

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics**Area Unique Identifier:** CO-S05000-003 Dry Creek Basin**Acreage:** 16,890

(1) Is the area of sufficient size? (If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception in the space provided below),

Yes No

Description (describe the boundaries of the area--wilderness inventory roads, property lines, etc.):

Unit is bounded as follows:

- On the north by the Tabeguache Trail;
- On the west by Cushman Mesa Road, USFS land and private land;
- On the south by Olathe Reservoir Road and private land; and
- On the east by vehicle routes and Rim Road.

1,000 acres in upper Piney Creek and Cushman Mesa in the southwest part of the unit were excluded due to the presence of wilderness inventory roads that access a private parcel and water developments, leaving 15,890 acres in the unit.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes No N/A

Description (include land ownership, location, topography, vegetation, and summary of major human uses/activities):

The remainder of the northwest part of the unit in the Cushman Mesa and Piney Creek areas (7,750 acres) lacks naturalness due to the presence of a dense network of vehicle routes, vegetative manipulations (chaining/roller-chopping and seedings), water catchments and other range developments. Likewise, at the south end of the unit 600 acres were excluded due to lack of naturalness because of the presence of roads and vegetative manipulation on the mesa between the East and West forks of Dry Creek.

The remaining 7,740 acres in the unit are natural in appearance overall with few signs of human alteration.

The remainder is comprised primarily of the drainages of the East and West forks of Dry Creek, and Dry Creek itself, below their confluence (with some lands between the east rim of Dry Creek Basin and Rim Road).

The unit takes in elevations of 8,000 feet on the higher southern end, and drops to 6,000 at the lower end of the creek to the north. The south portion supports ponderosa pine forest and mountain shrub lands on the benches above the creeks. The creeks themselves are perennial and support lush riparian vegetation of cottonwood, skunkbush, and willow. As the elevation descends toward the north the benches above the creek give way to pinyon-juniper forest, sagebrush flats and desert scrub, while the riparian zone associated with Dry Creek continues to be dominated by cottonwood trees.

Because this is a relatively undisturbed and natural landscape connecting higher elevation forest with more desert-like lowlands, this unit is an important wildlife migration corridor.

There is a 3-mile ATV trail on the bench on the east side of the East Fork of Dry Creek, and a 1-mile section of ATV trail crossing the northern portion of the unit. A two-mile section of constructed and maintained road above the West Fork of Dry Creek has been cherry-stemmed out of the unit.

There are about 5 miles of motorized single-track trails on the bench on the west side of Dry Creek. These routes are maintained open routes and are clearly visible as such for an observer following them. Because the tread is narrow (particularly on the single-track) and the vehicles using them are relatively light, they are not substantially noticeable in the unit as a whole.

There is one small spring development near the southwest boundary of the unit.

(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

Yes No N/A

Description:

About 710 acres of the unit between the east rim of Dry Creek Basin and Rim Road do not have outstanding opportunities for solitude. These lands consist of about 5 different polygons sandwiched between the rim and either BLM roads or Rim Road. Because of their close proximity to roads and their poor screening from roads opportunities for solitude in these areas are not outstanding.

The remaining 7,030 acres of this unit do have outstanding opportunities for solitude. The remainder has moderately rugged topography. The incised creek bottoms are the most topographically isolated areas of the unit. Good vegetative screening exists in all of the riparian zone, and the pinyon-juniper and ponderosa pine uplands.

There is motorized and mechanized access into the unit. A 3-mile ATV trail runs along the bench above the East Fork of Dry Creek, and is used primarily for seasonal hunting activities. During hunting season use is moderate to heavy.

A 2-mile road spur is cherry-stemmed out of the unit on the west bench above West Fork of Dry Creek. While this road is excluded from the unit it could negatively affect perceptions of

solitude for the adjacent lands within the unit. The road accesses a developed spring and trough, and provides full-size vehicle access to the area. The road is primarily used for grazing allotment management and for seasonal hunting access. During hunting season, use is moderate. The route is lightly used outside the hunting season.

About 5 miles of motorized single-track trail exists on the west bench of Dry Creek, mostly on the northern half of the unit. This is primarily used for recreational trail riding in the spring and fall. Motorized and mechanized use of these trails is moderate in spring and fall, and light in summer and winter.

The vehicle routes mentioned above would have a localized negative effect on perceptions of solitude during their primary seasons of use, but those effects would not be enough to preclude outstanding opportunities for solitude throughout most of the unit.

The size of the unit and vegetative and topographic screening provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The whole unit is within a basin defined by the upper rim of the canyon formed by Dry Creek, and is therefore isolated from the surrounding lands, which are laced with vehicle routes.

(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?

Yes X No _____ N/A _____

Description (describe the area's outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation):

The unit is well-suited for self-directed hiking, horseback use, and non-motorized/non-mechanized hunting use.

Despite the vehicle routes mentioned in section 3 (above) access to the vast majority of the unit is only by foot or horseback. The entire riparian zone up the main stem and both forks of Dry Creek is only accessible by foot or horse back.

Except for trails, no developed recreation facilities exist in this unit.

(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value)?

Yes X No _____ N/A _____

Description:

This area provides important wildlife habitat connectivity between the higher elevation forested lands on the Uncompahgre Plateau at the south end of the unit and the lower elevation lands to the north.

Summary of Analysis*

Area Unique Identifier: CO-S05000-003 Dry Creek Basin

Summary

Results of analysis:

This unit was identified by BLM through a review and update of the UFO wilderness characteristics inventory as required by FLPMA Sec 201. The Wilderness Society later suggested that BLM consider this area.

The singletrack motorized trails and two ATV trails within the unit are currently at a low level of use that is consistent with the findings of naturalness, and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The Dry Creek Transportation Plan (2009) designated these routes.

The area found to possess wilderness characteristics is 7,030 acres in size.

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? Yes No

2. Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes No N/A

3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation?

Yes No N/A

4. Does the area have supplemental values? Yes No N/A

Check one:

The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as lands with wilderness characteristics.

The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

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4-3-15

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* This form documents information that constitutes an inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR parts 4 or 1610.5-3.