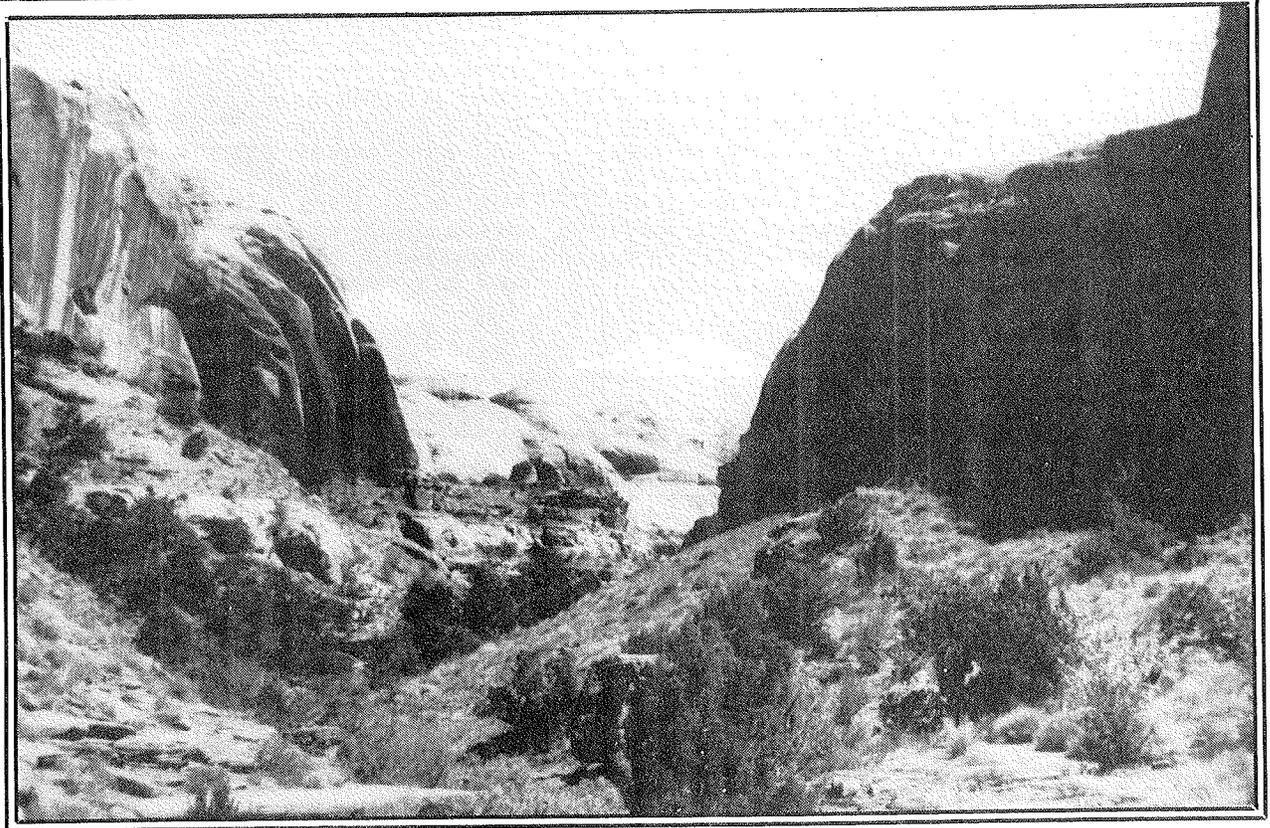


Negro Bill
Canyon WSA



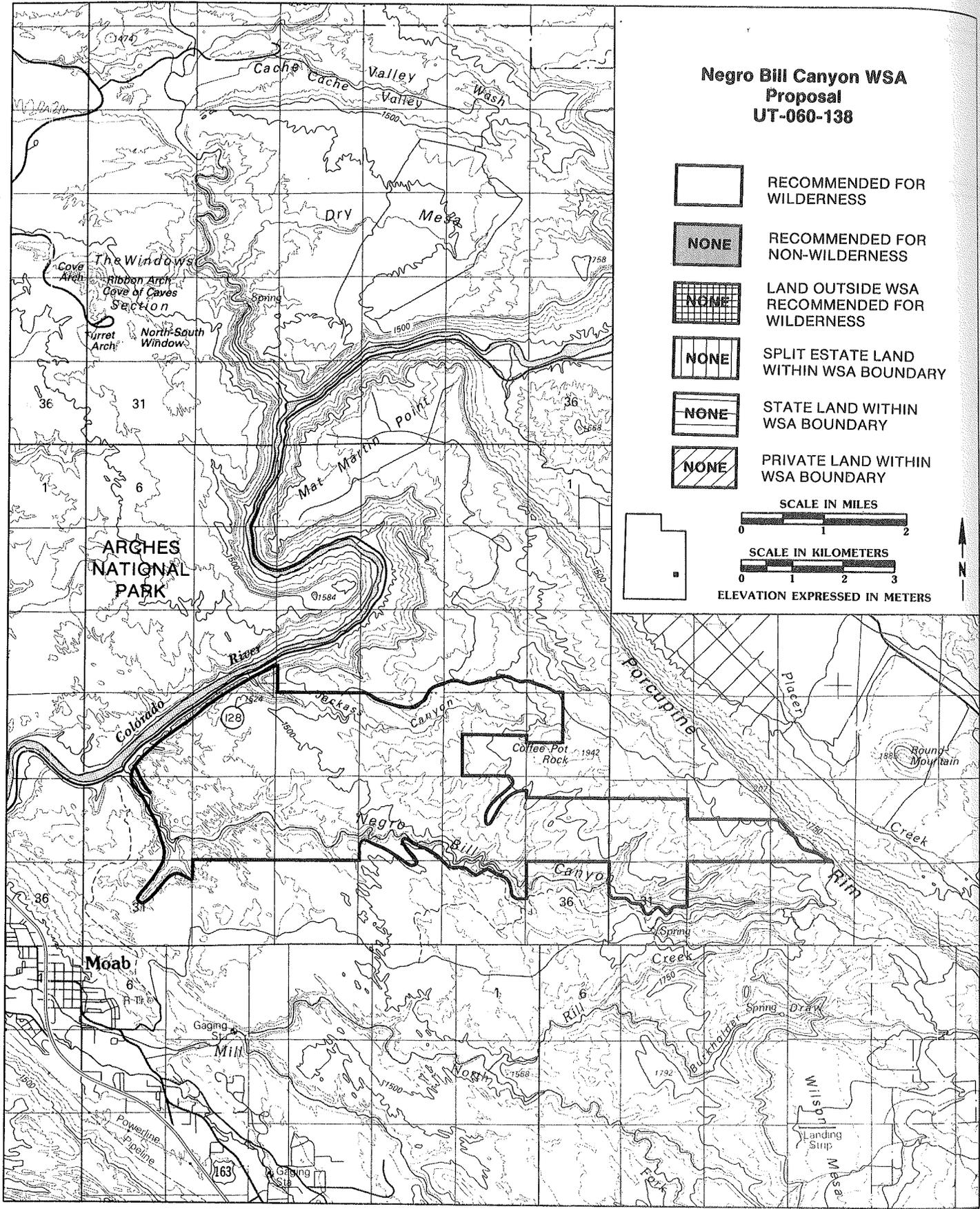
NEGRO BILL CANYON WSA

T. 24 S.

T. 25 S.

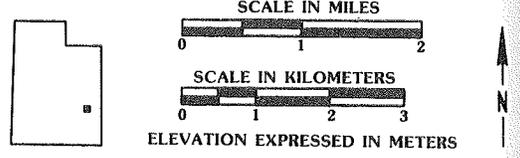
R. 22 E.

