

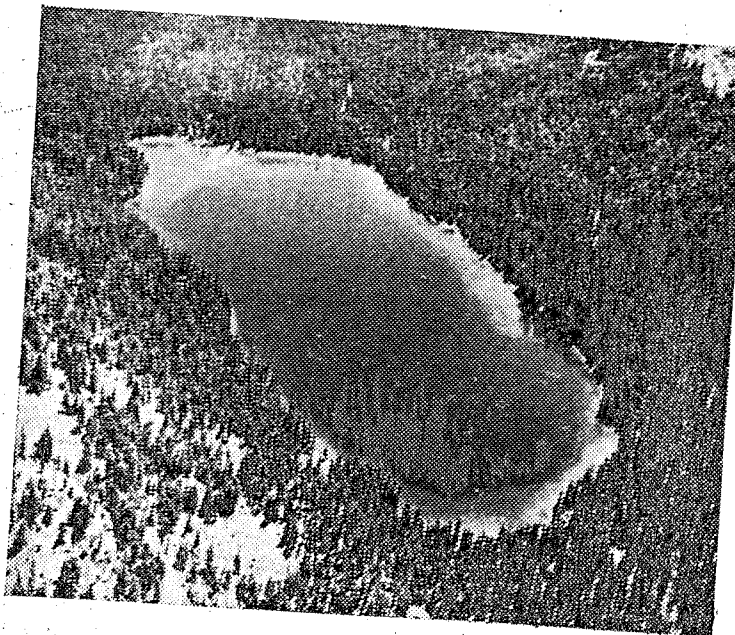
WILDERNESS AREAS (Montana file)
(SELWAY-BITTERROOT)

