

## Wilderness Study Area Information

### Background

HawkWatch project located within the Goshute Peak Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

Goshute Peak WSA encompasses 69,770 acres of public land.

To the north of Goshute Peak WSA is Bluebell WSA. A road separates these WSAs, with Bluebell running north of the road in the Toano Mountain Range and Goshute Peak running south of the road in the Goshute Mountain Range.

### History

When the Federal Land Management Policy Act (FLMPA), was passed in 1976, the BLM was then required, along with the Forest Service and other federal agencies, to manage for multiple use. One of those multiple uses was Wilderness. Under FLMPA, the BLM had to carry out a wilderness review of all public lands in their jurisdiction.

The wilderness review meant finding tracts of lands that satisfied the definition of wilderness as stated in the Wilderness Act of 1964. It states that:

“A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”

In the Elko District, 10 tracts of land totaling 272,422 acres, were recommended to congress in 1980 becoming Wilderness Study Areas.

Congress is the deciding factor on whether a WSA becomes a WILDERNESS or is released for multiple-use, not the BLM.

From 1980-1991, the BLM does “studies” of the 10 WSAs. These studies include public input, mineral reports, and an Environmental Impact Statement.

In the final report (completed in 1991), the Elko office makes specific recommendations on why all or some portions of these WSAs should or should not be kept as Wilderness. Congress can take our recommendations or not, but in the meantime, until Congress does make a decision, the BLM has to manage these lands “so as not to impair the suitability of such areas for preservation as wilderness...”

In other words the WSAs are to remain in the same condition that we recommended to congress in 1980.

The BLM manages WSAs under a document called the *Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review, H-8550-1*. This document has guidelines on what can and cannot be done within the WSAs.

## **Rules and Regs for WSAs** *an overview*

Grazing, mining and mineral uses can continue in the same manner and degree as was being conducted in 1976 at the time of passage of the Federal Land Management Policy Act (FLMPA, 1976). These are called “grandfathered” uses.

Any use or facility occurring at the passage of FLMPA, 1976, may continue in the same manner and degree as was established on that date. For example, any roads or structures found in 1976 were recorded in the inventory and are allowable for use.

Any new use, facility, or activity within a WSA must be temporary and not create surface disturbance. (Surface disturbance is any new disruption of the soil or vegetation requiring reclamation.) Is also called “non-impairing”.

- o Cross-country vehicle use off of boundary roads and existing ways is surface disturbing because the tracks created by the vehicle leave depressions or ruts, compact the soils, and trample or compress vegetation.
- o Certain activities recognized as acceptable within a WSA, such as recreational hiking, use of pack stock, or domestic livestock grazing, are allowable within a WSA although in the strictest sense, they cause surface disturbance.

Motor vehicles and mechanical transport are allowed only on designated routes (the ones that were identified in 1976 as roads or trails). On maps they are designated as “ways” or “cherrystem” routes.

Aircraft are allowed over the WSA and may land for emergency purposes and other situations if they do not create surface disturbance.

Removal of forest products is not permitted unless it is non-impairing. For example pine nut collecting for personal use is allowed, but not woodcutting or Christmas tree cutting.

Other allowable uses are: Cross-country skiing, hunting, trapping, fishing, boating (motorized and non-motorized), camping, rockhounding, hiking, recreational gold dredging and panning, ballooning, sailplaning, hang gliding, parachuting, rock climbing, caving, etc. Some of these activities have clauses to them, all must be non-impairing and in some instances, like climbing, you cannot leave permanent anchors behind. With camping and other outdoor activities, Leave No Trace ethics should be used.

Recommended group size maximum at the Goshute Watchable Wildlife Site is 10 people. Groups must follow all Leave No Trace ethics and provide their own water and supplies.

### **Leave No Trace Principles**

Plan Ahead and Prepare  
Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces  
Dispose of Waste Properly  
Leave What You Find  
Minimize Campfire Impacts  
Respect Wildlife  
Be Considerate of Other Visitors

### **HawkWatch Project (Goshute Watchable Wildlife Site)**

HawkWatch International Inc. and the BLM have a partnership together. HawkWatch provides valuable scientific data to the BLM and we in return provide some support to their project. Support being either monetary or in the form of man-hours and labor.

According to the Interim Management Policy for WSAs, the project is defined as non-impairing and temporary, and is educational or scientific in nature. Thus being an allowable use in a Wilderness Study Area. The BLM monitors the project to verify that no new disturbance is being created, all uses or structures are temporary, and Leave No Trace ethics are being used.

*For further information or more details, contact the Elko District Office, Tamara Hawthorne at (775) 753-0356.*