

COEUR D' ALENE DISTRICT

UNITS IDENTIFIED AS

WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

The April 1980 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains 1,160 acres of BLM land in three separate parcels. The two northern parcels, b, 560 acres, and c, 160 acres, are contiguous to Forest Service RARE II area 1-125 that has been recommended for further study. The southernmost parcel, d, containing 440 acres is no longer contiguous to the RARE II area, and thus is dropped from BLM consideration due to its small size.

Parcel b consists of steep slopes of the Selkirk Crest Area, heavily vegetated with a wide variety of species. Elevation ranges from 1,800 feet to 4,500 feet at the forest boundary. Numerous small drainages bring a degree of diversity to the terrain. Areas of heavy forest cover dominate the lower slopes, while bare rock and brush cover are found on the upper reaches.

Parcel c contains a portion of the lower slopes of Eneas Peak and descends steeply to the Kootenai River Valley. The slopes remain fairly uniform with no prominent features to break up the terrain. The area is densely vegetated, with stands of mixed conifers, and a variety of broadleaf trees, shrubs, and herbaceous species found throughout the parcel.

NATURALNESS:

Both parcels b and c appear to be in an essentially natural state; remaining unaffected by human activity.

SOLITUDE:

In parcel b, an opportunity for solitude exists when the unit is assessed with adjacent Forest Service land. Several factors limit the unit's ability to offer these opportunities on its own. Foremost is the area's small size. Within only 560 acres, few occasions exist to avoid the presence of others. The scattered vegetation pattern and the lack of distinct topographic variance create screening of only moderate effectiveness. This degree of screening is not able to provide for an outstanding opportunity for solitude within the confines of this small area. The addition of the Forest Service land would remove this limitation. Movement into and out of the unit is facilitated by the fact that it adjoins the forest on two sides. The boundaries of parcel b form a logical extension of the forest boundary, allowing travel to proceed along a more natural route.

In parcel c an outstanding opportunity for solitude exists only when assessed with the adjoining Forest Service land. Dense vegetative cover within the unit provides sufficient screening to avoid the sights and sounds of others. However, the only effective screening offered by topography is derived from a prominent ridge that runs through the unit. The addition of the Forest Service land would remove the limitation of the unit's small size. Movement into and out of the unit is facilitated by the fact that it adjoins the forest on two sides, with these boundaries the unit forms a more logical extension of the forest boundary.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

In both parcels outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are not available. The uniformity of topography and vegetation and the lack of characteristic features which provide a focal point for recreation activity preclude outstanding opportunities. The restriction upon movement that the parcels' size place upon the user would be alleviated with the inclusion of the Forest Service land. Movement would be available in several directions out of the area. However, recreation opportunities would remain limited, and would not improve in a significant way within the combined area.

SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:

The general area in which both parcels lie has been identified as important winter range for deer.

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PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments were received that agreed with the proposed decision to identify the unit as a wilderness study area, with no new specific data provided.

Comments that disagreed cited the following reasons:

- A lack of naturalness in the unit.
- A lack of an outstanding opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation in the unit.
- Influences outside the unit detract from the experience of solitude.
- The unit does not meet the size criteria.

COMMENT EVALUATION:

Size:

When considered with the contiguous RARE II area the unit meets the BLM size criteria.

Naturalness:

Comments stated that naturalness was generally lacking, with no evidence supplied to substantiate this opinion.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation:

The comment claimed these characteristics were lacking but supplied no explanation as to why they held this opinion.

Influences outside the unit which are not immediately adjacent to the unit are not to be a determinant in the inventory phase.

