



IDAHO FISH & GAME

600 South Walnut / Box 25
Boise, Idaho 83707

March 1, 1990

Marvin L. Plenert
Regional Director, Region 1
U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
1002 Northeast Holladay Street
Portland, OR 97232-4181

Dear Marv:

Enclosed is the supplemental information to the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Snow Peak-St. Maries Wildlife Management Area land exchange. This information supplements the original EA which was submitted in 1981 and approved as an attachment to the Finding of No Significant Impact by your office on March 30, 1982.

We believe the submission of this information along with the applications in our 2/21/90 letter to you completes the request by your office for updated material on the exchange. Hopefully, the process that began almost 10 years ago can now be completed.

Your early attention and reply to our request for approval to complete the exchange would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jerry M. Conley".

Jerry M. Conley
Director

JMC/TP/j

Enclosures

Cecil D. Andrus / Governor
Jerry M. Conley / Director



Supplemental Information
Snow Peak-St. Maries WMA Land Exchange
Environmental Assessment

The supplemental information provided here is arranged in three parts: 1) a brief review of how the St. Maries WMA (Lindstrom Peak) has changed since its acquisition in the 1940's and 2) a table presenting a scenario of the effects on the two areas with and without an exchange and 3) additional information presented on a page-by-page basis to bring the 1981 document up-to-date.

PART 1: BACKGROUND ON ST. MARIES WMA (LINDSTROM PEAK)

Acquisition of land for the St. Maries WMA "Deer Range" in the early 1940's consisted of mostly cut-over timber lands. Those lands that still had timber values were sold to the Department with timber reservations which allowed the timber to be removed after the sale for a period of five years. Two sellers requested and received a five-year extension to harvest reserved timber.

The objective of the project was to provide deer winter range. Livestock grazing was curtailed. A livestock control fence was constructed along part of the east boundary in early 1970. Another fence was constructed along the St. Maries River in the late 1970's. Some timber has been harvested from several small clear cuts and then broadcast burned to establish forage for deer. Many old logging roads were closed to motorized vehicle access. These activities provided good forage and secure areas for deer. All of the management activities have taken place on the south part of the WMA.

At the time of acquisition, the area was used primarily by deer during the winter months. With improvements, some deer have become resident on the area and the wintering deer herd has increased. The north part of the WMA has remained undeveloped for the past 40 years with the exceptions of a temporary road across one section. Because of the north and east aspect, the north end of the WMA provides only summer-fall range for resident deer. The dense timber canopy that has developed provides good security cover but doesn't provide winter forage. The north facing slopes now supports good commercial timber. Normal timber harvest activity could improve forage productions for deer summer range. Roads would have to be closed to provide security after harvest.

At the time the property was acquired, elk were not found on the WMA. Since that time, a resident elk herd has developed and now has an estimated population of about 60 animals. They are usually found on the southern portion of the WMA but also range through the north portion during summer and fall months when activity increases on the developed or south end of the WMA.

PART 2: The following table presents a scenario of wildlife, recreation and social impacts of the Snow Peak-St. Maries WMA area with and without a completed exchange.

Table - Estimated effects of the Snow Peak - St. Maries WMA land exchange

Resource/ Consideration	Alternatives			
	St. Maries WMA		Snow Peak	
	W/Exch.	W/O Exch.	W/Exch.	W/O Exch.
Deer Population	0	0	0	0
Elk Population	0	0	+	--
Goat Population	0	0	+	--
Other Big Game	0	0	+	--
Hunting/Fishing	0	0	+	-
Quality				
Watershed Protection	0	0	++	--
Community Acceptance	-	0	0	-
Regional Acceptance	+	-	+	-
Timber Value to Community	+	0	0	+
Total	+1	-1	+7	-10

++ = far exceeds present values
 + = exceeds present values
 0 = meets present values
 - = below present values
 -- = far below present values

PART 3: All references to Burlington Northern Incorporated (BNI) should now read Plum Creek Timber Company L.P. Burlington Northern created Plum Creek Timber Company as a wholly owned subsidiary which was later changed to a limited partnership.

