



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

Volume 2

# IDAHO WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT





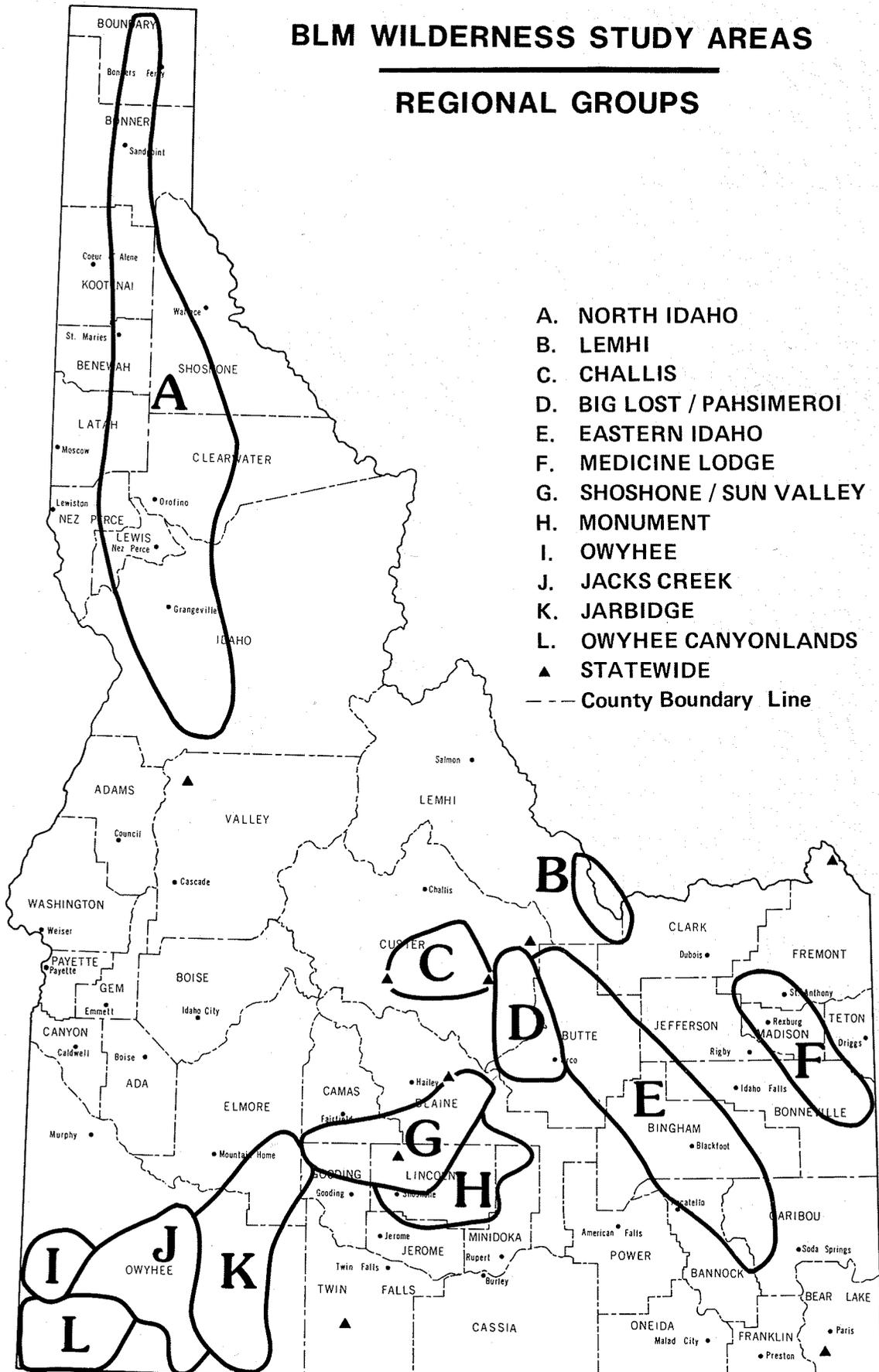
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

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*Idaho*  
Wilderness Study Report

# MAP 1

## BLM WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS REGIONAL GROUPS



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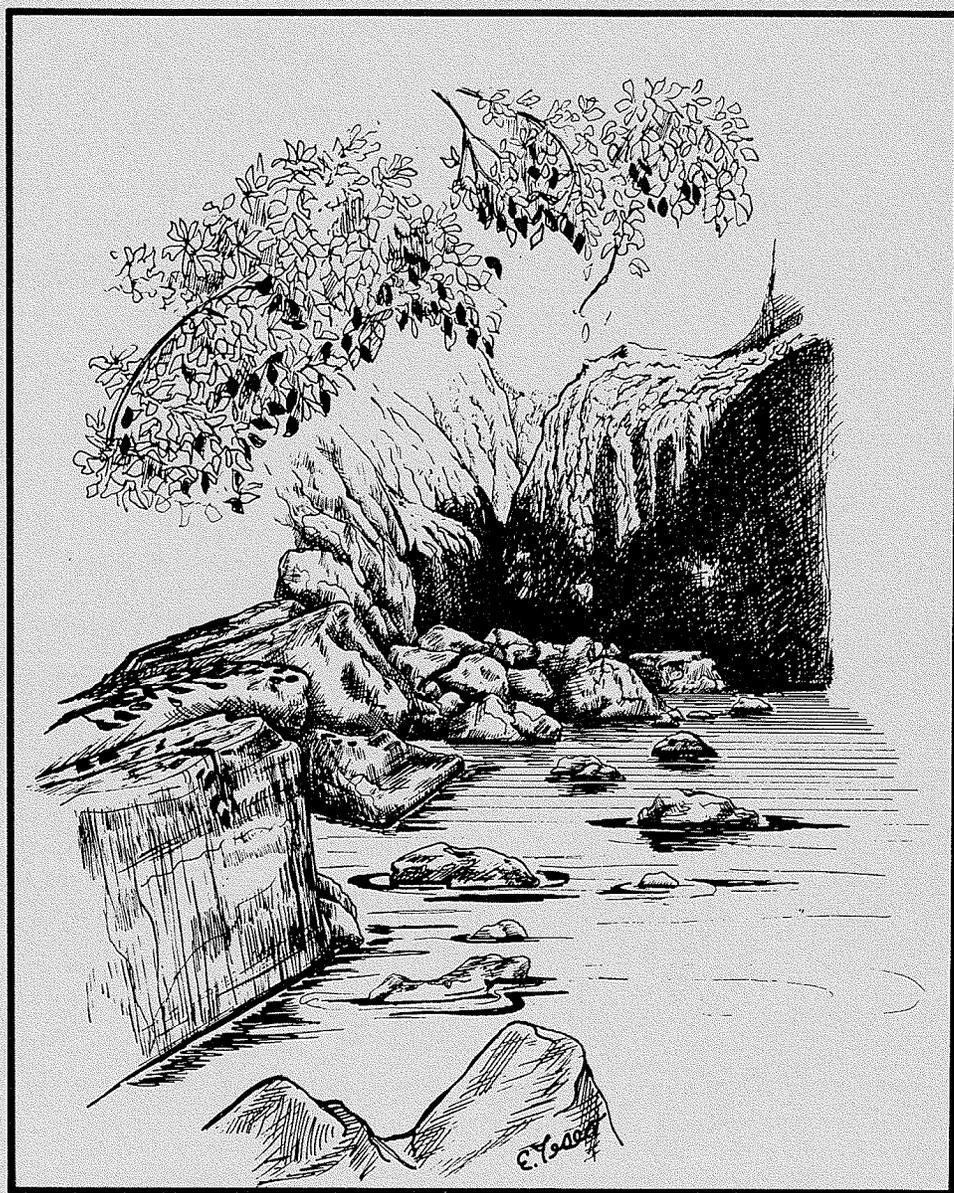
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# SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC WSA RECOMMENDATIONS

## JARBIDGE WILDERNESS



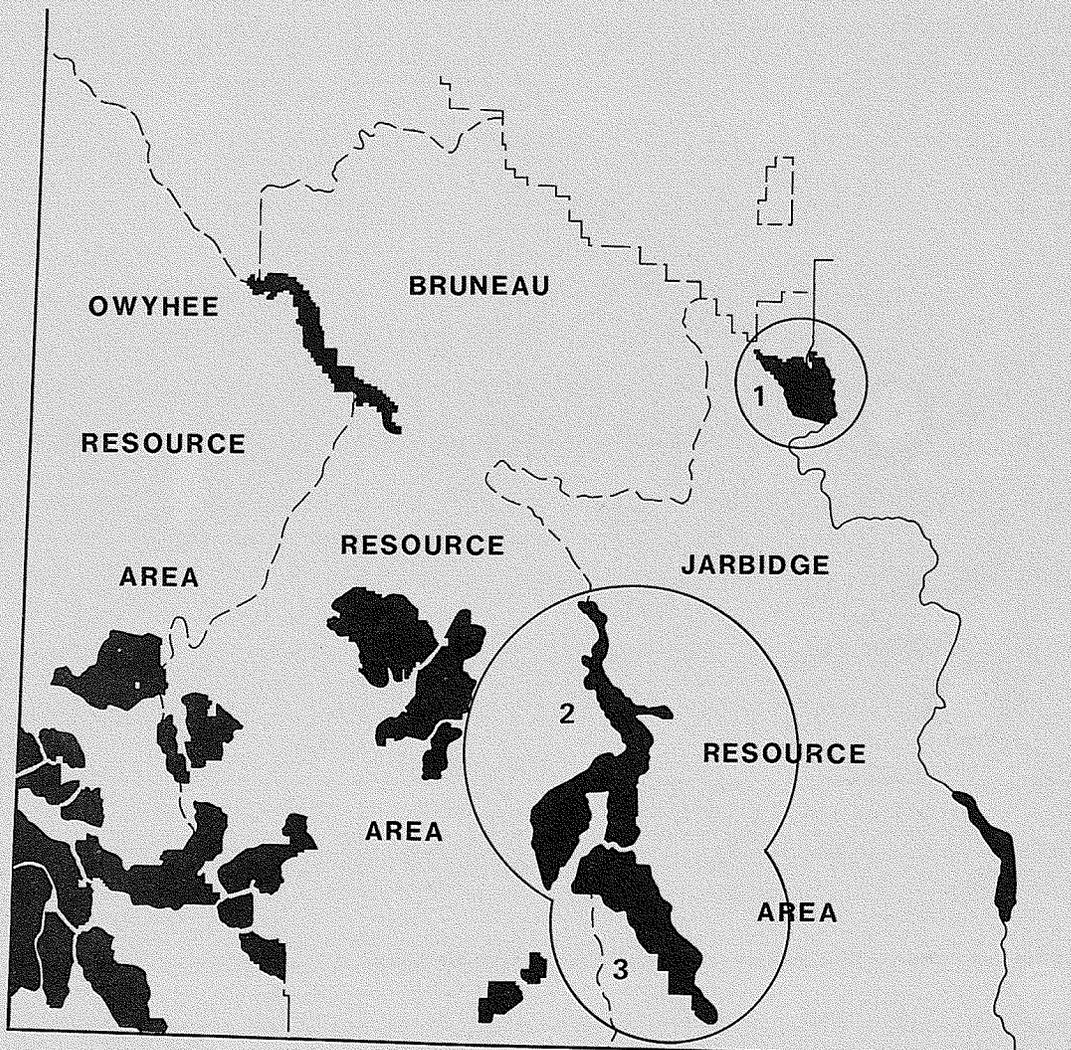
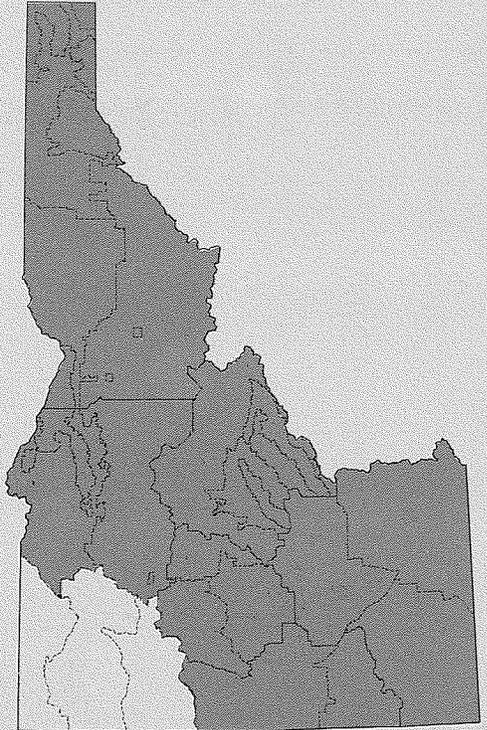
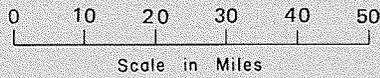
# JARBIDGE WILDERNESS

## LEGEND

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

## JARBIDGE

1. King Hill
2. Bruneau River-Sheep Creek
3. Jarbidge River



# Jarbidge River Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 75,118 acres

The Jarbidge River WSA (ID-17-11) is located in Owyhee County 120 miles southeast of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 75,118 acres of BLM lands, four state inholdings totaling 2,560 acres and two privately owned inholdings totaling 80 acres (see Table 1).

The WSA, on both sides of the Jarbidge and West Fork Bruneau Rivers, is bounded mostly by primitive dirt roads. Three cherry-stem roads, totaling five miles, enter the northern part of the area. The WSA consists of a flat to rolling plateau dissected by over 45 miles of canyons. The Jarbidge and West Fork Bruneau Rivers have carved very narrow, meandering courses through rhyolite rock to produce a canyon system 200 to 1,200 feet deep typified by vertical rock walls with thousands of rock spires. In many places, rock monoliths rise directly from the river. In other places, small talus slopes are nested between rock walls and the river or along the canyon rimrock. The slopes of the canyons are covered mostly with big sagebrush species and bunchgrasses. Along the rivers, lush riparian areas are lined with western juniper and dense growths of rushes, sedges, poison ivy and grasses. The canyons are among the most spectacular in the nation. The canyons attract boaters and backpackers seeking physical challenge and isolation.

To the east of the Jarbidge River, the plateau is relatively flat with the exception of Poison Butte. To the west of the Jarbidge River, the plateau is rolling to hilly in nature. Vegetation predominantly consists of big sagebrush-Sandberg bluegrass sites intermixed with smaller areas of big sagebrush-bluebunch wheatgrass and shadscale sites. Burned areas are dominated by almost pure stands of cheatgrass, an invading non-native species.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement filed in October 1987 at which time the recommendation for wilderness was generated through the planning process. Five alternatives were analyzed in the Jarbidge Wilderness EIS: a partial wilderness alternative where 16,740 acres of BLM land would be designated as wilderness and 58,378 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; an all wilderness alternative; a partial wilderness alternative where 49,881 acres of BLM land would be designated as wilderness and 25,237 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses; a no wilderness alternative where 75,118 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses; and a no wilderness alternative where 18,800 acres of BLM land would be included within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**16,740 acres recommended for wilderness**

**58,378 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Jarbidge River WSA is to designate 16,740 acres (the canyons) as wilderness and to release 58,378 acres (the plateaus) 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.

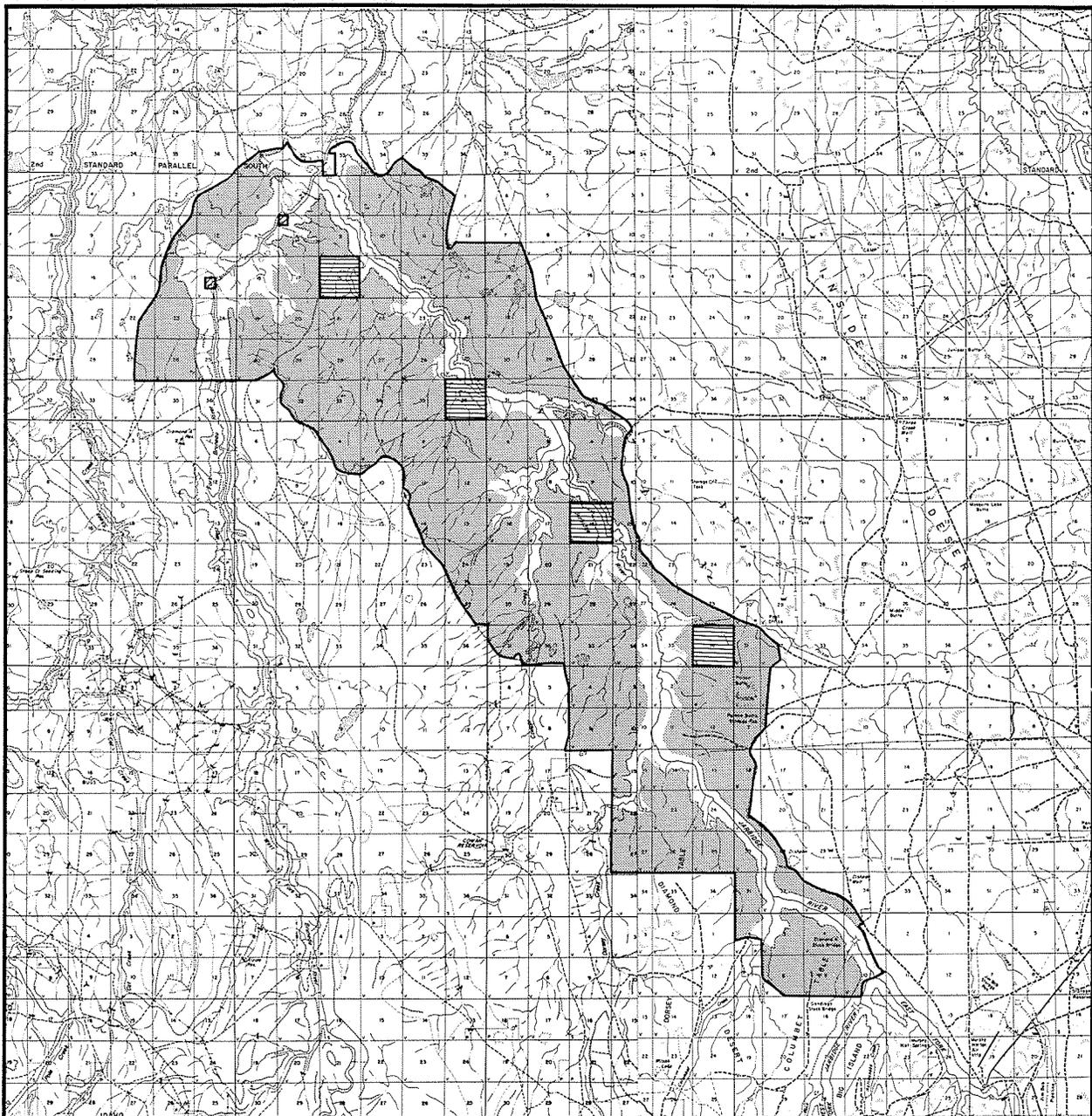
The 16,740 acres of federal land recommended for wilderness designation are shown as the nonshaded area on the Jarbidge River Proposal map. This recommendation would further apply to any inholding acreage if acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners. Appendix I lists all inholdings and provides additional information on acquisition of these nonfederal lands. The 16,740 acres recommended for wilderness designation would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of 45 miles of spectacularly scenic canyons within a five-hour drive of Boise, Idaho. The canyons offer outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude within a pristine setting. The Jarbidge and Bruneau Rivers are nationally known for the whitewater boating opportunities. The canyons have educational and scientific importance due to the presence of numerous prehistoric cultural sites and sensitive plant and animal species.

The canyons are recommended for wilderness because conflicts with other resources are minimal. With the exception of two trail crossings, little livestock use occurs because of the inaccessibility of the canyons. The area recommended for wilderness designation has low potential for the development of mineral resources. The canyons are manageable as wilderness due to their extreme ruggedness and their inaccessibility to motor vehicles and because of the well-defined wilderness boundary provided by the upper rims of the canyons. Wilderness designation of the rim-to-rim portions of about 45 miles of canyon (16,740 acres) would provide long-term protection for an exceptionally scenic area with outstanding wilderness characteristics.

The plateau areas (58,378 acres) are not recommended for wilderness designation because of conflicts with other resource uses. In comparison with the canyons and other plateau areas recommended for wilderness, the plateaus of the WSA are less natural and have lower opportunities for solitude due to frequent overflights by military jets. The vegetation on the WSA's plateaus is mostly in poor ecological condition.

A nonwilderness recommendation for the plateau would alleviate conflicts with grazing and range management practices such as seeding, brush control, fencing and livestock water development projects. It would allow vegetative manipulation projects on 6,100 acres to improve California bighorn sheep habitat and use of the plateaus for recreation activities dependent on motor vehicles such as hunting and rock collecting.

With wilderness designation of plateau, options to suppress the numerous lightning-caused wildfires and to reseed burned areas would be severely limited. In the long term, it is anticipated that all remnant areas of native vegetation on the plateaus would be burned off by wildfires. To prevent the invasion of cheatgrass, a non-native annual grass species, burned areas must be reseeded using motorized equipment and non-native, drought-tolerant perennial grass species suitable for wildlife and livestock forage. If cheatgrass is allowed to invade burned areas, cheatgrass stands would cause increased fire problems and consequently soil stability problems. Within other WSAs in southwestern Idaho, such as those in the Jacks Creek and Owyhee Canyonlands areas, large plateau areas with higher wilderness and ecological values have been recommended for wilderness designation.



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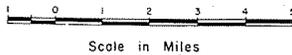
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- |   |   |   |              |
|---|---|---|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |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



**ID-17-11  
 JARBIDGE RIVER  
 PROPOSAL**

SEPTEMBER 1988

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	75,118
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	2,640
 Total	 77,758

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	16,740
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
 Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	 16,740
 Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	 770
 State land (outside WSA)	 0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	58,378
Split Estate	0
 Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	 58,378
 Inholdings (state, private)	 1,870

<sup>1</sup>Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings included within the area recommended for designation.

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

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### A. Naturalness

The Jarbidge River WSA consists of a plateau dissected by deep meandering river canyons. While the WSA is predominantly natural, there are several site-specific signs of man which impact naturalness locally. These include two livestock bridges within the canyons, 14 miles of ways, 3.8 miles of fence, eight livestock reservoirs and 1,800 acres of crested wheatgrass seeding on the plateau. The 1,800 acres were seeded after the area was designated as a WSA to prevent the invasion of cheatgrass. Three cherry-stem roads enter the northern part of the WSA. The size, location, number and distribution of these imprints in combination with topographic screening make them substantially unnoticeable in the WSA as a whole.

##### B. Solitude

The Jarbidge River WSA provides outstanding opportunities for solitude. More than 45 miles of canyons provide excellent topographic and vegetative screening for visitor groups and excellent potential for dispersing recreation use. West of the Jarbidge River, the large size of the plateau and its rolling nature provide for good topographic screening and for the potential to disperse visitor groups. East of the Jarbidge River, the northern part of the plateau within the WSA provides outstanding opportunities for solitude, while the southern half lacks outstanding opportunities due to its narrowness between the canyon and WSA boundary road and its lack of topographic screening. Solitude is frequently disrupted by low-flying military aircraft en route to the U.S. Air Force bombing range north of the WSA. Due to the lack of topographic screening, sights and sounds of military aircraft are more noticeable from the plateau areas.

##### C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The WSA contains outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined recreation. The natural features of the Jarbidge River WSA, especially the canyons, provide a strong recreational attraction to people interested in backpacking, day hiking, sightseeing, photography, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, rockhounding and whitewater boating. The canyons attract recreationists seeking physical challenge and isolation. The plateau provides lower quality opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation without the physical demand found in the canyons.

##### D. Special Features

The WSA contains habitat and populations of California bighorn sheep, bobcat, river otter and redband trout, all classified as sensitive species. Sensitive plant species found include *Lepidium davisii* and *Leptodactylon glabrum*.

The Jarbidge and Bruneau Rivers have been recommended to Congress for inclusion within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as wild rivers. The area has educational and scientific importance due to the numerous prehistoric cultural resources present, many of which have been evaluated as sites eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. These may demonstrate a type of habitation and subsistence activity not previously described in the scientific literature for the Northern Great Basin Culture area. A majority of the cultural sites are located in the canyons.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Jarbidge River WSA would not add a new ecosystem or landform to the National Wilderness Preservation System (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 Jarbidge 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 Jarbidge River WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The Jarbidge Wilderness is just north of the WSA in Nevada.

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 portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness, the canyons, is extremely manageable as wilderness due to its ruggedness and lack of conflicts with other resource uses. The only concern is the existence of unpatented mining claims for Bruneau jasper and fire opal at Indian Hot Springs in the extreme northern portion of the WSA. There are numerous mining claims at the Indian Hot Springs area, two of which totaling about five acres, are within the WSA. If these claims are determined to be valid, the removal of jasper would cause a localized loss of wilderness values.

The portion of the WSA recommended for nonwilderness, the plateau, is less manageable as wilderness due to the need for wildfire suppression and for reseeding burned areas to prevent the spread of cheatgrass, an annual grass species introduced from Russia. To prevent the invasion of a thick monoculture of cheatgrass, burned areas must be reseeded using drought-tolerant perennial grasses and motorized equipment. Crested wheatgrass, an introduced species, has proven to be the most reliable perennial grass in effectively suppressing the cheatgrass and in allowing shrubs to reestablish. If cheatgrass is allowed to invade burned areas, cheatgrass stands would cause increased problems in controlling wildfires and, consequently, soil stability problems. Due to the lack of topographic and vegetative barriers, it would also be extremely difficult to prevent unauthorized motor vehicle use on the plateau area east of the Jarbidge River.

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

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and Bureau of Mines (BM) completed a mineral assessment for 47,000 acres of the Jarbidge River WSA in 1988. The assessment found that the WSA has a low mineral potential for metals. A small placer of gold found was derived from gold mining districts upstream from the WSA. The gold values are too low and the placers are too small and difficult to access to support large-scale mining at a gold price of \$425 an ounce. The deposits could be attractive for recreational panning, sluicing and suction dredging.

At the northern boundary of the WSA near Indian Hot Springs, there is moderate potential for gem-quality Bruneau jasper. There are eight active mining claims for the sole source of this material between the Jarbidge River and Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSAs. Bruneau jasper is well known to dealers and is in moderate demand. In 1985, wholesale prices of good quality material ranged from \$8 a pound to \$20 a pound.

Geothermal resources are found at the northern end and just south of the southern end of the WSA at Indian Hot Springs and Murphy Hot Springs. The moderate temperature systems are suitable for direct-use application but not for power generation.

The WSA has a low energy resource potential for oil and gas since extensive high-angle faulting has likely precluded any accumulations.

In 1989, a 60-day public review of the USGS/BM mineral survey report for the Jarbidge River WSA was conducted. During the review, comments were submitted which resulted in follow-up consideration by the USGS. Based on this reevaluation, the USGS upgraded the mineral potential rating from low to moderate for undiscovered resources of low-grade, epithermal hot-spring gold and silver deposits 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-17-11 (JARBIDGE RIVER)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	WILD RIVER (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values Including Special Features	The canyons, 16,740 acres (22% of WSA), designated as wilderness would receive long-term Congressional protection. All wilderness values in the portions of the WSA which contain the most spectacular scenery and outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude would be maintained or enhanced. On the 58,378 acres of plateau not designated as wilderness, there would be long-term losses of naturalness on 13,500 acres (18% of WSA) from seedings.	With the exception of localized losses to naturalness and solitude occurring on limited sites of mineral exploration work, all wilderness values within the canyons would be retained or enhanced. On the plateaus, long-term losses of naturalness of 13,500 acres (18% of WSA) would occur from seedings.	All wilderness values on 18,800 acres (25% of WSA) of the WSA that contain the most spectacular scenery and outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude would receive long-term Congressional protection as a wild river. All wilderness values would be maintained or enhanced in the canyons. On the plateaus, long-term loss of naturalness on 13,500 acres (18% of WSA) would occur from seedings.	All wilderness values on 49,881 acres (66% of WSA) designated as wilderness would receive long-term Congressional protection. All wilderness values in the canyons would be maintained or enhanced. On the plateau areas not within the wilderness, long-term losses of naturalness would occur on 5,600 acres (7% of WSA) from seedings.	All wilderness values would receive long-term Congressional protection. All wilderness values would be maintained or enhanced.
Impacts on Range Management Project Maintenance and Construction	There would be no impact on range project maintenance and construction. A 738 AUM (15%) increase in livestock use would occur. Proposed projects include 1.4 miles of pipeline, 6 miles of fence, 2 reservoirs and 1 spring development.	There would be no impact on range project maintenance and construction. A 738 (15%) increase in livestock use would occur. Proposed projects include 1.4 miles of pipeline, 6 miles of fence, 2 reservoirs and 1 spring development.	There would be no impact on range project maintenance and construction. A 738 AUM (15%) increase in livestock use would occur. Proposed projects include 1.4 miles of pipeline, 6 miles of fence, 2 reservoirs and 1 spring development.	On the plateaus west of the Jarbidge River, the cost in terms of time and inconvenience of installing new and maintaining post FLPMA (October 21, 1976) projects would approximately double. There would be no impact on the plateaus east of the Jarbidge River. A 409 AUM (8%) increase in livestock use would occur. Proposed projects include 0.6 miles of pipeline and 6 miles of fence.	The cost of installing new fences and of maintaining post FLPMA (October 21, 1976) projects would approximately double in terms of time and inconvenience. A 738 AUM increase in livestock use would be foregone. Proposed projects include 6 miles of fence.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources	Potential mineral resources on 58,378 acres of plateau would be available for development. Exclusive of the 5 acres of Bruneau jasper claim, the WSA has low potential for development of mineral resources. Impacts of withdrawal of 16,740 acres from mineral entry and mineral leasing would be insignificant since no development is projected.	With the exception of an existing 80 acre hobby-collecting withdrawal, potential mineral resources would be available for development and there would be no impact on development. Exclusive of the 5 acres of Bruneau jasper claim, the WSA has low potential for development of mineral resources.	Potential mineral resources would be available for development on 56,318 acres. Exclusive of the 5 acres of Bruneau jasper claim, the WSA has low potential for development of mineral resources. Impacts of withdrawal of 18,800 acres from mineral entry and mineral leasing would be insignificant since no development is projected.	Potential mineral resources would be available for development on 25,237 acres. Exclusive of the 5 acres of Bruneau jasper claim, the WSA has low potential for development of mineral resources. Impacts of withdrawal of 49,881 acres from mineral entry and mineral leasing would be insignificant since no development is projected.	With the exception of valid existing rights, potential mineral resources would not be available for development. The potential for development of any additional mineral resource is low. Impacts of withdrawal of 75,118 acres from mineral entry and leasing would be insignificant since no development is projected.
Impacts on Recreational Motor Vehicle Use (continued next page)	Impacts to recreational motor vehicle use would be minimal. On the portion of the WSA accessible by motor vehicle, 16,788 acres (22% of WSA) would remain open to ORV use and, on 41,590 acres (56% of WSA), motor vehicle use would be allowed only on designated routes with	Impacts to recreational motor vehicle use would be minimal. On the portion of the WSA accessible by motor vehicle, 16,788 acres (22% of WSA) would remain open to ORV use and, on 41,590 acres (56% of WSA), motor vehicle use would be allowed only on designated routes with	Impacts to recreational motor vehicle use would be minimal. On the portion of the WSA accessible by motor vehicle, 16,788 acres (22% of WSA) would remain open to ORV use and, on 41,590 acres (56% of WSA), motor vehicle use would be allowed only on designated routes with	On the portion of the WSA accessible by motor vehicle, 16,788 acres (22% of WSA) would remain open to ORV use, 8,499 acres (12% of WSA) would be designated as limited to designated routes and 33,141 acres (44% of WSA) would be closed to recreational motor vehicles. 40 visitor	The entire area would be closed to recreational motor vehicle use. 100 visitor days of recreational motor vehicle use would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting use to adjacent public lands would be negligible.

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL WILDER- NESS ALTERNATIVE)	NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	WILD RIVER (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Recreational Motor Vehicle Use (continued)(Jarbidge River WSA)	minimal impact. Closing 16,740 areas (22% of WSA) in the inaccessible canyon would have no impact.	minimal impact. Limiting use on 16,740 acres (22% of WSA) in the inacces- sible canyon would have no impact.	minimal impact. Limiting use on 16,740 acres (22% of WSA) in the inacces- sible canyon would have no impact.	days of recreational mo- tor vehicle use would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting use would be negligible. Clos- ing 16,740 acres (22% of WSA) in the inaccessible canyon would have no impact.	

## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Designation of 16,740 acres of the Jarbidge River WSA as wilderness would have no impact on local social and economic values. There were no social or economic issues identified with the study of this WSA.

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

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory process were considered in developing study issues and various management alternatives. During the inventory phase, 29 comments were received. Of the 25 comments supporting WSA designation, six specifically recommended wilderness designation. Four comments stated the area should not be designated a WSA to allow the continuance of existing multiple-use management. The Idaho Department of Lands recommended that state land inholdings be exchanged should the area be designated as wilderness to avoid management conflicts.

During formal public review of the Draft Jarbidge Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, 96 comments addressed wilderness suitability of the Jarbidge River WSA. Of those, 65 comments supported wilderness designation and 31 opposed wilderness designation. One of the opposing comments was a petition containing 48 signatures.

Those opposing wilderness cited that designation is needed to protect the wilderness values and the special features of both the canyons and plateaus. Most wilderness supporters wanted wilderness designation of the entire WSA.

Those opposing designation were concerned that wilderness would place restrictions on livestock management, remove the area from mineral exploration and development and prevent recreational motor vehicle use. About one-half of the comments opposing wilderness designation supported national wild river designation.

Three government agencies commented specifically on this WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game stated that inclusion of plateaus containing California bighorn sheep habitat within the wilderness is essential to protect the habitat and to allow increases of bighorns to viable levels. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation supported a wilderness suitability recommendation of 49,881 acres. The Idaho Air National Guard opposed wilderness designation because of possible conflicts with its tactical flight training missions.

**APPENDIX I -- JARBIDGE RIVER 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		Presently Proposed for Acquisition	Preferred Method of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition (in \$)	Estimated Cost of Acquisition
			Surface Estate	Subsurface Estate				
Parcel No. 1 T. 13 S., R. 6 E. Sec. 13	40	1	Private	Private	Yes	Exchange	N/A	1,500
Parcel No. 2 T. 13 S., R. 7 E. Sec. 8	40	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	1,500
Parcel No. 3 T. 13 S., R. 7 E. Sec. 16	640(2)	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 4 T. 13 S., R. 7 E. Sec. 36	640(2)	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 5 T. 14 S., R. 8 E. Sec. 16	640(2)	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400

(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.

(2)Only portion of this acreage is within area recommended for designation. Acquisition through exchange would necessitate acquisition of entire parcel.

# King Hill Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 29,309 acres

The King Hill Creek WSA (ID-19-2) is located in Elmore County 40 miles east of Boise, Idaho. The WSA contains 29,309 acres of BLM lands. Inholdings include two state sections totaling 1,280 acres and one 40 acre private parcel (see Table 1).

The WSA, on both sides of King Hill Creek and its west fork, is bounded on the east and west by roads, on the south by an electrical transmission line and on the north by nonfederal lands. Two cherry-stem roads, totaling four miles, enter the northern part of the area.

The WSA contains scenic, highly convoluted topography with a maze of drainages, ridges, hills and peaks. The lower elevations of the southern edge of the area are Wyoming big sagebrush, Sandberg bluegrass and cheatgrass sites. The ridges are generally low sagebrush-bluebunch wheatgrass sites with a few junipers. The peaks in the northern part of the area are covered with mountain big sagebrush with bluebunch wheatgrass or Indian fescue, depending on slope aspect. Small clumps of Douglas-fir and aspen are present at higher elevations. Riparian areas contain poison ivy, rushes, sedges, grasses and willows. Only a small area is dominated by annual grasses following wildfire. The ground surface is extremely rocky.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) filed in October 1987 at which time the recommendation for wilderness was generated through the planning process. Three alternatives were analyzed in the Jarbidge Wilderness EIS: a no wilderness alternative where the entire 29,309 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; a partial wilderness where 26,389 acres of BLM land would be designated as wilderness and 2,920 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses; and an all wilderness alternative.

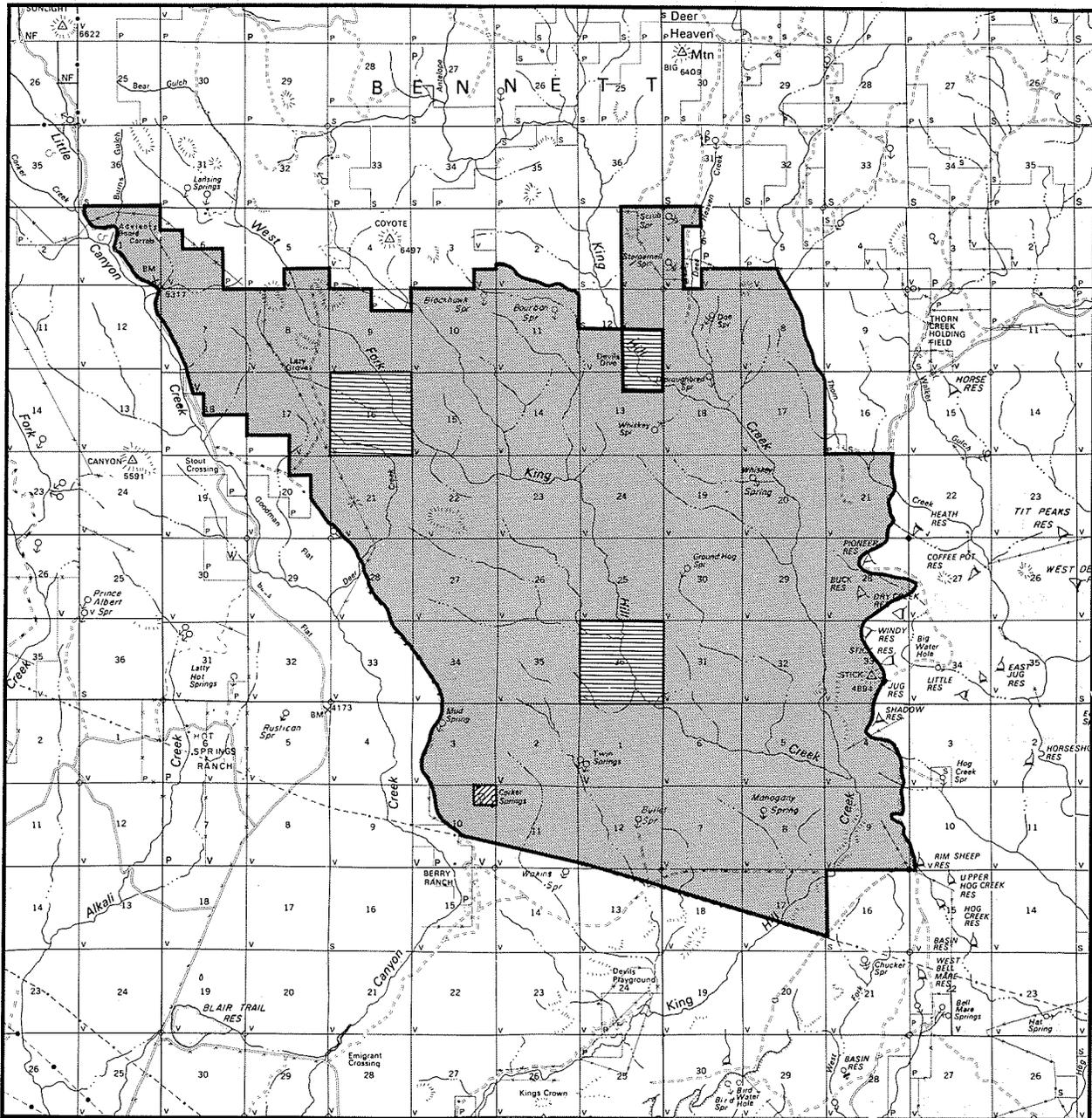
## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**0 acres recommended for  
wilderness  
29,309 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the King Hill Creek WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and release the 29,309 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 be implemented to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. The 29,309 acres of federal land recommended for release for nonwilderness uses are shown on the King Hill Creek Proposal map.

The entire 29,309 acre WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation because, in comparison with other WSAs in southern Idaho recommended for wilderness designation, the wilderness characteristics and special features of the King Hill Creek WSA are of lower quality. While the WSA contains the wilderness values necessary for study, it does not merit inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). Solitude and primitive recreation opportunities available in the WSA are similar to those afforded by thousands of acres of land adjacent to the WSA. The area is judged to be of more value for other resource uses including livestock grazing and motorized recreation activities. The WSA would not add a new ecosystem or landform to the NWPS. The WSA is located on a landform known as the Bennett Hills. Within two WSAs located on the Bennett Hills east of the King Hill Creek WSA, 19,350 acres are recommended for designation as wilderness.

Currently, there is little threat to the existing naturalness of the area. Projected activities are limited, mineral potential is low and there are no mineral rights in the WSA. Therefore, even without wilderness designation, the quality and values now found in the WSA are not expected to change significantly.

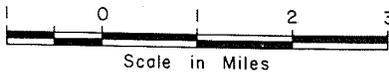


T. 2 S.  
 T. 3 S.  
 T. 3 S.  
 T. 4 S.

R. 9 E. | R. 10 E.

R. 10 E. | R. 11 E.

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



ID-19-2  
 KING HILL CREEK  
 PROPOSAL

SEPTEMBER 1988

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	29,309
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	1,320
 Total	 30,629

**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	29,309
Split Estate	0
 Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	 29,309
 Inholdings (state, private)	 1,320

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The King Hill Creek WSA contains hilly to mountainous topography with a maze of drainages. The WSA is predominantly natural but there are several site-specific signs of man that impact the area including four miles of ways, 9.9 miles of fence, seven spring developments and one reservoir within the WSA. Two cherry-stem roads intrude into the northern part of the area.

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

The size of the King Hill Creek WSA, in combination with the good-to-excellent topographic and vegetative screening, provides outstanding opportunities for solitude in most of the area. The maze of drainages, ridges, hills and peaks provides excellent screening among visitor groups and excellent potential for dispersing recreation uses. On 2,160 acres adjacent to a heavily traveled county road in the northwestern part of the WSA, outstanding opportunities for solitude are lacking due to vehicular sights and sounds.

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

The size of the King Hill Creek WSA, in combination with its diverse landforms and scenic quality, provide outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The natural features attract people interested in backpacking, day hiking, nature photography, wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting and rockhounding. However, there are no significant wildlife habitats, geologic features or scientific and educational values in the area that would attract a large number of visitors to the area.

