

Revision Topic – Inventoried Roadless Areas and Proposed Wilderness Areas

Need for Change

This subject is a Revision Topic because of the continuing controversy associated with the management of Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) and proposed Wilderness Areas, and because roadless areas cover a large part of the two forests. Within KIPZ, there are 91 IRAs totaling almost 1.5 million acres – 1/3 of the KIPZ (see Figure 1-34)

IRAs are defined as “Undeveloped areas typically exceeding 5,000 acres that met the minimum criteria for wilderness consideration under the Wilderness Act and that were inventoried during the Forest Service’s Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) process, subsequent assessments, or forest planning. These areas identified in a set of inventoried roadless area maps, contained in the Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation Rule, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 2, dated November, 2000, which are held at the National Headquarters of the Forest Service, or any update, correction, or revision of those maps.” (USDA Forest Service 2000c)

The 1987 Forest Plans provided direction to build roads and harvest timber in certain IRAs. That has proven to be very controversial, and the amount of timber harvest and road construction that was projected in the Forest Plans has not occurred. In the KNF 1987 Forest Plan, 132,600 acres (33%) of the IRAs were categorized as suitable for timber harvest and 271,600 acres (67%) were categorized as unsuitable (slight difference from 1987 totals due to rounding). In the IPNFs 1987 Forest Plan, 610,382 acres (71%) of the IRAs were categorized as suitable for timber harvest and 243,418 acres (29%) were categorized as unsuitable. Controversy continues to accompany most proposals to harvest timber, build roads, or otherwise develop IRAs. Comments heard during the first round of Forest Plan Revision open houses in June of 2002 confirmed that IRAs continue to be a topic of great interest.

Laws and Regulations

The purpose of wilderness and the broad direction for managing wilderness are stated in the Wilderness Act of 1964. Further requirements for evaluation and designation of wilderness are in 36 Code of Federal Regulations CFR 219.17, Forest Service Manual 2320, and Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 Chapter 7.

On January 12, 2001, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule was published in the Federal Register (FR Doc. 01-17249). This rule prohibits road construction, road re-construction, and timber harvest in IRAs on NFS Lands. The intent of this rule is to provide lasting protection for IRAs within the NFS in the context of multiple use management (Federal Register, 2001).

On May 10, 2001, the U. S. District Court for the District of Idaho enjoined the USDA from implementing the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This decision by the District Court was appealed to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

On June 7, 2001, the Chief of the Forest Service and Secretary of Agriculture issued a letter concerning interim protection of IRAs, stating “the Forest Service is committed to protecting and managing roadless areas as an important component of the NFS. The best way to achieve this objective is to ensure that we protect and sustain roadless values until they can be appropriately considered through forest planning”. (Bosworth 2001)

On December 12, 2002 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the May 10, 2001 ruling by the U. S. District Court that had enjoined USDA from implementing the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. At this time, the Court is still considering a rehearing request. They have not yet issued a mandate to lift the injunction, therefore the Forest Service remains enjoined from implementing the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. As long as the Roadless Area Conservation Rule is not in effect, the agency policy for the protection and management of Inventoried Roadless Areas is contained in Interim Direction at Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1925.

