is free of man's imprints, unnatural features include approximately 20 miles of vehicle ways, four corrals, one mile of barbed wire fence, two developed springs and ten small earthen reservoirs. These manmade features encompass approximately 30 acres within the WSA. The majority of these intrusions occur in the lower elevations, leaving the higher elevations free of man's imprints. In addition, 8 miles of cherrystem roads penetrate the WSA.

B. Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude exist within the WSA. The WSA is extremely rugged with high mountain peaks, and numerous drainages. This highly dissected topography provides numerous outstanding opportunities for solitude. On the west side of the WSA the drainages are rocky and rugged, while on the east side the drainages are densely wooded. The majority of the WSA is densely wooded, which creates a feeling of total seclusion. This is particularly true in the major drainages such as West Morris, Morris, Morgan Basin, Thirty-Mile, Johnson, Rosebud and Erickson Canyons.

Topographic screening enhances the opportunities for outstanding solitude. The WSA is composed of rugged mountains bordered to the east by rolling foothills and to the west by alluvial fans. The WSA contains about 15 drainages, averaging 2 to 4 miles long, and hundreds of small canyons with moderately dense stands of pinyon pine, limber pine, Utah juniper, white fir and mountain mahogany. Bristlecone pine occurs at higher elevations. The drainages are generally steeper on the west side than on the east, but all are passable on foot. The ridgeline itself is quite rugged with extreme relief. Elevations range from 5,300 to 8,000 feet.

Solitude is sometimes disrupted by military aircraft. The WSA is almost entirely covered by a Military Training Route (MTR) used for low level, high speed exercises and is entirely within a Military Operations Area (MOA). Flight elevations vary, but operations are conducted as low as 100 feet above ground level. Disruption of the silence, which contributes to the feeling of solitude in the Bluebell WSA, is still relatively infrequent. While it is difficult to accurately estimate the actual impact of these military operations, at times aircraft can be seen or heard flying all day. Other times one can travel for several days and not see or hear a military jet. It must be assumed that these impacts will continue to increase as the military continues its growth and expansion in Nevada.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The WSA, with its relatively large size and varied topography, contains outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined recreation experience. The majority of the WSA allows for unconfined freedom of movement due to the many drainages, ridges and peaks.

The 14 mile long WSA, with its many drainages, ridges and peaks provides outstanding opportunities for extended backpacking trips and hiking. The WSA is located in the northern extension of the Goshute Mountains where thousands of raptors migrate annually, providing outstanding opportunities for wildlife observation and photography. Limestone cliffs and rock formations offer outstanding opportunities for both rock climbing and fossil collecting.

D. Special Features: From late August through mid October each year, the Goshute Mountains are the site of a southern migration of thousands of raptors. Information collected from scientific research study

being conducted in the Goshute Peak WSA to the south indicates the Goshute Mountain Range is one of the most productive observation areas in the West. Raptors known to migrate through the area include golden and bald eagles, peregrine falcons, red-tailed hawks, goshawks, American kestrels and Cooper's hawks.

Bristlecone pine trees occur at the higher elevations. These trees are of special interest because they are the oldest living things known and are found in only a few high elevation areas in the United States.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems:

Wilderness designation of this WSA would add 55,665 acres of the Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System. There are presently thirteen areas within the wilderness system with this ecosystem; eight of which are in Nevada. Table 2 summarizes the ecosystem information.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>NATION WIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush Province/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	13	362,556	77	2,250,026
<u>NEVADA</u>				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	8	268,000	45	1,564,740

B. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: This WSA is within a five hour drive of two Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Salt Lake City, Utah and Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of these population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS AREAS</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>Utah</u>				
Salt Lake City	20	1,955,799	242	1,826,904
<u>Idaho</u>				
Boise	22	937,766	172	5,127,039

C. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The 1989 designation of Forest Service wilderness created a wide distribution of wilderness areas within the state, and the addition of this WSA would not significantly contribute to the geographical distribution of wilderness within the National Wilderness Preservation System in Nevada.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The area outside of the mineralized zones can be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. This area is a solid block of public land with no private inholdings or state lands. Areas within mineralized zones cannot be managed as wilderness as they will suffer a loss of wilderness values over the long term due to mining activities. It is anticipated that a large portion of the mineralized area will be developed into an open pit mine, and any reasonable opportunity to manage wilderness values will be forgone.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for approximately 41,324 acres of the Bluebell WSA. This was the acreage recommended for wilderness in the final wilderness EIS. According to the report, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1725-C, Carlin type disseminated gold deposits are found in the WSA (Plate 1 of the bulletin). The report rates 2,000 acres as having identified resources of gold, 3,600 acres as having high potential for gold resources and 3,900 acres as having moderate potential for gold resources. The data for the area identified as having identified gold resources is supported by assays of drill core samples taken by Battle Mountain Exploration Company in Erickson Canyon. Since the USGS report was issued to the public, industry interest in the WSA has increased as evidenced by new mining claims in the WSA. As of October, 1989 there were approximately 425 post-FLPMA mining claims, most of which were within the mineralized and potentially mineralized areas.

Areas with identified resources of limestone and high resource potential for high-purity limestone occur along the western and eastern boundaries of the survey area. The quality is estimated to be about the same as that being mined just north of the WSA.

Moderate potential for phosphate occurs in the north-central portion of the WSA. These phosphates are not considered likely to be as thick or rich as those being mined elsewhere.

Conditions for the generation and accumulation of oil and gas are generally unfavorable and the study area is rated as having low potential.

Impacts on Resources

The following comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all of the alternatives considered.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Economic impacts were considered but dropped during the EIS process because any increases in operating costs associated with wilderness designation would be insignificant.

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (No Wilderness)	All Wilderness	Alternative A (Partial Wilderness)	Alternative B (Partial Wilderness)	Alternative C (Partial Wilderness)
Wilderness Values	The Bluebell WSA's wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be lost due to woodcutting, recreational ORV use and mineral exploration and development.	Wilderness values of naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be retained within the Bluebell WSA, except in the Erickson Canyon area and along the immediate vicinity of cherrystem roads and boundary roads.	On 41,324 acres of naturalness, solitude and opportunities for primitive recreation would be maintained except in Erickson Canyon where an open pit mine would result in the loss of naturalness on 300 acres. Sights and sounds of mining would result in the loss of solitude on 5,000 acres. Adjacent to the closed ways, naturalness and solitude would be enhanced. Adjacent to the cherrystem roads and boundary roads solitude would be locally impacted by vehicle travel. On the 14,341 acres not designated, naturalness would be lost on 22 acres due to 2 miles of mining exploration roads and 10 miles of seismic lines. Opportunities for solitude and naturalness would be lost on 2,400 acres due to harvesting of Christmas trees and firewood.	25,830 acres designated as wilderness would maintain long-term naturalness, solitude and opportunities for primitive recreation. In the vicinity of the closed ways, naturalness and solitude would be enhanced. In the vicinity of cherry-stem roads and boundary roads, solitude would be adversely impacted due to continued motorized vehicle use. Wilderness values that exist in Erickson Canyon area would be lost on 5,000 acres due to development of an open pit mine. On the 29,835 acres managed for naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, reduced due to continued recreational ORV use, harvest of woodland products and exploration activities.	The majority of the 48,308 acres designated as wilderness would retain naturalness, solitude and opportunities for primitive recreation. In the immediate vicinity of the closed ways, naturalness and solitude would be enhanced. In the immediate vicinity of cherrystem roads and boundary roads, continued motorized vehicle use would impact solitude. On the 7,357 acres managed for uses other than wilderness, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be reduced because of continued recreational ORV use, mineral exploration activities, and harvest of woodland products.
Recreational ORV Use	There would be no impacts to recreational ORV use.	Recreational ORV use of 480 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.	Recreational ORV use would be eliminated on the 41,324 acres designated wilderness and 310 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. On the 14,341 acres not designated wilderness, recreational ORV use would continue.	Vehicle use would be eliminated on the 25,830 acres designated wilderness. 120 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. On the 29,835 acres not designated wilderness, recreational ORV use would increase but not exceed 360 visitor days annually.	Recreational ORV use would be eliminated on the 48,308 acres designated wilderness and 400 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.
Development of Mineral Resources	There would be no impacts on mineral exploration and development in the Bluebell WSA.	Precious metals and oil and gas exploration activities in the Bluebell WSA would be foregone due to withdrawal of the wilderness from mineral entry. A precious metals open pit mine would be developed in Erickson Canyon on claims existing prior to designation which can support a pre-designation discovery.	Exploration for mineral resources would be precluded on the 41,324 acres designated as wilderness and withdrawn from mineral entry. This includes 30 miles of seismic lines along the eastern border. An open pit precious metals mine would be developed in the wilderness area in Erickson Canyon on claims existing prior to designation which can support a pre-designation discovery. It would include 20 miles of new roads, tailings, waste dumps, heap leach pads and the pit.	In the 25,830 acres designated wilderness, an open pit precious metals mine would be developed in Erickson Canyon on claims existing prior to designation which support a pre-designation discovery. It would include 20 miles of new roads, tailings, waste dumps, heap leach pads & the pit. On 29,835 acres not designated, exploration for precious metals may result in 2 miles of access roads and 20 drill pads. Oil and gas exploration would include 40 miles of seismic lines on the western and eastern borders.	Exploration for mineral resources would be precluded on the 48,308 acres designated as wilderness including 40 miles of seismic lines along the eastern and western borders. An open pit mine would be developed in the Erickson Canyon area on claims existing prior to designation which support a pre-designation discovery. In the 7,357 acres not designated, exploration for mineral resources would result in 2 miles of exploratory access roads and 20 drill pads.
Woodland Harvest	There would be no impact on woodland product harvest.	The WSA would not be available for Christmas tree and firewood cutting. The harvest of up to 600 Christmas trees and 475 cords of firewood per year would be foregone, reducing the resource area's annual harvest of Christmas trees by 17% and firewood by 7%.	Wilderness designation would preclude the harvest of woodland products on 41,324 acres reducing the resource area's annual harvest of Christmas trees by 13% (445 trees) and firewood by 5% (350 cords).	Designation of 25,830 acres would preclude harvest of up to 275 Christmas trees and 220 cords of firewood reducing the resource area's annual harvest of Christmas trees by 8% and firewood by 3%.	Designation of 48,308 acres would preclude harvest of up to 520 Christmas trees and 415 cords of firewood reducing the resource area's annual harvest of Christmas trees by 15% and firewood by 6%. In the 7,357 acres not designated harvest would continue and is expected to reach 80 Christmas trees and 60 cords of firewood annually.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public Involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the Inventory process and early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness values.

A series of public meetings and public hearings were held in association with the study phase and draft environmental impact statement for the WSAs within the Wells Resource Area. The meetings were a combination workshop and scoping meeting and were held in Elko and Reno, Nevada. Formal public hearings were later held in Reno, Elko, and Wells, Nevada.

Oral and written comments on the draft EIS were received from 42 individuals, organizations and agencies. In general, four commentors supported more wilderness than the proposed action, seven commentors supported the proposed action, 25 commentors supported less wilderness than the proposed action and six commentors had no position.

Comments which specifically mentioned the WSA included comments on the various alternatives for adding and deleting portions of the WSA and mineral potential.

No comments were received from county agencies or officials. The Governor of Nevada, in his consistency letter of March 27, 1984, supported the Bureau's original proposed action for a partial wilderness recommendation except for an area on the west side of the WSA with good potential for metallics.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated the Final EIS should clarify what Interim management measures will be in effect during the wilderness classification process; clarify if off-road vehicle use in the WSAs prior to designation would affect the potential wilderness status of the WSAs; and whether access for mining, oil and gas exploration or other development will be allowed during the wilderness designation process. The EPA also stated that the final wilderness EIS should discuss how USGS/USBM mineral surveys will be used to modify the acres recommended for wilderness. The U.S. Air Force stated they support alternatives that do not restrict military overflights.

There was one written comment received on the final EIS from the EPA which supported the proposed action and recommended that the final recommendation include a statement that water and air quality will be best protected under wilderness designation.

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GOSHUTE PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 69,770 acres

The Goshute Peak (NV-010-033) is located approximately 100 miles east of Elko, Nevada and 20 miles southwest of West Wendover, Nevada in the southern extension of the Goshute Mountain Range. The entire WSA is BLM land with no split estate or private inholdings. (See Table 1). With the exception of approximately 2 miles, the WSA boundary is formed by dirt roads. The northern boundary is formed by the Morgan Pass Road. The eastern and western boundaries are each formed by an unnamed dirt road which roughly runs along the foothills, paralleling the mountain range. Approximately 2 miles of the southeastern WSA boundary is formed by a telephone line access road.

The WSA is generally oblong in shape, measuring 18 miles long and two to eight miles wide. Elevations range from 6,000 feet in the foothills to 9,500 feet on the ridgeline. The WSA is steep and mountainous with numerous canyons radiating from the central ridgeline of mountain peaks. At the lower elevations, the area supports a pinyon-juniper ecosystem, while small stands of mixed conifer forests can be found at the higher elevations. A small amount of benchland exists along the southeastern portion of the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Wells Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement finalized in July, 1987. There were five alternatives analyzed for the Goshute Peak WSA in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative which is the recommendation in this report, a partial alternative where 45,618 acres would be designated as wilderness and 24,152 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, a partial alternative where 65,585 acres would be designated as wilderness and 4,185 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, an all wilderness alternative and a no wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 61,004 acres recommended for wilderness 8,766 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 61,004 acres as wilderness and release 8,766 acres for uses other than wilderness (Map 1). All wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long-term. The partial wilderness alternative, the recommendation of this report, would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The 61,004 acre area is recommended for wilderness because it is natural and provides outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The 8,766 acre area is recommended for uses other than wilderness due to minerals potential and an existing telephone line right-of-way and highway right-of-way.

The imprints of man are confined to the lower elevations and are substantially unnoticeable in the WSA as a whole. Naturalness is enhanced at the higher elevations by the lack of imprints of man.

Opportunities for solitude are outstanding throughout the majority of the WSA due to extreme ruggedness and numerous densely wooded drainages. The majority of the WSA is densely wooded. This vegetative screening, plus the rugged topography, creates a feeling of total seclusion. White fir, limber pine, bristlecone pine and mountain mahogany add variety to the composition of the vegetative screening, enhancing the feeling of solitude.