The proposal to acquire Plum Creek Timber Company land is the continuation of a proposal approved by USFWS in 1983. The exchange procedure has been changed and some minor adjustments to the acreages have been made.

All supplemental information is referenced by an identification number, page and paragraph to the original environmental analysis submitted in 1981 (attached).

Identification
Number

1. Page 1, Paragraph 1 (Summary).
 The Canyon Creek-Snow Peak area is included in a special management area of the proposed Senator McClure-Governor Andrus Wilderness Bill in an elk management category. About 2,500 acres of USFS land is identified in the Idaho Panhandle National Forest

plan as winter ranges, nonroaded, not to be developed or timber harvest may occur without new roads or very minimal development. The remainder of the area is identified as important elk summer range.

2. Page 1, Paragraph 3 (Summary).
The present proposal to trade department land involves an exchange procedure where the Department would acquire the 12,055 acre Plum Creek Timber Company ownership and Idaho Department of Lands would acquire the 3,680 acre IDFG land.
3. Page 1, Paragraph 3 (Summary).
At public hearings held in Wallace, St. Maries and Coeur d'Alene on January 29, 30 and 31, 1990, a representative of the US Forest Service stated they would work to develop a cooperative management plan and remove their intermingled sections from the timber base (see attachment 1).
4. Page 1, Paragraph 4 (Summary).
The Department staff now estimates about 600 elk summer and 400 elk winter in the area. A high of 371 elk were counted during a 1983-84 winter survey.
5. Page 1, Paragraph 5.
Current estimates of marketable timber on 3,680 acres is 48 million board feet. The range is estimated at 43 to 52 million board feet.
6. Page 1, Paragraph 6.
A Summary of public hearings and written comments from the public and comments from county commissioners is presented in Attachment 2.
7. Page 3, Paragraph 3.
Plum Creek Timber Company reconstructed Forest Road #201 from the junction at the Bluff Creek road to the head of Buck Creek in Section 11, T.43N., R.7E., BM. In addition, they constructed about 1.6 miles of new road leaving Forest Road #201 in Section 15, T.43N., R.7E., BM following the Buck Creek Trail then crossing USFS Section 14 and proceeding into Section 11 where they plan to harvest timber in 1990. Plum Creek has reserved the right to harvest "each and every tree" in that Section. Estimated volume is 14 million board feet.
8. Page 3, Paragraph 4.
The USFS has offered to develop a cooperative management plan and alter the forest plan to remove the area from the timber base.
9. Page 4, Paragraph 1.
Plum Creek Timber Company has offered to sell their property. Through the exchange process the Department will acquire the Plum Creek land.

10. Page 5, Paragraph 4.
A draft wilderness bill by Senator James McClure and Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus would place the Canyon Creek-Spotted Louis Creek drainages in a special elk management area. The Idaho Panhandle National Forest Plan identifies about 2,500 acres of the area in categories 9, 10 and 4 which are defined as follows:
4. Provide winter range forage to support existing and projected big game populations through scheduled timber harvest and permanent forage areas.
 9. Manage to maintain and protect existing improvements and resource productive potential within minimum investments.
 10. Provide the opportunity for a semi-primitive recreation experience. The area will be managed in its present condition with no new roads.
11. Page 6, Paragraph 7 [(1) roading].
Increased access to this area has resulted in a reduction in the length of the elk hunting season from 79 days in 1966 to 26 days in 1989. This represents a loss of 53 days of hunter opportunity.
12. Page 7, Paragraph 6 (b).
The present proposal will place the ownership with Idaho Department of Lands. Public access for hunting or recreation will be preserved.
13. Page 7, Paragraph 7 (c).
The Idaho Board of Land Commissioners have directed the Idaho Department of Lands to develop a management plan for the area in cooperation with the Department of Fish and Game.
14. Page 8, Paragraph 1 (d).
Plum Creek Timber Company has reconstructed Forest Road 201 and constructed about 1.6 miles of new road into Buck Creek so they can begin timber harvest from Section 11, T.43N., R.7E., BM in 1990.
15. Page 8, Paragraph 2 (a).
Shoshone County Commissioners are concerned with potential loss of about \$1,000,000 in assessed evaluation in property in the county and \$11,000 in annual property tax revenue.
- Benewah County is concerned with loss of timber from the Snow Peak area that may be handled to St. Maries area mills and that the exchange is not in the best interest of their constituents.