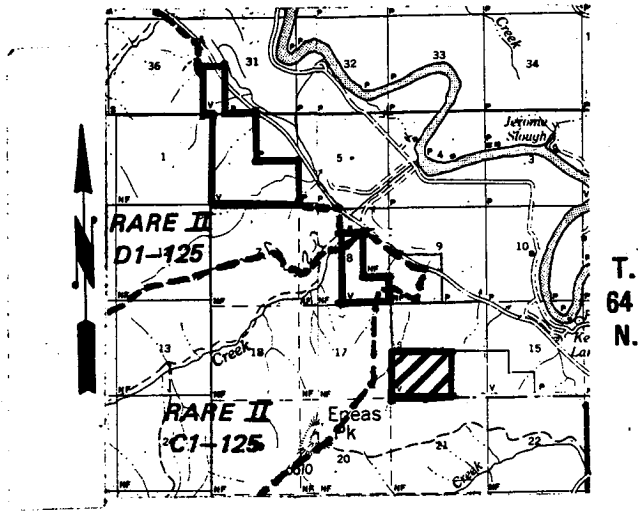
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DECISION:



No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. A unit of 720 acres is identified as a wilderness study area as it meets the naturalness criteria, and when considered with the contiguous RARE II area meets the size and the solitude criteria.

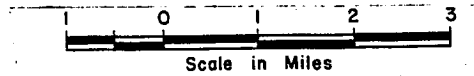
**61-1
SELKIRK CREST**

R. 1 W.

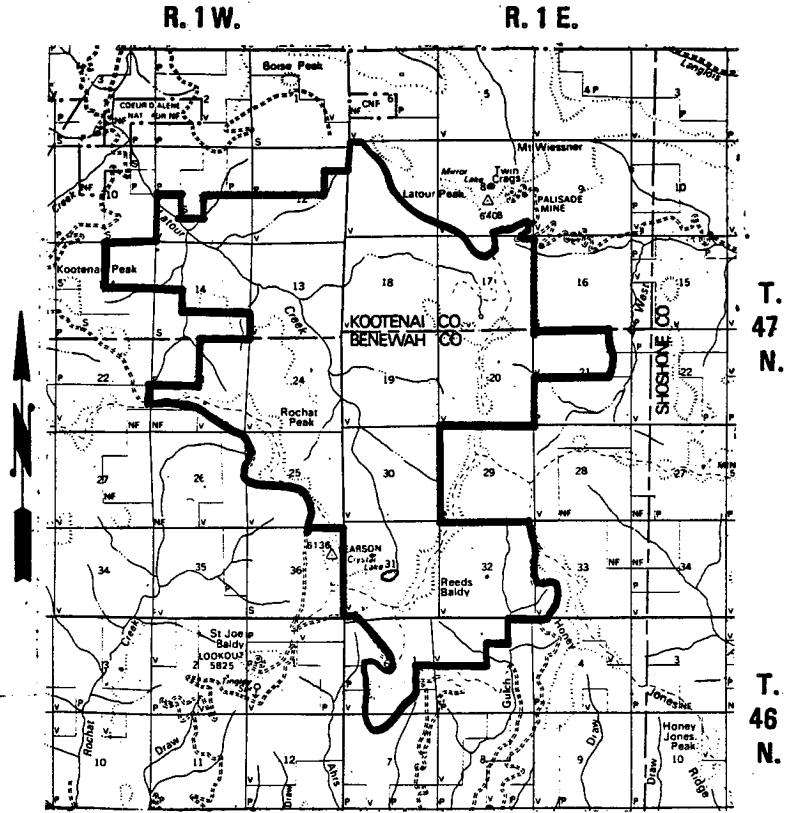


LEGEND



-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
-  AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS

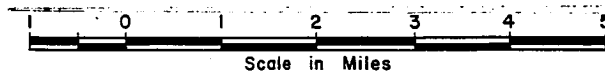


61-10
CRYSTAL LAKE



LEGEND

-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
-  AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS



61-10 CRYSTAL LAKE

The April 1980 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains 9,027 acres of BLM land. The initial inventory identified 8,955 acres within the unit. Field investigation indicated that an identified road more accurately fits the definition of a way. This route, originally constructed as a fire road, has been abandoned, no longer receives maintenance, and its use is only sporadic. This reclassification results in the addition of 160 acres. A 160 acre parcel of BLM land was overlooked and not included in the initial inventory figures, further increasing the acreage of the unit. Additional changes result from a more careful calculation of acreage. The unit contains a varied landscape. Bare talus peaks descend sharply to Latour Creek, some 3,000 feet below Reeds Baldy, the tallest of several peaks. The slopes in the upper end of the drainages are vegetated with a thin to moderately stocked mixed coniferous stand. Toward the lower end of the unit the density of this stand steadily increases. Bare areas of talus material are common in the upper end of the drainage and the basin below Crystal Lake contains the site of a fire now vegetated with a dense brush cover. The unit contains the major portion of the Latour Creek drainage, including its headwaters at Crystal Lake.

