

# WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS REVIEW

Date of Submission: December 15, 2001

Proponent: Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA); Utah Wilderness Coalition (UWC)

Name of Area to be Reviewed: **Daniels Canyon 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  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. No new information has been submitted by a member of the public.

The Daniels Canyon review area was inventoried for and included in the *1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory (revised 2003)*.

The proponents submitted information for the *SUWA/UWC Moonshine Draw Proposed Wilderness Unit* to the BLM Vernal Field Office on December 15, 2001. The submitted information included more and additional detailed data than the BLM had considered concerning opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, supplemental wilderness values, natural character, and photos. The Daniels Canyon review area is encompassed in the SUWA/UWC submittal.

The BLM Vernal Field Office in November 2002 prepared *Evaluation of New Information Reports* that determined portions, including the Daniels Canyon review area, of the *SUWA/UWC Moonshine Draw Proposed Wilderness Unit* review area may contain wilderness characteristics.

On February 7, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed the 1999 *Daniels Canyon Wilderness Inventory Unit*; the September 2001 SUWA/UWC submittal; and, the BLM Vernal Field Office *Evaluation of New Information Report* of November 2002. 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 State of Utah lands or private lands. 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:** The Daniels Canyon review area is located in northeastern Uintah County about 25 air miles east of Vernal, Utah. The review area begins at the south fork of Cub Creek and rapidly rises along the steep back side of Blue Mountain to the top of Cliff Ridge. The northern boundary of the area is the Daniels Canyon WSA and existing roads form other boundaries.

The steep western portion of the area is covered by piñon and juniper woodlands. The ridge top in the eastern portion is covered with sagebrush and different varieties of grass.

The area is has 322 acres of existing oil and gas leases which is nearly 11% of the area which is considered to contain wilderness characteristics.

(2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** The steep, rugged topography of the area has limited the number of intrusions. The impact from a rock quarry and access road in Section 9, T5S, R25E, was cherry-stemmed out of the review area in the *1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory (revised 2003)*. This development is still cherry-stemmed. Other existing human-made disturbances are generally screened by vegetation or topographic relief from area visitors.

Hunting, camping, and grazing have been the main uses of the area. Additional OHV trails have been identified from 1996 to the present. Trail usage is primarily for hunting and non-designated camping areas. This usage is mainly adjacent to the boundary or outside of the review area.

Although the review area is less than 5,000 acres in size, it has been determined to contain wilderness characteristics. Also, it is determined that the review area is contiguous to the Daniels Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) which is being managed for wilderness characteristics. The appearance of naturalness found in the WSA is continuous into the review area.

(3). **Solitude, and Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The existing vegetation and steep, rugged topography allows the visitor to experience opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Non-motorized recreation includes hunting, hiking, and camping.

(4). **Supplemental Values:** Cultural resources such as Uinta Fremont rock art, a mud granary, and associated camps and lithic scatters have been found in the review area. Big game habitat and sensitive plant and animal species habitat are present.

(5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** All of the review area was determined to contain wilderness characteristics.

**b. Externally Nominated Area:**

(1). The information provided under Heading 4.a., is valid for the externally nominated area that encompasses the Daniels Canyon inventory area.

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:

<b>DANIELS CANYON 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	0	0	0
WIA, BLM Identified	3,045	0	3,045
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>3,045</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,045</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 Stinger*  
Field Office Manager

Date: *6/6/07*

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.