

Grandmother Mountain Wilderness Study Area

1. The Study Area -- 17,129 acres

The Grandmother Mountain WSA (ID-61-15A) is located in Shoshone County 45 miles northeast of Moscow, Idaho. The WSA contains a total of 17,129 acres of public land with 10,339 acres in ID-61-15A and 6,790 acres in ID-61-15B. These two areas are separated by the U.S. Forest Service-administered Marble Creek drainage. There are an additional 160 acres of private land and 160 acres of land administered by the U.S. Forest Service within ID-61-15B.

Area ID-61-15A is bordered by a combination of national forest, private and state lands. The Freezeout Saddle Road forms the southern boundary of this portion of the WSA. Area ID-61-15B is bordered by a more intermingled pattern of national forest, private and state lands on all sides. This intermingled pattern results in a narrow and irregular configuration.

The terrain within ID-61-15A varies from heavily forested drainages to bare peaks. There are numerous small drainages and several high mountain lakes located throughout. Elevation ranges from 4,600 feet in the Lund Creek drainage to 6,800 feet on Widow Mountain.

The terrain and vegetation of ID-61-15B are similar to that of ID-61-15A. This area, however, does not contain the variety of features found in ID-61-15A. In the Placer Creek drainage, elevation ranges from 4,800 feet to over 6,300 feet.

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. Five alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; a no action/no wilderness alternative; a no wilderness timber emphasis alternative where 10,000 acres would be intensively managed for timber production; another no wilderness alternative where 9,684 acres would be managed as an Outstanding Natural Area with 2,905 acres as a Resource Natural Area/ACEC and the remainder for timber production, which is the recommendation of this report; and a partial wilderness alternative where 12,589 acres would be designated as wilderness and the remainder allocated primarily for timber management.

2. Recommendation and Rationale

0 acres recommended for wilderness

17,129 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for the Grandmother Mountain WSA is to not designate the area 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. All 17,129 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended for nonwilderness designation as shown on the Grandmother Mountain Proposal map.

The recommendation provides a wide spectrum of multiple use opportunities from intensive timber management to enjoyment of natural features to research in a unique environment.

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

While the WSA meets the basic criteria for consideration as wilderness during the inventory phase of the study process, further analysis indicates that the quality of wilderness values exhibited in this area are not worthy of inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. In addition, management objectives for this area are not compatible with wilderness designation.

Effective long-term management of this WSA as wilderness would require a similar designation on adjacent U.S. Forest Service lands, particularly those located in the Marble Creek drainage. These lands have already been designated as nonwilderness through the RARE II process and are slated for intensive timber harvesting and road building activities.