##### **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 King Hill Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem or landform to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented in the NWPS by three designated areas with 76,699 acres. There are 35 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
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 King Hill 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 King Hill Creek WSA would not add significantly to the geographical distribution of areas within the NWPS. The WSA would be one of the closest and more accessible areas for Boise residents. Interstate Highway 84 is about eight miles south of the WSA and State Highway 20 is about ten miles north of the area. A maintained county road between the two highways provides access to the western portion of the WSA.

#### **Manageability**

The majority of the WSA is manageable as wilderness due to its ruggedness and the lack of conflicts with other resource uses. Along the northern boundary, 80 acres of land are bound on three sides by private property and there is also a finger of WSA land (680 acres) along the northeast boundary bordered on most sides by private property. These two parcels of land do not possess sufficient wilderness values to warrant protection of their wilderness characteristics.

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

The U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines completed a mineral assessment for 27,680 acres of the King Hill Creek WSA in 1987. No mines, claims, mineral leases or identified resources are in the WSA. The Volcano mining district is just north of the study area and two mines in the district have records of past production of gold, silver, copper and lead. Development work is in progress on the Old Glory mine five miles north of the WSA.

The mineral assessment revealed no identified mineral resources in the WSA. A small area in the northern part of the area has moderate potential for undiscovered antimony, arsenic and gold. The remaining part of the study area has low mineral resource potential for all undiscovered metals and the entire area has low mineral resource potential for undiscovered oil, gas and coal and moderate potential for undiscovered resources of geothermal energy. Oil and gas leases were offered for land within the area but no applications were filed. Sand and gravel deposits are of negligible volume.

#### **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-19-2 (KING HILL CREEK)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Long-term losses to naturalness would occur on 1,010 acres (3% of WSA) from seedings. On a 4-mile section of the West Fork King Hill Creek, wilderness values would be enhanced.	All wilderness values on 26,389 acres (90% of WSA) would receive long-term Congressional protection. All wilderness values would be maintained or enhanced. On the remaining 2,920 acres of the WSA, there would be long-term losses of naturalness on 630 acres (2% of WSA) from seedings.	All wilderness values would receive long-term Congressional protection. All wilderness values would be maintained or enhanced.
Impacts on Range Management Project Maintenance and Construction	There would be no impact on range project maintenance and construction. An 80 AUM (2%) increase in livestock use would occur. Proposed projects include 2.3 miles of fence, 1,010 acres of seeding and 2 spring developments.	A 17 AUM (less than 1%) increase in livestock grazing would occur. The cost of construction and maintaining new projects would approximately double. Proposed projects include 2.3 miles of fence, 630 acres of seeding and 2 spring developments.	There would be no impact on the current level of livestock use. The cost of constructing and maintaining new projects would approximately double. Proposed projects include 2.3 miles of fence and 2 spring developments.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources	Potential mineral resources would be available for development. The WSA has low potential for development of mineral resources. There would be no impact on mineral resource development.	Potential mineral resources would be available for development on 2,920 acres. The WSA has low potential for development of mineral resources. Impacts of withdrawal of 26,389 acres from mineral entry and mineral leasing would be insignificant since no development is projected.	Potential mineral resources would not be available for development. The WSA has low potential for development of mineral resources. Impacts of withdrawing 29,309 acres from mineral entry and mineral leasing would be insignificant since no development is projected.
Impacts on Recreational Motor Vehicle Use	With the exception of a limitation on snowmobiles to designated routes, there would be no impact on recreational motor vehicle use.	Recreational motor vehicle use on 26,389 acres (90% of WSA) would be closed. The remaining 2,920 acres (10% of WSA) would be designated as open to ORV use with the exception of a limitation on snowmobiles to designated routes. 70 visitor days of recreational motor vehicle use would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting use to adjacent public land would be negligible.	The entire area would be closed to recreational motor vehicle use. 80 visitor days of recreational motor vehicle use would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting use to adjacent public lands would be negligible.

## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Social and economic factors were not identified as issues in the Jarbidge Wilderness EIS.

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

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. During the inventory phase, one comment supported the designation of the area as a WSA and as a wilderness and two comments opposed the designation as a WSA to allow the continuance of existing multiple-use management. The Idaho State Department of Lands recommended that state land inholdings be exchanged should the area be designated as wilderness to avoid management conflicts.

During formal public review of the Draft Jarbidge Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, 75 comments addressed wilderness suitability of the King Hill Creek WSA. Of those, 17 comments opposed wilderness designation and 58 supported wilderness designation. Opposition to wilderness designation stated that wilderness would place restrictions on livestock management, would remove the area from mineral exploration and development and would prevent motorized access for recreation. Support for wilderness said that designation is needed to protect wilderness values and special features.

Two government agencies commented specifically on this WSA. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation supported a wilderness suitability recommendation of 26,389 acres. The Idaho Air National Guard opposed wilderness designation because of possible conflicts with its tactical flight training missions.

# Bruneau River-Sheep Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 104,406 acres

The Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA (ID-111-17) is located in Owyhee County 90 miles southeast of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 104,406 acres of BLM lands and six state inholdings totaling 3,840 acres (see Table 1).

The WSA, on both sides of the Bruneau River and Sheep Creek, is bounded mostly by primitive dirt roads and crested wheatgrass seedings. One cherry-stem road totaling 2.75 miles enters the southwestern portion of the area.

The WSA consists of a plateau dissected by over 85 miles of river canyons. The Bruneau River and its major tributaries have carved narrow, meandering courses through rhyolite rock to produce a canyon system 200 to 1,000 feet deep typified by vertical rock walls with thousands of rock spires. In most places, small talus slopes are nestled between rock walls and the river. Above the rhyolite chasms, there are often additional talus slopes topped with an upper rim of basalt. The slopes of the canyons are covered with big sagebrush species and bunchgrasses. Along the water courses, lush riparian areas are lined with western juniper and dense growths of rushes, sedges, poison ivy and grasses. The canyons are some of the most spectacular in the nation. The canyons attract boaters and backpackers who are seeking physical challenge and isolation.

The plateaus are flat with infrequent low knolls providing the only topographic relief. Vegetative cover consists principally of big sagebrush-Sandberg bluegrass sites and shadscale-Indian ricegrass sites. Some areas have burned and are dominated by cheatgrass, an invading non-native species.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement filed in October 1987 at which time the recommendation for wilderness was generated through the planning process. Four alternatives were analyzed in the Jarbidge Wilderness EIS: a partial wilderness alternative where 20,800 acres of BLM land would be designated as wilderness and 83,606 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; an all wilderness alternative; a no wilderness alternative where 104,406 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses; and a no wilderness alternative where 24,000 acres of BLM land would be included within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**20,800 acres recommended for wilderness**

**83,606 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA is to designate 20,800 acres (the canyons) as wilderness and to release 83,606 acres (the plateaus) 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 20,800 acres of federal land recommended for wilderness designation are shown as the nonshaded area on the Bruneau River-Sheep Creek Proposal map. This recommendation would further apply to any state inholding acreage and 85 acres of private land adjacent to the WSA if acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners. Appendix I lists all nonfederal lands within the areas recommended for wilderness and provides additional information on acquisition on these lands.

The 20,800 acres recommended for wilderness designation would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of about 85 miles of scenic canyons within 1.5 to three hours driving time from Boise, Idaho. The canyons offer outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude within a pristine setting. The canyons have educational and scientific importance due to the presence of numerous prehistoric cultural sites and sensitive plant and animal species. Although designation of the canyons would not add a new ecosystem to the wilderness system, it would add a landform (desert canyon) not presently represented within the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem.

The canyons are recommended for wilderness because conflicts with other resources due to wilderness designation are minimal. Little livestock use occurs because of the inaccessibility of the canyons and the area recommended for wilderness designation has low potential for the development of mineral resources. The canyons are manageable as wilderness due to their extreme ruggedness and their inaccessibility to motor vehicles and because of the well-defined wilderness boundary provided by the uppermost canyon rims. Wilderness designation of the rim-to-rim portions of about 85 miles of canyon (20,800 acres) would provide long-term protection to an exceptionally scenic area with outstanding wilderness characteristics.

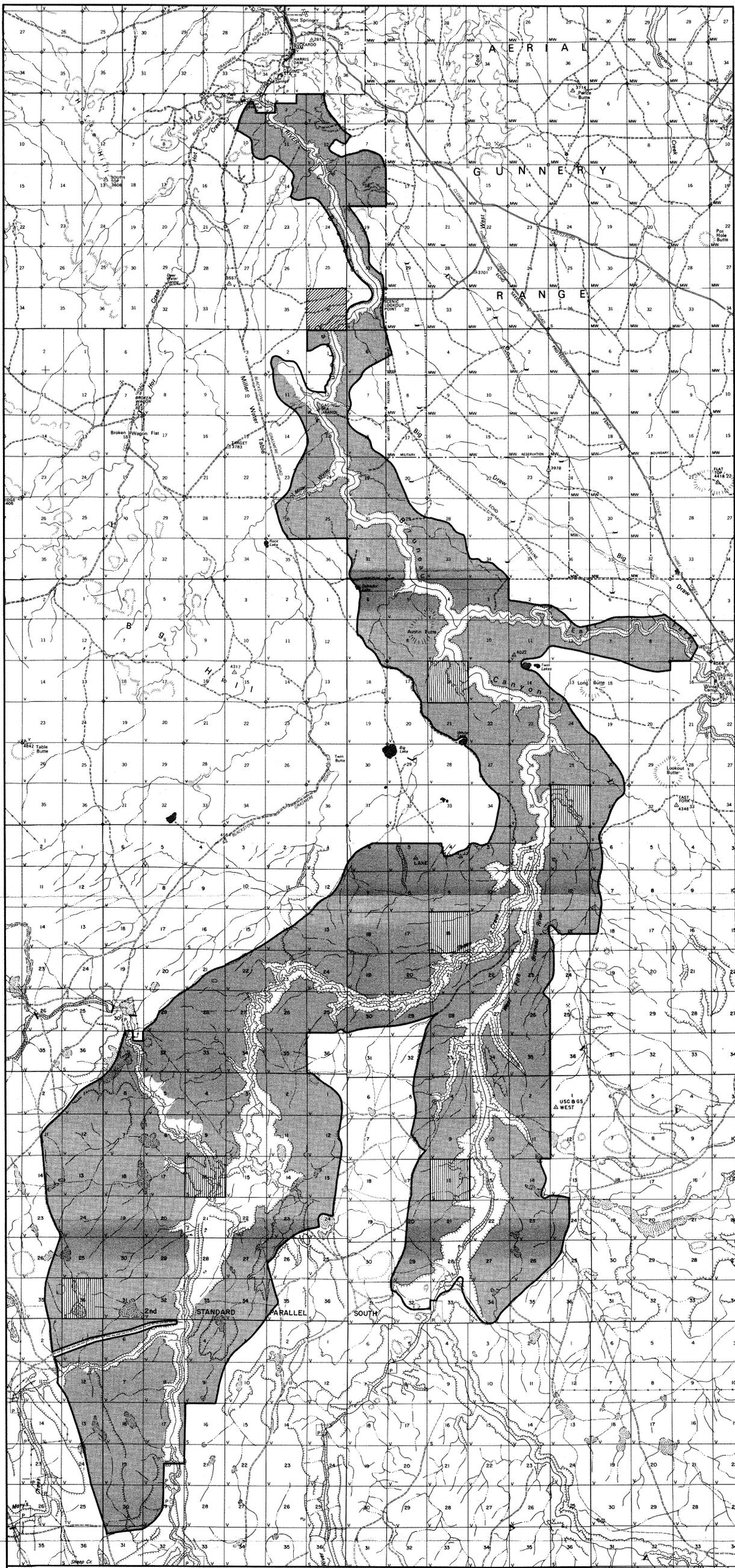
The plateau areas (83,606 acres) are not recommended for wilderness designation because of conflicts with other resource uses. In comparison with the canyons and other plateau areas recommended for wilderness, the plateaus of the WSA are less natural and scenic and have lower opportunities for solitude due to frequent overflights by military jets. The vegetation on the WSA's plateaus is in poor ecological condition.

A nonwilderness recommendation would alleviate conflicts with grazing and range management, such as seeding, fencing and livestock water development projects, with the need for vegetative manipulation projects on 8,500 acres to improve California bighorn sheep habitat and with the use of the plateaus for recreation activities dependent on motor vehicles, such as hunting and rock collecting.

With wilderness designation of plateau, options to suppress the numerous lightning-caused wildfires and to reseed burned areas would be severely limited. In the long term, it is anticipated that all remnant areas of native vegetation on the plateaus would be burned off by wildfires. To prevent the invasion of cheatgrass, a non-native annual grass species, burned areas have to be reseeded using motorized equipment and non-native, drought-tolerant perennial grass species suitable for wildlife and livestock forage. If cheatgrass were allowed to invade burned areas, cheatgrass stands would cause increased fire problems and consequently soil stability problems.

If the plateaus were designated as wilderness, it would be difficult to prevent the use of motor vehicles over the 29 miles of way and cross-country due to the lack of topographic barriers. The ways have been traditionally used for hunting, for access to the canyons for rock collecting and fishing and for day-to-day livestock management. A nonwilderness designation of the plateaus would eliminate the need for fencing and increased managerial presence to prevent unauthorized motorized use within a wilderness.

Within other WSAs in southwestern Idaho, such as those in the Jacks Creek and Owyhee Canyonlands area, large plateau areas with higher wilderness and ecological values have been recommended for wilderness designation.



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T. 13 S.

R. 5 E. R. 6 E.

R. 6 E. R. 7 E.

R. 7 E. R. 8 E.

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



ID-111-17  
BRUNEAU RIVER-SHEEP CREEK  
PROPOSAL

SEPTEMBER 1988

**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
BRUNEAU RIVER-SHEEP CREEK WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	104,406
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	3,840
<b>Total</b>	<b>108,246</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	20,800
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>20,800</b>
Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	1,165
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	83,606
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>83,606</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	2,760

<sup>1</sup>Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings included within the area recommended for designation.

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Bruneau-Sheep Creek WSA consists of a plateau dissected by deep, meandering river canyons. The WSA generally appears natural but there are several site-specific signs of man that impact naturalness locally including mining disturbances adjacent to the Bruneau River along the southern boundary of the WSA and one mile of constructed livestock trail into the Sheep Creek canyon. On the plateau, 29 miles of ways, 11 miles of fence, 19 livestock water reservoirs and one mile of constructed livestock trail are within the WSA. One cherry-stem road (2.75 miles) enters the southwestern plateau area of the WSA.

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

The Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA contains outstanding opportunities for solitude. More than 85 miles of canyons provide excellent topographic and vegetative screening between visitor groups and excellent potential for dispersed recreational use. The large size of the plateau, the screening potential of low vegetation, the topography's potential to disperse visitor groups and the good access to much of the WSA boundary would assure that groups could visit plateau areas without a disruption of their sense of solitude. Solitude is frequently disrupted by low-flying military aircraft utilizing the U.S. Air Force bombing range just east of the WSA. Due to the lack of topographic screening, sights and sounds of military aircraft are more noticeable from the plateau area.

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

The WSA contains outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The natural features of the Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA, especially the canyons, provide a strong recreational attraction to people interested in backpacking, day hiking, sightseeing, photography, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, rockhounding and whitewater boating. The Bruneau River is nationally known for its excellent whitewater boating while the canyons are some of the most spectacular in the nation. The canyons attract recreationists seeking physical challenge and isolation. The plateau provides opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation without the physical demand associated with the canyons; however, opportunities are of a lower quality than the canyons due to the lack of strong recreational attractions on the plateau.

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

The WSA contains habitats for and populations of California bighorn sheep, bobcat, river otter and redband trout, all classified as sensitive species. Sensitive plant species found include *Lepidium davisii* and *Leptodactylon glabrum*.

The Bruneau River and Sheep Creek have been recommended to Congress for inclusion within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as wild rivers.

The area has educational and scientific importance due to the numerous prehistoric cultural resources within the WSA, many of which have been evaluated as significant sites eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. These may demonstrate a type of habitation and subsistence activity not previously described in the scientific literature for the Northern Great Basin Culture area. A majority of the cultural sites are located in the canyons.

# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Bruneau-Sheep Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (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. The vegetation on the plateaus of the WSA is in poor condition while the vegetation in the canyons is in good condition.

**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	12,007	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 Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA is within a five-hour drive of 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 Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA would not add 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 balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

### Manageability

The portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness, the canyons, is extremely manageable as wilderness due to its ruggedness and lack of conflicts with other resource uses. The only concern in this area relates to the existence of unpatented mining claims for Bruneau jasper and fire opal at Indian Hot Springs in the extreme southeastern portion of the WSA. There are numerous mining claims at Indian Hot Springs, all or portions of eight claims totaling about 100 acres, within the WSA. If these claims are determined to be valid, the removal of jasper would cause a localized loss of wilderness values.

The portion of the WSA recommended for nonwilderness, the plateau, is less manageable as wilderness due to the need for the suppression of numerous lightning-caused wildfires and the need to reseed burned areas to prevent the spread of cheatgrass, an annual grass species introduced from Russia. To prevent the invasion of a thick monoculture of cheatgrass, burned areas must be reseeded using drought-tolerant perennial grasses and motorized equipment. Crested wheatgrass, an introduced species, has proven to be the most reliable perennial grass in effectively suppressing the cheatgrass and in allowing shrubs to reestablish. If cheatgrass is allowed to invade burned areas, cheatgrass stands would cause increased problems in controlling wildfires and, consequently, soil stability problems. Due to the lack of topographic and vegetative barriers, it would also be extremely difficult to prevent unauthorized motor vehicle use on the plateaus.

### Energy and Minerals Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and Bureau of Mines (BM) completed a mineral assessment for 90,000 acres of the Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA in 1988. The assessment found that the WSA has a low mineral resource potential for metals. A small amount of placer gold found was derived from gold mining districts upstream from the WSA. The gold values are too low and the placers are much too small and inaccessible to support commercial mining at a gold price of \$425 an ounce. The deposits could be attractive for recreational panning, sluicing and suction dredging.

At the southern boundary of the WSA near Indian Hot Springs on the Bruneau River, there is moderate potential for gem-quality Bruneau jasper. There are eight active mining claims for the sole source of this material between the Bruneau River-Sheep Creek and Jarbidge River WSAs. Bruneau jasper is well known to dealers and is in moderate demand. In 1985, wholesale prices of good quality material ranged from \$8 a pound to \$20 a pound.

Near the northern end of the WSA, recreational collecting of agate and petrified wood occurs. In the same area, but outside of the WSA near Hot Creek, there is limestone that could be mined if demand for limestone increases or if a new market is developed locally.

Geothermal resources are found at the northern and southern ends of the WSA near Indian Bathtub and at Indian Hot Springs. The low-to-moderate temperature systems are suitable for direct-use application but not for power generation.

Since extensive high-angle faulting has likely precluded any accumulation of oil and gas, the WSA has a low energy resource potential.

In 1989, a 60-day public review of the USGS/BM mineral survey report for the Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA was conducted. During the review, comments were submitted which resulted in follow-up consideration by the USGS. Based on this reevaluation, the USGS upgraded the mineral potential rating from low to moderate for undiscovered resources of low-grade, epithermal hot-spring gold and silver deposits 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-111-17 (BRUNEAU RIVER-SHEEP CREEK)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS (WILD RIVER) ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values Including Special Features	The canyons, 20,800 acres (20% of the WSA), designated as wilderness would receive long-term Congressional protection. With the exception of a localized loss of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation occurring on 100 acres of contiguous mining claims from mining activities, all wilderness values in the portions of the WSA which contain the most spectacular scenery and outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude would be maintained or enhanced. On the 83,606 acres of plateau not designated as wilderness, there would be long-term losses of naturalness on 14,500 acres (15% of WSA) from seedings.	With the exception of localized losses to naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation occurring on 100 acres of mining claims and on other limited sites of mineral exploration work, all wilderness values within the canyon would be retained or enhanced. On the plateaus, long-term losses of naturalness on 15,400 acres would occur (15% of WSA) from seedings.	All wilderness values in 24,000 acres of the WSA (23% of the WSA) that contain the most spectacular scenery and outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude would receive long-term Congressional protection as a wild river. With the exception of localized loss of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation occurring on 100 acres of contiguous mining claims from mining activities, all wilderness values would be maintained or enhanced in the canyons. On the plateaus, long-term losses of naturalness of 15,400 acres would occur (15% of WSA) from seedings.	All wilderness values would receive long-term Congressional protection. With the exception of a localized loss of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation occurring on 100 acres of contiguous mining claims from mining activities, all wilderness values in the canyons and plateaus would be maintained or enhanced.
Impacts on Range Management Project Maintenance and Construction	There would be no impact on range project maintenance and construction. A 722 AUM (18%) increase in livestock use would occur. Proposed projects include 3.5 miles of pipeline and 1.7 miles of fence.	There would be no impact on range maintenance and construction. A 722 AUM (18%) increase in livestock use would occur. Proposed projects include 3.5 miles of pipeline and 1.7 miles of fence.	There would be no impact on range project maintenance and construction. A 722 AUM (18%) increase in livestock use would occur. Proposed projects include 3.5 miles of pipeline and 1.7 miles of fence.	The cost in terms of time and inconvenience of constructing new fences and of maintaining post FLPMA (October 21, 1986) projects would approximately double. A 722 AUM increase in livestock use would be foregone. Proposed projects include 3.5 miles of pipeline and 1.7 miles of fence.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources (continued next page)	Potential mineral resources on 83,606 acres would be available for development. Exclusive of the Bruneau jasper claims, the WSA has	Potential mineral resources would be available for development. Exclusive of the Bruneau jasper claims, the WSA has low	Potential mineral resources would be available for development on 80,406 acres. Exclusive of the Bruneau jasper	With the exception of valid existing rights, potential mineral resources would not be available for development. The

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS (WILD RIVER) ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources (continued)(Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA)	low potential for development of mineral resources. Impacts of withdrawal of 20,800 acres from mineral entry and mineral leasing would be insignificant since no development is projected.	potential for development of mineral resources. There would be no impact on mineral resource development.	claims, the WSA has low potential for development of mineral resources. Impacts of withdrawal of 24,000 acres from mineral entry and mineral leasing would be insignificant since no development is projected.	potential for the development of any additional mineral resources is low. Impacts of withdrawal of 104,406 acres from mineral entry and mineral leasing would be insignificant since no development is projected.
Impacts on Recreational Motor Vehicle Use	Impacts to recreational motor vehicle use would be minimal. On the portion of the WSA accessible by motor vehicles, 68,606 acres (66% of WSA) would remain open to ORV use, and on 15,000 acres (14% of WSA), motor vehicle use would be allowed only on designated routes with minimal impact. Closing 20,800 acres (20% of WSA) in the inaccessible canyon would have no impact.	Impacts to recreational motor vehicle use would be minimal. On the portion of the WSA accessible by motor vehicles, 68,606 acres (66% of WSA) would remain open to ORV use and, on 15,000 acres (14% of WSA), motor vehicle use would be allowed only on designated routes with minimal impact. Limiting use on 20,800 acres (20% of WSA) inaccessible canyon would have no impact.	Impacts to recreational motor vehicle use would be minimal. On the portion of the WSA accessible by motor vehicles, 67,406 acres (65% of WSA) would remain open to ORV use and, on 13,000 acres (12% of WSA), motor vehicle use would be allowed only on designated routes with minimal impact. Limiting use on 24,000 acres (23% of WSA) inaccessible canyon would have no impact.	The entire area would be closed to motor vehicle use. 100 visitor days would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting use to adjacent public land would be negligible.

## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Designation of 20,800 acres of the Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA as wilderness would have no impact on local social and economic values. There were no social or economic issues identified with the study of this WSA.

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

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory process were considered in developing study issues and various management alternatives. During the inventory phase, 38 comments were received. Of the 31 comments supporting WSA designation, 12 specifically recommended wilderness designation. Seven comments stated the area should not be designated a WSA to allow continuing multiple-use management. The Idaho Department of Lands recommended that state land inholdings be exchanged should the area be designated as wilderness to avoid management conflicts.

During formal public review of the Draft Jarbidge Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, 94 comments addressed wilderness suitability of the Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA. Of those, 65 comments supported wilderness designation and 29 opposed wilderness designation. One of the opposing comments was a petition signed by 48 individuals.

Those favoring wilderness cited that designation is needed to protect the wilderness values and the special features of both the canyons and plateaus. Most wilderness supporters wanted wilderness designation of the entire WSA.

Those opposing designation were concerned that wilderness would place restrictions on livestock management, remove the area from mineral exploration and development and prevent recreational motor vehicle use. About one-half of the comments opposing wilderness designation supported national wild river designation.

Three government agencies commented specifically on this WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game stated that inclusion of some plateau lands of the Bruneau River-Sheep Creek WSA within wilderness is essential to protect California bighorn sheep habitat and to allow increase of bighorn populations to viable levels. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation supported a wilderness suitability recommendation of 17,929 acres. The Idaho Air National Guard opposed wilderness designation because of possible conflicts with its tactical flight training missions.

**APPENDIX I -- BRUNEAU RIVER-SHEEP CREEK WSA  
Estimated Costs of Acquisition of Nonfederal Holdings  
Within Areas Recommended for Designation(1)**

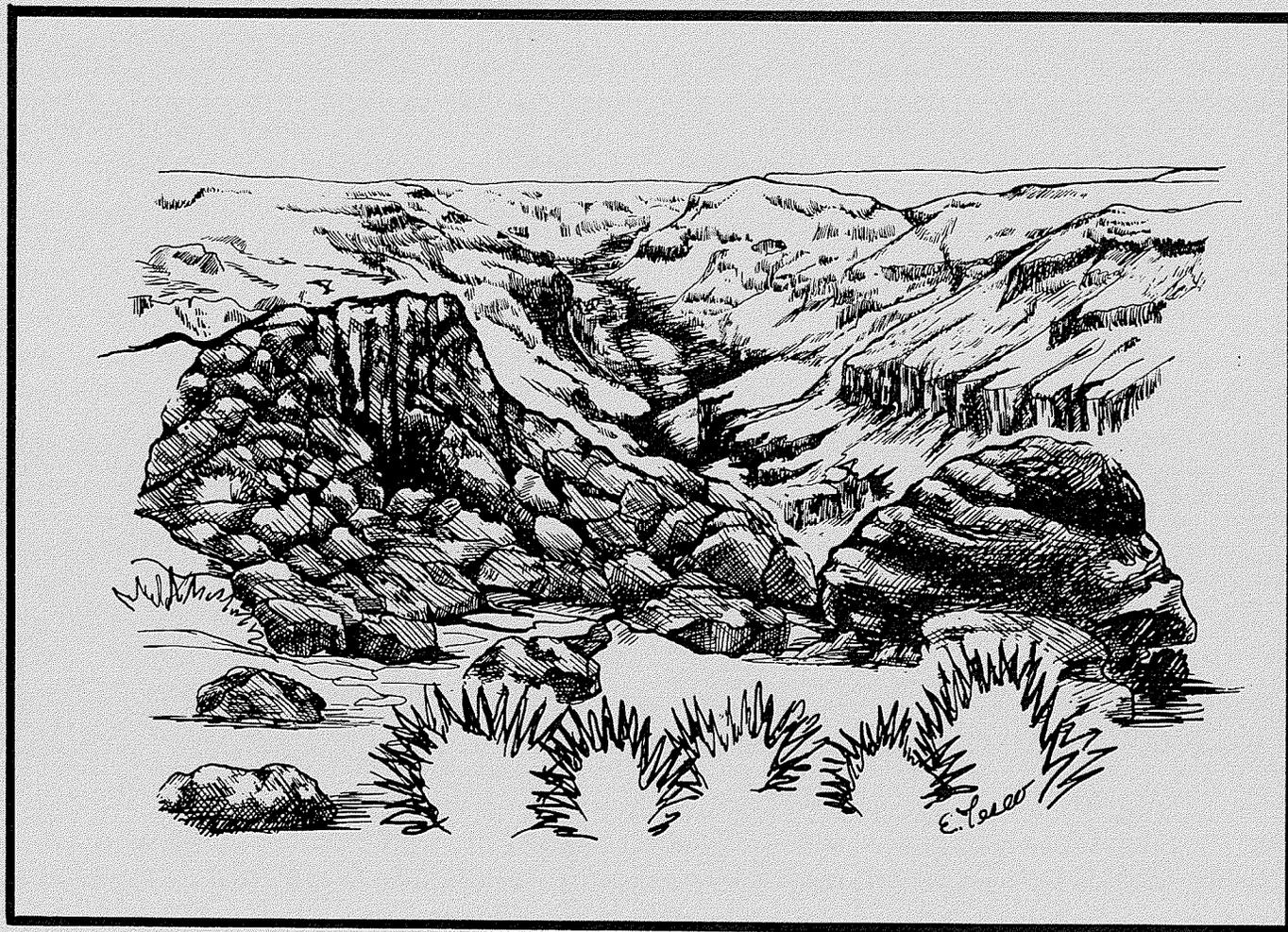
Legal Description	Total Acreage	Number of Owners	Type of Ownership by Estate	Type of Ownership by Estate	Presently Proposed for Acquisition	Preferred Method of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition
			Surface Estate	Subsurface Estate			Land Costs (in \$)	Processing Costs (in \$)
Parcel No. 1 T. 8 S., R. 6 E. Sec. 36	640(2)	1	Private	Private	Yes	Exchange	N/A	5,000
Parcel No. 2 T. 10 S., R. 7 E. Sec. 16	640(2)	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 3 T. 10 S., R. 7 E. Sec. 36.	640(2)	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 4 T. 11 S., R. 7 E. Sec. 16	640(2)	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 5 T. 12 S., R. 6 E. Sec. 16	640(2)	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 6 T. 12 S., R. 7 E. Sec. 16	640(2)	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400

(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.

(2)Only portion of this acreage is within area recommended for designation. Acquisition through exchange would necessitate acquisition of entire parcel.

# SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC WSA RECOMMENDATIONS

## JACKS CREEK WILDERNESS



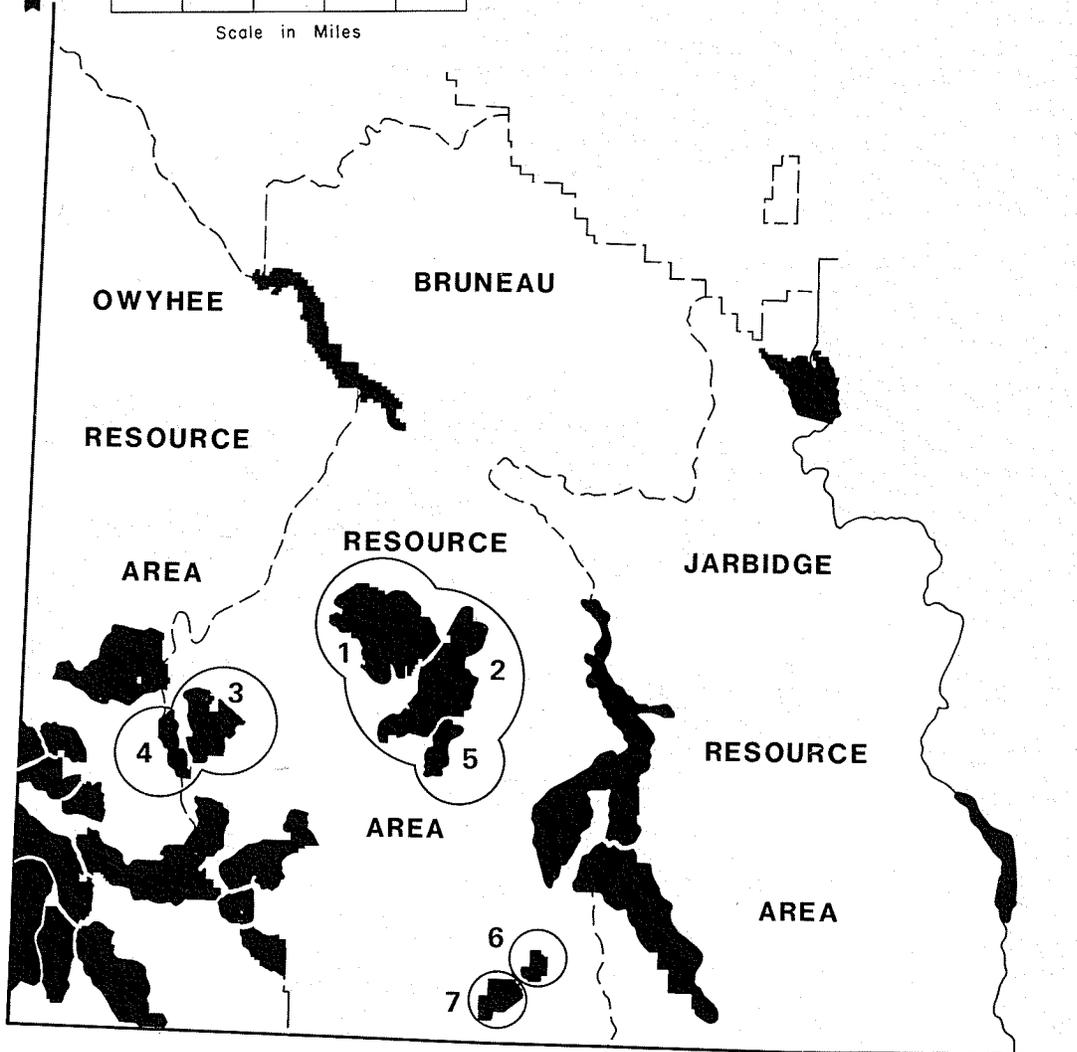
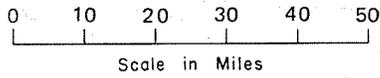
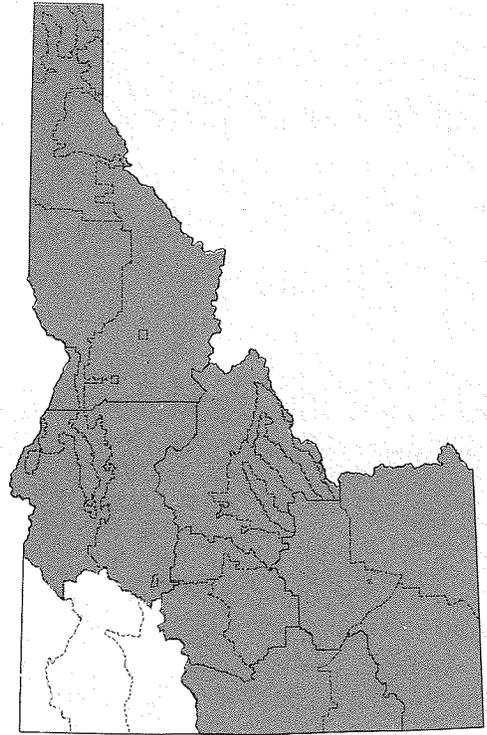
# JACKS CREEK WILDERNESS

## LEGEND

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

### JACKS CREEK

1. Little Jacks Creek
2. Big Jacks Creek
3. Pole Creek
4. Upper Deep Creek
5. Duncan Creek
6. Sheep Creek East
7. Sheep Creek West



# Little Jacks Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 58,040 acres

The Little Jacks Creek WSA (ID-111-6) is located in Owyhee County about 65 miles south of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 58,040 acres of BLM lands, three state inholdings totaling 1,920 acres and four privately owned inholdings totaling 240 acres (see Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the northwest by the Mud Flat Road, on the southeast by an underground natural gas pipeline corridor, while most of the remainder of the WSA is bounded by primitive dirt roads. Several cherry-stem roads (7.5 miles) enter the area.

The WSA consists of two major canyon systems separated by a sagebrush- and grass-covered basalt dome. Little Jacks Creek Canyon is a spectacular 27-mile long, multi-tiered, 1,000-foot deep canyon system. Five miles to the northwest the 600-foot deep and 12-mile long Shoofly Creek Canyon provides stark contrast to the surrounding hills and plateaus. The canyons contain 23 miles of perennial streams surrounded by dense riparian vegetation.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Management Framework Plan (MFP) for the Bruneau Resource Area finalized in March 1983. The recommendation for wilderness was evaluated in the Jacks Creek Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in July 1989. Six alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative where 32,970 acres would be designated as wilderness and 25,070 acres released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; no wilderness and all wilderness alternatives; and three partial wilderness alternatives where 49,660 acres, 32,210 acres and 6,350 acres would be designated as wilderness and 8,380 acres, 25,830 acres and 51,690 acres, respectively, would be released for other uses. An additional 1,030 acre tract of BLM land adjacent to the WSA was included in the study process under authority granted in Section 202 of FLPMA and is recommended for wilderness designation.

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**34,000 acres recommended for wilderness**

**25,070 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Little Jacks Creek WSA is to designate 34,000 acres, including 1,030 acres adjacent to the WSA, as wilderness and release 28,070 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.

The 34,000 acres of federal land recommended for wilderness designation are shown as the nonshaded area on the Little Jacks Creek Proposal map. The 1,030 acres adjacent to the southern part of the WSA are included with the area as wilderness. This recommendation for wilderness would further apply to any additional inholding acreage if acquired through exchange with the State of Idaho, and to a finger-like parcel of private land extending into the southern portion of the area, if the owner is willing to exchange. Appendix I lists all inholdings within the area recommended for wilderness and provides additional information on acquisition of these lands.

The 34,000 acres recommended for wilderness would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of 25 miles of spectacularly scenic canyons and surrounding 27,650 acres of plateau within 65 miles of Boise, Idaho. The area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude within a natural setting. The area includes the habitat for over 150 California bighorn sheep, a wildlands-dependent species. Although designation of the area as wilderness would not add a new ecosystem to the wilderness system, it would add over 6,000 acres of sagebrush- and grass-covered plateau in good to excellent ecological condition.

The area recommended for wilderness is of low mineral resource potential and contains no mining claims or leases. The area can be managed in the long term to protect and maintain its wilderness characteristics. Wilderness designation of 34,000 acres of BLM land would provide long-term protection to California bighorn sheep habitat and to an exceptionally scenic area with outstanding wilderness values.

The 25,070 acres of BLM land not recommended for wilderness are shown as nonshaded Areas A through E on the Little Jacks Creek Proposal map. These areas are recommended for release for nonwilderness uses because of the following reasons:

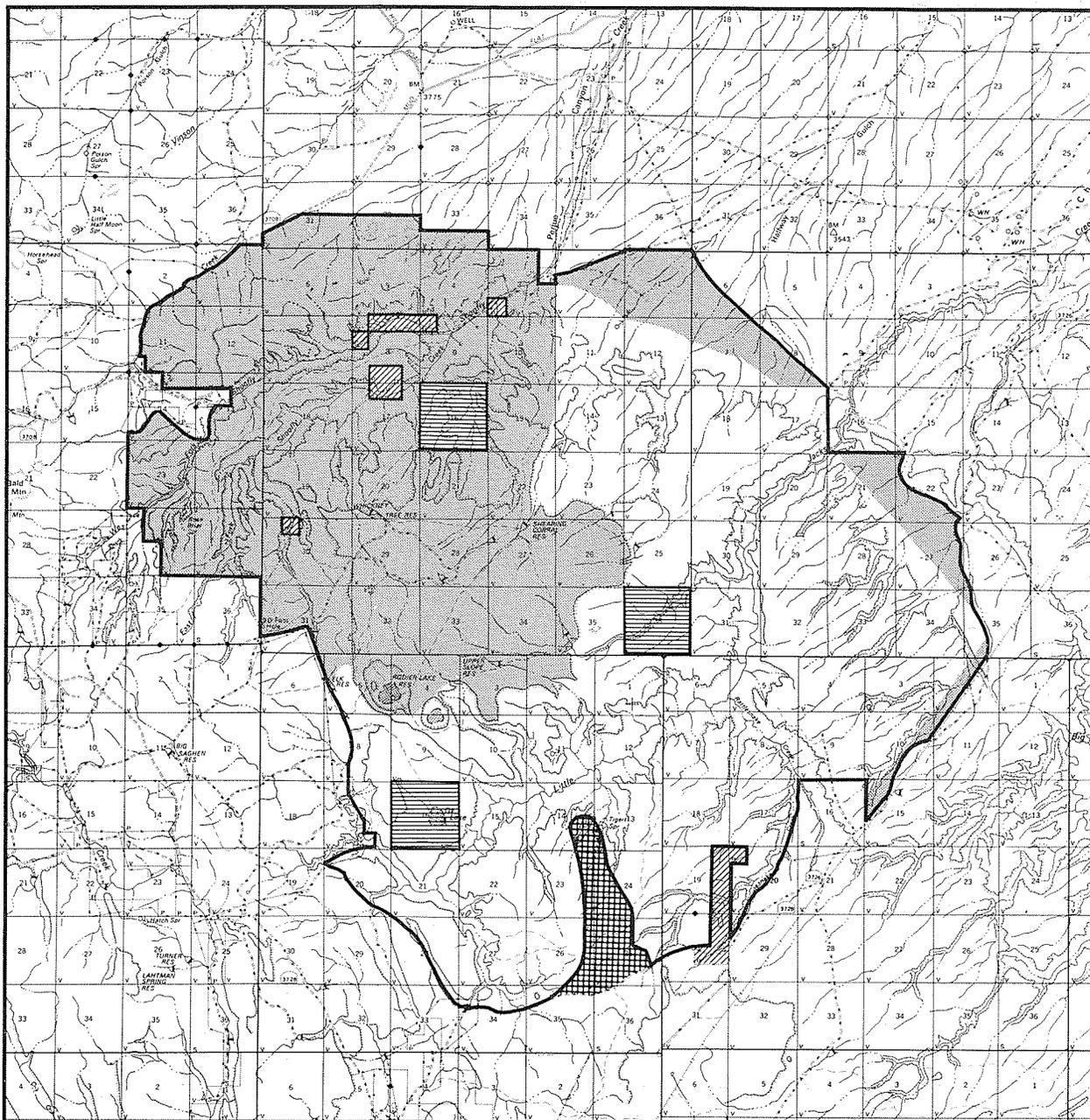
- AREA A: 3,300 acres on the WSA's northern boundary overlooking Mud Flat Road. This portion of the WSA is adjacent to the Mud Flat Road, a major access route to central Owyhee County. The road bed and its frequent vehicle traffic are visible throughout this area. Because of the influence of the adjacent road, this area lacks outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation.
- AREA B: 2,360 acres of the Little Jacks Creek WSA's northeast boundary. These two flat to gently sloping areas between an escarpment and WSA boundary roads contain no topographic, vegetative or soil barriers to discourage off-road vehicle use. Areas adjacent to this side of the WSA are used for desert motorcycle races and dispersed cross-country motorcycle use. The open low-lying terrain would make it difficult to enforce vehicle use restrictions if these areas were designated wilderness. Unintentional violations of these regulations would occur. The wilderness boundary

AREA B: created by eliminating these areas would be clearly defined by a radical change in  
(continued) topography and would not require a management presence to discourage or prevent  
unauthorized vehicle use.

