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# Appendix F

## Wilderness Characteristics Inventory



# APPENDIX F

## WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS INVENTORY AND PLANNING

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### INTRODUCTION

The BLM, GJFO, in accordance with the BLM policy on conducting wilderness characteristics inventories on BLM lands under Section 201 of the FLPMA (BLM Manual 6310, Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory on BLM Lands), has updated its inventory of lands with wilderness character found within the GJFO planning area. This document highlights the findings of this inventory. The complete inventory report is available on the RMP Web site at <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo/rmp.html>.

The original wilderness characteristics Inventory was conducted in 1979, resulting in the establishment of current wilderness study areas (WSAs) found in the GJFO. Some of the units analyzed as part of this inventory were part of the original inventory of 1979, or a supplemental inventory in 1999.

### Process for Identifying Wilderness Character Inventory Units

In an effort to conduct the most thorough analysis of lands with wilderness characteristics, the GJFO established a process for identification of wilderness character inventory units. This process included identification of units through two avenues; 1) Citizens' Wilderness Proposals (CWPs), and 2) Internal identification:

- 1) Citizens' Wilderness Proposals: Between 2001 and 2009, the Colorado Environmental Coalition submitted CWPs for 14 units within the planning area. These proposals included inventory reports conducted by non-BLM personnel. Several organizations referenced these CWPs in their comments during scoping for the GJFO Resource Management plan revision. The portions of the CWP identified units that are not within existing WSAs were carried forward for this inventory.

- 2) In addition to CWPs, GJFO staff identified areas that may possess wilderness characteristics based on their field knowledge. Then during the inventory process, the BLM Washington Office issued IM 2011-154, Requirement to Conduct and Maintain Inventory Information for Wilderness Characteristics and to Consider Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in Land Use Plans. This guidance included a document titled “Policy on Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory on BLM Lands.” Guidance in the IM was later published in BLM Manual 6310, Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory on BLM Lands.

In accordance with the new policy document, the GJFO completed a spatial data analysis to identify all areas in the GJFO which hosted 5,000 or more roadless acres of land. This analysis used the GJFO route inventory data set. A comprehensive route inventory had been compiled through years of field inventory for use in travel management planning. The analysis for identifying potential lands with wilderness characteristics utilized this data, seeking out certain route classes (not including single track or ATV trails) in determining the roadless areas. The initial boundaries of the units potentially containing wilderness characteristics were formed using land status and Route Inventory data. This process proved effective as evidenced by the fact that the results of the analysis pointed to all existing WSAs and all previously identified inventory units including CWPs as areas that may include over 5,000 roadless acres. The additional units identified by the spatial analysis provided the starting point for field inventory.

### **Process for Conducting Wilderness Character Inventory**

The process defined above identified 31 units (in addition to existing WSAs), totaling approximately 400,000 acres to be inventoried for the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics. The inventory was conducted using the process identified in BLM Manual 6310, Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory on BLM Lands. The field inventory identified the presence or absence of the following characteristics:

- size;
- apparent naturalness;
- opportunities for solitude;
- opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation; and
- supplemental values found for the unit.

The findings of past inventories (where applicable), including those provided in CWPs were compared to the current state of the units, analyzing changes in the landscape and levels of human impact, and were either confirmed or refuted

based on the analysis. The inventory write up for each unit also included a summary of major human uses, including valid existing rights (e.g., fluid mineral leases and mining claims), which could affect wilderness characteristics in the future.

This inventory was conducted between 2009 and 2011, and in some cases involved validating previous inventories. Therefore specific descriptions (e.g., condition of a trail and acreage of the unit currently leased for fluid minerals) may no longer be exact but offer a snapshot of conditions at the time of the inventory.

**Table F-I**, Summary of Findings, provides details for each wilderness characteristics inventory unit (WCIU). **Figure F-I**, Wilderness Characteristics Inventory, shows a map of all the units and the defining characteristics of each.

### Procedures for Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in Land Use Planning

BLM Manual 6320, Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the BLM Land Use Planning Process provides BLM Field Offices guidance for considering lands with wilderness characteristics in the land use planning process. In accordance with this guidance, the GJFO RMP alternatives consider a full range of reasonable alternatives for management of lands with wilderness characteristics. The alternatives range from no specific protections for lands with wilderness characteristics, to an alternatives that sets specific protections for all of the units with wilderness characteristics.

