

IDAHO INTENSIVE WILDERNESS INVENTORY

OIL AND GAS OVERTHRUST BELT

IDAHO FALLS DISTRICT

STATE DIRECTOR'S DECISION

IDAHO STATE OFFICE

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DECEMBER 1979



United States Department of the Interior

IN REPLY REFER TO
8500(932)

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Idaho State Office
Box 042; Federal Building
550 W. Fort Street
Boise, Idaho 83724

Dear Reader:

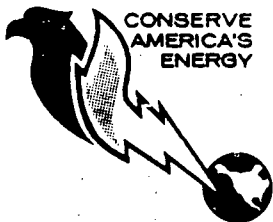
The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) requires the Secretary of the Interior to inventory roadless areas and roadless islands of the public lands to identify those areas/islands possessing wilderness characteristics as described in the Wilderness Act of 1964.

FLPMA states that while roadless areas are being reviewed, they are to be managed so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness. The purpose of conducting this intensive inventory in advance of the statewide intensive inventory was to evaluate the wilderness characteristics on those public lands within the Oil and Gas Overthrust Belt in the Idaho Falls District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), so that wilderness data would be available for consideration in relation to oil and gas activities in the Overthrust Belt.

On September 7, 1979, the State Director announced the proposed decision on this accelerated intensive wilderness inventory. Following publication of the proposed decision, a 90-day comment period was conducted.

Those public responses received during the comment period that addressed specific factors related to wilderness characteristics were carefully analyzed. Comments that related to other resource values, resource conflicts, or that expressed opinions for or against wilderness were reviewed but were not utilized in arriving at the intended final decision. The inventory process is only for the purpose of determining wilderness characteristics; comments not related to characteristics will be analyzed during the study phase.

The following represents the intended final decision related to wilderness values in the Oil and Gas Overthrust Belt.



Save Energy and You Serve America!

Units Identified as Wilderness Study Areas

35-77 Henry's Lake

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

The unit is located three miles south of the Continental Divide, eight miles east of the Montana-Idaho border.

This 350-acre parcel is bounded on the south and west by private lands and on the north and east by the Targhee National Forest. The adjacent Forest Service land has been recommended for wilderness as RARE II area W4-963, Lion Head.

Naturalness:

The unit lies in the foothills of the Henry's Lake Mountains. Characterized by a southern aspect, the unit includes two drainages, Pittsburgh Creek and a small, unnamed creek.

Half of the unit is sagebrush-dominated slopes with some bitterbrush and grasses. The remaining canyons and slopes support scattered stands of aspen, Douglas fir, and lodgepole pine. Lush riparian vegetation follows the creek courses.

The primary human imprint in the unit results from sheep grazing with effects localized and negligible.

About 1/4 mile up Pittsburgh Creek are remnants of a small diversion structure from an abandoned fish hatchery.

Impacts outside the unit are the sights and sounds of Highway 287 and rural developments along the shore of Henry's Lake, which are only seen from high vantage points and are relatively unnoticeable.

Solitude:

Throughout the unit, opportunities for solitude are outstanding. Traveling north into the canyons, vegetative screening is excellent. Topographic features are also important as one moves into the area's secluded canyons.

From the tops of the steeper hillsides, homes on the lakeshore are apparent, but their presence does not affect one's opportunity for solitude.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

Outstanding opportunities for a variety of primitive recreation activities exist, including hiking, camping, and horse packing. Pittsburgh Canyon is readily accessible via a foot trail.

Wildlife is abundant as cougar, bear, goose, elk, deer, coyotes, rabbits, grouse, sandhill cranes, hawks, golden and bald eagles, and many birds inhabit the area. The opportunity to photograph these animals is outstanding; some are excellent game for hunters. Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are excellent.

Supplemental Values:

Valuable wildlife habitat is found within the unit: moose use the area as a corridor from the slopes to the lake.

Hilltops and ridges provide vantage points for impressive views of the mountains south of Henry's Lake, including Sawtell Peak. Looking north, the steep canyons and dark green vegetation contrast with sage slopes and rugged mountains in Targhee National Forest.

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The proposed decision indicated that the entire unit should be identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

One general public comment was received which supported the proposed decision. No specific comments were received nor was there any further inventory information discovered which would affect the decision on this unit.

Decision: Unit 35-77, including 350 acres, is identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

37-77 Worm Creek

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

Located on the eastern border of the Cache National Forest, this 40-acre parcel is contiguous with the FS Worm Creek Wilderness proposal. It is situated on a northeast facing slope of Bloomington Creek Canyon and is bounded by private land to the north and east and by the Cache National Forest to the south and west. The unit could be managed as wilderness in an unimpaired condition only if incorporated with the adjacent Forest Service wilderness proposal.

Naturalness:

The unit changes from tree-dominated landscape to brushland as elevation increases. The lower portion supports a dense stand of aspen and includes Douglas fir and maple. Upslope the trees thin out, giving way to sagebrush and infrequent junipers.

