

# Corral-Horse Basin Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 48,500 acres

The Corral-Horse Basin WSA (ID-46-11) is located in Custer County 20 miles south of Challis, Idaho. The WSA includes 48,500 acres of BLM lands and 1,280 acres of state land inholdings (see Table 1). The WSA is roughly bounded on the north by Spar Canyon, on the west by the East Fork of the Salmon Road, on the south by Road Creek and on the east by Dry Gulch Road.

The WSA is composed of rolling hills surrounding Corral and Horse Basins. Anderson Peak, at 9,342 feet, dominates the WSA. The vegetation is predominantly sagebrush and grass with stringers of timber on stream, sideslopes and bottoms. There is one large stand of Douglas-fir on the east slope of Anderson Peak.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Challis Management Framework Plan Amendment/Final Environmental Impact Statement finalized in September 1986. Three alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; a partial wilderness alternative where 42,225 acres would be designated as wilderness and 6,275 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness; and a no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report.

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**0 acres recommended for wilderness**

**48,500 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation is to not designate the Coral-Horse Basin WSA 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. The entire 48,500 acres of federal land are shown on the Corral-Horse Basin Proposal map.

The quality of the wilderness values was the key consideration in the recommendation. While the WSA contains 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 humans, primarily rangeland developments, which impact naturalness locally. Solitude opportunities available in the WSA are similar to those afforded by the 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.

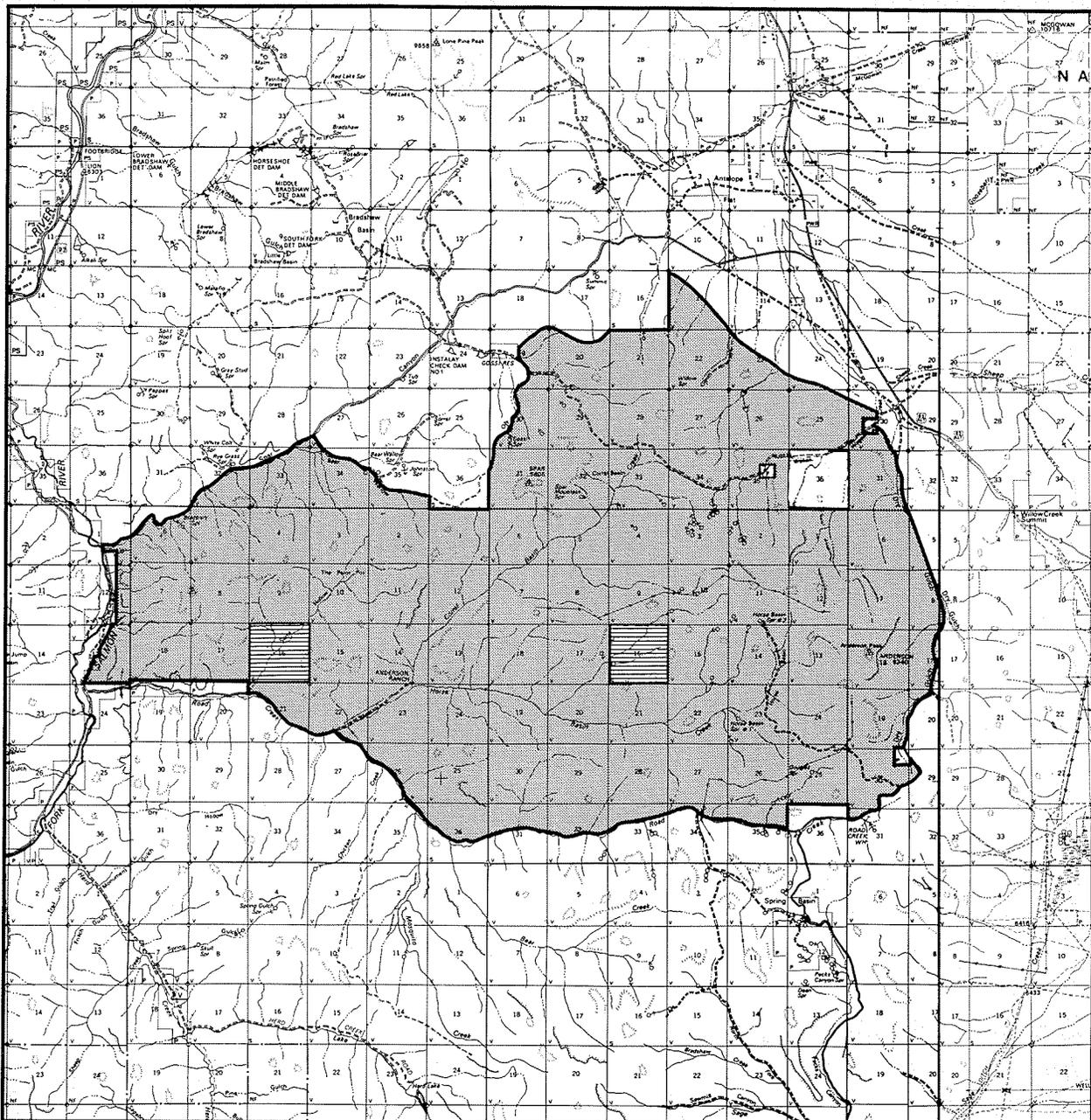
Since there is little vegetative screening on the gently rolling hills, the sights and sounds of boundary roads are apparent from much of the WSA. This, combined with almost no natural barriers, makes the area susceptible to off-road vehicle use. Constant patrolling and fencing of the associated roads would be necessary to eliminate ORV use of this area.

