

## 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: **Stuntz Draw 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 previously gathered and reviewed in the BLM inventories; photographic documentation; etc?

a. The proponent submitted a map identifying the specific boundaries of the UWC *Stuntz Draw Proposed Wilderness Unit* as proposed 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 on the Split Mountain Benches.

On February 7, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed UWC *Stuntz Draw 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 changes to the area since 2002 that could affect the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics.

This maintenance review did not include U.S. National Forest lands, 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, prior documentation from the BLM inventories, field observations, maps, master title plats, evidence presented as new information by a proponent, etc.), do you conclude:

a. \_\_\_\_\_ The decision previously reached in the 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 Stuntz Draw review area is located along the Utah-Colorado border in Uintah County about 25 miles east of Vernal, Utah. The boundaries of the area include the Echo Park Road to the north; private land and the Utah-Colorado border to the east; and, the Harpers Corner Road and private land to the south and west. The Dinosaur National Monument managed by the United States National Park Service (NPS) is adjacent to the review area to the east. Echo Park and Harpers Corner Roads provide motorized access to the area.

The northern 2/3 of the area slopes to the northeast at greater than 10 degrees. Several minor drainages dissect this slope. The Stuntz Draw is the primary drainage and is deeply entrenched. Topographic relief in this part of the area exceeds 1,300 feet.

Vegetation consists of dense, 10-15 foot tall pinion and juniper on rocky soils. Douglas fir pockets exist along both northern exposures and in small canyons along the face of Stuntz Draw. Shrubs and perennial grasses occupy the lower slopes. Sagebrush occupies the flat areas found in the southwestern part of the area.

There are no existing oil and gas leases or mineral materials permits within the area. No producing or plugged and abandoned wells are present.

(2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** The steep, rugged topography found in the northern 2/3 of the area has limited the number of human-made disturbances and maintained the appearance of naturalness. These disturbances are substantially unnoticeable due to being screened by the steep terrain and dense vegetation.

In the southern part of the review area, the sage brush flats were treated in 2006 with a Dixie Harrow to enhance Sage Grouse habitat. The treatment was not noticeable to a casual observer even during the project year. Some fencing and reservoirs are present in this area but do not modify the natural landscape. Two infrequently used ATV routes are occasionally used for the purposes of camping, antler collecting, exploring, and hunting big game. To date no openings have been observed in the monument and range allotment fences. Weeds including White-Top, have been chemically treated by both back-pack and ATV boom.

The area is contiguous with the Dinosaur National Monument to the east in Colorado. These lands are being managed for their wilderness values (personal correspondence, Wayne Prokopetz, Chief of Research and Resource Management, Dinosaur National Monument, NPS).

Even though the review area is less than 5,000 acres in size, the area has been determined to have wilderness characteristics and is contiguous with Federal lands being managed for their wilderness characteristics.

- (3). **Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The steep terrain and screening effect of vegetation will afford the visitor opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.
  - (4). **Supplemental Values:** Steep canyon walls provide scenic views. Petroglyphs can be found in the unit.
  - (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>STUNTZ DRAW 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 | 1,992  | 0   | 1,992              |
| WIA, BLM Identified       | 0  | 0   | 0                  |
| <b>TOTAL ACRES</b>        | <b>1,992</b>   | <b>0</b>  | <b>1,992</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 Stunz*  
Field Office Manager

Date: *6/7/07*

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.