

IMPORTANT PLANT AREA NOMINATION FORM – MONTANA

Nominated Site Name: Italian Peaks Important Plant Area (IPA)

General Location: The Italian Peaks area occurs at the southern end of the Bitterroot (or Beaverhead) Range at the very extreme southwest corner of Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (Fig. 1). The main divide ridge forms the Montana-Idaho border.

Site Coordinates: T16S R10W Sections: 32, 33  
T17S R10W Sections: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 17, 18  
T17S R11W Section 1

Maps: Two maps of the Italian Peaks IPA boundary are attached.

Photographs: Landscape photographs as well as photos of the following rare plants are included: *Agastache cusickii*, *Anelsonia eurycarpa*, *Caltha leptosepala* var. *sulfurea*, *Erigeron asperugineus*, *Erigeron leiomerus*, *Pedicularis contorta* var. *ctenophora*, *Physaria carinata*, *Potentilla jepsonii*, *Townsendia condensata*

Counties: Beaverhead County

Elevation: above treeline (9,400 ft)

Size of Area: approximately 2,000 acres

Property Ownership: U. S. Forest Service

Other designations for the site: Roadless Area

Table 1. Vascular plant species of concern in the Italian Peaks IPA

Species	MNHP global rank	MNHP state rank	FS Sensitive	Last Obs.	Population Size	Trend
<i>Agastache cusickii</i>	G3G4	S2S3	Yes	2015	50-500	Unknown
<i>Anelsonia eurycarpa</i>	None	None		2015	Unknown	Unknown
<i>Caltha leptosepala sulfurea</i>	None	None		2015	>1000	Unknown
<i>Erigeron asperugineus</i>	G4	S2	Yes	2015	100-1000	Unknown
<i>Erigeron leiomerus</i>	G4	S2		2015	Unknown	Unknown
<i>Pedicularis contorta ctenophora</i>	G5T3	S2S3		2015	Unknown	Unknown
<i>Physaria carinata</i>	G3G4	S1S2	Yes	2015	50-500	Unknown
<i>Potentilla jepsonii</i>	G5T4	S3	Yes	2015	100-1000	Unknown
<i>Townsendia condensata</i>	G4	S1S3		2015	50-500	Unknown

*Agastache cusickii* and *Anelsonia eurycarpa* occur in barren limestone talus. *Erigeron asperugineus*, *E. leiomerus*, *Physaria carinata*, *Potentilla jepsonii* and *Townsendia condensata* are found in shallow, stony calcareous soils on gentle to moderately steep slopes. *Caltha leptosepala* var. *sulfurea* forms near-monocultures in wet, calcareous soils along small streams and in seep areas at the base of talus slopes. *Pedicularis contorta* var. *ctenophora* occurs with

Idaho fescue and whitebark pine at timberline. Population size estimates are based on observation of surveyors rather than quantitative measurements.

Trend Information: no trend information for rare plants is available.

Threats: The only significant threat to the rare plants in the Italian Peaks is from motorized and perhaps non-motorized vehicle use. There is a trail that goes above treeline over Deadman Pass at ca. 9,750 ft in elevation. The trail goes through or near populations of *Erigeron asperugineus*, *E. leiomerus* and *Townsendia condensata*. Although the trail is closed to motor vehicles, trespass is common. There is currently little evidence of vehicle use off of the trail, but the country is very open and off-trail damage to all of the rare species is a very real possibility. Little enforcement of the roadless area is done due to the remote location.

Justification: The proposed Italian Peaks IPA area has an amazing assemblage of rare plants within a very small geographic area. Seven species of concern are present within the nominated area, as well as one species (*Anelsonia eurycarpa*) which has not been reported in the state before.

