New Wilderness

IN LAST Sunday’s Inland Empire Magazine, Don
McCombs of Koskkin, Idaho, wrote about hiking
into the backwoods of the Selway-Bitterroot country.
He also made a day-by-day itinerary of a trip into
these lovely woods. 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 Sel-
way-Bitterroot area as a wilderness area.

The nation’s largest proclaimed wilderness area
has been established in the national forest sys-
tem along the Idaho-Montana border.
The mountainous section of mountain country along the Bitterroo Divide includes 45 miles of
the free-flowing Selway River.

Secretary of Agriculture Orlville C. Freeman formally declared a primitive area to a wilderness
area by proclamation on Jan. 11, 1963.

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

"This new 1,230,000-acre wil-
derness area, in four National Forcets in Montana and Idaho, is the largest formally proclaimed wilderness area in the National Forest system.

The area extends into the Clearwater, Nezperce, Loi’s and Bitterroot National Forests of the Forest Service’s northern re-
gion. Administrative headqua-
ters for the northern region is in
Missoula.

TWENTY-SIX years ago (1936), the original 1,875,300-
area was classified under the least-extant primitive area
requirements. Some of the for-
meter primitive areas had roads.

Other parts had sites needed for
water impoundments, future rec-
recreational developments, and
for timber harvesting. A net area of
about 635,000 acres was declassi-
fied and put under regular Forest
Service multiple-use manage-
ment. An additional 126,075 acres
have been retained in primitive status pending further study.

In making these boundary ad-
justments, the Forest Service
conducted careful studies of land
use and resource values in the
area. After the studies were com-
pleted, the wilderness proposal
was submitted for review by all
interested parties. Public hear-
ings were conducted at Missou-
lia, Grangeville and Lewiston,
in the spring of 1961.

Approximately 1,500 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 Ser-
vice’s original recommendation.

The Secretary of Agriculture
thoroughly reviewed and then
approved the Forest Service pro-
posal by proclaiming the Selway-
Bitterroot area a wilderness area.

DESIGNATION of these pub-
lic lands as a wilderness area means that no permanent roads may be built in the area.

No mechanized equipment is per-
nulled. Timber cutting and other

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 for控制 grazing of pack stock, provide trails, sup-
ervise choice camping sites, provide pest control and protec-
tion against forest fires.

The area contains many beau-
tiful mountain lakes and streams,
high peaks and much wild, fer-
ested 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 valu-
able for water production. The
extent of the mineral potential in
the area is presently unknown.

Although values in the new
wilderness area prove important,
they can be developed under the
provisions of U.S. mining laws.

Secretary Freeman’s procla-
mation provides that 41,000 acres
on the slopes of the Lochsa River
be managed with recreation rec-
ognized 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 park facili-
ties.

BIG CREEK LAKE viewed from Stormy Pass.
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.

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW, FEBRUARY 3, 1963