Lands with Wilderness Characteristics: Polygon 30

June 2013

Form 1: Document Wilderness Characteristics Inventory Findings on Record

Is there existing BLM wilderness characteristics inventory information on all or part of this area?

NO **X** (If no, go to Form 2)
YES If yes, and if the area has subunits within the broader area, list the unique identifiers for each of those subunits:

Inventory Source:
Inventory Area Unique Identifier(s):
Map Name(s)/Number(s):
BLM District(s)/Field Office(s)

BLM Inventory findings on record: Document existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics (if more than one BLM inventory area is associated with the area, list each area and answer each question individually for each inventory area):

Document BLM Wilderness Characteristics Findings on Record (Historic Findings)					
Inventory Source Document:					
Area Unique Identifier	Sufficient Size? (YES/NO & acres)	Naturalness (YES/NO)	Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude (YES/NO)	Outstanding opportunities for primitive & unconfined recreation (YES/NO)	Supplemental Values? (YES/NO)
30					

(add rows as needed)

Form 2: Current Conditions: Presence Or Absence Of Wilderness Characteristics

Area Unique Identifier: **CO-110-030** Acreage: **6,355**
(If the inventory area consists of subunits, list the acreage of each and evaluate each separately).

1. Is the area of sufficient size? (If area meets an exception to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception):

   Yes X No (If "no" is checked, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "NA" for the remaining questions)

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

   The western boundary of the unit is formed by BLM road 1070. This road qualifies as a Wilderness Inventory Road and receives heavy traffic from oil and gas uses. The southern and eastern boundaries of the unit are formed BLM road 1071. For nearly its entire length, a natural gas pipeline follows the road. To exclude this from the LWC polygon, a 50 foot buffer will be placed on the on the northern and western sides of BLM road 1071, forming the boundary of the polygon. The northern boundary of the unit begins when the pipeline turns west, leaving BLM road 1071. The boundary follows this pipeline until it intersects an active well pad. The boundary then turns south, following the pipeline access road (Route 9). Route 9 then intersects Route 10 after a short distance. From here, the boundary turns north for a short distance until another well pad access road is reached (Route 8). The boundary again turns west following the road and extending straight west until private property is reached. The boundary travels south and then west following the private property line until another well pad is reached. The road accessing this pad (Route 2) will form the remaining northern boundary of the unit.

   Within the unit, several wilderness inventory roads exist. They will be cherry-stemmed out to preserve the wilderness resource values of the polygon. Route 3, a short road leading to a constructed platform meets the criteria for a WIR. At waypoint 30-005, an active well pad exists and should be removed from the unit. Along BLM 1071, another active well pad exists. This should be removed as well.

2. Does the area appear to be natural?

   Yes X No NA (If "no" is checked, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "NA" for the remaining questions)

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

   LWC Polygon 30 is primarily affected by the forces of nature. Though oil and natural gas developments are prevalent in the surrounding areas, they have no effect on the naturalness of the polygon. To further minimize possible effects, all pipelines and well pads have been excluded from the boundary of the proposed

polygon. The area has some minor range improvements including fences and stock ponds, but all are no longer in use and have degraded severely in condition. They are substantially unnoticeable and have little effect on the naturalness 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 **X** No NA (If "no" is checked, the area may still have wilderness characteristics – see question 4)

   Description (describe the area's outstanding opportunities for solitude):

   The boundaries of LWC Polygon 30 are marked by evidence of nearby human activities. Once within the boundaries of the Polygon, there is only a slight chance of encountering another person, whether by sight or sound. Within the boundaries, past evidence of human activities subsists in the form of capped wells and fences, but little present evidence exists. The topography of the area contributes to opportunities for solitude as well. Banta Ridge rises to nearly 6500 feet and separates the area, diminishing the already small chance of seeing another person.

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 NA (If "no" is checked, the area may still have wilderness characteristics; if "No" is checked for both questions 3 and 4 the area does not have wilderness characteristics, check "NA" for question 5)

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

   The unit provides ample opportunities for primitive recreation. In the late fall and early winter, the area provides habitat for elk and deer and could provide excellent chances for hunting. A hike along Banta Ridge rewards hikers with stunning views of Blue Mountain and the White River Valley.

