

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION RELATING TO IDAHO'S STUDY

A) INSTANT STUDY AREAS

There are three Instant Study Areas (ISAs) in Idaho. These areas were designated as natural or primitive areas prior to November 1, 1976, and automatically qualified as wilderness study areas with the passage of FLPMA.

The three ISAs were studied for their suitability in advance of the WSAs in Idaho. Recommendations on these three areas were submitted to Congress in 1985 as part of an omnibus ISA Bill.

The 26,713 acre Birds of Prey ISA and the 160 acre China Cup ISA were not recommended for wilderness designation. The 380,200 acre Great Rift ISA was partially recommended for wilderness designation with 33,400 acres being recommended for other uses. Since 1985, 24,350 acres of state and private inholdings within the portion recommended for wilderness have been acquired by BLM. These lands possess the same high quality wilderness values as the lands previously recommended for wilderness and are recommended for designation. The addition of these acquired lands has resulted in 346,800 acres being recommended for wilderness.

There has been no action in Congress on the omnibus ISA Bill since its introduction in 1985. Therefore, Idaho has included the recommendations for the three ISAs as part of this statewide wilderness package.

The following is a tabular display of Idaho's three ISAs:

ISA NAME	SUITABLE ACRES	NONSUITABLE ACRES	TOTAL ACRES	STATUS
Great Rift	346,800	33,400	380,200	Original submitted to Congress May 1985
Birds of Prey	0	26,713	26,713	Original submitted to Congress May 1985
China Cup	0	160	160	Original submitted to Congress May 1985

B) SECTION 202 WILDERNESS STUDIES

This report includes a category of wilderness study areas that have wilderness characteristics only when combined with the contiguous lands of another agency. The BLM lands were selected for wilderness study under the authority of Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and are identified in this report as "Section 202 WSAs." Ten Section 202 areas were identified during the Idaho wilderness inventory.

Generally, the Section 202 WSAs are studied using the same criteria as established for Section 603 WSAs. The value of each area as wilderness was compared with other multiple-use values of those areas.

Nine Section 202 areas were studied in Idaho's Small Wilderness Study Area Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement. One Section 202 (Selkirk Crest) was addressed in the 1986 North Idaho proposed MFP Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Six of the Section 202 WSAs (including Selkirk Crest) are not recommended for wilderness designation. Four Section 202 WSAs are recommended for wilderness. These WSAs are contiguous to U.S. Forest Service designated or recommended suitable wilderness areas.

SECTION 202 WSAs IN IDAHO

<u>WSA NAME</u>	<u>ACREAGE</u>	<u>PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE</u>
1. Box Creek	440	All 440 acres nonsuitable
2. Lower Salmon Falls Creek	3,500	All 3,500 acres nonsuitable
3. Henry's Lake	350	340 acres suitable/10 acres nonsuitable
4. Worm Creek	40	All 40 acres suitable
5. Goldburg	3,290	All 3,290 acres nonsuitable
6. Boulder Creek	1,930	All 1,930 acres nonsuitable
7. Borah Peak	3,880	All 3,880 acres suitable
8. Little Wood River	4,265	All 4,265 acres suitable
9. Black Butte	4,068	All 4,068 acres nonsuitable
10. Selkirk Crest	720	All 720 acres nonsuitable

C) MILITARY OVERFLIGHTS

Many WSAs in Idaho, particularly those in Southwestern Idaho are regularly overflowed by military aircraft during approved military operations. The Air Force and Idaho Air National Guard have identified the 22 WSAs addressed in the Jacks Creek, Jarbidge, Owyhee Canyonlands and Owyhee MFP and Wilderness EISs as critical to their plans of operations. These 22 WSAs underlie a significant portion of the Owyhee and Paradise Military Operation Area (MOA) and five military training routes (MTR). The MOA and MTR are not only used by the Air Force and Air National Guard in Idaho but are used by numerous Air Force, Navy and Marine Units from Nevada and California.

Last year approximately 365 training missions were scheduled in the MOAs and 3,548 missions were scheduled in the MTRs. The usage of the MTRs and the Paradise and Owyhee MOAs has steadily increased since their creation in 1975.

