



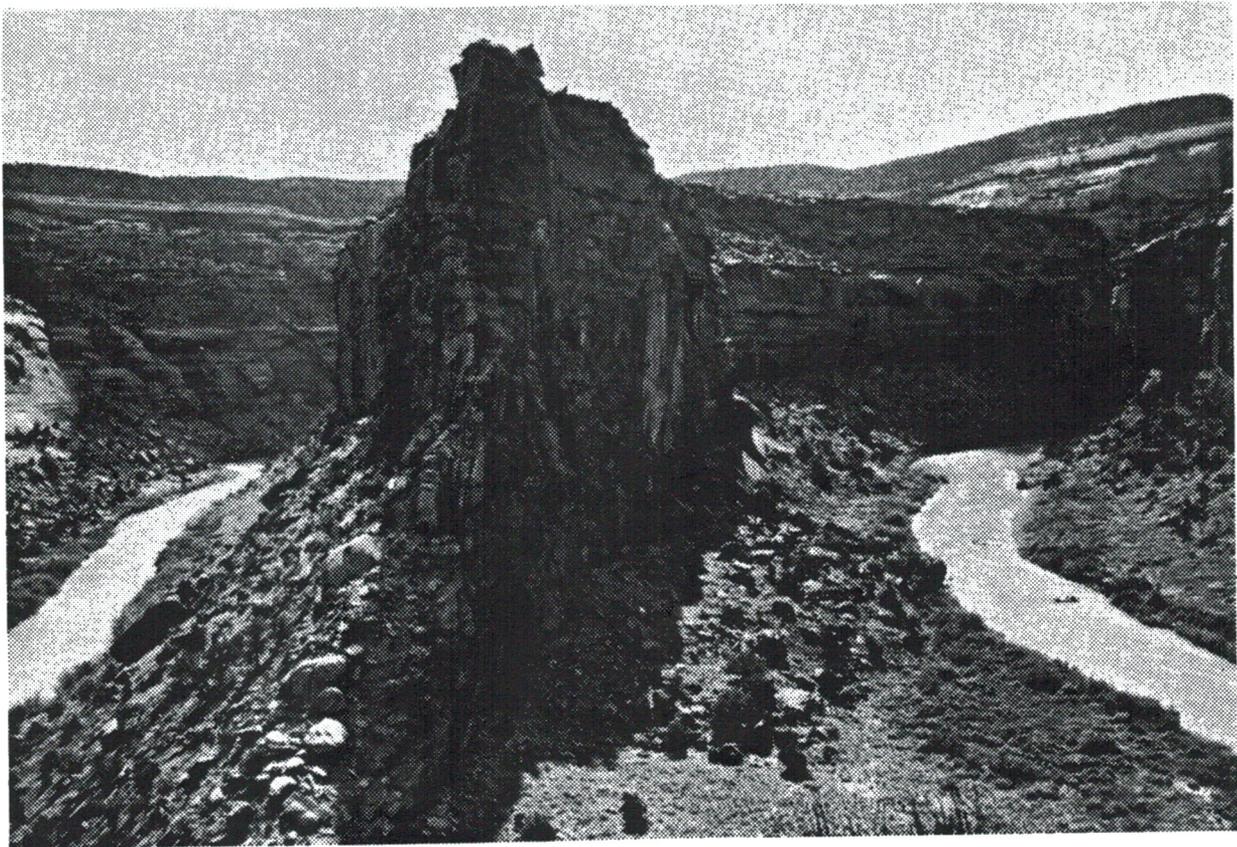
United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Colorado State Office
Colorado

October 1991



WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT

Statewide Overview



RECORD OF DECISION

Supplemental information to this report includes environmental impact statements, mineral survey reports, transcripts from public hearings, comments from local, State, and Federal Government, and comments from Indian Tribes. To review these supplemental data, or to obtain additional information, please contact:

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THE WILDERNESS REVIEW

This report culminates a 15-year effort by the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), to complete a wilderness review of public land in Colorado as required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976.

Although the Wilderness Act of 1964 directed other federal agencies to inventory their lands for wilderness characteristics, it did not apply to BLM-managed public lands. FLPMA, however, applied the goals and criteria of the Wilderness Act to BLM lands as well, and directed the Department to report to the President by October 21, 1991, 15 years from the date of the Act.

Consequently, over 8 million acres of public land in Colorado were inventoried for wilderness characteristics. During the inventory in 1980, BLM held 14 public meetings throughout the state and received and analyzed a total of 900 public comments. Sixty-three areas were then designated as wilderness study areas (WSA) that contain 5,000 acres or more of contiguous BLM land or are of sufficient size to make practical their preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; generally appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature; and provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined form of recreation. In addition, the WSAs contain supplemental values consisting of ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historic value. The primary goal of the wilderness study process was to recommend wilderness designation for those areas where wilderness was determined to be the most appropriate use of the land and its resources.

The inventory process resulted in designation of 63 wilderness study areas totaling 785,934 acres.

In order to provide more manageable boundaries, 7,570 additional acres were studied from BLM lands adjacent to but outside 12 of these WSAs. One additional 30 acre area adjacent to a Forest Service designated wilderness was designated as a WSA during land use planning for a total of 793,534 Colorado BLM acres studied; approximately 10 percent of the BLM public lands in Colorado. The remaining areas not reported here are all small areas, studied under section 202 of FLPMA and are contiguous to Forest Service or National Park Service lands. They fall into three general categories: (1) areas which were studied through resource management plans and subsequently released from further study, totaling 8,840 acres in one area and part of another; (2) seven areas totaling 9,352 acres which were adjacent to larger Forest Service study areas; these were studied through Forest Service planning and environmental analysis procedures and have been reported by the Forest Service and included in proposed legislation by both the Forest Service and Colorado senators and/or congressmen; and (3) two areas totaling 3,520 acres which were adjacent to a Forest Service study area and were released following Forest Service release of the contiguous larger study area. For further information on these areas, see discussion under "Other Pertinent Issues."

