

Appendix K: Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

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K. Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

K.1 Background

In an increasingly developed world, public lands with wilderness characteristics (as defined in the Wilderness Act, 16 U.S.C. 1131 (C)) provide social, cultural, economic, scientific, and ecological benefits for present and future generations. Many of America's most treasured landscapes include public lands with wilderness characteristics that provide visitors with rare opportunities for solitude and personal reflection. In addition, many of these lands have culturally significant and sacred sites important to native tribes. Many people and communities value these lands for hunting and fishing, observing wildlife, hiking, and other non-motorized and non-mechanized recreational uses. Lands with Wilderness characteristics are also important for their scientific, cultural and historic objects, which further our understanding of human and natural history, the functions of healthy ecosystems, and how human activities change our world. They also provide a variety of valuable ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, watershed protection, and air purification, and may contain habitat for numerous threatened and endangered species and other rare biological resources worthy of protection. Managing an area to protect its wilderness characteristics provides unique opportunities and benefits for present and future generations that may otherwise be irreparably lost.

Management of this resource is thus a high priority for the BLM, and the natural state of such lands should be protected to the extent possible, consistent with the BLM's planning and management authorities and its multiple-use mission. The BLM shall protect Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWCs) when undertaking land use planning and when making project-level decisions by avoiding impairment of their wilderness characteristics unless the BLM concludes, as part of its decision-making process, that impairment of wilderness characteristics is appropriate and consistent with applicable requirements of law and other resource management considerations. Where the BLM concludes that authorization of uses that may impair wilderness characteristics is appropriate, the BLM shall document the reasons for its determination and consider measures to minimize impacts on those wilderness characteristics. Where the BLM concludes that protection of wilderness characteristics is appropriate, the BLM shall protect the wilderness resources through land use planning.

K.2 Purpose and Authority

Principal authorities affecting the consideration of LWCs in the planning process are:

- A. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.* (FLPMA), exclusive of 43 U.S.C. 1782. FLPMA specifically states that preserving and protecting certain public lands in their natural condition is part of the BLM's mission. *See* 43 U.S.C. 1701(a)(8). FLPMA provides direction for inventories in Sections 102(a)(2), 201(a), and 202(c)(4) and (9), and land use planning in Section 202. These sections direct the BLM to prepare and maintain an inventory of all public lands and their resources and values. These sections also direct the Bureau to rely, to the extent available, on inventory information in the development of land use plans.

- B. The Wilderness Act of 1964, 16 U.S.C. 1131 *et seq.*
- C. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.* (NEPA)
- D. Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976, 42 U.S.C. 6501 *et seq.* (NPRPA)
- E. Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Section 1320, 43 U.S.C. 1784
- F. Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, 40 CFR 1500-1508
- G. BLM Regulations, 43 CFR 1601-1610, 43 CFR 2360.0-1 *et seq.*
- H. Department of the Interior (DOI) NEPA Regulations, 43 CFR Parts 46.
- I. BLM Manuals 6310 (Inventory Process) and 6320 (Planning Process).

K.3 Process

Regardless of past inventory, the BLM must maintain, i.e. keep current, an inventory of the wilderness resource on public lands. Keeping an inventory current requires gathering information and preparing a permanent file for any new inventory. It is essential that an adequate record of the inventory and subsequent updates be maintained that documents inventory findings, including relevant narratives, maps, photographs, citizen information, and any other relevant information. The wilderness inventory may need to be updated when:

1. The public or the BLM identifies wilderness characteristics as an issue during scoping in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis;
2. An RMP is being developed or an amendment or revision is being initiated;
3. The BLM has new information concerning resource conditions, including where the public has submitted new wilderness characteristics information that meets the BLM's minimum threshold.
4. The BLM has determined that the land appears to have wilderness characteristics and a proposed project may impair those apparent characteristics; or
5. Additional lands are acquired

The BLM must document the existing conditions as opposed to potential conditions that may result from a future planning decision. Where inventory data exists, a team familiar with the area may conduct much of the inventory using available information (e.g., existing maps and photos) and field checking as necessary. The wilderness inventory process directive does not mean that the BLM must conduct a completely new inventory and disregard the inventory information that it already has for a particular area. Rather, the BLM must ensure that its current inventory is updated with appropriate information to conform to FLPMA and BLM Manuals 6310 and 6320.

When citizen information regarding wilderness characteristics is received, BLM staff will document the submitted materials including: date of submission; name of proponent; name of proposal and/or area identified by the proponent; BLM District(s) and Field Office(s) affected; type of material submitted (e.g., narrative, map, photo); and, whether or not the public information meets the minimum standard for further review by BLM.

The minimum standard that citizen information must meet in order for BLM to consider the information during a wilderness inventory update process requires a submission of the following information to BLM: (a) a map of sufficient detail adequate to determine specific boundaries of the area in question; (b) a detailed narrative that describes the wilderness characteristics of the area and documents show that information significantly differs from the information in prior inventories conducted by BLM regarding the wilderness values of the area; and, (c) photographic documentation.

When citizen information regarding wilderness characteristics meets the minimum standard for further review, as soon as practicable, the BLM staff will evaluate the information regarding the validity of proposed boundaries of the area(s), the existence of roads and other boundary features, the size of the area(s), and the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics. This evaluation may be based on relevant information available in the office (prior BLM inventories, interdisciplinary team knowledge, aerial photographs, field observations, maps, etc.). Field checking may also be needed. BLM Staff will compare existing BLM knowledge with the submitted information and determine if the conclusion reached in previous BLM inventories remains valid, and will document the findings. These findings will be available to the public and BLM will retain a record of the evaluation and findings as evidence of BLM's consideration.

When the BLM confirms that LWCs exist, BLM Manual 6320 establishes the BLM's policy on considering LWCs in land use plans, land use plan amendments or revisions, and management of LWCs as administratively designated Wild Lands. The guidance also establishes the BLM's policy for considering project-level decisions in areas that have not yet been inventoried and analyzed consistent with the new policy described in BLM Manual 6310.

K.4 Unit Descriptions and Evaluation Summary

A total of 13 separate units, some with multiple tracts, were identified as initially meeting the criteria identified in BLM Manual 6310. These units are identified below and evaluated. Some additional areas were identified as possibly meeting the size criteria, but it was readily apparent to the BLM staff that they are bisected by obvious roads and were thus not evaluated further. However, when any doubt existed, the staff reviewed the area.

K.4.1 Pryor Mountain Unit

K.4.1.1 Prior Review:

Tract 1 is approximately 2,873 acres in size. This parcel is separated from The Pryor Mountains WSA by an established road (Sykes Ridge Road) but is adjacent to the Big Horn Tack-On WSA to the south and lands administratively endorsed for wilderness designation by the NPS in the

Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area to the southeast. Private lands form the northern boundary and the west boundary is a combination of a vehicle road, private lands and Custer National Forest lands. Previously it was a separate parcel of the Big Horn Tack-On Study Area since it was isolated by a Montana State land parcel. The other portion of the Study Area was designated as the Big Horn WSA. The state land was subsequently acquired and the Tract is now contiguous with the WSA.

