Clearwater Roadless Areas Index

These articles are saved from the old version of the website (prior to 2024), copy and pasted from either the Wayback Machine or the back-up of our old site. These were primarily authored by Gary Macfarlane, with help from others.

Two links are provided for each article. Each title links to the Wayback Machine web archive of the old FOC website. Below each title is a link to our "faux" of the Clearwater website, which is a mostly-functional duplicate of the FOC website from the 2018.

Each area is accompanied by a map created by Jeremy Jenkins or Collette Gantenbein. These can be found on FOC files (FOC Files > Administrative > FOC Maps > Roadless)

Wayback Machine Links:
(www.friendsoftheclearwater.org/undeveloped-wildlands/)
(www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/undeveloped-wildlands/)
(https://web.archive.org/web/20240526213350/https://www.friendsoftheclearwater.org/fmemailverification/undeveloped-wildlands/)

Undeveloped Wildlands in the Clearwater
www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/undeveloped-wildlands/

Since the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 and creation of the National Wilderness Preservation System conservationists have worked diligently to protect undeveloped public wildlands as Wilderness. These undeveloped wildlands are also known as roadless areas. National forests, national parks, national wildlife refuges and lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management all contain millions of acres of roadless wildlands that qualify for wilderness designation.

Today less than 3% (about 56 million acres) of all the lower 48 states acreage is designated wilderness. Including Alaska, approximately 5% of all lands in the United States is designated wilderness – roughly 111,000 million acres.

Only Congress can designate a federal public wildland as Wilderness. Designated wilderness areas are generally protected from industrial development including road building, logging, new mining entry, new livestock allotments, as well as all forms of motorized and mechanized transportation. However, undeveloped roadless areas, particularly in Idaho, are susceptible to all of these threats. Learn about the Idaho Roadless Rule.

There are approximately 1.5 million acres of roadless wildlands on the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests that have no permanent protection. In order to protect these irreplaceable wildlands they have been proposed as Wilderness. The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act **would designate these wildlands as Wilderness.**

Click the below links for a description and map of each irreplaceable roadless area in the Clearwater region. Other important roadless areas on the fringe of our mission area that we advocate for protection of include the Bitterroot Face and Lolo Peak (Bitterroot and Lolo National Forests/Selway – Bitterroot Wilderness additions), Rapid River and Salmon Face (Nez Perce National Forest/Hells Canyon Wilderness additions), and Mosquito – Fly, Sheep – Stateline, and Midget Peak (Idaho Panhandle National Forests).

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Upper North Fork – 63,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

Weir Creek (Weir – Post Office) – 22,000, Clearwater National Forest

Weitas Creek – 260,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

Individual Roadless Wildland Pages

Clear Creek – 9,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/clear-creek-roadless-area/

The Clear Creek Roadless Area encompasses 9,000 acres located at the head of Clear Creek along the western boundary of the Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forests. Access can be gained by spurs of Road 1842 on the north, Road 650 on the west, and Road 286 on the east, though some of these roads are closed during the general hunting season to lessen impacts on big game.

The land is mountainous; elevation ranges from 2,000 – 4,600 feet, and steep slopes parallel the creek's drainage, leading to moderately flat ridge tops. Past wildfires and resulting regrowth of vegetation have created dense brush fields of willow, maple, serviceberry, and various other shrubs, as well as young grand fir, Douglas fir, and western red cedar at the fringes. During the winter months, the thick vegetation provides a significant range for elk and moose. If you can navigate through the tall foliage screens you might find yourself on one of the overgrown trails that traverse the area. Deer, bear, and cougar are also found among the hills, meadows, and ridges. In addition, the habitats of the red-naped sapsucker, pileated woodpecker, Columbia spotted frog, and western toad overlap the drainage.

Clear Creek drainage, coupled with the Silver Creek-Pilot Knob Roadless Area to the south, is yearlong grey wolf habitat. The creek itself, despite past industrial activity, remains an important habitat for steelhead, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, whitefish, and salmon. A Chinook summer salmon hatchery is situated northwest of the area near the mouth of the creek outside of the national forest.

Currently, the primary uses of this verdant region include big game winter and summer range, fishing, and hunting. Approximately 14,000 acres have been lost in the last thirty years to road building and logging. More rigorous protection is urgently needed to prevent further segmentation and misuse of this important country.

Cove – Mallard/Frank Church – River of No Return Addition – 64,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/cove-mallard-frank-church-river-of-no-return-addition/

At approximately 64,000 acres, the Cove-Mallard Roadless Area is located just north of the Salmon River Breaks, adjoining the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness to the south and east. In the southern part of this primitive area there is little to no development. Hence, this area may serve as an important biological connecting corridor for migrating wildlife and genetic diversity. Indeed, the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness and Gospel-Hump Wilderness are connected, making them the single largest protected area of Wilderness in the lower 48 states.

A country filled with rolling hills and an extensive lodgepole pine forest canopy, Cove-Mallard contains pockets of old-growth ponderosa pine, along with mountain meadows and englemann spruce-alpine fir at the higher elevations. The explorer may come across Payson's milkvetch and candystick, both of which are Region One sensitive plant species.

Like many places in Clearwater Country, this landscape is defined by the waterways that run from the mountains to the river bottoms. In the northern part of the roadless area flows Big Mallard Creek, with it's bottom reaches entering the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness before it's confluence with the Wild & Scenic Salmon River. In the south flows Jersey Creek, its headwaters flowing from Jersey Mountain, which unfortunately was not included when boundaries were drawn for the Gospel-Hump Wilderness. Big Blowout Creek and Noble Creek are also prominent streams that drain this heavily wooded and still-wild area.

Wolverine and fisher roam these hills, with northern goshawk, three-toed woodpeckers, and black-backed woodpeckers rounding out the list of Region One sensitive wildlife species found in the roadless area. Rich with big-game summer range, the area offers abundant habitat for deer, elk, and moose, drawing in predators like grey wolves and, potentially, grizzly bears. Bighorn sheep and mountain goats can be found along the southeastern part of the roadless area, near it's border with the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. Cove-Mallard contains important habitat for West-slope cutthroat trout.

Opportunities for solitude, challenge, and reflection are excellent throughout this area. Hiking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, birding, and wildlife viewing are all compatible with this wildland setting. If planning an extensive backpacking trip, it is possible to start hiking from the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, southwest into Cove-Mallard, south into the Frank Church, and then west across the Cove-Mallard and into the Gospel-Hump Wilderness. For this and other reasons, the Cove-Mallard Roadless Area is a logical addition to the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness and the National Wilderness Preservation System.

While livestock grazing allotments exist in the area, they are currently not used. It is not likely they will be reopened. Four commercial outfitters operate in the area. Cook Ranch and Mallard Creek Ranch, located on the boundary of the roadless country, are private inholdings in the national forest used for recreation purposes. The tiny town of Dixie is located just to the west of the roadless area. A mining boom occurred in the region starting in 1890, with some activity remaining on the boundary of the area. The biggest threat to the area came from the infamous Cove-Mallard timber sales of the 1990s. These sales, which were vigorously resisted by citizens, would have destroyed the entire roadless area. Some of the sales were completed, which reduced the size of the area by about 13,000 acres.

Dixie Summit – Nut Hill – 13,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/dixie-summit-nut-hill-roadless-area/

Dixie Summit-Nut Hill Roadless Area is 13,000 acres of furrowed land located on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, slightly northeast of the Gospel-Hump Wilderness. Its name is rather misleading, as neither Dixie Summit nor Nut Hill is included in the area's frontiers anymore; Moose Butte at 7,100 feet is the most prominent topographical feature. A ridge runs south from Moose Butte through the roadless area; waters to the east of this ridge flow into the Red River (part of the Clearwater drainage), while waters to the west run to Big Creek and Crooked Creek, tributaries of the Salmon River. While some slopes are steep, most of the country consists of gentle hills and mountain meadows, such as Big Creek Meadows stretching across the western portion and up into the tributaries, providing forage for wildlife. The rest of the area ranges from pure lodgepole pine stands on the southern slopes at moderate elevations to alpine fir and Engelmann spruce in the draws and at higher elevations. The canopy shelters Spacious monkeyflower, a rare bloom endemic to Idaho.

