

16-9 REYNOLDS CREEK CANYON

The April 1980 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

This unit was identified as a Wilderness Study Area on August 10, 1979, based on the results of the accelerated wilderness inventory conducted for the Agricultural Environmental Statement. Re-evaluation of this unit is necessary in order to assure consistency in the application of wilderness review criteria between the earlier and more recent decisions. Obvious inconsistencies currently exist, particularly with regard to the manner in which naturalness, external influences, configuration, and outstanding opportunities were assessed in the earlier inventory.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains 14,650 acres of BLM land in an irregular square shape, approximately six miles on a side. It is located approximately 16 miles southeast of Marsing. The dominant natural feature is the canyon of Reynolds Creek. The unit includes about 5½ miles of canyon, part of the upper drainage of Salmon Creek, and the dominant Wilson Peak ridge. Two dead-end roads extend into the body of this unit in the northwest. The state section 36 is not within the boundaries of the existing study area.

NATURALNESS:

In the original decision it was recognized that four developed springs, two fences, a mining pit and two systems of substantial ways exist in the unit, but these were judged to be substantially unnoticeable. Reconsideration of these imprints of man shows that the majority occur in an area of 4,000 acres in the northwest, the same portion of the unit as the dead-end roads and radio repeater facilities on Wilson Peak which are technically outside the unit. This concentration of imprints of man in a relatively small area within the unit is judged to be a substantial impact on naturalness. The remainder of the unit, 10,650 acres, is judged substantially natural in character.

SOLITUDE:

The unit was originally judged to contain sufficient topographic and vegetative screening to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. While the topography and vegetation associated with the canyon are moderately effective in providing secluded spots for the visitor, size and external influences are now judged to play a more significant role in determining opportunities for solitude. Virtually the entire unit outside the canyon is subject to some external influence, including unobstructed views of boundary roads in portions of the unit sloping away from the canyon and views of the radio repeater and/or some portion of the system of substantial ways west of the canyon from most other points outside the canyon. Considering the cumulative impact of moderately significant external influences, the inner canyon is judged to be the only secluded area within the unit. However, the small size of this portion, the narrow, confining corridor of travel which tends to concentrate visitors and the short length and predominately linear nature of the canyon render opportunities for solitude less than outstanding.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

Recreation opportunities associated with the canyon were originally judged outstanding. However, a reconsideration of the features that provide outstanding recreation shows that the short length of canyon; its linear nature except for the scenic, extreme lower section; and the effect of external influences outside the canyon limit the primitive and unconfined recreation experience possible within the unit. These opportunities are now considered significant but not outstanding.

SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:

The canyon, surrounding escarpments and associated ecosystems are of scenic, educational and scientific value.

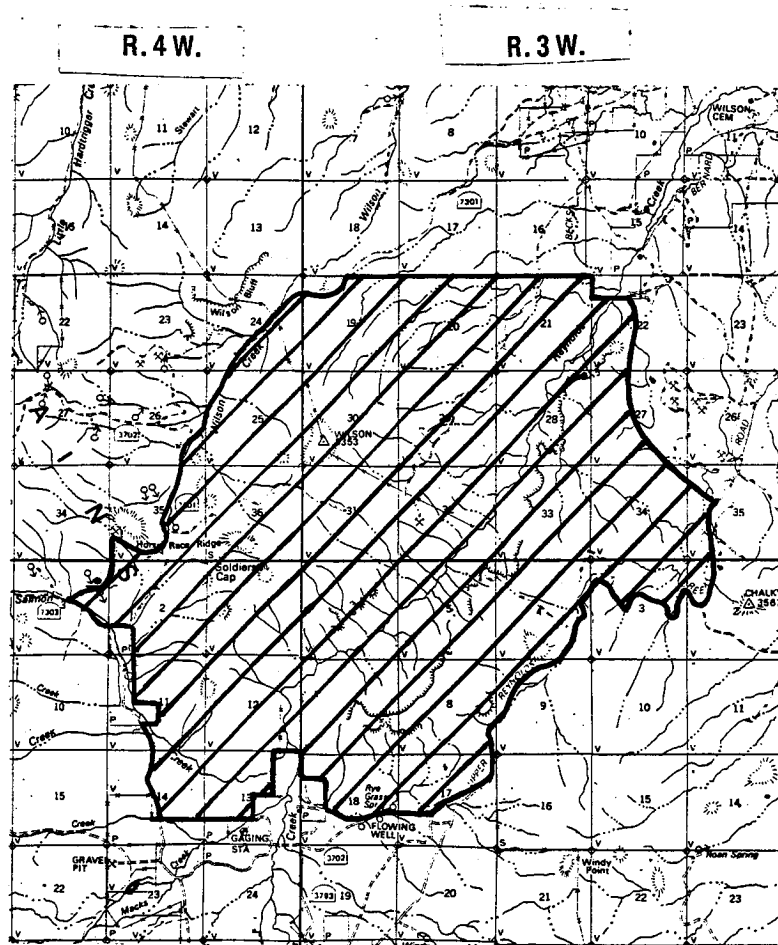
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PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments that supported the proposed decision to drop the unit gave the following specific reasons:

- The unit is not natural because imprints of man are substantially noticeable in the unit: imprints include developed springs, mining pits, roads, a corral, an irrigation ditch and a concrete diversion dam; other imprints in the area which lie outside the carefully manipulated boundary include additional concrete dams or weirs, a service road, a powerline, and a radio facility with several antennas and a concrete building on Wilson Peak.

REYNOLDS CREEK CANYON



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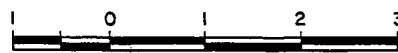
LEGEND



WILDERNESS STUDY AREA



AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS



Scale in Miles

- The unit lacks outstanding opportunities for solitude because of 1) minimal topographic and vegetative screening, 2) the presence of significant external influences in the form of persistent views of land development in the adjacent Snake River Valley, 3) noise and visual disturbance from the county road on the west and south boundary, and 4) noise and smell from a large feed lot to the north of the unit.
- The unit lacks outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation because of minimal vegetative and topographic screening.
- The area does not qualify in accordance with the criteria. Several of the comments did recognize that Reynolds Creek Canyon had many outstanding features both visual and geological and that it probably comes close to meeting the general concept of a wilderness area.

Comments opposed to the proposed decision to drop the unit gave the following specific reasons:

- The area is very natural; Wilson Peak towers are not noticeable.
- Opportunities for solitude in the canyon are outstanding.
- The canyon has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation; the close proximity of unit to urban centers increases opportunities.
- The area offers outstanding scenery and abundant flora varieties.

COMMENT EVALUATION:

Naturalness:

As stated in the proposed decision, the western portion of the unit has a cherry stem road, major bulldozer cuts, spring developments, ways, a fence, and a radio tower atop Wilson Peak. Because of the concentration of imprints in this portion of the unit the imprints are considered substantially noticeable.

The radio tower facility lies about one mile inside the unit at the highest elevation in the unit. Though contributing to the impairment of naturalness in the western portion of the unit, this facility appears as nothing more than several very inconspicuous hair lines on the horizon over Wilson Peak when observed from higher elevations within the rest of the unit.

There are two major bulldozer cuts from past mining in the west central portion of the unit. These bladings, because of their severity and location on steep east-facing slopes are visible from much of the high ground in the eastern half of the unit. The only place they are not readily observable is within the lower elevations of the canyon or on the eastern periphery of the unit which overlooks the major eastern boundary road. A substantial way is also highly visible in the same region for similar reasons. The eastern portion also has several ways which have impacts on naturalness because of the sloping terrain on which they are located.

The lower elevations of Reynold's Creek canyon are relatively free of imprints of man except for some heavy localized livestock terracing on steep hillsides, a small mineral exploration area, and the cement weirs in the upper reaches of the canyon. Only in the lower elevations of the canyon and in the rock outcrop areas of the southwest portion of the unit can the imprints of man be considered substantially unnoticeable solely because of the screening of higher elevation impacts by steep topographic relief.