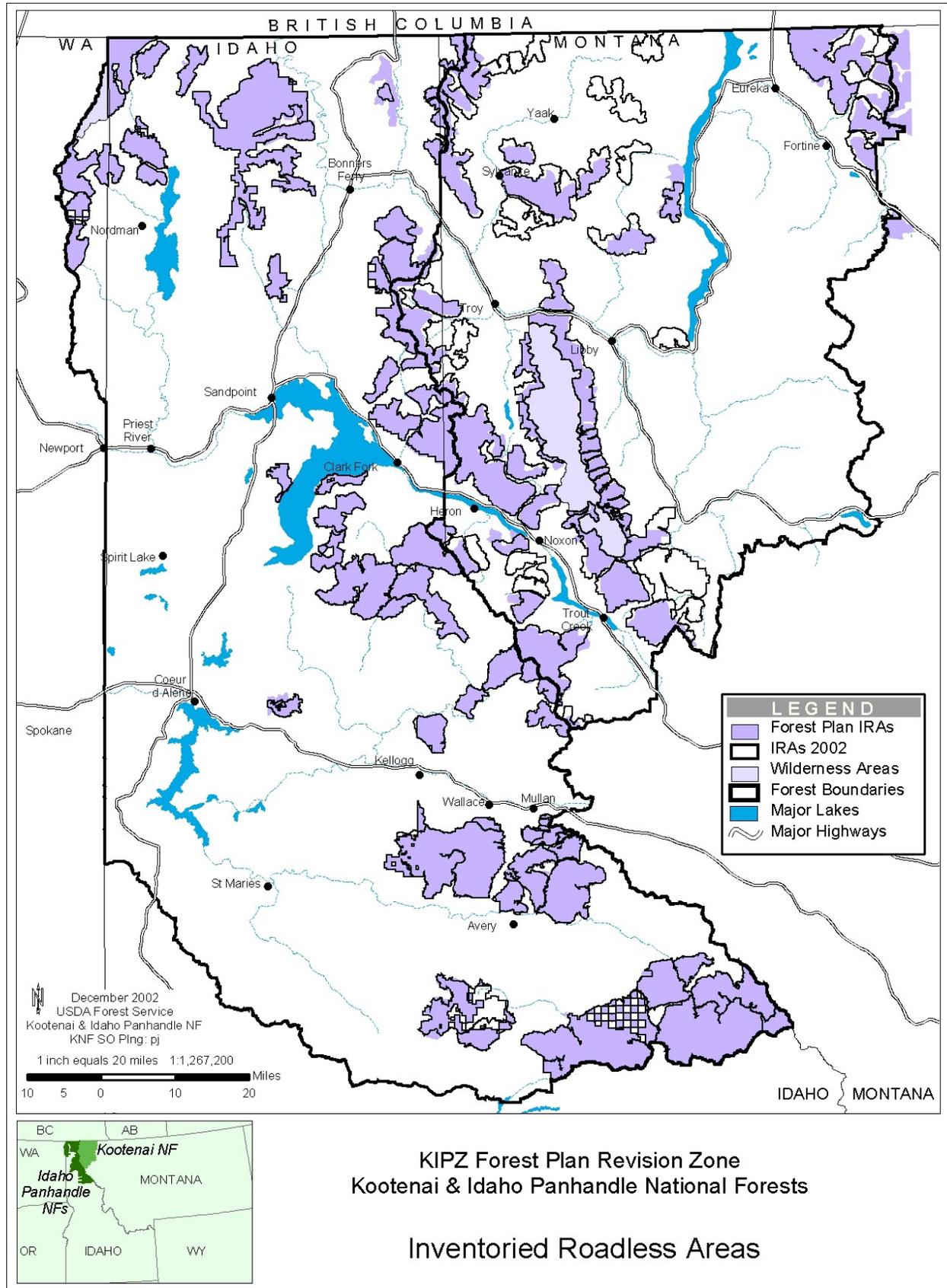


Figure 1-34. KIPZ Inventoried Roadless Areas

Forest Service Strategic Plan

The following objectives stated in the Strategic Plan (USDA 2000a) relate to the management of IRAs and proposed Wilderness Areas. The number of objectives is greater than for some other revision topics because IRAs can be managed for a wide variety of goals. The goals and objectives listed below are the ones that are compatible with the Roadless Area Conservation Rule direction:

Goal 1 “Ecosystem Health” states: Promote ecosystem health and conservation using a collaborative approach to sustain the Nation’s forests, grasslands and watersheds.

Objective 1.a states: Improve and protect watershed conditions to provide the water quality and quantity and the soil productivity necessary to support ecological functions and the intended beneficial water uses.

Objective 1.b states: Provide ecological conditions to sustain viable populations of native and desired nonnative species and to achieve objectives for Management Indicator Species/focal species.

Goal 2 “Multiple Benefits to People” states: Provide a variety of uses, values, products, and services for present and future generations by managing within the capability of sustainable ecosystems.

Objective 2.a states: Improve capability of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to provide diverse, high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities.

Objective 2.b states: Improve the capability of wilderness and protected areas to sustain a desired range of benefits and values.

The Forest Plans and Monitoring and Evaluation

IRAs are not Forest Plan monitoring items on the IPNFs. As part of the annual Forest Plan Monitoring, the KNF has tracked changes to IRAs since 1988. During the first nine years of the KNF Forest Plan, there was a total of 5,270 acres of development by timber sales or road construction within IRAs. However, since the end of 1996, no development has occurred in the IRAs on the KNF.