Wildlife communities include elk, moose, deer, bear, and cougar. Dixie Summit-Nut Hill is also prime habitat for the grey wolf. Wolverine, fisher, and pileated woodpeckers are some of the Region 1 sensitive species found among the trees and grasses here. The watershed provides the cold, clear water necessary for prime steelhead, Chinook summer salmon, and bull trout habitat.

A 1,000-acre Research Natural Area sits within the roadless area, located in the marshy grasslands along Meadow Creek and its tributaries. It includes the stream network itself, the nearby forest, and the mountain meadow environment's ecological contributions.

Though the roadless area itself is relatively small, it offers opportunities for fishing, hunting, camping, and horseback riding, and is very valuable public land as wildlife range and fisheries habitat. Intrusions from nearby development and off-road vehicle access pose the greatest threats until further protection for this important environment is instated.

Eldorado Creek – 7,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/eldorado-creek-roadless-area/

Eldorado Creek Roadless Area is the last natural area remaining in the more gentle and rolling forests that used to characterize North Central Idaho. A poorly drawn Forest Service boundary in 1987 resulted in some of the area being logged. Fortunately, at about 7,000 acres, it exceeds the minimum acreage recommendation for wilderness designation.

Centered at the headwaters of the Eldorado Creek drainage, this parcel sits approximately fifty miles slightly southeast of Orofino and is accessible by numerous, mostly graveled, Forest Service roads. The interior can be reached by about eight miles of low-standard trails. Though the area is small, it is notable for its good soil, gentle terrain, and hardy evergreen canopy within the Lolo Creek drainage. Dense stands of pine, fir, cedar, spruce, larch, and hemlock create a cool, lush shelter for wolverine, deer, moose, and black bear to traverse. Elk that winter in the adjacent Pete King drainage and North Lochsa Slope are provided summer range. Unsurprisingly, big game hunters, as well as huckleberry foragers, are the most frequent human denizens. In the past, two prehistoric hunting areas and three Nez Perce Indian trails existed in this area, and a few old lookout and cabin remains can still be found.

Though the natural appearance within the area has not been altered, intensely harvested timber areas surround Eldorado Creek. Without protection this verdant, unassuming gem could easily be absorbed by neighboring development.

Fish – Hungery Creek (North Lochsa Slope) – 118,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/fish-hungery-creek-roadless-area-also-known-as-lochsa-slope/

Fish-Hungery Creek Roadless Area is 118,000 acres of natural beauty located entirely within the boundary of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, about 70 miles east of Lewiston, Idaho. U.S. Highway 12 provides access from the south, and a few other low-standard dirt roads allow alternative entry, with the Lolo Trail/Motorway forming the northern boundary.

Nestled between Weitas Creek, Rackliff-Gedney, and Lochsa Face Roadless Areas, and the Selway-Bitteroot Wilderness, this country is characterized by its two major types of drainages: the first, a series of one- to six-mile long streams like Glade, Apgar, Deadman, and Bimerick Creeks that drain directly into the Lochsa River. The southwest and northeast portions of these are distinguished by steep stream breaklands dissected by abrupt side drainages. The second type, represented in the central portion of Upper Bimerick and Fish Creek drainages, exhibit a more broken topography: moderate-relief uplands and gentle hills etched with meandering streams spilling into broad bottomlands with diverse vegetation. Here, in the 60,000 acre Fish Creek drainage, the explorer is generously afforded a sense of solitude and isolation from other human activity in the most important steelhead stream in Idaho. Lush, shaded banks create a vital haven for anadromous steelhead trout and Chinook summer salmon, as well as cutthroat and rainbow trout. Elk are provided essential summer range in the Fish Creek drainage, and the area as a whole nurtures nearly 18,000 acres of ungulate winter range. Mule and white-tailed deer, moose, mountain goats, cougars, black bears, fisher, pine marten, wolverine, and lynx are among the mammal denizens, and Region 1 sensitive bird and amphibian species are present.

Elevation ranges from about 1,500 feet along the Lochsa River to 6,600 feet at Castle Butte to the northeast. At the higher elevations lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and beargrass are common. Western red cedar and grand fir grace the north slopes. Large forest fires in the early 1900s greatly determined later growth: a mosaic of expansive brush fields span many of the slopes, especially those in the south and west, but give way to concentrations of western white pine, Douglas fir, Engelmann spruce, larch, ponderosa pine, and mountain hemlock. Furthermore, Fish-Hungery Creek boasts several sensitive plant species including clustered ladyslipper, evergreen kittentail, Constance's bittercress, broad-fruit mariposa, light hookeria, and bank monkeyflower. The 1,300-acre Lochsa Research Natural Area was established in 1977 to protect and study the unique Pacific Coast vegetation that occurs within the roadless area boundaries. Flowering dogwood and 14 other plant species that are not normally found east of the Cascade Mountains or further east in the continental U.S. grow in this Research Natural Area.

An approximated .25 mile wide corridor within the Wild & Scenic Middle Fork/Lochsa River, runs the full length of the roadless area north of Highway 12. The 4,500-acre corridor is specially managed to emphasize the scenic values of the river environment. A sparse network of minimally maintained trails weaves throughout the area, most constructed in the early 20th century by Forest Service for wildfire control access. One path runs parallel to Fish Creek, offering low-impact accessibility to its cool, alluring waters. Stream fishing, hiking, backpacking, and horseback riding are becoming more popular as visitors can disperse widely throughout this country, from the mossy stream beds to the steep breaklands showcasing panoramic vistas of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

The Lolo Trail is an important prehistoric route and prominent in Nez Perce culture and history. This area possesses the longest remaining undisturbed section of the Lewis & Clark Trail in the country. Some 17 miles of trail in the Hungery Creek drainage, aptly named as the place where the explorers had nothing to eat, remains much as Lewis & Clark found them. In addition to a number of other historic and prehistoric sites, another of note is a World War II Japanese-American Internment camp near Highway 12 to the south just outside the boundary.

Under the Clearwater National Forest Travel Plan (2012), the region is now open to ORVs and ATVs, a guaranteed menace to natural processes and healthy ecosystems. Areas to the west and east have already been developed for timber harvest. The wealth and diversity of the region's flora and fauna cannot afford encroachment of roads and further exploitation. Its wilderness attributes and spatial orientation make it an ideal wilderness candidate.

Gospel – Hump Additions – 55,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/gospel-hump-additions/

The approximately 55,000 acres of roadless lands adjacent to the Gospel-Hump Wilderness include land that drains into two major river systems – the Clearwater and Salmon Rivers. These important areas should have been included in the original boundary, but unfortunately were left out.

The Johns Creek watershed is the most important bull trout stream in the entire South Fork Clearwater drainage. It also provides crucial habitat for steelhead and salmon. Currently, only the headwaters of Johns Creek are protected in the existing wilderness. The Forest Service has recommended this roadless drainage, from its headwaters to its confluence with the South Fork Clearwater, as a wild river. This entrenched stream forms a beautiful canyon as it travels north to the South Fork Clearwater. The steeper slopes in and around Johns Creek provide crucial mountain goat winter habitat. Even the Forest Service and Idaho Department of Fish and Game have admitted the importance of this area. Old forests, some with unique Pacific yew stands, are prime moose winter range.

The Tenmile Creek watershed is critical for steelhead, salmon, and bull trout. The headwaters of the West Fork Crooked River and Boulder Creek provide high-elevation lakes and forested terrain respectively. The West Fork Crooked River is also a rare population stronghold for Bull trout. Despite our best efforts, some land in the West Fork Crooked River area was logged in 2018. Indian Creek and surrounding country are breaks along the Salmon River providing critical habitat for bighorn sheep. Studies in the 70s and 80s suggested the most important wildlife habitat in the region consists of the roadless lands contiguous to the existing wilderness.

