

# Monticello Field Office

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The following WSAs are managed by the Monticello Field Office:

- Bridger Jack Mesa
- Butler Wash
- Cheesebox Canyon
- Cross Canyon
- Dark Canyon
- Fish Creek Canyon
- Grand Gulch
- Indian Creek
- Mancos Mesa
- Mule Canyon
- Road Canyon
- South Needles
- Squaw/Papoose Canyon

Note: Acreage shown is from the Utah Statewide Wilderness Report.

## Bridger Jack Mesa

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**Size:** 5,290 acres

**Location:** North-central San Juan County, about 18 miles northwest of Monticello, UT.

**Vegetation:** Vegetation is predominantly Pinyon-Juniper Woodland with small interspersed sagebrush parks.

**General Description:** The WSA is a north-south trending tableland bounded by spectacular orange-red cliffs. The view from the mesa is the major asset of the WSA because it enhances the recreational experience.

**Special Features:** The WSA may contain several archaeological sites.

# Butler Wash

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**Size:** 24,190 acres

**Location:** Northwestern San Juan County, about 55 miles northwest of Monticello, UT.

**Vegetation:** Vegetation is predominantly Pinyon-Juniper Woodland.

**General Description:** The WSA is in the Canyonlands Section of the Colorado Plateau Physiographic Province. The terrain consists of northward draining shallow canyons of varying widths and low, park-like mesas, with scattered buttes, knobs, and spires.

**Special Features:**

Approximately 47 percent of the WSA is rated as outstanding for scenic quality. The scenic value for the unit is high, especially in the northeast and southeast. In the northeast the Needles country becomes prominent. Red and buff sandstone spires, knobs, and buttes contrast with the green vegetation and the blue sky. In the southeast, the heads of Salt Creek (most of which is in Canyonlands National Park) cut a myriad of shapes in the colorful sandstone.

Other special features include evidence of early century cowboy use, cougars, mule deer, and peregrine falcon.

# Cheesebox Canyon

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**Size:** 15,410 acres

**Location:** San Juan County, about 34 miles west of Blanding, UT.

**Vegetation:** About half of the WSA is barren of vegetation. The remainder is Pinyon-Juniper Woodland and scattered stands of Ponderosa pine. Douglas fir is found on north facing slopes at the higher elevations with scattered areas of desert shrub and grasses.

**General Description:** This WSA is in the Canyonlands Section of the Colorado Plateau Physiographic Province. The WSA is a small mesa capped by the Cheesebox and cut by four meandering, steep-walled canyons which drain southwesterly into White Canyon. The surface of the mesa slopes gently southwest, and is almost featureless except for a few low buttes.

**Special Features:**

- Evidence that late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century cowboys roamed the canyons of southeast Utah herding cattle can still be seen.
- Peregrine falcon and bald eagle may make occasional use of the WSA.
- Desert bighorn sheep utilize the upper ends of Cheesebox Canyon, as well as Found Mesa and Fry Point.

- Natural Bridges National Monument is less than 2 miles to the east and includes part of White Canyon. Hikers from the Monument sometimes extend their trips in to the WSA portion of White Canyon.
- The entire WSA is noted for scenic quality. The canyon is sculpted rock with whirling patterns, carved pools, and sheer rock walls.
- The WSA contains many geologic features such as arches and natural bridges.

## Cross Canyon

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**Size:** 12,588 acres

**Location:** Dolores and Montezuma Counties, Colorado (11,580 acres) and in San Juan County, UT (1,008 acres). The area is approximately 14 miles southwest of Cahone, CO and about 1 mile southwest of Lowry Pueblo Ruins National Historic Landmark, and 5 miles north of Hovenweep National Monument.

**Vegetation:** Vegetation is thick Pinyon-Juniper Woodland on the slopes and canyon rim, with sage parks and riparian vegetation along the canyon bottom.

**General Description:** This WSA includes portions of three main canyons which are the continuation of the Cahone Canyon WSA. The relatively flat plateau through which these canyons are cut has a gentle southwest downward tilt from its 6,500 feet elevation at the northeast boundary of the WSA. Numerous ledges, rocky outcrops, and cliffs are exposed in the stair-stepped canyons which range in depth from 300-900 feet.