Tract 2 is approximately 497 acres in size. It is adjacent to the Pryor Mountains WSA to the west, south, and north, while the Sykes Ridge road forms the boundary to the east.

Tract 3 is approximately 143 acres in size. It is adjacent to the Big Horn Tack-On WSA on the north, east, and south sides. The west side is the Sykes Ridge road. It is separated from Tract 2 by the road and together they compose a section of land which was formally Montana State lands. They were not previously inventoried for wilderness character since they were acquired after the inventory effort. They were subsequently recommended for potential wilderness designation in the *Montana Statewide Wilderness Study Report* (1991) and were noted as being outside the WSA.

Tract 4 is approximately 445 acres in size. It is adjacent to the Pryor Mountains WSA to the west, south, and north, while the road forms the boundary to the east. It was initially dropped from wilderness consideration and not included in either the Pryor Mountain or the Big Horn Tack-On WSAs due to the human use pattern at the time, although it was recommended for possible wilderness designation in the *Montana Statewide Wilderness Study Report* (1991).

Tract 5 is an irregular shape and the boundary is formed by a combination of vehicle routes and a ROW. It is approximately 512 acres in size with 224 acres in Wyoming and 288 acres in Montana. The Pryor Mountains WSA is located to the west and the Big Horn Tack-on WSA is located to the east. It was initially unclear whether the two routes were roads or trails or a combination of both. The lands were not included in either WSA, although it was recommended for possible wilderness designation in the *Montana Statewide Wilderness Study Report* (1991).

Tract 6 is located adjacent to the Pryor Mountains WSA to its north. It is approximately 1,074 acres in size and is completely within Wyoming. The boundary is either a county maintained road or a Power Line ROW to the south, east, and west. The lands were inventoried in the initial effort and human activities at the time were noted as being intrusive and not of a primitive type. These activities were considered to have reduced the level of solitude to less than an outstanding level.

Tract 7, approximately 327 acres in size, was previously inventoried and the effort at that time identified several human improvements which were substantially noticeable, including vehicle routes and a fence line along the boundary.

Tract 8, approximately 269 acres in size, was found to have extensive evidence of uranium exploration and development located throughout the Tract. This included tailings piles, access roads, etc., and the lands were found to not possess wilderness character.

K.4.1.2 Unit Analysis:

The Pryor Mountains range in elevation from around 8,480 feet in the north end down to around 3,780 feet in the southeastern end of the range.

The upper elevations of the Pryor Mountains are characterized by patches of Douglas fir, particularly on the north slopes, with occasional open parks.

Understory is generally sparse in the dense Douglas fir stands. Shrub species include snowberry, ninebark, spirea, and juniper. Limber pine is also present, along with bluebunch wheat grass, needle-and-thread grass, bluegrasses, forbs, and sedges. In the open, unforested areas, vegetation is composed primarily of shrubs and grasses. Big sagebrush and shrubby cinquefoil are the dominant shrubs. Grasses include mountain brome, Kentucky bluegrass, and bluebunch wheatgrass. Common forbs are balsam root, geranium, and Eriogonum.

The mid elevations of the Pryor Mountains consist mostly of mountain shrubs. Utah juniper occupies the upper elevations gradually blending into mountain mahogany and eventually into big sagebrush. Black sage, rabbitbrush, and skunkbrush sumac may also be present along with bluebunch wheatgrass, needle-and-thread grass, three-awn, and sandberg bluegrass.

The red desert/saltshrub occurs on the lower slopes of the Pryor Mountains. Vegetation is generally sparse and scattered. Saltbushes of the *Atriplex* genus compose the majority of the vegetation.

There is no commercial timber harvest on the lands.

There is no licensed livestock use.

There are no active oil and gas leases.

All of the lands are within the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR): however, since the management plan for the PMWHR was written with possible wilderness designation in mind, very little wilderness conflict exists with management of the wild horse range. The PMWHR was established by an Act of Congress in 1968.

Tract 1: There is extensive evidence of uranium exploration located throughout the Tract. This includes tailings piles, access roads, etc. The presence of these impacts was noted in the initial WSA inventory and the lands were found to not possess wilderness character. Although time has passed, these impacts have not significantly reduced naturally or have not been rehabbed manually.

Tract 3: The Crooked Creek National Natural Area covers a portion of this land. This area provides significant fossil evidence of Early Cretaceous terrestrial fossil vertebrates and is one of only two known areas representing this period of life on the North American continent. It has produced eight new species and three new genera of dinosaurs. It was established in 1966.

K.4.1.3 Finding:

The lands are primarily in a natural condition, with a few, mostly well screened intrusions. Topography and vegetation screen these intrusions, which are mostly located adjacent to the designated road network and not in the interior of the Tracts.

Tract 1: A historical site, Pen's Cabin, is located in T. 8 S., R. 28 E., section 7. Pen's cabin was built about 1925. This site is a popular recreation attraction and the localized area is not in a natural condition due to human impacts from dispersed camping. There are two communication sites located on T. 8 S., R. 28 E., Section 6 and T. 8 S., R. 28 E., Section 21. These localized sites are not in a natural condition, but the rest of the Tract is. The total impact area is approximately 10 acres.

Tract 2: The lands are in a natural condition. The terrain and vegetation along Sykes Ridge road does not lend itself to cross-country OHV use or dispersed camping. There is a user-created foot trail leading to Frog's Fault Cave, which is only a short distance from the road. It attracts recreational use of an unknown level.

Tract 3: The lands are in a natural condition. The terrain and vegetation along Sykes Ridge road does not lend itself to cross-country OHV use. There are several wide spots along the road where vehicles park for scenic views or use as pull outs for opposing traffic but these are not major intrusions into the Tract and some are rehabbing naturally. None of these routes were evaluated by the BLM.

Tract 4: BLM has determined that both vehicle routes used as boundaries meet the classification of a road, and that the parcel is isolated from either WSA. Accordingly, these lands do not meet the size criteria for evaluation and lack wilderness character. See the Road Analysis Forms for details. This Tract will not be evaluated further since it does not meet the stand-alone size criteria.

Tract 5: BLM has determined that a portion of Tract 5 is isolated from the rest of the Tract by a vehicle route which is classified as a road. This portion of the Tract is approximately 46 acres in size and is located in portions of T. 58 N., R. 95 W., Sections 22, 23, and 26. Although it has been recommended for wilderness designation (BLM Montana Statewide Wilderness Study Report, 1991), this portion of Tract will not be evaluated further since it does not meet the stand-alone size criteria.