Vegetation is diverse, as the additions are found in varying elevations around the Gospel-Hump Wilderness. The dry bluebunch wheatgrass communities, interspersed with ponderosa pines, are found along the Salmon River Breaks. Whitebark pine is found in the upper reaches of Boulder Creek.

Topographically, the Gospel-Hump additions are diverse, too. The Salmon River is found at around 2,000 feet and some peaks are in excess of 8,000 feet. Some trails can be located, though much of the area remains wild and without trails. With the exception of a sliver of land near Crooked Creek and the headwaters of the West Fork Crooked River, the Forest Service has refused to protect the majority of this wildland under the weak Idaho Roadless Rule. Furthermore, the agency refuses to study this erroneously excluded land for wilderness potential, in spite of acknowledging its roadless nature. Thus, these additions are threatened with development even more so than other roadless areas on the Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forests. The wildlife habitat and aquatic values alone make these wildlands an important candidate for inclusion in the Gospel-Hump Wilderness.

Grandmother Mountain – 35,000 acres, Saint Joe National Forest and Bureau of Land Management

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/grandmother-mountain-roadless-area/

From the rocky pinnacle of Lookout Mountain, the view of Grandmother Mountain Roadless Area and beyond is so vast and boundless the ridges in the distance appear a hazy blue; mile after mile of forested hills. Management of the area is split between the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. This 35,000 acre swath, located roughly 30 miles southeast of St. Maries, Idaho, makes up part of the ridge dividing the Clearwater from the St. Joe drainage, with some acreage under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management. The U-shaped backbone includes Grandmother Mountain, Grandfather Mountain, Marks Butte, Crater Peak, Lookout Mountain, and the ominously named Widow Mountain. The landscape conveys its unmistakable glacial history: steep slopes, rocky outcroppings and scattered moraines, carved bowls, cirque basins, and icy mountain lakes. The headwaters of Marble Creek, a major tributary of the St. Joe River, flow northward from the ridgeline. Flowing to the east are the headwaters of the Little North Fork Clearwater, essential and generative habitat for Westslope-cutthroat and Bull trout, stretching undammed until it reaches Dworshak Reservoir. There are 2,300 acres of the watercourse eligible for wild and scenic protection.

The high elevation, geologic record, and past fire history are reflected in vegetation patterns. Nearly half of the roadless area consists of young, even-aged, and slowly regenerating stands of various evergreen types. Over the remaining forested regions old-growth cedars stand stately and dignified, graduating to reflect a sparser subalpine pattern as elevation climbs. Mountain hemlock and subalpine fir lean with the incline toward the peaks, and scrubby brush fields of beargrass and lupine spread over slopes. Elk find substantial summer range here, cohabiting with black bear, whitetail and mule deer, wolverine, fisher, lynx, and other species common to the forest setting. A more than 300-acre Research Natural Area is set aside to study the incredible ecological value of the high elevation lakes and wetlands of this, and the nearby, Pinchot Butte Roadless Area.

The interior is latticed with maintained and organized trails, affording hikes, campouts, horseback rides, cross-country skiing, fishing, huckleberry picking, and exceptional scenic viewing. Unfortunately, off-road vehicle use has left undeniable damage to trails and meadows, leading to restrictions on motorized transportation on several paths. The mountainous topography, sweeping meadows, varied tree cover, and array of traversable peaks allow ample opportunities for solitude and exploration. Were this region to be designated Wilderness, geographically it would be the closest wilderness to populous communities such as Moscow and Coeur d'Alene, and protection of the strikingly beautiful and ecologically rich landscape would be ensured.

John Day – 10,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/john-day-roadless-area/

John Day Roadless Area is 10,000 acres parallel to Highway 95 northeast of Riggins, Idaho. Located on a high ridge between the Salmon River and Little Slate Creek, it is separated from the latter roadless area by a road corridor on top of the ridge. Elevation ranges from 3,800 feet at the National Forest Boundary to over 7,000 feet at the main topographic features: John Day Mountain and Southwest Butte. The main ridge runs north to south, the slopes abruptly perpendicular with hardly any flat benches and dropping sharply into draws. On the slopes facing the Salmon River canyon to the west vegetation ranges from non-forested land to a scrubby alpine zone. South slopes contain mostly grasses with scattered trees at higher elevations, while north slopes are timbered with white bark pine and Douglas fir primarily and a minority of ponderosa pine.

The headwaters of Allison Creek and John Day Creek within the roadless area provide cool, steadily flowing waters needed for anadromous fish like steelhead, Chinook summer/fall salmon, and bull trout. Bald eagles use this area. Since the area is at or near the top of a ridge, it is primarily hunters who use the steep terrain as strategic vantage points.

Off-site intrusions and ORV damage pose the greatest threats. An ORV trail running through Southwest Butte accelerates erosion and displaces native wildlife.

Kelly Creek (Great Burn) – 255,000 acres, Clearwater and Lolo National Forests

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/kelly-creek-roadless-area-also-knows-as-great-burn-or-hoodoo/

Kelly Creek (Great Burn or Hoodoo) Roadless Area is a vast 255,000 acre expanse of wild country straddling the Montana/Idaho border along the Bitterroot Divide. The long and high divide runs north-south roughly 40 miles. From the ridges on either side emanate both large and small fast-moving streams, draining into the Clearwater Basin on the Idaho side (where the majority of Kelly Creek sits) and the Clark Fork drainage in Montana. The area burned heavily in the great fire of 1910, leaving charred snags, grassy slopes, and expanses of sub-alpine tundra-like meadow, hence the name Great Burn.

Noted for its rocky outcrops, cliffs, and jagged peaks, Kelly Creek boasts a varied topography with elevation ranging from 3,200 feet at the mouth of Moose Creek to peaks such as Rhodes and Williams rising nearly 8,000 feet. Much of the divide sits above 6,500 feet. Impressive stands of mountain hemlock and dozens of clear lakes nestled in arena-like cirques adorn the high country, with cheerful mountain heather dotting the slopes.

A cedar-hemlock-pine forest canopies upper elevations, primarily grand fir, Douglas fir, larch, modest stands of white pine on the Idaho side, and ponderosa pine at lower and drier elevations. Also prolific are verdurous, fragrant pockets of ancient western red cedar, some over 500 years old, which shelter such sensitive plants as Mingan moonwort, Bank monkey flower, clustered lady slipper, and Idaho strawberry.

A spruce-fir system populates the Montana side, with stretches of Engelmann spruce, sub-alpine fir, and mountain hemlock, with lodgepole pine copious over burned areas. A few whitebark pines can be found above 6,000 feet. Throughout the area, below the explorer's feet rolls a mossy carpet of sword and maidenhair ferns. Along the higher ridges, especially Williams Peak to Shale Mountain, craggy pinnacles and thin, irregular rocky formations often called "dinosaur rocks" for their resemblance to prehistoric creatures, stand sentry to the sweeping vistas.

Prior to the arrival of Euro-Americans, the native people used various natural animal crossings on the divide to wait for animals to migrate or be driven. At least four Indian trails, including the Lolo Trail along the southern boundary, as well as Native American camp areas, a vision quest site, lithic (or stone-tool making) workshops, and game traps existed. Today, the area is still favored country for elk hunting. In addition, mule deer and black bear abound, and an estimated 20-50 mountain goats trek the rock-ribbed high country along the Bitterroot Divide. Moose, mountain lions, and many species of furbearers inhabit this wild expanse, taking advantage of the exceptional summer range. An unfortunate illegal killing of a grizzly in 2007, and more than ten unconfirmed sightings of threatened grizzly bear over the past thirty years, suggest this area is essential habitat. Furthermore, Lynx and several Region 1 sensitive species find Kelly Creek a hospitable environment.

Kelly Creek and all its tributaries have been catch-and-release streams since 1970 to enhance Westslope-cutthroat populations. Twelve to fifteen-inch fish are not uncommon, lending national recognition to the drainage. Most of the larger streams and lakes support cutthroat and rainbow trout (landlocked steelhead since the construction of Dworshak Reservoir). Fish Lake, threatened with off-road vehicles, is important habitat for bull trout. Ironically, the Forest Service promotes motorized use in an area it recommends for wilderness!

