

WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS REVIEW

Date of Submission: September 15, 2001; February 3, 2003

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

Name of Area to be Reviewed: **Bourdette 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. New information was submitted by a member of the public.

In 1979, the BLM Vernal Field Office completed the *Blue Mountain Wilderness Inventory Situation Evaluation Report (UT-080-402)* and recommended the area did not qualify for further wilderness inventory. The recommendation was approved on February 12, 1979. The Bourdette Draw review area is encompassed by this report.

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

The proponents submitted information for the *SUWA/UWC Bourdette Draw Proposed Wilderness Unit* to the BLM Vernal Field Office on December 15, 2001. The submitted information included more detailed data than the BLM considered during the *Blue Mountain Wilderness Inventory Situation Evaluation Report (UT-080-402)* concerning opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, supplemental wilderness values, natural character, and photos. On February 3, 2003, SUWA submitted a revision to the proposal that corrected an error to their map submission. The correction removed a cherry-stemmed road in Section 1, T6S, R24E. The road did not extend to State of Utah lands which would have resulted in the review area being divided.

The Vernal Field Office in November 2002 prepared an *Evaluation of New Information Report* that determined wilderness characteristics may be present in the Bourdette Draw review area. A draft *Evaluation of New Information Report* was prepared for the February 2003 SUWA revision. The information in the draft report concurred with the SUWA revision that the trail did not extend into the State of Utah lands.

On February 6, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed the 1979 the *Blue Mountain Wilderness Inventory Situation Evaluation Report (UT-080-402)*; the *SUWA/UWC Bourdette Draw Proposed Wilderness Unit*; The SUWA revision; the Vernal Field Office November 2002 *Evaluation of New Information Report*; and, the Vernal Field Office 2003 draft *valuation 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, 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 Bourdette Draw review area is located along the Utah-Colorado border in Uintah County about 28 air miles southeast of Vernal, along the west and south slopes of Blue Mountain. Boundaries of the area usually correspond to roads and trails in the area. The main access routes are the Blue Mountain Road on the north side of the area; Miners Draw road on the south side; and, Bourdette Draw Road on the west side. The area is characterized with exposed outcrops of deeply weathered Weber Sandstone. The sandstone cliffs are steep, nearly vertical, and highly folded at Cliff Ridge. Vegetation ranges from sagebrush, grasses, piñon-juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine stands along the top of Cliff Ridge. The review area is separated into two parcels.

About 7,879 acres or 51% of the review area are covered by existing oil and gas leases.

Parcel #1 is located in Sections 13, 14, 21-29, 33-35, T5S, R24E; Sections 1, 3-5, T6S, R24E; Section 31, T5S, R25E; and, Sections 5-7, T6S, R25E. The lands are along the western and southwestern slope of Blue Mountain. Most of the surface steeply dips south and southwest.

Parcel #2 is located in Sections 11-15, 20-29, 33, 34, T5S, R25E. The lands are along the top of and the southern slope of Blue Mountain. Most of the surface steeply dips south and southwest. In Sections 11 and 12, the surface is gently rolling.

- (2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** The major portion of Parcel #1 in T5S, R24E, has retained the appearance of naturalness. The rugged terrain, topography, and vegetation screens the visitor. A variety of seasonal recreational activities occur along Bourdette Draw and Miners Draw Roads throughout the year. ATV use and non-designated camping has increased in 2002. A portion of Parcel #1 in Section 25, T5S, R25E, is substantially less than 5,000 acres in size and is separated from the BLM administered lands that contain wilderness characteristics. Therefore, this portion of Section 25 is not considered to contain wilderness characteristics. In that portion of Parcel #1 in Sections 1, 12, T6S, R24E; and Sections 5-7, T6S, R25E, the naturalness character has been diminished due to the increased ATV usage and recreational camping in non-designated areas. Vandalism of six cultural sites has occurred since 2006. That portion of Parcel #1 in Section 31, T5S, R25E, has retained the appearance of naturalness. Similar to the main portion of the parcel, the rugged terrain, topography and vegetation provide a screen to the visitor. However, this portion of the parcel is substantially less than 5,000 acres in size and is separated from other lands that contain wilderness characteristics. Therefore, this section is not considered to have wilderness characteristics.

In Parcel #2, most of the parcel is steep and rugged thereby retaining its natural character. Motorized vehicles have been prevented from using much of the terrain. Some range improvements are present within the parcel but are not substantially noticeable. ATV and camping use has expanded over the last five years north of the Miners Draw road which forms the south boundary of the parcel. This has caused a strip measuring about 400 feet wide by 3 miles long to lack naturalness and to be determined to not contain wilderness characteristics. Adjacent to the northern boundary of Parcel #2 a recreational launch site for hang gliding is located. About ½ mile west of the hang gliding site is several dispersed camp sites interlaced by motorized two-tracks. These two areas lack naturalness. Portions of this site previously were excluded but further review eliminated an additional 10 acres. Sections 11 and 12, T5S, R25E, of the parcel are being actively managed for sage grouse with seral changes to vegetation through sage brush treatments every seven years with a Dixie Harrow. The existing treatment areas would be substantially unnoticeable to the casual visitor.

In the review area, weed populations including white-top and small areas of Russian Knapweed have been chemically treated by both back-pack sprayers and ATV boom sprayers. The treated areas would be substantially unnoticeable to the casual visitor.

The interdisciplinary team considered that most of the Bourdette Draw review area did 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:** The terrain described above and the number of washes and drainages allow for opportunities of solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation for visitors take part in a variety of outdoor non-motorized appropriate to the time of year.

- (4). **Supplemental Values:** The area contains scenic, archaeological, and geological features of value. Habitat is also found within the review area for several types of raptors and other sensitive species and wildlife. A variety of scenic views are present within the review area. A variety of raptors and song birds live within the area.
- (5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** A portion of Parcel #1 in Section 25, T5S, R25E, is substantially less than 5,000 acres in size and is separated from the BLM administered lands that contain wilderness characteristics. The interdisciplinary team considered that this portion of Section 25 does not contain wilderness characteristics.

The portion of Parcel #1 in Sections 1, 12, T6S, R24E; and Sections 5-7, T6S, R25E, has had the naturalness character has been diminished due to the increased ATV usage and recreational camping in non-designated areas. Vandalism of six cultural sites has occurred since 2006. The interdisciplinary team considered that this portion of Section 25 does not contain wilderness characteristics.

That portion of Parcel #1 in Section 31, T5S, R25E, has retained the appearance of naturalness. Similar to the main portion of the parcel, the rugged terrain, topography and vegetation does provide a screen to the visitor. However, this portion of the parcel is substantially less than 5,000 acres in size and is separated from other lands that contain wilderness characteristics. Therefore, the interdisciplinary team considered that this portion of Section 25 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:

BOURDETTE DRAW AREA			
Type of Lands	Non WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (acres)	Non WSA Lands without Wilderness Characteristics (acres)	Total Acres
UWC, Externally Nominated	13,335	2,174	15,509
WIA, BLM Identified	0	0	0
TOTAL ACRES	13,335	2,174	15,509

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>
<i>Steve Strong</i>	<i>Fire</i>
<i>Stephanie Howard</i>	<i>NEPA</i>