

# Worm Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 40 acres

The Worm Creek WSA (ID-37-77) is located in Bear County 15 miles southwest of Montpelier, Idaho. The WSA includes 40 acres of public land. There are no private or state inholdings. Boundaries of the square 40 acre WSA are generally the U.S. Forest Service Worm Creek Wilderness proposal on the west and south sides and private lands on the east and north (see Table 1).

The WSA's topography varies from benchland to steep hillsides. Elevation ranges from 6,500 feet to 7,200 feet. The surrounding terrain contains high elevation basins and steep mountain peaks. Several peaks on the main ridge near the WSA exceed 9,000 feet. Vegetation varies from a tree-dominated ecotype to brushland at the higher elevations. The lower, moister northern portion of the area supports a dense stand of aspen and a Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine mix. Understory species include mountain maple, Oregon grape, pinegrass, snowberry, willow and serviceberry. Suitable habitat for deer, elk and a variety of birds and small mammals is available throughout the small tract.

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

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

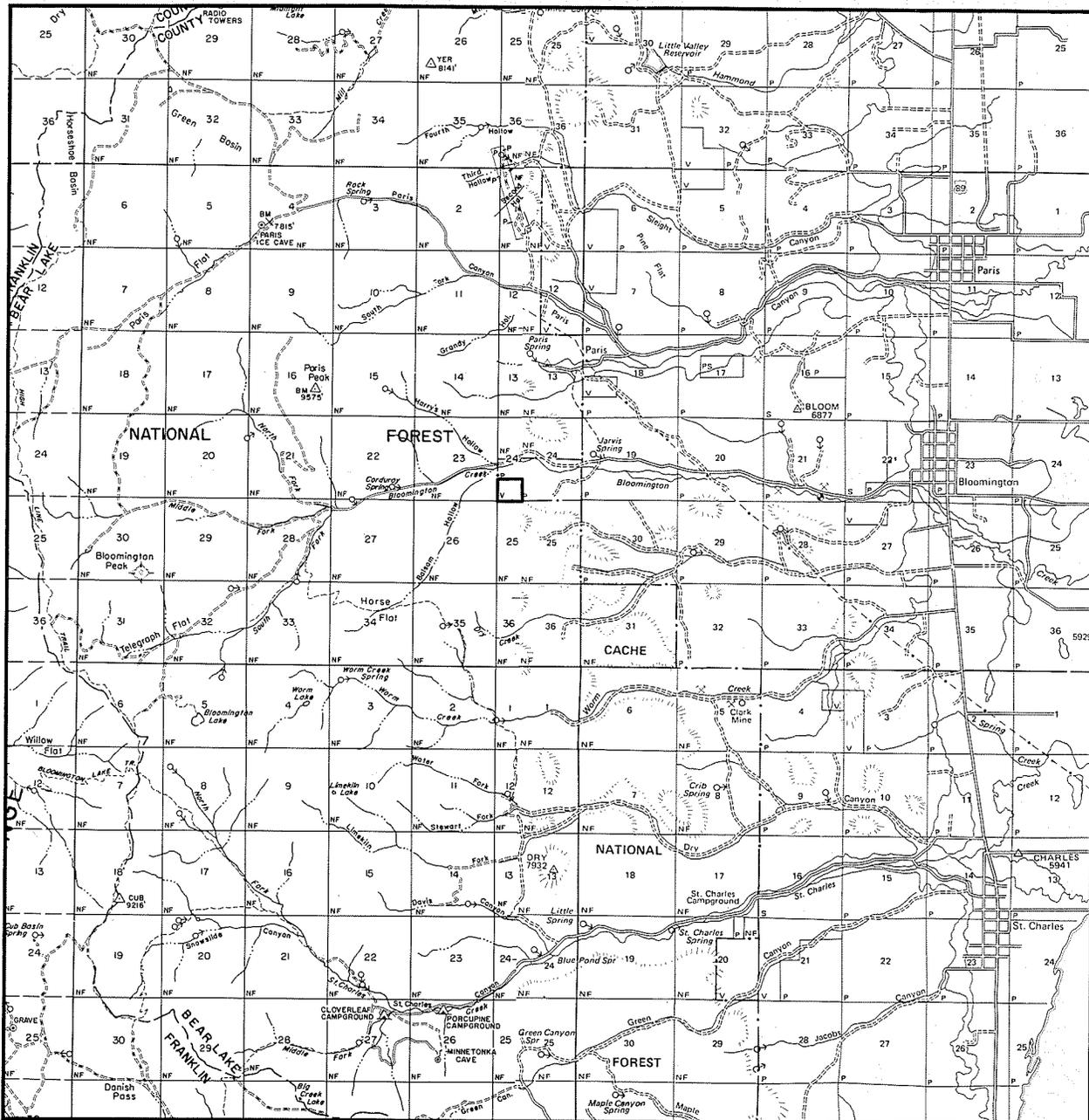
**40 acres recommended for  
wilderness**

**0 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

The recommendation is to designate the entire 40 acre WSA as wilderness in conjunction with the adjacent 16,000-acre U.S. Forest Service Worm Creek proposal (USDA, 1985, Caribou National Forest). This is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The entire 40 acre area of federal land within the WSA is recommended for wilderness designation and is shown on the Worm Creek Proposal map.

Manageability of the Worm Creek WSA as wilderness would be possible. The configuration of the area complements the adjacent boundary of the Worm Creek Wilderness proposal and would make a logical, manageable boundary. Wilderness management would not conflict with other present or anticipated future uses.