The size and diversity of the area, the variety of vegetative types and landforms, the abundance of wildlife, streams, and lakes all contribute to a virtually unlimited primitive setting for recreation in, and appreciation of, the wild. The vastness of this region, with 40 plus streams dissecting the area, trees and shrubs and varied mountainous terrain effectively isolates visitors from each other and provides excellent opportunity for solitude. Kelly Creek Roadless Area is a critical biological link between the massive Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness to the south and the Greater Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem to the north. Full protection of this regional wildland is essential to

curb damaging snowmobile and off-road vehicle use in the Idaho side, and to curtail the potential for speculative mining ventures.

Lick Point – 7,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxsoftheclearwater.org/lick-point-roadless-area/

Lick Point Roadless Area is 7,000 acres and separated from O'Hara-Falls Creek Roadless Area by only one road, and situated west of the expansive Meadow Creek Roadless Area. The entire area sits at a relatively high elevation between 5,000-6,000 feet, and contains the crucial headwaters of the American River in the far southeast corner, as well as Lick Creek. Meadows spread along the creek bottoms; the remaining land is rolling hills of similar topography. They cover mostly brush fields punctuated with shady alder glades and stands of old-growth lodgepole pine. Payson's milkvetch and Evergreen kittentail, both rare and sensitive, can be found among the meadows and canopy. The American River is an integral habitat for anadromous fish – the transparent waters creating a haven for steelhead trout, Chinook summer salmon, rainbow, cutthroat, and whitefish. The region is rich for moose forage, elk summer range, and wolf habitat. Unfortunately, cattle have left noticeable impacts on the landscape, on the trails, and in streambeds.

In conjunction with neighboring O'Hara-Falls Creek and Meadow Creek Roadless Areas, the region contains crucial anadromous fish habitat in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, and needs further protection to alleviate current pressures and intrusions on this important ecosystem.

Little Slate Creek – 12,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/little-slate-creek-roadless-area-3-2/

Little Slate Creek Roadless Area is 12,000 acres and located on the divide between the Salmon River and Slate Creek. The region is characterized by steep side slopes and draws where numerous Slate Creek tributaries furrow the landscape. Some flat benches at mid-elevations relieve sharp inclines. Elevation ranges from 2,100 feet where Slate Creek crosses the National Forest boundary to 7,370 feet just below Nut Basin, where a 2-acre lake of the same name lies rather unexpectedly, nurturing a large population of eastern brook trout. The area is almost completely forested with a majority of Douglas fir. The vegetation screen provides quality ungulate range in summer and winter. Consequently, the area is a popular hunting destination. Steelhead, Chinook summer salmon, and bull trout also thrive.

Certain pockets invite solitude, such as the ominously named Deadhorse Creek, hidden in the interior and scenic points such as Slate Point, Dead Point, and Nut Point. Trail 307 that runs west to east is part of the old miners' route to Florence, which is outside of the roadless area. Gold was discovered in Florence Basin in the summer of 1861 and by November there were 2,000 miners in the camp. However, the winter of 1861-62 was one of the coldest in Idaho history and Van Buren Creek—a key drainage—was named after a traveler who froze to death there. Besides trails and some grazing by domestic cattle (which conflicts with healthy fisheries), the landscape within the roadless area has maintained its natural integrity. Unfortunately, off-site intrusions are apparent from the hills and ridges, and ORV damage creates unnecessary stress on the land.

Little Slate Creek North – 6,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/little-slate-creek-north-roadless-area-2/

The 6,000 acre Little Slate Creek North portion includes Little Van Buren Creek, Waterspout Creek, and No Business Creek, where a 1,200 acre Research Natural Area is located, containing some of the southernmost growing specimens of maidenhair fern. Composed of very abrupt side slopes and tributary draws ranging from 2,100 feet – 7,291 feet in elevation, most of the undulating land is covered with mixed species of trees and vegetation. Elk, deer, and moose find summer and winter range, and often evade hunters, as the slopes are too steep to easily traverse. Turkeys and chukars, the latter a chicken-like game bird native to Pakistan, were introduced to the region and are still present. If you see a flash of bright blue in the underbrush it might be a native Mountain quail, a region 1 sensitive species. Slate Creek is an anadromous stream, generating ideal waters for steelhead and rainbow trout, Chinook salmon, and Bull trout.

Lochsa Slope/Selway – Bitterroot Addition – 75,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/lochsa-slope-selway-bitterroot-addition/

Lochsa Slope Roadless Area is a 75,000 acre, roughly crescent-shaped swath running east-west parallel to the Lochsa River and Highway 12, which comprise the northern boundary of the wildland. The area also hugs the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness to the south, and is about 77 miles east of Orofino, Idaho. The elevation ranges from below 2,000 feet along the Lochsa to 7,500 feet at Tom Beal Peak. The western two-thirds of the Lochsa Face are characterized by precipitous stream breakland dissected by steep side-drainages. At elevations above about 4,000 feet along the wilderness border and near the eastern boundary, past alpine glaciers carved cirque basins and scoured the mountains. Overall the topography is rugged, especially adjacent to the Lochsa River where steep cliffs, rocky outcrops, and steep gradient streams create an unmatched vista.

A diverse vegetation pattern covers the region with a dominant cedar-hemlock-pine ecosystem influenced by early 1900s fires. The area also includes larch, white pine, Douglas fir, grand fir, ponderosa pine, and impressive stands of mature western red cedar especially along the river from Warm Springs Creek eastward. On the glacial uplands at higher elevations, scattered conifer stands are punctuated with brush fields, and mountain meadows stretch alongside stream courses. Sheltered by the forest canopy are lady fern, pachistima, menziesia, beargrass, and grouse whortleberry, as well as sensitive botanicals like Mingan moonwort, clustered lady's-slipper, Idaho strawberry, and Evergreen kittentail.

The area contains thirteen major creeks that drain into the Lochsa River, providing high quality water and crucial spawning and rearing habitat for a large portion of the cutthroat and rainbow trout populations in the Lochsa River drainage. Five of these creeks are an essential haven for steelhead and Chinook summer salmon, inland redband trout, and westslope cutthroat trout. Elk, moose, mule and white-tailed deer, mountain goats, mountain lions, and black bear find a veritable sanctuary here, with over 8,000 acres of key ungulate winter range. A large moose population is located east of the Warm Springs Creek drainage in the Elk Summit area, the latter identified as a pivotal region for calving, rearing, and ultimately the survival of the moose. Lynx, harlequin duck, wolverine, fisher, and several sensitive amphibian species are sheltered within this extraordinary country.

Lochsa Slope is connected to Highway 12 by three pack bridges; trails traverse the interior, primarily following the main ridges, and provide access to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. A small boundary adjustment on this proposed new wilderness excludes Jerry Johnson Hot Springs, as it sees extremely heavy visitor use and is managed for such. Otherwise, the potential for solitude and isolation from human activity and development is exceptional. Cultural heritage sites include Nez Perce Indian trails, historic Forest Service locations, and prehistoric sites. The current uses of the Lochsa Slope country are hunting, camping, horseback riding, and fishing, all of which would be enhanced with federal protection. The addition of Lochsa Slope to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness would be a natural, seamless, and logical addition. Doing so would ensure the continued integrity and fundamental ecological contributions of this irreplaceable wild country.

Mallard – Larkins – 260,000 acres, Clearwater and Saint Joe National Forests

http://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/mallard-larkins-roadless-area/

The 260,000 acre Mallard-Larkins Roadless Area extends west from the Bitterroot Mountain Range, generally along the divide between the St. Joe and Clearwater River drainages, approximately 60 miles northeast of Orofino, Idaho. The landscape is dramatic: steep rocky ridges, deep canyons, rich forest, and nine major peaks over 6,500 feet. Flowing through the area are parts of three major river systems: St. Joe, Little North Fork Clearwater, and the main North Fork of the Clearwater, along with numerous large and small, fast-moving and crystal-clear streams.