R. 23 E.



Negro Bill Canyon WSA Proposal UT-060-138

-  RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  NONE RECOMMENDED FOR NON-WILDERNESS
-  NONE LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  NONE SPLIT ESTATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY
-  NONE STATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY
-  NONE PRIVATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY



ARGHES NATIONAL PARK

Moab

Gaging Mill

Colorado River

Negro Bill Canyon

Spring Creek

Forcupine Plateau

Round Mountain

Creek

Spring Draw

Wilson Mesa

Landing Strip

Fork

NEGRO BILL CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 7,620 acres

The Negro Bill Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-060-138) is in Grand County, about 1.5 miles northeast of Moab, Utah (population 5,333). The study area is an elongated unit about 2.5 miles at the maximum from north to south and about 8 miles long from east to west. The boundary of the WSA parallels State Highway 128 on the west; State land and a road border it on the north; the Porcupine Rim jeep road forms a portion of the eastern boundary; and State lands, canyon rims, and roads form the southern boundary (see Map). A cherry-stemmed road extends into the WSA approximately a 0.5 mile from State Highway 128. Most visitors enter from the parking area located between the WSA and State Highway 128.

The WSA contains 7,620 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). There are no private, State, or split-estate lands inheld in the WSA (see Table 1). The Colorado River is directly west of the WSA. Two westward-trending canyons, Negro Bill Canyon along the southern margin of the study area, and Jackass Canyon in the northwestern part of the study area, are the predominant features in the WSA. The intercanion area is flat to hilly tableland covered mostly by blackbrush and scattered juniper trees. The lowest point in the WSA is at about 3,995 feet elevation, where the stream in Negro Bill Canyon approaches State Highway 128. The highest point is at 4,769 feet, in the north-central part of the WSA.

**TABLE 1
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA**

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	7,620
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0
Total	7,620
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	7,620
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	7,620
In-holdings (State, private)	0
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	0
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0

Source: BLM File Data

NEGRO BILL CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in November 1990. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report, and a no wilderness (no action) alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

7,620 acres

(recommended for wilderness)

0 acres

(not recommended for wilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate the entire area as wilderness. This is the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term.

Almost all of the WSA is in a natural state and nearly one-third of the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Oil and gas, potash, and uranium and vanadium resources may occur in the WSA, but the likelihood of their development is low. The value of the area for wilderness purposes outweighs the value of potential mineral uses.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. In total, approximately 600 acres do not meet the naturalness criterion. The remaining 7,020 acres are in a natural state and meet the criterion.

The WSA is generally natural in character and appears relatively unaltered by man, but there are exceptions. A seismograph line extends 3 miles into the northern third of the unit. The line was constructed in 1962 and has been reclaimed in part but remains substan-

tially noticeable at some locations. A cross line extends both north and south from the main line in T. 25 S., R. 22 E., section 21. The southern line extends for 1.25 miles and ends in a star pattern. The northern portion of this line extends from the northeast through Jackass Canyon and joins the vehicle route forming a portion of the northern border (which is part of the Porcupine Rim Trail). Several additional seismograph trails are evident in this area, as well as in the northern and eastern portions of the WSA. A small pre-FLPMA livestock reservoir is in the southeast corner of Section 13. A post-FLPMA fence is found 2.5 miles from the mouth of Negro Bill Canyon in Main Canyon. It is about a 0.25 mile long and is constructed with green metal posts and four-strand barbed wire. This livestock fence was constructed to keep cattle in the upper section of the canyon except for authorized trailing purposes above the hiking trail to Morning Glory Natural Arch. A set of wood steps was constructed at the fence to facilitate hiker use. Most of the imprints are substantially noticeable from viewpoints such as fins and to a lesser degree from ridgetop vantage points. From lower observation points these imprints are less noticeable and, in places, are hard to distinguish.

A mining road was extended up the bottom of Negro Bill Canyon for approximately 1.5 miles (unauthorized) after the passage of FLPMA. Approximately a 0.5 mile of this road at the mouth of the canyon was in existence prior to FLPMA and is cherry-stemmed. At the present time this lower section of the road is substantially noticeable due to continued use by motor vehicles, but has reclamation potential if closed. The upper 1 mile of this road currently functions as the hiking trail in the canyon. Flash flooding, natural revegetation, and BLM trail management actions have combined to make this route substantially unnoticeable as a road. A pre-FLPMA cattle trail extends south from the canyon bottom in T. 25 S., R. 22 E., section 28, to the flats above.

