

# New Wilderness

IN LAST Sunday's Inland Empire Magazine, Don McCombs of Kooskia, Idaho, wrote about hiking into the backwoods of the Selway-Bitterroot country. He also included a day-by-day itinerary of a trip into these inviting wilds. Here, as a follow-up to the McCombs' article, is a U.S. Forest Service article and Forest Service photos on the establishing of the Selway-Bitterroot area as a wilderness area.

THE nation's largest proclaimed wilderness area has been established in the national forest system along the Idaho-Montana border.

The 80-mile long stretch of mountain country along the Bitterroot Divide includes 45 miles of the free-flowing Selway River. Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman formally changed the primitive area to a wilderness area by proclamation on Jan. 11, 1963.

"After thorough review of the recommendations submitted by this department's Forest Service," Freeman said, "I have proclaimed a major part of a former primitive area in Montana and Idaho as the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area.

"This new 1,239,800-acre wilderness area, in four National Forests in Montana and Idaho, is the largest formally proclaimed wilderness area in the National Forest system."

The area extends into the Clearwater, Nezperce, Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests of the Forest Service's northern region. Administrative headquarters for the northern region is in Missoula.

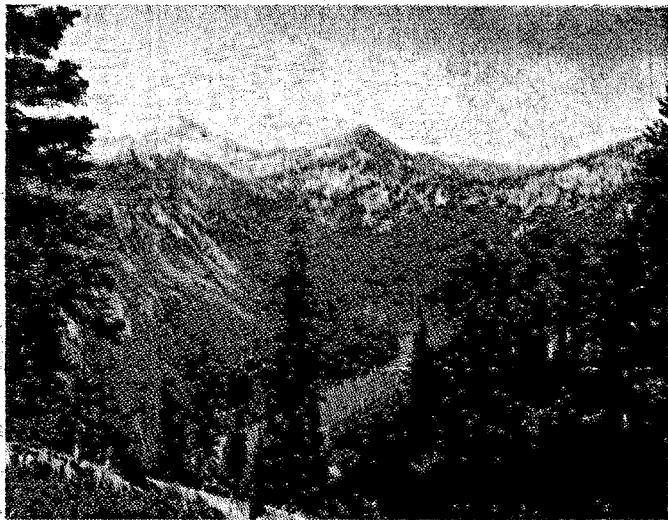
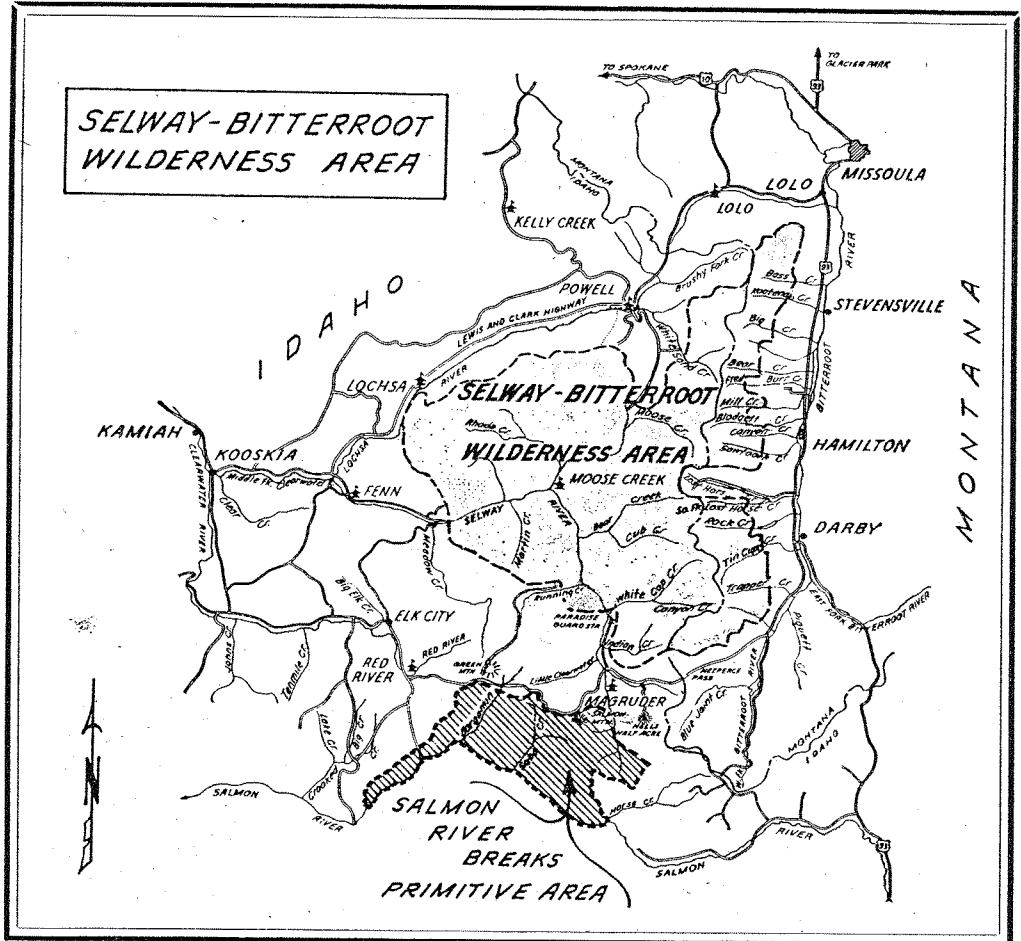
TWENTY-SIX years ago (1936) the original 1,875,306-acre area was classified under the less-exacting primitive area requirements. Some of the former primitive areas had roads. Other parts had sites needed for water impoundments, future recreational developments and for timber harvesting. A net area of about 418,500 acres was declassified and put under regular Forest Service multiple-use management. An additional 216,870 acres have been retained in primitive status pending further study.