The area appears natural. Human imprints are minimal and include faint tracks from vehicle use, the view and noise from agricultural activities outside the unit, and a partially fallen fence that borders the National Forest on the west. A set of tracks cuts through the unit's northwest corner for about 120 yards. From the highest points on the south side, agriculture uses east of Bloomington can be observed.

Solitude:

Solitude exists within the unit as vegetative screening is excellent except in the highest places from which agricultural activities are visible. A visitor would be occasionally subjected to the sound of vehicles on the Bloomington Creek Road. Wheat fields west of Bloomington can be seen from the south portion of the unit.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation exist, although the steep inclination is a limiting factor, particularly for camping.

Hunting, photography, horseback riding, bird watching, and botanical sightseeing are potential primitive recreation opportunities.

Supplemental Values:

The unit contains some excellent wildlife habitat. A diversity in vegetation over a short distance, good cover, and the unit's proximity to Bloomington Creek contribute to wildlife's use of the area.

Possibility for Returning to a Natural Condition:

Vegetative regeneration of the vehicle tracks at the northwest corner suggests minimal use, and exclusion of vehicles would rapidly complete the regeneration process. The fence could easily be removed by hand labor.

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The proposed decision indicated that the entire unit should be identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

One public comment pointed out that unit 37-77 was incorrectly located on the statewide Initial Inventory Map issued August 1979. This error was corrected with the unit later shown as contiguous with the Forest Service Worm Creek wilderness proposal. Another comment supported the recommendation to identify unit 37-77 as a Wilderness Study Area.

Decision: Unit 37-77 is identified as a Wilderness Study Area, dependent upon the contiguous RARE II area to meet the size criteria.

34-2 Islands (13, 14, 16-32, 34, 35)

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

This unit includes 21 islands along 20 miles of the Snake River. The easternmost portion is at Lufkin Bottom; the westernmost part near the Union Pacific Railroad bridge at Butler Island.

These islands contain 495 BLM acres. Lands on both sides of the river are scattered public and private. With the exception of the reclamation land withdrawals, considerably more of the banks are

in private ownership. A significant percentage of the land on the north side between Lufkin Bottom and Table Rock is administered by the Targhee National Forest. Numerous small private parcels disjoin the National Forest from the river.

Naturalness:

The river canyon has steep rock walls on both banks with occasional cottonwood or willow bottoms. The canyon opens into farmlands on the southwest as the river approaches Kelly Canyon.

Riparian vegetation dominates with species such as willow, alder, and russian olive forming dense stands. On the larger islands mature cottonwoods dominate the overstory with occasional park-like openings. On islands where livestock grazing occurs, brushy vegetation is absent or severely limited, with grasses and invader species forming the vegetative cover.

Unlike islands upriver, the grazing on these islands is managed under BLM livestock allotments. Islands showing signs of grazing but not heavily impacted are 13, 14, 17, 25, 27, 29, and 30. Islands with heavy grazing and an apparent loss of vegetative cover are 28, 34, and 35.

Several islands contain vehicle ways. On islands 17 and 27 access is available over gravel channels from the road following the north bank. On island 14, access is available over a diversion dam connecting the east end to the north shore. On island 27 there is also evidence of possible mining activity with gravel and other material pushed into a dike-like structure near the main channel.

Two bridges also impact the naturalness of the river. Heise Bridge, just upriver of island 14, is visible from the southeast tip of this island. The Union Pacific Railroad bridge crosses at Butler Island just downriver from island 13 and is visible from the island's northwest tip. Islands 13 and 14 are in a section of river severely affected by bank stabilization and water fluctuation problems caused by nearby diversion dams. Mining activity and irrigation pumping are imposing nearby activities.

Islands 13 and 14 are not considered manageable in an unimpaired condition. Stream flows and channelization structures have affected the size, shape, and natural character of these islands.

Solitude:

Opportunities for solitude vary and are at times affected by use on an adjacent gravel road on the northern bank. This road is sporadically used and often has a very minimal impact. In

addition, islands 21, 22, 24, 26, and 31 have good vegetative screening which blocks a large percentage of this impact. Generally, these islands offer outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

Canoeing and boating are among the recreational amenities which the Snake River offers and are an integral part of visiting these islands. This section of river offers a diversity of challenge including whitewater, whirlpools, snags, and deceptive currents, all providing canoers and boaters with outstanding opportunities.

Because many of the islands are dominated by thick willow stands, opportunities for camping are somewhat limited. Islands 19, 22, 26, 27, 29, and 30 contain accessible openings suitable for camping. Islands 28 and 35 also have openings for camping but are used by cattle.

Fishing from and around the islands is outstanding, with good populations of cutthroat, brown trout, and other game fish species.

The opportunity for viewing pristine and geologically unique scenery is also available. The rock cliffs along either bank and the dense riparian vegetation combine to create a very scenic setting.

Several of the islands are used by game birds and big game animals as habitat. Opportunities for hunting or observing wildlife are excellent.

