

Crystal Lake Wilderness Study Area

1. The Study Area -- 9,027 acres

The Crystal Lake WSA (ID-61-10) is located in the northeast corner of Benewah County and the southeast corner of Kootenai County about ten miles northeast of St. Maries, Idaho. The WSA contains approximately 9,027 acres of public land.

The northern border of the WSA is formed by private land and a portion of the Twin Crags Road. An irregular pattern of private land and portions of the Rochat Road define the western and southern borders. Portions of the Reeds Gulch and Pine Creek roads and private land form the eastern boundary.

The unit contains a landscape of varied character. Bare talus peaks descend sharply to Latour Creek some 3,000 feet below Reeds Baldy, the highest peak in the unit. The slopes in the upper drainages have a thin to moderately stocked mixed coniferous stand. Toward the lower end of the unit the density of this stand steadily increases. The unit contains the major portion of the Latour Creek drainage including its headwaters at Crystal Lake. Bare areas of talus materials are common in the upper end of the drainage. The basin below Crystal Lake is the site of a past fire and now has a dense brush cover.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the North Idaho Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement filed in September 1986. Three alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; a no action/no wilderness alternative; and a no wilderness with Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) designation alternative, which is the recommendation in this report.

2. Recommendation and Rationale

0 acres recommended for wilderness

9,027 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for the Crystal Lake WSA is to not designate it as wilderness but to protect its natural and cultural values through management as an ONA. 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. ONA designation would protect almost all the values that would be protected under wilderness designation. All 9,027 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended for nonwilderness with ONA designation as shown on the Crystal Lake Proposal map.

This WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation for two main reasons:

Due to its size and physical configuration, this WSA is vulnerable to activities on adjacent non-BLM lands. Timber harvest and other land-altering activities are visible from many portions of the WSA. With the current trend of increased activity on adjacent lands continuing, user perceptions of naturalness and opportunities for solitude will be degraded.

Future management direction for this WSA calls for increased emphasis on providing additional recreational opportunities for the public. This would involve maintaining roads which provide access to the trailheads in the area and maintaining the trail system within the WSA. The increased use of this area for recreation would not be compatible with management as a wilderness area.

Although this WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation, BLM recognizes the high quality primitive and semi-primitive recreation opportunities it contains and proposes to protect these values through management as an Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) to be established in the upcoming Resource Management Plan (RMP) process. The management objectives are to provide the maximum amount of recreational use without damage to the area's natural features. The area may not be used in any way that would unnecessarily detract from the quality of its natural features.

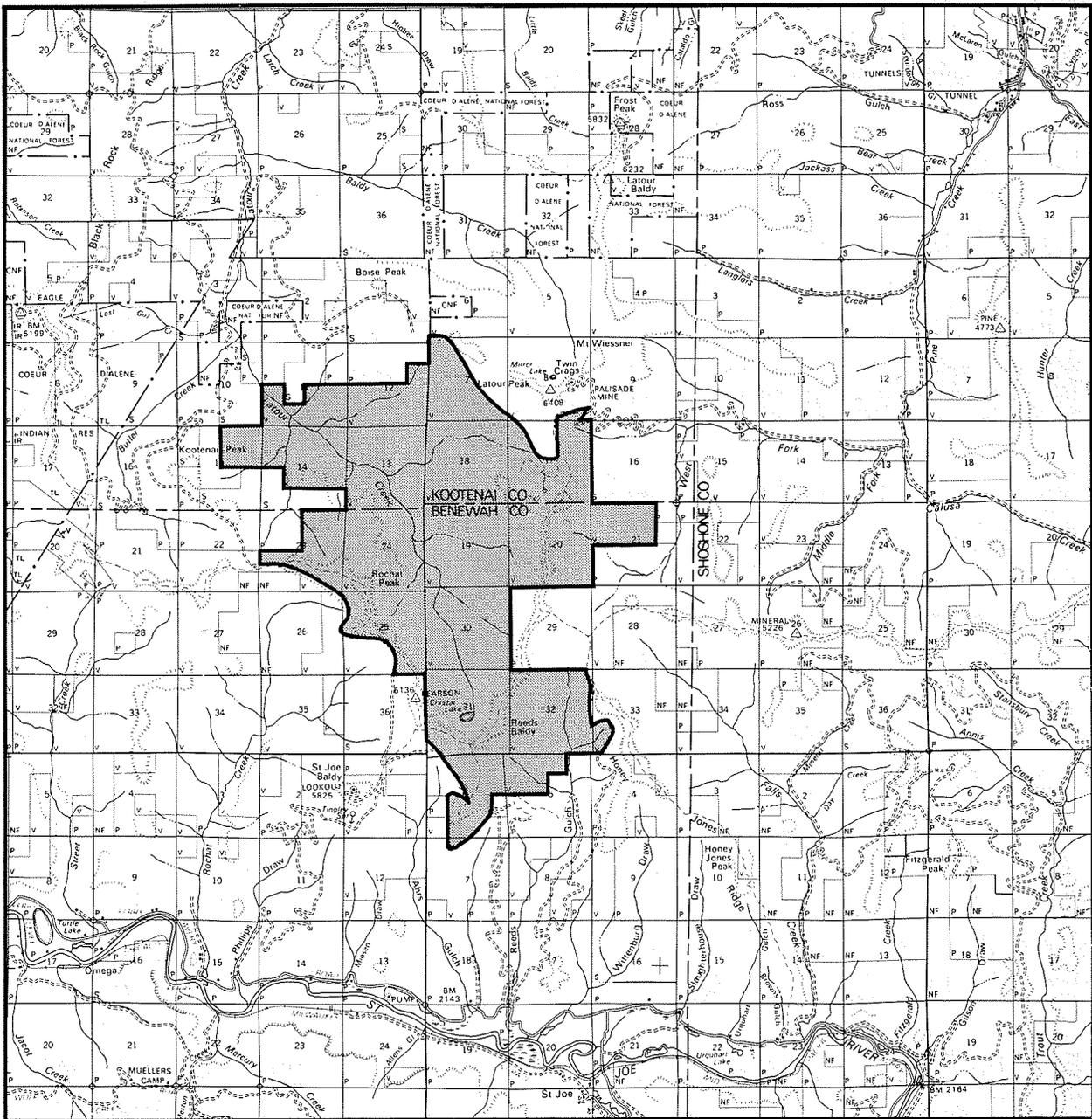
The recreational values of the WSA are excellent. It provides opportunities for hiking, camping, sightseeing, hunting, fishing and berry picking. Although no recreation facilities exist in the WSA, Crystal Lake itself is a destination point for hikers using the Sheep Springs Campground and trailhead located outside the WSA.