Planning Questions For IRAs and Proposed Wilderness Areas

Planning questions have been developed to provide context to the IRA and proposed Wilderness Areas revision topic. These questions are followed by a description of the historic and current condition and form the baseline to compare the effects of the alternatives. Additional analysis will be completed for the DEIS to more fully address these questions. This information will provide the decision maker with the knowledge necessary to understand the issue and make a decision.

The KIPZ Forest Plan Revision will address two issues associated with IRAs: (1) identification of proposed Wilderness Areas, and (2) management of all IRAs – including recommended wilderness and other management opportunities. These two issues are related, but presented separately for clarity.

IRA management: IRA management will be based on several items, including national roadless area direction, public comment and Forest Plan direction. A recent decision by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals directs the agency to implement the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This Rule is considered to have the official roadless area inventory for the Forest Service. See Tables 1-23 and 1-24 in this section.

Wilderness Evaluations: Examination of roadless areas for wilderness potential is a requirement of Forest Plan Revisions. For the KNF, the IRA coverage submitted for the Roadless Conservation EIS

was felt to be an adequate place to begin the wilderness evaluation process (refer to Table 1-24). For the IPNFs, the coverage submitted for the Roadless Conservation EIS did not accurately display the results of all the NEPA projects that had occurred in these areas since 1987. For this reason, some minor refinements were needed to show those changes and to have a more accurate product to use for the wilderness evaluation process (refer to Table 1-23).

Historic and Current Condition of IRAs

Since the Wilderness Act of 1964, there has been a great deal of interest and controversy associated with identifying and recommending to Congress areas for addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). The IRAs have been the main focus for possible additions. Management options for roadless areas, other than recommended wilderness, are also a significant issue.

In 1972, the Forest Service initiated a review of NFS roadless areas larger than 5,000 acres, known as the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation I (RARE I), to determine their suitability for inclusion in the NWPS. In 1977, a second review process, RARE II, began. It resulted in a nationwide inventory of roadless areas, which was completed in 1979. The forest planning process used during the development of the 1987 Forest Plans for the KNF and IPNFs further refined some of the areas delineated by the RARE II process.

For IRAs, the historic condition is the acreage of each IRA as listed in the 1987 Forest Plans. The current status is the acreage of each area as they presently occur (refer to Tables 1-23 and 1-24).

The KNF began a reinventory of their roadless areas in 1994 and completed it in 1999. This inventory was complete at the time of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule and was the coverage used for that analysis.

The IPNFs coverage submitted for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, because of the short response time, did not show where all NEPA projects since 1987 had reduced IRA acreages. Some portions of that coverage accurately depicted the current situation while other portions did not. The Forest has recently updated this coverage to show these changes (refer to Table 1-23).

Changes in IRA Acreages from 1987 to 2003

Listed below are tables showing acreage figures for each IRA on each forest. The IPNFs IRAs, (Table 1-23), lists this information for three time periods:

- (1) 1987 Forest Plans
- (2) 2000 Roadless Area Conservation Rule
- (3) 2003 coverage, which accurately displays the current situation. This most recent coverage will be used for the proposed wilderness evaluation for Forest Plan Revision.

The KNF IRAs (Table 1-24) has two columns:

- (1) 1987 Forest Plans
- (2) Roadless Area Conservation Rule. As indicated previously, the KNF IRA coverage had been updated prior to the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, displays the current situation and is an appropriate starting point for proposed wilderness evaluations

Several factors contribute to acreage differences from 1987 to 2003. Some IRAs had a reduction in size because development by timber sales and/or road construction occurred during the last 15 years within those areas. Map errors associated with the 1980's mapping were also corrected. Other increases are due to land exchanges, or because development of some kind that was expected to occur at the time of the Forest Plans did not happen.

Some differences in acreage are due to the methods used to delineate and calculate the acreages for these IRAs. In the 1980’s, the IRAs were delineated by hand, drawing lines on ½ inch/mile (1:126,720) maps. Our current maps have been prepared at 2.64”/mile (1:24,000) map scale using GIS technology.

Because of the re-inventory the KNF did in the 1990’s, some IRAs on that forest have had increases in acreage and some IRAs are now included that were not part of the original KNF Forest Plan. Contiguous areas were added to some roadless areas on the KNF following the definitions included in the Regional Protocol for IRA delineation.

