

Eden Valley

CA-050-214

EDEN VALLEY WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-050-214)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 6,485 acres

The Eden Valley WSA is located in eastern Mendocino County, California, approximately 100 miles north of San Francisco. The WSA includes 6,166 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 319 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1). There are no split estate or State-owned lands. The WSA boundary follows property lines and is surrounded by private properties except for some U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands on the south. The area lies between Elk Creek and Bennett Valley on the east and Eden Valley and Eden Valley Creek on the west. The WSA is bounded by a small parcel of BLM land and private land to the north.

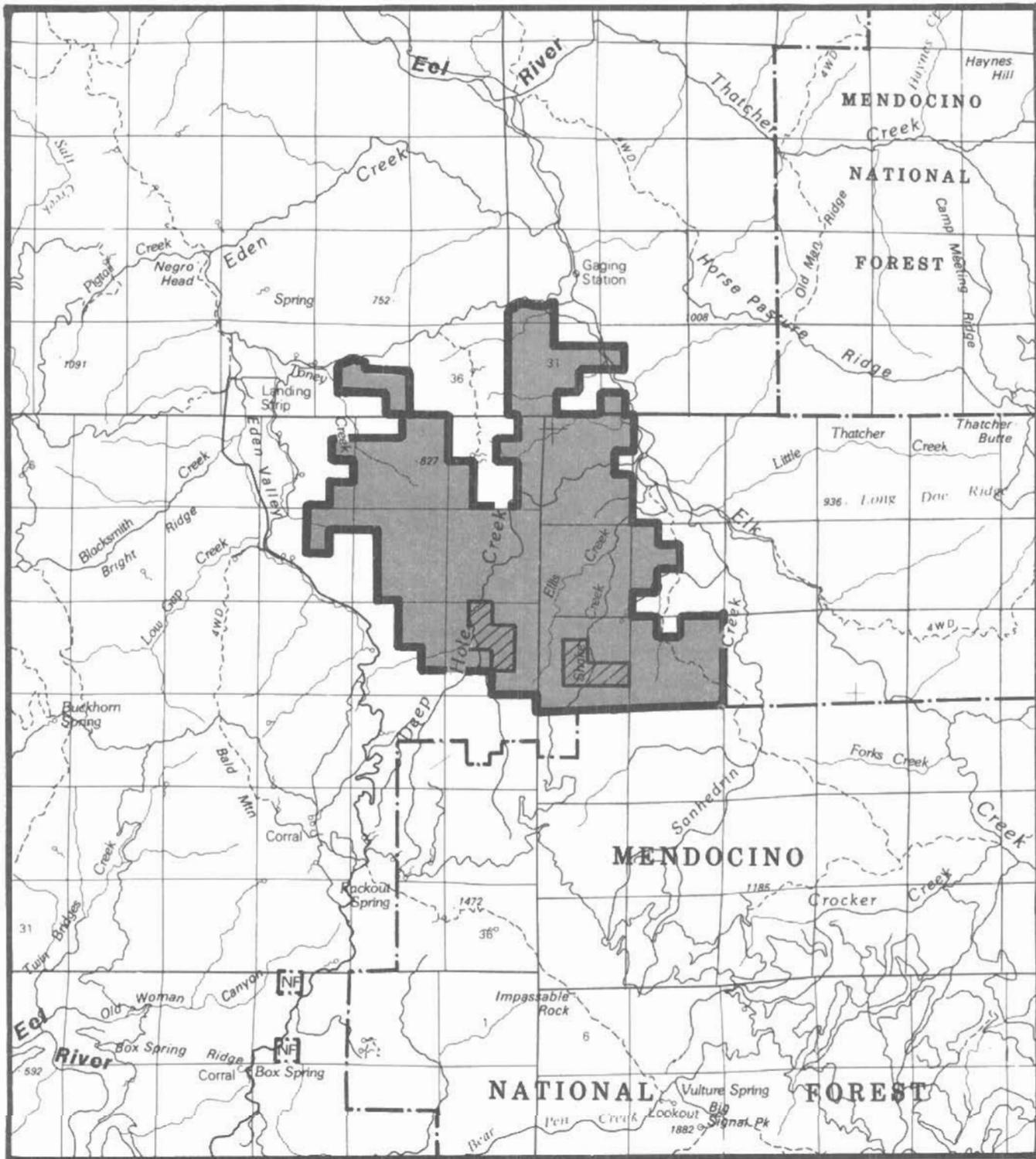
Approximately 95 percent of the WSA's vegetation was destroyed by a wildfire in August 1987. While the area's vegetation has been changed by fire, it is expected that vegetation typical of the area (thick brush, a few grassy meadows, hardwoods and a few cypress mixed with conifers) will soon re-establish. Deep Hole Canyon offers some topographic relief, with the rest of the WSA showing little relief.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Two alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Eden Valley/Thatcher Ridge WSA. There are two alternatives analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness (the preferred alternative).