The boundary of the proposed Italian Peaks IPA is the Montana-Idaho border on the south side. On the north-west side it is the small peak that is the last sizeable area of calcareous parent material above treeline. The east boundary is the 9,400 ft contour (approximate treeline) in the Deadman drainage. The northern boundary is the 9,400 ft contour (or above the level of dense forest cover) and the northern-most extent of apparent calcareous habitat on the Nicholia-Deadman Ridge. The boundary was drawn to include all of the known rare plant occurrences in the headwaters of the main stem of Nicholia Creek and adjacent Deadman Creek. It is believed that most or all of the rare species occur on soils derived from calcareous parent material; the proposed boundaries include most of the high-elevation calcareous parent material in the area.

Plant Communities: Most of the study area is moderately to very steep slopes with stony or gravelly soils. Plant cover is sparse, probably varying between 10% and 30%. Species composition is highly variable, depending on slope and aspect and probably the composition of the soil. Dominant plant species include *Senecio canus*, *Erigeron compositus*, *Stenotus acaulis*, *Lupinus argenteus*, *Potentilla ovina*, and *Solidago multiradiata*. This diverse, sparse vegetation is described as Dry Slopes (Cooper et al. 1997).

Small areas at the base of steep, north-facing slopes have late snow cover and are dominated by *Salix reticulata* and *Carex haydenii*. Wet soil of seep areas at the base of moraine is dominated by *Caltha leptosepala* var. *sulfurea* with some *Salix reticulata* on the drier margins. Other species are uncommon. This is the *Salix reticulata/Caltha leptosepala* community type.

Vascular plants: We recorded 106 species of vascular plants in the study area (Appendix A). Nine of these species are rare in Montana; seven are on the Montana Natural Heritage Program's Species of Concern list; and four are on the U.S. Forest Service Sensitive Species list. Photographs of these rare species are provided in Appendix B.

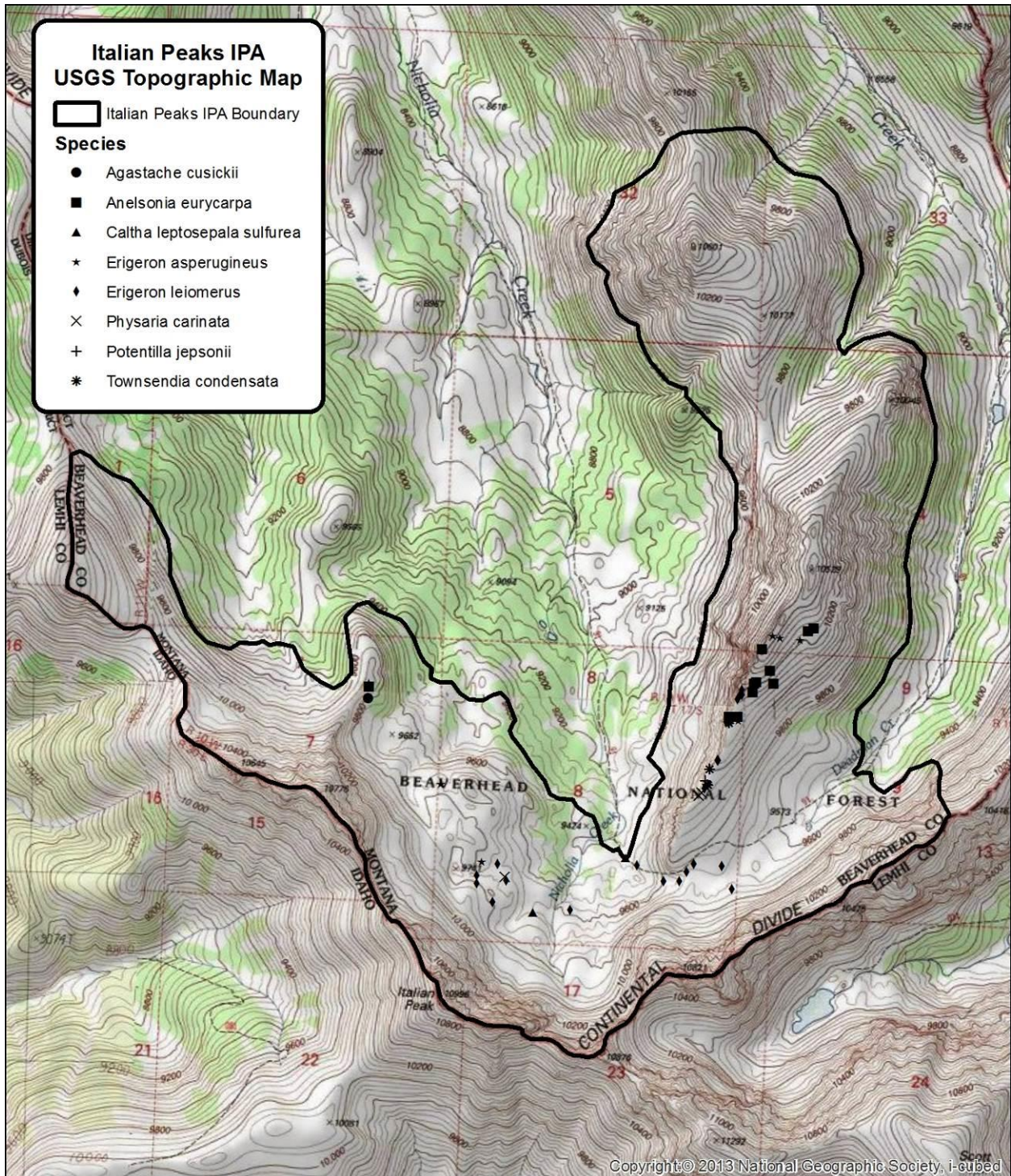
Literature cited:

