

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: **Beach Draw Area**

Date(s) of Field Office Review: February 6, 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 *Beach 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 110th 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 6, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed UWC *Beach 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, 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, 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 is present.

b. **Externally Nominated Area:**

(1). **Description:** The area is located immediately south of Split Mountain. It is contiguous to the Dinosaur National Monument boundary in Uintah County. The Monument is being managed for its wilderness values (personal correspondence, Wayne Prokopetz, Chief of Research and Resource Management, Dinosaur National Monument). The proposal area is separated into three parcels: #1 is adjacent to the Green River and contiguous with the monument on its northern boundary, #2 is contiguous to the Monument on its east and north and bounded by the Monument road to the south, and #3 is only 9 acres in size, adjacent to the Monument road and surrounded by private property.

There are no existing oil and gas leases within the Beach Draw review area.

(2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** The area is characterized by red, fossilized sand dunes along the northeast and eastern boundaries and by gently rolling sandy flats sparsely covered in sagebrush, juniper, annual and perennial grasses. Fences exist along all boundaries of the Monument but do not modify the natural landscape. There are no regularly used ATV routes. Most access to the area is blocked by private and Monument lands. Motorized access to the area is from the Monument Road. The infrequent visitors then park and hike into the area.

Parcels #1 and #2 have retained the appearance of naturalness due to the infrequent use. There are 2, two-track trails in Parcel #2 which are overgrown and only identifiable when directly on the trail. Weed populations, including White-Top, have been chemically treated by both back-pack and ATV boom without diminishing the aspect of naturalness. Although, Parcels #1 and #2 are substantially less than 5,000 acres in size, the area is contiguous with lands in the Dinosaur National Monument that are administratively endorsed and managed for wilderness values. Parcels #1 and #2 have been determined to contain wilderness characteristics.

Parcel #3 lacks wilderness characteristics because of the extremely small size (9 acres) and being surrounded by private land.

- (3). **Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The landscape as described above for Parcels #1 and #2 allows the infrequent visitors to experience solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation as they hike through this area. In particular, the contiguous Monument lands enhance the experience.
- (4). **Supplemental Values:** Spectacular rocky and barren outcrops of the southern exposures of Split Mountain and the entrenched Green River provide the area with supplemental values. A variety of raptors and song birds live within the area. Petroglyphs can be found in the unit.
- (5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** The interdisciplinary team found that Parcel #3 of the Beach Draw review area does not contain wilderness characteristics due being surrounded by private lands and the parcel's extremely small size.
- c. As protocol for all VFO wilderness characteristic reviews, the Interdisciplinary Team determined appropriate set-back distances for pipelines, roads, and other R-O-Ws.
- d. The following table summarizes the Non-WSA lands in the review area that do or do not contain wilderness characteristics:

BEACH DRAW UNIT			
Type of Lands	Non WSA Lands with wilderness characteristics (acres)	Non WSA Lands without wilderness characteristics (acres)	Total Acres
UWC, Externally Nominated	898	9	907
WIA, BLM Identified			
TOTAL ACRES	898	9	907

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 Stunzer*
Field Office Manager

Date: *6/8/07*

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.