

Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness – 2007 State of the Wilderness Report

The annual State of the Wilderness Report is developed to share information with the public regarding management activities in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness (SBW). This Report provides a summary of 2007 SBW management, visitor use, and campsite monitoring efforts that we hope meets public needs and interests. Please contact the managing National Forests (Bitterroot, Clearwater & Nez-Perce) with questions or comments.

Status Reports

Noxious Weeds DEIS

Noxious Weeds - A Draft Environmental Impact Statement for managing invasive plants in and adjacent to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness is near completion. Scoping for the Proposed Action began Oct. 26, 2006 and continued through the end of November. The ID Team has developed, and is in the process of analyzing, five alternatives (the Proposed Action, the No Action Alternative, and three additional alternatives). The anticipated date for release of the DEIS is by the middle of April 2008.

Wildland Fire

The summer of 2007 was a very active year for wildland fire. Fifty-nine Wilderness fire events were managed for a total of nearly 105,000 acres burned. Many of these fire events were "Fire Use" fires managed for resource benefits. The Moose Creek Ranger Station was threatened by three fires burning nearby and was structure protected for most of August. Fortunately, fire did not reach the Station. Several trails and areas in the SBW were closed for a portion of the summer season due to fire activity, limiting access for both the public and Forest Service crews.

10-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge

Accomplishment Level	Top Possible Score	2007	2006
Fire Plans	10	10	10
Noxious/Invasive Weeds	10	5	5
Air Quality	10	10	10
Education	10	10	4
Solitude	10	6	6
Recreation Site Inventories	10	6	6
Outfitter & Guide Operations	10	8	8
Adequate Forest Plan Direction	10	6	8
Information Needs	6	2	2
Workforce	10	2	2
Total	96	65	61

In 2007, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness showed modest improvement in meeting the goals of the Stewardship Challenge, primarily due to completion and implementation of the SBW Information and Education Plan. The score for adequate forest plan direction to prevent degradation of the wilderness resource dropped this year. This score is based on a combination of existing forest plan direction and having monitoring accomplished on schedule. Managers agree that monitoring for the standard related to public use (number of parties encountered and number of parties camped within sight or sound) is not being effectively met, and are looking at ways to better monitor existing public use.

Wilderness Program Accomplishment Summary

Type of Activity	Unit of Measure	Bitterroot NF	Clearwater NF	Nez-Perce NF	2007 Total	2006 Total
Field Presence	Wilderness Rangers (include River Rangers)	3	3	2	8	10
	Wilderness Ranger Field Days	101	156	153	410	580
	Volunteers	13	38	23	74	60
	Volunteer Hours	210	3,944	1,792	5,946	5,932
Education	Formal Education Programs	14	17	5	36	41
	Audience Members Reached	543	530	115	1,188	1,300
Trails	Miles of Trail Maintained	130	211.4	276	617.4	558.1
	Total Wilderness Trail Miles	458.8	325.3	706.6	1,490.7	1,490.7
Known Use / Visitation (Unknown # visitors not contacted or registered)	Individuals Contacted by Wilderness Rangers in the Field	263	195	330	788	996
	Trailhead Registration (people)	2449	818	190	3,457	2,423
	Monitoring Days / Landings at Moose Cr. Airstrip	NA	NA	151/449	151/449	137/436
	Monitoring Days/ Landings at Shearer Airstrip	NA	NA	28/55	28/55	31/53
	Monitoring Days / Landings at Fish Lake Airstrip	NA	56/88	NA	56/88	72/144
O/G use	Outfitters	18	5	14	37	37
	Camps Used in the SBW	17*	6	33	55	91
	Camps Inspected	16	21	15	52	56
Violations	Violations Recorded (incidents & citations combined)	24	25	9	38	27
Campsites	Total Existing Campsites/ Campsite Inventory Baseline Completed	365/360	331/331	311/311	1007/1002	1,004/990
	Campsites w/ Inventory Accomplished in 5 Year Cycle & (% of Total Campsites)	197 (54%)	299 (90%)	92 (30%)	588 (58%)	649 (65%)
	Campsite Inventory Accomplished 2007 & (% of Total Campsites)	82 (24%)	55 (17%)	62 (20%)	199 (19%)	153 (15%)
Fire	Wilderness Fire Events	19	13	27	59	50
	Wilderness Acres Burned	11,575	44,674	48,630	104,879	11,499
Authorizations	Mechanical Use Authorizations	12	7	12	31	21

The Nez Perce NF showed significant improvement in the emphasis placed on completing campsite inventories with the initiation of a new five-year cycle of data collection. On the Bitterroot NF, total campsite numbers were reduced due to filing updates and the removal of sites not used in at least ten years that have recovered from previous use.

* Due to changes in counting methodology for Outfitter/Guide "Camps Used in the SBW" on the Bitterroot NF, the overall number of camps used in 2007 appears to have been significantly reduced from 2006. The total number of camps used in the SBW using the new counting methodology for 2006 would be 59.