The WSA does offer outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, but the area is not a popular destination area and its values are similar to those available in thousands of adjacent acres and not unique to the WSA. There are no significant wildlife species or habitats, geologic features or scientific and educational values in the area that would benefit from wilderness designation. Wild horse management would be negatively affected by designation of this WSA. Use of helicopters and construction of horse-gathering facilities would not be allowed. The existing horse trap at Anderson Ranch, consisting of wire fences and runways, would be relocated to a less effective and desirable location after wilderness designation. Alternative methods of gathering and management of the herd have been initiated in previous years and were proven to be ineffective and uneconomical. If the facilities were allowed to stay in place, they would detract from the naturalness of the area.

There are 1,280 acres of state land inholdings, one section in the center of the WSA. If this land could not be acquired and access was requested, it would impact the ability to manage parts of the WSA as wilderness.

A treaty signed with the Shoshone-Bannock Indian Tribe allows the tribe members "... the right, without any charge therefore to cut timber for their own use, but not for sale and pasture their livestock on said public lands, and to hunt thereon and fish in the streams thereof." To date, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe has not opted to exercise this right. Any request would be honored. Cutting timber is not compatible with wilderness designation and would degrade the area's naturalness and impact opportunities for solitude.

Currently, there is little threat to the existing naturalness of the area. There are no known or projected activities and there is no known mineral potential. Therefore, even without wilderness designation, the quality and level of values now found in the WSA are not expected to significantly change.



T. 12 N.

T. 11 N.

T. 11 N.

T. 10 N.

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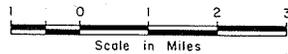
T. 9 N.

R. 18 E. | R. 19 E.

R. 19 E. | R. 20 E.

R. 20 E. | R. 21 E.

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



ID-46-11  
CORRAL-HORSE BASIN  
PROPOSAL

FEBRUARY 1988

**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
CORRAL-HORSE BASIN**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	48,500
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	1,280
 Total	 49,780

**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	48,500
Split Estate	0
 Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	 48,500
 Inholdings (state, private)	 1,280

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The Corral-Horse Basin WSA presents the visitor with a general appearance of naturalness. The area is composed of rolling hills surrounding Corral and Horse Basins. Anderson Peak, at 9,342, feet is the highest point in the WSA. Although there is scattered timber along the stream bottoms and one large Douglas-fir stand on the east side, the dominant vegetative type is sagebrush and grass.

