



# **SALMON-CHALLIS NATIONAL FOREST**

## **WILDERNESS EVALUATION PROCESS**

The 2012 Planning Rule requires forests in revision to evaluate suitability of lands for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System [36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)(v)]. To aid in making these determinations, the Forest Service provides direction for inventorying and evaluating potentially suited lands in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, chapters 71 and 72.

The inventory process considers an area's size, improvements, and roads. According to the handbook, potentially suitable areas that remain following the inventory process must be evaluated for their respective wilderness qualities. See Appendix A for a detailed map of areas evaluated during this process.

### **OUR PROCESS**

The wilderness evaluation process began with the development of a database of spatial attributes that responds to the evaluation criteria listed in Chapter 72.1 of the handbook. The detailed data contained within that database informs the evaluation process.

As outlined in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 72, the responsible official may vary the scope of the evaluation based on specific characteristics within each inventoried area. Because there is a correlation between roaded areas of the forest and areas where activities and other improvements have occurred, we used road density as a surrogate to consolidate areas into two distinct groupings for this evaluation: those inventoried areas that are mostly roaded and those that are not. To determine the road density for evaluation areas, we used a road density model that analyzed all forest roads on the Salmon-Challis. Forest roads, as defined by 36 CFR 212.1, are those roads within or adjacent to the Salmon-Challis that are necessary for the protection, administration and use of the forest and its resources.

We make this distinction because the landscape of the Salmon-Challis National Forest is rugged, which has resulted in pockets of roaded areas connected by arterial roads and concentrations of improvements and activities around forest roads. When considering all roads on the Forest and adjacent lands, there is a correlation between roaded areas of the Forest and areas where improvements occur. Examples of the improvements and activities that occur in roaded areas on the forest include grazing improvements, timber harvest, most unauthorized roads, special uses, motorized recreation, firewood cutting, mineral development and exploration, private parcels, cherry-stemmed roads, inholdings, etc.

Forest roads were built for a purpose and brought not only the road but “man and his works.” Because roads introduced “man and his works” to these areas of the Salmon-Challis, separating roaded areas from unroaded areas is a simple and understandable way for grouping and calling attention to other factors that are important to consider when evaluating wilderness.

## EVALUATION AREAS

For the purpose of this evaluation, the responsible official determined that inventoried areas with roaded areas of greater than 50 percent would be described as one grouping. See Appendix B for detailed maps of areas that fall into this grouping

While some areas in this grouping are not particularly dense with roads, they represent places where roads, timber harvest, mineral exploration and development, other activities, and improvements occur singularly or in a combination of ways that detract from wilderness character.

These inventoried areas are generally more challenged with regard to naturalness and have been altered to varying degrees. Solitude, along with primitive and unconfined recreation, can be challenged because sounds, activities, and improvements in these areas detract from the user's experience. The ability to manage these inventoried areas to preserve wilderness characteristics is hindered by a number of factors, including circumstances such as:

- containing or having neighboring lands owned by others,
- having odd-shaped boundaries that could hinder effective management,
- having mineral interest,
- being surrounded by roads, and
- having cherry-stemmed roads encroaching into the inventoried area.

These areas tend to represent those areas where “man and his works” can or, more importantly, have dominated the landscape and present general wilderness management challenges.

**Figure 1. Roads and fences like those pictured here are evidence of “man and his works.”**



Inventoried areas that fall into this grouping include:

- Howe Peak
- Jumpoff Peak
- Copper Basin
- South White Knobs
- North Fork Big Lost
- Porphyry Peak
- Sunset King
- Spring Hill
- Spring Basin Squaw
- Copper Mountain
- Lola Creek
- South Motorway
- Red Hill
- Corkscrew Mountain
- North Motorway
- Grouse Peak
- Seafoam Bubble
- Wheetip Creek
- Beaverheads Divide
- Trapper Mountain
- Grizzly Hill
- Sheephorn Mountain
- Deegan Mountain
- Haynes Creek Lemhi
- Yellow Jacket
- Upper Flume Creek Lemhi
- Taylor Mountain
- Henry Creek
- Pepper Creek Ridge South
- Lake Mountain East
- West Fork Blackbird Creek
- Cobalt
- Porphyry Ridge
- Perreau Creek
- Goldstone Mountain
- White Horse Basin
- Phelan Mountain
- Rapps Creek
- Leesburg
- Wallace Lake
- Daly Creek
- Salmon River Breaks South
- Ulysses Mountain
- Donnelly Gulch
- West Fork Hughes Creek
- Salmon River Breaks North
- Ransack Creek
- Gibbonsville East
- Anderson Mountain
- Indian Peak

## FOCAL EVALUATION AREAS

For the purpose of this evaluation, the responsible official determined that inventoried areas with roaded areas of less than 50 percent of the area would be described as a grouping. See Appendix C for detailed maps of areas that fall into this grouping.

These inventoried areas generally have large blocks of unaltered landscape, a high level of naturalness, and natural systems that are largely intact. While these areas may still have been altered by past activities, alterations are limited when looking at the areas as a whole. These inventoried areas are far enough removed from access to reflect ecological conditions that are an indication of the lack of human intervention

Several inventoried areas in this grouping amount to less than 5,000 acres each, but they are adjacent to protected areas, such as existing wilderness. These areas could be incorporated into adjacent lands preserved for wilderness. One other inventoried area amounting to less than 5,000 acres in this grouping is adjacent to federally-managed land and could be protected in an unimpaired condition due to its remote location against the Beaverhead Mountains.



Solitude, along with primitive and unconfined recreation, can be achieved because these inventoried areas don't have the sounds, activities, and improvements that detract from the user's experience. Topography, screening, and distance allow the user to enjoy these attributes within these areas and limit the sounds and sights of the outside world. These areas allow the visitor to feel more a part of nature and enjoy hunting, camping, fishing, backpacking, and pack and stock activities. Most activities associated with primitive or unconfined recreation are readily available.

These inventoried areas contain many ecological, geological, and other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. Collectively, these inventoried areas contain outstanding landscape features, research natural areas, and high quality water resources. Whether it is outstanding sage brush steppe, Borah Mountain, the Lemhi Mountain Range, intact alpine systems largely free of invasive species, or other attributes, these inventoried areas all have merit with regard to this matter.

The ability to manage these inventoried areas to preserve wilderness characteristics is possible. These areas may share many of the management challenges found in mostly roaded areas, but wilderness characteristics can still be preserved, especially if boundaries are wisely adjusted. Inventoried areas that fall into this grouping include:

- North Slope Pioneers
- Burnt Creek Big Lost
- JMJP Sagebrush
- JMJP Pine
- Spud Creek
- Borah Plus
- South Lemhi Range
- Pahsimeroi Mountains
- South Cabin Peak
- Horsethief
- West Fork Morgan Plus
- North Lemhi Range
- Leacock Point
- Chipps Creek
- Blackbird Mountain
- Stein Mountain

**Figure 2. Mount Borah, Idaho's tallest peak, lies within the Borah Plus inventory area. Borah Plus is currently a wilderness study area because it was recommended as a potential wilderness area when the current Challis National Forest plan was published in 1987.**



## SUMMARY

The wilderness recommendation process consists of four distinct steps. The evaluation phase is step two. Wilderness evaluation areas and focal wilderness evaluation areas are used to develop lists of attributes that detract from or contribute to wilderness character. They do not represent a proposal or decision to recommend for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The Salmon-Challis has large continuous landscapes that are generally natural in appearance. Unroaded or focal areas are a means to focus attention to those areas containing large blocks of unroaded lands where the Forest Service needs to fully understand other management considerations and influence on wilderness character.