The alternatives were developed considering manageability and resource values and uses. The alternatives also include a range of management prescriptions for WSAs, should they be released from wilderness consideration by Congress. This range includes the management of the WSA areas for their wilderness characteristics.

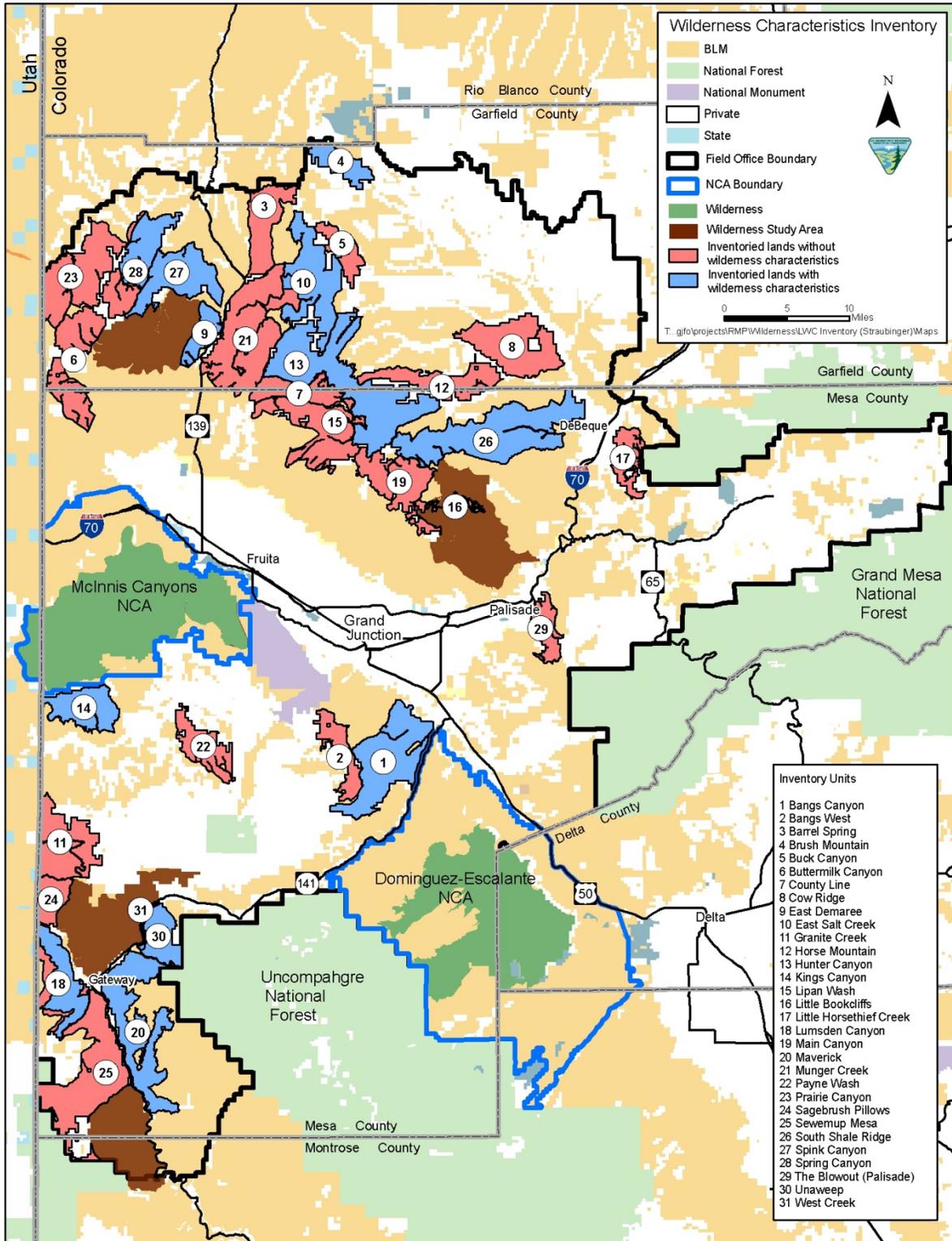
The **Proposed RMP** (Alternative B) would manage three lands with wilderness characteristics units for their wilderness characteristics.