Supplemental Values:

The primary supplemental value of these islands is the fish and wildlife habitat. Geese, ducks, and shore birds use the islands as nesting and brood-rearing sites. Whitetail deer, mule deer, and occasionally moose also utilize the islands.

Several scenic stretches also exist, with Rattlesnake Point and Table Rock two prominent features which provide impressive views.

Possibility of Returning to a Natural Condition:

For the majority of the islands, returning to a natural condition is not a problem. Impacts caused by livestock can be corrected given adequate rest during critical growth periods.

Returning islands 17 and 27 to a natural condition would be difficult; vehicle ways and other man-caused impacts are substantial.

* * * *

The proposed decision indicated that islands 13, 14, 17, and 27, containing 115 acres, did not meet the naturalness criteria.

One general public comment was received which supported this recommendation. No specific comments were received nor was there any further inventory information discovered which would affect the decision on this unit.

Decision: The 17 islands containing 380 acres are identified as a Wilderness Study Area; the remaining four islands do not meet the naturalness criteria.

34-3 Islands (36-47)

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

This unit consists of 12 islands in the Snake River between Lufkin Bottom and Pine Creek.

Lands on both sides of the river are scattered public and private, significantly more public than private. Targhee National Forest lands comprise a good deal of the area on the east side of the river.

Naturalness:

The islands stretch along seven miles of the deepest, most rugged portion of the Snake River Canyon. This gorge-like topography contributes greatly to the wild character of the river and its islands. These islands are dominated by thick riparian vegetation, especially willows, cottonwoods, alders, dogwoods, gooseberries, roses, cattails, and grasses.

The larger islands support small stands of intermediate to mature cottonwoods in their central portions. This opens up the understory to grasses and forbs, which contrasts with the dense shrub perimeters, heavily vegetated in willows, alders, and dogwood.

The major impact on these islands is cattle grazing; however, it has not substantially affected the apparent naturalness. Other human imprints on the islands are fire rings and occasional litter resulting from recreational use.

Solitude:

On several of the islands, a combination of vegetative screening and relatively large size offer outstanding opportunities for solitude. The remaining islands can provide some opportunities to feel alone, but due to small size and/or thinner vegetative screening, they cannot be deemed outstanding; it could be difficult for a visitor to avoid contact with others or with outside impacts.

On all islands the sounds of motorboats can intrude on a visitor's solitude to some degree. Potential for avoiding this impact is greater on the larger, well-screened islands.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

The opportunity for fishing from and around these islands is outstanding. Diverse habitats created by the many channels and shoreline vegetation provide areas suitable for a variety of fishing opportunities.

Big game and waterfowl hunting is a primitive recreation use of these islands. Wildlife observation and photography are outstanding, particularly for the bird species, including Bald and Golden Eagles.

On several islands there are outstanding camping areas. Grassy openings in the thick riparian vegetation, scenic views of the river and its impressive canyon walls, channels to swim, and areas to explore offer an unusual experience for campers.

The channels along the islands offer challenge for those who recreate in a variety of boats--kayaks, canoes, rafts, and motorboats.

Supplemental Values:

All of these islands are valuable habitat for wildlife. There is evidence of use by bear, moose, deer, coyotes, beavers, geese, ducks, raptors, and various birds.

This scenic stretch of the river includes massive rock faces which plunge straight down into the river, deflecting the force of the current into whirlpools and eddies. Walls of sedimentary rock have been sculptured into spires and caves.

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The proposed decision indicated that the entire unit should be identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

One general comment was received which supported this recommendation. No specific comments were received nor was there any further inventory information discovered which would affect the decision on this unit.

Decision: The 12 islands containing 155 acres are identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

34-4 Islands (48-57)

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

This unit contains 10 islands in the Snake River between Irwin and Pine Creek, a total of 235 acres.

A majority of the land on the north bank is privately owned; on the south side, upriver from Fall Creek, is National Forest land, and downriver are scattered public and private parcels.

Naturalness:

The river terrain may be characterized as generally open. Some steep rock canyon walls rise just east of the Swan Valley bridge.

An overstory of middle-aged cottonwoods occurs on the larger islands, with an understory of forbs, grasses, and scattered shrubs. Island portions not supporting cottonwood stands are dominated by a dense shrub community, including willows, russian olive, alder, and dogwood.

Visual impacts on naturalness are the elevated goose nesting boxes on the islands and along the riverbanks.

Use of automobiles for streambank riprap is an outside impact of some significance, particularly for island 54 where some 34 cars line the north bank across the channel from the island.

Solitude:

The proximity of Highway 26 to the islands affects the potential for experiencing solitude. Exceptions are islands 52 and 53 as they are considerably less affected by this outside disturbance. On islands 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55, and 56, the highway can be seen and/or the traffic clearly heard.

The remaining three islands (52, 53, and 57) possess excellent vegetative screening which practically eliminates noises from the highway. These islands therefore provide outstanding opportunity for solitude.