With the closure of George Air Force Base in California and the subsequent possible relocation of 94 F-4 Aircraft to Idaho, the projected use within Idaho is estimated to double. The Air Force is preparing an EIS for the Saylor Creek bombing range expansion. In the EIS, the impact of the proposed range expansion and associated increased flight activities on wilderness values will be analyzed. Target and ground disturbance areas would not be within WSAs; however, the action would result in increased low-level subsonic and higher level supersonic overflights.

BLM recognizes the importance of these military training operations for the national defense preparedness of this country but did not consider the impacts of the overflights as sufficient to warrant a nonsuitable recommendation for any of the WSAs within the designated flight operation areas.

D) WATER SITUATION

An issue of general concern is the effect of wilderness designation on existing and future water rights and uses. Many of the WSAs recommended for wilderness contain water-related values, including springs or impoundments which provide water for wildlife, and possibly human use. A small number of the WSAs recommended for wilderness have stream flows which, in addition to the uses already mentioned, support riparian vegetation, fish populations and may also provide water to downstream users.

A recent Interior Solicitor's opinion review by the Attorney General concludes that The Wilderness Act itself does not create federally reserved water rights. Only specific Congressional language on reserved water rights in the designation legislation can create reserved water rights for a wilderness area. BLM will file for appropriations for beneficial uses under Idaho State law.

E) BURNT CREEK WSA

The Big Lost/Pahsimeroi Final Wilderness EIS recommended no wilderness for the Burnt Creek WSA (24,980 acres). This recommendation was based on the preliminary information that the adjacent Rare II study area Borah Peak was going to be recommended nonsuitable and that management of the area for naturalness and solitude would be difficult and costly without a complementary recommendation on adjoining U.S. Forest Service lands. Subsequent to the release of the Big Lost/Pahsimeroi Final EIS, the U.S. Forest Service modified its recommendations to suitable for a 7.5 mile common border with BLM. That area now recommended suitable by the U.S. Forest Service is complementary to portions of adjoining BLM lands and led to BLM recommending 8,300 acres of the Burnt Creek WSA for wilderness designation. The remaining 16,680 acres are not recommended for wilderness due to their lower quality of naturalness and opportunities for solitude.

F) NORTH FORK OWYHEE RIVER WSA

The recommendation for the North Fork Owyhee River WSA is to designate 41,665 acres as wilderness. The EIS identified a need for special legislative language by Congress to allow mechanical removal of individual juniper and the use of prescribed burning to maintain a natural sagebrush-bunchgrass ecosystem. The WSA has been invaded by cheatgrass, a non-native plant which increases fire severity and has limited forage value.

Reestablishment of fire is an important factor in maintaining a western juniper/sagebrush-bunchgrass ecosystem in this WSA. The treatment would occur on approximately ten percent (4,150 acres) of the wilderness area with less than one percent (400 acres) being treated in any given year. The treatment calls for 100 percent removal of young growth (less than 50 years) juniper for a period of 20 years by mechanical means. Thereafter, prescribed burning and natural fire would be used to maintain the desired balance between juniper and sagebrush-bunchgrass species.

KEY ISSUES AND MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

Eighteen separate issues were identified during the wilderness study process ranging from site-specific concerns, such as the impact on hydroelectric development in the Box Creek and the Snake River Islands WSAs, to broader issues such as the impact of wilderness designation on recreational use of motor vehicles. Issues are analyzed in the 14 wilderness EISs and are discussed in the site-specific analysis for each WSA in Volumes I through IV of this report. The following five (5) key issues are of greatest concern in Idaho and appeared in almost all of the written documents and testimony received.

1. Wilderness Values: Idaho possesses a rich diversity of potential wilderness lands. Permanent preservation of wilderness values was a major issue in all wilderness studies. **CONCLUSION**: The lands with the best wilderness values would be protected through wilderness designation of 27 areas totaling 972,239 acres, meaning that 825,217 acres would be released for other uses. Much of the released lands would retain their existing natural values for the foreseeable future through administrative actions under existing laws and authorities. The site-specific analysis for each WSA identifies the areas where wilderness values could be foregone or lost because of other resource uses.