Two helicopter seismic exploration projects occurred within the WSA in 1982 and 1983. Both projects consisted of flying portable drill rigs to several

NEGRO BILL CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

locations where shallow exploratory holes were drilled. Tailings were back-filled into the holes and the small drill sites were rehabilitated. Total disturbance was less than 1 acre for each project.

B. Solitude

The Negro Bill Canyon portion of the WSA (1,375 acres or 18 percent of the WSA) meets the outstanding criterion for solitude. The balance of the WSA (6,245 acres) does not meet the outstanding solitude criterion for areas under wilderness review.

The WSA offers outstanding opportunities for solitude within portions of the unit due to the variety of topography present.

The size of the WSA is not a contributing factor to the wilderness values present. The area does not give the visitor a feeling of vastness. The configuration of the WSA is of considerable importance in the ability to assure protection of the wilderness values. The eastern and northeastern portions of the WSA are approximately a 0.5 mile wide in places. One finger in the southwest portion of the WSA is less than a 0.25 mile wide where the Moab Slickrock Bike Trail wraps around a side canyon.

Sheer canyon walls provide vertical separation and screening. The depth and winding nature of the canyon enhances topographic screening. In the eastern half of the canyon, the cliff walls become less sheer, with several side canyons branching off the main drainage. Vertical separation is not so pronounced. The winding nature of the eastern half of the canyon provides some screening. The side canyons that branch off the main drainage provide additional topographic screening. Topographic screening is also provided by sandstone fins in the western part of the unit near the canyon mouth.

The upper elevations of the unit consist primarily of windblown sand and sandstone formations. Some topographic screening is also provided by this uneven terrain, but it is less than outstanding. The narrowness of the canyon can detract from the solitude when many

people are in the area by limiting their opportunity to avoid each other.

Vegetation screening is provided by riparian vegetation along the creek in Negro Bill Canyon and from moderately dense juniper and pinyon pine growth of trees in the eastern portion of the WSA. Vegetation screening does diminish in the canyon bottom in the upper portion of Negro Bill Canyon and is absent in slickrock and low brush and grass-covered areas.

Solitude is limited in the central portion of the unit outside the canyon environment due to lack of vegetation screening, but increases in the northern and eastern portions of the WSA.

Sights and sounds of human activity outside the WSA are observable from some locations within the WSA. The western edge of the unit parallels State Highway 128, which is the major route between Moab and the community of Castle Valley. Also, portions of the Sand Flats Road are visible from the eastern portion of the unit. The Slickrock Bike Trail lies adjacent to the WSA on the south. The activities of people outside the WSA, primarily vehicle use with its associated noise, could adversely affect the opportunity for solitude in areas scattered throughout the WSA.

A visitor could easily find a secluded spot in the eastern portion of Negro Bill Canyon or in the fin portion near the western boundary. Opportunities are somewhat diminished in the lower portion of the canyon due to the WSA's narrowness. It would be difficult to find seclusion in the central portion of the unit due to lack of vegetation and topographic screening.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities are outstanding on 2,300 acres of the WSA (the canyon and fins areas) and are less than outstanding on the remaining 5,320 acres.

Portions of the canyon provide outstanding opportunities for hiking, camping, backpacking, and nature study. Sandstone fins near the mouth of the canyon also provide outstanding recreational hiking

NEGRO BILL CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

opportunities. The colorful sandstone formations, particularly in and near Negro Bill Canyon, offer excellent photographic opportunities. Horseback riding is gaining popularity in the WSA.

D. Special Features

Approximately 55 percent of the WSA is rated as outstanding for scenic quality.

Negro Bill Canyon is one of the few side drainages to the Colorado River in Utah that contains a perennial stream. This is of particular significance when considering its proximity to the community of Moab, making it easily available for public use. The WSA has approximately 6 miles of perennial stream.