The wilderness study areas addressed in this report include three categories of areas. The majority of WSAs are studied under Section 603 of FLPMA, are greater than 5,000 acres in size, are roadless and substantially free of human imprints. There are 39 such areas, making up the large majority of acreage studied, listed in Table 1.



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

OCT 18 1991

RECORD OF DECISION

The following are the wilderness recommendations for 54 wilderness study areas (WSAs) in the State of Colorado. These recommendations were developed from the findings of a 15-year wilderness study process by the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Land Management. The wilderness studies considered each area's resource values, present and projected future uses of the areas, public input, the manageability of the areas as wilderness, the environmental consequences of designating or not designating the areas as wilderness, and mineral surveys prepared by the U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Bureau of Mines.

Based on our review of those studies, I have concluded that 395,792 acres within 20 study areas should be designated as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System and that 376,030 acres within 46 study areas should be released from wilderness study for uses other than wilderness. The acreage recommendations for each WSA, with which I concur, are listed in the following table. The Wilderness Study Report accompanying this decision includes a detailed discussion of the recommendations and maps showing the boundaries of each area.


Secretary of the Interior

OCT 18 1991

Date

RECORD OF DECISION

WSA Name	Study	WSA Number	Acres Recom- mended for Wilderness	Acres Recom- mended for Non Wilderness
BULL CANYON	CRAIG	CO-010-001/UT-080-419 ¹	13,080	107
WILLOW CREEK	CRAIG	CO-010-002	13,503	0
SKULL CREEK	CRAIG	CO-010-003	14,050	0
BLACK MOUNTAIN	CRAIG	CO-010-007A	0	9,932
WINDY GULCH	CRAIG	CO-010-007C	0	12,274
OIL SPRING MOUNTAIN	CRAIG	CO-010-046	0	17,740
PLATTE RIVER CONTIGUOUS	CRAIG	CO-010-104	30	0
TROUBLESOME	CRAIG	CO-010-155	0	8,250
WEST COLD SPRING	CRAIG	CO-010-208/UT-080-103 ²	0	14,482
DIAMOND BREAKS	CRAIG	CO-010-214/UT-080-113 ³	32,620	60
ANT HILLS	CRAIG	CO-010-224	0	4,354
CHEW WINTER CAMP	CRAIG	CO-010-224A	0	1,320
PETERSON DRAW	CRAIG	CO-010-226	0	5,160
VALE OF TEARS	CRAIG	CO-010-229D	0	7,420
CROSS MOUNTAIN	CRAIG	CO-010-230	14,081	0
BILL HARE GULCH	GUNNISON BASIN	CO-030-085	0	406
LARSON CREEK	GUNNISON BASIN	CO-030-086	0	902
REDCLOUDPEAK	GUNNISON BASIN	CO-030-208	0	36,722
AMERICANFLATS	GUNNISON BASIN	CO-030-217	1,494	3,306
HANDIESPEAK	GUNNISON BASIN	CO-030-241	0	16,664
MENEFEE MOUNTAIN	SAN JUAN	CO-030-251	0	7,089
WEBER MOUNTAIN	SAN JUAN	CO-030-252	0	6,303
CROSS CANYON	SAN JUAN	CO-030-265/UT-060-229 ⁴	0	11,580
SQUAW/PAPOOSE CANYONS	SAN JUAN	CO-030-265A/UT-060-227 ⁵	0	4,611
CAHONE CANYON	SAN JUAN	CO-030-265D	0	8,960
MCKENNA PEAK	SAN JUAN	CO-030-286	0	19,398
DOLORES RIVER CANYON	SAN JUAN	CO-030-290	29,415	200
TABEGUACHE CREEK	UNCOMPAHGRE	CO-030-300	7,748	21
CAMEL BACK	UNCOMPAHGRE	CO-030-353	0	10,402
ADOBE BADLANDS	UNCOMPAHGRE	CO-030-370B	0	10,425
GUNNISON GORGE	UNCOMPAHGRE	CO-030-388	22,078	0
BROWNS CANYON	ROYAL GORGE	CO-050-002	6,614	0
MCINTYRE HILLS	ROYAL GORGE	CO-050-013	0	16,650
LOWER GRAPE CREEK	ROYAL GORGE	CO-050-014	0	11,220
BEAVER CREEK	ROYAL GORGE	CO-050-016	20,750	5,400
UPPER GRAPE CREEK	ROYAL GORGE	CO-050-017	0	10,200
SAND CASTLE	SAN LUIS	CO-050-135	0	1,284
SAN LUIS HILLS	SAN LUIS	CO-050-141	0	10,240
DEMAREE CANYON	GRAND JUNCTION	CO-070-009	0	21,050
LITTLE BOOK CLIFFS	GRAND JUNCTION	CO-070-066	0	26,525
BLACK RIDGE CANYONS	GRAND JUNCTION	CO-070-113	19,595	583
BLACK RIDGE CANYONS WEST	GRAND JUNCTION	CO-070-113A/UT-060-116/7 ⁶	49,142	648
THE PALISADE	GRAND JUNCTION	CO-070-132	0	26,050
DOMINGUEZ CANYON	GRAND JUNCTION	CO-070-150/030-363	73,888	2,245
SEWEMUPMESA	GRAND JUNCTION	CO-070-176/030-310A	18,835	305

Continued next page

RECORD OF DECISION (continued)

