Handout WPLI 11/29/2016

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Wyoming State Office

September 1991

Wyoming Statewide Wilderness Study Report
Wilderness Study Area Specific Recommendations

Volume II

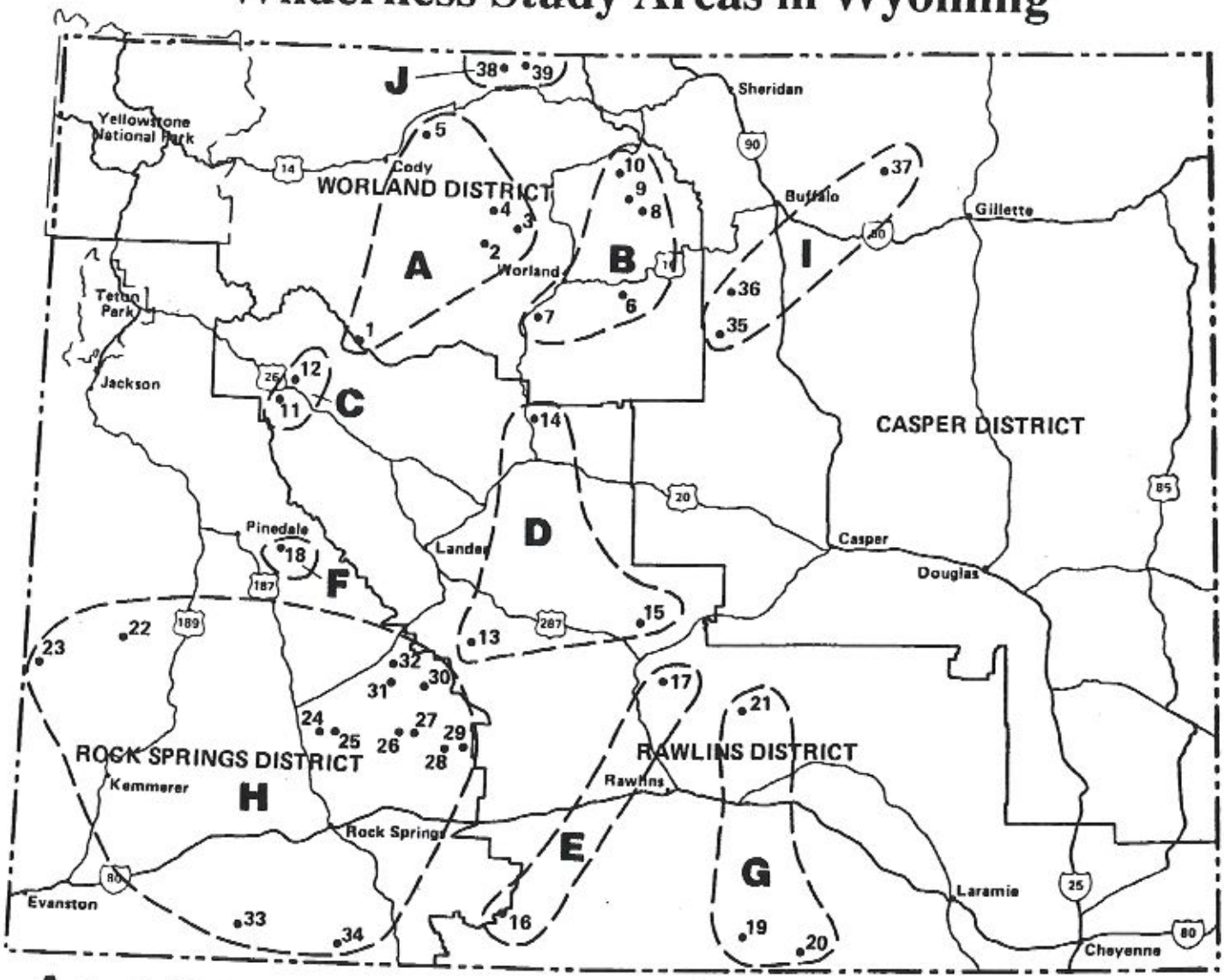
WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT

Prepared by:

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wyoming State Office
Cheyenne, Wyoming

September 1991

Wilderness Study Areas in Wyoming



A—Grass Creek/Cody Wilderness EIS
1. Owl Creek
2. Bobcat Draw Badlands
3. Sheep Mountain
4. Red Butte
5. McCullough Peaks

B—Washakie Wilderness EIS
6. Honeycombs
7. Cedar Mountain
8. Medicine Lodge
9. Alkali Creek
10. Trapper Creek

C—Whiskey Mountain-Dubois Badlands Wilderness EIS
11. Whiskey Mountain
12. Dubois Badlands

D—Lander Wilderness EIS
13. Sweetwater Canyon
14. Copper Mountain
15. Sweetwater Rocks (4 Areas)

E—Adobe Town-Ferris Mountains Wilderness EIS
16. Adobe Town
17. Ferris Mountains

F—Scab Creek Wilderness EIS
18. Scab Creek

G—Great Divide Wilderness EIS
19. Encampment River Canyon
20. Prospect Mountain
21. Bennett Mountain

H—Rock Springs Wilderness EIS
22. Lake Mountain
23. Raymond Mountain
24. Buffalo Hump
25. Sand Dunes
26. Alkali Draw
27. South Pinnacles
28. Alkali Basin/East Sand Dunes
29. Red Lake
30. Honeycomb Buttes
31. Oregon Buttes
32. Whitehorse Creek
33. Devil's Playground/Twin Buttes
34. Red Creek Badlands

I—Buffalo Wilderness EIS
35. Gardner Mountain
36. North Fork
37. Fortification Creek

J—Billings Wilderness EIS
38. Pryor Mountain
39. Bighorn Tack-on

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary Analysis of WSA Recommendations

Grass Creek/Cody Study

Owl Creek Study Area.....3
Bobcat Draw Badlands Study Area.....12
Sheep Mountain Study Area.....24
Red Butte Study Area.....34
McCullough Peaks Study Area.....43

Washakie Study

Honeycombs Study Area.....54
Cedar Mountain Study Area.....64
Medicine Lodge Study Area.....75
Alkali Creek Study Area.....86
Trapper Creek Study Area.....97

Lander Study

Sweetwater Canyon Study Area.....110
Copper Mountain Study Area.....121
Sweetwater Rocks (Lankin Dome) Study Area.....129
Sweetwater Rocks (Split Rock) Study Area.....139
Sweetwater Rocks (Savage Peak) Study Area.....149
Sweetwater Rocks (Miller Spring) Study Area.....158

Dubois Badlands/Whiskey Mountain Study

Dubois Badlands Study Area.....168
Whiskey Mountain Study Area.....177

Adobetown/Ferris Mountains Study

Adobetown Study Area.....184
Ferris Mountains Study Area.....196

Great Divide Study

Encampment River Canyon Study Area.....206
Prospect Mountain Study Area.....214
Bennett Mountains Study Area.....222

Rock Springs District Study

Lake Mountain Study Area.....232
Raymond Mountain Study Area.....240
Buffalo Hump Study Area.....248
South Pinnacles Study Area.....258
Sand Dunes Study Area.....265
Alkalin Basin/East Sand Dunes Study Area.....276
Alkali Draw Study Area.....284
Red Lake Study Area.....293
Honeycomb Buttes Study Area.....302
Oregon Buttes.....313
Whitehorse Creek Study Area.....323

Devils Playground/Twin Buttes Study Area.....332
Red Creek Badlands Study Area.....339

Buffalo Study
Gardner Mountain Study Area.....349
North Fork Study Area.....358
Fortification Creek Study Area.....366

Billings Study
Pryor Mountain Study Area.....376
Bighorn Tack-On Study Area.....385

Appendix 1 - Scab Creek ISA Report.....1-1

Appendix 2 - Inholdings and Acquisitions Table.....2-1

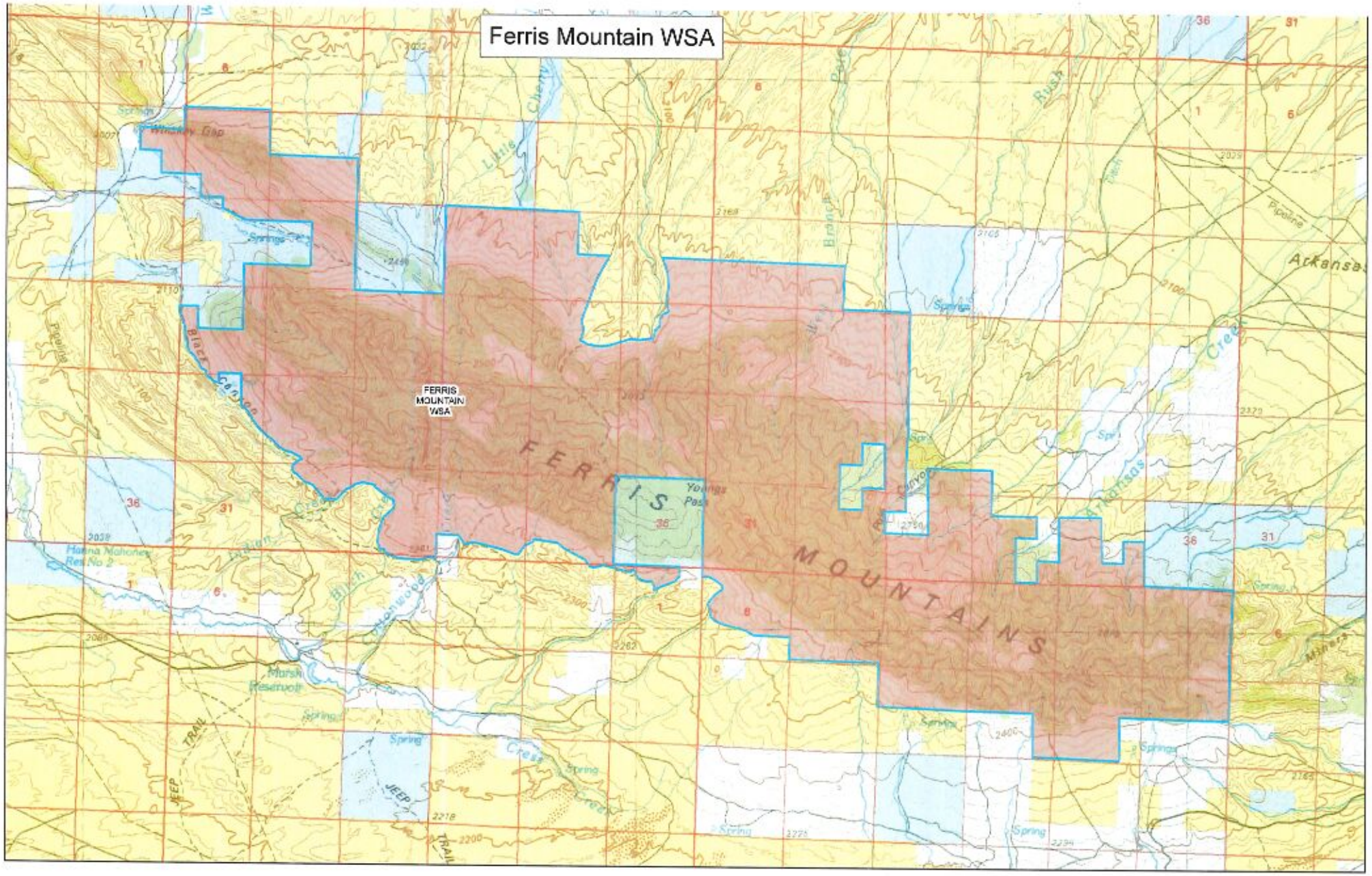
FERRIS MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

