

Eighteenmile Wilderness Study Area

1. The Study Area -- 24,922 acres

The Eighteenmile WSA (ID-43-3) is located in Lemhi County 15 miles southeast of Leadore, Idaho. The WSA includes 24,922 acres of BLM lands. The WSA is bounded on the north by the Salmon National Forest, on the south by the Targhee National Forest, on the east by the Beaverhead National Forest and on the west by public and private lands in the Eighteenmile, Clear and Ten Mile Creek drainages. The WSA is mountainous with low hills rising to the Continental Divide's rolling meadows and steep cliffs dominated by the 11,141-foot Eighteenmile Peak which is the eastern boundary of the WSA. Vegetation varies from lowland sagebrush-grass up through Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine and limber pine to grassy meadows on the Divide.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Lemhi Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), filed in December 1987. Five alternatives were studied in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; a no wilderness retention alternative; a no wilderness/no action alternative; and a partial wilderness alternative in which 14,796 acres would be recommended for wilderness and 10,126 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, which is the recommendation of this report.

2. Recommendation and Rationale

14,796 acres recommended for wilderness

10,126 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for the Eighteenmile WSA is to designate 14,796 acres as wilderness and to release 10,126 acres for uses other than wilderness. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative with acquisitions. 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 14,796 acres of federal land within the WSA recommended for wilderness and the 10,126 acres recommended for nonwilderness are shown on the Eighteenmile Proposal map.

The recommendation of 14,796 acres for wilderness is based on the area's exemplary wilderness values, ease of management, its proximity and interrelation with the Italian Peaks RARE II Areas in both Idaho and Montana and the lack of resource conflicts. The 14,796 acres recommended for wilderness designation provide exceptional scenery, recreation and solitude. The area is in a rather remote portion of Lemhi County and receives less than 100 visitor use days annually. The recommended portion also abuts the RARE II Units Italian Peaks located to the south and east. The three areas, if designated as wilderness, would provide a contiguous wilderness that straddles the Continental Divide in Montana and Idaho.

Wilderness designation of the recommended area would ensure preservation of an exceptional landscape along the Continental Divide. The rolling foothills are comprised of sagebrush and grass, contrasting with rolling meadows and steep cliffs of the Continental Divide, offering the visitor an outstanding opportunity to experience the naturalness of the nation's "backbone."

The topographic relief, plant communities and lack of roads or vehicle ways into and adjacent to the recommended portion of the WSAs offer outstanding opportunities for solitude. The area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation as human imprints are limited to one vehicle way and very few range improvements.

There are few conflicts with other resource uses of the area recommended for wilderness. Timber in the recommended area is not of sufficient quantity to be of commercial value, especially considering the distance to local mills.

The displacement of ORV use is not significant because the proposed area receives only 15 visitor use days per year and the adjacent areas outside the WSA offer almost limitless ORV opportunities.