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are outstanding. The 18 mile long WSA, with its many drainages, ridges and peaks provides outstanding opportunities for extended backpacking trips and hiking. Limestone formations offer outstanding opportunities for both rock climbing and fossil collecting. Thousands of raptors migrate south along the ridges of the WSA annually, providing outstanding opportunities for observing and photographing a wide variety of raptors. After a long journey across the Great Salt Lake Desert, the raptors spend up to several weeks resting before continuing their trip south. One can easily observe these birds riding thermals rising from the precipitous cliffs of the Goshute Range in search of unsuspecting prey. It is not uncommon to observe bald eagles, and the opportunity even exists to see the endangered peregrine falcon. Also of importance within the area recommended for wilderness is the bald eagle winter roost in the southern portion of the Goshute Range.

The area is manageable as wilderness due to the extreme ruggedness and the relative inaccessibility of much of the area. The close proximity of the WSA to Wendover and Salt Lake City and the demand for firewood and Christmas trees will result in unauthorized woodcutting, increasing management costs.

Within the area recommended for wilderness, conflicts with other resources are limited. Grazing use will be allowed to continue. The area has no identified mineral resources, and it has low mineral resource potential for undiscovered deposits of all metallic minerals, oil, gas and coal, and for geothermal energy. Almost the entire southern half of the area is rated as having identified resources of limestone and a high potential for high-purity limestone. However, the widespread occurrence of limestone in other locations nearer to rail lines and highways makes development unlikely.

A scientific research project for studying migrating raptors has been in operation in the WSA since 1979. The project site consists of a temporary camp and several trap stations located on the ridgeline above Christmas Tree Canyon. The project operates from late August to early November each year, and the research data collected is considered important for baseline wildlife inventory data, future wilderness management planning and ecological condition monitoring. BLM provides yearly logistical support by transporting water and supplies to the project site. On a limited basis, this support is proposed for continuation following designation. Impacts of the operation are localized and temporary and are not considered significant enough to preclude continuing the study.

The 8,766 acres not recommended for wilderness are comprised of three parcels, A at the northern tip of the WSA, B along the northeastern boundary of the WSA and C at the southern tip of the WSA. Parcels A and B are not recommended because they have good potential for metallic minerals based on GEM data. These parcels were not studied by USGS because they were not recommended for wilderness designation. In these areas, the need to make available the potential resources of gold outweighs the wilderness values. If these minerals are developed, the wilderness values on less than 20 acres would be lost. However, the impacts would be spread throughout the area, and the sights and sounds from mining activities would impact almost the entire area in both parcels.

Area C is not recommended for wilderness to allow for future placement of communication and energy facilities within the utility corridor that follows the highway, to remove an existing telephone right-of-way and highway right-of-way inadvertently included in the WSA and because a portion of the area has good potential for gold based on GEM data. This parcel was not studied by USGS. A designated utility corridor, which follows US Alternate 93, penetrates one to one and a half miles into the southern portion of the WSA. Also within the area are telephone and highway rights-of-way which penetrate 200 feet into the WSA along four miles of the boundary. The telephone line was removed during the summer of 1990 and the right-of-way is expected to be relinquished. The need to retain the corridor for future placement of utility and communication lines and the need to retain the existing highway right-of-way outweigh the wilderness values. In addition, if the minerals are developed, activities from this development would cause a loss of wilderness values on approximately 20 acres, but the sights and sounds from these impacts would be spread enough throughout the area to impact almost the entire area C.



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T29N

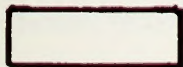
R67E

R68E

R69E



RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS -



RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS -



LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



SPLIT ESTATE - NONE



STATE - NONE



PRIVATE - NONE



MILES

Goshute Peak Proposal

NV-010-033
March 1990

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Table 1
Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	69,770
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	<u>0</u>
Total	69,770
 <u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>	
BLM (within WSA)	61,004
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	61,004
 Inholdings (state, private)	 0
 <u>Within the Area Recommended for Nonwilderness</u>	
BLM	8,766
Split Estate	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	8,766
 Inholdings (state, private)	 0

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness: The steep, mountainous topography with small stands of mixed conifer forests and the numerous canyons radiating from the central ridgeline of mountain peaks provide outstanding naturalness. Enhancing this naturalness is the absence of man's imprints in the higher elevations. Even the scattered imprints of man in the lower elevations do not detract from the naturalness of the area because of the dense pinyon-juniper woodlands. A small amount of benchland exists along the southeastern portion of the WSA. Man's imprints in the WSA consist of approximately 27 miles of vehicle ways, an old deer hunter's cabin, a deer hunter's camp, one corral, one mile of barbed wire fence, one developed spring and a raptor counting and trapping area which includes four blinds made of plywood. The majority of these intrusions penetrate less than one mile into the WSA, leaving the higher elevations free of intrusions. In addition, a one mile cherrystem road penetrates the WSA boundary and a scientific research project on raptor populations is being conducted atop one of the ridges.

B. Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude exist within the WSA. The WSA is extremely rugged with high mountain peaks, rocky cliffs and numerous drainages. On the west side of the WSA the drainages are rocky and rugged, while on the east side the drainages are densely wooded. The majority of the WSA is densely wooded, which creates a feeling of total seclusion.

The topographic screening in the area is excellent. The WSA is composed of rugged mountains bordered to the east by rolling foothills and to the west by alluvial fans. About 15 drainages, averaging two to five miles long, wind through moderately dense stands of pinyon pine, limber pine, Utah juniper, white fir and mountain mahogany. The drainages are generally steeper on the west side than on the east, but all are

passable on foot. The ridgeline itself is quite rugged with extreme relief. Elevations range from 6,000 to 9,500 feet.

Vegetative screening is outstanding because of the amount, distribution and variety. Limber pine, Utah juniper, white fir, mountain mahogany and bristlecone pine provide excellent screening in the higher elevations, while pinyon pine and Utah juniper provide outstanding screening in the lower elevations. Solitude is sometimes disrupted by military aircraft. While only the very northern portion of the WSA is within a Military Training Route (MTR) used for low level, high speed exercises, aircraft are not confined to the MTR and fly over the entire WSA. In addition, the southeastern portion of the WSA lies within restricted airspace. Flight elevations vary, but operations are conducted as low as 100 feet above ground level. Disruption of the silence, which contributes to the feeling of solitude in the Goshute Peak WSA, is still relatively infrequent. While it is difficult to accurately estimate the actual impact of these military operations, at times aircraft can be seen or heard flying all day. Other times one can travel for several days and not see or hear a military jet. It must be assumed that these impacts will continue to increase as the military continues its growth and expansion in Nevada.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The WSA, with its relatively large size and varied topography, contains outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined recreation experience. The majority of the WSA allows for unconfined freedom of movement due to many drainages, ridges and peaks.

The 18 mile long WSA, with its many drainages, ridges and peaks provides outstanding opportunities for extended backpacking trips and hiking. Thousands of raptors migrate over the WSA annually, providing outstanding opportunities for wildlife observation and photography. Enhancing these opportunities is the potential to observe bald eagles during the winter. Limestone cliffs and rock formations offer outstanding opportunities for both rock climbing and fossil collecting.

D. Special Features: From late August through mid October each year, the Goshute Mountains are the site of a southern migration of thousands of raptors. Information collected from a study site within the WSA indicates this area is one of the most productive observation areas in the West. Raptors known to migrate through the area include golden and bald eagles, peregrine falcons, red-tailed hawks, goshawks, American kestrels and Cooper's hawks.

Another special feature at the southern end of the WSA is a bald eagle winter roost. The roost is also used by migrating bald eagles.

Bristlecone pine trees occur at the higher elevations. These trees are of special interest because they are the oldest living things known and are found in only a few high elevation areas in the United States.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: Wilderness designation of this WSA would add 69,770 acres of the Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System. There are presently thirteen areas within the wilderness system which contain this ecosystem; eight of which are in Nevada. Table 2 summarizes the ecosystem information.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>NATION WIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush Province/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	13	362,556	77	2,250,026
<u>NEVADA</u>				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	8	268,000	45	1,564,740

B. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: This WSA is within a five hour drive of two Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Salt Lake City, Utah and Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of these population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>Utah</u>				
Salt Lake City	20	1,955,799	42	1,826,904
<u>Idaho</u>				
Boise	22	937,766	172	5,127,039

C. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The 1989 designation of Forest Service wilderness created a wide distribution of wilderness areas within the state, and the addition of the Goshute Peak WSA would not significantly contribute to the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System in Nevada. However, designation of the Goshute Peak WSA would provide a wilderness area that is probably unsurpassed in the West for numbers of migrating raptors, justifying its addition to the NWPS.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The entire Goshute Peak WSA can reasonably be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. The area is a solid block of public land with no private inholdings or state lands. With the exception of the three parcels not recommended for wilderness, the WSA is rated as low potential for undiscovered deposits of all metallic minerals, oil, gas, coal, and the identified resources limestone are not likely to be developed. Any development of potential minerals in the areas not recommended for wilderness would be peripheral impacts and would not impair wilderness values in the WSA as a whole. The highway right-of-way in the southeastern portion of the WSA would detract from the wilderness setting but only in a localized area. This would not overall impair wilderness values. Unauthorized woodcutting activities are anticipated to continue, requiring increased management.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for the 61,004 acres of the Goshute Peak WSA recommended for wilderness. According to the report, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1725-C, a small area just south of Black Point is regarded as having a low mineral resource potential for gold and a low mineral resource potential for oil and gas. The report identified the WSA as having a high mineral resource potential for high-purity limestone. As of October, 1989 there were approximately 270 post-FLPMA mining claims in the WSA. 160 of these were located in areas not recommended for wilderness. Outside of the area studied by U.S.G.S., two parcels in the northern and one in the southern portions of the WSA were rated as good potential for metallic minerals through the GEM studies.

Impacts on Resources

The following comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all of the alternatives considered.

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (Partial Wilderness)	All Wilderness	No Wilderness	Alternative A (Partial Wilderness)	Alternative B (Partial Wilderness)
Wilderness Values	For 61,004 acres designated as wilderness, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be retained. In the immediate areas of the closed ways, naturalness and solitude would be enhanced. In the immediate vicinity of cherry-stem roads and boundary roads, continued use of motorized vehicle would adversely impact solitude. On the 9,766 acres managed for other than wilderness, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be reduced due to continued recreational ORV use, harvest of woodland products and mineral exploration activities.	Wilderness values of naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be retained within the Goshute Peak WSA, except along cherry-stem roads, and boundary roads where wilderness values would be adversely impacted by motorized vehicles.	The Goshute Peak WSA's values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be lost over the long-term due to mineral exploration, woodcutting and ORV use.	For 45,618 acres designated as wilderness, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be retained. In the immediate vicinity of the closed ways, naturalness and solitude would be enhanced. In the immediate vicinity of cherry-stem roads and boundary roads, solitude would be adversely impacted due to continued use of motorized vehicles. On the 24,152 acres managed for uses other than wilderness, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be reduced due to continued recreational ORV use, harvest of woodland products and mineral exploration activities.	For 65,585 acres designated as wilderness, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be retained. In the immediate vicinity of the closed ways, naturalness and solitude would be enhanced. In the immediate vicinity of cherry-stem roads and boundary roads, solitude would be adversely impacted due to continued use of motorized vehicles. On the 4,185 acres managed for uses other than wilderness, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be reduced due to continued recreational ORV use, harvest of woodland products and mineral exploration activities.
Recreational ORV Use	Recreational ORV use would be eliminated on 61,004 acres designated wilderness. 960 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. On 9,766 acres not designated wilderness, recreational ORV use would continue but would not exceed 240 visitor days annually.	Recreational ORV use of 1200 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.	There would be no impacts to recreational ORV use.	Vehicle use would be eliminated on the 45,618 acres designated wilderness. 530 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. On 24,152 acres not designated wilderness, recreational ORV use would increase but not exceed 670 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future.	Vehicle use would be eliminated on the 65,585 acres designated wilderness. 530 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. On 4,185 acres not designated wilderness, recreational ORV use would increase but not exceed 670 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future.
Development of Mineral Resources	61,004 acres would be withdrawn from mineral entry. Exploration for oil and gas including three miles of seismic lines on the southeastern border would be precluded. The 9,766 acres not designated would remain open to all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Exploration for precious metals would result in 12 miles of exploratory access roads and 120 drill pads. Exploration for oil and gas would result in 7 miles of seismic lines.	All 69,770 acres would be withdrawn from mineral entry. Exploration for precious metals as well as oil and gas would be foregone.	There would be no impacts to exploration for mineral resources in the Goshute Peak WSA.	There would be no impacts to exploration and development of mineral resources.	65,585 acres would be withdrawn from mineral entry. Exploration for oil and gas would be precluded including 7 miles of seismic lines and 10 miles of new roads along the southeastern border. The 4,185 acres not designated would remain open to all mineral entry and leasing. Exploration for mineral resources would result in 2 miles of new access roads, 20 drill pads, and 3 miles of seismic lines.
Woodland Product Harvest	Wilderness designation would preclude harvest of woodland products on 61,004 acres, reducing the resource area's annual harvest of Christmas trees by 15% (90 trees) and firewood by 10% (77 cords).	Designation would close the WSA to Christmas tree and firewood cutting. The harvest of up to 600 Christmas trees and 770 cords of firewood per year would be foregone, reducing the resource area's annual harvest of Christmas trees by 17% and firewood by 11%.	There would be no impact on woodland product harvest in the Goshute Peak WSA.	Wilderness designation would preclude harvest of woodland products on 45,618 acres, reducing the resource area's annual harvest of Christmas trees by 15% (90 trees) and for firewood by 10% (77 cords). In the non-suitable area 65 Christmas trees and 100 cords of firewood would be harvested annually.	Wilderness designation would preclude harvest of woodland products on 65,585 acres; under this alternative all 600 Christmas trees and 770 cords of firewood would be precluded from harvest, reducing the resource area's annual harvest for Christmas trees by 17% and for firewood by 11%.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Economic Impacts were considered but dropped during the EIS process because any increases in operating costs associated with wilderness designation would be insignificant.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public Involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory process and early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness values.