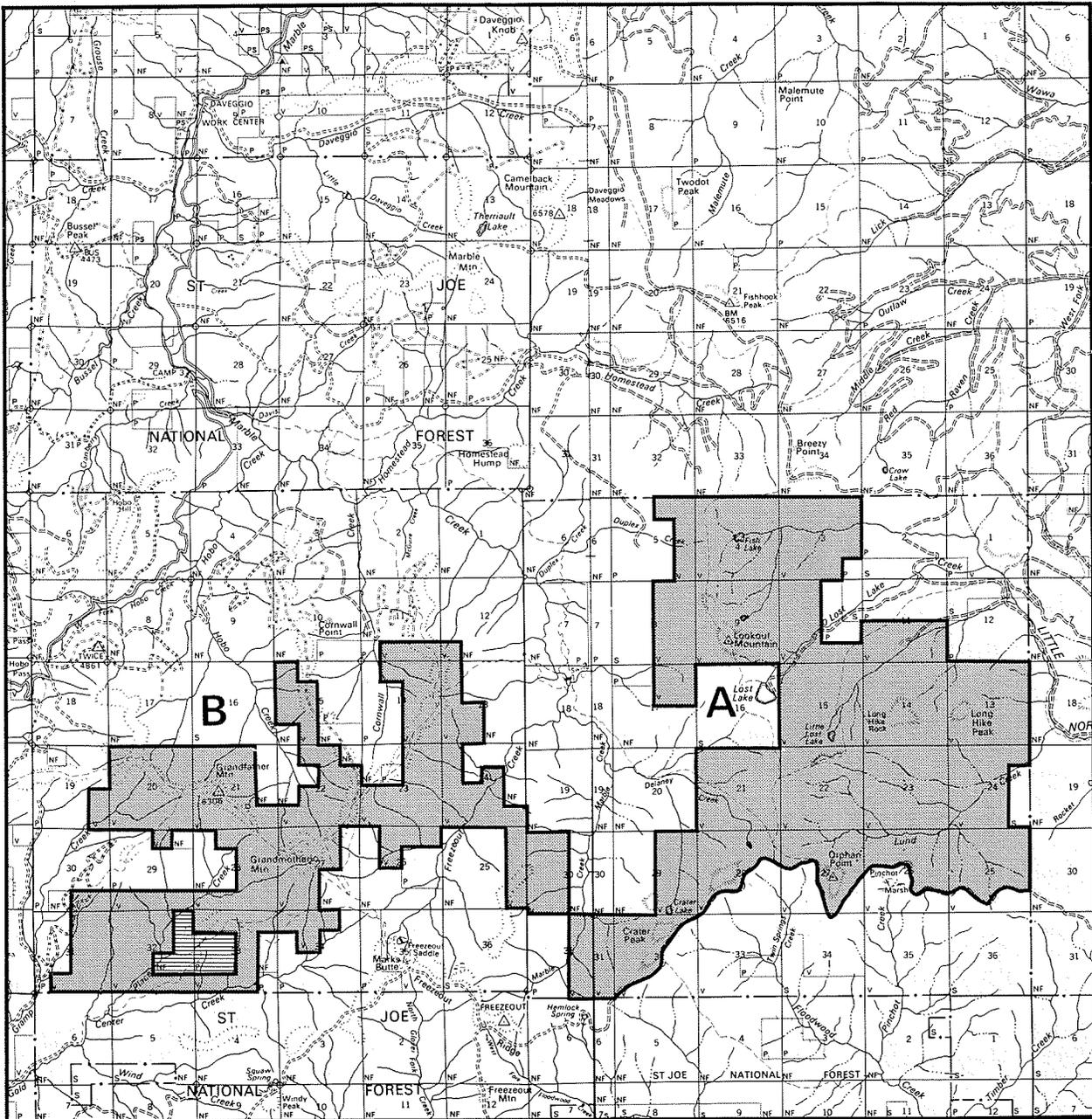
While not recommended for wilderness designation, certain portions of the Grandmother Mountain WSA contain attributes which make specialized management emphasis a good recommendation. Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) designation on 9,684 acres of the WSA would help preserve the area's character as a basically undisturbed alpine environment in a region that has been generally logged and roaded during the past fifty years while still providing recreational opportunities. Final boundaries and management guidelines for the proposed ONA will be developed during the preparation of the District Resource Management Plan (RMP) scheduled for 1993. The area would not be used in any manner which would unnecessarily impact the quality of its natural features. Timber harvest activities would not be permitted and no new road construction could occur in the ONA portion of the WSA. ORV use would be restricted to the existing 12 miles of maintained trails. Solitude and naturalness would be adversely affected, to a limited extent, throughout the WSA as a result of approximately 330 annual visitor days of recreational ORV use.

Another portion of the WSA recommended for special management emphasis is the Lund Creek-Orphan Point area of the WSA. This 2,905 acre portion was designated as a Research Natural Area (RNA) and Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in 1988. Old growth hemlock and subalpine fir forests and a unique aquatic environment make this an important area for the study of plant diversity. RNA/ACEC designation of this area will protect its natural features and provide an area ideally suited for research activities. No timber harvest, road building or ORV activities will be permitted in the RNA. Most of the wilderness values which currently exist in this small area would be maintained in the long term.

The portion of the Grandmother Mountain WSA recommended for intensive timber management is well-suited for that activity. It contains stands of timber with high economic value and is located where timber harvesting on adjacent lands has already degraded the wilderness values to marginal levels. Vehicle access to this area could be easily opened by extending existing road systems on nearby U.S. Forest Service and state lands. To manage this area for timber production and harvest would conflict with wilderness values since harvest and associated road building activities would eventually eliminate the wilderness values of naturalness, solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation on this portion of the WSA.

Conflicts caused by the recommendation are limited. No livestock grazing occurs and none is projected for the future. Recreation opportunities would be enhanced throughout the WSA and timber harvesting would be permitted in the area where the highest value timber and majority of nearby road systems exist.

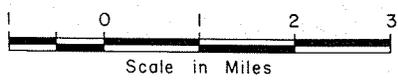
There are no mining claims located within the WSA and, although the WSA would be open to mineral entry under the recommendation, its low mineral potential makes future mineral development unlikely.



