

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: **Dead Horse Pass Area**

Date(s) of Field Office Review: February 1, 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 *Crouse Canyon Proposed Wilderness Unit*. This UWC proposed unit is also listed in the bill, *America's Red Rock Wilderness Act* as Dead Horse Pass. For the purpose of this review, the UWC *Crouse Canyon Proposed Wilderness Unit* as illustrated in the *UWC Proposal for Wilderness in Utah* will be called the Dead Horse Pass review area. The *America's Red Rock Wilderness Act* bill was first introduced in 1989. It recently 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 1979, the BLM Vernal Field Office completed the *Diamond Mountain Wilderness Inventory Situation Evaluation Report (UT-080-109)* and recommended the area did not qualify for further wilderness inventory. The recommendation was approved on February 21, 1979. The Dead Horse Pass review area is encompassed by this report.

In 1989, UWC published the book *Wilderness at the Edge*, which provided information on the review area.

On February 1, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed the *Diamond Mountain Wilderness Inventory Situation Evaluation Report (UT-080-109)*; the UWC *Crouse Canyon 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:** None.

b. **Externally Nominated Area:**

- (1). **Description:** The Dead Horse Pass review area is located in Daggett County about 30 air miles northeast of Vernal, Utah. A sandstone ridge trending southwest to northeast transects the review area. The irregularly shaped ridge appears dotted by pinion and juniper trees. Parcel #1 is located at the north end of the area. It is bounded on the east by the Crouse Canyon Road and Warren Draw Road to the west. The Taylor Flat Road is to the north. Parcel #1 is isolated from Parcel #2 and contains about 1,500 acres.

No existing oil and gas leases are present within the review area.

- (2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** A two-track leads into a range allotment in the south end of the unit. Several two-track ATV routes across private lands have been started in the last 5 years. These routes are currently being litigated with Uintah County and may be closed. At present, the routes do not detract noticeably from the naturalness of the area as a whole. Two of the southern routes were previously cherry-stemmed.

A prescribed fire burned across the middle of the unit in the fall of 2005. The fire appears natural in characteristic and does not detract from the naturalness.

A pipeline corridor runs north to south along Warren Draw at the west boundary of the review area. The corridor contains five separate, buried pipelines. The western edge of Parcel #2 has been adjusted to include the construction width R-O-W for this pipeline corridor.

The interdisciplinary team found that Parcel #2 has retained its appearance of naturalness and has been determined to contain wilderness characteristics. However, Parcel #1 is isolated and is substantially less than 5,000 acres in size. It has been determined that this parcel does not contain wilderness characteristics.

Those lands that were considered not to contain wilderness characteristics are described under Heading 4.b.(5), Areas without wilderness characteristics.

- (3). **Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Parcel #2 is remote, relatively large, topographically diverse, and in some areas of the parcel, isolated from the occasional traffic of the Crouse Canyon Road which forms the eastern boundary. This route may see an average of 10 vehicles a day from March through December. The road is graveled and county maintained. Equestrian riders use this area as well as big game hunters for elk, mountain lion, and deer.
 - (4). **Supplemental Values:** Hiking into the area would provide someone solitude while providing scenic views. Big horn sheep have recently been reintroduced to the area.
 - (5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** The interdisciplinary team found that Parcel #1 is isolated and is substantially less than 5,000 acres in size. It has been determined that this parcel does not contain wilderness characteristics.
- 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:

DEAD HORSE PASS AREA			
Type of Lands	Non WSA Lands With Wilderness Characteristics (acres)	Non WSA Lands Without Wilderness Characteristics (acres)	Total Acres
UWC, Externally Nominated	6,994	1,124	8,118
WIA, BLM Identified			
TOTAL ACRES	6,994	1,124	8,118

- 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* Date: *4/2/07*
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.