WSA Name	Study	WSA Number	Acres Recom- mended for Wilderness	Acres Recom- mended for Non Wilderness
EAGLEMOUNTAIN	GLENWOOD SPRINGS	CO-070-392	330	0
HACK LAKE	GLENWOOD SPRINGS	CO-070-425	10	0
BULL GULCH	GLENWOOD SPRINGS	CO-070-430	10,414	4,586
CASTLE PEAK	GLENWOOD SPRINGS	CO-070-433	0	11,940
HIGH MESA GRASSLAND RNA	ROYAL GORGE	CO-ISA-001 (-050-009)	0	680
NORTH SAND HILLS NATURAL AREA	KREMMLING	CO-ISA-002 (-010-108)	0	791
NEEDLE ROCK NATURAL AREA	UNCOMPAGRE	CO-ISA-003 (-030-229b)	0	80
RARE LIZARD AND SNAKE NATURAL AREA	SAN JUAN	CO-ISA-004 (-030-263)	0	443
POWDERHORN P.A.	GUNNISON BASIN	CO-ISA-005 (-030-089)	<u>48,115</u>	<u>7,022</u>
			395,792	376,030

¹ Adjoining WSA acres (620) in Utah will be included in Utah Statewide Report.

² Adjoining WSA acres (3,200) in Utah will be included in Utah Statewide Report.

³ Adjoining WSA acres (3,900) in Utah will be included in Utah Statewide Report.

⁴ Adjoining WSA acres (1,008) in Utah will be included in Utah Statewide Report.

⁵ Adjoining WSA acres (6,676) in Utah will be included in Utah Statewide Report.

⁶ Adjoining WSA acres (5,200) in Utah will be included in Utah Statewide Report.

* Note: Minor variations between acreages listed in table and acreages in EISs are due to improved measurement accuracy, corrected errors, and map updating.

**COLORADO
WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT**

**Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

October 1991

**Table 1 - SECTION 603 WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS,
5,000 ACRES OR LARGER**

UNIT NUMBER	UNIT NAME	DISTRICT	COLORADO ACRES STUDIED
CO-010-001/UT-080-419	BULL CANYON	CRAIG	13,187
CO-010-002	WILLOW CREEK	CRAIG	13,503
CO-010-003	SKULL CREEK	CRAIG	14,050
CO-010-007A	BLACK MOUNTAIN	CRAIG	9,932
CO-010-007C	WINDY GULCH	CRAIG	12,274
CO-010-046	OIL SPRING MOUNTAIN	CRAIG	17,740
CO-010-155	TROUBLESOME	CRAIG	8,250
CO-010-208/UT-080-103	WEST COLD SPRING	CRAIG	14,482
CO-010-214/UT-080-113	DIAMOND BREAKS	CRAIG	32,680
CO-010-230	CROSS MOUNTAIN	CRAIG	14,081
CO-030-208	REDCLOUD PEAK	MONTROSE	36,722
CO-030-241	HANDIES PEAK	MONTROSE	16,664
CO-030-251	MENEFEE MOUNTAIN	MONTROSE	7,089
CO-030-252	WEBER MOUNTAIN	MONTROSE	6,303
CO-030-265/UT-060-229	CROSS CANYON	MONTROSE	11,580
CO-030-265A/UT-060-227	SQUAW/PAPOOSE CANYONS	MONTROSE	4,611
CO-030-265D	CAHONE CANYON	MONTROSE	8,960
CO-030-286	MCKENNA PEAK	MONTROSE	19,398
CO-030-290	DOLORIS RIVER CANYON	MONTROSE	29,615
CO-030-300	TABEGUACHE CREEK	MONTROSE	7,769
CO-030-353	CAMEL BACK	MONTROSE	10,402
CO-030-370B	ADOBE BADLANDS	MONTROSE	10,425
CO-030-388	GUNNISON GORGE	MONTROSE	22,078
CO-050-002	BROWNS CANYON	CANON CITY	6,614
CO-050-013	MCINTYRE HILLS	CANON CITY	16,650
CO-050-014	LOWER GRAPE CREEK	CANON CITY	11,220
CO-050-016	BEAVER CREEK	CANON CITY	26,150
CO-050-017	UPPER GRAPE CREEK	CANON CITY	10,200
CO-050-141	SAN LUIS HILLS	CANON CITY	10,240
CO-070-009	DEMAREE CANYON	GRAND JUNCTION	21,050
CO-070-066	LITTLE BOOK CLIFFS	GRAND JUNCTION	26,525
CO-070-113	BLACK RIDGE CANYONS	GRAND JUNCTION	20,178
CO-070-113A/UT-060-116/7	BLACK RIDGE CANYONS WEST	GRAND JUNCTION	49,790
CO-070-132	THE PALISADE	GRAND JUNCTION	26,050
CO-070-150/030-363	DOMINGUEZ CANYON	GRAND JUNCTION	76,133
CO-070-176/030-310A	SEWEMUP MESA	GRAND JUNCTION	19,140
CO-070-430	BULL GULCH	GRAND JUNCTION	15,000
CO-070-433	CASTLE PEAK	GRAND JUNCTION	11,940
CO-ISA-005	POWDERHORN P.A.	MONTROSE	55,137

Note: Utah acres are reported in Utah Statewide report.

Areas Studied under Section 202 of FLPMA

The WSAs in the second category are studied under the planning authority of Section 202 of FLPMA and are generally less than 5,000 acres in size and are contigu-

ous to Forest Service or National Park Service designated wilderness or study areas, and are, therefore, of sufficient size to make practical their preservation in an unimpaired condition. Eleven of these are included in this report.