- **Bangs Canyon (Bangs):** A series of shallow to moderately deep canyons drain northeasterly from the edge of Piñon Mesa (a part of the Uncompahgre Plateau) into the Gunnison River. Bang's Canyon, West Bang's Canyon, and the canyon of North East Creek. Critically sensitive from a cultural resource standpoint, the area was utilized as long ago as 10,000 years - first by the paleo Indian culture and successively by the cultures commonly referenced as the archaic, Fremont and Ute. Recreational activities include mountain biking, hiking, backpacking, hunting, driving off-highway vehicles, and horseback riding. A short segment of the 142-mile Tabeguache Trail, an extension of the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail System, traverses the inventory unit.

**Table F-1  
Summary of Findings**

<b>Unit Identifier</b>	<b>WCIU Name</b>	<b>Total Acreage of WCIU</b>	<b>WCIU Identified by External Proponent</b>	<b>WCIU Identified by BLM</b>	<b>WCIU Found to have Wilderness Character</b>	<b>Acres Found to Have Wilderness Character</b>
1	Bang's Canyon	20,434	•	•	•	20,434
2	Bang's West	6,879		•		
3	Barrel Spring	10,169		•		
4	Brush Mountain	5,310		•		
5	Buck Canyon	5,009		•		
6	Buttermilk Canyon	14,086		•		
7	County Line	7,380		•		
8	Cow Ridge	15,721	•			
9	East Demaree	4,796	•	•	•	4,796
10	East Salt Creek	18,303		•	•	17,008
11	Granite Creek	14,048	•			
12	Horse Mountain	10,303		•		
13	Hunter Canyon	32,700	•		•	32,228
14	Kings Canyon	9,606	•	•	•	9,606
15	Lipan Wash	15,373		•		
16	Little Bookcliffs WSA Expansion	1,580	•			
17	Little Horsethief Creek	5,732		•		
18	Lumsden Canyon	13,764		•	•	10,072
19	Main Canyon	12,613		•		
20	Maverick	20,401	•	•	•	20,401
21	Munger Creek	23,801		•		
22	Payne Wash	8,153		•		
23	Prairie Canyon	17,569	•			
24	Sagebrush Pillows	5,127	•			
25	Sewemup Mesa	23,551	•			
26	South Shale Ridge	27,540	•	•	•	27,540
27	Spink Canyon	13,081		•	•	13,081
28	Spring Canyon	14,009		•	•	8,848
29	The Blowout	5,105		•		
30	UnawEEP	9,494	•	•	•	7,154
31	West Creek	111	•	•	•	111

**Figure F-1  
Wilderness Characteristics Inventory**



- **Maverick:** A five-canyon complex and unique roadless area with outstanding opportunities for solitude given the topography, vegetation, and unique feature of Juanita Arch, which is the only natural bridge in Colorado. Mining claims are present at the boundaries of the unit but there has been no development of the claims. While there are existing oil and gas leases, the area is not within the area of current known potential for conventional or shale gas development and no past exploration or development for oil and gas has occurred.
- **Unaweep:** This area has outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation with the unit primarily affected by the forces of nature. It includes the 1,000-foot-deep Ute Creek Canyon with the sheer granite cliffs of Unaweep Canyon. There are no right-of-way conflicts, and no current mining claims. While there are approximately 100 acres of existing oil and gas leases, the area is not within the area of current known potential for conventional or shale gas development and no past exploration or development for oil and gas has occurred.

The remaining nine areas fall within the portion of the GJFO with known potential for natural gas development, and are largely leased for oil and gas development; or provide motorized and mechanized use opportunities. Under the Preferred Alternative and its corresponding travel management plan the manageability of these areas for wilderness characteristics would be compromised by valid existing rights, and/or motorized and mechanized use and these areas would be managed for other resources and resource uses. The impacts of the management alternatives on lands with wilderness characteristics can be found in Chapter 4 of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.