Tract 6: The BLM closed the sole vehicle route identified during the initial inventory when the 1984 Billings RMP was signed. It has since naturally rehabbed and is not substantially noticeable. The electrical power line noted as an intrusion was used as a portion of the boundary in this effort and was not included in the area under consideration. The evidence of uranium exploration was determined to be minor in scale and size and is not substantially noticeable due to its location in the remote and generally untraveled interior of the Tract. Cattle are no longer grazed in the area. The natural condition of the landscape has improved from what was earlier observed since human use trends have changed through time and the lands are now in a natural condition.

Tract 7: The initial inventory identified several human improvements which were substantially noticeable, including vehicle routes and a fence line along the boundary. These impacts have been reduced or removed. The vehicle routes have naturally rehabbed after closure in the RMP of 1984. The land condition has improved and the lands are now in a natural condition.

Tract 8: There is extensive evidence of uranium exploration located throughout the Tract. This includes tailings piles, access roads, etc. The presence of these impacts was noted in the initial WSA inventory and the lands were found to not possess wilderness character. Although time has passed, these impacts have not significantly reduced naturally or have not been rehabbed manually. The east boundary was set along aliquot parts, an artificial boundary, but an attempt at using natural features and human impact boundaries was determined to be too difficult to manage. This Tract is not in a natural condition and the initial conclusions are still appropriate. The Tract will not be evaluated further.

K.4.2 Dry Creek Unit

K.4.2.1 Prior Review:

The unit was originally inventoried as Dry Creek (MT-067-200) in the earlier inventory and the new inventory has the same boundaries. The unit is characterized by rolling landforms which gently rise towards the west and it contains scattered trees in only its western portion. The rest of the unit is grasslands and sage. The area is mountain foothills, with vegetation being a pale green and the soils are a grey gumbo clay with a few minimal light tan shale outcropping. Most drainages on the east side are configured such that they lead directly toward a State Highway.

K.4.2.2 Unit Analysis:

The unit covers approximately 6,425 acres of public lands. The entire unit is grazed commercially under permit from BLM and there are at least 5 miles of existing range fence, one spring development, and a stock tank. There are approximately 6 miles of vehicle routes which are mostly used for rangeland management. These routes are not classified as roads by BLM. A natural gas pipeline with a ROW crosses the extreme northeast corner of the unit and isolates a small portion of the lands from the rest of the unit. For recreational purposes the area does attract some upland bird hunting and horseback riding, and although use levels are not known, they are estimated to be low due to lack of cover and browse for wildlife.

K.4.2.3 Finding:

The unit is essentially in a natural condition, with the exception of the area where the ROW is located. The unit landscape is such that that all the drainages in the southern third open to the State Highway. The central and eastern portions of the unit have little tree cover or extensive topographic screening. The highest level of solitude is possible in Sections 31 and 32, where even in this area there is limited vegetative cover. The unit does not have a high level of solitude, let alone an outstanding level. While the expectation of meeting anyone in the unit is low, the opportunity for an outstanding recreational experience is also low since there is almost no

attraction value. No supplemental values were identified. The lands do not meet the wilderness characteristic criteria and will not be evaluated further.

K.4.3 Deer Mountain Unit

K.4.3.1 Prior Review:

The unit was originally inventoried in the earlier effort as Deer Mountain, (MT-067-201). It had the same boundaries. The unit is formed by a single, narrow north-south ridgeline sparsely vegetated by conifers along the summit spine of the ridge and in the draws. The ridgeline drops off sharply to the east.

This unit was studied in the initial and intensive phases of the earlier Wilderness inventory and was dropped from further consideration at the end of the inventory.

K.4.3.2 Unit Analysis:

The unit is approximately 9,496 acres in size. This type of landform is known as a “Cuesta Scarp”. The geological feature is a supplemental feature in the unit.

There is a pipeline ROW in the southern region which bisects the unit into two separate units.

There are possibly other pipelines as well. Several additional developments are proposed and in the process of being evaluated and processed.

The narrow configuration of the unit hinders an expectation of solitude since any traffic can be heard from many points, even though timber does reduce some impact.

K.4.3.3 Finding:

The pipeline ROW bisects the unit into two smaller portions, neither of which meets the size criteria by themselves. The lands will not be evaluated further.

K.4.4 Bear Creek Unit

K.4.4.1 Prior Review:

Originally this unit was inventoried as Bear Creek Unit (MT-067-204). From flat prairie on the west and north, Bear Creek rises to low bentonite domes and ridges in the center section. The only vegetation in the unit is sparse range grasses, sagebrush, and scrub timber.

The unit is bordered by Bear Canyon road and a parcel of Montana State lands on the north, Gyp Springs road on the east, Blue Wash Road on the northeast, and the Montana/Wyoming border on the south.

This unit was dropped following the intensive inventory phase when it was found to lack naturalness due to extensive human impacts, mostly from mineral exploration and development

occurring on much of the area. It was also noted that the level of solitude was low and the opportunity for primitive recreation was mostly adversely impacted by other human activities.

K.4.4.2 Unit Analysis:

The unit is approximately 8,930 acres in size. The BLM has established the Petroglyph Canyon ACEC for protection of the petroglyphs found on the rock formations found there. The area serves as a transit zone for OHV recreational use transiting from Wyoming to the higher elevations in the Custer National Forest in Montana. The recreational activities appear to be all of a semi-primitive motorized type. The unit is heavily impacted by bentonite mining its western half.

K.4.4.3 Finding:

The unit meets the size criteria. The western region is not in a natural condition due to human impacts, both historical and ongoing. Only the rougher central and southern portions appear natural. Similarly, the lack of vegetation and the unvaried topography do not provide for a sense of solitude, let alone one of an outstanding level. There is no primitive recreation occurring. There are special features present, which already have protective measures present. The original conclusions noted in the initial inventory are still relevant. The lands do not possess wilderness characteristics and will not be evaluated further.

K.4.5 Burnt Timber Canyon Unit

K.4.5.1 Prior Review:

Originally inventoried in 1979 as portions of the Burnt Timber Unit (MT 067-205), this unit was initially dropped in the Final Inventory Decision of 1980, but due to protests received by BLM during the public comment period, was subsequently reviewed further. Ultimately these portions were not part of the Unit which was established as the Burnt Timber WSA in 1991 due to the existence of uranium mining claims and a BLM enclosure, vehicle routes, a horse trap, and several other human impacts in the vicinity of Demi-John Flat, which is a flat and open bench on the west side of the WSA and other areas along the WSA boundary on the east side.

K.4.5.2 Unit Analysis:

The area is approximately 7,204 acres in size and divided into two separate parcels. The area has not seen further mining development since the prior inventory. The BLM facilities noted in the initial inventory have been removed. Several minor ways evaluated in the initial inventory are naturally rehabbing and essentially no longer usable.