Kootenai County had no comments.

16. Page 8, Paragraph 6 (Consultation Description).
See attachment 2 for a list of recent public hearings and input from organizations regarding the proposed exchange.
17. Page 11, Map.
See attachment 3 for a map of the proposed Snow Peak WMA.
18. Page 13.
Winter elk population summary. We estimate winter elk populations to be about 400 animals. A total of 371 elk were observed in the area during a winter survey in 1983-84.
19. Page 14, Paragraph 1.
The present estimate for elk on the summer range is 600 animals. Harvest has shown an upward trend of 10%. The general season length has been reduced to 26 days and either-sex hunting has changed to a mix of 11 days of bulls-only and 15 days of either-sex hunting during September. The season length is 28 days.
20. Page 14, Paragraph 3.
The mountain goat herd on the area has increased to about 100 animals.
21. Page 16, Paragraph 3.
The bag limit for cutthroat trout has been reduced by 50% to 3 fish due to increased fishing pressure and watershed impacts in the upper part of the drainage.
22. Page 18, Paragraph 3.
Adjustments to acreage and a timber harvest reservation made by Plum Creek Timber Company indicate the timber volume on the land to be acquired by Department of Fish and Game will be about 75 million board feet.
23. Page 20, Paragraph 3.
The USFS testified at public hearings that they would develop a cooperative management plan and amend the forest plan to remove their intermingled land from the timber management base.
24. Page 23, Paragraph 3.
The number of acres owned by the Department has been reduced to 5,788 acres due to an exchange involving Idaho Department of Lands for land on the Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area.

Page 24, Map.
See attachment 4 for a map of other lands proposed to be exchanged.

25. Page 28, Paragraph 3.
Hunting pressure has increased in the area. Results of hunters checked at several check stations conducted during the elk and deer seasons are as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Hunters</u>	<u>Wildlife Harvested</u>
1985	89	2 deer, 11 grouse, 1 rabbit
1986	235	1 elk, 5 deer, 19 grouse
1987	263	3 deer, 22 grouse
1988	263	1 elk, 4 deer, 6 grouse
1989	209	2 elk, 8 grouse

26. Page 28, Paragraph 7.
About 43 to 45 million board feet will be available to the St. Maries area market. If harvested over a 10 year period, this will provide 43 to 45 jobs per year to the St. Maries area. This is based on an industry statement that 100,000 board feet of timber provides 1 job in the wood products industry.
27. Page 29, Paragraph 1.
The present exchange plan moves ownership of the Department of Fish and Game land to Idaho Department of Lands. Neither agency pays property taxes, nor are they permitted to by Idaho law. No tax change will occur in Benewah County. The Idaho legislature changed the distribution of Fish and Game fine money to counties, so Shoshone County will not receive a share based on acreage owned. Shoshone County would lose about \$1,000,000 in assessed evaluation for property and about \$11,000 in annual property taxes. Most of the \$11,000 would probably be passed on to all property owners in the county and will have minimal impact on county government or on school districts.
28. Page 29, Paragraph 3.
The exchange procedure has changed. Under the current proposal the State Department of Lands will have the Department lands on the St. Maries WMA and the Department will gain the Plum Creek lands near Snow Peak. The Department of Lands was directed by the State Board of Land Commissioners to prepare a management plan for the Lindstrom Peak area which will consider wildlife values in the management of lands.