Cooper, S. V., P. Lesica and D. Page-Dumroese. 1997. Plant community classification for alpine vegetation on the Beaverhead National Forest, Montana. USDA Forest Service General Technical Report INT-GTR-362, Ogden, UT.

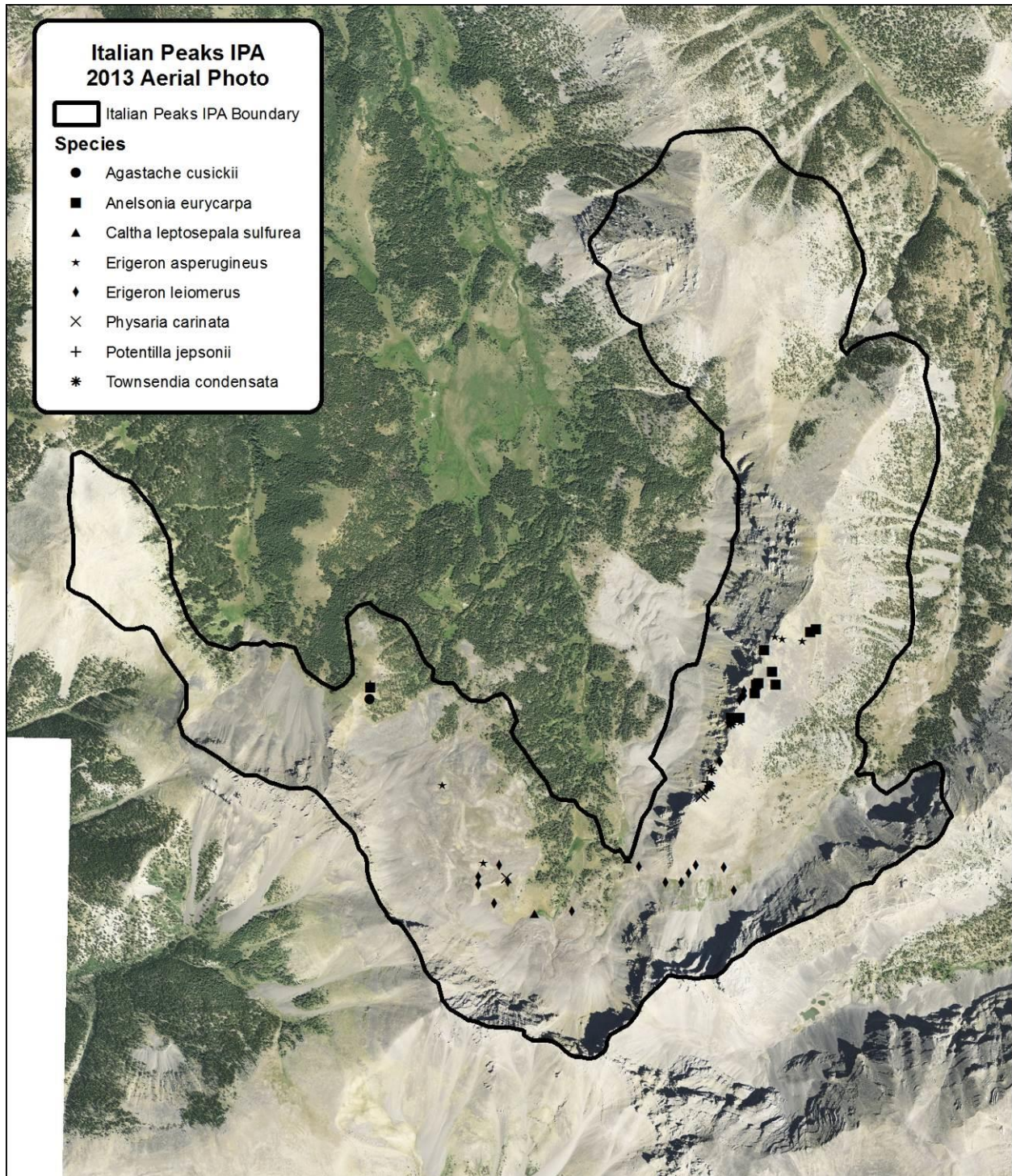
Form submitted by: Jessie Salix (Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest), Peter Lesica, Dave Hanna and Andrea Pipp (Montana Natural Heritage Program).