Table 2 - SECTION 202 WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS, LESS THAN 5,000 ACRES

UNIT NUMBER	UNIT NAME	DISTRICT	COLORADO ACRES STUDIED
CO-010-104	PLATTE RIVER CONTIGUOUS	CRAIG	30
CO-010-224	ANT HILLS	CRAIG	4,354
CO-010-224A	CHEW WINTER CAMP	CRAIG	1,320
CO-010-226	PETERSON DRAW	CRAIG	5,160
CO-010-229D	VALE OF TEARS	CRAIG	7,420
CO-030-085	BILL HARE GULCH	MONTROSE	406
CO-030-086	LARSON CREEK	MONTROSE	902
CO-030-217	AMERICAN FLATS	MONTROSE	4,800
CO-050-135	SAND CASTLE	CANON CITY	1,284
CO-070-392	EAGLE MOUNTAIN	GRAND JUNCTION	330
CO-070-425	HACK LAKE	GRAND JUNCTION	10

"Instant Study Areas"

The third category consists of areas that were formally identified as natural or primitive areas prior to Novem-

ber 1, 1975, and which Section 603 of FLPMA directs to be studied. These areas were identified by BLM as "Instant Study Areas" (ISA). Five such areas were identified in Colorado and are listed in Table 3.

Table 3 - INSTANT STUDY AREAS

NAME OF ISA	ACREAGE
CO-ISA-001 HIGH MESA GRASSLAND RESEARCH NATURAL AREA	680
CO-ISA-002 NORTH SAND HILLS NATURAL AREA	791
CO-ISA-003 NEEDLE ROCK NATURAL AREA	80
CO-ISA-004 RARE LIZARD AND SNAKE NATURAL AREA	443
CO-ISA-005 POWDERHORN PRIMITIVE AREA	55,137*

**Acreage varies from original ISA acreage due to improved measurement and the inclusion of some adjacent areas with wilderness characteristics.*

Each of these was studied and sent to Congress as part of a national package of Instant Study Areas for BLM in 1985. These have not received action by Congress and the studies are, therefore, included in this package. Only Powderhorn is large enough to contain wilderness characteristics on its own merits, and it has been recommended for wilderness designation to Congress by the President following a separate study and EIS. It was included in legislation introduced by both Colorado senators in the 101st Congress dealing primarily with Forest Service areas. It is expected to continue to be included in any new legislative proposals.

The Wilderness Studies

All of the remaining areas (excluding the ISAs) were studied as part of land use planning efforts, either as

amendments to existing plans or through new resource management plans. Environmental impact statements were prepared assessing the recommendations for Powderhorn and for all of the remaining study areas. These are listed in Table 4 below. As an integral component of these studies, over 40 public meetings and open houses were held and 20 formal hearings were conducted. Over 1,000 oral and written statements were received and analyzed, totaling over 5,000 individual comments. Of the total comments received statewide, approximately 88% could be categorized as in favor of wilderness designations, while 10% were generally opposed. See summary of public comments at the end of this overview for further details. The input and data received from this public involvement have been major factors in the recommendations.

Table 4 - LIST OF WILDERNESS STUDIES

NAME OF STUDY FINAL EIS	DRAFT EIS FILED	FINAL EIS FILED	ACREAGE
GRAND JUNCTION RA	APRIL 1985	NOVEMBER 1989	236,005 ¹
CRAIG DISTRICT	LITTLE SNAKE RA- 2/86 ⁴ WHITE RIVER RA- 10/89 & KREMMLING RA	NOVEMBER 1990	165,408 ²
SAN JUAN RA	APRIL 1984	DECEMBER 1990	94,392 ³
GLENWOOD SPRINGS RA	NOVEMBER 1982	NOVEMBER 1987	27,280
UNCOMPAHGRE BASIN RA	JUNE 1987	MAY 1990	42,905
CANON CITY DISTRICT	SEPTEMBER 1982	DECEMBER 1987	82,868
GUNNISON BASIN AND AMERICAN FLATS/SILVERTON	APRIL 1982	AUGUST 1987	65,415
POWDERHORN INSTANT STUDY AREA	MAY 1980	MAY 1984	48,500

¹Also included 5,000 acres in Utah.

²Also included 7,620 acres in Utah.

³Also included 7,684 acres in Utah.

⁴The Craig District Final EIS encompassed all of the WSAs from two separate draft EISs.

Note: Total acreages vary from the Record of Decision - due to measurement accuracy improvements since completion of some EISs.

**THE RECOMMENDATION - A COMMITMENT
TO BALANCE AND DIVERSITY**

There are 20 areas recommended for designation as wilderness that total 395,792 acres. The remaining 376,030 study acres are recommended for release to other forms of multiple-use management. This would result in wilderness protection of 51% of the study acreage and about 5% of the total 8 million acres of BLM public lands in Colorado.

These recommendations provide a statewide balance of multiple uses and natural protection. They provide for wilderness protection of the most outstanding and representative study areas,

while protecting natural values on many other areas through other management designations, and they allow for potential development of the study areas with the most significant energy and mineral resources.

Table 5 (following) identifies and summarizes the areas recommended for designation and for release. The acreage studied is in some instances greater than the actual WSA acreage. Proposed boundaries have been extended slightly beyond the WSA boundary to make a more manageable or identifiable boundary.