Another major impact on solitude is the sight and sound of motor-boats on the river.

Primitive Recreation:

The diversity of challenge for boaters includes whitewater, whirlpools, snags, and deceptive currents, providing opportunities to test and develop paddling skills.

Hunting waterfowl is another popular activity. Several of the islands have good habitat for cutthroat, brown trout, and whitefish. Fishing is an outstanding activity on this stretch of the Snake River.

Opportunities for camping on most islands are generally limited by the dense vegetation. On those islands with openings, opportunities are outstanding.

Fishing, hunting, camping, wildlife observation, photography, and canoeing combine to provide an outstanding diversity of recreational opportunities.

Supplemental Values:

The most significant supplemental value is wildlife habitat. Geese, ducks, and a variety of shore birds utilize the islands as nesting and brood-rearing sites. Whitetail deer, mule deer, and moose also use these islands. Raptors use the islands for hunting.

An archaeological survey has revealed sites of occupancy by early Indians in the immediate area.

Scenery is also a supplemental value of significance. Of particular interest are the rock cliffs which intermittently border the river.

Possibilities of Returning to a Natural Condition:

Goose nesting boxes could easily be removed if they affected the wilderness values of the islands.

Removal of junk cars, particularly on island 52, would help return the unit to a more natural condition. If possible, the mitigation of these visual impacts near island 54 would also aid in enhancing the apparent naturalness of this island.

* * * *

The proposed decision indicated that the entire unit should be identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

One general comment was received which supported this recommendation. No specific comments were received nor was there any further inventory information discovered which would affect the decision on this unit.

Decision: The 10 islands containing 235 acres are identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

Units Identified as Lacking Wilderness Values

34-8 Game Creek

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

The unit contains 4,792 acres of BLM land on the west slope of the Teton Mountains and is 1½ miles east of Victor, Idaho. Boundaries on the south and east are the Targhee National Forest and on the north and west private lands. Five miles of the Idaho-Wyoming border constitute the unit's eastern boundary.

Naturalness:

The unit is located in the foothills of the Grand Teton Range. The western margin begins at 6,350 feet, rising sharply to nearly 8,000 feet. Four major drainages flow from Forest Service lands to the western edge. Open meadows are isolated within the unit. Vegetation varies from sage-bitterbrush and grass in the drier places to forested slopes and draws. The primary conifer is Douglas fir, and moist areas support stands of mature aspen.

Human imprints are relatively unnoticeable throughout most of the unit. Fences, a small reservoir, and a few grown-over ways constitute the major impacts. Two trails enter the unit from private property, only one passable for a half-mile into the unit by 4-wheel drive vehicles. Windfalls have made vehicular travel beyond the half-mile point impossible. Another rugged trail penetrates for a half-mile, with vehicle passage blocked by a fence.

Mud Lake is a small livestock reservoir; however, the impact on naturalness is minor, as the reservoir seems to have been developed from a natural depression. Associated fences tend to draw some attention to the reservoir. Grazing around the reservoir is noticeable but has not substantially affected the apparent naturalness of the meadow.

A waterworks structure and its maintenance road in Game Creek Valley have been excluded from the unit.

Views of Victor and agriculture use outside the unit are not significant enough to greatly affect wilderness qualities and are screened by the unit's topography and vegetation.

Solitude:

Steep, well-wooded slopes and canyons create screening which increases greatly the opportunities for experiencing solitude. Obstructed trails have limited accessibility into the unit, and hence reduce the likelihood of encountering many other people. Only from a few west-facing slopes and ridgetops on the western edge is one aware of Victor and the agricultural activities outside the unit. Since these viewpoints represent a small portion of the total area, the impact on solitude is not substantial.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

The unit offers outstanding opportunities for recreation such as backpacking, horseback riding, hiking, bird watching, and primitive camping. Trails, generally impassable by vehicles, allow good access on foot or horseback. Abundant natural openings constitute excellent camping spots, often reachable by game trails.

Hunting is one of the current recreational uses, as the area is habitat for moose, mule deer, elk, and upland game birds. The wildlife offers excellent opportunities for photographers as does the area's scenic qualities. The unit offers excellent opportunities for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

Supplemental Values:

The unit provides excellent and valuable wildlife habitat, with an abundance of moose and deer, and has been identified as critical deer winter range.

Striking views of Teton Valley, the Big Hole Mountains, and the Tetons are available from numerous points in the unit.

Stands of native Colorado Blue Spruce in the Game Creek drainage represent the northernmost reach of this species and its only occurrence in Idaho.

Possibilities of Returning to a Natural Condition:

All trails could possibly return to a natural condition. Many trees have fallen across these ways, and former vehicle trails have revegetated and been reduced to one-track trails.

Removal of the fences in the general vicinity of Mud Lake would require little effort and would greatly change the naturalness of the area.