A series of public meetings and public hearings were held in association with the study phase and draft environmental impact statement for the WSAs within the Wells Resource Area. The meetings were a combination workshop and scoping meeting and were held in Elko and Reno, Nevada. Formal public hearings were later held in Reno, Elko, and Wells, Nevada.

Oral and written comments on the draft EIS were received from 42 individuals, organizations and agencies. In general, four commentors supported more wilderness than the proposed action, seven commentors supported the proposed action, 25 commentors supported less wilderness than the proposed action and six commentors had no position.

Comments which specifically mentioned the WSA included comments on the current raptor counting and trapping project (both for and against), the need to protect the raptor migration areas, various alternatives for adding and deleting portions of the WSA, mineral potential and conflicts with utility and highway corridors.

No comments were received from county agencies or officials. The Governor of Nevada, in his consistency letter of March 27, 1984, supported the Bureau's original preferred alternative except for an area on the east side of the WSA with Good Potential for metallics.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated the Final EIS should clarify what interim management measures will be in effect during the wilderness classification process; clarify if off-road vehicle use in the WSAs prior to designation would affect the potential wilderness status of the WSAs; and whether access for mining, oil and gas exploration or other development will be allowed during the wilderness designation process. The EPA also stated that the FEIS should discuss how USGS/Bureau of Mines mineral surveys will be used to modify the acres identified as suitable. The U.S. Air Force stated they support alternatives that do not restrict military overflights.

There was one written comment received on the final EIS from the EPA which supported the proposed action and recommended that the final recommendation include a statement that water and air quality will be best protected under wilderness designation.

The Board of Directors of the Local Board and Executive Committee is pleased to announce the results of the recent election. The Board has elected the following members to the Executive Committee for the next year: [List of names and positions].

A series of public meetings and public hearings were held in accordance with the requirements of the Water Pollution Control Act. The Board has received and considered the comments of the public and has taken appropriate action.

One and a half copies of the final EIS were made available to the public for review. In general, the comments received have been helpful and the Board has taken appropriate action to address the concerns raised. The Board has approved the final EIS and the proposed project.

Comments received from the public during the public hearings have been carefully reviewed. The Board has taken appropriate action to address the concerns raised. The Board has approved the final EIS and the proposed project.

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SOUTH PEQUOP WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 41,090 acres

The South Pequop WSA (NV-010-035) is located in southeastern Elko County, approximately 60 air miles southeast of the town of Elko, in the south end of the Pequop Mountains. The WSA contains 41,090 acres of BLM lands with no split estate or private inholdings. (See Table 1). The northern WSA boundary and a portion of the western boundary are formed by BLM Road 1023. From the intersection of BLM Road 1023 and BLM Road 1121, the boundary heads east along the Ninemile Canyon Road, snaking its way in a U-shape back to the west to a point in section 25, T.32 N., R. 66 E., where the boundary cuts cross-country in a southwesterly direction to intersect with BLM Road 1038, which forms the southwestern WSA boundary. The southeastern boundary is formed by a dirt road which intersects BLM Road 1038 in section 20, T.31 N., R. 65 E. This unnamed dirt road curves north, then east, intersecting BLM Road 1054. The eastern WSA boundary is formed in part by BLM Road 1054 and section lines along sections 6, 7 and 8, T. 31 N., R. 65 E. Along section 6, the boundary exits the section line to a dirt road going west for approximately three-fourths of a mile, then heads north cross-country to a well. From this well the boundary follows the dirt road north to BLM Road 1023.

The South Pequop WSA is comprised of a U-shaped main ridgeline which trends northeast to southwest. Broad vistas of the Basin and Range Province are available from the ridgeline. Elevations range from 5,650 feet in the lower benchlands to 8,950 feet on the ridgeline. Portions of the WSA contain rugged, dissected topography densely forested with pinyon pine, juniper, white fir, limber pine and mountain mahogany. Small scatterings of bristlecone pine, the oldest living thing known to man, occur at the higher elevations. These trees are only found in a few high elevation areas in the United States. Collectable fossils are found weathering out of the limestone formations.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Wells Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement finalized in July, 1987. There were four alternatives analyzed for the South Pequop WSA in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative which is the recommendation in this report, another partial wilderness alternative where 37,573 acres would be designated as wilderness and 3,517 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, an all wilderness alternative and a no wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 34,544 acres recommended for wilderness 6,546 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 34,544 acres as wilderness and release 6,546 acres for uses other than wilderness (Map 1). All wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long-term. The partial wilderness alternative, the recommendation of this report, would be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The 34,544 acre area is recommended for wilderness because it is natural and provides outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The densely forested, highly dissected portions of the WSA provide a setting untouched by man. The 11 miles of vehicle ways within the area are substantially unnoticeable and do not detract from the area's naturalness.

Opportunities for solitude are outstanding within the numerous drainages extending from the central ridgeline. The dissected topography, along with dense white fir, limber pine and pinyon juniper stands,

offers a visitor a sense of remoteness and total isolation from other portions of the area.

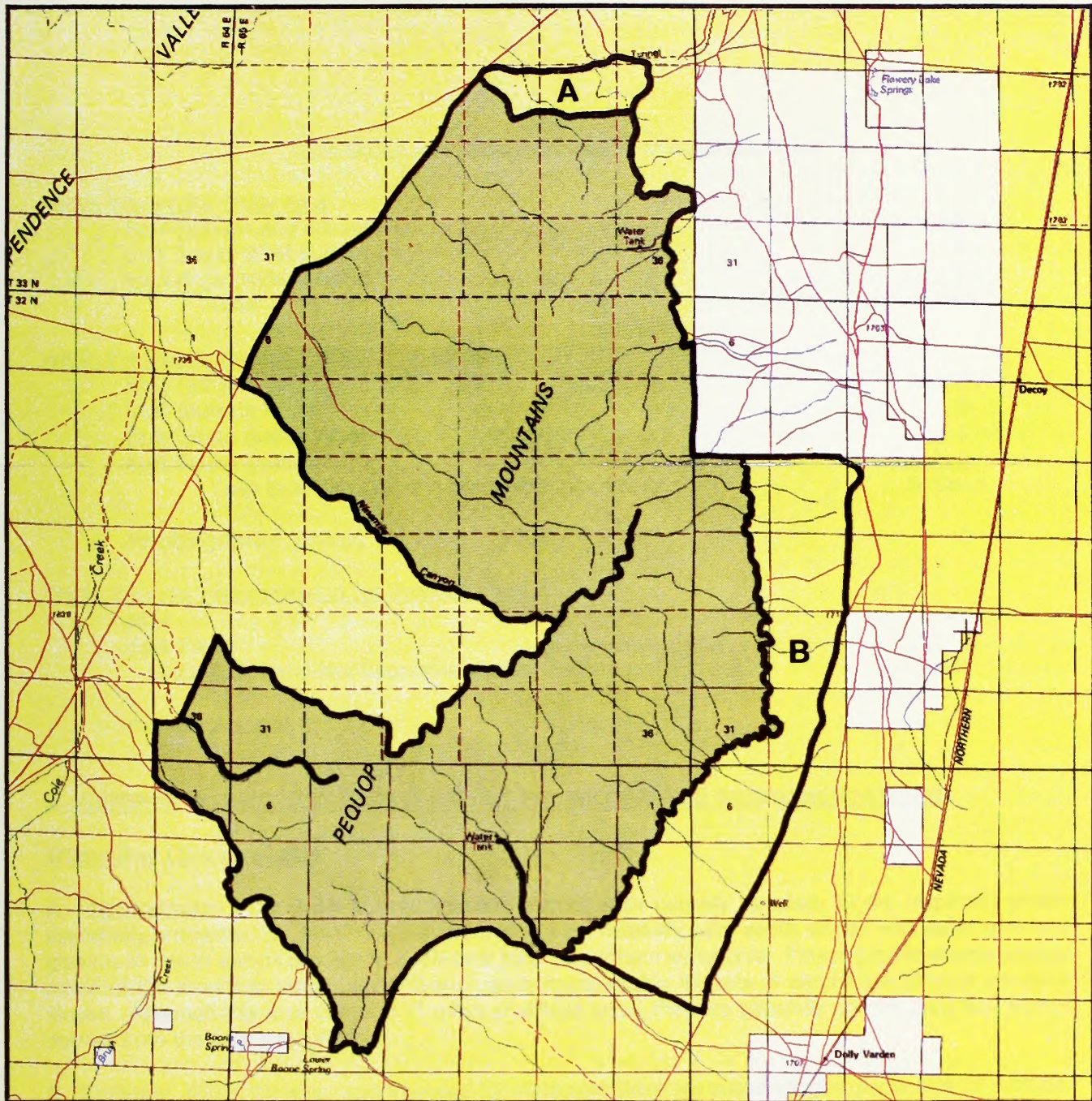
The majority of the area allows for unconfined freedom of movement due to the many drainages, ridges and peaks. Outstanding opportunities for hiking and backpacking are available along the ridges and canyons. The east-west drainages are numerous, and each affords a challenging and rewarding hike varying from two to eight miles from the lower slopes to the highest ridgeline. Most of these canyons are devoid of evidence of previous travelers, and one has the feeling that few, if any, people have explored many of the draws and side slopes away from the main ridgeline. Scenic vistas are outstanding at the higher elevations, and views of up to 70 miles are available in some directions.

Within the area recommended for wilderness USGS has identified two zones of moderate potential for gold, silver, lead, zinc and copper. One zone, comprised of approximately 500 acres, lies adjacent to the southern boundary of area A which is not recommended for wilderness (see discussion on area A below). Wilderness values within the 500 acres are considered higher than potential mineral values where mineral development is not anticipated even without wilderness designation. The other zone of potential mineralization is north and adjacent to the Ninemile Canyon Road and encompasses approximately 5,600 acres. The wilderness values in this area are also considered more important than a rating based on faint indicators of mineralization.

Within the area recommended for wilderness, conflicts with other resource uses are essentially nonexistent. Grazing use will be allowed to continue. As of January, 1990 there were four mining claims in the WSA. Although the area recommended for wilderness contains identified phosphate resources and areas with moderate potential for phosphate resources, these deposits and potential deposits are not considered likely to be large enough to be economically mined. Certain factors adversely affect the prospect for commercial development of the phosphatic deposits: The beds dip steeply and therefore would have to be mined underground, and the tonnage apparently available is far below the minimum requirements for a viable commercial deposit. Although it is close to a railroad, the WSA is far from agricultural and industrial markets. In the areas rated as moderate potential for gold, silver lead, zinc and copper, development is not anticipated even without wilderness designation.

The 6,546 acres not recommended for wilderness are comprised of two parcels, one at the northern tip of the WSA (A) and one along the eastern side of the WSA (B). Several factors contributed to the recommendation for area A. The northern boundary of the WSA lies adjacent to the Western Pacific railroad line. Sights and sounds from trains adversely impact solitude in the area because it is comprised of low, rolling hills that do not provide adequate screening. The area is also identified as having moderate potential for gold, silver, lead, zinc and copper. There are no outstanding wilderness values until one reaches the ridgeline which forms the northern boundary of the area recommended for wilderness. These factors all combine to override the less than outstanding wilderness values that exist in area A.

The majority of area B is comprised of gently sloping, lower elevation benchland which lacks opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The gentle terrain lends itself to potential vegetative manipulations such as seedings for livestock management. A portion of the eastern WSA border is formed by private land in sections 17 and 18 of T.32N., R.66E. Future activity on these private lands could adversely affect wilderness values. A large portion of the area is rated as good potential for phosphates. The majority of the vehicle ways in the WSA are in area B, and the gentle terrain is easily accessible for ORV use. Although none of these factors alone were considered important enough to outweigh wilderness values, the combination of all, plus the lack of outstanding wilderness values in area B, was considered more important than preserving the marginal wilderness values.

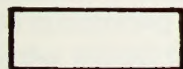


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R65E

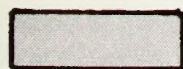
R66E



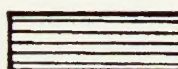
RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS -



SPLIT ESTATE - NONE



RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS -



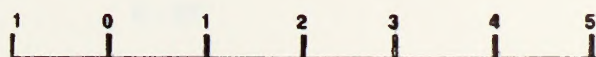
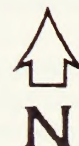
STATE - NONE



LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



PRIVATE - NONE



MILES

South Pequop Proposal

NV-010-035
March 1990

Table 1
Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	41,090
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	<u>0</u>
Total	41,090
 <u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>	
BLM (within WSA)	34,544
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	34,544
 Inholdings(state, private)	 0
 <u>Within the Area Recommended for Nonwilderness</u>	
BLM	6,546
Split Estate	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	6,546
 Inholdings (state, private)	 0

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness: The WSA is predominately natural with densely forested, highly dissected terrain essentially untouched by man. Vegetation ranges from relatively bare south slopes with sagebrush and grasses to dense stands of white fir and limber pine on northern exposures. Pinyon-juniper stands occupy much of the mountain range, while dense, nearly impenetrable thickets of shrubs are present on many slopes. Although this area contains 11 miles of vehicle ways, they are generally unnoticeable and do not detract from the area's naturalness.

B. Solitude: Within the area recommended for wilderness there are outstanding opportunities for solitude. The area consists of a north-south trending mountain range dominated by a knife-edged ridgeline. Numerous drainages extending both east and west from the high ridgeline form steep canyons that are visually separated from each other. Dense vegetation and timber in these canyons provides outstanding seclusion. Although the less vegetated southern exposures do not provide good screening, overall the WSA has outstanding opportunities for solitude. In the area not recommended for wilderness the topography is gentler without the dense and dissected woodlands, and opportunities for solitude are low to nonexistent.

Solitude in the WSA is sometimes disrupted by military aircraft. The WSA is almost entirely covered by a Military Training Route (MTR) used for low level, high speed exercises. Flight elevations vary, but operations are conducted as low as 100 feet above ground level. Disruption of the silence, which contributes to the feeling of solitude in the WSA, is still relatively infrequent. While it is difficult to estimate the actual impact of these military operations, at times aircraft can be seen or heard flying all day. Other times one can travel for several days and not see or hear a military jet. It must be assumed that these impacts will continue to

increase as the military continues its growth and expansion in Nevada.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The area recommended for wilderness contains outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined recreation experience. Outstanding opportunities for hiking and backpacking are available along the ridgelines and canyons of the mountain range. Numerous camping opportunities are found in the side canyons and along the main ridgeline. Scenic vistas for up to 70 miles in some directions are available at higher elevations. The WSA provides outstanding opportunities to collect invertebrate fossils or to view bristlecone pine trees, the oldest living things known to man.