Tract 1, approximately 1,816 acres in size, is separated from the Pryor Mountains WSA by a maintained road. It is adjacent to the Burnt Timber WSA on its east side. The west boundary is a combination of private lands and the WSA boundary, which is a primitive vehicle route. The route is naturally rehabbing and essentially unusable. There are mining impacts including test pits and some routes which are still readily visible to a casual observer since they are in the

foreground in the viewshed. The BLM has a new wildlife guzzler and conducts regular vehicle access to maintain it.

Tract 2, approximately 5,388 acres in size, is adjacent to the Burnt Timber WSA to the west. It is bordered on the west by a road, on the south by the Montana/Wyoming border, and on the east side by a combination of private lands, a road, and a minor and primitive vehicle route, which is naturally rehabbing and not usable. Although the lands are within a BLM grazing allotment, no use has occurred for a number of years. Commercial Range operators do trail cattle along the unit boundary road between the lower elevation private lands to the south and the Forest Service lands further north.

K.4.5.3 Finding:

Tract 1 still has visible evidence of human impacts and is not in a natural condition, although overall the condition has improved from the previous inventory. The BLM has new facilities which will have motorized access use and which have a localized impact. The area does offer solitude and primitive recreation opportunities, when considered with the adjacent WSA. This area is not in a condition for further evaluation at this time, although management actions may improve its condition in the future and warrant a new evaluation.

Tract 2 is in a natural condition, and its size and configuration, together with its topography and vegetation, offers both outstanding primitive recreation opportunity and solitude. There are supplemental features present as well.

K.4.6 Weatherman Draw Unit

K.4.6.1 Prior Review:

Originally inventoried in 1979 as Weatherman Draw, (MT-067-202), approximately half the unit is covered with timber and the remainder is grasslands, interspersed with sagebrush. The unit consists of rolling hills of 3,600 feet to 5,000 feet above sea level.

This unit was dropped following the initial inventory phase when it was found to lack naturalness due to extensive human impacts from mineral exploration.

K.4.6.2 Unit Analysis:

The lands include approximately 11,603 acres of public lands and meet the size criteria. The BLM staff identified the presence of the human impacts which were found in the earlier effort and which remain substantially noticeable.

There are a number of new impacts as well, including a number of primitive vehicle routes identified for the new RMP effort.

The lands are commercially grazed under permit by BLM and there are a number of localized developments (fence lines, etc.) related to the operation which does not substantially detract from the natural condition.

There is a pipeline ROW in the northern portion.

The area receives a fair amount of casual and commercial recreational visitation, especially during summer months.

The staff review found opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude is not at an outstanding level due to the configuration of the unit and recreational use numbers, types, and seasonal uses. The recreation is mostly related to hunting and is mostly semi-primitive motorized.

A portion of the unit has been designated as the Weatherman Draw ACEC for the protection of significant cultural resources which is a supplemental resource.

K.4.6.3 Finding:

While the unit meets the size criteria, the current conditions on the ground support the earlier decision that the unit lacks naturalness. The visual impacts do attract the notice of a casual observer. The area does offer a level of solitude and primitive recreation. There are supplemental resources present. The unit does not meet the conditions for further consideration for Wilderness Character.

K.4.7 Jack Creek Unit

K.4.7.1 Prior Review:

Originally inventoried in 1979 as the Jack Creek Unit (MT-067-203), the general vegetative type is grass and sagebrush except on sandstone outcrops where juniper is found. The topographic features are high angle fault scarps which run in an easterly to northeasterly direction separated by relatively flat valley bottoms.

This unit was dropped following the initial inventory phase when it was found to lack naturalness due to extensive human impacts from mineral exploration.

K.4.7.2 Unit Analysis:

The area includes approximately 7,823 acres of public lands. The BLM staff identified the presence of the human impacts which were found in the earlier effort and which remain substantially noticeable.

There are a number of new impacts as well, including a number of primitive vehicle routes identified for the new RMP effort.

The lands are commercially grazed under permit from BLM and there are a number of localized developments (3 miles of fence lines, at least one spring development, etc.) related to the grazing operation but which does not substantially detract from the natural condition.

There is a pipeline ROW located in the unit.

There are active Bentonite mining claims located on the unit, which are related to the ongoing mining operation on the adjacent private lands.

The staff review found opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude is not at an outstanding level due to the configuration of the unit and recreational use numbers, types, and seasonal uses. The recreation is mostly related to upland bird and big-game hunting and is mostly semi-primitive motorized.

K.4.7.3 Finding:

While the unit meets the size criteria, the current conditions on the ground support the earlier decision that the unit lacks naturalness. The ROW isolates a substantial area and this reduces the area under consideration. The area as a whole does offer a level of solitude and primitive recreation but not at an outstanding level. There are no supplemental resources present. The entire unit does not meet the conditions for further consideration for Wilderness Character.

K.4.8 Little Wall Creek Unit

K.4.8.1 Prior Review:

Originally inventoried in 1979 as Little Wall Creek Unit (MT-067-214), this area consists of a typical grassland/sagebrush type common to eastern Montana. No major topographic features are present. The area is low rolling hills with little topographic relief.

This unit was dropped following the initial inventory phase when it was found to lack naturalness due to extensive human impacts from agricultural development and other activities, lack of outstanding levels of primitive recreation and solitude and no supplemental features being present.

K.4.8.2 Unit Analysis:

The area covers approximately 17,816 acres in size of which all are public lands.

The area is commercially grazed under a BLM permit. There are at least 6 reservoirs, approximately 20 miles of fence, 2 wells and 1 corral associated with this operation.

Approximately 750 acres are under cultivation for crested wheatgrass.

Invasive halogeton is prevalent throughout the unit.

There are no commercial recreation permits and only minimum casual recreational use.

There are several oil and gas leases present, but no development has occurred.

There are a number of vehicular routes noted on the new BLM travel inventory which bisect the unit.

K.4.8.3 Finding:

The lands are not in a natural condition due to invasive species and human impacts, which are localized, but noticeable due to lack of topography and vegetation screening. The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is not of an outstanding level. There is little topographical or vegetation screening possible. There are no supplemental values present. These lands do not meet the wilderness characteristics criteria.

K.4.9 Islands

K.4.9.1 Prior Review:

The BLM staff inventoried 9 islands in the earlier wilderness inventory. All were located along the Yellowstone River. They were all inventoried as a single unit, Yellowstone Islands (MT-067-210). The islands were dropped in the initial inventory phase as lacking opportunity for solitude due to their closeness to major human impacts and in some cases lack of vegetative screening as well.

This inventory found that the conditions had changed through time: Due to shifting currents, weather events, and vegetation growth some islands were no longer isolated by river channels. Several new islands were located however.