Idaho Panhandle National Forests IRAs

The IPNFs currently has 48 IRAs, which are listed in the following table and shown on Figure 1-34. The acreage figures for specific IRAs vary for the three time periods for the reasons outlined in the previous section. Acreages listed are for the NFS lands within IRAs.

Table 1-23: Idaho Panhandle National Forest Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs)

IRA Name and Number	NFS Acres in 1987 Forest Plan	Approximate NFS acres in 2000 Roadless Area Conservation EIS	NFS Acres in 2003 coverage that will be used for proposed Wilderness Evaluation
Little Grass Mountain #121	7,900	7,900	7,966
Blacktail Mountain #122	5,100	5,300	4,965
Upper Priest #123	14,300	13,700	14,008
South Fork Mountain #124	5,400	5,200	5,292
Selkirk (with Long Canyon) #125	102,000	95,800	97,959
Kootenai Peak #126	6,000	4,500	4,974
White Mountain #127	7,800	8,700	7,499
Hellroaring #128	11,800	1,700	1,978
Trestle Peak #129	7,100	7,400	7,274
Beetop #130	11,200	12,900	12,446
East Cathedral Peak #131	22,300	22,900	22,320
Magee #132	34,800	34,100	34,811
Teepee Creek #133	5,100	5,400	5,187
Skitwish Ridge #135	6,300	6,900	4,746
Spion Kop #136	23,700	22,500	22,391
Lost Creek #137	11,300	11,600	11,606
Trouble Creek #138	6,100	5,900	5,950
Graham Coal #139	10,800	10,700	10,290
Maple Creek #141	8,700	8,500	8,674
Stevens Peak #142	4,400	4,600	4,729
Big Creek #143	75,000	74,500	76,347
Storm Creek #144	8,200	8,200	8,228
Hammond Creek #145	16,100	18,700	17,404
Rolland Point #146	6,300	6,400	6,524
North Fork #147	32,100	30,300	31,357

IRA Name and Number	NFS Acres in 1987 Forest Plan	Approximate NFS acres in 2000 Roadless Area Conservation EIS	NFS Acres in 2003 coverage that will be used for proposed Wilderness Evaluation
Grandmother Mountain #148	16,400	24,100	22,347
Pinchot Butte #149	7,000	7,800	8,509
Mosquito Fly #150	15,400	13,200	19,408
Midget Peak #151	7,000	6,400	7,239
Wonderful Peak #152	5,100	5,100	4,938
Continental Mountain #153	6,900	7,700	7,525
Saddle Mountain #154	8,600	7,500	7,765
Packsaddle #155	18,700	17,900	19,309
Hungry Mountain #156	9,600	8,900	8,615
Katka #157	12,400	10,500	10,343
Schafer Peak #160	6,600	6,100	5,894
Blacktail Mountain #161	4,700	4,900	4,830
Mt. Willard/Lake Estelle #173	35,300	32,700	35,000
Mallard Larkins #300	127,100	119,800*	129,376
Meadow Creek/Upr North #302	6,100	4,300*	6,056
Buckhorn Ridge #661	9,600	9,400	9,558
Scotchman Peaks #662	31,800	30,200	32,070
Northwest Peaks #663	5,700	5,400	5,479
Trout Creek #664	8,300	8,400	8,538
Giltedge/Silver Creek #792	300	200	202
Sheep Mountain/Stateline #799	28,000	26,900	27,733
Salmo-Priest #981	20,500	20,300	20,020
Grassy Top #982	12,900	13,300	13,617
IPNFs Total	853,800	825,300* (838,300 with St. Joe WSR acreage added)	849,305

*The figure the Washington Office generated for the Roadless Conservation EIS was 823,000 acres (figure rounded to the nearest 1,000s). This calculation did not include approximately 13,000 acres where the St. Joe Wild and Scenic River flows through the Mallard Larkins and Meadow Creek IRAs. Since the acreage figures for the other two columns have the St. Joe WSR acreage included in those IRAs, for consistency the 13,000 acres is added back to the 823,000. This would result in a total of 836,000 acres. The figures used in the middle column are from a recent Forest recalculation of that same coverage. The figures differ by a very small amount (.2%)

Kootenai National Forest IRAs

The KNF currently has 43 IRAs, which are listed in the following table and shown on Figure 1-34. There were 32 roadless areas identified in the 1987 Forest Plan. Some of the eleven additional roadless areas were analyzed in 1987 but did not meet the criteria at that time; and some areas were first considered as IRAs in the recent reinventory process because of additions to NFS land ownership in that area and other factors.