Missoula, Montana, Sun Morning, July 22, 1956

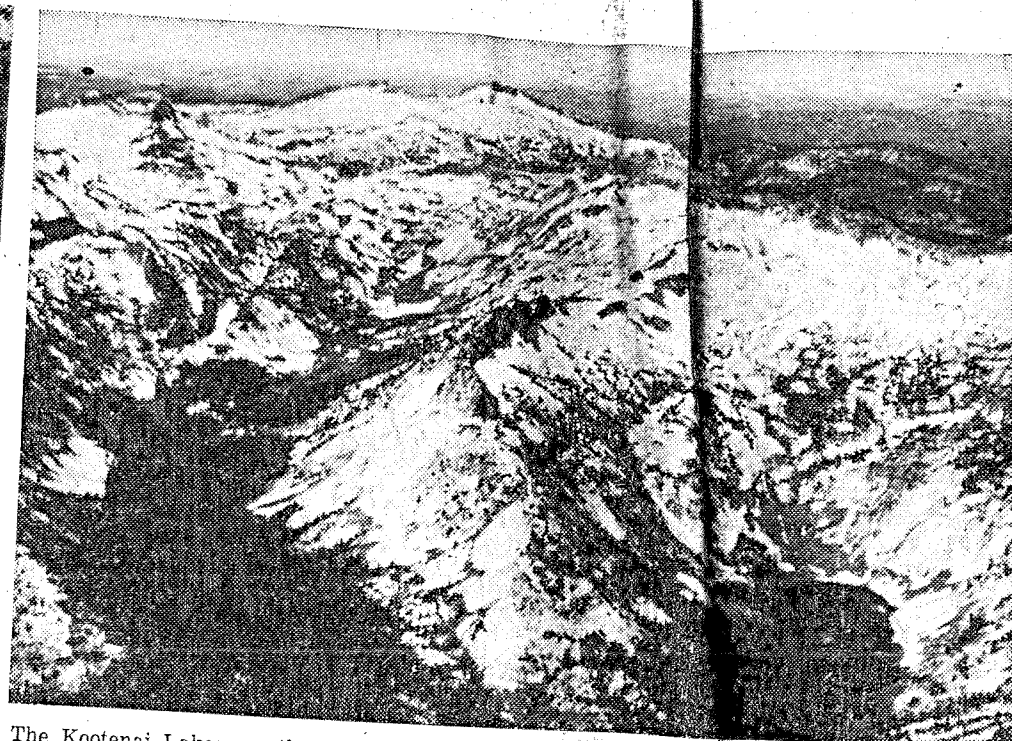
Wilderness encroachment. Voice of

Huge Primitive Area Is Isolated for Reclassification

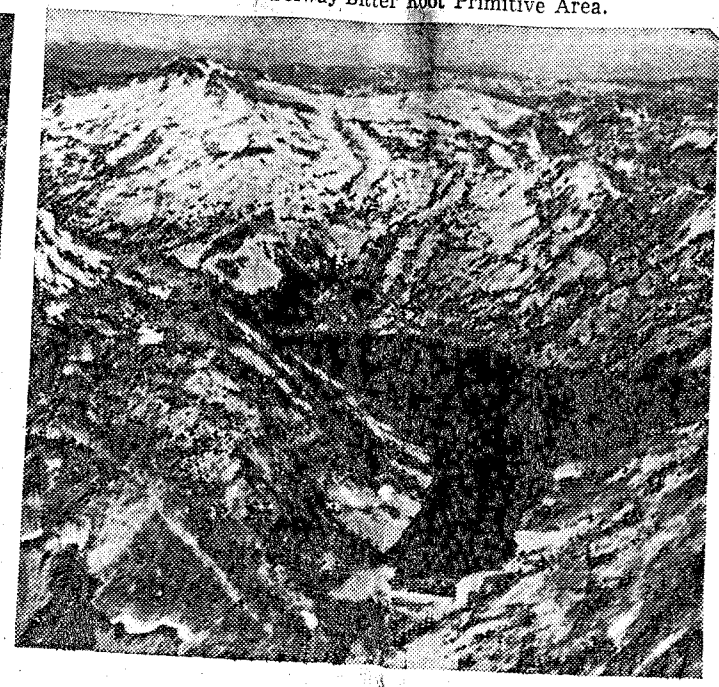
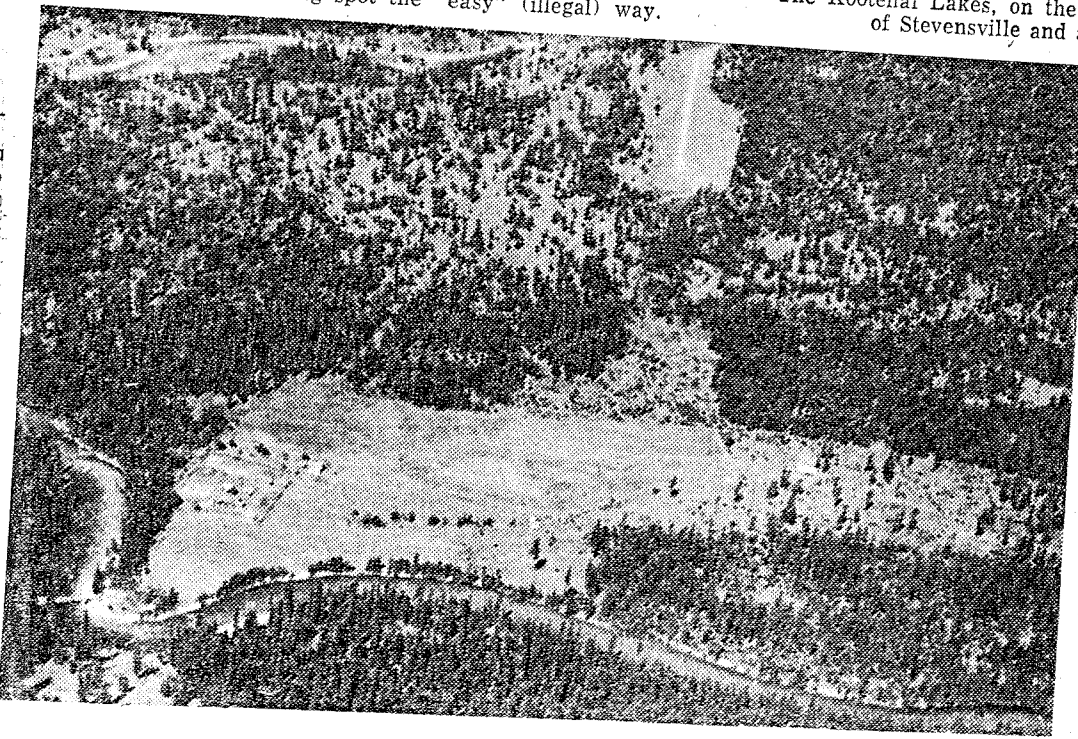
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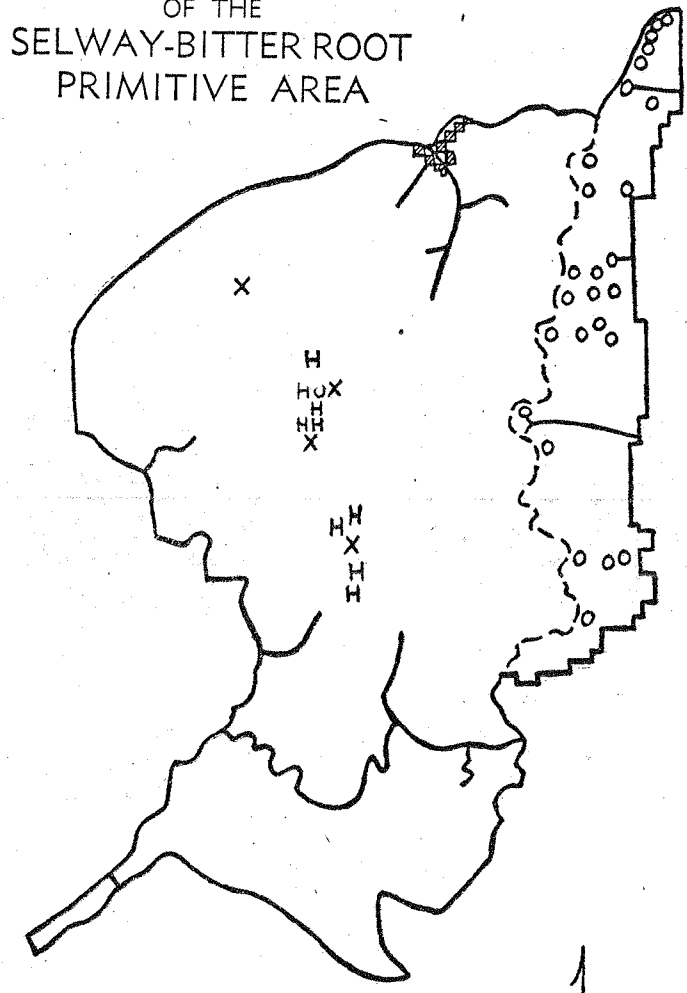
Big Sand Lake, 19 miles west of Corvallis, is located four miles west of the Montana-Idaho border fairly deep in the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area. The corpse of a sunken pontoon airplane is still visible from shore, at the eastern end of the lake, where two fishermen cracked up while attempting to land on this beautiful fishing spot the "easy" (illegal) way.