AREA C: 2,720 acres in Shoofly/Perjue Canyons. This area would be difficult to manage as  
wilderness because of the pattern of land ownership. There are four private parcels  
and a state section within a two-mile radius. A two-mile cherry-stem road provides  
access to three of the private inholdings which are located in the canyon bottom. If  
the private lands could not be acquired by BLM, nonconforming uses on the private  
inholdings could compromise naturalness and opportunities for solitude and  
primitive recreation in the federal portions of the canyon. Visitors to these canyons  
would be on private land or adjacent to the access road about 60 percent of the  
time.

AREA D: 16,570 acres on Wickney Tree Dome and in Shoofly/Perjue Canyons. This portion  
of the Little Jacks Creek WSA contains about six miles of cherry-stem roads which  
provide access to livestock reservoirs. Closure of the road system to public use  
would be necessary to maintain wilderness characteristics on this sloping lava dome,  
known as Wickney Tree Dome, which separates the Little Jacks and Shoofly canyon  
systems. Such a road closure would be difficult to enforce. A nonwilderness  
recommendation would allow the construction of a proposed eight-mile livestock  
watering pipeline and more intensive use by domestic livestock. It would also  
permit a proposed spraying and seeding project on about 160 acres. If Wickney  
Tree Dome is not designated as wilderness, then the remainder of AREA D  
(Shoofly/Perjue Canyon) is cut off from the portion of the WSA recommended for  
wilderness and would be difficult to manage as wilderness.

AREA E: 120 acres adjacent to the natural gas pipeline that separates Little Jacks Creek and  
Big Jacks Creek WSAs. Recommending this area for nonwilderness would allow  
for a .75-mile wide corridor between the proposed Big Jacks Creek and Little Jacks  
Creek wilderness area to accommodate future underground utility right-of-way  
needs. Underground utility line construction would adversely impact naturalness  
and motorized vehicles and equipment would be needed for construction and  
maintenance.



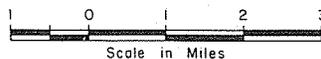
T. 7 S.  
 T. 8 S.  
 T. 8 S.  
 T. 9 S.  
 T. 9 S.  
 T. 10 S.

R. 1 E. | R. 2 E.

R. 2 E. |

R. 3 E. |

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



**ID-111-6  
 LITTLE JACKS CREEK  
 PROPOSAL**

FEBRUARY 1989

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	58,040
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	2,160
Total	60,200

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	32,970
BLM (outside WSA)	1,030
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	34,000
Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	1,590
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	25,070
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	25,070
Inholdings (state, private)	880

<sup>1</sup>Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings included within the area recommended for designation.

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Little Jacks Creek WSA consists of major canyon systems separated by a plateau. Numerous wildlife species including California bighorn sheep, mule deer, sage grouse, mountain quail, raptors and redband trout are found in the area. The WSA is predominantly natural with negligible human imprints. Signs of humans are nine small livestock water developments, 1.5 miles of fence, about ten miles of primitive vehicle routes (ways) and 7.5 miles of cherry-stem roads. In addition, a wildlife guzzler, 1.4 miles of livestock water pipeline and a telephone microwave tower are located on Wickney Tree Dome (Area D) which has not been recommended for wilderness.

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

Opportunities for solitude are outstanding in most of the WSA because of its large size and excellent vegetative and topographic screening in the canyons.

The best opportunities for solitude are in the 40-plus miles of tightly meandering canyons where dense riparian vegetation shields visitors from adjacent groups. The meandering canyons limit views to less than .5 mile and often no more than a few hundred yards.

Outstanding opportunities for solitude are also found on the plateaus due to their spaciousness, remoteness and views of canyon chasms and surrounding hills.

Opportunities for solitude are less outstanding in Area A because of the impact of adjacent Mud Flat Road. Low elevation flights by military aircraft occasionally disrupt opportunities for solitude throughout the WSA. The entire southwest corner of Idaho is used for training military pilots in subsonic low elevation flight. Disruptions of solitude are usually brief, although occasionally aircraft can be seen or heard throughout the day.

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

Most of Little Jacks Creek WSA has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation because of its 40-plus miles of spectacular canyons, its broad landform diversity, 23 miles of perennial streams with excellent trout fishing and because of frequent opportunities to view California bighorn sheep, pronghorn and mule deer. Area A, 3,300 acres, is the only portion of the WSA lacking in outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation (see Solitude).

California bighorn sheep are a primary attraction of the area. Bighorn sheep are second only to grizzly as the species most sought after by serious wildlife viewers, while many hunters consider bighorn sheep the premier trophy species in North America. Opportunities to view the sheep are excellent and visitors who walk two or three miles through the thick riparian brush in the canyon are usually rewarded with glimpses of sheep scampering on the cliffs above.

The canyons of the Shoofly and Little Jacks Creek drainages provide a spectacular backdrop for recreational activities. Little Jacks Creek Canyon is more than 1,000 feet deep in places and is characterized by successive tiers of talus slopes and precipitous cliffs alternating from the plateau rim to the canyon floor. In contrast to the more open, expansive panoramas in Little Jacks Creek Canyon, the extremely narrow Rattlesnake Creek tributary canyon provides a vertical-walled enclosure giving a sense of remoteness and isolation from the surrounding landscape. The tributary canyons offer corridors, hidden pools, dry waterfalls and tiny green oases left behind by their intermittent streams.

Throughout the Little Jacks Creek WSA, opportunities for dispersed recreation are outstanding. Frequent visitor use can be expected not only in the stream canyons but also along the miles of plateau rims where vistas are commonplace.

Fishing is excellent in the 23 miles of perennial streams in Little Jacks Creek and Shoofly Creek Canyons. The streams are home to redband trout, a desert-adapted species.

A growing attraction is the near-pristine sagebrush/grasslands that separate Little Jacks Creek and Big Jacks Creek canyons. In these areas, stands of perennial grasses have obscured the usually dominant sagebrush. These remnant grasslands have special significance. They are a contrast to the sagebrush-dominated plains that now characterize most of the high desert throughout the west.

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

The WSA has many special features including spectacular scenery; rare, near-pristine sagebrush steppe grasslands; valuable archaeological sites; and wildlife habitat for California bighorn sheep, redband trout and mountain quail.

The WSA abounds in exceptionally scenic natural features including the 1,000-foot deep canyon of Little Jacks Creek, narrow grotto-like tributary canyons, wind-sculpted arches, springs and rolling plateaus dominated by waving perennial grasses.

The Little Jacks Creek WSA supports a population of 150-plus California bighorn sheep. This population is about four percent of all California bighorn sheep in the world. Because of their relative intolerance to the presence of humans, sheep are a wildlands-or wilderness-dependent species. They are classified as sensitive.

The WSA includes 23 miles of redband trout habitat. This desert species is found only in southern Idaho, eastern Oregon and northern Nevada. Because of its limited range, this species has also been classified as a sensitive species.

Mountain quail is yet another sensitive species found in the canyons of Little Jacks Creek WSA. Little information is known about these native quail except that their population numbers have declined dramatically since the 1950s. One sensitive plant, *Pediocactus simpsonii* var. *robustior*, is found in the WSA.

On the lava dome separating Shoofly and Little Jacks Canyons, a series of low rock walls, known as the Shoofly Rock Alignments, are probable remnants of a prehistoric game drive where pronghorn antelope were once hunted by bands of Indians. This site has been proposed for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Several prehistoric campsites have also been located adjacent to the Shoofly Rock Alignments.

## 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 Jacks Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS); however, it would add a landform and vegetative type not presently represented in the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem. This WSA is particularly valuable since more than 6,000 acres of the sagebrush steppe plateau are in good ecological condition and are characteristic of pre-settlement vegetation. This ecosystem is represented by three designated areas with 76,699 acres. There are 35 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	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 Little Jacks 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 Little Jacks Creek WSA would add to the geographical distribution of areas within the NWPS. Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon and plateau area not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

### Manageability

The portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness designation can be managed in the long term to protect and maintain its wilderness characteristics and values. It contains no mining claims or mineral leases. The two inconspicuous livestock water developments are serviced by primitive vehicle routes. Rough topography and rocky soils would prevent or discourage motorized vehicle use in the vast majority of the proposed wilderness area.

It would be difficult to manage the following portions of the WSA recommended for nonwilderness to preserve wilderness characteristics.

About 3,300 acres on the northwest boundary of the WSA (Area A) would be difficult to manage as wilderness because of the impacts of the adjacent Mud Flat Road on solitude and primitive recreation. This road is a major access route to central Owyhee County. The road bed and its frequent vehicle traffic are visible throughout this 3,300 acre area.

On the WSA's northeast boundary, 2,360 acres (Area B) would be difficult to manage in the long term as wilderness. These are two flat to gently sloping areas that lie between an escarpment and WSA boundary roads. There are no topographic, vegetative or soil barriers to discourage off-road vehicle use on these areas. Areas adjacent to this side of the WSA are used for desert motorcycle races and dispersed cross-country motorcycle use. The open low-lying terrain would make it difficult to enforce vehicle use restrictions if these areas were included in the wilderness. Unintentional violations of these regulations would occur. The wilderness boundary created by eliminating these areas would be clearly defined by a radical change in topography and would not require a management presence to discourage or prevent unauthorized vehicle use.

In Shoofly/Perjue Canyons, 2,720 acres (Area C) would be difficult to manage as wilderness because of the overall pattern of land ownership. There are four private parcels and a state section within a two-mile radius. A two-mile cherry-stem road provides access to three of the private inholdings which are located in the canyon bottom. If the inholdings were not acquired by BLM, nonconforming uses on the private inholdings could compromise naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in the canyon.

On Wickney Tree Dome and upper Shoofly Canyon, there are 16,570 acres (Area D) that include six miles of cherry-stem roads which provide access to livestock reservoirs. Much of this plateau area is drivable by motorized vehicles. Frequent vehicle traffic would disrupt opportunities for solitude in much of the area. Closure of this road system to the general public would be difficult but necessary to maintain outstanding opportunities for solitude.

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

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Mines (BM) completed a mineral assessment for 34,000 acres of the Little Jacks Creek WSA in 1987.

Investigations conducted by the USGS and BM revealed no identified minerals and a low mineral resource potential for metals, oil and gas, and geothermal energy.

No mines, prospects, mineralized areas, patented mining claims or mineral leases were identified in the WSA. Sand, gravel and industrial rock resources are present but sufficient quantities are available elsewhere to satisfy current local needs.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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

**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-111-6 (LITTLE JACKS CREEK)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	ALL MANAGEABLE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	MINIMUM RE-SOURCE CONFLICT ALTERNATIVE	RIM-TO-RIM WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values (continued next page)	<p><b>WILDERNESS (34,000 acres)</b> Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation should be enhanced on about 120 acres. About 13.6 miles of redband trout habitat would benefit from improved riparian condition. California bighorn sheep populations would remain at or near the habitat carrying capacity of approximately 200 animals within the WSA.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS (25,070 acres)</b> Naturalness would be lost on 9,700 acres. Opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be diminished on about 8,800 acres. About 4.3 miles of redband trout habitat would benefit from improved riparian condition. Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 1,650 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland. The Shoofly Rock Alignments and associated surface sites could be impacted by increased livestock trampling. If private lands in Shoofly Canyon are developed, there would be additional loss of naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation on 2,725 acres. The development of these private lands could also preclude use of about 5% of the existing bighorn sheep habitat and cause decline of 1.6 miles of redband habitat. Results of the displacement of bighorn could range from no effect on population numbers to a small permanent reduction (5-10 animals) in herd size. Bighorn sheep populations would remain at or near the habitat carrying capacity.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS (58,040 acres)</b> Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be enhanced on about 210 acres. About 17.9 miles of redband trout habitat would benefit from improved riparian condition. Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 2,100 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland. Vandalism (illegal excavations) of archaeological sites would be reduced and vehicle damage to Shoofly Rock Alignments would be halted. California bighorn sheep populations would remain at or near the habitat carrying capacity of 200 animals within the WSA.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS (58,040 acres)</b> Naturalness would be lost on 9,800 acres. Opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be diminished on about 8,800 acres. About 17.9 miles of redband trout habitat would benefit from improved riparian condition. Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 3,750 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland. The Shoofly Rock Alignments and associated surface sites could be impacted by increased livestock trampling. If private lands in Shoofly Canyon are developed, there would be an additional loss of naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation on 2,725 acres. The development of these private lands could also preclude use of about 5% of the existing bighorn sheep habitat and cause decline of 1.6 miles of redband habitat. Results of the displacement of bighorn could range from no effect on population numbers to a small permanent reduction (5-10 animals) in herd size. California bighorn sheep populations would remain at or near the habitat carrying capacity of 20 animals within the WSA. Construction of new underground utilities outside the .25-mile utility corridor could result in loss of naturalness and diminished opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation in areas visible from new utility paths and associated service roads.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS (50,690 acres)</b> Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be enhanced on about 230 acres. About 17.9 miles of redband trout habitat would benefit from improved riparian condition. Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 2,100 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland. Vandalism (illegal excavations) of archaeological sites would be reduced and vehicle damage to Shoofly Rock Alignments would be halted. California bighorn sheep populations would remain at or near the habitat carrying capacity of 200 animals within the WSA.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS (8,380 acres)</b> Naturalness would be lost on 240 acres. If private lands in Shoofly Canyon are developed, there would be additional loss of naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation on 2,725 acres. Development of these private lands could also preclude use of about 5% of the existing bighorn sheep habitat and cause decline of 1.6 miles of redband habitat. Results of the displacement of bighorn could range from no effect on population numbers to a small permanent reduction (5-10 animals) in herd size. Bighorn sheep populations would remain at or near the habitat carrying capacity.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS (32,210 acres)</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS (25,830 acres)</b> Naturalness would be lost on 9,800 acres. Opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be diminished on about 8,800 acres. About 4.3 miles of redband trout habitat would benefit from improved riparian condition. Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 1,650 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland. The Shoofly Rock Alignments and associated surface sites could be impacted by increased livestock trampling. If private lands in Shoofly Canyon are developed, there would be an additional loss of naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation on 2,725 acres. The development of these private lands could also preclude use of about 5% of the existing bighorn sheep habitat and cause decline of 1.6 miles of redband habitat. Results of the displacement of bighorn could range from no effect on population numbers to a small permanent reduction (5-10 animals) in herd size. Bighorn sheep populations would remain at or near the habitat carrying capacity.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS (6,350 acres)</b> Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be maintained on 6,350 acres. About 13.6 miles of redband trout habitat would benefit from improved riparian condition. California bighorn sheep populations would remain at or near the habitat carrying capacity of 200 animals within the WSA.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS (51,690 acres)</b> Naturalness would be lost on 9,800 acres. Opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be diminished on about 8,800 acres. About 4.3 miles of redband trout habitat would benefit from improved riparian condition. Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 3,750 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland. The Shoofly Rock Alignments and associated surface sites could be impacted by increased livestock trampling. If private lands in Shoofly Canyon are developed, there would be an additional loss of naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation on 2,725 acres. The development of these private lands could also preclude use of about 5% of the existing bighorn sheep habitat and cause decline of 1.6 miles of redband habitat. Results of the displacement of bighorn could range from no effect on population numbers to a small permanent reduction (5-10 animals) in herd size. Bighorn sheep populations would remain at or near the habitat carrying capacity. Construction of new underground utilities outside</p>

Issue Topics	Proposed Action	All Wilderness Alternative	No Wilderness/ No Action Alternative	All Manageable Wilderness Alternative	Minimum Resource Conflict Alternative	Rim to Rim Wilderness Alternative
Impacts on Wilderness Values (cont)(Little Jacks Creek WSA)						the .25-mile utility corridor could also result in loss of naturalness and diminished opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation in areas visible from new utility paths and associated service roads.
Impacts on Recreation Use	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation use would be 2,575 visitor days, an increase of 1,375 annual visitor days over current use. The major use areas would be Little Jacks Creek Canyon with use about 30% hunting and 70% nonhunting. There would be no significant impact on opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation use would be 1,475 visitor days, an increase of 1,025 annual visitor days over current use. The major use areas would be Shoofly Creek canyons with use about 30% hunting and 70% nonhunting. Opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting would not be affected.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation use would be 4,100 visitor days, an increase of 2,450 visitor days over current use. Major use areas would be Little Jacks Creek and Shoofly Creek canyons with use about 30% hunting and 70% nonhunting. Opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting are not expected to be significantly impacted, although there could be displacement of some sage grouse hunters.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation use would be 4,050 visitor days, an increase of 2,400 annual visitor days over current use. Major use areas would be Little Jacks Creek and Shoofly Creek canyons with use about 30% hunting and 70% nonhunting. Opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting would not be affected.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the All Wilderness Alternative.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> No significant impact.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation would be 2,475 visitor days, an increase of 1,325 annual visitor days over current use. The major use areas would be Little Jacks Creek Canyon with use about 30% hunting and 70% nonhunting. Opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting would not be affected.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation use would be 1,575 visitor days, an increase of 1,175 annual visitor days over current use. The major use areas would be Shoofly Creek canyons with use about 30% hunting and 70% nonhunting. Opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting would not be affected.</p>
Impacts on Selected Wildlife Species	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Mule deer would increase up to 5%. Pronghorn would increase up to 5%. Sage grouse would increase up to 10%.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Mule deer would increase up to 5%. Pronghorn would increase up to 5%. Sage grouse would increase up to 10%.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as Proposed Action.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as Proposed Action.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Mule deer, pronghorn and sage grouse populations would remain stable.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as Proposed Action.</p>
Impacts on Income and Jobs	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$89,502 additional annual income and 6 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$71,200 for range improvements and \$4,600 annually for wilderness management.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> There would be \$71,626 of additional annual income and 5.8 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$32,900 for range improvements and \$444,600 annually for wilderness management.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$106,750 of additional annual income and 6.4 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$86,200 for range improvements.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$86,124 of additional annual income and 5.7 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$40,200 for range improvements and \$4,600 annually for wilderness management.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$94,734 of additional annual income and 6.2 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$86,200 for range improvements and \$4,600 annually for wilderness management.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$106,750 of additional annual income and 6.4 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$86,200 for range improvements and \$4,600 annually for wilderness management.</p>

## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of the entire Little Jacks Creek WSA or any portion of the WSA as wilderness would have no significant social or economic effects on Owyhee County.

## 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 wilderness inventory for the Little Jacks Creek roadless unit, 22 comments supported the establishment of a WSA and 24 opposed it. Reasons cited among those who supported the establishment of a WSA were: the area has few human imprints (11 comments); an abundance of wildlife (seven comments); good opportunities for primitive recreation (three comments); and archaeological sites (three comments). Those opposed to designation of the WSA cited: the area is criss-crossed by numerous roads (23 comments); the area has potential for increased livestock grazing (22 comments); the area has been proposed for a livestock watering pipeline (21 comments); solitude is disrupted by frequent U.S. Air Force jet flights (21 comments); water developments and fences preclude naturalness (18 comments); solitude is disrupted by regular air patrol of the natural gas pipeline; the area lacks drinking water (five comments); and the area is too open, hot and barren for primitive recreation (four comments).

During the public review of the Bruneau MFP, 69 out of 76 comments supported wilderness designation. Proponents of wilderness cited the following reasons: bighorn sheep habitat (17 comments); ecological values of relatively undisturbed vegetation communities (12 comments); wildlife habitat (nine comments); quality of wilderness characteristics (nine comments); redband trout habitat (four comments); and opportunities for primitive recreation (three comments).

During the public review of the Draft Jacks Creek Wilderness EIS, a total of 151 written and oral comments addressing this WSA were received. Public hearings were held in Boise and Grand View, Idaho. Eighty-five commenters supported wilderness designation for all or portions of the WSA; forty commenters supported no wilderness for the WSA; while 26 commenters took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Among those supporting wilderness, 80 percent were Idaho residents, a majority from Ada County; 12 percent were from other western states; and eight percent were residents of eastern states. By far the most prevalent reason cited for wilderness designation was preservation of wildlife habitat, particularly California bighorn sheep habitat. The second most frequently cited reason for supporting wilderness designation was protection of pristine high desert ecosystems. Other reasons in support of wilderness were to provide primitive recreation opportunities and solitude, to preserve scenic quality, to protect archaeological values, the proximity to Boise, Idaho, and to maximize protection of fisheries and riparian habitat. Twelve wilderness supporters pointed out that wilderness designation would have minimal resource conflicts with other resource uses.

About 85 percent of the comments opposing wilderness designation were from local residents with about 40 percent from Owyhee County, 35 percent from Ada County, and ten percent from Canyon and Elmore Counties. The remaining 15 percent were from residents of other western states. Twenty-two of these commenters believe that wilderness designation would discriminate against senior citizens and the handicapped. Other reasons for opposing wilderness were bighorn sheep do not need wilderness, wilderness is not effective management (too inflexible and costly), wilderness is not multiple

use, Idaho has enough wilderness, wilderness values do not need wilderness designation for protection, wilderness would close the door to future oil and gas exploration work.

Several agencies commented on the Draft EIS. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Air Force and Idaho Department of Fish and Game supported wilderness designation. The Owyhee County Commissioners opposed designation. The Federal Aviation Agency, Environmental Protection Agency and the Idaho State Historical Society did not express an alternative preference.

**APPENDIX I -- LITTLE JACKS CREEK 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		Presently Proposed for Acquisition	Preferred Method of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition	
			Surface Estate	Subsurface Estate			Land Costs (in \$)	Processing Costs (in \$)
Parcel No. 1 T. 8 S., R. 2 E. Sec. 36	640	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 2 T. 9 S., R. 2 E. Sec. 16	640	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 3(2) T. 9 S., R. 3 E. Sec. 19 (E1/2E1/2) Sec. 20 (NW1/4NW1/4) Sec. 30 (E1/2NE1/4, N1/2SE1/4)	360(3)	1	Private	Private	Yes	Exchange	N/A	15,000

(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.

(2)Finger-like protrusion into southern part of WSA - outside WSA but adjacent to WSA boundaries - acquisition from willing owner would improve wilderness manageability.

(3)310 acres of this parcel within boundary of proposed wilderness.

# Duncan Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 10,005 acres

The Duncan Creek Canyon WSA (ID-111-7B) is located in Owyhee County about 75 miles southeast of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 10,005 acres of BLM land and one state inholding of 640 acres (see Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the east by a maintained dirt road, while most of the remainder of the WSA is bordered by primitive dirt roads. The WSA is dominated by more than ten miles of narrow, meandering, sheer-walled 500-foot deep canyons surrounded by a sagebrush- and grass-covered rolling plateau. Canyon bottoms are covered by riparian vegetation. More than 60 percent of the plateau is covered with near-pristine sagebrush steppe vegetation.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Management Framework Plan (MFP) for the Bruneau Resource Area finalized in March 1983. The recommendation for wilderness generated through the planning process was evaluated in the Jacks Creek Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in July 1989. Four alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative where 8,760 acres would be designated as wilderness and 1,245 acres released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; no wilderness and all wilderness alternatives; and a partial wilderness alternative where 9,445 acres would be designated as wilderness and 560 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness.

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**8,760 acres recommended for wilderness**

**1,245 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Duncan Creek WSA is to designate 8,760 acres as wilderness and release 1,245 acres for nonwilderness 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.

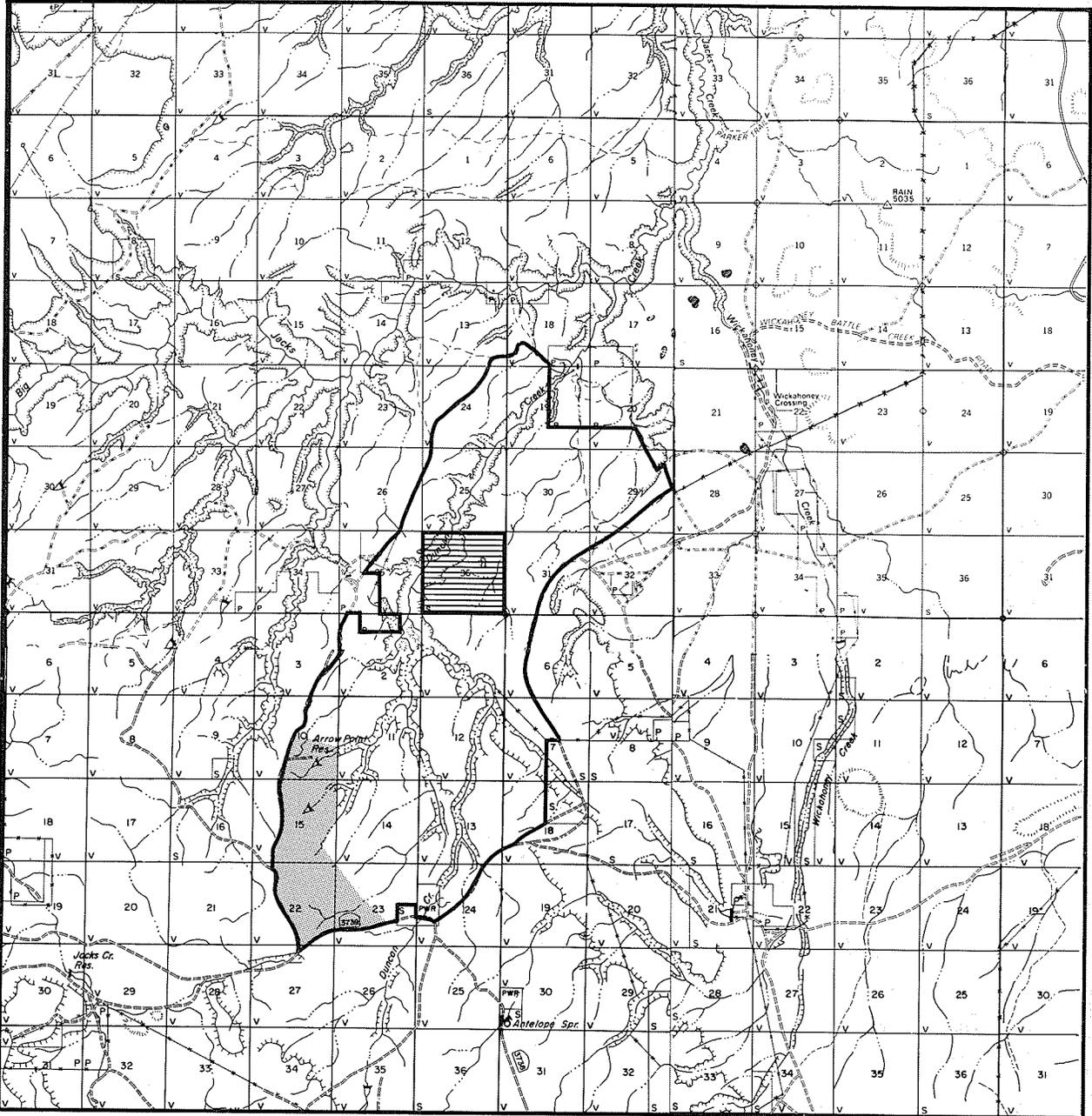
The 8,760 acres of federal land recommended for wilderness designation are shown as the nonshaded area on the Duncan Creek Proposal map. The recommendation for wilderness would further apply to a 640 acre inholding when acquired through exchange with the State of Idaho, and to about 300 acres of a 640 acre parcel of private land adjacent to the northern boundary of the WSA if acquired through exchange from a willing owner. Appendix I lists all inholdings within the area recommended for wilderness and provides additional information on acquisition of these lands.

The 8,760 acres recommended for wilderness would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of more than ten miles of spectacularly scenic canyons and surrounding plateau within 75 miles of Boise, Idaho. The area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude within a natural setting. The area includes 4,500 acres of California bighorn sheep habitat. Although designation of the area as wilderness would not add a new ecosystem to the wilderness system, it would add 5,900 acres of sagebrush- and grass-covered plateau in good to excellent ecological condition.

The area recommended for wilderness is of low mineral resource potential and contains no mining claims or leases. With the acquisition of a 640 acre state inholding, the area can be managed in the long term to protect and maintain its wilderness characteristics. Wilderness designation would provide long-term protection to California bighorn sheep habitat and to a scenic area with outstanding wilderness values.

The 1,245 acres of BLM land not recommended for wilderness are shown as the shaded area on the Duncan Creek Proposal map. The area contains two small livestock water developments and 2.5 miles of primitive vehicle routes. The area is recommended for nonwilderness uses because of conflicts with livestock grazing, such as the proposed construction of a livestock water pipeline. If the 1,245 acres are excluded, the wilderness could be managed as a pristine area with no human-made features except an abandoned fence.

While the area contained the wilderness values necessary for study, they are not considered to be of a quality to merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The area generally appears natural but there are several site-specific signs of man which impact naturalness locally. Solitude opportunities available in the area are similar to those afforded by thousands of acres of land adjacent to the area.

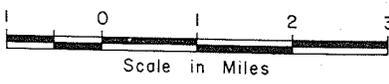


T. 9 S.  
T. 10 S.  
T. 10 S.  
T. 11 S.

R. 3 E. | R. 4 E.

R. 4 E. | R. 5 E.

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



ID-111-7B  
DUNCAN CREEK  
PROPOSAL

FEBRUARY 1989

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	10,005
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	640
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,645</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	8,760
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>8,760</b>
Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	940
State land (outside WSA)	

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	1,245
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>1,245</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0

<sup>1</sup>Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings included within the area recommended for designation.

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Duncan Creek WSA consists of a rolling plateau dissected by about ten miles of deep canyons. Numerous wildlife species including California bighorn sheep, mule deer, sage grouse, mountain quail, raptors and redband trout are found in the area. The WSA is predominantly natural with negligible human imprints. Signs of man are two small livestock water developments, 2.5 miles of primitive vehicle routes (ways) and an abandoned fence.

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

Opportunities for solitude are outstanding in most of the WSA because of its large size and excellent vegetative and topographic screening in the canyons and good topographic screening in the rolling hills in the northern portion of the WSA.

The best opportunities for solitude are in the ten-plus miles of canyons where topographic and vegetative screening is excellent. The twisted canyon walls, irregular talus slopes, rock pinnacles and dense riparian vegetation provide an effective visual and auditory barrier between groups. Visual contact is generally not possible within the canyon at distances of more than .25 mile.

Opportunities for solitude are less than outstanding in the southernmost and easternmost portion of the WSA where deep drainages are absent and the surrounding plateau is flat to gently sloping. Solitude in these areas is also affected by regular traffic on the adjacent boundary road.

Low elevation flights by military aircraft occasionally disrupt opportunities for solitude throughout the WSA. The entire southwest corner of Idaho is used for training military pilots in subsonic low elevation flight. Disruptions of solitude are usually brief, although occasionally aircraft can be seen or heard throughout the day.

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

Duncan Creek WSA has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation because of its ten-plus miles of spectacular canyons, variety of landforms, four miles of perennial streams with good trout fishing and because of frequent opportunities to view pronghorn and mule deer.

The ten-plus miles of spectacular canyons are the principle recreation attraction of the WSA. The 500-foot deep canyons range from broad and open with expansive vistas to narrow grotto-like tributary canyons. Zeno Canyon, in the southern portion of the WSA, with its twisted sheer-walled cliffs and dense riparian vegetation presents an enticing challenge to those seeking wilderness experiences. Near the confluence of Zeno and Duncan Creek canyons, a 60-foot spring-fed waterfall plummets over the canyon rim.

The four miles of perennial streams create a sharp contrast to the barren sagebrush-dominated desert surrounding the canyons. Fishing for redband trout is good. Pronghorn antelope are frequently seen on the plateaus while mule deer are common in the canyons.

Visitors can be expected not only in the canyons but also along the miles of rims where vistas are commonplace. A growing attraction on the plateaus is the near-pristine sagebrush/grasslands. On these rangelands in good ecological condition, perennial grasses have obscured the usually dominant sagebrush. These remnant grasslands are a stark contrast to the sagebrush-dominated plains that now characterize most of the high desert throughout the west.

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

The Duncan Creek WSA abounds in exceptionally scenic natural features including the 500-foot deep Duncan Creek; narrow, twisted Zeno Canyon; a 60-foot waterfall; and rolling plateaus dominated by perennial grasses.

The WSA includes four-plus miles of redband trout habitat. This desert-adapted trout is found in southern Idaho, eastern Oregon and northern Nevada and has been classified as a sensitive species.

About 4,500 acres in the WSA have been identified as California bighorn sheep habitat. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game reintroduced this rare species in the adjacent Big Jacks Creek WSA in 1988. Some of these animals are expected to utilize the habitat provided in the Duncan Creek WSA. Bighorns disappeared from this area in the 1920s. Existing California bighorn sheep populations in Owyhee County account for about ten percent of the world's known population. Because of their relative intolerance to the presence of humans, California bighorn sheep are a wildlands or wilderness-dependent species. They are classified as a sensitive species by BLM and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. This designation was justified due to the relative rarity of these animals.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Duncan Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS); however, it would add a landform not presently represented in the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem. This ecosystem is represented by three designated areas with 76,699 acres. There are 35 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
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 Duncan 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 Duncan Creek WSA would add to the geographical distribution of areas within the NWPS. Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon and plateau area not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

#### **Manageability**

By acquiring the 640 acre state inholding, the area can be managed in the long-term to protect and maintain its wilderness characteristics and values. The Idaho State Department of Lands has expressed its willingness to exchange state lands within BLM areas recommended for wilderness designation. The area contains no mining claims or mineral leases. Rough topography and rocky soils would prevent or discourage motorized vehicle use off boundary roads.

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

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Mines (BM) completed a mineral assessment for 9,400 acres of the Duncan Creek WSA in 1987.

Investigations conducted by the USGS and BM revealed no identified minerals and a low mineral resource potential for metals, oil and gas, and geothermal energy.

No mines, prospects, mineralized areas, patented mining claims or mineral leases were identified in the WSA. Sand, gravel and industrial rock resources are present but sufficient quantities are available elsewhere to satisfy current local needs.

#### **Impacts on Resources**

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

Table 4

Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative  
WSA ID-111-7B (DUNCAN CREEK)

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	ALL MANAGEABLE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p><b>WILDERNESS (8,760 acres)</b> Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be maintained on 8,760 acres. The bighorn sheep population would expand and fully occupy available habitat.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS (1,245 acres)</b> Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 450 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS (10,005 acres)</b> Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation enhanced on about 120 acres affected by the closure of primitive vehicle routes. The bighorn sheep population would expand and fully occupy available habitat.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS (10,005 acres)</b> Unregulated increases in recreation use could preclude use of up to 13% of the potential habitat for the Big Jacks Creek Complex sheep transplant. The significance of this impact is not known since the sheep have not been reintroduced into this habitat yet and, therefore, critical use areas are not known. The bighorn sheep population would expand and partially occupy available habitat. Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 450 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS (9,445 acres)</b> Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be enhanced on about 25 acres affected by the closure of primitive vehicle routes. The bighorn sheep populations would expand and fully occupy available habitat.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS (560 acres)</b> Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 100 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland.</p>
Impacts on Recreation Use	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation use would be 1,600 visitor days, an increase of 1,225 annual visitor days over current use. Major use areas would be Duncan Creek Canyon with use about 70% hiking and sightseeing and 30% hunting. There would be no significant impact on opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> No significant impact.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation use would be 1,245 visitor days, an increase of 1,050 annual visitor days over current use. Major use areas would be Duncan Creek Canyon with use about 65% hiking/sightseeing and 35% hunting. Opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting would not be affected.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> No significant impact.</p>
Impacts on Selected Wildlife Species	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Mule deer would increase up to 2%. Pronghorn would increase up to 2%. Sage grouse would increase up to 5%.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Mule deer would increase up to 2%. Pronghorn would increase up to 2%. Sage grouse would increase up to 5%.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as Proposed Action.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as Proposed Action.</p>
Impacts on Income and Jobs	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$31,079 of additional income and 2.75 new jobs. Implementation costs would be \$1,700 annually for wilderness management.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> There would be \$30,316 of additional income and 2.75 new jobs. Implementation costs would be \$1,700 annually for wilderness management.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$27,155 of additional income and 2.4 new jobs. There would be no implementation costs.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$30,874 of additional income and 2.75 new jobs. Implementation costs would be \$1,700 annually for wilderness management.</p>

## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of the entire Duncan Creek WSA or any portion of the WSA as wilderness would have no significant social or economic effects on Owyhee County.

## 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 wilderness inventory for the Duncan Creek roadless unit, 14 commenters supported establishing a WSA and one opposed it. Reasons cited among those who supported establishment of a WSA were the area's outstanding scenery (five comments), abundance of wildlife (four comments), and outstanding backcountry hiking opportunities (three comments). The comment opposed to designation of the area as a WSA cited the lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation.

During the public review of the Bruneau MFP, 33 out of 37 comments supported wilderness designation. Proponents of wilderness cited the following reasons: ecological values (11 comments), wildlife habitat for sensitive species (two comments), rare plants (two comments), and quality of the area's wilderness characteristics (two comments).

During the public review of the Draft Jacks Creek Wilderness EIS, 151 written and oral comments addressing this WSA were received. Public hearings were held in Boise and Grand View, Idaho. Eighty-four commenters supported wilderness designation for all or portion of the WSA; forty-one commenters supported no wilderness for the WSA; while 26 commenters took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Among those supporting wilderness, 80 percent were Idaho residents, with a majority from Ada County; 12 percent were from other western states; and eight percent were residents of eastern states. By far the most prevalent reason cited for wilderness designation was preservation of wildlife habitat, particularly California bighorn sheep habitat. The second most frequently cited reason for supporting wilderness designation was protection of pristine high desert ecosystems. Other reasons in support of wilderness were to provide primitive recreation opportunities and solitude; to preserve scenic quality; the proximity to Boise, Idaho; and to maximize protection of fisheries and riparian habitat. Twelve wilderness supporters pointed out that wilderness designation would have minimal resource conflicts with other resource uses.

About 85 percent of the comments opposing wilderness designation were from local residents with about 40 percent from Owyhee County, 35 percent from Ada County, and ten percent from Canyon and Elmore Counties. The remaining 15 percent were from residents of other western states. Twenty-two of these commenters believe that wilderness designation would discriminate against senior citizens and the handicapped. Other reasons for opposing wilderness were bighorn sheep do not need wilderness, wilderness is not effective management (too inflexible and costly), wilderness is not multiple use, Idaho has enough wilderness, wilderness values do not need wilderness designation for protection, wilderness would close the door to future oil and gas exploration work.

Several agencies commented on the Draft EIS. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Air Force and Idaho Department of Fish and Game supported wilderness designation. The Owyhee County Commissioners opposed designation. The Federal Aviation Agency, Environmental Protection Agency and the Idaho State Historical Society did not express an alternative preference.

**APPENDIX I -- DUNCAN CREEK 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. 10 S., R. 3 E. Sec. 36	640	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 29(2) T. 10 S., R. 4 E. Sec. 17 (S1/2SW1/4) Sec. 18 (S1/2SE1/4) Sec. 19 (NE1/4, N1/2SE1/4) Sec. 20 (NW1/4, N1/2SW1/4)	640	1	Private	Private	Yes	Exchange	N/A	15,000

(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.

(2)Outside WSA but adjacent to northern boundary - acquisition through exchange with willing owner would improve accessibility to area recommended for wilderness designation - if acquired, southwestern portion of parcel would be designated as wilderness.

# Big Jacks Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 54,833 acres

The Big Jacks Creek WSA (ID-111-7C) is in Owyhee County about 70 miles southeast of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 54,833 acres of BLM lands, two state inholdings totaling 1,280 acres and two private inholdings totaling 160 acres (see Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the west by an underground natural pipeline and associated primitive service roads. Most of the remainder of the WSA is bordered by primitive dirt roads. One short cherry-stem road (.75 mile) enters the southern part of the area.

The WSA consists of a major canyon system and the surrounding sagebrush- and grass-covered plateau. Big Jacks Creek Canyon and six major tributary canyons create more than 50 miles of rugged, spectacular chasms radiating throughout the WSA. Canyon features range from broad 700-foot deep V-shaped canyons to narrow grotto-like enclosures. Thirty-five miles of perennial streams wind through the canyons. The tributary canyons divide much of the surrounding plateau into narrow fingers of high desert sagebrush/grasslands.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Management Framework Plan (MFP) for the Bruneau Resource Area finalized in March 1983. The recommendation for wilderness generated through this planning process was evaluated in the Jacks Creek Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in July 1989. Five alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative where 44,525 acres would be designated as wilderness and 10,308 acres released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; no wilderness and all wilderness alternatives; and two additional partial wilderness alternatives where 49,875 acres and 10,800 acres would be designated as wilderness, and 4,958, and 44,033 acres would be released for other uses, respectively.

## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**44,525 acres recommended for wilderness**

**10,308 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Big Jacks Creek WSA is to designate 44,525 acres as wilderness and to release 10,308 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.

The 44,525 acres of federal land recommended for wilderness designation are shown as the nonshaded area on the Big Jacks Creek Proposal map. This recommendation for wilderness would further apply to any additional inholding acreage if acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners. Appendix I lists all inholdings within the area recommended for wilderness designation and provides additional information on acquisition of these lands.

The 44,525 acres recommended for wilderness would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of more than 50 miles of spectacularly scenic canyons and surrounding 33,725 acres of the plateau within 70 miles of Boise, Idaho. The area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude within a natural setting. It provides habitat for an expanding population of California bighorn sheep, a wildland-dependent species. Although designation of the area as wilderness would not add a new ecosystem to the wilderness system, it would add over 5,800 acres of sagebrush- and grass-covered plateau in good to excellent ecological condition. More than 95 percent of the riparian areas are also in good ecological condition.