There are no opportunities for outstanding primitive and unconfined recreation in the areas recommended for nonwilderness. The gentle topography offers few hiking or backpacking challenges.

D. Special Features: Bristlecone pine trees occur at the higher elevations. These trees are of special interest because they are the oldest living things known and are found in only a few high elevations areas in the United States.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: Wilderness designation of this WSA would add 41,090 acres of the Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System. There are presently thirteen areas within the wilderness system which contain this ecosystem; eight of which are in Nevada. Table 2 summarizes the ecosystem information.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>NATION WIDE</u>				
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<u>NEVADA</u>				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	8	268,000	45	1,564,740

B. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: This WSA is within a five hour drive of two Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Salt Lake City, Utah and Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of these population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>Utah</u>				
Salt Lake City	20	1,955,799	42	1,826,904
<u>Idaho</u>				
Boise	22	937,766	172	5,127,039

C. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The 1989 designation of Forest Service wilderness created a wide distribution of wilderness areas within the state, and the addition of the South Pequop WSA would not significantly contribute to the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System in Nevada. However, adding the South Pequop WSA to the NWPS is justified because of its forests of bristlecone pine, one of the oldest known plant species.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The entire WSA can reasonably be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. The area is a solid block of public land with no private inholdings, state lands or rights-of-way. As of January, 1990 there were four mining claims in the WSA. The WSA is rated as low potential for undiscovered deposits of oil, gas, coal and geothermal energy. Although the WSA contains zones of moderate potential for gold, silver, lead, zinc and copper, it is not anticipated that any of these minerals would be developed. The potential phosphate resources are not considered of high enough grade to be developed.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for the 34,544 acres of the South Pequop WSA recommended for wilderness. The survey was conducted from 1984 through 1985. According to the report, USGS/BM Bulletin 1725-B, the study area has two areas in which the geochemical data suggest the possibility of concealed deposits of gold, silver, lead, zinc and copper. The areas are regarded as having a moderate resource potential for these metals, but there is no indication of the grade or dimensions of these potential deposits. One area is at the northern end of the study area and comprises approximately 500 acres, and the other area is north of Ninemile Canyon and comprises approximately 5600 acres. Neither area was identified in the GEM report for the WSA. The USGS/BM report also identified areas of moderate potential for phosphate resources and a small area of identified (actual) phosphate resources. This corresponds with the GEM data used during the wilderness study process. The entire study area has a low resource potential for oil and gas. As of January 1, 1990 there were four post-FLPMA claims in the WSA. Three were located in 1988 in the southeast corner of the WSA and one was located in 1989 north of Ninemile Canyon.

Impacts on Resources

The following comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all of the alternatives considered.

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (Partial Wilderness)	All Wilderness	No Wilderness	Partial Wilderness (Alternative B)
Wilderness Values	<p>On the 34,544 acres designated as wilderness, naturalness, solitude and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be maintained. In the immediate areas of the closed ways, naturalness and solitude would be enhanced. In the immediate vicinity of cherrystem roads and boundary roads solitude would be locally impacted by vehicle travel. On 6,546 acres managed for uses other than wilderness, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be reduced because of recreational ORV use, harvest of woodland products and mineral exploration activities.</p>	<p>Wilderness values of naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be retained within the South Pequop WSA except along cherrystem roads and boundary roads wilderness values would be adversely impacted by motorized vehicles.</p>	<p>The South Pequop WSA's values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be lost over the long-term due to mineral exploration, woodcutting and ORV use.</p>	<p>On the 37,573 acres designated as wilderness, naturalness, solitude and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be maintained. In the immediate vicinity of the closed ways, naturalness and solitude would be enhanced. In the immediate vicinity of cherrystem roads and boundary roads, solitude would be adversely impacted due to continue use of motorized vehicles. On the 3,517 acres managed for uses other than wilderness, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be reduced because of continued recreational ORV use, mineral exploration activities and harvest of woodland products.</p>
Recreational ORV Use	<p>Recreational ORV use would be eliminated on the 34,544 acres designated wilderness and 130 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. On the 6,546 acres not designated, recreational ORV use would continue but would not exceed 110 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future.</p>	<p>Recreational ORV use of 240 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.</p>	<p>There would be no impacts to recreational ORV use.</p>	<p>Recreational ORV use would be eliminated on the 37,573 acres designated wilderness and 175 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. On the 3,517 acres not designated wilderness, recreational ORV use would continue to increase but not exceed 65 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future.</p>

Table 4 Continued
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (Partial Wilderness)	All Wilderness	No Wilderness	Partial Wilderness (Alternative B)
Development of Mineral Resources	While the 34,544 acres designated would be withdrawn from mineral entry, there would be no impacts to exploration or development of mineral resources due to low mineral potential. The 6,546 acres not designated as wilderness would remain open to all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Exploration for precious metals is expected to result in 10 miles of exploratory access roads and 20 drill pads. Exploration for oil and gas is not expected to occur.	All 41,090 acres would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Exploration for precious metals would be foregone eliminating the potential for 10 miles of new access roads.	There would be no impacts to exploration and development of mineral resources as the entire area would be open to mineral entry and leasing.	Designation and withdrawal of 37,573 acres would preclude anticipated mineral exploration in the northern end of the area. Two miles of roads and 4 drill pads would be precluded. The 3,517 acres not designated would remain open to all forms mineral entry and leasing. Exploration for precious metals is expected to result in 8 miles of exploratory access roads and 16 drill pads. Exploration for oil and gas is not expected to occur.
Woodland Product Harvest	Harvest of up to 400 Christmas trees and 385 cords of firewood would be foregone in the designated area, reducing the resource area's annual harvest of Christmas trees by 11% and firewood by 6%. Harvest in the area not designated would not occur as there are no harvestable products in this area.	Designation of the 41,090 acres would eliminate Christmas tree and firewood cutting. The harvest of up to 400 Christmas trees and 385 cords of firewood per year would be foregone reducing the resource area's annual harvest of Christmas trees by 11% and firewood by 6%.	There would be no impact on woodland product harvest in the Goshute Peak WSA.	Harvest of up to 400 Christmas trees and 385 cords of firewood would be foregone in the designated area, reducing the resource area's annual harvest for Christmas trees by 11% and for firewood by 6%. Harvest in the area not designated would not occur as there are no harvestable products in this area.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Economic impacts were considered but dropped during the EIS process because any increases in operating costs associated with wilderness designation would be insignificant.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory process and early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness values.

A series of public meetings and public hearings were held in association with the study phase and draft environmental impact statement for the WSAs within the Wells Resource Area. The meetings were a combination workshop and scoping meeting and were held in Elko and Reno, Nevada. Formal public hearings were later held in Reno, Elko, and Wells, Nevada.

Oral and written comments on the draft EIS were received from 42 individuals, organizations and agencies. In general, four commentors supported more wilderness than the proposed action, seven commentors supported the proposed action, 25 commentors supported less wilderness than the proposed action and six commentors had no position.

Most comments which specifically mentioned the WSA touched on high wilderness values (outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation), high scenic values, and the potential for reintroduction of bighorn sheep to be enhanced with designation. Comments opposing wilderness centered around visitor use. One individual felt the area was too small to support much visitor use and that increases in visitor use would degrade the resource.

No comments were received from county agencies or officials. The Governor of Nevada, in his consistency letter of March 24, 1984, supported the Bureau's original preferred alternative but suggested more a identifiable boundary be developed along the eastern boundary.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated the Final EIS should clarify what interim management measures will be in effect during the wilderness classification process; clarify if off-road vehicle use in the WSAs prior to designation would affect the potential wilderness status of the WSAs; and whether access for mining, oil and gas exploration or other development will be allowed during the wilderness designation process. The EPA also stated that the FEIS should discuss how USGS/Bureau of Mines mineral surveys will be used to modify the acres identified as suitable. The U.S. Air Force stated they support alternatives that do not restrict military overflights.

There was one written comment received on the final EIS from the EPA which supported the proposed action and recommended that the final recommendation include a statement that water and air quality will be best protected under wilderness designation.

BAD LANDS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 9,426 acres

The Bad Lands WSA (NV-010-184) is located in Elko County approximately 65 miles northeast of Elko, Nevada and 25 miles southwest of Jackpot, Nevada in the O'Neil Basin. The WSA contains 9,426 acres of BLM lands with no split estate or private inholdings. (See Table 1).

The boundary in the southeast corner of the WSA adjoins private land at Burnt Meadows. From this point going west and then north, a combination of a telephone line and its access road forms the southern boundary. The remainder of the western boundary adjoins Twin Meadows Ranch private lands in sections 9 and 16, T.45 N., R.62 E. The eastern and northern WSA boundaries are formed by a rugged four-wheel drive road.

The WSA consists of rough ridges and cliffs of volcanic origin, dissected by eight miles of Salmon Falls Creek, one of the finest trout fisheries in northeastern Nevada. Elevations range from 5,700 feet in the canyon to over 6,000 feet on benches and ridges outside the canyon. Pinnacles and spires over 100 feet tall are common along Salmon Falls Creek. Lush riparian vegetation exists throughout the main canyon and in the lower reaches of the adjoining side canyons.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Wells Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement finalized in July, 1987. There were three alternatives analyzed for the Bad Lands WSA in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative which is the recommendation in this report, an all wilderness alternative and a no wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 8,415 acres recommended for wilderness 1,011 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 8,415 acres as wilderness and release 1,011 acres for uses other than wilderness (Map 1). All wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long-term. The partial wilderness alternative, the recommendation of this report, would be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The 8,415 acre area is recommended for wilderness because it is natural and provides outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Salmon Falls Creek, as it meanders through the WSA, is one of only a few streams in Nevada that offer the combination of floating, excellent fishing, outstanding scenery and outstanding primitive camping. The rugged, volcanic cliffs and canyons are extremely scenic and provide hikers outstanding opportunities for seclusion. Salmon Falls Creek, with its lush riparian vegetation, meanders 250 feet below rugged volcanic hills and sloping mesas. The creek is mostly inaccessible to livestock, providing a virtually untouched and fairly uncommon riparian setting in Nevada. The sinuosity of Salmon Falls Creek, as well as lush riparian vegetation, provide excellent screening. This, coupled with sand bars along the stream, offer outstanding opportunities for primitive overnight camping. During high water flow, small rapids and tight turns offer challenge and adventure for kayakers and rafters. Hikers and backpackers are afforded outstanding opportunities for sightseeing and photography in and around Salmon Falls Creek. One might view a river otter slowly making its way upstream or a raptor circling above the towering canyon walls. With the recent reintroduction of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, a river floater might observe a ewe and her lamb taking a drink or sunning themselves on a rocky outcrop. Salmon Falls Creek also offers some of the best stream fishing opportunities for German brown and rainbow trout in northeastern Nevada.

The area recommended for wilderness is manageable as wilderness due primarily to the extreme ruggedness and relative inaccessibility of much of the area.

Conflicts with other resources are essentially nonexistent. Grazing use will be allowed to continue. The area has no identified mineral resources and a low potential for undiscovered deposits of all metallic minerals, oil, gas and coal, and for geothermal energy. As of October, 1989 there were no mining claims in the WSA.

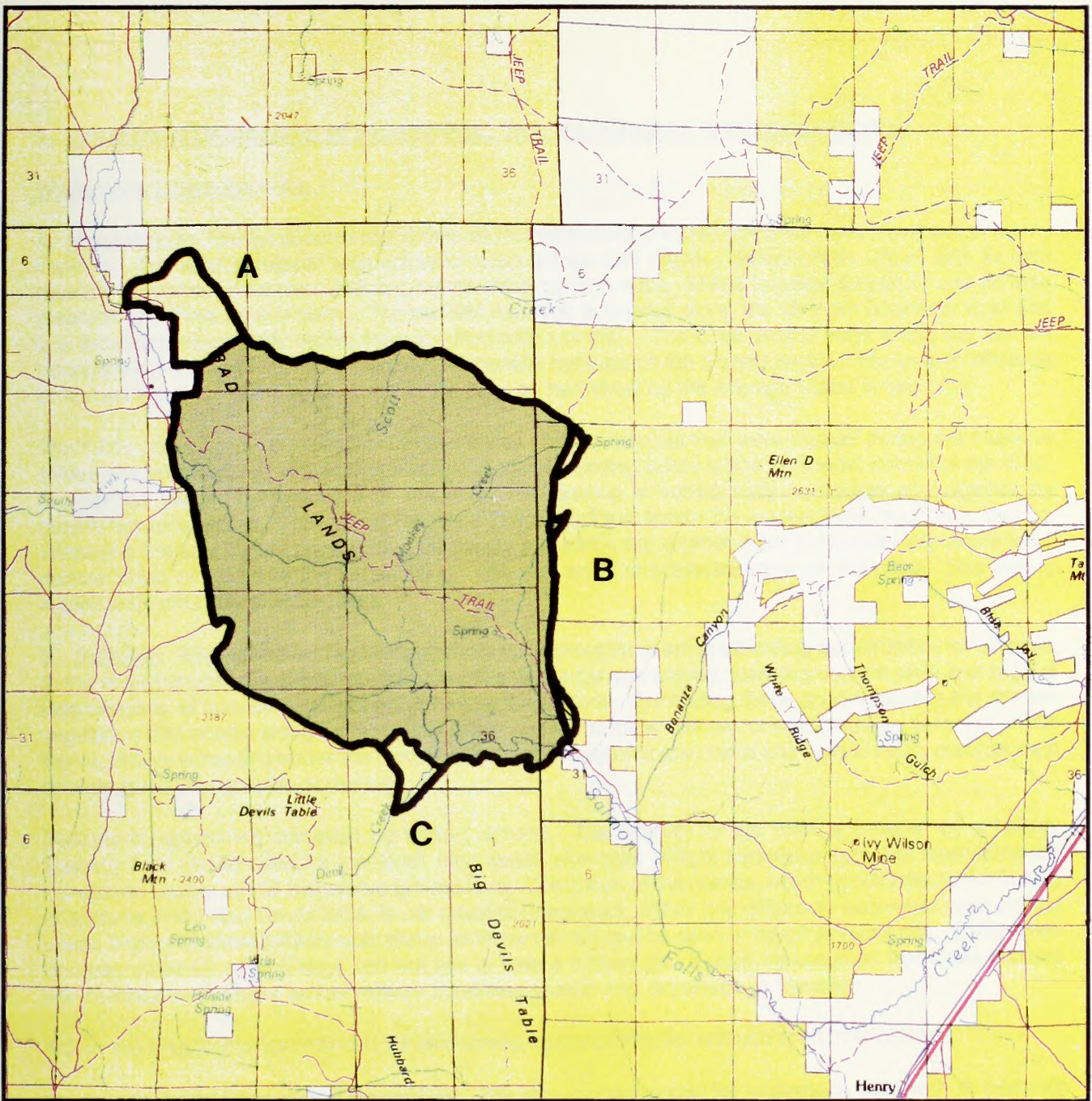
The 1,011 acres not recommended for wilderness are comprised of seven small parcels along the periphery of the WSA. These parcels are not recommended for wilderness because man-caused intrusions significantly diminish wilderness values.