T. 44 N.
 T. 43 N.
 T. 43 N.
 T. 42 N.

R. 3 E. | R. 4 E. | R. 4 E. | R. 5 E.

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



ID-61-15A,B
GRANDMOTHER MOUNTAIN
PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1988

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

Within Wilderness Study Area

BLM (surface and subsurface)	17,129
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	320
Total	17,449

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	17,129
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	17,129
Inholdings (state, private)	320

3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

When the area was inventoried, evidence of human activity from timber harvests was found in several locations within the Grandmother Mountain WSA. Stumps are scattered throughout the area but with no major concentrations in any one location. Evidence of past timber harvest activity in the WSA is hardly noticeable due to overgrowth.

Snow-covered skid trails are visible from higher elevations due to the contrast from the more heavily forested areas. However, these skid trails have little impact upon the natural character of the area.

Evidence of human activity immediately outside the WSA boundary is plentiful. These activities consist primarily of past and ongoing timber harvests and road construction. Numerous clearcuts offer the most significant visual impacts.

Whether or not these impacts are visible will depend upon the user's location within the area and the extent to which screening is present. At least some of these impacts will be visible near the WSA boundaries and from most peaks and ridges. Views of outside impacts are more readily available in the westernmost portion of the WSA. This results from this segment's narrow configuration.

Established trails within the Grandmother Mountain WSA are predominantly found along the ridgelines. Use of these trails will expose users to the presence of outside impacts. Destinations within the WSA are more likely to be located off the ridges where these impacts are lessened. Within the westernmost portion of the WSA, these impacts are more significant. This is due to the intensity and widespread presence of outside activities and few features which serve as destination points.

B. Solitude

An outstanding opportunity for solitude exists in much of ID-61-15A. The area is heavily vegetated and the terrain is frequently broken by small drainages. The resulting screening provides an opportunity for users to isolate themselves from one another. Unlike ID-61-15B, the opportunities within ID-61-15A are not totally dependent upon adjoining land to be considered outstanding.

The configuration of ID-61-15B, which contains 4,540 acres, is extremely irregular and narrow because of an intermingled land ownership pattern. This confines users to a narrow corridor, increasing the chance of encountering other users. The screening available from both topography and vegetation cannot offset the inherent limitation of this configuration. Evidence of human imprints outside of the WSA plays a role in the perception of solitude in ID-61-15B. Activities such as timber harvesting and road building are visible from most points within this portion of the WSA due to its elevation and narrow configuration. Most of the land outside this portion of the WSA is being used for timber production. This pattern of development will continue and spread. The amount of existing visible evidence is sufficient to preclude the perception of this area as a lonely or secluded place. Future outside impacts can only intensify this feeling.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Grandmother Mountain WSA offers a diversity of possible activities. The more prominent among these are hiking, hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, primitive camping and nature and wildlife observation. The range of landform and vegetation, from bare peaks to dense forest, provides a broad base which can meet the needs of these varied activities.

The variety of environments maintains visual interest for both the hiker and those involved in nature study. Hunting opportunities exist for elk, deer, moose, bear and upland game. Fishing is available in the area's lakes and numerous small streams. The large amount of snow and the relatively inaccessible nature of the area during the winter provide a challenging setting for the cross-country skier. Although all these factors enhance the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, they are not sufficient to create outstanding opportunities.

The opportunities available in ID-61-15B are comparatively less than those in ID-61-15A. While the same activities may be pursued in each area, the quality of experience is less than that in ID-61-15A. Those factors which limit the quality of experience are a lack of features which would enhance primitive recreation activities, the confining configuration of the area and the exposure of outside impacts.

D. Special Features

The Lund Creek drainage, 2,905 acres in the southeastern portion of the WSA, is important because of its ecological diversity. The ecosystem found here is not found elsewhere in the region. Old growth hemlock and subalpine fir forests are the major interest but equally important are the aquatic environments of wet meadows, marshes, sphagnum bogs and streams. In recognition of this diversity of vegetative communities, this area has been designated a Research Natural Area (RNA) and Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Grandmother Mountain WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by one designated area with 30,875 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>	
Cedar-Hemlock-Pine Forest Ecosystem	1	30,875	1	17,289
			<u>IDAHO</u>	
Cedar-Hemlock-Pine Forest Ecosystem	0	0	1	27,389

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

The Grandmother Mountain 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

Inclusion of the Grandmother Mountain 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

In the long term, only the central and southern portions of ID-61-15A, an area of less than 1,500 acres, could be effectively managed to preserve wilderness characteristics. These areas are sufficiently shielded from outside impacts by vegetative and topographic screening so as to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and preservation of the natural character for the long term.