Solitude:

The evaluation of solitude is based upon the ability of a unit to allow a visitor to escape the sights and sounds of others in the unit as well as significant external influences. The minimal vegetative screening in this unit combined with the topographic layout of the unit creates a significant corridor effect in the canyon as well as prohibits visitors an escape from external influences.

The Reynolds Creek canyon is generally wide, straight and open with little riparian vegetation. These characteristics permit a visitor to see a long way in the canyon. This lack of screening within the canyon in combination with the relatively short length of the canyon is insufficient to mitigate the corridor effect which the canyon creates.

Because of the topographic layout of the unit (sloping generally downhill to the Snake River plain to the north and sharply downhill to major boundary roads on the east, west and south side) a visitor is constantly aware of widespread agricultural development or

road development in close proximity to the unit. Agricultural development is generally not considered a significant external influence, however, the topographic layout of the unit combined with the lack of any vegetative screening prohibits a visitor from escaping external sights anywhere in the unit except in the lower elevations of the canyon, thus the external influences are judged to significantly diminish the opportunities for solitude.

Because of the corridor effect of the canyon, the lack of effective topographic and vegetative screening, and significant external influences, the opportunities for solitude are not considered outstanding.

Primitive Recreation:

Opportunities for primitive recreation are largely dependent upon a unit's size and the presence of exceptional or unusual natural features or recreation attractions. Exceptional natural features are those which provide exceptional scenery, diversity of land form and/or reasonable mobility for a visitor, and would result in a strong recreation attraction to an area for one or more types of activities.

Most of the natural area of this unit is comprised of the six mile long Reynolds Creek canyon. This canyon is comprised of steep, open slopes on the west and moderately steep rock escarpments on the east. The mouth of the canyon is formed by a short 1/4 mile long, narrow sheer-walled canyon. The head of the canyon has some interesting granitic rock outcrop areas. These interesting areas are scenic, but because of their limited size they cannot be considered exceptional or unusual natural features. Likewise, the remainder of the canyon is scenic, but not unusually so to be considered an exceptional or unusual recreation attraction.

Because of steep topography, the canyon and surrounding escarpments confine the visitor to a limited area of the unit. Escape from the canyon will cause a visitor to immediately encounter the presence of man either as localized significant scars on the land or as significant external influences. A climb out of the canyon to the west will result in seeing major bladings or badly eroded vehicle tracks as well as widespread external influences. A climb to the east will place the visitor on an escarpment which often overlooks a major road and other external influences. Because of the confining affects of topography and widespread external influences, a sense of being confined in a small isolated natural area among man's developments is significant.

Therefore, the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation cannot be considered outstanding because of restricted mobility and a sense of confinement caused by external influences and topography, combined with a lack of exceptional recreational attractions.