Attachment 1

January 23, 1990

In response to a number of requests for information regarding the Forest Service reaction to the current Fish & Game/Buck Creek Land Exchange, I've attached a one page summary.

I expect this may be presented and/or discussed at the up-coming hearings.

Bill

Bill Morden
Forest Supervisor



IDAHO FISH & GAME LAND ACQUISITION OF BUCK CREEK

January 23, 1990

This paper is the Forest Service's Assessment of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game proposal to obtain all intermingled private lands in the Buck Creek area, amounting to 12,000 acres owned by Plum Creek Timber Company. The remaining 20,000 acres in the area are National Forest System lands.

We understand the purpose of the State's proposal is to provide high quality fish and wildlife management in the area on what are now Plum Creek Timber Company lands. Important fish and wildlife values in the area include elk, mountain goats, and westslope cutthroat trout.

The National Forest System lands are administered under the the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) Forest Plan. This plan identifies the Buck Creek area as one of five key Elk areas in the IPNF, and designates 15,000 acres of the National Forest lands for timber and elk habitat management, predicated on a transportation system developed jointly by the intermingled land managers. The remaining 5,000 acres are designated for semi-primitive recreation and maintenance management.

In this special situation, with intermingled ownership, the Forest Service would not unilaterally conduct management practices which would be contrary to the goals for the lands of another public land agency. Doing so would essentially render the objectives of managing the intermingled lands moot. The Forest Service would, in fact, seek and expect to develop a cooperative management agreement with the Fish and Game department.

While it is unclear to us at the moment what direction the Fish and Game department will receive or follow regarding the lands in question, we anticipate their goals to be predicated on uses that would preclude road access in the Buck Creek area.

Both Plum Creek and National Forest lands in the area suitable for timber harvesting are unroaded. Without road access, these lands are available only to minor amounts of helicopter or cable logging from roads along the area's perimeter.

We anticipate that vegetation management considered by the Department will be driven by wildlife habitat needs, and not by scheduled timber harvest.

Therefore, the timbered National Forest lands in the Buck Creek area, which are now part of the IPNF timber "base," would be removed from that base, and would no longer be used in calculating the IPNF's allowable sale quantity (ASQ) or long-term sustained yield.

No timber harvesting has occurred on the 15,000 acres of National Forest lands to date, and none is scheduled by the IPNF during the next seven years. Because of the inventory and growth on these acres we estimate they contribute about 2 million board feet per year to our current allowable timber sale quantity and can contribute up to 4 million board feet per year to our long-term sustained yield. Estimated standing merchantable sawtimber volume is 100 million board feet. Further, we estimate 80% of this volume would be significantly below cost for the Forest Service to independently access and log under current economic conditions.

We look forward to working with Fish and Game, should they acquire the lands, in the development of a cooperative working agreement to manage the key resources and values of this area. While our allowable timber sale quantity will be reduced by about 2 million board feet per year, we will continue to seek and emphasize opportunities to enhance fish and wildlife habitat as well as public use of the area.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RELATING TO THE
PROPOSED SNOW PEAK-ST. MARIES WMA EXCHANGE

The following is a summary of comments received by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game as of February 12, 1990, relating to the proposed Snow Peak-St. Maries WMA exchange. The comments are arranged as follows:

1. Letters received from the public in support of the exchange.
2. Letters received from the public in opposition to the exchange.
3. Letters from organized sportsmen clubs or conservation organizations.
4. Letters from county commissioners.
5. Petitions from the Idaho Wildlife Federation - District 1.
6. Comments taken from public testimony and sign-up cards provided at three public hearings.

Also enclosed are copies of notices of public hearings relating to the exchange.

1. Letters from the public in support.

The Department has received 91 letters with a total of 106 signatures from persons supporting the proposed exchange. The most commonly mentioned factors for supporting the exchange included:

- A. Retain high quality wildlife habitat in the Canyon Creek-Buck Creek area.
- B. Protect important mountain goat herd on Snow Peak.
- C. Protect water quality of Little North Fork of the Clearwater River.
- D. Maintain roadless nature of the Snow Peak area for backcountry hunting experience.
- E. Protect big game winter range values in Canyon Creek.