Area A, a 630 acre parcel in the northwest corner of the WSA, contains a 100 acre rangeland seeding which was missed during the intensive wilderness inventory. The seeding, which was plowed and drilled with crested wheatgrass in 1965, presents an unnatural setting which contrasts both in color and line with the adjacent undisturbed vegetation. Because of the narrow configuration of this parcel, the seeding is substantially noticeable. Maintenance of the seeding will perpetuate this unnatural setting. This area also contains an earthen reservoir which, though not a significant impact itself, adds to the unnaturalness of the area. These man-caused intrusions along with the narrow configuration of the area virtually eliminate the wilderness values of naturalness of this parcel.

Of the six remaining parcels which comprise a total of 381 acres, five parcels (all labelled B) along the eastern boundary of the WSA contain a bladed fenceline, and one parcel (C) along the southern boundary of the WSA contains a pre-FLPMA telephone line with access road. These man-caused intrusions, which were missed during the intensive inventory, create long, narrow strips of land separated from the main body of the WSA from which a visitor can readily observe either the WSA boundary road on one side or the telephone or fence line on the other. It was determined that the telephone line and the fenceline would form a more natural and identifiable boundary.

Table 1
Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	9,426
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	<u>0</u>
Total	9,426
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>	
BLM (within WSA)	8,415
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	8,415
Inholdings	0
<u>Within the Area Recommended for Nonwilderness</u>	
BLM	1,011
Split Estate	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	1,011
Inholdings (state, private)	0



T45N

T44N

R62E

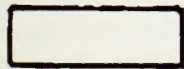
R63E



RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS -



SPLIT ESTATE - NONE



RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS-



STATE - NONE



LAND OUTSIDE WSA
RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



PRIVATE - NONE



MILES

Bad Lands
Proposal

NV-010-184
February 1990

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness: The 8,415 acres recommended for wilderness are predominately natural and free of man's imprints. The area is rugged with volcanic outcroppings and ridges. Salmon Falls Creek, with its lush riparian vegetation, meanders 250 feet below steep canyon walls. Man's Imprints consist of one earthen reservoir and three vehicle ways. The earthen reservoir is located along the northern boundary road and is a localized impact only visible from the immediate vicinity. The three vehicle ways along the eastern boundary do not detract from the area's naturalness because of the rugged terrain. The overall influence of human imprints on the naturalness of the area as perceived by the average visitor is negligible.

The 1,011 acres not recommended for wilderness contain imprints that were missed during the intensive wilderness inventory. A 100-acre crested wheatgrass seeding exists in the northwest corner of the WSA. Due to the narrow configuration of this area, the seeding is substantially noticeable and significantly diminishes naturalness. The bladed fence line that occurs just inside the eastern WSA boundary, and the telephone line and bladed access road that occur just inside the southwestern WSA boundary create long, narrow strips of land with the intrusions on one side and the boundary road on the other. This setting significantly diminishes naturalness.

B. Solitude: Within the area recommended for wilderness there are outstanding opportunities for solitude. In the main canyon, along Salmon Falls Creek, sinuous canyon course, towering canyon walls and rugged side canyons all provide excellent opportunities for solitude. Enhancing these opportunities is the riparian vegetation that occurs along Salmon Falls Creek and in the lower reaches of adjoining side canyons. While the vegetative screening above the canyon is poor, the rough volcanic mesa and rugged rocky outcroppings provide good topographic screening.

Solitude is sometimes disrupted by military aircraft. The majority of the WSA is covered by a Military Training Area (MTR) used for low level, high speed exercises. Flight elevations vary, but operations are conducted as low as 100 feet above ground level. Disruption of the silence, which contributes to the feeling of solitude in the Bad Lands WSA, is still relatively infrequent. While it is difficult to accurately estimate the actual impact of these military operations, at times aircraft can be seen or heard flying all day. Other times one can travel for several days and not see or hear a military jet. It must be assumed that these impacts will continue to increase as the military continues growth and expansion in Nevada.

Within the area not recommended for wilderness, opportunities for solitude are nonexistent.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The area recommended for wilderness, even with its relatively small size, contains outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined recreation experience. The majority of the WSA allows for unconfined freedom of movement due to the many drainages, hills and ridges. While users would concentrate along Salmon Falls Creek, the riparian vegetation and sinuosity of the canyon ensures that opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are available.

Fishing opportunities along Salmon Falls Creek are excellent. The creek offers challenge and adventure to kayakers and rafters during high water. The diversity of wildlife species, including river otter, raptors, chukar, cougar and bobcats, provide outstanding opportunities for sightseeing and photography. In 1989, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep were reintroduced into the area, adding another outstanding sightseeing opportunity.

There are no opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation in the areas not recommended for wilderness.

D. **Special Features:** The WSA contains no special features.

Diversity In the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. **Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems:** Wilderness designation of this WSA would add 9,426 acres of the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Presently, only four wilderness areas in the system contain this ecosystem and two of them are within Nevada. Since the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem is represented to such a limited extent, adding more areas to the national system with this ecosystem is desirable. Table 2 summarizes the ecosystem information.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>NATION WIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush Province/ Sagebrush Steppe	4	131,199	138	4,356,340
<u>NEVADA</u>				
Sagebrush Steppe	2	86,907	34	1,252,442

B. **Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers:** This WSA is within a five hour drive of two Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Reno, Nevada, and Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>Idaho</u>				
Boise	22	937,766	172	5,127,039
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	45	4,967,230	175	6,945,487

C. **Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas:** The 1989 designation of Forest Service wilderness created a wide distribution of wilderness areas within the state, and the addition of the Badlands WSA would not significantly contribute to the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System in Nevada. However, designation of the Badlands WSA would add a wilderness setting which offers the combination of opportunities for floating, excellent fishing, outstanding scenery and outstanding primitive camping along a stream virtually ungrazed by livestock. This type of setting is uncommon in Nevada and justifies addition to the NWPS.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The 8,415 acres recommended for wilderness can reasonably be managed to preserve values now present in the area. There are no mining claims or oil and gas leases in the area, and there is low potential for undiscovered deposits of all metallic minerals, oil, gas, coal and geothermal energy. The area is a solid block of public land with no private inholdings, state lands or rights-of-way. Although there are opportunities for ORV travel, these opportunities are limited due to the rugged, rocky terrain. The 1,011 acres not recommended for wilderness uses are not manageable as wilderness. The seeding must be periodically maintained which may include discing and reseeding. The four small parcels separated from the main area are not manageable due to additional maintenance requirements of the telephone line and fenceline.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for the 8,415 acres of the Bad Lands WSA recommended for wilderness. The survey was conducted from 1983 through 1985. According to the report, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1725-A, the area has no identified mineral resources and low mineral resource potential for undiscovered deposits of all metallic minerals, oil, gas, coal and geothermal energy. As of October, 1989 there are no mining claims or production of mineral resources in the area.

Impacts on Resources

Table 4 summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all of the alternatives considered.

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

	Proposed Action (Partial Wilderness)	All Wilderness	No Wilderness
Wilderness Values	The 8,415 acres designated as wilderness would maintain long-term naturalness and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation and solitude. On the 1,011 acres not designated as wilderness, there would be a reduction of naturalness due to continued ORV use.	Wilderness values of naturalness and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation and solitude would be retained except along boundary roads where uncontrolled motorized access would adversely impact solitude. In the immediate vicinity of the closed ways naturalness and solitude would be enhanced.	There would be a reduction in naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation due to continued ORV use.
Recreational ORV Use	Recreational ORV use of 100 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impact of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible. On the 1,011 acres of the WSA not designated as wilderness, recreational ORV use would continue to increase, but would not exceed 50 visitor days annually.	Recreational ORV use of 150 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impact of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.	There would be no impacts to recreational ORV use.
Development of Mineral Resources	There would be no impacts to mineral activities as no mineral activity is projected to occur.	There would be no impacts to mineral activities as no mineral activity is projected to occur.	The WSA would be open for mineral entry and leasing. No mineral activities are expected to occur.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Economic Impacts were considered but dropped during the EIS process because any increases in operating costs associated with wilderness designation would be insignificant.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory process and early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness values.

A series of public meetings and public hearings were held in association with the study phase and draft environmental impact statement for the WSAs within the Wells Resource Area. The meetings were a combination workshop and scoping meeting and were held in Elko and Reno, Nevada. Formal public hearings were later held in Reno, Elko, and Wells, Nevada.

Oral and written comments on the draft EIS were received from 42 individuals, organizations and agencies. In general, four commentors supported more wilderness than the proposed action, seven commentors supported the proposed action, 25 commentors supported less wilderness than the proposed action and six commentors had no position.

Most comments which specifically mentioned the WSA touched on high wilderness values (outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation), high scenic values, potential reintroduction of bighorn sheep enhanced with designation. Comments opposing wilderness centered around visitor use. One individual felt the area was too small to support much visitor use and that increases in visitor use would degrade the resource.

No comments were received from county agencies or officials. The Governor of Nevada, in his consistency letter of March 27, 1984, supported the Bureau's preferred alternative.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated the Final EIS should clarify what interim management measures will be in effect during the wilderness classification process; clarify if off-road vehicle use in the WSAs prior to designation would affect the potential wilderness status of the WSAs; and whether access for mining, oil and gas exploration or other development will be allowed during the wilderness designation process. The EPA also stated that the FEIS should discuss how USGS/Bureau of Mines mineral surveys will be used to modify the acres identified as suitable. The U.S. Air Force stated they support alternatives that do not restrict military overflights.

There was one written comment received on the final wilderness EIS from the EPA which supported the proposed action and recommended that the final recommendation include a statement that water and air quality will be best protected under wilderness designation.

SOUTH FORK OWYHEE RIVER WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 51,632 acres

The South Fork Owyhee River WSA (ID-16-53/NV-010-103A) is located in Owyhee County, Idaho, and Elko County, Nevada, about 115 air miles south-southwest of Boise. The WSA includes 43,790 acres of BLM land and surrounds one 160-acre privately-owned inholding in Idaho and 7,842 acres of BLM land in Nevada, for a total of 51,632 acres of Federal land (see Table 1). This acreage includes 1,280 acres acquired from the State of Idaho in 1987 after the area was designated as a WSA.

Within Idaho, 90% of the WSA's 40-mile circumference is bounded by primitive dirt roads and fence lines, while 10% is bounded by legal subdivisions along non-Federal lands. In Nevada, the WSA's 9-mile circumference is bounded by primitive dirt roads, fence lines, and a gas pipeline. Four cherrystem roads (6.5 miles) enter the WSA. The northern part of the WSA adjoins the Little Owyhee River WSA (ID-16-48C) and the Owyhee River Canyon WSA (ID-16-48B/OR-3-195), while the southern end of the WSA adjoins the Owyhee Canyon WSA (NV-010-106).

The WSA consists of a flat to hilly sagebrush, bitterbrush, and bunchgrass covered plateau sharply dissected by 20 miles of canyons including 17 miles of the South Fork Owyhee River. The South Fork canyon is 500 to 800 feet deep, narrow, and very meandering. Portions of the canyons that are not sheer-walled are covered with sagebrush and bunchgrasses, while the riparian areas consist of narrow bands of lush grasses, rushes, and sedges.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in October 1989. Two 640-acre inholdings acquired from the State of Idaho were included in the study process under the authority granted in Section 202 of FLPMA, as were 1,165 acres of BLM land adjacent to the WSA in Idaho.

There were 5 alternatives analyzed in the EIS for this WSA: a partial wilderness alternative where 50,135 acres of BLM land (including the 2,445 acres studied under the authority of Section 202 of FLPMA) would be designated as wilderness and 2,662 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, which is the recommendation of this report; 2 additional partial wilderness alternatives where 9,990 and 36,720 acres would be designated as wilderness and 41,642 and 15,362 acres, respectively, would be released for uses other than wilderness; a no wilderness alternative; and an all wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 50,135 acres recommended for wilderness 2,662 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 50,135 acres as wilderness and release 2,662 acres for uses other than wilderness. The all wilderness alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment in the long term. The recommendation would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

The 50,135 acres recommended for wilderness are shown on the South Fork Owyhee River WSA Map (Map 1). This recommendation would apply to the 160-acre private inholding if acquired through purchase or exchange with a willing owner. Appendix I lists the non-Federal land within the area recommended for wilderness and provides additional information on the acquisition of this land.