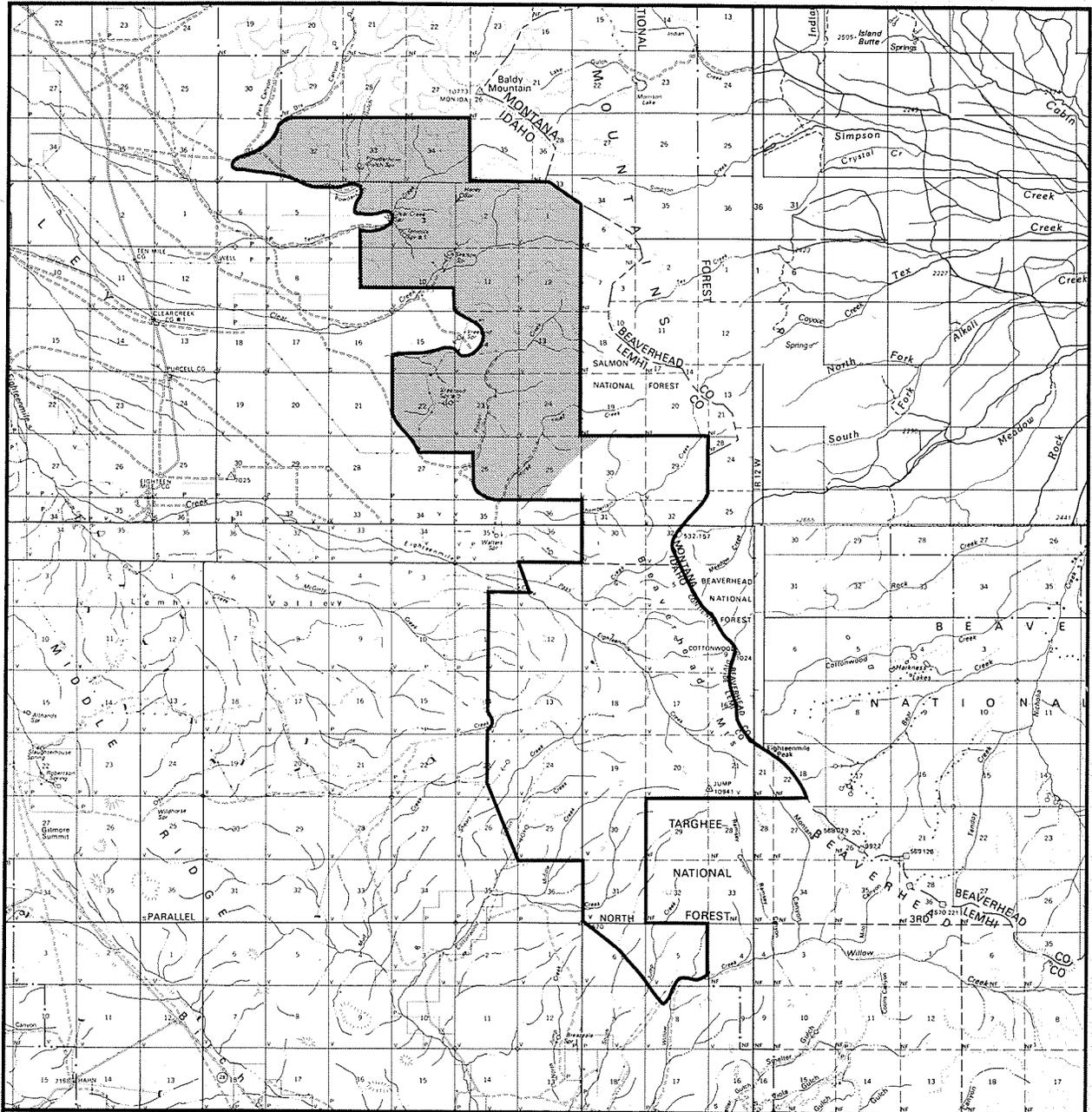
The 10,126 acre portion that is not recommended for wilderness designation lies to the north of the recommended portion. Removing this area from the suitable area would allow future phosphate and gypsum mining on 2,470 acres. According to the USGS survey, potential is high for gypsum and moderately high for phosphate. Portions of the 2,470 acres are currently under application for prospective permits. If this occurs, four miles of new road probably will be built.

Also, the northern portion of the Eighteenmile WSA surrounds an isolated portion of the Salmon National Forest west of the Continental Divide that was not recommended for wilderness. Wilderness designation of this portion of the WSA could eliminate access to this inholding or, more likely, a cherry-stem road would be necessary, dissecting the WSA.

Another consideration was that the northern portion is more open and less steep, making most of the area more accessible by ORVs. Preventing access would be possible by fencing and signing but would lessen the feeling of naturalness, solitude and the unconfined recreation opportunities, especially on the Continental Divide.

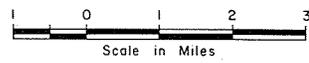
Five hundred acres in the northwestern tip of the Eighteenmile WSA are in a larger area of about 2,500 acres which is rated as crucial elk winter habitat. General elk winter habitat extends north and south of the crucial area along the edge of the foothills. Approximately 240 head of elk winter in this area.

