Wildlife

This area has a high abundance and diversity of wildlife species. Approximately 1200 elk, 1400 deer and 100 to 150 moose winter in this area. An additional 1000-1700 elk and 600 deer move through the area in migration to winter ranges.

In addition to the big game use, sage grouse and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse are found in the area. The sharp-tail population is one of the only huntable populations left in the state.

Numerous non-game bird species, including the bald and golden eagles, ferruginous and red-tail hawk and sage thrashers are found throughout the area at various times of the year.

Economics

See Part II, Chapter 3.

Wilderness Resources

Naturalness - Impacts on the apparent natural character of the WSA include vehicle ways, livestock fences,a small deer trap, intermittent vehicle tracks on the sand, and litter. About 32 miles of vehicle ways enter and cross the WSA. Most are no more than trails that are difficult to follow, lack definition and are obscured by encroaching vegetation. Off-road vehicle tracks on the dunes are temporary impressions in the sand that disappear quickly when the wind blows. The short segments of livestock fence that total 5 miles, the deer trap and litter are all insignificant, and are absorbed easily within this large area.

Influences on naturalness outside the WSA include views of St. Anthony and the sights and sounds of rural vehicle traffic and agricultural activities. These influences are most imposing near the WSA's southeastern and eastern border and from higher vantage points where topographic screening is minimal.

Outstanding Opportunities - Opportunities for solitude exist throughout most of this relatively large area. It measures about ten miles from east to west and five miles from north to south and has a fairly good configuration. Topographic screening is provided by the abrupt elevational changes and the many pockets and bowls in the dunes. Influences on solitude outside the WSA include sights and sounds of rural traffic, agricultural activities and views of St. Anthony. These influences are most noticeable near the WSA's southeastern border. However, views of the expansive sand dunes and Grand Teton Mountains tend to overshadow these influences. Throughout most of the WSA ample spots for seclusion are available.

Quality, diversity and challenge combine to make primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities outstanding. Hiking, horseback riding, camping, wildlife observation, photography, and cross-country skiing are among the possible activities. The quality of the activities is enhanced by the exceptional and unusual sand features, scenic views and interesting plant and animal communities. The lack of reliable water, extreme temperatures and the rugged terrain make all the activities challenging.

Supplemental Values - The WSA provides crucial wintering habitat for large mammals, including elk, moose and deer. The elk herd in particular is dependent on the western portion of the WSA. The herd migrates from as far away as Yellowstone National Park and Montana.

Two rare species of primrose are known to exist in the dunes: one has been listed as endangered and the other proposed. The barren sand also provides habitat for a species of tiger beetle that is found only in one other place in the world, the Bruneau Dunes near Mountain Home, Idaho.

The relative uniqueness of these non-coastal dunes provides uncommon scenic and geologic value. All of the lands within the WSA have been proposed as a National Natural Landmark to recognize these values.

Summary of Wilderness Quality

The Sand Mountain WSA is natural in appearance, offers outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and provides a diverse array of supplemental values. The only limiting factor is the minor influence from nearby human activity.

Multiple Use Benefits

None of the multiple resource values or uses that currently exist in the WSA require wilderness designation to continue. Other BLM management authority and actions could assure that they will.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Ecosystem Diversity - The Sand Mountain WSA is within the Great Basin Province - Desert ecosystem, as classified by the Bailey-Kuchler Ecosystems of the United States method. There are two designated wilderness areas totaling 34,545 acres that represent this ecosystem. Additionally, 179 potential areas, totaling 5,356,020 acres, are being considered or under study for designation, that could increase this representation.