The primary reason for the continuing degradation of wilderness values throughout the rest of the WSA is the increasing use of contiguous lands for timber production and road construction. The wilderness values of solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation will be the most severely impacted with naturalness reduced. The EIS prepared in 1986 stated that effective wilderness management of much of this WSA was dependent upon wilderness compatible management of the surrounding U.S. Forest Service lands. The Final Forest Plan (1987) for this area calls for only a small portion of the lands which border this WSA to be managed "in its present condition with no new roads." The remaining U.S. Forest Service lands are slated for "production of wood products." U.S. Forest Service plans call for continued logging and road building immediately adjacent to this WSA through the year 2010 and beyond.

The private and state lands which border this WSA are, likewise, being utilized for intensive timber production. The irregular and narrow configuration of ID-61-15B and the western portion of ID-61-15A forces visitors to use areas from which these activities are plainly visible. In addition, the higher elevation of these portions of the WSA makes it quite easy to view and/or hear the activities on the lower adjoining lands.

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. The entire WSA was identified as suitable for undiscovered resources for garnet, asbestos, refractories and anorthosite.

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-61-15A (GRANDMOTHER MOUNTAIN)**

ISSUE TOPICS	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/TIMBER EMPHASIS ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS-TIMBER/ONA/RNA)	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Resources	Protected.	Naturalness and solitude reduced throughout WSA by ORV use.	Values lost on 10,000 acres. Naturalness and solitude reduced on remainder.	Protected on 2,905 acres. Values lost on 4,540 acres. Naturalness and solitude reduced on 9,684 acres.	Protected on 12,589 acres. Values lost on 4,540 acres.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources	Withdrawn from mineral entry (17,129 acres).	No impact.	No impact.	No impact.	12,589 acres withdrawn from mineral entry.
Impacts on Timber Industry and Local Economy:					
Potential Harvest (MBF)	0	0	2100	617	617
Potential Jobs	0	0	15	5	5
Impacts on Recreational ORV Use	Closed to ORV use. 350 annual visitor days foregone.	Slight benefit from trail maintenance.	Slight benefit from 20 miles new road.	2,905 acres closed. 9,684 acres restricted use. 120 visitor days lost (potential).	12,589 acres closed to ORV use. 190 visitor days lost.
Impacts on Soil:					
Loss (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	1731	510	510
Loss (% of current BLM-EIS area totals)			.4	.12	.5
Impacts on Water Quality:					
Sediment Yield Increase (tons/10 years)			1173	346	346
Sediment Yield Increase (% of current yields in EIS area)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	.8	.24	.24
Water Yield Increase (acre/ft/ year)			50	15	15
Impacts on Water Supply	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	No impact.	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Fish: Sediment Reaching Fish Habitat (tons/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	680	200	200
Impacts on Vegetation:					
Eliminate Productivity (acres/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	92	27	27
Modification of Succession (acres/ 10 years)			1973	589	589
Impacts on Mammals and Birds: Loss of Habitat Capability (head/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.			
Elk			23	7	7
Deer			4	2	2
Impacts on Archaeological Resources	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	No impact.	No impact.	No impact.
Impacts on Scenic Quality	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Slight adverse impact on 10,000 acres.	Slight adverse impact on 4,540 acres.	Slight adverse impact on 4,540 acres.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

None of the alternatives considered for the Grandmother Mountain WSA would cause any significant or economic effects. While there would be slight gains for the timber industry and local economy over current conditions through implementation of the recommendation, these gains would be about one-third of the potential gains which intensive timber management of all productive forest lands would provide. In either case, these impacts would be negligible.

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, timber companies and related interest groups were opposed to any further wilderness designations or any other forms of restrictive designations for this area. Environmental groups felt the Grandmother Mountain area was the last vestige of wilderness in a sea of clearcuts. They feel the only real protection for this area is through wilderness designation. These two factions are determined and vocal. From the comments received, this WSA appears to be the most controversial of the five studied in northern Idaho.

Of the 89 respondents who specifically commented on this WSA during the EIS phase (either in writing or orally), 47 favor wilderness designation, 38 prefer no wilderness for this area and four prefer partial wilderness for this WSA. Six other commenters oppose any further wilderness designations regardless of the area. This WSA was mentioned by six persons in testimony at the formal public hearing. One favored wilderness designation and five opposed wilderness designation for this WSA.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game commented on the Draft EIS and indicated support for the recommendation.