



❖ LANDS WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS ❖

The BLM is required under the Federal Land and Policy Management Act of 1976 to maintain a current inventory of all public lands and their resources, including wilderness characteristics. As part of the planning process for the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (D-E NCA) draft Resource Management Plan (RMP), the BLM updated its inventory of wilderness characteristics and found four areas with wilderness characteristics outside of the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness and Wilderness Study Area, totaling 21,816 acres.

What are lands with wilderness characteristics (LWCs) and how do they differ from wilderness areas and wilderness study areas?

Only Congress can designate wilderness areas, and the BLM no longer has authority to designate wilderness study areas. Outside of existing wilderness and wilderness study areas, the BLM must maintain an inventory of other lands with wilderness characteristics. In order to meet the BLM's criteria for lands with wilderness characteristics, an area must have the following qualities:

- Be roadless, with more than 5,000 acres of contiguous BLM lands, or be adjacent to existing wilderness areas or wilderness study areas
- Exhibit a high degree of naturalness, where the imprint of human activity is substantially unnoticeable
- Have outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation

The BLM is not required to protect wilderness characteristics where they are found. Through the planning process, the BLM must consider wilderness characteristics equally with other resources, such as wildlife, paleontological, and cultural resources.

What lands with wilderness characteristics are within the D-E NCA?

The BLM updated its inventory of wilderness characteristics in 2012 as part of its RMP process and identified the Gunnison Slopes, Dominguez Addition, Dry Fork, and Cottonwood Canyon areas as LWCs. In August 2012, this inventory was posted on the NCA website: <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca.html>.

What decisions regarding LWCs are under consideration in the draft RMP?

The BLM is considering a range of alternatives regarding protections for LWCs. These protections include restrictions necessary to preserve inventoried wilderness characteristics, such as limitations on surface disturbance or new developments and restrictions on motorized travel. The table below displays the BLM's management considerations by alternative:

	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E (Preferred)
Acres managed for protection of wilderness characteristics	0	21,816 (4 units)	0	0	13,597 (2 units)

Where in the draft RMP can I find more information about LWCs?

- Chapter 2, section 2.6 (“Alternatives Matrix”), starting on page 103
- Chapter 2, section 2.7 (“Summary of Impacts”), starting on page 18
- Chapter 3 (“Affected Environment”), subsection 3.2.5, which describes existing conditions regarding LWCs in the D-E NCA
- Chapter 4 (“Environmental Consequences”), subsection 4.3.5, which discusses impacts on LWCs from proposed management actions
- Appendix R, map 3-26 [“Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (Outside of designated Wilderness and WSAs)”]

Questions to consider when commenting on decisions in the draft RMP regarding LWCs:

- What do (or don’t) you like about the different alternatives for LWCs? Why?
- What do (or don’t) you like about the management of LWCs being proposed under the preferred alternative? Why?