NATURALNESS:

The unit has retained its essentially natural character. Evidence of man's activity is found in two locations, although this impact does not significantly alter the natural character. The most intrusive impact is a 1½ mile way along the steep slope below Crystal Lake. This route, constructed in association with a fire, receives insignificant use and no maintenance. Due to its location on the slope and a lack of screening on the brush covered hill, it is distinctly visible throughout a limited area in the central portion of the unit. Topography prevents its impact from reaching a more widespread area. Approximately six miles of hiking trail runs along the ridge at the head of the Latour drainage, and along three sides of the unit. This route is of very low impact and extremely localized in its influence.

SOLITUDE:

An outstanding opportunity for solitude is available within the unit. The majority of the unit is composed of a single drainage. In an area such as this with screening offered by the extensive forest cover, many occasions to avoid the sights and sounds of others are provided. Topography provides a more limited degree of screening due to its relatively uniform nature. The screening that topography provides in combination with that from vegetation creates an outstanding opportunity for solitude.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

The diversity of the terrain provides an outstanding opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The range from bare peaks to heavily forested creek bottoms provides a broad base for a variety of activities: hiking, hunting, sightseeing, and fishing. The steep nature of the terrain provides a vastness greater than the acreage figures indicate. This steepness provides a challenge for certain activities, at the same time imposing limits upon others.

SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:

The scenic quality of this unit qualifies as a supplemental value. Some of the best and most wide ranging views of the surrounding area can be experienced from this unit, ranging from deep valleys and river bottoms to distant peaks.

REHABILITATION:

Natural processes will eventually reduce the imprint of the one way which intrudes into the unit. The addition of hand labor would decrease the amount of time required for rehabilitation.

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PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments that supported the decision to identify a study area felt that more adjacent land should be added to provide some sort of buffer.

Comments disagreeing with the proposed decision cited the following reasons:

- Influences outside the unit detract from solitude.
- A road goes to the top of Reed's Baldy and affects the unit.

COMMENT EVALUATION:

Roadless/Naturalness:

Field examination found that the way to Reed's Baldy does not meet the inventory definition of a road.

Solitude-Recreation:

Influences outside the unit are not directly adjacent, and therefore do not disqualify the unit during the inventory phase.

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DECISION:

No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. A unit of 9,027 acres is identified as a wilderness study area as it meets the naturalness, and the solitude-recreation criteria.

The April 1980 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The Grandmother Mountain area consists of a total of 17,129 acres of BLM land, physically broken into two sub-units a and b, where administrative land patterns cause cornering of BLM land, rather than one contiguous parcel. The eastern unit (a) contains 10,339 acres, the western unit (b), 6,790 acres. Unit b contains 160 acres of National Forest land (included in the above acreage), and a 160 acre private land inholding (not included in the above acreage). The August 1979 initial inventory report indicated 10,360 acres in unit a and 6,830 in unit b. The new figures are a result of a more accurate calculation of acreage. Much of the following evaluation refers to the entire area, with specific references to the two separate units.

Units a and b are separated by the Marble Creek drainage. Unit a contains a long ridgeline and several high country lakes. There are numerous creeks in the area, and the country is heavily forested. Unit a is a fairly solid block of ownership. Unit b is much more scattered in ownership. The contiguous 6,790 acres branch out into many fingers, and the National Forest adjoins much of the area. The country is mountainous and heavily forested, with many streams breaking up the terrain.

There are several hiking trails that cross the area, all maintained by the FS or the BLM. These trails cross a variety of country through dense forests, across mountain tops, and along streams. The western portion contains heavily stocked mixed conifers, while the upper elevations contain thin stands of sub-alpine fir and talus slopes. The Orphan Point Road that forms the southern boundary is a good quality route that is generally traveled during three seasons. The area is completely snowed-in during winter months. Major landmarks include the headwaters of Lund Creek, Fish Lake, Grandmother and Grandfather Mountains, Lookout Mountain, and Freezeout Creek. Much of the area overlooks Marble Creek which is essentially administered by the Forest Service, and divides the area into units a and b.