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The proposed decision indicated that the entire unit should be identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

Public comment pointed out that size is a limiting factor, which is emphasized by the fact that the FS wilderness proposal for the West Slope of the Tetons is no longer contiguous with the unit. Naturalness was thought to be impacted by grazing and firewood collecting. It was also felt that solitude and primitive recreation are not outstanding because of the area's small size, current pressures from private property, and close proximity to developments. Others said they agreed that the unit had wilderness characteristics and should be identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

During the comment period, the unit was reconsidered based on the ability to manage it in an unimpaired condition. It is felt that the unit is not of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition and of a size suitable for wilderness management. This decision is based on the rationale that the unit has an irregular shape with private land nearly cutting the unit in half; the FS land on the unit's eastern and southern boundaries being classified non-wilderness; and private land, open to any form of development, bounding the unit on the north and west.

Decision: The unit does not qualify for wilderness study due to lack of size, lack of manageability, and lack of naturalness.

36-15 Big Spring

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

The unit is situated two miles from the Continental Divide, and the Montana border and contains 5,810 acres.

Boundaries are formed on the north by the Targhee National Forest, on the west by private lands, on the northeast by State land, and on the south by BLM roads.

Naturalness:

The unit contains steep, mountainous country with well defined drainages and ridges. Creeks drain to the southwest from elevations as high as 8,600 feet. Vegetation is diverse, with conifers at higher elevations and sagebrush and grasses dominating the lower portion. Some deciduous species are found at creek bottoms and near springs.

The unit is relatively untouched by the activities of man. Major human imprints are jeep trails and spring developments. The jeep trails generally climb ridgebacks, terminating at higher points. These vehicle ways are well vegetated and are inaccessible to two-wheel drive vehicles.

Two abandoned spring developments are found within the unit. Some brush control has occurred on the eastern edge; however, it is not discernible and appears natural.

These human imprints do not substantially affect the natural integrity of the unit.

Solitude:

Topographic relief and, in some instances, vegetative screening combine to provide numerous opportunities for experiencing solitude. The rugged terrain contributes to a feeling of remoteness from human development. Views to the north provide spectacular vistas of the Continental Divide.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

The unit provides a wide variety of opportunities, including hiking, hunting, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and sightseeing.

The area is utilized by a diverse range of big game and bird species which provide hunting opportunities. The rugged terrain and spectacular vistas encountered from the high peaks combine to offer challenge and reward to recreationists year round.

Supplemental Values:

The unit provides good habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Upland birds and large game animals utilize the area during parts of the year. The area supports a diverse range of non-game animals such as hawks, owls, small mammals, and birds.

Proximity to the Continental Divide and its majestic views add supplemental scenic value to the unit. The unit has been identified as having potential Indian sites.

Opportunities for Returning to a Natural Condition:

The most significant signs of human activities are vehicle ways which have generally vegetated, showing no signs of maintenance. Revegetation would occur rapidly with the exclusion of vehicles. The livestock watering tank could easily be removed.

The proposed decision indicated that the entire unit should be identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

Public comment pointed out that the unit is too small and too close to developments to offer outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. One commentor felt the unit could not stand alone as wilderness but should be identified as a Wilderness Study Area in hopes that it could be considered along with adjacent Forest Service roadless land.

During the public comment period, the unit was field checked and re-evaluated. Nearly 15 miles of substantial vehicle ways were found in addition to those noted during the field reconnaissance in the Spring of 1979. The ways extend up every major drainage, criss-crossing and bisecting the unit. As a result of the re-examination the conclusion that the frequency of ways, in combination with the small size of the unit, has impaired the naturalness with little opportunity of returning to a natural condition.

Decision: The unit does not qualify for wilderness study due to lack of naturalness.

36-18 Rattlesnake Point

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

The unit is located approximately 25 miles southwest of Dubois, Idaho, and contains 8,365 acres.

Naturalness:

The unit contains alluvial fans draining from 7,000 feet near the National Forest to 5,000 feet at the valleys. On the east, the drainage systems are steep, forming well defined gulches. On the south, the drainage from Rattlesnake Point is steep, but with less defined gulches.

Vegetation consists mainly of low sagebrush/bunch grass associations. At the higher elevations are sagebrush, junipers, and scattered Douglas fir.

The most obtrusive impact to naturalness is a garbage filled ditch near the southern edge. This small area has been excluded from the unit. East of this ditch a two-track way leads to a corral and winds around the base of a rise where a gully has rendered the tracks impassable.

A jeep trail, maintained for hauling water, receives relatively regular and continuous use. The unit boundary has been moved to the western edge of this way.

A two-track way splits off from the unit's western boundary and provides access into Targhee National Forest. This way cuts through the northwest corner of the unit and leads to a scenic, rugged canyon, the majority of which is in the National Forest.

Highway 22 parallels the southern boundary of the unit at a distance from the unit boundary varying from several hundred to several thousand feet. This route is not heavily used and is visible from about a half-mile into the unit.

Views of the surrounding agricultural lands also create an outside impact. The most obtrusive views are where irrigated farmland creates green space and is visible from most of the eastern border.