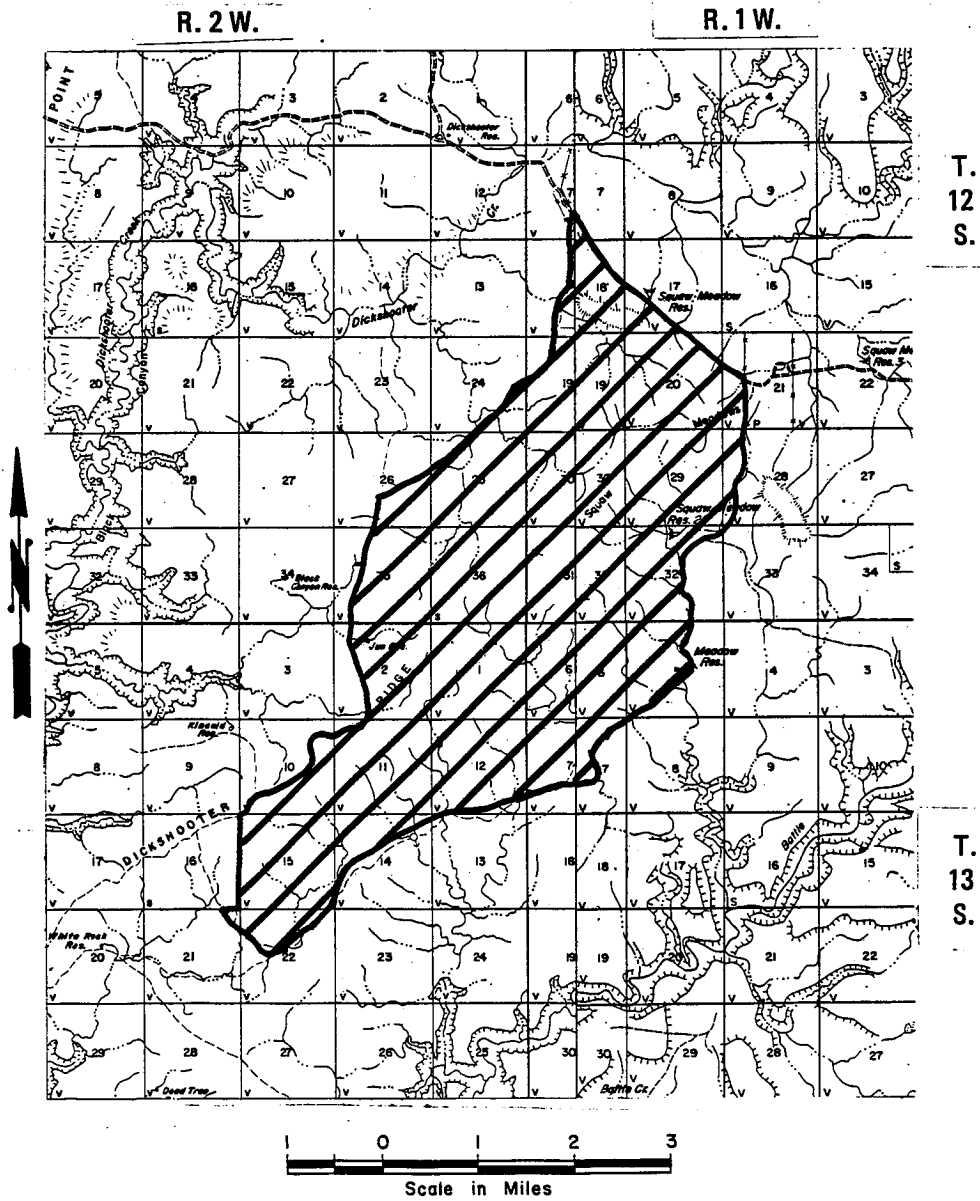
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DECISION:



No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. The unit is not identified as a wilderness study area due to a lack of a natural area of sufficient size, and to the lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation.

16-49c

SQUAW MEADOWS



LEGEND

-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
-  AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS

16-49c SQUAW MEADOWS

The April, 1980 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains 10,316 acres of BLM lands in an area eight miles long and four miles wide. It is located north of the Owyhee River about 33 miles west of Riddle. The unit lies on a flat to gently rolling table dominated by northern desert shrub species.

NATURALNESS:

Imprints of man are limited to a number of small stock ponds, mostly located about the periphery of the unit. The stock ponds are of limited localized impact and are sufficiently dispersed so as not to be substantially noticeable. The unit as a whole retains its natural character.

SOLITUDE:

The desert shrub vegetation of the unit offers minimal vegetative screening. The flat to gently rolling terrain offers poor topographic screening. The small size of the unit, combined with poor topographic and vegetative screening, does not afford outstanding opportunities for solitude.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

Recreational opportunities in the unit include camping, backpacking and hunting. The unit's uniform character and lack of exceptional or unusual natural features and recreational attractions render the recreation opportunities less than outstanding. There is no significant physical and mental challenge associated with the recreation opportunities.

SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:

The unit is reported to be bighorn sheep use area.

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PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments that specifically addressed unit 16-49c agreed with the proposed decision to drop the unit from further wilderness consideration because of a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation as well as a lack of naturalness.

