

## 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: **Diamond Mountain 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:  X

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. No new information has been submitted by a member of the public.

In 1980, the BLM issued a decision on Wilderness Study Areas based on the 1979 Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Reports. Much of the Diamond Mountain review area is contained within the *Boone Springs Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Report (UT-080-208)*. A recommendation was made that the area did not qualify for wilderness study. The recommendation was approved on March 20, 1980.

The Diamond Mountain review area was not reinventoried for inclusion in the *1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory (revised 2003)*.

The proponent submitted information on December 15, 2001, for the SUWA/UWC *Diamond Mountain Proposed Wilderness Unit*. The submitted information included more detailed data than the BLM considered during the *1979 Boone Springs Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Report (UT-080-208)* and the *Wild Mountain Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Report UT-080-104* concerning opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, supplemental wilderness values, natural character, and photos. The proponent also excluded impacts identified in the reports.

The Vernal Field Office in March 2003 prepared an *Evaluation of New Information Report* that determined wilderness characteristics may be present in the Diamond Mountain review area.

On February 7, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed the *1979 Boone Springs Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Report (UT-080-208)* and the *Wild Mountain Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Report UT-080-104*; the *SUWA/UWC Diamond Mountain Proposed Wilderness Unit*; and the *Vernal Field Office 2003 Evaluation of New Information Report*. 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, 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:** None.
  - b. **Externally Nominated Area:**
    - (1). **Description:** The Diamond Mountain review area is located in Uintah County about 26 air miles northeast of Vernal, Utah, on the south-facing slope of the Diamond Mountain Plateau. Several steep canyons and washes have eroded into the south-facing slope of the Diamond Mountain Plateau.

Riparian areas are present on the canyon and wash bottoms. The hillsides are covered with dense pinyon-juniper forests at higher elevations and sagebrush at lower elevations.

About 5,475 acres or 20% of the review area is covered by existing oil and gas leases.
    - (2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** Overall, the Diamond Mountain review area has retained an appearance of naturalness. Any existing human impacts are substantially unnoticeable within the area.

In the 1960s, areas of piñon-juniper trees were removed on about 700 acres by mechanical chaining. This occurred in Sections 3, 4, 9, 10, T3S, R25E. This area was not included in the previous inventory as having wilderness characteristics. Since that time, two wildfires burned the area in 1981 and 2002. The impact to the area is substantially unnoticeable to the casual visitor.

A small block of land administered by the BLM is located in Section 1, T3S, R25E. The land is substantially less than 5,000 acres in size. However, the block has retained its natural character. It is contiguous to the Dinosaur National Monument which is being managed for its wilderness values (personal correspondence, Wayne Prokopetz, Chief of Research and Resource Management, Dinosaur National Monument).

A block of land administered by the BLM is located in Section 25, T2S, R25E. The land is substantially less than 5,000 acres in size. However, the block has retained its natural character. It is contiguous to the Wild Mountain WIA that has been determined to contain wilderness characteristics.

Overall, the area contains an appearance of naturalness.

- (3). **Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Visitors are afforded the opportunity for solitude because the rugged, eroded terrain and vegetation provides screening for a sense of isolation. Primitive and unconfined recreational activities such as hiking, camping, horseback riding, and hunting are available to visitors.
  - (4). **Supplemental Values:** The area contains ecological and geological features of value. Habitat for several types of raptors and sensitive species exists in the review area.
  - (5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** The small amount of lands identified without wilderness characteristics is due to set-back distances from Rights-Of-Way surface disturbance.
- 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>DIAMOND MOUNTAIN AREA</b>			
Type of Lands	Non WSA Lands With Wilderness Characteristics (acres)	Non WSA Lands Without Wilderness Characteristics (acres)	Total Acres
UWC, Externally Nominated	27,238	25	27,263
WIA, BLM Identified			
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>27,238</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27,263</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 Humes Date: 3/29/07  
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.