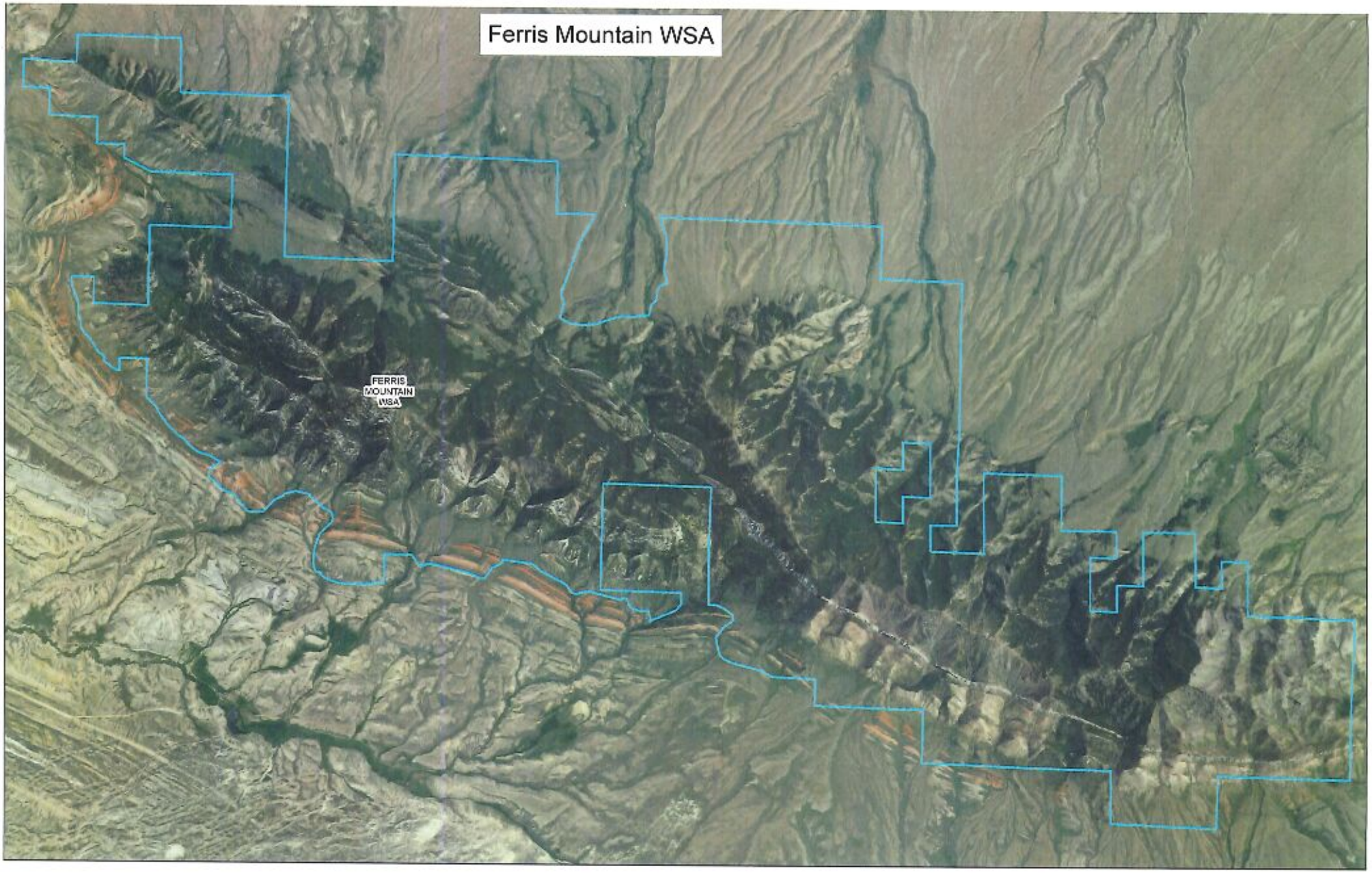
1. THE STUDY AREA -- 22,245 acres

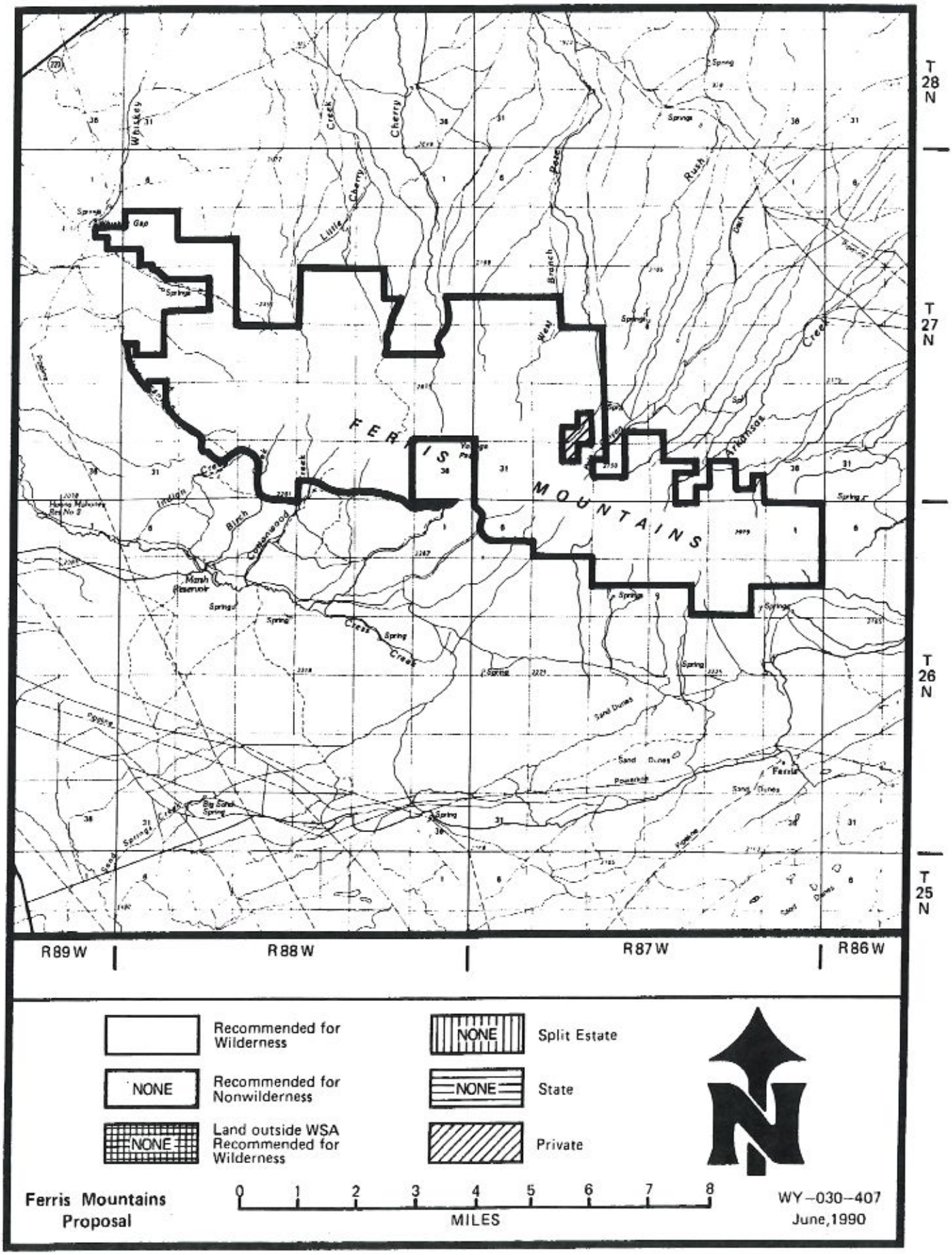
The Ferris Mountains WSA (WY-030-407) includes 22,245 acres of BLM lands and one privately owned inholding totalling 160 acres (see Table 1). The WSA is located in northwestern Carbon County, about 40 miles north of Rawlins, Wyoming. The Ferris Mountains are a small mountain range, rising abruptly from the gently rolling plains that surround the WSA. The WSA is bounded on the north by the rolling plains of the Sweetwater Valley, on the south by the level expanses of Separation Flat, on the west by state land and Whiskey Gap, and on the east by Miners Canyon (see Map 1).

The Ferris Mountains WSA is extremely steep and rugged, providing unusual and spectacular scenery. Along the southern flank, a formation of limestone outcrops forms a prominent white band twelve miles long which is visible for up to 50 miles. Ferris Peak is the highest point in the Great Divide Basin at 10,037 feet and rises some 3,000 feet from the valley floor. Vegetation consists of coniferous trees, shrubby plants, grasses and forbs. The WSA also contains grassy meadows and riparian areas.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Final Adobe Town-Ferris Mountains Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in January 1988. There were three alternatives analyzed in the EIS including All Wilderness, which is the recommendation in this report, No Wilderness, and a second All Wilderness alternative which also included the private inholding and adjacent private and state lands (totalling 1,800 acres) in the designated wilderness.


Ferris Mountain WSA
FERRIS MOUNTAIN WSA
FERRIS MOUNTAINS
Youngs Pass
Black Canyon
Arkansas Creek
Hanna Mahoney Res No 2
Marsh Reservoir
Whiskey Gap
Little Cherry
Rush
Pipeline
Springs
Spring
JEEP TRAIL


Ferris Mountain WSA
FERRIS MOUNTAIN WSA



Ferris Mountains Proposal

WY-030-407
June, 1990

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

Within Wilderness Study Area	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	22,245
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (State, private)	160
Total	22,405
Within the recommended wilderness boundary	
BLM (within WSA)	22,245
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	22,245
Inholdings (state, private)	160
Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness	
BLM	0
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land not recommended for Wilderness	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0

2. **RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE** -- **22,245 acres recommended for wilderness**
0 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate the entire area as wilderness (Map 1). This is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it will result in the least change in the natural environment over the long term. This recommendation for wilderness will further apply to any additional inholding acreage acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners. Appendix 1 lists all inholdings and provides additional information on acquisition of inholdings.

In recommending this area for wilderness, the exemplary quality of its wilderness values was a key consideration. The WSA is in a natural state, rugged and roadless. There is a lack of development in the Ferris Mountains WSA. The wilderness inventory of this area judged the WSA to be natural in appearance. One man-made intrusion in the area was the Babb's Mine which included an old mine access road and mineral exploration area. This scar has since been reclaimed entirely and no longer represents an intrusion into the area's natural appearance.

Outstanding opportunities for solitude are available throughout the WSA. The area's ruggedness, its roadless nature, and its size all contribute to the outstanding opportunities for solitude. Visitors to the area would be able to avoid the sights and sounds of others and find seclusion in this rugged area. Major canyons distributed throughout the WSA offer places to escape the activities of others.

The Ferris Mountains WSA provides a number of high quality classic wilderness recreation opportunities. These include hiking and backpacking, horseback riding, camping, studying nature, and mountain climbing. Big game hunting is of exceptional quality. The Ferris Mountains WSA also contains a portion of the east rim of the Wyoming Great Divide Basin and the Continental Divide. All of these features combine to offer a diverse recreation opportunity.

Designation of this area as wilderness would add an ecosystem not currently represented in the wilderness system. All 22,245 acres of the Ferris Mountains WSA are included in the Wyoming Basin/Douglas Fir Forest ecosystem. No designated wilderness areas contain this ecosystem. Only one other BLM area in Wyoming is under study that contains this ecosystem, and the example in the Ferris Mountains is judged to be the most natural of the areas studied in this state.

The wilderness recommendation would not conflict with other resource uses in the WSA. Grazing of the area will be allowed to continue. The area has low potential for energy and mineral resources. It is unlikely that timber resources would have any commercial value in the foreseeable future.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilderness Characteristics

A. **Naturalness:** The Ferris Mountains WSA has an essentially natural character. The area is extremely rugged with elevations rising over 10,000 feet. The WSA contains numerous high ridges and deep canyons with no evidence of past human activity. Dense timber, interspersed with rock outcrops and open grassy meadows, contribute to the natural appearance of the area.