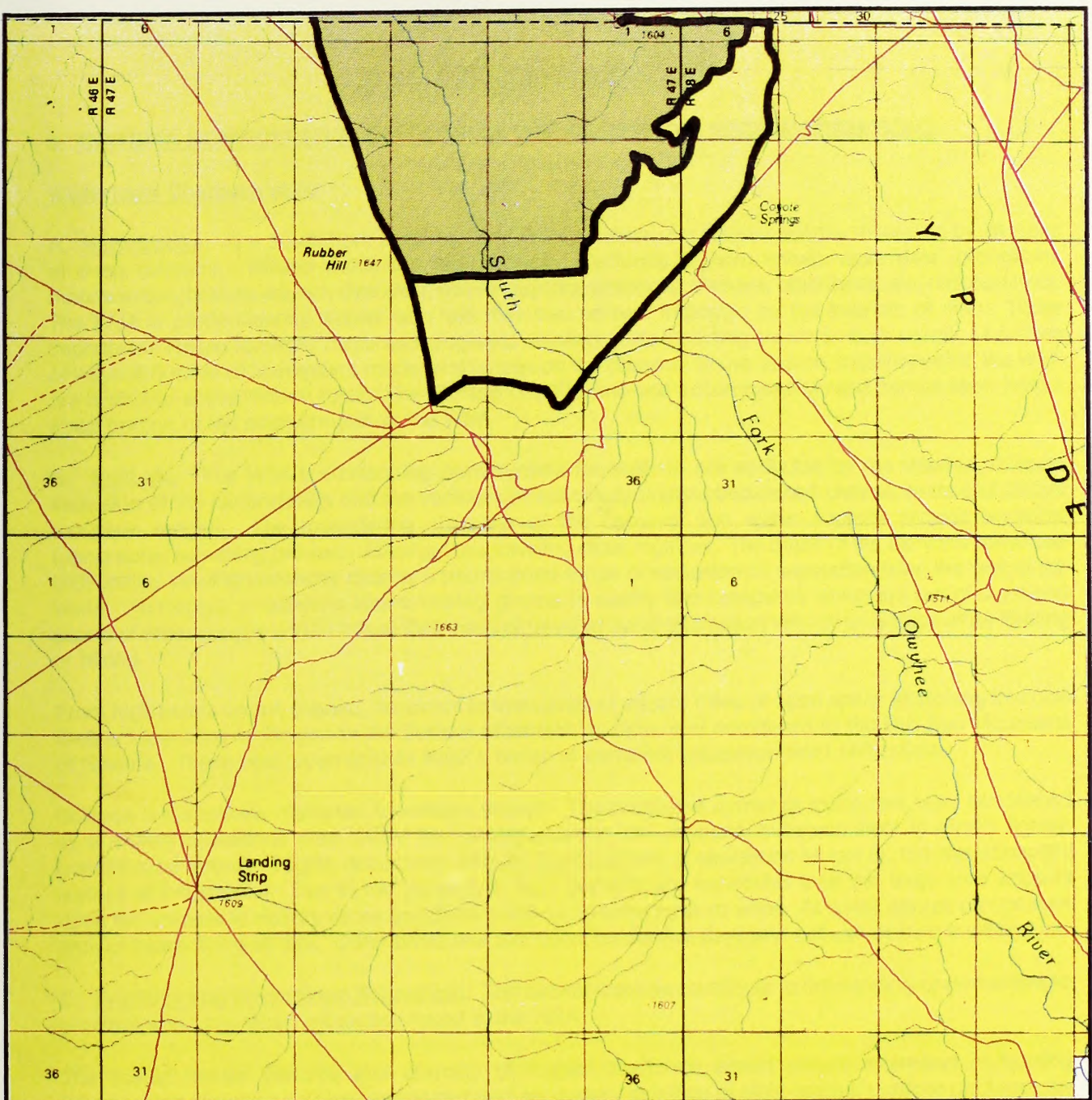
The 50,135 acres recommended for wilderness designation would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of 19.5 miles of spectacularly scenic canyon and 40,145 acres of surrounding plateau. The area is natural in appearance, has outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation, and offers significant special features. The area is manageable to protect wilderness characteristics over the long term with a minimum of resource conflicts. The 50,135 acres recommended for designation are a portion of a proposed 385,080-acre Owyhee Canyonlands wilderness which would include about 270 miles of desert canyon, 164 miles of whitewater boating opportunities, and 292,640 acres of plateau.

The 1,165 acres of BLM land in Idaho adjacent to the WSA also recommended for wilderness have wilderness values and were included within the area recommended for designation to provide a more definable wilderness boundary. Much of these adjacent lands, 930 acres, were acquired from the State of Idaho in 1987.

The 2,662 acres recommended for uses other than wilderness are within the State of Nevada in the southern end of the WSA. This area was not recommended for wilderness designation to allow for the development of an utility corridor along the existing El Paso Gas Pipeline to accommodate above and underground transmission facilities. The utility corridor was identified through the BLM's planning process.

Table 1
Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>	<u>Acres</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>
	<u>ID</u>	<u>NV</u>	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	43,790	7,842	51,632
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0	0	0
inholdings (state, private)	<u>160</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>160</u>
Total	43,950	7,842	51,792
 <u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>			
BLM (within WSA)	43,790	5,180	48,970
BLM (outside WSA)	1,165	0	1,165
Split Estate (within WSA)	0	0	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended For Wilderness	44,955	5,180	50,135
inholdings (state, private)	160	0	160
 <u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>			
BLM (surface and subsurface)	0	2,662	2,662
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Lands Not Recommended For Wilderness	0	2,662	2,662
inholdings	0	0	0

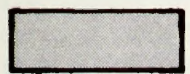


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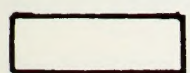
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RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS -



SPLIT ESTATE - NONE



RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS



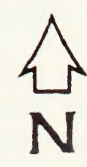
STATE - NONE



LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE



PRIVATE - NONE



MILES

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness: The South Fork Owyhee River WSA consists of a plateau sharply dissected by 20 miles of deep canyons. Wildlife within the WSA includes California bighorn sheep, mule deer, pronghorn, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, river otter, beaver, raptors, waterfowl, chukars, other birds, and redband trout. The WSA is predominantly natural with less than two percent impacted by the imprints of man. These imprints are limited to widely dispersed rangeland developments including six small stock ponds, 14.3 miles of ways, 6.5 miles of cherrystem roads, and fences on the plateau. In the canyon, Imprints within the WSA are limited to some historic ruins. The El Paso Gas Pipeline and accompanying road can be seen from a small portion of the southern part of the WSA.

B. Solitude: The WSA's outstanding opportunities for solitude are attributed to the isolated, intimate seclusion of the canyonlands and the vastness of seemingly undisturbed desert plateau lands and distant mountain ranges. The meandering character of the canyons and water courses provide excellent topographic screening between visitor groups traveling close together. The depth of the canyons combined with limited viewing distances creates a tremendous sense of seclusion or separation from the rest of the world. The length of canyons allows visiting groups to readily find campsites which are out of sight and sound of other groups and to adjust their rates of travel to avoid interaction with other groups while floating or hiking.

From high points on the plateau, hundreds to thousands of square miles of open space stretching from the Steens Mountains in Oregon to the Juniper Mountain in Idaho, and southward to the Bull Run Mountains of Nevada. These vast, open spaces instill a sense of complete separation from civilization.

Solitude is sometimes disrupted by military aircraft. The southwest corner of Idaho has been established as a military operations area (MOA) for training pilots in low elevation, subsonic flight in mostly fighter-bomber type aircraft. Flights occur over different flight patterns at elevations as low as 100 feet above the surface of the plateau. Due to the variation in flight patterns and schedules over this large area, impacts upon the solitude to visitors varies greatly from day to day and week to week. At times, aircraft can be seen and/or heard flying all day. Other times one can travel for several days and not see or hear a military jet.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The natural features contribute to outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation found in the WSA.

The scenic natural features and diversity of rugged landforms attract people interested in hunting, backpacking and river running, and associated secondary activities of sight-seeing, outdoor photography, wildlife viewing, botanical studies and fishing. River running opportunities on the South Fork Owyhee River are of exceptionally high quality.

The miles of canyons, their diversely and severely eroded rock landscapes and their steep slopes create a sense of isolation or solitude, thereby enhancing the primitive recreation experience. Visitors traveling in or near the canyons are constantly aware of the forces of nature. Floating or hiking along the river and tributary streams gives one a sense of participation in the movements of a natural force.

The challenge and excitement of whitewater rapids add significantly to the boating experience. Hiking the rugged canyons and plateau without the aid of established trails provides a natural and arduous recreational challenge which heightens the primitive experience.

The numerous talus slopes of the canyons encourage the exchange of recreation use between the river and

plateau. Recreational use of the plateau would tend to concentrate near the canyon rims. These rimrock areas of the plateau often offer less arduous hiking conditions than those in the canyons and provide numerous opportunities for spectacular vistas of the canyons below. Hiking on the plateau provides an opportunity to experience vast, open spaces stretching into the distant horizon.

D. Special Features: The WSA is rich in special features, including scenic, scientific, wildlife and cultural values. The special features contribute significantly to the overall quality of the wilderness characteristics.

The canyons of the South Fork Owyhee River are of exceptionally high scenic quality. The combination of moving water, colorful sheer cliffs, grass-covered talus slopes, and blue sky create a dramatic stark beauty which totally envelopes the visitor. In places, reddish brown cliffs drop hundreds of feet to the water. These fractured, blocky rock monoliths are tinted with brilliant green, yellow and orange microflora. Near the base of the cliffs, water sometimes seeps from the fractures to nourish small, lush, clinging, deep green plant communities. The monoliths are frequently topped with a multitude of diversely-eroded spires. The sheer rock walls often give way to steep slopes covered with a mosaic of red rock rubble and subdued green and yellow sagebrush and grasses.

Sensitive wildlife species found in the WSA include California bighorn sheep, bobcat, river otter, and redband trout. Of particular concern is the population of bighorn sheep, a species dependent upon wildlands habitat. In 1985, bighorn sheep were reintroduced into the canyon complex of the WSA.

Sensitive plant species found in the WSA include Eatonella nives, Lupinus uncialis, Artemisia packardiae, and Malacothrix.

The WSA contains both historic and prehistoric archaeological sites. Prehistoric sites are found both on the plateau and in caves and rockshelters within the canyons. Historic sites include the ruins of several stone buildings and rock walls along the river.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the diversity of natural systems as represented by ecosystems: Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS), however, it would add a landform not presently represented in the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem. The landform is dominated by rhyolite uplands cut by deep canyons. Designated wilderness within the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem (as of January 1991) included 131,199 acres in 4 designated wilderness areas in Nevada, Idaho, and California. The designated wildernesses have vegetation and landform characteristics unlike those of the South Fork Owyhee River WSA. There are 138 other BLM WSAs which contain portions of the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem. This information is summarized in Table 2. Vegetation on about thirty-two percent of the WSA is in good to excellent ecological condition.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush Province				
Sagebrush Steppe	4	131,199	138	4,356,340
<u>NEVADA</u>				
Sagebrush Steppe	2	86,907	34	1,252,442
<u>IDAHO</u>				
Sagebrush Steppe	1	12,997	30	887,024

B. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within five hours driving time from the Boise population center. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of the population center.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Center	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>Idaho</u>				
Boise	22	937,766	172	5,127,039

C. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA would add to the geographical distribution of wilderness areas. The existing wilderness areas of the NWPS are geographically concentrated in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range and Cascade Mountain Ranges of California, Oregon and Washington, and in the Rocky Mountains and Continental Divide area of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and eastern Utah. There are only two wilderness areas in the area comprising northern Nevada, southwestern Idaho, and southeastern Oregon.

Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon system not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The WSA is manageable in the long term to protect wilderness characteristics. There are no resource uses which could not be adequately controlled or would affect the manageability of the wilderness. The WSA is over 27 miles from a paved highway. Vehicle access to the WSA boundaries is via some gravel roads but mostly along dirt roads which have received minimal construction and little or no maintenance. Much of the plateau within the WSA is relatively flat, but many areas (particularly those close to the canyons) are sewn with rock rubble and impassible to vehicles.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for 47,610 acres of the WSA in 1987.

The area has a low mineral resource potential for all metals, and no claims exist.

Oil and gas leases and lease applications cover a large part of the area, but no resources have been identified. Energy potential for oil, gas, and coal resources is low.

Sand and gravel deposits are present and volcanic rocks that might be used as dimension stone or decorative rock are widespread, but larger deposits are widely available in more accessible areas.

Chalcedony and common opal may have been recovered from three prospects in the northern part of the WSA. The lack of bright and interesting colors and patterns in the minerals limits their value and marketability for lapidary purpose.