The majority of human imprints are grazing activities, fences and waterhole improvements. These imprints are not considered to be major impacts to naturalness and tend to blend into the landscape when viewed from more than .5 mile. Impacts to the natural appearance of the WSA consist of two cherry-stem roads which penetrate the boundaries for six miles and two vehicle ways transversing the WSA on the east. These impacts lessen the natural and scenic wilderness experience. The horse trap at Anderson Ranch is an important activity that impacts the WSA. The wing fences and runways extend from the trap into the WSA. These facilities are apparent to the visitor and lessen the naturalness of the area.

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

The Corral-Horse Basin WSA's solitude potential was not rated as outstanding. Much of the WSA is comprised of rolling hills separating wide basins. Solitude opportunities are primarily due to the WSA's size. Due to the lack of vegetative screening and the general openness of the terrain, the outside sights and sounds, present in the form of cherry-stem and bordering roads and private ranches, detract from the user's experience. They are not imposing but do lessen the feeling of solitude. The rolling terrain of the WSA attracts ORV enthusiasts and also lessens the feeling of solitude in the WSA.

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

The Corral-Horse Basin WSA, with its relatively large size, lack of man-made or natural barriers and its lack of developments in or near the area, contains outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The rolling hills and wide basins, with Anderson Peak in the background, provide opportunities for hiking, backpacking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, photography, bird-watching and sightseeing. The general lack of barriers and the gently rolling terrain encourage off-road vehicle use, especially in the fall.

## **D. Special Features**

The Corral-Horse Basin WSA is part of the Challis Wild Horse Range and offers excellent wild horse viewing. The wild horses are an introduced element in the WSA. Except for the gathering facilities near Anderson Ranch, the wild horses presently add to the area.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

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

**TABLE 2**

#### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Rocky Mountain Forest Province				
			<u>NATIONWIDE</u>	
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 Corral-Horse Basin WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population center.

**Table 3**

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

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

## C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

Wilderness designation of the Corral-Horse Basin WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS.

### Manageability

The WSA could be managed as wilderness. However, due to the numerous vehicle access points and rolling terrain, many miles of fence, signing and constant patrolling would be necessary to effectively eliminate vehicle use. While present vehicle use is not an administrative problem in a nonwilderness environment, it would be a significant problem in a designated wilderness.

Two identifiable mining claims are located on the northern edge of the WSA and have not yet been noticeably prospected. The claimants have expressed their belief that the area has high potential for discovery of precious metals. Should the claimants begin development, wilderness characteristics would be impacted over the entire northeast corner.

The Shoshone and Bannock Indians of the Fort Hall Reservation, Idaho, through the Treaty of Fort Bridger on July 3, 1868, and ratified by the United States Senate on February 16, 1869, ceded lands to the United States. A follow-up agreement with the Shoshone and Bannock Indians, concluded February 5, 1898, ratified June 6, 1900 (31 Stat. 672), in Article IV of the Act to ratify the agreement (31 Stat. 674), states as follows:

"So long as any of the lands ceded, granted, and relinquished under this treaty remain part of the public domain, Indians belonging to the above-mentioned tribes, and living on the reduced reservation, shall have the right, without any charge therefor, to cut timber for their own use, but not for sale, and pasture their livestock on said public lands, and to hunt thereon and fish in the streams thereof."

Although the Tribe has not claimed this right, a request would be honored. Cutting timber is not compatible with wilderness designation and this activity would degrade the naturalness of the area and impact opportunities for solitude. This applies to all of the WSA. To date, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe has not opted to exercise this right. Should the Tribe pursue this option, the Bureau would be hard pressed to mitigate any impacts. These rights continue to exist on all of the WSA.

The 1,280 acres of state lands within the WSA should be acquired. If these lands are not acquired, motor vehicle access could not be denied.

