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Volume 4

# IDAHO WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT



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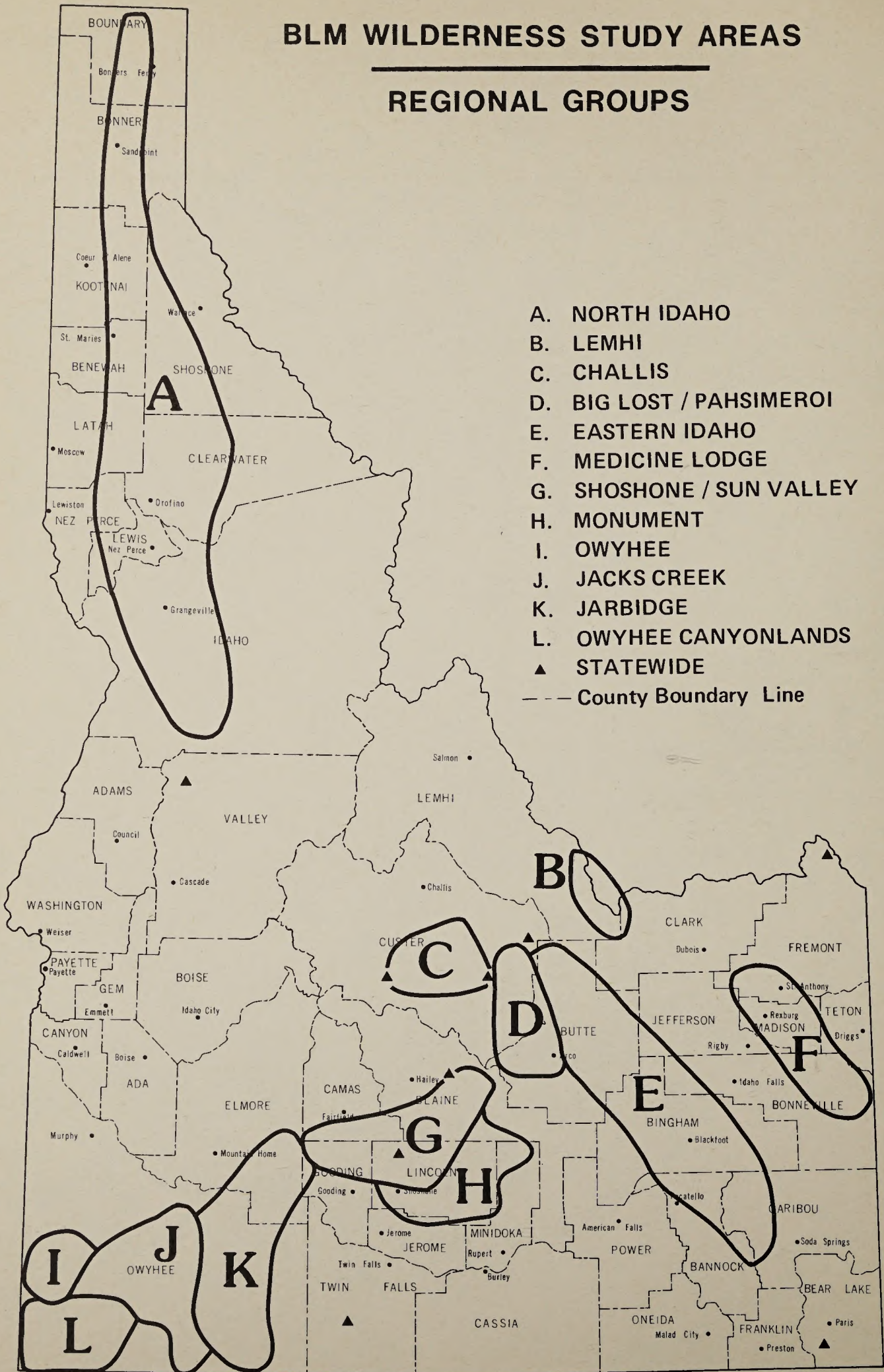
*Idaho*  
Wilderness Study Report



# MAP 1

## BLM WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

### REGIONAL GROUPS





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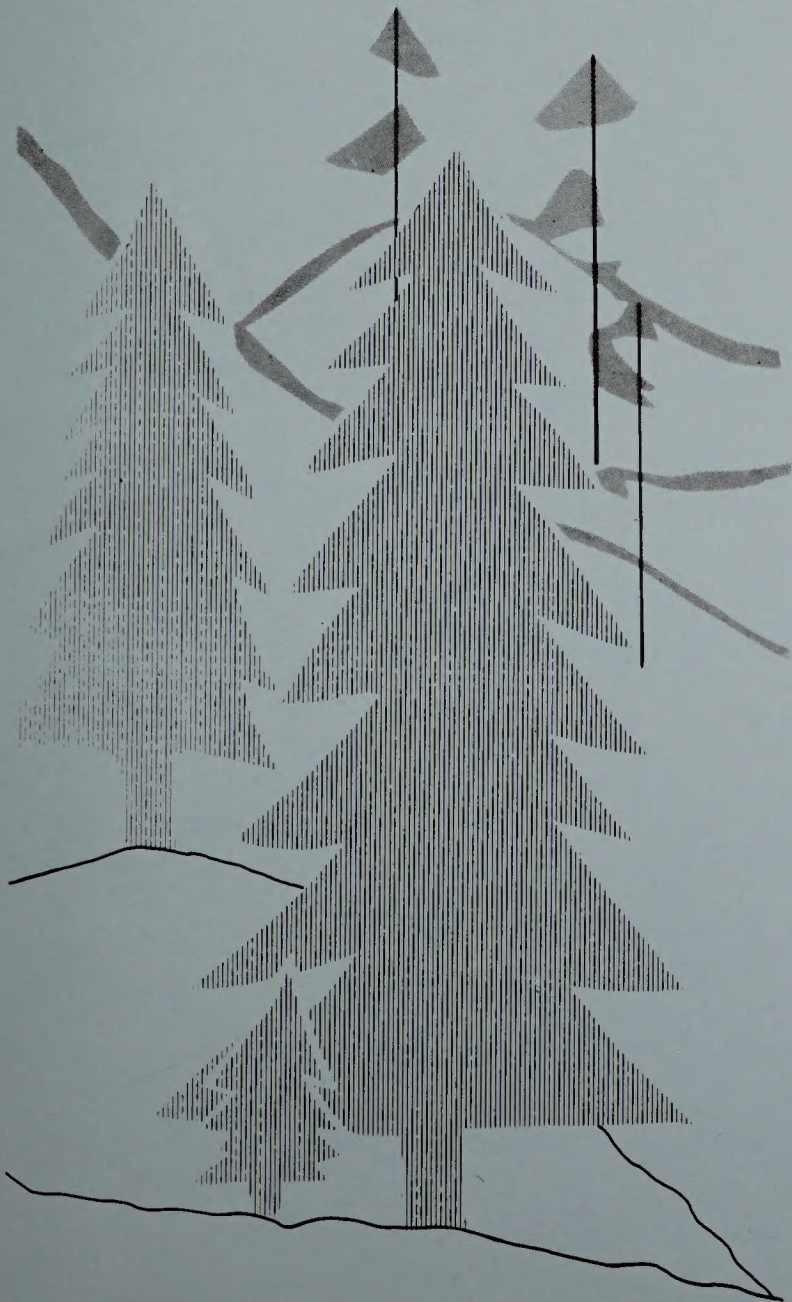
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# SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC WSA RECOMMENDATIONS

## NORTH IDAHO WILDERNESS

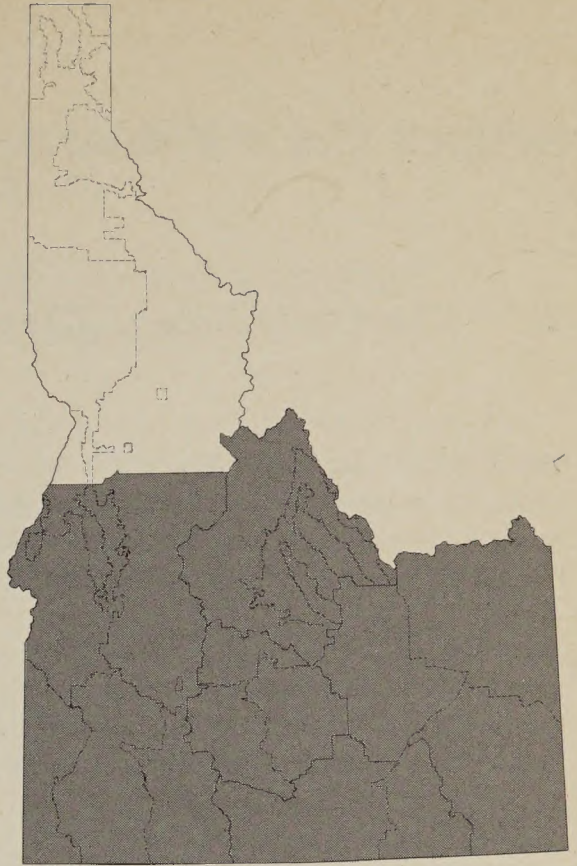








# NORTH IDAHO WILDERNESS

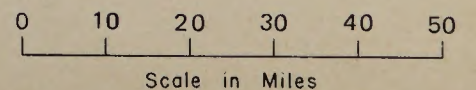


## LEGEND

- DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- - - - - RESOURCE AREA BOUNDARY
- ⊕ WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

## NORTH IDAHO

1. Selkirk Crest
2. Crystal Lake
3. Grandmother Mountain
4. Snowhole Rapids
5. Marshall Mountain





# Selkirk Crest Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 720 acres

The Selkirk Crest WSA (ID-61-1) is located in Boundary County 18 miles northwest of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. It contains 720 acres of public land (see Table 1). A Kaniksu National Forest RARE II Area that has not been recommended for wilderness designation borders the unit on the west. Private lands form the remaining boundaries with the Westside County Road running adjacent to the unit for .25 mile at the north end.

The WSA is steep and heavily vegetated with a wide variety of species. Elevation ranges from near 1,800 feet to almost 4,500 feet at the national forest boundary. Numerous small drainages break up the otherwise uniform slopes of the WSA while areas of bare rock and brush cover are found on the upper reaches.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the North Idaho Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement filed in September 1986. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no action/no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report; and an all wilderness alternative.



## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**0 acres recommended for  
wilderness**

**720 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

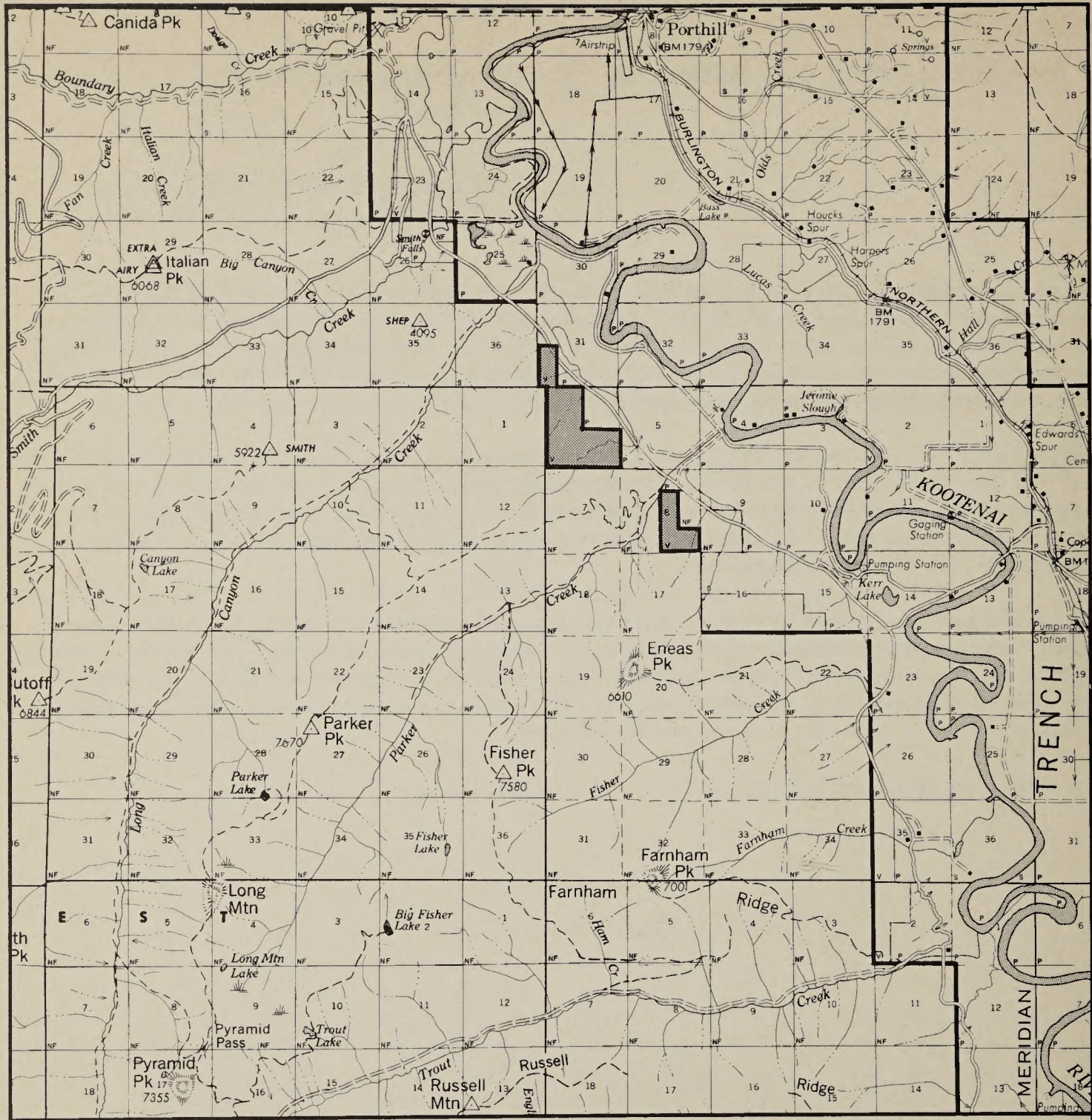
The recommendation for the Selkirk Crest WSA is to release the area for uses other than wilderness. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. All 720 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended for nonwilderness designation as shown on the Selkirk Crest Proposal map.

This very small WSA was studied for possible wilderness designation because it borders a U.S. Forest Service RARE II Area (43,500 acres). Under the all wilderness alternative, management of this WSA would become the responsibility of the U.S. Forest Service should its RARE II Area be designated as wilderness. Since the forest plan does not recommend the area for wilderness designation, this adjacent WSA is likewise not recommended for wilderness designation.

The isolated location of this WSA and its very steep topography make any use incidental in nature. Due to its small size and narrow configuration, the area has outstanding solitude values only in conjunction with the adjacent 43,500 acres of U.S. Forest Service lands. There are no conflicting resource uses of this WSA. It is projected that the current level of minimal use in this WSA will remain constant and no additional impacts to current wilderness values are expected over the long term.

This WSA is simply too small to stand on its own as a wilderness area.

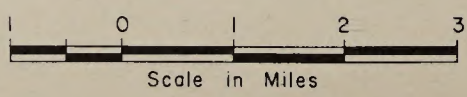




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 T. 63 N.

R. 2 W. | R. 2 W. | R. 1 W. | R. 1 W.

- RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
- SPLIT ESTATE
- RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS
- STATE
- LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
- PRIVATE



**ID-61-1 (202)  
 SELKIRK CREST  
 PROPOSAL**

JANUARY 1988



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
SELKIRK CREST WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	720
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
	720
Total	

**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
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	720
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	720
	0
Inholdings (state, private)	



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Selkirk Crest WSA area appears to be in an essentially natural state with rugged topography and dense vegetation. There are no human imprints present in the area.

##### **B. Solitude**

The ability of the area to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude can exist only in conjunction with the adjoining RARE II Area. By itself, the area offers very limited opportunities for solitude primarily due to the small size of the unit and its proximity to active agricultural operations less than 200 yards to the east.

When the adjoining 43,500 acres of RARE II are considered, the area provides outstanding opportunities for solitude for several reasons. The diverse topography of the area -- mountainous with numerous drainages -- provides many opportunities for visitors to avoid each other. The vegetation in the area is adequate to screen visitors from one another. Movement between the RARE II Unit and WSA is made easier because the two areas have a 2.9-mile common boundary. It is very easy for the visitor to find a secluded spot in the combined area, although this opportunity is basically nonexistent if the WSA is considered by itself.

Human activity outside the boundary can be seen from almost anywhere in the WSA. The WSA lies on a steep mountainside with the panoramic Kootenai River Valley below. Human impacts stem from farming activities in the Valley which include plowed fields, farmhouses and distant roads.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

The ability of the WSA to provide outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation can be assessed only in conjunction with the adjoining RARE II Area. By itself, the WSA offers only limited opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The presence of only subtle topographic and vegetative diversity and the lack of any prominent feature precludes any "outstanding" opportunity.

When the RARE II Area and WSA are combined into one unit, there is the opportunity for a variety of recreation activities that would be considered outstanding. However, the opportunities still would not change in the WSA and the opportunities for recreation in the RARE II Area would not be increased with the addition of the WSA to the area.

##### **D. Special Features**

The WSA does not contain any 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 the Selkirk Crest WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by five designated areas with 337,369 acres. There is one other BLM study area in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**  
**Ecosystem Representation**

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Columbia Forest Province				
			<u>NATIONWIDE</u>	
Western Ponderosa Forest Ecosystem	5	337,369	1	720
			<u>IDAHO</u>	
Western Ponderosa Forest Ecosystem	2	250,822	1	720



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Selkirk Crest WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



### **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

Inclusion of the Selkirk Crest WSA within the NWPS will not serve to further the objective of this factor. The Northern Rocky Mountain region contains one of the largest concentrations of designated and proposed wilderness areas within the country.

#### **Manageability**

This area cannot be managed as wilderness. It is totally dependent upon the adjacent U.S. Forest Service RARE II Area to be manageable as wilderness. The value of the WSA is in providing a more cohesive unit of public land. This WSA is too small to stand alone as a manageable wilderness area.

#### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

According to the internal BLM mineral analysis and the joint U.S. Geological Survey/Bureau of Mines initial assessment, there are no known energy resources or mineral values for either locatable or leasable minerals within the WSA. Reserves of subeconomic saleable materials such as peat, sand and gravel have been identified within the WSA and on adjoining lands. There are no mining claims in the WSA.

#### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-61-1 (SELKIRK CREST)**

ISSUE TOPICS	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED ACTION (NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Protected.	Slight loss of solitude from ORV use.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources	Withdrawn from mineral entry.	Potential for exploration and development.
Impacts on Timber Industry and Local Economy:		
Potential Harvest (MMBF)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Potential Jobs		
Impacts on Recreational ORV Use	No Impact.	Current 10 annual visitor days would be unchanged.
Impacts on Soil:		
Loss (tons/10 years)		
Loss (% of current BLM-EIS area totals)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Water Quality:		
Sediment Yield Increase (tons/10 years)		
Sediment Yield Increase (% of current yields in EIS area)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Water Yield Increase (acre/ft/year)		
Impacts on Water Supply	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Fish:		
Sediment Reaching Fish Habitat (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Vegetation:		
Eliminate Productivity (acres/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Modification of Succession (acres/10 years)		
Impacts on Mammals and Birds:		
Loss of Habitat Capability (head/10 years)		
Elk	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Deer		
Impacts on Archaeological Resources	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Scenic Quality	No change.	No change.



## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Social and economic factors were not considered a significant issue in the study of the Selkirk Crest WSA.

## **Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments**

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process, starting with the inventory phase and continuing through the development of the Final EIS. No one commented on this area during the inventory phase.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, 28 respondents specifically mentioned this WSA. Of these, 24 supported wilderness designation if the adjoining USFS RARE II Area was so designated and four opposed wilderness designation. No one commented on this WSA at any of the three public meetings or the formal public hearing.

The Federal Highway Administration responded to the Draft EIS and expressed concern over actions which could affect the highway on the eastern portion of the WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game noted its opposition to wilderness designation of federal lands in this area due to its proposed big game enhancement projects.



# Crystal Lake Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 9,027 acres

The Crystal Lake WSA (ID-61-10) is located in the northeast corner of Benewah County and the southeast corner of Kootenai County about ten miles northeast of St. Maries, Idaho. The WSA contains approximately 9,027 acres of public land.

The northern border of the WSA is formed by private land and a portion of the Twin Crags Road. An irregular pattern of private land and portions of the Rochat Road define the western and southern borders. Portions of the Reeds Gulch and Pine Creek roads and private land form the eastern boundary.

The unit contains a landscape of varied character. Bare talus peaks descend sharply to Latour Creek some 3,000 feet below Reeds Baldy, the highest peak in the unit. The slopes in the upper drainages have a thin to moderately stocked mixed coniferous stand. Toward the lower end of the unit the density of this stand steadily increases. The unit contains the major portion of the Latour Creek drainage including its headwaters at Crystal Lake. Bare areas of talus materials are common in the upper end of the drainage. The basin below Crystal Lake is the site of a past fire and now has a dense brush cover.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the North Idaho Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement filed in September 1986. Three alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; a no action/no wilderness alternative; and a no wilderness with Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) designation alternative, which is the recommendation in this report.



## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**0 acres recommended for wilderness**

**9,027 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Crystal Lake WSA is to not designate it as wilderness but to protect its natural and cultural values through management as an ONA. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. ONA designation would protect almost all the values that would be protected under wilderness designation. All 9,027 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended for nonwilderness with ONA designation as shown on the Crystal Lake Proposal map.

This WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation for two main reasons:

Due to its size and physical configuration, this WSA is vulnerable to activities on adjacent non-BLM lands. Timber harvest and other land-altering activities are visible from many portions of the WSA. With the current trend of increased activity on adjacent lands continuing, user perceptions of naturalness and opportunities for solitude will be degraded.

Future management direction for this WSA calls for increased emphasis on providing additional recreational opportunities for the public. This would involve maintaining roads which provide access to the trailheads in the area and maintaining the trail system within the WSA. The increased use of this area for recreation would not be compatible with management as a wilderness area.

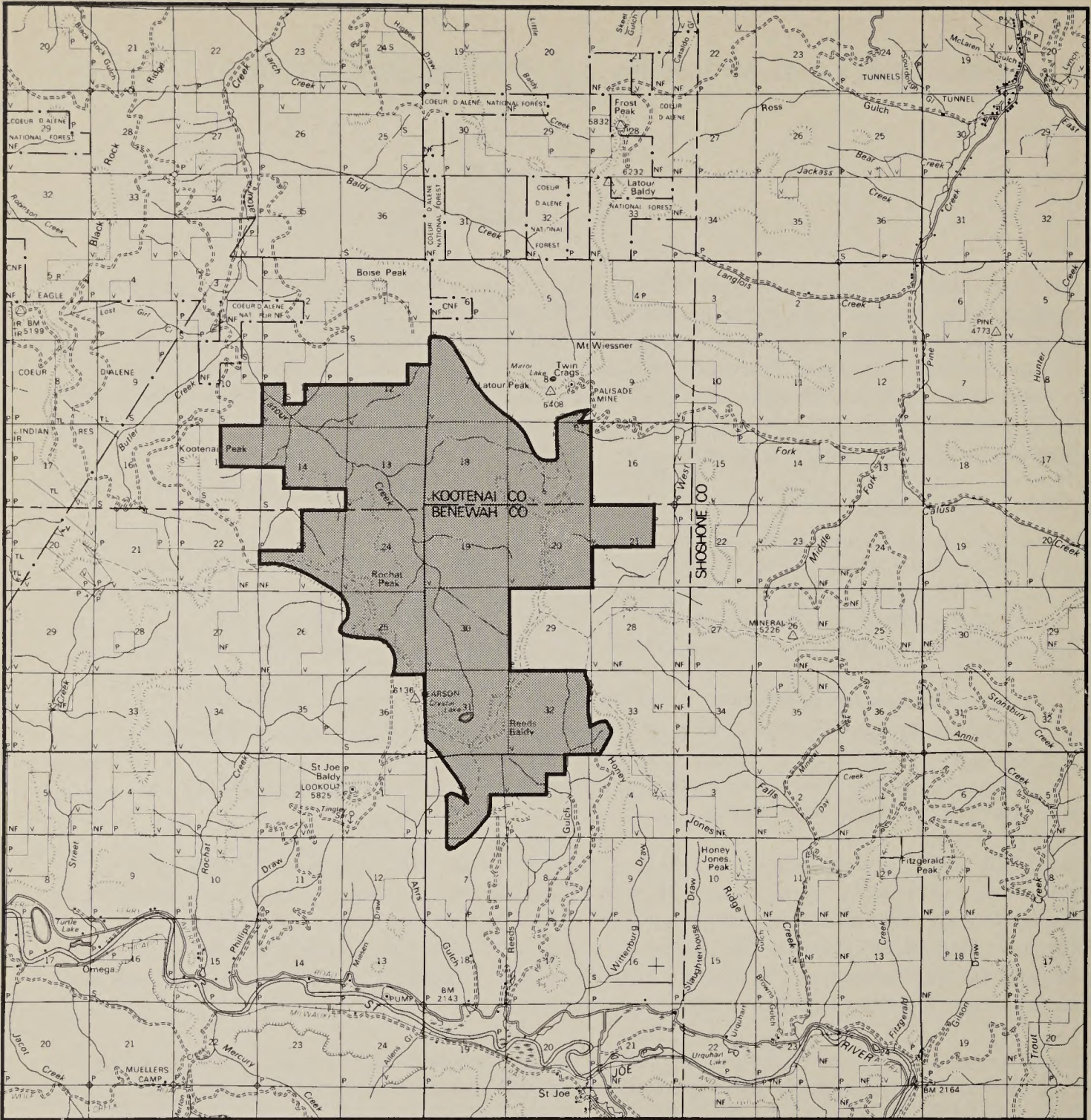
Although this WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation, BLM recognizes the high quality primitive and semi-primitive recreation opportunities it contains and proposes to protect these values through management as an Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) to be established in the upcoming Resource Management Plan (RMP) process. The management objectives are to provide the maximum amount of recreational use without damage to the area's natural features. The area may not be used in any way that would unnecessarily detract from the quality of its natural features.

