

# Shoshone Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 6,914 acres

The Shoshone WSA (ID-59-7) is located in Lincoln County one mile northwest of Shoshone, Idaho. The WSA includes 6,914 acres of BLM-administered lands. There are no split estate lands or inholdings within the area (see Table 1). The WSA is bounded on the north and south by state and private lands. The east and west boundaries are formed by two unnamed roads.

The WSA consists of a recent lava flow. Pressure ridges, blisters, subsidence craters and other volcanic features are common in the WSA. Although the broken and rugged lava surface provides topographic relief, elevations range only from 3,781 feet on the west boundary to 3,970 feet on the east boundary.

Vegetation is sparse in the WSA. Although small pockets of vegetation are scattered throughout the area, the overall impression of the WSA is of a barren lava flow.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and included in the Monument Final Environmental Impact Statement, Wilderness, filed in July 1987. 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

6,914 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for the Shoshone WSA is to release all 6,914 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. All 6,914 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and are shown as the Shoshone WSA on the Shoshone Proposal map.

The quality of the wilderness values was the key consideration in the recommendation. While this WSA met the minimum criteria for wilderness study, it does not contain wilderness values that would add quality and diversity to the National Wilderness Preservation System. The area does not exhibit any significant or unusual special features. 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. Although the Shoshone WSA's overall appearance is generally natural, three areas in the WSA have been impacted by unauthorized surface lava rock removal. Areas where rock has been removed are distinguished by the dull reddish surface exposed after removal of the overlying black lava. These areas are obvious at close range. A vehicle trail across the WSA provides access to the rock removal areas. This vehicle trail has been physically blocked and rehabilitated. Vegetation is slowly regrowing on the trail.

Naturalness along the eastern edge is also altered somewhat by the seasonal impoundment of irrigation water in a ground water recharge area. A monitoring well is located inside the WSA boundary south of the recharge area.

The WSA's eastern boundary is located along the road to the Lincoln County Landfill. The WSA boundary road and numerous spur trails into the WSA are littered with an assortment of appliances, wire, construction material, household garbage and other miscellaneous trash commonly found near landfills.

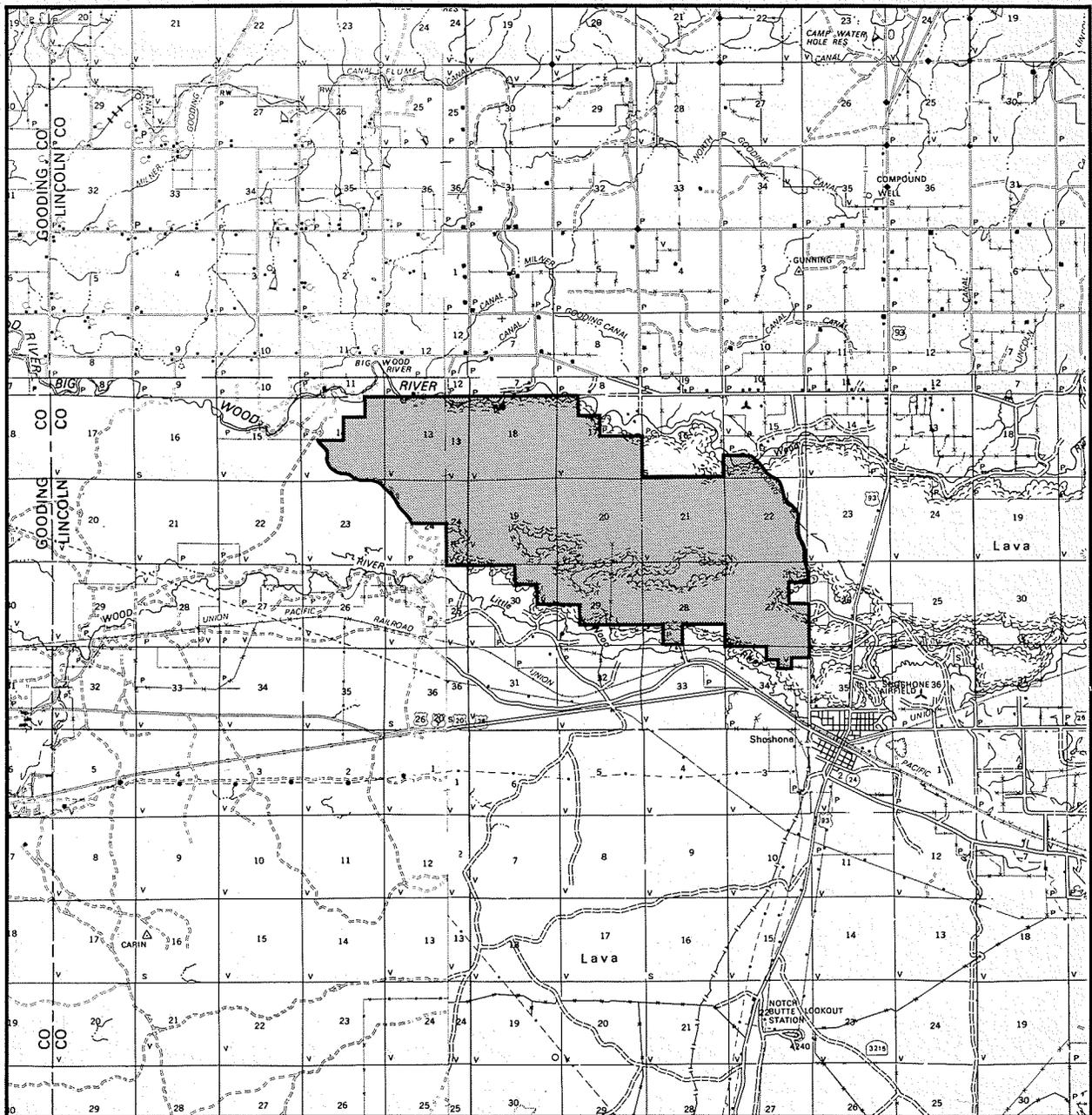
Approximately 1.1 miles of fence are also located within the WSA. The Union Pacific Railroad's main line is located one mile from the WSA's southern boundary. Trains can be seen from the edge of the WSA. Agricultural activity and boundary roads are also visible from the WSA's edges. Eight parcels of public land within the WSA adjacent to private agricultural lands have been farmed in trespass. These are located in and along the north, south and east parts of the WSA. In combination with the size and boundary configuration of the WSA, the result is an area marginally natural in appearance. These impacts will continue to degrade the area's natural values in the long term.

