

WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS REVIEW

Date of Submission: October 24, 2002

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

Name of Area to be Reviewed: **Hideout Canyon Area**

Date(s) of Field Office Review: February 7, 2007

BLM Field Office(s) Affected: Vernal Field Office; Moab 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 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 Hideout Canyon review area is contained within the East Book Cliffs wilderness inventory unit (UT-060-108). In 1979, the BLM Moab Field Office completed an initial wilderness inventory for the East Book Cliffs wilderness inventory unit. It was determined that the unit did not qualify for further wilderness inventory.

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

The proponents submitted information to the BLM Vernal Field Office and the BLM Moab Field Office on October 24, 2002. The submitted information included more detailed data than the BLM considered during the 1979 initial inventory concerning opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, supplemental wilderness values, natural character, and photos. The proposal is contained within the 1979 East Book Cliffs wilderness inventory unit. The Moab Field Office prepared an *Evaluation of New Information* report dated October 31, 2002, that the review area may contain wilderness characteristics and that the decision reached in the 1979 initial inventory is not valid.

The review area is located in Grand County and only that portion of the area in the Vernal Field Office planning boundary was reviewed. On February 7, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed the 1979 East Book Cliffs initial inventory report; the October 2002 SUWA/UWC submittal; and, the Moab Field Office *Evaluation of New Information* Report of October 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. 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 area is present.

b. **Externally Nominated Area:**

(1). **Description:** The Hideout Canyon review area is located in Grand County about 70 air miles south-southeast of Vernal, Utah. This area is at the southern end of the Vernal Field Office planning boundary. It begins along the Book Cliff Divide. The area is characterized by deeply incised canyons rising 3,000 feet in topographic relief from the south to the Book Cliffs Divide at an elevation of 8,200 feet.

Vegetation in the south facing canyons is dense juniper and pinion pine on the drier slopes. Numerous stands of mature Douglas fir occupy the higher elevation slopes. Brushy areas of Big Sage brush give way to tall oak brush, maturing Aspen clones and small but densely populated stands of westerly exposed Douglas fir along riparian canyon junctions.

Within the Vernal Field Office planning area, three parcels of the area were reviewed by a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary review team. The parcels are each substantially less than 5,000 acres in size but are adjacent to other lands in the Hideout Canyon review area that are considered by the Moab Field Office to contain wilderness characteristics. All parcels are comprised of the steep, south face of the Book Cliffs and are similar in the ruggedness of the terrain and vegetation.

Parcel #1 is located in Sections 12-14, T16S, R23E; and Section 7, T16S, R24E. The northern boundary of the parcel is formed by the Book Cliffs Divide Road. Other boundaries are formed by State of Utah owned lands and the southern boundary of the Vernal Field Office planning area.

Parcel #2 is located in Section 8, T16S, R24E. Boundaries of the area are formed by State of Utah owned lands and the southern boundary of the Vernal Field Office planning area.

Parcel #3 is located in Sections 3 and 4, T16S, R24E. Boundaries of the area are formed by the Book Cliffs Divide Road, State of Utah owned lands and the southern boundary of the Vernal Field Office planning area.

About 154 acres or 14% of the three parcels are covered by existing oil and gas leases.

- (2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** The steep, rugged terrain and dense vegetation for most of the three parcels preclude motorized access. Several non-designated camp sites have been created through the years within 300 feet of the Book Cliffs Divide Road. These sites are primarily used during hunting seasons for a total of 15 nights annually. One designated primitive camp site exists in Parcel #3. The presence and usage of the sites have not diminished the appearance of naturalness.

Chemical vegetative treatments have been conducted on populations of white-top, hen bane, Russian knapweed, and hounds tongue. Both back-pack ATV boom sprayers have been used.

No mechanical fuels treatments or prescribed burns have occurred on the parcels.

Parcel #3 contains 157 acres that have been leased for oil and gas. Two plugged and abandoned wells are on the western boundary. No rock material leases are in place.

The human-made disturbances in the three parcels have not diminished the appearance of naturalness.

- (3). **Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The steep slopes, canyons, and heavy vegetation will screen the visitor from the Book Cliffs Divide Road providing opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.
- (4). **Supplemental Values:** Scenic views are afforded the visitor due to the steep slopes and topographic relief. The area provides winter habitat for mule deer, elk, black bear, and mountain lion. Several migratory bird species that are considered sensitive may be found in the parcels.
- (5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** None.
- 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:

HIDEOUT CANYON AREA			
Type of Lands	Non WSA Lands With Wilderness Characteristics (acres)	Non WSA Lands Without Wilderness Characteristics (acres)	Total Acres
UWC, Externally Nominated	1,113	0	1,113
WIA, BLM Identified	0	0	0
TOTAL ACRES	1,113	0	1,113

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>

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 Date: 6/6/07
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.