T. 15 N.
 T. 14 N.
 T. 14 N.
 T. 13 N.
 T. 13 N.
 T. 12 N.



R.27 E. | R.28 E. R.28 E. | R.29 E. R.29 E. | R.30 E.

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



**ID-43-3
 EIGHTEENMILE
 PROPOSAL**

JUNE 1988

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

Within Wilderness Study Area

BLM (surface and subsurface)	24,922
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
Total	24,922

Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary

BLM (within WSA)	14,796
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA) ¹	0
Split Estate (outside WSA) ¹	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	14,796
Inholdings (state, private) ¹	0
State land (outside WSA)	0

Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness

BLM	10,126
Split Estate ¹	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	10,126
Inholdings (state, private) ¹	0

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

3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

The Eighteenmile WSA is predominantly natural with few human imprints. The WSA is dominated by the 11,141-foot Eighteenmile Peak which forms the eastern boundary. The general topography is mountainous, with low hills rising to the Continental Divide's rolling meadows and steep cliffs. Eight major creeks, several valleys and numerous smaller gulches drain into Eighteenmile Creek to the west outside the WSA.

Vegetation varies from lowland sagebrush-grass communities up through Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine and limber pine to grassy meadows on the Divide. Willow-aspen riparian vegetation occupies most creek bottoms. No vegetation or timber harvest, other than some minor fence post and rail cutting, have occurred.

In the recommended area, the naturalness is outstanding. The visitor is offered a wide panorama dominated by steep valleys with small creeks draining into Eighteenmile Creek. Other than minor range improvements and a small vehicle way, human impacts are negligible.

The only human imprints are four miles of vehicle way, minor range improvements and off-site visual intrusions such as past mining activity at Clear Creek. These visual intrusions, although not within the WSA, are visible from much of the WSA, lessening the perception of naturalness.

Five hundred acres in the northwestern tip of the Eighteenmile WSA are in a larger area of about 2,500 acres which is rated as crucial elk winter habitat. General elk winter habitat extends north and south of the crucial area along the edge of the foothills. Approximately 240 head of elk winter in this area.

B. Solitude

The recommended portion of the WSA provides an outstanding opportunity for solitude due to rugged terrain, vegetative screening, remoteness and limited accessibility. Under ideal conditions of moderate (500 visitor use days per year) and evenly distributed use, opportunities would be of high quality.

The area currently receives less than 100 visitor use days per year. With heavy use (more than 500 visitor use days per year), it would be more difficult to isolate visitors from the sights and sounds of others since the steep slopes tend to concentrate use along the creek bottoms.

Solitude within the nonrecommended portion is also outstanding. However, the proximity to mining activities and lack of vegetative screening in this area opens much of the nonrecommended portion to these sights and sounds that exist outside the WSA's boundary.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The Eighteenmile WSA offers outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Opportunities for hiking, backpacking, camping, horseback riding, rockhounding, hunting, wildlife viewing, photography, fishing, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are excellent in the recommended portion. However, in the nonrecommended area, sights and sounds of mining activities, coupled with less vegetative screening, lessens the feeling of wildness.

D. Special Features

The Continental Divide forms the eastern boundary of the WSA. It is also the Montana and Idaho boundary.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a new ecosystem or landform to the NWPS. The Eighteenmile WSA represents the Rocky Mountain Forest Province Douglas-fir Forest. This ecosystem is represented in the nearby Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness and by 18 designated areas with 1,349,971 acres. There are 19 other BLM areas in the state under study with this ecosystem.

TABLE 2

Ecosystem Representation

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

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

The Eighteenmile 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 Eighteenmile WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS but would further concentrate wilderness areas in Idaho.

Idaho contains six designated wilderness areas including the largest wilderness area in the contiguous 48 states, the 2.2 million acre Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness. The 3,869,197 acres in these six areas amount to seven percent of the acreage in Idaho.

Manageability

The recommended portion of the WSA can be reasonably managed as wilderness since common boundaries abut the RARE II Areas Italian Peaks in both Idaho and Montana. The Continental Divide is extremely steep and inaccessible on the nonsuitable area. When combined with the RARE II Areas, this creates a logical and manageable unit because of the steep terrain and lie of the land.

