

Domeland Wilderness Fish Creek Addition Potential Recommended Wilderness Addition Sequoia National Forest

This recommendation was derived from Wilderness Evaluation Polygon #1431

Number of Acres

Approximately 1,460 acres.

Location and Description of Recommended Boundary

The forest's potential recommended boundary includes a portion of the Woodpecker Inventoried Roadless Area and would extend the existing boundary of the Domeland Wilderness northward. This piece is bounded on the west by Forest Road 22S77A with a 75-foot setback on the west encompassing most of the Bald Mountain Botanical Area. The Bald Mountain Lookout is approximately 400 feet from the western tip of the addition. Sherman Pass Road with a 200-foot setback is the boundary on the east. The northern boundary is contiguous with the existing inventoried roadless area boundary and following a prominent ridgeline from west to east to Fish Creek and then northeast along the inventoried roadless area boundary to Sherman Pass Road. Fish Creek flows north to south in the eastern end of the area.

The boundary supports management of the area as potential wilderness because of the following:

- Visitors would be able to locate the boundary on both a map and on the ground.
- The boundary minimizes the potential for motorized incursions into wilderness because the boundary is offset from roads the public can locate both on maps and on the ground.
- All lands adjacent to the recommended wilderness are managed by the Forest Service.

General Geography, Topography and Vegetation

The potential recommended addition is a high-elevation mountainous area from 7,000 to 9,000 feet above sea level, primarily comprised of shrublands (about half), graduating to conifer and mixed conifer (about one third) in the higher elevations, including eastside pine, pinyon/juniper, and Sierran mixed conifer. The rest is grass or exposed bedrock. The shrub type it is mostly high desert/montane chaparral transition. Fish Creek is in the Fish Creek South Fork Kern critical aquatic habitat and is in good condition. The area is in the old forest emphasis area, and Southern Sierra Fisher conservation area.

Current Uses

The area is lightly used for dispersed camping, hunting and fishing. Motorcycle riding is popular in the surrounding area, although there are no motorcycle trails within the addition. The area is within the Fish Creek Range Allotment. The only developments around the area are a fire lookout, livestock structures including water troughs, fence line and corrals. Forest roads just outside of the area are open to highway

legal vehicles only. A special use permit is issued to Edwards Air Force Base for their pilot wilderness survival training that occurs approximately 5 times each year.

Wilderness Characteristics and the Ability to Protect and Manage the Area so as to Preserve Wilderness Characteristics

The area appears natural for the most part and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention. The area has been affected by past sheep and cattle grazing, current cattle grazing, wildfire and a limited amount of timber harvest. The area was burned in the Manter Fire in 2000. The Bald Mountain Botanical Area and the Fish Creek Canyon with interesting geologic features (basalt caps) provide a very unique and high value special resource that contributes to the wilderness character of the area. The area is also adjacent to the existing Domeland Wilderness to the south. The area does contain several Forest Service sensitive species including the fisher, slender salamanders and historic detections of willow flycatcher.

Summary of Factors Considered in the Selection of this Area

Forest staff considered the presence and extent of wilderness qualities, manageability and the significance of the area in the context of the entire Sequoia National Forest in selecting this area to analyze as a potential recommendation as wilderness.

- The area makes a logical addition to the Domeland Wilderness, incorporating a portion of the Woodpecker Inventoried Roadless Area, Fish Creek critical aquatic refuge and a majority of the Bald Mountain Botanical Area that provides habitat for numerous rare plants.
- Potential permanent protection of this unit as wilderness would leave only the Forest Road 22S0 corridor, with 200-foot setbacks on either side, between the South Sierra Wilderness and the Domeland Wildernesses. Establishing nearly contiguous wilderness protects movement of wildlife and the quality of visitor experiences in the area.
- The area contains several Forest Service sensitive species.
- The overall character of the area appears natural and appears to be unaffected by human influences.