Table 1-24: Kootenai National Forest Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs)

IRA Name and Number	1987 Forest Plan Acres	Current Acreage
Alexander #696	0	6,700
Allen Peak #185	0	29,600
Barren Cr #183	0	14,600
Berray Mtn #672	8,300	9,100
Big Creek #701	0	7,500
Buckhorn Ridge #661	22,000	28,800
Cabinet Face East #671	50,400	51,000
Cabinet Face West #670	10,900	13,700
Cataract Creek #665	17,700	25,400
Chippewa #682	2,300	1,300
Cube Iron #784	1,200	600
Devils Gap #698	0	5,400
East Fork Elk #678	5,000	6,800
Flagstaff #690	9,500	11,100
Galena #677	15,500	19,300
Gold Hill #668	10,700	6,500
Gold Hill West # 176	10,200	15,100
Government Mtn #673	8,600	10,100
Grizzly Peak #667	6,000	7,400
Huckleberry Mtn #699	0	9,000
LeBeau #507	700	1,300
Lone Cliff Smeads #674	6,600	5,100
Lone Cliff West #674a	0	5,300
Maple Peak #141	1,400	3,600
Marston Face #172	6,000	9,100
McKay Creek #676	13,500	15,300
McNeeley #675	7,700	6,700
Mt Henry #666	0	13,600
Northwest Peaks #663	13,400	15,300
Roberts #691	8,000	10,800
Robinson Mtn #164	0	7,000
Rock Cr #693	400	800
Roderick #684	24,800	29,700
Saddle Mtn #168	0	14,700

IRA Name and Number	1987 Forest Plan Acres	Current Acreage
Scotchman Peaks #662	51,900	54,400
Ten Lakes #683	7,100	48,500
Thompson Seton #483	20,100	29,400
Trout Creek #664	31,400	30,900
Tuchuck #482	2,300	2,200
West Fork Elk #692	4,800	5,200
West Fork Yaak #694	0	8,200
Willard Estelle #173	18,500	33,000
Zulu #166	6,400	10,000
KNF Total	403,300	639,100

Note: The Roadless Area Conservation EIS listed total acres for the Kootenai IRAs as 628,000 because the acres for Northwest Peaks and Ten Lakes Scenic Areas were left out of the total acreages. They have been included with their surrounding IRAs in these Kootenai totals. Some areas of proposed wilderness (MA8) were coded incorrectly in the Roadless EIS in Chippewa and McKay Creek IRAs; these are now coded correctly.

Which IRAs have potential for Wilderness?

The roadless area inventory will be analyzed for proposed wilderness recommendations based on the three tests of capability, availability and need. The result of this analysis will be a list of areas that can be recommended for additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS).

Capability The capability of a potential wilderness is defined in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12-7.21 as “the degree to which the area contains the basic characteristics that make it suitable for Wilderness designation without regard to its availability or need as Wilderness.”

Availability All NFS lands found to meet wilderness capability requirements are generally available for consideration as wilderness. However, this availability is constrained by a determination of the value of and need for the wilderness resource relative to the value of and need for other resources from the site. To be available for wilderness, the wilderness values of the resource, both tangible and intangible, should exceed the value of other resources that formal wilderness designation would preclude.

Need Overview FSH 1909.12-7.23 directs the Forest Service to “determine the need for an area to be designated as Wilderness through an analysis of the degree to which it contributes to the local and national distribution of Wilderness.” Need is addressed on a national basis and is evaluated in terms of the geographic distribution of areas, representation of landforms and ecosystems, and the presence of wildlife expected to be visible in wilderness.

Assessment of need may be divided into two major categories: *biological need* (landform representation and plant/animal biodiversity) and *social need* (outdoor recreation opportunities). Only areas determined to be both capable and available for wilderness are to be considered in the need evaluation for recommended wilderness.

