## WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS INVENTORY UPDATE – 2011

## FORM 1

### Documentation of BLM Wilderness Characteristics Inventory Findings from Previous Inventory on Record

**1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area?**
**No** _____ **Yes** __X_____ (If yes, and if more than one area is within the area, list the names of those areas.):

**a) Inventory Source:** Montana BLM's Initial Inventory (November 1978 – August 1979)

**b) Inventory Area Name(s)/Number(s):**__Al's Creek / MT-066-257__

**c) Map Name(s)/Number(s):** BLM Montana Wilderness Inventory Maps:
Final Initial Inventory Map (August 1979)
Proposed Wilderness Study Decision Map Lewistown & Miles City Districts (March 1980)
Final Inventory Decision Map Lewistown & Miles City Districts (November 1980)

**d) BLM District(s)/Field Office(s):**__Lewistown / Havre Resource Area_____

**2. BLM Inventory Findings on Record:**
*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):*

| **Inventory source:** Montana BLM's Initial Inventory (November 1978 – August 1979) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Area Unique Identifier** | **Sufficient Size? (acres)** | **Naturalness?** | **Outstanding Solitude?** | **Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation?** | **Supplemental Values?** |
| MT-066-257 | YES (25,898) | NO | -- | -- | -- |
| **Comments** | The unit has 20-25 reservoirs, 10-15 miles of fence, one water well, one road with cattleguards that leads to private land, primitive vehicle trails, 1-2 miles of gas pipeline, 10 active gas wells and 10 or more dry gas holes. Many of the oil/gas drilling sites and associated pipelines have been reseeded or cleared of trees. These disruptions along with the 2000-3000 acres of sagebrush spraying have given the area an unnatural appearance. The area was dropped from wilderness consideration in the August 1979 Final Decision. | | | | |

**FORM 2**

**Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics**

a. Area Unique Identifier: Al's Creek - Area 10 Acreage 16,683
*(If the inventory area consists of subunits, list the acreage of each and evaluate each separately).*

(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 X No _____
*(Note: If "No" is checked the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "NA" for the remaining questions below.)*

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

The boundaries of this unit are defined by surrounding State and private lands to the north and east, the 3 Mile Ridge Road to the west and southwest, and the Cow Island Trail to the south.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural? Yes _____ No X N/A_____
*(Note: If "No" is checked the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "NA" for the remaining questions below.)*

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

There are 34 oil/gas wells in this unit which is 70% leased (the 1979 evaluation lists 27 oil/gas wells). 22 of these wells have been abandoned or plugged and abandoned leaving 12 that are currently active. There are several miles of buried oil/gas pipeline and more than 20 miles of vehicle routes within the unit, most of these associated with oil/gas wells while some provide access to private land. There are two oil/gas road right-of-ways and four oil/gas pipeline right-of-ways (See attached map). This area was also included in the proposed South Bears Paw field management plan which is on hold until the RMP is completed.

There are portions of 5 grazing allotments within this unit. The 1979 evaluation lists 20-25 reservoirs, 10-15 miles of fence, one water well, and cattleguards on the private access road. At least one reservoir (Ridge Reservoir) has provided a recreational fishery in the past.

Vegetation and topography found within the Al's Creek Unit is typical of the Missouri River breaks region. The unit contains nearly level to rolling upland areas dissected by steep timbered coulees. The most common rangeland vegetation community is the sagebrush/grassland type. These occur on open ridges in timbered areas and cover large areas of the landscape that are nearly level to slightly sloping. This habitat type features a canopy of Wyoming big sagebrush with an herbaceous understory dominated by rhizomatous grasses and bunchgrasses. Timbered coulees are common and contain both ponderosa pine and Douglas fir habitat types. Douglas fir

is more widespread on north-facing slopes while ponderosa pine tolerates drier sites such as south and west-facing slopes.

The ID Team attempted to adjust the size of the Al's Creek Unit from 16,683 acres down to approximately 11,700 acres to reduce the impacts from natural gas development. These adjustments were made to the northwest and northeast corners of the unit. In addition, the private land referred to as "Milk River Bills" (southeast corner) was removed from the unit by following existing roads and the private/public land boundary. Using this new boundary, the unit contains (6) cattleguards, 19.4 miles of interior barb wire fence, forty miles of vehicle routes used by recreationists, the grazing permittees and gas and pipeline companies, 5.2 miles of gas pipeline and 34 stockwater reservoirs.

(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__X____

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

(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_____ No_____ N/A__X____
*(Note: If "No" is checked for both 3 and 4 the areas does not have wilderness characteristics; check "NA" for question 5.)*

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

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

Description:

## Summary of Analysis*

**Area Unique Identifier:** Al's Creek - Area 10

**Summary**

Results of analysis: *(Note: explain the inventory findings for the entirety of the inventory unit. When wilderness characteristics have been identified in an area that is smaller than the size of the total inventory unit, explain why certain portions of the inventory unit are not included within the lands with wilderness characteristics (e.g. the inventory found that certain parts lacked naturalness).)*

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? Yes X No_____

2. Does the area appear to be natural? Yes_____ No X N/A_____

3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? Yes_____ No_____ N/A X

4. Does the area have supplemental values? Yes_____ No_____ N/A X

Check one:

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

X The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

**Prepared by (team members):**

| Name | Title | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Kathy Tribby | Outdoor Recreation Planner | 3/15/2011 |
| Craig Miller | Wildlife Biologist | 3/23/2011 |
| Kirsten Boyle | Natural Resource Specialist | 3/24/2011 |
| Mitch Forsyth | Range Specialist | 3/25/2011 |
| Abby Hall | Range Technician | 3/29/2011 |
| Brian Hockett | Planning & Environmental Coordinator | 4/6/2011 |
| Barney Whiteman | Petroleum Engineer | 3/15/2011 |

**Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):**

**Name:** Stanley James **Title:** Field Manager

**Date:** 6/26/12

**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.*