Landform diversity varies considerably within the boundaries of the Desert ecosystem. The Sand Mountain WSA is the only sand dune area within the Desert ecosystem that is being considered for wilderness. However, other ecosystems in the western states contain sand dunes. One 33,450 acre area in Colorado, the Great Sand Dunes Wilderness, has been designated and is managed by the National Park Service. Four other BLM WSAs contain large dune complexes, and have been recommended preliminarily suitable for designation. They are the Sand Dunes WSA (16,280 acres) in Wyoming and the Imperial/Algodonis Sand Dunes WSA (20,778 acres) in California.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation Opportunities

BLM's wilderness study policy calls for an evaluation of how a WSA can contribute to solitude and primitive recreation opportunities within five hours driving time of metropolitan statistical areas (MSA). The two MSAs that are fairly close, but over 5 hours away from the Sand Mountain WSA, are Boise, Idaho and Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah. These MSAs currently have 16 designated wilderness areas, totaling 5,158,903 acres, available to them within five

hours driving time. There are an additional 294 areas with over 11.5 million acres, under consideration and study for wilderness within close proximity of the two MSAs. The Sand Mountain WSA would not contribute significantly to opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation for the two MSAs.

Geographic Distribution

In the region surrounding Idaho, the existing wilderness areas are concentrated in the Sierra Nevada Mountain range in California, the Cascade Mountain range in Oregon and Washington and in the Rocky Mountains of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado. There are few wilderness areas in Nevada, Utah, southeast Oregon, and southern Idaho.

The Sand Mountain WSA could help balance geographic distribution in the wilderness system by adding an area in southeastern Idaho.

Manageability

The long term management of the Sand Mountain WSA as wilderness would be potentially difficult. A considerable amount of boundary identification and motorized vehicle closure enforcement would be needed.

The WSA's northern and southeastern boundaries follow legal subdivisions, rather than any recognizable topographic feature or constructed road. Signing and other means of boundary identification would be necessary.

Closing this area to motorized recreationists would also present potential problems. The area has historically been used by off-road-vehicle enthusiasts since the early 1960's. These people have been very much opposed to closing the area to motorized use. Regular enforcement patrols would be necessary to ensure that vehicle use was eliminated.

An inholding of 640 acres of state land would need to be acquired to maintain the integrity of the area. The Idaho Department of Lands has requested that an exchange be made of the inholding in any areas that are designated wilderness.

Wilderness Quality Standards Summary

Standard 1 - Energy and Minerals Resource Values. There is a low to medium potential for the development of oil, natural gas and geothermal resources. Potential for the development of locatable minerals is zero. There is a high potential for sand deposits and low to medium potential for cinders, pumice and lava building stone.

Standard 2 - Impacts on Other Resources. After designation only claims for minerals with valid existing rights could be developed. The area would be closed to motorized vehicles. Recreational off-road vehicle use is moderately high and represents most of the current recreation use of the area. A portion of the area contains big game wintering habitat currently in poor condition. Needed mechanical treatment to revitalize decadent vegetation could not be done under wilderness management.

Standard 3 - Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values. Continued use by

motorized vehicles will adversely affect solitude and primitive recreation values. Proposed management of the WSA, other than wilderness, would prevent impairment of the natural values.

Standard 4 - Public Comment. A large number of public comments have been received concerning this WSA. The majority of the comments have strongly opposed any wilderness consideration of the area and have emphasized conflicts with off-road vehicle use, and pointed out reasons why the area does not qualify for wilderness. Other commentors have emphasized that the area possesses the required wilderness characteristics and should receive full consideration.

Standard 5 - Local Social and Economic Effects. Wilderness designation of the WSA would prohibit motorized use of the area, which would impact the local social and economic environment. A large amount of the local recreation use centers around the dunes and is related to recreational machines designed for over sand travel. Several local businesses, depend on the revenues they derive from selling, maintaining and modifying these specialized machines.

Standard 6 - Consistency with Other Plans. Wilderness designation of the WSA would conflict with both county and state recreation plans. Fremont County Commissioners have submitted to BLM for the record that they are opposed to wilderness for the WSA. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation had committed state off-road vehicle funds for the development of the sand dunes as an off-road vehicle park.

Conflicts with plans of other federal, state or local agencies or Indian tribes have not been identified.

