

Marshall Mountain Wilderness Study Area

1. The Study Area -- 5,804 acres

The Marshall Mountain WSA (ID-62-10) is located in Idaho County 22 miles east of Riggins, Idaho. The WSA originally contained 6,524 acres of public land but approximately 720 acres of the WSA have been designated as wilderness as part of the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness Area.

The Payette National Forest forms the boundary along the north and east sides of the WSA. Natural surface roads, a section of state land and other parcels of public land form the remaining borders. This intermingled pattern results in the WSA's narrow and irregular configuration.

The topography of the area is mountainous and frequently broken by perennial and intermittent drainages. The land is heavily covered by a mixed-conifer forest. The forest cover is occasionally broken by talus slopes and rock outcrops. Elevation ranges from 3,600 feet in Long Tom Creek to over 8,400 feet at the summit of Marshall Mountain.

This WSA is part of the historic Marshall Mountain Mining District where hundreds of mining claims were staked and many successful mining operations flourished in the early 1900s through the 1950s. None of the successful operating mines are located within the WSA but there are over 15 mine sites (a few of which are still active) within ten miles of the WSA. Currently there are approximately 150 lode mining claims in the WSA.

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. Four alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative; a no action/no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report; a no wilderness timber emphasis alternative in which most of the WSA would be allocated for intensive timber management; and a partial wilderness alternative under which the northern portion of the WSA (1,680 acres) would be designated as wilderness and the remaining 4,124 acres would be allocated for nonwilderness uses.

6524 Original WSA
5804 WSA

720 - Frank Church - RNR
Wilderness

2. Recommendation and Rationale

0 acres recommended for wilderness

5,804 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for the Marshall 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 5,804 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended for nonwilderness designation as shown on the Marshall Mountain Proposal map.

This WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation for the following reasons:

Although this WSA contains minimal wilderness characteristics, an analysis indicates that the quality of wilderness values in this area do not merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

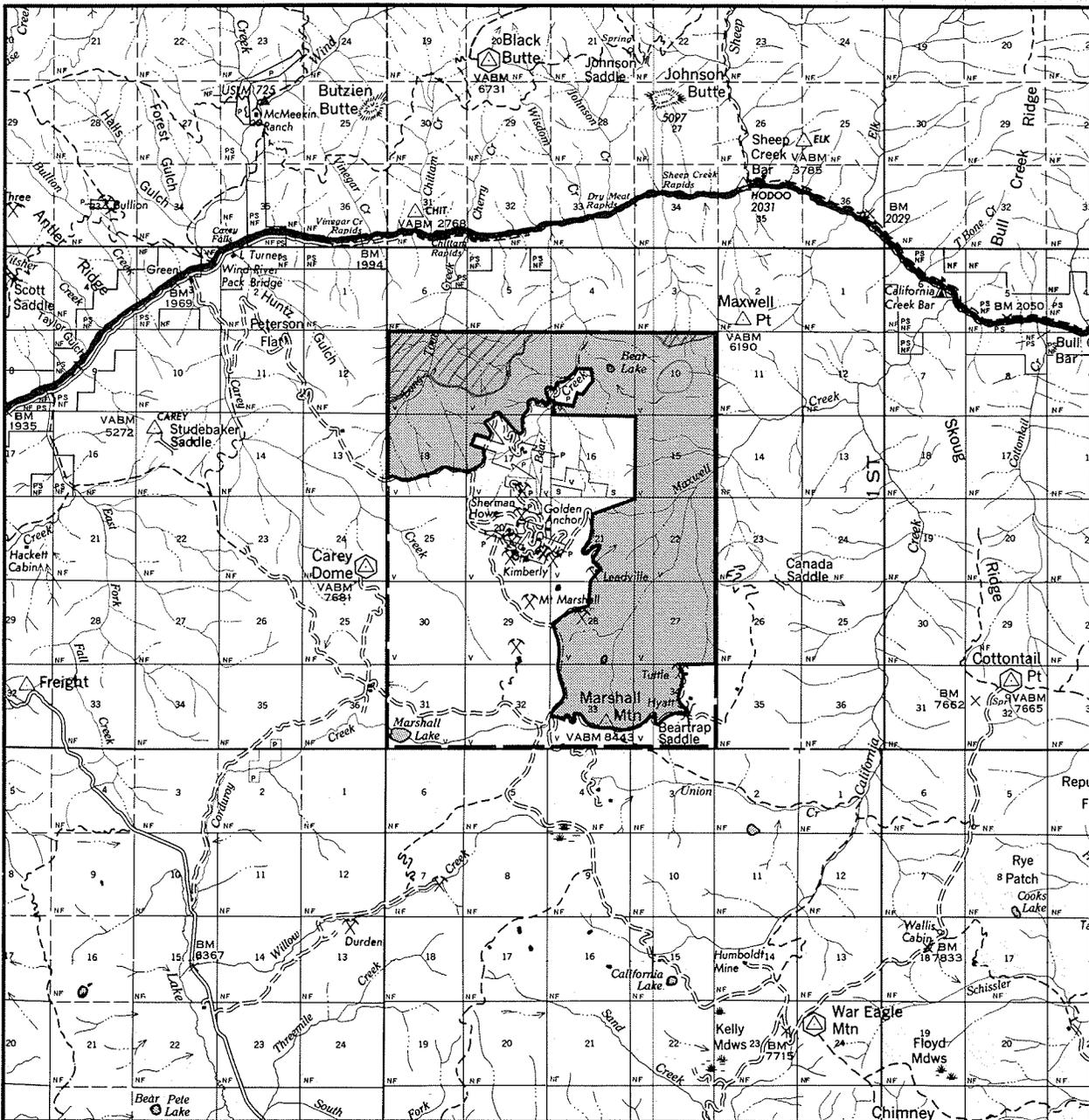
Exceptional opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within this immediate area are readily available in the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness Area which adjoins this WSA. Comparable values are not contained in this WSA because of the numerous mine pits and other evidence of this area's use as a historic mining district. Over 150 lode mining claims are located within the WSA.

