

# **Chemise Mountain**

*CA-050-111*

CHEMISE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-050-111)

1. THE STUDY AREA —

4,483 acres

The Chemise Mountain WSA is located on the coastline, both north and south of the Humboldt-Mendocino County line within the King Range National Conservation Area. The nearest cities are Ferndale, forty air miles north, Fort Bragg, forty air miles south, Garberville, ten air miles east, and Shelter Cove, immediately north of the WSA. The San Francisco Bay Area is located approximately 170 air miles to the south. The study area contains 4,143 acres of BLM land, 243 acres of State land, 97 acres of private property, and no split estate inholdings (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA's southern boundary is adjacent to the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. The eastern boundary is Whale Gulch Creek, Chemise Mountain Road, and private property. The northern portion of the WSA is bounded by private land and Chemise Mountain Road, and the western boundary is the Pacific Ocean and private property.

The topography is steep and rugged. Elevation drops 2,600 feet to the ocean over about one-half mile. Major drainages are Whale Gulch Creek and Chemise Creek; both drain into the Pacific Ocean. The western slope is extremely steep with Douglas-fir growing in the drainages and chaparral on the saddles and ridges. There are also several open grassy meadows; the largest, named Hidden Valley, is nearly 35 acres in size.

In 1970, the U.S. Congress established the King Range National Conservation Area, which contains this WSA and the 34,031-acre King Range WSA (CA-050-112). In 1975, the BLM State Director designated 3,941 acres as the Chemise Mountain WSA a primitive area. Management direction is to provide opportunities for primitive recreation and protect outstanding scenic values. Nearly ten miles of hiking and horseback riding trails in the WSA are designated a part of the National Recreation Trails System. The California State Water Resources Control Board designated the intertidal zone of the WSA's shoreline an Area of Special Biological Significance. The purpose of this special designation is to protect biological communities of such extraordinary value that no acceptable risk of change in their environments, as a result of man's activities, can be entertained.

As a consequence of establishing the Chemise Mountain Primitive Area, it was automatically subject to wilderness review as mandated by Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and labeled an Instant Study Area (ISA). Although the Chemise Mountain ISA did not contain 5,000 acres, it was decided during intensive wilderness inventory that the ISA together with the contiguous land was of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition. The additional 542 acres adjacent to, but outside the ISA boundary, were included in the wilderness

study process as authorized in Section 202 of FLEMA. A forty-acre parcel inside the ISA boundary was acquired by BLM in 1985 and was also studied under Section 202.

Two suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft EIS. A partial-wilderness recommendation was considered but dropped from further analysis because the Chemise Mountain WSA's size and lack of resource conflicts made such an alternative impractical and unnecessary. The Final EIS analyzed the same two suitability recommendations: no wilderness (the District Advisory Council recommendation) and all wilderness.

2.	<u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u>	4,143	acres recommended for wilderness
		0	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

All wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. This is considered to be the environmentally-preferable alternative as it would result in the least change to the natural environment over the long-term. In all, a total of 4,143 acres are recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS).

The rationale for selecting this all-wilderness recommendation is: 1) the area contains outstanding wilderness values and special features; 2) inclusion of the WSA in the NWPS would provide an opportunity for a broad spectrum of people to have wilderness experiences because of its convenient location; 3) there are no resource conflicts with wilderness designation; 4) the area is manageable as wilderness; 5) wilderness designation of this WSA would expand the diversity within the NWPS.

The WSA has retained an outstanding primitive character which exemplifies the qualities described in the definition of wilderness contained in Section 2(c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act. The western slope and north-south ridgeline near Chemise Mountain show very little sign of being disturbed by man and have retained their primeval character and influence. The area has recovered from the substantial impacts that occurred in 1973 from the use of heavy mechanical equipment to suppress an uncontrolled wildfire. An extensive trail system provides an outstanding challenge and unique experience for hikers, backpackers and horseback riders. Travel through the complex variations of vegetation and terrain requires physical stamina and coordination, and competence with good judgement. Visitors have outstanding opportunities to find secluded places, especially in the old-growth Douglas-fir forests next to the WSA's southern boundary and in the inner gorge of the western slope drainages. The new north-south ridgeline trail extension will add significantly to both the quantity and quality of back-country recreational opportunities because this BLM trail will link up to the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park trail system and double the mileage of uninterrupted wilderness travel.