On the northern and western boundaries, fencing and patrolling would be necessary to protect values on the lower elevation areas from impacts caused by ORV use because the terrain is a more gentle relief. However, most of the recommended portion is extremely steep and is inaccessible to ORVs. On the portion not recommended as suitable, administrative costs would likely be higher since the terrain is much gentler and allows access to ORVs. Fencing and patrolling would be necessary to protect wilderness values, even along the Continental Divide, which forms the eastern boundary to the WSA which is adjacent to nonwilderness U.S. Forest Service lands to the east.

Several thousand acres of U.S. Forest Service lands east of the WSA lie west of the Divide forming an island of nonwilderness lands in Idaho. Wilderness designation of this portion of Eighteenmile would cause road access problems to these lands.

Energy and Minerals Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey prepared a mineral resource report for the Eighteenmile WSA in 1988 (USGS Bulletin 1718-B).

The northern portion of the WSA has a high potential for gypsum. Gypsum has been commercially extracted from lands immediately adjacent to the WSA. The WSA has moderate potential for the occurrence of metallic minerals such as silver, copper, molybdenum, zinc and others.

Moderately high uranium values occur in the sediments of Eighteenmile Creek and Cottonwood Creek. These values probably resulted from fluvial concentration of trace amounts of uranium in the Beaverhead Pluton which forms the Continental Divide from Pass Creek to the southern limit of the WSA. None of the outcrop samples indicated any high uranium values including the samples taken from this intrusion.

The oil and gas potential at depths above 10,000 feet is low to moderate. It is expected that any hydrocarbons present would be in the form of natural gas rather than oil.

The potential for development of geothermal resources was not addressed in the USGS Mineral Resource Report (USGS Bulletin 1718-B) but is thought to be low.

The northern portion of the WSA has moderate to high potential for phosphate and parts of the WSA are presently under application for prospective permit.

Occurrence of mineral materials in both the suitable and unsuitable portions of the Eighteenmile WSA is widespread. Sand and gravel, limestone and other bulk mineral resources are abundant throughout the entire WSA. Poor access and the distance to markets seriously reduce the potential for developing these resources.

Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table on the following page 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-43-3 (EIGHTEENMILE WSA)