**Special Features:**

- Ancestral Puebloan ruins are common in the canyon.
- Geologic formations are well exposed for scientific and educational study: the Summerville and Morrison Formations of the Jurassic Period outcrop and are overlain by Burro Canyon and Dakota Formations of the Upper Cretaceous.
- The Morrison formation is rich in fossilized wood and plant remains as well as fossil vertebrate bones.

## Dark Canyon

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**Size:** 60,030 acres

**Location:** San Juan County, about 30 miles west of Monticello, UT.

**Vegetation:** Pinyon-Juniper Woodland and blackbrush are the predominant vegetation.

**General Description:** This WSA is a complex of fragments of the Dark Canyon Plateau and seven deep, meandering canyons that drain into Cataract Canyon of the Colorado River, northwest of the WSA. The

remnants of the Dark Canyon Plateau are mesas that slope gently westward. The canyons are as much as 2,000 feet deep and are generally steep. They are narrow in places and quite wide in others, with cottonwood trees and low buttes on the floors. An unusual feature in the Canyonlands country is the 10 miles of perennial stream that flow through the northern portion of the WSA in a series of plunge pools and waterfalls.

**Special Features:**

Of geological interest are the limestone exposures with red chert nodule inclusions. The limestone also includes cockleshell and crinoids stem fossils. These limestone ledges make deep and narrow lower Dark Canyon, an especially scenic canyon due to their waterfall producing effect.

Dark Canyon is known for its outstanding scenic qualities. Unimpaired vistas from the unit enhance the wilderness values. To the west are the Henry Mountains and the Orange Cliffs, to the north are the lands of Canyonlands National Park, and to the east are the La Sal Mountains.

Ancestral Puebloan occupation seems to have been somewhat sparse compared to canyons further south, such as Grand Gulch. Cliff dwellings, granaries, petroglyphs, and lithic scatters do exist within the area. These features enhance the primitive recreation values present and add to the feeling of timelessness in these rugged and remote canyons.

Historic evidence of use of the area for cattle and sheep grazing includes a stock trail, a corral, and cowboy camps.

Groups of desert bighorn sheep are occasionally observed by hikers and by boaters on the Colorado River just west of the unit. All of the major canyons in the complex have been identified as crucial desert bighorn sheep habitat. Cougars, a species associated with wilderness, inhabit remote canyons in the unit in pursuit of mule deer. Being a large inhabitant of wild and remote areas, the cougar has an esthetic value.

## Fish Creek Canyon

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**Size:** 46,440 acres

**Location:** San Juan County, about 12 miles southwest of Blanding, UT.

**Vegetation:** In addition to Pinyon-Juniper Woodland and sagebrush, which together occupy two-thirds of the WSA, desert shrubs are common. Ponderosa pine is found in the drainages of the northern part of the WSA.

**General Description:** The four main canyons of this WSA are up to 700 feet deep. The canyons meander somewhat and contain numerous rock fins, alcoves, pinnacles, step-like pour offs on the canyon floors, and impressive natural arches. The canyons widen and become more shallow at the southern end of the WSA.

**Special Features:**

Approximately 60 percent (28,000 acres) of the WSA is rated as outstanding for scenic quality.

Fish Creek WSA includes land extensively occupied by Ancestral Puebloan dwellers from about 200 A.D. to 1300 A.D.

The unit contains a wealth of pristine cultural resources. Not only are these of scientific interest but they are scenic and make interesting discoveries for the recreationist. An archaeological site on the northeast border of the unit has been stabilized and surrounded by a chain link fence. This site, called Comb Wash Overlook, has 4 tower bases, a wall on the mesa rim, and rock shelter dwellings below. The well-preserved ruins, with a dramatic view of Dry and Comb Wash junctions, enhance a visitor's feeling of the history and the timelessness of the land.

The Hole in the Rock Trail, the route followed by the Mormon settlers in 1879 to 1880, forms most of this unit's southern boundary. The pioneers camped at Snow Flat Spring Cave and built The Twist, a narrow twisting road through the rocks from the mesa down to the Comb Wash area.

