

Box Creek Wilderness Study Area

1. The Study Area -- 440 acres

The Box Creek WSA (ID-110-91A) is located in Valley County approximately ten miles northeast of McCall, Idaho. The WSA includes 440 acres of BLM lands (see Table 1). The WSA is contiguous with the U.S. Forest Service 266,292 acre Secesh roadless area on the WSA's north and east boundaries. The WSA is bounded on all other sides by lands administered by the Idaho Department of Lands.

The WSA consists of rolling to extremely steep and broken terrain supporting a mixed conifer forest of Douglas-fir, subalpine fir, Englemann spruce and lodgepole pine. Ponderosa pine, larch and aspen are also present. The forest cover is frequently broken by large granite outcrops. Elevation ranges from 5,700 to 6,700 feet. Box Creek flows through the southern portion of the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Small Wilderness Study Area Environmental Impact Statement filed September 1989. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report; and an all wilderness alternative.

2. Recommendation and Rationale

0 acres recommended for wilderness

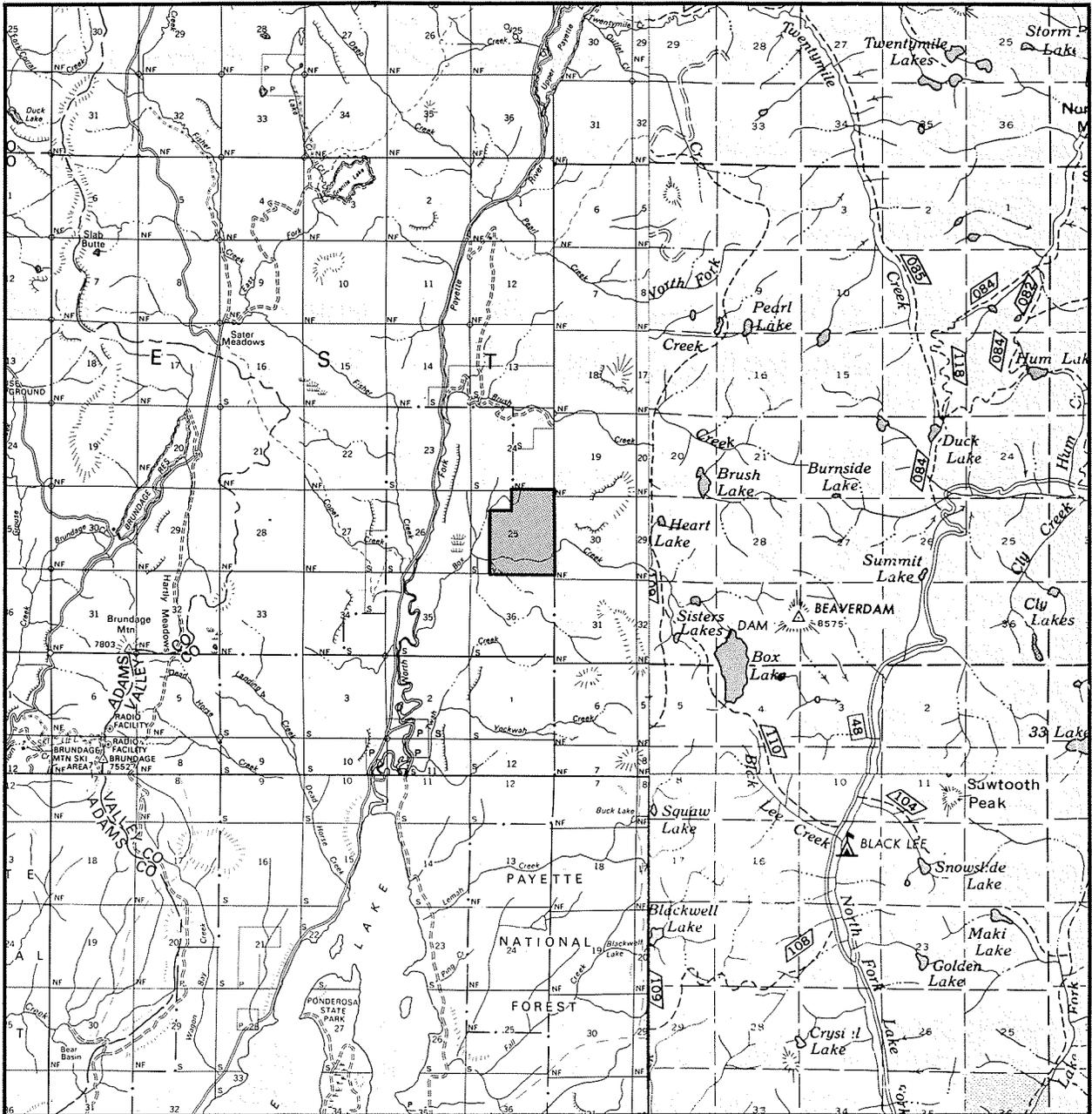
440 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for the Box Creek WSA is to not designate the area as wilderness and to release the 440 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 use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

The WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation because the U.S. Forest Service has recommended that the lands adjacent to the WSA within the contiguous Secesh roadless area be released and managed for uses other than wilderness including semi-primitive recreational motor vehicle use and salvage logging. Logging and other motorized activities also occur on state lands adjoining the western and southern boundaries of the WSA.