Snake River Islands

The Snake River Islands WSA is located in southeastern Idaho within a 25-mile segment of the South Fork between Swan Valley and Heise. The WSA contains 39 islands that total 770 acres of public land. The intensive wilderness inventory decision (1980) originally listed the islands as three separate WSAs. Because of the many similarities between the three island WSAs, they have been combined and are referred to as the Snake River Islands WSA. Table 3 shows the original WSAs and lists each island by number. These numbers can be referenced to the maps in Alternatives section.

TABLE 3
SNAKE RIVER ISLANDS WSA

NAME	NUMBER	ACREAGE	ISLAND NUMBERS	TOTAL ISLANDS
Table Rock Islands	34-2	380	16,18-26,28-32,34,35	17
Pine Creek Islands	34-3	155	36-47	12
Conant Valley Islands	34-4	235	48-57	10
TOTAL		770		39

Island Group #49 looking south across Conant Valley.

Island #50 with Conant Valley in the background.

Island #18 which is located east of the rest stop on U.S. Highway 26.

Lands

All of the 39 islands totaling 770 acres are BLM-administered public lands. Ownership of the surrounding river banks is U. S. Forest Service, private and state. Twenty five of the 39 islands have been withdrawn by the Bureau of Reclamation for power site and reclamation projects.

Energy and Minerals

Most of the islands have been leased for oil and gas and none for geothermal resources and no claims on locatable minerals have been filed. The WSA has a low to medium potential for the development of geothermal resources and a medium potential for oil and gas. The chance of locating economical placer gold deposits is rated low, while the development potential for sand and gravel is medium to high. Further information can be found in the Geology, Energy and Minerals Report which is on file in the Idaho Falls District Office.

Livestock Grazing Management

None of the 39 islands is authorized for grazing as part of an allotment. Eight permittees have allotments on the riverbanks from islands 16 to 57. When the level of the Snake River is low enough, cattle and sometimes horses are able to cross the narrower channels to graze in trespass on islands closer to shore. Evidence of trespass grazing has been found on islands 25, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35 (Table Rock island group) and 47 (Pine Creek group). The only major impact on the islands is from cattle grazing.

Wildlife

The South Fork of the Snake is a unique ecosystem that supports a high diversity of wildlife. This area provides critical wintering and nesting bald eagle habitat, crucial big game winter range for elk, deer and moose and the largest remaining native cutthroat fisheries left in the state of Idaho.

Forest grouse, along with over 80 species of non-game birds, are also found on the river. One of the most important values the islands have for wildlife is goose nesting sites. Geese prefer the islands and openings in the dense vegetation because of the protection provided against predation.

Recreation

The recreation use of the islands is related to boating on the South Fork of the Snake. The river is known for its high quality cutthroat trout fishing, and fishing from and around the islands attracts most of the recreation use. Other activities include camping, picnicking, sightseeing, photography, and nature study. There is a diverse representation of wildlife on the islands and spectacular scenery throughout the river corridor that attracts recreationists.

Recreation use of the islands is relatively light. Most use occurs during the boating season, which is generally the warmer summer and fall months when fishing season is open. Some waterfowl and deer hunting takes place when the seasons are open.

Wilderness Resources

Naturalness - Impacts on the apparent natural character of the islands are livestock grazing, litter and fire rings left by recreationists and human activity and development nearby. Livestock grazing is the most significant impact and has affected islands 25, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35, and 47 (Refer to the maps at the end of this Appendix for the location of the islands by number). Grazing has reduced some thick island vegetation, creating open spaces more suitable for camping and spring waterfowl nesting. Litter and fire rings are found on the larger islands where camping is possible. Offsite influences appear the most dominant on islands 48-57, where highway 26 is nearest the river and traffic can be seen and clearly heard from the islands. The use of automobiles for stream bank rip-rap is of some significance, particularly on island 54 where over 30 junk cars line the river's bank. From island 16 to island 35 a gravel road parallels the river, but has little impact because it is sporadically used and is screened well by dense vegetation.

