

The region also contains significant historical and cultural features. Of particular interest is the Lolo Trail, which is on both the National Historic Landmark and National Historic Trail registries. Long a fundamental prehistoric route between the Columbia Basin and Montana, the trail was also utilized by Lewis and Clark. Later, Nez Perce leader Chief Joseph and his band of non-treaty Indians traveled the trail en route to Canada, attempting to escape persecution during the Nez Perce Conflict of 1877.

Opportunities for hiking, backpacking, primitive camping, horseback riding, hunting, and stream fishing are abundant. Among the wide, rounded ridges of the drainages and tributaries, visitors will find solitude and a sense of isolation in the verdant wild. Diverse topography and expanses of dense trees and shrubs shield the explorer from civilization. Weitas Creek provides clean water for the North Fork of the Clearwater, and Upper Cayuse Creek and North Fork tributaries contain some of the largest stands of old-growth left in the entire Clearwater Basin; low elevation river valleys such as this do not often escape roading. The Forest Service suggested if this area is designated as wilderness, the unmaintained 555 route beyond the Weitas Guard Station bridge be incorporated in the wilderness. That is precisely what our wilderness proposal does. Under the Clearwater National Forest Travel Plan (2012) Weitas Creek was turned over to off-road motorized use, threatening to exacerbate erosion-prone soils, displace wildlife, and disturb the primitive serenity. It is for these fundamental attributes, as well as the protection of unparalleled fish populations and wildlife habitats, that make the Weitas Creek region a vital candidate for wilderness designation.

Take Action

The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (NREPA), HR 1187, would protect this magnificent area as wilderness. Contact your US senator or representative to support this bill. Senator _____, US Senate, Washington, DC 20510; Representative _____, US House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515. Visit <http://www.friendsoftheclearwater.org/description/> for more information about this legislation.

More Information: Friends of the Clearwater, PO Box 9241, Moscow, ID 83843; www.friendsoftheclearwater.org; [ph\(208\)882-9755](tel:(208)882-9755)

100% post-consumer recycled paper, processed without chlorine



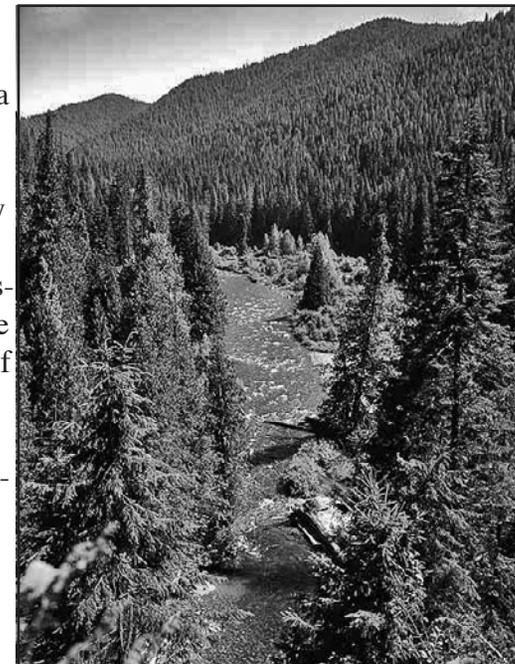
Join Us in Protecting Wild Clearwater Country