The Kootenai Lakes, on the Montana side of the Idaho border, are located about 11 miles west of Stevensville and about six miles inside the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area.



PENETRATIONS OF THE SELWAY-BITTER ROOT PRIMITIVE AREA



Editor's note: The following article, presenting the varied and numerous problems confronting wilderness, wild and primitive areas, was written after a two-year survey by the author. The pending reclassification of the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area to a wilderness area makes it a timely topic, written by an ardent advocate of the conservation and preservation of our wilderness. While fostering the concept of wilderness areas, he recognizes the magnitude and the logic of the difficulties they face, the sincere and realistic views of other interests.

By TED HEWETT

While western Montana sportsmen are busy this summer trying to find enough time for a trip to their favorite fishing stream plans are being made that will affect the fishing and hunting opportunities years from now for their children and generations to come. These plans are the studies being made by the Forest Service leading to the reclassification of the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area to a wilderness area.

And, because of so much penetration, the chances are strong the area will be drastically reduced in size when it is reclassified.

This huge area is the largest of all primitive, wild, wilderness and roadless areas with nearly 3,000 square miles. It features fabulous hunting of elk, with one of the largest elk herds in the country, and deer, bear, moose and mountain goat. It's alpine lakes and white-water streams offer tremendous native cutthroat fishing. The area includes most of two game preserves, the Selway Game Preserve and the Salmon River Game Preserve, both on the Idaho side.

Although Missoula residents are only 13 miles as the crow flies from the border of the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area most of them have no idea exactly what a wilderness, wild, primitive or roadless area is, let alone their differences.

The Over-All Concept

To understand the differences of these areas one must first know their over-all concept—which is to guarantee the preservation of rough wild land completely in its natural form, with no encroachments of modern civilization. To

Figure out for yourself where the boundary of the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area would have to be pushed back to escape the penetrations shown above. Of the primitive areas reclassified in the past the Forest Service has not accepted for wild or

Primitive Wilderness Faces Encroachment of Civilization

(Continued From Feature Page)

part wilderness and three are classified as roadless areas.

The roadless areas are all located in northern Minnesota in what is described as the finest canoe country in America. They differ only slightly from the other areas in that the regulations governing them are not quite so strict. These three areas total 814,456 net acres.

Wilderness, wild and primitive areas total the following net acreages by states: Idaho, 3,001,547; Wyoming, 2,299,132; Montana, 1,919,787; California, 1,536,652; New Mexico, 975,035; Washington, 926,091; Colorado, 786,033; Oregon, 715,908; Arizona, 674,673; Utah, 214,717, and North Carolina, 7,400.

Nine in Montana

There are nine wilderness, wild and primitive areas in Montana, with the following net acreages: Bob Marshall Wilderness Area, 950,000; Gates of the Mountains Wild Area, 28,562; Absaroka Primitive Area, 64,000; Anaconda-Pintlar Primitive Area, 144,940; Bear-tooth Primitive Area, 230,000; Cabinet Mountains Primitive Area, 88,940; Mission Mountains Primitive Area, 73,260; Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area, 291,085, and the Spanish Peaks Primitive Area, 49,000.

The Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area lies mostly in Idaho, with 1,577,010 net acres in that state.

The establishment of these areas started in the 1930s, when conservation finally gained a foothold in America and the public began realizing immediate steps had to be taken to stop the wanton destruction of the nation's natural resources and places of natural beauty.

Between 1931 and 1939 the Forest Service established 73 primitive areas in the national forests—set aside to preserve their primitive conditions. The Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area is one of these areas, established in 1936.

By 1939, however, it was obvious the primitive area regulations, L-20, were too weak to prevent penetrations of roads, logging, mining, airfields and so forth, and the areas were quickly losing their natural beauty.

Regulations Changed

The Forest Service then revoked the primitive area regulations and set up the current and more strict U-1 and U-2 regulations governing wilderness and wild areas. The 73 primitive areas that had been set up were to be reclassified as wilderness or wild areas, depending on their size—wilderness if over 100,000 acres and wild if between 5,000 and 100,000 acres.

The two saddest facts at present in relation to these areas are: First, that in the 17 years since the primitive area regulations were revoked only 20 of the 73 areas have been reclassified, and the others, except for two areas that were abolished, technically remain primitive areas; second, that the newer wilderness and wild area regulations have many loopholes allowing penetrations.