There are thirty-eight mountain lakes large enough to be named, of which Heart Lake is the largest at 35 acres. Although there are multiplicities of rock outcroppings, talus slopes, and barren areas, a major proportion is heavily vegetated. Extremely diverse, the greenery includes low elevation coastal-disjunct rainforest communities and impressive pockets of old-growth western red cedar, western hemlock, and inland western white pine. Near Isabella Creek, old-growth alder, Pacific Yew, and many different ferns thrive among ancient cedar giants. Throughout, several rare and sensitive botanical varieties are also found.

The thirty-eight lakes lure visitors every summer. The rivers and larger streams are an ideal course for fish, including bull trout, Westslope cutthroat, and introduced Kokanee salmon. Abundant wildlife communities flourish, ranging from elk, deer and moose, to black bears, mountain lions, and one of the largest populations of Rocky Mountain Goats. Sensitive species such as fisher, wolverine, harlequin duck, Columbia spotted frog, Coeur d' Alene Salamander, and western toad find crucial sanctuary.

Access is provided over a network of roughly 280 miles of low standard trails, and while certain intrusions such as logging roads, outfitter camps, and establishments associated with fire control exist just outside the area's border, there are swaths of up to 20,000 acres that are virtually undisturbed.

Mallard-Larkins has a long history of support for wilderness protection: in 1969 a 30,500-acre portion of the high country characterized by abrupt summits and icy lakes was designated as a "Pioneer Area." Challenging and diverse terrain, blissful solitude, and humility among the wild landscape are readily found in this inimitable place.

Unfortunately, road building and logging have diminished this roadless area over the years, motorized vehicles have degraded some of the landscape, and future mining proposals exist. Restoration is needed around the edges of the area.

Meadow Creek/Selway – Bitterroot Addition – 215,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

http://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/mallard-larkins-roadless-area/

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Moose Mountain – 22,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/moose-mountain/

Moose Mountain Roadless Area is 22,000 acres of triangle-shaped land flanked by Mallard-Larkins to the west, Kelly Creek eastward, and Bighorn-Weitas to the south. Situated between the Kelly Creek stream and the North Fork of the Clearwater, Moose Mountain represents a crucial region linking the aforementioned roadless areas. As its name suggests, it is comprised of the Moose Mountains, a series of peaks and ridges about 4 miles long extending north to south along the western periphery of the area, with Moose Creek Buttes extending southeast from the Moose Mountains. Elevation drops rapidly from the peaks, ranging from nearly 7,000 feet to just under 3,000 feet within a 1-2 mile horizontal distance.

The entire area falls within a cedar-hemlock-pine ecosystem, though most of the land above 6,000 feet (dominantly the south-facing slopes) is barren rock or low, sparse vegetation such as shrubs and perennials. The north and northeast slopes are more shaded with lodgepole pine, Douglas fir, grand fir, western red cedar, western white pine, larch, and Engelmann spruce. Elk, mule deer, black bears, and a few Rocky Mountain goats find essential winter range, primarily on the shrubby, south-facing slopes above Kelly Creek. Moose Mountain, along with the surrounding roadless areas, has long been native habitat for the Gray wolf. Unconfirmed sightings of the threatened grizzly bear have been made amidst this furrowed country.

The rugged terrain has few trails, making the area of interest to hikers seeking a challenge. Opportunities for solitude are not as great as in larger areas, though the area sees little use, as the region is curbed on two sides by a road and on one side by extensive timber harvesting. However, the major ridges offer outstanding mountainous scenery and the area's modest size would allow a fit hiker to cover it in a day or two. Moose Mountain's critical position linking other wild areas makes it an important consideration for full protection.

North Fork Slate Creek – 11,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/north-fork-slate-creek/

The 11,000 acres that make up North Fork Slate Creek are the northernmost lands of the disjointed Slate Creek drainage. It contains the headwaters of McKenzie Creek, which drains into the Salmon River, and the North Fork Slate Creek. Elevation ranges from 2,100 feet at Slate Creek, where it meets the forest boundary, due west to 6,480 feet at Dairy Mountain. Similar to the other portions of this drainage, it is characterized by very steep side slopes and tributary draws with some flat benches to break up the inclines. The western and southern portions are sweeping grass slopes with sparse timber; the northern portion below Dairy Mountain is craggy rimrock with the remainder timbered hillsides. Elk, deer, and moose graze the precipitous country, accompanied underfoot by introduced turkeys and chukars, and the elusive pileated woodpecker. Broad-fruit mariposa, a delicate bloom of the lily family native to this area and the Palouse, often clings to the dry, rocky cliffs. Slate Creek is a vital stream for anadromous species, including steelhead and rainbow trout, Chinook summer/fall salmon, and threatened Bull trout.

Overall the combination of topography and vegetation moderately screen outside activities. A few miles of trail allow a surprising amount of cross-country travel, and the steep terrain provides a refuge for roaming deer and elk, as it is generally too steep for hunting. Explorers seeking a challenge could find it in the river breaklands, ridge tops around the North Fork Slate Creek, and scattered cliffs and bluffs. The region was important in early Euro-American Idaho history. In the fall of 1811, eleven members of the Wilson Price Hunt Expedition, led by Donald McKenzie, passed the mouth of what is now McKenzie Creek. The river route was also traversed by miners in the 1860s. Currently, off-road vehicles pose the greatest menace to the region's natural processes and to key wildlife and fisheries habitat.

North Fork Spruce/Selway – Bitterroot Addition – 36,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/north-fork-spruce-selway-bitterroot-addition/

North Fork Spruce Roadless Area is a 36,000-acre stretch of land roughly 14 miles long, hugging the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness along its eastern border, and Sneakfoot Meadows nestling the southwest curve (the area is also known as Elk Summit in conjunction with the adjacent Sneakfoot area). This parcel varies from .25 mile-5.5 miles wide and encompasses highly diverse land types ranging from steep, rocky stream breaklands, to alpine glacial cirque basins, to loose colluvial and frost-churned uplands. Weathered rock and soil in this area is highly erosive, leaving much land located on the steep slopes unstable.

The main drainage is White Sand Creek, flowing from the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Elevation is lowest here at 3,500 feet, and climbs to over 7,000 feet at Beaver Ridge Lookout along the northwest boundary. Excluding stream bottoms, most land sits above 5,500 feet. This steep country is entirely within the western spruce-fir forest ecosystem, except for a small section of cedar-hemlock-pine forest in lower White Sand Creek. Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, western larch, and lodgepole pine are most common, leaning against the slopes and stretching their needled branches skyward. In lower areas, grand fir and western red cedar habitats occur. Most of the region boasts this mixed stand of trees, as well as shrub such as spiny beargrass and false huckleberry.

The varied terrain supports a prominent moose population, renowned throughout Idaho and considered one of the largest concentrations in the state. In addition to moose, moderate numbers of elk, black bears, and deer inhabit the area, as well as fisher, wolverine, Columbia spotted frog, and numerous other Region 1 sensitive species. Ungulates are provided a vital summer range, and the wet, high elevation of this upper Lochsa parcel is reported to shelter the rare Harlequin duck.

The configuration of this country allows a great variety of recreation. The interior is networked with a well-dispersed 30-mile trail system. Excluding the vicinity of the lakes east of Beaver Ridge Lookout where some explorers hike and fish the five small lakes, cross-country foot travel is challenging due to dense vegetation and steep stream breaklands. Stream fishermen are drawn to White Sand Creek where much of the water runs wild with rare steelhead, Bull trout, and Westslope cutthroat trout. Colt Killed Creek is a key stream for salmon, steelhead, and the unique Bull trout, as well. Hiking, backpacking, hunting, horseback riding, lake/stream fishing, photography, and blissful solitude are afforded among the intact natural integrity of this country.