Solitude:

The many swales and gulches offer an outstanding opportunity for solitude. The topography varies throughout the unit, creating steep grades, flat tables, gentle plains, and winding swales. Secluded and remote spots may be found throughout the unit offering outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

Hiking, camping, and horseback riding are potential primitive recreational opportunities. The varied topography and interesting geologic features provide outstanding opportunities to experience these activities.

Supplemental Values:

The unit has a high potential for discovery of aboriginal cultural remains.

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The proposed decision indicated that the entire unit should be identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

Public comment pointed out that the unit is too small and close to developments to offer outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. One commentator said parts of the unit are badly overrun by ORV's.

During the public comment period, the unit was field checked and re-evaluated. Nearly 20 miles of light to substantial ways were found in addition to those noted during the field reconnaissance in the Spring of 1979. The ways extend up every major drainage, criss-crossing and bisecting the unit. One substantial way completely bisects the northeastern portion of the unit and appears to be extensively used by livestock men. As a result of the re-examination, the conclusion is that the frequency of ways, in combination with the small size of the unit, has impaired the naturalness with little opportunity of returning to a natural condition.

Decision: The unit does not qualify for wilderness study due to lack of naturalness.

37-88 Mt. Naomi

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

Located east of Franklin, Idaho, this three parcel unit contains a total of 240 acres. The parcels border the Cache National Forest on the east and are surrounded on the north, south, and west by private land. Contiguous with RARE II lands that were recommended for further planning, the unit would be practical to manage for preservation in an unimpaired condition if eventually incorporated into this larger wilderness proposal.

Naturalness:

The unit possesses elevational changes of 500-800 feet. Vegetation is diverse and dense. The steeper western portion includes Big-tooth maples and open meadow-like areas. As elevation increases, vegetation changes to sage-grassland.

Crooked Creek, a tributary to Maple Creek, and a portion of the Flat Creek watershed, a tributary to the Cub River, flow through the unit. Imprints of man include a vehicle way, fences, and a stockpile of old fencing materials. A FS fence on the eastern border and a narrow pack trail through the southeast corner constitute human imprints. Cattle grazing is apparent from small grazed areas and narrow cattle trails.

Solitude:

Throughout most of the maple-sage dominated portions of the unit, vegetative screening provides outstanding opportunities for solitude. A feeling of remoteness can also be found in the open meadows. Only from the highest northwest portion are visitors reminded of human activities outside the unit. Views of Franklin and nearby agricultural areas have a minimal affect on opportunities for solitude.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

Hikers, hunters, or equestrians would have easy access to the unit providing outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Deer frequent the area, and pack trails lead into the National Forest. Ruffed grouse inhabit the maple-dominated part of the unit, providing an outstanding opportunity for upland bird hunting.

Supplemental Values:

Views to southeast into Cache National Forest are spectacular and emphasize the wild quality of the unit. Views from the meadows are unusually scenic, providing a 360-degree panorama of the surrounding mountains.

Possibility of Returning to a Natural Condition:

Naturalness impacts within the unit are all of a readily rehabilitative nature; exclusion of vehicles and removal of fencing materials would eliminate these disturbances.

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The proposed decision indicated that the entire unit should be identified as a Wilderness Study Area.

Two comments were received concerning these small parcels. One pointed out that the parcels are contiguous with the Mt. Naomi area on only one of their four-sided boundaries. This situation creates irregular boundaries and potential administration problems. Another comment asked that the parcels be identified as a Wilderness Study Area and studied along with the Forest Service Worm Creek proposal. The Caribou National Forest has indicated they have no interest in considering these parcels.

Decision: The unit does not qualify for wilderness study due to lack of outstanding solitude-recreation, based on configuration problems and lack of manageability.

34-1A Islands (1A-4A)

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

The four islands, totalling 60 acres, are located along a 10-mile stretch of the Snake River from the Market Lake Wildlife Management Area to Menan Butte.

Naturalness:

The general topography surrounding these islands is flat and open, except for Menan Buttes which rise north of island 4A. The majority of the surrounding land is agricultural.

The islands and much of the river banks are dominated by mature stands of cottonwood. Understory vegetation is willow, alder, dogwood, russian olive, and wild rose. Undergrowth is composed of forbs and bunch grasses.

Vehicle tracks were found on islands 3A and 4A as was evidence of grazing. On island 2A a shallow pit and sheets of plywood were discovered.

Outside impacts are substantial. Riprapped banks are visible from all four islands, as is agricultural activity. On island 4A views of man's activities are extremely imposing with dome-like houses being constructed to the east and west of the island, powerlines, and radio towers on Menan Butte, and the sights and sounds of railroad and highway bridges obvious from the eastern end of the island.

Manageability:

The possibility of managing these islands as wilderness is extremely limited. Channels which separate islands 2A and 3A from the mainland are extremely shallow and intermittent and, in effect, cause them not to be islands during much of the year. Islands 1A and 4A are small and situated in an agricultural surrounding. Managing these islands in an unimpaired condition would be virtually impossible due to their size, location, variability of river flow, and channel separation from the mainland. Another management problem is the riprap on the river banks which will dramatically change the character of the river and islands over time.