The only significant human imprints noted during the wilderness inventory were those associated with the Babb's Mine. These included an old two-track access road and two adits. Since the inventory, these intrusions have been reclaimed so that they no longer detract from the WSA's natural appearance. The adits were closed and recontoured; the road was obliterated. The entire disturbed area was reseeded with native vegetation. Visual distances, rugged topography, and dense vegetation all serve to obscure other minor imprints of man within the WSA. The overall influence of human imprints on the naturalness of the area as perceived by the average visitor is negligible.

B. **Solitude:** The Ferris Mountains WSA contains outstanding opportunities for solitude. Extreme local relief and abundant vegetative cover combine to provide outstanding opportunities to experience solitude. Substantial vegetative and topographic screening is provided by the area's steep mountain slopes, its deep secluded canyons, and its abundant forest cover. Scattered open meadows in the central part of the WSA mix with the densely forested stands to provide a diverse and quality experience without compromising the feeling of isolation. The majestic views of the Sweetwater Valley to the north and the large expanse of Separation Flat to the south provide a feeling of spaciousness. The WSA's diversity encourages freedom of movement within its boundaries.

C. **Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The Ferris Mountains WSA, in combination with its relatively large size, diversity, and ruggedness, contains outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The WSA's ridges, canyons, valleys and meadows offer outstanding opportunities for hiking, hunting, camping and backpacking. These opportunities are further enhanced because the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is proposed to run through a portion of the WSA. A climb to Ferris Peak offers an exceptional hiking experience, where visitors must pick their own routes because there are no trails to the top. Hunting within the WSA is considered exceptional and the scenic values are unique to the region.

D. **Special Features:** The Madison Formation is a particularly unique large limestone outcrop. This formation is a series of large limestone fins protruding from the south side of the Ferris Mountains and extends nearly the entire length of the WSA. The Madison Formation can be seen for many miles away and contributes to the WSA's status as a state and regional landmark.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. **Expanding the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems and landforms:** Wilderness designation of the WSA would add an ecosystem not presently represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. There is only one other BLM area in Wyoming under study with this ecosystem, and the example in this WSA is judged to be the most natural of the areas studied in this state. This information is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Studies Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas areas	NWPS Areas acres	Other BLM areas	Other BLM acres
	NATION WIDE			
Dry Domain/ Wyoming Basin Province/Douglas-fir Forest	0	0	1	6,339
	WYOMING			
	0	0	1	6,339

B. **Assessing the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers:** The WSA is within a five hour drive of two major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of the population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Casper, WY	27	4,080,891	32	443,414
Cheyenne, WY	27	1,950,377	11	69,300

C. **Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas:** The Ferris Mountains WSA would contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. Although Wyoming and neighboring states contain a great deal of designated wilderness, no units of the National Wilderness Preservation System are located in central Wyoming. The Ferris Mountains WSA would help fill this gap.

Manageability (the area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The Ferris Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness. There are no pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases in the WSA. The post-FLPMA leases contain the Wilderness Protection Stipulation and the potential for oil and gas development is low.

The only concern relates to the 160-acre private inholding. If the inholding is developed in the future, an access route would be needed. The development and access route could to some degree impair BLM's ability to manage the directly affected lands as wilderness. However, the WSA is still considered manageable as wilderness because it is unlikely that any development would occur, and even if it did, the access route would be less than 1/2 mile in length.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Bureau of Mines conducted a mineral assessment of the Ferris Mountains WSA in 1983 and 1984 (U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1757-C, 1988). The results of that report provide the basis for the following information.

The results of that assessment show that there are no identified mineral resources in the WSA. There is low resource potential for minerals including gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, iron, nickel, molybdenum, tungsten, lithium, beryllium, manganese, calcium carbonate, and silica. The mineral assessment also concluded that there is no resource potential for phosphate, gypsum, uranium, thorium, and oil and gas.

Two mineralized areas (the Babbs mine and the Spanish mine) were examined and sampled in detail by the Bureau of Mines. The Babbs mine area contains no current claims. The samples analyzed from this area contained only small amounts of gold, silver and copper. Most samples did not contain either precious or base metals. The conclusion drawn by Bureau of Mines is that no occurrence of base or precious metals in the Babbs mine area constitutes a resource.

The Spanish Mine claims lie partially within the Ferris Mountains WSA. The mineral assessment found evidence of mineralization generally consisting of low-grade copper, lead, zinc, silver, arsenic, and rare traces of gold. Again, none of these mineral occurrences are classified as an identified resource.

There is no present production of any mineral resource in the WSA.

Impacts on Other Resources

The following comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all the alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

TABLE 4
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF IMPACTS

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (All Wilderness)	No Wilderness	Enhanced Wilderness
Wilderness Values	Wilderness values retained on 22,245 acres. Impacts to naturalness and solitude would not occur on 4,000 acres.	Naturalness and solitude lost or impaired on 4,000 acres. No legal protection of wilderness values on 22,245 acres.	Wilderness values retained on 24,045 acres. Impacts to naturalness and solitude would not occur on 4,000 acres.
Energy and Mineral Resources	22,245 acres closed to mineral entry and leasing.	22,245 acres open to mineral entry and leasing.	24,045 acres closed to mineral entry and leasing.
ORV Use	Ten visitor-days annually displaced from 22,245 acres; insignificant impact due to better opportunities on nearby public lands.	Ten visitor-days annually displaced from 22,245 acres. No increase in vehicle accessibility; no significant impacts.	One hundred-fifty visitor-days annually displaced from 24,045 acres; insignificant impact due to better opportunities on nearby public land.
Forestry acres of forest land forgone.	8 MMBF harvest on 1,000 acres forgone. Timber management on remaining 8,000 other timber management could Sales unlikely in foreseeable future.	8 MMBF harvest on 1,000 acres over next 50 to 100 years; of forested land forgone. Sales unlikely occur on remaining 8,000 acres of forested land, but sales are unlikely in foreseeable future.	8 MMBF harvest on 1,000 acres forgone. Timber management on remaining 8,000 acres in foreseeable future.
Wildlife	No impacts. Long-term protection of wildlife habitat on 22,245 acres. Prescribed burns on 6,000 acres would double bighorn sheep population.	No impacts. Loss of 1,000 acres of habitat over short term while harvesting occurs. Prescribed burns on 6,000 acres would double bighorn sheep population.	No impacts. Long-term protection of wildlife habitat on 24,045 acres. Prescribed burns on 6,000 acres would double bighorn sheep population.
Raptors	No impacts. Long-term protection of nesting habitat on 22,245 acres.	No impacts. Nesting habitat protected because timber harvest would not occur during nesting activity.	No impacts. Long-term protection of nesting habitat on 24,045 acres.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Local social and economic considerations were not an issue in the EIS. There were no impacts to the local economy or social character identified during the study of this WSA.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Inventory: During the inventory phase, 36 comments were received on the Ferris Mountains WSA. Twenty supported inclusion of this unit as a wilderness study area and 11 were opposed to the unit's inclusion. Those who favored wilderness study believed that the unit had all the prerequisite wilderness characteristics for a WSA. Those opposed cited reasons such as mineral values, the loss of timber resources, and elimination of motorized access for hunting.

Draft EIS: During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 45 comments, both written and oral, were received. Of those, four oral statements were received at the public hearing held in Rawlins, Wyoming; the remaining 41 comments were written responses to the draft EIS. In general, 26 comments favored wilderness designation and 11 comments favored no wilderness designation. Eight comments addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation or nondesignation.

Support for wilderness designation stemmed from a desire to protect some of the public lands from commercial exploitation. Opposition to designation was based on mineral potential and the desire for uses other than wilderness.

Of all comments received, 4 were from federal agencies and 8 were from state agencies. No comments were received from local agencies. Of the federal agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service supported the Proposed Action (All Wilderness Alternative). Of the state agencies, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the Department of Environmental Quality (Water Quality Division), and the Wyoming Recreation Commission all supported the Proposed Action. The Geological Survey of Wyoming and the Department of Agriculture supported the No Wilderness Alternative. The State Engineer's Office voiced some concern about wilderness designation, and the Oil and Gas Commission had no comment. In addition, the Governor's Office had no overall position regarding wilderness designation, but were opposed to inclusion of state-owned land or mineral estates in BLM WSAs.

APPENDIX 1
ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS
WITHIN AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION [1]

Legal Description (Prior to any Subdivisional)	Total Acreage	Number of Owners (If Parcel has been Subdivided)	Type of Ownership by Estate (Federal, State, Private, other)		Presently Proposed for Acquisition (Yes, No)	Preferred Method of Acquisition (Purchase, Exchange, other)	Estimated Cost of Acquisition	
			Surface Estate	Subsurface Estate			Land Costs	Processing Costs
Parcel 1 T.27N.,R.87W Sec. 29, NE1/4SE1/4, S1/2SE1/4 Sec. 32, NW1/4NE1/4	160	1	Private	Private	Yes	Exchange		

[1] The standard costs in this appendix in no way represent a formal appraised value of the land in general estate, but are rough estimates based on sales or exchanges of lands or mineral estates with similar characteristics to those included in the WSA. The estimates are for purposes of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring non-Federal holdings and in no way represent an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimate included in this appendix.

ENCAMPMENT RIVER CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

1. THE STUDY AREA -- 4,547 acres

The Encampment River Canyon WSA (WY-030-301) includes 4,547 acres of BLM lands with no inholdings or split estate lands (see Table 1). The WSA is located in southern Carbon County, approximately 2 miles south of Encampment, Wyoming and 1 mile north of the U.S. Forest Service Encampment River Wilderness. It lies in the foothills of the Sierra Madre mountains.

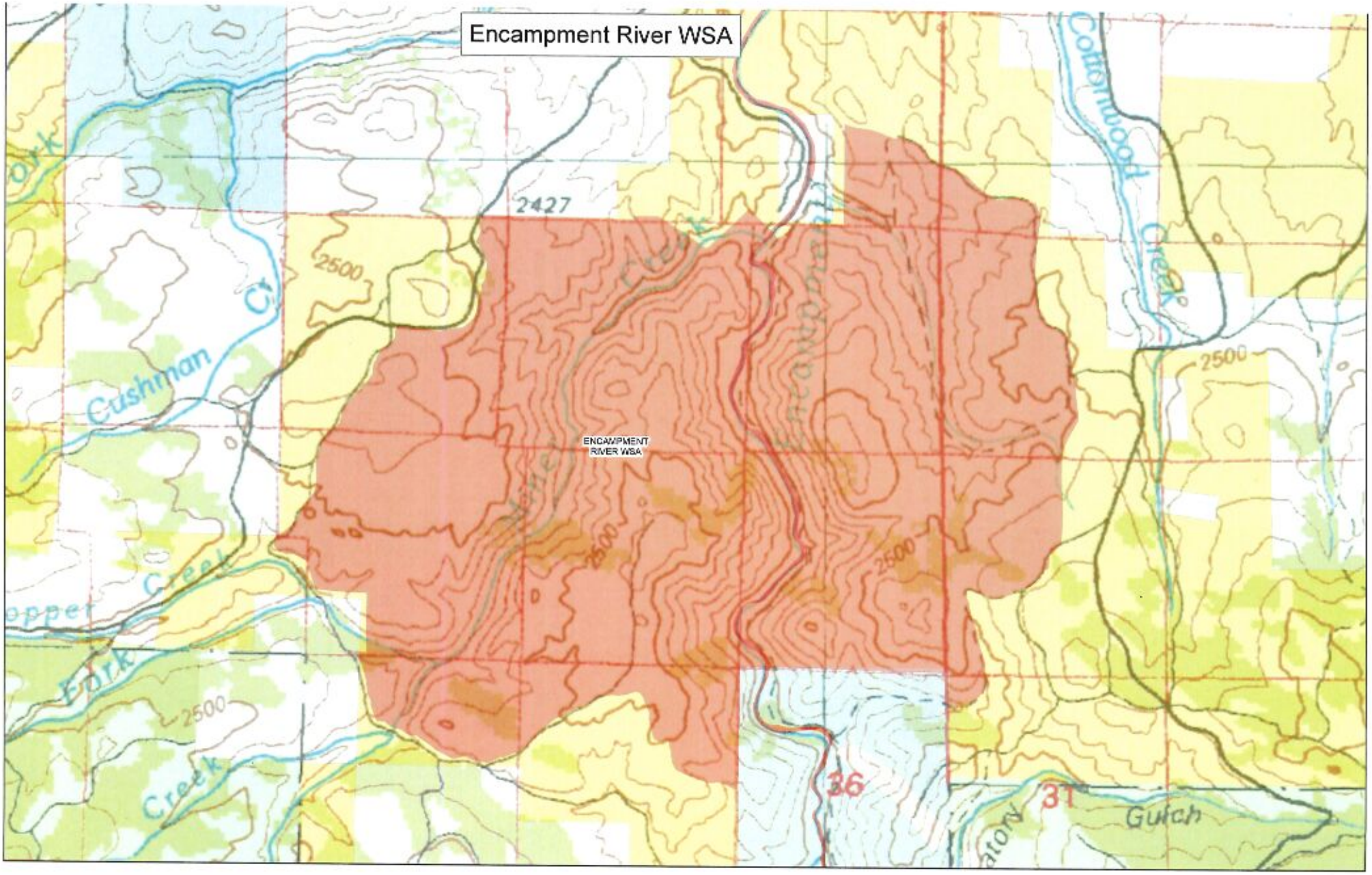
The WSA is bounded on the north by private lands, fences and roads; on the east by roads and a powerline; on the south by private and state lands, roads, and mineral exploration activity; and on the west by roads (see Map 1).