The Shoshone WSA is predominantly a lava flow which inherently provides opportunities for solitude and isolation as well as primitive camping and hiking. However, the quality of these opportunities is comparable to those found in any lava flow of similar size. Opportunities for solitude are limited by the small size of this WSA.

The Great Basin Province/Desert Ecosystem (3130-39) is the only ecosystem represented by the WSA. The Craters of the Moon Wilderness (43,243 acres) administered by the National Park Service (NPS) currently represents this ecosystem in Idaho. Designation of the Shoshone WSA as wilderness would not add an unrepresented ecosystem to the Natural Wilderness Preservation System.

Several characteristics of the Shoshone WSA could complicate administration of the area as wilderness. The WSA is adjacent to the Lincoln County Landfill. An easily accessible, well-maintained road forms the WSA's eastern boundary. Numerous short vehicle trails spur off this boundary road, and the WSA lies only .5 mile from the city limits of Shoshone. These factors create a perpetual unauthorized dumping problem in the eastern part of the Shoshone WSA.

The recommendation would allow slab lava to be made available for sale through the BLM's common variety mineral material sale program. It is unlikely that the lava rock covered by mining claims (925 acres) in the northeast part of the WSA would meet the criteria for a locatable mineral. Therefore, the claims would not be valid. However, approximately 2,000 tons of slab lava would meet the criteria for a common variety mineral and could be sold to the public through material sales. Alternatively, a community pit for slab lava rock could be established in the eastern part of the area. This resource is valuable because of the proximity of haul roads and distribution centers. Continued demand for this type of material is expected.

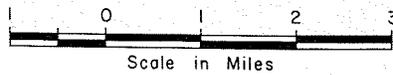


T. 4 S.  
 T. 5 S.  
 T. 5 S.  
 T. 6 S.

R. 16 E. | R. 17 E.

R. 17 E. | R. 18 E.

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



ID-59-7  
 SHOSHONE  
 PROPOSAL

APRIL 1988

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

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	6,914
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,914</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	6,914
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>6,914</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0

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

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

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

The quality of the wilderness values was an additional consideration in the recommendation. While the Shoshone 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 human signs, primarily rangeland developments, which impact naturalness locally. The majority of the existing impacts cannot be rehabilitated to a natural appearance.

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

Areas in the center of the WSA provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The topographic variety of the lava flow provides numerous opportunities to be isolated from the sights and sounds of others. Opportunities for solitude are not available on the WSA's edges. 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.

