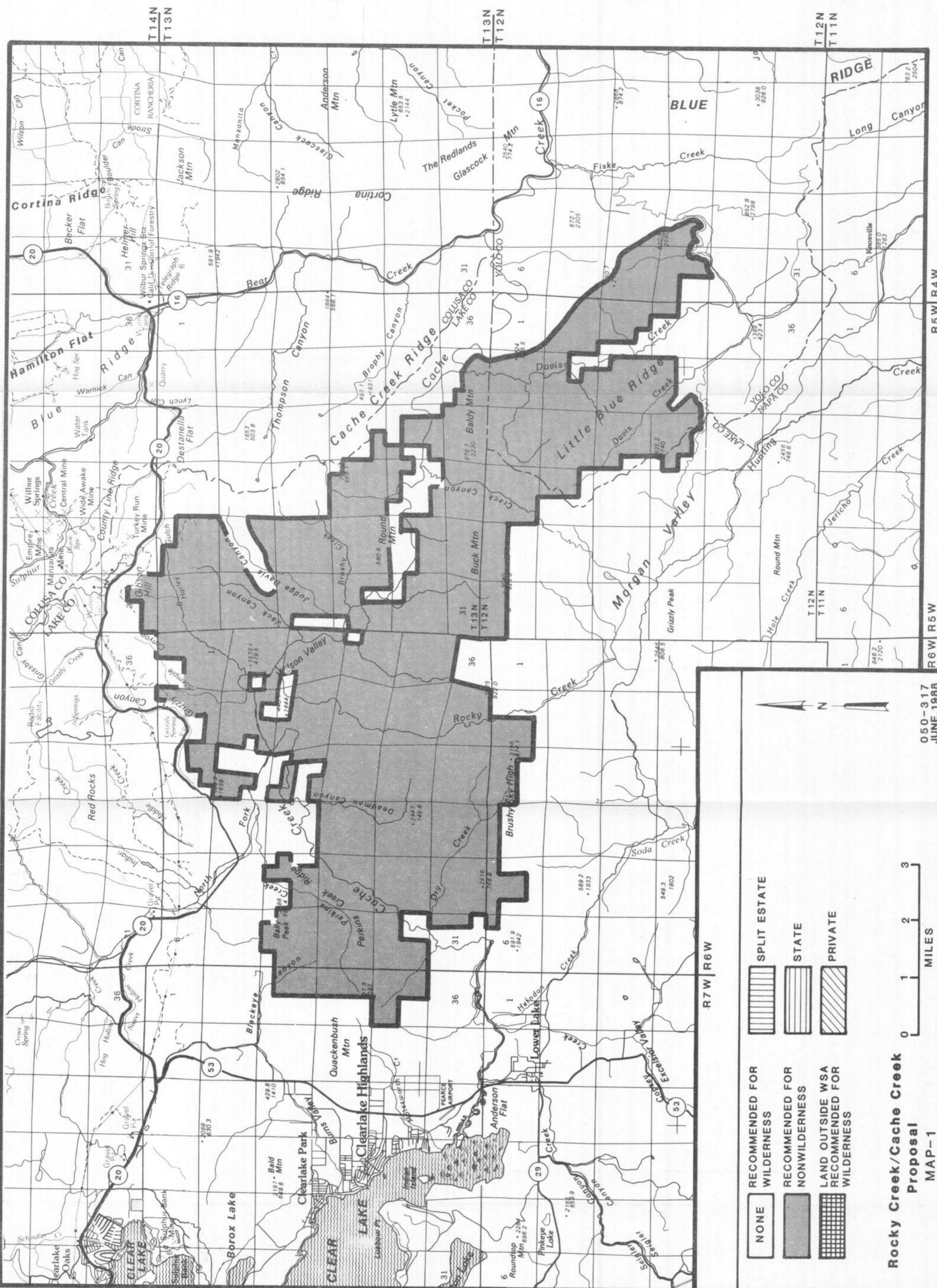


**Rocky Creek  
Cache Creek**

*CA-050-317*



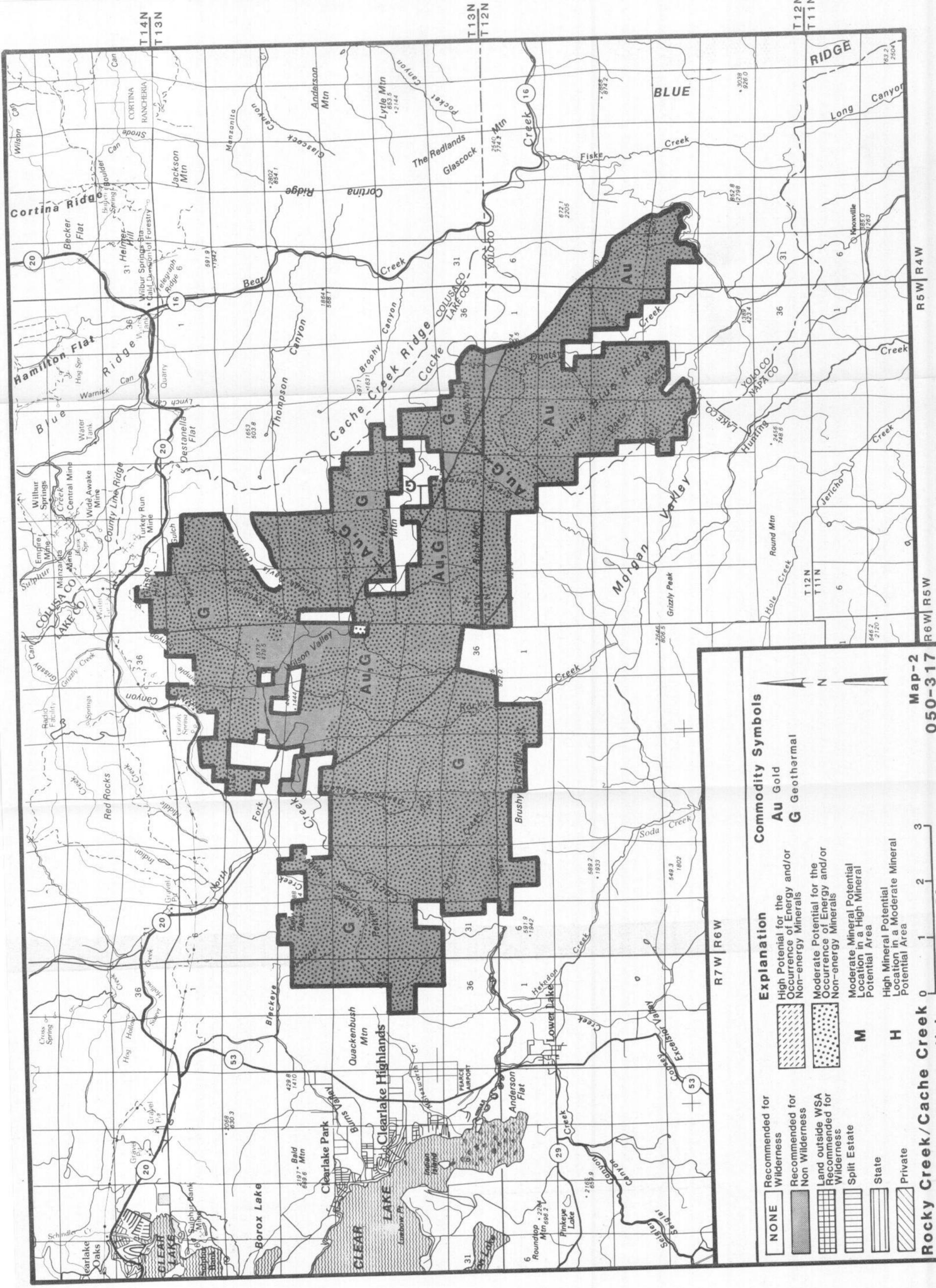
N

	NONE		RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS		SPLIT ESTATE
	RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS		LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS		STATE
					PRIVATE

0 1 2 3  
MILES

050-317  
JUNE, 1988

**Rocky Creek/Cache Creek  
Proposal  
MAP-1**



**Map-2**  
**050-317**

**Rocky Creek/Cache Creek Mineral Resource Potential**

Symbol	Explanation	Commodity Symbols
	Recommended for Wilderness	Au Gold
	Recommended for Non Wilderness	G Geothermal
	Land outside WSA	
	Recommended for Wilderness	
	Split Estate	
	State	
	Private	
	Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals	
	Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area	
	High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area	

ROCKY CREEK - CACHE CREEK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-050-317)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 35,019 Acres

The Rocky Creek - Cache Creek WSA includes 33,561 acres of BLM administered public lands, four parcels of privately owned land totaling approximately 1,275 acres and 183 acres of State lands. There are no split estate lands (see Map 1 and Table 1).