Outstanding Opportunities - Opportunities for solitude vary and are affected by the size and vegetative cover on a particular island and proximity to outside influences. On fifteen of the 39 islands a combination of vegetative screening and relatively large size contribute to opportunities for solitude. The remaining 24 islands can provide some opportunities to feel alone, but because of their small size and thinner vegetative screening, it would be difficult for a visitor to avoid contact with others or outside influences. The major outside influences include highway 26 and nearby developments, vehicle traffic on the gravel road between island 16 and island 35 and the presence of motorboats throughout the entire river segment.

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are numerous and of high quality. Fishing from and around the islands is the most popular activity and is directly related to the excellent cutthroat trout fishery in the South Fork. The river channels along the islands offer challenge for boaters to test their skills on swift flat water. Primitive camping is available on several of the larger islands where there are grassy openings in the thick vegetation. The abundance and diversity of wildlife on the islands offer good deer and waterfowl hunting and excellent chances to observe and photograph several wildlife species, particularly bald and golden eagles. All of these recreation values are enhanced by the spectacular scenery found along the river corridor.

Supplemental Values - The most important supplemental value of the islands is wildlife habitat. They provide sites for bald eagle nesting and roosting and hunting sites for other raptors. Elk depend on the islands for forage in the winter, while deer and moose use them year round. The islands are of great importance as nest sites for the Canada goose. Geese prefer island nesting because it is relatively free from predators.

Summary of Wilderness Quality

The most important wilderness qualities of the Snake River Islands WSA are its opportunities for primitive recreation and supplemental values. The major limiting factors are the influences from nearby human activity, motorboating, relatively low use capacity for the islands, and constantly changing boundaries due to river channeling. Islands 36-47 are located in the section of river least influenced by outside activities and are the most remote.

Multiple Resource Benefits

Wilderness designation would help protect existing multiple resource values and uses of the islands by requiring that all power site and reclamation project withdrawals be relinquished. Designation would not protect the values that may be affected by new activities that could occur near to the islands and within the river corridor. Lands adjacent to the islands are of mixed ownership and designation of the islands would not prevent changes in land use that are not compatible with wilderness. However, similar protection could be given with a recreational and scenic river designation under the 1978 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. As a National River, the entire corridor would be managed to protect the important scenic, recreational and wildlife values for which it would be designated.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Ecosystem Diversity - BLM's wilderness study policy calls for evaluating how each WSA will contribute to the ecosystem diversity of the wilderness system. The evaluation is normally based on information from the Bailey-Kuchler Ecosystems of the United States study. However, the Snake River Islands WSA is of such small scale, the Bailey-Kuchler system would not serve as a useful analysis to determine wilderness suitability.

The Snake River Islands are within an area evaluated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the highest ranked wildlife ecosystem in Idaho. The ecosystem contains the most extensive and highest quality cottonwood-riparian forest in the state. This ecosystem is very limited in Idaho, covering less than 0.2 percent of the state, and is not represented in the wilderness system. Potential representation exists only in the Snake River Islands WSA.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation Opportunities - BLM's wilderness study policy calls for an evaluation of how a WSA can contribute to solitude and primitive recreation opportunities within five hours driving time of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA). The two MSAs that are closest to the Snake River Islands WSA are Boise, Idaho and Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah. These MSAs currently have 16 designated wilderness areas totaling 5,158,903 acres available to them within five hours driving time. There are an additional 294 areas, with over 11.5 million acres, under consideration and study for wilderness within close proximity of the two MSAs.

The Snake River Islands WSA would not contribute significantly to opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation for the two MSAs. Their small size and limited carrying capacity would offer little to these major population centers.

Geographic Distribution - In the region surrounding Idaho, the existing wilderness areas are concentrated in the Sierra Nevada Mountain range in California, the Cascade Mountain range in Oregon and Washington, and in the Rocky Mountains of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado. There are few wilderness areas in Nevada, Utah, southeast Oregon, and southern Idaho.

The Snake River Islands WSA could help balance geographic distribution in the wilderness system by adding an area in southeastern Idaho.