K.4.9.2 Unit Analysis:

Current status plats and aerial photos reveal that there are 10 individual islands or groupings of small islands which are partially or wholly administered public land islands on the Yellowstone River. There are 3 islands on the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River as well. An intensive Field Inventory will be required to verify the existence of these and any additional islands not shown on the current status plats. The islands total approximately 1,075.4 acres in size, of which approximately 351.6 acres are BLM. The largest island was 165 acres and the smallest was 3.8 acres. The islands are numbered from west to east for the Yellowstone River and South to North on the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River.

Boulder River, Stillwater River and the Musselshell River were also examined, but no islands were located on public lands.

All the islands appear to be very low lying and several may be transitory since they appear to be mostly graveled sand bars. After an initial examination of historical documents, it appears that the hydrology of the river can alter size, shapes and features of islands rapidly.

The Yellowstone River flows northeast through Montana from its source in the southern Absaroka range in Wyoming to its junction with the Missouri River in North Dakota. The Billings Field Office includes approximately 150 miles of this river between Springdale and Custer, Montana.

The Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River (not to be confused with the Clark Fork River), is a tributary of the Yellowstone River, 150 miles long in Montana and Wyoming. It rises in southern

Montana, in the Beartooth Mountains, and southwest of Granite Peak. It flows southeast into the Shoshone National Forest in northwest Wyoming, then northeast back into Montana. It passes the communities of Belfry, Bridger, Fromberg, and Edgar, and joins the Yellowstone approximately 2 miles southeast of Laurel, Montana. The actual junction of the rivers is managed by the BLM as the Sundance Recreation Area.

For the Yellowstone River, typically the western islands have willow and old growth vegetation with an understory of shrubs and grasses. As one progresses eastwards, cottonwoods predominate, but willows, thick shrubs, and even open meadows of range grasses are found.

For the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River, these conditions occur as one goes north.

Invasive species such as tamarisk, Russian olive, etc. have established themselves all along the river corridors.

The BLM BiFO has Alternatives in the draft RMP/EIS that all public lands located along the Yellowstone River be managed as an ACEC for resource concerns and for conformity with adjacent FO RMPs.

The Yellowstone River is the pathway of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and has the congressionally designated Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail along its course. Pompeys Pillar National Monument is located adjacent to the river approximately 30 miles east of Billings.

A portion of the Clark's Fork of The Yellowstone River has the congressionally designated Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail which follows its course.

Both River segments have portions of the State of Montana designated Bozeman Historical Trail which follow their courses.

Yellowstone River:

Island 1: Located in T. 1 S., R. 13 E., Section 8, found west of the community of Big Timber. The island is approximately 3.8 acres in size and is composed of all public lands.

Island 2: Located in T. 1 N., R. 14 E., Section 19, found just west of the community of Big Timber. It is a total of 113 acres in size, of which approximately 77 acres are public lands.

Island 3: Located in T. 3 S., R. 21 E., Section 9. Four small islands grouped together, all with similar vegetation: mature cottonwoods and wetland plant communities (sedges, grasses, etc.) Anecdotal evidence of Invasive Tamarisk species present as well. The islands are located just west of the community of Columbus and approximately 45 miles west of Billings.

Island A is approximately 2.3 acres total size – all public lands managed by BLM.

Island B is approximately 2: 3.8 acres total size – 2.5 acres BLM and 1.3 acres private.

Island C is approximately 3.4 acres total size – 1.8 acres BLM and 1.6 acres private.

Island D is approximately 10.1 acres total size – 8.2 acres of BLM and 1.9 acres private.

Island 4: located in T. 2 S., R 24 E., Section 13. This parcel is included in the Sundance Recreation Area and is the junction point of the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River and the main course of the Yellowstone River. It is a total of 81 acres, of which 34 acres are BLM. The vegetation is mature cottonwoods and wetland plant communities. The Sundance Recreation Area is a popular year-round destination for the local community and there is a developed parking lot with a restroom and walking trails which lead to the river. The island is located on the far side of the recreation Area from a county paved road, which runs along the main course of the Yellowstone River.

Island 5: Located in T. 1 S., R. 25 E., Section 25. This parcel is a small portion of a larger island and is the western point (upstream side) of the island. The total island size is approximately 313 acres of which 9 acres are BLM.

Island 6: Located in T. 1 S., R 26 E., Section 2. This island is part of the Four Dances Natural Area ACEC managed by the BLM. It is located in mid channel in the downtown section of Billings and is in close proximity to an Oil Refinery, a powerhouse, and Interstate Highway 90. The total size is 23 acres, of which 12 acres are BLM. Much of the island is a gravel bar and there is only low growing vegetation communities present.

Island 7: Located in T. 1 N., R 27 E., Section 8. This island has two separate BLM parcels. It is located east of Billings, near the community of Lockwood. The approximate total size of the island is 152 acres, of which the two BLM parcels are 16 acres and 28 acres.

Island 8: Located in T. 3 N., R. 30 E., Sections 19 and 20. There are two separate islands in close proximity. They are both known locally as Bundy Island. A portion of the larger island has an old and naturally rehabbing agricultural field on it. This field is readily apparent and is not in a natural condition. The approximate total BLM lands are 80 acres and 24 acres.

Island 9: Located in T. 3 S., R 30 E., Sections 21 and 22. This island is known locally as Pompeys Pillar Island. It is just downstream from the National Monument. The approximate size of the island is 165 acres, of which 105 acres are BLM.

Island 10: Located in T. 4 N., R33 E., Section 7. This island is located just west of the community of Custer and is near 7 Mile Flat. The total size of the island is approximately 84 acres, of which 19 acres are BLM. Vegetation comprises willows, tamarisk, and immature cottonwoods.

Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River:

Island 1: Located in T. 6 S., R. 23 E., Section 15. This island is located just north of the community of Belfry. It is approximately 6 acres in size, of which 3.0 acres are BLM. The vegetation comprises a Cottonwood, Russian olive and Willow complex.

Island 2: This island is located just east from the community of Rockvale. The total size of the island is approximately 30 acres, of which 13 acres are BLM.

Island 3: This parcel is included in the Sundance Recreation Area and is the junction point of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River and the main course of the Yellowstone River. It is a total

of 5.0 acres, of which 2.0 acres are BLM. The vegetation is mature cottonwoods and wetland plant communities. The Sundance Recreation Area is a popular year-round destination for the local community and there is a developed parking lot with a restroom and walking trails which lead to the river. The island is located on the far side of the recreation Area from a county paved road, which runs along the main course of the Yellowstone River.

K.4.9.3 Finding:

Due to extensive works of man found along the riverbanks, and the islands' small sizes, there might be little sense of solitude; however, there may be some vegetation screening or location in the river channel which may affect the determination. Interstate Highway 90 and the mainline of the Northern Pacific Rail Road parallel the Yellowstone River for much of the distance, but not always right by the river and there are rolling hills and curves in the road and Rail Road courses. The islands do provide outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation since access is limited to boat only and the Yellowstone River is a popular fishing destination. However, the Yellowstone River is open for motorboat use, which is a semi-primitive activity. User percentages are not known.

