

Selkirk Crest Wilderness Study Area

1. The Study Area -- 720 acres

The Selkirk Crest WSA (ID-61-1) is located in Boundary County 18 miles northwest of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. It contains 720 acres of public land (see Table 1). A Kaniksu National Forest RARE II Area that has not been recommended for wilderness designation borders the unit on the west. Private lands form the remaining boundaries with the Westside County Road running adjacent to the unit for .25 mile at the north end.

The WSA is steep and heavily vegetated with a wide variety of species. Elevation ranges from near 1,800 feet to almost 4,500 feet at the national forest boundary. Numerous small drainages break up the otherwise uniform slopes of the WSA while areas of bare rock and brush cover are found on the upper reaches.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 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. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no action/no wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report; and an all wilderness alternative.

2. Recommendation and Rationale

**0 acres recommended for
wilderness**

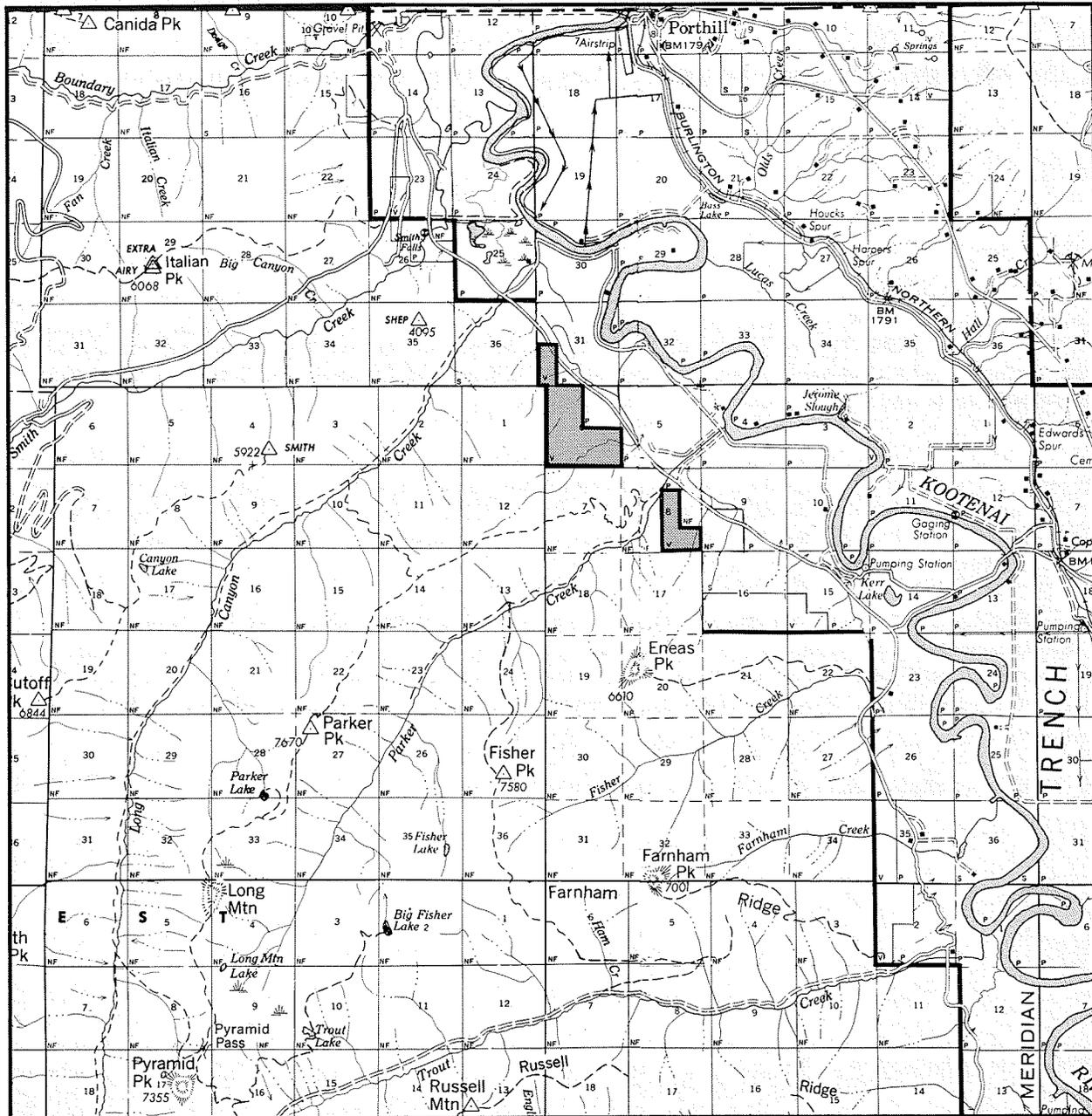
**720 acres recommended for
nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Selkirk Crest WSA is to release the area 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. All 720 acres of federal land within the WSA are recommended for nonwilderness designation as shown on the Selkirk Crest Proposal map.

This very small WSA was studied for possible wilderness designation because it borders a U.S. Forest Service RARE II Area (43,500 acres). Under the all wilderness alternative, management of this WSA would become the responsibility of the U.S. Forest Service should its RARE II Area be designated as wilderness. Since the forest plan does not recommend the area for wilderness designation, this adjacent WSA is likewise not recommended for wilderness designation.

