


BIG LOST/PAHSIMEROI WILDERNESS
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FINAL


Associate State Director

Prepared BY
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Salmon and Idaho Falls Districts

BIG LOST/PAHSIMEROI
WILDERNESS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

() Draft

(X) Final EIS

1. Type of Action: () Administrative (X) Legislative

2. Responsible Agencies:

a. Lead Agency: Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management

b. Cooperating Agencies: None

3. Abstract: The Big Lost/Pahsimeroi Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement analyzes three Idaho Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), two in the Idaho Falls District and one in the Salmon District, to determine resource impacts which could result from designation or nondesignation of these WSAs as wilderness. WSAs 31-14 Appendicitis Hill, 21,900 acres, 31-17 White Knob Mountains, 9,950 acres, and 45-12 Burnt Creek, 24,980 acres, are recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

4. Comments have been requested and received from the following:

See Reviewers and Respondents Section

5. Date Draft Statement Made Available to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Public:

Draft EIS: Filed 08/26/83

Final EIS:

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SUMMARY

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzes the impacts resulting from designating or not designating three Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) as wilderness. The proposed action recommends a nonwilderness designation for all three WSAs, including WSA 31-14, Appendicitis Hill (21,900 acres), WSA 31-17, White Knob Mountains (9,950 acres), and WSA 45-12, Burnt Creek (24,980 acres).

The Proposed Action in the Draft EIS was the result of land use decisions made in the Big Lost MFP (for Appendicitis Hill and White Knob Mountains), and the Ellis-Pahsimeroi MFP (for Burnt Creek). The Proposed Action in this Final EIS (FEIS) differs from that in the DEIS. The DEIS recommended 8,300 acres of Burnt Creek for wilderness designation. The FEIS Proposed Action recommends this acreage for nonwilderness uses. Therefore, if the Proposed Action in this EIS is accepted by Congress, this document will also serve as a part of the amendment process concerning the Burnt Creek WSA recommendation in the Ellis-Pahsimeroi MFP.

Alternatives considered for each of the WSAs were No Wilderness, No Action, Partial Wilderness, and All Wilderness. The No Action and No Wilderness Alternatives are combined because there is no measurable difference between the possible impacts of either. A Partial Wilderness Alternative for the White Knob Mountains WSA was not analyzed further because size adjustments would not significantly improve manageability, balance resource uses, or reduce conflicts.

The significant environmental issues developed in the study process common to all WSAs were: 1) impacts on wilderness values; 2) impacts on the development of energy and mineral resources; and 3) impacts on recreational off-road vehicle use. Two other issues were identified which concerned only the Appendicitis Hill WSA. These were: 1) impacts on mule deer winter range, and 2) impacts on timber management. Livestock grazing, which is recognized by Congress as an acceptable activity within wilderness areas, would continue under existing plans. Subject to valid existing rights, present law would withdraw any designated wilderness from appropriation under the mining laws effective the date of designation.