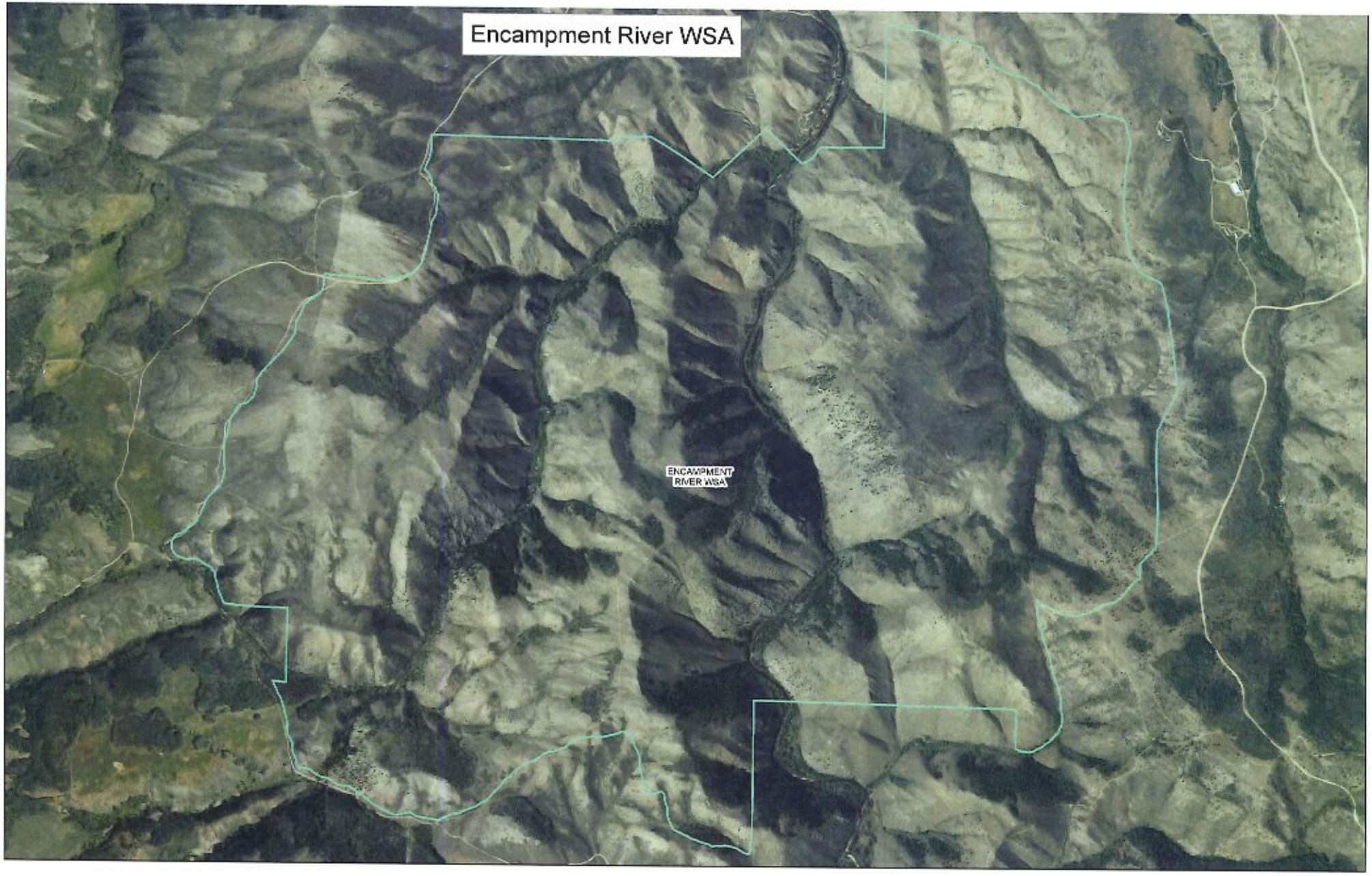
The topography of the entire unit is mountainous. Steep canyons and rocky slopes dominate the vistas. The Encampment River and a major tributary, Miner Creek, add scenic features to the WSA. Elevations range from 7,200 feet along the Encampment River to 8,545 feet on the high ridges.

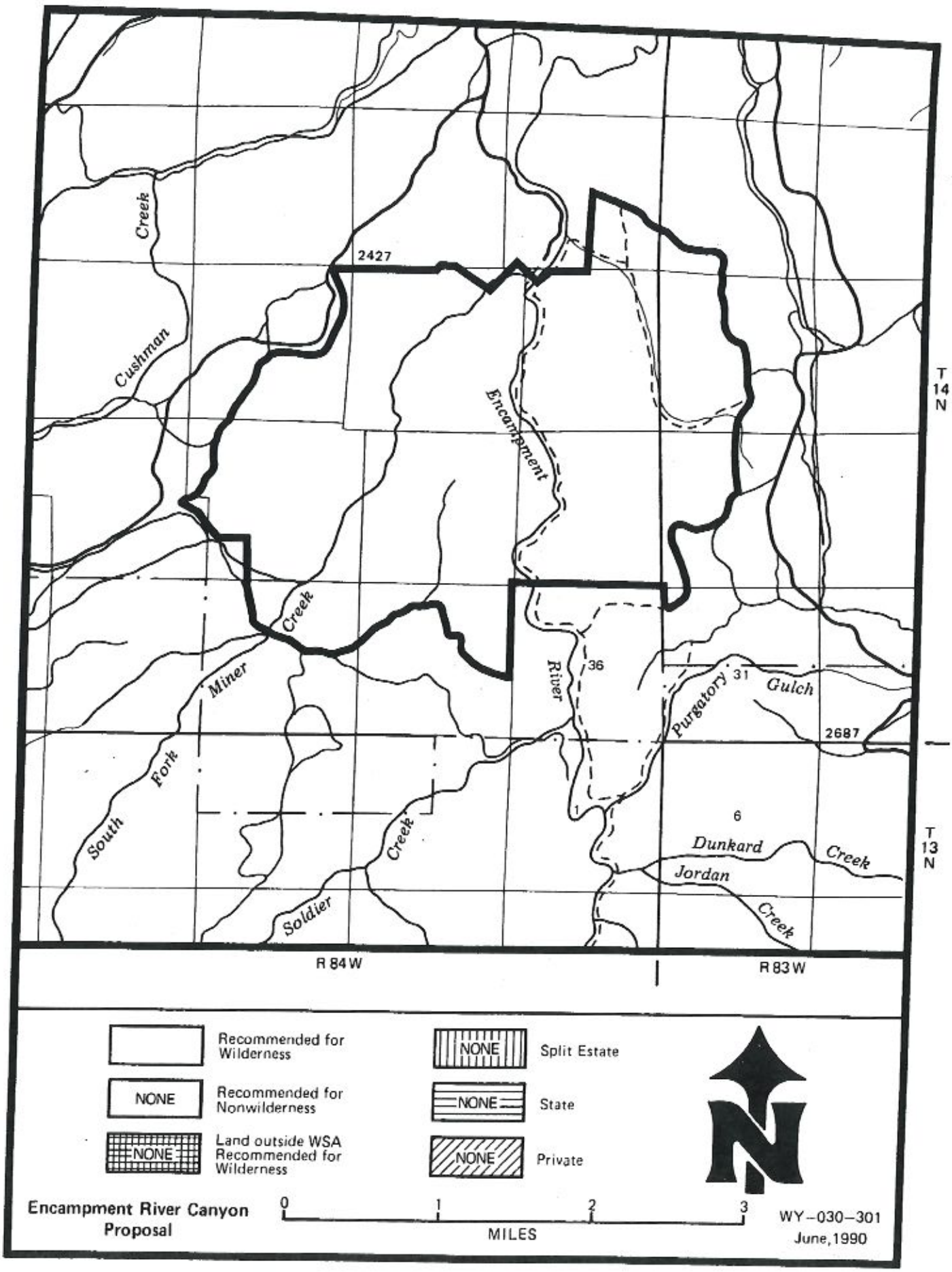
Approximately 10 percent of the WSA is forested. Tree species present include limber pine, lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, subalpine fir, cottonwood and aspen. They occur in pure and mixed stands scattered throughout the WSA.

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

Within Wilderness Study Area		
BLM (surface and subsurface)		4,547
Split Estate (BLM surface only)		0
Inholdings (State, Private)		0
Total		4,547
Within the recommended wilderness boundary		
BLM (within WSA)		4,547
BLM (outside WSA)		0
Split Estate (within WSA)		0
Split Estate (outside WSA)		0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	4,547	
Inholdings (State, Private)		0
Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness		
BLM	0	
Split Estate	0	
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	0	
Inholdings (State, Private)		0


Encampment River WSA
ENCAMPMENT RIVER WSA
Cottonwood Creek
Cushman Cr
Upper Fork Creek
Creek
2427
2500
2500
2500
2500
2500
36
31
Gulch


Encampment River WSA
ENCAMPMENT RIVER WSA



Encampment River Canyon Proposal

Lower elevations and drainages are characterized by narrow belts of deciduous trees (cottonwoods, willows, alders), coniferous trees (Douglas-fir, true firs), grasses, and forbs bordering the Encampment River.

The middle and upper elevations along with the rocky slopes are primarily composed of a mosaic of bunchgrass with small shrubs (sagebrush, mountain mahogany, bitterbrush, serviceberry) on steep canyon slopes, and small fingers of trees in the draws and gullies. This mosaic of vegetation has been influenced by wildfires and through differing aspects of the canyon.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Final Great Divide Resource Area Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in August, 1990. There were two alternatives analyzed in the EIS including All Wilderness, which is the recommendation in this report, and No Wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE -- 4,547 acres recommended for wilderness
0 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate the entire area as wilderness. This is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change to the natural environment over the long term.

In recommending the WSA for wilderness, the quality of the area's wilderness values was a key consideration. The WSA is in a natural state, rugged and scenic. The WSA consists mainly of the Encampment River and Miner Creek canyons, both steep-walled and rugged with dense vegetation. The area does contain a few man-made features, including a fence, the remains of two old cabins, the washed out remains of a river dam, numerous prospect pits and tunnels, and the remains of a wooden pipeline. However, these have weathered for many years and now blend into the overall view. They do not seriously impair the wilderness character of the area.

