

For Immediate Release
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BLM Seeks Public Input On Vermillion Basin Wilderness Character Inventory

(Craig-) The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is releasing the Preliminary Vermillion Basin Wilderness Character Inventory Evaluation for public review and comment. BLM will host two public open-house workshops to facilitate the review of inventory data, answer questions, and accept public comment. The first open house will be held December 7, from 4 to 7:00 p.m. at the Little Snake Field Office Conference Room, 455 Emerson Street, Craig, Colorado. The second open house will be December 11, from 3 to 6:00 p.m. at the Community Center in Maybell, Colorado.

The inventory was conducted by an experienced BLM team from two states and an ad-hoc group of citizen observers who represent a wide range of interests. Vermillion Basin is located approximately 80 miles northwest of Craig, Colorado.

The Wilderness Character Inventory follows the final 1998 Vermillion Basin Roadless Review. The current inventory is only a report of findings and not a decision document or planning process. Changes in management prescriptions for the area would come about only after a Resource Management Plan amendment, which is a public process

BLM's preliminary findings for the Vermillion Basin area are:

- Total area inventoried, 81,028 acres
- Area with wilderness character, 78,566 acres
- Area without wilderness character, 2,462 acres

The inventory criteria used were the same as those used in the original 1980 BLM national wilderness inventory. These criteria require that the area be predominantly natural in character and have outstanding opportunities for either solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The Preliminary Wilderness Character Inventory Evaluation and background information are available at the BLM Little Snake Field Office website (<http://www.co.blm.gov/lspa/lspa/index.htm>). Follow the link to Vermillion Basin or go directly to the URL (<http://www.co.blm.gov/lspa/verbasin/newsrel.htm>). A desk copy of the Preliminary Wilderness Character Inventory Evaluation is also available for review at the Little Snake Field Office.

In order to assure this inventory has considered all current relevant data, BLM is now asking for information that may not have been considered in the preliminary findings regarding:

1. the presence or condition of man-made structures or facilities within the area;

2. outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation within the area; and

3. supplemental values within the area. This may include such values as rare or endangered plants or animals, unique natural features, or scenic values.

BLM requests that this information be provided no later than December 29, 2000 to the Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, 455 Emerson Street, Craig, Colorado 81625. Detailed files from the field inventory are available for review at the Little Snake Field Office.

After all information provided by the public is reviewed and analyzed, the Wilderness Character Inventory will be completed and you will be notified of the final inventory findings. The collected inventory information will be used when the Little Snake Field Office begins a Resource Management Plan amendment for the Vermillion Basin next year.

At this time, we are only asking for specific comments on the preliminary findings of the Wilderness Character Inventory. We are not currently seeking opinions on whether or not the area should be considered for wilderness designation. The public will have additional opportunities to comment during the Resource Management Plan amendment process. If you have any questions on this process, please contact Jim McBayer at (970) 826-5083.

Please note the BLM Wilderness Character Inventory should not be confused with the Vermillion National Monument proposal by the National Wildlife Federation. Thank you for your interest and participation in the management of BLM Colorado Public Lands.

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