

Classifications

Classifications

Under the Classification and Multiple Use (C&MU) Act of 1964, three areas were classified for retention (28,586 acres). They were also segregated from appropriation under the agricultural land laws, from sales under Section 2455 of the Revised Statutes, and from the operation of the mining laws but not from mineral leasing.

Resource Objectives and Planned Actions

The resource objective of this action will be to protect from mineral entry those areas which contain significant resource values and BLM constructed improvements (see Appendix 2.11).

Following public input and subsequent discussions with BLM archeologists, it was determined that three highly significant and unique cultural and/or paleontologic sites were located in areas covered by C&MU classifications. These are the Crooked Creek Natural Area, Petroglyph Canyon and Weatherman's Draw. The Crooked Creek Natural Area is protected from certain activities under C&MU Classification W-15468, while Petroglyph Canyon and Weatherman's Draw are included in C&MU Classification M-7991. Lifting the C&MU classifications and allowing mineral exploration in these areas could irreparably damage or destroy the extremely valuable resources contained there. The C&MU classifications will be left intact in these three areas until such time as a BLM protective withdrawal can be put into effect.

Mystery Cave is not located within C&MU Classification M-7991. It was previously included in an area withdrawn for the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area. This withdrawal has since been revoked, but an opening order was not published. The area is, therefore, not open to mineral entry. In the future, should management decide to issue an opening order for this area, a formal BLM protective withdrawal will be sought for Mystery Cave.

The C&MU classification will be continued for the Britton Springs Cabin and Corrals until a protective withdrawal can be implemented.

The C&MU Classification will be revoked on the Cottonwood Springs and Corrals. This is a change from the Billings Final RMP/EIS as no further withdrawal will be applied for.

C&MU classifications will be continued on approximately 970 acres pending withdrawal applications. An additional 360 acres will have a protective withdrawal applied for. A total of 1,020 acres of protective withdrawal are being applied for. When the withdrawals are put into effect, the 970 acres of C&MU classifications will be revoked. The remaining 27,616 acres of C&MU classifications have been revoked.

Rationale

Areas containing special resource values or Federal improvements such as those stated above, require special protection from mineral entry. Areas with only nominal resource values can be adequately protected by the 43 CFR 3809 surface protection regulations.

Monitoring

When in the vicinity, Resource Area personnel will monitor withdrawn areas to determine compliance with the withdrawn status.

Implementation Priorities

Formal withdrawal petitions will be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw the following areas from operation of the land laws, and the mineral laws, but not the mineral leasing laws:

1. Britton Springs Cabin and Corrals
2. Crooked Creek Natural Area
3. Petroglyph Canyon
4. Weatherman's Draw

Support

Necessary support has already provided relevant data that was also needed for the classification review reports.