Unless noted above, the islands do appear to be in a natural condition and may have the potential for further wilderness consideration. Because of the lack of complete information about the islands, any determination that they obviously and clearly do not have potential for wilderness designation would be premature at this time.

This initial inventory could only be done using aerial photos and Land Status Plats. The islands will have to field inventoried during the June river rise and immediately after the heavy rains, as well as again during low water. These should best indicate island and mainland features.

K.4.10 Meeteetse Unit

K.4.10.1 Prior Review:

During initial Wilderness inventory a preliminary staff review identified these lands as meeting the size requirement (over 5,000 acres) but probably mostly lacking naturalness due to the presence of roads, and lacking opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation on most of the lands due to lack of topography and vegetation screening. However, it was noted that a small portion of the area did have potential for further in-depth evaluation, if some private lands were acquired. Subsequent to private land acquisition in 2009, this and the larger BLM lands are the area which is the subject of the following formal review and analysis as a Wilderness Character Inventory Unit.

The lands have never been formally inventoried for their wilderness character. One parcel of lands (560 acres) was acquired by the BLM in 2009 (DOI-BLM-MT-C010-2009-0042 EA). A portion of the remainder of the unit is located within the Meeteetse Spires ACEC (960) acres, established in 1999 for protection and enhancement of the rare plant *Shoshona pulvina*, hazardous cliffs, and the scenic values of the spires. Additional portions are public lands located north, south and east of the ACEC and the recently acquired land parcel.

The western boundary is a combination of private lands and National Forest Service; the southern and northern boundaries are private lands and Montana State lands, and the eastern boundary is private lands. They total approximately 18,940.8 acres in size

K.4.10.2 Unit Analysis:

One parcel of land (560 acres) was acquired by the BLM in 2009 (DOI-BLM-MT-C010-2009-0042 EA). A portion of the remainder of the unit is located within the Meeteetse Spires ACEC (960) acres, established in 1999 for protection and enhancement of the rare plant *Shoshona pulvina*, hazardous cliffs, and the scenic values of the spires. Additional portions are public lands located north, south and east of the ACEC and the recently acquired land parcel.

The area is located on the base of the eastern slope of the Beartooth Mountains, approximately 5 miles south of the community of Red Lodge Montana. The terrain rises steeply from 5,600 feet to 7,200 feet in the distance of less than 1.5 miles. The Meeteetse Spires, the main geological formation in the area, are formed by a tilted layer of sedimentary rocks at the edge of the Beartooth Uplift and are remnants of upturned Madison Limestone.

The area is in the rain shadow of the Beartooth Mountains and exhibit an extremely abrupt change in annual precipitation from 26 inches along the west side of the unit to 6 inches less than one mile to the east of the spires.

The lower slopes are a combination of communities of Limber Pine and Douglas Fire; Limber Pine and Rocky Mountain Juniper; montane riparian forest; and Douglass Fir forests with Lodgepole Pine near the USFS boundary. There is some evidence of blister rust and mountain pine beetle kill, but the vast majority of the timber in the area is healthy.

The public lands are adjacent to National Forest lands managed as the “Line Creek Research Natural Area”, a Forest Service “Roadless Area” with roadless prescriptions but not recommended by the USFS for potential Wilderness designation.

A small hunting cabin, constructed in 2007 by the previous private landowner, is located in the recently acquired parcel. It is used under BLM permission for research purposes by Rocky Mountain College. It is located in T. 8 S. R. 20 E., Section 35.

There are a number of blocks of private land in-holdings present which are being developed.

The lands are managed as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II and III.

There is a commercial recreation operator conducting activities in the area under permit to the BLM and licensed by the State of Montana. The commercial operator brings international, national, and regional clients to the area. General recreational use levels are considered to be low although most of the information is anecdotal. Most activities are hunting and sightseeing.

The Meeteetse Spires Trail, a county maintained vehicle route, enters the unit from the north and continues southerly. It bisects the unit and isolates several parcels from the rest of the unit.

There are three Montana State land parcels which are either edge holdings or inholdings.

There are six separate inholdings present, which vary in size. Several have been subdivided for development purposes.

The vehicle route to the cabin is maintained only by passage of vehicle and would be maintained only in emergency, not for access, but for natural resource protection if it causes severe erosion. This route ends at the Forest Service boundary. It is approximately 1.5 miles in length. The route itself is open for administrative use only and has a gate on it at the State land boundary.

There is a primitive vehicle route in the southern portion of the unit, running north westerly. It dead-ends at the Forest Service boundary and is approximately 3 miles in length. It is not maintained by the BLM. It was previously considered a road and isolates a portion of the unit south of it from the rest of the unit. It is substantially noticeable and is a main access into the general area.

There are a number of primitive vehicle routes in the south central portion of the unit, generally running westerly or southerly, apparently constructed at one time for private land, range or timber access.

The acquisition lands are not grazed commercially due to very shallow soils. The rest of the proposed area is located in portions of 3 grazing allotments. These are the Bear Creek (4148) grazing allotment, the Bischoff (5203) grazing allotment, and the Grove Creek (5225) grazing allotment.

There is a 50 foot wide Forest Service Hiking trail (ROW 71926), located in T. 8 S., R 20 E., Section 27. It crosses a portion of the unit from east to west. The actual trail tread width as constructed varies but is not as wide as the ROW.

Some of the lands have been previously leased for potential oil and gas development, although there has been no development.

The public lands south of the recently acquired parcel have been proposed for possible ACEC designation in at least one Alternative in the draft Billings RMP. Under FLPMA, establishment of ACECs for resource concerns is a priority.

K.4.10.3 Finding:

The Meeteetse Spires Trail and several other vehicle routes which have been determined to be roads bisect portions of the unit into separate parcels. These are identified on the field map, in the road inventory files, and described here:

Tract 1: 23.4 acres in size. Isolated from the rest of unit by Meeteetse Trail, less than 5,000 acres in size and thus lack wilderness character. This parcel will not be considered further.

Tract 2: 977 acres in size. Isolated from the rest of unit by Meeteetse Trail and a vehicle route determined to be a road, less than 5,000 acres in size and thus lack wilderness character. This parcel will not be considered further.

Tract 3: 373 acres in size. Isolated from the rest of unit by Meeteetse Trail and a vehicle route determined to be a road, less than 5,000 acres in size and thus lack wilderness character. This parcel will not be considered further.

Tract 4: 87 acres in size. Isolated from the rest of unit by a vehicle route determined to be a road, less than 5,000 acres in size and thus lacks wilderness character. This parcel will not be considered further.