The recreational values of the WSA are excellent. It provides opportunities for hiking, camping, sightseeing, hunting, fishing and berry picking. Although no recreation facilities exist in the WSA, Crystal Lake itself is a destination point for hikers using the Sheep Springs Campground and trailhead located outside the WSA.

The proposed ONA designation for this WSA would provide administrative protection for most wilderness values; however, the recreational emphasis of the ONA management plan would reduce the availability of solitude due to increased use of the area. The conflicts such designation would cause with other resource uses of this WSA, such as timber harvesting, are limited. Timber harvest activities would be prohibited, eliminating a potential annual harvest of 830 MBF of timber.

Closing the area to ORV use would eliminate about 75 visitor days of use each year. The small amount of grazing which currently occurs would be allowed to continue. There are no mining claims located within the WSA and, although the unit would be open to mineral entry, its low mineral potential makes the likelihood of mineral development extremely doubtful.











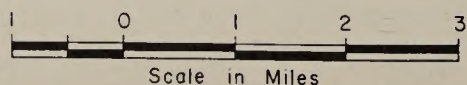
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T. 46 N.

R. 1 W. | R. 1 E.

R. 1 E. | R. 2 E.

- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



ID-61-10  
CRYSTAL LAKE  
PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1988



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
CRYSTAL LAKE WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	9,027
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
 Total	 9,027

**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
 State land (outside WSA)	 0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	9,027
Split Estate	0
 Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	 9,027
 Inholdings (state, private)	 0



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

While the Crystal Lake WSA is in an essentially natural state, there is one human imprint that reduces the quality of its natural appearance. This imprint is a "way" which stretches for 1.5 miles in the extreme eastern portion of the WSA. The way is now overgrown and impassable. Natural revegetation has reduced the visual impacts of the road cut, though it does not significantly limit the way's visibility.

The way is visible only from certain areas within the southern portion of the WSA. This area encompasses approximately 2,000 acres and contains Crystal Lake. Crystal Lake receives most of the use within the WSA. Reeds Baldy, a prominent peak, is also located here. These two features, along with ease of access, serve to make this area the focal point of use in the Crystal Lake WSA. This WSA is vulnerable to management practices on adjacent non-BLM land. This is particularly significant outside of the northwest portion of the area where an intermingled pattern of state and private land exists. Timber harvest and other land-altering activities, such as road building, farming and home building, are visible from many portions of the WSA. Current trends indicate that use of the surrounding lands for development will increase in the future, thereby affecting user perceptions of naturalness in the area. This same situation exists to the south and west of the WSA. Actions within this area are visible from fewer locations within the WSA and will, therefore, constitute a less significant impact.

##### **B. Solitude**

When conditions of moderate and dispersed use exist, the heavily forested areas (approximately 3,700 acres) within the WSA provide an outstanding opportunity for solitude due to vegetative screening. However, the trend of increased visitor use and BLM objectives to focus on recreation in this area will make it more difficult to isolate oneself from the sights and sounds of other users because of the relative small size of the WSA and limited topographic screening. It is anticipated that recreation use of this WSA will increase from the current 1,000 visitor days each year to over 6,000 visitor days by the year 2,000.

Activities on adjacent lands could severely diminish opportunities for solitude in the Crystal Lake WSA.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

The Crystal Lake WSA offers a diversity of possible activities. The more prominent among these are fishing, cross-country skiing, hiking and nature study. The range of landform and vegetation, from bare peaks to heavily forested creek bottoms, provides a broad base which can meet the needs of these varied activities. Fishing opportunities include both stream and lake. Cross-country skiing within the WSA accommodates a wide range of skill levels. The variety of environments maintains visual interest for both the hiker and those involved in nature study.



## **D. Special Features**

The Crystal Lake WSA contains features which have both cultural and educational values. These features consist of the Skitswish Monuments located along the ridges surrounding the majority of the area. These unique rock structures are associated with the religious ceremonies of the Coeur d'Alene Indians. A Coeur d'Alene Indian Tribal Council resolution has identified the dependency it has on these sites for their native religious "vision quest" practices. These monuments have been classified as significant cultural sites and are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.



# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

## A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Crystal Lake WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by ten designated areas with 2,539,310 acres. There is one other BLM study area in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Columbia Forest Province				
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Western Spruce-Fir Forest Ecosystem	10	2,539,310	1	9,027
<u>IDAHO</u>				
Western Spruce-Fir Forest Ecosystem	1	300,115	1	9,027



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Crystal Lake WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

Inclusion of the Crystal Lake WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The Northern Rocky Mountain region contains one of the largest concentrations of designated and proposed wilderness areas within the country.

### **Manageability**

The Crystal Lake WSA cannot be managed as wilderness. Existing solitude values cannot be maintained while meeting the need for additional recreation opportunities. A projected six-fold increase in the use of this area by the year 2000 will continue to reduce user perceptions of naturalness and affect opportunities for solitude since adequate topographic and vegetative screening is not available to isolate users from the sights and sounds of others. In addition, activity on adjacent non-BLM lands has continued to increase. This increase in activity is currently most evident on state and private lands northwest of the WSA where timber harvesting activities and road building are occurring. Long-range plans for other state and private lands which surround this WSA indicate that noncomplementary activities such as road building, timber harvest and homesite development will increase in the near future. These increases will further reduce the wilderness values of naturalness and solitude.

### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

According to the internal BLM analysis and the joint U.S. Geological Survey/Bureau of Mines initial assessment, no known energy or mineral resource values exist in this WSA. There are no mining claims, leases or pending applications for leasable minerals. Literature indicates that the fault zones within the WSA and favorable host rocks of the lower Belt Supergroup are similar to those in the Coeur d'Alene Mining District.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-61-10 (CRYSTAL LAKE)**

ISSUE TOPICS	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS - OUTSTAND- ING NATURAL AREA)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Protected.	Values lost on 4,931 acres. Nat- uralness and solitude reduced on remainder.	Protected.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources	Withdrawn from mineral entry (9,027 acres).	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Timber Industry and Local Economy:			
Potential Harvest (MBF)	0	830	0
Potential Jobs	0	6	0
Impacts on Recreational ORV Use	Closed to ORV use. 75 annual visitor days foregone.	Benefit from 9.8 miles of new road.	Closed to ORV use. 75 annual visitor days foregone.
Impacts on Soil:			
Loss (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	850	
Loss (% of current BLM-EIS area totals)		.2	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Water Quality:			
Sediment Yield Increase (tons/10 years)		576	
Sediment Yield Increase (% of current yields in EIS area)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	.4	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Water Yield Increase (acre/ ft/year)		25	
Impacts on Water Supply	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	No impact.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Fish:			
Sediment Reaching Fish Habitat (tons/ 10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	65	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Vegetation:			
Eliminate Productivity (acres/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	46	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Modification of Succession (acres/10 years)		976	
Impacts on Mammals and Birds: Loss of Habitat capability (head/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.		Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Elk		12	
Deer		3	
Impacts on Archaeological Resources	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	No impact.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Scenic Quality	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Slight adverse impact on 4,931 acres.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.



## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

None of the alternatives considered for the Crystal Lake WSA would cause any significant social or economic effects. A potential annual harvest of 830 MBF of timber from 4,931 acres of commercial forest land would be foregone.

## **Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments**

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process starting with the inventory phase and continuing through the development of the Final EIS.

During the inventory phase, the majority of commenters agreed that this area contained qualities that made it eligible for further study.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, 66 respondents specifically commented (either in writing or orally) about this WSA. Of these, 33 favored wilderness designation and 33 preferred no wilderness for this area. This WSA was mentioned by three persons in testimony at the formal public hearing. All three favored no wilderness.

Three government agencies submitted written comments concerning this WSA. The Bureau of Indian Affairs urged continued coordination with local Indian tribes and the Idaho Department of Lands expressed an opinion concerning future land use allocations within this WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game supports the BLM recommendation for this WSA.



# Grandmother Mountain Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 17,129 acres

The Grandmother Mountain WSA (ID-61-15A) is located in Shoshone County 45 miles northeast of Moscow, Idaho. The WSA contains a total of 17,129 acres of public land with 10,339 acres in ID-61-15A and 6,790 acres in ID-61-15B. These two areas are separated by the U.S. Forest Service-administered Marble Creek drainage. There are an additional 160 acres of private land and 160 acres of land administered by the U.S. Forest Service within ID-61-15B.

Area ID-61-15A is bordered by a combination of national forest, private and state lands. The Freezeout Saddle Road forms the southern boundary of this portion of the WSA. Area ID-61-15B is bordered by a more intermingled pattern of national forest, private and state lands on all sides. This intermingled pattern results in a narrow and irregular configuration.

The terrain within ID-61-15A varies from heavily forested drainages to bare peaks. There are numerous small drainages and several high mountain lakes located throughout. Elevation ranges from 4,600 feet in the Lund Creek drainage to 6,800 feet on Widow Mountain.

The terrain and vegetation of ID-61-15B are similar to that of ID-61-15A. This area, however, does not contain the variety of features found in ID-61-15A. In the Placer Creek drainage, elevation ranges from 4,800 feet to over 6,300 feet.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the North Idaho Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement filed in September 1986. Five alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; a no action/no wilderness alternative; a no wilderness timber emphasis alternative where 10,000 acres would be intensively managed for timber production; another no wilderness alternative where 9,684 acres would be managed as an Outstanding Natural Area with 2,905 acres as a Resource Natural Area/ACEC and the remainder for timber production, which is the recommendation of this report; and a partial wilderness alternative where 12,589 acres would be designated as wilderness and the remainder allocated primarily for timber management.



## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**0 acres recommended for wilderness**

**17,129 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Grandmother Mountain WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and release the area for other uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. All 17,129 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended for nonwilderness designation as shown on the Grandmother Mountain Proposal map.

The recommendation provides a wide spectrum of multiple use opportunities from intensive timber management to enjoyment of natural features to research in a unique environment.

This WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation for two primary reasons:

While the WSA meets the basic criteria for consideration as wilderness during the inventory phase of the study process, further analysis indicates that the quality of wilderness values exhibited in this area are not worthy of inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. In addition, management objectives for this area are not compatible with wilderness designation.

Effective long-term management of this WSA as wilderness would require a similar designation on adjacent U.S. Forest Service lands, particularly those located in the Marble Creek drainage. These lands have already been designated as nonwilderness through the RARE II process and are slated for intensive timber harvesting and road building activities.

While not recommended for wilderness designation, certain portions of the Grandmother Mountain WSA contain attributes which make specialized management emphasis a good recommendation. Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) designation on 9,684 acres of the WSA would help preserve the area's character as a basically undisturbed alpine environment in a region that has been generally logged and roaded during the past fifty years while still providing recreational opportunities. Final boundaries and management guidelines for the proposed ONA will be developed during the preparation of the District Resource Management Plan (RMP) scheduled for 1993. The area would not be used in any manner which would unnecessarily impact the quality of its natural features. Timber harvest activities would not be permitted and no new road construction could occur in the ONA portion of the WSA. ORV use would be restricted to the existing 12 miles of maintained trails. Solitude and naturalness would be adversely affected, to a limited extent, throughout the WSA as a result of approximately 330 annual visitor days of recreational ORV use.

Another portion of the WSA recommended for special management emphasis is the Lund Creek-Orphan Point area of the WSA. This 2,905 acre portion was designated as a Research Natural Area (RNA) and Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in 1988. Old growth hemlock and subalpine fir forests and a unique aquatic environment make this an important area for the study of plant diversity. RNA/ACEC designation of this area will protect its natural features and provide an area ideally suited for research activities. No timber harvest, road building or ORV activities will be permitted in the RNA. Most of the wilderness values which currently exist in this small area would be maintained in the long term.

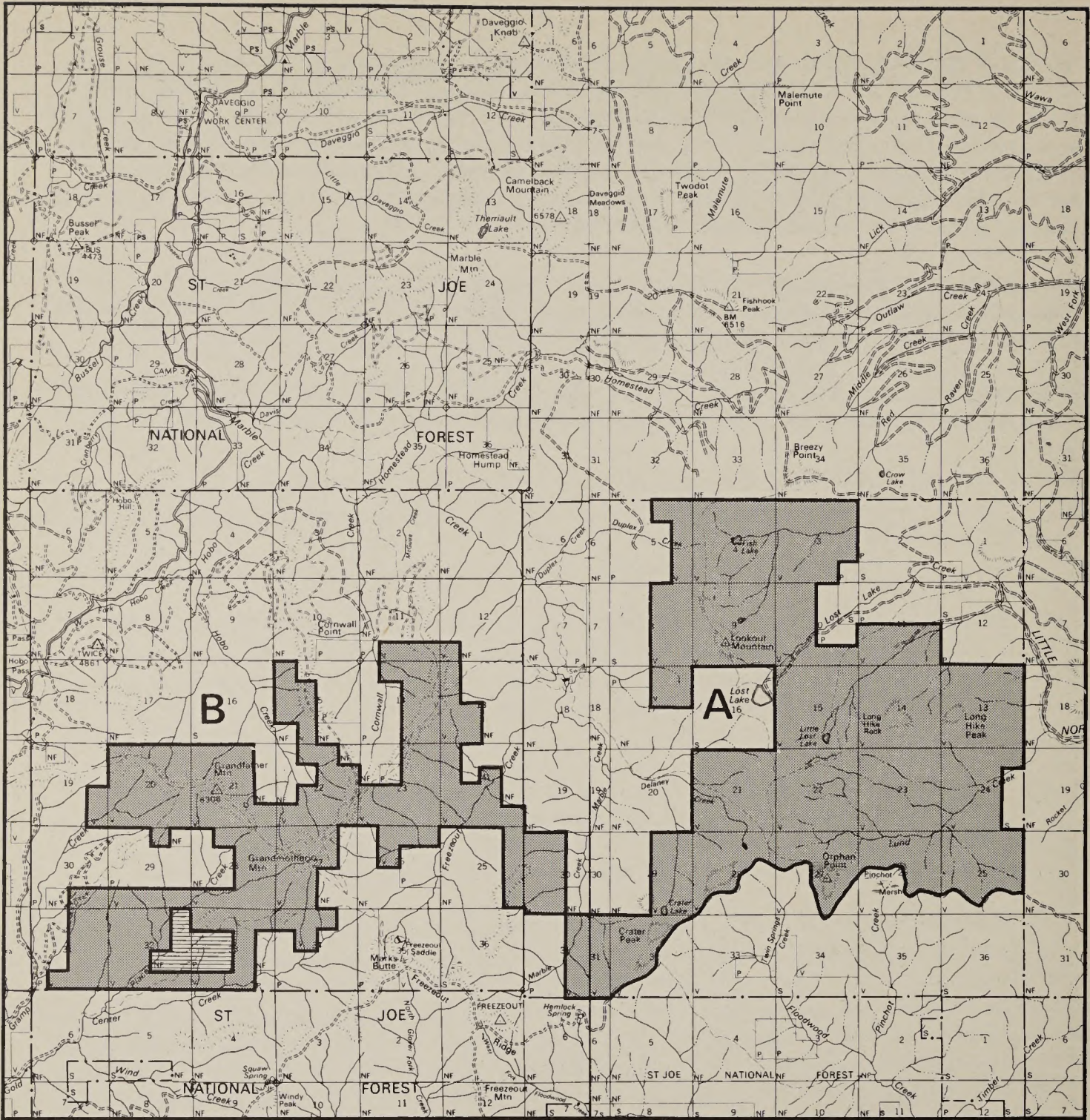


The portion of the Grandmother Mountain WSA recommended for intensive timber management is well-suited for that activity. It contains stands of timber with high economic value and is located where timber harvesting on adjacent lands has already degraded the wilderness values to marginal levels. Vehicle access to this area could be easily opened by extending existing road systems on nearby U.S. Forest Service and state lands. To manage this area for timber production and harvest would conflict with wilderness values since harvest and associated road building activities would eventually eliminate the wilderness values of naturalness, solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation on this portion of the WSA.

Conflicts caused by the recommendation are limited. No livestock grazing occurs and none is projected for the future. Recreation opportunities would be enhanced throughout the WSA and timber harvesting would be permitted in the area where the highest value timber and majority of nearby road systems exist.

There are no mining claims located within the WSA and, although the WSA would be open to mineral entry under the recommendation, its low mineral potential makes future mineral development unlikely.





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





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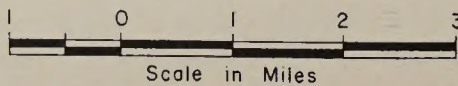
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R. 4 E. | R. 5 E.

- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



**ID-61-15A,B  
GRANDMOTHER MOUNTAIN  
PROPOSAL**

JANUARY 1988



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
GRANDMOTHER MOUNTAIN WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	17,129
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	320
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,449</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>0</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	17,129
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>17,129</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	320



### 3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### A. Naturalness

When the area was inventoried, evidence of human activity from timber harvests was found in several locations within the Grandmother Mountain WSA. Stumps are scattered throughout the area but with no major concentrations in any one location. Evidence of past timber harvest activity in the WSA is hardly noticeable due to overgrowth.

Snow-covered skid trails are visible from higher elevations due to the contrast from the more heavily forested areas. However, these skid trails have little impact upon the natural character of the area.

Evidence of human activity immediately outside the WSA boundary is plentiful. These activities consist primarily of past and ongoing timber harvests and road construction. Numerous clearcuts offer the most significant visual impacts.

Whether or not these impacts are visible will depend upon the user's location within the area and the extent to which screening is present. At least some of these impacts will be visible near the WSA boundaries and from most peaks and ridges. Views of outside impacts are more readily available in the westernmost portion of the WSA. This results from this segment's narrow configuration.

Established trails within the Grandmother Mountain WSA are predominantly found along the ridgelines. Use of these trails will expose users to the presence of outside impacts. Destinations within the WSA are more likely to be located off the ridges where these impacts are lessened. Within the westernmost portion of the WSA, these impacts are more significant. This is due to the intensity and widespread presence of outside activities and few features which serve as destination points.

##### B. Solitude

An outstanding opportunity for solitude exists in much of ID-61-15A. The area is heavily vegetated and the terrain is frequently broken by small drainages. The resulting screening provides an opportunity for users to isolate themselves from one another. Unlike ID-61-15B, the opportunities within ID-61-15A are not totally dependent upon adjoining land to be considered outstanding.

The configuration of ID-61-15B, which contains 4,540 acres, is extremely irregular and narrow because of an intermingled land ownership pattern. This confines users to a narrow corridor, increasing the chance of encountering other users. The screening available from both topography and vegetation cannot offset the inherent limitation of this configuration. Evidence of human imprints outside of the WSA plays a role in the perception of solitude in ID-61-15B. Activities such as timber harvesting and road building are visible from most points within this portion of the WSA due to its elevation and narrow configuration. Most of the land outside this portion of the WSA is being used for timber production. This pattern of development will continue and spread. The amount of existing visible evidence is sufficient to preclude the perception of this area as a lonely or secluded place. Future outside impacts can only intensify this feeling.



### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

Grandmother Mountain WSA offers a diversity of possible activities. The more prominent among these are hiking, hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, primitive camping and nature and wildlife observation. The range of landform and vegetation, from bare peaks to dense forest, provides a broad base which can meet the needs of these varied activities.

The variety of environments maintains visual interest for both the hiker and those involved in nature study. Hunting opportunities exist for elk, deer, moose, bear and upland game. Fishing is available in the area's lakes and numerous small streams. The large amount of snow and the relatively inaccessible nature of the area during the winter provide a challenging setting for the cross-country skier. Although all these factors enhance the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, they are not sufficient to create outstanding opportunities.

The opportunities available in ID-61-15B are comparatively less than those in ID-61-15A. While the same activities may be pursued in each area, the quality of experience is less than that in ID-61-15A. Those factors which limit the quality of experience are a lack of features which would enhance primitive recreation activities, the confining configuration of the area and the exposure of outside impacts.

### **D. Special Features**

The Lund Creek drainage, 2,905 acres in the southeastern portion of the WSA, is important because of its ecological diversity. The ecosystem found here is not found elsewhere in the region. Old growth hemlock and subalpine fir forests are the major interest but equally important are the aquatic environments of wet meadows, marshes, sphagnum bogs and streams. In recognition of this diversity of vegetative communities, this area has been designated a Research Natural Area (RNA) and Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).



# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

## A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Grandmother Mountain WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by one designated area with 30,875 acres. There is one other BLM study area in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Columbia Forest Province				
	<u>NATIONWIDE</u>			
Cedar-Hemlock-Pine Forest Ecosystem	1	30,875	1	17,289
	<u>IDAHO</u>			
Cedar-Hemlock-Pine Forest Ecosystem	0	0	1	27,389



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Grandmother Mountain WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

Inclusion of the Grandmother Mountain WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The Northern Rocky Mountain Region contains one of the largest concentrations of designated and proposed wilderness areas within the country.

### Manageability

In the long term, only the central and southern portions of ID-61-15A, an area of less than 1,500 acres, could be effectively managed to preserve wilderness characteristics. These areas are sufficiently shielded from outside impacts by vegetative and topographic screening so as to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and preservation of the natural character for the long term.

The primary reason for the continuing degradation of wilderness values throughout the rest of the WSA is the increasing use of contiguous lands for timber production and road construction. The wilderness values of solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation will be the most severely impacted with naturalness reduced. The EIS prepared in 1986 stated that effective wilderness management of much of this WSA was dependent upon wilderness compatible management of the surrounding U.S. Forest Service lands. The Final Forest Plan (1987) for this area calls for only a small portion of the lands which border this WSA to be managed "in its present condition with no new roads." The remaining U.S. Forest Service lands are slated for "production of wood products." U.S. Forest Service plans call for continued logging and road building immediately adjacent to this WSA through the year 2010 and beyond.

The private and state lands which border this WSA are, likewise, being utilized for intensive timber production. The irregular and narrow configuration of ID-61-15B and the western portion of ID-61-15A forces visitors to use areas from which these activities are plainly visible. In addition, the higher elevation of these portions of the WSA makes it quite easy to view and/or hear the activities on the lower adjoining lands.

### Energy and Minerals Resource Values

According to the internal BLM analysis and the joint U.S. Geological Survey/Bureau of Mines initial assessment, no known energy or mineral resource values exist in this WSA. There are no mining claims, leases or pending applications for leasable minerals. The entire WSA was identified as suitable for undiscovered resources for garnet, asbestos, refractories and anorthosite.