Existing Wilderness Areas - In considering the need for additional Wilderness Areas, it should be noted that two designated wilderness areas occur within the KIPZ. These are:

Idaho Panhandle NFs – Salmo-Priest Wilderness Area (12,000 acres)

Kootenai NF – Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area (93,700 acres)

Wilderness Study Areas - There are two areas within the KIPZ that have been designated by Congress as Wilderness Study Areas. For the IPNFs, the Idaho-Arkansas Land Exchange Act of 1992 directed the forest to study approximately 4,500 acres in the Grandmother Mountain Area. The Montana Wilderness Study Act specified that the Ten Lakes area would be reviewed within a five-year period for suitability as wilderness. The analysis was accomplished and a final Report was sent to Congress in 1983. Pending a decision from Congress on the KNF recommendations for Ten Lakes, the 1987 Forest Plan designated a special management area (MA 9) for this area. This 34,200-acre area remains in that temporary status.

Which of the IRAs that have potential should be proposed for Wilderness?

The DEIS will include an analysis of several alternatives. Each alternative will include a recommendation of some or no additional Wilderness Areas. The recommendation will be based on the overall management theme or management approach that is reflected by the alternative.

Public comment will be received on the DEIS. Final wilderness recommendations in the FEIS will be a reflection of national direction, Regional expectations, and public comment.

The proposed revised Forest Plans will review and consider wilderness recommendations made in the 1987 KNF and IPNFs Forest Plans. These are listed below, with the acreages from the original Forest Plans. As with IRAs, these acres may be different now due to newer mapping technology, land exchanges and other factors.

IPNFs 1987 Forest Plan Recommended Wilderness	Acres
Salmo-Priest (addition to existing wilderness)	17,600
Scotchman Peaks (IPNFs portion)	23,900
Selkirk Crest	26,700
Mallard-Larkins	78,500
Forest Total	146,700

KNF 1987 Forest Plan Recommended Wilderness	Acres
Scotchman Peak (KNF portion)	36,200
Cabinet Face East (addition to existing wilderness)	20,400
Cabinet Face West (addition to existing wilderness)	8,000
McKay (addition to existing wilderness)	6,700
Chippewa (addition to existing wilderness)	400
Ten Lakes Contiguous Area	6,800
Forest Total	78,500

On the KNF, eleven separate Wilderness Bills have been introduced to Congress, seven since the Forest Plan was signed, without a decision being made on any of the areas involved. Similar efforts covering the IPNFs have not resulted in a decision.

How should the IRAs that are recommended for wilderness be managed?

Areas that are recommended for wilderness will be managed according to forestwide management direction (forestwide standards and guidelines) as well as Management Areas (MA) direction. It is expected that the DEIS will contain an MA for recommended wilderness. The MA for recommended wilderness should address the concern that management actions do not allow activities that would preclude an area from being designated as a wilderness in the future.

How should the IRAs that are not recommended for wilderness be managed?

The 1987 Forest Plans provided direction on how the IRAs that were not proposed for wilderness should be managed. They were allocated to a variety of MAs. Some of these MAs had prescriptions that called for road construction while others did not. The intent in the Forest Plans was that a certain amount of timber would come from the IRAs that had timber harvest prescriptions.

This direction to build roads and harvest timber in certain IRAs has proven to be very controversial, and the amount of timber harvest and road construction that was projected in the Forest Plans has not occurred. Controversy continues to accompany most proposals to harvest timber, build roads, or otherwise develop IRAs.

The ROD for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule prohibited road construction, road reconstruction, and or timber cutting, sale or removal in IRAs except under certain circumstances. On December 12, 2002, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the ruling by the US District Court that had enjoined USDA from implementing the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This on-going litigation and other future national developments may continue to make the Agency’s management direction for these areas uncertain. Management direction for IRAs in the proposed revised Forest Plans will comply with the direction in affect at that time.

What are the implications of continuing under current management direction for IRAs?

Direction in the 1987 Forest Plans included guidance to manage some of the IRAs for resources that would preclude roadless management. Direction included proposed development in some of the IRAs for timber management. The projected amounts of timber harvest and road construction from these areas has not occurred. Continuing under 1987 Forest Plan direction would perpetuate this situation, and the desired goals and objectives as stated in the 1987 Forest Plans would not be met for those areas. This direction does not reflect the current national policy for the management of IRAs and needs to be revised.

The revised Forest Plans will evaluate each of the 91 IRAs on the KIPZ and recommend management options depending upon current national direction that continues to evolve and change. Currently, we are unable to implement the Roadless Area Conservation Rule because of remaining legal issues. The Forest Service has established interim guidance for the management of IRAs to ensure that these areas are protected until the current legal issues are resolved and national guidance is finalized. Until that time, we will continue to evaluate these roadless areas through our Forest Plan Revision Process.