In making these boundary adjustments, the Forest Service conducted careful studies of land use and resource values in the area. After the studies were completed, the wilderness proposal was submitted for review by all interested parties. Public hearings were conducted at Missoula, Grangeville and Lewiston, in the spring of 1961.

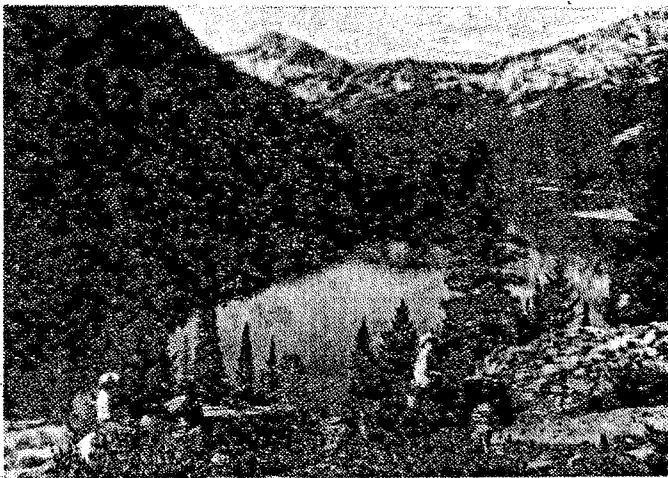
Approximately 4,000 groups and individuals expressed and submitted opinions in person and in writing at the three public

hearings. Analysis of opinions and suggestions presented at the public hearings and further field study resulted in changes and modifications in the Forest Service's original recommendation. The Secretary of Agriculture thoroughly reviewed and then approved the Forest Service proposal by proclaiming the Selway-Bitterroot area a wilderness area.

DESIGNATION of these public lands as a wilderness area means that no permanent roads may be built in the area. No mechanized equipment is permitted. Timber cutting and other



BIG CREEK LAKE viewed from Stormy Pass.