Table 5 - COLORADO WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

WSA NAME	WSA NUMBER	DISTRICT	TOTAL ACRES STUDIED	ACRES RECOMMENDED	ACRES NOT RECOMMENDED
BULLCANYON	CO-010-001/UT-080-419	CRAIG	13,187	13,080	107
WILLOW CREEK	CO-010-002	CRAIG	13,503	13,503	0
SKULL CREEK	CO-010-003	CRAIG	14,050	14,050	0
BLACK MOUNTAIN	CO-010-007A	CRAIG	9,932	0	9,932
WINDY GULCH	CO-010-007C	CRAIG	12,274	0	12,274
OIL SPRING MOUNTAIN	CO-010-046	CRAIG	17,740	0	17,740
PLATTER RIVER CONTIGUOUS	CO-010-104	CRAIG	30	30	0
TROUBLESOME	CO-010-155	CRAIG	8,250	0	8,250
WEST COLD SPRING	CO-010-208/UT-080-103	CRAIG	14,482	0	14,482
DIAMOND BREAKS	CO-010-214/UT-080-113	CRAIG	32,680	32,620	60
ANT HILLS	CO-010-224	CRAIG	4,354	0	4,354
CHEW WINTER CAMP	CO-010-224A	CRAIG	1,320	0	1,320
PETERSON DRAW	CO-010-226	CRAIG	5,160	0	5,160
VALE OF TEARS	CO-010-229D	CRAIG	7,420	0	7,420
CROSS MOUNTAIN	CO-010-230	CRAIG	14,081	14,081	0
BILL HARE GULCH	CO-030-085	MONTROSE	406	0	406
LARSON CREEK	CO-030-086	MONTROSE	902	0	902
RED CLOUD PEAK	CO-030-208	MONTROSE	36,722	0	36,722
AMERICAN FLATS	CO-030-217	MONTROSE	4,800	1,494	3,306
HANDIES PEAK	CO-030-241	MONTROSE	16,664	0	16,664
MENEFEE MOUNTAIN	CO-030-251	MONTROSE	7,089	0	7,089
WEBER MOUNTAIN	CO-030-252	MONTROSE	6,303	0	6,303
CROSS CANYON	CO-030-265/UT-060-229	MONTROSE	11,580	0	11,580
SQUAW/PAPOOSE CANYONS	CO-030-265A/UT-060-227	MONTROSE	4,611	0	4,611
CAHONE CANYON	CO-030-265D	MONTROSE	8,960	0	8,960
MCKENNA PEAK	CO-030-286	MONTROSE	19,398	0	19,398
DOLORES RIVER CANYON	CO-030-290	MONTROSE	29,615	29,415	200

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Table 5 - COLORADO WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

WSA NAME	WSA NUMBER	DISTRICT	TOTAL ACRES STUDIED	ACRES RECOM-MENDED	ACRES NOT RECOM-MENDED
TABEGUACHE CREEK	CO-030-300	MONTROSE	7,769	7,748	21
CAMEL BACK	CO-030-353	MONTROSE	10,402	0	10,402
ADOBE BADLANDS	CO-030-370B	MONTROSE	10,425	0	10,425
GUNNISON GORGE	CO-030-388	MONTROSE	22,078	22,078	0
BROWNS CANYON	CO-050-002	CANON CITY	6,614	6,614	0
MCINTYRE HILLS	CO-050-013	CANON CITY	16,650	0	16,650
LOWER GRAPE CREEK	CO-050-014	CANON CITY	11,220	0	11,220
BEAVER CREEK	CO-050-016	CANON CITY	26,150	20,750	5,400
UPPER GRAPE CREEK	CO-050-017	CANON CITY	10,200	0	10,200
SAND CASTLE	CO-050-135	CANON CITY	1,284	0	1,284
SAN LUIS HILLS	CO-050-141	CANON CITY	10,240	0	10,240
DEMAREE CANYON	CO-070-009	GRAND JUNCTION	21,050	0	21,050
LITTLE BOOK CLIFFS	CO-070-066	GRAND JUNCTION	26,525	0	26,525
BLACK RIDGE CANYONS	CO-070-113	GRAND JUNCTION	20,178	19,595	583
BLACK RIDGE CANYONS WEST	CO-070-113A/ UT-060-116/117	GRAND JUNCTION	49,790	49,142	648
THE PALISADE	CO-070-132	GRAND JUNCTION	26,050	0	26,050
DOMINGUEZ CANYON	CO-070-150/030-363	GRAND JUNCTION	76,133	73,888	2,245
SEWEMUP MESA	CO-070-176/030-310A	GRAND JUNCTION	19,140	18,835	305
EAGLE MOUNTAIN	CO-070-392	GRAND JUNCTION	330	330	0
HACK LAKE	CO-070-425	GRAND JUNCTION	10	10	0
BULL GULCH	CO-070-430	GRAND JUNCTION	15,000	10,414	4,586
CASTLE PEAK	CO-070-433	GRAND JUNCTION	11,940	0	11,940
HIGH MESA GRASSLAND RNA	CO-ISA-001 (-050-009)	CANON CITY	680	0	680
NORTH SAND HILLS NATURAL AREA	CO-ISA-002 (-010-108)	CRAIG	791	0	791
NEEDLE ROCK NATURAL AREA	CO-ISA-003	MONTROSE	80	0	80
RARE LIZARD AND SNAKE NATURAL AREA	CO-ISA-004 (-030-263)	MONTROSE	443	0	443
POWDERHORN P.A.	CO-ISA-005	MONTROSE	<u>55,137</u>	<u>48,115</u>	<u>7,022</u>
STATEWIDE TOTALS			771,822	395,792	376,030

Note: Utah acreages are reported in Utah Statewide Report.

Areas Recommended Suitable

The recommended areas are made up principally of 14 proposed new wilderness areas, and four smaller additions to existing Forest Service-designated wilderness areas.

These areas represent some of the most outstanding natural public lands in Colorado. They include parts of the most spectacular canyons on the major river systems in Colorado, such as Ruby Canyon on the Colorado River (Black Ridge Canyons WSAs), the Dolores River Canyon WSA, the Cross Mountain WSA on the Yampa River, the Gunnison Gorge WSA, and Browns Canyon WSA on the Arkansas River. They range from the alpine Cannibal Plateau and Powderhorn Lakes to desert canyons with riparian systems, waterfalls, and endangered cactus in Dominguez Canyon and Tabeguache Canyon. (See map attached for locations of individual areas.)