The isolated location of this WSA and its very steep topography make any use incidental in nature. Due to its small size and narrow configuration, the area has outstanding solitude values only in conjunction with the adjacent 43,500 acres of U.S. Forest Service lands. There are no conflicting resource uses of this WSA. It is projected that the current level of minimal use in this WSA will remain constant and no additional impacts to current wilderness values are expected over the long term.

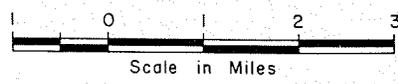
This WSA is simply too small to stand on its own as a wilderness area.



T. 65 N.
T. 64 N.
T. 64 N.
T. 63 N.

R. 2 W. | R. 2 W. | R. 1 W. | R. 1 W.

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



ID-61-1 (202)
SELKIRK CREST
PROPOSAL

JANUARY 1988

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

Within Wilderness Study Area

BLM (surface and subsurface)	720
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
Total	720

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	720
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	720
Inholdings (state, private)	0

3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

The Selkirk Crest WSA area appears to be in an essentially natural state with rugged topography and dense vegetation. There are no human imprints present in the area.

B. Solitude

The ability of the area to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude can exist only in conjunction with the adjoining RARE II Area. By itself, the area offers very limited opportunities for solitude primarily due to the small size of the unit and its proximity to active agricultural operations less than 200 yards to the east.

When the adjoining 43,500 acres of RARE II are considered, the area provides outstanding opportunities for solitude for several reasons. The diverse topography of the area -- mountainous with numerous drainages -- provides many opportunities for visitors to avoid each other. The vegetation in the area is adequate to screen visitors from one another. Movement between the RARE II Unit and WSA is made easier because the two areas have a 2.9-mile common boundary. It is very easy for the visitor to find a secluded spot in the combined area, although this opportunity is basically nonexistent if the WSA is considered by itself.

Human activity outside the boundary can be seen from almost anywhere in the WSA. The WSA lies on a steep mountainside with the panoramic Kootenai River Valley below. Human impacts stem from farming activities in the Valley which include plowed fields, farmhouses and distant roads.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The ability of the WSA to provide outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation can be assessed only in conjunction with the adjoining RARE II Area. By itself, the WSA offers only limited opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The presence of only subtle topographic and vegetative diversity and the lack of any prominent feature precludes any "outstanding" opportunity.

When the RARE II Area and WSA are combined into one unit, there is the opportunity for a variety of recreation activities that would be considered outstanding. However, the opportunities still would not change in the WSA and the opportunities for recreation in the RARE II Area would not be increased with the addition of the WSA to the area.

D. Special Features

The WSA does not contain any 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 Selkirk Crest WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by five designated areas with 337,369 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 Ponderosa Forest Ecosystem	5	337,369	1	720
			<u>IDAHO</u>	
Western Ponderosa Forest Ecosystem	2	250,822	1	720

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

The Selkirk Crest 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 Selkirk Crest WSA within the NWPS will not serve to further the objective of this factor. The Northern Rocky Mountain region contains one of the largest concentrations of designated and proposed wilderness areas within the country.

Manageability

This area cannot be managed as wilderness. It is totally dependent upon the adjacent U.S. Forest Service RARE II Area to be manageable as wilderness. The value of the WSA is in providing a more cohesive unit of public land. This WSA is too small to stand alone as a manageable wilderness area.

Energy and Minerals Resource Values

According to the internal BLM mineral analysis and the joint U.S. Geological Survey/Bureau of Mines initial assessment, there are no known energy resources or mineral values for either locatable or leasable minerals within the WSA. Reserves of subeconomic saleable materials such as peat, sand and gravel have been identified within the WSA and on adjoining lands. There are no mining claims 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-61-1 (SELKIRK CREST)

ISSUE TOPICS	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED ACTION (NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Protected.	Slight loss of solitude from ORV use.
Impacts on Development of Mineral Resources	Withdrawn from mineral entry.	Potential for exploration and development.
Impacts on Timber Industry and Local Economy: Potential Harvest (MMBF) Potential Jobs	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Recreational ORV Use	No Impact.	Current 10 annual visitor days would be unchanged.
Impacts on Soil: Loss (tons/10 years) Loss (% of current BLM-EIS area totals)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Water Quality: Sediment Yield Increase (tons/10 years) Sediment Yield Increase (% of current yields in EIS area) Water Yield Increase (acre/ft/year)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Water Supply	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	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.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Vegetation: Eliminate Productivity (acres/10 years) Modification of Succession (acres/10 years)	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Mammals and Birds: Loss of Habitat Capability (head/10 years) Elk Deer	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Archaeological Resources	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.	Topic was not an issue for this alternative.
Impacts on Scenic Quality	No change.	No change.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Social and economic factors were not considered a significant issue in the study of the Selkirk Crest WSA.

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. No one commented on this area during the inventory phase.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, 28 respondents specifically mentioned this WSA. Of these, 24 supported wilderness designation if the adjoining USFS RARE II Area was so designated and four opposed wilderness designation. No one commented on this WSA at any of the three public meetings or the formal public hearing.

The Federal Highway Administration responded to the Draft EIS and expressed concern over actions which could affect the highway on the eastern portion of the WSA. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game noted its opposition to wilderness designation of federal lands in this area due to its proposed big game enhancement projects.