Past threats of massive logging projects and snowmobile use pose the most pressing threats to this irreplaceable country. While currently not included in the roadless area, the Rudd Moore Lakes area should be evaluated as a logical addition. A portion of the Upper Spruce Creek drainage was erroneously excluded in the newly defined roadless area, and the boundary from 1987 (Section 16) should be adopted. Further, proximity to other roadless areas and a contiguous boundary with the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, not to mention the impressive moose population, make North Fork Spruce a natural and significant addition to already protected wildlands.

O'Hara – Falls Creek – 33,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.friendsoftheclearwater.org/ohara-falls-creek-roadless-area/

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Pilot Knob (Silver Creek) – 21,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/pilot-knob-roadless-area-also-known-as-silver-creek-pilot-knob/

The 21,000 acre Pilot Knob Roadless Area is north of Highway 14 and east of Grangeville, Idaho. It includes the upper two-thirds of Silver Creek and several small tributaries of Newsome Creek. The elevation ranges from around 4,000 feet at the lowest point in Newsome Creek to 7,000 feet at the region's most distinctive geologic feature – Pilot Rock. A massive, bare rock face near the center of the area, Pilot Rock is flanked by a visually pleasing mosaic of boulder outcroppings, sweeping meadows, and lush forest. The contour profile of the whole area is generally homogeneous rolling hills with a consistent forest cover. Vegetation types are diverse; old-growth grand fir stands are prevalent next to Newsome Creek. Moist grand fir and subalpine fir types cover the majority of the area, with small, wet openings dominated by Engelmann spruce and alder scattered throughout the Silver Creek drainage. The slender, blossomed stalks of Candystick and Evergreen kittentail (both sensitive plant species) can be found underfoot. The area supports elk, deer, moose, fisher, and bear populations, and taken with Clear Creek Roadless Area to the north is a yearlong Gray wolf habitat. The upper portion of Silver Creek contains a thriving population of introduced eastern brook trout, and Newsome Creek and its tributaries provide an essential haven for anadromous fish and native species.

This swath of country may contain undiscovered historic and prehistoric cultural traces. Along the northeastern boundary of the Pilot Knob Roadless Area is the historic Nez Perce Trail, which was used by indigenous peoples long before the time of mountain men and miners. This trail was the main access route to Idaho County mines of the 19th Century, which later became the Elk City Wagon Road, and still later, was improved to accommodate motor vehicles. More significantly, Pilot Rock is an ancient vision quest locale for the Nez Perce Indian Tribe. The Tribe is presently negotiating with the Forest Service to establish an undisturbed area around this inimitable sacred heritage site.

Access roads traversing the area and running the distance to Pilot Knob Lookout mean the region is threatened by erosion, displacement, and damage associated with ORV use. This road corridor is not included within the boundary of the roadless area. Mining activity just outside the boundary of the area is not widespread, but in view of past mining history, interest continues and 12 unpatented mining claims exist within the area, thus running the risk that crucial ecological habitat could be spoiled. Protection for Pilot Knob Roadless Area is essential to ensure the integrity of the resources in the area.

Pinchot Butte – 9,000 acres, Nez Perce National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/pinchot-butte-roadless-area/

Pinchot Butte Roadless Area is a distinctive 9,000-acre swath of country located 36 miles southeast of St. Maries, Idaho and separated from the expansive Grandmother Mountain Roadless Area by only one forest road. The area lies along the south side of the divide between the North Fork of the Clearwater River (to which all streams here drain) and the St. Joe River. Pinchot Butte is the highest point at nearly 6,000 feet; the elevation drops to 3,400 feet at Floodwood Creek at the southern boundary. Narrow ridges that drop abruptly into steep, tapered draws characterize the topography. Several craggy rock outcroppings nestle along the slopes of Pinchot Butte and the tops of ridges, evidence of the area's complex geology and structure. Vegetation is largely comprised of old-growth mountain hemlock and alpine fir interspersed with brush fields that sprang up largely as a result of sweeping fires in the early part of the 20th century. Pinchot Marsh is a unique and irreplaceable high elevation wetland with important sedge/carex grass species and sphagnum moss. The moderate elevation slopes provide crucial summer range for elk, and other wildlife includes black bear, whitetail and mule deer, and a variety of common small and non-game creatures. Cutthroat trout are found in the West Fork of Floodwood Creek, and essential Bull trout habitat overlaps this region.

Pinchot Butte is relatively remote from centers of human population, thus developments in the area are few and opportunities for solitude are enhanced by the light visitor use and effective forest screen. Two low-standard roads are excluded from the roadless area, though one is already closed to traffic.

Pot Mountain – 51,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/pot-mountain-roadless-area-2/

Pot Mountain Roadless Area spans 51,000 acres and is thirty-six air miles from Orofino, Idaho. Seven major peaks punctuate the skyline; the area's namesake, Pot Mountain, crests at 7,130 feet. Four cool, crisp mountain lakes dot the high elevations. Rushing streams race from the ridges down to the valley (Chateau Falls plunges sixty feet) where the North Fork of the Clearwater creates a southeast boundary. Together with intriguing rock formations, the steep terrain is a vast diversity of vegetation. Two-thirds of the area lies within a cedar-hemlock-pine ecosystem flush with Western red cedar, Douglas fir, grand fir, and interspersed with slender copses of birch. The higher elevations largely support the remaining third: dense stands of mountain hemlock, subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce. Most of the timber is relatively young, telling the story of extensive fires in the early 1900s that scorched the land and created sweeping brush fields, particularly on south facing slopes.

Under the moist, shady bowers of the generative trees, the lightly-treading explorer might find Idaho kittentail, Constance's bittercress, spacious monkey flower (endemic to Idaho), clustered lady's slipper, Bank monkeyflower, and deer fern – all sensitive plant species in this region.

Thanks to diverse habitats, Pot Mountain supports a spectacular array of wildlife. Approximately 16,000 acres of vital big-game winter range augments elk, mule deer, black bear, and Rocky Mountain goat populations, as well as a plethora of species common to the rest of the forest. Of the rare species, northern goshawk, marten, fisher, wolverine, lynx, and Bull trout have been documented. Where there is prey there are predators, demonstrated by the multiple unconfirmed sightings of grizzly bears.

The rugged and furrowed slopes of this roadless area provide wildlife protection from human activities, but also allow the thoughtful explorer a sense of solitude amidst steep ridges and dense vegetation. Hiking, primitive camping, backpacking, photography, horseback riding, hunting, and lake fishing for cutthroat trout draws visitors to this stunning country. Of the more than two-dozen cultural heritage sights recorded here, five speak to the indigenous importance of the land, including Native American campsites, a vision quest site, and a major trail that still exists along a currently used path.

Logging and roading adjacent to the area has created severe environmental damage. Swaths of clearcuts leave the steep slopes highly susceptible to erosion and mudslides. The Clearwater National Forest Travel Plan of 2012 allows for motorized use in the area, consequently, off-road vehicles and motorized travel damages vegetation, displaces wildlife, and accelerates erosion. As an integral part of the northern Rockies bioregion, extending from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to the Yukon River country in northwest Canada, Pot Mountain is an impressive and crucial allocation for wilderness protection.

Rackliff – Gedney/Selway – Bitterroot Addition – 90,000, Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/rackliff-gedney-roadless-area/

The 90,000 acres of Rackliff-Gedney Roadless Area are generally between the Lochsa and Selway Rivers from their confluence eastward to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness boundary. The ridge top that separates the drainages is the boundary between the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests (before consolidation). This country is composed of picturesque mountain scenery. Some of the ridges are weathered and smooth, with scattered stands of trees among meadows flush with beargrass and wildflower blooms in a dizzying array of purple, pink, red, yellow, blue, and white. Other peaks are sharp and barren, like the appropriately named Knife Edge Ridge. Elevation ranges from 1,500-1,900 feet at the river canyons to 6,926 feet at Coolwater Lookout, the highest point in the area.