Impacts on Resources

The following comparative impact table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action	No Wilderness	Canyonlands Wild. Alternative	Wildlife Wilderness Alternative	All Wilderness
Wilderness Values	Wilderness area No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities. Enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities from improved grazing practices, prescribed burning and from closure of 20 miles of roads/ways. However, continued use of vehicle routes for rangeland facility maintenance will prevent complete rehabilitation of routes. Some localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 200 user days for backpacking and 300 days for other activities. Such use will have no impact on solitude or primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from the river shorelines. Nonwilderness area Entire 2,662 acres will lose naturalness and primitive recreation from utility corridor construction. Recreation use to reach 30 user days per annum in 20 years.	No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 36,640 acs. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on the plateau from improved grazing practices and prescribed burning except on 11,050 acs. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 11,050 acs from drill seeding land treatments and on 2,662 acres from utility line construction. Some localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 150 user days for backpacking and 390 user days for other activities. This use will not affect solitude or primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from the river shoreline.	Wilderness area No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 9,990 ac. Localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 100 user days for backpacking, and 100 user days for other activities. Such use to have no impact on solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from river shoreline. Nonwilderness area No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 27,930 acres. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing practices and prescribed burning except on 11,050 acres from drill seeding land treatment. Loss of naturalness on 2,662 acres from utility construction. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 50 user days for backpacking and 290 days for other activities. Such use will not affect naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.	Wilderness area No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 36,720 acs. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing practices, prescribed burning, and from the closure of 17 miles of roads/ways. Localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days of backpacking and 175 days for other activities. This use will not impact solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall or naturalness away from river shorelines. Nonwilderness area No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 1,650 acres. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 1,050 acres from drill seeding land treatments and on 2,662 acres from utility construction. Recreation use per annum to reach 175 user days in 20 years and to have no impact on naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.	No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 51,867 acres. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on the plateau from improved grazing practices, prescribed burning, and from the closure of 21 miles of roads/ways. However, continued use of vehicle routes for rangeland facility maintenance will prevent complete rehabilitation of routes. Some localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 200 user days for backpacking, and 275 user days for other activities. Such use would not affect solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall or naturalness away from the river shoreline.
Condition and Amount of Native Vegetation	Wilderness area Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 32,555 acres and retained in good condition on 17,580 acres by improved grazing practices. Nonwilderness area Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 2,656 acres. Native plants displaced on 6 acres by utility construction activities.	Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 32,806 acres and retained in good condition on 17,540 acres by improved grazing practices. Native vegetation displaced on 6 acres by utility construction activities.	Wilderness area Ecological condition of native plant communities retained in good condition on 9,990 acres. Nonwilderness area Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 31,686 acres and retained in good condition on 7,550 acres by improved grazing practices. Native plants displaced on 2,400 acres by seeding. Vegetation displaced on additional 6 acres by utility construction activities.	Wilderness area Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 19,530 acres and retained in good condition on 16,740 acres by improved grazing practices. Nonwilderness area Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 12,162 acres and retained in good condition on 800 acres by improved grazing practices. Native plants displaced on 2,400 acres seeded. Vegetation also displaced on 6 acres by utility construction.	Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 34,327 acres and retained in good condition on 17,540 acres by improved grazing practices.
Level of Livestock Use	Annual livestock use to increase from 2,180 AUMs to 2,228 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.	Annual livestock use to increase from 2,180 AUMs to 3,303 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.	Annual livestock use to increase from 2,180 AUMs to 3,303 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.	Annual livestock use to decrease from 2,180 AUMs to 2,111 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.	Annual livestock use to decrease from 2,180 AUMs to 1,666 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.
Semi-Primitive Recreation Use	20 miles of roads/ways closed to recreational vehicle use within wilderness. Semi-primitive motorized recreation use to reach 330 user days per annum in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rock-hounding or camping in association with WSA boundary roads.	All roads/ways to remain open for semi-primitive motorized recreation use. Use to reach 390 user days annually in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rock hounding or camping.	There are no roads/ways within canyon wilderness to be closed to semi-primitive motorized recreation use. Annual use in 20 years to reach 390 user days for hunting, sightseeing, rock-hounding or camping along plateau roads/ways.	17 miles of interior roads/ways closed to recreational vehicle use within wilderness. Use to reach 350 user days per annum in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rock hounding or camping in association with WSA boundary roads and nonwilderness lands open for vehicle access.	21 miles of interior roads/ways closed to recreational vehicle use within wilderness. Semi-primitive motorized recreational use associated with WSA boundary roads to reach 275 user days in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rock hounding or camping.

**Table 4 Continued
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**

Issue Topics	Proposed Action	No Wilderness	Canyonlands Wild. Alternative	Wildlife Wilderness Alternative	All Wilderness
Selected Wildlife Populations (Bighorn sheep, mule deer, antelope and grouse)	Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Road and way closures would reduce potential for wildlife disturbance from recreational vehicle use. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices, reservoir maintenance, prescribed burning and seeding on plateau would increase wildlife populations. However, increased livestock numbers would compete with and reduce potential wildlife populations on lands not designated. Utility construction would cause temporary displacement of wildlife populations.	Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices, reservoir maintenance, prescribed burning and seeding on plateau would increase wildlife populations. However, increased livestock numbers would compete with and reduce potential wildlife populations. Utility construction would cause temporary displacement of wildlife populations.	Impacts the same as those of the No Action Alternative.	Impacts the same as those of the Proposed Action.	Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Road and way closures would reduce potential for wildlife disturbance from recreational vehicle use. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices, reservoir maintenance, prescribed burning and seeding on plateau would increase wildlife populations.
Soil Erosion	Road/way closures reduce soil erosion by 57 tons per year within wilderness. Improved grazing practices combined with prescribed burning and seeding and a small increase in livestock use to result in a 5-15% reduction in soil erosion over the long term on 40,362 acres of plateau. Utility construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 8.7 tons per year.	Improved grazing practices combined with prescribed burning and seeding to cause reduced soil erosion over long-term by 5-15%. However, this acreage to see 10-20% increase in soil erosion from large projected increase in livestock use on plateau. Utility construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 8.7 tons per year. Overall, soil erosion rates to increase by 5-10% on non wilderness plateau.	Impacts the same as those described under the No Action Alternative.	Road/way closures within wilderness to reduce soil erosion by 30 tons per year. Improved grazing practices combined with prescribed burning and seeding and with a moderate increase or decrease (depending on location) in livestock use to result in a 5-15% reduction in soil erosion over the long-term on plateau. Utility construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 8.7 tons per year.	Road/way closures to reduce soil erosion by 65 tons per year. Improved grazing practices combined with prescribed burning and decrease in projected livestock use to result in 15% reduction in soil erosion over the long-term on plateau.
Water Quality	Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams reduced by as much as 15%. Owyhee River sediment load not measurably affected.	Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams increased 5-10%. Owyhee River sediment load not measurably affected.	Impacts the same as the No Action Alternative.	Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams reduced by 5-15%. Owyhee River sediment load not measurably affected.	Impacts the same as the Proposed Action.
Local Income and Jobs.	Income and employment data by individual WSA is not available. For Owyhee Canyonlands WSA complex as a whole, the Proposed Action would contribute to a .3% increase in income and a .3% increase in employment over the next 20 years from livestock and recreational use of the WSAs in the three-county area (Owyhee, Malheur and Elko Counties).	Both income and employment from WSA complex up .4% in 20 years.	Both income and employment from WSA complex up .4% in 20 years.	Both income and employment from WSA complex up .3% in 20 years.	From WSA complex, income up .2% and employment up .3%.

Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of 50,135 acres as wilderness would have no significant social or economic impacts on the local communities of Owyhee and Elko Counties. The impact to local income and jobs was an issue analyzed in the study of the South Fork Owyhee River WSA.

Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory process were considered in developing study issues and various management alternatives. During the wilderness inventory for the South Fork Owyhee River roadless unit, 13 public comments supported the establishment of a WSA and 4 opposed it. Comments in favor felt the area possessed the minimum characteristics necessary to be considered for wilderness as well as supplemental values such as wildlife, native vegetation and cultural resources. Those opposed to the WSA felt that the area did not have significant wilderness characteristics and that "multiple use" would be better served if the area was released from further wilderness review.

During the public review of the Owyhee and Bureau Management Framework 51 out of 55 comments supported wilderness designation for the Owyhee Canyonlands WSA. Comments in support of wilderness designation were primarily based on the need for long-term protection of the high quality wilderness characteristics and special features of both the canyons and the plateau. Comments opposed to wilderness designation addressed a perception that "multiple use" would provide greater public benefit; that wilderness was not multiple use; and that public benefits could be optimized more effectively with a wild river designation in the adjoining Owyhee River Canyon WSA and with the further development of livestock and potential mineral/energy resources on the plateau and in the Owyhee River's tributary canyons.

During the public comment period on the draft Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness EIS, 448 written or oral comments supported all WSAs or portions of all WSAs in the Owyhee Canyonlands complex as wilderness, 46 comments opposed any wilderness in the WSA complex and 23 comments had no position. Those in favor of wilderness for the South Fork Owyhee River WSA were mostly in support of designating the entire WSA as wilderness. Support for the entire WSA as wilderness was based upon a desire to see wildlife, vegetation and natural resources protected in the long term. Opposition to any of the WSAs becoming wilderness was based upon a desire for improved livestock management opportunities, the need for continued use of the area for motorized recreation, the need to have further opportunities for the exploration for and possible development of mineral and energy resources, and the need to potentially develop utility corridors.

Government agencies took the following position: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supported wilderness designation; the Bonneville Power Administration did not object to wilderness designation provided there was adequate consideration given to utility corridors; the U.S. Air Force supported wilderness if no significant restrictions were placed on military overflights; the Bureau of Reclamation had no objection to wilderness; the Governor of Nevada, the Nevada State Office of Community Services, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the Nevada Division of State Parks, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game supported wilderness designation; the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology and the Nevada Department of Minerals could not endorse wilderness until more geological data was available; and the Idaho Air National Guard opposes wilderness as did the local governments of Owyhee and Elko counties.

Subsequent to the May 31, 1984 conclusion of the public comment period for the draft Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness EIS, but prior to the completion of the final EIS, 78 written comments were received. One of the comments opposes any wilderness designation in the WSA complex, one took no position, and 76 supported wilderness designation. Of the wilderness advocates, 61 supported designating the entire South Fork Owyhee River WSA as wilderness. Most of the wilderness support was in response to a "flyer" sent out by the Committee for Idaho's High Desert and to an "alert" in the magazine published by the Sierra Club.

APPENDIX 1
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS
WITHIN AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION

<u>Legal Description</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>Acreage</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>of</u> <u>Owners</u>	<u>Type of Ownership</u> <u>by Estate</u> <u>Surface Sub-Surface</u> <u>Estate</u>	<u>Presently</u> <u>Proposed for</u> <u>Acquisition</u>	<u>Preferred</u> <u>Method of</u> <u>Acquisition</u>	<u>Estimated Costs</u> <u>of Acquisition</u> <u>Land</u> <u>Processing</u>
Parcel #1 T.15N., R.4W., MDM Sec. 22, SE 1/4	160	1	Private	Yes	Exchange	N/A \$4,500

The estimated costs listed in this Appendix in no way represent a federal appraised value of the lands, but are rough estimates based upon sales of lands with similar characteristics to those included in the USA. The estimates are for the purpose of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring non-federal holdings and in no way represents an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimates.

OWYHEE CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 21,875 acres

The Owyhee Canyon WSA (NV-010-106) is located in Elko County, Nevada, about 125 air miles south of Boise. The WSA includes 21,875 acres of BLM land surrounding a 280-acre private inholding (Table 1). Ninety-four percent of the WSA's 36-mile circumference is bounded by primitive dirt roads and a gas pipeline. The remainder of the boundary is along two miles of private property. The South Fork Owyhee River WSA (ID-16-53/NV-010-103A) is just north of this WSA.

The western two-thirds of the WSA consists of a gently rolling sagebrush, bitterbrush, and bunchgrass plateau. The eastern third consists of a 100- to 200-foot deep basin cut by 21 miles of 100- to 300-foot deep canyons, including 18 miles of the South Fork Owyhee River. Portions of the narrow, meandering canyons that are not sheer-walled are covered with sagebrush and bunchgrasses, while the riparian areas consist of narrow bands of lush grasses, rushes, and sedges.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in October 1989. There were 4 alternatives analyzed in the EIS for this WSA: a partial wilderness alternative where 13,525 acres would be designated as wilderness and 8,350 acres released for uses other than wilderness, which is the recommendation of this report; a partial wilderness alternative where 1,600 acres would be designated as wilderness and 20,275 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness; an all wilderness alternative; and a no wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 13,525 acres recommended for wilderness 8,350 acres recommended for nonwilderness.

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 13,525 acres as wilderness and release 8,350 acres for uses other than wilderness. The all wilderness alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment in the long term. The recommendation would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. The 13,525 acres of Federal land recommended for wilderness are shown on the Owyhee Canyon WSA Maps (Map 1).

The 13,525 acres recommended for wilderness designation would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of 14 miles of spectacularly scenic canyon and 11,925 acres of surrounding plateau. The area is natural in appearance, has outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation, and offers significant special features. The area is manageable to protect wilderness characteristics over the long-term with a minimum of resource conflicts. The 13,525 acres recommended for designation are a portion of a proposed 385,080 acre Owyhee Canyonlands wilderness which would include about 270 miles of desert canyon, 164 miles of whitewater boating opportunities, and 292,640 acres of plateau.

The 8,350 acres of BLM land recommended for uses other than wilderness include canyon and plateau lands within the southern one-third of the WSA. Private property and associated access routes separate the area from the portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness designation. A road is needed to the South Fork Owyhee River to provide access for whitewater boating. The existing access route to the private property is the most reasonable location for this road. The southern part of the WSA has been identified through BLM's planning process as a possible utility corridor. Releasing the 8,350 acres for nonwilderness uses would allow for future consideration of these activities.

Table 1
Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	21,875
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	<u>280</u>
Total	22,155
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>	
BLM (within WSA)	13,525
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	13,525
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<u>Within the Area Recommended for Nonwilderness</u>	
BLM	8,350
Split Estate	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	8,350
Inholdings (state, private)	280



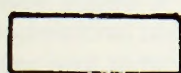





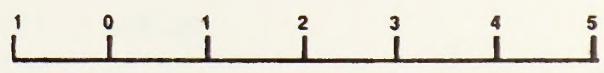
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|---|---|---|---------------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - |  | SPLIT ESTATE - NONE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS - |  | STATE - NONE |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA
RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS - NONE |  | PRIVATE - NONE |



Owyhee Canyon
Proposal

MILES

NV-010-106
February 1990

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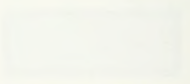
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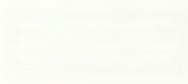
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STATE - LOCAL



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3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness: The Owyhee Canyon WSA consists of a plateau and basin cut by 21 miles of 100 to 300 foot deep canyons. Wildlife in the WSA includes mule deer, pronghorn, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, river otter, beaver, raptors, waterfowl, chukars, and redband trout. California bighorn sheep may move into the area from the adjoining South Fork Owyhee River WSA. The WSA is predominantly natural with less than one percent impacted by the imprints of man. Imprints are limited to one livestock pond and 4 miles of ways (vehicle tracks).

B. Solitude: The WSA's outstanding opportunities for solitude are attributed to the isolated, intimate seclusion of canyonlands and the vastness of seemingly undisturbed desert plateau lands and distant mountain ranges. The meandering character of the canyons and river bed provide excellent topographic screening between visitor groups traveling close together. The depth of the canyons combined with limited viewing distances creates a tremendous sense of seclusion or separation from the rest of the world.

From high points on the plateau, one can see hundreds to thousands of square miles of open spaces stretching from the Steens Mountains in Oregon to Juniper Mountain in Idaho, and southward to the Bull Run Mountains of Nevada. These vast, open spaces instill a sense of complete separation from civilization. Solitude is sometimes disrupted by military aircraft. The WSA is entirely covered by a Military Operations Area (MOA) and two Military Training Areas (MTR) used for low level, high speed exercises. In addition, the military is expanding its operations in the area to include supersonic flights. Flight elevations vary, but operations are conducted as low as 100 feet above ground level. Disruption of the silence and separation from civilization, which contribute to the feeling of solitude in the Owyhee Canyon WSA, is still relatively infrequent. While it is difficult to estimate the actual impact of these military operations, at times aircraft can be seen or heard flying all day. Other times one can travel for several days and not see or hear a military jet. It must be assumed that these impacts will continue to increase as the military continues its growth and expansion in Nevada.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The natural features and diversity of rugged landforms attract people interested in hunting, backpacking and river running, and associated secondary activities of sight-seeing, outdoor photography, wildlife viewing, botanical studies and fishing. River running opportunities on the South Fork Owyhee River are of exceptionally high quality.