Wilderness designation of this WSA would complement current management objectives and planned actions outlined in the 1974 King Range National Conservation Area Management Program as well as recently developed resource

specific activity plans. All existing short-term uses and management direction would continue in the same manner and degree because the WSA is currently being managed as a primitive area; the objectives of which are almost identical to those of a wilderness area.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	4,143
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
<u>Inholdings</u>		
State		243
Private		<u>97</u>
Total		4,483
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	4,143
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>4,143</u>
<u>Inholdings</u>		
State		
Private		
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	0
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		0

PACIFIC

OCEAN

KING RANGE

NATIONAL

CONSERVATION

AREA

CHEMISE MTK

PRIMITIVE AREA

HUMBOLDT CO

CHEMISE MTK

PRIMITIVE AREA

HUMBOLDT CO

MENDOCINO CO



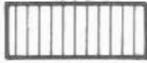
T4S  
T5S

HM  
T5S  
T24N  
MDM

R1E | R2E HM

R19W | R18W  
MDM | MDM

-  RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS
-  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

-  SPLIT ESTATE
-  STATE
-  PRIVATE



**Chemise Mountain  
Proposal  
MAP-1**



050-111  
JUNE, 1988

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA retains its natural appearance. The rugged topography in combination with diverse vegetation creates a primeval environment. Man's imprint on the landscape of the WSA is noticeable for approximately a mile along the north-south ridge and along a few east-west trending ridges due to the construction of firebreaks in 1973. Overall, these intrusions are substantially unnoticeable because rapid revegetation has occurred. Within a decade it will be difficult to tell whether mechanical equipment was ever used for fire suppression in this WSA. Approximately twenty acres in the northern portion of the area were logged about twenty years ago, but the screening from thick vegetation substantially diminishes the impact from this intrusion. Hiking and horseback trails have been constructed throughout the area, and these developments enhance man's use and enjoyment of the WSA without degrading its natural condition.
2. Solitude: The steep canyons and ocean beaches provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. Visitors can experience both the intimacy of small, steep, narrow drainages and canyons and the vastness and great expanse of the ocean. Views of the Pacific Ocean and to the south into the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park enhance opportunities to experience both solitude and spaciousness.

Visitation to this WSA is moderate at present, and anticipated to increase about ten percent per year for the next fifteen years. Recent trail extensions and new trail development will allow visitors to disperse into more remote areas, thus creating greater opportunities for solitude.

This WSA is periodically overflown by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation exist in this WSA, due to the diversity in the number of activities and because several of them have outstanding qualities when considered alone. Examples of these primitive and unconfined types of recreational activities are: hiking, backpacking, camping, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, photography, bird watching, and sightseeing for botanical, zoological, or geological features. The new trail extension along the ridge south of Chemise Mountain would substantially increase overall visitor use because the trail would disperse hikers toward the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park.

4. Special Features: Scenic qualities are outstanding in this area. The abrupt rise of topography is rarely surpassed on California's rugged coast and is seldom found in other parts of the world. Viewing the natural landscape as it meets the ocean is a unique experience for most users since there are few coastal lands left undeveloped in California. Rare animals such as the California Brown Pelican and bald eagle are known to visit the area. Recent intensive archaeological surveys have located several important cultural sites within and near the WSA. These sites may be significant enough to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The Roosevelt Elk is being reintroduced in this area.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 4,143 acres of the Pacific Forest/Mixed Evergreen ecosystem. Addition of this WSA would expand the diversity within the NWPS because there are currently no coastal wilderness areas composed of mixed evergreen forests combined with a coastal prairie-scrub mosaic. The area is one of the few remaining extensive stretches of unroaded coastline in the United States that offer outstanding opportunities for a superior backpacking experience.

TABLE 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Pacific Forest/California Mixed Evergreen	5	433,107	2	36,532
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Pacific Forest/California Mixed Evergreen	4	45,074	2	36,532

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of two major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

TABLE 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Redding	14	1,236,503	11	344,633
Santa Rosa-Petaluma	10	888,579	12	134,167

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: There are two designated wilderness areas within fifty air miles of this WSA. They include the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness and the North Fork Wilderness, both managed by the Forest Service. The King Range WSA lies two miles to the north and is recommended for 63% partial-wilderness.

C. Manageability

The entire WSA is manageable as wilderness. There are no resource conflicts or nonconforming uses within the Chemise Mountain WSA that would have an impact on preserving the area's wilderness character. The WSA could be managed as wilderness over the long-term based on present knowledge of the resources and potential visitor use.