2. Letters from the public in opposition.

The Department has received 63 letters with a total of 66 signatures from persons in opposition to the proposed exchange. The most commonly mentioned factors for opposing the exchange included:

- A. The Department is disposing of property they said would be held permanently.

- B. Disposal of the land is not in the best interest of the area.
 - C. The acquired Snow Peak lands will be removed from the "timber base" with the resultant loss of jobs and associated income to the local community.
 - D. Lost revenue from timber harvest in the Snow Peak area will adversely impact Shoshone County and the Avery School District.
 - E. Potential loss of recreation land on St. Maries WMA.
 - F. Concern over Bennett Tree Farm, Inc. acquiring St. Maries land if exchange with state lands does not go through.
 - G. Addition of "de facto" wilderness by acquisition of Snow Peak land and co-management with the US Forest Service.
3. Letters from organizations.

The Department received 7 letters in support of the exchange from the following sportsmen/conservation organizations:

Shoshone County Sportsmen's Association
Bonner County Sportsmen's Association
Kootenai Environmental Alliance
Golden Eagle Audubon Society
North Idaho Fly Casters
Northern Idaho Treehound Association
North Idaho Trail Riders Organization

4. Letters from county commissioners.

The Department received letters from the Shoshone (2 letters), Benewah, and Clearwater county commissioners. All three counties opposed the exchange based primarily on economic impacts from the loss of tax base. Benewah County requested an opportunity to make additional comments after reviewing the public hearing transcripts.

5. Petition from Idaho Wildlife Federation.

The Department received a petition from District 1 of the Idaho Wildlife Federation with 165 signatures supporting the exchange.

6. Public hearings.

The Department conducted three public hearings to receive testimony from the public on the exchange. The meetings were held in Wallace on January 29, 1990; in St. Maries on January 30, 1990; and in Coeur d'Alene on January 31, 1990. The Department requested everyone in attendance to sign a "comment card" whether they intended to speak or

give written comments on the card. In Wallace there were 31 people present, in St. Maries 69 people present, and in Coeur d'Alene 63 people present.

In Wallace 10 individuals provided oral comments; 2 spoke in favor of the exchange, 5 spoke in opposition, and 3 offered information but took no position.

In addition, 6 individuals offered written comments on "comment cards" provided by the Department. Three wrote comments in favor of the exchange, 3 comments expressed no position. Seventeen individuals filled out cards but offered no comments.

In St. Maries 17 individuals provided oral comments; 13 different people spoke in opposition (3 additional people who spoke in Wallace spoke again in opposition), 1 offered information but took no position, and no one spoke in favor of the exchange.

In addition, 8 individuals offered written comments on cards. Six wrote comments in opposition, 1 wrote comments in favor, and 1 offered no position. Forty-six individuals filled out cards but offered no comments.

In Coeur d'Alene 18 individuals provided oral comments; 10 people spoke in favor of the exchange, 3 different people spoke in opposition (4 additional people who had spoken in Wallace and/or St. Maries spoke again in opposition), and 1 person offered information but took no position.