COMMENT EVALUATION:

Naturalness:

As stated in the proposed decision, the unit is natural because the imprints of man (stock ponds) are so widely scattered and mostly peripheral that they are substantially unnoticeable in the unit as a whole.

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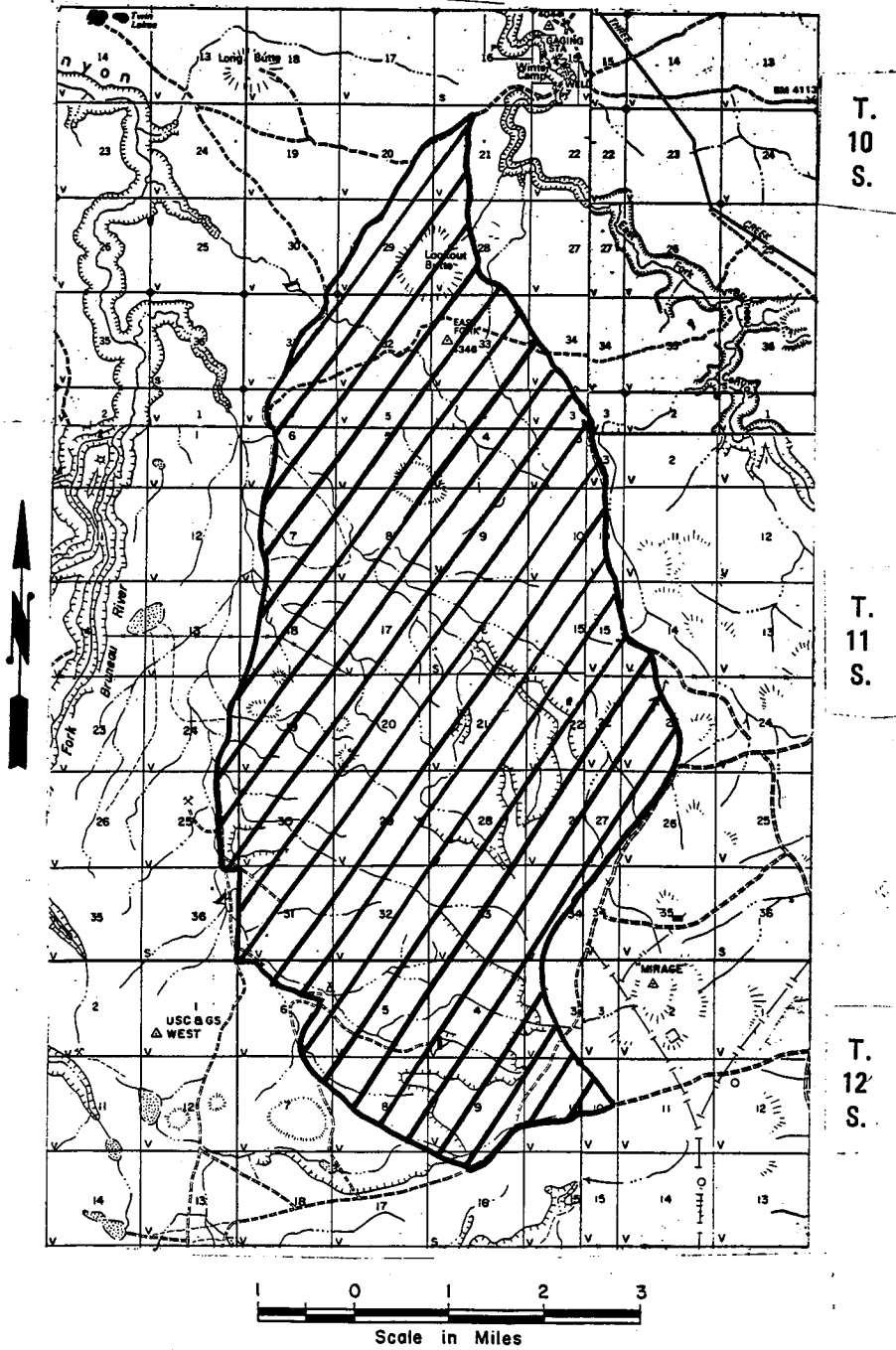
DECISION:

No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. The unit is not identified as a wilderness study area due to a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation.