2. RECOMMENDATION/RATIONALE 0 acres recommended for wilderness
6,166 BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

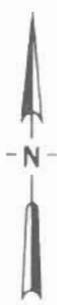
No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is the environmentally-preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long-term. The preferred alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

While the WSA possesses wilderness characteristics, they are not of sufficient quality to recommend inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). With the exception of Deep Hole Creek, there is little topographic relief and most of the area is covered with heavy brush, making use difficult. There will be a period of a few years (5-10) when the area will be more accessible because of the 1987 burn, but as thick vegetation returns, the area will be largely inaccessible. Due to its size and lack of open space, there is little opportunity for quality solitude experiences; most users would be concentrated in limited geographical areas.



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

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There are no unique values or special features that set this WSA apart from other public lands.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,166
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
<u>Inholdings</u>		
State		0
Private		319
Total		6,485
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
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
<u>Inholdings</u>		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,166
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		6,166

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Eden Valley WSA generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with human influences unnoticeable for the most part. One major canyon is within its border—Deep Hole Creek. This canyon which contains steep, forested terrain, averages between 200 feet and 400 feet deep.

Most of the existing human imprints in the Eden Valley WSA are the five miles of firebreaks and rugged Jeep trails along several ridges and dispersed throughout the area. These intrusions are minor imprints on the landscape and are substantially unnoticeable.

2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude are available throughout the WSA because of the topographic variations and vegetative screening. Deep Hole Creek, which bisects the WSA in a north-south direction, offers the best opportunity for seclusion and a feeling of isolation because of its steep hillsides and the abundance of Douglas-fir along the drainage.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive or Unconfined Recreation: The area offers limited opportunity for users to participate in primitive or unconfined recreational activities such as hiking, fishing and hunting. Much of the area is covered with very dense, low-lying brush forming natural barriers that restrict human movement within the area. Visual amenities are minimal due to topographic uniformity and landform characteristics.
4. Special Features: Bald eagles and peregrine falcons, both classified as endangered species, migrate through the area. One pair of peregrine falcons is known to nest in the area north of the WSA. Elk Creek, located in the northeastern portion of the WSA, is a major salmon and steelhead spawning and nursery tributary. Deep Hole Creek is a productive, small stream, primarily for steelhead and resident rainbow trout.

B. Diversity in the Natural Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 6,166 acres of the Pacific Forest/Chaparral ecosystem. Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add an ecosystem not represented in California. It is represented by several areas already included in the NWPS.

TABLE 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Pacific Forest/Chaparral	2	53,770	2	18,518
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Pacific Forest/Chaparral	1	4,745	2	18,518

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a days driving time (five hours) of major populations centers. The WSA is within a five-hour drive of three major population centers.

TABLE 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Acres		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Santa Rosa/Petaluma	10	888,579	12	134,167
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,822
Redding	14	1,236,503	11	344,633

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The Eden Valley WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. The Yolla-Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness and North Fork Wilderness lie 21 and 35 miles, respectively, to the north, and Snow Mountain Wilderness is 15 miles to the southeast.

