

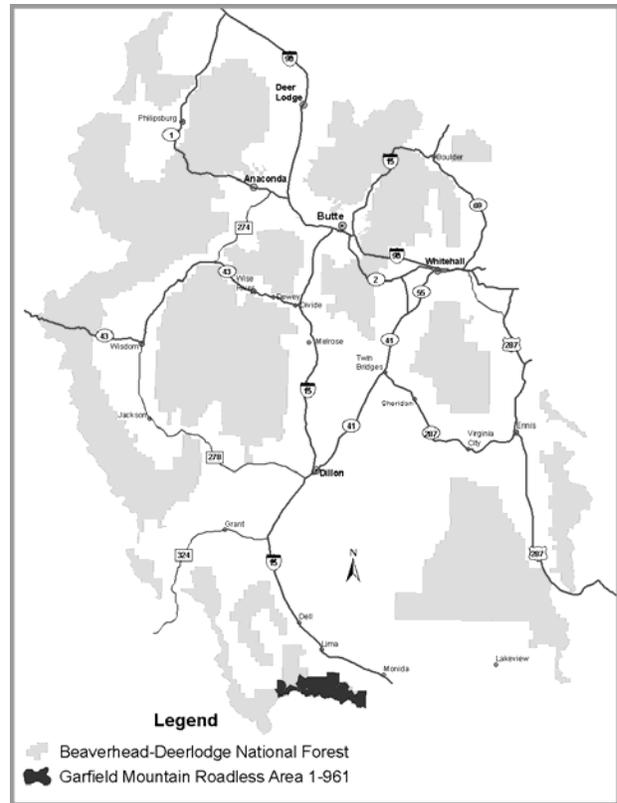
## Garfield Mountain (No. 1-961)

48,935 Acres

### *Description*

The Garfield Mountain Roadless Area is located west of Interstate 15 on the Continental Divide in Beaverhead County, Montana. The IRA and Caribou Targhee Roadless Area 4-961 are contiguous. Access is available from Sawmill Flats, Shineberger, East and Sheep Creek roads.

Elevations range from about 7,500 in the foothills to 10,100 feet at the peaks. The terrain is moderately rugged. Vegetation is sparse in the higher areas, where rock outcrops and rock slides are common. Sagebrush-grasslands with stringers of Douglas-fir and mountain mahogany in the canyons dominate the lower elevations. Lodgepole pine and limber pine fingers are found from mid-elevations to the timberline. Aspen is abundant in the Modoc-Pleasant Valley areas.



### *Capability*

**Integrity of the Natural Environment and Scenery:** The appearance is nearly natural, with fences, stock developments, and wheel tracks visible in lower elevations. A power line corridor is visible from Pine Creek in the western-most portion of the IRA. Scenic integrity is mostly high. The natural integrity has been reduced slightly by cattle grazing and wheel tracks.

**Opportunities for Solitude and Primitive Recreation:** Although fairly open, many places have topographic and vegetative screening, and solitude can be found. The area's undeveloped character and remoteness contribute to opportunities for primitive recreation.

**Special Features:** The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

**Manageability and Boundaries:** The boundaries are well defined because they follow topographic features and administrative boundaries. The area could be managed as Wilderness.

### *Availability*

**Recreation:** The most common recreation use is hunting. Both summer and fall are popular for stock use. Some places in the IRA are popular for snowmobiling.

**Wildlife:** The IRA provides secure habitat for wildlife enhancing linkages and connectivity across the landscape in between GYA and forests to the west and north. Canada lynx habitat and wolverine denning habitat are mapped. Westslope cutthroat trout inhabit some stream segments.

**Water:** Water in this area maintains instream values of stream and riparian environments and is important for irrigation. There are also spring developments for livestock. Increased demand for irrigation water is likely.

**Livestock Grazing:** Most of the Garfield Mountain Area is grazed as part of an allotment.

**Timber:** There is no suitable timber in this roadless area.

**Minerals/Oil & Gas:** Forty-one percent of the area has a medium phosphate potential. Sixty percent of the area has moderate oil & gas potential, thirty-nine percent has low potential, and the remainder has very low potential. In 2006 the first oil and gas leases issued on the BDNF in some time were issued in the Garfield Mountain Roadless Area and vicinity. These leases were issued for 10 years under stipulations of the 1995 Oil and Gas Leasing Decision and the direction of the 1986 Beaverhead Forest Plan.

**Heritage:** The Middle Fork of Little Sheep Creek contains Indian pictographs.

**Land Use Authorizations:** There are no special uses which limit Wilderness potential. A designated power corridor lies outside the IRA in section 35 by Bannock Pass. The width of this corridor is not limited and may expand into the IRA in the future, which would limit availability of that portion for Wilderness.