Past wildfires have impacted the vegetation today, evidenced by the extensive brush fields punctuated by islands of unburned trees and stands of relatively new growth. Comprising the blend are western red cedar, larch, Douglas fir, grand fir, ponderosa pine, and western white pine. At higher elevations, one finds lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and scattered whitebark stands. Several sensitive plant species are present, including Payson's milkvetch, lance-leaved milkwort, Northern moonwort, Constance's bittercress, Pacific Dogwood, Daubenmire's dasynotus, clustered lady's-slipper, Evergreen kittentail, and bank monkeyflower.

Such a vegetation pattern creates rich, bountiful forage for ungulates. Elk, mule and whitetail deer, moose, and mountain goat fluctuate from high slopes in the summer to the river bottoms in the winter. Glover Ridge, a flat, open rim in the east sector, is a favored elk-calving area. Rackliff-Gedney is also home to black bear, fisher, cougar, wolf, lynx, and has grizzly bear habitat along with the contiguous Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Furthermore, it supports a stunning array of bird species, including several varieties of woodpecker, sapsucker, and raptors like osprey and bald eagles. The area contains several streams on both the Lochsa and Selway sides of the divide that are crucial spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous and native fish.

Topographically, Rackliff-Gedney presents an exciting challenge. Trails tend to lead the explorer upwards toward the ridge tops, traversing steep slopes and cliffs. The rewards for the arduous climb are stunning, matchless panoramic views, icy mountain lakes and cirque basins, brilliant wildflower blooms, and juicy berry patches. Not for just its scenic attributes is Rackliff-Gedney a special place. Approximately 100 acres of the Lochsa Research Natural Area are located here, and the roadless area as a whole is within the 5,600-acre designated Wild & Scenic River Corridor. Native Americans used Coolwater Ridge, Knife Edge Ridge, and Ridgetop Trail 3A, both prehistorically and in historic times, to get into what is today the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Artifacts found in the area suggest these peaks held a spiritual significance for indigenous peoples. The natural integrity of this region's pivotal ecology, along with its spatial orientation, makes it an important candidate for inclusion in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

Despite our best efforts, The Forest Service recently allowed logging on the fringe of this roadless area. Our map has yet to be updated to reflect this development, though the change is minimal.

Selway – Bitterroot Additions – 580,000 acres, Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/selway-bitterroot-additions/

There are approximately 580,000 acres of roadless wildlands adjacent to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. These are comprised of Meadow Creek (215,000 acres), Rackliff-Gedney (90,000 acres), Lochsa Slope (75,000 acres), North Fork Spruce (36,000 acres), Sneakfoot Meadows (23,000 acres), Lolo Peak (18,000 acres), and the Bitterroot Face (123,000 acres). The latter two are located in Montana, except for approximately 1,000 acres, which are located in Idaho.

Meadow Creek provides the most important habitat for Westslope Cutthroat, steelhead, Bull trout, and rainbow trout on the Nez Perce portion of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. Located just to east of the Selway-Bitteroot Wilderness, and separated from the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness to the south by the Magruder Corridor, this intact, large swath of roadless wildland also supports crucial habitat for Grey wolves, wolverines, fishers, black bears, and historically, grizzly bears.

Rackliff-Gedney straddles the divide between the Wild & Scenic Lochsa and Selway Rivers, and is adjacent to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness to the east. Comprised of steep slopes, weathered ridges, and flower-filled meadows, this roadless wildland ranges from 1,500-6,900 feet above sea level. Oral histories and archaeological findings suggest that the Nez Perce routinely traveled through this area and contains important spiritual significance.

Lochsa Slope parallels the Wild & Scenic Lochsa River to the south and Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness to the north. The area contains thirteen cold, clean-water tributaries of the Lochsa River, with five of them providing essential habitat for West steelhead and summer Chinook. This extraordinary landscape also supports habitat for elk, moose, deer, mountain goats, cougars, black bears, lynx, wolverine, fisher, and Harlequin ducks.

North Fork Spruce lies adjacent to the Selway-Bitteroot Wilderness to the east. Steep, diverse, and wild, the area has a dominant spruce-fir forest canopy and supports one of the largest moose populations in all of Idaho. The wildland also provides important summer range for ungulates, notably elk, and habitat for fishers, wolverines, Columbia spotted frogs, and Harlequin ducks. White Sand Creek, with its headwaters located in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, drains this roadless area.

In conjunction with North Fork Spruce, the Sneakfoot Meadows Roadless Area is commonly referred to as Elk Summit. Comprised of jagged peaks, glacial cirque lakes, meandering streams, and wet meadows, this wildland supports lupine and Indian paintbrush wildlflower populations, as well as subalpine fir, grand fir, Englemann spruce, and lodgepole pine.

The vast majority of the Lolo Peak and Bitterroot Face are located on the Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests in Montana. For historical, ecological, and geographical reasons, they are logical additions to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

The Selway-Bitterroot Additions are threatened with road building, logging, mining, and more increasingly, by motorized recreation. Much of these wildlands, including those in Montana, were included in the original Selway Primitive Area, which was drawn up in the 1930's. For political reasons, these roadless wildlands were excluded when the boundaries for the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness were established in 1964.

Siwash Creek – 9,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/siwash-creek-roadless-area/

Curving along the southwest corner of Pot Mountain, the Siwash Creek Roadless Area creates a 9,000-acre irregular triangle in the North Fork Clearwater River drainage, and is composed of the characteristic steep stream bank landscape. There are only two second- and third-order streams; the rest are first-order streams draining directly into the river or other larger streams. From the 2,200 feet elevation at the North Fork, the land rises rapidly to just over 5,000 feet at Clarke Mountain. The overall low elevation means the cedar-hemlock-pine ecosystem dominates, and also supports rare Coastal Disjunct plant communities, such as Western red cedars, that are remnants of plant life that thrived far inland from the Pacific Coast up until the ascension of the volcanic Cascade Mountains several million years ago.

The natural boundary of the river and the network of streams create valuable habitat for threatened Bull trout, Inland redband trout, and cutthroat trout. Elk, mule deer, and black bears roam the creased countryside. This rare and critical river ecosystem needs protection, as most of it has been lost to logging, dam building in Dworshak, and other development. Its proximity to Pot Mountain to the east and Bighorn-Weitas to the southeast makes Siwash Creek a substantial consideration for wilderness designation.

Sneakfoot Meadows/Selway – Bitterroot Addition – 23,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/sneakfoot-meadows-selway-bitterroot-addition/

In the southeast corner of the Clearwater National Forest spreads 23,000 acres that make up Sneakfoot Meadows Roadless Area (also known as Elk Summit, in conjunction with the adjacent North Fork Spruce Roadless Area). This complex country is bounded to the west by the sharp mountains of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, Lochsa Face Roadless Area to the northwest, and North Fork Spruce Roadless Area to the east. As its name suggests, it is dominantly composed of gently rolling terrain, high water tables, and wet meadows with lazily meandering streams. One can however, climb to elevations over 6,000 feet with the promise of a strikingly cold, crystalline lake (there are five in the area) tucked in a glacial cirque basin. The ragged peaks average around 7,000 feet; the highest is just under 8,000 feet. The generally lofty elevation translates to nearly 90% western spruce-fir ecosystem coverage – largely subalpine fir, grand fir, Engelmann spruce, and even-aged lodgepole pine grew from the ashes of widespread fires in the early 1900s. Shrub areas are dense with alder and willow in the wetter lands, and menziesia ("fool's huckleberry"), provides fodder for elk, deer, small game, and moose. A 2,000-acre Research Natural Area sits within the boundaries of this country focused on the unique wet meadows, surrounding subalpine fir habitat, and ancient Engelmann spruce stand.