Solitude:

With the exception of island 4A where outside impacts substantially reduce opportunities for solitude, excellent vegetation screening makes opportunities for solitude outstanding.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

Primitive recreation opportunities exist, the most significant being hunting. The slow channels and sloughs are excellent habitat for waterfowl. There is evidence that big game use the islands.

Fishing is available, with the slower channels, backwaters, and gravel riffles providing habitat for trout and whitefish. Current use and success rates in this area indicate these opportunities are not outstanding.

On island 1A openings in the vegetation suitable for camping occur close to the banks. On islands 3A and 4A openings are located in the interior of the islands. Access to these potential camping areas is extremely difficult due to dense brush vegetation.

Supplemental Values:

The only significant supplemental value is wildlife habitat; waterfowl and a variety of shore birds utilize these islands.

Possibility of Returning to a Natural Condition:

With little impacts on these islands, the possibility of returning to a natural condition is good.

* * * *

The proposed decision indicated that the unit did not meet the naturalness or the manageability criteria.

One general public comment was received which supported this proposed decision. No specific comments were received nor was there any further inventory information discovered which would affect the decision on this unit.

Decision: These islands do not qualify for wilderness study due to lack of naturalness or lack of manageability.

34-1 Islands (1-12)

The proposed decision included the following analysis of wilderness characteristics:

Size and Location:

This unit consists of 12 islands totalling 190 acres in the Snake River between Sunnybell and the Lorenzo Bridge.

Due to riprapping and stream channelization, the size and physical location of these islands has drastically changed. Determination of exact boundaries or acreage would be obsolete within a year. The majority of the land on the river banks is privately owned.

Naturalness:

This stretch of islands is surrounded by flat agricultural lands. Dense riparian vegetation dominates the river banks and islands with an overstory of cottonwoods and an understory of willows and alders. In open areas forbs and bunch grasses dominate the undergrowth.

The extensive riprapping of the river banks has had a significant impact on the islands; they have changed drastically in both size and shape. Islands 1 and 12 have fused with larger islands containing public and private lands. Islands 4 and 6 are now separated from the mainland by shallow or intermittent channels. Island 8 is now two islands with a major channel separating them. The steep cutbanks and rapid gravel deposition on most of the islands suggest that the shifting in location and size is continuing. From the standpoint of manageability, the possibility of preserving these islands in an unimpaired condition is impossible.

On islands 7, 8, and 11, bulldozers have constructed riprap along the banks or dikes to control floodwaters. Because of these activities, islands 7 and 11 are now connected to the mainland. Part of the dike construction on islands 7 and 8 was an effort to insure adequate flow for a diversion dam connecting islands 4 and 7. This dam has provided motorized vehicle access on island 4. A high voltage powerline passes over island 9 with a power pole located on the island.

Solitude:

Opportunities for solitude, while available on some of the islands, could not be termed outstanding. Man-made impacts significantly detract from a visitor's opportunity of feeling remote from man's activities.

Sights and sounds from nearby roads and agricultural activities also limit opportunities for experiencing solitude. Traffic on the roads and noise from agricultural equipment are unavoidable on many islands.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

Opportunities for primitive recreation exist but are not outstanding. The riprapping that has drastically changed island shapes has also negatively affected recreation opportunities.

New channels have destroyed or drastically altered fish habitat. Trees along the banks have been undercut by currents and have fallen into the river. These snags make the waters more dangerous and thereby reduce opportunities for rafting or canoeing.

Hunting is also available but is not outstanding. The proximity of these islands to human activity has reduced the numbers and diversity of wildlife species.

Supplemental Values:

The primary supplemental value of this unit is wildlife habitat. Great Blue Heron, Osprey, and Bald and Golden Eagles use this section of the river.

Possibility of Returning to a Natural Condition:

The predominant impact is the extensive riprapping and stream channelization. To remove the miles of dikes, levees, riprapping, and the dam between islands 4 and 7 through hand labor would be impossible.

* * * *

The proposed decision indicated that the unit did not meet the naturalness or the solitude-recreation criteria.

One general public comment was received which supported the proposed decision. No specific comments were received nor was there any additional inventory information discovered which would affect the decision on this unit.

Decision: These islands do not qualify for wilderness study due to lack of naturalness or lack of outstanding solitude/recreation.

* * * *

In summary, the intensive inventory intended final decision identifies the following units as Wilderness Study Areas:

Unit 35-77	Henry's Lake *	350 acres
Unit 37-77	Worm Creek *	40 "
Units 34-2)		
3)	Islands	770 "
4)		

*Unit less than 5,000 acres dependent upon a contiguous RARE II area to meet the size criteria.

Of the total 20,732 acres intensively inventoried in the Overthrust Belt, 1,160 acres were found to have wilderness characteristics, and thus the units containing those acres are identified as Wilderness Study Areas. The remaining 19,572 acres are dropped from the wilderness inventory process.

