

Jerry Peak West Wilderness Study Area

1. The Study Area -- 13,530 acres

The Jerry Peak West WSA (ID-46-14A) is located in Custer County 20 miles south of Challis, Idaho. The WSA includes 13,530 acres of BLM lands. There are no state or private inholdings. The WSA is bounded on the west and north by the East Fork of the Salmon River, on the east by the Herd Creek Road and on the south by the Challis National Forest. The WSA consists of the foothills of Sheep Mountain (in the Challis National Forest), extending from the banks of the East Fork Salmon River through moderately steep sagebrush- and grass-covered hills that have pockets of timber in the higher elevations.

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. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative and a no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report.

2. Recommendation and Rationale

**0 acres recommended for
wilderness**

**13,530 acres recommended for
nonwilderness**

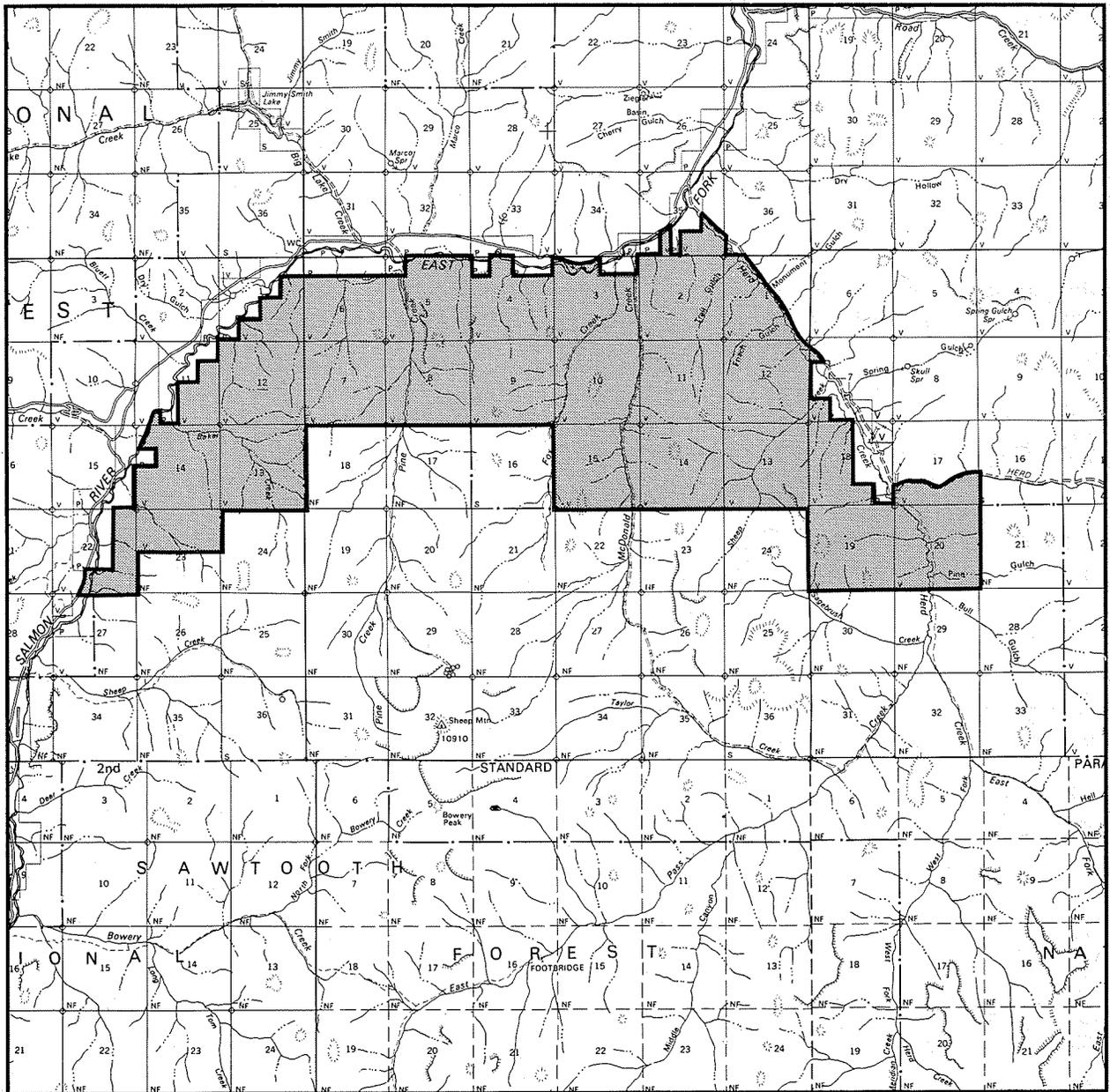
The recommendation is to not designate the Jerry Peak West WSA as wilderness and release the area for other uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. The entire 13,530 acres of public land are shown on the Jerry Peak West 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 man, primarily rangeland developments, which impact naturalness locally. Solitude opportunities available in the WSA are similar to those afforded by the adjacent thousands of acres of land. The WSA does offer outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. While opportunities are available, the area is not a popular destination point and the values are the same as those available on thousands of adjacent acres. There are no significant wildlife species or habitats, geologic features or scientific and educational values in the area that would benefit from wilderness designation.