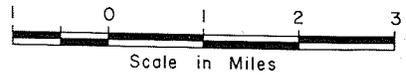
The wilderness values of naturalness, solitude and primitive recreation would be available with this recommendation and would enhance the adjacent U.S. Forest Service proposal. The 40 acre parcel lends itself as an excellent transition zone, giving the traveler a feeling of gradual entrance into more remote territory.



T. 13 S.  
 T. 14 S.  
 T. 14 S.  
 T. 15 S.

R. 42 E. | R. 42 E. | R. 43 E.

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



**ID-37-77  
 WORM CREEK  
 PROPOSAL**

JANUARY 1989

**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
WORM CREK WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	40
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	40
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>40</b>
Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	0
State land (outside WSA)	0

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	0
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>0</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0

<sup>1</sup>Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings and/or split tracts included within the study.

### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Work Creek WSA is a steep foothill environment which supports rich and complex forest vegetation as well as sagebrush and grasses. The natural character of this landscape blends with the high scenic quality of the adjacent U.S. Forest Service land. Impacts to the natural appearance of the area are nonexistent or unnoticeable. Views outside the area include infrequent traffic on the Bloomington Creek Road and nearby farms.

##### **B. Solitude**

Opportunities for solitude in this small 40 acre tract are dependent on the adjacent Worm Creek Wilderness proposal. The U.S. Forest Service analysis of solitude for the wilderness proposal is:

The opportunities for solitude are moderate because of the moderate size, high topographic and moderate vegetative screening and moderate distances from the perimeter to the center of the area.

The small WSA would contribute little to opportunities for solitude within the wilderness proposal.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

Opportunities for primitive recreation in this small parcel are dependent on the adjacent Worm Creek Wilderness proposal. The U.S. Forest Service analysis of primitive recreation opportunities is:

The opportunities for primitive recreation are moderate because of the moderate area size, many road corridors projecting into the area, high topographic and moderate vegetative screening and because limited facilities are present.

The small WSA would contribute little to the opportunities for primitive recreation within the proposed wilderness because the area lacks significant natural features that would attract recreationists.

##### **D. Special Features**

The Worm Creek WSA does not possess features that are any more significant than found on other lands within the region.

# Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

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

Wilderness designation of the Worm Creek WSA would add an ecosystem presently represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This ecosystem is represented by 18 designated areas with 1,349,971 acres. There are four other BLM areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Rocky Mountain Forest Province				
	<u>NATIONWIDE</u>			
Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	18	1,349,971	4	26,152
	<u>IDAHO</u>			
Douglas-Fir Forest Ecosystem	0	0	19	173,228

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

The Worm Creek WSA is within a five-hour drive of two major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers. This 40 acre parcel would not expand opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation for the two population centers because of its small size and limited opportunities.

**Table 3**

**Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers**

Population Centers	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Boise, Idaho/Salt Lake City, Utah <sup>1</sup>	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250

<sup>1</sup>Salt Lake City, Utah, and vicinity includes other cities of Provo, Orem and Ogden, Utah.

## **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

The Worm Creek WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. It could only make a small contribution if the adjacent U.S. Forest Service Worm Creek Wilderness proposal was designated and the 40 acre tract was part of the designated wilderness.

### **Manageability**

The Worm Creek WSA could be managed effectively as wilderness only if the adjacent U.S. Forest Service Worm Creek Wilderness proposal is designated. Conflicts between wilderness management and incompatible uses could be eliminated ensuring long-term preservation of wilderness values.

### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

Mineral assessments for the Worm Creek WSA were prepared by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1984 and the Bureau of Mines in 1985. The following is a summary from these reports:

The Worm Creek WSA lies in the high potential area for discoveries of oil and gas primarily because of its location along the western edge of the Utah-Idaho-Wyoming Overthrust Belt. The Paris-Willard Thrust, a relatively untested portion of the Overthrust Belt, extends in a north-south direction through the area. The Crawford and Meade Thrusts are also thought to underlie the area at greater depths. Stratigraphic rock units which are major producers farther east in the Overthrust Belt are known to underlie the area. An oil and gas well drilled four miles southwest of the WSA to a depth of 7,500 feet did not penetrate any thrust sheets, nor did it encounter any hydrocarbons.

Oil and gas leases cover the entire area of the nearby national forest lands and public lands within the WSA. Because of this, the U.S. Forest Service 1982 mineral reports classify the area as having high potential for oil and gas.

### **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-37-77 (WORM CREEK)**

RESOURCE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION (ALL WILDERNESS)	NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on USFS Worm Creek Roadless Area	Roadless area's wilderness values slightly enhanced.	No Impact.
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values preserved.	Values lost on 40 acres.
Impacts on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development	40 acres withdrawn from leasing.	No Impact.
Impacts on Timber Harvest	Harvest foregone on 39 acres. No significant impact.	No Impact.
Impacts on Motorized Recreation	No Impact.	No Impact.

## **Local Social and Economic Considerations**

Wilderness designation would create a minor favorable economic impact as a result of increased recreation use. No significant social effects would occur as a result of wilderness designation of the Worm Creek WSA.

## **Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments**

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory period and early stages of EIS preparation were considered in developing issues and various alternatives for the ultimate management of those lands found to have wilderness value.

In the inventory stage, those opposing intensive inventory were concerned with mineral development of the area.

Those favoring intensive inventory were homesite owners living near the area and others who felt the area should be inventoried since it was adjacent to a U.S. Forest Service proposal.