### Impacts on Resources

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-61-15A (GRANDMOTHER MOUNTAIN)**

ISSUE TOPICS	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/TIMBER EMPHASIS ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS-TIMBER/ONA/RNA)	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Resources	Protected.	Naturalness and solitude reduced throughout WSA by ORV use.	Values lost on 10,000 acres. Naturalness and solitude reduced on remainder.	Protected on 2,905 acres. Values lost on 4,540 acres. Naturalness and solitude reduced on 9,684 acres.	Protected on 12,589 acres. Values lost on 4,540 acres.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources	Withdrawn from mineral entry (17,129 acres).	No impact.	No impact.	No impact.	12,589 acres withdrawn from mineral entry.
Impacts on Timber Industry and Local Economy:					
Potential Harvest (MBF)	0	0	2100	617	617
Potential Jobs	0	0	15	5	5
Impacts on Recreational ORV Use	Closed to ORV use. 350 annual visitor days foregone.	Slight benefit from trail maintenance.	Slight benefit from 20 miles new road.	2,905 acres closed. 9,684 acres restricted use. 120 visitor days lost (potential).	12,589 acres closed to ORV use. 190 visitor days lost.
Impacts on Soil:					
Loss (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	1731	510	510
Loss (% of current BLM-EIS area totals)			.4	.12	5
Impacts on Water Quality:					
Sediment Yield Increase (tons/10 years)			1173	346	346
Sediment Yield Increase (% of current yields in EIS area)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	.8	.24	.24
Water Yield Increase (acre/ft/ year)			50	15	15
Impacts on Water Supply	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	No impact.	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Fish: Sediment Reaching Fish Habitat (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	680	200	200
Impacts on Vegetation:					
Eliminate Productivity (acres/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	92	27	27
Modification of Succession (acres/ 10 years)			1973	589	589
Impacts on Mammals and Birds: Loss of Habitat Capability (head/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.			
Elk			23	7	7
Deer			4	2	2
Impacts on Archaeological Resources	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	No impact.	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Scenic Quality	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Slight adverse impact on 10,000 acres.	Slight adverse impact on 4,540 acres.	Slight adverse impact on 4,540 acres.



## Local Social and Economic Considerations

None of the alternatives considered for the Grandmother Mountain WSA would cause any significant or economic effects. While there would be slight gains for the timber industry and local economy over current conditions through implementation of the recommendation, these gains would be about one-third of the potential gains which intensive timber management of all productive forest lands would provide. In either case, these impacts would be negligible.

## Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process starting with the inventory phase and continuing through the development of the Final EIS.

During the inventory phase, timber companies and related interest groups were opposed to any further wilderness designations or any other forms of restrictive designations for this area. Environmental groups felt the Grandmother Mountain area was the last vestige of wilderness in a sea of clearcuts. They feel the only real protection for this area is through wilderness designation. These two factions are determined and vocal. From the comments received, this WSA appears to be the most controversial of the five studied in northern Idaho.

Of the 89 respondents who specifically commented on this WSA during the EIS phase (either in writing or orally), 47 favor wilderness designation, 38 prefer no wilderness for this area and four prefer partial wilderness for this WSA. Six other commenters oppose any further wilderness designations regardless of the area. This WSA was mentioned by six persons in testimony at the formal public hearing. One favored wilderness designation and five opposed wilderness designation for this WSA.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game commented on the Draft EIS and indicated support for the recommendation.



# Snowhole Rapids Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 5,068 acres

The Snowhole Rapids WSA (ID-62-1) is located in Idaho and Lewis Counties eight miles southwest of Cottonwood, Idaho. The WSA contains 5,068 acres.

Private land forms the border around the majority of the WSA. Approximately 2.5 miles of Rice Creek Road and Cottonwood Creek Road (natural surface roads) form small portions of the border at both ends of the WSA. The WSA is approximately 20 miles in length but averages only .5 mile in width. Within this configuration is the Salmon River and its steep canyon walls. The majority of the WSA is between those walls. Only at Mahoney Creek, approximately midway through the area, does the WSA extend any appreciable distance from the river. There the boundary extends one mile south of the river. In contrast, the WSA narrows to approximately 330 feet 1.5 miles downstream.

The canyon walls within the WSA are steep and highly broken due to erosion. Numerous perennial and intermittent drainages further diversify the terrain. Elevation ranges from 1,200 feet at the Salmon River to 3,800 feet in the Mahoney Creek drainage.

The vegetation within the WSA is more uniform than the topography. Grasses dominate the landscape where adequate soil is present. However, scattered locations support trees, shrubs and herbaceous species. Most of these locations are along the drainages that flow into the Salmon River. The most extensively vegetated area is found in the Mahoney Creek drainage.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the North Idaho Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement filed in September 1986. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; and a no action/no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report.



## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**0 acres recommended for wilderness**

**5,068 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Snowhole Rapids WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and release the area for other uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. All 5,068 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended for nonwilderness designation as shown on the Snowhole Rapids Proposal map.

This WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation because long-term management of this WSA as wilderness would not be feasible. This conclusion is based on two major factors:

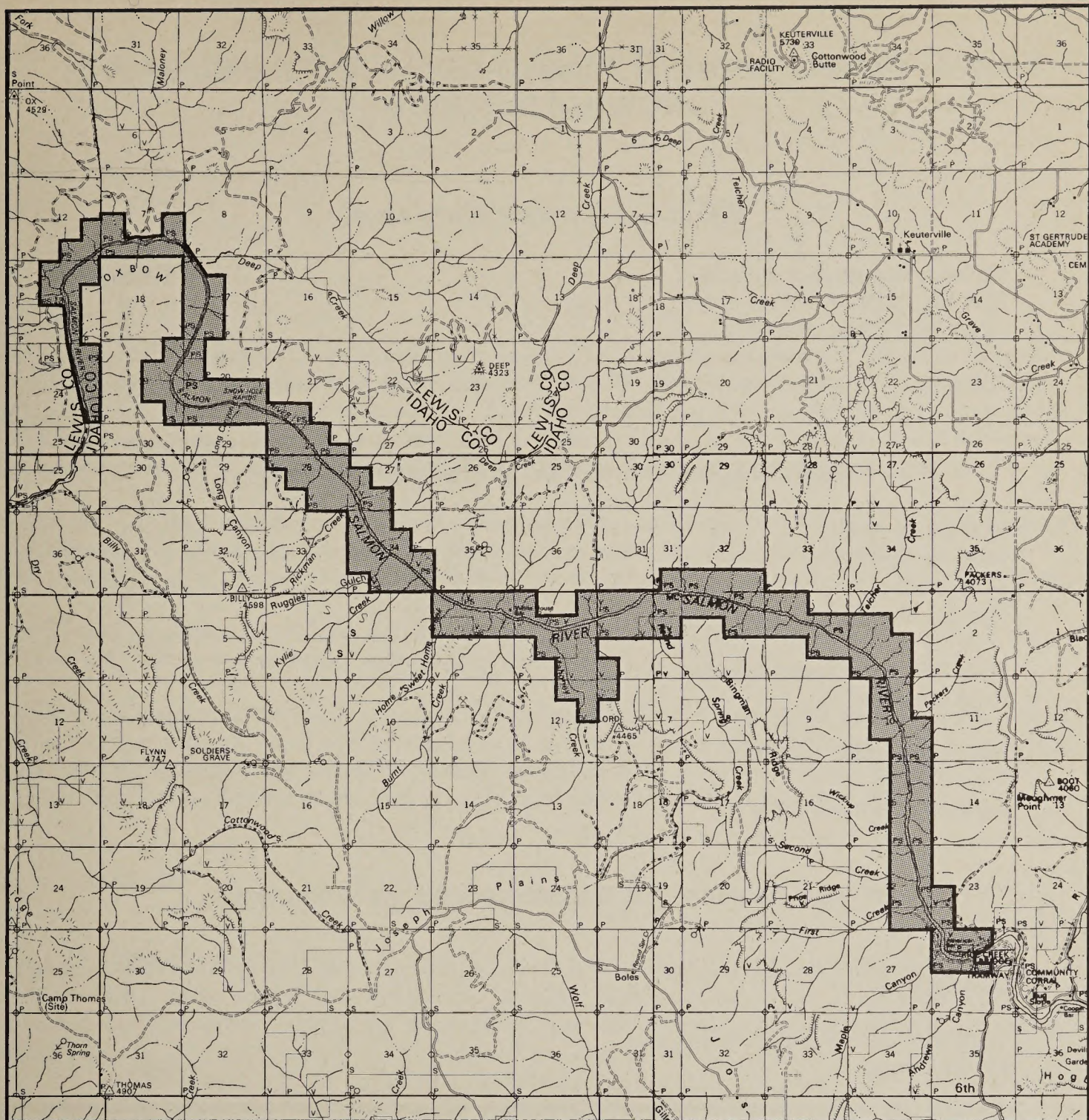
Increasing homesite development and ranching activity on adjacent non-BLM lands is visible from the river and many other points in the WSA and reduces user perceptions of naturalness and solitude. These visual intrusions will increase over the long term.

The river corridor has a high value for management as a recreation area. The management objective is to promote recreation opportunities in this area. Since 1975, use of the Salmon River by recreationists has increased from 2,800 annual user days to over 8,500 annual user days. This trend is continuing and will reduce opportunities for solitude since almost all the use of this WSA is concentrated in the narrow river corridor, which averages about one-half mile in width, where topographic and vegetative screening is insufficient to isolate users from one another. The physical characteristics of this WSA are such that indirect or direct management techniques designed to disperse visitor use and minimize user encounters would not be practical. This is compounded by the concentration of visitor use along the river, unmanaged segments of the river both upstream and downstream of the WSA and the nonconforming allowable use of power boats, all of which degrade opportunities for solitude.

The unique natural values of this WSA would be protected through the continuing implementation of the Lower Salmon River Recreation Management Plan and the Lower Salmon River Cultural Resource Management Plan. The WSA is withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws by a formal withdrawal enacted in 1986. As such, there will be no impacts from mineral exploration or development. Under the recommendation, the entire WSA would be open to ORV use. No land-based ORV use occurs presently and it is unlikely to occur in the near future simply due to the rugged topographic features of the Salmon River Canyon within the WSA. Livestock use would be maintained at the current level of 299 AUMs.

The recreational values of this WSA are outstanding. The Lower Salmon River, 21 miles of which pass through this WSA, provides nationally recognized whitewater rafting opportunities. Based upon the percentage of the WSA area to the total river corridor, recreation use within the WSA is currently estimated at 8,500 annual user days. Recreation activities associated with river running include fishing, camping, hiking, hunting and sightseeing. The recommendation will protect and enhance the recreational values of this WSA and accommodate increased use.





T. 31 N.







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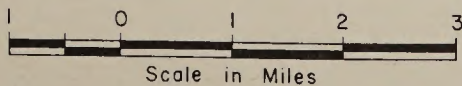
T. 30 N.

T. 30 N.

R. 3 W. | R. 2 W.

R. 2 W. | R. 1 W.

- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



**ID-62-1  
SNOWHOLE RAPIDS  
PROPOSAL**

JANUARY 1988



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
SNOWHOLE RAPIDS**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	5,068
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,068</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>0</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	5,068
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>5,068</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The quality of the wilderness values was the key consideration in the recommendation. While the Snowhole Rapids WSA contained the wilderness values necessary for study, they are not considered to merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA generally appears natural but there are several site-specific human signs, primarily rangeland developments, which impact naturalness locally. Evidence of human activity is present throughout the WSA, largely from mining and domestic livestock grazing.

Within the WSA, there are no concentrations of impacts which could impair the feeling of being in a natural environment. Whitehouse Bar contains most of the impacts within the WSA. Several old cabins are along both sides of the river. An old road, suitable only as a pack trail, extends down the river on the south bank.

Other intrusions within the WSA are widely scattered, small tailing piles and small rock structures. They are the result of Chinese mining activity between 1860 and 1880.

Visitor use is centered on the river and its banks. Infrequent use occurs beyond this narrow corridor. From certain locations along the river, outside impacts along the rim of the canyon can be seen. Activities on land adjacent to the WSA have had little affect on users within the area. However, increases in activity on adjacent lands could adversely impact user perceptions of naturalness within the WSA.

##### **B. Solitude**

Primary use of the WSA is recreational activity centered on power and float boating on the Salmon River. The river banks, where suitable, are only used for campsites or for short stops. Since visitor use is generally limited to a narrow corridor, chances for encountering other users are increasing as recreational use of this area grows.

The outstanding opportunity for solitude can be maintained only under conditions of low and evenly distributed use. Use on the lower Salmon River has more than tripled within the past five years and a continuation of this trend will result in diminished opportunities for solitude.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

The Salmon River is widely recognized as an outstanding whitewater rafting river. Activities associated with river rafting may include fishing, sightseeing and hiking.



#### **D. Special Features**

The Salmon River Canyon is of great archaeological and historical importance. Numerous archaeological sites have been located throughout the Snowhole Rapids WSA. Artifacts indicate continuous habitation by humans for over 10,000 years. The entire river corridor within this WSA has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places and is known as the Lower Salmon River Archaeological District.



## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

### A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Snowhole Raipds WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by two designated areas with 55,925 acres. There is one other BLM study area in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

#### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<hr/>				
Palouse Grassland Province				
			<u>NATIONWIDE</u>	
Wheatgrass-Bluegrass Ecosystem	2	55,925	1	5,068
			<u>IDAHO</u>	
Wheatgrass-Bluegrass Ecosystem	0	0	1	5,068



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Snowhole Rapids WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

Inclusion of the Snowhole Rapids WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The Northern Rocky Mountain region contains one of the largest concentrations of designated and proposed wilderness areas within the country.

### **Manageability**

Long-term management of this WSA as wilderness would not be feasible. Increased homesite development and ranching on adjacent non-BLM lands would reduce opportunities for primitive recreation and perceptions of naturalness in this area. Opportunities for solitude are being reduced significantly due to the increased use of the Salmon River.

Techniques to minimize visitor encounters and interaction would not be practical for this WSA for a number of reasons:

The river canyon configuration of this WSA concentrates users in a narrow corridor. Use of this WSA is centered on one major activity (boating and rafting). Topographic and vegetative screening is insufficient in the high-use corridor. Use of this navigable river is basically unmanaged both upstream and downstream of the WSA. Power boat use of the river is an established nonconforming use that intrudes upon opportunities for solitude.

### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

According to the internal BLM analysis and the joint U.S. Geological Survey/Bureau of Mines initial assessment, no significant energy or mineral values exist in this WSA. There are no mining claims, leases or pending applications for leasable minerals.

This WSA is currently withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws by a formal withdrawal enacted in 1986.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-62-1 (SNOWHOLE RAPIDS)**

ISSUE TOPICS	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Solitude would continue to be degraded by power boat use.	Solitude degraded by power boat use.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources	Continued withdrawal of 5,068 acres.	Continued withdrawal of 5,068 acres.
Impacts on Timber Industry and Local Economy: Potential Harvest (MBF) Potential Jobs	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Recreational ORV Use	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Soil: Loss (tons/10 years) Loss (% of current BLM-EIS area totals)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Water Quality: Sediment Yield Increase (tons/10 years) Sediment Yield Increase (% of current yields in EIS area) Water Yield Increase (acre/ft/year)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Water Supply	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Fish: Sediment Reaching Fish Habitat (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Vegetation: Eliminate Productivity (acres/10 years) Modification of Succession (acres/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Mammals and Birds: Loss of Habitat Capability (head/10 years) Elk Deer	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Archaeological Resources	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Scenic Quality	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.



## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Neither of the alternatives considered for the Snowhole Rapids WSA would cause any significant social or economic effects.

## **Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments**

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process starting with the inventory phase and continuing through the development of the Final EIS.

During the inventory phase, the majority of commenters cited the recreational and archaeological values of the Lower Salmon River corridor. Many asked that BLM support efforts to have the river designated as a wild and scenic river rather than a wilderness area.

Of the 31 respondents who specifically commented on this WSA during the EIS phase (either in writing or orally), 19 favor wilderness designation while 12 prefer no wilderness for this area. Six commenters oppose any further wilderness designations regardless of the area.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game submitted a letter supporting the recommendation for this WSA. No other government agencies commented specifically about this WSA. The Nez Perce Indian Tribe commented that it had all rights to the waters of the Salmon River and that this WSA should be returned to its control. No one commented on this WSA at the formal public hearing.



# Marshall Mountain Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 5,804 acres

The Marshall Mountain WSA (ID-62-10) is located in Idaho County 22 miles east of Riggins, Idaho. The WSA originally contained 6,524 acres of public land but approximately 720 acres of the WSA have been designated as wilderness as part of the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness Area.

The Payette National Forest forms the boundary along the north and east sides of the WSA. Natural surface roads, a section of state land and other parcels of public land form the remaining borders. This intermingled pattern results in the WSA's narrow and irregular configuration.

The topography of the area is mountainous and frequently broken by perennial and intermittent drainages. The land is heavily covered by a mixed-conifer forest. The forest cover is occasionally broken by talus slopes and rock outcrops. Elevation ranges from 3,600 feet in Long Tom Creek to over 8,400 feet at the summit of Marshall Mountain.

This WSA is part of the historic Marshall Mountain Mining District where hundreds of mining claims were staked and many successful mining operations flourished in the early 1900s through the 1950s. None of the successful operating mines are located within the WSA but there are over 15 mine sites (a few of which are still active) within ten miles of the WSA. Currently there are approximately 150 lode mining claims in the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the North Idaho Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement filed in September 1986. Four alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; a no action/no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report; a no wilderness timber emphasis alternative in which most of the WSA would be allocated for intensive timber management; and a partial wilderness alternative under which the northern portion of the WSA (1,680 acres) would be designated as wilderness and the remaining 4,124 acres would be allocated for nonwilderness uses.



## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

0 acres recommended for wilderness

5,804 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for the Marshall Mountain WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and release the area for other uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. All 5,804 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended for nonwilderness designation as shown on the Marshall Mountain Proposal map.

This WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation for the following reasons:

Although this WSA contains minimal wilderness characteristics, an analysis indicates that the quality of wilderness values in this area do not merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Exceptional opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within this immediate area are readily available in the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness Area which adjoins this WSA. Comparable values are not contained in this WSA because of the numerous mine pits and other evidence of this area's use as a historic mining district. Over 150 lode mining claims are located within the WSA.

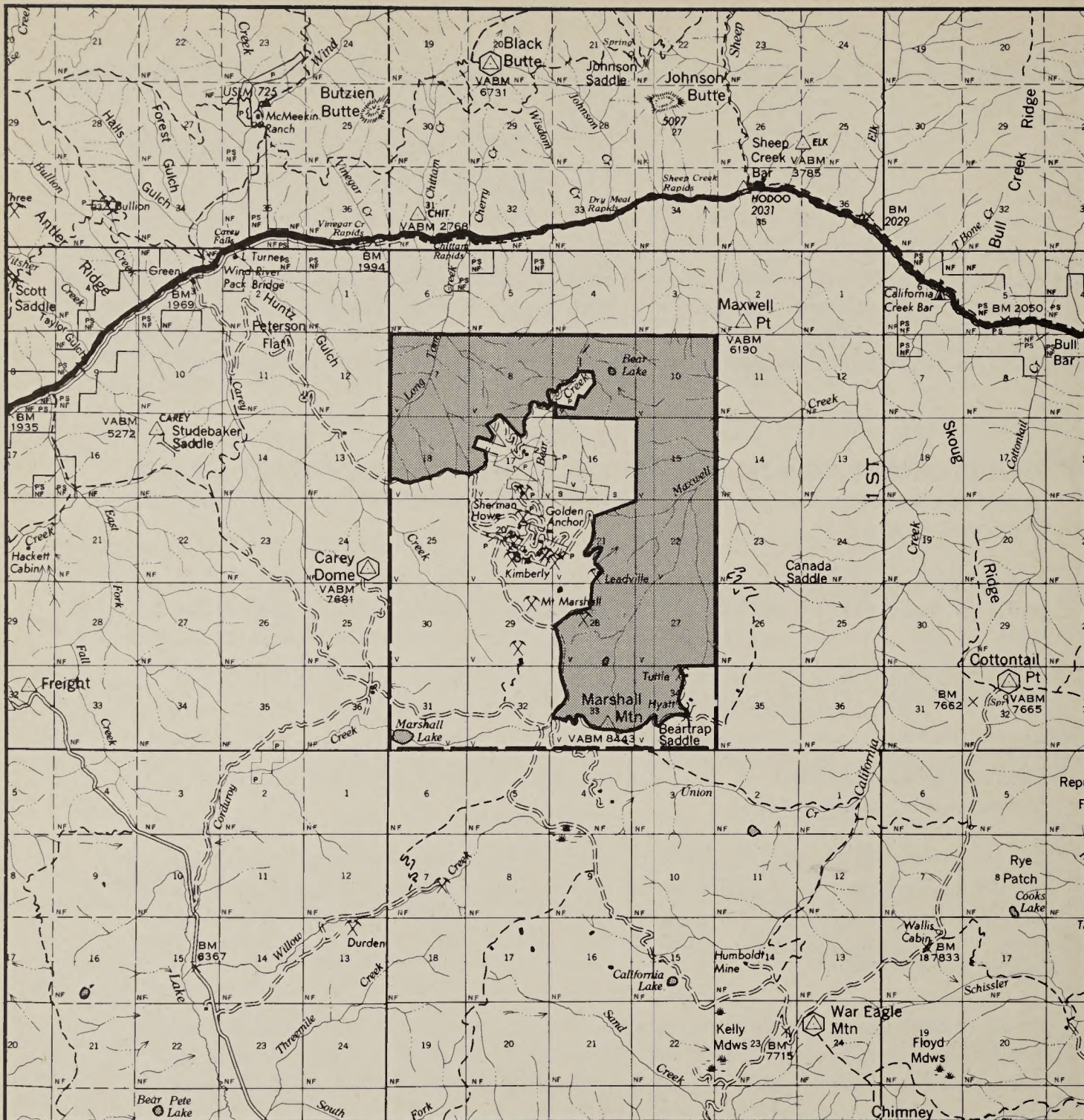
This very isolated WSA has highly rated scenic values but receives very little use. Mining claimants occasionally enter the WSA and some hunting occurs during the fall. Most of the recreation is on adjacent lands.

The recommendation would protect the recreational values of the WSA while keeping the area open to mineral entry and possible mineral development should improved market conditions and/or new technology make development economically feasible. The entire WSA would be open to vehicular use which would benefit mineral exploration activities and ORV opportunities.

Resource conflicts caused by the recommendation are limited. The small amount of grazing use which currently occurs (eight AUMs) would be unaffected. No intensive timber management is proposed due to the high percentage of low-value timber which occurs on the WSA.

In summary, wilderness designation of this WSA is not compatible with the historic mining use of the area. The majority of people who commented on this WSA felt the original management emphasis for the Marshall Mountain Mining District should be maintained to preserve the future potential for active mineral development. It is also important to note that, in 1980 when Congress included the northern 720 acres of this WSA in the River of No Return Wilderness Area, it was considered the only portion of the WSA worthy of wilderness designation.





T. 25 N.







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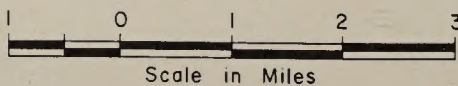
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T. 23 N.

R. 4 E. R. 5 E.

R. 5 E. R. 6 E.

- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



ID-62-10  
MARSHALL MOUNTAIN  
PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1988



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
MARSHALL MOUNTAIN**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	5,804
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
 Total	 5,804

**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
 State land (outside WSA)	 0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	5,804
Split Estate	0
 Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	 5,804
 Inholdings (state, private)	 0



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Marshall Mountain area appears to be in a natural condition. However, there has been extensive prospecting in the area, much occurring 30 to 50 years ago, which left small test holes and pits throughout the area. There are a few abandoned mines and prospects scattered throughout the area, most of which have a tailings pile in the vicinity of the entrance. These have been found mainly in Sections 18 and 22. The impact on naturalness from these mines and prospects is very localized due to the heavy forest cover that screens them. They are safety hazards.

##### **B. Solitude**

There is a cherry-stem area in the Bear Creek drainage containing several active mining operations. Frequent truck travel occurs along the Bear Creek Road. Heavy equipment and air compressors often accompany these mining operations. The noise of this equipment is loud and inescapable in much of the Bear Creek drainage. The loss of opportunities for solitude in Bear Creek occurs in portions of Sections 8, 9 and 10 and encompasses about 450 acres.

There is another active mining operation in the southwest quarter of Section 23. This operation is just outside the WSA boundary on national forest land. Loss of solitude as a result of this mine occurs in Section 22, encompassing about 50 acres. Increased mining activity, both within and outside the WSA, would adversely affect naturalness and solitude values.