A treaty signed with the Shoshone-Bannock Indian Tribe allows the tribe members ". . . 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, any request would be honored. Cutting timber is not compatible with wilderness designation and would degrade the area's naturalness and impact solitude. This applies to all of the WSA east of McDonald Creek. To date, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe has not opted to exercise this right.

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

The WSA also lacks any special features that would be considered a focal or destination point for visitors. These values are much the same as those available on thousands of adjacent acres.



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

R. 17 E. | R. 18 E. R. 18 E. | R. 19 E.

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



**ID-46-14A
 JERRY PEAK WEST
 PROPOSAL**

FEBRUARY 1988

**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area
JERRY PEAK WEST**

Within Wilderness Study Area

BLM (surface and subsurface)	13,530
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
Total	13,530

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	13,530
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	13,530
Inholdings (state, private)	0

3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

The Jerry Peak West WSA presents a general appearance of naturalness. The WSA represents a transition from lower elevation sagebrush/grass ecosystems to high-elevation conifer forest ecosystems. Minor imprints exist from one mile of fence, one mile of water pipeline and three spring developments. The range improvements tend to be small scale, blending into the natural landscape. They are considered minor impacts to naturalness.

B. Solitude

The WSA presents an outstanding opportunity for solitude. However, the proximity of the WSA to the East Fork Road lessens the visitor's perception of solitude due to the sights and sounds from nearby private homes, farms and ranches outside the WSA along the northern and western boundaries. 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.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The inventory identified the WSA as possessing outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation due to its lack of man-made or natural barriers. Possible activities include hiking, backpacking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, photography, bird-watching and sightseeing.

D. Special Features

The WSA lacks any special feature which could be called a focal or destination point attractive to visitors.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

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

TABLE 2

Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		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 Jerry Peak 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

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

Manageability

The WSA could be managed as wilderness. Access by vehicle is virtually nonexistent and is controlled by private landowners along the East Fork of the salmon River. Cooperative agreements with the private landowners could be adequate to control or allow access.

It may be difficult, however, to maintain the integrity of area as wilderness due to its relatively long, narrow shape and the encircling nonwilderness lands. Future use and access into surrounding U.S. Forest Service and private lands could restrict the ability to retain wilderness values in this area.

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 a 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 to pasture their livestock on said public lands, and to hunt thereon and fish in the streams thereof."

Although the Tribe has not yet claimed this right, any request would be honored. Cutting timber is not compatible with wilderness designation, would degrade the area's naturalness and impact opportunities for solitude. This applies to all of the WSA east of McDonald Creek.

Energy and Minerals Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for the Jerry Peak West WSA in 1984.

Evidence of metallic mineralization is lacking in the Jerry Peak West WSA. A low resource potential for base metals is assigned to the part of the WSA that is underlain by Paleozoic sedimentary rocks.

Some of the Jerry Peak West WSA has been leased for oil and gas exploration; however, significant oil and gas occurrences are unlikely because the Paleozoic sedimentary rocks, the most likely targets for oil and gas exploration, are complexly folded and faulted. In addition, heating of these rocks during the Eocene volcanism, accompanied and followed by high-angle faulting, probably drove off or destroyed oil and gas that may have accumulated.

Impacts on Resources

The following comparative 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-31-17 (JERRY PEAK WEST)

ISSUE TOPICS	NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Loss of wilderness values on 495 acres. Wilderness values on 13,035 acres subject to loss but no adverse activities anticipated in the next 20 years.	Wilderness values on all 13,530 acres would be retained.
Impacts on Development of Energy and Mineral Resources	13,539 acres open to mineral entry and leasing. 45 acres of surface disturbance.	All 13,530 acres closed to mineral entry and leasing. No surface disturbance.
Impacts on Water Quality in the East Fork of the Salmon River	Negligible (less than 1% increase in sediment).	No change.
Impacts on the East Fork of the Salmon River and Anadromous Fishery	Potential reduction (less than 1%) in number of salmon and steelhead fry.	No change.
Impacts on Recreation Off-Road Vehicle Use	No displacement of users.	100% reduction in use. Displacement of 15 visitor days. Impact of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

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. 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.

Twenty-three of the comments received during the Draft EIS comment period or at the public hearing specifically mentioned the Jerry Peak West WSA. The Draft EIS recommended all of the Jerry Peak West WSA as suitable. A reevaluation of the wilderness characteristics prior to release of the DFEIS resulted in a recommendation change to nonsuitable. Sixteen comments supported the suitable recommendation. Four commenters were opposed to a suitable wilderness recommendation stating that Idaho had enough existing wilderness. Three 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.

Three government agency comments mentioned the Jerry Peak West WSA. The Soil Conservation Service disagreed with the suitable recommendation stating that it appeared to be a vehicle restriction designation in the form of wilderness. The Idaho Department of Lands expressed a desire to exchange state land that would be affected by a wilderness designation. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare concurred with the recommendation on the basis of water quality benefits to tributaries of a special resource water.