This very isolated WSA has highly rated scenic values but receives very little use. Mining claimants occasionally enter the WSA and some hunting occurs during the fall. Most of the recreation is on adjacent lands.

The recommendation would protect the recreational values of the WSA while keeping the area open to mineral entry and possible mineral development should improved market conditions and/or new technology make development economically feasible. The entire WSA would be open to vehicular use which would benefit mineral exploration activities and ORV opportunities.

Resource conflicts caused by the recommendation are limited. The small amount of grazing use which currently occurs (eight AUMs) would be unaffected. No intensive timber management is proposed due to the high percentage of low-value timber which occurs on the WSA.

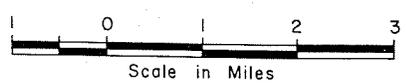
In summary, wilderness designation of this WSA is not compatible with the historic mining use of the area. The majority of people who commented on this WSA felt the original management emphasis for the Marshall Mountain Mining District should be maintained to preserve the future potential for active mineral development. It is also important to note that, in 1980 when Congress included the northern 720 acres of this WSA in the River of No Return Wilderness Area, it was considered the only portion of the WSA worthy of wilderness designation.



T. 25 N.
 T. 24 N.
 T. 24 N.
 T. 23 N.

R. 4 E. R. 5 E. R. 5 E. R. 6 E.

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



ID-62-10
 MARSHALL MOUNTAIN
 PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1988



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

Within Wilderness Study Area

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| BLM (surface and subsurface) | 5,804 |
| Split Estate (BLM surface only) | 0 |
| Inholdings (state, private) | 0 |
| Total | 5,804 |

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 | 5,804 |
| Split Estate | 0 |
| Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness | 5,804 |
| Inholdings (state, private) | 0 |

3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

The Marshall Mountain area appears to be in a natural condition. However, there has been extensive prospecting in the area, much occurring 30 to 50 years ago, which left small test holes and pits throughout the area. There are a few abandoned mines and prospects scattered throughout the area, most of which have a tailings pile in the vicinity of the entrance. These have been found mainly in Sections 18 and 22. The impact on naturalness from these mines and prospects is very localized due to the heavy forest cover that screens them. They are safety hazards.

B. Solitude

There is a cherry-stem area in the Bear Creek drainage containing several active mining operations. Frequent truck travel occurs along the Bear Creek Road. Heavy equipment and air compressors often accompany these mining operations. The noise of this equipment is loud and inescapable in much of the Bear Creek drainage. The loss of opportunities for solitude in Bear Creek occurs in portions of Sections 8, 9 and 10 and encompasses about 450 acres.

There is another active mining operation in the southwest quarter of Section 23. This operation is just outside the WSA boundary on national forest land. Loss of solitude as a result of this mine occurs in Section 22, encompassing about 50 acres. Increased mining activity, both within and outside the WSA, would adversely affect naturalness and solitude values.

The remaining 5,304 acres of the WSA contain good opportunities for solitude. The broken, mountainous landscape offers opportunities for visitors to isolate themselves from others. Dense forests that cover much of the area help screen visitors from each other.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The outstanding opportunity for primitive and unconfined types of recreation is centered on the WSA's suitability for backcountry camping. Recreation opportunities include hiking, backpacking, hunting, wildlife observation, photography and sightseeing.