Manageability is enhanced because the WSA's boundary is clearly defined by physical features: the Pacific Ocean, Whale Gulch Creek, Chemise Mountain Road and Shelter Cove Road.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at time of preliminary suitability recommendation: The geology and mineralization of the Chemise Mountain WSA is described in the Unit Resource Analysis (URA) based on data in Mineral Resource Inventory (MRI) files for the BLM East Mendocino Planning Unit. The MRI data in the Affected Environment section of the Chemise Mountain Wilderness Final EIS of 1988 indicated that the WSA has a low potential for the occurrence of energy-related and metallic mineral resources. There are no patented or unpatented mining claims in the WSA. No oil and gas seeps or coal seams were detected in the WSA. The geothermal resource potential of the area is also low. No mineral material sites exist in the area, nor are there any sodium or potassium leases. The WSA has a low potential for the occurrence of uranium, thorium and nonmetallic mineral resources.

Minor manganese resources occur two miles outside the WSA near Queen's Peak. Fourteen lode claims were filed for this site in 1982. The known deposits are too small and the manganese too low in concentration for further economic exploitation. Similar manganese mineralization may be within the belt of melange that extends into the WSA, but economic deposits are unlikely.

Although there has been historical exploration of both base and precious metals north of the WSA in the Mattole River drainage, geologic and geochemical field data indicate almost no gold potential and low potentials for lead, zinc, copper, and silver. One high-grade vein and several minor veins containing lead, zinc, copper and silver were discovered at Shelter Cove, less than two air miles northwest of the WSA.

The WSA was identified by the California Energy Commission as having limited potential for wind energy development. There are no leases at the present time. The area is unlikely to be considered a prime resource for development in the near future due to the limited geographic extent of the resource and geographic isolation.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the nonsuitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: The Chemise Mountain WSA became an Instant Study Area as mandated by section 603 of FLPMA and as such was the subject of a mineral survey by the U.S. Bureau of Mines and U.S. Geological Survey. The results of the mineral survey were published in 1980 (MF 1196 A-C and Open File Report 80-815) and included in BLM's preliminary analysis and recommendations.

#### E. Impacts on Resources

The following comparative impact table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all the alternatives considered, including designation or nondesignation of the entire WSA as wilderness.

TABLE 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	The area's wilderness values would be retained.	The area's Primitive Area designation would be maintained and it's wilderness values retained.
Impact on Reintroduction and Management of Roosevelt	Impact on the reintroduction of elk would be negligible. A minor positive impact from prescribed burning would be partially offset by minor dis-	Impacts would be the same as that for the Proposed Action.
Elk	turbance to elk resulting from increased visitor use to the area.	

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the Inventory and Study Phases, and in the Draft EIS were used to develop significant issue topics, various alternatives and finally, to recommend that the entire WSA be designated a wilderness area.

A total of 515 written and oral comments were received during the formal public review period. Over 90 percent of the comments supported wilderness designation of this WSA. Only seven commenters recommended no-wilderness. The most frequently mentioned item of concern was the need to protect the natural values of the few remaining roadless areas adjacent to the Pacific Ocean. Fifty letters identified the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park as an important factor in justifying why the Chemise Mountain WSA should be designated wilderness. Several respondents argued that BLM should not equate administrative protection of the area because of its Primitive Area designation with Congressional designation as a wilderness area.

Resource management issues mentioned most often were: wildlife (40 percent); fisheries (26 percent); and vehicle access (44 percent). Less than five percent of the total number of comments received identified any need for a more detailed analysis of the environmental impacts on the WSA's resource values.

The Ukiah District Advisory Council appointed a Technical Review Team to study wilderness issues in detail because of the many concerns and controversies expressed by the general public, special interest groups and government agencies. The Council, after reviewing the TRT's report, recommended that the WSA not be designated a wilderness area.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency classified the Draft EIS as category LO, Lack of Objections. Concern about mineral resources was expressed by the U.S. Bureau of Mines. They emphasized that mineral deposits of economic value may be found in areas of low potential. The U.S. Dept. of Air Force is generally supportive of wilderness designation provided that no restrictions are placed on essential military overflights. The major concern expressed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was the assurance that salmon and steelhead habitat on the west-slope coastal streams be protected.

California Assemblyman Dan Hauser had no comment on this WSA. The California Coastal Commission said BLM should prepare and submit a consistency determination for those actions specified in the EIS which may have a direct effect on the coastal zone. The potential for developing wind energy under wilderness was a concern of the California Energy Commission. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection was concerned about its firefighting capabilities and limitations in areas recommended for wilderness designation, especially when residential communities are located nearby. The safety of these residents could be compromised by BLM's restrictions placed on the use of mechanical equipment. The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors supported the wilderness alternative, and expressed the need to allow firefighting techniques that prevent the spread of uncontrolled fires into nearby communities such as Shelter Cove and Whale Gulch.