They represent remote, pristine mesa tops with colorful history such as Sewemup Mesa to isolated badlands like Skull Creek and Bull Canyon, and even more remote and rugged canyons in Diamond Breaks flanking historic and isolated Browns Park. In contrast, the truly pristine maze of Black Ridge Canyons and a collection of a dozen arches are literally within view of I-70 and Grand Junction, the largest city on the West Slope, while the little known canyons and cascades of Beaver Creek are within 15 miles of Colorado Springs on the Front Range. Bull Gulch on the south bank of the Colorado River adjoins the major Denver to San Francisco AMTRAK route and is viewed by hundreds of AMTRAK passengers every day, yet is estimated to receive less than 700 visitors a year.

Areas Recommended Nonsuitable

The areas recommended nonsuitable include nearly all of the high potential oil and gas resource areas, including the controversial Oil Springs Mountain and Little Bookcliffs, the latter of which also contains a thriving wild horse herd. Other areas were judged to have natural values of lesser significance, although they have minimal competing resource values. These include McKenna Peak, Weber Mountain, McIntyre Hills, Windy Gulch, and Adobe Badlands, as well as several others. Two areas, Upper and Lower Grape Creek, are not considered feasible to manage as wilderness due to water management prerogatives of the manager of an upstream reservoir.

Nevertheless, the natural values on most of these areas will continue to be protected through other forms of administrative management restrictions. Approximately 110,000 acres currently have ACEC designations, are designated all or partly as no surface occupancy (NSO), or include off-highway vehicle closures. It is expected that scheduled or ongoing land use plans will result in additional protective designations.

Three areas, Cross Canyon, Squaw Papoose Canyon, and Cahone Canyon have major Anasazi ruins, are within the Anasazi ACEC and are also high potential oil and gas areas. In these, the cultural sites will be protected by NSO and OHV closures in the canyons, while allowing leasing and production to potentially occur from the canyon rims.

One area, San Luis Hills, has limited outstanding natural values except that it would represent a unique ecosystem type¹ within the National Wilderness System. This ecosystem is also not represented in any other study areas in any state.

¹ Rocky Mountain fescue/mountain mahly prairie. BLM's study policy uses the Bailey Kuchler ecoregion and potential natural vegetation classification to identify ecosystems.

KEY STUDY ISSUES

Wilderness Values

Wilderness values, including naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, would be maintained on 395,792 acres of BLM public lands, which would be designated wilderness, 51% of the total study acreage. Solitude and primitive recreation opportunities would be expanded in a diversity of settings on a year-round basis. Recreational uses include rafting, hiking, hunting, fishing, backpacking, rock climbing, nature photography, and sightseeing.

There would be six new ecosystems added to the NWPS in Colorado, compared to a total of seven currently within designated wilderness in the state. In addition, several of these ecosystems are only minimally represented in the NWPS nationwide. Significant supplemental values would be preserved, including archaeological sites, critical game habitat, bighorn sheep habitat, endangered fish, plant, and raptor habitat, unique vegetation communities, outstanding representative riparian communities, and unusual land forms.

Although some wilderness values would be diminished on the remaining 376,030 acres released to other forms of multiple-use management, many of the natural values would be protected by administrative restrictions on OHVs or mineral development. Only on three areas totaling about 65,000 acres are natural values projected to be substantially diminished, as a result of extensive oil and gas development (Demaree Canyon, Little Bookcliffs, and Oil Spring Mountain).

Recreation

Recreation use is an important component of the multiple-use management of the proposed wilderness areas. It is especially important in river areas already heavily used such as Gunnison Gorge, Browns Canyon, Dolores River Canyon, and Black Ridge Canyons. While some of these areas are at or near carrying capacity now, others are expected to

receive substantially increased use following designation.

Because of the outstanding primitive recreation opportunities found on the proposed areas, this wilderness proposal is an integral component of the Colorado Recreation 2000 Plan entitled *Recreation Futures*. Of the 14 new wilderness areas proposed for designation, only five are not within special recreation management areas. In addition, two areas (Sewemup Mesa, and Beaver Creek) compose much of the viewshed of the two BLM designated backcountry byways in Colorado, and another seven¹ are viewed by thousands of motorists on major state highways daily.

Because these areas are essentially roadless by definition, few currently used off-highway vehicle routes would be closed within the proposed areas. Nevertheless, some unmaintained "ways" are currently used and will be closed. This is estimated to total less than 50 miles of ways that will no longer be available for motorized use. This represents less than one-half of one percent of the available vehicle routes available on public lands.

Of the 22 major areas not recommended, eight are within or adjacent to Special Recreation Management Areas. Recreational values will be maintained on these areas. The remaining 14 areas receive very little recreation use other than hunting. Opportunities for primitive recreation will only be substantially diminished in the three areas with significant projected minimal development. In these areas, motorized OHV recreation may be enhanced by the construction of additional roads.

Energy and Minerals

In order to assure full consideration of mineral values in the wilderness recommendations, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) have completed mineral surveys for each of the WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. In addition, the USGS and BOM summarized the results of these studies and summa-

¹Black Ridge Canyons and Black Ridge Canyons West, Cross Mountain, Bull Canyon, Willow Creek, Skull Creek, Sewemup Mesa

rized the available data on the nonrecommended areas as well in a "Briefing Book" titled *Mineral Summaries, Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Areas, Colorado, 1990*. All of the individual mineral surveys and the briefing book accompany this package for more detailed information.

The mineral reports generally categorize the WSAs by high, moderate, and low potential for mineral occurrence. This potential does not consider the development potential or economics of development, only the likelihood of mineral occurrence. Definitions used in assigning the potential follow.

LOW mineral resource potential is assigned to areas where geologic, geochemical, and geophysical characteristics define a geologic environment in which the existence of resources is unlikely. This broad category embraces areas with dispersed but insignificantly mineralized rocks as well as areas with few or no indications of having been mineralized.