Cougar and black bear which are wildlife species associated with wilderness may occasionally visit the area.

Three animal species (black-footed ferret, bald eagle, and peregrine falcon) listed as endangered and seven other animal species that are considered sensitive may occur in the WSA.

The Jones Cycladenia, Cycladenia humilis var. jonesii, a threatened plant species and one additional plant species that is considered sensitive may occur in the WSA. Refer to Appendix 4 and the Affected Environment, Vegetation and Wildlife Including Special Status Species sections of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Final EIS for additional information.

Morning Glory Natural Bridge (arch) is the main destination for hikers using the WSA. Morning Glory Natural Bridge is located at the head of a tributary canyon on State land just outside of the WSA. With a length of 243 feet, Morning Glory Natural Bridge is the sixth longest natural rock span in the United States. BLM is currently attempting to acquire the State land that includes this outstanding feature through exchange.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystem not presently represented in the NWPS.

PNV is the vegetative type that would eventually become climax vegetation if not altered by human interference, and is not necessarily the vegetation that is currently present in an area.

The WSA is in the Colorado Plateau Province/Ecoregion. The PNV in the WSA is entirely juniper-pinyon woodland (7,620 acres), which is well represented in the NWPS nationally and in Utah and in other BLM study areas both in and outside of Utah. This information is summarized in Table 2 from data compiled in December 1989.

**TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION**

	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)				
NATIONWIDE (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	11	1,401,745	84	2,136,385
UTAH (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	26,000	53	1,698,578

Source: BLM File Data.

NEGRO BILL CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is within a 5-hour drive of the Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah and Provo-Orem, Utah standard metropolitan statistical areas. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Negro Bill Canyon WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas within the NWPS. As of January 1987, the NWPS included 93 areas comprising 5,475,207 acres in Utah, Arizona, and Colorado, the adjacent states nearest the WSA.

TABLE 3
WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah	11	1,099,962	78	2,252,055
Provo-Orem, Utah	11	721,793	90	2,779,248

Source: BLM File Data.

A Negro Bill Canyon Wilderness would supplement the NWPS in the Canyonlands Section of the Colorado Plateau, however, where there are just two established wilderness areas, totaling 70,751 acres. There are four designated wilderness areas within 100 miles of the WSA. About 50 miles southwest of the WSA is the 45,000-acre Dark Canyon Wilderness (U.S. Forest Service [FS]); to the southeast, in Colorado are the 41,189-acre Lizard Head Wilderness (FS) and the 16,505-acre Mt. Sneffels Wilderness (FS); to the east, also in Colorado, is the 11,180-acre Black Canyon of the Gunnison Wilderness (National Park Service [NPS]).

Manageability (The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character.)

The Negro Bill Canyon WSA can be managed as wilderness to preserve the values now present in the area. Current uses such as livestock grazing and maintenance of a 0.25 mile of fence and one small livestock reservoir would continue with little or no effect on wilderness values. Even though there are 368 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases in the WSA, the leases are subject to nonim-

pairment of wilderness values and it is expected that they will expire and not be renewed.

There are 3,200 acres of mining claims in the WSA but, because of low resource potentials, development is not expected following wilderness designation. There are no private or State in-holdings or other valid rights in the WSA that would significantly affect wilderness values.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) prepared a mineral assessment report for the Negro Bill Canyon WSA (USGS Bulletin 1754-D, Susan Bartsch-Winkler, et al., 1990). The report indicates that no mineral resources were identified in the study area. The mineral resource potential for gypsum, potash, halite (rock salt), and bentonite on the surface and in the subsurface beneath the WSA is high. The energy and mineral resource potential for oil, gas, carbon dioxide, uranium, and vanadium on the surface and beneath the WSA is moderate. The potential for helium gas, geothermal sources, and metals other than uranium and vanadium is low.

NEGRO BILL CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the area as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Social and economic factors were not considered to be significant issues in the EIS.