The remaining 5,304 acres of the WSA contain good opportunities for solitude. The broken, mountainous landscape offers opportunities for visitors to isolate themselves from others. Dense forests that cover much of the area help screen visitors from each other.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

The outstanding opportunity for primitive and unconfined types of recreation is centered on the WSA's suitability for backcountry camping. Recreation opportunities include hiking, backpacking, hunting, wildlife observation, photography and sightseeing.

##### **D. Special Features**

There are no special features in the WSA.



## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

### A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Marshall Mountain WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by three designated areas with 826,068 acres. There is one other BLM study area in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**  
**Ecosystem Representation**

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Columbia Forest Province				
			<u>NATIONWIDE</u>	
Grand Fir/Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	3	826,068	1	5,804
			<u>IDAHO</u>	
Grand Fir/Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	1	529,214	1	5,804



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Marshall Mountain WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

Inclusion of the Marshall Mountain WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The Northern Rocky Mountain region contains one of the largest concentrations of designated and proposed wilderness areas within the country.

### **Manageability**

This WSA currently could be managed as a wilderness area; however, the ability to manage this area for wilderness in the long term is questionable. In the Marshall Mountain area, gold and other minerals have been economically mined in the past. For this reason, the WSA is saturated with mining claims (over 150). Should the price of these minerals escalate and/or new cost-effective technologies become available, it will become economically feasible for claimants to actively pursue or resume mining operations in this WSA. The impacts associated with numerous active mining operations such as road construction and mine excavation would degrade or eliminate wilderness values. The severity of degradation would be dependent upon the magnitude, intensity and incidence of new or resumed mining operations.

Mining activity in the vicinity of the WSA is currently depressed due to the high costs of production relative to the market value of the minerals. Should this WSA be designated a wilderness area during this time of depressed mineral development, the potential for further degradation of wilderness values would be eliminated and the area would be manageable in the long term as wilderness.

### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

According to the internal BLM analysis and the joint U.S Geological Survey/Bureau of Mines initial assessment, there are no known mineral values for leasable or saleable minerals; however, this area has been classified as having identified undiscovered resources for base metals, gold and silver. There are active mines near or adjacent to the WSA. There is a large inferred demand for mineral production or exploration within the WSA based upon the number of mining claims. According to the USGS map, "Land Valuable for Geothermal Resources," this area may be valuable for geothermal resources.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-62-10 (MARSHALL MOUNTAIN)**

ISSUE TOPICS	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/ TIMBER EMPHASIS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Protected.	Slight adverse impacts to solitude and naturalness from ORV use. Potential for value loss if mineral development commences.	Values lost on 3,920 acres. Naturalness and solitude reduced on remainder.	Protected on 1,680 acres. Values lost on 2,280 acres. Naturalness and solitude reduced on 1,844 acres.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources	Withdrawn from mineral entry (5,804 acres).	No impact.	No impact.	1,680 acres withdrawn. No impact on the remainder.
Impacts on Timber Industry and Local Economy:				
Potential Harvest (MBF)	0	0	724	421
Potential Jobs	0	0	5	3
Impacts on Recreational ORV Use	Closed to ORV use. No impact. 10 annual visitor days foregone.	No impact.	Benefit from 7.8 miles new road.	Benefit from 4.5 miles new road.
Impacts on Soil:				
Loss (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	671	390
Loss (% of current BLM-EIS area totals)			.16	.1
Impacts on Water Quality:				
Sediment Yield Increase (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	469	267
Sediment Yield Increase (% of current yields in EIS area)			.3	.17
Water Yield Increase (acre/ft/year)			20	11
Impacts on Water Supply	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Fish: Sediment Reaching Fish Habitat (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	0	0



ISSUE TOPICS	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/TIMBER EMPHASIS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
<b>Impacts on Vegetation:</b>				
Eliminate Productivity (acres/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	37	21
Modification of Succession (acres/10 years)			775	443
<b>Impacts on Mammals and Birds: Loss of Habitat Capability (head/10 years)</b>				
Elk	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	3	2
Deer			2	1
<b>Impacts on Archaeological Resources</b>				
	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	No impact.	No impact.
<b>Impacts on Scenic Quality</b>				
	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Slight adverse impact on 3,920 acres.	Slight adverse impact on 2,280 acres.



## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

None of the alternatives considered for the Marshall Mountain WSA would cause significant social or economic effects.

## **Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments**

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process starting with the inventory phase and continuing through the development of the Final EIS. During the inventory phase, the majority of commenters pointed out the historic use of this area as the Marshall Mountain Mining District. Most voiced concern over studying this area for wilderness designation and questioned why an area that had been dedicated to mining should not be considered as eligible or appropriate for preservation as wilderness.

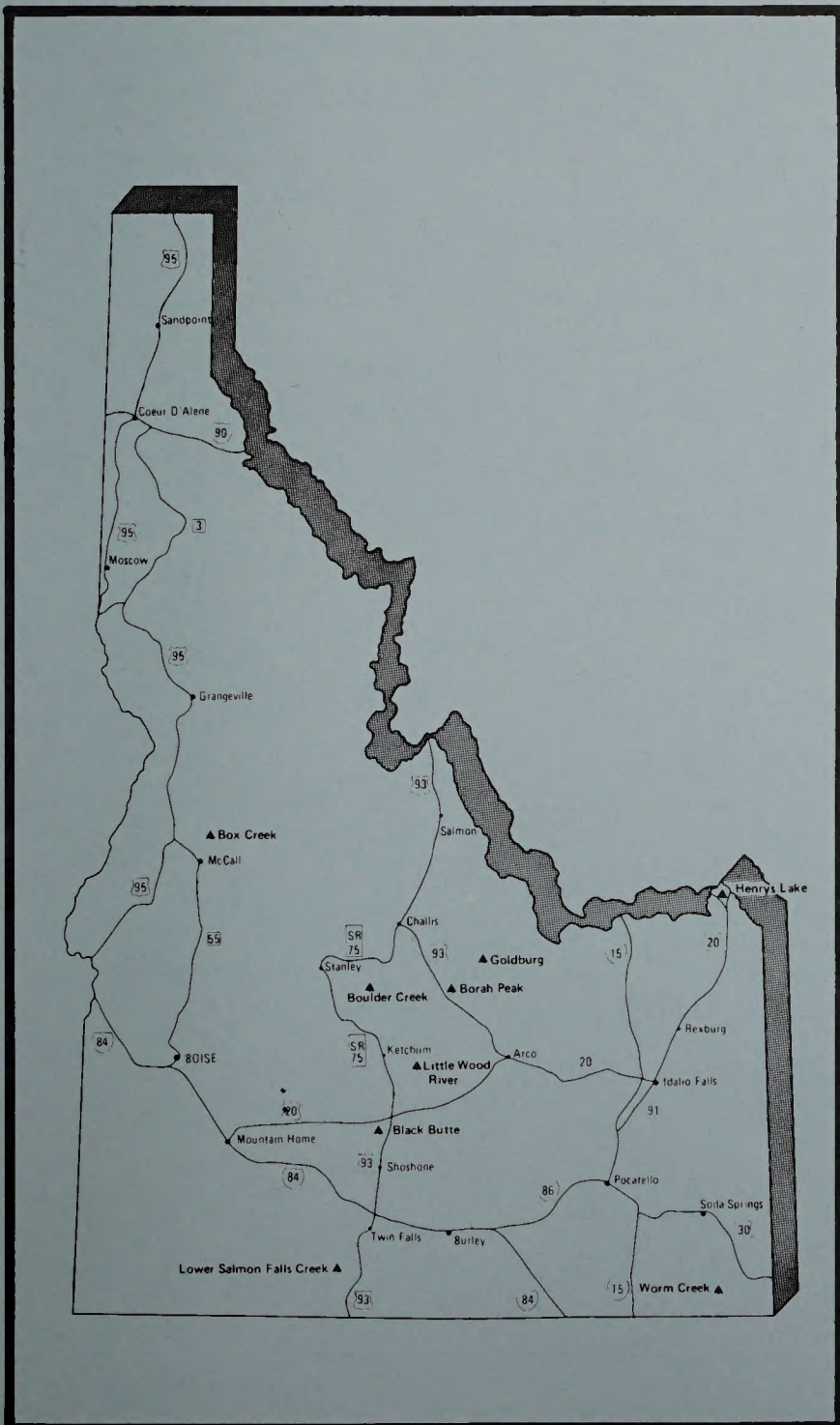
Of the 31 respondents who specifically commented on this WSA (either in writing or orally), the majority favored no wilderness for this WSA while four indicated a preference for wilderness designation. Six commenters oppose any further wilderness designations regardless of the area.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game submitted a letter supporting the BLM recommendation for this WSA. No other government agencies commented specifically about this WSA. The Nez Perce Indian Tribe commented that it had all rights to the waters of the Salmon River and that this WSA should be returned to its control. No one commented on this WSA at the formal public hearing.



# SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC WSA RECOMMENDATIONS

## STATEWIDE WILDERNESS 202 AREAS

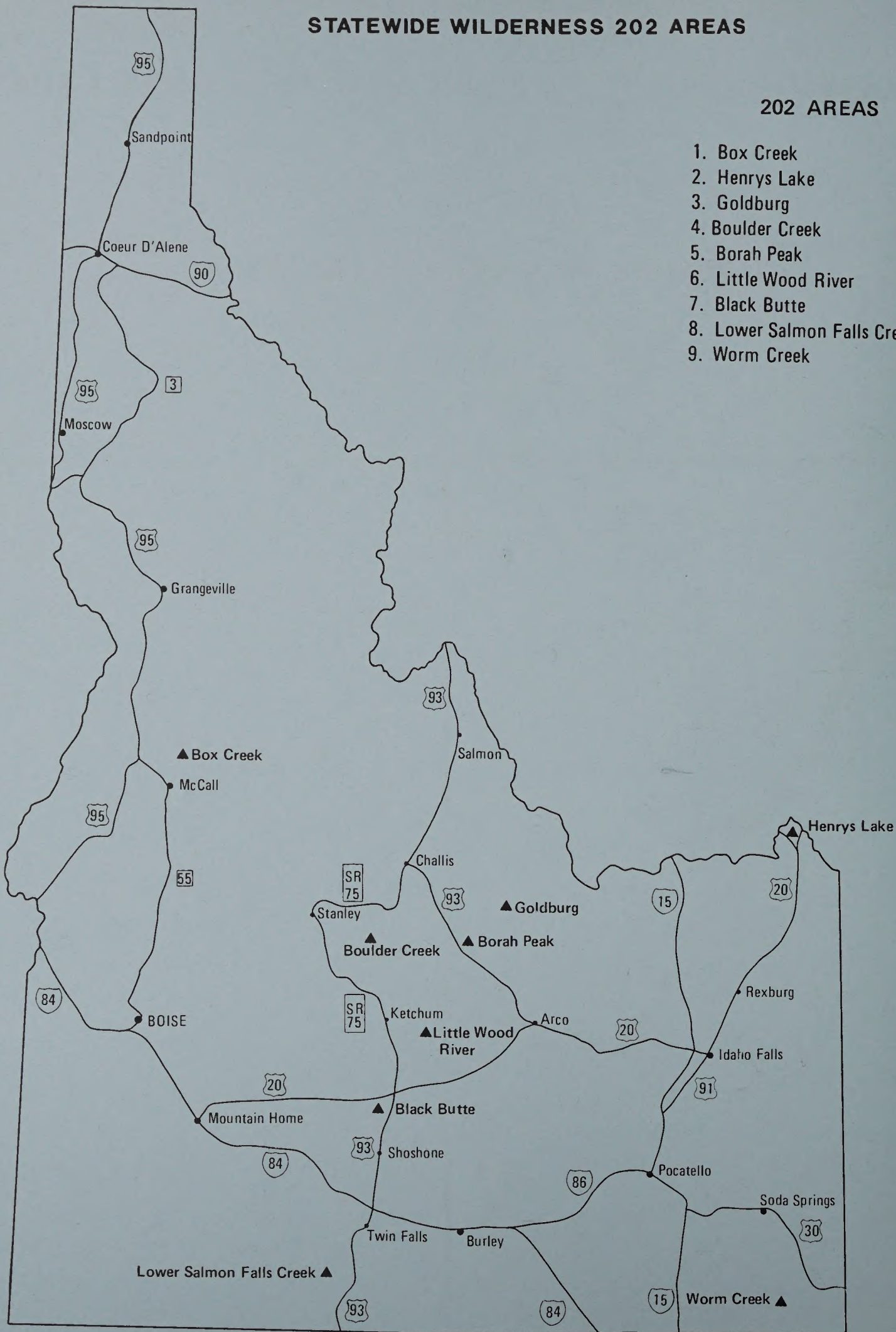




# STATEWIDE WILDERNESS 202 AREAS

## 202 AREAS

1. Box Creek
2. Henrys Lake
3. Goldburg
4. Boulder Creek
5. Borah Peak
6. Little Wood River
7. Black Butte
8. Lower Salmon Falls Creek
9. Worm Creek





# Lower Salmon Falls Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 3,500 acres

The Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA (ID-17-10) is located in Twin Falls County approximately 40 miles southwest of Twin Falls, Idaho. The WSA contains 3,500 acres of BLM land (see Table 1). There are no private or state inholdings. Boundaries are the canyon rim on both the east and west sides. The northern boundary is generally the Lilly Grade Road while the southern boundary is on a section line 1.25 miles north of Salmon Falls Dam.

The WSA consists of a 16-mile long and .5-mile wide canyon that carries Salmon Falls Creek. This vertical-walled, meandering canyon dissects the Antelope Pocket lava plain and is between 300 and 600 feet deep. It supports a variety of plants, fish and wildlife species. Elevations range from 3,660 feet along the creek bottom at its northern boundary to just above 5,000 feet on top of the rim near its southern boundary. The talus slopes of the canyon are dominated by northern high desert species while the canyon bottom is dominated by juniper, willow and other riparian vegetation.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Small Wilderness Study Areas Statewide filed with the Environmental Protection Agency in September 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report; and an all wilderness alternative.



## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**0 acres recommended for  
wilderness**

**3,500 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and to release the 3,500 acres for other uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation because of wilderness characteristics of naturalness, primitive recreation and solitude are not considered to merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). Also manageability problems would arise due to the area's small size and narrow configuration and outside influences causing resource protection problems.

The quality of naturalness is diminished in the WSA by different factors. The limited access routes into the narrow, steep canyon create highly concentrated use areas that are visible and create a perception that these site-specific areas are not natural in character. These areas show signs of overuse, vegetation losses and soil erosion and compaction. Also the water flow through the canyon is controlled by the Salmon River Canal Company which manages the reservoir located two miles upstream from the WSA boundary.

The quality of solitude is also diminished due to the WSA's small size and narrow configuration creating a narrow corridor of use from its limited access routes. That also increases the potential for visitor interaction. Vegetative screening on the side slopes of the canyon is poor and does not screen out sights or sounds of other users. Sights and sounds of activities outside the narrow WSA also diminish the quality of solitude.

The narrow configuration and steep terrain of the WSA has limited the number of access routes to the area's canyon bottom, thereby diminishing the quality of opportunities for unconfined recreation opportunities. The steep terrain of the WSA limits additional access routes into the canyon. More access is needed to provide better opportunities for unconfined camping. Campers would have to use the same site or be within hearing distance of each other.

Management of the area would be difficult due to the WSA's small size, narrow configuration and limited access routes into the canyon. User restrictions would be set up immediately to protect the wilderness and supplemental values within the canyon. In addition, BLM does not have control over the water flow through the WSA. That could cause a risk to visitors and resource protection problems during high water releases and low or no water releases.

The no wilderness recommendation provides the opportunity to continue management of the area and an additional 14 miles of canyon as an Outstanding Natural Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ONA/ACEC). The designation of the area as an ONA/ACEC puts emphasis on the supplemental values rather than the marginal wilderness characteristic values (outstanding natural opportunities for solitude and or primitive recreation).









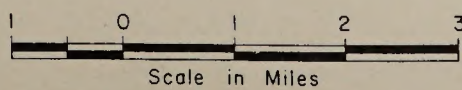


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 T. 12 S.  
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 T. 13 S.  
 T. 13 S.  
 T. 14 S.

R. 13 E. | R. 14 E.

R. 14 E. | R. 15 E.

- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



ID-17-10  
 LOWER SALMON FALLS CREEK  
 PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1989



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
LOWER SALMON FALLS CREEK WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	3,500
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,500</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>0</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	3,500
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>3,500</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA is essentially natural with limited human imprints. The impacts on naturalness of the area consist of illegal garbage/litter dumps located just below the rim on the north end of the WSA. There is also an abandoned two-track way (now used as a foot trail) located on the southwest end of the WSA that travels north along a wide bench area just below the upper rim of the canyon for one-half mile inside the WSA. The few trails that do go down into the canyon are mostly undeveloped and are located in the canyon's steep draws. These trails all show some type of soil and vegetative losses due to their steepness and lack of design. Also the few indiscriminately located campsites along the creek show signs of minor vegetative losses and soil compaction problems.

The narrowness of the canyon and its limited access routes to the bottom tends to funnel user groups into the same area creating visible, highly concentrated use areas. This creates a perception that these site-specific areas are not natural in character.

Also the visitor use in the canyon has increased by 23 percent over the last two years from 3,000 to 3,700 visits creating an impact on some of the more easily accessed trails and campsites from points outside the WSA.

##### **B. Solitude**

The topographic screening afforded by the meandering character of the canyon, combined with good-to-excellent vegetative screening in the canyon bottom, offers some opportunities for solitude. However, the quality of solitude is diminished due to the narrow corridor of use and limited access routes into the canyon which increases the potential for visitor interaction. Vegetative screening on the sideslopes of the canyon is poor and does not screen out sights or sounds of visitors using different trails leading to the canyon bottom. In some canyon areas, sounds can be heard for more than a mile in both directions and users can see others as far as two miles away.

Solitude along the rim is diminished by the sights and sounds of human activities and developments on the flat lava plain located just outside the WSA boundary. These activities and developments include dry and irrigated farming, livestock grazing, range developments and power line corridors. On the rim at the southern and northern ends of the WSA, vehicle traffic noise can be heard from the steep road grades at Salmon Dam and Lilly Grade.



### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

Opportunities for primitive recreation consist of upland and waterfowl hunting, fishing, camping, backpacking, hiking, sightseeing and nature photography. Access routes into the canyon consist of very few undeveloped trails or passages into the canyon. Trail use is basically found near the vehicle access routes paralleling the rim or near the two ends of the Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA where major roads are less than 1.5 miles away. The quality of unconfined recreation is diminished by the small number of access routes which tends to concentrate visitors in a narrow corridor.

The steep terrain of the WSA limits the location and number of additional access routes into the canyon to provide better opportunities for unconfined and primitive recreation activities.

Both the primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities are diminished due to the limited number of campsites in the steep canyon, which causes groups to camp at the same site or within hearing distance of others.

### **D. Special Features**

No special features that would attract a large number of visitors to the area are found in the WSA.



# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

## A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the NWPS; however, it would add a vegetation and landform not presently represented in the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem. This ecosystem is represented by three designated areas with 76,699 acres. There are 35 other BLM study areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**  
**Ecosystem Representation**

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Dry Domain/Intermountain Sagebrush Province				
		<u>NATIONWIDE</u>		
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	3	76,699	136	4,359,340
		<u>IDAHO</u>		
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	1	12,997	35	949,916
		<u>NEVADA</u>		
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	1	32,407	29	1,273,919
		<u>CALIFORNIA</u>		
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	0	0	5	152,431
		<u>OREGON</u>		
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	0	0	67	1,983,074



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. 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 Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA could be managed to preserve its wilderness character in the long term. However, management would be extremely difficult because of the area's small size and narrow configuration creating problems in resource protection, both human and environmental.

With limited access points and routes into the canyon, user restrictions into the canyon would be set up immediately to protect the wilderness values from visitor saturation that could diminish the naturalness, solitude, recreation and supplemental values.

Overall wilderness expenditures would be extremely high due to hiring of personnel to enforce visitor use limitations, repair resource damage, construct new trails and protect supplemental values in the WSA.

In addition, because the Bureau does not have control over the release of water from the upstream reservoir, visitor safety and resource protection would be a problem during high water releases. Preserving the canyon bottom's natural ecosystem from too little or no water releases would also be a problem.

### Energy and Minerals Resource Values

A Geologic, Energy and Mineral (GEM) assessment report was prepared for the WSA in 1982 and 1983 (TERRADATA Corporation 1983). Conclusions from the report are:

The WSA has only low favorability for diatomite resources. The area is not favorable for any other GEM resources. This includes oil and gas, geothermal, metallic metals, oil shale and tar sands, uranium and thorium, coal and other metals.

Currently there are four oil and gas leases within the WSA boundary with two of the leases covering approximately 500 acres. At this time, the lessees are restricted from surface occupancy between canyon rims. Exploration may be conducted using what equipment can be carried in on foot or horseback.

The WSA is not within an area of current locatable mineral activity and there are no existing mining claims within the area.

There are no hydroelectric plants nor power lines that cross inside the WSA. Power lines exist that parallel the canyon rim or cross less than a mile just north and south of the north and south WSA boundaries. Interest for future hydroelectric development has been concentrated north of Lilly Grade and near Salmon Falls Dam, both areas outside the WSA.

### Impacts on Resources

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-17-10 (LOWER SALMON FALLS CREEK)**

RESOURCE TOPIC	PROPOSED ACTION (NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	No Impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Hydroelectric Development	No Impact.	No Impact.
Impacts on Oil and Gas Development	No Impact.	Opportunity to explore in the canyon would be foregone. No impact on development.
Impacts on Cultural Resources	No Impact.	No Impact.
Impacts on Bighorn Sheep Introduction	No Impact.	No Impact.
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	No Impact.	No Impact.



## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of 3,500 acres of the Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA as wilderness would have no impact on the local social or economic values. There are 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. 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.

During the formal review of the Draft inventory recommendation, public comment overwhelmingly supported inclusion of the inventory area as a WSA even though it did not meet the size criteria for wilderness. Supporting comments noted the area's special features and outstanding opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation. At that time, the Twin Falls County Board of County Commissioners and Planning and Zoning Commission recommended to continue the Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) designation for the area.

During the formal review of the Draft EIS, 41 written and oral comments were received. Of the 20 comments which specifically mentioned the Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA, 16 supported wilderness, two opposed designation and two took no stand. Those favoring wilderness commented on its solitude and supplemental values. Those opposing designation felt that the ONA/ACEC designation protects the area's unique values. Most comments were from residents of Idaho.

Federal agencies commented on the Draft EIS included the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Idaho State agencies providing comments were the Department of Health and Welfare and the Historical Society. The agencies took no position on wilderness designation.



# Henrys Lake Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 350 acres

The Henrys Lake WSA (ID-35-77) is located in Fremont County 13 miles north and east of Macks Inn near the junction of Highways 287 and 20. The WSA includes 350 acres of public land. There are no private or state inholdings in the tract (see Table 1). A small ten acre parcel at the WSA's southeastern corner has been identified in planning efforts for disposal through sale or exchange. The parcel is adjacent to other developed private home sites. Boundaries of the WSA are generally the U.S. Forest Service Lion's Head Wilderness proposal on the north and east of Section 32 and private lands on the west and south remainder of the section. The WSA could not stand as wilderness on its own because of its small size. Therefore, it is dependent on the designation of the Lion's Head Wilderness.

Vegetation in the WSA is varied. Lush riparian vegetation follows the creek courses and includes species such as rose, aspen, willow, serviceberry and snowberry. The slopes and drainages have scattered stands of Douglas- fir, lodgepole pine and aspen. Also growing on the slopes are sagebrush, bitterbrush and grasses such as needlegrass, mountain brome, fescue and prairie junegrass. Throughout much of the late spring and summer, wildflowers cover the slopes: lupine, paintbrush, cinquefoil, buckwheat, arrowleaf balsamroot, common yarrow, geranium, gilia, monkeyflower, Oregon grape, pearly everlasting and asters.

Wildlife species found in the WSA include black bear, elk, moose, deer and a variety of birds. The area lies within "Situation I" habitat where management for grizzly bear is given priority over other uses.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Draft Proposed Plan Amendments and Environmental Impact Statement for Small Wilderness Study Areas Statewide filed in September 1989. Three alternatives were analyzed in the FEIS for the Henrys Lake WSA: the proposed action (partial wilderness) alternative (340 acres), which is the recommendation of this report; an all wilderness alternative (350 acres); and a no wilderness alternative.



## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**340 acres recommended for wilderness**

**10 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation is to designate 340 acres as wilderness and to release ten acres for other uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation is shown on the Henrys Lake Proposal map.

The Henrys Lake WSA could not stand on its own as wilderness because of its small size. It is recommended for wilderness only in conjunction with the adjacent 16,800 acre U.S. Forest Service Lion's Head Wilderness Proposal (USDA, 1985, Targhee National Forest).

The wilderness values of naturalness, solitude and primitive recreation would be available on the recommended portion of the WSA and enhanced on the adjacent U.S. Forest Service proposal.

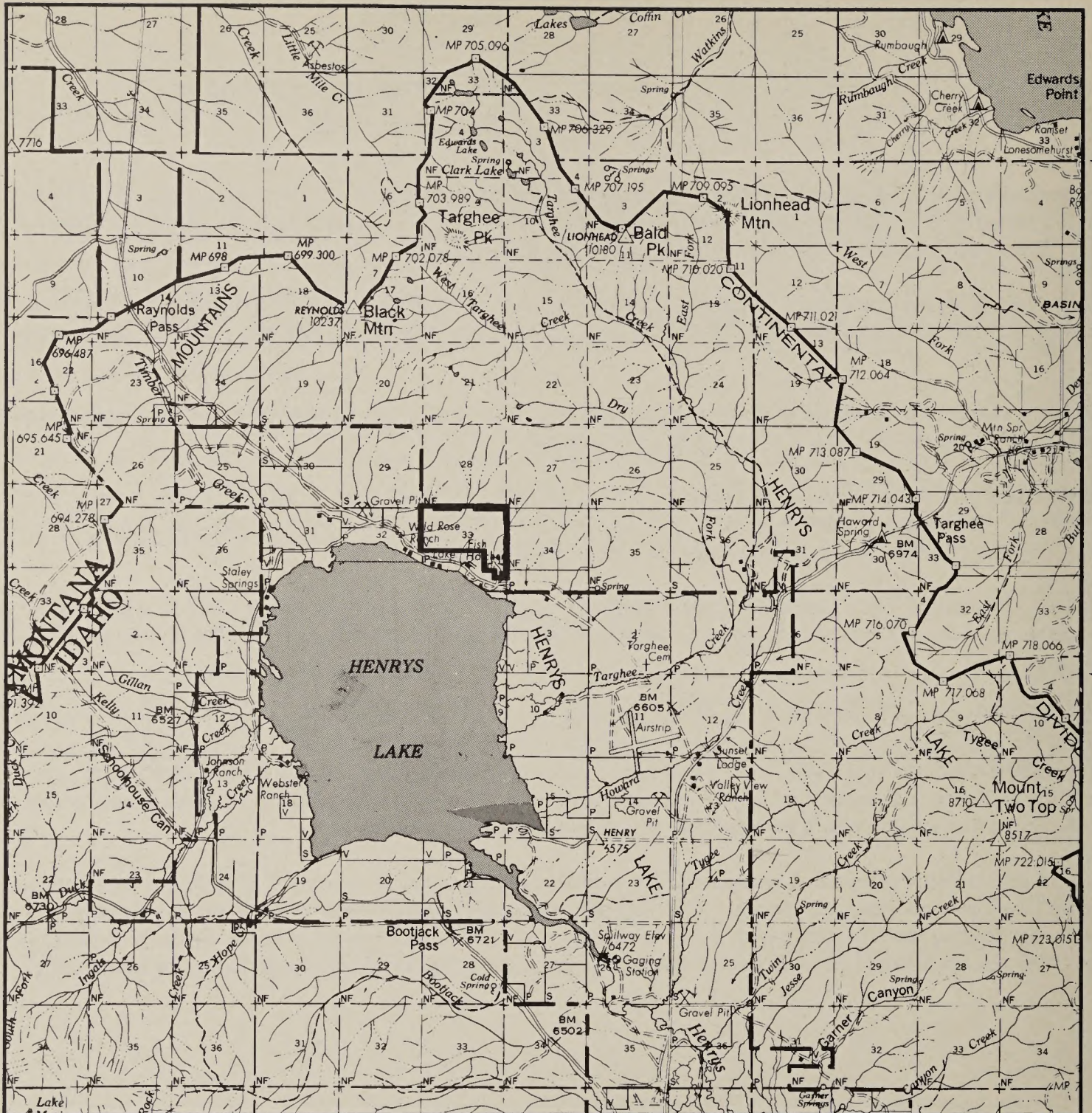
The recommended portion also is an excellent transition zone, giving the traveler a feeling of gradual entrance into more and more remote territory. The steep brushy slopes and drainages wooded with Douglas-fir trees provide additional opportunities for solitude as one gains altitude and enters the adjacent Lion's Head proposal.

Opportunities for primitive recreation include horse packing, camping, photography and hunting. Combined with the amenities of the available solitude, naturalness and opportunities to continue into the Lion's Head proposal, primitive recreation potential is outstanding.

Manageability of the Henrys Lake WSA as wilderness would be possible. The configuration of the area complements the adjacent boundary of the proposed Lion's Head Wilderness and would make a logical, manageable boundary. Wilderness management would not conflict with other present or anticipated future uses. Communications between BLM's Idaho Falls District and the Targhee National Forest indicate that adding 340 acres of the Henrys Lake WSA to the Lion's Head would not conflict with plans of the U.S. Forest Service and would be consistent with future management of the area.

The ten acre parcel recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation is composed of a cluster of small land parcels surrounding developed recreation homesites. Conflicts with wilderness management and the private development would be anticipated. By deleting the ten acres and moving the recommended wilderness boundary to the north, manageability is greatly enhanced. The ten acres would be available for disposal as proposed in the Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan.





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





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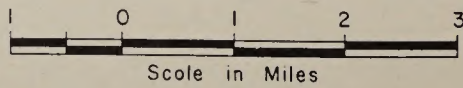
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R. 43 E.

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- |   |   |   |              |
|---|---|---|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



**ID-35-77  
HENRYS LAKE  
PROPOSAL**

JANUARY 1989



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
HENRYS LAKE WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	350
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	340
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>340</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	10
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>10</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Henrys Lake WSA is essentially natural with few human imprints. Imprints consist of the remnants of a small diversion structure from an abandoned fish hatchery and the evidence from sheep grazing which is localized and negligible. Wildlife species found in the WSA include black bear, elk, moose, deer and a variety of birds. Impacts outside the WSA are the sights and sounds of Highway 287 and rural recreational developments along the shore of Henrys Lake. These impacts are relatively unnoticeable except near the WSA's southern border and from higher vantage points. Designation of this tract as wilderness would complement the U.S. Forest Service designation of wilderness adjacent to the tract.

##### **B. Solitude**

Opportunities for solitude in this small 350-acre parcel are dependent on the adjacent Lion's Head Wilderness proposal. The U.S. Forest Service analysis of solitude for the wilderness proposal is "topographic screening enhances the opportunity for solitude which is rated as high."

Throughout the WSA, opportunities for solitude are outstanding. Traveling north into the canyons, vegetative screening is excellent. Topographic features also play an important role as the visitor moves deeper into the area's secluded canyons.

From the tops of the steeper hillsides, the homes on the lakeshore are apparent but their presence does not affect the visitor's opportunity for solitude. The predominant feeling is rather that of entrance into a wilderness setting -- an unconfined and natural space.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

Opportunities for primitive recreation in this small WSA are outstanding and include hiking, camping, horse packing and wildlife photography. These activities are dependent upon the adjacent Lion's Head Wilderness proposal. The U.S. Forest Service analysis of primitive recreation opportunities is "the opportunities for primitive recreation are high but there are few opportunities for challenging experiences."



## **D. Special Features**

The Henrys Lake WSA supports a variety of wildlife species and is part of "Situation I" grizzly bear habitat. The area is also an important element in the scenery that backdrops Henrys Lake and the mountain range that rises abruptly from the lake's northern shore.



# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

## A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Henrys Lake WSA would add an ecosystem presently represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by 18 designated areas with 1,349,971 acres. There are four other BLM areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Rocky Mountain Forest Province				
	<u>NATIONWIDE</u>			
Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	18	1,349,971	4	26,152
	<u>IDAHO</u>			
Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	0	0	19	173,228



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Henrys Lake WSA is within a five-hour drive of two major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho/Salt Lake City, Utah <sup>1</sup>	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250

<sup>1</sup>Salt Lake City, Utah, and vicinity includes other cities of Provo, Orem and Ogden, Utah.



## **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

The Henrys Lake WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. It could only make a small contribution if the adjacent U.S. Forest Service Lion's Head Wilderness proposal was designated and the 340-acre tract was part of the designated wilderness.

### **Manageability**

The portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness designation can reasonably be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. Conflicts with present and future uses and wilderness management are absent. Excluding motor vehicles from the area is not a potential problem because the area is steep and brushy. Travel is presently limited to foot and horse traffic.

The ten acre parcel recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation consists of a cluster of small land parcels surrounding developed recreation home sites. Conflicts with wilderness management and the private development would be anticipated.

### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for the Henrys Lake WSA in 1983. The following is a summary from these reports:

The Henrys Lake WSA contains no oil and gas leases or mining claims. The potential is low for oil and gas and mineral resources.

Since the WSA is in the Central Idaho Basin and Range geothermal province, a moderate potential for geothermal resources exists. There is no surface indication of the presence of geothermal energy.

The potential for sand and gravel is high. No metallic or nonmetallic mineral deposits are known within the WSA although gravel and stone have been removed in the vicinity.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-35-77 (HENRYS LAKE)**

RESOURCE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL WILDERNESS)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on USFS Lion's Head Roadless Area	Roadless area's wilderness values enhanced.	Roadless area's wilderness values enhanced.	No Impact.
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Maintained (no impact) on suitable portion. Lost on non- suitable 10 acres.	Maintained (no impact).	Unchanged on 340 acres; lost on 10 acres.
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	No Impact.	No Impact.	No Impact.
Impacts on "Situation I" Grizzly Bear Management	No Impact.	No Impact.	No Impact.



## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Social and economic impacts were not considered a significant issue in the Henrys Lake Study.

## **Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments**

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory period and early stages of EIS preparation were considered in developing issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness value.

In the inventory stage, those opposing intensive inventory were concerned with mineral development of the area.

Those favoring intensive inventory were homesite owners living near the area and others who felt the area should be inventoried since it was adjacent to a U.S. Forest Service proposal.



# Worm Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 40 acres

The Worm Creek WSA (ID-37-77) is located in Bear County 15 miles southwest of Montpelier, Idaho. The WSA includes 40 acres of public land. There are no private or state inholdings. Boundaries of the square 40 acre WSA are generally the U.S. Forest Service Worm Creek Wilderness proposal on the west and south sides and private lands on the east and north (see Table 1).

The WSA's topography varies from benchland to steep hillsides. Elevation ranges from 6,500 feet to 7,200 feet. The surrounding terrain contains high elevation basins and steep mountain peaks. Several peaks on the main ridge near the WSA exceed 9,000 feet. Vegetation varies from a tree-dominated ecotype to brushland at the higher elevations. The lower, moister northern portion of the area supports a dense stand of aspen and a Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine mix. Understory species include mountain maple, Oregon grape, pinegrass, snowberry, willow and serviceberry. Suitable habitat for deer, elk and a variety of birds and small mammals is available throughout the small tract.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Draft Proposed Plan Amendments and Environmental Impact Statement for Small Wilderness Study Areas Statewide filed in September 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: the proposed action (all wilderness) alternative, which is the recommendation of this report; and a no wilderness alternative.



## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**40 acres recommended for  
wilderness**

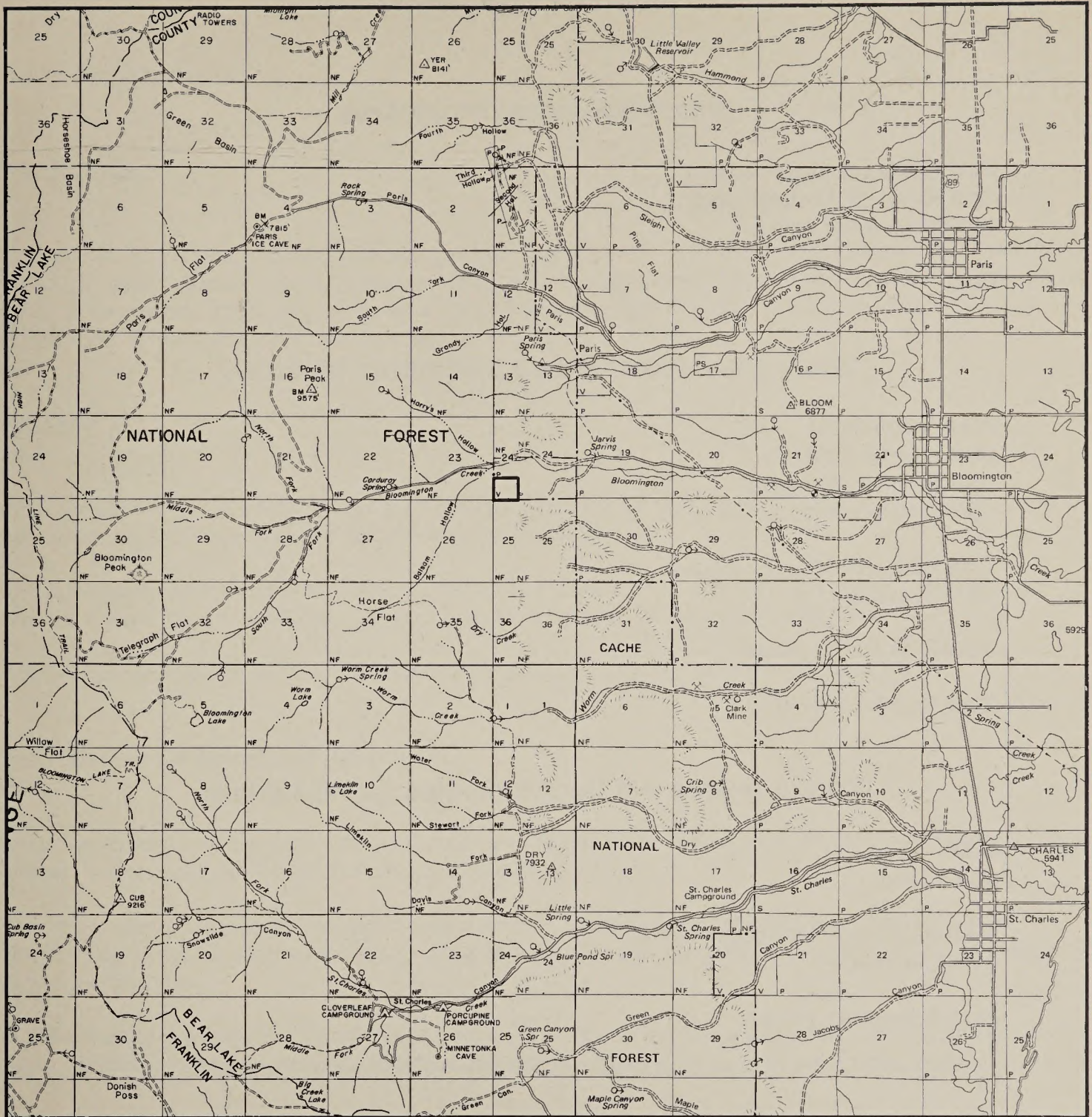
**0 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

The recommendation is to designate the entire 40 acre WSA as wilderness in conjunction with the adjacent 16,000-acre U.S. Forest Service Worm Creek proposal (USDA, 1985, Caribou National Forest). This is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The entire 40 acre area of federal land within the WSA is recommended for wilderness designation and is shown on the Worm Creek Proposal map.

Manageability of the Worm Creek WSA as wilderness would be possible. The configuration of the area complements the adjacent boundary of the Worm Creek Wilderness proposal and would make a logical, manageable boundary. Wilderness management would not conflict with other present or anticipated future uses.

The wilderness values of naturalness, solitude and primitive recreation would be available with this recommendation and would enhance the adjacent U.S. Forest Service proposal. The 40 acre parcel lends itself as an excellent transition zone, giving the traveler a feeling of gradual entrance into more remote territory.











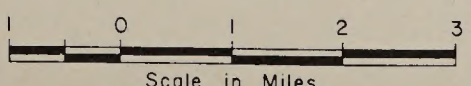
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 T. 14 S.  
 T. 15 S.

R.42 E.

R.42 E.

R.43 E.

- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



ID-37-77  
 WORM CREEK  
 PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1989



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
WORM CREK WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	40
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
 Total	 40

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	40
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
 Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	 40
 Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	 0
 State land (outside WSA)	 0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	0
Split Estate	0
 Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	 0
 Inholdings (state, private)	 0

<sup>1</sup>Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings and/or split tracts included within the study.



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Work Creek WSA is a steep foothill environment which supports rich and complex forest vegetation as well as sagebrush and grasses. The natural character of this landscape blends with the high scenic quality of the adjacent U.S. Forest Service land. Impacts to the natural appearance of the area are nonexistent or unnoticeable. Views outside the area include infrequent traffic on the Bloomington Creek Road and nearby farms.

##### **B. Solitude**

Opportunities for solitude in this small 40 acre tract are dependent on the adjacent Worm Creek Wilderness proposal. The U.S. Forest Service analysis of solitude for the wilderness proposal is:

The opportunities for solitude are moderate because of the moderate size, high topographic and moderate vegetative screening and moderate distances from the perimeter to the center of the area.

The small WSA would contribute little to opportunities for solitude within the wilderness proposal.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

Opportunities for primitive recreation in this small parcel are dependent on the adjacent Worm Creek Wilderness proposal. The U.S. Forest Service analysis of primitive recreation opportunities is:

The opportunities for primitive recreation are moderate because of the moderate area size, many road corridors projecting into the area, high topographic and moderate vegetative screening and because limited facilities are present.

The small WSA would contribute little to the opportunities for primitive recreation within the proposed wilderness because the area lacks significant natural features that would attract recreationists.

##### **D. Special Features**

The Worm Creek WSA does not possess features that are any more significant than found on other lands within the region.



# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

## A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Worm Creek WSA would add an ecosystem presently represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by 18 designated areas with 1,349,971 acres. There are four other BLM areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Rocky Mountain Forest Province				
		<u>NATIONWIDE</u>		
Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	18	1,349,971	4	26,152
		<u>IDAHO</u>		
Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	0	0	19	173,228



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (five hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Worm Creek WSA is within a five-hour drive of two major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers. This 40 acre parcel would not expand opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation for the two population centers because of its small size and limited opportunities.

**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
Boise, Idaho/Salt Lake City, Utah <sup>1</sup>	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250

<sup>1</sup>Salt Lake City, Utah, and vicinity includes other cities of Provo, Orem and Ogden, Utah.



## **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

The Worm Creek WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. It could only make a small contribution if the adjacent U.S. Forest Service Worm Creek Wilderness proposal was designated and the 40 acre tract was part of the designated wilderness.

### **Manageability**

The Worm Creek WSA could be managed effectively as wilderness only if the adjacent U.S. Forest Service Worm Creek Wilderness proposal is designated. Conflicts between wilderness management and incompatible uses could be eliminated ensuring long-term preservation of wilderness values.

### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

Mineral assessments for the Worm Creek WSA were prepared by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1984 and the Bureau of Mines in 1985. The following is a summary from these reports:

The Worm Creek WSA lies in the high potential area for discoveries of oil and gas primarily because of its location along the western edge of the Utah-Idaho-Wyoming Overthrust Belt. The Paris-Willard Thrust, a relatively untested portion of the Overthrust Belt, extends in a north-south direction through the area. The Crawford and Meade Thrusts are also thought to underlie the area at greater depths. Stratigraphic rock units which are major producers farther east in the Overthrust Belt are known to underlie the area. An oil and gas well drilled four miles southwest of the WSA to a depth of 7,500 feet did not penetrate any thrust sheets, nor did it encounter any hydrocarbons.

Oil and gas leases cover the entire area of the nearby national forest lands and public lands within the WSA. Because of this, the U.S. Forest Service 1982 mineral reports classify the area as having high potential for oil and gas.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-37-77 (WORM CREEK)**

RESOURCE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (ALL WILDERNESS)	NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on USFS Worm Creek Roadless Area	Roadless area's wilderness values slightly enhanced.	No Impact.
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values preserved.	Values lost on 40 acres.
Impacts on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development	40 acres withdrawn from leasing.	No Impact.
Impacts on Timber Harvest	Harvest foregone on 39 acres. No significant impact.	No Impact.
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	No Impact.	No Impact.



## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Wilderness designation would create a minor favorable economic impact as a result of increased recreation use. No significant social effects would occur as a result of wilderness designation of the Worm Creek WSA.

## **Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments**

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory period and early stages of EIS preparation were considered in developing issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness value.

In the inventory stage, those opposing intensive inventory were concerned with mineral development of the area.

Those favoring intensive inventory were homesite owners living near the area and others who felt the area should be inventoried since it was adjacent to a U.S. Forest Service proposal.



# Goldburg Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 3,290 acres

The Goldburg WSA (ID-45-1) is located in Custer County 29 miles southeast of Challis, Idaho. The WSA includes 3,290 acres of BLM lands. There are no inholdings in the WSA. The WSA is bounded on the north by public lands .5 mile south of Big Creek, on the east by the North Lemhi Mountains in the Challis National Forest .25 mile north of the Hillside Creek Jeep Trail, and on the west by private and public lands 1.5 miles east of the townsite of Goldburg. The WSA consists of westward sloping alluvial foothills ranging from 6,100 feet of elevation on the west side to 8,800 feet on the eastern side. The dominant vegetation is sagebrush-grass with fingers and patches of Douglas-fir extending downslope from U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Mackay Management Framework Plan Amendment/Small Wilderness Study Area Environmental Impact Statement finalized in September 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; and a no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report.



## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

0 acres recommended for wilderness

3,290 acres recommended for nonwilderness

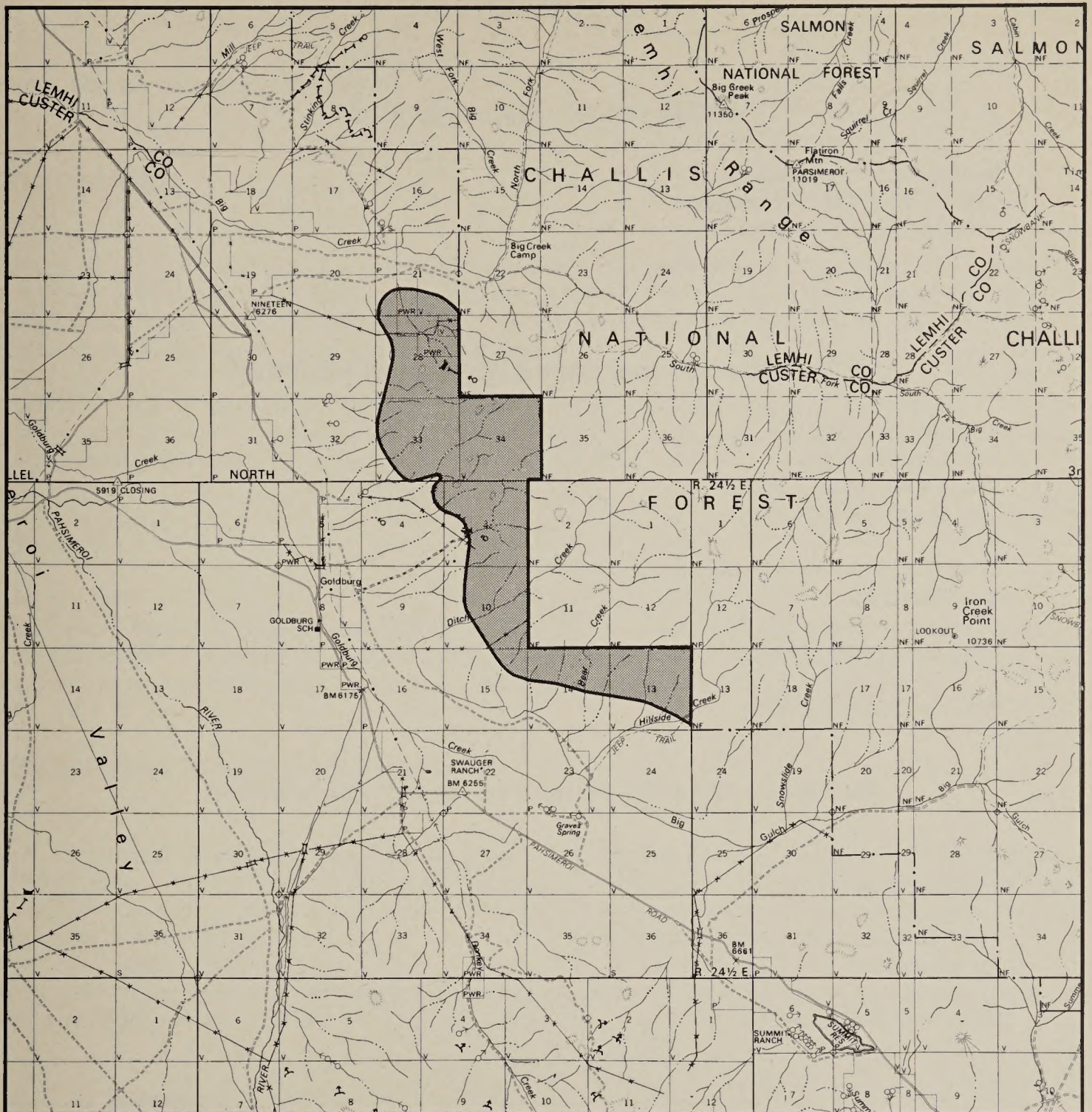
The recommendation for the Goldberg WSA is to release the area for uses other than wilderness. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. The entire 3,290 acres of public land are shown as the Goldberg Proposal map.