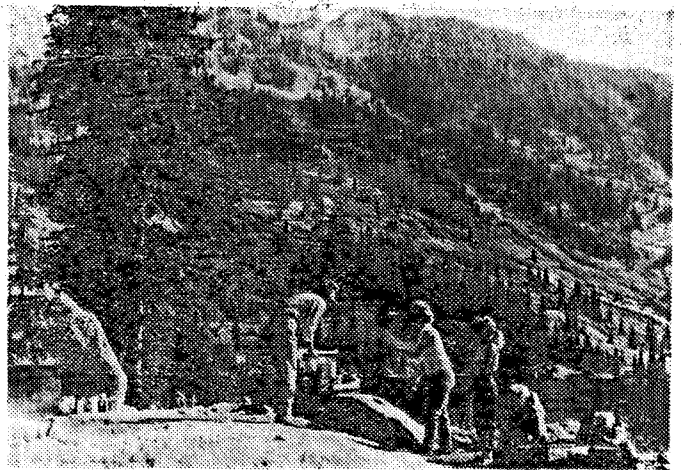


commercial uses—except already established grazing of livestock—are not allowed. To keep the wilderness area in its natural state, there will be extensive management to: Control grazing of pack stock, provide trails, supervise choice camping sites, provide pest control and protection against forest fires.

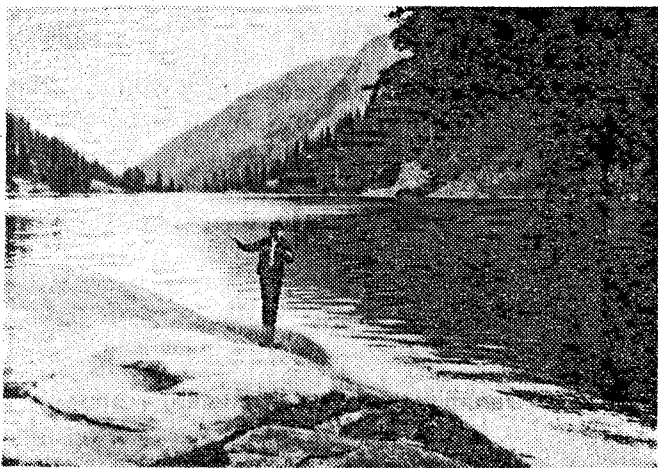
The area contains many beautiful mountain lakes and streams, high peaks and much wild, forested country. It includes the summer range for one of the largest elk herds in the United States and is popular big game hunting country. It is also val-

uable for water production. The extent of the mineral potential in the area is presently unknown. Should mineral values in the new wilderness area prove important, they can be developed under the provisions of U.S. mining laws.

Secretary Freeman's proclamation provides that 44,000 acres on the slopes of the Lochsa River be managed with recreation recognized as the "key value." This portion was not included in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area because parts of it are needed for future development of camping spots and pack facilities.

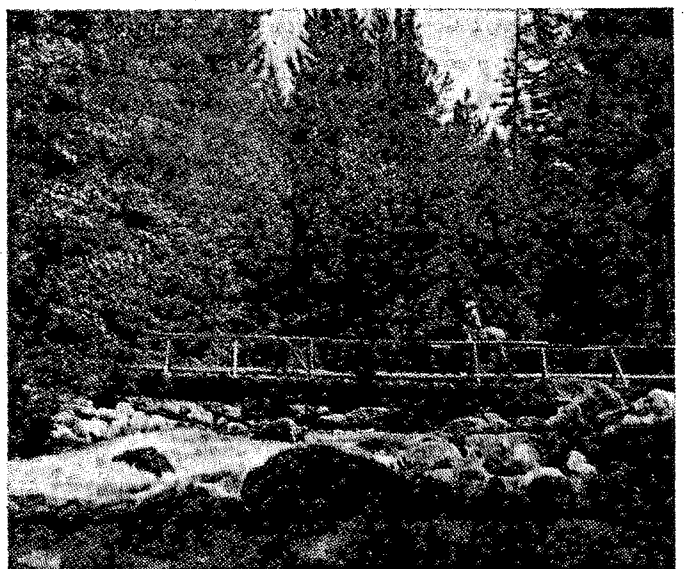


FAMILY CAMPING in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.



ABOVE: Riders on the trail around Big Creek Lake area.

LEFT: Camper tosses a fly off rock point of Big Creek Lake.



RIGHT: Horsebackers crossing bridge on a wilderness pack trip.