In 1908, as part of a survey of Natural Bridges National Monument, W.B. Douglass of the General Land Office surveyed and described the Snow Flat Spring Cave. He considered the spring to be important to the National Monument because it "...supplied the only available water at a necessary intermediate stopping point and was, therefore, essential to public travel".

Bald eagles and peregrine falcons may be sighted in the WSA. Cougar, a species associated with wilderness, inhabit the WSA. Seven other animal species and 4 plant species that are considered sensitive may occur in the WSA.

## Grand Gulch

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**Size:** 105,520 acres

**Location:** San Juan County, about 45 miles west of Blanding, UT.

**Vegetation:** Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, sagebrush, and blackbrush are the predominant types of vegetation.

**General Description:** This WSA is in the Canyonlands Section of the Colorado Plateau Physiographic Province. This WSA is predominantly a network of sinuous canyons, totaling more than 190 miles in length, that are tributary to the San Juan River.

### Special Features:

The canyons of the WSA contain a myriad of sandstone erosion forms in whites, reds, browns, and yellows. Canyons, pinnacles, pedestals, knobs, arches, and alcoves offer unique and dramatic views in nearly every part of the area. Long distance views from the mesa tops include scenic focal points such as Monument Valley, Navajo Mountain, Red House Cliffs, and the Henry Mountains.

The area contains extensive remains of Ancestral Puebloan dwellers occupation from about 200 A.D. to 1300 A.D. These consist of lithic scatters, walled fireplaces, pictographs, petroglyphs, pithouses, pottery shards, towers, cliff dwellings, and kivas. Not only are the sites of scientific importance, but they are also of interest to recreationists. The Grand Gulch Archaeological District (4,240 acres) was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

A portion of the northern boundary follows the Hole in the Rock Trail, the route the early Mormon settlers followed in 1879 to settle the town of Bluff, Utah. Evidence that cattlemen used the area in the early 1900s includes Oliver Ranch in lower John's Canyon.

The WSA has populations of cougar, mule deer, bobcat, and possibly desert bighorn sheep which are wildlife species associated with wilderness. Peregrine falcons and bald eagles may occasionally visit

the WSA. Seven other animal species and four plant species that are considered sensitive may occur in the WSA.

## Indian Creek

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**Size:** 6,870 acres

**Location:** San Juan County, about 35 miles northwest of Monticello, UT.

**Vegetation:** About 75 percent (5,163 acres) of the WSA is bare rock. Sparse desert shrub covers the remainder of the WSA.

**General Description:** This WSA consists of several northward-sloping canyons as much as 300 feet deep and narrow, twisting tributary canyons cut through the red rock. Four miles of perennial streams are within the WSA.

**Special Features:**

- Two pour offs in Indian Creek near the western border of the WSA are picturesque when water is flowing in the intermittent drainage. The two pour offs drop almost 150 feet.
- Desert bighorn sheep, which are a wildlife species associated with wilderness, has been found within this WSA.
- Peregrine falcons, golden eagles, bald eagles, and Mexican spotted owls may occur in the WSA.

## Mancos Mesa

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**Size:** 51,440 acres

**Location:** Western San Juan County, about 50 miles west of Blanding, UT.

**Vegetation:** Blackbrush is the most common vegetation.

**General Description:** This WSA is in the Canyonlands Section of the Colorado Plateau Physiographic Province. Mancos mesa is a rugged, westward-sloping mesa bounded by canyons as much as 600 feet deep. Three winding canyons from 250 to 800 feet deep cut across the mesa. Wind-blown sand covers large parts of the mesa and has accumulated in large deposits in portions of the canyons.

**Special Features:**

- The Mancos Mesa WSA contains archaeological, geological, wildlife, and scenic values.
- The peregrine falcon and 8 animal species that are considered sensitive may occur in the WSA.
- Desert bighorn sheep, which is a wildlife species associated with wilderness is occasionally sited in the WSA.

# Mule Canyon

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**Size:** 5,990 acres

**Location:** South-central San Juan County, about 30 miles west of Blanding, UT.

**Vegetation:** About 40 percent of the WSA is barren of vegetation but a fairly dense, mature Pinyon-Juniper Woodland and scattered Ponderosa Pine and Douglas fir trees cover most of the WSA.