**Non-Federal Lands:** There are 209 acres of private lands in 3 separate parcels.

**Disturbances:** The area has a low risk for insects and diseases because there is only a small percentage of conifer forest.

### *Need*

**Ecological:** The Garfield Roadless Area is a part of the Beaverhead Mountains Ecological Section, and contains most of the shrub land, grassland, riparian and aspen communities underrepresented in the NWPS. Sensitive plant species not currently protected by Wilderness designation, and habitat for sage grouse, lynx and wolverine.

**Social:** Recommendation for Wilderness is supported by people who praise the remoteness and ruggedness, and who desire to see lower elevation grassland/shrubland additions to Wilderness. Support for recommendation of this area for Wilderness has also been received from those who support Wilderness recommendation for all roadless areas. Opposition comes from people interested in retaining mineral exploration and grazing.

### *Suitability*

**Capability:** Natural integrity has been reduced by livestock grazing. There are opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. The area could be managed as Wilderness if there were minor boundary adjustments.

**Availability:** Ten-year oil and gas leases were issued in 2006 which may limit availability. Existing leases are not revocable by recommendations of wilderness made after the leases are already issued.

**Need:** The area would add lands, and contribute underrepresented shrub land and grassland communities to the NWPS. Wilderness recommendation for Garfield Mountain has received both support and opposition from the public.

**Wilderness Evaluation Summary**

IRA	Acres*	Capability	Availability	Need	Suitability
Garfield Mt., BDNF 1-961	48,935	High	Moderate	High	High
Caribou-Targhee NF 4-945	47,500	Not rated	Not rated	Not rated	Not Rated
Total	96,435				

\*Nonfederal lands are excluded from the acreage.

**Garfield Mountain IRA Changes from 1987 to 2007**

Updated Acres by Map Categories	BDNF Acres Only
1987 Total	42,701
Acres Added	6,747
Acres Dropped	-32
GIS Acreage Recalculated	-481
2007 Total	48,935

Note: Recalculated acreage using GIS include changes to one or more of the following categories: land exchanges, refined mapping scales, updated acre calculation techniques, and/or mapping error corrections.

**Alternatives and Environmental Consequences****IRA Disposition by Alternative**

Roadless Acres in Allocation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6
Recommended Wilderness	--	--	92%	--	--	66%
Wilderness Study Area	--	--	--	--	--	--
Summer Non-Motorized *	80%	83%	97%	83%	83%	18%
Backcountry Recreation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16%
Road-based	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	--
Current Travel Plan Applies	20%	17%	3%	17%	17%	n/a
Winter Non-Motorized	23%	23%	100%	23%	23%	19%
Fisheries Key Watershed	n/a	n/a	--	--	--	--
Restoration Key Watershed	n/a	n/a	55%	--	43%	--
Tentatively Suitable Timber	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Modeled Suitable Timber	--	--	--	--	--	--
Modeled Suitable Range	61%	61%	61%	61%	61%	61%
Moderate Oil & Gas Potential	60%	60%	60%	60%	60%	60%

\* Summer Non-motorized includes Recommended Wilderness and Some Wilderness Study Area allocations for Alternatives 1 through 5. Summer Non-motorized, Recommended Wilderness, and Wilderness Study Area allocations are mutually exclusive in Alternative 6.

Garfield Mountain IRA differs from other IRAs because 6,700 of the 49,000 acres are not protected by the RACR. The northeast corner of the IRA is an addition *since* the RACR was passed. The road construction and timber harvest prohibitions of RACR do not apply to that section.

Wilderness recommendation in Alternatives 3 and 6 protect secure wildlife along the Continental Divide, adds underrepresented shrubland and grassland communities to the NWPS, and protects the IRA from the possibility development in the area with moderate potential for oil and gas not already leased. The current leases could be developed under a Controlled Use Stipulation but with the road construction prohibitions of the RACR development potential is very low. **No new oil and gas leases would be issued.** Mountain biking would be prohibited and snowmobiling more limited.

A non-Wilderness recommendation for this area in Alternatives 1, 2, 4 and 5 would not positively respond to the Regional Needs Assessment and need for long term protection of unique Wilderness resources and secure habitat. Outside of the possibility of oil and gas development, Wilderness characteristics would be maintained in this planning period because non-motorized allocations or travel plan closures in all alternatives close a majority of the area to motorized uses. Alternative 5 designates a restoration key watershed as well. Sixty percent of the IRA has moderate potential for oil and gas development and may or may not be protected from development by road construction prohibitions of the RACR. The newly inventoried northeast corner would not be. More area would be open for snowmobiling and trails would be open to mountain bikes.