Manageability

Long term management as a wilderness of the Snake River Islands WSA would be potentially difficult. The boundaries of the islands are not stable because of fluctuations in river flow. Low water releases from Palisades Reservoir can greatly drain channels and connect islands with adjacent land. High releases do not totally flood the islands, but the 100-year flood projections do predict total flooding. Over the course of time, the river's natural erosive action will cut new banks, form different channels and reconnect some islands with adjacent banks.

Off-site influences cannot be controlled because of the mixed land ownership. Changes in land use and development could adversely affect the wilderness values of an island or islands. Wilderness designation and management of the islands would not give BLM authority to control how nearby lands are used that are administered by other agencies or privately owned.

Wilderness Quality Standards Summary

Standard 1 - Energy and Minerals Resource Values. There is a low to medium potential for the development of geothermal resources and a medium potential for oil and gas. Potential for placer gold deposits is low and a medium to high rating is given for the development of sand and gravel deposits.

Standard 2 - Impacts on Other Resources. Designation could affect mining and mineral leasing, power site and reclamation withdrawals and grazing. Only mining claims and mineral leases with valid existing rights could be developed and would be regulated to minimize impacts on wilderness values. Power site and reclamation withdrawals would have to be relinquished by the Bureau of Reclamation and fences may be constructed or other livestock controls implemented to remove unauthorized grazing from the islands. However, livestock grazing provides open areas in the otherwise dense vegetation that are important for goose nesting. Geese prefer these open sites on the islands for protection against predation.

Standard 3 - Impacts of Nondesignation on Wilderness Values. Nondesignation could adversely affect natural values, solitude and primitive recreation because development, although unlikely, could occur. The islands are inaccessible and development is not anticipated, at least in the short term.

Standard 4 - Public Comment. Little public comment was received during the inventory. One commentor supported wilderness for the islands because of their high wildlife and wilderness values. No opposing comments were received.

Standard 5 - Local Social and Economic Effects. Local social and economic effects could result if the power site and reclamation project withdrawals were relinquished. However, since specific projects have not been approved that are tied with the withdrawals, the actual effects cannot be estimated. There are no other significant local social and economic effects from wilderness designation.

Standard 6 - Consistency with Other Plans. The river corridor is now managed through a memorandum of understanding between the following agencies.

Federal

U.S. Forest Service, Targhee National Forest
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Falls District

State

Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources

In the management agreement the above agencies agreed to coordinate future management decisions and to contact the other agencies if a management change is considered. Wilderness designation is not expected to greatly affect the agreement.

Conflicts with plans of other federal, state or local agencies or Indian tribes have not been identified.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Sand Mountain WSA

Alternative A

None of the Sand Mountain WSA would be recommended suitable for designation as wilderness. Wilderness values on 21,100 acres of public land would be affected because the surface would be open for use and development.

The WSA is listed as having low-moderate potential for oil and gas and geothermal resources. The entire area is leased for oil and gas, but is protected from any exploration or development activities that would impair the WSA's suitability for designation as wilderness. This protection would last until Congress decides whether or not to designate the area. As this alternative suggests, nondesignation would open the area to long-term oil and gas occupancy. Impacts such as access roads, drilling sites, pipelines, and storage areas would degrade the natural character of the area and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. The extent and distribution of the oil and gas activities and where the wilderness values would be affected are impossible to predict because the WSA is solidly blocked with leases. It is not known which ones would be explored or developed.

Nondesignation of the WSA would allow continued public use of motorized recreational vehicles in the area. Under this alternative, motorized vehicle use would not be regulated or restricted during the spring, summer and fall months. During this time, both visual and audible impacts from motorized recreational vehicles would diminish solitude and primitive recreation opportunities. The more lasting surface disturbances in vegetated areas would degrade the natural appearance of the WSA.

From December 1 through April 30 of each year, 15,800 acres of the WSA are closed to all motorized vehicles. This closure protects wintering elk herds and provides a setting for solitude and winter primitive recreation opportunities. These opportunities would not be affected by ORV use if the area is not designated.