Tract 5: 3,841 acres in size. Isolated from the rest of unit by a vehicle route determined to be a road, less than 5,000 acres in size and thus lacks wilderness character. Additionally, the parcel has a number of other vehicle determined to be roads or vehicle routes which receive routine use, lacks vegetation and topographical screening. This parcel will not be considered further.

Tract 6: 356 acres in size. Isolated from the rest of unit by a vehicle route determined to be a road, less than 5,000 acres in size and thus lacks wilderness character. This parcel will not be considered further.

Tract 7: A very small parcel of 0.6 acres in size in a corner of the unit isolated by Meeteetse Road from the rest of the public lands. It is less than 5,000 acres in size. This parcel will not be considered further.

Tract 8: Approximately 2.9 acres in size in a corner of the unit and isolated from the rest of the unit by a vehicle route determined to be a road. It is less than 5,000 acres in size and lack wilderness character. This parcel will not be considered further.

Tract 9: Approximately 10,809 acres in size. This large, central region of the unit has a number of vehicle routes which are somewhat noticeable and used on at least an occasional basis, as well as most of the private land inholdings. Several range developments and their access routes are also visible from a distance due to topography and lack of vegetation screening. This parcel will not be considered further.

Tract 10: The remainder of the unit, approximately 2,149 acres along the west side of the unit, has man-made facilities and structures which are substantially unnoticeable and which do not detract from the surrounding environment. Vehicle routes #2 and #3 are minor, naturally rehabbing, and do not substantially attract casual attention. Vehicle route #1, the route to the cabin, is not open to the public except as a non-motorized trail. It is visible within the view shed of the canyon which it goes up, however.

There is a primitive vehicle route in the southern portion of the unit, running north westerly. It dead-ends at the Forest Service boundary and is approximately 1 mile in length. It is not maintained by the BLM and is not being used. It is identified as vehicle route #2 in the Road Analysis Forms.

There is a primitive vehicle route in the south central portion of the unit, running west, apparently constructed at one time for range or timber access. It is approximately 0.25 miles in

length and dead-ends near the south eastern corner of the recently acquired private lands. It is not maintained by the BLM. It is not being used. It is identified as vehicle route #3 in the Road Analysis Forms

Conclusion:

There are natural attractions in Tract10 of the unit which have outstanding primitive recreational opportunities, which include the Meeteetse Spires and other local geological formations. There are limited numbers of primitive motorized vehicle routes which may be used for non-motorized access. The FS trails (both designated and non-designated) on public lands within the unit are non-motorized. The terrain is challenging and more visitor risk is assumed to be present. Self-reliance is necessary.

The land in Tract 10 is considered significant for the presence of a rare plant species, *Shoshona pulvinata*, which is known in only three locations in Montana and twelve locations world-wide. It is not a federal species candidate for federal listing, but is a BLM sensitive plant species.

Tract 10 includes the lands already designated as the Meeteetse Spires ACEC.

Additionally, the lands are within the Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone and critical habitat for the Canada Lynx. There are nesting Peregrine Falcons in the rock spires. A wolf pack was eliminated from the area after preying on livestock, but the area is known habitat.

Of the entire Unit, only the lands in Tract 10 are considered to have wilderness characteristics, and these do not meet the size criteria. However, the boundary does provide the opportunity to manage it as a separate unit, so the Staff feels that the exemption criteria apply. The boundary is set as being the Forest Service/ BLM on the west, private lands on the south, and the east has a combination of Montana State lands and the Meeteetse Road, vehicle the north boundary is private lands.

K.4.11 Bad Canyon Unit

K.4.11.1 Prior Review:

No prior wilderness inventory has been done for this parcel. It is less than 5,000 acres in size and is isolated from other BLM lands. Following the new wilderness inventory guidelines in BLM Manual 6301 the BLM staff and members of the public recommended a review be done and an evaluation be prepared. The public lands are located adjacent to lands managed by the Custer National Forest, but which are not recommended for possible Wilderness designation. The lands include approximately 2,036 acres of public lands and there are no private land inholdings.

K.4.11.2 Unit Analysis:

The unit is bordered by private lands on all sides except the south, which are National Forest lands.

There is no motorized access to this parcel. The BLM does have a non motorized ROW across private lands and there is an undeveloped trailhead located on the south side of the unit.

The area is extensively timbered with scenic geological formations.

The riparian corridor is in a natural condition, with few invasive species present.

Bad Creek contains a stable population of Yellowstone Cut-throat trout, which is a native species, listed as endangered, and is a supplemental feature for the unit. The lands are important habitat for Grizzly Bear. The riparian corridor serves as an important wildlife migration corridor.

The trout, and the natural scenery, attract an unknown number of casual recreationists, mostly from the local communities, but the location is advertized as a destination in several publications regionally. There are no known commercial recreation operators. All recreational use is primitive in nature. The surrounding private lands have strictly restricted access as well.

A portion of the unit was previously burned in a wild fire, but is naturally rehabbing.

There is one motorized vehicle route which enters the unit from the east across Forest lands. It is naturally rehabbing and is not open for use. There is one vehicle route which accesses the lands from the south. It is maintained only by use and is not open to general use across private lands.

There are portions of five grazing allotments in the unit. The allotments are 5492, 5582, 5558, 5562, and 5548.

K.4.11.3 Finding:

The unit is in a natural condition. There is plentiful vegetation and topographical screening for an outstanding level of solitude. The area has significant geological, riparian, wildlife, and scenery resources which provide an outstanding level of primitive recreation attractions and experiences. The opportunity for this kind of recreation is further enhanced by the administrative lack of motorized access across the private lands. The lands in the unit are less than the minimum size criteria however, and although the unit is configured in a long and relatively narrow shape which by itself does not lend itself to wilderness management, the canyon within the unit can be managed by itself, or the entire unit along private/public land boundaries.

K.4.12 Lake Mason Unit

Prior Review

The area inventoried in this effort was slightly different from the earlier effort since the BLM staff identified several potential changes in vehicle routes which might affect the determination. A number of vehicle routes were inventoried during the course of the BLM Travel Management Planning conducted during FY 2009-2011 as part of the new Billings Field Office RMP effort. Several routes were classified at that time as being less than roads, including Grazing District Road located in the southern region of the unit.

The public lands are completely surrounded by private and Montana State lands. There are two (2) parcels of Montana State lands totaling 800 acres which are completely isolated within the unit, as well as two (2) private lands parcel inholdings which total approximately 170 acres in size. The Inventory area totals approximately 10, 504 acres of public land in size.

The lands are composed of a sage-brush grass steppe ecosystem with only a few scattered trees present. The terrain is one of low rolling hillsides broken by a few small washes with little elevation change. There are few low outcroppings of rock. There are no permanent water sources present. There are invasive plant species which are common throughout the unit.

