

# 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: **Moonshine Draw 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 previously gathered and reviewed in the BLM inventories; photographic documentation; etc?

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

b. 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 *Moonshine Draw Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Report (UT-080-415)*. A recommendation was made that the area did not qualify for wilderness study. The recommendation was approved on March 20, 1980.

In 1999, the BLM reinventoried the Moonshine Draw area and determined that the area did contain wilderness characteristics. This determination is described as the BLM Moonshine Draw Wilderness Inventory Area in the *1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory (revised 2003)*.

The proponent submitted information on December 15, 2001, for the SUWA/UWC *Moonshine Draw Proposed Wilderness Unit*. The submitted information included more detailed data than the BLM considered during the *1979 Moonshine Draw Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Report (UT-080-415)* 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 November 2002 prepared an *Evaluation of New Information Report* that determined wilderness characteristics may be present in the Moonshine Draw review area for those lands submitted by SUWA/UWC.

On February 7, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed the 1979 *Moonshine Draw Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Report (UT-080-415)*; the 1999 Moonshine Wilderness Inventory Area; 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, 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:** The Moonshine Draw Inventory Area is located in Uintah County about 25 air miles east-northeast of Vernal, Utah. The west and north boundaries border the Dinosaur National Monument, private lands, and State of Utah lands. The east and south borders follow unpaved roads as well as the border of State of Utah lands. It is separated from the Daniels Canyon WSA by Doc's Valley Road.

The deeply eroded Moonshine Draw and Bear Hollow, as well as the open Yampa Plateau, are the main topographic features of this area. Elevations range from 7,600 feet at the top of the plateau to 6,000 feet at the bottom of Moonshine Draw.

The open plateau is covered with shrub vegetation that gives way to areas heavily wooded by piñon and juniper. There are also small pockets of ponderosa pine in the south.

There are no existing oil and gas leases within the review area.

- (2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** Much of the WIA area retains its natural character, given the few intrusions, its rugged terrain, and the difficult access. The wooded portions of Moonshine Draw and Bear Hollow are natural in appearance and scenic.

A small number of human-made developments such as a vehicle way, fence, and corral are present in the area. The eastern portion of the unit was reassessed in 2001 and found that only two of the five previously identified livestock reservoirs could be found. These developments are substantially unnoticeable and do not diminish the appearance of naturalness of the WIA area.

The Moonshine Draw Wilderness Inventory Area is smaller in size than 5,000 acres. However, the area is contiguous to the Dinosaur National Monument. The Monument lands are being managed for their wilderness values (personal correspondence, Wayne Prokopetz, Chief of Research and Resource Management, Dinosaur National Monument).

- (3). **Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The extremely rugged landscape of the review area provides opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Moonshine Draw and other smaller draws provide topographic screening that enhances the experience. Vegetation found throughout much of the unit also screens visitors from each other. Hiking, back-packing hunting, camping, and viewing of expansive scenic vistas are opportunities provided within the Moonshine Draw inventory area. Hunters, hikers, and ranchers are the primary visitors to this area.
- (4). **Supplemental Values:** The area contains habitat for the Mexican spotted owl, peregrine falcon, spotted and big free-tailed bats, and the Utah milk snake.
- (5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** None.

**b. Externally Nominated Area:**

- (1). **Description:** The SUWA/UWC nominated area is located to the southeast of the WIA area in Sections 28, 29, 33, T4S, R25E. It is separated from the Daniels Canyon WSA by Doc’s Valley Road. The area is similar to the information provided above under Heading 4.a.(1)., Description.
- (2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** The SUWA/UWC nominated area is similar to the lands of the BLM WIA described above under Heading 4.a.(2)., Appearance of Naturalness.
- (3). **Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The SUWA/UWC nominated area is similar to the lands of the BLM WIA described above under Heading 4.a.(3)., Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation.
- (4). **Supplemental Values:** The SUWA/UWC nominated area is similar to the lands of the BLM WIA described above under Heading 4.a.(4)., Supplemental Values.
- (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:

<b>MOONSHINE DRAW AREA</b>			
<b>Type of Lands</b>	<b>Non WSA Lands With Wilderness Characteristics (acres)</b>	<b>Non WSA Lands Without Wilderness Characteristics (acres)</b>	<b>Total Acres</b>
UWC, Externally Nominated	676	0	676
WIA, BLM Identified	3,837	0	3,837
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>4,513</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,513</b>

5. 7 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 Stunz  
Field Office Manager

Date: 4/18/07

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.