

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):** Rock Creek/MT-064-355

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):

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-064-355	YES (14,440)	NO	--	--	--
Comments	This unit might be considered were it not for the numerous vehicle ways which intrude and the extremely poor ownership pattern. The only part of this unit with wilderness value is basically some 800 to 1,000 acres in a narrow band near the center.				

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

a. Area Unique Identifier Rock Creek - Area 84 Acreage 9264
(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 Pratt Road delineates a portion of the northeast boundary and a maintained road runs along part of the western boundary of the unit. During the field inspection a route analysis determined that the vehicle route that runs through sections 8, 17 & 20 (T33N, R35E) met the definition of a wilderness inventory road, so the boundary was adjusted to exclude the \pm 2600 acres that lies southeast of this "road." The remaining unit boundaries of this unit are generally defined by surrounding state and private lands.

(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):

Native grasses in this unit are typical of the northern glaciated plains and includes western wheatgrass, thick-spike wheatgrass, green needlegrass, needle-and-thread, blue grama and several bluegrass species. Silver sagebrush is the most common shrub in the prairie setting while steep-sided draws support isolated stands of silver buffaloberry and common chokecherry. Rocky Mountain Juniper occurs on the northern slopes of draws and coulees associated with Rock Creek Canyon. A few green ash and boxelder trees are present in some of the coulees in the unit while plains cottonwood can be observed along Rock Creek. The Glasgow Field Office is currently using leafy spurge flea beetles as biological control agents to manage the leafy spurge infestation observed in Jones Coulee.

There are 2 unfenced private in-holdings of native rangeland in the unit. Livestock grazing on these private lands is managed in conjunction with adjacent public land grazing allotments. Portions of the unit have been cultivated in the past, but all have reverted back to native vegetation (go back lands). Barely visible linear piles of rock along some old field edges are the only remaining evidence of the previous farming activity. There are a couple reservoirs and several miles of fence and 2-track vehicle routes crossing the unit. One plugged and abandoned

oil well in the northeastern end of the unit was apparently a dry hole. All these human-made features were considered to be substantially unnoticeable during the field inspection.

(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 bottomlands in this unit provide sufficient topographic screening for visitors to avoid the sights, sounds, and evidence of other people in the area. The numerous coulees that drain into Rock Creek Canyon provide additional opportunities for visitors to find seclusion in the unit.

(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 Rock Creek 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:

Rock Creek is one of the few perennial streams on the Hi-Line that flows through a largely intact prairie setting. The extensive exposures of sandstone along Rock Creek Canyon provide outstanding scenery while the riparian area along Rock Creek provides habitat for native amphibians. 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 nesting habitat. Pronghorn winter range occurs throughout the unit while mule deer often winter in the eastern half of the unit.

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 not always apparent or visually dominating to the overall landscape.

Summary of Analysis*

Area Unique Identifier: Rock Creek - Area 84

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 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):

Name	Title	Date
Fritz Prellwitz	Wildlife Biologist	3/23/2011
Kathy Tribby	Outdoor Recreation Planner	6/10/2011
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Jordan Thompson	Rangeland Management Specialist	7/13/2011
Steve Klessens	Field Manager (Acting)	7/13/2011
Barney Whiteman	Petroleum Engineer	

Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):

Name: Steve Klessens

Title: Acting 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.