The miles of canyons, their diversely and severely-eroded rock landscapes and their steep slopes create a sense of isolation or solitude, thereby enhancing the primitive recreation experience. Visitors traveling in or near the canyon are constantly aware of the forces of nature. Floating or hiking along the river gives one a sense of participation in the movements of a natural force.

The challenge and excitement of whitewater rapids add significantly to the boating experience. Hiking the rugged canyons and plateau without the aid of established trails provides a natural and arduous recreational challenge which heightens the primitive experience.

Talus slopes of the canyon encourage the exchange of recreation use between the river and plateau. Recreational use of the plateau would tend to concentrate near the canyon rims. These rimrock areas often offer less arduous hiking conditions than those in the canyon and provide numerous opportunities for spectacular vistas of the canyon below. Hiking on the plateau provides an opportunity to experience vast, open spaces stretching into the distant horizon.

D. Special Features: The WSA is rich in special features, including scenic, wildlife and cultural values. The special features contribute significantly to the overall quality of wilderness characteristics.

The canyons are of high scenic quality. The combination of moving water, colorful sheer cliffs, grass-covered talus slopes, and blue sky create a dramatic stark beauty which totally envelopes the visitor. Sheer walls of dark brown to black rock dominate the scenery. These fractured, blocky rock monoliths are tinted with brilliant green, yellow and orange microflora. Near the base of the cliffs, water sometimes seeps from the fractures to nourish small, lush, clinging, deep green plant communities. The sheer rock walls rise above steep slopes covered with a mosaic of blackish rock rubble and subdued green and yellow sagebrush and grasses.

Sensitive wildlife species found in the WSA include bobcat, river otter, and redband trout. The recent reintroduction of California bighorn sheep into adjoining WSA ID- 16-53/NV-010-103A should result in a movement of bighorns into the Owyhee Canyon WSA.

The WSA contains both historic and prehistoric archaeological sites.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the diversity of natural systems as represented by ecosystems: Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS), however, it would add a landform not presently represented in the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem. The landform is dominated by rhyolite uplands cut by deep canyons. Designated wilderness within the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem (as of January 1991) included 131,199 acres in 4 designated wilderness areas in Nevada, Idaho, and California. The designated wildernesses have vegetation and landform characteristics unlike those of the Owyhee Canyon WSA. There are 138 other BLM WSAs which contain portions of the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem. This information is summarized in Table 2. Vegetation on about thirteen percent of the WSA, mostly in the canyons, is in good to excellent ecological conditions.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
	<u>NATIONWIDE</u>			
Intermountain Sagebrush Province				
Sagebrush Steppe	4	131,199	138	4,356,340
	<u>NEVADA</u>			
Sagebrush Steppe	2	86,907	34	1,252,442
	<u>IDAHO</u>			
Sagebrush Steppe	1	12,997	30	887,024

B. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a days driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within four to five hours driving time from the Boise population center. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of the population center.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Center	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	Areas	Acres	Areas	Acres
<u>Idaho</u>				
Boise	22	937,766	172	5,127,039

C. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA would add to the geographical distribution of wilderness areas. The existing wilderness areas of the NWPS are geographically concentrated in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range and Cascade Mountain Range of California, Oregon, and Washington, and in the Rocky Mountains and Continental Divide area of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and eastern Utah. There are only two wilderness areas in the area comprising northern Nevada, southwestern Idaho, and southeastern Oregon. Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon system not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The WSA is manageable in the long-term to protect wilderness characteristics. There are no resource uses which could not be adequately controlled or would affect the manageability of the wilderness. The WSA is over 27 miles from a paved highway. Vehicle access to the WSA boundaries is via some gravel roads but mostly along dirt roads which have received minimal construction and little or no maintenance. Much of the plateau within the WSA is relatively flat, but many areas (particularly those close to the canyons) are strewn with rock rubble and impassible to vehicles.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

In 1987 the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment of the area recommended for wilderness designation. The area has a low mineral resource potential for all metals, and no claims exist. Oil and gas leases and lease applications cover a large part of the area, but no resources have been identified. Energy potential for oil, gas, and coal resources is low.

Sand and gravel deposits are present and volcanic rocks that might be used as dimension stone or decorative rock are widespread, but larger deposits are widely available in more accessible areas.

Impacts on Resources

Table 4 summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of 13,525 acres of the WSA as wilderness would have no significant social or economic impacts on the local communities of Elko County. The impact to local income and jobs was an issue analyzed in the study of the Owyhee Canyon WSA.

**Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**

Issue Topics	Proposed Action	No Wilderness	Canyonlands Wild. Alternative	Wildlife Wilderness Alternative	All Wilderness
Wilderness Values	<p><u>Wilderness area</u> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 13,305 acres. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing practices and from closure of 1 mile of way to vehicle use. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 320 acres from utility construction activities on adjacent nonwilderness lands. Some localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 803 user days for boating, 50 user days for backpacking and 60 user days for other activities. Such use would not impact solitude or primitive recreation opportunities overall or naturalness away from river shoreline.</p> <p><u>Nonwilderness area</u> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 1,000 acres. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 7,350 acres from utility construction. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 414 user days for boating, 50 user days for backpacking and 50 user days for other activities. This use will not affect naturalness, solitude or primitive recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 14,205 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 670 acres from utility construction activities. Localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 100 user days for backpacking and 110 user days for other activities. Such use not to affect solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from the river shoreline.</p>	<p><u>Wilderness area</u> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 1,600 acres. Localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 803 user days for boating, 50 user days for backpacking and 60 user days for other activities. This use will not impact solitude or primitive recreation opportunities or naturalness away from the river shoreline.</p> <p><u>Nonwilderness area</u> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 12,605 acres. Slight enhancement in naturalness and solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing practices. Loss of naturalness on 670 acres from utility construction activities. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 414 user days for boating, 50 user days for backpacking and 130 user days for other uses. Such use will not affect naturalness, solitude or primitive recreation opportunities.</p>	<p><u>Nonwilderness</u> (21,875 acres) Impacts on the same as those described under the No Action Alternative.</p>	<p>No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 21,875 acres. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing practices and closure of 4 miles of ways. Localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 100 user days for backpacking, and 110 user days for other activities. Such use not to affect solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from the river shoreline.</p>
Condition and Amount of Native Vegetation	<p><u>Wilderness area</u> Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 11,925 acres and retained in good condition on 1,600 acres by improved grazing practices.</p> <p><u>Nonwilderness area</u> Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 7,150 acres and retained in good condition on 1,200 acres by improved grazing practices. Utility construction activities to displace vegetation on 1 1/2 acres.</p>	<p>Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 19,075 acres and retained in good condition on 2,800 acres by improved grazing practices. Utility construction activities to displace vegetation on 1 1/2 acres.</p>	<p><u>Wilderness area</u> Ecological condition of native plant communities retained in good condition on 1,600 acres.</p> <p><u>Nonwilderness area</u> Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 19,073 1/2 acres and retained in good condition on 1,200 acres from improved grazing practices. Utility construction activity to displace 1 1/2 acres of vegetation.</p>	<p>Impacts the same as those under the No Action Alternative.</p>	<p>Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 19,075 acres and retained in good condition on 2,800 acres by improved grazing practices.</p>

Table 4 Continued
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Proposed Action	No Wilderness	Canyonlands Wild. Alternative	Wildlife Wilderness Alternative	All Wilderness
Selected Wildlife Populations (Bighorn sheep, mule deer, antelope and sage grouse)	Increased recreation use would have minimal impact on wildlife populations. Localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during recreation activity. Way closures reduce potential for wildlife disturbance from recreational vehicle use. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices on the plateau would increase wildlife populations. However, increased livestock numbers would compete with and reduce potential wildlife populations. Utility construction would cause no temporary displacement of wildlife populations.	Increased recreation use would have minimal impact on wildlife populations. Localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during recreation activity. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices on plateau would increase wildlife populations. However, increased livestock numbers would compete with and reduce potential wildlife populations. Utility construction would cause only temporary displacement of wildlife.	Impacts the same as the No Action Alternative.	Impacts the same as the Proposed Action except there would not be increased livestock numbers to compete with wildlife populations. Livestock would be reduced to benefit wildlife.	Increased recreation use would have minimal impact on wildlife populations. Localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during recreation use. Way closures reduce potential for wildlife disturbance from recreational vehicle use. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices would increase wildlife populations.
Semi-Primitive Recreation Use	One mile of interior way closed to recreational vehicle use in the wilderness. Semi-primitive motorized recreation use to reach 110 user days annually in 20 years for hunting, sight-seeing, rockhounding or camping in association with WSA boundary roads and nonwilderness lands open for vehicle access. New road construction into Twelve Mile in non-wilderness area will slightly enhance semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities.	All interior ways to remain open for semi-primitive motorized recreation use. Use to reach 110 user days annually in 20 years for hunting, sight-seeing, rockhounding or camping. New road construction into Twelve Mile within nonwilderness area to slightly enhance the semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities.	There are no roads or ways within the canyon wilderness to be closed. Annual use in 20 years to reach 150 user days for hunting, sight-seeing or camping along plateau roads & ways. New road construction into Twelve Mile within nonwilderness area to slightly enhance semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities.	Impacts the same as those described in No Wilderness. New road construction into Twelve Mile in nonwilderness area to slightly enhance semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities.	4 miles of interior ways closed to recreational vehicle use due to wilderness designation. Semi-primitive motorized recreation use associated with WSA boundary roads to reach 110 user days in 20 years for hunting, sight-seeing, rockhounding or camping.
Livestock Use	Annual livestock use to increase from 2,515 AUMs to 2,866 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.	Annual livestock use to increase from 2,515 AUMs to 2,866 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.	Annual livestock use to increase from 2,515 AUMs to 2,866 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.	Annual livestock use to decrease from 2,515 AUMs to 1,207 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.	Annual livestock use to decrease from 2,515 AUMs to 1,207 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.
Soil Erosion	Way closure to reduce associated soil erosion by .8 tons per year within wilderness. Improved grazing practices to slightly reduce soil erosion on 19,075 acres of the plateau. However, a moderate increase in projected livestock use to result in a 10% increase in soil erosion. Utility construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 2.4 tons per year.	Improved grazing practices to slightly reduce soil erosion on plateau. However, a moderate increase in projected livestock use to result in a 10% increase soil erosion. Utility construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 2.4 tons per year.	Impacts the same as the No Action Alternative.	Improved grazing practices combined with a projected decrease in livestock use to result in a 15% reduction in soil erosion on plateau. Utility corridor construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 2.4 tons per year.	Way closures to reduce associated soil erosion by 3.2 tons per year. Improved grazing practices combined with a projected reduction in livestock use to result in 15% decrease in soil erosion on plateau.
Water Quality	Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams reduced by 10%. Owyhee River sediment load not measurably affected.	Impacts the same as the Proposed Action.	Impacts the same as the Proposed Action.	Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams reduced by 15%. Owyhee River sediment load not measurably affected.	Impacts the same as the Wildlife Wilderness Alternative.
Local Income and Jobs	Income and employment data by individual WSA is not available. For Owyhee Canyonlands WSA complex as a whole, the Proposed Action would contribute to a .3% increase in income and a .3% increase in employment over the next 20 years from livestock and recreational use of the WSAs in the three-county area (Owyhee, Malheur, and Elko Counties).	Both income and employment from WSA complex up .4% in 20 years.	Both income and employment from WSA complex up .4% in 20 years.	Both income and employment from WSA complex up .3% in 20 years.	From WSA complex, income up .2% and employment up .3%.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory process were considered in developing study issues and various management alternatives.

During the wilderness inventory for the Owyhee Canyon roadless unit, 21 public comments supported the establishment of a WSA and 9 opposed it. Comments in support felt the area possessed the characteristics necessary to be considered for wilderness as well as supplemental values such as wildlife, scenic vegetation and cultural resources. Those opposed to the WSA felt the area did not have significant wilderness characteristics and that "multiple use" would be better served if the area was released from further wilderness review.

During the public comment period on the draft Owyhee canyonlands Wilderness EIS, 448 written or oral comments supported all WSAs or portions of all WSAs in the Owyhee Canyonlands complex as wilderness, 47 comments opposed any wilderness in the WSA complex and 23 comments had no position. Those in support of wilderness for the Owyhee Canyon WSA were mostly in favor of designating the entire WSA as wilderness.

Support for the entire WSA as wilderness was based upon a desire to see wildlife, vegetation and other natural resources protected in the long-term. Opposition to any of the WSA becoming wilderness was based upon a desire for improved livestock management opportunities, the need for continued use of the area for motorized recreation, the need to have further opportunities for the exploration and possible development of mineral and energy resources, and the need to potentially develop utility corridors.

Government agencies took the following positions: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supported wilderness designation; the Bonneville Power Administration did not object to wilderness designation provided there was adequate consideration of utility corridors; the U.S. Air Force supported wilderness if no significant restrictions were placed on military overflights; the Bureau of Reclamation had no objection to wilderness; the Governor of Nevada, the Nevada State Office of Community Services, and the Nevada Department of Wildlife and the Nevada Division of State Parks supported wilderness designation; the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology and the Nevada Department of Minerals could not endorse wilderness until more geological data was available; and the Idaho Air National Guard opposed wilderness as did the local government of Elko County.

Subsequent to the May 31, 1984, conclusion of the public comment period for the draft Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness EIS, but prior to the completion of the final EIS, 78 written comments were received. One of the comments opposed any wilderness designation in the WSA complex, 1 took no position, and 76 supported wilderness designation. Of the wilderness advocates, 61 supported designating the entire Owyhee Canyon WSA as wilderness. Most of the wilderness support was in response to a "flyer" sent out by the Committee of Idaho's High Desert and to an "alert" in the magazine published by the Sierra Club.

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