2. Recreation Motor Vehicle Use: The impact of wilderness designation on motorized recreation activities was addressed in 14 wilderness environmental studies. **CONCLUSION**: Recreational motor vehicle use would not be allowed within wilderness. Due to rough topography, only a very small portion of existing opportunities for recreational motor vehicle use on BLM-administered lands within Idaho occurs within areas recommended for wilderness designation. There is an abundance of public land outside of potential wilderness where such use is allowed. The individual site-specific analyses in this report identify any situation where motorized use would be significantly impacted.

3. Livestock Grazing: Livestock use and the development and maintenance of range projects and improvements was an issue identified in eight wilderness EISs. **CONCLUSION**: By law, grazing is permitted in wilderness and existing authorized levels of grazing would be maintained along with maintenance of existing range improvements. It is recognized, however, that increased grazing, the development of new projects and improvements, and the implementation of some livestock management techniques would be restricted within wilderness.

4. Wildlife Habitat: The protection of wildlife habitat was addressed in ten wilderness studies. **CONCLUSION**: Critical habitats for wildlife would be protected under wilderness designation. On released lands, administrative actions such as Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designations would, in some cases, provide protection of critical wildlife habitat. Vegetative treatments to improve wildlife habitat would be allowed on released lands. Specific impacts to wildlife habitat are addressed in the site-specific analyses included in this report.

5. Energy and Mineral Resources: The impact of wilderness designation on energy and/or mineral resource exploration and development was identified as an issue in nine of the 14 wilderness EISs. **CONCLUSION**: Wilderness designation would not significantly impact any areas known to contain mineral resources or rated as having high potential for mineral occurrence. The U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared mineral assessments of areas recommended for wilderness designation. These assessments are a part of Idaho's Statewide Wilderness Study Report and a summary of the findings of each assessment is found in the site-specific analysis for each WSA recommended in whole or in part for wilderness designation.

MINERALS

Recognizing that raw materials are vital to our national economy and security, Congress directed that assessments of mineral potential be conducted prior to an area being designated wilderness. The assessments are required by both The Wilderness Act and in Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The assessment of Idaho's suitable recommendations was conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey in cooperation with the Bureau of Mines and completed in 1989. The means of assessment were based on surface and underground geologic mapping and sampling, air borne geophysical survey and geochemical study.

The classification standards used by BLM reflect the potential that there may be undiscovered occurrences of mineralized rock in an area. These standards do not reflect whether a mineral commodity or deposit is economical to extract. It is difficult to predict the future demand for minerals. What may be economically feasible today might not be tomorrow, and vice versa. It is impossible to accurately predict future uses or future values of minerals in the wilderness suitability equation.

A detailed explanation of projected mineral occurrence is found in the 14 wilderness EIS statements and the U.S. Geological Survey or Bureau of Mines report which accompany this report and is summarized in the WSA site specific analysis.

MINERAL REEVALUATION

During a public review period for U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Mineral Survey Reports for Wilderness Study Areas in Owyhee County, comments were submitted indicating that the areas were in a geologic environment similar to areas in southeastern Oregon where discoveries of disseminated precious metals deposits had been made subsequent to the studies conducted by the USGS. BLM managers felt the comments were significant and warranted follow-up consideration by the USGS. The WSAs in Owyhee County for which comments were received during this period included:

<u>WSA</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>GS BULLETIN NO.</u>
North Fork Owyhee River	ID-016-040	1719-A
Owyhee River Canyon	ID-016-048B	1719-D
Little Owyhee River	ID-016-048C	1719-C
Deep Creek-Owyhee River	ID-016-049A	1719-D
Yatahoney Creek	ID-016-049D	1719-B
Battle Creek	ID-016-049E	1719-B
Juniper Creek	ID-016-052	1719-B
South Fork Owyhee River	ID-016-053	1719-F
Jarbidge River	ID-017-011	1720-B
Bruneau River	ID-111-017	1720-B
Upper Deep Creek	ID-111-044	1719-G

The USGS completed a follow-up evaluation of these WSAs and issued Open-File Report 89-0531. Based on the results of its evaluation, the USGS upgraded the mineral potential ratings from low potential to moderate potential for undiscovered resources of low-grade, epithermal hot-spring gold and silver deposits in these WSAs.

While these changes in potential ratings were noteworthy, BLM did not feel that amendments or changes to the recommendations of the EIS prepared for these WSAs were warranted.