The release of this intended final decision initiates a 30-day protest period, during which persons wishing to protest any of the intended final decisions shall have 30 days to file a written protest.

Protests should address specific inventory units and must include a clear and concise statement of reasons for the protest, including any supporting data available. Protests may be filed with the Idaho State Office or the Idaho Falls District Office of the BLM and must be post-marked or received by the end of the 30-day period, January 28, 1980.

For further information on any of the inventory units, contact the Idaho State Office or the Idaho Falls District Office.

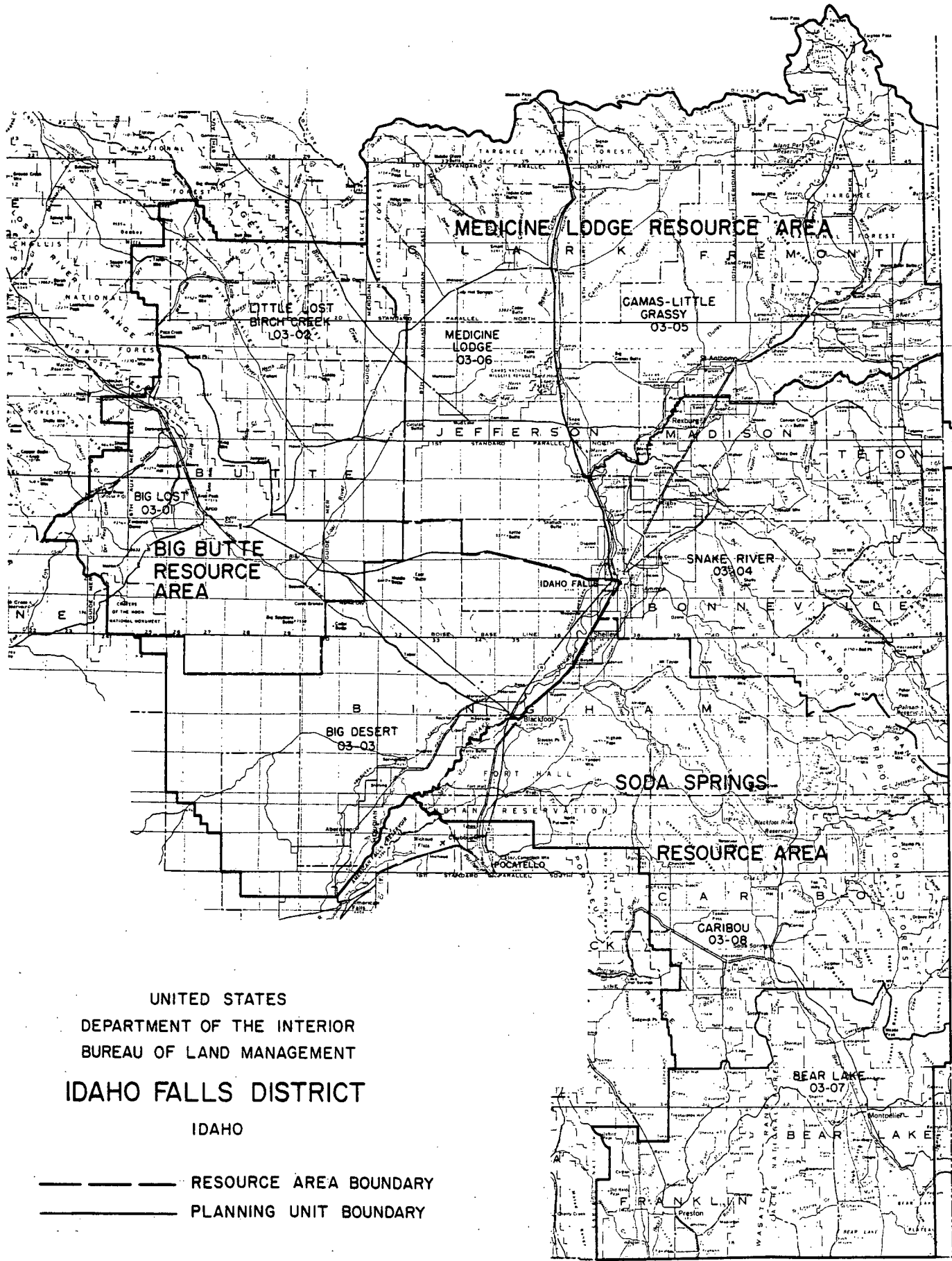
Idaho State Office - BLM
Federal Building, Box 042
550 W. Fort Street
Boise, Idaho 83724

Idaho Falls District Office - BLM
940 Lincoln Road
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401

Robert O. Buffington
State Director

Date: 12 - 11 - 79

Enclosures:
Maps



UNITED STATES
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
IDAHO FALLS DISTRICT
 IDAHO

———— RESOURCE AREA BOUNDARY
 ———— PLANNING UNIT BOUNDARY

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