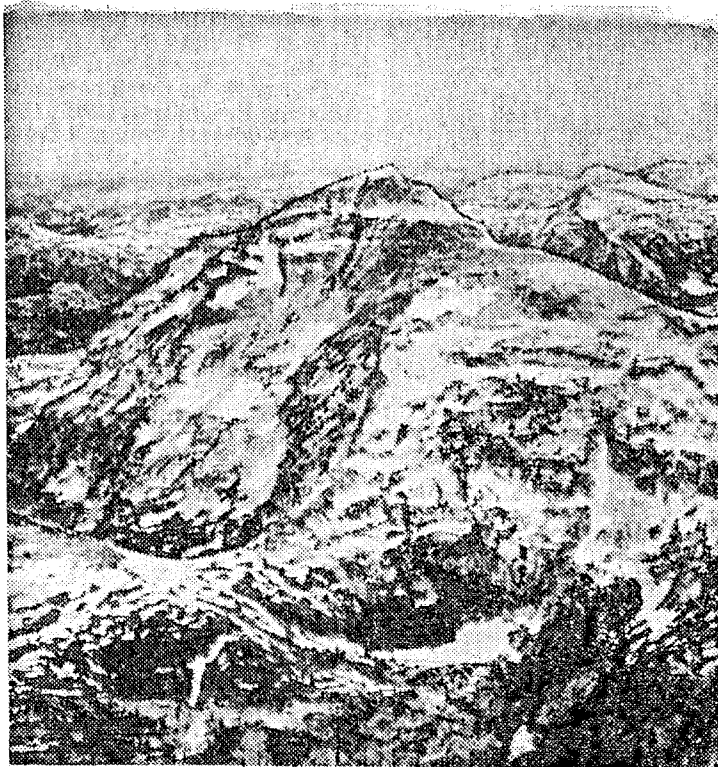
Actually, the reclassification of primitive areas got off to a good start, with 12 areas reclassified the first year, in 1940. But since then only eight areas have been reclassified, and at this rate, reclassifying only eight areas in the past 16 years, it averages out that it will take until the year 2058 to reclassify the 51 remaining primitive areas.

The primitive areas supposedly are being governed by the current wilderness and wild area regulations, but more penetrations can be found in the primitive areas than in the wilderness or wild areas, indicating they will not be adequately protected by the newer regulations unless they are reclassified.

For example, within the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area of Montana and Idaho, one can find 115 miles of roads, 27 dams, three public airfields, mining operations and one private airfield on the 4,268 acres of private land.

About 3,000 acres of the private land is owned by a private firm and it has done some logging on its land. The other private land consists of eight homesteads, of which one is an \$83,000 dude ranch development.

The existence of private land holdings inside these areas is explained by the fact that they were



Looking north at El Capitan Mountain, 10 miles west of Darby. This beautiful peak, with an elevation of 9,965 feet, serves as a prominent landmark in the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area.



Kerlee Lake, which feeds Tin Cup Creek, a few miles southeast of El Capitan Mountain in the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area. Flying over this area one can usually spot several small lakes like this. Altogether there are probably half a thousand lakes in this largest of primitive areas.

been made from natural lakes and three have roads penetrating the primitive area to them. They back up a total of about 10,000 acre-feet of water.

Boundary Trouble

The reason these dams are located inside the primitive area, aside from the fact that the current regulations allow them, is probably because the boundary of the primitive area was drawn too close to the valley when the area was first established, extending to the end of the canyons coming out of the Bitter Roots. This left no room for canyon dams to be built for irrigation purposes outside the area, and as a result, the dams have been allowed for inside and have been built all the way back in the canyons to the Idaho border.

To remove these dams and roads in the reclassification of the Selway-Bitter Root primitive area it would be necessary to push the boundary back to the Idaho border, completely eliminating this largest of wilderness, wild and primitive areas from Montana.