MODERATE mineral resource potential is assigned to areas where geologic, geochemical, and geophysical characteristics indicate a geologic environment favorable for resource occurrence, where interpretations of data indicate a reasonable likelihood of resource accumulation, and (or) where an application of mineral-deposit models indicates favorable ground for the specified type(s) of deposits.

HIGH mineral resource potential is assigned to areas where geologic, geochemical, and geophysical characteristics indicate a geologic environment favorable for resource occurrence, where interpretations of data indicate a high degree of likelihood for resource accumulation, where data support mineral-deposit models indicating presence of resources, and where evidence indicates that mineral concentration has taken place. Assignment of high resource potential to an area requires some positive knowledge that mineral-forming processes have been active in at least part of the area.

UNKNOWN mineral resource potential is assigned to areas where information is inadequate to assign low, moderate, or high levels of resource potential.

Of the 14 recommended new wilderness areas, only a small portion of one area, Cross Mountain, is classified as high potential for oil and gas by Geological Survey, and no pre-FLPMA leases exist in any of the recommended WSAs. Seven nonrecommended areas are classified as high potential for oil and gas and 116 pre-FLPMA leases, covering 43,000 acres, are held by production and still in effect in these areas. Two nonrecommended areas, Red Cloud and Handies Peak, are classified as high potential for precious base mineral occurrence.

In addition, only three other recommended areas are classified as moderate potential for any minerals, leaving 10 of the 14 almost completely in the low potential category for all minerals.

Designation of the recommended areas would remove some 395,792 acres from further mineral exploration and/or possible development. This is approximately 5% of the BLM public lands in Colorado. However, only a very small part of this recommended acreage (approximately 2,500 acres) is classified as high potential for any mineral occurrence. It is, therefore, concluded that impacts to mineral development of this proposal are likely to be minimal, although it must be recognized that the level of uncertainty of the mineral potential categorization is in some cases quite high.

Livestock Grazing

Some portion of all of the recommended WSAs over 5,000 acres in size are used for livestock grazing during some part of the year. No reductions in use levels would occur as a result of wilderness designation. Some inconvenience may result for livestock operators who are accustomed to driving vehicles to range improvements, to distribute salt or feed or to check livestock conditions and distribution. Such vehicle use would be eliminated or curtailed in some instances but would be allowed to continue under permit where nonvehicular access is not practical. Consequently, no serious impacts to livestock operations would occur since they would be allowed to continue using vehicular routes if it is truly necessary for their operation.

In several recommended WSAs, range improvements have been proposed which would probably not be built under wilderness designation. The sum total of these improvements could result in an increase in allotted AUMs of 275. This would

represent a .001% increase in the total AUMs permitted by BLM within these areas that would be foregone. In most cases, improvements can be constructed outside of the WSAs to produce a similar result.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE STUDIES

A total of over 1,100 comments, both oral and written, on the Colorado WSAs were submitted during the formal comment periods for the seven draft wilderness environmental impact statements listed below. These comments included a total of over 5,000 WSA-specific statements.

Approximately 88 percent of the comments received favored wilderness designation for some or all of the WSAs. Approximately 10 percent of the comments generally opposed designation of any wilderness. Two percent of the comments did not appear to favor wilderness or nonwilderness. The comments received on most WSAs were decidedly

weighted towards support for wilderness designation. The public comment section in the individual wilderness study reports accompanying this overview should be referenced for the spread of comments received specific to each area.

Federal, state and local agencies with an interest or jurisdiction within the study areas were asked to comment on each of the EISs. These comments are also summarized in the wilderness study reports.

The total number of comments received on each of the eight study efforts are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6 - SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

STUDY NAME	DRAFT COMMENT PERIOD	TOTAL COMMENTS ON WILDERNESS ISSUE	FINAL EIS RELEASED
POWDERHORN	MAY-JULY 1980	123	MAY 1984
GLENWOOD SPRINGS RA	NOV 1982-FEB 1983	105	OCT 1987
CANON CITY DO	SEPT-NOV 1982	122	DEC 1987
GRAND JUNCTION RA	APR-JULY 1985	62	NOV 1989
UNCOMPAHGRE RA	AUG-NOV 1987	92	MAY 1990
SAN JUAN/SAN MIGUEL	JUNE-AUG 1984	105	DEC 1990
WHITE RIVER/KREMMLING LITTLE SNAKE	OCT 1989-JAN 1990 FEB 1986-MAY 1986	422	NOV 1990
GUNNISON BASIN/ AMERICAN FLATS	APRIL-JUNE 1982	85	AUG 1987

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION RELATIVE TO COLORADO STATEWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Water Rights

The Interior Solicitor and Attorney General concluded in 1988 that the Wilderness Act in itself does not create a federal reserved water right. Only specific Congressional language on actual wilderness designation legislation could provide a federal reserved right. Consequently, it is the Department of the Interior's and BLM's position that filings for any specific beneficial uses would be carried out under Colorado state law and that no federal water right would exist.

Nevertheless, the issue of federal reserved water rights has become the most critical issue in Colorado wilderness legislation. Congress has recently proposed or enacted wilderness legislation specifically providing a federal reserved water right in several states, including Arizona most recently. In the past, Colorado's two U.S. senators have held opposing views on this issue, and Forest Service legislation dealing only with headwaters areas has been stalled for several years because of concerns by water user groups, fearing a precedent of federal water rights in downstream BLM proposed wilderness areas.

It is very important to assure understanding of all involved parties that most of the recommended BLM wilderness areas, in fact, have limited potential water rights implications, even if a federal reserved water right were enacted by Congress. Of the 14 proposed new wilderness designations, two¹ are clearly headwaters areas, six² have only intermittent or small streams flowing through them, and two additional areas have only Forest Service lands above and appear to have very little

potential for conflict³. Only minor conflicts with individual water rights holders appear possible in these areas.