17-1a

LOOKOUT BUTTE

R. 8 E.



LEGEND

-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
-  AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS

17-1a LOOKOUT BUTTE

The April, 1980 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains 20,077 acres of BLM lands with one state inholding. The unit is an ellipse in shape with axes five miles and ten miles in length, and is located southwest of the Clover-Three Creek Road, 30 miles southeast of Bruneau. The unit lies on a rolling plateau west of the East Fork Bruneau River. From a high plateau area in the southeast, the unit breaks north and west into lower rolling hills in the central and western area. The northern half is a relatively level plain dominated by Lookout Butte. Drainages are typically gently sloping, broad and shallow. Northern desert plant communities dominate.

NATURALNESS:

A substantial way crosses the unit in the north; three light ways intrude the unit a short distance in the southwest. Two bladed fence lines intersect in the west central portion, one extending east-west across the unit, the other extending north from the southern boundary to its intersection with the first fence line. These bladed lines are noticeable at variable distances due to the rolling terrain and poor vegetative screening. While they do provide evidence of man, they affect only narrow corridors in portions of the unit. The unit as a whole retains its natural character.

SOLITUDE:

Low desert shrubs and grasses dominant in the unit provide little vegetative screening. Poor to moderate topographic screening prevails in the area. While visitors may reasonably expect to find pockets of solitude due chiefly to the unit's size, opportunities are not considered outstanding due to lack of relief and minimal vegetative screening. The bladed fence lines crossing the unit further restrict the opportunities for solitude by limiting the potential for experiencing vast, unobstructed open spaces.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

While the unit offers recreation opportunities such as hiking, camping, horseback riding, hunting, wildlife viewing and photography, the lack of unusual or exceptional natural features and recreation attractions renders the opportunities for primitive recreation less than outstanding. Challenge associated with primitive recreation in the area is not considered outstanding.

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PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments that supported the proposed decision to drop the unit stated that the unit did not offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or for primitive recreation, and also that the unit was not natural. Comments opposed to dropping the unit stated that the BLM had improperly evaluated the opportunity for solitude by depending too heavily upon the influence of topographic and vegetative screening.

COMMENT EVALUATION:

Naturalness:

The conclusion remains that the unit is natural because the imprints of man are so widely scattered that they are not substantially noticeable in the unit as a whole. It is recognized that localized impacts from bladed fence lines are severe in some locations because of rolling terrain and minimal vegetative cover for screening soil disturbances.

Solitude:

The BLM does not rely solely upon topographic and vegetative screening to evaluate solitude. Decisions are made by evaluating the relationship of topographic and vegetative screening to the overall size of a unit.

It is generally recognized that the lack of topography and tall vegetation does limit the opportunity to achieve solitude (to avoid the sights and sounds of others in a unit as well as external influences) unless the area involved is relatively large. Low vegetation on flat to relatively flat terrain can provide excellent screening if given a sufficiently large enough area to allow other visitors or external influences (such as vehicle traffic on boundary roads) to blend or disappear into the landscape. Low vegetation on flat terrain does give a sense of remoteness or vastness to an area, adding to the solitude experience.

The determining factor as to whether a solitude experience can be considered outstanding is the opportunity of visitors to escape the sights and sounds of others in a unit of a given size as well as vehicle traffic along boundary roads or other external influences. If a unit is not large enough to allow a realistic amount of visitors to disperse and achieve the blending affect of flat, open, sagebrush areas, the opportunities for solitude cannot be considered outstanding. Unit 17-1a is not considered large enough to provide sufficient dispersion and landscape blending of a realistic amount of visitor use. In addition, the opportunity to experience vast, unobstructed open space is greatly diminished by bladed fence line systems cutting the unit into three parcels. Therefore, opportunities for solitude are not considered outstanding.

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DECISION:

No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. The unit is not identified as a wilderness study area due to a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation.