

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):** Frenchman Creek East/MT-064-359

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-064-359	YES (44,840) (BLM)	--	--	--	--
Comments	There are very few compromising features existing in this unit. They consist mainly of minor stock reservoirs, and low profile vehicle ways. The unit is a good example of north plains type country. The two streams draining this region are as near perennial as any in Valley County. It is also valuable to note that this unit borders Canada, and is adjoined for several miles with the proposed "Canadian Grasslands National Park." The unit is recommended for intensive study.				
Inventory source: Montana BLM's Intensive Inventory (August 1979 - November 1980)					
MT-064-359	YES (44,840) (BLM)	NO	NO	NO	YES
Comments	The Frenchman Creek East Unit will not be studied for potential addition to the National Wilderness System. None of the three segments contain outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation due to the configuration of the segments and the great visibility from the open ridge tops found throughout the area.				

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

a. Area Unique Identifier Frenchman Creek East* Acreage 47,311
(If the inventory area consists of subunits, list the acreage of each and evaluate each separately).

* This write-up includes Area 91A (Frenchman Creek East) and Area 91B (Snake Creek). Area 91A contains 24,999 acres and Area 91B contains 22,312 acres.

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

Both areas contain over 5,000 acres of contiguous BLM-administered lands.

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

The western boundary of the unit is primarily defined by adjacent private and state lands. The southern boundary and a portion of the eastern boundary are clipped to right-of-way MTM 28895 while the remainder of the eastern boundary follows the Duncan Road. During the field inspection a route analysis concluded that the Snake Creek Road meets the definition of a wilderness inventory road, which essentially splits the original unit in half – north to south. Both halves still meet the size criteria for wilderness characteristics. The following discussion addresses the original unit as a whole - no attempt has been made to prorate the miles of fence and vehicle routes or supplemental values to the "new" subunits.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural? Yes 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 include western and 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, but rarely is its coverage dense enough to type to a shrubland. Bearded wheatgrass and little bluestem are common grasses in the breaks and badlands while creeping juniper, skunkbush sumac and isolated stands of silver buffaloberry and common chokecherry are scattered across the rougher portions of the unit. Plains cottonwood is the dominant can be observed in the riparian area along Frenchman Creek.

There are portions of 16 grazing allotments within the unit, approximately 40 miles of interior fences and over 80 miles of vehicle routes. Small reservoirs are scattered throughout the unit.

There are 7 plugged and abandoned and 3 abandoned gas wells on this unit which is 1% leased. There is 1 mine claim within the unit.

There are four unfenced sections of state land and approximately 2600 acres of private land inholdings in the unit. Livestock grazing on the comingled private and state lands is managed in conjunction with adjacent public land grazing allotments.

With the exception of a couple reservoirs near the Snake Creek Road the majority of the man-made features described above were considered substantially unnoticeable during the field inspection. While some private haylands are visible in the bottoms along in the Frenchman Creek in the southern end of the unit, much of the private land that can be viewed in the distance is no longer cropped. Seeded back to grass, these lands blend in to the overall landscape much better now than they did when they were farmed.

(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):

From several vantage points along the east side of the Frenchman drainage one can see for miles, but the eroded breaks and badlands provide sufficient topographic screening for visitors to avoid the sights, sounds, and evidence of other people in the area. The rolling prairie, hills and occasional breaks in the eastern half of the unit provide additional opportunities for seclusion. Overall, the remoteness and relatively large size of the units (both over 22,000 acres) combined with the dissected and broken topography provides 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
(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 Frenchman Creek East 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 area attracting hunters from across Montana as well as many nonresident hunters.

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

Description:

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.

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. Mule deer winter range is found throughout the unit while the west half of the unit provides pronghorn winter range. Black-tailed prairie dogs are also found in the unit.

Summary of Analysis*

Area Unique Identifier: Frenchman Creek East and Snake Creek – Areas 91A & 91B

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
Kathy Tribby	Outdoor Recreation Planner	6/15/2011
Fritz Prellwitz	Wildlife Biologist	3/22/2011
Kirsten Boyle	Natural Resource Specialist	3/24/11
Micah Lee	Realty Specialist	06/24/2011
Brian Hockett	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	7/13/2011
Jordan Thompson	Rangeland Management Specialist	7/13/2011
Steve Klessens	Field Manager (Acting)	7/13/2011
Barney Whiteman	Petroleum Engineer	6/15/2011

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.