Summary of WSA-Specific Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 165 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 398 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statements by the same commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs. In general, 380 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while eight commenters were opposed. Ten commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the need to protect the wilderness values in the WSA from development, preserve those values for future generations, and add the diversity of the WSA to the NWPS. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from other states.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would preclude mineral exploration and development and conflict with motorized recreation. Most of those opposing wilderness designation were from rural Utah and from outside the state.

No Federal agencies commented on the Draft EIS for this WSA.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are no State in-holdings in the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the State of Utah expressed general opposition to wilderness designation but did not take a definite position regarding wilderness designation of the WSA. The State commented that Negro Bill Canyon has relatively low wilderness values and the highest degree of conflict compared to the other WSAs in the region. The State also pointed out that there are some special features in the area accessible only through the WSA (e.g., Morning Glory Natural Bridge). State identified conflicts include a moderate potential for oil and gas, uranium/vanadium, potash, and water resource development. The State commented that the Grand Resource Management Plan recommends part of the WSA for Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) management and that this would allow for protective management of the WSA's unique wilderness resources while allowing other nonwilderness uses in the parts not designated as an ONA.

The Negro Bill Canyon WSA is in Grand County. The Grand County Master Plan does not specifically address the WSA. The plan generally emphasizes continuation of present uses and maximizing mineral development. The Grand County Commission is opposed to wilderness designation and has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation of BLM lands in Utah. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the Commission stated that Negro Bill Canyon could more appropriately be managed under multiple use management guidelines. The Commission noted that wilderness designation would conflict with County proposed recreational and commercial uses of the canyon.

NEGRO BILL CANYON WSA

Table 4
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topic	Recommendation All Wilderness (7,620 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness designation would preserve wilderness values, including naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and the special features of Class A scenery, endangered or special status species, wildlife associated with wilderness, and a perennial stream, wherever these values occur in the WSA.	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation, and loss would occur as intrusions increase. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 40 acres of the WSA due to mineral exploration activities. Vehicular use of 0.5 mile of road and exploratory roads as well as ORV activity on the flats above the canyons would continue to be an annoyance that would detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in the WSA. As much as 760 acres would be directly affected. The quality of opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be indirectly reduced in quality on up to an additional 3,050 acres adjacent to the areas of disturbance. Some special features, including Class A scenery and wildlife associated with wilderness, would be disturbed.
Impacts on Vegetation	Vegetation types and special status species would be preserved by the All Wilderness Alternative because surface disturbance would not occur.	Vegetation types would be altered on 0.5 percent of the WSA. Continued management of the threatened, endangered, or other special status species would be required to insure that ORV use would not threaten populations of two special status plant species.
Impacts on Mineral and Energy Exploration and Development	Wilderness designation would preclude potential oil and gas exploration opportunities. Significant production of locatable, leasable, or salable minerals would not be foregone because the probability of development is low even if the WSA is not designated wilderness.	Mineral and energy resource exploration and production in the Negro Bill Canyon WSA would not be affected because mineral leasing, location of mining claims and mineral development would not be restricted for protection of wilderness values.

NEGRO BILL CANYON WSA

**Table 4 (Continued)
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative**

Issue Topic	Recommendation All Wilderness (7,620 Acres)	Alternatives No Action/No Wilderness
Impacts on Wildlife Habitat and Populations	Wilderness designation would protect wildlife habitat and populations and would provide additional solitude.	About 0.5 percent (40 acres) of the wildlife habitat in the WSA would be disturbed. Therefore, wildlife populations including special status species would not be significantly decreased.
Impacts on Recreation	The All Wilderness Alternative would benefit primitive recreation by eliminating surface-disturbing activities and increasing management attention and recognition of primitive recreation values. Primitive-type use would increase. ORV use would be eliminated from the WSA, but would not decline regionally because there are many similar areas outside but near the WSA that would be available for use.	The quality of primitive recreation would be directly reduced on up to 800 acres and indirectly reduced on as much as 3,050 acres more. This would be due to oil and gas exploration and increased ORV use in accessible areas. Both primitive and motorized recreational use would increase in the foreseeable future. Limitation may have to be imposed on visitation in order to protect resource values.