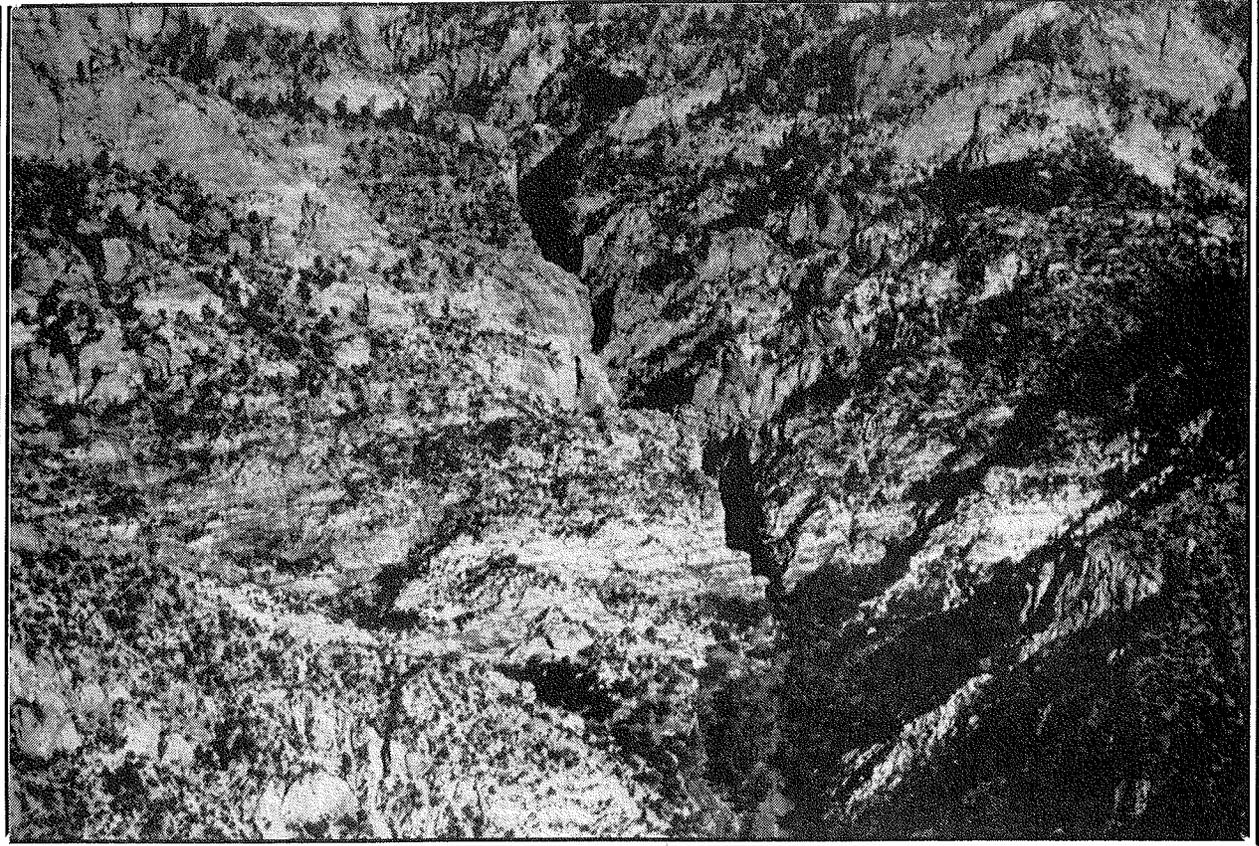


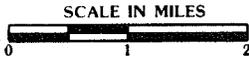
Spring Creek Canyon  
WSA



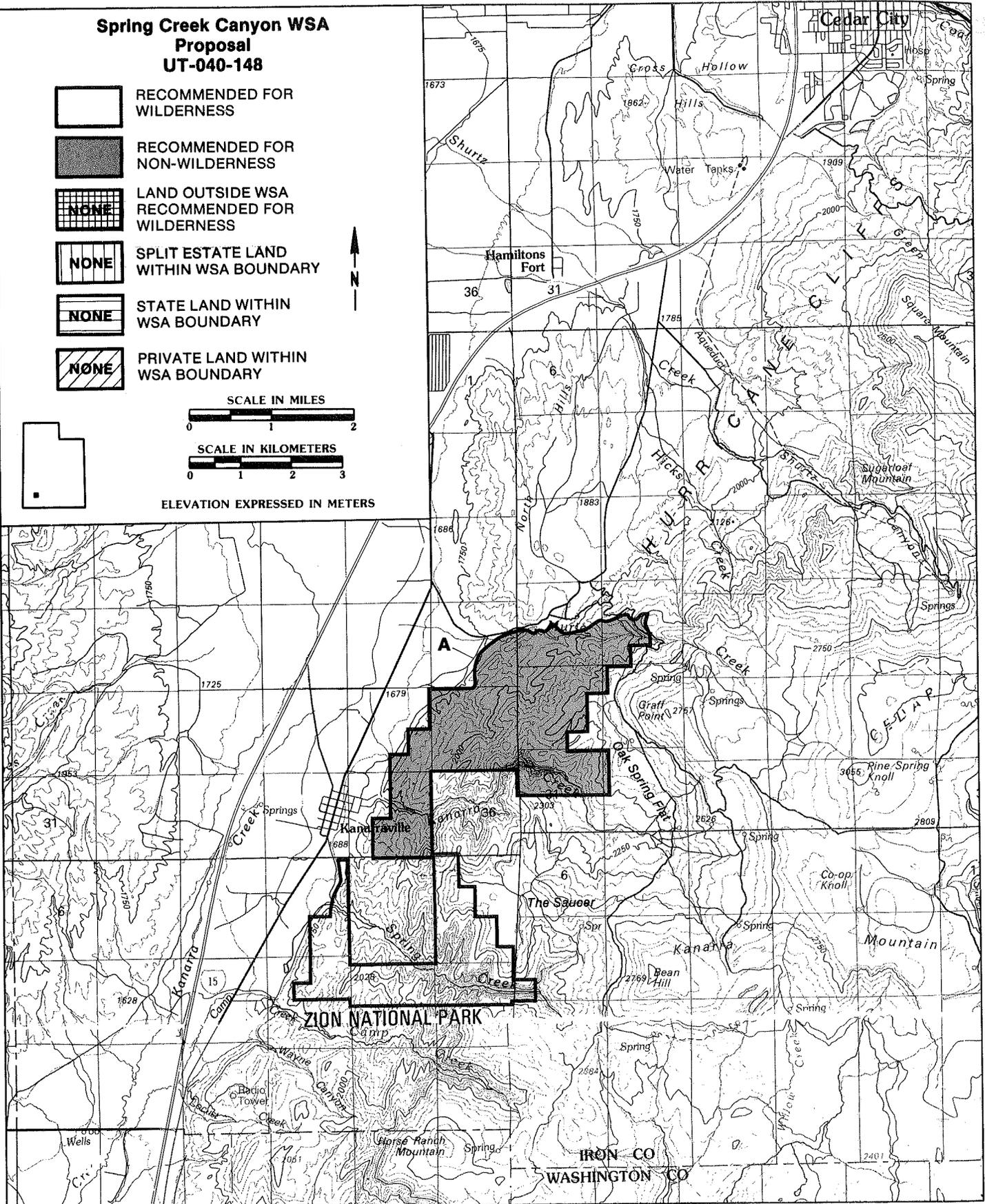
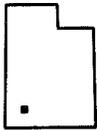
# SPRING CREEK CANYON WSA