NATURALNESS:

The area has retained an essentially natural character. Evidence of man's activity is found in several locations though this impact has not significantly altered the natural character. Evidence of timber harvests outside the area are visible from within in several locations. This is primarily due to the number of mountain tops that afford panoramic vistas. These external impacts were not judged to impair the naturalness inside the area.

There was a 2,560 acre timber sale in the eastern portion of unit a in 1954. The harvest was a selective cut, with most of the logging conducted on top of snow, resulting in little surface disturbance. Skid trails are now overgrown with heavy brush. Due to the snow depth at the time of the sale, there are stumps in the area 4-5 feet in height. Public comment from the initial inventory indicated that the area contained stumps averaging 15-20 feet in height. However, the field inventory found no stumps over 6 feet on BLM land. It was determined that the area within the 26 year old timber sale generally appeared to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable, because the area was selectively cut, with no concentrated area of impact; skid trails are heavily overgrown; stumps are rotting and often lower than the surrounding vegetation; it would require a trained observer to detect most of the evidence of the timber sale.

There are 18 miles of hiking trails in the area. The trails are maintained and have signs at various intersections. However, the impact on the naturalness is very low and extremely localized in its influence. There is a dismantled Forest Service fire lookout atop Lookout Mountain. The remnants include wire cables, with a low impact on naturalness very localized in its influence.

SOLITUDE:

An outstanding opportunity for solitude exists within the area. The terrain is mountainous, steep, and frequently broken by drainages. Within this type of country there is an almost unlimited opportunity for visitors to isolate themselves from others. The vegetation enhances these opportunities for solitude. Dense forests cover much of the area, providing an excellent screening effect and separating people from the sights and sounds of others.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

The diversity of terrain creates an outstanding opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. Mountain ridges, valleys, and streams combine to provide the base for a variety of recreation activities. Most activities are related to backcountry camping, including backpacking, hiking, sightseeing, hunting, and fishing. There are also excellent opportunities for nature and wildlife observation.

SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:

The scenic values of the area qualify as supplemental values. Numerous mountain tops and ridge trails provide outstanding views of the surrounding country. The Lund Creek drainage in the eastern portion of the area has been recommended for designation as a Research Natural Area due to its great diversity of vegetation. Old growth mountain hemlock and sub-alpine fir forests are the major attractions, but equally impressive are aquatic situations including lakes, sphagnum bogs, wet meadows, marshes, and streams.

REHABILITATION:

Although the impacts of the dismantled tower on Lookout Mountain are minor, the mountain top could be returned to a totally natural condition by removal of the remaining cables. This could be accomplished with the use of hand tools.

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PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

The majority of the comments received addressed units 61-15a and 61-15b as one. Comments that agreed that the units should be identified as wilderness study areas did not offer new data.

Comments disagreeing with the proposed decision cited the following reasons:

- Activities of man outside the unit affect naturalness, solitude, and primitive recreation.
- The shape of the unit is not manageable as wilderness.
- Past logging activities detract from the natural character.
- Ways into Fish Lake and Lost Lake meet the definition of roads.

COMMENT EVALUATION:

Roadless/Naturalness:

Comments discussed the impacts on naturalness of past logging activity. The majority of this activity took place 25 years ago. Evidence of past logging can be found within the unit. However, 25 years of vegetation has rendered this evidence substantially unnoticeable.

One commentator supplied aerial photos of old logging roads within the Lund Creek area. With snow on the ground and viewing them from aircraft, these routes are visible. During field investigation they proved to be very difficult to find or follow on the ground. From this point of view they were substantially unnoticeable.

The comments on the Fish Lake and Lost Lake vehicle routes were field checked. It is felt that they do not meet the Bureau definition of roads. Both of these routes were at one time constructed but neither receive any mechanical maintenance. Judging by the amount of brush encroaching upon the routes, they do not appear to receive relatively regular and continuous use.