The WSA was studied for wilderness in conjunction with the contiguous 340,416 acre U.S. Forest Service RARE II North Lemhi Area, which was completed in 1987. The U.S. Forest Service determined that the RARE II Area was not suitable for wilderness designation. Since the RARE II Area is not recommended suitable, BLM has determined that the Goldberg WSA cannot stand on its own merit and lacks the necessary characteristics to qualify for designation.

The quality of the wilderness values was the key consideration in the recommendation. These values were considered outstanding when combined with the adjacent RARE II Area. On their own, however, they were not considered to merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA generally appears natural but there are several site-specific signs of man, primarily rangeland developments which impact naturalness. Solitude opportunities are similar to those afforded by the thousands of acres of land adjacent to the WSA. The perception of these values is lessened by the area's small size and long, narrow configuration and lack of vegetative screening, especially on the WSA's western edge, which allows outside sights and sounds to be perceived throughout the WSA. The WSA does offer outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation when combined with the adjacent RARE II Area. However, these qualities are diminished by the area's small size, long narrow configuration and lack of vegetative screening. The values that are present are similar to thousands of acres of adjacent lands.

Of the WSA's 3,290 acres, 1,196 are forested. Of these, 930 acres are classified as commercial forest lands suitable for management. The potential harvestable timber yield on the commercial stands is estimated at 124 MBF per year. Although there is no projected demand for the next ten to twenty years, wilderness designation would remove this timber from potential harvest.





T. 13 N.







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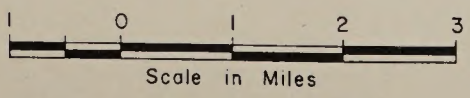
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T. 11 N.

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R. 24 E. | R. 25 E.

- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



ID-45-1  
GOLDBURG  
PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1989



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
GOLDBURG WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	3,290
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,290</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>0</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	3,290
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>3,290</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Goldberg WSA is essentially natural with few human imprints. The WSA consists of westward-facing sloping alluvial foothills ranging in elevation from 6,100 feet on the west side to 8,800 feet on the east side. The dominant vegetation is sagebrush-grass with fingers and patches of Douglas-fir. The majority of the timber exists on the upper elevation east side, generally 7,600 feet, and is adjacent to the national forest lands.

The perception of naturalness is lessened because of the WSA's proximity to the Pahsimeroi Valley Road. The closeness, narrow configuration, small size and general lack of lower elevation vegetation screening and topographic relief allow the sights and sounds of road usage in approximately 80 percent of the WSA.

##### **B. Solitude**

The WSA contains outstanding opportunities for solitude when combined with the adjacent RARE II Unit. However, due to the lack of lower elevation vegetative screening and topographic relief and the small size and narrow configuration (which allow the outside sights and sounds to be evident), the feeling of solitude is lessened.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

Goldberg WSA contains outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation when combined with the adjacent RARE II Study Area. Opportunities exist for hiking, camping, backpacking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hunting, photography, bird watching and sightseeing. However, the long, narrow shape of the WSA and proximity to the Pahsimeroi Road does lessen these opportunities.

Backpackers and campers would feel confined in this small area. Sightseers would be able to view outside sights and sounds from approximately 80 percent of the unit.

##### **D. Special Features**

The WSA lacks any special features which could be called a focal or destination point for visitors.



# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

## A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Goldberg WSA would add an ecosystem not presently represented in Idaho. However, this ecosystem is represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) by four designated areas with 76,129 acres. There are eight other BLM study areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Rocky Mountain Forest Province				
	<u>NATIONWIDE</u>			
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	4	76,129	23	247,843
	<u>IDAHO</u>			
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	0	0	8	162,710



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Golburg WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

Idaho has the largest wilderness area in the contiguous 48 states, the 2.2 million acre Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness. Wilderness designation of this WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographical distribution of areas within the NWPS but would further concentrate wilderness areas in Idaho.

### Manageability

The WSA could be managed as wilderness in terms of existing imprints. However, its small size (3,290 acres) and long, narrow configuration could restrict the ability to retain wilderness value in the area. The private lands and the public road near the west side degrade the solitude and the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation by bringing in the sights and sounds of farm/ranch activities and motorized use of the road.

### Energy and Minerals Resource Values

WGM, Inc., mining and geological consultants, prepared a Geology, Energy and Mineral assessment for the Goldberg WSA in 1983.

The Goldberg WSA is classified as moderately favorable for the accumulation of metallic mineral deposits based on indirect evidence. Tungsten-copper-molybdenum-silver mineralization related to small intrusive bodies occurs at the Ima mine about eight miles northwest of the WSA and at Bid Creek, just north of the WSA. In addition, cobalt is present in the same strike belt about two miles north of the WSA.

All of the Goldberg WSA is classified as unfavorable for uranium and thorium, based on limited direct evidence. The classification is based on the discouraging results obtained from the WSA during mineral evaluation. The Goldberg WSA is classified as unfavorable for the occurrence of locatable nonmetal minerals based on limited direct evidence. The geologic setting of the WSA is generally unfavorable and no occurrences are reported.

The Goldberg WSA is classified as moderately favorable for oil and gas based on indirect evidence. The regional geological setting is favorable and, although the Goldberg WSA is almost entirely underlain by unfavorable Precambrian rocks, both potential source and reservoir rocks probably occur in underlying thrust blocks.

The southwestern edge of the Goldberg WSA is classified as having low favorableness for low to high (40°C to over 150°C) geothermal resources based on indirect evidence. The area comprises the lower elevations in the WSA which might lie along major lineaments or possible range-bounding faults. The remainder of the WSA is classified as unfavorable for low to high (40°C to 150°C) geothermal resources based on indirect evidence.

The Goldberg WSA is classified as unfavorable for sodium and potassium on limited direct evidence. The Precambrian quartzites underlying the WSA are not favorable host rocks.

The Goldberg WSA is classified as unfavorable for leasable commodities based on limited direct evidence. No rocks known to contain these commodities underlie the WSA.



The Goldberg WSA is classified as having low favorability for saleable resources based on limited direct evidence. The WSA is almost entirely underlain by Precambrian quartzites and no large alluvial deposits are mapped in the WSA.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-45-1 (GOLDBURG)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on USFS North Lemhi Roadless Area	No Impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Values lost on 930 acres.	Values would be maintained.
Impacts on Water Quality of Goldberg Creek	No Impact.	No Impact.
Impacts on Antelope	No Impact.	No Impact.
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	No Impact.	WSA closed to motorized use. None occurs now.
Impacts on Forest Product Sales	No Impact.	Product sales foregone including potential of 124 MBF per year.



## Local Social and Economic Considerations

The social and economic factors were not considered a significant issue in the study.

## Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. During formal public review of the Draft EIS, 27 written comments were received of which ten specifically addressed the Goldberg WSA. Public hearings were held at Idaho Falls, Boise and Challis, Idaho. Seventeen persons testified.

Of the ten specific written comments received, eight comments favored wilderness for the WSA. Two commenters opposed wilderness designation for the WSA. Of the 17 persons who testified, seven supported wilderness designation for the Goldberg WSA. No one opposed wilderness designation for the Goldberg WSA specifically but one opposed wilderness designation of any kind.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the beauty of the area, its logical extension of the North Lemhi RARE II Area which has not been recommended for wilderness designation, and the fact that the area was in the headwaters of the Pahsimeroi, an anadromous fishery that needs more protection.

Those opposed to wilderness designation were concerned with a general "lock-up" of the land.

The Bureau of Reclamation, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, the Idaho State Historical Society, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service all commented on the Draft EIS. The Bureau of Indian Affairs commented on the impact of nondesignation on anadromous fisheries. The Idaho State Historical Society voiced its concern that archaeological and historical inventories had not been completed. The other agencies did not identify a specific conflict with any of the alternatives.



# Boulder Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 1,930 acres

The Boulder Creek WSA (ID-46-13) is located in Custer County 27 miles southwest of Challis, Idaho. The WSA includes 1,930 acres of BLM lands (see Table 1). There are no private or state inholdings. The WSA is bounded on the north by state land and the Boulder Creek Road and on the south by public lands. The western boundary is formed by state lands and the Challis National Forest. The WSA consists of moderately steep terrain dropping from 8,100 feet on the west to 6,140 feet of elevation on the east side. Vegetation is primarily sagebrush with pockets of Douglas-fir. Little Boulder Creek flows through the center of the WSA and provides both anadromous and resident fish habitat.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Small Wilderness Study Area Statewide Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in September 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; and a no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report.



## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**0 acres recommended for  
wilderness**

**1,930 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

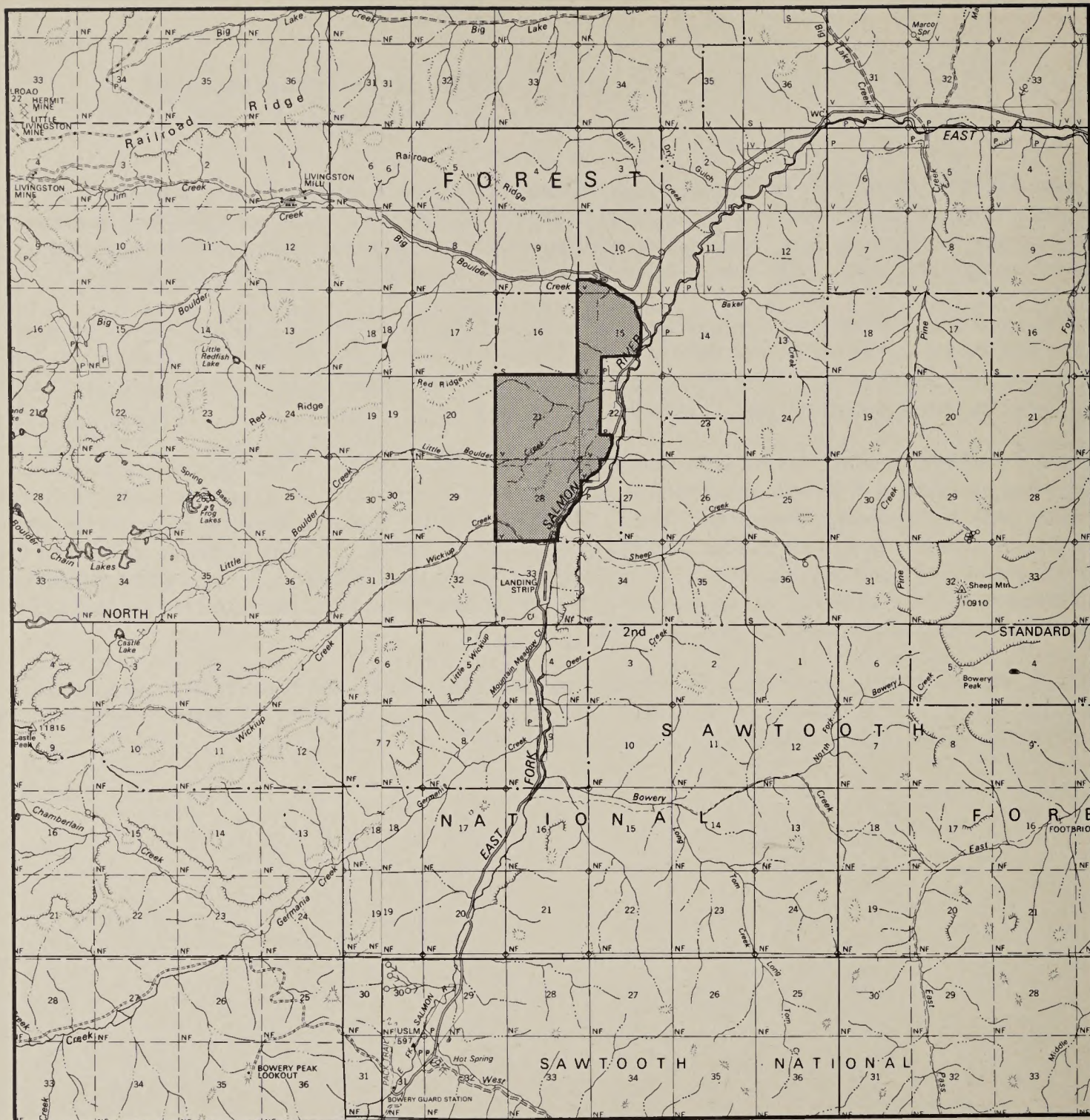
The recommendation for the Boulder Creek WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and release the WSA for other uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. The entire 1,930 acres of federal land are shown on the Boulder Creek Proposal map.

The WSA was studied for wilderness with the contiguous 433,000 acre U.S. Forest Service RARE II Area Boulder-White Clouds. The U.S. Forest Service determined that the RARE II Area was not suitable for wilderness designation. Since the RARE II Area is not recommended suitable, BLM has determined that the Boulder Creek WSA cannot stand on its own merits and lacks the necessary characteristics to qualify for designation.

The quality of the wilderness values was the key consideration in the recommendation. These values were considered outstanding when combined with the adjacent RARE II Area. On their own, however, they were not considered to merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA generally appears natural but there are two short water pipeline developments which impact naturalness locally. Opportunities for solitude are similar to those afforded by the thousands of acres of land adjacent to the WSA. The perception of these values is lessened by the area's small size and lack of vegetative screening which allow the outside sites and sounds of national forest, farm, ranch and recreational activities (primarily motorcycles) to be present throughout the WSA.

The WSA does offer outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation when combined with the adjacent RARE II Area. However, these qualities are diminished by the area's small size and lack of vegetative screening. The values that are present are similar to thousands of acres of adjacent lands.





T. 10 N.







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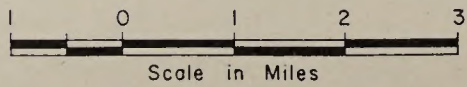
T. 9 N.

T. 8 N.

R. 16 E. | R. 17 E.

R. 17 E. | R. 18 E.

- |   |   |   |              |
|---|---|---|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



Scale in Miles

ID-46-13  
BOULDER CREEK  
PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1989



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
BOULDER CREEK WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	1,930
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,930</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>0</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	1,930
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>1,930</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Boulder Creek WSA is essentially natural with few human imprints. The WSA is moderately steep, rising from 6,140 feet on the east side to more than 8,100 feet in elevation on the west side. However, the proximity to the Boulder Creek and East Fork Roads coupled with the WSA's small size (1,930 acres), lack of vegetative screening and narrow width, cause the sights and sounds of adjacent traffic and farm/ranch activity to be apparent to the visitor throughout the WSA. Vehicles travel this road on a regular basis, especially local farm, ranch and recreation traffic. These roads are the only vehicular access into tens of thousands of acres of U.S. Forest Service lands.

##### **B. Solitude**

Opportunities for solitude do exist on the WSA, primarily provided through its hilly nature. However, due to the WSA's small size and lack of vegetation, the outside influences of the Boulder Creek and East Ford Roads are noticeable to the visitor throughout the WSA. These roads provide access to large U.S. Forest Service acreage including the popular Sawtooth National Recreation Area. The East Fork of the Salmon River Canyon narrows into a bottleneck and, when combined with the WSA's narrow width, the visitor is kept within a 1.25 mile wide corridor adjacent and above the East Fork Road.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

Boulder Creek WSA does offer opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Possible activities include hiking, backpacking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, photography, bird watching or sightseeing. However, the area's small size, narrow width and proximity to the Boulder Creek and East Fork Road lessens these opportunities by keeping the visitor within a narrow corridor just above these roads, within earshot.

##### **D. Special Features**

The WSA lacks any special features which could be called a focal or destination point for visitors.



# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

## A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Boulder Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem or landform to the NWPS. The Boulder Creek WSA represents the Rocky Mountain Forest Province/Western Spruce-Fir Forest ecosystem. This ecosystem is represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) by 41 designated areas with 4,756,981 acres. There are seven other BLM areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Rocky Mountain Forest Province				
		<u>NATIONWIDE</u>		
Western Spruce Fir Forest Ecosystem	41	4,756,981	9	64,171
		<u>IDAHO</u>		
Western Spruce Fir Forest Ecosystem	2	26,910	7	37,261



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Boulder Creek WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

Wilderness designation of the Boulder Creek WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS but would further concentrate wilderness areas in Idaho.

### **Manageability**

The WSA could be managed as a wilderness area in terms of access and existing imprints. However, its small size (less than 2,000 acres) and its long, extremely narrow shape (.25 mile at one point) could significantly restrict the ability to retain wilderness values in this area. The private lands and the public road on the east side degrade the solitude and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation by bringing in the sights and sounds of farm/ranch activities and motorized use of the road.

### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

The U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for the WSA in 1983. Evidence of metallic mineralization is lacking in the WSA. The WSA has low to no potential for geothermal energy resources.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-46-13 (BOULDER CREEK)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on USFS Boulder-White Cloud Roadless Areas	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Wilderness Values	No impact.	Values preserved.
Impacts on Water Quality	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	No impact.	20 visitor days displaced annually.
Impacts on Energy and Mineral Development	No impact.	No significant impact.
Impacts on Livestock Grazing and Range Management	No impact.	No impact.



## Local Social and Economic Considerations

The social and economic factors were not considered a significant issue in the study.

## Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, 27 written comments were received of which 15 specifically addressed the Boulder Creek WSA. Public hearings were held at Idaho Falls, Boise and Challis, Idaho. Of the 15 specific written comments received, 12 comments favored wilderness for the WSA. Three commenters opposed wilderness designation for the WSA. Seventeen persons testified. Of the 17 persons who testified, five supported wilderness designation of the Boulder Creek WSA, one person opposed and one individual had no opinion.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the beauty of the area, its enhancement of the adjacent RARE II Boulder-White Clouds Area which has not been recommended for wilderness and its enhancement of wilderness opportunities.

Those opposed to wilderness designation were concerned with a general "lock-up" of the land including the regulations that would eliminate motorized uses. One individual specifically stated wilderness designation would preclude responsible fire suppression in the WSA.

The Bureau of Reclamation, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, the Idaho State Historical Society, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service all commented on the Draft EIS. The Bureau of Indian Affairs commented on the impact of nondesignation on anadromous fisheries. The Idaho State Historical Society voiced its concern that archaeological and historical inventories have not been completed. The other agencies did not identify a specific conflict with any of the alternatives.



# Borah Peak Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 3,100 acres

The Borah Peak WSA (ID-47-4) is located in Custer County 15 miles northwest of Mackay, Idaho. The WSA includes 3,100 acres of BLM lands and surrounds 640 acres of state lands. The WSA is bounded on the north and east by the Challis National Forest, on the south by Sawmill Gulch and west by power lines. The WSA consists of steep, west-sloping terrain. Vegetation is sagebrush-grass with scattered mountain mahogany.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Statewide Small Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) filed in September 1989. Three alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; a no wilderness alternative; and an all wilderness plus additional acreage alternative, which was the proposed action in the EIS.

A 780 acre tract adjacent to the WSA was included in the study process under authority granted in Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and is recommended for wilderness designation. The entire 3,880 acres of federal lands are shown as the Borah Peak Proposal map.



## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**3,880 acres recommended for wilderness**

**0 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation is to designate the entire Borah Peak WSA (3,100 acres) as wilderness. Also, 780 acres outside the WSA are recommended as wilderness. The additional acreage offers outstanding naturalness and presents a more logical boundary. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

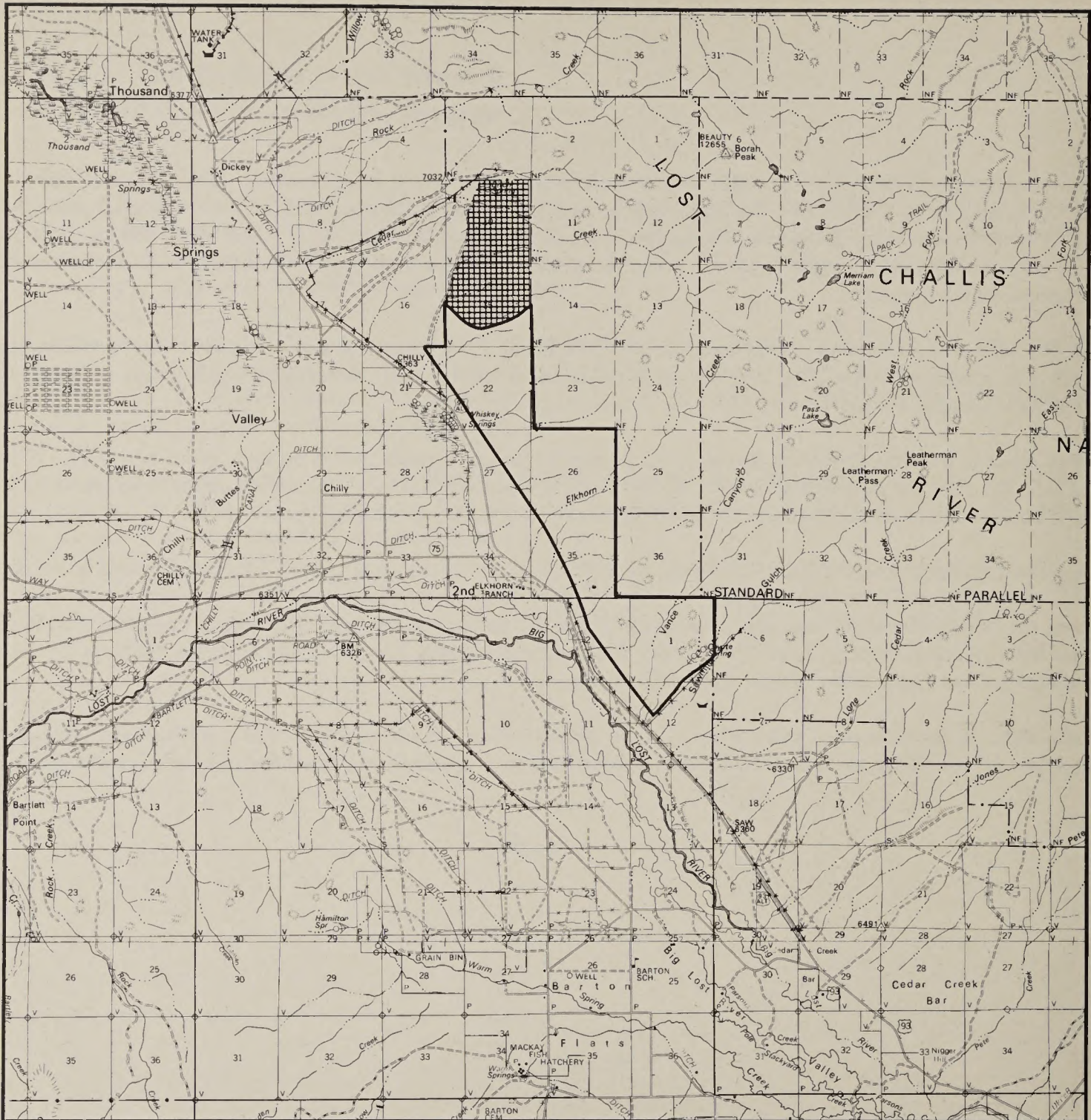
The WSA lies west of the U.S. Forest Service RARE II Unit Borah Peak which has been recommended for wilderness and shares a six mile common border. The WSA, when combined with the U.S. Forest Service's, would provide a clear and logical western boundary, a powerline corridor that is very easily identified.