This WSA is bounded by private or state owned lands. Except for two short portions of Jeep road along the south and southeast boundary, the WSA boundary follows property lines.

The prominent feature of the WSA is Cache Creek which runs in a west-to-east direction and forms a rugged, steep-sided canyon through most of the study area. The steep canyon walls occasionally open to broad, grassy openings with scattered valley oaks. Numerous steep, side drainages also meet along Cache Creek, including Trout Creek and Rocky Creek. The remainder of the WSA is dominated by rolling, chaparral covered hills. Elevations range from 800 feet along Cache Creek to 3,196 feet along the ridge summits.

Approximately 25 percent of the public land within the WSA has been designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)/Research Natural Area (RNA).

The WSA lies entirely within the Clear Lake National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area, established June 7, 1962, calling for cooperative management by the BLM and California Department of Fish & Game.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Clear Lake Resource Area Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which was final in October 1986. An additional 1526-acre tract adjacent to the WSA along Cache Creek and in Wilson Valley, acquired after the wilderness inventory, was included in the study process under authority granted in Section 202 of FLPMA. There were three alternatives analyzed in the EIS: 1) all wilderness; 2) partial wilderness which would have designated 91 percent of the WSA as wilderness; and, 3) no wilderness, which is the proposed action.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RATIONALE

	0	acres recommended for wilderness
	33,561	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA, as well as the acquired acreage. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. While the all-wilderness alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative, any development that may occur within the WSA boundary will be implemented in a manner to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The decision attempted to balance the area's values with the needs for intensive management not permitted if designated wilderness. In the end, the final nonsuitable recommendation is based on the following: 1) the existing mining claims could impair the area's wilderness values; 2) wildlife species of special concern in the area require aggressive wildlife management, and, 3) BLM can manage the special resources of the area with other designations.

Approximately one-third of the WSA is covered with over 550 mining claims. Some of these claims could be found to possess valid existing rights. Claims with valid existing rights can be developed consistent with wilderness designation and could impair wilderness values. Development of these claims could significantly alter BLM's capability to manage the area as wilderness.

The area supports a herd of 500 Tule elk, a California sensitive species. Management of these elk by the State Department of Fish & Game requires aggressive actions such as habitat manipulation, conversion of areas dominated by thistle to grasses, and development of a dependable water system. Wilderness designation would prohibit completion of these projects which cannot be done without mechanized/motorized equipment.

To protect the unique values of Cache Creek, nearly 8,200 acres of the WSA have been designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. This will both protect resources and allow continued management of the area's unique values.

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

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	33,561
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
<u>Inholdings</u>		
State		183
Private		<u>1,275</u>
Total		35,019
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
<u>Inholdings</u>		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	33,561
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		33,561

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA generally retains its natural condition. However, since the completion of the Intensive Inventory, approximately 2.5 miles of firebreaks 30-foot wide were constructed to control two large wildfires in 1981. While visible, these firebreaks are slowly regaining their natural state. In the Perkins Creek area, grazing lease developments have led to vegetative conversion and development of roads, gates, cattle guards, water development and fences. These grazing operations would be allowed under wilderness designation. Approximately two percent of the WSA's naturalness has been adversely impacted.

2. Solitude: The WSA possesses outstanding opportunities for solitude. The size, configuration, mixed vegetation patterns, and broken topography all promote a sense of solitude and seclusion in the WSA.

