

# WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS REVIEW

Date of Submission: January 30, 2007

Proponent: Utah Wilderness Coalition (UWC) – (America's Red Rock Wilderness Proposal)

Name of Area to be Reviewed: **Vivas Cake Hill Area**

Date(s) of Field Office Review: February 7, 2007

BLM Field Office(s) Affected: Vernal Field Office

## EVALUATION

1. Was new information submitted by a member of the public for this area?

a. YES:   X   NO:           

2. If new information was submitted, describe the submission. For example, did the submission include a map that identifies the specific boundaries of the area(s) in question; a narrative that describes the wilderness characteristics of the area and documents how that information differs from the information gathered and reviewed in prior BLM inventories; photographic documentation; etc?

a. The proponent submitted a map identifying the specific boundaries of the UWC *Vivas Cake Hill Proposed Wilderness Unit*. This proposed wilderness unit is part of the Dinosaur region depicted in the "Citizen's Proposal for Wilderness in Utah" which is found on the UWC website. The map illustrates the wilderness proposals as listed in the bill, *America's Red Rock Wilderness Act*. This bill was first introduced in 1989. The *America's Red Rock Wilderness Act* bill was reintroduced into the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress as H.R.1919 in the U.S. House of Representatives, and S. 1170 in the U.S. Senate.

In 1989, UWC published the book *Wilderness at the Edge*, which provided information concerning the dinosaur region.

On February 7, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed UWC *Vivas Cake Hill Proposed Wilderness Unit* as proposed in the bill, *America's Red Rock Wilderness Act*; and, the published book *Wilderness at the Edge*. In addition, the interdisciplinary team reviewed recent changes to the area that could affect the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics.

This maintenance review does not include U.S. National Forest lands, U.S. National Park Service, State of Utah lands, or private lands. Only lands within the BLM Vernal Field Office planning boundaries were considered by the interdisciplinary team. The attached map shows the BLM Vernal Field Office's determination of which lands contain or do not contain wilderness characteristics for the review area.

3. As a result of interdisciplinary review of relevant information (which may include aerial photographs, state and county road information, road maintenance agreements, documentation from prior BLM inventories, field observations, maps, master title plats, evidence presented as new information by a proponent, etc.), do you conclude:

a. \_\_\_\_\_ The decision reached in previous BLM inventories that the area lacks wilderness is still valid.

(or)

b.   X   Some or all of the area has wilderness characteristics as shown on the attached map.

4. Describe your findings regarding specific wilderness characteristics and provide detailed rationale.

a. **WIA Area.**

(1). **Description:** No WIA Area is present.

b. **Externally Nominated Area.**

(1). **Description:** The Vivas Cake Hill Area is located about 22 miles east of Vernal, Utah, in Uintah County. The area is 0.5 miles west of the Utah-Colorado border. The area is 1,200 feet wide and two miles in length. The Dinosaur National Monument is adjacent to the area to the north and west. Private lands form the east boundary and the Echo Park Road is the south boundary of the area. The road is the primary access to the area.

No mineral material permits or oil and gas leases have been issued. No producing or plugged and abandoned wells exist in the area.

(2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** The area is contiguous to the southern fenced boundaries of Dinosaur National Monument that are being managed for their wilderness values (personal correspondence, Wayne Prokopetz, Chief of Research and Resource Management, Dinosaur National Monument). No openings have been made in the boundary fencing. No noticeable ATV routes are present. Visitors come to the area for camping, antler collecting, exploring, and hunting. The area has maintained an appearance of naturalness.

Vegetation consists of densely spaced juniper on rocky soils. Wyoming sage, rubber rabbit-brush, indian rice grass, needle and thread, and annual grasses such as cheat grass occupy the lower slopes. Weed infestations including white-top have been chemically treated by both back-pack and ATV boom. The average observer would not notice any change to naturalness due to the treatments.

Although the area is substantially less than 5,000 acres, the area is contiguous with monument lands that are being managed for their wilderness characteristics. Therefore, the area has been determined to contain wilderness characteristics.

(3). **Solitude, and Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Small isolated drainages to the north provides some places for solitude. The area does provide opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The area is contiguous with monument lands that are being managed for their wilderness characteristics.

- (4). **Supplemental Values:** Opportunities for hiking and non-motorized recreation are available in the area.
- (5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** None.
- b. As protocol for all VFO wilderness characteristic reviews, the Interdisciplinary Team determined appropriate set-back distances for pipelines, roads, and other R-O-Ws.
- c. The following table summarizes the Non-WSA lands in the review area that do or do not contain wilderness characteristics:

<b>VIVAS CAKE HILL AREA</b>			
<b>Type of Lands</b>	<b>Non WSA Lands with wilderness characteristics (acres)</b>	<b>Non WSA Lands without wilderness characteristics (acres)</b>	<b>Total Acres</b>
UWC, Externally Nominated	277	0	277
WIA, BLM Identified	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>277</b>

5. Document all information considered during the interdisciplinary team review (e.g. aerial photographs, state and county road information, road maintenance agreements, prior documentation from the BLM inventories, field observations, maps, master title plats, evidence presented as new information by a proponent, etc.)
- August 2006 NAIP (National Agricultural Imagery Program) aerial photos.
  - Master Title Plats.
  - State of Utah DOGM (Division of Oil, Gas and Mining) approved, producing and plugged and abandoned oil and gas wells (current up to 1-25-07).
  - R-O-W using LR 2000.
  - Field Observations.
  - GIS layers for various resources including: Range improvements, Recreation facilities, Wildlife, and Fire including both Rx and fuels projects.
  - USGS digital topographic maps both 1:24,000 and 1:100,000.
  - Land status of the BLM.
  - The BLM road layer including roads on 1:24,000 scale and supplemented by both GPS and aerial photography.
  - Uintah County Roads layer August 2006.
  - UWC wilderness proposal data layer.
6. List the members of the interdisciplinary team and resource specialties represented.

<i>Chuck Patterson</i>	<i>Recreation</i>
<i>Kim Bartel</i>	<i>Recreation/wilderness</i>
<i>Tim Faircloth</i>	<i>Wildlife</i>
<i>Naomi Hatch</i>	<i>Realty</i>
<i>Jerry Kenczka</i>	<i>AFM Minerals</i>
<i>Howard Cleavinger</i>	<i>Associate Field Manager</i>
<i>Kyle Smith</i>	<i>GIS</i>
<i>Steve Knox</i>	<i>USO Planning Specialist</i>
<i>Kelly Buckner</i>	<i>NEPA</i>
<i>Mark Stavropoulos</i>	<i>Range</i>
<i>Blaine Phillips</i>	<i>Archeology</i>

**7. Signature / Concurrence**

This review by a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team was conducted in February 2007. The purpose of the review was to identify for planning purposes those areas that are not Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) but do contain wilderness characteristics. A supplement to the draft Vernal Land Use Plan will, in Alternative E, analyze the impact from and to the identified wilderness characteristics. Until the Land Use Plan is completed, it should be noted that as part of a project-specific or site-specific analysis within this area, these findings will be used to assess impacts, if any, to wilderness characteristics within the project area.

I concur with the findings of the interdisciplinary team as described in this review.

Name: William Hoyer Date: 4/30/07  
Field Office Manager

This determination is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision-making process and does not constitute a decision that can be appealed.