Outstanding opportunities for solitude are available throughout the WSA. The area's ruggedness and roadless nature contribute to the outstanding opportunities for solitude. Although most visitor use is concentrated on the Encampment River Trail that parallels the river, visitors would be able to escape the sights and sounds of others in the numerous side canyons in the WSA.

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are outstanding in the WSA. Opportunities include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, kayaking, canoeing, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and photography. The Encampment River Trail parallels the river and provides access to its entire length. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has classified the Encampment River as a "Class 2" stream, which means that it is very good trout water of statewide importance.

Conflicts with other resource uses of this WSA are limited. The area provides crucial winter range for bighorn sheep, elk, and mule deer. Prescribed burning of approximately 600 acres is needed to improve the quantity and quality of the winter range. In addition, certain range improvements are needed to achieve rangeland management objectives. Although both prescribed

fire and new range improvements are allowed in designated wilderness, these activities can be done only under very strict conditions. Designating this area as wilderness could increase the cost sufficiently to make these projects unfeasible.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilderness Characteristics

A. **Naturalness:** Most of the WSA is in a relatively natural state. A fence line crosses one half of the WSA, but its location is not intrusive except at one place on the hiking trail that parallels the river. The area also has a few two-track trails, remains of two old cabins and the washed out remains of a river dam, numerous prospect pits and tunnels, and the remains of a wooden pipeline. These intrusions have weathered for many years and now blend into the overall view. Except for two piles of mine tailings, the intrusions are not noticeable from a distance. They do not seriously impair the wilderness character of the WSA as a whole.

The International Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) has developed a private parcel of land adjacent to the WSA along the river; however, due to screening provided by trees, rock outcrops, and steep canyon walls, the area is not noticeable from within the WSA. The development does not impair the wilderness character of the WSA.

B. **Solitude:** The WSA offers opportunities for solitude in the canyon. The deep canyons and high rocky ridges provide topographic screening, and the vegetation of the area contributes further screening. At current and projected levels of use, contacts between visitors would be high along the trail, which would reduce the level of solitude. The portion of the WSA above the canyon is accessible by vehicles and solitude qualities are diminished.

C. **Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The Encampment River Canyon WSA offers opportunities for a great variety of recreational activities, including fishing, hunting, backpacking, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing and photography, camping, rock hounding, and sightseeing. The river canyon attracts recreationists from Wyoming and the neighboring states of Colorado, Nebraska, and Utah.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) has classified the Encampment River as very good trout waters with statewide importance.

The Encampment River Trail parallels the river and provides access to the entire length of the river. The trail is closed to motorized vehicle use year round, and the entire WSA is closed to motorized traffic in the winter for big game protection.

Mule deer hunting is very popular within the WSA as, locally, it is considered a potential trophy area. There are no hunting seasons on bighorn sheep in the area because of low sheep numbers.

D. **Special Features:** The Encampment River Canyon contains sites associated with early exploration and mining activities of regional historical importance.

A one mile wide corridor along the Encampment River is proposed for National Natural Landmark (NNL) designation. A portion of the proposed NNL lies within the WSA.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. **Expanding the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems and landforms:** Wilderness designation of the WSA would not expand the diversity of ecosystem representation in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The ecosystem is already represented in the wilderness system by 41 areas covering 4,756,981 acres. Of this total, 12 wilderness areas are located in Wyoming and cover 1,633,603 acres. Nationwide there are 9 WSAs under study with this ecosystem, two of which are in Wyoming. This information is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas areas	NWPS Areas acres	Other BLM Studies areas	Other BLM Studies acres
		NATION WIDE		
Dry Domain/ Rocky Mountain Forest Province/ Western Spruce-fir Forest	41	4,756,981	9	64,171
		WYOMING		
	12	1,633,603	2	5,692

B. **Assessing the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers:** The WSA is within a five hour drive of six major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of the population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Areas areas	NWPS Areas acres	Other BLM Studies areas	Other BLM Studies acres
Casper, Wyoming	27	4,080,891	32	461,112
Cheyenne, Wyoming	27	1,950,377	11	86,998
Boulder, Colorado	33	2,719,962	27	466,314
Denver, Colorado	33	2,719,962	27	466,314
Ft. Collins, Colorado	33	2,719,962	27	466,314
Greeley, Colorado	33	2,719,962	27	466,314

C. **Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas:** The Encampment River Canyon WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. There are 4 wilderness areas in southern Wyoming in close proximity to this WSA. Also, there are 8 areas in northern Colorado within 200 miles or less of the WSA.

Manageability (The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The Encampment River Canyon WSA is manageable as wilderness. There are no oil and gas leases or inholdings in the WSA and mineral resource potential is low.

The only concern relates to the existence of post-FLPMA mining claims within or partially within the WSA. These claims are located for copper, gold, and silver and have not been developed. Upon wilderness designation, validity examinations would be conducted on existing mining claims. Development of valid claims would be allowed with restrictions to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the land. Mining activity would impair BLM's ability to manage the directly affected lands as wilderness but it is unlikely that development would occur.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines conducted a mineral assessment of the Encampment River Canyon WSA in 1987 (U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1757-F, 1989). The results of that report provide the basis for the following information.

The results of the assessment show that there are no identified resources in the WSA. There is low resource potential for undiscovered metallic commodities and industrial minerals. The mineral assessment also concluded that there is no resource potential for oil and gas, coal, geothermal resources, or uranium.

There is no present production of any mineral resource in the WSA.

Impacts on Other Resources

The following comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all the alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

TABLE 4
SUMMARY OF IMPACTS
Encampment River Canyon WSA

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (All Wilderness)	No Wilderness
Naturalness	Prescribed burning would destroy naturalness for 1-3 years on approximately 1,200 acres. Closing ORV use yearlong would have a positive effect on 500 acres. Range improvement projects would have a negative effect on 2-3 acres. vicinity (2-3 acres).	Prescribed burning would destroy naturalness for 1-3 years on approximately 1,200 acres. ORV use in the upland would have a negative effect from May 1 to November 30 on about 500 acres. Range improvement projects would destroy naturalness in the immediate
Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and/or Primitive Unconfined Recreation	Prescribed spring burning would have a negative effect for 2-3 weeks on solitude, but few visitors are present. Closing ORV use yearlong would have a minor, but positive effect. Range projects would destroy solitude during construction. Cattle use would have a negative unconfined recreation.	Prescribed burning would have a negative effect for 2-3 weeks in the spring but few visitors are present. ORV use in the uplands would have little effect because most visitation is on the canyon trail. Range projects would destroy solitude during construction. Cattle use in the area would have a negative effect on primitive, affect on primitive, unconfined recreation
Special Features	There would be positive effects on special features because there would be no degrading actions.	There would be no negative affects anticipated on special features because surface-disturbing activities are not expected.
Recreational Opportunities	Vegetative manipulation would have a positive effect on bighorn sheep viewing because of an anticipated increase in numbers. There would be no motorized recreation. There would be continued visitor/cattle conflicts.	Vegetative manipulation would have a positive effect on bighorn sheep viewing because of an anticipated increase in numbers. Cattle-visitor conflicts would continue even though range improvements would result in better cattle distribution.
Big Game Management	Yearlong ORV closure would have a positive effect on big game by reducing harassment. Big game habitat would be enhanced and an increase in big horn sheep numbers is expected. effect.	Winter closure of ORVs would have a positive effect on big game as would prescribed burning and installation of guzzlers. Bighorn sheep numbers may increase to 150 head. Range improvement projects would have little
Livestock Management	There would be a negative effect on livestock management because of the restriction	There would be no negative effects on livestock management from management actions in this alternative. on the use of motor vehicles.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Local social and economic considerations were not an issue in the EIS. There were no impacts to the local economy or social character identified during the study of this WSA.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Inventory: During the inventory phase, 53 comments were received on the Encampment River Canyon WSA. Twenty-four supported inclusion of this unit as a wilderness study area and 29 were opposed to the unit's inclusion. Those who favored wilderness study believed that the unit had all the prerequisite wilderness characteristics for a WSA. Those opposed cited reasons such as elimination of motorized access, the small size of the area, a preference for multiple-use rather than wilderness, and a lack of wilderness characteristics.

Draft EIS: During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 131 written comments were received. There were no oral or written comments received at the wilderness public hearings held in Rawlins and Laramie, Wyoming. In general, 125 comments favored wilderness designation and 1 comment favored no wilderness designation. The comments in favor of wilderness designation were primarily generic comments which included two other WSAs. Five comments addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation or nondesignation.

Support for wilderness designation stemmed from a desire to protect some of the public lands from commercial exploitation. Opposition to designation was based on the small size of the area.

Of all comments received, 2 were from federal agencies and 3 were from state agencies. No comments were received from local agencies. Of the federal agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Bureau of Mines did not state a formal position. Of the state agencies, the Geological Survey of Wyoming and the Wyoming State Engineer's Office did not state a formal position. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department prefers an ACEC designation but, if that does not occur, they support a wilderness designation.

PROSPECT MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

1. THE STUDY AREA -- 1,145 acres

The Prospect Mountain WSA (WY-030-303) includes 1,145 acres of BLM lands with no inholdings or split estate lands (see Table 1). The WSA is located in southern Carbon County approximately 16 miles southeast of Encampment, Wyoming, and 8 miles north of the Colorado-Wyoming border, along the southwestern flank of the Snowy Range in the Medicine Bow Mountains. The WSA is bounded on the north by the Prospect Creek Road and the North Platte River, on the east by the U.S. Forest Service Platte River Wilderness, on the south by a two-track road and fenceline, and on the west by a fenceline (see Map 1).

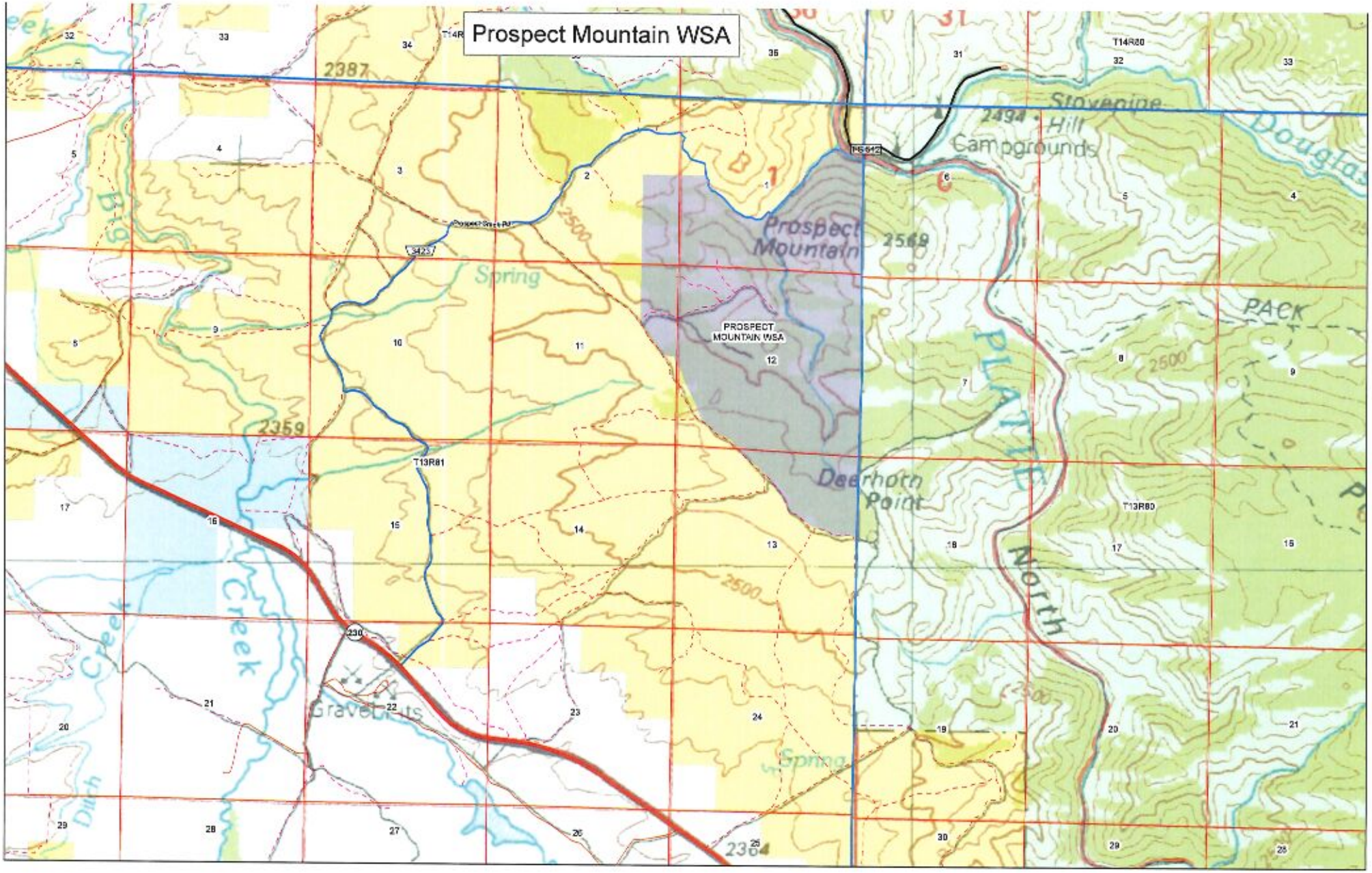
The WSA contains the western half of Prospect Mountain. Elevations range from 7,400 feet along the North Platte River to 8,430 feet on Prospect Mountain. The WSA is 70 percent forested, with lodgepole pine and aspen as the major species, and contains riparian areas and beaver ponds.

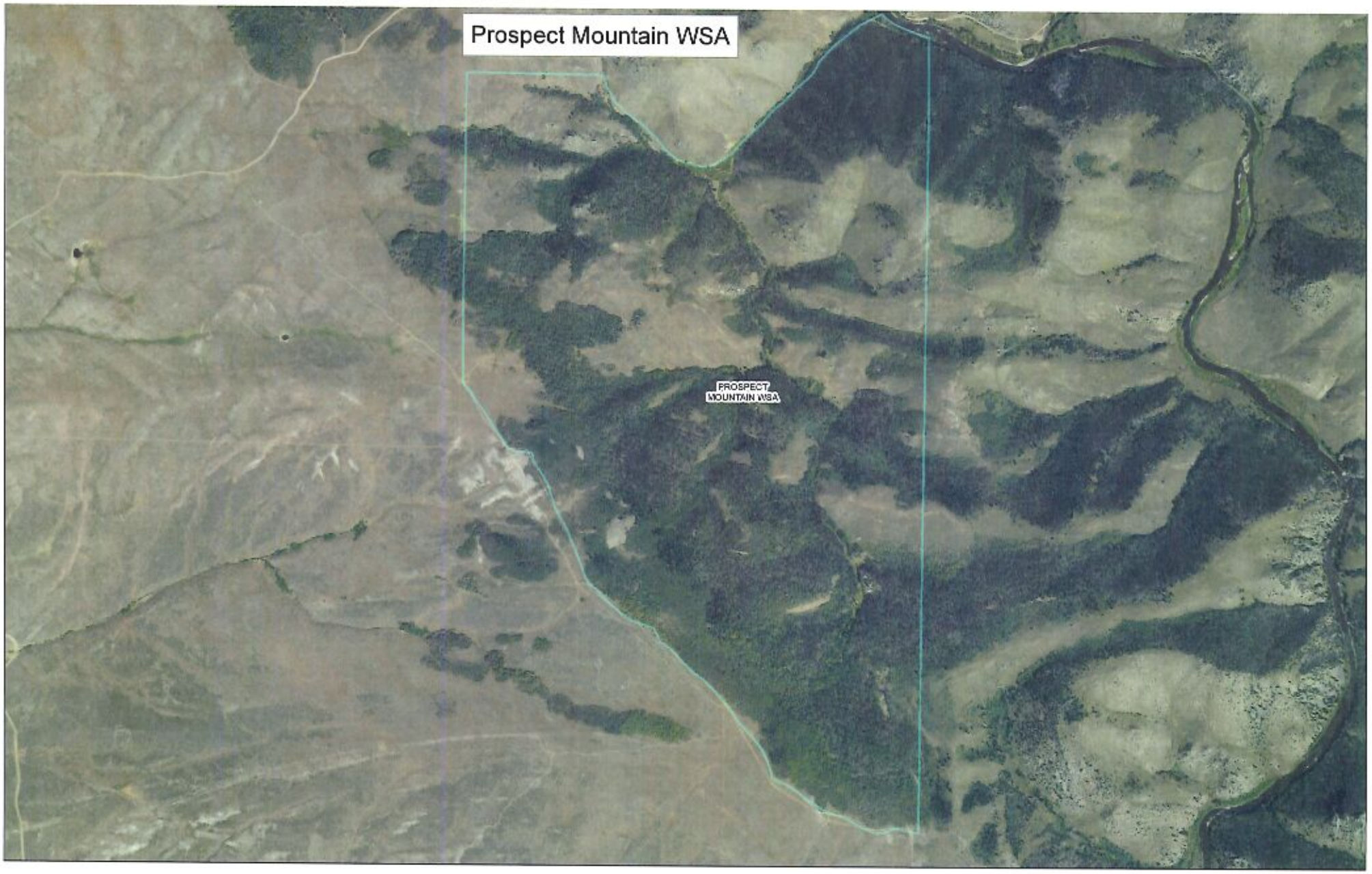
The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Final Great Divide Resource Area Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in August, 1990. There were two alternatives analyzed in the EIS including All Wilderness, which is the recommendation in this report, and No Wilderness.

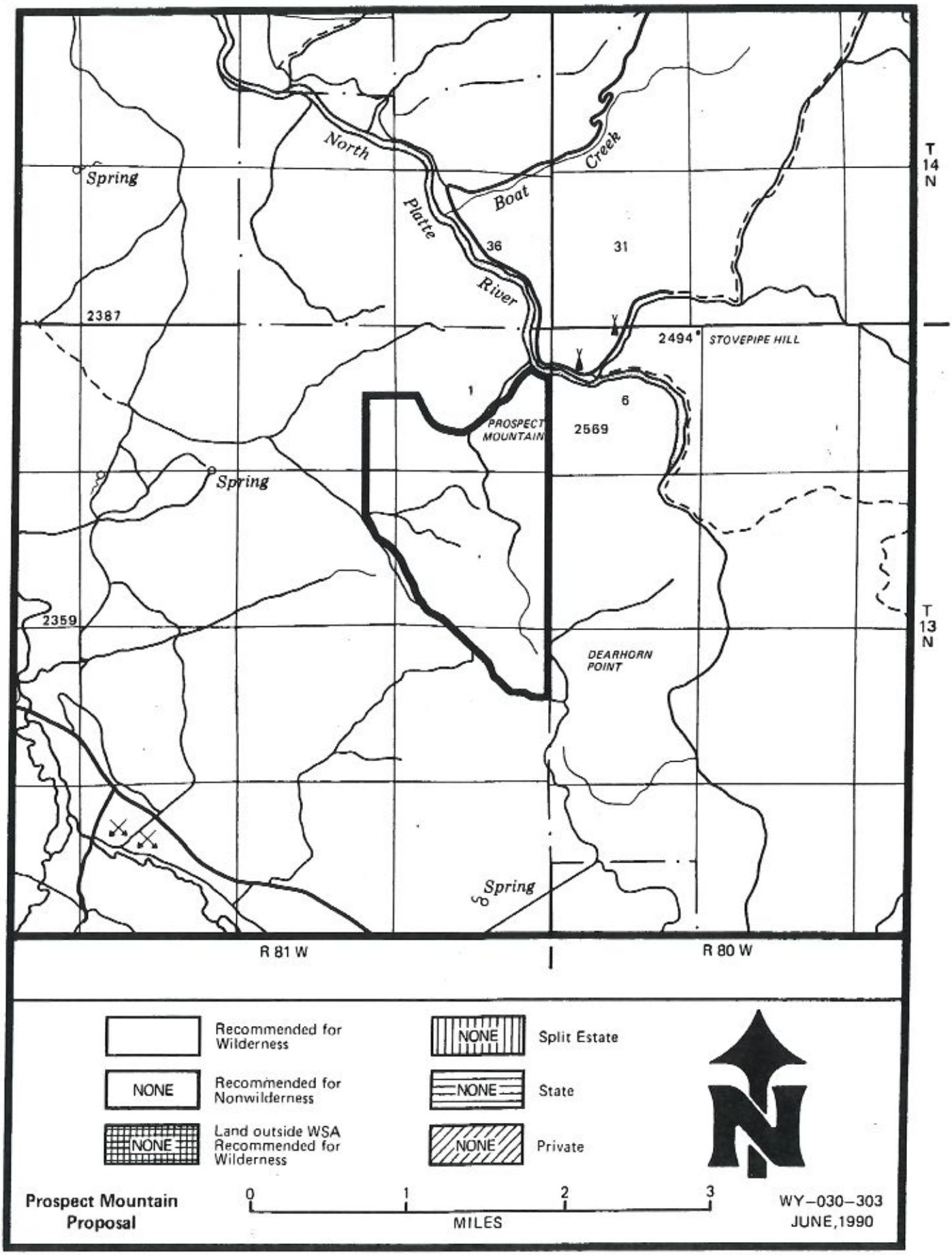
TABLE 1 - Land Status & Acreage Summary of the Study Area

Within Wilderness Study Area	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	1,145
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (State, Private)	0
Total	1,145
Within the recommended wilderness boundary	
BLM (within WSA)	1,145
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	1,145
Inholdings (State, Private)	0
Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness	
BLM	0
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	0
Inholdings (State, Private)	0

STUDY AREA
WILDERNESS


Prospect Mountain WSA
PROSPECT MOUNTAIN WSA
Prospect Mountain
Deerhorn Point
Stovepipe Hill
Campgrounds
Spring
Creek
Gravel Pits
PACK
North
2387
2359
2569
2494
2500
T13R81
T13R80
T14R80
230
3423


Prospect Mountain WSA
PROSPECT
MOUNTAIN WSA


North
Platte
River
Boat
Creek
Spring
Spring
Spring
36
31
1
6
2387
2494
STOVEPIPE HILL
PROSPECT MOUNTAIN
2569
2359
DEARHORN POINT
T 14 N
T 13 N
R 81 W
R 80 W
Recommended for Wilderness
NONE
Recommended for Nonwilderness
NONE
Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
NONE
Split Estate
NONE
State
NONE
Private
0
1
2
3
MILES
Prospect Mountain Proposal
WY-030-303
JUNE, 1990

2. **RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE**---**1,145 acres recommended for wilderness**
0 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate the entire area as wilderness. This is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it will result in the least change in the natural environment over the long term.

In recommending this area for wilderness, the outstanding quality of the area's wilderness values and its location adjacent to the U.S. Forest Service Platte River Wilderness were key considerations. The WSA lies directly adjacent to the Platte River Wilderness, sharing a common border for nearly two miles. The WSA would make an excellent expansion of an existing area and would add the western half of Prospect Mountain to the wilderness system.

The WSA, in combination with the existing wilderness area, contains outstanding wilderness values. The WSA is in a natural state; except for two short two-track trails that dead end, the WSA is free of human-related intrusions. The WSA has mountainous topography with dense forest cover, offering a high degree of solitude. The WSA's combination of topographic and vegetative screening create a variety of secluded places where visitors would be able to escape the sights and sounds of others.

The area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation. Mule deer and elk hunting, hiking, camping, and rock hounding are excellent in the area. The WSA is exceptionally scenic and has abundant wildlife. The North Platte River, adjacent to the WSA, offers exceptional fishing and floatboating opportunities.