### Energy and Minerals Resource Values

Mineral assessments for the Corral-Horse Basin WSA were prepared by the BLM in 1979 (and updated in 1988). Conclusions from this report are:

The majority of the area has low potential for minerals. Two claim groups in the northwest and northeast of the WSA were staked in 1987 by ASARCO. ASARCO, in comments on the Draft EIS, indicated its belief that the Corral-Horse Basin WSA has potential for the discovery of copper, gold, molybdenum and uranium.

Salable minerals include sand and gravel, borrow and fill and building stone. The area has very little high-quality sand and gravel.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the area has no value for geothermal resources. It is not included in the "lands valuable prospectively for geothermal resources" as depicted on the USGS geothermal resources map (February 1977 update). BLM's Unit Resource Analysis (URA) indicates the area within Ranges 20 and 21 East may have undiscovered oil and gas resources. Geologically, this area is underlain by thick sediments that could contain oil and gas. One lessee has indicated that vibroseis seismic work in areas adjacent to the Corral-Horse Basin WSA indicated that conditions exist for the possible accumulation of hydrocarbons.

### **Impacts on Resources**

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

**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-46-11 (CORRAL-HORSE BASIN)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Loss of wilderness values on 4,365 acres (9% of WSA). 44,135 acres subject to loss of values but no adverse activities are anticipated within the next 10 years.	Wilderness values would be preserved on all 48,500 acres.	Wilderness values would be maintained on 34,225 acres, lost on 8,010 acres and subject to loss on 6,265 acres.
Impacts on Development of Energy and Mineral Resources	48,500 acres open to mineral entry and leasing. 140 acres would be disturbed due to mining claim and/or oil and gas lease development.	48,500 acres closed to mineral entry and leasing. No surface acres disturbed due to formal withdrawal from entry.	6,275 acres open and 42,225 acres closed to mineral entry or leasing. No surface disturbance of open areas anticipated for the next 20 years.
Impacts on Timber Harvesting	Harvest of 4.9 MMBF of commercial timber could occur requiring 7 miles of new road and disturbing 675 acres.	Harvest of 4.9 MMBF of commercial timber would be foregone. Heavier use of other lands would be required to meet allowable cut goals.	Same as All Wilderness Alternative.
Impacts on Water Quality in the East Fork of the Salmon River	2% degradation in water quality due to increased sedimentation.	Minimal (less than 1%) benefit through revegetation of jeep trails and elimination of vehicle use.	Same as All Wilderness Alternative.
Impacts on East Fork of the Salmon Anadromous Fishery	2% loss of salmon fisheries to reduced water quality.	Slight improvement (less than 1%) to 100% reduction in vehicle use.	Slight improvement (less than 1%) due to 80% reduction in vehicle use.
Impacts on Recreational ORV Use	No displacement of ORV users.	100% reduction in use. 500 visitor days displaced annually by closure to vehicle use. This use can easily transfer to other areas; not a significant impact.	80% reduction in potential use. 400 visitor days displaced annually by closure to vehicle use. This use can easily transfer to other areas; not a significant impact.

## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

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

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

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

Nineteen of the comments received during the Draft EIS comment period or at the public hearing specifically mentioned the Corral-Horse Basin WSA. Seven commenters supported the recommendation of nonsuitable. Of these seven, four simply agreed with the recommendation, one noted existing vehicle/recreation use, one cited too much existing wilderness in Idaho and one noted potential energy and mineral resources. Three other comments recommended a "no action" alternative or a new study since they felt the energy and mineral resource values quality standard cannot be met. These are considered as additional no wilderness comments.

Nine commenters urged BLM to review the no wilderness recommendation and change it to a wilderness recommendation. These commenters felt that the solitude was outstanding and that important wildlife and recreational values would be protected.

One government agency comment specifically mentioned the WSA. The Soil Conservation Service, USDA, agreed with the nonsuitable recommendation.