**General Description:** The two canyons which characterize this WSA, the head of Mule Canyon and the head of the North Fork of Mule Canyon, trend southeast. The walls of the canyon are alternating layers of red and white sandstone. The canyons cut into a terrace which is part of Grand Gulch Plateau, or Cedar Mesa.

**Special Features:**

- Archaeological values are high and are of special interest to visitors of the WSA.
- There are many known Ancestral Puebloan dweller sites within the WSA, most of which are cliff dwellings. These picturesque ancient structures add elements of discovery and education to the primitive recreation experience.
- The WSA also contains special geological features such as arches and natural bridges. Additionally, 53 percent of this WSA has outstanding scenery characterized by smooth red sandstone and the contrasting greens of Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir.
- Cougars, which are often associated with wilderness, frequent the WSA in pursuit of mule deer. Peregrine falcons and bald eagles, may occasionally visit the WSA. Seven other animal species and two plant species that are considered sensitive may occur in the WSA.

# Road Canyon

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**Size:** 52,420 acres.

**Location:** San Juan County, about 10 miles north of Mexican Hat, UT.

**Vegetation:** Desert shrubs and Pinyon-Juniper Woodland are the predominant vegetative types.

**General Description:** This WSA is in the southeastern part of the Grand Gulch Plateau. Three canyons, including Road Canyon, cut through the unit. Steep canyon walls and knobs, pinnacles, arches, and alcoves characterize the WSA.

**Special Features:**

- Scenic and geological special features include the deep canyons, sheer cliffs, and dramatic views from the canyon rims.
- A portion of Valley of the Gods within the WSA includes monolithic sandstone buttes that rise 400 to 500 feet above the valley floor.

- Approximately 56 percent (29,355 acres) of the WSA is rated as outstanding for scenic quality.
- Road Canyon WSA contains a variety of topographic features including: unique erosional forms of sandstone, towering pinnacles, steep-walled canyons, and gently sloping plateaus.
- The Hole in the Rock Trail, a National Register site, used by Mormon pioneers forms the unit's northeast boundary.
- Peregrine falcons and bald eagles may inhabit or use the WSA.
- Seven other animal species and three plant species that are considered sensitive may inhabit the WSA.

## South Needles

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**Size:** 160 acres

**Location:** Northwestern San Juan County, about 10 miles northwest of Monticello, UT.

**Vegetation:** Vegetation is predominantly Pinyon-Juniper Woodland.

**General Description:** The terrain in this WSA consists of sloping slickrock that drains northeastward and low benches.

**Special Features:**

The unit is very scenic. Red and buff spires, knobs, and buttes contrast with green vegetation and blue sky. The highly eroded sandstone features, including numerous pinnacles and the Vanhemert Arch, provide for geologic study and viewing. The entire WSA is rated outstanding for scenic quality.

A spring on the northern edge of the WSA flows about 0.5 cubic feet per second and supports a small riparian area of cottonwoods, oak, and reeds.

Cougar which is a wildlife species associated with wilderness, may be found in the WSA in the pursuit of mule deer. Peregrine falcons and golden eagles, a species considered by the BLM to be sensitive, are found in the WSA. Six other sensitive animal species and one sensitive plant species may occur in the WSA.

## Squaw and Papoose Canyon

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**Size:** 17,682 acres

**Location:** Dolores County, CO (4,611 acres) and San Juan County, UT (6,676 acres).

**Vegetation:** Vegetation is thick Pinyon-Juniper Woodland on the slopes and canyon rim, with sage parks and riparian growth along the canyon bottom.

**General Description:** The WSA centers on Squaw and Papoose Canyons and the narrow mesa that separates the two canyons.

**Special Features:**

The WSA has a high archaeological site density, it was heavily used by the Ancestral Puebloan dwellers from 450 A.D. to 1300 A.D.

Geological formations are well exposed for scientific and educational study. The Summerville and Morrison formations of the Jurassic Period outcrop and are overlain by Burro Canyon and Dakota Formations of the Upper Cretaceous. The Morrison is rich in fossilized wood, plant remains and fossil vertebrate bones. These values are important to many recreation users who note that such a combination of archaeological and educational values, scenic beauty and ruggedness can be found in few places.