The western slope is extremely steep on its eastern edge and drops into gentle terrain on its western boundary. When combined with the adjacent U.S. Forest Service RARE II Unit, the area offers an outstanding opportunity for solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation. By itself, the WSA does not offer these outstanding opportunities.

The area, when combined with the RARE II lands, offers two special features that attract visitors. The first is Borah Peak itself which, at 12,655 feet, is the highest point in Idaho. This spectacular mountain gives the visitor the feeling of approaching the "top of the world" and seems to spread out as far as the eye can see. The second feature is the outstanding geologic evidence of the powerful Challis Earthquake that occurred in 1983. Currently, the USGS is studying the area and wilderness designation would help preserve its characteristics.

The recommendation for wilderness will further apply to the state land inholdings acquired through exchange or purchase. Appendix I lists all inholdings and provides additional information on acquisition of inholdings and split estate minerals.





T. 9 N.

T. 9 N.

T. 8 N.

T. 8 N.

R. 21 E.

R. 22 E.

R. 22 E.

R. 23 E.



RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE



RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS



STATE



LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS



PRIVATE



Scale in Miles

ID-47-4  
BORAH PEAK  
PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1989



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
BORAH PEAK WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	3,100
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	640
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,740</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	3,100
BLM (outside WSA)	780
Split Estate (within WSA) <sup>1</sup>	0
Split Estate (outside WSA) <sup>1</sup>	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>3,880</b>
Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	640
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	0
Split Estate <sup>1</sup>	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>0</b>
Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	0

<sup>1</sup>Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with federal surface and nonfederal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have federal minerals but non-federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Borah Peak WSA is predominantly natural with few human imprints. The area is a fairly steep shoulder of Borah Peak, the tallest mountain in Idaho. The adjacent RARE II Area enhances the naturalness and dominates the WSA. The majority of human imprints consists of vehicle ways and spring improvements located along the northern boundary and around Birch Springs.

The predominant vegetation is sagebrush-grasslands with scattered stands of mountain mahogany which gives way to scattered pine and fir. When combined with the adjacent RARE II lands, the WSA provides an excellent example of transition zones in an outstanding natural environment.

##### **B. Solitude**

The Borah Peak WSA offers outstanding opportunities for solitude, especially when the unit is considered a portion of the adjacent larger RARE II Area which shares a six-mile long border. The WSA features rapidly changing vegetation zones and gives the visitor a sense of solitude that steep, opening mountain canyons can provide. However, due to the WSA's lack of vegetative screening and general openness of the lower terrain, outside sights and sounds are present. These are not significantly imposing but they do lessen the feeling of solitude.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

The Borah Peak WSA, in combination with the adjacent 116,000 acre RARE II Area, is relatively large, diverse and rugged and contains outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

The high mountain peaks of the RARE II Area and the lower elevation Borah Peak WSA provide outstanding hiking and backpacking opportunities. Opportunities for wildlife viewing, hunting, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, sightseeing and photography are excellent.

##### **D. Special Features**

The WSA is contiguous with RARE II Unit 4-120 Borah Peak which, at 12,655 feet in elevation, is the highest point in Idaho and the focal and destination point for the area. Also, the WSA includes evidence of faulting that occurred in the Challis Earthquake of 1983. The faulting offers an outstanding characteristic of earthquakes in a natural environment. Preservation would offer the visitor an outstanding opportunity to view faulting.



# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

## A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Borah Peak WSA would add an ecosystem not presently represented in Idaho. However, this ecosystem is represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System by four designated areas with 76,129 acres. There are eight other BLM study areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Rocky Mountain Forest Province				
	<u>NATIONWIDE</u>			
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	4	76,129	23	247,843
	<u>IDAHO</u>			
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	0	0	8	162,710



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Borah Peak WSA is within a five-hour drive of one major population center, Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

Idaho has the largest wilderness area in the contiguous 48 states, the 2.2 million acre Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness. Wilderness designation would not help distribute wilderness areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System but would further concentrate wilderness area in Idaho.

### Manageability

The Borah Peak WSA and the recommended portion outside the WSA can reasonably be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. The recommendation provides logical and identifiable boundaries when combined with the adjacent RARE II Area. One section (640 acres) of state land inside the boundary would be acquired.

Fences would probably be built along the west side of the WSA in order to control ORV access and regular patrolling would be necessary. The inclusion of the WSA as wilderness would make a more manageable boundary for the adjacent RARE II Area which would better protect the area's wilderness values.

### Energy and Minerals Resource Values

WGM, Inc., Mining and Geological Consultants, prepared a GEM assessment for the Borah Peak WSA in 1983. The Borah Peak WSA is classified as having low favorability for the accumulation of metallic minerals, uranium and thorium deposits and nonmetallic minerals based on limited direct evidence. No metallic or nonmetallic occurrences are reported in the units underlying the WSA.

All of the Borah Peak WSA is classified as moderately favorable for the accumulation of oil and gas based on limited direct evidence. The regional geological environment is favorable and both potential source and reservoir rocks occur in the subsurface of the WSA.

The southwestern edge of the Borah Peak WSA is classified as having low favorability for low-to-high temperature (40°C to over 150°C) geothermal resources based on indirect evidence. This area encompasses the lower elevations along major lineaments or along possible faults. The remainder of the WSA is classified as unfavorable for low to high temperature (40°C to over 150°C) geothermal resources based on indirect evidence.

The Borah Peak WSA is classified as unfavorable for sodium and potassium deposits and other leaseable commodities based on limited direct evidence. No rocks known to contain these commodities or other leaseable commodities underlie the WSA.

The southwestern edge of the Borah Peak WSA is classified as moderately favorable for sand and gravel deposits based on limited direct evidence. Geological mapping shows this area to be underlain by alluvial fan deposits. The remainder of the WSA is classified as unfavorable for saleable resources based on limited direct evidence. Geological mapping indicates the presence of unfavorable host rocks for any saleable commodities.

### Impacts on Resources

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-47-4 (BORAH PEAK)**

ISSUE TOPICS	NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED ACTION (ALL WILDERNESS PLUS ADDI- TIONAL WILDERNESS ACREAGE)
Impacts on USFS Borah Peak Proposed Wilderness	No Impact.	Proposed wilderness area's values slightly enhanced.	Proposed wilderness area's values slightly enhanced.
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Values lost on 97 acres due to timber harvest.	Values preserved on 3,880 acres.	Values preserved on 3,880 acres.
Impacts on Deer and Antelope Winter Range	No Impact.	No Impact.	No Impact.
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	No Impact.	10 visitor days of ORV use displaced annually.	10 visitor days of ORV use displaced annually.
Impacts on Energy and Mineral Resource Management	No Impact.	Opportunity to explore for and develop resource would be lost on 3,880 acres.	Opportunity to explore for and develop resource would be lost on 3,100 acres.
Impacts on Livestock and Grazing Resource Management	No Impact.	No Impact.	No Impact.
Impacts on Timber Harvest	No Impact.	Opportunity to harvest 14 MBF annually would be lost.	Opportunity to harvest 14 MBF annually would be lost.



## Local Social and Economic Considerations

The social and economic factors were not considered a significant issue in the study.

## Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, 27 written comments were received of which 14 specifically addressed the Borah Peak WSA. Eleven comments favored wilderness for the WSA. Three commenters opposed wilderness designation for the WSA.

Public hearings were held at Idaho Falls, Boise and Challis, Idaho. Seventeen persons testified. Seven supported wilderness designation specifically for the EIS and one opposed wilderness designation of any kind. However, no comments were received specifically for the Borah Peak WSA.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the beauty of the area, its value as a logical extension of the Borah Peak RARE II Area and the fact that the area has a portion of the faulting left behind by the Challis earthquake of 1983.

Those opposed to wilderness designation were concerned with a general "lock-up" of the land, effects on grazing costs, that ORV use was higher than stated in the EIS and that the area did not have any special qualities making it deserving of wilderness protection.

The Bureau of Reclamation, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, the Idaho State Historical Society, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service all commented on the Draft EIS. The Idaho State Historical Society voiced its concern that archaeological and historical inventories had not been completed. The other agencies did not identify a specific conflict with any of the alternatives.



APPENDIX 1 --BORAH PEAK WSA  
 Estimated Costs of Acquisition of Nonfederal Holdings  
 Within Areas Recommended for Designation(1)

Legal Description	Total Acreage	Number of Owners	Type of Ownership by Estate	Type of Ownership by Estate	Presently Proposed for Acquisition	Preferred Method of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition
			Surface Estate	Subsurface Estate			Land Costs (in \$)	Processing Costs (in \$)
Parcel No. 1 T. 9 N., R. 22 E. Sec. 36	640	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	5,000

(1)The estimated costs listed in this appendix in no way represent a formal appraised value of the land or mineral estate but are rough estimates based on sales or exchanges of lands or mineral estates with similar characteristics to those included in the WSA. The estimates are for purposes of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring nonfederal holdings and in no way represent an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimate included in this appendix.



# Little Wood River Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 4,265 acres

The Little Wood River WSA (ID-53-4) is located in Blaine County, Idaho. The WSA includes 4,265 acres of BLM-administered lands in two parcels. The eastern parcel contains 825 acres; the western parcel contains 3,440 acres. Both are contiguous with the U.S. Forest Service Pioneer Mountains RARE II Area. There are no state or private inholdings within the WSA. A 120-acre parcel of state land is bounded on the east, south and west by the Little Wood River WSA and on the north by the Pioneer Mountains RARE II Area. Private, state and U.S. Forest Service lands define the boundary of the WSA with the exception of a short section of unnamed, nonsystem jeep trail on the WSA's eastern boundary.

The WSA is entirely within the Elk Mountain Crucial Elk Winter Range Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The WSA makes up approximately 55 percent of the public lands within the 11,887-acre ACEC. The ACEC is managed primarily for the long-term protection of winter habitat for elk.

The Little Wood River WSA is characterized by mountainous terrain cut by steep drainages. Drainages include the Little Wood River, Chicken Creek, Buck Creek and Brown Creek. The Little Wood River is lined with a dense riparian zone which includes cottonwoods and willows. At lower elevations, the area's vegetation is dominated by big sagebrush interspersed with grasses. As elevations increase, Douglas-fir stands and quaking aspen groves become common. Elevations range from 5,620 feet to 7,879 feet.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and included in the Proposed Plan Amendments and Environmental Impact Statement for Small Wilderness Study Areas Statewide filed in September 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report, and a no wilderness alternative.



## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**4,265 acres recommended for wilderness**

**0 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Little Wood River WSA is to designate 4,265 acres as wilderness. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. All 4,265 acres of federal land within the Little Wood River WSA are recommended for wilderness designation. Federal lands recommended for wilderness designation within the WSA are shown on the Little Wood River Proposal map.

The WSA has outstanding wilderness values which would benefit from wilderness designation. Both parcels are adjacent to the large Pioneer Mountains RARE II Area (#4-201). The Sawtooth and Challis National Forests have recommended a 95,911 acre portion of the RARE II Area as suitable for wilderness designation. The Little Wood River WSA is a logical extension of the U.S. Forest Service's wilderness recommendation. The suitable wilderness recommendation for the Little Wood River WSA is dependent upon the contiguous suitable recommendation for the Pioneer Mountains RARE II Area. The area recommended for designation could be managed as wilderness in conjunction with a contiguous U.S. Forest Service Wilderness. The WSA's small size would make it difficult to manage as wilderness without the contiguous designation. However, both the U.S. Forest Service's proposed wilderness and the suitable recommendation for this WSA are relatively noncontroversial. Both areas contain minimal resource conflicts.

The Little Wood River WSA is generally natural, and most of the area is pristine. The only marks of humans are two constructed trails and several examples of tree carving left by sheepherders over the years. Both of the trails are of a low standard which would be suitable in a designated wilderness. There are a few infrequently used primitive campsites. The only facilities at these campsites are small rock fire rings.

The area has been grazed by livestock since the late 1800s. However, the impact of grazing is not noticeable to most visitors unless they happen upon a band of sheep. With the exception of limited cattle use on the extreme western edge of the WSA, all livestock grazing in the area is by sheep. Most of the sheep use is trailing to and from the national forest in the early summer and late fall. All of the sheep operators in the area use pack stock to move camps and equipment. Several of the south slopes in the WSA appear to be heavily used but this is due to concentrated use by elk during the winter. There are no planned or proposed range improvements inside the WSA and wilderness designation would have no affect on existing sheep operations.

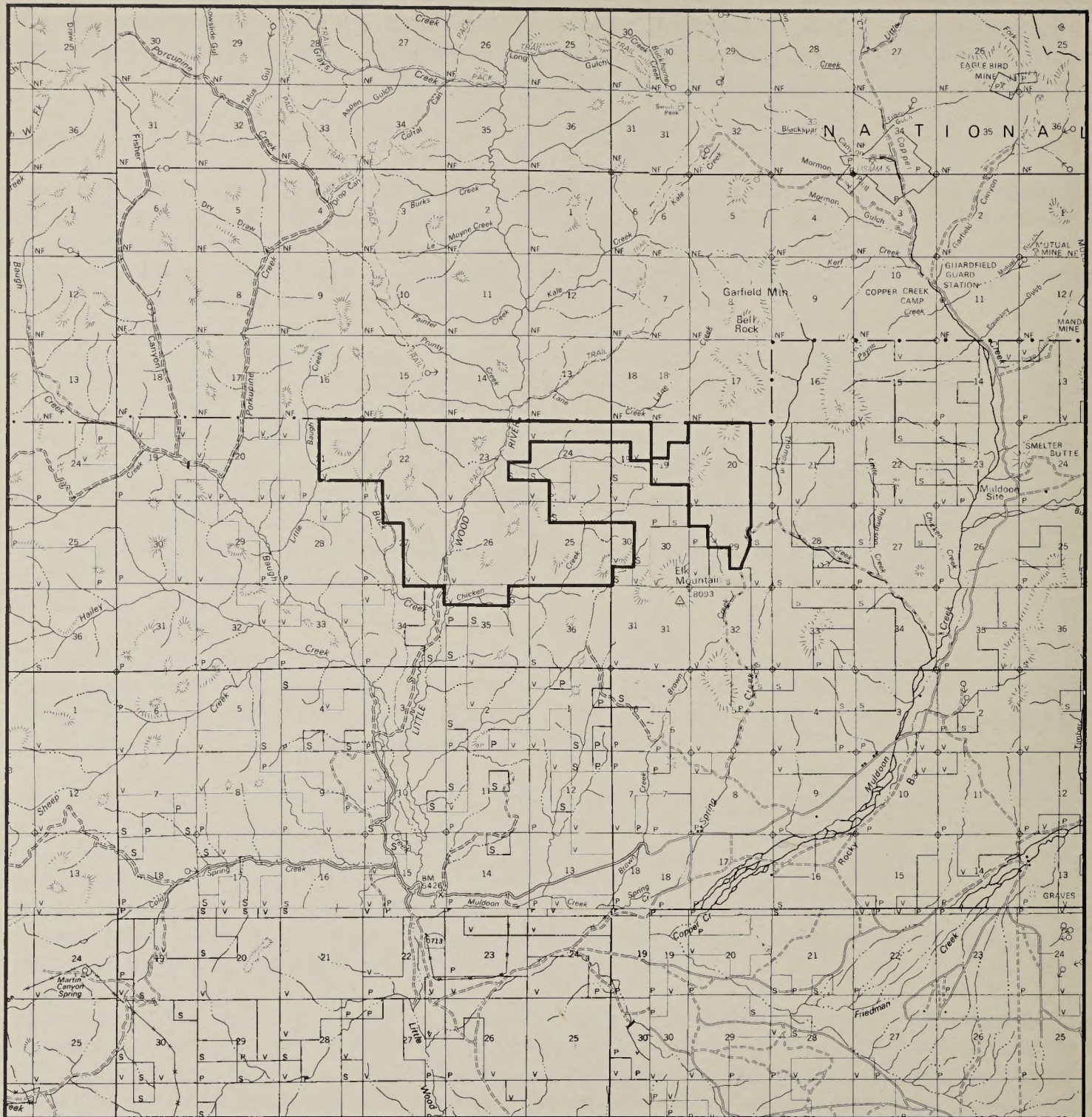
Recreational use of the area is light. Most use is concentrated during the fall hunting season with a majority of the hunters pursuing mule deer. Elk tags are available in small numbers under controlled unit regulations. One outfitter operates in the area under permits from BLM and the U.S. Forest Service. The area is slowly being discovered by hikers and fishermen from nearby Sun Valley and Ketchum. Most of these local users seem to be seeking a reprieve from the similar, but more crowded, opportunities available in the Big Wood River Valley. Opportunities for solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation are exceptional.

While the overlaying and surrounding ACEC is essential to the long-term survival of a 400-head elk herd, the WSA also supports mule deer, blue grouse, sage grouse, raptors, beaver, black bear, mountain lions, trout and a large variety of nongame wildlife. During the spring it is not unusual to see elk, antelope and mule deer, all at the same time. The WSA is a transitional area (ecotone) between the forest and mountains to the north, and the desert of the Snake River Plain to the south. The Little Wood River flood plain contains an intact, lush cottonwood riparian forest.









The Little Wood River WSA is located directly on top of the dividing line between two Bailey-Kuchler classified ecosystems. Both the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem and the Rocky Mountain Forest Province/Douglas-fir Forest Ecosystem are represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System in Idaho. However, wilderness designation for this WSA provides an opportunity to include a transition zone along with its associated biodiversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

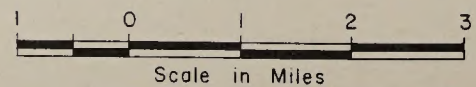




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|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



Scale in Miles

**ID-53-4  
 LITTLE WOOD RIVER  
 PROPOSAL**

JANUARY 1989



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
LITTLE WOOD RIVER WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	4,265
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
 Total	 4,265

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	4,265
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
 Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	 4,265
 Inholdings (state, private)	 0
 State land (outside WSA)	 0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	0
Split Estate	0
 Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	 0
 Inholdings (state, private)	 0



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Little Wood River WSA is natural in appearance. The rugged mountain sides appear unaffected by the works of man. Although livestock grazing has affected the vegetation along the Little Wood River drainage, the canyon's dense riparian vegetation remains natural in appearance.

A closed vehicle trail extends 1,500 feet into the WSA along the Little Wood River from the south boundary. Following the closure in 1982, this trail has revegetated to a single track. At the present time, the two-track jeep trail appears to end at the private land/BLM (WSA) boundary. From that point north, the trail's appearance is that of a low standard pack trail.

##### **B. Solitude**

The WSA provides outstanding opportunities for solitude. The WSA's rugged mountainous topography, dense riparian vegetation along the Little Wood River and stands of Douglas-fir and quaking aspen in the higher elevations, combined with the WSA's proximity to the Pioneer Mountains provide numerous opportunities for solitude. Visitors to the area can feel isolated virtually anywhere in the WSA.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

The Little Wood River WSA contains outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The area is used by hikers, backpackers, horse packers and hunters. Many visitors pass through the area on their way to the Pioneer Mountains Roadless Area. A diversity of recreational opportunities including fishing, camping, hunting, photography and sightseeing are available within the area.

##### **D. Special Features**

The WSA makes up approximately 55 percent of the public lands within the 11,887 acre Elk Mountain Crucial Elk Winter Range ACEC. The ACEC is managed primarily for the long-term protection of winter habitat for elk. This area is essential to the long-term survival of an elk herd of up to 400 animals that summer in the Pioneer Mountains and winter in the ACEC. The area also supports year-round populations of mule deer, blue grouse and sage grouse. Raptors use the cottonwoods in the canyon bottoms for nest sites. The section of the Little Wood River which flows through the WSA is a large-volume, pristine stream. Environmental organizations have mentioned this section of the river as a candidate for wild river designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.



# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

## A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Little Wood River WSA would add an ecosystem presently represented in Idaho and represented in the NWPS by four designated areas with 76,129 acres. There are eight other BLM study areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Rocky Mountain Forest Province				
	<u>NATIONWIDE</u>			
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	4	76,129	23	247,843
	<u>IDAHO</u>			
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	0	0	8	162,710



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Little Wood River WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

The Little Wood River WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The U.S. Forest Service-administered Sawtooth Wilderness (217,008 acres), representing similar landforms and a similar ecosystem, is 60 miles to the northwest. The National Park Service-administered Craters of the Moon Wilderness (43,243 acres) is 20 miles to the southeast. Designation of the Little Wood River WSA as wilderness would not help balance the geographic distribution of opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences. Rather, designation would expand opportunities in the NWPS currently available only within these two nearby wilderness areas.

### **Manageability**

The Little Wood River WSA can be reasonably managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. There are no conflicts with existing resource uses. Continuation of existing livestock operations would not be impacted by wilderness designation. Sheep grazing is the only current permitted use in the area. There are no facilities in the WSA associated with these sheep operations. Operators use horses and mules to pack in sheep camps. Motorized ATVs are not used because the country is too steep and because travel along the Little Wood River trail requires numerous deep fords.

There are two trails which provide access to the WSA and the Pioneer Mountains Roadless Area to the north. At the present time, the trailheads are located on private land about one mile south of the WSA boundary. The federal government holds easements for both of these trails across the private land. The private landowner requested that his land be included in the existing motorized closure for the surrounding ACEC to prevent motorized use of his property. The gate and signing of the main Little Wood River trail have been successful in preventing motorized use.

All public lands within the WSA were closed to motorized vehicle use on October 1, 1982. The U.S. Forest Service's proposed wilderness to the north is also closed to motorized use. Both of these closures are well established and known by the public. Wilderness designation would not be viewed as a new closure by ORV enthusiasts.

Overall, the manageability of the area is enhanced by the overlaying ACEC classification. Because the ACEC boundary extends beyond the WSA boundary, additional protection is provided along the perimeter of the WSA.

### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

The WSA has low oil, gas and geothermal potential and moderate favorability for silver and zinc. (Geology, Energy, Mineral Resource Evaluation of the Pioneer Mountains GRA October 1983.) There are no mining claims within the WSA and few mining claims adjacent to the WSA.

Based on the low leasable mineral potential and lack of locatable mineral activity, there is little potential for mineral development within the WSA.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-53-4 (LITTLE WOOD RIVER)**

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (All Wilderness/No Action)	No Wilderness Alternative
Impact on Wilderness Values	<p>All wilderness values would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation.</p> <p>Wilderness designation and management would maintain the area's apparent naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.</p> <p>Special features would be maintained.</p>	<p>No surface-disturbing actions are anticipated or predicted in the WSA. The area would continue to be managed as an ACEC.</p> <p>Management of the area as an ACEC for elk crucial winter range would maintain the WSA's naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude, and primitive and unconfined recreation and special features.</p>
Impacts on Pioneer Mountains Roadless Area	<p>Wilderness designation of the Little Wood River WSA would help protect and enhance the wilderness values of the Roadless Area by ensuring that no actions would take place in the WSA that would intrude upon them.</p>	<p>The wilderness values of the proposed Pioneer Mountain Wilderness would not be affected.</p>
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	<p>The Little Wood River WSA would remain closed to recreational ORV use. There would be no impact on motorized recreation.</p>	<p>The Little Wood River WSA would remain closed to recreational ORV use. There would be no impact on motorized recreation.</p>
Impacts on Crucial Elk Winter Range	<p>The elk crucial winter range would be protected and maintained.</p>	<p>The area would be managed as an ACEC for the protection of elk crucial winter range.</p>



## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Designation of the area as wilderness would have no or minimal effects on the local social and economic situation.

## **Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments**

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Public hearings were held in Challis, Boise and Idaho Falls, Idaho, during February 1988.

During public review of the Draft EIS, 27 letters were received. Fifteen specifically supported wilderness designations, with nine comments supporting a suitable recommendation for the Little Wood River WSA. Six letters supported nonwilderness designation, with two specifically identifying the Little Wood River WSA. None of their comments addressed any objections to the recommendation for this WSA.

The U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, Idaho State Historical Society and Department of Health and Welfare all commented on the Draft EIS.