A Publication of Friends of the Clearwater

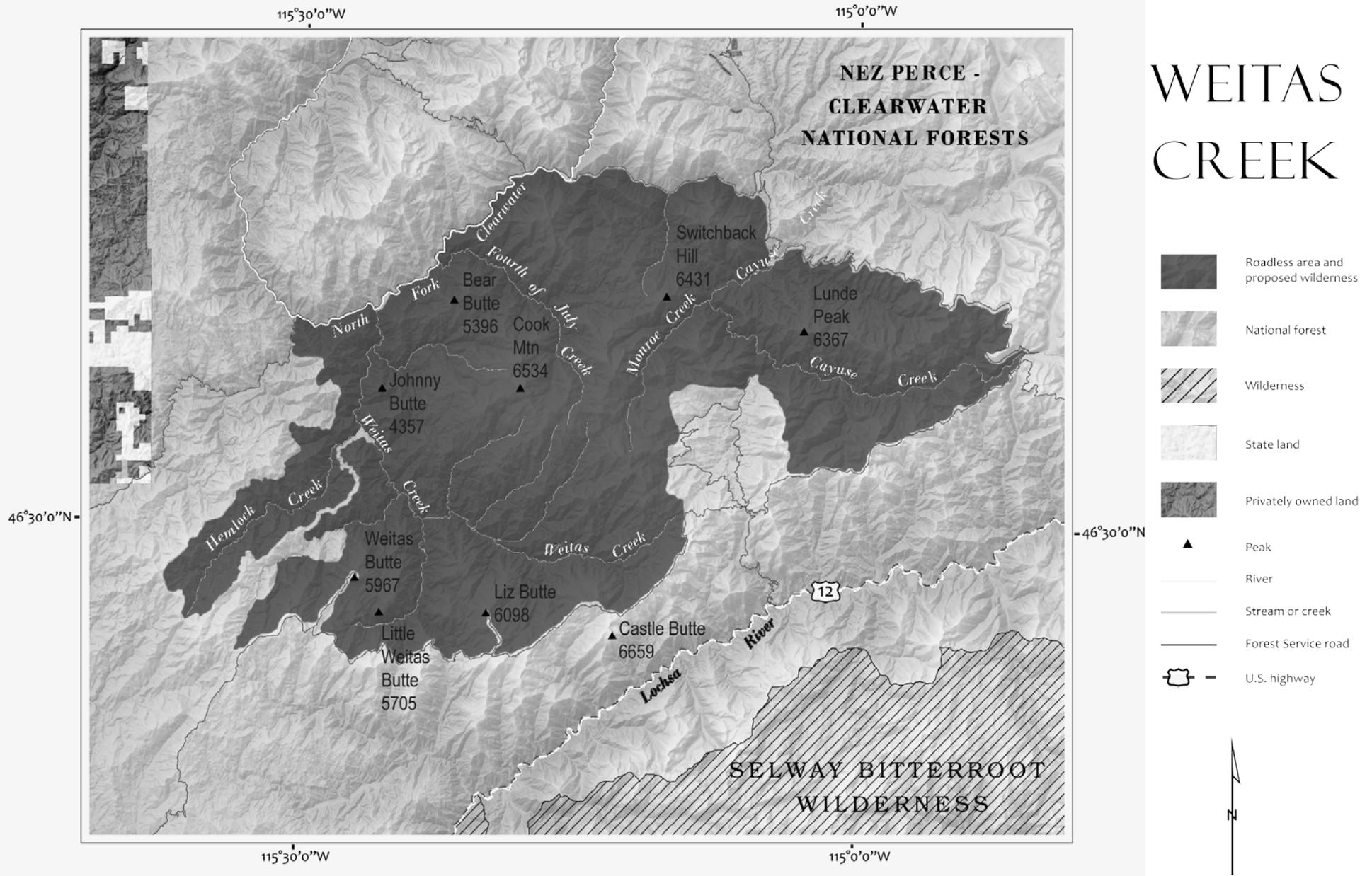
Proposed
Weitas Creek Wilderness
260,000 Acres
Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forests

Bighorn-Weitas (usually called Weitas Creek), with 260,000 acres, is the largest undesignated roadless area entirely within the Nez Perce- Clearwater National Forests. This swath of natural beauty sits within two major drainages: Weitas Creek and Cayuse Creek, with various streams that drain into the North Fork of the Clearwater. The area between Weitas and Cayuse Creeks—Cook Mountain—consists of generally rolling upland landforms with wide ridges and pleasant scenic views. There are few large, exposed areas of rocky and barren ground. Mountaintops are mostly rounded and deeply weathered.

Weitas Creek lies dominantly in the cedar-hemlock-pine ecosystem. At the higher elevations, roughly 5,000 to 7,000 feet, one finds spindly carex and beargrass, and mountain hemlock and even-aged lodgepole pine, their slender trunks shooting upwards in defiance of the forest fires that induced their growth. At lower elevations—ranging from 2,400 to 4,000 feet at the stream bottoms—grand fir and western red cedar dominate. Within the conifer stands stretch large brush fields and grass meadows used as winter forage by ungulates.



Chuck Pezeshki photo



Wildlife abounds in this sprawling low-elevation country. Roughly 18,000 acres provides crucial winter range for elk. Mule deer and black bear are other common big game, as well as moose, mountain lion, the threatened lynx, wolverine, fisher, at least one wolf pack, and the intriguing—yet unconfirmed—grizzly sighting. In addition, numerous Region 1 sensitive species' habitats occur here. The cold, clear waters of the creeks provide a haven for bull trout and cutthroat trout. A Cayuse Creek catch-and-release regulation established in 1974 for the protection and enhancement of the latter species resulted in a regional reputation for an excellent fishery.