Solitude-Recreation:

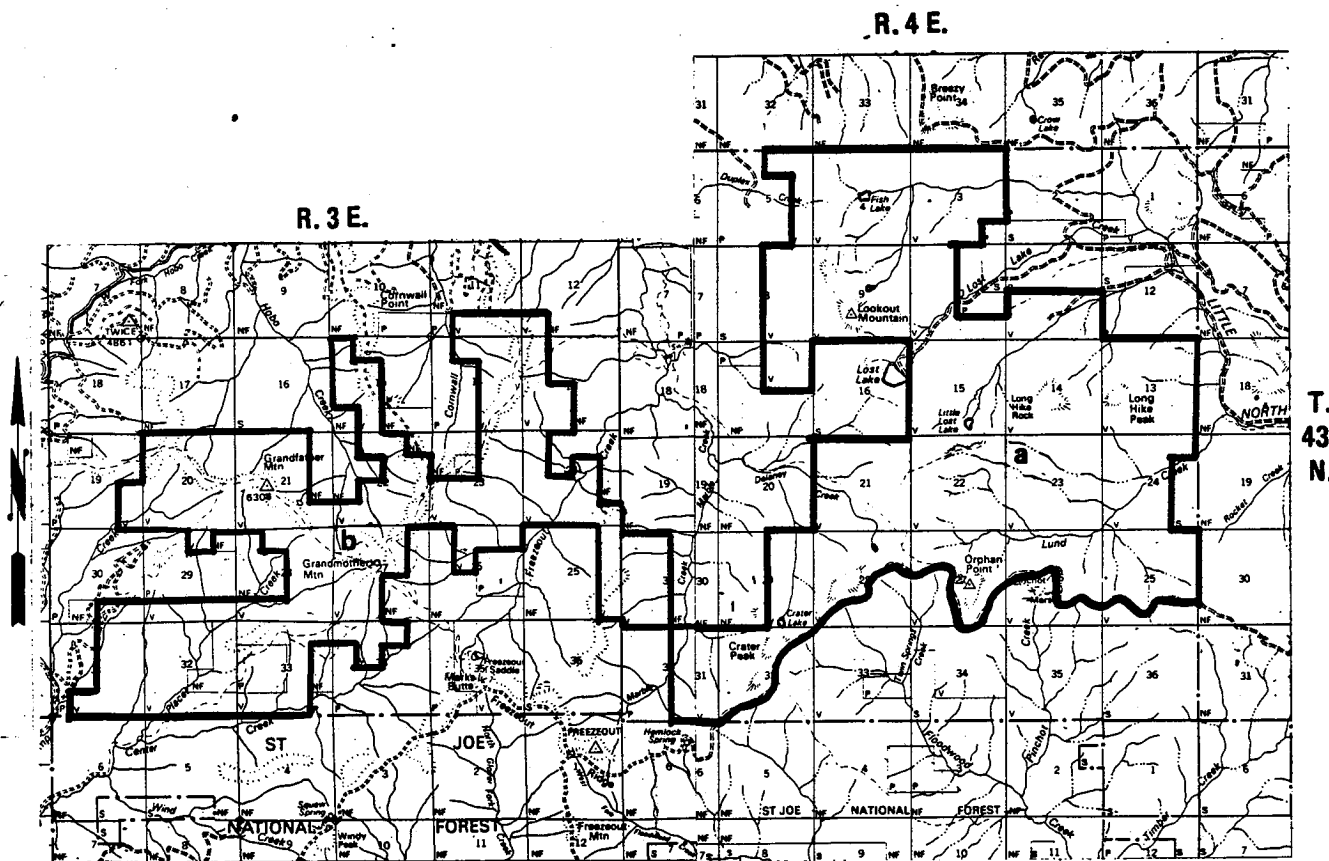
Outside influences, unless extremely imposing and immediately adjacent to the unit, and manageability of the unit, are considered during the study phase and not the inventory phase.

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DECISION:

No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. Units of 10,339 acres (unit a), and 6,790 acres (unit b) are identified as wilderness study areas as they both meet the naturalness and the solitude-recreation criteria.

61-15 a, b
GRANDMOTHER MOUNTAIN



LEGEND

-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
-  AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS