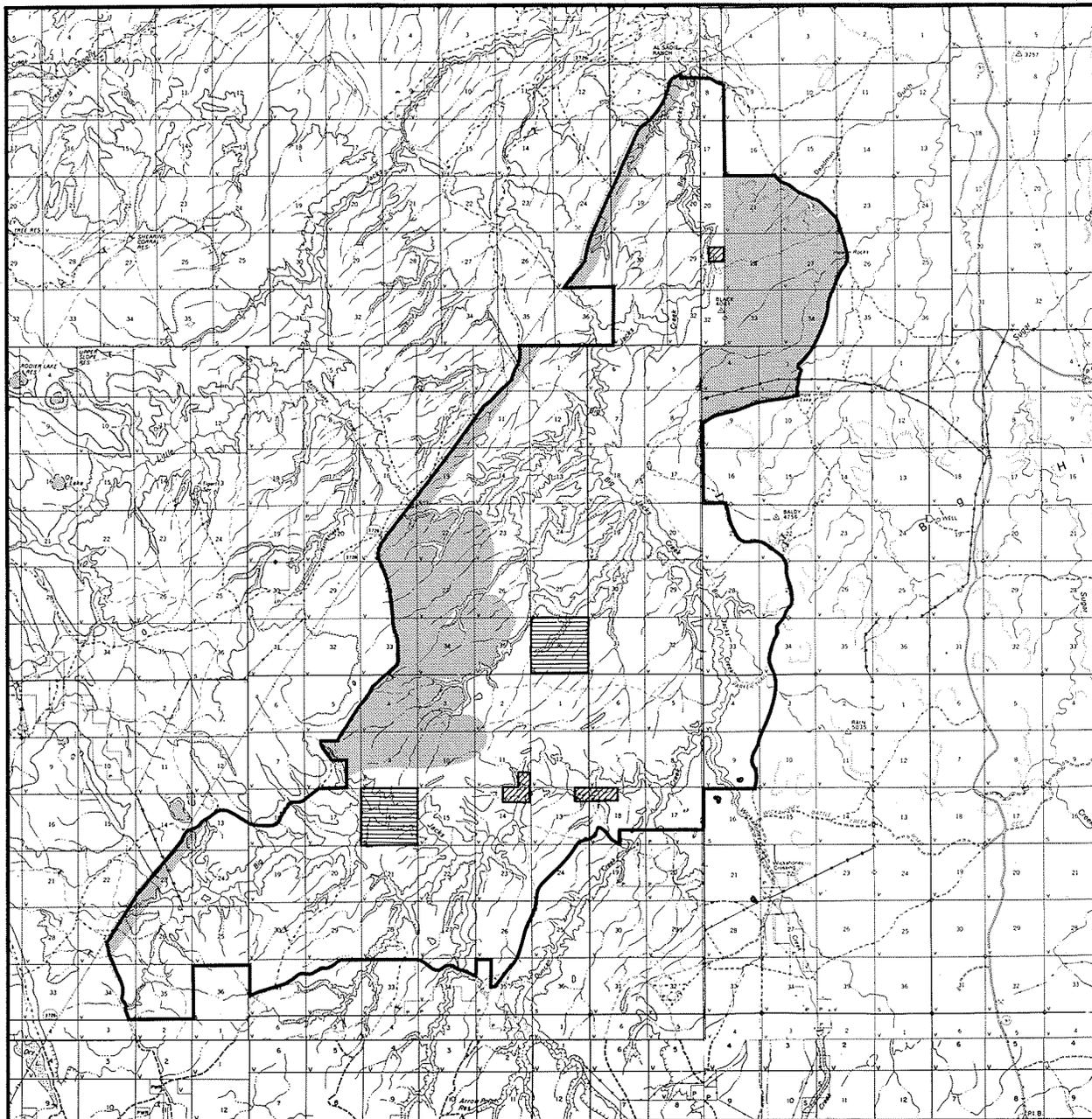
The area recommended for wilderness is of low mineral resource potential and contains no mining claims or leases. The area can be managed in the long term to protect and maintain its wilderness characteristics. Wilderness designation of 44,525 acres of BLM land would provide long-term protection to California bighorn sheep habitat and to an exceptionally scenic area with outstanding wilderness values.

The 10,308 acres of BLM land not recommended for wilderness are shown as shaded Areas A through C on Map 1. Although the areas have wilderness values, they are recommended for nonwilderness uses for the following reasons:

- AREA A:** About 4,000 acres on the northeast corner of the WSA. This flat to gently sloping plateau between Big Jacks Creek Canyon and the WSA's eastern boundary road contains few topographic, vegetative or soil barriers to discourage off-road vehicle use. Areas adjacent to this side of the WSA are used for desert motorcycle races and dispersed cross-country motorcycle use. The open, low-lying terrain would make it difficult to enforce vehicle use restrictions if this area was designated wilderness. Unintentional violations of these regulations would occur. The wilderness boundary created by eliminating this area would be clearly defined by a radical change in topography and would not require a management presence to discourage or prevent unauthorized vehicle use.

**AREA B:** About 5,000 acres of the plateau west of Big Jacks Creek Canyon. This portion of the WSA is not recommended for wilderness to allow construction of an additional 4.5 miles of laterals on the proposed 19-mile Jacks Creek livestock watering pipeline. These laterals would result in an additional 797 AUMs of livestock use. Deletion of this area is not expected to diminish overall opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation in the wilderness area. None of the area recommended for nonwilderness is within bighorn sheep habitat area.

**AREA C:** About 1,000 acres adjacent to the natural gas pipeline that separates Little Jacks Creek and Big Jacks Creek WSAs. Recommending this area for nonwilderness would allow for a .75-mile wide corridor between the proposed Big Jacks Creek and Little Jacks Creek wilderness areas to accommodate future underground utility right-of-way needs. Underground utility line construction would adversely impact naturalness and motorized vehicles and equipment would be needed for construction and maintenance.



T. 8 S.

T. 9 S.

T. 9 S.

T. 10 S.

T. 10 S.

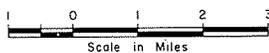
T. 11 S.

R. 2 E. | R. 3 E.

R. 3 E. | R. 4 E.

R. 4 E. | R. 5 E.

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



**ID-111-7C  
BIG JACKS CREEK  
PROPOSAL**

FEBRUARY 1989

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	54,833
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	1,440
Total	56,273

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	44,525
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	44,525
Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	1,560
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	10,308
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	10,308
Inholdings (state, private)	0

<sup>1</sup>Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings included within the area recommended for designation.

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Big Jacks Creek WSA consists of a major canyon system and surrounding plateau. Numerous wildlife species including California bighorn sheep, mule deer, pronghorn, sage grouse, mountain quail, raptors and redband trout are found in the area. The WSA is predominantly natural with negligible human impacts. Signs of man are four small livestock water developments, 2.5 miles of fence, .75 mile of cherry-stem road, and 19 miles of primitive vehicle routes (ways).

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

Opportunities for solitude are outstanding in the WSA because of its large size and excellent vegetative and topographic screening in the canyons.

The best opportunities for solitude are found in the 50-plus miles of rugged canyons that radiate throughout the WSA. Topographic and vegetative screening within the canyons is excellent. The canyon walls, irregular talus slopes, rock pinnacles and dense riparian vegetation provide an effective visual and auditory barrier between groups. Visual contact between groups usually is not possible at distances of more than .25 mile.

Outstanding opportunities for solitude are also found on the plateaus. The spaciousness of the flat to rolling plateaus combined with ample sagebrush provide numerous opportunities for solitude.

Low elevation flights by military aircraft occasionally disrupt solitude throughout the WSA. The entire southwest corner of Idaho is used for training military pilots in subsonic low elevation flight. Disruptions are usually brief, although occasionally aircraft can be seen or heard throughout the day.

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

Big Jacks Creek WSA has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation because of its 50-plus miles of spectacular canyons, its broad landform diversity, 35 miles of perennial stream with good trout fishing and because of frequent opportunities to view wildlife, including California bighorn sheep.

The canyons are the primary recreational attraction of the area. The highly eroded canyon system contains a wide variety of canyon types ranging from 700-foot deep broad open canyons with expansive vistas to narrow, winding grotto-like tributary canyons with precipitous walls that entirely block sunlight.

Mobility is enhanced by the radiating configuration of the canyon tributaries which provide scenic routes to most portions of the Big Jacks Creek WSA. Mobility is excellent in most portions of canyons but is sometimes hampered by heavy riparian vegetation in the narrow canyon bottoms. These obstacles, however, are not insurmountable and present a physical challenge that can be an important element in the visitor's wilderness experience.

Fishing is good in the 35 miles of perennial streams. The most common game fish is redband trout, a desert-adapted trout species.

Visitors can be expected not only in the miles of stream canyons but also along the plateau rims where vistas are commonplace. In contrast to the rugged, angular forms of the canyons, the surrounding plateau is characterized by gentle terrain and low, rounded forms. These contrasting landforms provide a strong recreational attraction that each alone would not have.

A growing attraction are the near-pristine sagebrush/grasslands that separate Little Jacks Creek and Big Jacks Creek canyons. In these areas, stands of perennial grasses have obscured the usually dominant sagebrush. They are a stark contrast to the sagebrush-dominated plains that now characterize most of the high desert throughout the west.

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

The WSA includes 35 miles of redband trout habitat. This desert-adapted trout species is found only in southern Idaho, eastern Oregon and northern Nevada. Because of its limited range, the fish has been classified as a sensitive species.

Mountain quail is another sensitive species found in the canyons of Big Jacks Creek WSA. Little information is known about these native quail except that their population numbers have declined dramatically since the 1950s.

In 1988, 40 California bighorn sheep were reintroduced into the WSA. California bighorn sheep in Owyhee County account for about ten percent of the world's known population. All of the Owyhee County populations and most of the U.S. populations are the result of reintroduction. Because of their relative intolerance to the presence of humans, California bighorn sheep are a wildlands- or wilderness-dependent species. They are classified as a sensitive species by BLM and Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Two sensitive plant species, *Pediocactus simpsonii* var. *robustior* and *Lepidium davisii*, 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 Big Jacks Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS); however, it would add a landform and vegetative type 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 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
Dry Domain/Intermountain Sagebrush Province				
	<u>NATIONWIDE</u>			
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	3	76,699	136	4,359,340
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Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	1	12,997	35	949,916
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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 Big Jacks 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**

<b>Population Centers</b>	<b><u>NWPS Areas</u></b>		<b><u>Other BLM Studies</u></b>	
	<b>areas</b>	<b>acres</b>	<b>areas</b>	<b>acres</b>
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250

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

The Big Jacks Creek WSA would add to the geographical distribution of areas within the NWPS. Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon and plateau area not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

### **Manageability**

The portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness designation can be managed in the long term to protect and maintain its wilderness characteristics and values. The proposed wilderness area does include three private inholdings. Providing access to these inholdings would not have a significant impact on wilderness characteristics or values. A 120 acre private parcel is located within the proposed wilderness on a cherry-stem road. There are no plans to close this road unless the property is acquired through exchange. The three inconspicuous livestock water improvements are already serviced by primitive vehicle routes (ways). Rough topography and rocky soils would prevent or discourage motorized vehicle use in the vast majority of the area.

About 4,000 acres on the northeast corner of the WSA (Area A) would be difficult to manage in the long term as wilderness. This flat to gently sloping plateau between Big Jacks Creek Canyon and the WSA's eastern boundary road contains few topographic, vegetative or soil barriers to discourage or prevent unauthorized motor vehicle use.

There are no significant wilderness manageability problems anticipated in the remaining portions of the WSA.

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

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Mines (BM) completed a mineral assessment for 49,875 acres of the Big Jacks Creek WSA in 1987.

Investigations conducted by the USGS and BM revealed no identified minerals and a low mineral resource potential for metals, oil and gas, and geothermal energy.

No mines, prospects, mineralized areas, patented mining claims or mineral leases were identified in the WSA. Sand, gravel and industrial rock resources are present but sufficient quantities are available elsewhere to satisfy current local needs.

### **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-111-7C (BIG JACKS CREEK)**

Issue Topics	No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)	All Manageable Wilderness Alternative	Rim To Rim Wilderness Alternative
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> (54,833 acres) Naturalness would be lost on 5,350 acres. Underground utility construction could reduce naturalness of another 550 acres. Outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation could be diminished on 9,750 acres. 19 miles of redband trout habitat would improve but another 3 miles would decline in condition. Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 11,300 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland. The bighorn sheep population would expand and fully occupy available habitat.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> (49,875 acres) Naturalness and opportunities for solitude\primitive recreation would be enhanced on about 200 acres. About 19 miles of redband trout habitat would benefit from improved riparian condition. Scientific values could be diminished on 5,800 acres of good condition rangeland. The bighorn sheep population would expand and fully occupy available habitat.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> (4,958 acres) Underground utility construction could reduce naturalness on about 550 acres. Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation could be diminished on about 4,400 acres affected by increased ORV use.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> (10,800 acres) About 19 miles of redband trout habitat would benefit from improved riparian condition. Another 3 miles of redband habitat would decline in condition. The bighorn sheep population would expand and fully occupy available habitat.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> (44,033 acres) Naturalness would be lost on 5,350 acres. Outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be diminished on 9,750 acres. Underground utility construction could also reduce naturalness on another 550 acres. Scientific/ecological values could be diminished on 11,300 acres of good condition sagebrush steppe rangeland. The bighorn sheep population would expand and fully occupy available habitat.</p>
Impacts on Recreation Use	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation use would be 3,665 visitor days, an increase of 2,915 annual visitor days over current use. Major use areas would be Big Jacks Creek Canyon with use about 75% nonhunting and 25% hunting. Opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting would not be affected.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> No significant impact.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> No significant impact.</p>
Impacts of Creek Pipeline Extensions (continued on next page)	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Naturalness would be lost and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation diminished on 5,350 acres. Scientific values (supplemental wilderness values) could be diminished on 4,400 acres of good condition rangeland affected by increased livestock grazing. 3 miles of redband trout habitat would decline in condition. There</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> No impact.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> No impact.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as the Proposed Action.</p>

Issue Topics	No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)	All Manageable Wilderness Alternative	Rim To Rim Wilderness Alternative
Impacts of Creek Pipeline Extensions (continued)(Big Jacks Creek WSA)	would be a slight improvement in wildlife habitat.		
Impacts on Selected Wildlife Species	<b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as Proposed Action.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as Proposed Action.  <b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Mule deer, pronghorn and sage grouse would remain stable.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> Mule deer, pronghorn and sage grouse populations would remain stable.  <b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as Proposed Action.
Impacts on Income and Jobs	<b>NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$96,812 of additional annual income and 7.1 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$63,850 for range improvements.	<b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$182,110 of additional annual income and 16 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$48,100 for range improvements and \$4,500 annually wilderness management.	<b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$196,933 of additional annual income and 16.35 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$63,850 for range improvements and \$4,500 annually for wilderness management.

## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of the entire Big Jacks Creek WSA or any portion of the WSA as wilderness would have no significant social or economic effects on Owyhee County.

## 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 wilderness inventory for the Big Jacks Creek roadless unit, 18 public commenters supported establishing a WSA and 23 opposed it. Reasons cited among those who supported establishment of a WSA were the area's spectacular scenery (seven comments), abundance of wildlife (six comments), outstanding hiking opportunities in the canyons (five comments), and large size (four comments). Those opposed to designation of the WSA cited the area is crossed by numerous roads (23 comments); the area has been proposed for a livestock watering pipeline (20 comments); water developments and fences preclude naturalness (17 comments); solitude is disrupted by frequent U.S. Air Force jet flights (nine comments); and the area is too open, hot and dry for recreation use (five comments).

During the public review of the Bruneau MFP, 72 out of 76 comments supported wilderness designation. Proponents of wilderness cited the following reasons: bighorn sheep habitat (27 comments), ecological values of relatively undisturbed vegetation communities (12 comments), wildlife habitat (nine comments), quality of wilderness characteristics (nine comments), redband trout habitat (four comments), and opportunities for primitive recreation (three comments).

During the public review of the Draft Jacks Creek Wilderness EIS, 151 written and oral comments addressing this WSA were received. Public hearings were held in Boise and Grand View, Idaho. Eighty-five commenters supported wilderness designation for all or a portion of the WSA, 40 commenters supported no wilderness for the WSA, while 26 commenters took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Among those supporting wilderness, 80 percent were Idaho residents with a majority from Ada County; 12 percent were from other western states; and eight percent were residents of eastern states. By far the most prevalent reason cited for wilderness designation was preservation of wildlife habitat, particularly California bighorn sheep habitat. The second most frequently cited reason for supporting wilderness designation was protection of pristine high desert ecosystems. Other reasons in support of wilderness were to provide primitive recreation opportunities and solitude; to preserve scenic quality; the proximity to Boise, Idaho; and to maximize protection of fisheries and riparian habitat. Twelve wilderness supporters pointed out that wilderness designation would have minimal resource conflicts with other resource uses.

About 85 percent of the comments opposing wilderness designation were from local residents with about 40 percent from Owyhee County, 35 percent from Ada County, and ten percent from Canyon and Elmore Counties. The remaining 15 percent were from residents of other western states. Twenty-two of these commenters believe that wilderness designation would discriminate against senior citizens and the handicapped. Other reasons for opposing wilderness were bighorn sheep do not need wilderness, wilderness is not effective management (too inflexible and costly), wilderness is not multiple use, Idaho has enough wilderness, wilderness values do not need wilderness designation for protection, wilderness would close the door to future oil and gas exploration work.

Several agencies commented on the Draft EIS. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Air Force and Idaho Department of Fish and Game supported wilderness designation. The Owyhee County Commissioners opposed designation. The Federal Aviation Agency and the Idaho State Historical Society did not express an alternative preference.

**APPENDIX I -- BIG JACKS CREEK 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 S., R. 3 E. Sec. 36	640	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 2 T. 10 S., R. 3 E. Sec. 16	640	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 3 T. 8 S., R. 4 E. Sec. 29 SW1/4NE1/4	40	1	Private	Private	No	Exchange	N/A	2,000
Parcel No. 4 T. 10 S., R. 3 E. Sec. 11 SE1/4SE1/4 Sec. 14 N1/2NE1/4	120	1	Private	Private	No	Exchange	N/A	5,000
Parcel No. 5 T. 10 S., R. 3 E. Sec. 13 NE1/4NE1/4 T. 10 S., R. 4 E. Sec. 18 N1/2NW1/4	120	1	Private	Private	No	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.

# Pole Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 24,509 acres

The Pole Creek WSA (ID-111-18) is located in Owyhee County about 80 miles south of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 24,509 acres of BLM land and six privately owned inholdings totaling 240 acres (see Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the north by the improved Deep Creek Road. Most of the remainder of the WSA is bordered by primitive dirt roads. Three cherry-stem roads (2.5 miles) enter the area.

The WSA has a wide diversity of topographic features including several shallow basalt-rimmed basins, juniper-covered hills and flat tablelands. Sagebrush communities dominate basins and plateaus while western juniper covers the hills, canyons and basalt rimrocks. Fifteen miles of perennial creeks wind through the canyons.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Management Framework Plan (MFP) for the Bruneau Resource Area finalized in March 1983. The recommendation for wilderness generated through the planning process was evaluated in the Jacks Creek Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in July 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness alternative where the entire 24,509 acre WSA would be released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; and an all wilderness alternative.

## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

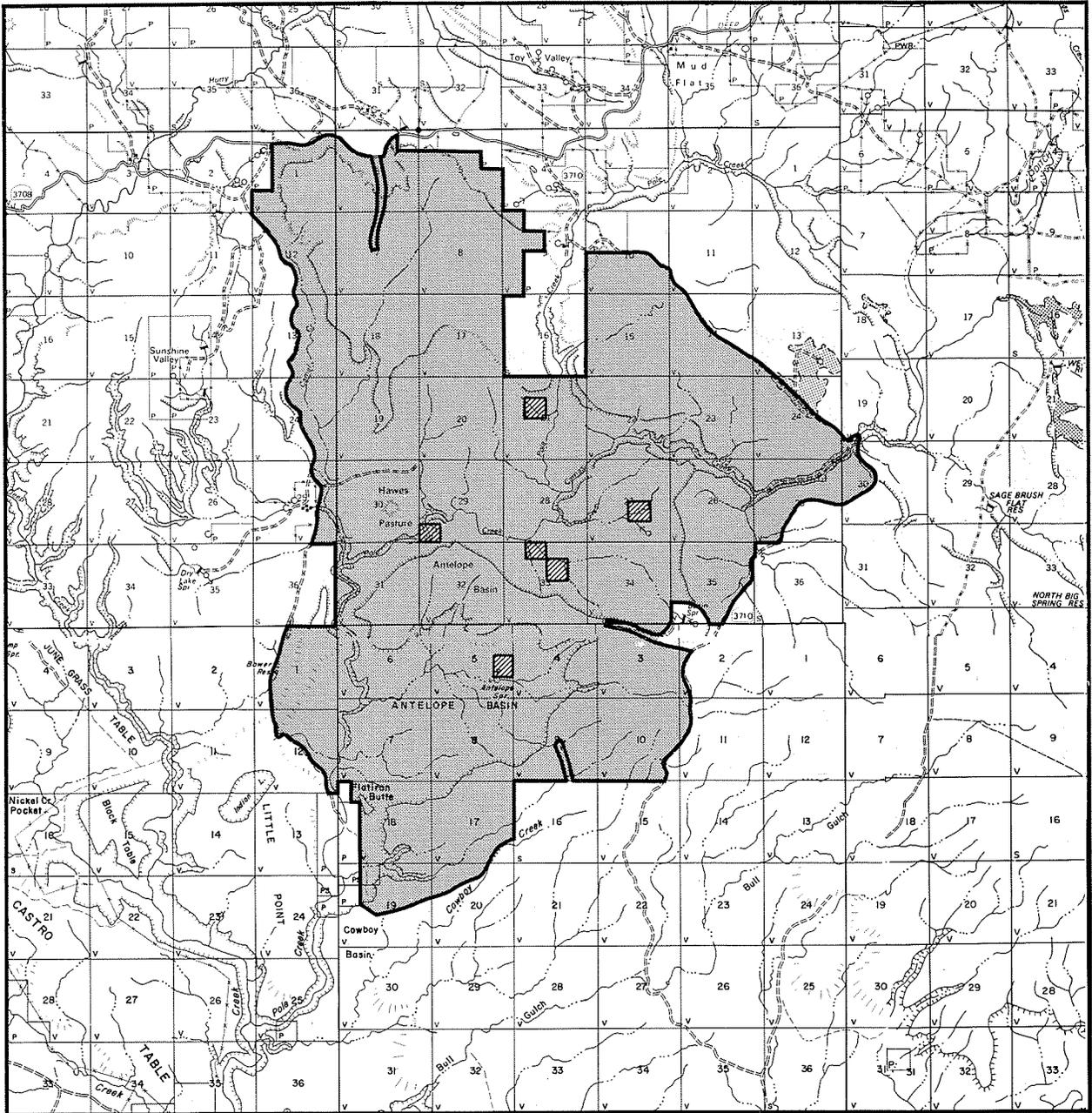
**0 acres recommended for  
wilderness  
24,509 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Pole Creek WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and to release the entire WSA (24,509 acres) for nonwilderness 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 area is shown on the Pole Creek Proposal map.

The quality of the wilderness values was an additional consideration in the recommendation. While the 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 signs of man which impact naturalness locally. Solitude opportunities available in the WSA are similar to those afforded by thousands of acres of land adjacent to the WSA. These opportunities are due to the remoteness and lack of human activity in the area and are not due to any intrinsic values unique to the WSA. While the WSA does offer outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, there are no significant wildlife species or habitats, geologic features or scientific and educational values in the area that would benefit from wilderness designation.

BLM is currently implementing more intensive grazing management systems within the WSA. The systems include such practices as deferred grazing, rest rotation, riparian habitat protection and adjustments in season of use. Resulting improvement in ecological condition and increases in available livestock forage would allow a 47 percent increase (1,172 AUM) in livestock grazing over current use in 20 years. Wilderness designation would limit grazing use to that occurring at the time of designation.

There is a proposal to improve the road along the eastern boundary of the WSA. Road upgrading would cause increased recreation use, especially during hunting season. Due to the lack of topographic and vegetative barriers, it would be very difficult to prevent motor vehicles from leaving the road and going into the area if designated as wilderness.



T. 9 S.  
 T. 10 S.  
 T. 10 S.  
 T. 11 S.

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-111-18  
 POLE CREEK  
 PROPOSAL**

FEBRUARY 1989

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	24,509
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	240
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,749</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	24,509
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>24,509</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	240

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Pole Creek WSA consists of hills and plateaus dissected by canyons. The WSA is predominantly natural but there are several site-specific signs of man that impact the area including 2.5 miles of cherry-stem roads, four miles of primitive vehicle routes (ways) and two small livestock water developments.

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

Opportunities for solitude are outstanding in the western and northern part of the WSA because of its size, vegetation and landforms. The best opportunities for solitude are found along the meandering Camas and Pole Creeks. Views up and down the canyons are usually less than .25 mile. Riparian vegetation in the canyon floors and juniper stands on the canyon slopes provide additional visual screening.

Opportunities for solitude are also outstanding in Wagon Box Basin and in the juniper-covered hills north of Pole Creek. In these areas, the combination of topographic relief and dense stands of juniper provides effective visual and auditory screening between visitor groups.

Only scattered juniper grows in Antelope Basin and on the southern plateaus of the WSA. Opportunities for solitude are less than outstanding in these areas because of the lack of topographic relief and vegetative screening.

Low elevation flights by military aircraft occasionally disrupt opportunities for solitude throughout the WSA. The entire southwest corner of Idaho is used for training military pilots in subsonic low elevation flight. Disruptions are usually brief, although occasionally aircraft can be seen or heard throughout the day.

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

Although the Pole Creek WSA has some outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation, they are of lower quality when compared to other WSAs in southwestern Idaho.

The major recreational attraction of the area is its wealth of archaeological sites. While many of the 150 sites are composed of relatively obscure surface scattering of tools and chipping debris, others are fascinating examples of prehistoric rock art. Basalt hunting blinds and rock walls line the canyon rims. Prehistoric artists have etched images of bighorn sheep and geometric designs into basalt walls lining Camas Creek. Eleven separate rock art locations have been found with several containing numerous individual panels.

## **D. Special Features**

Because of its archaeological wealth, about 35 percent of the Pole Creek WSA is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Pole Creek/Camas Creek Archaeological District. There are more than 150 prehistoric archaeological sites in the WSA including habitation sites, caves, hunting blinds, rock alignments and numerous petroglyphs. The density of sites indicates this remote desert area was once bustling with activity. Archaeological research suggests this area has been occupied for 6,000 to 7,000 years. This area has excellent potential for studying prehistoric settlement patterns and intercultural relationships. Intensive scientific archaeological investigations have been conducted in the area since 1975 including four archaeological "digs."

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Pole Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System; however, it would add a landform and vegetative type not presently represented in the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem. About 55 percent of the WSA's vegetation is in poor ecological condition with less than three percent in good ecological condition. Because of the generally poor ecological condition of the vegetation, this WSA is not a good representation of the pre-settlement sagebrush steppe ecosystem. This ecosystem is represented by three designated areas with 76,699 acres. There are 35 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	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 Pole 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 Pole Creek WSA would add to the geographical distribution of areas within the NWPS. Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon and plateau area not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

### **Manageability**

The entire WSA could effectively be managed as wilderness only if private inholdings were acquired on the parcels which would compromise wilderness characteristics.

There are six 40 acre private inholdings scattered throughout the central core of the WSA. This central portion of the WSA has little topographic or vegetative screening. It is characterized by broad, open basins with long sweeping views. The private inholdings are located in these basins and are visible from much of the WSA. Nonconforming uses on these private inholdings could compromise naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in much of the WSA. Providing motorized vehicle access to the inholdings would also impact naturalness and eliminate opportunities for solitude in much of the central part of the WSA. In this type of open terrain and with the distribution of private parcels, BLM cannot be sure that this area can be effectively managed in the long term to maintain its wilderness characteristics unless the inholdings were acquired.

There is a proposal to improve the road along the eastern boundary of the WSA to service a mining operation to the south. If this road is upgraded, recreation use along it would greatly increase and it would be difficult to prevent unauthorized motor vehicle travel into the area if designated as wilderness due to the lack of topographic and vegetative barriers.

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

An assessment of the mineral potential was done under the Geology, Mineral and Energy contract. There are no known mineral or energy resources in the WSA and the geology is not favorable for the discovery of significant marketable energy or mineral resources. There are no known mining claims or 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-111-18 (POLE CREEK)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	(24,509 acres) Naturalness would be lost and opportunities for primitive recreation would be diminished on 4,400 acres. There would be increased livestock trampling of archaeological sites in the Pole Creek/Camas Creek Archaeological District.	(24,509 acres) Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be enhanced on about 85 acres affected by road closures. Ongoing archaeological research and site stabilization would become more costly and could be limited.
Impacts on Recreation Use	Annual recreation use would be about 550 visitor days, an increase of 225 annual visitor days over current use. Opportunities to participate in off-road vehicle use or hunting would not be affected.	Annual recreation use would be about 475 visitor days, an increase of 150 visitor days over current use. Some sage grouse hunters could be displaced. There would be no significant impact on opportunities to participate in ORV use.
Impacts on Selected Wildlife Species	Mule deer would increase up to 5%. Pronghorn would increase up to 5%. Sage grouse would increase up to 10%.	Mule deer would increase up to 5%. Pronghorn would increase up to 5%. Sage grouse would increase up to 10%.
Impacts on Income and Jobs	There would be \$21,793 of additional annual income and .8 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$11,000 for range improvements.	There would be \$8,124 of additional annual income and .5 new jobs. Implementation costs would total \$4,400 annually for wilderness management.

## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Nondesignation or designation of the entire Pole Creek WSA or any portion of the WSA as wilderness would have no significant social or economic effects on Owyhee County.

## 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 alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness values.

During the wilderness inventory for the Pole Creek roadless unit, 14 public commenters supported the establishment of a WSA and two opposed it. Reasons cited among those who supported the establishment of a WSA were the area's archeological sites (five comments), exceptional scenery (four comments), and wildlife values (three comments). Those who opposed designation of the WSA cited the lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation.

During the public review of the Bruneau MFP, all 25 comments supported wilderness designation. Comments suggested that BLM had overstated wilderness manageability problems and that the area's archeological values warranted wilderness designation.

During the public review of the Draft Jacks Creek Wilderness EIS, 151 written and oral comments addressing this WSA were received. Public hearings were held in Boise and Grand View, Idaho. Seventy-seven commenters supported wilderness designation for all of the WSA, 48 commenters supported no wilderness for the WSA, while 26 commenters took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Among those supporting wilderness, 80 percent were Idaho residents with a majority from Ada County; 12 percent were from other western states; and eight percent were residents of eastern states. The most prevalent reasons cited for wilderness designation were preservation of cultural values and wildlife habitat. Other reasons supporting wilderness were to provide primitive recreation opportunities and solitude; to preserve scenic quality; the proximity to Boise, Idaho; and to maximize protection of riparian habitat. Twelve wilderness supporters pointed out that wilderness designation would have minimal resource conflicts with other resource uses.

About 85 percent of the comments opposing wilderness designation were from local residents with about 40 percent from Owyhee County, 35 percent from Ada County, and ten percent from Canyon and Elmore Counties. The remaining 15 percent were from residents of other western states. Twenty-two of these commenters believe that wilderness designation would discriminate against senior citizens and the handicapped. Other reasons for opposing wilderness were wilderness is not effective management (too inflexible and costly); wilderness is not multiple use; Idaho has enough wilderness; wilderness values do not need wilderness designation for protection; wilderness would close the door to future oil and gas exploration work.

Several agencies commented on the Draft EIS. The Department of the Air Force and supported wilderness designation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and the Owyhee County Commissioners supported no wilderness designation. The Federal Aviation Agency, Environmental Protection Agency and the Idaho State Historical Society commented on the DEIS but did not express an alternative preference.

# Sheep Creek West Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 11,680 acres

The Sheep Creek West WSA (ID-111-36A) is located in Owyhee County about 105 miles southeast of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 11,680 acres of BLM land with no nonfederal inholdings. The eastern half of the WSA is bounded by primitive dirt roads and most of the remainder of the area is bordered by fences.

The WSA is bisected by the spectacular 800-foot deep gorge of Sheep Creek Canyon. A series of cliffs, rock outcroppings and talus slopes descend to a dense riparian zone along the 6.5 miles of Sheep Creek. The gorge is surrounded by scenic plateau lands with quaking aspen trees highlighting a series of elongated buttes. Adjacent to the aspen groves are thick pockets of brush with snowberry the most prevalent species. Sagebrush and grass cover the remainder of the plateau.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Management Framework Plan (MFP) for the Bruneau Resource Area finalized in March 1983. The recommendation for wilderness generated through the planning process was evaluated in the Jacks Creek Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in July 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative where 11,680 acres would be designated as wilderness, which is the recommendation of this report; and a no wilderness alternative.

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**11,680 acres recommended for wilderness**

**0 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Sheep Creek West WSA is to designate the entire WSA (11,680 acres) as wilderness. This is the environmentally preferable alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term.

The 11,680 acres of federal land recommended for wilderness designation are shown as the nonshaded area on the Sheep Creek West Proposal map.

The area recommended for wilderness would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of the spectacular gorge of Sheep Creek and the surrounding scenic hills. The area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation within a natural setting.

This WSA has the widest diversity of plant communities among areas under wilderness review in the Boise District. It is located in an ecotone between the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem and a coniferous forest ecosystem which accounts for its wide diversity of plant communities. Five major ecological communities are well represented including big sagebrush, low sagebrush, mountain brush, quaking aspen woodlands and riparian communities. The WSA also contains significant intrusions of silver sagebrush communities. About 55 percent of the WSA is in good-to-excellent ecological condition and is indicative of pre-settlement vegetation. This is the only proposed wilderness area in the Boise District providing representation of mountain brush and quaking aspen woodland communities. These are also the only mountain brush and aspen communities under wilderness review in the District that are in good ecological condition. Sagebrush steppe vegetation once encompassed about ten percent of the continental U.S. or about 130,000,000 acres. The National Wilderness Preservation System currently includes about 41,545 acres of this ecosystem, although none of the designated areas include examples of the deep rhyolite/basalt canyons that characterize the landform of Sheep Creek West WSA. This WSA would be an excellent addition to the wilderness system as a representation of this ecosystem because of its diversity of plant communities, the good ecological condition of its vegetation and because it would add representation of deep rhyolite/basalt canyons to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Wilderness designation would have no significant impact on other resource uses. Domestic livestock grazing would remain at or near existing levels regardless of the wilderness decision. The area is of low mineral potential. The area can be managed in the long-term to protect and maintain wilderness characteristics. Rough topography and rocky soils would prevent or discourage motorized vehicle use in the vast majority of the area. About two-thirds of the boundary is fenced. Wilderness designation would provide long-term protection to an exceptionally scenic area with outstanding wilderness and ecological values.



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
SHEEP CREEK WEST**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	11,680
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
 Total	 11,680

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	11,680
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
 Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	 11,680
 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 Sheep Creek West WSA consists of a hilly area dissected by 6.5 miles of deep canyons. Numerous wildlife species including mule deer, pronghorn, sage grouse, raptors and redband trout are found in the area. About 93 percent of the area is natural appearing. Human imprints include nine small livestock water developments, a livestock trail, a few fences and several vague vehicle tracks (ways). The livestock trail was constructed during the wilderness review process without BLM authorization.

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

The WSA does not have outstanding opportunities for solitude because of the topography's potential to concentrate visitors along narrow corridors, the short length and configuration of the canyon and rim corridors and the lack of sufficient topographic and vegetative screening on the surrounding plateau.

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

Sheep Creek West WSA has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation because of its scenic, vegetative and topographic diversity, 6.5 miles of perennial streams with good trout fishing and excellent opportunities to view wildlife.

The primary recreation attraction of the WSA is the exceptionally scenic gorge of Sheep Creek. The narrow, V-shaped canyon plummets 800 feet in a series of cliffs, rock outcropping and talus slopes to a dense riparian vegetation zone along the creek. Scattered stands of aspen occur on the canyon slopes in areas of spring seepage.

The spectacular canyon vistas seen from the rim are supplemented by the scenic plateau. Aspen thickets cover the north and eastern rimrocks of the area's small tables. The aspen grows adjacent to springs and where late spring snowpack lingers.

The plateau and canyon corridors of the WSA provide primitive recreation opportunities for a variety of uses such as hiking, backpacking, fishing and hunting. On the plateau where access routes are excellent, spectacular vistas in a natural setting are available without the physical demands normally associated with wilderness travel. Those who seek greater physical demands and challenges can descend 800 feet and travel in the river corridor where large boulders and dense riparian vegetation provide obstacles.

Trout fishing is good in the canyon depths where Sheep Creek winds through the WSA. The most common game fish is redband trout. Mule deer are frequently seen in the canyon and adjacent to the aspen groves on the plateau. Large herds of pronghorn antelope are often seen on the plateaus.

## **D. Special Features**

The entire Sheep Creek West WSA is exceptionally scenic with the aspen-banded plateaus rivaling the 800-foot deep canyon of Sheep Creek in scenic splendor. In the distance, the snow-capped mountains of Nevada's Jarbidge Wilderness provide a spectacular backdrop. The narrow, V-shaped canyon of Sheep Creek, the lush green riparian oasis adjacent to the creek, pockets of aspen in the canyon and the narrow bands of aspen that dissect the plateau create a contrasting variety of landform and color that changes with the seasons as the aspen turn from spring's emerging green to fall's brilliant gold.

The WSA includes more than 6,300 acres of sagebrush steppe plateaus in near-pristine condition. These plateaus include the widest diversity of vegetative communities found in any areas under wilderness review in the Boise District. These are rare remnants of an ecosystem that once dominated more than ten percent of the United States continental land base.

The WSA includes 6.5 miles of redband trout habitat. This desert-adapted trout species is found in southern Idaho, eastern Oregon and northern Nevada and has been classified as a sensitive species.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System; however, it would add a landform not presently represented in the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem. The landform of the Sheep Creek West WSA is dominated by a deep rhyolite- and basalt-lined canyon. Vegetation is characteristic of the sagebrush steppe sagebrush/bunchgrass ecosystem. This WSA is particularly valuable as a representation of this landform/vegetation combination because of its diversity of vegetation communities and because more than 6,300 acres of the sagebrush steppe plateau are in good-to-excellent ecological condition, characteristic of pre-settlement vegetation. This ecosystem is represented by three designated areas with 76,699 acres. There are 35 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	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		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 Sheep Creek West 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 Sheep Creek West WSA would not add significantly to the geographical distribution of areas within the NWPS. Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon and plateau area not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

### **Manageability**

The entire WSA can be managed in the long term to protect and maintain its wilderness characteristics and values. It contains no private inholdings, mining claims or mineral leases. Eight of the area's nine livestock water developments were constructed under the Bureau's Wilderness Interim Management Policy (IMP) and the cooperative agreement specifies that motorized access would not be necessary for maintenance if the area were designated wilderness. The other livestock water development is already serviced by a primitive vehicle route. About two-thirds of the WSA boundary is fenced. Rough topography and rocky soils would prevent or discourage motorized use in the vast majority of the area.

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

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Mines (BM) completed a mineral assessment of the Sheep Creek West WSA in 1988.

Investigations conducted by the USGS and BM determined the WSA was of low mineral and energy resource potential for metals, geothermal resources and oil and gas. No claims, leases or mineral workings were identified.

Geodes found in a small area along the southeastern boundary of the WSA lack features demanded by rockhounds and gem dealers but could be of interest to collectors. Placer gold occurs in the sand and gravel of Sheep Creek but values are too low to support commercial mining at the current market value. The occurrence could attract recreational panning or sluicing.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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

**Table 4**

**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative  
WSA ID-111-136A (SHEEP CREEK WEST)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	(11,680 acres) Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be enhanced on about 50 acres affected by road closures. Opportunities for solitude could be slightly diminished in Sheep Creek Canyon as recreation use increases.	(11,680 acres) Opportunities for solitude could be slightly diminished in Sheep Creek Canyon as recreation use increases.
Impacts on Recreation Use	Annual recreation use would be about 200 visitor days, an increase of 150 annual visitor days over current use. There would be no significant impact on opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting.	Annual recreation use would be about 200 visitor days, an increase of 150 annual visitor days over current use. Opportunities to participate in off-road vehicle use or hunting would not be affected.
Impacts on Selected Wildlife Species	Mule deer would increase up to 5%. Pronghorn would increase up to 5%. Sage grouse would increase up to 10%.	Mule deer would increase up to 5%. Pronghorn would increase up to 5%. Sage grouse would increase up to 5%.
Impacts on Income and Jobs	There would be \$4,705 of additional annual income and .3 new jobs. Implementation costs would be \$1,800 annually for wilderness management.	There would be \$4,705 of additional annual income and .3 new jobs. There would be no implementation costs.

## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of the entire Sheep Creek West WSA or any portion of the WSA as wilderness would have no significant social or economic effects on Owyhee County.

## 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 wilderness inventory for the Sheep Creek West roadless unit, 20 public commenters supported establishing a WSA and five opposed it. Reasons cited among those who supported establishment of a WSA were the area's spectacular scenery (six comments), outstanding opportunities for hiking and backpacking (five comments), fishing opportunities (two comments), natural appearance (two comments), its abundance of wildlife (two comments), archaeological sites (two comments), and its geological values (two comments). Those opposed to designation of the WSA cited opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation were limited to the canyon (three comments), a major livestock trail crosses the WSA (two comments), imprints of humans are frequently found in the area (two comments), and that the area can be better managed under multiple use (two comments).

During the public review of the Bruneau MFP, 26 out of 30 comments supported wilderness designation. Most of these cited the area's ecological values as the primary reason for wilderness designation and several suggested that livestock grazing should be discontinued in pristine portions of the proposed wilderness.

During the public review of the Draft Jacks Creek Wilderness EIS, 151 written and oral comments addressing this WSA were received. Public hearings were held in Boise and Grand View, Idaho. Seventy-seven commenters supported wilderness designation for all of the WSA, 48 commenters supported no wilderness for the WSA, while 26 commenters took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Among those supporting wilderness, 80 percent were Idaho residents with a majority from Ada County; 12 percent were from other western states; and eight percent were residents of eastern states. The reasons cited for wilderness designation were preservation of wildlife habitat, to provide primitive recreation opportunities and solitude, to preserve scenic quality, and to maximize protection of fisheries and riparian habitat. Twelve wilderness supporters pointed out that wilderness designation would have minimal resource conflicts with other resource uses.

About 85 percent of the comments opposing wilderness designation were from local residents with about 40 percent from Owyhee County, 35 percent from Ada County, and ten percent from Canyon and Elmore Counties. The remaining 15 percent were from residents of other western states. Twenty-two of these commenters believe that wilderness designation would discriminate against senior citizens and the handicapped. Other reasons for opposing wilderness were wilderness is not effective management (too inflexible and costly), wilderness is not multiple use, Idaho has enough wilderness, wilderness values do not need wilderness designation for protection, wilderness would close the door to future oil and gas exploration work.

Several agencies commented on the draft EIS. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Air Force and Idaho Department of Fish and Game supported wilderness designation. The Owyhee County Commissioners opposed designation. The Federal Aviation Agency, Environmental Protection Agency and the Idaho State Historical Society did not express an alternative preference.

# Sheep Creek East Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 5,050 acres

The Sheep Creek East WSA (ID-111-36B) is located in Owyhee County about 100 miles southeast of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 5,050 acres of BLM land with no nonfederal inholdings.

About 15 percent of the WSA is bordered by primitive dirt roads and the remainder of the WSA boundary is defined by legal subdivisions, a boundary delineated to exclude livestock water developments and primitive vehicle routes from the area being considered for wilderness.

The WSA straddles Sheep Creek Canyon. The sheer-walled cliffs and talus slopes of the 600-foot deep gorge dominate the area. In the canyon depths, Sheep Creek winds its way through riparian vegetation. Sagebrush and grasses dominate the low hills and buttes of the plateau surrounding the four-mile long gorge within the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Management Framework Plan (MFP) for the Bruneau Resource Area finalized in March 1983. The recommendation for wilderness generated through the planning process was evaluated in the Jacks Creek Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in July 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness alternative where the entire 5,050 acre WSA would be released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; and an all wilderness alternative.

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

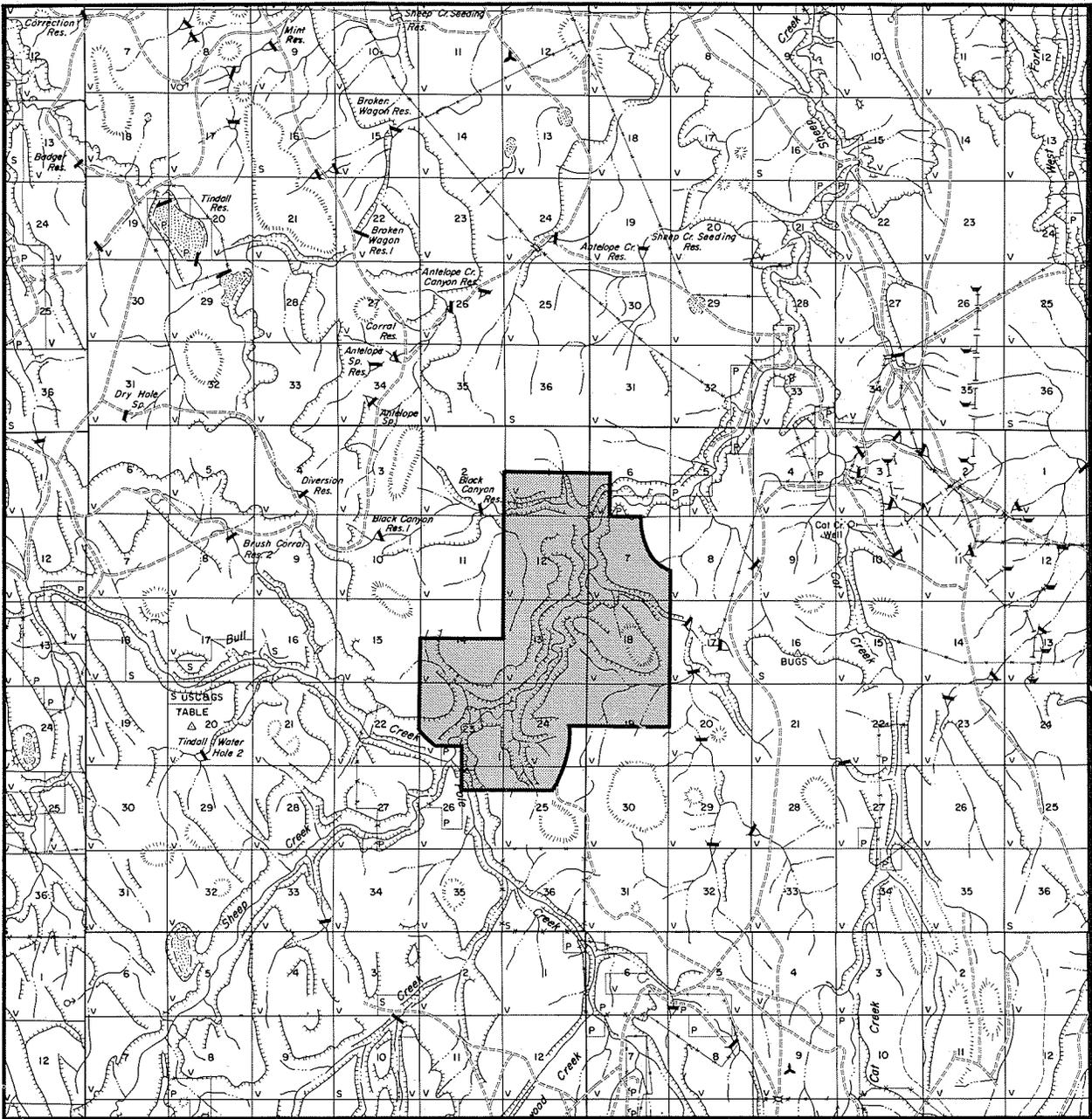
**0 acres recommended for wilderness**

**5,050 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Sheep Creek East WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness, and release all 5,050 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. The area is shown on the Sheep Creek East Proposal map.

The quality of the wilderness values was an additional consideration in the recommendation. While the 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 signs of man which impact naturalness locally. Solitude opportunities available in the WSA are similar to those afforded by thousands of acres of land adjacent to the WSA. These opportunities are due to the remoteness and lack of human activity in the area and are not due to any intrinsic values unique to the WSA. The WSA does not offer outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. There are no significant wildlife species or habitats, geologic features or scientific and educational values in the area that would benefit from wilderness designation.

Without wilderness designation, there is the potential to increase domestic livestock grazing by an additional 198 AUMs. This increase is due to anticipated improvement in ecological condition of the vegetation over the next 20 years. The recommendation for this WSA would permit increases in grazing to occur as additional forage becomes available.



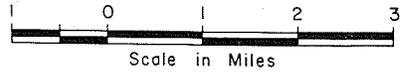
T. 14 S.  
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T. 16 S.

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-111-36B  
SHEEP CREEK EAST  
PROPOSAL**

FEBRUARY 1989

**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
SHEEP CREEK EAST**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	5,050
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,050</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	5,050
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>5,050</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Sheep Creek East WSA is dominated by a 600-foot deep canyon. The WSA is predominantly natural but there are several site-specific signs of man that impact the area including a .5-mile primitive vehicle route (way).

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

Opportunities for solitude are less than outstanding in the WSA because of the potential for visitors to concentrate along narrow corridors, the short length of the canyon and rim corridors and the lack of sufficient topographic or vegetative screening on the surrounding plateau.

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

Sheep Creek East Creek WSA has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation because of its scenic canyon, landform diversity, 6.5 miles of perennial creeks with good trout fishing and frequent opportunities to view wildlife.

The recreational attractions and scenic vistas of the canyon system are supplemented by the variety of landforms on the surrounding plateau. The flat buttes, low hills and intervening swales of the plateau provide an interesting and varying landscape for those traversing the plateau to reach the canyon. Pronghorn antelope are common on the plateau and mule deer are frequently seen in the canyon. However, there are no significant wildlife habitats, geologic features or scientific and educational values in the area that would attract a large number of visitors to the area.

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

There are no special features in the WSA. The 600-foot deep canyon of Sheep Creek is a scenic chasm bisecting the rolling sagebrush plateaus of the WSA. However, the canyon in the adjacent Sheep Creek West WSA, an area recommended for wilderness designation, is more spectacular.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS); however, it would add a landform and vegetative type 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 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
Dry Domain/Intermountain Sagebrush Province (Sheep Creek East)				
	<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 Sheep Creek East 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**

<b>Population Centers</b>	<b><u>NWPS Areas</u></b>		<b><u>Other BLM Studies</u></b>	
	<b>areas</b>	<b>acres</b>	<b>areas</b>	<b>acres</b>
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250

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

The Sheep Creek East WSA would not add significantly to the geographical distribution of areas within the NWPS. Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon and plateau area not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

### **Manageability**

It would be difficult to manage the WSA in the long term to maintain its outstanding primitive recreation opportunities. The WSA does not have outstanding opportunities for solitude.

The majority of recreation use in this WSA is expected to be concentrated in the four-mile long canyon of Sheep Creek and on the rims adjacent to the canyons. The relatively short length of these travel corridors (four to six miles) limits the number of groups that could visit the area without frequently encountering other visitors. Satisfactory primitive recreation experiences are dependent on maintaining some opportunities for solitude. Primitive recreation is not outstanding if visitors are constantly encountering other groups. In the long term, it could be necessary to regulate and limit the recreation use to maintain opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

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

An assessment of the mineral potential was done under the Geology, Mineral and Energy contract. There are no known mineral or energy resources in the WSA and geologic environments are not favorable for the discovery of significant marketable energy or mineral resources. There are no known mining claims or 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-111-36B (SHEEP CREEK EAST)

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	(5,050 acres) Opportunities for solitude could be slightly diminished in Sheep Creek Canyon as recreation use increases.	(4,050 acres) Naturalness and opportunities for solitude\primitive recreation would be enhanced on about 5 acres affected by road closures. Opportunities for solitude could be slightly diminished in Sheep Creek Canyon as recreation use increases.
Impacts on Recreation Use	Annual recreation use would be about 200 visitor days, an increase of about 150 annual visitor days over current use. Opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting would not be affected.	Annual recreation use would be about 200 visitor days, an increase of 150 annual visitor days over current use. There would be no significant impact on opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting.
Impacts on Selected Wildlife Species	Mule deer would increase up to 5%. Pronghorn would increase up to 5%. Sage grouse would increase up to 10%.	Mule deer would increase up to 5%. Pronghorn would increase up to 5%. Sage grouse would increase up to 10%.
Impacts on Income and Jobs	There would be \$6,803 of additional annual income and .4 new jobs. There would be no implementation costs.	There would be \$4,105 of additional annual income and .3 new jobs. Implementation costs would be \$5,500 annually for wilderness management.

## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Nondesignation or designation of the entire Sheep Creek East WSA or any portion of the WSA as wilderness would have no significant social or economic effects on Owyhee County.

## 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 wilderness inventory for the Sheep Creek East roadless unit, 13 public commenters supported establishing a WSA and one opposed it. Reasons cited among those who supported establishment of a WSA were the area's outstanding opportunities for solitude (seven comments), spectacular scenery (five comments), and opportunities for hiking and backpacking (three comments). The comment opposing designation of the WSA stated the area lacked naturalness and outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation or solitude.

During the public review of the Bruneau MFP, all 30 comments supported wilderness designation. Proponents of wilderness cited the following reasons: the area's exceptional scenic values (ten comments); potential bighorn sheep habitat (nine comments); and potential ecological values (seven comments).

During the public review of the Draft Jacks Creek Wilderness EIS, 151 written and oral comments addressing this WSA were received. Public hearings were held in Boise and Grand View, Idaho. Eighty-four commenters supported wilderness designation for all of the WSA, 41 commenters supported no wilderness for the WSA, while 26 commenters took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Among those supporting wilderness, 80 percent were Idaho residents with a majority from Ada County; 12 percent were from other western states; and eight percent were residents of eastern states. The most prevalent reasons cited for wilderness designation were preservation of wildlife habitat, and protection of pristine high desert ecosystems. Other reasons in support of wilderness were to provide primitive recreation opportunities and solitude, to preserve scenic quality, and to maximize protection of fisheries and riparian habitat. Twelve wilderness supporters pointed out that wilderness designation would have minimal resource conflicts with other resource uses.

About 85 percent of the comments opposing wilderness designation were from local residents with about 40 percent from Owyhee County, 35 percent from Ada County, and ten percent from Canyon and Elmore Counties. The remaining 15 percent were from residents of other western states. Twenty-two of these commenters believe that wilderness designation would discriminate against senior citizens and the handicapped. Other reasons for opposing wilderness were wilderness is not effective management (too inflexible and costly), wilderness is not multiple use, Idaho has enough wilderness, wilderness values do not need wilderness designation for protection, wilderness would close the door to future oil and gas exploration work.

Several agencies commented on the Draft EIS. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and the Owyhee County Commissioners supported no wilderness designation. The Department of the Air Force supported designation of the entire WSA as wilderness. The Federal Aviation Agency, Environmental Protection Agency and the Idaho State Historical Society commented on the DEIS but did not express an alternative preference.

# Upper Deep Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 11,510 acres

The Upper Deep Creek WSA (ID-111-44) is located in Owyhee County about 90 miles southwest of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 11,510 acres of BLM land with no nonfederal inholdings.

The boundaries of the WSA are delineated by primitive dirt roads, private property, fence lines and drainages. One short cherry-stem road (.25 mile) enters the southeastern part of the area.

The northern half of the WSA is dominated by a rugged mountainside dissected by twisting canyons and covered with basalt rock outcroppings and juniper woodlands. Fifteen miles of canyons connect the juniper woodlands with plateaus in the southern half of the WSA. Canyons alternate between 350-foot deep sheer-walled cliffs and long talus slopes. Juniper dots the cliffs while riparian vegetation lines the 15 miles of perennial creeks. Plateau areas in the southern part of the WSA are generally flat with sparse, low-lying sagebrush and grass vegetation.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Management Framework Plan (MFP) for the Bruneau Resource Area finalized in March 1983. The recommendation for wilderness generated through the planning process was evaluated in the Jacks Creek Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in July 1989. Four alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness alternative where the entire 11,510 acre WSA would be released for other uses, which is the recommendation of this report; an all wilderness alternative; a partial wilderness alternative where 10,355 acres would be designated as wilderness and 1,155 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses; and a partial wilderness alternative where 5,700 acres would be designated as wilderness and 5,810 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness.

## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**0 acres recommended for  
wilderness  
11,510 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

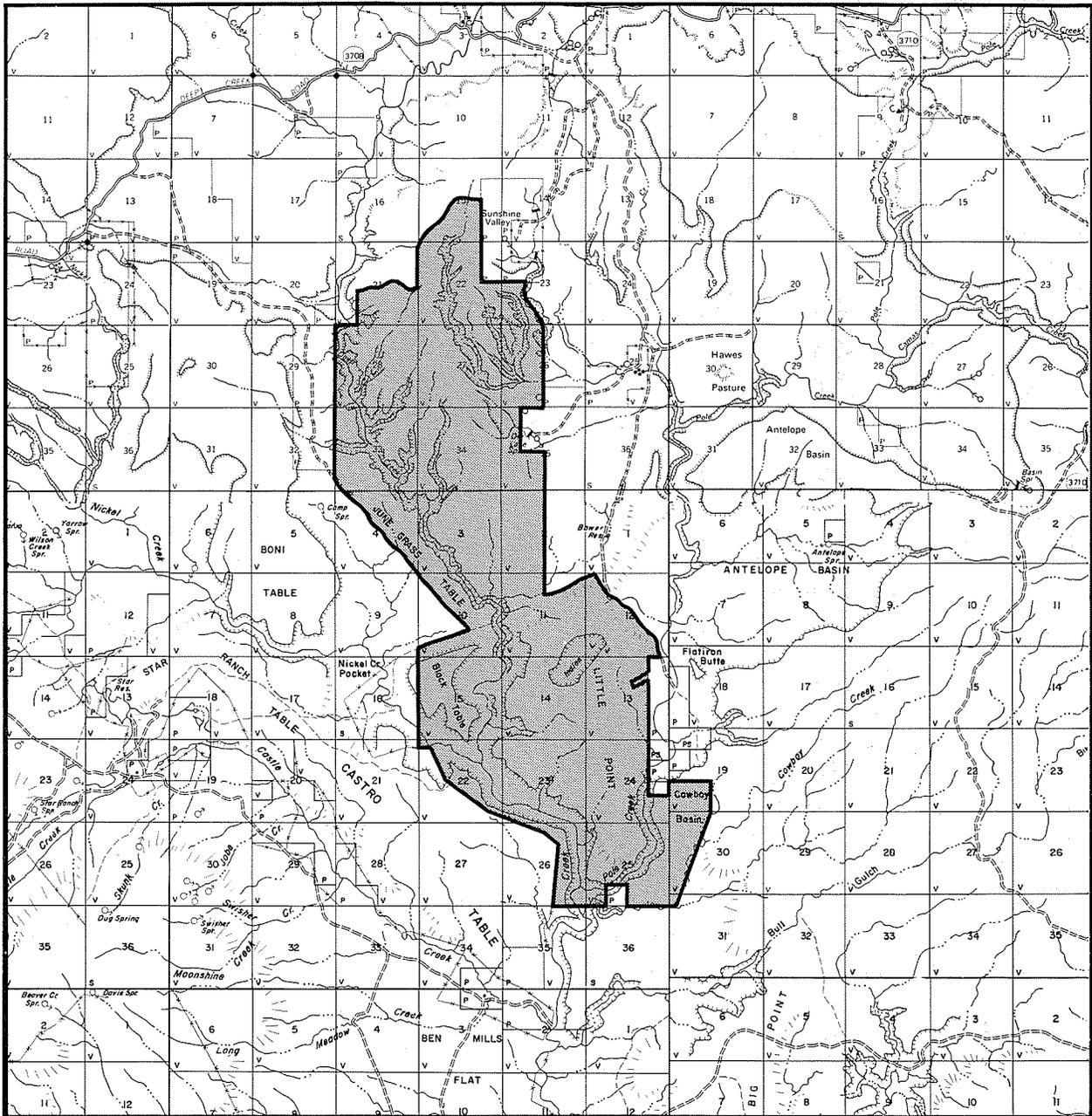
The recommendation for the Upper Deep Creek WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and to release the entire WSA (11,510 acres) for nonwilderness uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long-term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. The area is shown on the Upper Deep Creek Proposal map.

The quality of the wilderness values was an additional consideration in the recommendation. While the 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 signs of man which impact naturalness locally. Solitude opportunities available in the WSA are similar to those afforded by thousands of acres of land adjacent to the WSA. These opportunities are due to the remoteness and lack of human activity in the area and are not due to any intrinsic values unique to the WSA. The WSA does not offer outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. There are no significant wildlife species or habitats, geologic features or scientific and educational values in the area that would benefit from wilderness designation.

The recommendation would allow for an additional 417 AUMs of livestock grazing in 4,660 acres of plateau in the eastern part of the WSA. Due to the lack of vegetative and topographic barriers, it would be difficult to prevent unauthorized motor vehicle use on 5,810 acres of plateau, especially during hunting season.

After areas with long-term wilderness manageability problems and significant resource conflicts have been removed, 5,700 acres of the WSA remain. This includes the Deep Creek Canyon and the Slack Mountain areas.

The Deep Creek Canyon portion of this area would be difficult to manage as wilderness because of its narrow configuration, relatively shallow depth and the ease of mobility between the canyons and the adjacent plateau. The primary wilderness value of the Slack Mountain portion of the WSA is outstanding opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation. This value is associated with the rugged, convoluted terrain and dense western juniper cover which characterizes the area.



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T. 11 S.

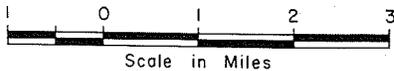
T. 11 S.

T. 12 S.

R. 4 W. | R. 3 W.

R. 3 W. | R. 2 W.

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



**ID-111-44  
UPPER DEEP CREEK  
PROPOSAL**

FEBRUARY 1989

**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
UPPER DEEP CREEK**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	11,510
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,510</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	11,510
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>11,510</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Upper Deep Creek WSA consists of mountain and plateau areas dissected by canyons. Wildlife species including mule deer, pronghorn, sage grouse, raptors and redband trout are found in the area. The WSA is predominantly natural but there are several site-specific signs of man that impact the area including one small livestock water development, one historic cabin, two miles of fence, a .25-mile cherry-stem road and three miles of primitive vehicle routes (ways).

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

Opportunities for solitude are outstanding in one-half of the WSA because of the vegetative and topographic screening found in the 15 miles of rugged canyons which meander through the WSA and in the juniper-covered hills in the northern end of the WSA.

Opportunities for solitude are less than outstanding on Little Point Plateau in the southeastern part of the WSA. The plateau is generally flat to slightly rolling and is vegetated with sparse, low-growing sagebrush and grass species. The relatively small size of the plateau and the lack of sufficient topographic or vegetative screening preclude exceptional opportunities for solitude. It is anticipated that even with light recreation use, visitors traversing the plateau would frequently see or hear other groups.

The meandering character of Deep Creek generally limits views up and down the canyon to less than .25 mile. Riparian vegetation in the canyon floor and isolated juniper stands on moderate canyon slopes provide additional visual screening between visitor groups. A large number of visitors could utilize the canyon for primitive recreation with little likelihood of encountering other groups.

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

Although the Upper Deep Creek WSA has some outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation, they are of lower quality when compared to other WSAs in southwestern Idaho.

The major recreational attraction of the WSA is the wide diversity of landforms that are compacted into a relatively small area with topography that allows excellent mobility throughout the area. The plateau, the canyons and the rugged hills can all be visited on foot in a day. While the meandering canyons and juniper-covered hills are scenic, in combination and contrast with the flat plateau, they provide a vista of changing topographic and vegetative landforms. However, there are no significant wildlife habitats, geologic features or scientific and educational values in the area that would attract a large number of visitors to the area. The area is not as scenic as many other WSAs in southwestern Idaho.

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

Because of its archaeological wealth, about 20 percent of the Upper Deep Creek WSA is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Pole Creek/Camas Creek Archaeological District. Over 20 prehistoric archaeological sites have been found adjacent to canyons in the southern half of the WSA. Sites include habitation areas, caves, hunting blinds and basalt rock alignments. Archaeological research indicates this area has been occupied for the past 6,000 to 7,000 years. This area has excellent potential for studying prehistoric settlement patterns and intercultural relationships. Intensive scientific archaeological investigations have been conducted in the area since 1975 including an archaeological "dig" in 1983.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System; however, it would add a landform and vegetative type 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 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
Dry Domain/Intermountain Sagebrush Province (Upper Deep Creek WSA)				
	<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 Upper Deep 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 Upper Deep Creek WSA would add to the geographical distribution of areas within the NWPS. In southwestern Idaho, the WSA would add a desert canyon, plateau and mountainside area to the wilderness system and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

### **Manageability**

About 90 percent of the WSA can be managed effectively in the long term to maintain its wilderness values. About 1,150 acres in two narrow strips on the western and eastern boundaries of the WSA would be difficult to effectively manage as wilderness. These areas of open, flat terrain lie between WSA boundary roads and canyon rims. These boundary roads are used during fall hunting season. There are no natural features to discourage or prevent off-road vehicle use. The open, flat terrain would make it difficult to post vehicle use restrictions. During hunting season, unintentional violations of these regulations could occur.

Much of Little Point Plateau also lacks vegetative and topographic barriers to discourage or prevent unauthorized motorized vehicle use. This, however, is not an insurmountable wilderness management problem since the only vehicle access to the plateau is via a narrow plateau corridor less than .5 mile wide. Signing and fencing of this .5-mile stretch would eliminate any unintentional vehicle trespass problems on Little Point Plateau.

The only other potential wilderness manageability problem is with Deep Creek Canyon. If the Little Point Plateau is not designated as wilderness because of conflicts with potential increases in domestic livestock grazing, Deep Creek Canyon would be difficult to manage as wilderness because of its narrow configuration, relatively shallow depth and the ease of mobility between the canyon and the adjacent plateau.

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

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Mines (BM) completed a mineral assessment for 5,700 acres of the Upper Deep Creek WSA in 1986.

The assessment found that the area has moderate potential for small gold placers and low potential for gold and silver resources in epithermal deposits. The area also has low potential for tin, uranium, oil, gas and geothermal energy resources. The southern part has low potential for diatomite. Gold found in three samples collected from sand and gravelly bars along Deep Creek indicates that the area may be attractive for recreational or small-scale commercial suction-dredge operations. There is a large diatomite deposit about five miles southeast of the study area.

In 1989, a 60-day public review of the USGS/BM mineral survey report for the WSA was conducted. During the review, comments were submitted which resulted in follow-up consideration by the USGS. Based on this reevaluation, the USGS upgraded the mineral potential rating from low to moderate for undiscovered resources of low-grade, epithermal hot-spring gold and silver deposits in the WSA.

There are no mining claims and active mineral leases in the WSA and no minerals have been produced from the area.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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

**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-111-44 (UPPER DEEP CREEK)**

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (No Action Alternative)	All Wilderness Alternative	All Manageable Wilderness Alternative	Minimum Resource Conflict Alternative
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<b>NONWILDERNESS</b> (11,510 acres) Naturalness would be lost and opportunities for primitive recreation would be diminished on 640 acres affected by firewood cutting. Opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude would also be diminished on 1,150 acres affected by increased ORV use. There would be increased livestock trampling of archaeological sites in the Pole Creek/Camas Creek Archaeological District.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> (11,510 acres) Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be enhanced on about 40 acres. Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation could be diminished on 1,150 acres affected by increased vehicle traffic. Ongoing archaeological research and site stabilization would become more costly.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> (10,355 acres) Naturalness and opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation would be enhanced on about 40 acres. Ongoing archaeological research and site stabilization would become more costly.  <b>NONWILDERNESS</b> (1,155 acres) Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be diminished by increased ORV use.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> (5,700 acres) No significant impact.  <b>NONWILDERNESS</b> (5,810 acres) Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be diminished on 1,150 acres affected by increased ORV use. There would be increased livestock trampling of archaeological sites in the Pole Creek/Camas Creek Archaeological District.
Impacts on Recreation Use	<b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation use would be about 600 visitor days, an increase of 275 annual visitor days over current use. Opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting would not be affected.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> Annual recreation use would be about 600 visitor days, an increase of 275 annual visitor days over current use. There would be no significant impact on opportunities to participate in ORV use or hunting.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the All Wilderness Alternative.  <b>NONWILDERNESS</b> No significant impact.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the All Wilderness Alternative.  <b>NONWILDERNESS</b> No significant impact.
Impacts on Selected Wildlife Species	<b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Mule deer would increase up to 5%. Pronghorn would increase up to 5%. Sage grouse would increase up to 10%.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> Mule deer would increase up to 10%. Pronghorn would increase up to 10%. Sage grouse would increase up to 10%.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the All Wilderness Alternative.  <b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as Proposed Action.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> Same as the All Wilderness Alternative.  <b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Same as Proposed Action.
Impacts on Income and Jobs	<b>NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$14,791 of additional annual income and .8 new jobs. There would be no implementation costs.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> There would be \$8,524 of additional annual income and .7 new jobs. Implementation costs would be \$1,800 annually for wilderness management.	<b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$9,014 in additional income and .7 new jobs. Implementation costs would be \$1,800 annually for wilderness management.	<b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There would be \$14,696 of additional annual income and .8 new jobs. Implementation costs would be \$1,800 annually for wilderness management.

## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of the Upper Deep Creek WSA or any portion of the WSA as wilderness would have no significant social or economic effects on Owyhee County.

## 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 alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness values.

During the wilderness inventory for the Upper Deep Creek roadless unit, two public commenters supported the establishment of a WSA and 13 opposed it. These comments were received in response to the state director's proposed decision to identify a 40,486 acre unit as a WSA. Following the public comment period, the state director's final decision trimmed the WSA down to the present 11,510 acres. Reasons cited among those who opposed establishment of a WSA were the area includes many roads (11 comments), is used by very few recreationists (ten comments), is not natural appearing and includes many human imprints (seven comments), wilderness conflicts with grazing management objectives (seven comments), recreation opportunities are limited because of poor access (six comments), and wilderness would affect adjacent state and private lands (seven comments). Those supporting designation of the area as a WSA cited the area's naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude\primitive recreation.

During the public review of the Bruneau MFP, 31 out of 34 comments supported wilderness designation. Those supporting wilderness designation stated that plateaus should be included in the proposed wilderness because of their recreation and ecological values which outweighed livestock production values. Those opposed to wilderness designation stated the area was too small for a wilderness and that solitude was frequently interrupted by low-flying military aircraft.

During the public review of the Draft Jacks Creek Wilderness EIS, 151 written and oral comments addressing this WSA were received. Public hearings were held in Boise and Grand View, Idaho. Eighty-four commenters supported wilderness designation for all or portion of the WSA, 41 commenters supported no wilderness for the WSA, while 26 commenters took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Among those supporting wilderness, 80 percent were Idaho residents with a majority from Ada County; 12 percent were from other western states; and eight percent were residents of eastern states. The reasons cited for wilderness designation were preservation of wildlife habitat, providing primitive recreation opportunities and solitude, preserving scenic quality, protecting archaeological values and maximizing protection of riparian habitat. Twelve wilderness supporters pointed out that wilderness designation would have minimal resource conflicts with other resource uses.

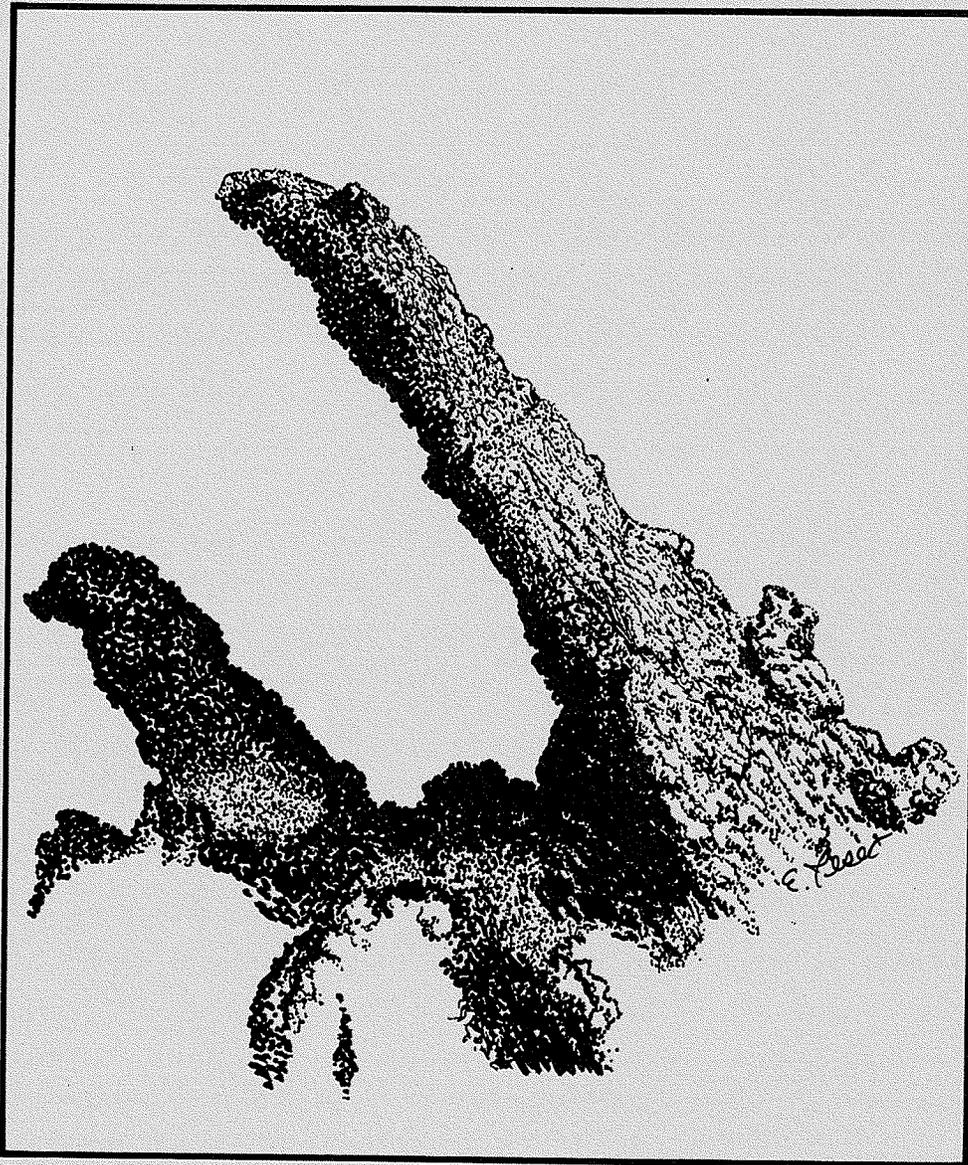
About 85 percent of the comments opposing wilderness designation were from local residents with about 40 percent from Owyhee County, 35 percent from Ada County, and ten percent from Canyon and Elmore Counties. The remaining 15 percent were from residents of other western states. Twenty-two of these commenters believe that wilderness designation would discriminate against senior citizens and the handicapped. Other reasons for opposing wilderness were wilderness is not effective management (too inflexible and costly), wilderness is not

multiple use, Idaho has enough wilderness, wilderness values do not need wilderness designation for protection, wilderness would close the door to future oil and gas exploration work.

Several agencies commented on the Draft EIS. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Air Force and Idaho Department of Fish and Game supported wilderness designation. The Owyhee County Commissioners opposed designation. The Federal Aviation Agency, Environmental Protection Agency and the Idaho State Historical Society did not express an alternative preference.

# SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC WSA RECOMMENDATIONS

## EASTERN IDAHO WILDERNESS



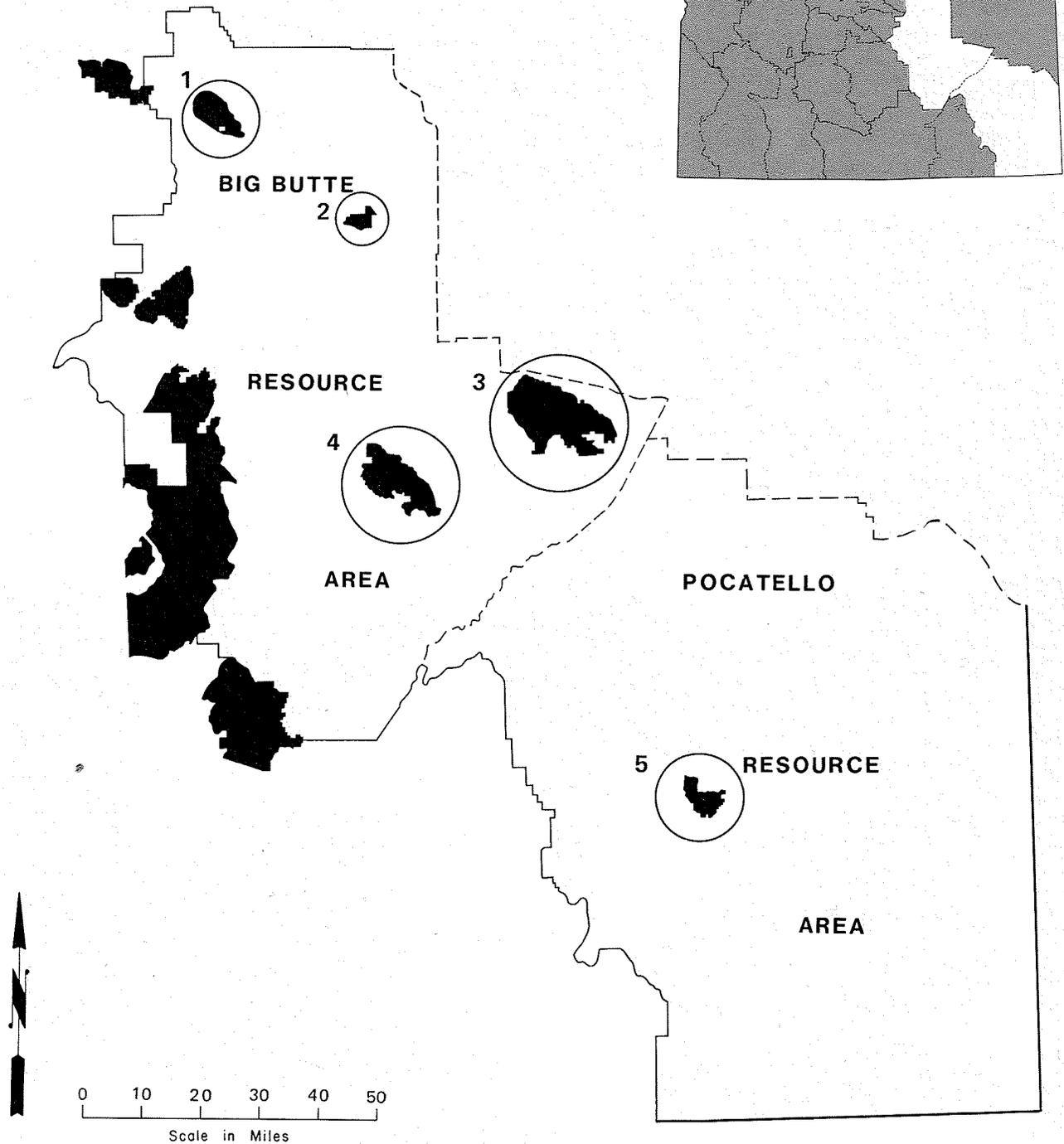
# EASTERN IDAHO WILDERNESS

## LEGEND

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

## EASTERN IDAHO

- 1. Hawley Mountain
- 2. Black Canyon
- 3. Hell's Half Acre
- 4. Cedar Butte
- 5. Petticoat Peak



# Petticoat Peak Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 11,298 acres

The Petticoat Peak WSA (ID-28-1) lies within Fish Creek Mountain Range just one mile northeast of Lava Hot Springs, Idaho, in Bannock and Caribou Counties. All of the WSA's 11,298 acres are on BLM-administered land. Topography is steep and mountainous with Petticoat Peak being the highest point at more than 8,000 feet. Canyons and ridges radiate in all directions from the mountain peak. Dominant vegetation on the western slopes consists of junipers, mountain shrubs and sagebrush. Thick stands of Douglas-fir intermingled with lodgepole and limber pine cover the WSA's east side. A wide variety of shrubs, forbs and grasses is found throughout and aspen groves blanket moist sites on the west slopes.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Eastern Idaho Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) filed October 1986. 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

11,298 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for the Petticoat Peak WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and release all 11,298 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. Although the recommendation is not the environmentally preferable alternative, BLM will use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. Existing regulations, BLM policy and the Big Desert Management Framework Plan will guide the use of the land to mitigate impacts. The Petticoat Peak Proposal map shows the lands recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

The quality of the wilderness values was the key consideration in the recommendation. While the WSA contained the wilderness values necessary for study, they are not considered to merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Manageability problems caused by dead-end roads and on-site and off-site land uses are incompatible with the preservation of wilderness values.

The quality of naturalness is diminished in the area by several factors. Five dead-end roads extend into the WSA from one to two miles in length. Two roads between North and Hadley Canyons are joined by a way and nearly bisect the area. Motorized travel on these routes decreases the visitor's perception that the area is natural. Scattered throughout the northern half of the area are livestock reservoirs, corrals, drift fences and other signs of livestock management activities which detract from the natural appearance. On a site-specific basis, the southern half has firewood cutting sites in six of the major canyons. Outside activities that influence the visitor's perception of naturalness include state highways along the WSA's south and west boundaries, Union Pacific railroad line near the west boundary, farming activities adjacent to 80 percent of the WSA's boundary and the nearby towns of Lava Hot Springs and Bancroft, Idaho. The sights and sounds of these adjacent activities lower the quality of solitude around the edge of the WSA. Cumulatively, those factors degrade the natural appearance of the area and the perception that the visitor is in an area affected primarily by the forces of nature.

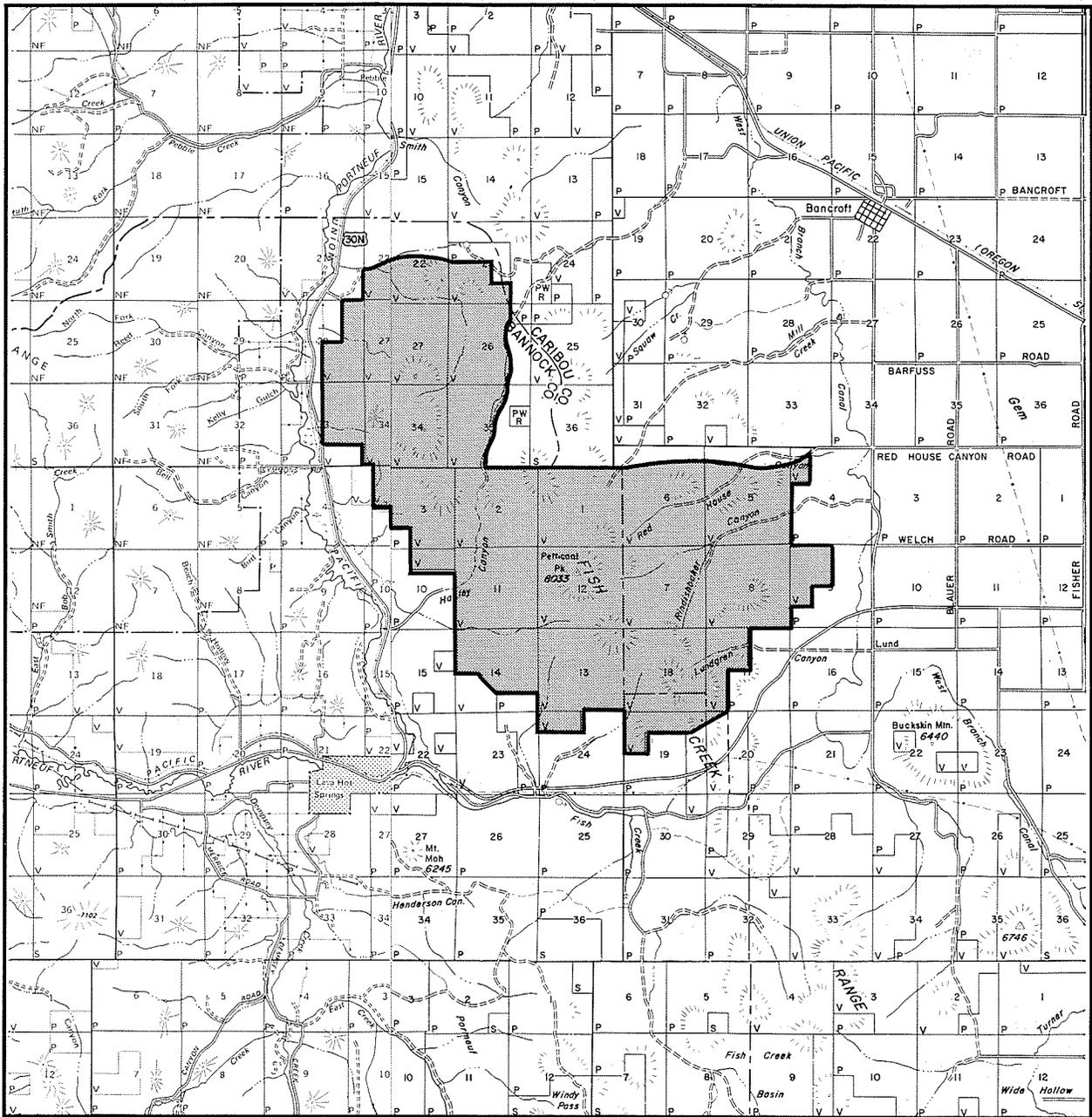
The quality of solitude is also adversely affected by motorized travel on dead-end roads and from nearby human activity. The sights and sounds of highway and railroad traffic, vehicles in the area and adjacent farm machinery diminish the visitor's opportunity for solitude.