Diversity in the NWPS would not be enhanced. The WSA represents an uncommon inland sand dunes complex, which is represented in only one other designated area of 133,450 acres in the wilderness system. However, there are four other BLM WSAs totaling 566,791 acres that contain sand dune complexes that have been recommended preliminarily suitable for designation as wilderness.

Managing the Sand Mountain WSA for other multiple uses other than wilderness would not have any significant impacts on energy and minerals, livestock grazing, recreation uses, or wildlife.

Alternative B

None of the Sand Mountain WSA would be recommended suitable for designation as wilderness. The impacts would be the same as Alternative A, except that ORV use is expected to increase substantially. The increase would be attributed to developing the sands as an ORV park, emphasizing extensive use. Increased ORV activity would decrease naturalness, particularly at access and concentrated use sites.

Alternative C

None of the Sand Mountain WSA would be recommended suitable for designation as wilderness. The impacts of this alternative would be the same as Alternative A, except that restrictions on ORV travel would protect vegetated lands in the WSA. Designated routes would be identified for motorized access to the barren sands where motorized use would remain open. ORV use is expected to increase but not to the level and extent described in Alternative B.

Alternative D

Under this Alternative, 6,560 acres of the Sand Mountain WSA would be recommended suitable for designation and 14,540 acres would not. Short and long term benefits to wilderness values of designating 6,560 acres would be the same as Alternative E. Impacts to the wilderness values by not designating 14,540 acres would be the same as Alternative C except that restrictions on ORV travel would protect vegetated lands and the naturalness of the area. Designated routes would be identified for motorized access to the barren sands where motorized uses would remain open.

All forms of mineral entry would be eliminated on 6,560 acres. The area has been identified as prospectively valuable for oil, gas and geothermal energy resources. The long-term opportunity to explore for and develop these resources would be lost.

Motorized recreation would be closed on 6,560 acres. About 600-700 visitor use days, associated with ORV riding, would not occur, and all potential opportunities would be lost. The area that would be closed is considered to be the most challenging part of the dunes, where only the well-equipped and skilled can ride. These high and remote dunes are the major attraction for ORV enthusiasts who come from other states, particularly Utah. Wilderness designation would make the area less attractive to people from out-of-state and local riders who have the necessary skills and specialized equipment. Displacement of motorized use to other areas of public land would not be as severe as in Alternative E, because the most heavily used eastern areas would remain open.

Long term management of the WSA would be potentially difficult under this partial wilderness alternative. Impacts and possible problems associated with wilderness management would be the same as Alternative E. Unlike Alternative E, wildlife habitat management would not be constrained under this partial wilderness alternative.

The effects on the local economy would be nearly the same as Alternative E. The Sand Hills Resort and local specialized equipment shops are generally in business to supply goods and services to ORV enthusiasts who are attracted to the more challenging dunes. These dunes are in the portion of the WSA that would be recommended for wilderness.

Alternative E

Including the Sand Mountain WSA in the NWPS would protect, preserve and enhance the wilderness values on 21,100 acres of public land. The WSA's natural appearance and wilderness character would remain unchanged. Opportunities for people seeking solitude or primitive recreation activities would be maintained and enhanced.

Long term benefits to the area's wilderness values would result through designation. Wilderness management would permit the natural ecological processes to continue and prevent degredation of geologic, scenic and current wildlife values.

The diversity of the NWPS would be enhanced through designation. One inland sand dune wilderness is currently represented in the NWPS. It is the Great Sand Dunes, totaling 33,540 acres, located in Colorado. Designation of the Sand Mountain WSA would increase the total area represented by this unique land form type and ecosystem.

Wilderness designation of the WSA would close 21,100 acres to all forms of mineral entry. The area has been identified as prospectively valuable for oil, gas and geothermal energy resources. The long-term opportunity to explore for and develop these resources would be lost.

Designation would eliminate all forms of motorized recreation use on 21,100 acres. About 2,500 visitor use days associated with ORV riding would not occur and all potential opportunities would be lost. Shifting of ORV recreation to other areas of public land would result and could occur in areas less suitable for motorized use. Primitive recreation activities would be protected, but use and interest is expected to be low. Supply for primitive recreation in the region presently exceeds demand.