Date of Submission: January 2016

**Map 1. Italian Peaks IPA Boundary, USGS Topographic Map**



**Map 2.** Italian Peaks IPA Boundary, 2013 Aerial Photo



**Appendix A.** Vascular plants observed in the Italian Peaks study area July 6-7, 2015.

SPECIES	FAMILY
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Agastache cusickii</i>	Lamiaceae
<i>Agoseris glauca</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Agropyron scribneri</i>	Poaceae
<i>Agropyron trachycaulum</i>	Poaceae
<i>Androsace septentrionalis</i>	Primulaceae
<i>Anelsonia eurycarpa</i>	Brassicaceae
<i>Anemone drummondii</i>	Ranunculaceae
<i>Anemone multifida</i>	Ranunculaceae
<i>Anemone patens</i>	Ranunculaceae
<i>Angelica roseana</i>	Apiaceae
<i>Antennaria aromatica</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Antennaria rosea</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Antennaria umbrinella</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Arenaria capillaris</i>	Caryophyllaceae
<i>Arnica longifolia</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Artemisia dracunculus</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Artemisia michauxiana/ludoviciana</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Artemisia tridentata</i> var. <i>vaseyana</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Aster sibiricus</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Astragalus kentrophyta</i> var. <i>tegetarius</i>	Fabaceae
<i>Boechera lemmonii</i>	Brassicaceae
<i>Caltha leptosepala</i> var. <i>sulfurea</i>	Ranunculaceae
<i>Carex elynoides</i>	Cyperaceae
<i>Carex haydenii</i>	Cyperaceae
<i>Castilleja crista-galli</i>	Scrophulariaceae
<i>Castilleja pallescens</i>	Scrophulariaceae
<i>Castilleja pulchella</i>	Scrophulariaceae
<i>Cerastium arvense</i>	Caryophyllaceae
<i>Cerastium beeringianum</i>	Caryophyllaceae
<i>Cirsium scariosum</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Collomia debilis</i> var. <i>debilis</i>	Polemoniaceae
<i>Crepis nana</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Cymopterus nivalis</i>	Apiaceae
<i>Cystopteris fragilis</i>	Polypodiaceae
<i>Delphinium bicolor</i>	Ranunculaceae
<i>Delphinium glaucescens</i>	Ranunculaceae
<i>Dodecatheon pulchellum</i>	Primulaceae
<i>Draba cana</i>	Brassicaceae
<i>Draba lonchocarpa</i>	Brassicaceae