D. Special Features

There are no special features in the WSA.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Marshall Mountain WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by three designated areas with 826,068 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> | | | | |
| Grand Fir/Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem | 3 | 826,068 | 1 | 5,804 |
| <u>IDAHO</u> | | | | |
| Grand Fir/Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem | 1 | 529,214 | 1 | 5,804 |

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

The Marshall 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 Marshall 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

This WSA currently could be managed as a wilderness area; however, the ability to manage this area for wilderness in the long term is questionable. In the Marshall Mountain area, gold and other minerals have been economically mined in the past. For this reason, the WSA is saturated with mining claims (over 150). Should the price of these minerals escalate and/or new cost-effective technologies become available, it will become economically feasible for claimants to actively pursue or resume mining operations in this WSA. The impacts associated with numerous active mining operations such as road construction and mine excavation would degrade or eliminate wilderness values. The severity of degradation would be dependent upon the magnitude, intensity and incidence of new or resumed mining operations.

Mining activity in the vicinity of the WSA is currently depressed due to the high costs of production relative to the market value of the minerals. Should this WSA be designated a wilderness area during this time of depressed mineral development, the potential for further degradation of wilderness values would be eliminated and the area would be manageable in the long term as wilderness.

Energy and Minerals Resource Values

According to the internal BLM analysis and the joint U.S Geological Survey/Bureau of Mines initial assessment, there are no known mineral values for leasable or saleable minerals; however, this area has been classified as having identified undiscovered resources for base metals, gold and silver. There are active mines near or adjacent to the WSA. There is a large inferred demand for mineral production or exploration within the WSA based upon the number of mining claims. According to the USGS map, "Land Valuable for Geothermal Resources," this area may be valuable for geothermal resources.

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-62-10 (MARSHALL MOUNTAIN)

| ISSUE TOPICS | ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE | NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE | NO WILDERNESS/ TIMBER EMPHASIS ALTERNATIVE | PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| Impacts on Wilderness Values | Protected. | Slight adverse impacts to solitude and naturalness from ORV use. Potential for value loss if mineral development commences. | Values lost on 3,920 acres. Naturalness and solitude reduced on remainder. | Protected on 1,680 acres. Values lost on 2,280 acres. Naturalness and solitude reduced on 1,844 acres. |
| Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources | Withdrawn from mineral entry (5,804 acres). | No impact. | No impact. | 1,680 acres withdrawn. No impact on the remainder. |
| Impacts on Timber Industry and Local Economy: | | | | |
| Potential Harvest (MBF) | 0 | 0 | 724 | 421 |
| Potential Jobs | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 |
| Impacts on Recreational ORV Use | Closed to ORV use. No impact. 10 annual visitor days foregone. | No impact. | Benefit from 7.8 miles new road. | Benefit from 4.5 miles new road. |
| Impacts on Soil: | | | | |
| Loss (tons/10 years) | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | 671 | 390 |
| Loss (% of current BLM-EIS area totals) | | | .16 | .1 |
| Impacts on Water Quality: | | | | |
| Sediment Yield Increase (tons/10 years) | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | 469 | 267 |
| Sediment Yield Increase (% of current yields in EIS area) | | | .3 | .17 |
| Water Yield Increase (acre/ft/year) | | | 20 | 11 |
| Impacts on Water Supply | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | 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. | 0 | 0 |

| ISSUE TOPICS | ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE | NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE | NO WILDERNESS/ TIMBER EMPHASIS ALTERNATIVE | PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Impacts on Vegetation: Eliminate Productivity (acres/10 years) | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | 37 | 21 |
| Modification of Suc- cession (acres/10 years) | | | 775 | 443 |
| Impacts on Mammals and Birds: Loss of Hab- itat Capability (head/10 years) Elk | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | 3 | 2 |
| Deer | | | 2 | 1 |
| Impacts on Archaeo- logical Resources | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | Topic was not an issue for this alternative. | 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 3,920 acres. | Slight adverse impact on 2,280 acres. |

Local Social and Economic Considerations

None of the alternatives considered for the Marshall Mountain WSA would cause significant social or economic effects.

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 pointed out the historic use of this area as the Marshall Mountain Mining District. Most voiced concern over studying this area for wilderness designation and questioned why an area that had been dedicated to mining should not be considered as eligible or appropriate for preservation as wilderness.

Of the 31 respondents who specifically commented on this WSA (either in writing or orally), the majority favored no wilderness for this WSA while four indicated a preference for wilderness designation. Six commenters oppose any further wilderness designations regardless of the area.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game submitted a letter supporting the BLM recommendation for this WSA. No other government agencies commented specifically about this WSA. The Nez Perce Indian Tribe commented that it had all rights to the waters of the Salmon River and that this WSA should be returned to its control. No one commented on this WSA at the formal public hearing.