The proposed ONA designation for this WSA would provide administrative protection for most wilderness values; however, the recreational emphasis of the ONA management plan would reduce the availability of solitude due to increased use of the area. The conflicts such designation would cause with other resource uses of this WSA, such as timber harvesting, are limited. Timber harvest activities would be prohibited, eliminating a potential annual harvest of 830 MBF of timber.

Closing the area to ORV use would eliminate about 75 visitor days of use each year. The small amount of grazing which currently occurs would be allowed to continue. There are no mining claims located within the WSA and, although the unit would be open to mineral entry, its low mineral potential makes the likelihood of mineral development extremely doubtful.

T. 48 N.
T. 47 N.

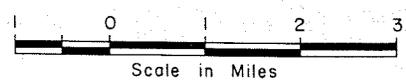
T. 47 N.
T. 46 N.



R. 1 W. | R. 1 E.

R. 1 E. | R. 2 E.

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



ID-61-10
CRYSTAL LAKE
PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1988

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

Within Wilderness Study Area

BLM (surface and subsurface)	9,027
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
Total	9,027

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	9,027
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	9,027
Inholdings (state, private)	0

3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

While the Crystal Lake WSA is in an essentially natural state, there is one human imprint that reduces the quality of its natural appearance. This imprint is a "way" which stretches for 1.5 miles in the extreme eastern portion of the WSA. The way is now overgrown and impassable. Natural revegetation has reduced the visual impacts of the road cut, though it does not significantly limit the way's visibility.

The way is visible only from certain areas within the southern portion of the WSA. This area encompasses approximately 2,000 acres and contains Crystal Lake. Crystal Lake receives most of the use within the WSA. Reeds Baldy, a prominent peak, is also located here. These two features, along with ease of access, serve to make this area the focal point of use in the Crystal Lake WSA. This WSA is vulnerable to management practices on adjacent non-BLM land. This is particularly significant outside of the northwest portion of the area where an intermingled pattern of state and private land exists. Timber harvest and other land-altering activities, such as road building, farming and home building, are visible from many portions of the WSA. Current trends indicate that use of the surrounding lands for development will increase in the future, thereby affecting user perceptions of naturalness in the area. This same situation exists to the south and west of the WSA. Actions within this area are visible from fewer locations within the WSA and will, therefore, constitute a less significant impact.

B. Solitude

When conditions of moderate and dispersed use exist, the heavily forested areas (approximately 3,700 acres) within the WSA provide an outstanding opportunity for solitude due to vegetative screening. However, the trend of increased visitor use and BLM objectives to focus on recreation in this area will make it more difficult to isolate oneself from the sights and sounds of other users because of the relative small size of the WSA and limited topographic screening. It is anticipated that recreation use of this WSA will increase from the current 1,000 visitor days each year to over 6,000 visitor days by the year 2,000.