C. Manageability

The Eden Valley WSA is manageable as wilderness. Because of lack of access, both administrative and public use will be low, and Bureau presence will be held at a minimum. The lack of exploitable resources considerably reduces the likelihood of impairment of wilderness values. The proximity of private land could result in some use of off-highway vehicles in the area. However, this use will be minimal due to the lack of roads and trails, and dense vegetation. The minor grazing (27 AUMs) and lack of range improvements do not affect the area's manageability for wilderness.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at time of preliminary nonsuitability recommendation: The energy and minerals potential of the Eden Valley WSA is addressed in the Eden Valley/Thatcher Ridge Wilderness EIS (1987) and the East Mendocino Management Framework Plan (1975). Due to the fact that the WSA was deemed non-suitable in the EIS, no BLM Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) report was completed. In lieu of a G-E-M report, a literature search was made in order to verify the finding of the EIS.

The geology, mineralization and lack of development in the Eden Valley WSA indicate a low potential for mineral resources. Based on known occurrences of minerals from U.S. Bureau of Mines and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) studies on adjacent U.S. Forest Service land, it has been determined that the area has potential for the occurrence of copper, manganese, chromite, platinum and coal. However, there is no indication that large or extractable deposits are present in the WSA. Historically, there has been no exploration or industry interest in any of these minerals within the WSA. The low quality of the coal and the size of the deposit do not make it economically feasible to mine. As of January 23, 1988, there were no mining claims recorded in the WSA.

The USGS, on February 9, 1967, classified the lands in the eastern half of the Eden Valley WSA as being prospectively valuable for geothermal resources. No hot springs or other geothermal indicia are known to occur in the immediate area. As of February 11, 1988, there were no geothermal lease applications within the WSA. There has been no geothermal exploration, development, or production in the WSA.

As of February 11, 1988 there were no lease applications within the WSA for oil and gas. The WSA has little to no potential for oil and gas. There are no known saleable mineral deposits in the WSA.

In summary, all mineral resource potentials within the Eden Valley WSA are considered to be low.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the nonsuitability decision which should be considered in the final recommendation: Due to the recommendation of nonsuitability for wilderness designation neither the U.S. Bureau of Mines nor the U.S. Geological Survey has conducted a mineral survey for the Eden Valley WSA. Because the entire WSA is considered to have low

mineral potential, no mineral resource potential map was prepared for the WSA. According to the BLM records dated March 25, 1988, no unpatented mining claims exist within the WSA.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Eden Valley-Thatcher Ridge Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (No-wilderness/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	As a result of the projected 50 visitor-days annually in off-highway vehicle use, prescribed burns on approximately 150 acres and the small-scale mining development, there would be a minor impact on naturalness, opportunities for solitude, and primitive or unconfined recreation on less than 5% of the area's 6,166 acres. There would be no significant impact on the Deep Hole Creek Canyon or on the bald eagle or peregrine falcon.	All wilderness values in the area would be retained. The area's naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive or unconfined recreation would receive a minor benefit from the closure of the area to 25 visitor-days of OHV use and mineral exploration/development.
Impact on Sensitive Plant Species Habitat	Full fire suppression and the projected 50 visitor days of OHV use and the surface disturbances associated with these uses would have a slight adverse effect but would be mitigated by excluding these surface-disturbing activities once a field inventory is completed.	Designation would have a very minor positive impact by precluding OHV use and full fire suppression. Increased non-motorized use would have no significant impact on these species.
Impacts on Endangered Species	Bald eagles and peregrine falcons would be negligibly impacted by the noise and surface disturbance associated with occasional OHV and nonmotorized use. Prescribed burns would have a very minor short-term impact, but would enlarge foraging areas, thereby enhancing peregrine falcon habitat.	Minor beneficial impact on the bald eagles and peregrines from closure of area to vehicles and mining activity.

F. Local Social and Economic Conditions

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.