<i>Draba oligosperma</i>	Brassicaceae
<i>Ericameria suffruticosa</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Erigeron asperugineus</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Erigeron caespitosus</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Erigeron compositus</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Erigeron leiomerus</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Erigeron tweedyi</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Eriogonum ovalifolium</i>	Polygonaceae
<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>	Poaceae
<i>Frasera speciosa</i>	Gentianaceae
<i>Geum triflorum</i>	Rosaceae
<i>Heuchera parvifolia</i>	Saxifragaceae
<i>Hulsea algida</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Cupressaceae
<i>Kelseya uniflora</i>	Rosaceae
<i>Leucopoa kingii</i>	Poaceae
<i>Lewisia pygmaea</i>	Portulacaceae
<i>Linum lewisii</i>	Linaceae
<i>Lomatium cous</i>	Apiaceae
<i>Lupinus argenteus</i>	Fabaceae
<i>Lupinus sericeus</i>	Fabaceae
<i>Micranthes odontoloma</i>	Saxifragaceae
<i>Minuartia nuttallii</i>	Caryophyllaceae
<i>Minuartia obtusiloba</i>	Caryophyllaceae
<i>Oxytropis borealis</i>	Fabaceae
<i>Oxytropis sericea</i>	Fabaceae
<i>Parnassia sp.</i>	Saxifragaceae
<i>Pedicularis contorta</i> var. <i>ctenophora</i>	Orobanchaceae
<i>Penstemon aridus</i>	Plantaginaceae
<i>Penstemon attenuatus</i>	Plantaginaceae
<i>Penstemon montanus</i>	Plantaginaceae
<i>Penstemon procerus</i>	Plantaginaceae
<i>Petrophytum caespitosum</i>	Rosaceae
<i>Phacelia hastata</i>	Hydrophyllaceae
<i>Phacelia sericea</i>	Hydrophyllaceae
<i>Physaria carinata</i>	Brassicaceae
<i>Picea englemannii</i>	Pinaceae
<i>Pinus albicaulis</i>	Pinaceae
<i>Poa alpina</i>	Poaceae
<i>Poa interior</i>	Poaceae
<i>Poa secunda</i>	Poaceae
<i>Polemonium viscosum</i>	Polemoniaceae
<i>Polygonum bistortoides</i>	Polygonaceae

<i>Potentilla glaucophylla</i>	Rosaceae
<i>Potentilla jepsonii</i>	Rosaceae
<i>Potentilla ovina</i>	Rosaceae
<i>Primula parryi</i>	Primulaceae
<i>Ribes hendersonii</i>	Grossulariaceae
<i>Salix reticulata</i>	Salicaceae
<i>Sedum lanceolatum</i>	Crassulaceae
<i>Senecio canus</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Senecio cymbalaria</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Senecio fremontii</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Senecio streptanthifolius</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Silene parryi</i>	Caryophyllaceae
<i>Silene repens</i>	Caryophyllaceae
<i>Solidago multiradiata</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Stenotus acaulis</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Townsendia condensata</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Townsendia montana</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Townsendia parryi</i>	Asteraceae
<i>Trifolium haydenii</i>	Fabaceae
<i>Valeriana edulis</i>	Valerianaceae
<i>Valeriana sitchensis</i>	Valerianaceae
<i>Zigadenus elegans</i>	Liliaceae



Appendix B. Landscape and rare plant photographs.



View south along Deadman/Nicholia Creek divide.



Upper Nicholia Creek basin.



Upper Nicholia Creek basin



*Agastache cusickii*



*Anelsonia eurycarpa*



*Caltha leptosepala* var. *sulfurea*



*Pedicularis contorta* var *ctenophore*



*Erigeron asperugineus*



*Erigeron leiomerus*



*Physaria carinata*



*Potentilla jepsonii*