Long term management of the WSA would be potentially difficult under this alternative. A considerable amount of boundary identification and motorized vehicle closure enforcement would be needed to eliminate impacts of motorized use on the WSA's wilderness values. The boundary for much of the WSA follows legal subdivisions and is not readily identifiable on the ground. The WSA is also accessible and can be traversed by machines designed for over-sand travel. Eliminating this historic use of the WSA would require an extensive enforcement program.

Wildlife habitat management would be constrained under wilderness management. Mechanical vegetation manipulation projects designed to improve crucial big game wintering habitat would not be allowed. Without habitat improvement, maximum wildlife forage cannot be produced, and would result in a downward trend in habitat condition. This would reduce the carrying capacity of the crucial winter range.

Income to local businesses, derived from ORV sales and services, would be lost. Estimates of this loss amount to $25,300 and 3 jobs. Individual motorbike and dune buggy shops and the Sand Hills Resort may have to close. These businesses are dependent on income from local and out-of-state recreationists.

Snake River Islands

Alternative A

Under Alternative A, none of the Snake River Islands WSA would be recommended suitable for designation as wilderness. Wilderness values on 770 acres of public land would be open for use and development, except mineral leasing activities would be regulated to prevent surface disturbing activities. These

limitations on mineral leasing would help protect the natural values of the islands. Other development activities that could affect wilderness values would not likely occur because of the islands' inaccessible nature.

Twenty-five of the 39 islands have been withdrawn for power sites or reclamation projects. If any of these withdrawals were developed for hydroelectric power and/or reservoirs for irrigation and flood control, the islands would likely be flooded. Wilderness values on the islands would be lost.

Ecosystem diversity in the NWPS would not be enhanced under this alternative. Even though the islands are small in comparison to other designated wilderness, they contain an ecosystem that is not currently represented in the NWPS.

No significant impacts would result to other environmental components if the WSA was not designated wilderness.

Alternative B

Under this alternative, none of the Snake River Islands WSA would be recommended suitable for designation as wilderness. Impacts would be the same as Alternative A.

Alternative C

Under this alternative, none of the Snake River Islands WSA would be recommended suitable for designation as wilderness. Impacts would be the same as Alternative A, except that added protection of the islands' character is afforded with greater restrictions on mining and mineral leasing.

Alternative D

Under this alternative, twelve of the Snake River Islands, totaling 155 acres of public land, would be recommended suitable for designation as wilderness. Impacts would be the same as Alternative E, only fewer acres and islands would be protected through wilderness management.

Long-term management of the WSA would be potentially difficult under this partial wilderness alternative. Impacts and possible problems associated with wilderness management would be the same as Alternative E.

No significant impacts would result to other environmental components if the WSA was designated wilderness.