The wilderness inventory listed a variety of recreation opportunities for the WSA but none were considered outstanding. These activities included camping, hiking, hunting, horseback riding and photography. The reason the opportunities were not considered outstanding is because they are abundantly available in similar landscapes throughout the nearby national forests. The national forests offer places that are larger, more isolated and contain physical features and recreation attractions that are lacking at Petticoat Peak.

Certain conditions adversely affect BLM's ability to manage this area as wilderness over the long term. Dead-end roads and existing off-site impacts from agricultural activities, highways, railroad line and private home development have the potential to further degrade solitude and visitor perception of naturalness. BLM has no control over these off-site impacts.

The Petticoat Peak WSA is close to Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah, and large cities in southeastern Idaho but would not appreciably expand primitive recreation and solitude opportunities for these population centers. Few visitors are expected to be attracted to the area because it lacks outstanding primitive recreation. Solitude opportunities are present within the WSA's interior but are diminished near the boundaries by on-site and off-site activities.

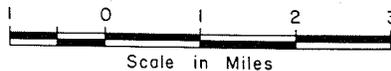
The no wilderness alternative provides opportunities for both road and roadless forms of recreation. The commercial timber base, located inside the WSA, would be available for sale. The Pocatello RMP decision limits vehicle travel to existing roads and trails within the WSA. About three-fourths of the area will remain roadless and natural in appearance and be available for nonmotorized recreation.



R. 37 E. | R. 38 E.

R. 38 E. | R. 39 E.

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



ID-28-1  
 PETTICOAT PEAK  
 PROPOSAL

OCTOBER 1988

T. 8 S.  
 T. 9 S.

T. 9 S.  
 T. 10 S.

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	11,298
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,298</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	11,298
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>11,298</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

Impacts on the natural appearance are located along the boundaries and at the ends of roads and vehicle trails in the Petticoat Peak WSA. They include vehicle trails, drift fences, livestock reservoirs, corrals and firewood cutting areas. Five dead-end roads enter the area and vehicle travel on these routes would likely decrease the visitor's perception of the natural appearance. Outside influences include views of agricultural activity and the town of Lava Hot Springs, Idaho.

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

At Petticoat Peak there exists outstanding opportunities for solitude. The steep topography, numerous canyons and variety of tall vegetation screens visitors from each other. Outside influences have an affect on the quality of solitude. These influences include vehicle travel on the dead-end roads as well as nearness to a major railroad line, highways and agricultural activities. They have their greatest affect near the WSA's boundaries. Train whistles can be heard frequently throughout the day and night.

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

The wilderness inventory listed a variety of recreation opportunities for the WSA but none as outstanding.

##### **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

The Petticoat Peak WSA is located in the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Western Spruce Fir Forest Ecosystem (3130-14). This ecosystem is not well represented nationwide in the wilderness system. Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by one designated area with 13,158 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
Intermountain Sagebrush Province				
	<u>NATIONWIDE</u>			
Western Spruce Fir Forest Ecosystem	1	13,158	1	11,298
	<u>IDAHO</u>			
Western Spruce Fir Forest Ecosystem	0	0	0	11,298

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

The Petticoat Peak WSA is within a five-hour drive from 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.

Petticoat Peak would increase the land area available to Boise, Idaho, and Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah, residents for solitude and primitive recreation by less than one percent. However, most wilderness visitors to the WSA are not expected to come from long distances because the area lacks outstanding primitive recreation opportunities and attractions.

**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 Petticoat Peak WSA would contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### **Manageability**

The WSA would have extensive administrative problems if designated.

Five dead-end roads extend into the WSA from one-to-two miles in length. Two roads between North and Hadley Canyons are joined by a way and nearly bisect the area. Increased vehicular use of these roads in future years would degrade the nonmotorized visitor's perception of naturalness and solitude opportunities throughout a large portion of the area. Access to range developments, particularly in and around North Canyon, is required for grazing management practices. Vehicles are used for inspections of range improvements. Herds are moved by motorized equipment. These activities would cause adverse impacts to solitude.

Existing off-site impacts from agricultural activities, highways, a railroad line and private home development degrade solitude and the perception of naturalness in west, south and southeast portions of the WSA. Subdivision and homesite development is presently underway near the WSA's west boundary and is expected to increase.

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

A Geologic, Energy and Mineral (GEM) assessment report was prepared for the Petticoat Peak WSA in 1985 (Geoexplorers International, Inc., 1985). Conclusions from the report are:

The Petticoat Peak WSA is considered to have low-to-moderate potential for oil and gas. The entire WSA is covered by noncompetitive oil and gas leases and seismic lines have been run through the area. The WSA lies within the northern extension of the Utah-Wyoming-Idaho Overthrust Belt. However, major geologic formations expected to produce hydrocarbon deposits are absent in the area. Continued geophysical exploration can be expected because of the area's proximity to the Overthrust Belt.

Geothermal potential of the WSA is low to moderate for low temperature occurrences. The hot springs at Lava Hot Springs, Idaho, southeast of the area occur at the intersection of faults in the area and similar thermal waters may be present in the highly faulted WSA. However, it is not anticipated that this resource will be developed because of better potential in more accessible locations outside the WSA.

No unpatented mining claims exist within the WSA and no locatable-type mineral deposits are known to occur. Low grade manganese has been mined near the town of Lava Hot Springs, Idaho. The manganese oxide was probably deposited by spring waters rising along fault zones. Although the highly faulted WSA may contain other such deposits, reserves are expected to be small and widely dispersed. Deposits of silica and limestone have been developed around the Lava Hot Springs along the northwestern edge of the WSA. Although sand and gravel occurs along the Portneuf River Valley one mile west, very little occurs within the WSA.

## **Impacts on Resources**

The following comparative impact table for the Petticoat Peak WSA 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-28-1 (PETTICOAT PEAK)**

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	The natural character will be destroyed on 1,524 acres where timber is cut, limbs and other waste are scattered and logs are skidded. Opportunities for solitude during the 2- to 3-year logging operation will be lost. Over the long term, the cut area will be visible from approximately 10-15% of the WSA. The natural character will be destroyed on 4-10 acres where an exploratory oil and gas well is drilled, a pad is cleared and drill cuttings are stored. Opportunities for solitude will be lost for about 1 year while drilling takes place. Over the long term, the abandoned drill pad will be visible from about 2% of the WSA.	Wilderness values and special features of scenic mountain terrain, limber and lodgepole pine forests and important wildlife habitat would be preserved on 11,298 acres. Closing 2 miles of ways to motorized vehicle use would allow tracks to revegetate and eliminate conflicts between solitude and motorized recreation.
Impacts to Energy and Mineral Development	No Impact.	Subject to valid existing rights on 9,946 acres of oil and gas leases, the WSA would be withdrawn from leasing and location. Withdrawal would discourage exploration and development of moderate potential areas for oil and gas.
Impacts to Motorized Recreation Use	No Impact.	Motorized recreation use, amounting to 100 visitor days, would be foregone annually both in the short and long term. Impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.
Impacts to Timber Harvest and Management	No Impact.	Timber resources totaling 2.5 MMBF on 1,524 acres of the WSA would not be harvested.

## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

No significant social effects would occur as a result of wilderness designation of the Petticoat Peak WSA.

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

Wilderness was not an issue in the Pocatello RMP and was not a subject of comments. No comments received during the wilderness inventory were deferred for consideration during the study.

BLM's wilderness inventory and study were conducted with extensive public participation and public involvement was an important consideration in making wilderness recommendations. BLM solicited public involvement in the study phase through scoping meetings, mailings on issue identification and alternative formulation, a 90-day public comment period and two formal hearings on the Eastern Idaho Draft Wilderness EIS. Comments received during the inventory period and EIS scoping efforts were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness value. Fifty-seven of the comments received during the Draft EIS comment period or at the public hearings specifically mentioned the Petticoat Peak WSA. Objections were based on the unknown status of minerals and that the area should be left open for other uses. Wilderness supporters emphasized the area's wildlife values, closeness to Idaho population centers and wilderness values.

Three government agencies commented on the WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency stated that they had no objection to the Draft EIS proposal. The Bureau of Indian Affairs supported wilderness for the WSA and said that the Fort Hall Indian Treaty would not conflict with wilderness management for Petticoat Peak. Changes that reflect this have been made in the Final EIS.

# Hawley Mountain Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 15,510 acres

The Hawley Mountain WSA (ID-32-3) is located in Butte County 25 miles north of Howe, Idaho. The WSA includes 15,510 acres of public land. Inholdings consist of 1,280 acres of state land (see Table 1). Boundaries are generally the Wet Creek Road to the west, Deer Creek Road to the southwest and south and an unnamed BLM road on the northeast.

The Hawley Mountain WSA's physical character is steep and mountainous with well-defined drainages fanning out in all directions toward the WSA's border. The higher peaks and ridges are dominated by rock cliffs and talus slopes. Douglas-fir and mountain mahogany blanket areas at the higher elevations. The lower slopes are covered with sagebrush, grasses and forbs. Perennial drainage bottoms support a semi-wet meadow community of grasses and sedges. Major wildlife species that occupy the area include deer, antelope, elk and sage grouse.

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

## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

0 acres recommended for wilderness

15,510 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for the Hawley Mountain WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and 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. Existing regulations, BLM policy and the Little Lost/Birch Creek Management Framework Plan will guide the use of the land to mitigate impacts. The Hawley Mountain Proposal map shows the lands recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

All 15,510 acres of the Hawley Mountain WSA are recommended for nonwilderness designation because they do not contribute significant solitude and primitive recreation opportunities in an area of Idaho that has abundant wilderness. Also nondesignation will allow mechanical manipulation of mule deer habitat to sustain and increase deer populations, maintain motorized opportunities for hunters and other recreationists on existing roads and trails, and reserve timber resources for potential harvest. The Hawley Mountain WSA possesses the required basic wilderness characteristics that led to study of the area. However, difficulties in wilderness management and the trade-offs with other resource uses outweigh the benefits of wilderness designation. Nondesignation of the area allows mechanical manipulations of wildlife habitat, continuation of limited motorized access for hunting and possible harvest of timber resources.

Much of the WSA's lowlands and canyons are accessible to motor vehicle use and natural barriers are lacking. Even with signing, patrols and public education, vehicle trespass is expected because of the area's remote location and distance from administrative personnel.

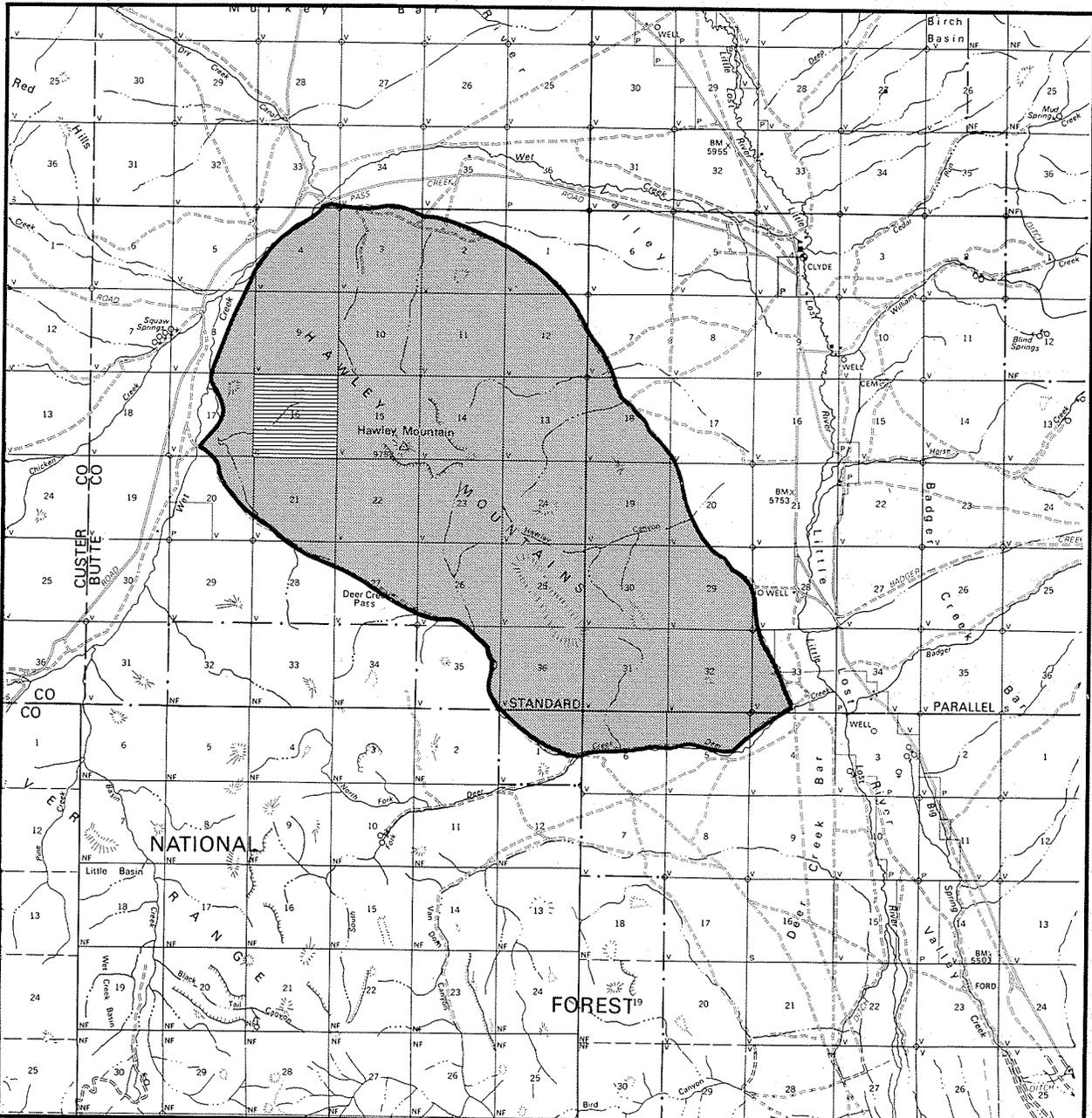
While the area could provide outstanding primitive hunting opportunities, current use is primarily by motorized vehicle. Release of this area from consideration as wilderness would allow popular, vehicle-based hunting to continue. Solitude is available but the area is relatively small in size and is near major roads on the east and north boundaries. Primitive recreation opportunities are present but the area lacks significant physical features that attract wilderness users. Other roadless areas and designated wilderness areas in the nearby mountain ranges offer similar primitive opportunities but are more attractive to recreationists. They include over four million acres of designated wilderness in six areas and more than 400,000 acres in five roadless areas. The roadless areas are located on either side of the valley, about ten miles from where the WSA is situated. These areas are on national forest lands and contain similar landscapes and wilderness-related opportunities but are available in a greater scale and abundance than found in the WSA. They also offer a greater challenge, more variety of primitive recreation activities and natural features that attract recreationists such as high peaks, basins, streams and rivers, and isolation that cannot be found on Hawley Mountain.

The recommendation allows a variety of activities to take place and are summarized as follows:

Treatment of mule deer winter range habitat with mechanized equipment will be done. Winter habitat in this area is limited, and stable and healthy populations depend on adequate forage. The mechanical treatment of forage species will help maintain healthy populations for hunting and is expected to increase herd size by 45 animals.

Motorized recreation use will continue on existing jeep trails and will occur primarily during the hunting seasons. The use amounts to be approximately 150 visitor days annually.

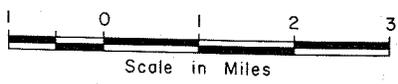
Timber totaling ten million board feet (MMBF) on 2,724 acres will be reserved for harvest and stand improvement. Much of the timber is old-age Douglas-fir and is heavily infested with mistletoe. The timber resource would increase in health and vigor with shelterwood and selection logging techniques.



T. 10 N.  
T. 9 N.  
T. 9 N.  
T. 8 N.

R. 26 E. | R. 26 E. | R. 27 E.

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



**ID-32-3  
HAWLEY MOUNTAIN  
PROPOSAL**

OCTOBER 1988

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	15,510
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	1,280
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,790</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	15,510
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>15,510</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	1,280

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Hawley Mountain WSA is essentially natural with negligible human imprints. The WSA is a small island mountain within the Little Lost River Valley and is located between the Lemhi Mountain Range to the east and the Big Lost Mountain Range to the west.

Impacts on naturalness consist of 14 vehicle trails totaling 13 miles, a small border dump, two miles of fence and a 480 acre crested wheatgrass seeding. Views outside the area include traffic on rural roads and nearby farms. All impacts have a minor affect on the overall natural appearance of the area.

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

Within Hawley Mountain there exists outstanding opportunities for solitude. The rugged terrain and timber on the upper slopes provide topographic and vegetative screening. Views of the Little Lost Valley from within the area enhance the feeling of isolation. The valley is sparsely populated and few human activities take place. Sufficient size and good screening would allow visitors to find a secluded place.

Solitude opportunities are judged to be of somewhat lesser quality than nearby national forest lands. This is because of the WSA's relative small size and nearness to human activity. Roadless areas in the adjacent national forests are much larger and are considerably more remote.

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

Hunting is an outstanding recreational activity within the WSA. Deer, antelope, elk and sage grouse can be hunted. Hiking, horseback riding, rock climbing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are other possible activities. The diversity of terrain and rugged landscape offers challenge and recreational attractions to visitors.

Other roadless areas in the nearby mountain ranges offer similar primitive opportunities but are more attractive to recreationists. They offer a greater challenge, numerous primitive recreation activities and more natural features that attract recreationists. Hawley Mountain is surrounded by designated wilderness and public lands that offer abundant opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

##### **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

The Hawley Mountain WSA is located in the Rocky Mountain Forest Province/Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem (M3110-49). Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented 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	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	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 Hawley 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**

Designation of Hawley Mountain would not help balance geographic distribution of wilderness.

### **Manageability**

The Hawley Mountain WSA could be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. However, the inadvertent use of motor vehicles within the area and State of Idaho inholdings could create management difficulties.

Lowland portions that surround the WSA and several canyon openings lack natural barriers to motorized vehicle use. Fourteen vehicle access points branch off from the main boundary roads and extend up to two miles into the WSA. Presently, hunters use these routes for access along with sightseers and other recreationists using motorized vehicles. Signing, patrol and public education efforts would be needed to manage vehicle use but motorized trespass would likely occur because of the isolation and distance from administrative personnel. Vehicle trespass would degrade solitude opportunities for wilderness visitors.

Acquiring the 1,280 acre of state land would be necessary to maintain the integrity of the area. The northwestern state section (640 acres) includes part of the Hawley Mountain area. The other section (640 acres) is part of the southwestern tip of the area. Acquisition of the state lands would eliminate possible conflicts with providing access and would maintain the area's wilderness character. The Idaho Department of Lands said it favors an exchange of lands if the WSA becomes wilderness.

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

A Geology, Energy and Mineral (GEM) assessment report was prepared for the Hawley Mountain WSA in 1985 (Geoexplorers International, Inc., 1985). Conclusions from the report are:

The Hawley Mountain WSA has low potential for oil and gas. The majority of the WSA is covered by noncompetitive oil and gas leases; however, no exploration activities have been conducted within or near the WSA. The area is underlain by stratigraphic equivalents of some rock units present in the Utah-Wyoming-Idaho Overthrust Belt; however, the Triassic and Jurassic age sedimentary rocks which are major oil and gas producers elsewhere in the Overthrust Belt are absent.

No mining claims exist within or adjacent to the WSA. Metallic mineralization found from six to 20 miles west of the WSA occurs as isolated prospects. Although the rock units which contain this mineralization are found within the WSA, there is no indication that the units contain mineralization. Thus, the area is considered to have a low potential for the occurrence of locatable metallic minerals.

The Hawley Mountain WSA is underlain by Quaternary glacial and alluvial deposits which probably contain abundant sand and gravel resources. The deposits have little value because similar deposits are abundant and located much closer to areas of consumption.

### **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-32-3 (HAWLEY MOUNTAIN)**

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Naturalness and solitude would be lost on 3,024 acres from timber cutting, mule deer habitat improvement and motorized recreation use.	Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation and special features would be preserved on 15,510 acres and enhanced slightly by eliminating motorized recreation use.	Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation and special features would be preserved on 10,400 acres. Naturalness and solitude would be degraded slightly on 5,100 acres of the WSAs lower slopes by continued motor vehicle use.
Impacts to Energy and Mineral Development	No Impact.	Subject to valid existing rights on 3,850 acres of oil and gas leases, the WSA would be withdrawn from leasing and location. Because of low potential for occurrence of energy or mineral resources, no impacts are anticipated.	Subject to valid existing rights on 3,850 acres of oil and gas leases, the WSA would be withdrawn from location and leasing. Because of low potential for occurrence of energy or mineral resources, no impacts are anticipated.
Impacts to Motorized Recreation Use	No Impact.	Motorized recreation use, amounting to 150 visitor days, would be foregone annually.	No Impact.
Impacts to Timber Harvest and Management	No Impact.	Timber resources totaling 10 MMBF on 2,724 acres of the WSA would not be harvested.	Timber resources totaling 10 MMBF on 2,724 acres of the WSA would not be harvested.
Impacts to Mule Deer Habitat Improvement	No Impact.	Mule deer habitat on 300 acres would not be improved and the present herd's health and condition would decline. The potential of 45 more animals would be lost.	Mule deer habitat on 300 acres would not be improved and the present herd's health and condition would decline. The potential of 45 more animals would be lost.

## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

No significant social effects would occur as a result of wilderness designation of the Hawley Mountain WSA.

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

BLM's wilderness inventory and study were conducted with extensive public participation and public involvement was an important consideration in making wilderness recommendations. BLM solicited public involvement in the study phase through scoping meetings, mailings on issue identification and alternative formulation, a 90-day public comment period and two formal hearings on the Eastern Idaho Draft Wilderness EIS. Comments received during the inventory period and EIS scoping efforts were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness value.

Wilderness was not an issue in the original Big Desert MFP and was not a subject of comments. No comments received during the wilderness inventory were deferred for consideration during the study. The comments received addressed the roads and trails used for hunting, impacts on naturalness, outside influences on solitude, small size of the area and concerns that the area did not offer significant primitive recreation opportunities.

Sixty-one comments were received during the Draft EIS comment period or at the public hearings that mentioned the Hawley Mountain WSA. Two of the commenters opposed wilderness because of the unknown mineral status and one person felt Idaho already had enough wilderness. Supporters for designation of the WSA emphasized the area's wildlife values, scenic vistas, lack of resource conflicts, important wilderness and special values and accessibility for recreationists.

Several commenters wanted the boundaries of the WSA adjusted to remove lands that are accessible to motorized vehicles. This action would enhance wilderness manageability and is addressed in the partial wilderness alternative of the Final EIS.

Two government agencies commented on the WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency stated that they had no objection to the Draft EIS proposal.

# **Black Canyon Wilderness Study Area**

## **1. The Study Area -- 5,400 acres**

The Black Canyon WSA (ID-32-9) contains 5,400 acres of BLM-administered land located at the southern toe of the Lemhi Mountain Range. The WSA's landscape is characterized by rocky canyons, massive cliffs and thrust faults. The lower slopes and canyon bottoms contain sagebrush, forbs and grasses typical of this low moisture, high desert environment. Patches of juniper trees are found throughout the area and small stands of Douglas-fir grow at the higher elevations.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Eastern Idaho Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) filed in October 1986. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS for Black Canyon WSA: the proposed action (no wilderness) alternative, which is the recommendation of this report (5,400 acres would be designated as nonwilderness); and an all wilderness alternative.

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**0 acres recommended for wilderness**

**5,400 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Black Canyon 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. Existing regulations, BLM policy and the Little Lost/Birch Creek Management Framework Plan will guide the use of the land to mitigate impacts. The Black Canyon WSA is shown on the Black Canyon Proposal map.

All 5,400 acres of the Black Canyon WSA are recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation because the area does not contribute significant solitude and primitive recreation opportunities in an area of Idaho already abundant in wilderness. Existing roads and trails would remain and manageability problems would be incompatible with the preservation of wilderness values. BLM recognizes that the Black Canyon WSA possesses the required basic wilderness characteristics and has certain natural values worthy of preservation but difficulties in wilderness management and trade-offs with other resource uses outweigh the benefits of wilderness designation.

The Black Canyon WSA's opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation are judged to be less than exemplary. Solitude is available, but the area is small. Visitors are limited to traveling in four canyons within the area which are one to two miles in length. This physical limitation will constrict the visitor's opportunity to be alone. Primitive recreation opportunities are present but the area lacks significant physical features that attract wilderness users. Other roadless areas and designated wilderness areas in the nearby mountain ranges offer similar primitive opportunities but are more attractive to recreationists. They include more than four million acres of designated wilderness in six areas and more than 400,000 acres in five roadless areas. The roadless areas are located in the Lemhi Mountain Range north of the WSA and in the Lost River Range to the west. These areas are on national forest lands and contain similar landscapes and wilderness-related opportunities but are available in a greater scale and abundance than found in the WSA. They also offer a greater challenge and more variety of primitive recreation activities. They have more natural features that attract recreationists such as high peaks, basins, streams, rivers and isolation.

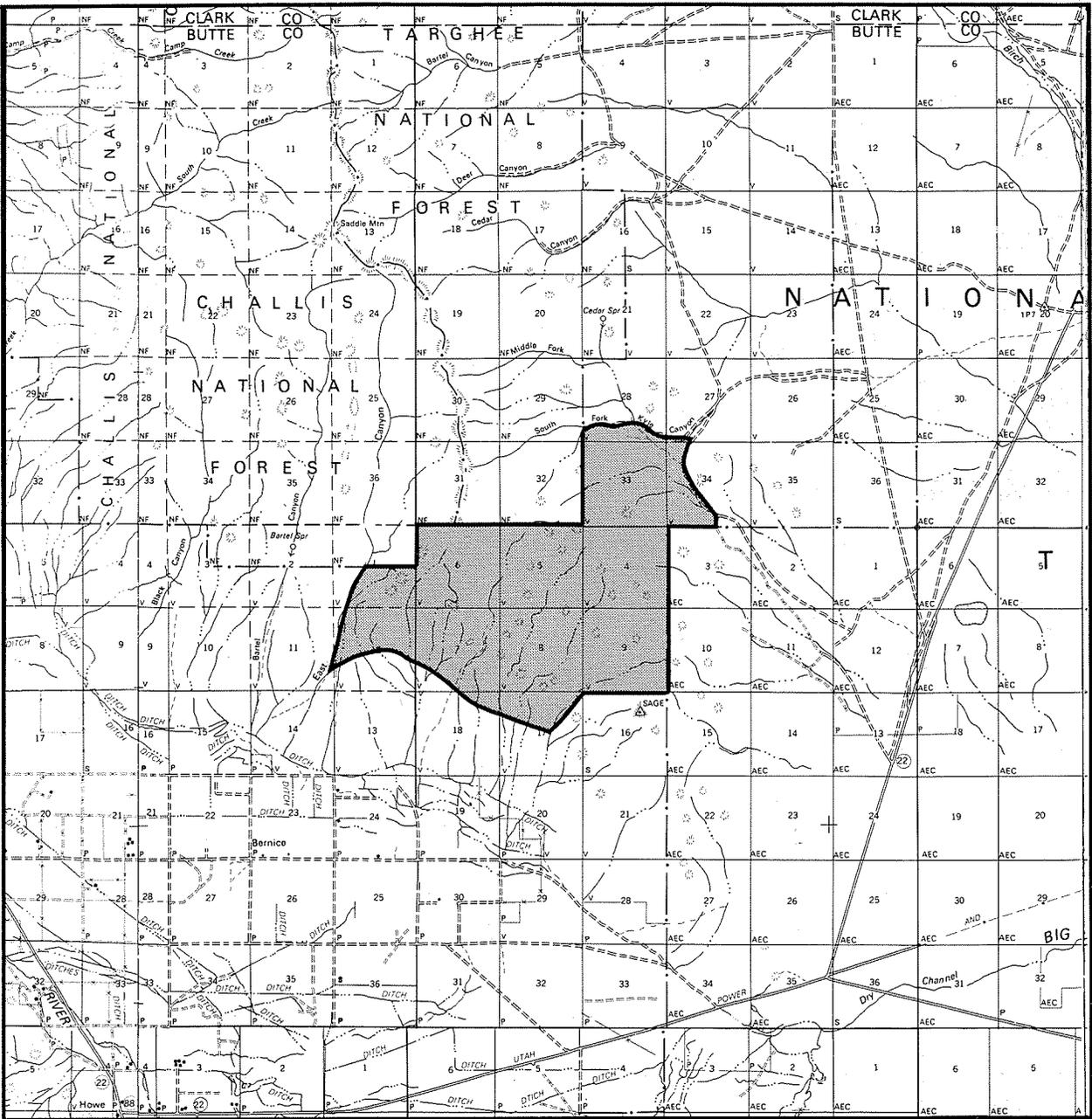
The WSA would be difficult to manage over the long term as wilderness. The major concern is the ability to exclude motorized vehicles. The area lacks natural barriers to vehicle travel on most of the access routes. Lowland portions along the southern foothills of the WSA and canyon openings lack natural barriers to motorized vehicle use. Five vehicle access points branch off from the main boundary roads and extend up to two miles into the WSA. One heavily used trail nearly reaches the U.S. Forest Service boundary on the area's north border. A boundary adjustment to eliminate these trails would decrease the size of the WSA to less than the required 5,000 acres. Hunters along with sightseers and other recreationists using motorized vehicles use these routes for access. Signing, patrol and public education efforts would be needed to manage vehicle use but motorized trespass would likely occur because of the isolation and distance from administrative personnel. Vehicle trespass would degrade the visitor's solitude opportunities.

The area is too small to offer solitude for many people at one time. If the WSA became wilderness, management efforts would encourage only a low number of visitors. Use would be concentrated in the area's four narrow canyons which are one to two miles in length and dead-end near the national forest boundary.

The no wilderness recommendation will allow motorized recreation to continue on existing jeep trails, primarily during the hunting seasons and less frequently during the spring and summer. The use amounts to approximately 150 visitor days annually.

The Black Canyon WSA contains cultural values, high scenic quality and important habitat for a variety of birds. These values would be protected through visual management objectives to retain the existing landscape, Little Lost/Birch Creek Wildlife Habitat Management Plan, Management Framework Plan and cultural resource management objectives.

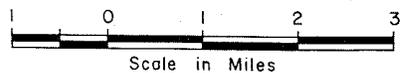
Public comments indicate there are important archaeological values being destroyed at a rapid rate. BLM studies and surveillance of the area in 1982 and 1983 showed no recent vandalism. The archaeological features appear to be no more significant than others in the Little Lost and Birch Creek valleys. Because of clear public concern for this area, an interim management plan has been developed and implemented including signs, patrols and evaluations. The area will be included in a cultural resources management plan for the Little Lost and Birch Creek valleys. The recommendation for Black Canyon would not have adverse impacts to archaeological resources. Cultural resource values can be managed effectively through the use of signing and patrols. Wilderness designation would not add to the existing level of protection.



R. 29 E. | R. 30 E.

R. 30 E. | R. 31 E.

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



**ID-32-9  
BLACK CANYON  
PROPOSAL**

OCTOBER 1988

T. 7 N.  
T. 6 N.  
T. 6 N.  
T. 5 N.

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	5,400
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,400</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	5,400
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>5,400</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Black Canyon WSA is essentially natural, with negligible human imprints. The 5,400 acre area is comprised of the southern toe of the Lemhi Mountain Range which includes a national forest roadless area of almost 200,000 acres. The roadless area has been recommended for release from wilderness consideration.

Impacts on naturalness in the WSA consist of five vehicle trails totaling four miles, one mile of fence and a gray steel door covering a dynamited cave. Views outside the area include traffic on rural roads, farming activities and facilities on the Idaho Nuclear Engineering Laboratory site. Views are distant and not imposing. All impacts have a minor effect on the overall natural appearance of the area.

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

Extensive topographic variation combined with some vegetative screening make opportunities for solitude outstanding. The deep, winding canyons, caves and rock formations offer places where the visitor could find a secluded place and avoid others. Views outside the area would have little influence on the visitor's chances for solitude. Visitation would be limited to a few people in this small area to maintain quality opportunities because visitors are confined to travel in the area's four major canyons. These canyons dead-end near the national forest boundary to the north.

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

Primitive recreation opportunities include rock climbing, hiking, wildlife viewing and spelunking. The rock formations, caves and bird life are natural features that provide a good recreational attraction to visitors.

Primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities are judged to be less than exemplary. Opportunities are present, but the area lacks significant physical features that attract wilderness users. Other roadless areas and designated wilderness areas nearby offer similar primitive opportunities but are more attractive to recreationists. They include more than four million acres of designated wilderness in six areas and more than 400,000 acres in five roadless areas.

The roadless areas are located in the Lemhi Mountain Range north of the WSA and in the Lost River Range to the west. These areas are on national forest lands and contain similar landscapes and wilderness-related opportunities but are available in a greater scale and abundance than found in the WSA. They also offer a greater challenge, more variety of primitive recreation activities and natural features that attract recreationists such as high peaks, basins, streams, rivers, and isolation.

## **D. Special Features**

The Black Canyon WSA's landscape is dominated by vertical-walled canyons, caves and other rock formations of geologic interest. These formations are picturesque and provide important habitat for golden eagles, kestrels, great horned owls, hawks and falcons. The caves and rock formations have also been used for shelters and hunting blinds by prehistoric inhabitants as long as 10,000 years ago. Pictographs and other signs of early inhabitants can be found in the area.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

The Black Canyon WSA is located in the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Sagebrush Steppe (3130-49). Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). 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. If designated, the Black Canyon WSA could increase the total area represented by this ecosystem.

**TABLE 2**

#### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	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 Black Canyon 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 Canyon WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS.

### **Manageability**

The Black Canyon WSA could be managed over the long term to preserve its wilderness character but with administrative problems. There are five vehicle access points and trails into the area which would extend up to two miles. One heavily used trail nearly reaches the U.S. Forest Service boundary on the area's north border. A boundary adjustment to eliminate these trails would decrease the size of the WSA to less than the required 5,000 acres. Attempting to close the motor vehicle trails would be difficult because natural barriers are lacking except on a short segment of the Box Canyon trail.

The area is too small to offer solitude for many people at one time. If the WSA became wilderness, management efforts would encourage only a low number of visitors. Use would be concentrated in the area's four narrow canyons.

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

A Geology, Energy and Mineral (GEM) assessment report was prepared for the Black Canyon WSA in 1985 (Geoexplorers International, Inc. 1985). Conclusions from the report are:

The Black Canyon WSA has low-to-moderate potential for oil and gas. The WSA is covered with noncompetitive oil and gas leases; however, the lessees have not conducted any exploration within or near the WSA. The WSA is underlain by stratigraphic equivalents of some rock units present in the Utah-Wyoming-Idaho Overthrust Belt; however, the Triassic and Jurassic age sedimentary rocks, which are the major oil and gas producers elsewhere in the Overthrust Belt, are absent. Little is known of the existence of other source or reservoir rocks in the area.

The WSA lies along the boundary between the Snake River Plain geothermal region, an area with moderate geothermal potential, and the Central Idaho Basin and Range geothermal region, an area with low geothermal potential. Unlike the Snake River Plain that lies immediately to the east, the WSA is underlain by Paleozoic carbonate rock, a factor which greatly diminishes the potential for geothermal resource occurrence.

No unpatented mining claims exist within the WSA. Lead, silver and copper deposits have been mined in two mining districts that are located approximately three miles northwest of the WSA. The mineralization occurred in fractures of rock units which are not known to occur within the WSA. Exploratory drilling on unpatented claims, formerly located just northeast of the WSA boundary, yielded no evidence of mineralization and the claims were subsequently abandoned.

Lands at lower elevations in the WSA are comprised of alluvial fans underlain by considerable quantities of sand and gravel. These deposits have little value because of the abundance of similar deposits located much closer to areas of consumption.

## **Impacts on Resources**

The following comparative impact table for Black Canyon WSA 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-32-9 (BLACK CANYON)**

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p>Motorized use would slightly degrade naturalness and solitude. Low use vehicle trails would be maintained by travel with the possibility of being expanded slightly by cross-country use. However, no increase in visitor use is projected above current levels and new impacts will be confined to the existing trails. Solitude would be disrupted slightly by the presence of vehicles, particularly during the hunting seasons. Over the long term the WSA would retain the natural character and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation because of the anticipated low use by recreationists.</p>	<p>Wilderness values and special features would be preserved on 5,400 acres and enhanced slightly by eliminating motorized use. The values include deep winding canyons with caves and vertical rock formations, a variety of raptors and signs of early inhabitants such as pictographs and lithic scatters.</p>
Impacts to Energy and Mineral Development	No impact.	<p>No valid existing rights. Lands would be withdrawn from location and leasing. Because of low potential for mineral occurrence, no exploration or development is anticipated.</p>
Impacts to Motorized Recreation Use	No impact.	<p>Motorized recreation use amounting to 90 visitor days would be foregone.</p>

## 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 Black Canyon WSA.

## Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

BLM's wilderness inventory and study were conducted with extensive public participation and public involvement was an important consideration in making wilderness recommendations. BLM solicited public involvement in the study phase through scoping meetings, mailings on issue identification and alternative formulation, a 90-day public comment period and two formal hearings on the Eastern Idaho Draft Wilderness EIS. Comments received during the inventory period and EIS scoping efforts were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness value.

Wilderness was not an issue in the original Big Desert MFP and was not a subject of comments. No comments received during the wilderness inventory were deferred for consideration during the study.

Eighty-one of the comments received during the Draft EIS comment period or at the public hearings specifically mentioned the Black Canyon WSA. Six commenters opposed designation of the WSA. Reasons were that designation would attract visitors to the area causing damage to the area's cultural sites, the unknown mineral status and that BLM's assessment of wilderness value was correct. One commenter sent a petition against wilderness that contained 119 signatures from citizens who live near the WSA. Wilderness supporters emphasized the WSA's cultural, scenic, geologic and wilderness values.

The major concern of commenters focused on the area's archaeological sites and that wilderness designation would be the best protection of these features from acts of vandalism. Two commenters felt the WSA should be combined with the 190,000 acre Diamond Peak roadless area and considered for wilderness in the U.S. Forest Service roadless area reevaluation process.

Three government agencies commented on the WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency stated that they had no objection to the Draft EIS proposal. The Bureau of Indian Affairs supported wilderness because the Black Canyon WSA contains artifacts of the Indian heritage.

# Cedar Butte Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 35,700 acres

The Cedar Butte WSA (ID-33-4) is located in Bingham County 42 miles west of Idaho Falls, Idaho. The WSA includes 35,700 acres of public land. Inholdings consist of 640 acres of state land (see Table 1). Boundaries are generally the outside edges of the lava flow near the Union Pacific railroad to the northeast and adjacent to state, BLM and private lands on the east, south and west.

The WSA contains a series of overlying lava flows with the most recent flows dating back 10,800 years. The terrain is characterized as generally flat with undulating topography. Vegetation varies throughout the lava flow. Where soils have accumulated, high desert sagebrush, grasses and forbs are abundant. Juniper trees are found scattered throughout where soil and moisture conditions allow them to survive. Several species of mammals live in the WSA, including rodents. The larger animals more frequently seen are mule deer, antelope, coyotes and rabbits. Over 100 species of birds have been identified on the lava plains. Sage grouse and mourning doves are of particular interest and are hunted to a limited extent near the lava's edge.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Eastern Idaho Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) filed in October 1986. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS for the Cedar Butte WSA: the proposed 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**

**35,700 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

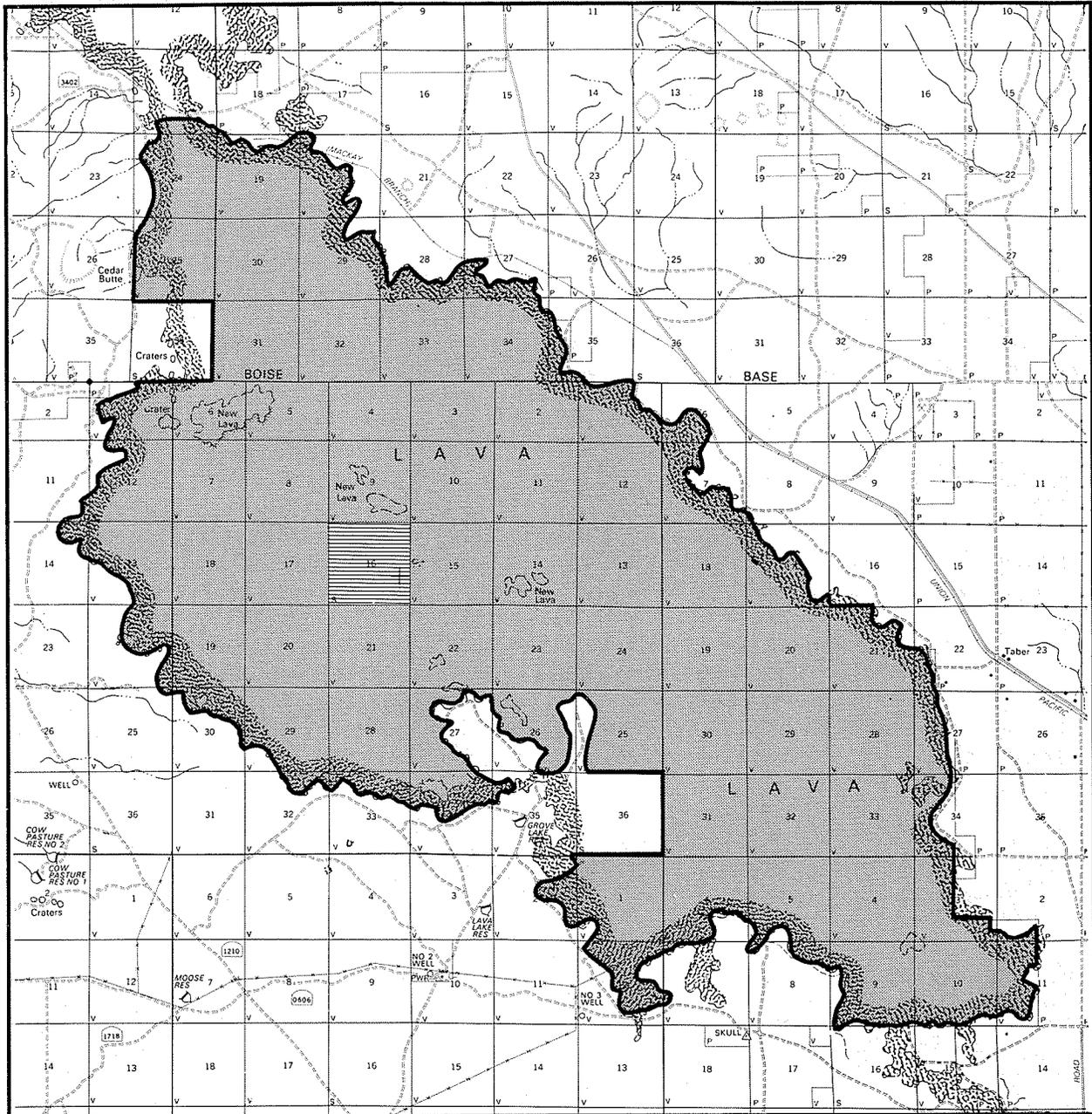
The recommendation for the Cedar Butte WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and release all 35,700 acres for other uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. Existing regulations, BLM policy and the Big Desert Management Framework Plan will guide the use of the land to mitigate impacts. The Cedar Butte Proposal map shows the lands recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

The quality of the wilderness values was the key consideration in the recommendation. While the WSA contained the wilderness values necessary for study, they were not considered to merit the area's inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The area is predominantly natural in appearance but lacks topographic and physical features that attract primitive recreation use. The land surface across the lava is relatively flat but without destination attractions such as lava tube caves, fissures, buttes and other geologic or lava formations of interest to recreationists. Other Wilderness Study Areas within 20 to 40 miles of Cedar Butte that possess these attributes include Craters of the Moon National Monument and Wilderness Area, the proposed Great Rift Wilderness and the recommended Hell's Half Acre WSA. Even though these areas contain features attractive to recreationists, visitation is low. As an example, the Craters of the Moon Monument has over 200,000 visitors a year to the information center and only 125 visits to the wilderness area annually. In summary, primitive recreation use of the Cedar Butte WSA is currently low and it is anticipated that those wishing to visit a lava flow landscape would choose others in the vicinity because the area lacks attractive recreation features.