Unit Analysis:

There is a power line ROW which cuts through a portion of the southern area of the unit. A portion of the eastern boundary of the unit is formed by an isolated USDI Fish and Wildlife parcel of the Lake Mason National Wildlife Refuge. A portion of the western boundary of the unit is formed by a Montana State land parcel. The remainder of the inventory unit is formed by private/public lands boundary.

A county maintained road (Snowy Mountain Road) cuts through the north portion of the unit from east-west and isolates approximately 320 acres from the rest of the unit. This part of unit does not meet the size criteria and does not have any wilderness characteristics.

On the east side of the unit approximately 1,320 acres of public lands are isolated by another county maintained road (an extension of the Lake Mason Road) running north-south. This portion of the unit has no wilderness characteristics since it does not meet the size criteria either.

The lands are commercially grazed under permit from BLM as part of Grazing Allotments 4981, 4975, and 4988. There are a number of related facilities including stock ponds, a windmill, access routes, and fence lines. These are localized impacts and do not substantially detract from the natural condition.

The unit receives some recreational use, mostly upland game hunting. Use numbers are unknown but are estimated by both BLM staff and State of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks staff to be very low. The lands are part of a State of Montana Block Management hunting unit. There are no commercial, competitive or organized groups under permit from the BLM using these lands. The area is not being marketed by any individual or government entity as a major recreational destination.

The lands are critical sage grouse habitat, which extends over a much large area than just this unit.

The BLM route inventory process found that there are 13 separate vehicle routes totaling approximately 21 miles in length.

Finding:

Although current human use levels are apparently very low and the expectation of meeting anyone on the unit is also very low, there is very little vegetation or topographical screening present, so any human caused sights and sounds would be noticeable at a large distance. There is

not an outstanding level of solitude present. The area does not offer itself as a recreation destination. There are no specific attractions present other than a large open space of public lands, which are themselves set in the middle of a large expanse of open and undeveloped landscape. The lands will not be evaluated further.

K.4.13 Timber Canyon Unit

K.4.13.1 Prior Review:

No prior wilderness inventory was conducted on this land parcel. No clear indication of why it was not is available. Following the new guidelines the BLM staff recommended a review be done and an evaluation be prepared. The public lands are located adjacent to lands managed by the Custer National Forest, but which are not recommended for possible Wilderness designation. The lands include approximately 6,414 acres of public lands and there are no private land inholdings.

The Timber canyon unit is located about 60 miles east of Red Lodge. The soils in the Timber Canyon area are derived from limestone and sandstone formations. The limestone uplifts and formations contain a number of caves and sinkholes.

This mountain range was never glaciated, is rather dry, and contains some very steep terrain and some of the canyons are deeply incised in the limestone

K.4.13.2 Unit Analysis:

The BLM road analysis determined that there seven (7) routes which meet the criteria as roads. These are identified on the BLM Surface Management Status Map (*Bridger, 2000*) as routes 1039, 1046, 1046, 1047, 1048, 1049, 1050, and 1051. Three of them (1046, 1047, and 1051) connect to designated Forest Service roads, while 1039 connects to 1046 and 1050 connects to a power line located off public lands. Cumulatively, these routes cut the unit into small parcels.

There is a power-line ROW located along portions of the western edge of the unit.

The lands are grazed commercially under permit from BLM as Allotment 4135. There are a number of associated range developments present.

The unit has never received heavy use by recreationists, although it does receive regular use by recreationists passing through it while going to more popular destinations on the Forest lands lying above it. Recreation opportunities include deer and small game hunting, hiking, and snowmobiling. Many primitive trails and old mining roads provide easy motorized access. The unit has no commercial outfitters operating on it.

There are reported to be some archeological and paleontological sites on the unit but an intensive inventory has not been done.

K.4.13.3 Finding:

The lands have a number of established vehicle routes which qualify as roads. These cut the unit into smaller parcels, none of which meet the size criteria. The configuration of the parcel does not lend itself or portions of the unit, to management as wilderness. The area as a whole does offer a level of solitude and primitive recreation but not at an outstanding level. Semi-primitive motorized recreation is the type of activity now occurring on it. There are supplemental resources present. The entire unit does not meet the conditions for further consideration for Wilderness Character.

K.5 Conclusion

Table Appendix K-1: Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Review Finding

Lands With Wilderness Characteristics Review Finding			
Name of unit	Total Acres	Wilderness Character	Non-Wilderness Character
A. Pryor Mountain Unit			
Tract 1	2,873 acres	2,873 acres	0 acres
Tract 2	497 acres	497 acres	0 acres
Tract 3	143 acres	143 acres	0 acres
Tract 4	445 acres	0 acres	445 acres
Tract 5	559 acres	512 acres	47 acres
Tract 6	1,074 acres	1,074 acres	0 acres
Tract 7	327 acres	327 acres	0 acres
Tract 8	269 acres	0 acres	269 acres
B. Dry Creek Unit			
	6,425 acres	0 acres	6,425 acres
C. Deer Mountain Unit			
	9,496 acres	0 acres	9,496 acres
D. Bear Creek Unit			
	8,930 acres	0 acres	8,930 acres
E. Burnt Timber Unit			
Tract 1	1,816 acres	703 acres	1,113 acres
Tract 2	5,388 acres	5,376 acres	13 acres
F. Weatherman Draw Unit			
	11,603 acres	11,603 acres	0 acres
G. Jack Creek Unit			
	7,823 acres	0 acres	7,823 acres
H. Little Wall Creek Unit			
	17,816 acres	0 acres	17,816 acres
I. River islands			
	352 acres	Unknown	Unknown
J. Meeteetse Unit			
Tract 1	23.4 acres	0 acres	23.4 acres
Tract 2	977 acres	0 acres	977 acres
Tract 3	373 acres	0 acres	373 acres
Tract 4	87 acres	0 acres	87 acres
Tract 5	3,841 acres	0 acres	3,841 acres
Tract 6	356 acres	0 acres	356 acres
Tract 7	0.6 acres	0 acres	0.6 acres
Tract 8	2.9 acres	0 acres	2.9 acres
Tract 9	10,809 acres	0 acres	10,809 acres
Tract 10	2,149 acres	2,149 acres	0 acres
K. Bad Canyon Unit			
	2,036 acres	2,036 acres	0 acres
L. Lake Mason Unit			
	10,504 acres	0 acres	10,504 acres
M. Timber Canyon Unit			
	6,414 acres	0 acres	6,414 acres
TOTAL	113,409 acres	27,292 acres	85,763.9 acres

Following management Prescriptions in the BLM Manual 6310, Official Case Files for each of the inventory units have been established. These contain Road/Route determinations, relevant reference documentation, and a detailed analysis of the current resource conditions. These files are available for public review and will be maintained by the Billings Field Office.

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