

**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 (Go to Form 2) \_\_\_\_\_ 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):** Moss Creek/MT-064-343, South Valley/MT-064-362

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/Valley 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):*

<b>Inventory source: Montana BLM's Initial Inventory (November 1978 – August 1979)</b>					
<b>Area Unique Identifier</b>	<b>Sufficient Size? (acres)</b>	<b>Naturalness?</b>	<b>Outstanding Solitude?</b>	<b>Outstanding Primitive &amp; Unconfined Recreation?</b>	<b>Supplemental Values?</b>
MT-064-343	YES (20,160)	--	--	--	--
<b>Comments</b>	Though several vehicle ways intrude this unit, it exhibits a high degree of natural screening. The unit may be "apparently" natural.				
MT-064-362	YES (188,410)	NO	--	--	--
<b>Comments</b>	Though containing over 180,000 acres, this unit is an aggregate divided by roads, Private and State property of significant size, and heavily developed. Little, if any of this acreage possesses any remnants of wilderness characteristic. The unit clearly and obviously doesn't meet the requirements for study area status.				
<b>Inventory source: Montana BLM's Intensive Inventory (August 1979 - November 1980)</b>					
MT-064-343	YES (20,160)	YES	NO	NO	--
<b>Comments</b>	The unit is not considered suitable for future wilderness study. Although the area appears natural, its flat topography and lack of ecological diversity allows for neither an outstanding opportunity for solitude nor primitive and unconfined type of recreation.				



## FORM 2

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

a. Area Unique Identifier Moss Coulee - Area 56 Acreage 14,337  
(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.)

This area contains over 5,000 acres of contiguous BLM-administered lands.

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

The southeast boundary of this unit is defined by a fence that runs through sections 1, 10, 11, 14, 15, 22, 26, & 27 in T28N, R34E. This new boundary was established during the field inspection to remove roughly 4500 acres from the unit that contained a large amount of fences, reservoirs and noticeable vehicle routes, some of which receive periodic maintenance. Two other maintained roads define the north and south boundaries of the unit. The western boundary follows ownership and the Kluck County Road along the northwest edge of the unit.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural? Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_ 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):

The topography in the unit varies from nearly level to rolling prairie that is sporadically dissected with coulees and breaklands. Lost Coulee and its southern tributary support riparian woodland communities dominated by plains cottonwood. Scattered boxelder, silver buffaloberry and common chokecherry are also present in these major drainages. The terraces adjacent to the riparian areas support stands of silver sagebrush while Wyoming big sagebrush is common across large expanses of upland habitat in the unit. Western and/or thickspike wheatgrass are the dominant and diagnostic grass species associated with Wyoming big sagebrush. Green needlegrass, needle-and-thread and prairie junegrass are common bunchgrasses and prairie coneflower, purple prairie clover and silver-leaved scurfpea are common forbs.

After adjusting the unit boundaries as described above, there are approximately 5 miles of interior fence left within the unit. Numerous reservoirs and a couple miles of 2-track vehicle routes remain in the unit after the boundary adjustments, but all these man-made features were determined to be substantially unnoticeable during the field inspection.



There are four inholdings - two sections of state land and approximately 1160 acres of private land in two parcels. Livestock grazing on these private and state lands is managed in conjunction with adjacent public land grazing allotments.

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

The rolling prairie, breaks and coulees in this unit provide sufficient topographic screening for visitors to avoid the sights, sounds, and evidence of other people in the area. From some of the higher vantage points within the unit, the view stretches on for miles with very little evidence of man's work even on adjacent ownerships.

(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   
(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):

It's possible to participate in a variety of primitive and unconfined recreation activities in the Moss Coulee unit including hiking, backpacking, hunting, horseback riding, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, photography and sightseeing for botanical, zoological and geological features. Big game and upland bird hunting are currently the most popular recreational pursuits in the unit.

(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value)? Yes  No  N/A

Description:

Both greater sage-grouse strutting grounds and sharp-tailed grouse dancing grounds occur in the unit. The diversity of native grasses in the unit provides quality grassland bird and waterfowl nesting habitat. Pronghorn and mule deer are year-long residents. Mule deer winter in the northern portion of the unit and there's some pronghorn winter range in the southeast end of the area.

Cultural Resources, both known and unknown within the unit boundary are present and may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Sites types located within the general area include prehistoric cultural resources such as subsistence gathering and processing areas, rock alignments, spiritual locales and numerous habitation sites. Historic cultural resources include the physical remains of sites associated with farming, ranching, railroad, mining and the homestead era. It is important to note that physical manifestations associated with prehistoric and historic cultural resources are rarely apparent or visually dominating to the overall landscape.



### Summary of Analysis\*

Area Unique Identifier: Moss Coulee - Area 56

#### 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).)*

New boundaries were established during the field inspection to remove roughly 4500 acres that lacked naturalness and two maintained roads redefined the north and south boundaries of the unit.

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.

Prepared by (team members):

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Kathy Tribby	Outdoor Recreation Planner	6/15/2011
Fritz Prellwitz	Wildlife Biologist	3/22/2011
Brian Hockett	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	July 19, 2011
Ray Neumiller	Rangeland Management Specialist	July 19, 2011

Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):

Name: Steve Wilson Title: Adm FM

Date: 6-28-2012

*\*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.*