Alternative E

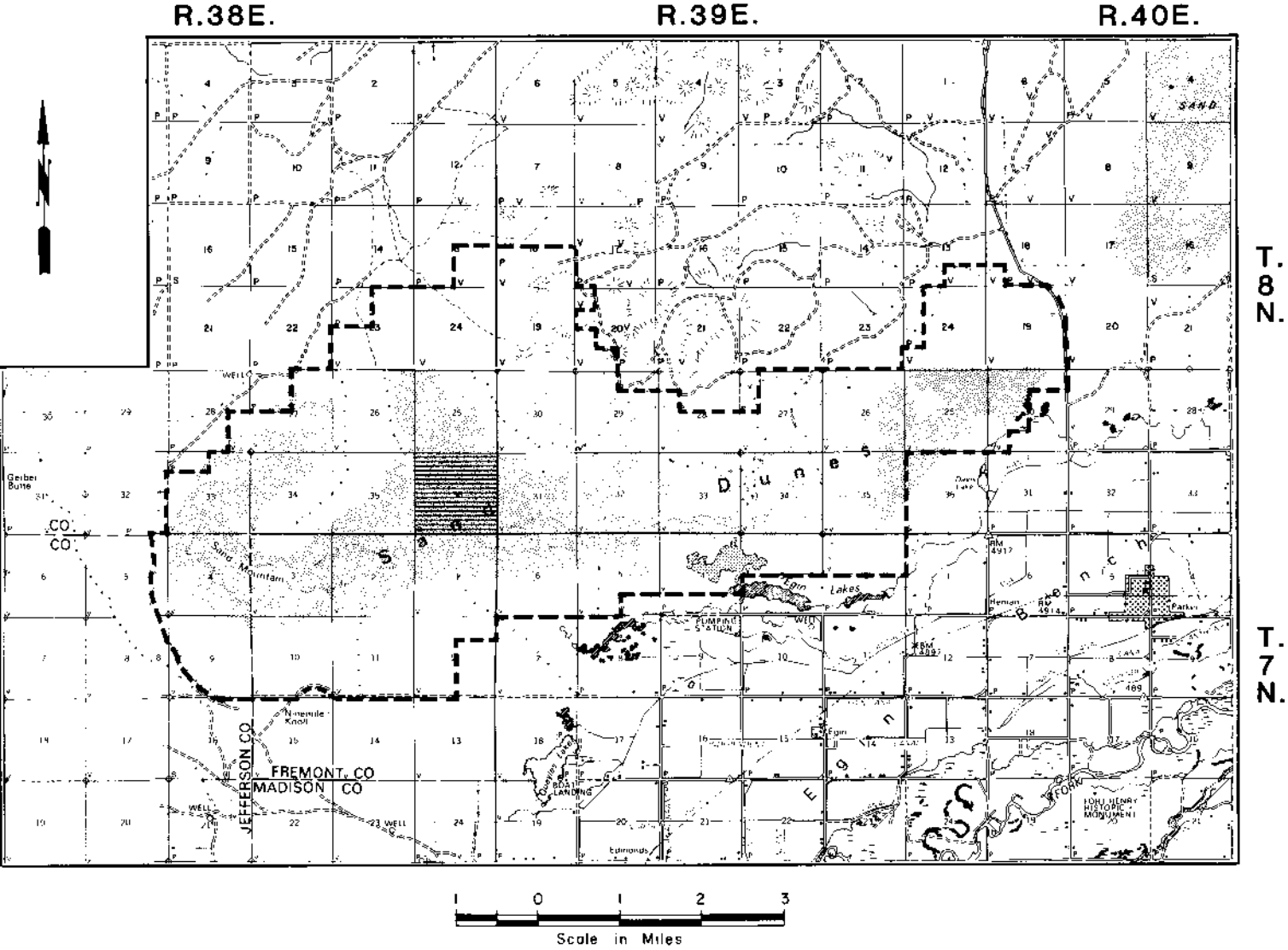
Including the Snake River Islands in the NWPS would protect, preserve and enhance the wilderness values on 39 islands totaling 770 acres of public land. Power site and reclamation withdrawals would be relinquished by the Bureau of Reclamation, removing the threat of permanent flooding.

The diversity in the NWPS would be enhanced through designation. Even though the islands are small in comparison to other designated wilderness, they contain an ecosystem that is not currently represented in the NWPS.

Long term management of the WSA would be a problem because of the instability of the islands' boundaries and the limited control BLM has on the impacts from off-site influences. The islands' boundaries change from fluctuations in the river flow and the erosion action of the water will cut new banks, form different channels and reconnect some islands with adjacent banks. Land use changes on nearby lands not managed by BLM cannot be controlled and could cause impacts sufficient to degrade the wilderness quality of the islands. Adverse impacts to the islands' natural character and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would result from major development activities.

No significant impacts would result to other environmental components if the WSA were designated wilderness.

SAND MOUNTAIN WSA 35-3



1 0 1 2 3

Scale in Miles

MAP 1

ALTERNATIVES A, B & C

- - - - WSA RECOMMENDED NONSUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS

——— WSA RECOMMENDED SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS

▤ STATE LANDS WITHIN WSA