Wilderness management for an estimated 100 acres of an existing lava building stone mining claim area would be impossible. Building stone excavation activities and a .5-mile access route will cause impacts to naturalness that could not be adequately reclaimed.

The remaining 35,600 acres of the WSA are not likely to change over the long term. The lava landscape has little commodity uses and generally prevents activities that will cause noticeable surface disturbance. Both motorized and nonmotorized recreation use will remain low and impacts to the area will be insignificant.



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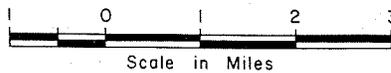
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- |   |   |   |              |
|---|---|---|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |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



**ID-33-4  
CEDAR BUTTE  
PROPOSAL**

OCTOBER 1988

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	35,700
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	640
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,340</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	35,700
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>35,700</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Cedar Butte WSA is predominantly natural with negligible human imprints. Impacts on the natural appearance consist of four vehicle trails totaling four miles, two small rock dumps, an 80 acre building stone collection site and a 6,100 acre crested wheatgrass seeding. The seeding was broadcast from the air and now grows in the scattered soil pockets of the flow. Although this grass species is exotic, the average visitor would not consider it unnatural. Outside influences include some views of traffic on nearby rural roads, agricultural activities and an infrequently traveled railroad line. All impacts to the natural character of the WSA area minor.

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

The WSA offers outstanding opportunities for solitude because of its large size. The area's open and generally flat landscape with little vegetative cover does not provide screening that would separate visitors. However, the large size, numerous depressions and swells in the lava beds and expected low use would offer solitude. The opportunity for solitude is due to the remoteness and lack of human activity in the area and are not due to any intrinsic values unique to the WSA. Other than the occasional passing of a train to the northeast, external influences are limited to infrequent vehicles traveling adjacent desert roads.

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

The rugged and expansive nature of the WSA offers outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation activities on a lava flow landscape. Hiking and camping opportunities are present for those willing to pack water. Similarly, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing could provide risk and challenge for the winter recreationist. However, the WSA does lack significant physical features that would attract recreationists to the area and offer destinations for hiking and camping. Examples of volcanic features lacking in the Cedar Butte WSA that do attract recreationists include lava tube and fissure caves, buttes, vents and cinder and spatter cones. Other areas that possess these attributes include Craters of the Moon National Monument and Wilderness Area, the proposed Great Rift Wilderness and the recommended Hell's Half Acre WSA. Even though these areas contain features attractive to recreationists, visitation is low. In summary, primitive recreation use of the Cedar Butte WSA is currently low and it is anticipated that those wishing to visit a lava flow landscape would choose others in the vicinity because the area lacks attractive recreational features.

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

The lava landscape has scientific and educational significance. It is one of the older exposed lava flows, dating back about 10,800 years. The lava beds are an example of pahoehoe lava features of geologic importance. Ecological relationships are illustrated by the pioneering plants and other characteristics of developing plant communities. While these features would be of interest to the educational community, they are not of interest to the general public because of more spectacular volcanic areas to the east and west of the Cedar Butte WSA.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

The Cedar Butte WSA is located in the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Desert Ecosystem (3130-39) where vegetation is largely absent. This ecosystem is not well represented nationwide in the wilderness system. If designated, Cedar Butte could increase the total area represented by this ecosystem and add vegetation and landform characteristics associated with a lava flow that is generally five times the age of the Craters of the Moon Wilderness. This ecosystem is represented by one designated area with 30,245 acres. There are 11 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
Intermountain Province	Sagebrush				
				<u>NATIONWIDE</u>	
Desert-Vegetation Absent Ecosystem	Largely	1	30,245	12	870,403
				<u>IDAHO</u>	
Desert-Vegetation Absent Ecosystem	Largely	1	30,245	11	646,687
				<u>NEVADA</u>	
Desert-Vegetation Absent Ecosystem	Largely	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 Cedar Butte WSA is within a five-hour drive from 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.

Cedar Butte would increase the land area available to Boise, Idaho and Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah, residents for solitude and primitive recreation by about one percent. However, most wilderness visitors to the WSA are not expected to come from long distances because the area lacks physical features that would attract recreation use.

**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 Cedar Butte WSA would contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. No wilderness areas have been designated in southeastern Idaho where the WSA is located. The nearest designated area is the 43,243 acre Craters of the Moon Wilderness in south-central Idaho. Adjacent to the Craters is the proposed 346,800 acre Great Rift Wilderness which has been recommended for designation to Congress by the President.

### **Manageability**

The Cedar Butte WSA could be managed over the long term to preserve its wilderness character because of the inaccessible terrain and well-defined wilderness boundary along the margins of the lava flow.

There is one potential manageability concern in the area that relates to a 454 acre mining claim for lava building stone. If the claim or part of it is classified as valid, then the stone may be mined and an estimated 100 acres could be patented. Access over .5 mile of existing vehicle trail to the claim area would likely be improved. Wilderness management of this claim area and access route would be impossible. Development of the claim would not affect wilderness management for the remainder of the WSA.

Acquisition of the state lands in one section (640 acres) would eliminate possible conflicts with providing access and maintaining the area's wilderness character. Idaho Department of Lands said it favors an exchange if the WSA becomes wilderness.

BLM has concluded that this WSA is manageable as wilderness even with the potential surface impacts that could result from development of the claims. Mining impacts would not be visible from almost all of the WSA since less than one percent of the area would be affected. It is also possible that no mineral development will ever take place because sources for the stone are abundant in southeastern Idaho.

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

A Geologic, Energy and Mineral (GEM) assessment report was prepared for the Cedar Butte WSA in 1983 (Geoexplorers International, Inc., 1983). Conclusions from the report and information from BLM sources on locatable and salable minerals are:

The WSA is considered to have low potential for oil and gas. Although the majority of the WSA is covered with noncompetitive oil and gas leases, no exploration activities have been conducted. The thick sequence of Snake River Basalt masks the underlying sedimentary rock units making the area of low interest for oil and gas exploration. The presence of volcanic vents throughout the area gives further evidence of the lack of oil- and gas-bearing sedimentary rock formations.

Geothermal potential in the WSA is also considered low. Geothermal data from holes drilled surrounding the WSA show that typical heat gradients were very low. The low heat gradients are probably due to the fact that water moves quickly through the subsurface, removing the earth's heat.

Lava building stone is the only known locatable or salable mineral that occurs in the Cedar Butte WSA. Six unpatented mining claims have been filed on 454 acres in the WSA for building stone. Twenty-five acres of the claim group contain stone that is considered an uncommon variety and, therefore, subject to location under the mining laws. The mining claimant could apply for patent on up to 100 acres within the WSA for the locatable building stone deposits found on three of the six claims.

### **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-33-4 (CEDAR BUTTE)**

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p>Naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation and special features would be lost on up to 100 acres of lava building stone sale area. Views of the stone removal activities could be seen from only about a .5-mile radius of the mine because the lava terrain would screen most views. This would be a short-term impact (3-5 years) because mining activity would cease after the stone supply is depleted. Over the long term, views of the material area would have an insignificant impact because only a thin layer of surface rock would have been removed.</p>	<p>Wilderness values and special features of pristine pahoehoe formations and pioneering plant communities would be preserved on 35,600 acres and degraded on lava building stone mining claims involving up to 100 acres. Four miles of peripheral vehicle trails would rehabilitate by eliminating 50 visitor days of motorized recreation use.</p>
Impacts to Energy and Mineral Development	No Impact.	<p>Subject to valid existing rights on 17,026 acres of oil and gas leases, the WSA would be withdrawn from leasing and location. Withdrawal will not impact exploration because of low potential. Wilderness designation would require validity exam on building stone claims.</p>

## **Local Social and Economic Consideration**

No significant social effects would occur as a result of wilderness designation.

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

BLM's wilderness inventory and study were conducted with extensive public participation and public involvement was an important consideration in making wilderness recommendations. BLM solicited public involvement in the study phase through scoping meetings, mailings on issue identification and alternative formulation, a 90-day public comment period and two formal hearings on the Eastern Idaho Draft Wilderness EIS. Comments received during the inventory period and EIS scoping efforts were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness value.

Wilderness was not an issue in the original Big Desert MFP and was not a subject of comments. Few comments were received during the wilderness inventory and either supported or opposed wilderness for the area. None were deferred for consideration during the study.

Sixty of the comments received during the Draft EIS comment period or at the public hearings specifically mentioned the Cedar Butte WSA. All but two supported wilderness for the area. One objected to wilderness because of the unknown status of minerals and because industry had not yet had a chance to explore the WSA. The other supported the no wilderness recommendation because the commenter wanted to see one lava flow left open for changes in recreation and scientific needs. Wilderness supporters emphasized the WSA's special features and wilderness values as reasons for designation. Some felt that, since the WSA was similar to Hell's Half Acre, Cedar Butte should deserve the same wilderness recommendation.

Two government agencies commented on the WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency stated that they had no objection to the Draft EIS proposal.

# Hell's Half Acre Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 66,200 acres

The Hell's Half Acre WSA (ID-33-15) is located in Bonneville County ten miles west of Idaho Falls, Idaho. The WSA includes 66,200 acres of public land. Inholdings consist of 2,560 acres of state land (see Table 1). Boundaries of the WSA are generally the outside edges of the lava flow near State Highway 20 to the north and adjacent to state, BLM and private lands on the east, south and west.

The 5,200-year-old lava flow resembles a flat moonscape that is interrupted by deep crevices, fissures, ridges, depressions and sparse vegetation. Vegetation type and density vary widely depending on where soils have accumulated. Pioneer plants such as lichens and mosses inhabit the barren lava surfaces, while more diverse plant communities have developed on the older lava surfaces and in "kipukas," areas within the flow that escaped the encroaching lava. The kipukas and older lava flows contain dense stands of juniper trees and a wide variety of high desert shrubs, forbs and grasses. Mule deer, antelope, coyotes and rabbits are the most frequently sighted mammals on Hell's Half Acre. Sage grouse and mourning doves inhabit the lava flows and kipukas and are hunted to a limited extent near the WSA's boundary. No threatened, endangered or sensitive animals or plants are known to occur in the area.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Eastern Idaho Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) filed October 1986. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS for Hell's Half Acre WSA: the proposed action (all wilderness) alternative, which is the recommendation of this report (66,200 acres would be designated as wilderness); and a no wilderness alternative.

## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**66,200 acres recommended for wilderness**

**0 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Hell's Half Acre WSA is to designate the area 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. The entire 66,200 acres of BLM-administered public land within the WSA is recommended for wilderness designation and is shown as the Hell's Half Acre Proposal map. This recommendation for wilderness will further apply to the 2,560 acres of inholdings that are anticipated to be acquired from the State of Idaho through exchange.

Wilderness designation of this area would ensure the preservation of a 5,200-year-old lava landscape and maintain the outstanding opportunities for solitude among the area's fissure, ridges, crevices and other volcanic features. Also the challenging primitive recreation opportunities and integrity of the designated National Natural Landmark would be protected.

Several factors contribute to the area's value as wilderness:

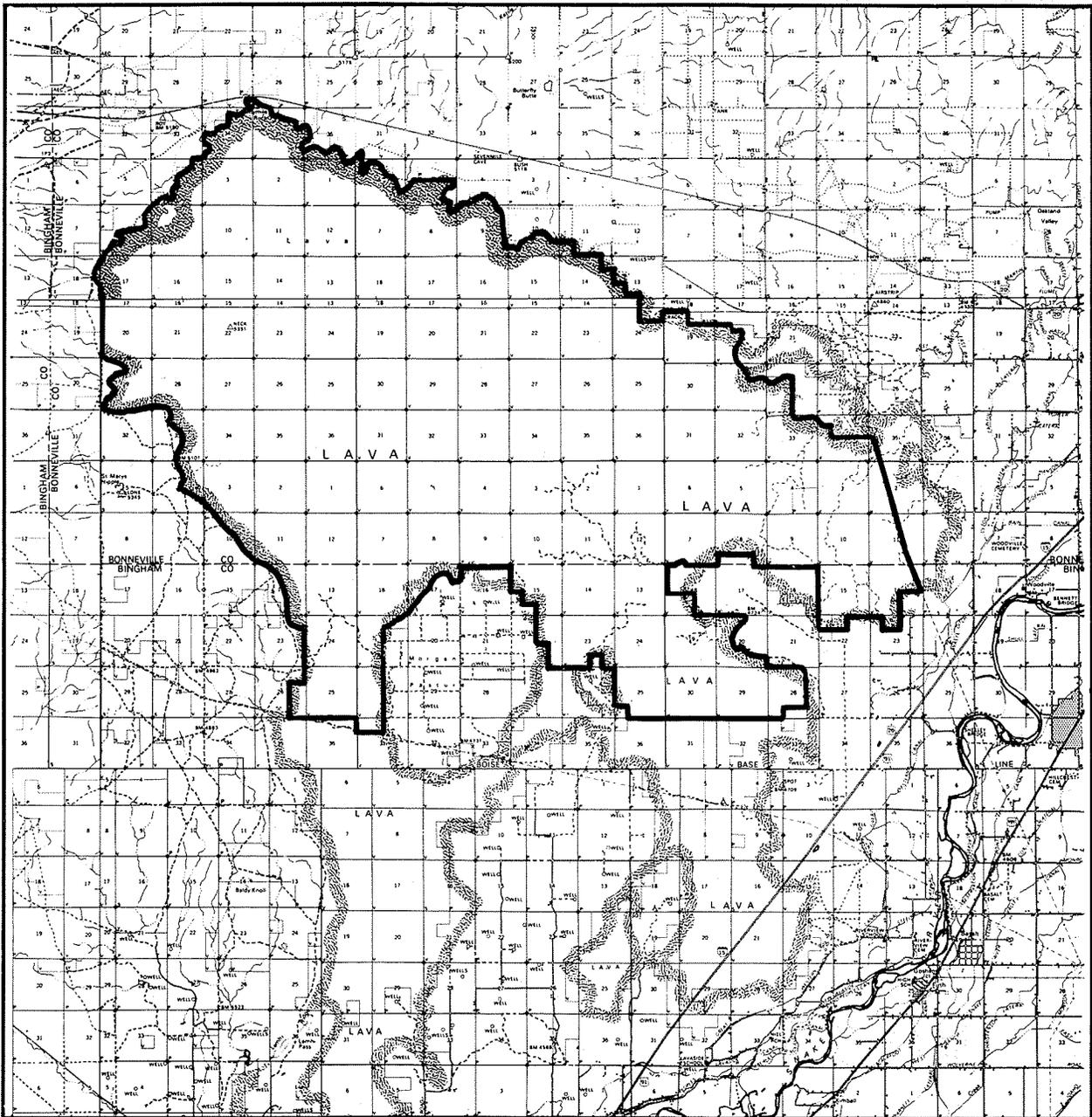
The 66,200 acres recommended for wilderness designation includes nearly three-fourths of the Hell's Half Acre lava field. The field is an outstanding example of a single-event geologic feature that is fully preserved and exposed. Fractures, depressions, ridges and caves are common across the fairly smooth surface. A large portion of the WSA, 44,000 acres, is designated a National Natural Landmark.

The WSA adds an element of uncommon and striking scenery to the southeastern Idaho high desert. Farm land and sagebrush-covered flats surround the lava flow which is a scenic backdrop for visitors along Interstate 15. Thousands of people travel this highway on their way to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

The WSA's large size and rugged volcanic landscape offer excellent solitude for those willing to venture into this harsh environment. The absence of trails will help maintain the isolated character of the area for recreationists. Hiking, camping and caving among the pressure and flow ridges, kipukas and lava tubes of one of the youngest shield volcanos in the U.S. can be a challenging and rewarding experience.

The WSA can be managed to preserve its wilderness values over the long term because of its extreme ruggedness, inaccessibility to motor vehicles and well-defined wilderness boundary along the margins of the lava flow. State lands pose some concern for future management of the area as wilderness. These inholdings, if acquired through exchange, would supplement the wilderness values and remove the possibility of conflicts with incompatible uses. The Idaho Department of Lands has expressed a willingness to exchange.

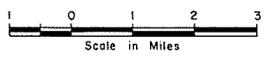
Conflicts with other resource uses of the Hell's Half Acre WSA are limited. Exploration and development of geothermal and oil and gas would be curtailed by wilderness designation. However, the geologic structure of the WSA suggests that a low potential exists for these energy sources. Lava building stone collection would not be permitted. The impact would be minor because adequate quantities of stone are available elsewhere to meet future demands. Other stone collection sites are available outside the WSA in the Hell's Half Acre flow and the Snake River Plain. Motorized recreation would be eliminated but the impact would be negligible because the present use is low (150 visitor days per year).



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R. 34 E. | R. 35 E.      R. 35 E. | R. 36 E.      R. 36 E. | R. 37 E.

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



**ID-33-15  
 HELL'S HALF ACRE  
 PROPOSAL**

OCTOBER 1988

**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
HELL'S HALF ACRE**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	66,200
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	2,560
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,760</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	66,200
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>66,200</b>
Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	2,560
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

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

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

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Hell's Half Acre WSA is predominantly natural with negligible human imprints. The 5,200-year-old lava flow has been an obstacle to development since the settlement of the Snake River Plain and generally is considered unusable land. Farming activities have stopped at the edge of the lava flow leaving the hardened basalt surface virtually untouched.

Impacts on the natural appearance of the WSA consist of 18 faintly visible vehicle trails and six small border dump sites. These impacts are minor and do not detract from the naturalness of this large area. From the edges and higher points of Hell's Half Acre, the visitor can view cultivated land, rural traffic on farm roads and highways and the towns of Idaho Falls and Shelley, Idaho. Farming occurs up to the lava borders along the north, south and southeast. The overall impact on naturalness of these influences is minor. Few areas either in the National Wilderness Preservation System or being studied for designation compare with the high quality of naturalness in Hell's Half Acre.

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

The WSA offers outstanding opportunities for solitude because of its large size, rugged topography and lack of hiking trails. The visitor can find a secluded spot. The sharp relief in the lava provides adequate screening for reducing encounters with other visitors. The nearby farming activity and other human influences could detract from a feeling of solitude for some visitors. Others who venture into this rugged landscape may find that the nearness of civilization heightens their awareness of being easily removed from human activity.

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

Hell's Half Acre offers outstanding recreational activities rarely found in this country. Volcanic forces have created lava tunnels which can be explored as well as a myriad of volcanic features that provide excellent subjects for photographers and geology buffs. Sightseeing is outstanding for botanical and zoological features. Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing offer physical and mental challenge to winter explorers. Similarly, for those willing to brave the rough portions of lava, hiking allows visitors to discover its unique beauty. The many lava features offer travel destinations of interest to explorers and enhance the quality of each expedition into the lava. Camping is another activity for the enthusiast willing to pack in water. The rugged terrain and harsh conditions provide a significant challenge to those who find this aspect of primitive recreation rewarding.

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

The scientific, educational and scenic values of the Hell's Half Acre WSA area are important. A large portion, 44,000 acres, has been designated a National Natural Landmark because of its unusual occurrence within the Snake River Plain. It includes excellent examples of pahoehoe lava features of geologic importance. The ecology of the lava is a prime illustration of pioneering plant communities. The ferns in the deep cracks are a botanical anomaly. For the visitor to this uncommon and striking landscape, the scenic contrast to the southeastern Idaho desert is of special interest. The lava flow adds an element of significant change from the surrounding sagebrush-covered flats and cultivated farm land.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Hell's Half Acre WSA is located in the Intermountain Sagebrush Province -- Desert Ecosystem where vegetation is largely absent. This ecosystem is not well represented nationwide in the wilderness system. If designated, Hell's Half Acre could increase the total area represented by this ecosystem and add vegetation and landform characteristics associated with a lava flow that is generally twice the age of the Craters of the Moon Wilderness. This ecosystem is represented by one designated area with 30,245 acres. There are 11 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
Intermountain Sagebrush Province					
		<u>NATIONWIDE</u>			
Desert-Vegetation Absent Ecosystem	Largely	1	30,245	12	870,403
		<u>IDAHO</u>			
Desert-Vegetation Absent Ecosystem	Largely	1	30,245	11	646,687
		<u>NEVADA</u>			
Desert-Vegetation Absent Ecosystem	Largely	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 Hell's Half Acre WSA is within a five-hour drive from 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.

Hell's Half Acre would increase the land area available to Boise, Idaho, and Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah, residents for solitude and primitive recreation by about one percent. However, most wilderness visitors to the WSA are not expected to come from long distances. The local communities of Idaho Falls, Blackfoot and Pocatello, Idaho, would likely benefit the most from the area. These local communities have a combined population of over 100,000 people.

**Table 3**

**Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers**

Population Centers	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	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**

Hell's Half Acre WSA would contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. No wilderness areas have been designated in southeastern Idaho where the WSA is located. The nearest designated area is the 43,243 acre Craters of the Moon Wilderness in south-central Idaho. Adjacent to the Craters is the proposed 346,800 acre Great Rift Wilderness which has been recommended for designation to Congress by the President. There are five other wilderness areas totaling 3,958,158 acres located in central Idaho.

### **Manageability**

The WSA can be managed to preserve its wilderness values over the long term because of its extreme ruggedness, inaccessibility to motor vehicles and well-defined wilderness boundary along the margins of the lava flow. State lands pose some concern for future management of the area as wilderness. These inholdings, if acquired through exchange, would supplement the wilderness values and remove the possibility of conflicts with incompatible uses. The Idaho Department of Lands has expressed a willingness to make an exchange.

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

Mineral assessments for the Hell's Half Acre WSA have been prepared by the Geological Survey in 1987 and the Bureau of Mines in 1985. Conclusions from these reports are:

Industry has leased half of the WSA for oil and gas, but lessors have not shown interest in exploration. The area lacks host rocks and structures favorable for the occurrence of oil and gas or coal. No thermal water is known to exist within the WSA and several wells adjacent to the area have water which indicates low heat gradients. The resource potential for these commodities is low.

The WSA contains about 150,000 tons of basalt building stone suitable for use as a decorative veneer. The likelihood for development of the decorative stone is considered moderate. Most areas which contain suitable stone lie near the edge of the lava field.

Analysis of basalt samples from the WSA showed no concentrations of any elements which might be associated with mineralization. It is, therefore, concluded that the WSA has low mineral resource potential for metals.

### **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-33-15 (HELL'S HALF ACRE)**

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	PROPOSED ACTION (ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values and special features of scenic 5,200-year-old pahoehoe and lava formations, pioneering plant communities and a 44,000 acre National Natural Landmark would be preserved on 66,200 acres. Natural character would be rehabilitated along 18 miles of vehicle trails by removing the surface disturbance of motor vehicle use. Solitude would not be disturbed near the trails because visitors would not see or hear motor vehicles.	Continued presence of motor vehicles on 18 miles of vehicle trails would slightly degrade naturalness. Solitude would be disturbed by the infrequent presence of vehicles on the fringes of the WSA.
Impacts to Energy and Mineral Development	Subject to valid existing rights on oil and gas leases, the WSA would be withdrawn from mineral entry. Because of low potential for occurrence of energy mineral commodities, no impacts are anticipated. Lava building stone collection would not be permitted but the impact would be minor because adequate quantities of stone would be available to meet future demands. Other stone collection sites are available outside the WSA in the Hell's Half Acre Flow and the Snake River Plain.	No Impact.
Impacts to Motorized Recreation Use	Motorized recreation use, amounting to 150 visitor days, would be foregone annually both in the short and long term. Impacts of shifting use to other public lands would be negligible.	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 Hell's Half Acre WSA.

## Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

BLM's wilderness inventory and study were conducted with extensive public participation and public involvement was an important consideration in making wilderness recommendations. BLM solicited public involvement in the study phase through scoping meetings, mailings on issue identification and alternative formulation, a 90-day public comment period and two formal hearings on the Eastern Idaho Draft Wilderness EIS. Comments received during the inventory period and EIS scoping efforts were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness value.

During the wilderness inventory, BLM received 31 comments that addressed the Hell's Half Acre WSA. Twenty-seven comments supported the WSA recommendation and emphasized the area's high quality wilderness characteristics to include naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation and special features of scenic value, wildlife value, educational and scientific importance and diverse vegetation. Four comments said the area lacked naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation and would not qualify for further study.

Wilderness was not an issue in the original Big Desert MFP and was not a subject of comments. No comments received during the wilderness inventory were deferred for consideration during the study. Comments received during the issue identification and alternative formulation steps offered the following points to be considered during the study:

The WSA's outstanding wilderness quality and closeness to population centers.

The conflicts with motorbike use and mineral activities.

The need to protect a lava flow as wilderness when Idaho already has enough wilderness.

Seventy-eight of the comments received during the Draft EIS comment period or at the public hearings specifically mentioned the Hell's Half Acre WSA. All but two strongly supported the recommendation for wilderness. The two against wilderness objected because of the unknown status of minerals and because industry had not yet had a chance to explore the WSA. Supporters emphasized the area's high quality wilderness values, lack of resource conflicts, important special features and closeness to major Idaho population centers. One commenter from Utah Power and Light Company supported wilderness but asked that a boundary adjustment be made in the area.

Three government agencies commented on the WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency stated that they had no objection to the Draft EIS proposal. The Bureau of Indian Affairs concurred with the recommendation because of Hell's Half Acre's high-quality wilderness values.

**APPENDIX I --HELL'S HALF ACRE**  
**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 (federal, state, private, other)	Type of Ownership by Estate (federal, state, private, other)	Presently Proposed for Acquisition	Preferred Method of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition
			Surface Estate	Subsurface Estate				
Parcel No. 1 T. 2 N., R. 34 E. Sec. 16	640	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	6,400
Parcel No. 2 T. 2 N., R. 34 E. Sec. 36	640	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	6,400
Parcel No. 3 T. 2 N., R. 35 E. Sec. 16	640	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	6,400
Parcel No. 4 T. 2 N., R. 35 E. Sec. 36	640	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	6,400

(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.

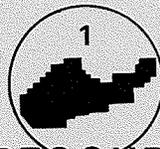
# SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC WSA RECOMMENDATIONS

## MEDICINE LODGE WILDERNESS

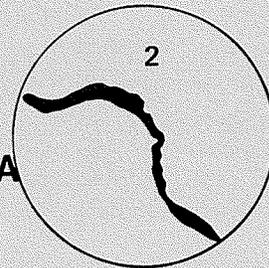


**MEDICINE LODGE WILDERNESS**

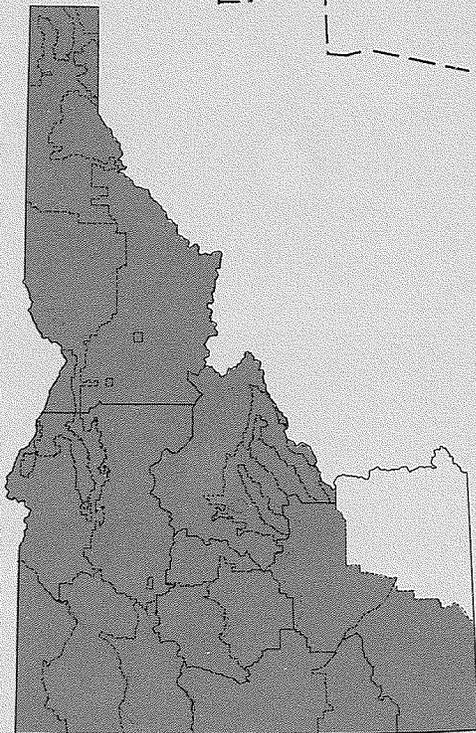
**MEDICINE LODGE**



**RESOURCE**



**AREA**



**LEGEND**

- DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- RESOURCE AREA BOUNDARY
- WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

**MEDICINE LODGE**

- 1. Sand Mountain
- 2. Snake River Islands



Scale in Miles



# Snake River Islands Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 770 acres

The Snake River Islands WSA (ID-34-2) is comprised of 39 separate islands located within a 25-mile segment of Idaho's South Fork of the Snake River in Bonneville County between Swan Valley and Heise, Idaho. The WSA includes 770 acres of public land. Ownership of the adjacent river banks is a mixed pattern of private, State of Idaho and U.S. Forest Service (see Table 1). Twenty-five of the islands are withdrawn for power site and reclamation projects by the Bureau of Reclamation.

The Snake River Islands are characterized by dense riparian vegetation. An overstory of middle-aged cottonwoods occurs on the larger islands with an understory of forbs, grasses, scattered shrubs and an occasional park-like opening. Smaller islands that do not support cottonwood trees are covered with willows, Russian olive, alder and dogwood. The surrounding river landscape varies within the 25-mile corridor and influences the character of the islands. The segment from Swan Valley to Conant Valley is characterized as a generally open flood plain and pastoral setting. From Conant Valley, the river flows through a rugged, deep gorge comprising the most scenic stretch of the South Fork. Beyond the canyon to Heise, the river enters a flat alluvial flood plain flanked by farmland.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan and Medicine Lodge Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) filed in December 1987. Three alternatives were analyzed in the FEIS for the Snake River Islands WSA: the proposed action (no wilderness) alternative, which is the recommendation of this report; an all wilderness alternative (770 acres); and a partial wilderness alternative (155 acres - 12 islands).

## 2. Recommendation and Rationale

**0 acres recommended for  
wilderness**

**770 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Snake River Islands WSA is to designate the area as nonwilderness and to release all 39 islands (770 acres) for uses other than wilderness (see the Snake River Islands Proposal maps 1-6). 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 39 islands are recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation because the islands are extremely small and use adjacent to the islands is heavy and increasing. The islands cannot easily be managed as wilderness and wilderness values are impaired by unnatural water flow regulation, motorboat traffic, recreation use and other outside influences.

A variety of conditions adversely affect BLM's ability to manage the islands as wilderness:

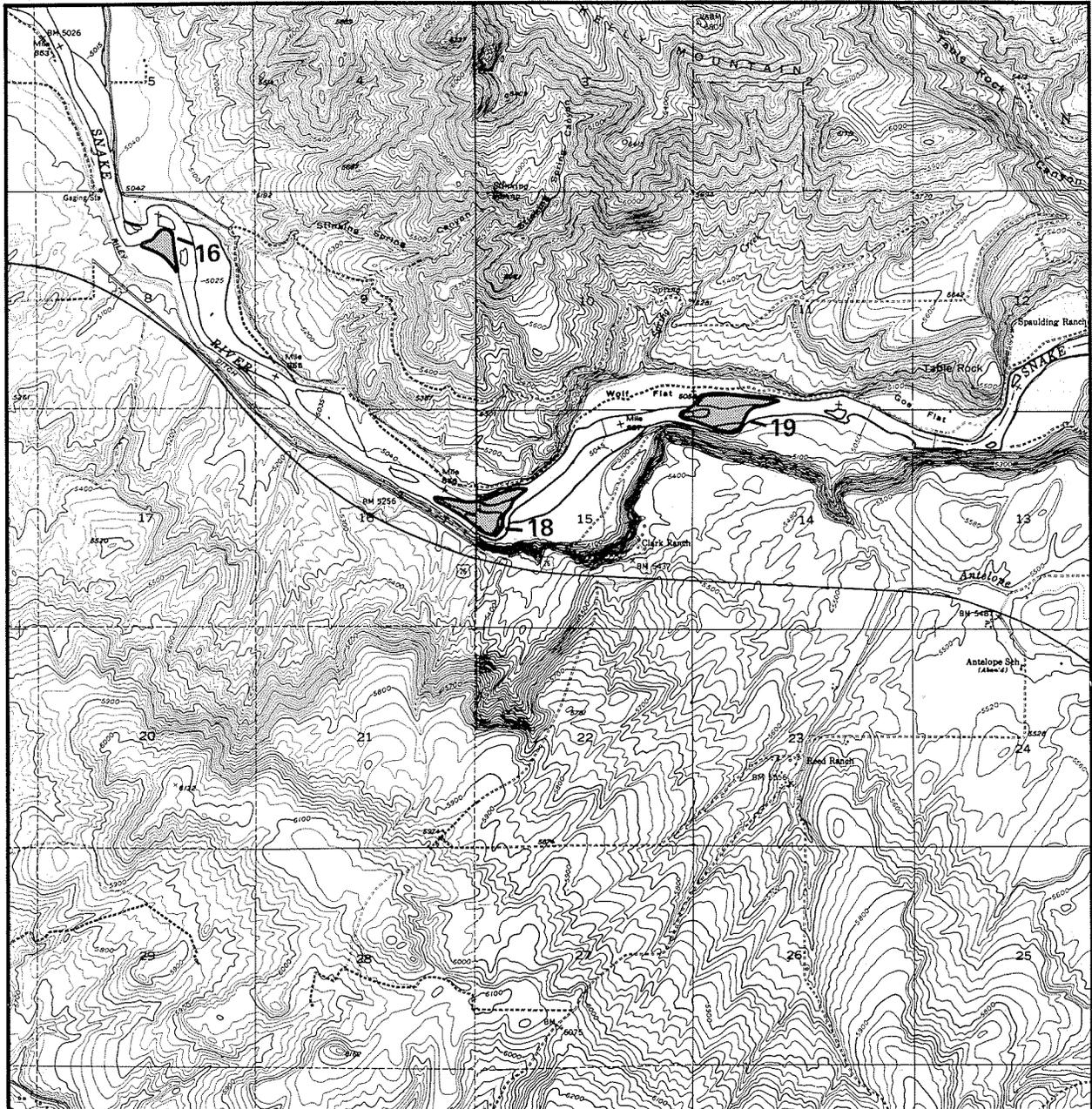
Water levels in the South Fork are regulated by the Bureau of Reclamation at Palisades Dam and fluctuate significantly depending on irrigation demands or needs projected for storage. These fluctuations, both extremely high flows and low flows, have changed the islands' size, configuration and vegetative cover within the past few years. River channels that once separated several islands from the mainland no longer carry flows below 10,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) or are dry except during the highest flows (15,000-20,000 cfs). Island size and configuration have been altered by the erosive action of the water. In the spring of 1986, high flows (26,000 cfs) stripped a number of the islands in the upper river segment of vegetation and left gravel bars. BLM has no control over water releases from the dam and, therefore, no control on whether an island will remain an island over the long term. Wilderness boundary identification and management would be impossible over the long term.

The opportunity to experience solitude and primitive recreation and a visitor's perception of naturalness on the majority of the islands is limited because of outside influences that cannot be controlled. Use of motorboats on the river is allowed and BLM has no control over the type of boat used since it is state-controlled water. Motorboat traffic is extensive, particularly during the summer fishing season. Avoiding the sights and sounds from this traffic on the small islands is nearly impossible. Twenty-seven of the islands have other adjacent and nearby influences which degrade wilderness values. These include highway traffic, recreational and landowner traffic along a paralleling river road, farm-related machinery and structures, and cattle grazing. The remaining 11 islands within the scenic canyon portion of the river are influenced by camping activities and a canyon rim trail that has motorcycle, horse and hiking traffic which can be seen and heard from the islands. Unwanted grazing impacts naturalness when livestock on nearby river allotments cross shallow or nonexistent channels onto the islands. Livestock also interfere with opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. All of these influences are impossible or difficult for BLM to control and manage because of the adjacent mixed ownership of private, state and national forest lands.

BLM recognizes that the Snake River Islands WSA possesses the required basic wilderness characteristics and has certain natural values that are and will be protected but difficulties in wilderness management and the trade-offs with other resource uses outweigh the benefits of wilderness designation.

The natural values and resource uses that will be protected include bald eagle nesting and wintering areas, big game wintering grounds and blue ribbon cutthroat trout fisheries, important riparian and ecosystem relationships and highly valued scenic resources. These values will be protected through special designations and management objectives outlined in the Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan. These designations include an Area of Critical Environmental Concern and Special Recreation Management Area. The management objectives of these designations will focus on protecting natural and wildlife values and resources while providing and accommodating motorized and nonmotorized recreation uses and needs.

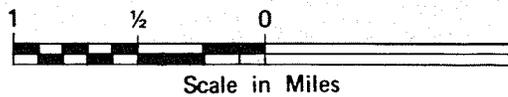
The Medicine Lodge RMP decision has placed protective limitations on development of the South Fork of the Snake River that includes all of the islands in the Snake River Islands WSA. These limitations are no surface occupancy for oil and gas and geothermal resources, withdrawal of locatable minerals from mining claim location and closure to sand and gravel extraction.