This WSA is periodically overflowed 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 The Cache Creek WSA offers excellent opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The WSA size and topographic features (creeks, canyons, ridge tops) allow the hiker ample opportunity to enjoy the area's near-natural conditions. Non-motorized white-water rafting is available and the scenery of this low elevation country is unmatched in northern California.
4. Special Features The WSA offers five important special features. These are: 1) the large winter concentration of Bald Eagles (50-70 eagles, an endangered species) along Cache Creek; 2) opportunities for white-water rafting found within the river corridor; 3) the Cache Creek Tule elk herd (a California sensitive species) of some 500 animals, is second only to the Owens Valley herd in numbers; 4) recent inventories in the Wilson Valley area indicate extensive use by early Americans. These sites are unique in that they are among the only undisturbed cultural sites in northern California; and, 5) the large block of undisturbed vegetation found within the Northern California Chaparral Research Natural Area (RNA). There are no other stands of this size that are largely free of man's influence, thus providing an opportunity for research.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 33,561 acres of the California Chaparral/Chaparral ecosystem. Wilderness designation of this WSA would add an ecosystem not represented in California. While there are ecosystems of similar composition, the variations of vegetation, soils and water sources are unique to this area.

TABLE 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BIM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chapparral/Chapparral	17	462,256	10	55,056
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chapparral/Chapparral	17	462,256	10	55,056

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

TABLE 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BIM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,833
Redding	14	1,236,503	11	344,633
Santa Rose/Petaluma	10	888,579	12	134,167
Vallejo/Fairfield/Napa	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
San Francisco/Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: There are no WSAs recommended as suitable within 50 air miles of this WSA. The Snow Mountain Wilderness Area, administered by the Mendocino National Forest (40 air miles to the north) is the nearest designated wilderness. Pt. Reyes National Seashore Wilderness administered by the National Park Service, lies 65 air miles to the southwest.

C. Manageability

The Rocky Creek-Cache Creek WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, the existence of numerous mining claims and geologic formations that extend into the WSA could preclude approximately 50 percent of the area to be managed as wilderness, if developed.

The potential for development of these claims is judged to be moderate (Energy and Mineral Resource Values section). The same formation is found here that supports Homestake Mining Company's McLaughlin Mine, two miles to the southeast of the WSA. It is anticipated that, if developed, approximately 400-600 acres would be used for open-pit mining, tailings and processing facilities. Road location and length could depend on the location of mining activities. Mining activities would be visible from a large portion of the WSA. Opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation would be diminished, resulting in a large portion of the WSA becoming unmanageable as wilderness.

The California Department of Fish & Game has proposed to irrigate up to 20 acres in the Wilson Valley for forage for Tule elk during drought years and to encourage the migration of the elk from private lands north of Highway 20 where damage to crops is increasing. The need for vehicle access and physical facilities (pump, caretaker housing, etc), would conflict with wilderness management.

Grazing operations in the Perkins Ridge/Creek area and other outside influences would not significantly detract from the Bureau's ability to manage the area as wilderness.

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 Resources

1. Summary of information known at the time of preliminary nonsuitability recommendations: The energy and minerals potential of the Rocky Creek-Cache Creek WSA is addressed in the Clear Lake Wilderness EIS (1987) and the Clear Lake MFP (1984). Due to the fact that the WSA is recommended nonsuitable, no Geology-Energy- Minerals (G-E-M) report was prepared. In lieu of a G-E-M report, a literature search was made to determine the areas mineral potential.

From various information sources, it was determined the WSA contains deposits of, or occurrences of, mercury, gold, asbestos, placer chromite, magnesite, and sand and gravel. Small quantities of mercury were removed prior to and during World War II, with no production since. Ten mining claims (all for mercury) have been patented within the WSA. The potential for mercury mineralization in the WSA is low.

The potential for gold, based on the geologic structure common to the WSA and Homestake Mining Company's McLaughlin Gold Mine, two miles to the southeast is moderate (In 1987, the McLaughlin Gold Mine produced 189,000 troy ounces of gold). The potential of all other minerals in the WSA is low.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Several comments were received during the wilderness inventory phase. These comments generally supported the Bureau's decision to include the area for further study and recommend all-wilderness.

During the study phase, a public hearing was held in Ukiah, California. During the public hearing and comment period, 20 written comments were received, and nine individuals testified at the hearing. Ninety-five percent of the comments supported all wilderness.

The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors endorsed the preferred alternative (no wilderness), and the Mendocino County Public Works requested more clarification on possible impacts to county roads if the area were added to the NWPS.