A gigantic dam, known as the Pennycuffs project, has been proposed on the middle fork of the Clearwater River in Idaho, which would back up water 31 miles to the western boundary of the Selway-Bitter Root primitive area and another five miles into the area. The wilderness supporters take this stand:

Besides spoiling natural beauty, dams spoil natural wildlife and

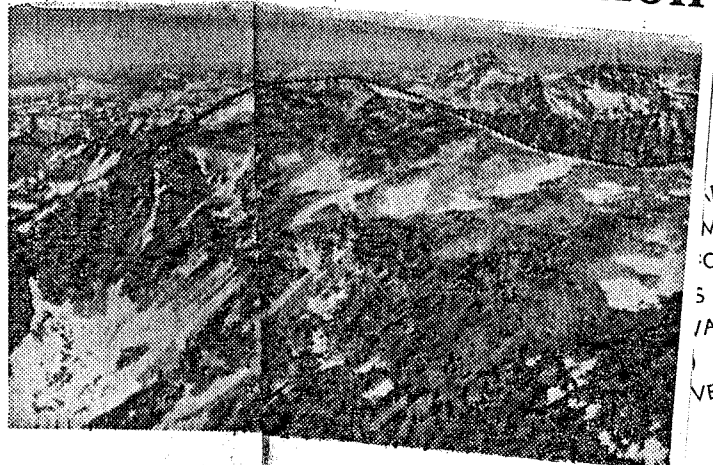
Forest Service is recommending rejection of the leases when they are sought inside these areas, and so far, the Department of Interior is rejecting them.

Logging—Although commercial logging is prohibited by the current wilderness and wild area regulations, and although it necessitates roads, logging is being allowed for on a slight basis on the margins of primitive area boundaries to control bug infestations which threaten to wipe out much timber, both inside and outside the areas.

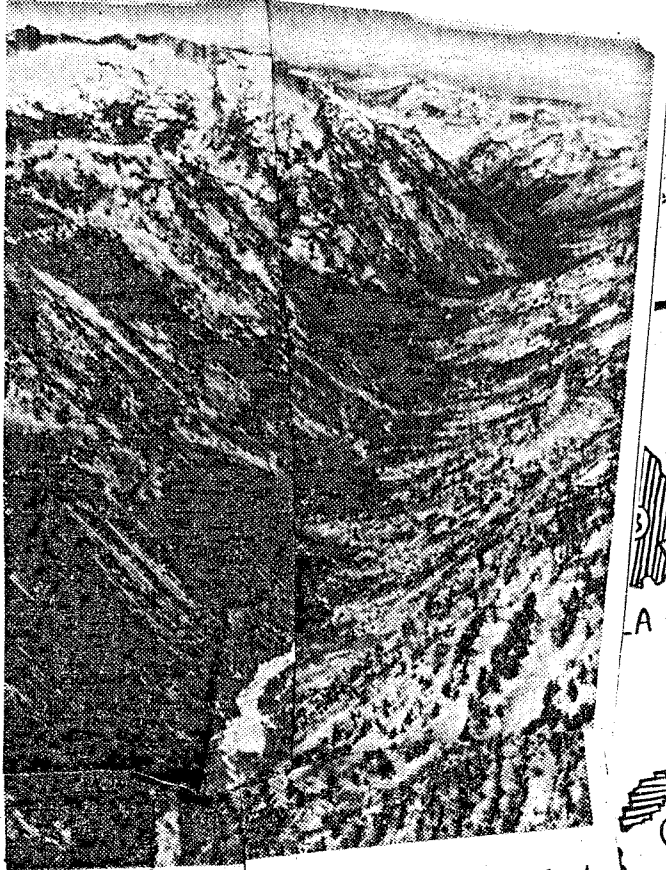
Fire—A very great natural danger each summer as there are no access roads in these areas over which to rush fire fighters, with many old mature stands of timber ready to "blow up" once a fire starts. This danger has diminished in the past few years with the establishment of the Forest Service Smoke Jumpers.

Diseases, parasites and bug infestations—These natural enemies, like blister rust, dwarf mistletoe and the spruce budworm and spruce bark beetle infestations, are hard to bring under control in these areas simply because there are no roads. The best argument against building access roads in these areas to fight them is the fact that forests have endured various diseases for millions of years and survived without any help from man, and any roads built in these areas would take many years to erase.