# Black Butte Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 4,068 acres

The Black Butte WSA (ID-54-2) is located in Lincoln and Blaine Counties 17 miles north of Shoshone, Idaho. The WSA includes 4,068 acres of BLM-administered lands. There are no split estate lands or inholdings within the area (see Table 1). The WSA's boundaries are formed by the following dirt roads: on the south by BLM Road 3216, the Buck Lake Road; on the west by BLM Road 3210; on the north by BLM Road 1302, the West Magic Road; and on the east by State Highway 75. The boundary also follows a property line around one state section and two private holdings.

The WSA is dominated by Black Butte, an inactive volcano of recent origin (4,000 to 6,000 years ago) rising about 200 feet above the surrounding older lava plateau. The vent of this volcano is an irregularly shaped subsidence crater up to .5 mile wide and 80 to 200 feet deep. The crater contains a jumbled variety of lava benches, cliffs, jagged outcrops, lava tubes and vents. The flanks of Black Butte are covered with young lava that has fractured into polygonal plates up to four feet across and one to six inches thick.

The basalt in the area varies in color from black to purplish-black on the exposed desert varnished surfaces with a dull, brownish-red on the under surface. Removal of dark surface lava slabs has resulted in the exposure of brownish-red lava under layers.

Although the younger lava and the crater are virtually devoid of vegetation, the lower flanks of the Butte support a mixed shrub-grass community.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and included in the Proposed Plan Amendments and Final Environmental Impact Statement for Small Wilderness Study Areas Statewide filed in September 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report, and an all wilderness alternative.



## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**0 acres recommended for wilderness**

**4,068 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Black Butte WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and release all 4,068 acres for other uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

All 4,068 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and are shown as the Black Butte WSA on the Black Butte Proposal map.

The quality of the wilderness values was a key consideration in the recommendation. While the WSA contained the wilderness values necessary for study, it is not considered to merit the area's inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). The Black Butte WSA would not add quality and diversity to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Due to the proximity to State Highway 75, the small size of the WSA and mining activity, solitude opportunities available in the WSA are inferior to those afforded by thousands of acres of land, primarily lava flows, which are found in the Shoshone District.

Another key consideration was the fact that the area is not manageable as wilderness due to the mining activity that is occurring under the Surface Management (1872 Mining Law) regulation 3809. The naturalness of the Black Butte WSA has been severely impacted by lava rock mining activity. Areas of lava rock removal are distinguished by the reddish surface exposed after removal of the black lava plates. Due to this color contrast, the removal areas appear as visual scars and intensively mined areas are visible from a distance.

A network of roads and trails created to support mining wind over and around the Butte in the central part of the WSA. Even when the surface lava is not removed, heavy equipment on the roads and trails has broken and crushed the plated lava surface, changing its color and texture. This results in obvious roads and trails that cannot be reclaimed. A trespass road built in 1986 leads from State Highway 75 to the crater. This road has a significant impact on the area's naturalness and cannot be reclaimed.

Within the WSA boundary, removal of the veneer lava would continue on the 510 acres of claims determined in 1981 to be valid. Including the operations approved in 1986, mining activity would expand to an estimated 1,000 additional acres. An estimated total of over 1500 acres, or 37 percent of the total area of the WSA, would be disturbed by mining and primitive roads. The surface disturbance would occur primarily in the central part of the WSA on and around Black Butte crater. Disturbed areas would be distinguished by the reddish-colored surface exposed after removal of the dark brown or black veneer lava. The disturbance would be obvious and the area's apparent naturalness would be lost on all disturbed areas. Vehicles and equipment working in the area would reduce opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Reclamation would not restore a natural appearance.

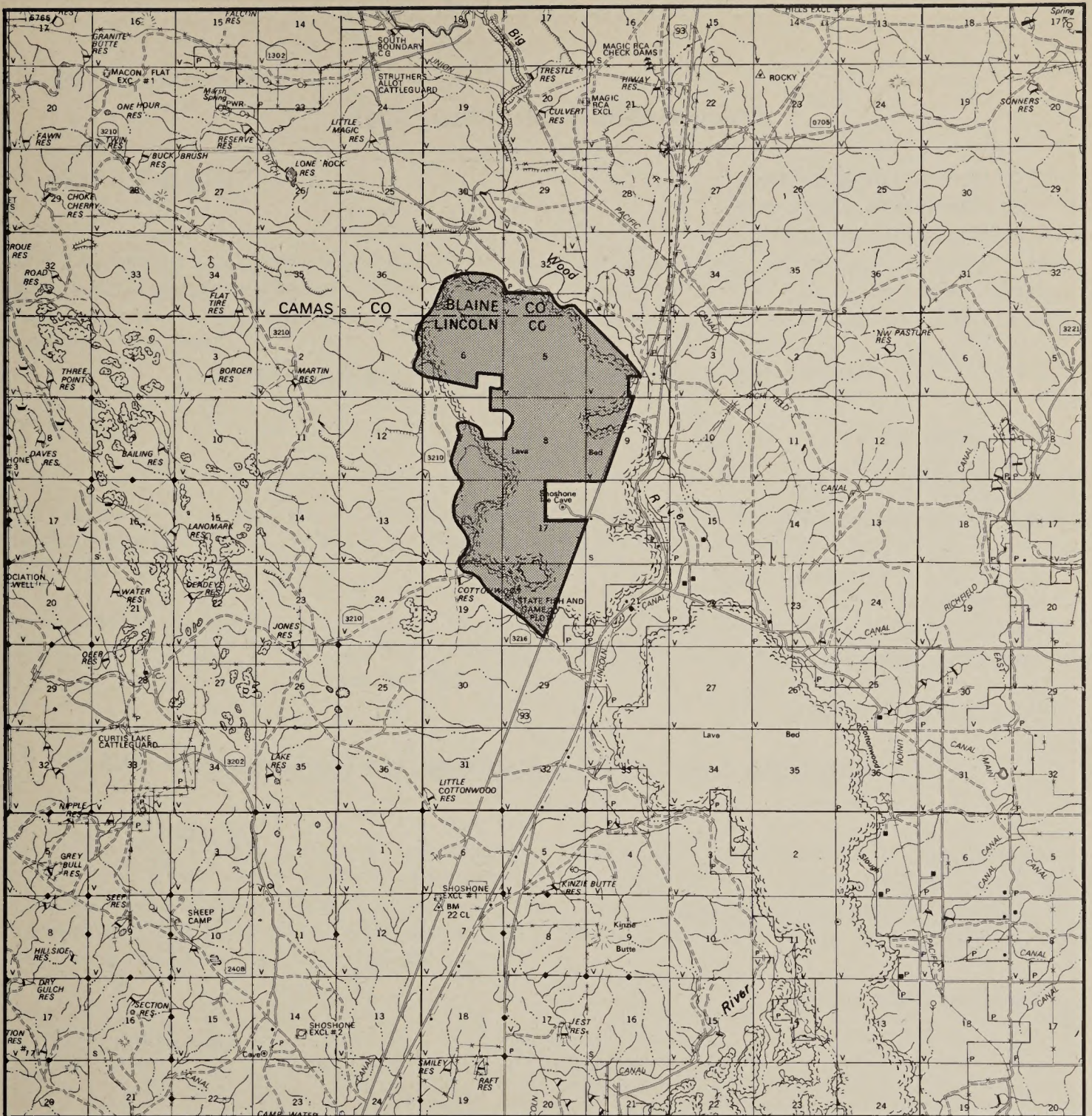
The naturalness of the WSA has been further altered from a user-built project, Two Pits Reservoir, located just within the north boundary. The reservoir consists of two pits, each about four feet deep, 50 feet wide and 75 feet long. These pits are not noticeable from a distance but are obviously unnatural at close range. The reservoir contains water during the spring and remains dry the rest of the year.

Although the Black Butte WSA offers opportunities to study the vegetative and geologic features of a young aa lava flow, similar ecosystems and geologic features of higher wilderness quality are recommended for wilderness designation within the Great Rift and Raven's Eye WSAs located one hour northeast of the WSA.



The Great Rift (355,850 acres) and Raven's Eye (67,110 acres) WSAs contain ecosystems and geologic features similar to those in the Black Butte WSA. The Great Rift and Raven's Eye WSAs, however, have higher quality wilderness values because of their large size, greater diversity of lava flow features and vegetation, and reduced influence from human works. Recommendation of these WSAs as wilderness is adequate to represent Snake River Plain desert lava flow ecosystem features and opportunities in the NWPS. The Great Rift and Raven's Eye WSAs also provide much higher quality opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation than does the Black Butte WSA.





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





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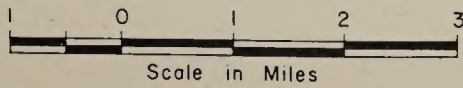
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|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



ID-54-2  
BLACK BUTTE  
PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1989



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
BLACK BUTTE WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	4,068
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,068</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>0</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	4,068
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>4,068</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The naturalness of the Black Butte WSA has been significantly reduced by lava rock mining. The majority of the existing impacts cannot be restored to a natural appearance. Portions of the WSA outside the mining area remain natural in appearance. These areas include Black Butte's southern flanks, the interior crater and most of the southern part of the WSA.

##### **B. Solitude**

The topographic variety of the crater and lava flow provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and isolation from the sights and sounds of others. However, the small size of the WSA limits opportunities for solitude if many visitors were in the WSA at the same time.

Roads in the WSA and surrounding area detract from a feeling of solitude. Traffic on State Highway 75 on the mining roads can be seen and heard from the WSA's higher elevations. The Shoshone Ice Caves, which has about 40,000 visitors per year, can be seen from the WSA.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

The Black Butte WSA provides a variety of recreation opportunities. The rugged volcanic features and desert environment provide outstanding opportunities for camping, hiking, geologic study and photography. Camping and hiking are challenging due to the rough lava and steep slopes. Some hunting also occurs, primarily on the lower slopes and western part of the WSA. Visits usually occur in the spring and fall, probably due to severe temperature extremes during the summer and winter months.

##### **D. Special Features**

Black Butte is a recent basaltic shield cone (4,000 to 6,000 years old) which rises 200 feet above the surrounding older lava plateau. Near the cone are volcanic features such as lava channels and tubes, foamy pahoehoe sheet flows, aa flows and a central subsidence crater. These features are fresh and represent an uncommon occurrence of volcanic landforms. The WSA is an example of recent volcanic activity and is easily accessible from State Highway 75. Because of this, the area offers an exceptional interpretive opportunity.



There is outstanding potential in the Black Butte WSA for an interpretive site that could be built off Highway 75. The site could include parking space, sanitary facilities, interpretive signs and a nature trail leading to the center of the crater. Interpretation could focus on the geology and fauna associated with relatively recent volcanic activity. The interpretive site would be unique to the local area. The nearest site that interprets similar landforms is Craters of the Moon, two hours to the northeast.



# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

## A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Black Butte WSA would add an ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented in the NWPS by one designated area with 30,245 acres. There are 11 other BLM areas in the state with this ecosystem under study. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Intermountain Sagebrush Province				
			<u>NATIONWIDE</u>	
Desert-Vegetation Largely Absent Ecosystem	1	30,245	12	870,403
			<u>IDAHO</u>	
Desert-Vegetation Largely Absent Ecosystem	1	30,245	11	646,687
			<u>NEVADA</u>	
Desert-Vegetation Largely Absent Ecosystem	0	0	1	223,716



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Black Butte WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas:**

The Black Butte WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The NPS-administered Craters of the Moon Wilderness (43,243 acres), representing a similar landform and ecosystem, is a five-mile drive to the northeast. Designation of the Black Butte WSA as wilderness would not help balance the geographic distribution of opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

### **Manageability**

The WSA would not be manageable as wilderness due to locatable mining claim activities. Since the Black Butte WSA is less than 5,000 acres, locatable mining activity is exempt from the nonimpairment criteria for the Wilderness Interim Management Policy and is regulated under the 43 CFR 3809 Regulations, "Surface Management of Public Lands Under U.S. Mining Laws" (November 26, 1980). Mining activity regulated under the 3809 regulations may impair wilderness values and will severely affect the ability to manage the area as wilderness.

Veneer lava in the Black Butte area consists of polygonal plates three to four feet wide and one to six inches thick. The thin sheets of lava are economically valuable because they are lightweight and possess a color and texture combination popular for decorative building.

Removal of lava rock from the Black Butte area has been occurring since the early 1970s. BLM established a community pit on the west side of the crater in 1973. In 1981 Black Butte lava was determined to be a locatable mineral and validity determination confirmed eleven placer mining claims. During 1986 and 1987, two CFR 3809 mining claim Plan of Operations and Environmental Assessments were approved.

### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

The Black Butte WSA has no petroleum potential and moderate potential for geothermal resources (BLM, 1989).

As described, the area has a high value for locatable and saleable minerals due to the decorative lava rock. Extraction of veneer lava would continue on the 510 acres covered by valid mining claims and up to 1,000 additional acres, depending on the outcome of validity examinations.

The mineral estates in the WSA are in federal ownership and open to mineral entry. There are no mineral leases within the WSA.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-54-2 (BLACK BUTTE)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	All wilderness values would be lost on over 1,500 acres disturbed by extraction of veneer lava. Apparent naturalness would be lost in approximately 37% of the WSA. The surface disturbance would be visible and obvious in the majority of the WSA. Because of the reduction in naturalness, the values of Black Butte for geologic studies would be reduced.	Some wilderness values would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. Extraction of veneer lava would continue on the 510 acres now covered by valid mining claims and all other claims determined to be valid. All wilderness values would be lost in the areas of surface disturbance. The disturbed areas could not be reclaimed.
Impacts on Lava Mining	All lands within the WSA would remain open for mineral entry. All locatable lava rock would be available for location of mining claims and development.	Within the WSA, extraction of veneer lava would continue on the 510 acres covered by valid mining claims and on up to 1,000 additional acres, depending on the outcome of validity examinations. After designation, other areas of veneer lava within the wilderness area would not be available for location of mining claims and development.
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	The entire area would be open to ORV use. There would be no impact on motorized recreation.	Recreational ORV use of less than 75 visitor days would be displaced annually. The impact of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.



## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Social and economic factors were not considered a significant issue in the study.

## **Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments**

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Public hearings were held in Challis, Boise and Idaho Falls.

During public review of the Draft EIS, 27 letters were received. Fifteen specifically supported wilderness designation with four comments supporting a suitable recommendation for Black Butte. One comment stated support for the recommendation only because the area had lost its natural values. Six letters supported nonwilderness designation with two specifically identifying Black Butte. None of their comments addressed objections to the recommendation on Black Butte WSA.

The U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and Idaho State Historical Society commented on the Draft EIS.



# Box Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 440 acres

The Box Creek WSA (ID-110-91A) is located in Valley County approximately ten miles northeast of McCall, Idaho. The WSA includes 440 acres of BLM lands (see Table 1). The WSA is contiguous with the U.S. Forest Service 266,292 acre Secesh roadless area on the WSA's north and east boundaries. The WSA is bounded on all other sides by lands administered by the Idaho Department of Lands.

The WSA consists of rolling to extremely steep and broken terrain supporting a mixed conifer forest of Douglas-fir, subalpine fir, Englemann spruce and lodgepole pine. Ponderosa pine, larch and aspen are also present. The forest cover is frequently broken by large granite outcrops. Elevation ranges from 5,700 to 6,700 feet. Box Creek flows through the southern portion of the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Small Wilderness Study Area Environmental Impact Statement filed September 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report; and an all wilderness alternative.



## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

0 acres recommended for wilderness

440 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for the Box Creek WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and to release the 440 acres for uses other than wilderness. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

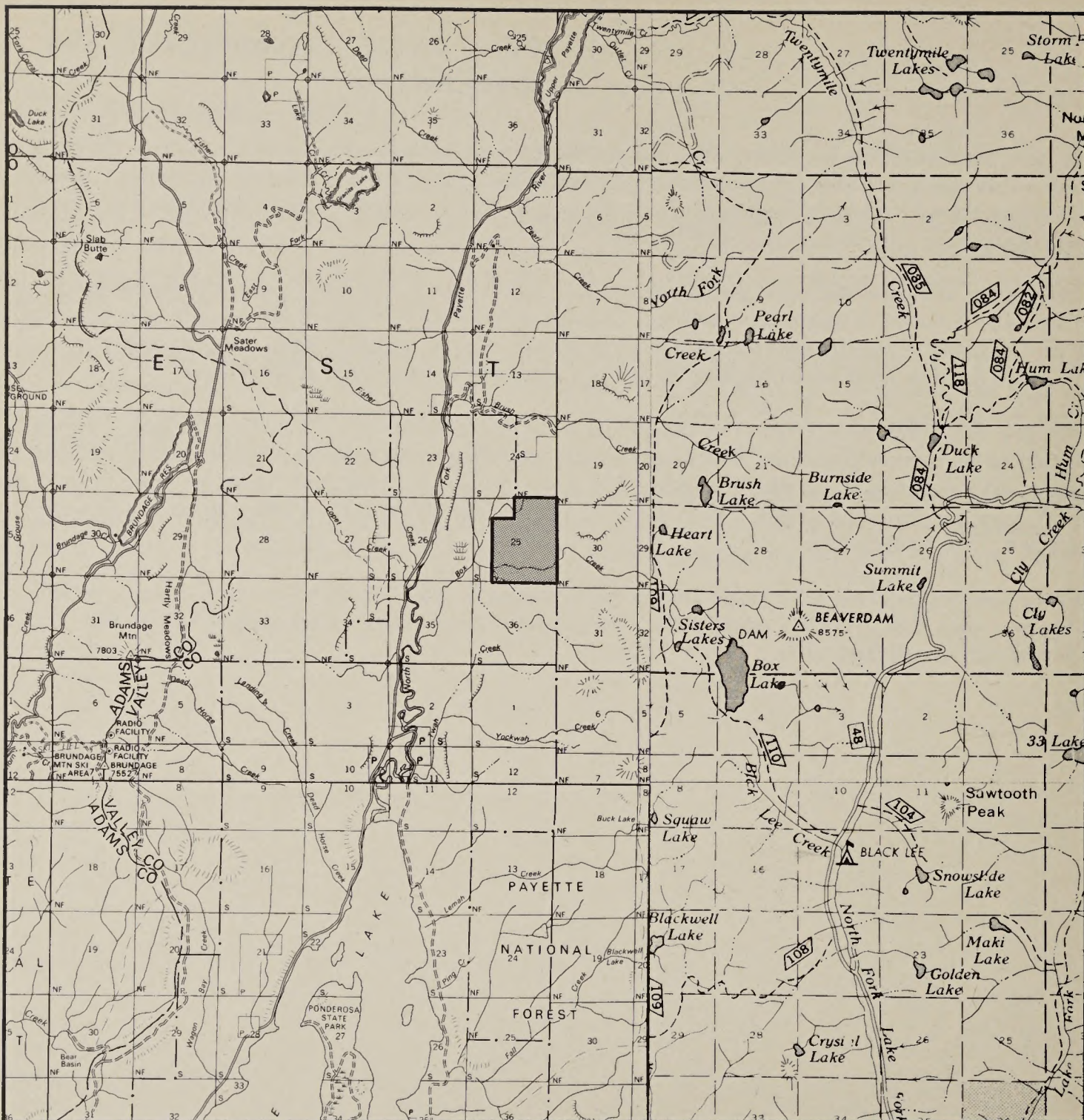
The WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation because the U.S. Forest Service has recommended that the lands adjacent to the WSA within the contiguous Secesh roadless area be released and managed for uses other than wilderness including semi-primitive recreational motor vehicle use and salvage logging. Logging and other motorized activities also occur on state lands adjoining the western and southern boundaries of the WSA.

The 440 acre Box Creek WSA is too small to stand on its own as a wilderness. Without designation of adjoining U.S. Forest Service lands as wilderness, the WSA could not be managed to provide wilderness opportunities. Sights and sounds of logging and motor vehicle activities or adjacent U.S. Forest Service and state lands would be apparent from most of the WSA, adversely impacting solitude and naturalness. By itself, the WSA does not have outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.







Wilderness designation of the WSA would prevent the harvesting of 500 MBF of timber every 30 years. Release of the area for uses other than wilderness would make management of the 440-acre parcel compatible with that of adjoining U.S. Forest Service and state lands.

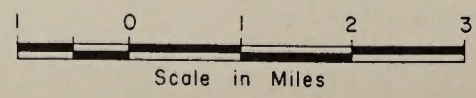


T. 21 N.  
 T. 20 N.  
 T. 20 N.  
 T. 19 N.



| R. 3 E. | R. 3 E. | R. 4 E. | R. 4 E. |

- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



ID-110-91A  
 BOX CREEK  
 PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1989



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
BOX CREEK WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	440
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>0</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	440
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>440</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0



### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Box Creek WSA is natural with no human imprints. The area consists of rolling to extremely steep and broken terrain supporting a mixed conifer forest cover frequently broken by large granite outcrops. A perennial stream, Box Creek flows through the southern part of the WSA.

The area has been affected primarily by the forces of nature. There are no primitive roads, trails or other human-made features in the WSA.

##### **B. Solitude**

When combined with the contiguous U.S. Forest Service roadless area, the WSA contains outstanding opportunities for solitude. By itself, the WSA does not have outstanding opportunities for solitude due to its small size.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

When combined with the contiguous U.S. Forest Service roadless area, the WSA provides outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation such as hiking, hunting, fishing, photography and wildlife viewing. However, by itself, the WSA does not provide such outstanding opportunities due to its limited size.

##### **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 the Box Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented within the northern Rocky Mountain ecosystem by ten designated areas with 909,780 acres. There are three other BLM areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Rocky Mountain Province				
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Grand Fir/Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	10	909,780	4	1,589
<u>IDAHO</u>				
Grand Fir/Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	2	585,118	1	440
<u>OREGON</u>				
Grand Fir/Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	8	344,662	3	1,149



**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Box Creek WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



## **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

The Box Creek WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The largest block of Idaho wilderness is located in the Rocky Mountains about 40 air miles east of the WSA.

### **Manageability**

Combined with the contiguous U.S Forest Service 266,292 acre Secesh roadless area, the WSA could be effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character. The U.S. Forest Service has recommended that 20,000 acres adjacent to the WSA within the roadless area be released for uses other than wilderness including recreational motor vehicle use and salvage logging.

Taken by itself, the WSA cannot be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics. Logging and motor vehicle activities occurring on surrounding U.S. Forest Service and state lands would be heard or visible from much of the 440-acre WSA making opportunities for naturalness, solitude and primitive recreation less than outstanding.

Most of the 440 acres within the WSA are commercial forest lands. The timber production and capability classification process has determined that 295 acres are capable of sustaining long-term timber production. These 295 acres are included in the timber harvest base for BLM's Cascade Resource Area. The annual allowable cut in the WSA is approximately 17 MBF.

### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

The WSA is located within the Idaho Batholith portion of the northern Rocky Mountain geologic province. The oil and gas potential is rated at zero. The geothermal potential is very low. The WSA is not within an area of current locatable mineral activity and there are no existing mining claims within the area.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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



**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-110-91A (BOX CREEK)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Naturalness and primitive and unconfined recreation would be lost on most of WSA. Solitude would be reduced.	Naturalness reduced on 75% of the WSA and solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation reduced on 90% of the WSA by activities on adjacent lands.
Impacts on USFS Secesh Roadless Area	Sights and sounds of timber harvest in WSA would be noticeable over 10% of the roadless area.	No effect.
Impacts on Hydroelectric Development	No impact.	Proposed project would have to be relocated 1/8 mile.
Impacts on Timber Harvest	No impact.	Harvest of 500 MBF every 30 years foregone.
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Wildlife	Deer and elk use increase up to 5%. Bear and grouse use decrease by 2% to 3%, respectively.	No impact.
Impacts on Fisheries	Fish populations reduced by up to 10%.	Fish populations could be slightly reduced by up to 10% by activity on adjacent lands.
Impacts on Gray Wolf	No impact.	No impact.



## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of the entire Box Creek WSA as wilderness would prevent the harvesting of 500 MBF of timber every 30 years.

### 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.

During the formal review of the Draft EIS, 41 oral and written comments were received. Of the 23 commenters who specifically mentioned the Box Creek WSA, 15 supported wilderness designation, four opposed designation and four took no position. Those favoring wilderness commented on its outstanding naturalness and wildlife values. Those opposing designation were concerned that wilderness would preclude commodity use of resources. Most commenters were residents of Idaho.

Federal agencies commenting on the Draft EIS included the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Idaho state agencies providing comments were the Department of Health and Welfare and the Historical Society. The agencies took no position on wilderness designation except for the Bureau of Indian Affairs which supported wilderness designation of the Box Creek WSA.