Activities on adjacent lands could severely diminish opportunities for solitude in the Crystal Lake WSA.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The Crystal Lake WSA offers a diversity of possible activities. The more prominent among these are fishing, cross-country skiing, hiking and nature study. The range of landform and vegetation, from bare peaks to heavily forested creek bottoms, provides a broad base which can meet the needs of these varied activities. Fishing opportunities include both stream and lake. Cross-country skiing within the WSA accommodates a wide range of skill levels. The variety of environments maintains visual interest for both the hiker and those involved in nature study.

D. Special Features

The Crystal Lake WSA contains features which have both cultural and educational values. These features consist of the Skitswish Monuments located along the ridges surrounding the majority of the area. These unique rock structures are associated with the religious ceremonies of the Coeur d'Alene Indians. A Coeur d'Alene Indian Tribal Council resolution has identified the dependency it has on these sites for their native religious "vision quest" practices. These monuments have been classified as significant cultural sites and are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Crystal Lake WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by ten designated areas with 2,539,310 acres. There is one other BLM study area 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
Columbia Forest Province				
			<u>NATIONWIDE</u>	
Western Spruce-Fir Forest Ecosystem	10	2,539,310	1	9,027
			<u>IDAHO</u>	
Western Spruce-Fir Forest Ecosystem	1	300,115	1	9,027

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

The Crystal Lake 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 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	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

Inclusion of the Crystal Lake WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The Northern Rocky Mountain region contains one of the largest concentrations of designated and proposed wilderness areas within the country.

Manageability

The Crystal Lake WSA cannot be managed as wilderness. Existing solitude values cannot be maintained while meeting the need for additional recreation opportunities. A projected six-fold increase in the use of this area by the year 2000 will continue to reduce user perceptions of naturalness and affect opportunities for solitude since adequate topographic and vegetative screening is not available to isolate users from the sights and sounds of others. In addition, activity on adjacent non-BLM lands has continued to increase. This increase in activity is currently most evident on state and private lands northwest of the WSA where timber harvesting activities and road building are occurring. Long-range plans for other state and private lands which surround this WSA indicate that noncomplementary activities such as road building, timber harvest and homesite development will increase in the near future. These increases will further reduce the wilderness values of naturalness and solitude.

Energy and Minerals Resource Values

According to the internal BLM analysis and the joint U.S. Geological Survey/Bureau of Mines initial assessment, no known energy or mineral resource values exist in this WSA. There are no mining claims, leases or pending applications for leasable minerals. Literature indicates that the fault zones within the WSA and favorable host rocks of the lower Belt Supergroup are similar to those in the Coeur d'Alene Mining District.

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-61-10 (CRYSTAL LAKE)**

ISSUE TOPICS	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS - OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Protected.	Values lost on 4,931 acres. Naturalness and solitude reduced on remainder.	Protected.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources	Withdrawn from mineral entry (9,027 acres).	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Timber Industry and Local Economy:			
Potential Harvest (MBF)	0	830	0
Potential Jobs	0	6	0
Impacts on Recreational ORV Use	Closed to ORV use. 75 annual visitor days foregone.	Benefit from 9.8 miles of new road.	Closed to ORV use. 75 annual visitor days foregone.
Impacts on Soil:			
Loss (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	850	
Loss (% of current BLM-EIS area totals)		.2	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Water Quality:			
Sediment Yield Increase (tons/10 years)		576	
Sediment Yield Increase (% of current yields in EIS area)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	.4	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Water Yield Increase (acre/ft/year)		25	
Impacts on Water Supply	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	No impact.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Fish:			
Sediment Reaching Fish Habitat (tons/ 10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	65	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Vegetation:			
Eliminate Productivity (acres/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	46	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Modification of Succession (acres/10 years)		976	
Impacts on Mammals and Birds: Loss of Habitat capability (head/10 years)			
Elk	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	12	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Deer		3	
Impacts on Archaeological Resources	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	No impact.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Scenic Quality	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Slight adverse impact on 4,931 acres.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

None of the alternatives considered for the Crystal Lake WSA would cause any significant social or economic effects. A potential annual harvest of 830 MBF of timber from 4,931 acres of commercial forest land would be foregone.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process starting with the inventory phase and continuing through the development of the Final EIS.

During the inventory phase, the majority of commenters agreed that this area contained qualities that made it eligible for further study.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, 66 respondents specifically commented (either in writing or orally) about this WSA. Of these, 33 favored wilderness designation and 33 preferred no wilderness for this area. This WSA was mentioned by three persons in testimony at the formal public hearing. All three favored no wilderness.

Three government agencies submitted written comments concerning this WSA. The Bureau of Indian Affairs urged continued coordination with local Indian tribes and the Idaho Department of Lands expressed an opinion concerning future land use allocations within this WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game supports the BLM recommendation for this WSA.