The 440 acre Box Creek WSA is too small to stand on its own as a wilderness. Without designation of adjoining U.S. Forest Service lands as wilderness, the WSA could not be managed to provide wilderness opportunities. Sights and sounds of logging and motor vehicle activities or adjacent U.S. Forest Service and state lands would be apparent from most of the WSA, adversely impacting solitude and naturalness. By itself, the WSA does not have outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

Wilderness designation of the WSA would prevent the harvesting of 500 MBF of timber every 30 years. Release of the area for uses other than wilderness would make management of the 440-acre parcel compatible with that of adjoining U.S. Forest Service and state lands.



T. 21 N.

T. 20 N.

T. 20 N.

T. 19 N.

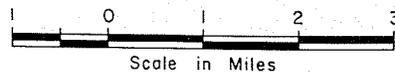
R. 3 E.

R. 3 E.

R. 4 E.

R. 4 E.

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



**ID-110-91A
BOX CREEK
PROPOSAL**

JANUARY 1989

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

Within Wilderness Study Area

BLM (surface and subsurface)	440
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
Total	440

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	440
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	440
Inholdings (state, private)	0

3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

The Box Creek WSA is natural with no human imprints. The area consists of rolling to extremely steep and broken terrain supporting a mixed conifer forest cover frequently broken by large granite outcrops. A perennial stream, Box Creek flows through the southern part of the WSA.

The area has been affected primarily by the forces of nature. There are no primitive roads, trails or other human-made features in the WSA.

B. Solitude

When combined with the contiguous U.S. Forest Service roadless area, the WSA contains outstanding opportunities for solitude. By itself, the WSA does not have outstanding opportunities for solitude due to its small size.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

When combined with the contiguous U.S. Forest Service roadless area, the WSA provides outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation such as hiking, hunting, fishing, photography and wildlife viewing. However, by itself, the WSA does not provide such outstanding opportunities due to its limited size.

D. Special Features

The WSA contains no 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 Box Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented within the northern Rocky Mountain ecosystem by ten designated areas with 909,780 acres. There are three 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
Rocky Mountain Province				
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Grand Fir/Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	10	909,780	4	1,589
<u>IDAHO</u>				
Grand Fir/Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	2	585,118	1	440
<u>OREGON</u>				
Grand Fir/Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	8	344,662	3	1,149

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

The Box 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 Box Creek WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The largest block of Idaho wilderness is located in the Rocky Mountains about 40 air miles east of the WSA.

Manageability

Combined with the contiguous U.S. Forest Service 266,292 acre Secesh roadless area, the WSA could be effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character. The U.S. Forest Service has recommended that 20,000 acres adjacent to the WSA within the roadless area be released for uses other than wilderness including recreational motor vehicle use and salvage logging.

Taken by itself, the WSA cannot be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics. Logging and motor vehicle activities occurring on surrounding U.S. Forest Service and state lands would be heard or visible from much of the 440-acre WSA making opportunities for naturalness, solitude and primitive recreation less than outstanding.

Most of the 440 acres within the WSA are commercial forest lands. The timber production and capability classification process has determined that 295 acres are capable of sustaining long-term timber production. These 295 acres are included in the timber harvest base for BLM's Cascade Resource Area. The annual allowable cut in the WSA is approximately 17 MBF.

Energy and Minerals Resource Values

The WSA is located within the Idaho Batholith portion of the northern Rocky Mountain geologic province. The oil and gas potential is rated at zero. The geothermal potential is very low. The WSA is not within an area of current locatable mineral activity and there are no existing mining claims within the area.

Impacts on Resources

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

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative
WSA ID-110-91A (BOX CREEK)

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Naturalness and primitive and unconfined recreation would be lost on most of WSA. Solitude would be reduced.	Naturalness reduced on 75% of the WSA and solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation reduced on 90% of the WSA by activities on adjacent lands.
Impacts on USFS Secesh Roadless Area	Sights and sounds of timber harvest in WSA would be noticeable over 10% of the roadless area.	No effect.
Impacts on Hydroelectric Development	No impact.	Proposed project would have to be relocated 1/8 mile.
Impacts on Timber Harvest	No impact.	Harvest of 500 MBF every 30 years foregone.
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Wildlife	Deer and elk use increase up to 5%. Bear and grouse use decrease by 2% to 3%, respectively.	No impact.
Impacts on Fisheries	Fish populations reduced by up to 10%.	Fish populations could be slightly reduced by up to 10% by activity on adjacent lands.
Impacts on Gray Wolf	No impact.	No impact.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of the entire Box Creek WSA as wilderness would prevent the harvesting of 500 MBF of timber every 30 years.

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 formal review of the Draft EIS, 41 oral and written comments were received. Of the 23 commenters who specifically mentioned the Box Creek WSA, 15 supported wilderness designation, four opposed designation and four took no position. Those favoring wilderness commented on its outstanding naturalness and wildlife values. Those opposing designation were concerned that wilderness would preclude commodity use of resources. Most commenters were residents of Idaho.

Federal agencies commenting on the Draft EIS included the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Idaho state agencies providing comments were the Department of Health and Welfare and the Historical Society. The agencies took no position on wilderness designation except for the Bureau of Indian Affairs which supported wilderness designation of the Box Creek WSA.