Dude ranchers and resort owners—Some persons in this business sew up whole drainages in



Trapper Peak, center, highest peak in the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area, with an elevation of 10,131 feet. El Capitan Peak is shown just to the right of Trapper Peak, and Sugarloaf Peak is far right.



Fred Burr Reservoir, southwest of Victor and about two miles inside the Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area. This is one of the few irrigation canals in the primitive area that was not built at a natural dam site. Several years ago the original earth-fill dam at this site broke, and water from the reservoir thundered all the way to this canyon bottom, as can be seen by the large white area below the reservoir. It will take many years for a natural regrowth of brush to erase the narrow-strewn canyon floor. All of the 26 irrigation dams on the Montana side of this primitive area back up on 10,000 acre-feet of water.

bear, whose total population in the U. S. is now estimated at 100,000, with most of them in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area of Montana.

The "multiple use" of governing public lands is the "golden rule" of the Forest Service: "To settle problems determining the greatest benefit to the greatest number in the run." In this way the Forest Service tries its best to satisfy public interest as well as possible.

Wilderness, wild and primitive areas, however, are unique in that if any interest other than wilderness interest is given concessions inside these areas, all interests would have to be let in and the very purpose of these areas would be lost.

The sportsmen—This problem is limited to exceptions those who violate the laws by using motorcycles, motor scooters or jeeps through the trails, and others who go as far as to fly airplanes to emergency landing fields or lakes in wilderness, wild and primitive areas for a quick hunting or fishing trip.

Huge Area, Few Men

In Montana there are only 130 Forest Service rangers and ranger assistants to guard the 16 1/2 million acres of national forest land located in the state, which includes nearly two million acres of wilderness, wild and primitive areas. This averages out to 200 square miles of land for each of these men to control—an impossible job, even though they are aided in the guarding of these areas by the state's 50 game wardens. Their main trouble is that they are kept so busy doing their

boats has already become well established." Because of this clause one should expect that when the Selway-Bitter Root primitive area is reclassified into a wilderness area the three public airfields there will remain open to all use.

Wilderness Society

The group dedicated to preserving these areas is the Wilderness Society, with headquarters in Washington, D. C. It makes personal investigations of wilderness, wild and primitive areas and problems, followed up by recommendations to the Forest Service as an organization representing those who love the areas most. It also represents wilderness interests at public hearings.

All of the wilderness, wild and primitive areas, with the exception of one wild area in North Carolina, lie in the 11 western states. It is therefore ironical to note that the majority of the 8,500 members of the Wilderness Society live east of these states, where there is only the one primitive area.

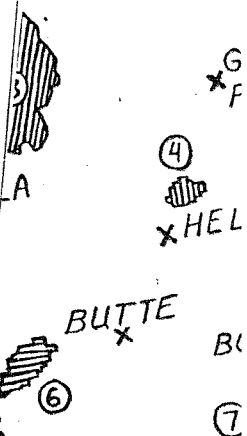
This strange relationship is probably brought about by the fact that there is so much other national forest land in the western states not yet badly penetrated that satisfies the demands of westerners for this type of land.

In short, westerners have developed an apathy toward these areas, taking their existence and their protection for granted.

What will happen to the Selway-Bitter Root primitive area when it comes up for reclassification will be interesting to observe.

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If where the boundary would have to be drawn above. Of the Forest Service has those parts of primitive areas which are followed in the reclassification will be drastically reduced. Montana altogether 95 net acres, is the largest of the largest her mountain goat. These offer the best in Montana side also approximately



wild and primitive areas (5), which is located in Montana are: (1) Selway-Bitter Root Primitive Area (8) Absaroka



club went for guests and Wil- and Wil- r. Frank r. Gilbert and Lock- rdy. Lor- f. Lederman- contract some of Mrs. Bridge- tained Wood. Wanson. Johnson. present or Mrs. or Mrs. the high