This leaves four areas with significant water resources or apparent potential for conflict.⁴ Even a federal reserved water right on these areas would have no effect on existing water uses or rights. Only changes in water uses and points of diversion that would significantly diminish flows through the wilderness areas could be in any way affected by a federal reserved right. In such a situation, BLM could object to the change if it had a direct and adverse effect on the wilderness values.

In these four areas, an examination of potential wilderness-related water needs, current flow management and protection, along with potential for changes in water uses, could determine whether an actual conflict with potential water uses may exist or whether a federal reserved right would actually have any protective value. For example, the Gunnison Gorge WSA is immediately below the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument, which is in the process of quantifying a federal reserved water right for the Monument. It is possible, perhaps likely, that no additional flow protection would be needed to protect the wilderness values in the Gorge. In a totally different situation, the flow regime through the Dolores River Canyon is controlled by operation of McPhee Dam, which is adjudicated and allows minimal potential for further changes, but does provide for some minimum stream flow protection. A federal reserved right would have no effect on existing operation and may be determined, therefore, to have no effect on water uses, nor on protection of wilderness values.

¹*Powderhorn, Sewemup Mesa*

²*Diamond Breaks, Bull Canyon, Willow Creek/Skull Creek, Black Ridge Canyons, (since only one bank of the Colorado River is proposed), Browns Canyon (also only includes one bank of the Arkansas River) and Bull Gulch*

³*Tabeguache, Dominguez Canyon*

⁴*Dolores Canyon, Gunnison Gorge, Cross Mountain, Beaver Creek*

In summary, the recommended legislation accompanying this package proposes no federal reserved water rights associated with wilderness designation. However, should Congress consider designation with specific water rights language, a case-by-case analysis shows potential for effects on actual future water uses to be limited to a very small number of areas, probably less than four. These would appear to provide excellent opportunities for equitable resolution of the water rights controversy, if each situation is analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Inholdings and Other Prior Rights

The WSAs recommended for wilderness designation contain few inholdings or other prior rights, especially when compared to the overall scattered public land pattern in Colorado. Within the entire 20 areas recommended, there is a total of 8 private inholdings which total 370 acres, and 10 state-owned inholdings totaling 5,416 acres. There are no pre- or post-FLPMA oil and gas leases. There are approximately 14 pre-FLPMA mining claims.

Wilderness Study Areas That Have Been Released

As referenced on page 1, several areas that were designated as WSAs in the Inventory Decision, made in 1980, have subsequently been released from WSA status.

One area, Tepee Draw (5,490 acres, CO-010-228) was released by decision of the Little Snake Resource Management Plan, completed in 1989. This area was originally identified as a "202" area, studied under the optional planning provisions of section 202 of FLPMA. It was studied in the RMP and judged to not provide significant enhancement to the wilderness values of the adjacent Dinosaur National Monument. Several nearby areas, also adjoining Dinosaur National Monument, are not recommended for wilderness designation, but have been retained in WSA status to allow Congressional decision due to public comment. (Ant Hills, 4,354 acres, CO-010-224; Chew Winter Camp, 1,320 acres, CO-010-224A; Peterson Draw, 5,160 acres, CO-010-226; Vale of Tears, 7,420 acres, CO-010-229D).

Another area (Hack Lake, 10 acres, CO-070-425) was studied in the Glenwood Springs RMP. Originally a 3,360 acre WSA adjacent to the Forest Service Flat Tops Wilderness, it was determined to be largely unsuitable for wilderness designation and management, except for two small parcels totaling 10 acres that are located above the rim of the plateau, where most of the Flat Tops Wilderness lies, consequently, the remaining acreage was dropped through the RMP decision in 1984. Neither decision was protested.

Finally, three small areas (Slumgullion Slide, 1,640 acres, CO-030-211; Sparling Gulch, 1,120 acres, CO-030-088; and Friends Creek, 760 acres, CO-030-213), adjacent to the Forest Service Cannibal Plateau Study Area, were released from WSA status when the Forest Service released the contiguous portion of the study area. Without the much larger adjoining Forest Service area, they could not stand alone and be managed as wilderness areas, and were subsequently released by State Director decision announced publicly and in the Federal Register. No comments were received on the decision.

Wilderness Study Areas Not Included in This Report

A total of seven small WSAs identified under section 202 of FLPMA, adjacent to Forest Service study areas, have been studied cooperatively by the Forest Service and are not reported here. All of the areas could not be managed as wilderness without the adjoining Forest Service study areas and are, therefore, dependent upon the designation or release of the larger contiguous areas. They have, therefore, been reported by the Forest Service and are not included in this report.

Four of these areas (Black Canyon, 2,300 acres, CO-050-131; South Piney Creek, 870 acres, CO-050-132B; Papa Keal, 1,020 acres, CO-050-137; and Zapata Creek, 720 acres, CO-050-139B), adjoin the Forest Service Sangre De Cristo study area. These were studied through the Pike-San Isabel Forest Plan and have been proposed for partial designation and partial release in both Forest Service draft legislation and in previous legislation introduced by both Colorado Senators. Of the total 4,910 acres, 3,300 have been recommended for designation and 1,610 for release.

Three other study areas (West Needles Contiguous 1,240 acres, CO-030-229A; Whitehead Gulch, 1,669 acres, CO-030-230B; and Weminuche Contiguous, 1,533 acres, CO-030-238B), are remnants of study areas that were partially exchanged with the Forest Service in a boundary adjustment completed in 1983. They are contiguous to lands now managed

as Forest Service study areas that are recommended for addition to the Weminuche Wilderness. The areas remaining in BLM management, however, are not recommended, largely because of their configuration relative to the Weminuche Wilderness. They would constitute appendages, whereas the areas previously exchanged to the Forest Service complement a logical boundary. The areas were studied cooperatively in the San Juan Forest Plan and have been included for release in Forest Service draft legislation and previously introduced legislation.

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