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL WILDERNESS/DEVELOPMENT)	NO WILDERNESS/RETENTION	NO WILDERNESS/DEVELOPMENT	ALL WILDERNESS	PARTIAL WILDERNESS RETENTION
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Naturalness and solitude would be adversely affected or lost on 2,470 acres (10% of WSA) due to the construction of 4 miles of new road and 2,270 acres of surface disturbance associated with projected mining development. Wilderness values on 7,656 acres (31%) would be subject to loss but no adverse activities are presently anticipated.	Naturalness and solitude would be adversely affected or lost on 2,470 acres (10% of WSA) due to the construction of 4 miles of new road and 2,270 acres of surface disturbance associated with projected mining development. Wilderness values of 22,452 acres (90%) would be subject to loss but no adverse activities are presently anticipated.	Naturalness and solitude would be adversely affected or lost on 2,470 acres (10% of WSA) due to the construction of 4 miles of new road and 2,270 acres of surface disturbance associated with projected mining development. Wilderness values on 22,452 acres (90%) would be subject to loss but no adverse activities are presently anticipated.	Impacts to solitude and naturalness would not occur on 2,470 acres of projected development. No road construction or surface disturbance.	Naturalness and solitude would be adversely affected or lost on 1,250 acres (5% of WSA) due to the construction of 4 miles of new road and 1,050 acres of surface disturbance associated with projected mining development. Wilderness values on 8,926 acres (36%) would be subject to loss but no adverse activities are presently anticipated.
Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Energy and Mineral Resources	Loss of opportunity to develop any energy and mineral resources on 14,796 acres recommended for wilderness. Mining of both phosphate and gypsum is projected on the 2,470 acres within the area not recommended for wilderness.	Mining of both phosphate and gypsum is projected on 2,470 acres within the area not recommended for wilderness.	Mining of both phosphate and gypsum is projected on 2,470 acres within the area not recommended for wilderness.	Loss of opportunity to develop any energy and mineral resources on 24,780 acres.	Loss of opportunity to develop any energy and mineral resources on 14,796 acres recommended for wilderness. Mining of both phosphate and gypsum is projected on the 2,470 acres within the area not recommended for wilderness.
Impacts on Primitive, Semi-Primitive, Nonmotorized and Motorized Recreation Opportunities	Primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation opportunities would be lost on 4,026 acres due to the construction of roads and vehicle uses associated with projected mining activities. 15 visitor days of ORV use would be displaced.	Primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation opportunities would be lost on 4,026 acres due to the construction of roads and vehicle uses associated with projected mining activities. 15 visitor days of ORV use would be displaced.	In the long term, all primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreational opportunities would be lost because of gradual proliferation in 4-wheel drive tracks and the influence of mining activities. No displacement of ORV use.	25 visitor days of ORV use displaced.	15 visitor days of ORV use would be displaced.
Impacts on Water Quality	Loss of 1 mile of marginal fishery habitat. No impact on fisherman use days (none occur). Water quality could be adversely impacted in Tenmile Creek and Clear Creek by mining activity. Sediment levels could exceed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards.	Loss of 1 mile of marginal fishery habitat. No impact on fisherman use days (none occur). Water quality could be adversely impacted in Tenmile Creek and Clear Creek, depending on the location of mining activity. Sediment levels could exceed EPA standards.	Loss of 1 mile of marginal fishery habitat. No impact on fisherman use days (none occur). Water quality could be adversely impacted in all perennial streams in the area. In those watersheds where mining occurred, sediment levels could exceed EPA standards.	There would be no adverse impacts to water quality, fishery habitat or fisherman use days.	Loss of 1 mile of marginal fishery habitat. No impact on fisherman use days (none occur). Water quality could be adversely impacted depending on the location of mining activity. Tenmile Creek and Clear Creek could have sediment levels exceeding EPA standards.
Impacts on Crucial Elk Winter Range and Elk Numbers	All 500 acres of crucial elk winter range would be lost; 50% reduction in herd size (120 animals).	All 500 acres of crucial elk winter range would be lost; 50% reduction in herd size (120 animals).	All 500 acres of crucial elk winter range would be lost; 50% reduction in herd size (120 animals).	Loss of 500 acres of habitat and 120 animals would not occur.	All 500 acres of crucial elk winter range would be lost; 50% reduction in herd size (120 animals).

Local Social and Economic Considerations

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

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. During formal public review of the Draft EIS, 194 letters were received. Testimony was also heard at a formal meeting. Of the comment letters, 160 pertained to the wilderness suitability issue.

In general, six commenters supported wilderness designation for all or part of the Eighteenmile WSA, 153 commenters supported no wilderness for the WSA, while one commenter addressed the relative merits of the EIS but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the outstanding solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation and the fact that the WSA abuts the recommended RARE II Unit Italian Peaks. Support for wilderness was also expressed for lands adjacent to the Continental Divide Trail and that wilderness would provide more protection for wildlife.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that further wilderness designation would create too much wilderness in Idaho. Most local comment was from grazing permittees and ranchers opposed to wilderness.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Idaho Air National Guard, Idaho State Historic Preservation Office and the Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District all commented on the Draft EIS. The EPA was concerned that any decision short of total wilderness designation would not meet the Clean Water Act Standards. The Air National Guard opposed wilderness designation because its designation would conflict between overflights tactical training mission and the wilderness characteristic of solitude. The Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District stated its policy is to oppose any further wilderness designation in Lemhi County. The Idaho State Historic Preservation Office did not comment specifically about wilderness.

APPENDIX I -- EIGHTEENMILE 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. 14 N., R. 28 E. Sec. 36	640	1	State	State		Exchange	N/A	10,000

(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.