Lush stretches of marshy meadows peppered with lupine, Indian paintbrush, and clumps of slender trees giving way to steep slopes and rocky pinnacles, create a prime homeland for many species of wildlife. Elk graze the higher elevations in the summer, and mule deer, black bear, and numerous common forest species cohabitate. Of particular interest is the Elk Summit moose herd – likely the largest concentrated moose population in northern Idaho. Because so little is known of the habitat requirements for this unique animal, studies are being conducted through tagging, radio collaring, and observing animal behavior during different seasons of the year. These lanky creatures are readily observed during the summer months throughout the area, especially near the meadow areas and along the roads. In addition, fisher, wolverine, and Region 1 sensitive amphibian habitats overlap Sneakfoot Meadows Roadless Area. The streams are a fundamental native fish habitat for the likes of Westslope cutthroat and inland redband trout, and principal spawning and rearing waters for steelhead and Summer Chinook. The two Walton Lakes are popular with anglers, and the streams provide high quality water to the larger White Sand Creek.

A mere half-mile into the corridor screens noise from the access roads, and the explorer is free to peruse the lattice of low-standard trails in seclusion. One might briefly encounter other hikers or horseback riders, as Sneakfoot Meadows provides a stunning landscape for primitive recreation and drinking in the scenic and wildlife views. Wintertime snowmobile use disturbs and diminishes critical lynx habitat. As a natural segue to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and bordered by other substantial roadless areas, it is critical that Sneakfoot Meadows receives protection to maintain its remarkable natural integrity.

Upper North Fork – 63,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/upper-north-fork/

Upper North Fork Roadless Area is 63,000 acres of strikingly varied and majestic landscape unfolding on the Idaho/Montana border. This description includes the adjacent Rawhide Roadless Area, since for all practical purposes the areas are contiguous. The long-defunct Rawhide Road (today just a dirt trail) is all that separates them. Located approximately 40 air miles west of Missoula, Montana, this country ranges from narrow, flat valley bottoms to steep breaklands framing drainages; from sloping meadows and shady woods to jagged ridges and carved cirque basins. Sharp, rugged relief above 7,000 feet occurs along the Bitterroot Divide, separating Idaho/Montana, with a few glacial lakes punctuating the ridges. Topography softens in the North Fork Clearwater drainage, dropping to just under 4,000 feet where the watercourse leaves the area. Upper North Fork contains six lakes and the headwaters of two important river systems – North Fork Clearwater and St. Joe.

Among the varied terrain three major vegetative ecosystems are found. A cedar-hemlock-pine forest encompasses lower elevations in the North Fork of the Clearwater River, Meadow, and Chamberlain Creeks. Ascending slopes up to 6,000 feet are western spruce-fir cover. Alpine meadows, carex, and beargrass carpet the high ridge elevations. In the early 1900s, these regions met the same fate as many in the Clearwater Basin – fire, with the resulting regeneration evident in stands of slender, even-aged lodgepole pine. Other species include subalpine fir, western larch, mountain hemlock, grand fir, and white bark pine.

The region is crucial habitat for elk, lynx, moose, black bear, whitetail and mule deer, grizzly bears, and a plethora of birds and other animals native to conifer-covered mountains in North Central Idaho. The unmatched cold, clear water of Meadow Creek is the most important spawning and rearing locale for bull trout in the state. Cutthroat and rainbow trout find it and the other creeks and lakes apt habitat, as well.

In addition to supporting crucial ecological systems, the Upper North Fork contains unique natural and cultural features. The large size, varied topography, and dense vegetation screen, provide remarkable opportunities for solitude and for experiencing the incomparable countryside, be it through hiking, camping, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, or photography. Stateline Trail, which extends north from Hoodoo Pass along the Bitterroot Divide, is a designated National Recreation Trail, and has long been used by indigenous peoples, then trappers, and now outdoor enthusiasts. Historic evidence indicates early Native Americans used selected sites along the Divide for killing game that crossed or were driven from one side to the other. Approximately 150 acres of the St. Joe River has been classified as Wild under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. Considerable early day mining and Forest Service activity has left scattered traces on the areas boundary.

The pressing need to protect this area cannot be overstated. Wilderness designation would safeguard the pivotal integrity and purity of the headwaters of two substantial river systems.

Weir Creek (Weir – Post Office) – 22,000, Clearwater National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/weir-creek-roadless-area-also-known-as-weir-post-office/

Weir Creek Roadless Area is 22,000 acres, with Highway 12 providing the southern boundary, and the Lolo Motorway creating the northern margin. The interior is guarded, traversed by only two short, low-standard trails. The country is forged by steep river breaklands, undulating sharply from 3,000 feet at Highway 12 to 7,000 feet along the Lolo Motorway. In addition to the two major streams for which it is named, numerous other first and second-order streams drain directly into the Lochsa River, and at the head of Post Office Creek lies a large cirque basin with two glassy lakes. The underlying Cretaceous Idaho Batholith gives rise to prominent rock outcroppings and geologic formations such as the weathered column known as "Devil's Chair" along the Lolo Motorway.

The lower half of the area, generally below 5,000 feet, is made up of cedar-hemlock-pine ecosystem, while the higher elevations are principally western spruce-fir forest. Large forest fires in the early 1900s had a significant influence on the present vegetation, with much of the area, especially along south and west portions, consisting of brush fields. Unburned areas and land that has regenerated are comprised of a wide variety of western red cedar and grand fir habitat types in the lower end, and subalpine fir types at higher gradients. Elk, deer, bear, and moose are the most common large mammals. Rocky Mountain goats were mentioned in the journals of Lewis & Clark, and some still exist near the upper end of the drainage. Gray wolf, wolverine, fisher, Columbia spotted frog, Coeur d' Alene salamander, and western toad habitat overlaps this area. The streams are a critical environment for Summer Chinook, steelhead, Westslope Cutthroat, and Bull trout.

The steep, sloping terrain coupled with dense vegetation translates to a high level of seclusion within the cool, shady depths of the canopy. Hot springs, like those at Weir Creek, invite the explorer to soak in warm pools worn smooth over generations – a small border adjustment in the wilderness proposal would exclude this popular spot from designation because of extremely heavy use, but the remaining country is eligible for wilderness consideration. The Lolo Trail is a significant cultural heritage feature as a route for prehistoric indigenous travel, Lewis & Clark, and Chief Joseph's band of non-treaty Nez Perce Indians. A 1/4-mile-wide corridor within an unmarked boundary of the Middle Fork/Lochsa River runs the full length of the roadless area. This 500-acre corridor is supervised under a Special River Management Plan to emphasize the scenic values and ecological contributions of the river environment. In addition, a National Recreation Trail is also located within the corridor at Colgate Warm Springs salt lick. The compact size and absence of privately owned land makes Weir Creek a natural integration into an expansive, self-managed landscape that would include the adjacent Fish-Hungery Creek, Weitas Creek, and Lochsa Slope Roadless Areas.

Weitas Creek – 260,000 acres, Clearwater National Forest

https://www.fauxoftheclearwater.org/weitas-creek/

At 260,000 acres Bighorn-Weitas (Weitas Creek), is the largest 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 Clearwater. The area between Weitas and Cayuse Creeks (Cook Mountain) consists of generally rolling upland landforms with wide ridges and pleasant scenic views. Underlying coarse-grained quartz menzonite of the Cretaceous Idaho Batholith, coupled with gneiss and rhyolite, created highly erosive soils here. However, 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 5,000-7,000 feet, one finds spindly carex and beargrass, 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 2,400-4,000 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.

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, wolves, 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.

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 country, the trail was also utilized by Lewis & Clark. Later, the Nez Perce leader Chief Joseph and the band of non-treaty Indians traveled the trail to Canada, attempting to escape persecution during the Nez Perce Conflict of 1877. In addition to this landmark, nine other prehistoric sites and fifty-seven historical sites have been located just outside, or in some cases within the region, including Forest Service lookouts, cabins, and Lewis & Clark expedition campsites, among others.

Opportunities for hiking, backpacking, primitive camping, horseback riding, hunting, and stream fishing are abundantly provided. 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 outside activities. Weitas Creek provides clean water for the North Fork Clearwater and Upper Cayuse Creek. These North Fork tributaries contain some of the largest stands of old growth left in the entire Clearwater Basin (generally low-elevation river valleys such as this do not escape road building/development). 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 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 Bighorn-Weitas region a vital candidate for wilderness designation.