Conflicts with other resources uses of this WSA are limited. Designation of the area as wilderness would conflict with forest management because timber harvest would be prohibited. Grazing of the area would be allowed to continue. There is low potential for mineral resources, no potential for energy resources, and no identified mineral resources in the WSA. Mining activity has not occurred though there are post-FLPMA mining claims in the WSA. Development of these claims is unlikely.

3. **CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS**

Wilderness Characteristics

A. **Naturalness:** The Prospect Mountain WSA has an essentially natural character. Man's influence, for the most part, is unnoticeable. Except for two short two-track trails that dead end, the area is free of intrusions. These intrusions blend into the overall view and are not noticeable from a distance. They do not impair the wilderness character of the WSA. The vegetation and/or topography screen the primitive trails, providing a high degree of naturalness.

B. **Solitude:** Prospect Mountain and Prospect Creek, coupled with dense forest cover and riparian areas, provide a high degree of solitude, while creating numerous secluded places for recreational activities. With 70 percent of the area covered by trees, visitors are easily screened from one another. The Platte River Wilderness, which forms the eastern boundary of the WSA and contains 23,000 acres, enhances the opportunity for solitude in this WSA because of its undeveloped nature.

C. **Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The Prospect Mountain area provides a variety of recreational activities, including fishing, hunting, sightseeing, hiking, camping, rock hounding, and wildlife viewing. The area is used by local residents and nonresidents alike. The North Platte River adjacent to the WSA offers high quality fishing and floatboating, and is a well-known national attraction.

Other major recreational use is associated with mule deer and elk hunting. This area provides high-quality hunting and has regional significance.

Opportunities for sightseeing within the WSA are numerous. The area is exceptionally scenic with nongame wildlife such as raptors and small mammals abundant in the WSA.

D. **Special Features:** The Prospect Mountain WSA is highly scenic. Color and texture of the WSA contrast sharply with the adjacent high desert environment. Colors are many shades of green and blue in the warmer months and change to green, gold and brown in the fall.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. **Expanding the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems and landforms:** Wilderness designation of the WSA would not expand the diversity of ecosystem representation in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The ecosystem is already represented in the wilderness system by 41 areas covering 4,756,981 acres. Of this total, 12 wilderness areas are located in Wyoming and cover 1,633,603 acres. Nationwide there are 9 WSAs under study with this ecosystem, two of which are in Wyoming. This information is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas areas	NWPS Areas acres	Other BLM Studies areas	Other BLM Studies acres
		NATION WIDE		
Dry Domain/ Rocky Mountain Forest Province/ Western Spruce-fir Forest	41	4,756,981	9	64,171
		WYOMING		
	12	1,633,603	2	5,692

B. **Assessing the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers:** The WSA is within a five hour drive of six major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of the population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Casper, Wyoming	27	4,080,891	32	464,514
Cheyenne, Wyoming	27	1,950,377	11	90,400
Boulder, Colorado	33	2,719,962	28	469,716
Denver, Colorado	33	2,719,962	28	469,716
Ft. Collins, Colorado	33	2,719,962	28	469,716
Greeley, Colorado	33	2,719,962	28	469,716

C. **Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas:** The Prospect Mountain WSA would not contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. There are 4 wilderness areas in southern Wyoming in close proximity to this WSA. Also, there are 8 areas in northern Colorado within 200 miles or less of the WSA.

Manageability (The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The Prospect Mountain WSA is manageable as wilderness. There are no oil and gas leases or inholdings in the WSA and mineral resource potential is low.

The only concern relates to the existence of post-FLPMA mining claims within or partially within the WSA. These claims are located for various minerals, including copper, uranium, and feldspar and have not been developed. Upon wilderness designation, validity examinations would be conducted on existing mining claims. Development of valid claims would be allowed with restrictions to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the land. Mining activity would impair BLM's ability to manage the directly affected lands as wilderness but it is unlikely that development would occur.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines conducted a mineral assessment of the Prospect Mountain WSA in 1987 (U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1757-E, 1989). The results of that report provide the basis for the following information.

The results of the assessment show that there are no identified resources in the WSA. There is low resource potential for undiscovered metallic commodities and industrial minerals. The mineral assessment also concluded that there is no resource potential for oil and gas, coal, geothermal resources, or uranium.

There is no present production of any mineral resource in the WSA.

Impacts on Other Resources

The following comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all the alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

TABLE 4
SUMMARY OF IMPACTS
Prospect Mountain WSA

Issue Topics	Proposed Action All Wilderness	No Wilderness
Wilderness	Prescribed burning on 120 acres would have a negative effect for two to five years.	ORV use would have a negative, though minor, effect. Prescribed burning would have a negative effect on 120 acres for two to five years. Forest management activities would impair naturalness.
Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and/or Unconfined Recreation	Prescribed burning would be noticeable for about one year.	ORV use would have a negative, though minor, effect. Forest management activities would impair solitude during harvest and would have long-term, negative effects on primitive, unconfined recreation.
Special Features	Effect of burning on scenery would have a negative effect for two to five years on about 250 acres.	ORV use, prescribed burning, would have a negative effect on scenery on about 500 acres for two to five years. Forest management practices would have a negative affect on scenery on about 500 acres.
Recreational Opportunities	ORV users (about 500 visits/year) would be negatively effected.	Timber management practices would displace recreationists for two months in the summer every 10 years.
Big Game Management	There would be a minor, positive effect from ORV closure. Prescribed burning on 120 acres would have a positive effect on crucial elk winter range.	Prescribed burning would have a positive effect on crucial elk winter range.
Forest Management	There would be a natural forest species conversion from lodgepole pine to spruce fir. Fire hazard would increase. Productivity and health of the forest would be less than optimal. Two and one half million board feet of lumber would not be produced.	There would be little species conversion and less diversity in the forest. Fire hazard would be lessened. Two and one half million board feet of lumber would be harvested.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Local social considerations were not an issue in the EIS. There were no impacts to the local social character identified during the study of this WSA. An economic consideration related to timber harvest was identified. Wilderness designation would prohibit timber harvest which would result in a loss of about 10 work years of potential employment and about $737,000 in potential revenue generation in the near future and would make a potential winter logging area unavailable.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Inventory: During the inventory phase, 27 comments were received on the Prospect Mountain WSA. Eighteen supported inclusion of this unit as a wilderness study area and 7 were opposed to the unit's inclusion. Two comments did not indicate a preference. Those who favored wilderness study believed that the unit had all the prerequisite wilderness characteristics for a WSA and was located next to a U.S. Forest Service RARE II area. Those opposed cited reasons such as elimination of motorized access, a preference for multiple-use rather than wilderness, and the existence of enough wilderness acreage already in the system.

Draft EIS: During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 131 written comments were received. There were no oral or written comments received at the wilderness public hearings held in Rawlins and Laramie, Wyoming. In general, 127 comments favored wilderness designation and 1 comment favored no wilderness designation. The comments in favor of wilderness designation were primarily generic comments which included two other WSAs. Three comments addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation or nondesignation.

Support for wilderness designation stemmed from a desire to protect some of the public lands from commercial exploitation. Opposition to designation was based on the small size of the area.

Of all comments received, 2 were from federal agencies and 1 was from a state agency. No comments were received from local agencies. Of the federal agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Bureau of Mines did not state a formal position. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department, a state agency, supported the Proposed Action (All Wilderness Alternative).

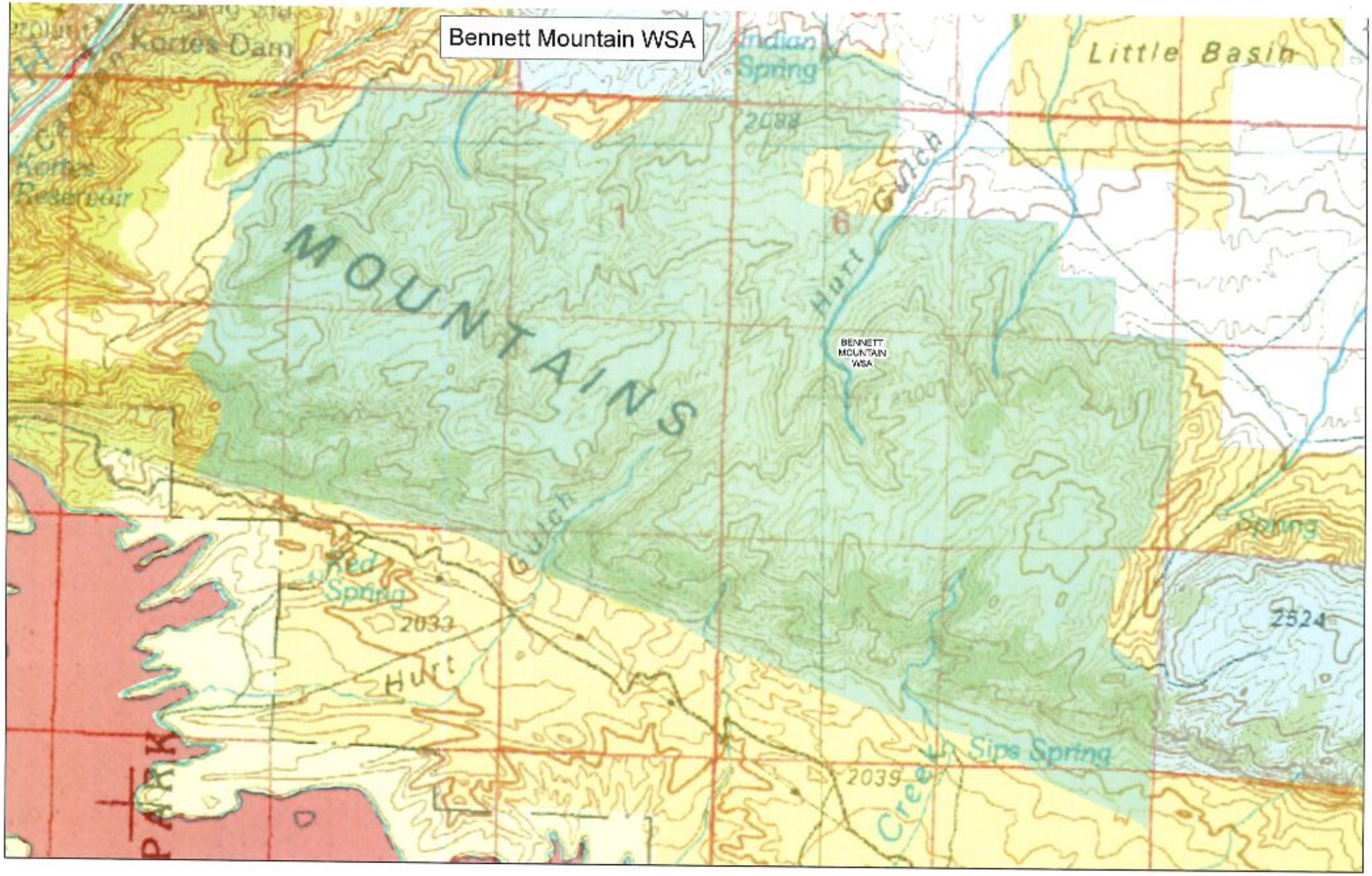
BENNETT MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

1. THE STUDY AREA -- 6,003 acres

The Bennett Mountains WSA (WY-030-304) includes 6,003 acres of BLM lands with no inholdings or split estate lands (see Table 1). The WSA is located in north central Carbon County east of Seminoe Dam and lies about 35 miles northeast of Rawlins, Wyoming. The WSA is part of the Seminoe Mountain range, a small rugged range which rises abruptly from the surrounding lowlands. The WSA is bounded on the north and east by private and state lands, on the south by the Powerline road, and on the west by the Bennett Mountain road (see Map 1).