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

   Yes **X** No NA

   Description:

   From the top of Banta Ridge, visitors are provided with expansive and scenic views of northwest Colorado. Colorado Parks and Wildlife identified the lower elevations of the unit to be preliminary general habitat for greater sage grouse, a United States Fish and Wildlife Service candidate for endangered species status.

Rare plant species, including the ephedra buckwheat (*Eriogonum ephedroides*) are located within the unit.

6. Summary of Analysis to document information that constitutes the inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. This does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision, and does not represent a decision in regard to how the area will be managed or address impacts of management decisions. Explain the inventory findings for the entirety of the inventory unit. When an LWC has been identified that is smaller than the size of the total inventory unit, explain why certain portions of the inventory unit are not included in the LWC (e.g. the inventory found that certain parts lacked naturalness).
   - Does the area meet size requirements or exceptions? Yes **X** No
   - Does the area appear natural? Yes **X** No NA
   - Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? Yes **X** No NA

   Check one:

   X The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as land with wilderness characteristics (*all 3 bullets must be answered "yes"*).

   The area does not have wilderness characteristics (*one or more of the bullets is answered "no"*).

7. Prepared by (list team members, titles, date, signatures; add lines as needed):

Evaluator (name/title): **Ty Skoe, Recreation Intern** Date: **5/23/2013**
Evaluator (name/title): **Cody Niehus, Recreation Intern** Date: **5/23/2013**
Evaluator (name/title): Date:

8. Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):
   Name: Kurt E. Walter
   Title: FIELD MANAGER
   Date: 06/27/13

Form 3: Route Analysis:

The Route Analysis includes factors to consider when determining whether a route is a road for wilderness characteristics inventory purposes. For the purposes of this analysis, use the following definition of a "road". This definition is drawn from and the FLPMA legislative history and historic BLM inventory direction.

> Road: An access route which has been improved and maintained by mechanical means to insure relatively regular and continuous use. A way maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road.
>
> a. Improved and maintained – Actions taken physically by people to keep the road open to vehicle traffic. "Improved" does not necessarily mean formal construction. "Maintained" does not necessarily mean annual maintenance.
>
> b. Mechanical means – Use of hand or power machinery or tools.
>
> c. Relatively regular and continuous use – Vehicular use that has occurred and will continue to occur on a relatively regular basis. Examples are: access roads for equipment to maintain a stock water tank or other established water sources, access roads to maintained recreation sites or facilities, or access roads to mining claims.

If a portion of a route is found to meet the wilderness inventory road criteria (see Part III) and the remainder does not meet these criteria (e.g., a cherrystem road with a primitive route continuing beyond a certain point), identify each segment and explain the rationale for the separate findings.

Wilderness Characteristics Inventory Area Unique Identifier: **C0-110-030**
Route or Route Segment Name and/or Identifier: **LWC_030_Route_1**

I. LOCATION:

Refer to attached map and BLM corporate data (GIS). List photo point references (where applicable) or reference attached photo log:

Map Title: **LWC_Unit_30** Map Date:

Describe:
The route travels south from Rio Blanco County Road 2 along Cottonwood Creek. It is BLM Road 1070. Associated photo points are 30-001, 30-003, and 30-006a.

II. ROUTE CONTEXT

The purpose of a route is not a deciding factor in determining whether a route is a road for wilderness characteristics inventory purposes. The purpose of a route does provide context for factors on which such a determination may be based, particularly the question of whether maintenance of the route ensures relatively regular and continuous use. The purpose also helps to determine whether maintenance that may so far have been unnecessary to ensure such use would be approved by BLM when the need arises.

A. Current Purpose (if any) of Route: (Examples: rangeland/livestock improvements (stock tank, developed spring, reservoir, fence, corral), inholdings (ranch, farmhouse), mine site, concentrated use site (camp site), recreation, utilities (transmission line,