T. 3 N.

R. 41 E.

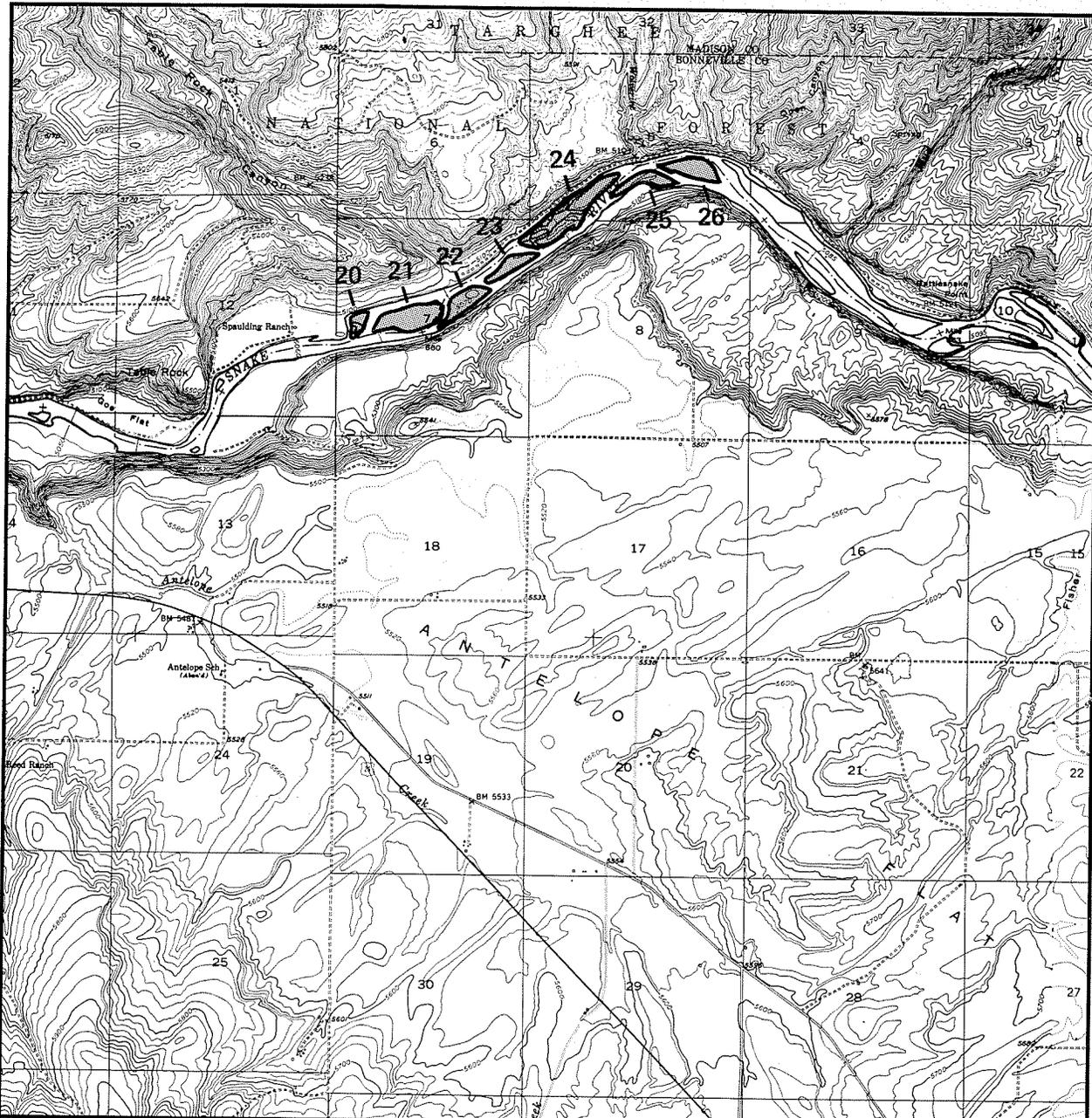
- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  SPLIT ESTATE |
|  RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  STATE        |
|  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  PRIVATE      |



ID-34-2  
SNAKE RIVER ISLANDS  
PROPOSAL

MAP 1

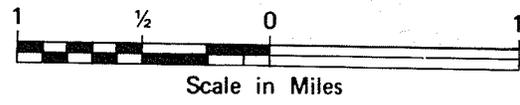
AUGUST 1988



T. 3 N.

R. 41 E. | R. 42 E.

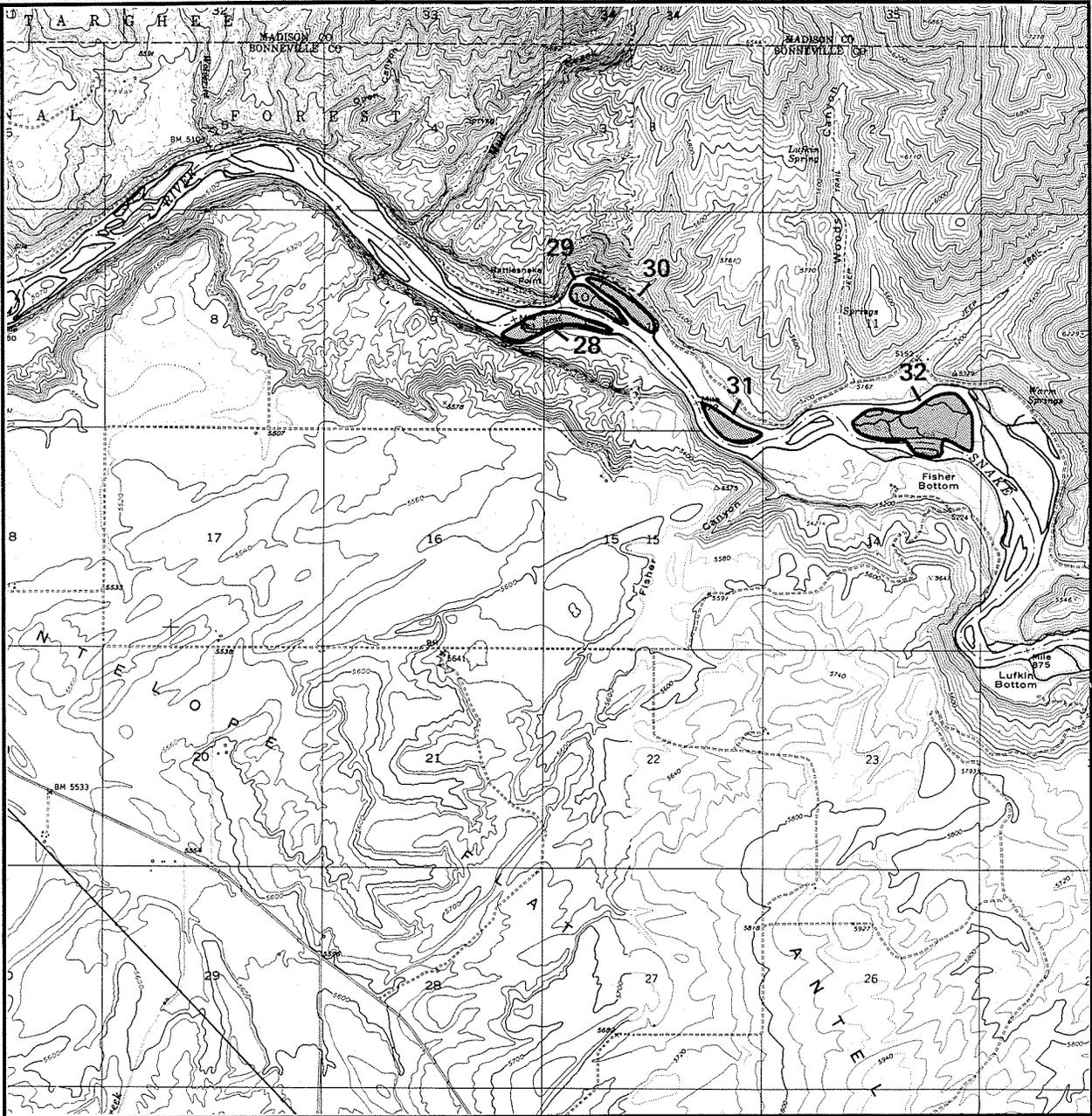
- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  SPLIT ESTATE |
|  RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  STATE        |
|  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  PRIVATE      |



ID-34-2  
 SNAKE RIVER ISLANDS  
 PROPOSAL

MAP 2

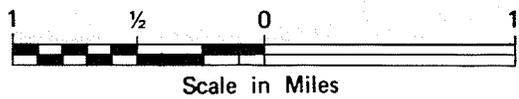
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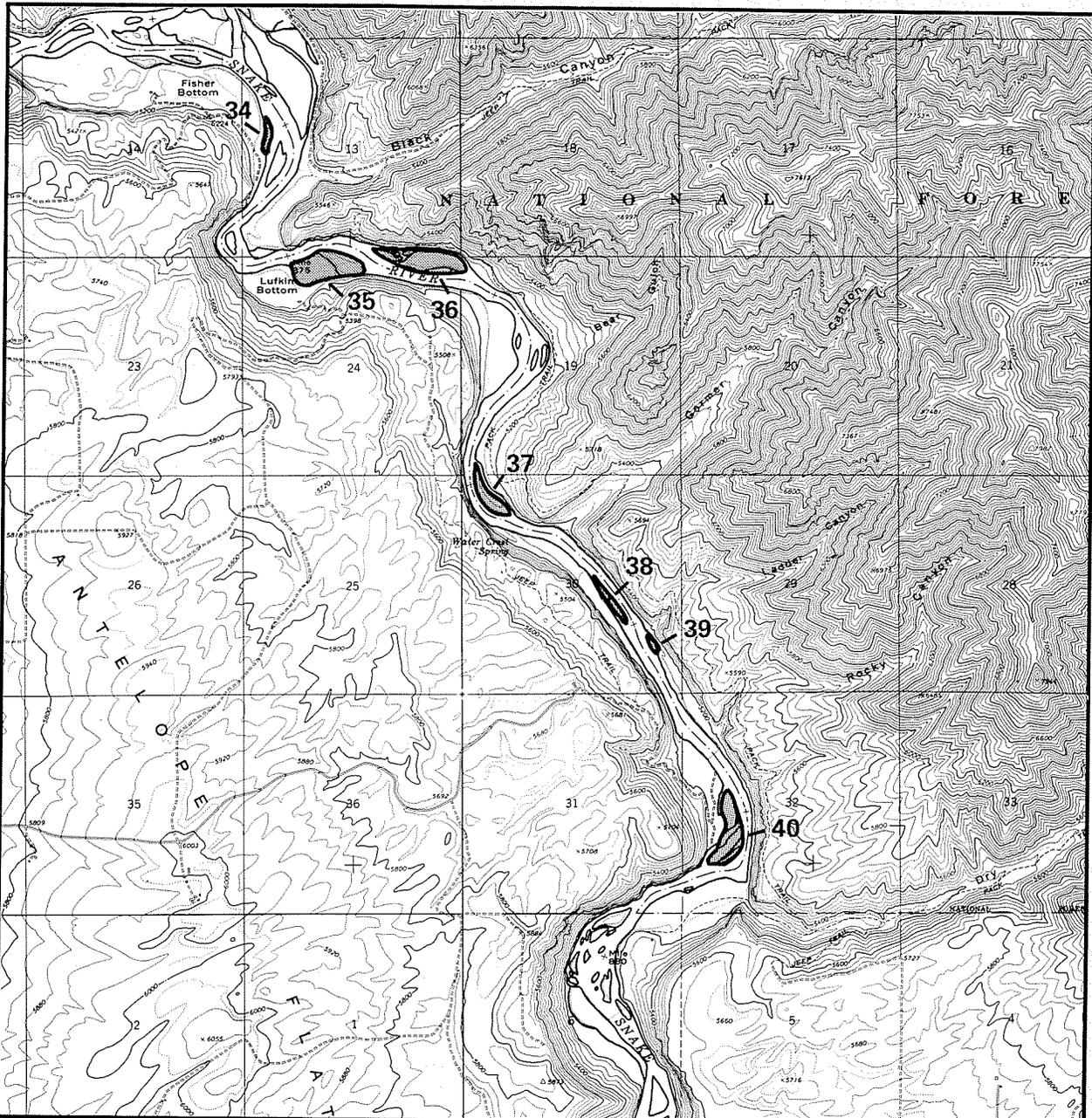
- |   |   |   |              |
|---|---|---|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



ID-34-2  
SNAKE RIVER ISLANDS  
PROPOSAL

MAP 3

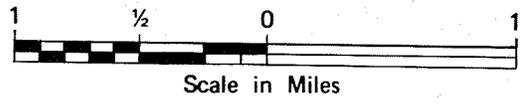
AUGUST 1988



R.42 E. | R. 43 E.

T. 3 N.  
T. 2 N.

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



ID- 34- 2  
SNAKE RIVER ISLANDS  
PROPOSAL

MAP 4

AUGUST 1988

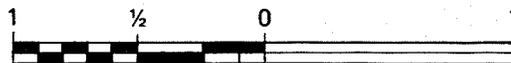


T. 3 N.

T. 2 N.

R. 42 E. | R. 43 E.

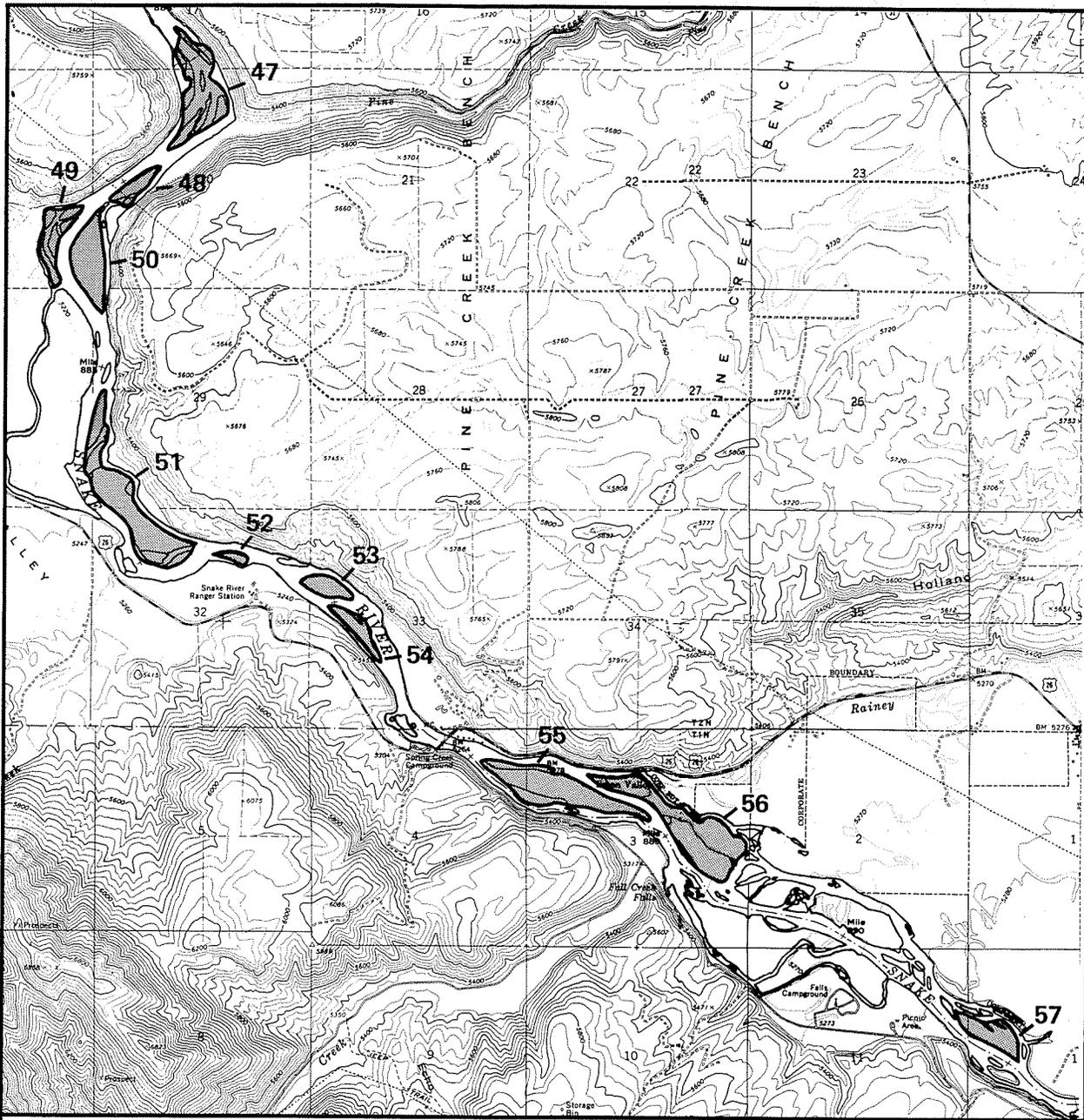
- |   |   |   |              |
|---|---|---|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



ID-34-2  
SNAKE RIVER ISLANDS  
PROPOSAL

MAP 5

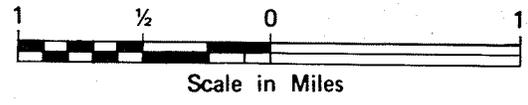
AUGUST 1988



T. 2 N.  
T. 1 N.

R. 43 E.

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



ID-34-2  
SNAKE RIVER ISLANDS  
PROPOSAL

MAP 6

AUGUST 1988

**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
SNAKE RIVER ISLANDS WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	770
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>770</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	770
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>770</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The islands are essentially natural with some human imprints and influences. Impacts on the natural character of the Snake River Islands WSA islands are livestock grazing, litter and fire rings left by recreationists and nearby human activity and development. Grazing has reduced some thick island vegetation, creating open spaces more suitable for camping and spring waterfowl nesting. Litter and fire rings are found on the larger islands where camping is possible. Off-site influences appear the most dominant on islands 48-57 where Highway 26 is nearest the river and traffic can be seen clearly and heard from the islands. The use of automobiles for rip-rap is of some significance, particularly on island 54 where over 30 junk cars line the river bank. From islands 16-35, a gravel road parallels the river and is frequently used by recreationists and private landowners. A motorcycle, horse and hiking trail follows the canyon rim above islands 36-47. These off-site impacts degrade a visitor's perception of naturalness. Controlled water flows from Palisades Dam have caused unnatural erosive influences on the islands. High water levels to support downstream irrigation needs have cut new banks and channels which have changed the size and configuration of the islands. Channel flow in some instances has changed enough to reconnect some of the islands with the mainland.

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

Opportunities for solitude vary and are affected by the size and vegetative cover of a particular island, seasonal recreation use and proximity to outside influences. On 15 of the 39 islands, a combination of vegetative screening and relatively large size contributes to opportunities for solitude. The remaining 24 islands can provide some opportunities for solitude but, because of their small size and thinner vegetative screening, visitors cannot avoid contact with others or outside influences. The major outside influences include Highway 26 and nearby developments, vehicle traffic on the gravel road between islands 16 and 35 and the presence of motorboats throughout the entire river segment, particularly during the summer fishing season when recreation use peaks.

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

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are numerous and of high quality but are influenced by motorboats, motor vehicle traffic on roads that parallel the river and farm-related activities. Fishing from and around the islands is the most popular activity and is directly related to the excellent cutthroat trout fishery in the South Fork. The river channel along the islands offers challenge for boaters to test their skills on flat, swift water. Primitive camping is available on several of the larger islands where there are grassy openings in the thick vegetation. The abundance and diversity of wildlife on the islands offer good deer and waterfowl hunting and excellent chances to observe and photograph several wildlife species, particularly bald and golden eagles. All of these recreation values are enhanced by the spectacular scenery found along the river corridor. However, the adjacent and nearby presence of motorboats, motor vehicle traffic and farm machinery degrades primitive recreation opportunities.

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

The most important supplementary value of the Snake River Islands WSA is wildlife habitat. The islands provide bald eagle nesting and roosting sites and hunting areas for other raptors. Elk depend on the islands for forage in the winter while deer and moose use them year round. The islands are within an area evaluated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the highest ranked ecosystem in Idaho. The ecosystem contains the most extensive and highest quality cottonwood-riparian forest in the state.

# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Snake River Islands WSA would add an ecosystem not presently represented in Idaho or in the National Wilderness Preservation System. 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.

The islands are within an area evaluated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the highest ranked ecosystem in Idaho. The ecosystem contains the most extensive and highest quality cottonwood-riparian forest in the state. This ecosystem is very limited in Idaho, covering less than 0.2 percent of the state, and is not represented in the wilderness system. Potential representation exists only in the Snake River Islands WSA.

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

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	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 Snake River Islands 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 Snake River Islands WSA would contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System by adding an area in southeastern Idaho. In the region surrounding Idaho, the existing wilderness areas are concentrated in the Sierra Nevadas in California; the Cascade Mountain Range in Oregon and Washington; and in the Rocky Mountains of Idaho, Montana, Colorado and Wyoming. There are a few wilderness areas in Nevada, Utah, southeastern Oregon and southern Idaho.

### **Manageability**

The Snake River Islands WSA cannot be managed as wilderness. Since the South Fork of the Snake River is dammed and regulated by the Bureau of Reclamation, BLM has no control over water levels. The variance in water flow has eroded some of the once tree-covered WSA islands to gravel bars. New islands have formed and islands that did not qualify for WSA status are now established and vegetated. At water levels below 10,000 cfs, many channels are dry, causing several WSA islands to become part of the river bank land and can no longer be classified as islands. Boundary identification would be difficult and ever-changing.

BLM has no control of outside influences on wilderness values because of the adjacent mixed ownership of private, state and national forest lands. The opportunity to experience solitude and primitive recreation and a visitor's perception of naturalness on the majority of the islands is limited because of off-site influences. Use of motor boats on the river is allowed on the water since it is state-owned. Motorboat traffic is extensive, particularly during the summer fishing season. Avoiding the sights and sounds from this traffic on the small islands is nearly impossible. Twenty-seven of the islands have other adjacent and nearby influences which degrade wilderness values. These include highway traffic, recreational and landowner traffic along a paralleling river road, farm-related machinery and structures and cattle grazing. The remaining 11 islands within the scenic canyon portion of the river are influenced by camping activities and a canyon rim trail that has motorcycle, horse and hiking traffic which can be seen and heard from the islands. Unwanted grazing impacts naturalness when livestock on nearby river allotments cross shallow or nonexistent channels onto the islands. Livestock also interfere with opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

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

A Geology, Energy and Mineral (GEM) assessment report was prepared for the Snake River Islands WSA in 1983 and 1984 (Geoexplorers International, Inc., 1983-84). Conclusions from the report are as follows:

No active unpatented or patented mining claims exist within the WSA. Most of island units 2 and 3 are covered by oil and gas leases. The potential for energy and mineral resources in the Snake River Islands WSA is rated moderate for oil and gas, low to moderate for geothermal, low for locatables and moderate to high for sand and gravel.

### **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-34-2 (SNAKE RIVER ISLANDS)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Over the short term, naturalness and primitive recreation would be maintained on the 39 islands along with supplemental values of wildlife including bald eagle nesting and wintering sites. Long-term impacts from construction of a large reservoir would result in a loss of all wilderness values on islands 31-57. Islands 16-27 would retain their wilderness and supplemental values for the foreseeable future.	Wilderness characteristics of naturalness and primitive recreation would be protected on 37 islands which would benefit wildlife habitat (particularly bald eagle nesting areas) and scenic values. Wilderness character and wildlife habitat would be lost or degraded on 2 islands from recreation homesite development with or without wilderness designation. The threat of flooding from a large reservoir would no longer exist.	Wilderness characteristics of naturalness and primitive recreation would be protected on 11 islands which would benefit wildlife habitat (particularly bald eagle nesting areas) and scenic values. One of the islands in the partial alternative would lose wilderness character from recreation homesite development with or without designation. The remaining 27 islands would not receive long-term protection but, without the threat of inundation from reservoir construction, values would likely remain on 26 islands. 1 island, adjacent to the recreation homesite development, would be degraded.
Impacts to Threatened, Endangered and Candidate Species	Bald eagle populations would increase as projected under the Greater Yellowstone Bald Eagle Recovery Plan over the short term. Over the long term, dam construction would inundate habitat and 4 nests would be lost. Eaglet births would decrease from 10 per year to 3 per year and annual wintering populations would decrease from 40-80 birds to 10-20 birds.	Bald eagle populations would increase as projected under the Greater Yellowstone Bald Eagle Recovery Plan. 10 eaglets would be produced annually with 40-80 birds wintering along the river.	Bald eagle populations would increase as projected under the Greater Yellowstone Bald Eagle Recovery Plan. 10 eaglets would be produced annually with 40-80 birds wintering along the river.
Impacts to Power Site and Reclamation Project Development	No impacts would result to power site and reclamation project development. Options to construct projects would be left open.	Power site and reclamation withdrawals would be revoked and potential projects would not be allowed.	Power site and reclamation withdrawals would be revoked and potential projects would not be allowed.

## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Social and economic impacts were not considered a significant issue in the Snake River Islands Study.

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

BLM's wilderness inventory and study were conducted with extensive public participation and public involvement was an important consideration in making wilderness recommendations. BLM solicited public involvement in the study phase through scoping meetings, a 90-day public comment period and three formal hearings on the Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan/EIS (the Draft Medicine Lodge Wilderness EIS was part of the land use plan). Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory period and EIS scoping efforts were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness value.

In the inventory stage, six commenters favored intensive inventory while three did not. One had no opinion. Those who favored further study stressed protection for the unique cottonwood-riparian system, excellent wildlife habitat and the high value of primitive recreation in the area. Irrigation structures, roads and mineral exploration were concerns of those who opposed further study of the islands.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, 18 comments specifically addressing this WSA were received. In general, 11 comments supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA. Six commenters supported no wilderness for this WSA. One had no opinion.

Nine federal agencies commented on the Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement containing the wilderness EIS but gave no wilderness-related comments. One state agency supported BLM's no wilderness recommendation because of the Lynn Crandall dam proposal.

No comments addressing the Snake River Islands WSA were received on the Medicine Lodge Wilderness Final EIS.

# Sand Mountain Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 21,100 acres

The Sand Mountain WSA (ID-35-3) is located in Fremont and Jefferson Counties ten miles west of the city of St. Anthony, Idaho. The WSA includes 21,100 acres of public land. Inholdings consist of one 640 acre tract of state land (see Table 1). A small five acre parcel of private land is located 500 feet west and inside the WSA's eastern boundary where the owner operates a resort and campground for off-road vehicle enthusiasts. Boundaries of the WSA are generally a county road on the east and southwest, a BLM road on the west and state and private land subdivisions on the northwest, north and southeast.

The Sand Mountain WSA is characterized by a series of large, active sand dunes. The most prominent feature is Sand Mountain which rises about 500 feet above the adjacent plain. Sand in various degrees of stabilization occupies lands surrounding most of the shifting dunes. Two old volcanic buttes and exposed areas of more recent basaltic bedrock add to the geologic diversity.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan and Medicine Lodge Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) filed in December 1987. Three alternative were analyzed in the FEIS for the Sand Mountain WSA: the proposed action (no wilderness) alternative, which is the recommendation of this report; an all wilderness alternative (21,100 acres); and a partial wilderness alternative (6,560 acres).

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**0 acres recommended for wilderness**

**21,100 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Sand Mountain 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. Existing regulations, BLM policy and the Medicine Lodge Resource Management Framework Plan will guide the use of the land to mitigate impacts. The Sand Mountain Proposal map shows the lands recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

All 21,100 acres of the Sand Mountain WSA are recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation for the following reasons:

Certain conditions adversely affect BLM's ability to manage this area as wilderness over the long term. Boundaries of the area are generally drawn along legal subdivisions with no identifiable features to aid in discerning where the wilderness would begin and end. Fencing the boundaries would be necessary to protect wilderness values from trespass motor vehicle use. Numerous accesses, law enforcement issues, historical off-road vehicle use and local opposition to wilderness would further complicate manageability.

Naturalness and opportunities for solitude are less than exemplary. These wilderness values are adversely affected by influences outside the WSA. They include extensive farming activities adjacent to the WSA's eastern and southern boundaries, and frequent farm-to-market vehicle traffic along the southern boundary, the Egin-Hamer Road. Irrigation equipment, farm equipment, an off-road vehicle resort, community and farm buildings and vehicle traffic can be seen and heard, detracting from the visitor's perception of naturalness or a solitude experience.

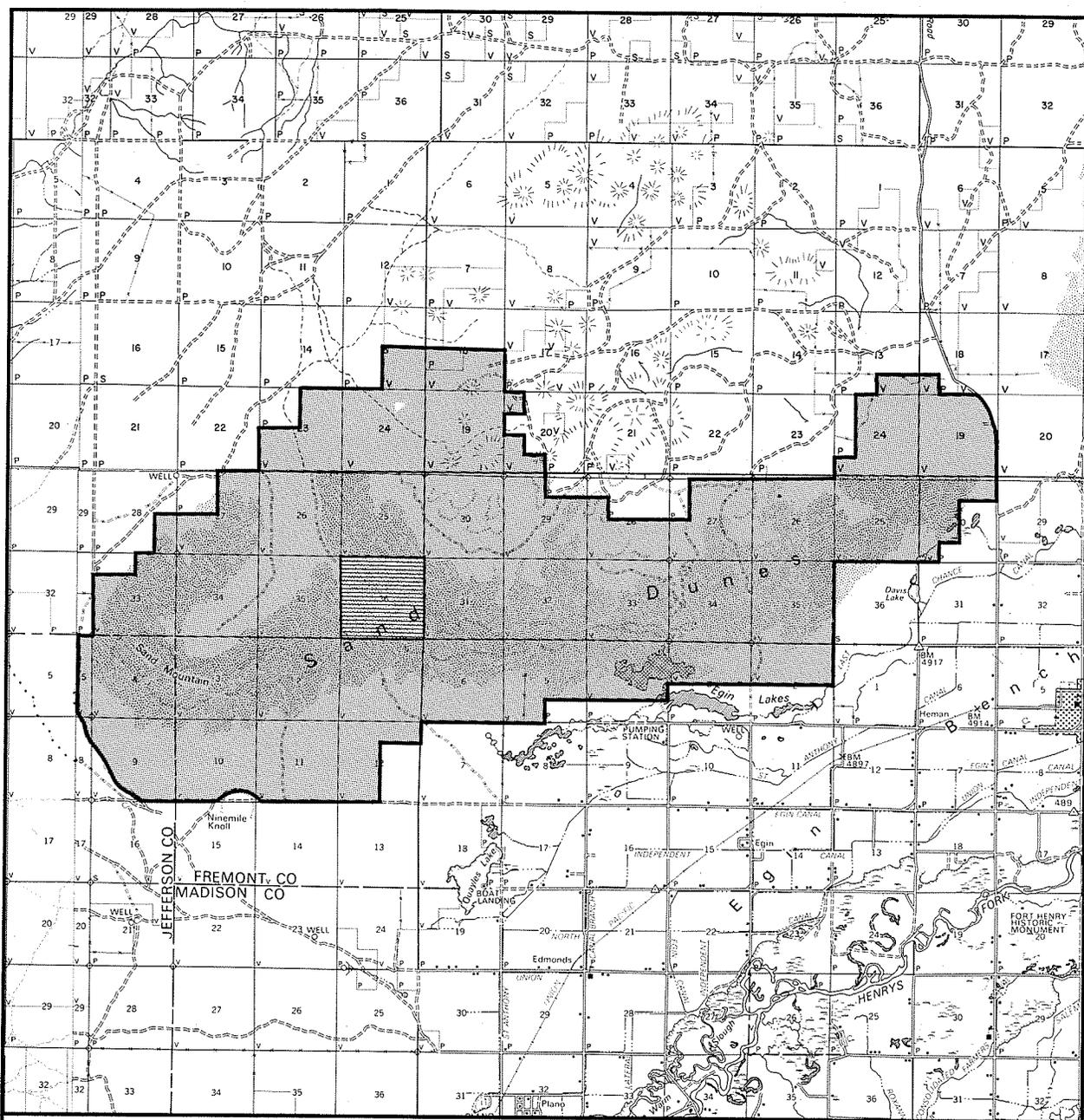
Certain resources and environmental components will benefit from the nonsuitable recommendation. Benefits include improved big game winter habitat, off-road vehicle recreation opportunities and stronger local economies.

Mechanical manipulation of winter habitat for deer, elk and moose would ensure stable and healthy populations and allow increases in herd size. Increasing the populations, particularly elk, will provide more hunting opportunities for the ever-increasing demand in southeastern Idaho. Preservation of the nearly 2,000 head of elk that winter in and near the WSA, one of the largest elk herds in the continental U.S., is of key concern to wildlife and sportsmen interests.

Motorized and developed recreation is projected to increase by as much as 350 percent by the year 2006 for an estimated total of 19,250 to 23,350 visitor use days. Opportunities for off-road vehicle riding in these extensive sand dunes would continue for Idaho citizens and benefit off-road vehicle recreationists from several nearby states. Near-unanimous comment expressed throughout the inventory, study and EIS process opposed wilderness for this area. Most of the commenters feel the area is best-suited to motorized recreation activities.

Positive local economic impact would occur with the expected influx of ORV recreationists, bringing an estimated \$1,448,400 in revenues. This projected increase in retail trade earnings would not have a significant impact on regional economies but local businesses are expected to benefit. The off-road vehicle resort located on the WSA's eastern border would not close.

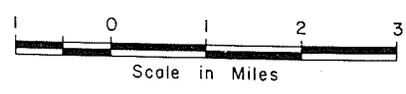
The natural values and resource uses that deserve protection include existing motorized and nonmotorized recreation uses and big game winter habitat. These values would be protected through special designations and management objectives outlined in the Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan. These designations include an Area of Critical Environmental Concern and Special Recreation Management Area. The management objectives of these designations will focus on protecting natural values and wildlife resources while providing and accommodating motorized and nonmotorized recreation uses.



T. 9 N.  
T. 8 N.  
T. 8 N.  
T. 7 N.

R. 38 E. | R. 39 E. | R. 39 E. | R. 40 E.

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



ID-35-3  
SAND MOUNTAIN  
PROPOSAL

AUGUST 1988

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	21,100
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	640
Total	21,740

**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	21,100
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	21,100
Inholdings (state, private)	640

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Sand Mountain WSA is essentially natural in appearance but has some human-caused imprints. These imprints include vehicle ways, livestock fences, a small deer trap, intermittent vehicle tracks on the sand and litter. About 32 miles of vehicle ways enter and cross the WSA. The ways are no more than trails that are difficult to follow, lack definition and are obscured by encroaching vegetation. Off-road vehicle tracks on the dunes are temporary impressions in the sand that disappear quickly when the wind blows. The short segments of livestock fence which total five miles, the deer trap and litter are all insignificant and are absorbed easily within this large area.

Influences on naturalness outside the WSA include views of St. Anthony, Idaho, and the sights and sounds of rural vehicle traffic and agricultural activities. These activities are most imposing near the WSA's southeastern and eastern border and from higher vantage points where topographic screening is minimal.

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

Opportunities for solitude exist throughout most of this relatively large area. The WSA measures about ten miles from east to west and about five miles from north to south and has a fairly good configuration. Topographic screening is provided by the abrupt elevation changes and the many pockets and bowls in the dunes. Influences on solitude outside the WSA include sights and sounds of rural traffic, agricultural activities and views of St. Anthony. These influences are most noticeable near the WSA's southeastern border. Throughout most of the WSA, ample spots for seclusion are available. However, increasing ORV use on the dunes themselves are beginning to impact the wilderness values.

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

Quality, diversity and challenge combine to make primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities outstanding. Hiking, horseback riding, camping, wildlife observation, photography and cross-country skiing are among the possible activities. The quality of the activities is enhanced by the exceptional and unusual sand features, scenic views and interesting plant and animal communities. The lack of reliable water, extreme temperatures and the rugged terrain all make the activities challenging.

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

The WSA provides crucial wintering habitat for large mammals including elk, moose and deer. The elk herd in particular is dependent upon the western portion of the WSA. The herd migrates from as far away as Yellowstone National Park and Montana.

An uncommon species, evening primrose, is known to exist in the dunes. The primrose generally grows near lava rock outcrops. The dunes tiger beetle, also uncommon, thrives in sparsely vegetated areas near the dune edges.

The relative uniqueness of these noncoastal dunes provides uncommon scenic and geologic value. All of the lands within the Sand Mountain WSA have been proposed for designation as a National Natural Landmark. The area also contains a Research Natural Area in recognition of these values.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Sand Mountain WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by one designated area with 30,245 acres. There are 11 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
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 Sand Mountain WSA is within a five-hour drive of two 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 Sand Mountain WSA would contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System by adding an area in southeastern Idaho. In the region surrounding Idaho, the existing wilderness areas are concentrated in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range in California; the Cascade Mountain range in Oregon and Washington; and in the Rocky Mountains of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Colorado. There are a few wilderness areas in Nevada, Utah, southeast Oregon and southern Idaho.

### **Manageability**

The long-term management of the Sand Mountain WSA as wilderness would be difficult. Several characteristics of the Sand Mountain WSA would complicate management as wilderness. ORV enthusiasts would be opposed to the ultimate closure, making law enforcement with a limited staff very difficult. The high number of access points, knowledge of the dunes throughout a five-state area and local opposition would take years to overcome, especially with the limited amount of quality off-road vehicle opportunities in the region.

Closing this area to motorized recreationists would also present major problems. The area has been historically used by off-road vehicle enthusiasts since the early 1960s. There has been extreme local opposition to a wilderness designation since the initial inventory by ORV enthusiasts and this sentiment has spread throughout a five-state region among other riders since so few dune-riding opportunities exist for a weekend excursion. Regular law enforcement patrols would be necessary to ensure that vehicle use was eliminated which would require additional law enforcement staff.

A considerable amount of boundary identification and motorized vehicle closure enforcement would be needed. The WSA's northern and southeastern boundaries follow legal subdivisions rather than any recognizable topographical feature or constructed road. Signing and other means of boundary identification would be necessary. Drifting sand would require continual maintenance of boundary fences.

Big game winter range would suffer without mechanical manipulation of crucial forage. Private landowners have been converting local natural range to farmed land, eliminating a significant portion of traditional forage for these animals. Without the ability to supplement winter feed by mechanical manipulation within the WSA lands, the elk herd would diminish by nearly 200 animals.

An inholding of 640 acres of state land would need to be acquired to maintain the integrity of the area. The Idaho Department of Lands has requested that an exchange be made of the inholding in any area that is designated wilderness.

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

A Geology, Energy and Mineral (GEM) assessment report was prepared for the Sand Mountain WSA in 1983 (Geoexplorers International, Inc., 1983). Conclusions from the report are as follows:

None of the lands have been leased for geothermal resources and no mining claims for locatable minerals have been filed. All of the lands are leased for either oil and gas or are available for leasing under the simultaneous oil and gas leasing system. The WSA has low-to-medium potential for the development of oil, gas and geothermal resources.

There is no known potential for the development of metallic locatable minerals. The development potential for dune sand is rated high while the potential for developing volcanic cinders, pumice and lava building stone is medium to high. These areas are readily available 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 Sand Mountain WSA area as wilderness.

**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-35-3 (SAND MOUNTAIN)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p>Naturalness degraded on 410 acres from vegetative manipulation and seeding projects, campground construction and livestock water developments. Solitude and primitive recreation eliminated by 4,000-5,000 visitor use days of ORV use on 21,100 acres during spring, summer and fall and on 5,300 acres in the eastern portion by 300-400 visitor use days snowmobiling. Primitive recreation and solitude maintained on western 15,800 acres by winter ORV closure. Big game winter habitat, proposed sensitive species and scenic and geologic values maintained by ACEC and SRMA management.</p>	<p>Long-term (beyond 20 years) protection of wilderness characteristics and supplemental values on 21,100 acres. Wilderness protection would benefit stable wildlife habitats, candidate species of tiger beetle and primrose and scenic and geologic values. Downward trend in big game habitat would stabilize populations below optimum levels.</p>	<p><b>PARTIAL WILDERNESS (6,560 acres)</b> Long-term protection of naturalness and supplemental values of candidate species of tiger beetle and primrose and scenic and geologic values. Solitude and primitive recreation enhanced partially but degraded by nearby ORV use.</p> <p><b>NO WILDERNESS (14,540 acres)</b> Naturalness degraded on 410 acres from vegetative manipulation and seeding projects, campground construction and livestock water developments. Solitude and primitive recreation eliminated by ORV use on 14,540 acres during spring, summer and fall but maintained during winter by ORV closure.</p>
Impacts to Threatened, Endangered and Candidate Species	<p>ORV use increases could cause individual mortalities for candidate species of tiger beetle and primrose but impact would be slight. Stable populations would result and status would remain unchanged over the long term.</p>	<p>Long-term habitat protection from ORV use for candidate species of tiger beetle and primrose. Populations remain stable and listing may or may not occur.</p>	<p><b>PARTIAL WILDERNESS/NO WILDERNESS</b>            Long-term habitat protection from ORV use on 6,560 acres for candidate species of tiger beetle and primrose. ORV use increases on 14,540 acres could cause mortalities but impact would be slight. Stable populations would result and status would remain unchanged over long term. Partial wilderness would have little benefit to population.</p>
Impacts to Recreational ORV Use	<p>ORV-related recreation enhanced with a considerable positive impact to recreation use. Total recreation use could increase 350% or to 19,250-23,350 visitor use days by the year 2006.</p>	<p>ORV-related recreation eliminated resulting in considerable impact. Visitor use would decrease as much as 1,100% with 16,450-20,500 visitor use days foregone. Local ORV recreationists would shift activity to other nearby dunes and out-of-state visitation would not occur to any great degree.</p>	<p><b>PARTIAL WILDERNESS/NO WILDERNESS</b>            ORV-related recreation enhanced with a moderate positive impact to recreation use. Total recreation use would increase 141% or to 8,050-9,400 visitor use days by the year 2006. Local ORV recreationists would shift activity away from partial wilderness to nearby dunes and out-of-state visitation would decrease.</p>

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Local Economics (Sand Mountain WSA)	Total recreation expenditures would equal as much as \$1,448,400. This would represent a considerable beneficial impact to local businesses.	Total recreation expenditures would decrease by \$375,000. This would represent a considerable adverse impact to local businesses. Some businesses may have to close.	Total recreation expenditures would equal as much as \$503,820. This would represent a moderate benefit to local businesses.
Impacts on Big Game Winter Range	Habitat manipulation would maintain elk populations at 2,000 head, moose at 35-45 head and deer at 1,200-1,400 head. Optimum population goals could be met.	Without habitat improvement, an estimated decrease of 200 elk, 10-15 moose and 400 deer would result as well as a downward trend in habitat condition. Optimum population goals could not be met.	Habitat manipulation would maintain elk populations at 2,000 head, moose at 35-45 head and deer at 1,200-1,400 head. Optimum population goals could be met.
Impacts on Livestock Facility Development and Range Conditions	Range improvements could be constructed. Better distribution of livestock and a more stable range condition with increased quality and quantity of key forage grasses will result.	Range improvements would be constrained which would reduce capability of grazing systems to distribute livestock for optimum forage utilization. Forage grass vigor could decrease resulting in a downward trend in range condition.	Range improvements could be constructed. Better distribution of livestock and a more stable range condition with increased quality and quantity of key forage grasses will result.

## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of the Sand Mountain WSA as nonwilderness would increase the number of 12-hour visitor days by 13,700 to 16,700 visitor days. This would lead to an increase in recreation expenditures of between \$849,800 and \$1,035,900. Thus, total expenditures for recreation activity in the WSA would be \$1,198,800 to \$1,448,400. This would convert to earnings of between \$475,800 and \$574,900 which would represent approximately three percent of the 1983 three-county retail trade earnings. The multiplier effect would increase total earnings to \$1,269,400.

The projected three percent increase in retail trade earnings would not have a significant impact on the three-county economy. However, business establishments in the immediate vicinity of the WSA are expected to benefit.

## Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

BLM's wilderness inventory and study were conducted with extensive public participation and public involvement was an important consideration in making wilderness recommendations. BLM solicited public involvement in the study phase through scoping meetings, a 90-day public comment period and three formal hearings on the Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan/EIS (the Draft Medicine Lodge Wilderness EIS was part of the land use plan). Comments received during the inventory period and EIS scoping efforts were used to develop significant study issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness value.

Intense opposition to any wilderness consideration of the Sand Mountain WSA began with the inventory and carried through the FEIS. The inventory process took over four years to complete and involved numerous comments, protests to decisions and appeals to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). The following is a summary of the comments received throughout the process.

BLM's initial inventory decision was to identify the Sand Mountain WSA for further inventory evaluation. Twenty-two comment letters were received with 20 opposing wilderness consideration for the area and two favoring further consideration. Those favoring wilderness commented on the uniqueness of noncoastal dune landscape and the way the wind naturally erases evidence of tracks on the sand. Those opposing wilderness felt the need to retain the outstanding opportunities for motorized recreation on the dunes and claimed few opportunities for solitude or naturalness existed due to extensive surrounding development, farm operations and from physical and environmental aspects limiting primitive recreation. Concern for an economic loss to local businesses was expressed by the ORV enthusiasts and local businesses.

With strong opposition to wilderness, BLM proposed to drop the area from further consideration which prompted an appeal by The Wilderness Society. IBLA upheld the appeal and required BLM to continue with the inventory. The change in decision to conduct the intensive inventory brought numerous protests from supporters of off-road vehicle recreation. Sixty-four letters were received with 60 opposing inventory, two supporting and two with no opinion.

A second appeal from a local St. Anthony, Idaho, judge was filed with IBLA after the protest decision was made but IBLA later upheld the decision to continue the process. The judge had not shown sufficient evidence to support dropping the area from the inventory.

The intensive inventory was completed and BLM's proposed decision was to identify the Sand Mountain area as a WSA. Forty-four comment letters were received with 40 opposing the study of the area, two supported the decision and two had no comment. Further protests were received from off-road vehicle enthusiasts but the decision remained. Ten appeals were filed with IBLA but none provided adequate reasons not to conduct the study on Sand Mountain.

BLM completed the study and released the Draft EIS along with a nonsuitable recommendation for the Sand Mountain WSA. Nineteen letters were received on the wilderness portion of the Medicine Lodge RMP/EIS. Sixteen comments agreed with the no wilderness recommendation for the WSA, two disagreed and one had no opinion. During a scheduled hearing, one commenter agreed with the no wilderness recommendation.

Nine government agencies provided written responses to the Draft EIS/Resource Management Plan but did not comment on the WSA. These agencies are the Idaho Department of Water Resources, the Department of the Army, the Bureau of Mines, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy. No comments were received on the Final Medicine Lodge Wilderness EIS from government agencies.