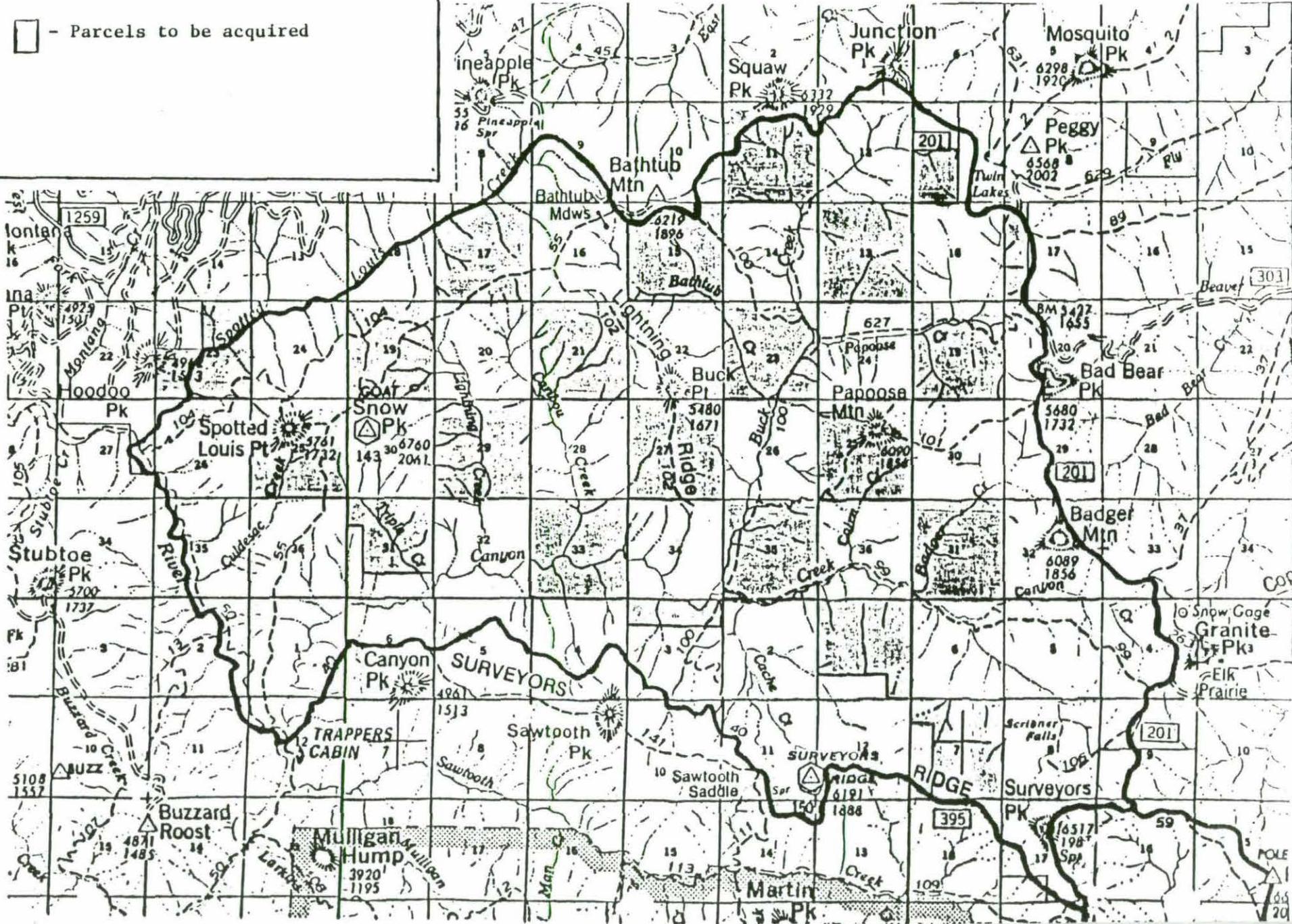
In addition, 23 individuals offered written comments on cards. Twenty-one wrote comments in favor, 2 were opposed. Twenty-two individuals filled out cards but did not comment.

In summary, the Department of Fish and Game received written or oral comments for or against the exchange from 238 individuals, excluding letters from organizations, petitions, and county commissioners. One hundred forty-three people favored the exchange and 95 people opposed the exchange.

PROPOSED SNOW PEAK WMA

□ - Parcels to be acquired

Attachment 3



WEST ST JOE
FPD OFFICE

Municipal
Airport

Milltown

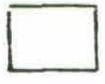
St. Maries

St. Maries
Park

ST. MARIES WMA

Idaho Department of
Fish and Game

Land to be Traded



Land to be Retained