The Bennett Mountains WSA contains three basic types of topography: the mountain plateau/ridges; the steep rock ledges; and the many tributary draws. Elevations range from 6,600 feet to 8,000 feet. The mountain, which is approximately four miles long within the WSA, has distinct rocky ledges and walls along the entire southern exposure, and the northern portion is traversed with numerous tree-filled drainages. In many places, the rocky walls are vertical outcrops that create a fortress type appearance. In most cases, all portions of the WSA are interspersed with grasses, sagebrush and other shrubs, and pockets of pine, aspen and willows. The higher elevations have considerably less vegetation and more rugged rocky features.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Final Great Divide Resource Area Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in August, 1990. There were two alternatives analyzed in the EIS including No Wilderness, which is the recommendation in this report, and All Wilderness.


Bennett Mountain WSA
Korte's Dam
Korte Reservoir
Indian Spring
2088
Little Basin
MOUNTAINS
Hurt Gulch
BENNETT MOUNTAIN WSA
Red Spring
2033
Hurt
Gulch
Spring
2524
Sips Spring
2039
Creek
PARK

Bennett Mountain WSA
BENNETT MOUNTAIN WSA

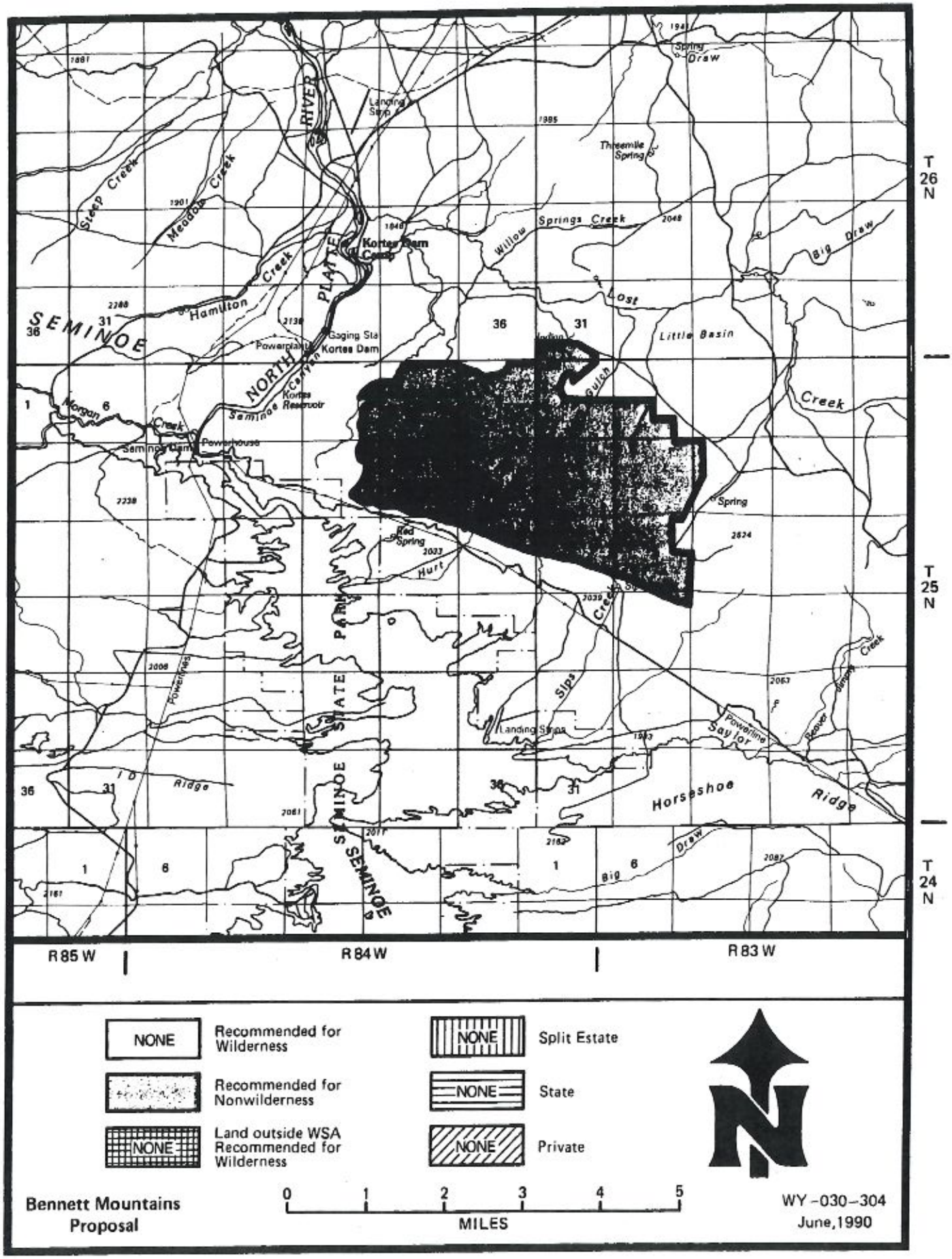

T 26 N
T 25 N
T 24 N
R 85 W
R 84 W
R 83 W
NONE
Recommended for Wilderness
Recommended for Nonwilderness
Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
Split Estate
State
Private
0 1 2 3 4 5
MILES
Bennett Mountains Proposal
WY-030-304
June, 1990

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

Within Wilderness Study Area	
BLM (surface and subsurface)	6,003
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (State, Private)	0
Total	6,003
Within the recommended wilderness boundary	
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
Inholdings (State, Private)	0
Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness	
BLM	6,003
Split Estate	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	6,003
Inholdings (State, Private)	0

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE -- 6,003 acres recommended for nonwilderness
0 acres recommended for wilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to release 6,003 acres for uses other than wilderness. The All Wilderness alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change to the natural environment over the long term. However, the nonwilderness recommendation would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

In recommending this WSA for uses other than wilderness, the relative quality of the area's wilderness values was a key consideration. Although the wilderness inventory notes that outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation exist in the WSA, these values are not found throughout the study area. Opportunities for solitude do exist in the canyons of the WSA, but these are relatively small areas in relation to the WSA as a whole. Visitor overlap would occur as people travel between canyons or seek to traverse the entire WSA. The WSA lacks a focal point for primitive recreation opportunities and the area does not contain unique or distinctive recreation opportunities.

There are no significant special features in this WSA which would be enhanced or protected under a wilderness designation. In addition, there are no resource conflicts in this WSA which a wilderness designation would help to resolve. There is low potential for mineral resources and there is no commercial forest land within the WSA. The low level of activity that is presently occurring in the WSA is expected to continue for the foreseeable future, with no appreciable change to the area's natural environment.

The ecosystem involved is already represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System, so adding this WSA would not contribute to the ecosystem diversity of the wilderness system. The Cloud Peak Wilderness (67,026 acres) in northern Wyoming contains the Dry Domain/Wyoming Basin Province/Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem that typifies this WSA.

The addition of this WSA would not expand opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within a day's driving time of major population centers. There are 27 wilderness areas totalling nearly 4.2 million acres within 5 hours of Casper, Wyoming; similarly, there are 27 wilderness areas totalling almost two million acres within 5 hours of Cheyenne, Wyoming.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilderness Characteristics

A. **Naturalness:** The Bennett Mountains WSA is predominantly natural, with few human imprints. The mountain, which is approximately four miles long, has distinct rocky ledges and walls along the entire southern exposure, and the northern portion is traversed with numerous tree-filled drainages. In many places, the rocky walls are vertical outcrops that create a fortress type appearance. In most cases, all portions of the WSA are interspersed with grasses, sagebrush and other shrubs, and pockets of pine, aspen and willows. The higher elevations have considerably less vegetation and more rugged rocky features. The elevation ranges from approximately 6,600 to 8,000 feet. The only man-made intrusions in the WSA are approximately 4 miles of discontinuous two-track trails. These are not noticeable from a distance and have a minimal impact on the total area.

B. **Solitude:** The high plateau, coupled with numerous draws and rocky outcrops, provides a high degree of solitude. The mountain offers numerous secluded places for recreational activities. However, the areas are small and visitor overlap is likely as one travels between canyons. The spectacular view of Seminoe Reservoir to the southwest provides a feeling of spaciousness but also illustrates the effects of man's nearby development.

C. **Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The Bennett Mountains WSA provides opportunities for primitive recreational activities that primarily include hunting, hiking, trapping, camping, wildlife viewing, and sightseeing. The rugged and diverse terrain provides high quality opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. There are no unique or exceptional recreation opportunities within this WSA.

D. **Special Features:** There are no significant special features within this WSA.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. **Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems and landforms:** Wilderness designation of the WSA would not expand the diversity of ecosystem representation in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The ecosystem is presently represented in the wilderness system by one area (Cloud Peak) in northern Wyoming. Also, there are 16 other BLM areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas areas	NWPS Areas acres	Other BLM Studies areas	Other BLM Studies acres
		NATION WIDE		
Dry Domain/ Wyoming Basin Province/Sagebrush Steppe	1	67,026	16	230,031
		WYOMING		
	1	67,026	16	230,031

B. **Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers:** The WSA is within a five hour drive of two major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours drive of the population centers.

TABLE 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Areas Areas	NWPS Areas Acres	Other BLM Studies Areas	Other BLM Studies Acres
Casper, Wyoming	27	4,080,891	32	459,656
Cheyenne, Wyoming	27	1,950,377	11	85,542

3. **Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas:** The Bennett Mountains WSA would contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System. Although Wyoming and neighboring states contain a great deal of designated wilderness, no units of the National Wilderness Preservation System are located in central Wyoming. The Bennett Mountains WSA would help fill this gap.

Manageability (The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character).

The Bennett Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness. There are no resource conflicts which would present problems for management. There are no oil and gas leases in the WSA and mineral resource potential is low. There are no mining claims in the WSA nor any inholdings.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey conducted an assessment of the geology and mineral resource potential of the Bennett Mountains WSA in 1983. The results of that assessment show that there is low potential for mineral resources. There is low potential for metallic resources, shales, clays, gypsum, oil and natural gas, and coal or peat.

Significant resources of stone and aggregate exist within the WSA but transportation costs render the deposits noneconomic and therefore of low potential.

There is no present production of any mineral resource in the WSA.

Impacts on Other Resources

The following comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all the alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

TABLE 4
SUMMARY OF IMPACTS
Bennett Mountains WSA

Issue Topics	Proposed Action (No Wilderness)	All Wilderness
Naturalness	ORV use is low and would have little effect.	No ORV use would have a minor, positive effect.
Opportunities for Solitude and/or Primitive, Unconfined Recreation	ORV use is low and would have little effect.	No ORV use would have a minor, positive effect.
Recreational Opportunities	Use and values would change very little.	Two hundred and fifty (250) visits/year by ORV users would be eliminated, but could be accommodated in nearby areas.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Local social and economic considerations were not an issue in the EIS. There were no impacts to the local economy or social character identified during the study of this WSA.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Inventory: During the inventory phase, 21 comments were received on the Bennett Mountains WSA. Sixteen supported inclusion of this unit as a wilderness study area and 5 were opposed to the unit's inclusion. Those who favored wilderness study believed that the unit had all the prerequisite wilderness characteristics for a WSA. Those opposed cited reasons such as a lack of wilderness values and elimination of motorized access.

Draft EIS: During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 131 written comments were received. There were no oral or written comments received at the wilderness public hearings held in Rawlins and Laramie, Wyoming. In general, 124 comments favored wilderness designation and 2 comments favored no wilderness designation. The comments in favor of wilderness designation were generic comments which included two other WSAs. Five comments addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation or nondesignation.

Support for wilderness designation stemmed from a desire to protect some of the public lands from commercial exploitation. Opposition to designation was based on the desire to provide access and dispersed recreation opportunities in the area.

Of all comments received, 3 were from federal agencies and 2 were from state agencies. No comments were received from local agencies. Of the federal agencies, the National Park Service supported the All Wilderness Alternative. The Environmental Protection Agency and Bureau of Mines did not state a formal position. Of the state agencies, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department supported the Proposed Action (No Wilderness Alternative) and the Geological Survey of Wyoming did not state a formal position.