

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: **Cold Spring 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: 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. No new information has been submitted by a member of the public.

In 1979, the BLM initially inventoried the Cold Spring Mountain review area.

The *Cold Spring Mountain Wilderness Inventory Unit* was inventoried for wilderness characteristics and included in the *1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory (revised 2003)*.

The proponents submitted information for the *SUWA/UWC Cold Spring Mountain 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 Cold Spring Mountain review area is encompassed in the SUWA/UWC submittal.

The BLM Vernal Field Office in November 2002 prepared an *Evaluation of New Information Report* that determined the Cold Spring Mountain review area of the may contain wilderness characteristics and the decisions reached in previous inventories of the BLM remain valid.

On February 7, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed the 1999 *Cold Spring Mountain 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 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:** The Cold Spring Mountain review area is included in the *1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory (revised 2003)*. It was determined that wilderness characteristics are present in portions of the area. The proponent's proposal encompasses the WIA area as well as the southwestern slopes of the O-Wi-Yu-Kuts Mountains. The review of the area is provided under Heading 4.b., Externally Nominated Area.

A minor amount of the review area, nine acres, is covered by existing oil and gas leases.

b. **Externally Nominated Area.**

- (1). **Description:** The Cold Spring Mountain Area is located in Daggett County along the Utah-Colorado border 40 air miles northeast of Vernal, Utah. The boundaries of the area are the Browns Park Road to the south; Jesse Ewing Canyon to the west; the Clay Basin Creek Road to the north; the West Cold Spring WSA and State of Utah and private lands to the east.

Nearly 2,000 feet of topographic relief is present in the review area. The terrain is rugged and the low-lying slopes are moderately to highly dissected.

- (2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** Except for the northern end of the area, Jesse Ewing Canyon, and along George Draw in the south-central part of the area, the appearance of naturalness has been retained. While there are human-made disturbances in the remaining area, the dense piñon-juniper woodlands and the steep, rugged terrain conceal and make the intrusions substantially unnoticeable.

That portion of the area between George Draw and the Utah-Colorado border was determined to contain naturalness. Although this portion is less than 5,000 acres in size, it is contiguous with the West Cold Spring WSA that is being managed for wilderness. The portion does contain wilderness characteristics.

Naturalness has been impacted on the northern end of the area due to human-made disturbances. A combination of vehicle ways and surface disturbances associated with natural gas pipelines, a fiber optic line, access to developed springs (chokecherry, fighting, and cottonwood), hunting, non-designated camping areas, OHV usage, and State of Utah and private land holdings have impacted naturalness.

The boundary in Jesse Ewing Canyon has been adjusted to account for the width of the construction Rights-Of-Way in the canyon for the road and existing pipelines.

In the south-central portion of the area along George Draw, vehicle ways and fences associated with ranching are substantially noticeable and have impacted naturalness of the area.

Additional changes not identified or occurring since the 2002 inventory include:

- A 2,000 acre Lop-and-Scatter fuels reduction project was completed in 2006 in township of T2N, R25E. From five to 20 stems per acre were cut. The number of junipers cut and the scattering of the resulting slash was found to not diminish the naturalness of the area to a casual observer.
- The Radosevich airstrip which forms the southeast boundary in Sections 21 and 28, T2N, R25E, is still being used.
- The interdisciplinary team on February 7, 2007, concurred with the previous assessment of wilderness characteristics during the BLM's 1999 inventory.

- (3). **Solitude, and Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The rugged landforms, deep canyons, and dense vegetation in the area provide a setting where a visitor can find isolation and solitude from others and the outside world.

The review area offers opportunities to participate in a variety of primitive and unconfined recreational activities, including hiking, backpacking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, and sightseeing. Scenic views are present throughout the area.

- (4). **Supplemental Values:** The review area possesses a variety of supplemental values, including wildlife, sensitive species habitat, and cultural resources.
- (5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** The interdisciplinary team on February 7, 2007, determined that the following areas did not contain wilderness characteristics. Information was provided in Heading 4.b.(2)., Appearance of Naturalness:

- The northern end of the area in Sections 20, 21, 27-31, 33, 34, T3N, R25E; and, Sections 5 and 6, T2N, R25E. A combination of vehicle ways and surface disturbances associated with natural gas pipelines, a fiber optic line, access to the chokecherry, fighting, and cottonwood developed springs, hunting, non-designated camping areas, OHV usage, and State of Utah and private land holdings have impacted naturalness.
- The boundary in Jesse Ewing Canyon has been adjusted to account for the width of the construction Rights-Of-Way in the canyon for the road and existing pipelines.

- In the south-central portion of the area along George Draw in Sections 21, 22, 27, 28, 34, T2N, R25E. A combination of vehicle ways and fences associated with ranching are substantially noticeable and have impacted naturalness of the 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:

COLD SPRING MOUNTAIN AREA			
Type of Lands	Non WSA Lands with wilderness characteristics (acres)	Non WSA Lands without wilderness characteristics (acres)	Total Acres
UWC, Externally Nominated	8,764	4,412	13,176
WIA, BLM Identified	0	0	0
TOTAL ACRES	8,764	4,412	13,176

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 Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (UDOGM) 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: 5/4/07

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.