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

The rugged volcanic features and desert environment of the WSA provide accessible opportunities for primitive day hiking. Recreation use is estimated at less than 100 visitor days annually. The combination of rugged terrain, lack of water or destination spots and lack of special features probably accounts for the low visitor use figures.

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

The Shoshone WSA does not contain any significant or unusual special features.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Shoshone WSA would add an ecosystem presently represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) by one area with 30,245 acres. There are 11 other BLM areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

#### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	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 Shoshone 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 the cities of Provo, Orem and Ogden, Utah.

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

The Shoshone WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. The NPS-administered Craters of the Moon Wilderness (43,243 acres), representing a similar landform and ecosystem, is a one-hour drive to the northeast. The lava flow wilderness values within the Craters of the Moon Wilderness are superior in every respect to those of the Shoshone WSA. Therefore, designation of the Shoshone WSA as wilderness would not help balance the geographic distribution of opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

### **Manageability**

The WSA would be manageable as wilderness. There are no private rights or conflicts within the area which would affect the ability to retain wilderness values.

The eastern one-fourth of the WSA is adjacent to the Lincoln County Landfill and within one-half mile to two miles of the Shoshone, Idaho, city limits. Numerous vehicle trails spur off the well-maintained eastern boundary road into the WSA. Unauthorized dumping is a major problem all along this boundary road and along the spur trails into the WSA. Unauthorized removal of surface lava rock is also a problem impacting naturalness in this part of the WSA.

Agricultural lands bound the Shoshone WSA on the north and south. Farming trespass is a historic problem on the arable parcels of the WSA along the edges of the lava flow. There would be administrative problems and costs associated with management of this area. Wilderness management would require intensive patrols of the area by personnel with law enforcement capability and boundary fences surrounding the area.

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

The Shoshone WSA has zero petroleum potential, is classified as not prospectively valuable for geothermal resources (BLM 1985) and has low potential for locatable minerals. The WSA has moderate potential for saleable slab lava rock. There are an estimated 2,000 tons of saleable common variety slab lava within the WSA. Mining claims within the WSA cover approximately 925 acres. There is no present production of any energy or mineral resources 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-59-7 (SHOSHONE)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p>All wilderness values would be lost on the 50 acre lava rock community pit. Wilderness values would be degraded on an additional 400 acres or less in the surrounding viewshed. Lava rock removal would degrade wilderness values on approximately 6.5% of the Shoshone WSA.</p> <p>Low-use vehicle trials would be maintained by ORV travel. However, no increase in visitor use is projected above current levels and impacts would be confined to the existing trails.</p>	<p>Wilderness values would receive long-term Congressional protection. All existing wilderness values would be maintained on 6,914 acres.</p>
Impacts on Development of Locatable and Saleable Mineral Resources	<p>There would be no impact on development of locatable and saleable mineral resources. Potential mineral resources, including approximately 2,000 tons of common variety slab lava, would be available for development.</p>	<p>Development of potential mineral resources would be foregone. This includes approximately 2,000 tons of common variety slab lava.</p>
Impacts on Livestock Grazing Operations	<p>Existing cattle operating procedures would continue. The level of grazing use would decrease 3 AUMs, or 1.8%. Ecological condition class would remain unchanged.</p>	<p>Existing cattle operating procedures would continue. The level of grazing use would decrease 3 AUMs, or 1.8%. Ecological condition class would remain unchanged.</p>
Impacts on Fire Management	<p>There would be no impact on fire management.</p>	<p>Full suppression, including use of pumper trucks, helicopters and bulldozers, within the WSA would not occur.</p>

## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Designation of the area as nonwilderness would have minimal affect on the local social and economic situation. If a community pit was developed for the removal of slab lava, there would be a local source for this stone. The approximate 2,000 tons of slab lava would be available for mining at about \$5 a ton. Slab lava of similar quality is commercially available from local stone dealers at \$40 a ton delivered. Slab lava of higher quality is available for mining about 15 miles north of Shoshone, Idaho, at \$15 a ton.

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

Public involvement occurred throughout the wilderness review process. During public review of the Draft EIS, five written comments supporting wilderness designation were received. None of these comments contained supporting reasons for their position. No comments opposing wilderness designation were received.

The U.S. Department of Energy, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Federal Highway Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Department of Health and Welfare, Department of Lands, Transportation Department, Department of Water Resources and Idaho State Historical Society commented on the Draft EIS. None of their comments specifically addressed the Shoshone WSA.

