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RECONNAISSANCE OF
SILVER SPRING LAKE - EAST KOOTENAYS
Elk Forest Reserve
SILVER SPRING LAKE

Location:

Silver Spring Lake is situated in the East Kootenays in the Lizard Mountain Range of the Rocky Mountains, about two miles due east of the town of Elko. The Elk River makes a large bend at this point. The town of Elko is at the elbow of the bend while Silver Spring Lake is across the stream within the crook of the river. The Lake is at a considerably higher elevation than Elko and at one time was the town's reservoir. A small creek drains out the north end and drops, almost precipitously, down the mountain side to the river far below.

Silver Springs Lake - general view from south end looking north. Note scree slopes and lack of flat ground.
Access:

A few hundred yards south of Elko an old timber bridge spans the Elk River. The original road to Fernie was over this structure and along the east bank of the river. The road is now in poor repairs, sections of it close to Elko lie well above the river on a narrow ledge gouged out of the gravelly mountain side. A mile past the bridge a trail leads up the steep mountainside a half mile to Silver Spring Lake.

A close-up of a scree slope on west side of lake showing clarity of water and also difficulty of footing.
Description:

The lake is a small one lying in a 600-foot-wide "Y" shaped valley which it fills from side to side. On either side of the half-mile-long lake masses of boulders and broken rocks of all sizes which have accumulated at the foot of the mountain slopes form the lakeshore and continue their angle of repose to the lake bottom. Footing is difficult and treacherous along these slopes. Some scrub larch manages to find a precarious hold on the shifting slopes and rock outcrops.

The lake water is crystal clear and sweet. At one time Elko's water supply came from this lake and a small cement dam with overflow pipe is still to be seen at the north end of the lake.
Silver Spring Lake is really the first and largest of three lakes occupying a high local valley which commences as a hanging valley above Elk River and runs south several miles to the valley of the Wigwam River.

The three lakes were visited and evidence of use to some intent was noted at each of them.

The scenery is picturesque but barren with massive rock cliffs, scree slopes and sparse cover. The mountains are dry and sun scorched.

Close up of rock outcrop on east side of lake at north end. This is really the only flat ground available on the lake. Note burnt-over dry, sparsely-covered rock slopes in the background.
The lake lies within the Elk Forest Reserve and no alienations exist on it.

Recommendations:

There seems to be no adequate reason to reserve any portion of Silver Spring Lake for public use. Its location and surroundings combined with its position in the Elk Forest Reserve would seem to protect it sufficiently without specifically reserving any portion. While the lake offers some of the local people relaxation and wilderness enjoyment it is of very minor importance to the general public when other larger, more accessible and more beautiful lakes and vistas in the immediate, surrounding countryside are to be found.

References:

Maps: R.M. 15-95
Pre-emption 40, Fernie

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PARKS AND RECREATION DIVISION