## Spring Creek Canyon WSA Proposal UT-040-148

-  RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  RECOMMENDED FOR NON-WILDERNESS
-  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  SPLIT ESTATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY
-  STATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY
-  PRIVATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY



ELEVATION EXPRESSED IN METERS



T. 36 S.

T. 37 S.

T. 38 S.

**SPRING CREEK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

**1. THE STUDY AREA: 4,433 acres**

The Spring Creek Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-040-148) is in the southeastern corner of Iron County, about 7 miles southwest of Cedar City, Utah (population 10,972). The WSA extends about 6 miles from north to south and 3 miles from east to west. The study area is 1.5 to 2 miles east of Interstate Highway 15 (I-15) and immediately east of the community of Kanaraville. The configuration of the WSA is mostly dependent on land ownership. Private land and two State sections surround the study area, and the southern boundary adjoins Zion National Park (see Map). Two State sections nearly bisect the WSA. The WSA includes 4,433 acres of public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

There are no private, State, or split-estate lands in the WSA (see Table 1).

The study area includes a portion of the Hurricane Cliffs, an impressive west-facing escarpment that extends from north of Cedar City into northwestern Arizona. Two major canyons, Kanarra and Spring Creek, bisect the WSA. Elevation ranges from 5,600 feet at the base of the cliffs to almost 7,900 feet on the plateau atop the Cliffs. Juniper, scrub oak, shrubs, and grasses predominate, but vegetative cover generally is not dense. Sedges, rushes, cottonwoods, willows, and shrubs characteristic of riparian zones in the region grow on the canyon floors.

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

<b>WITHIN THE WSA</b>	<b>ACRES</b>
BLM (surface and subsurface)	4,433
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,433</b>
<b>WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY</b>	
BLM (within the WSA)	1,607
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM land recommended for wilderness</b>	<b>1,607</b>
In-holdings (State, private)	0
<b>WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS</b>	
BLM	2,926
Split-Estate	0
<b>Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness</b>	<b>2,926</b>
In-holdings (State, Private)	0

Source: BLM File Data

## SPRING CREEK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The WSA was dropped from wilderness study status by the Secretary of the Interior on December 30, 1982 due to its small size, but because of its wilderness values and proximity to Zion National Park, including a National Park Service (NPS) endorsed wilderness proposal of 120,620-acres, it was studied under Section 202 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. The southern portion of the WSA is adjacent to the 120,620 acre area administratively endorsed by the NPS for wilderness designation. Three alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative where 1,607 acres would be designated as wilderness and 2,826 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, which is the recommendation in this report; a no wilderness (no action) alternative; and an all wilderness alternative.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

- 1,607 acres  
(recommended for wilderness)
- 2,826 acres  
(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 1,607 acres as wilderness and to release the remaining 2,826 acres for other uses. Designation of the entire area as wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The alternative selected however, would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

The southern and recommended portion of the WSA is almost severed from the northern portion by State and private lands. The geographic configuration results in a WSA of two distinct parts. Each portion exhibits different characteristics and geographic relationships. The recommended southern portion adjoining Zion National Park is small but can be effectively managed as wilderness. All of the recommended portion is in a natural state and has outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Special features include the

scenery in Spring Creek Canyon which closely resembles the landscape of Camp Canyon immediately to the south in Zion National Park. Many of the remaining terrain and scenic features in the recommended portion are very similar to those in the neighboring portion of the Park. Wilderness protection of the southern part of the WSA would complement the values in Zion National Park.

Designation of the recommended area would conflict with a limited potential for oil and gas exploration and a potential for development of a municipal water line in Spring Creek Canyon. The wilderness values of the recommended area outweigh these conflicts because production of oil and gas is not likely following exploration, and recent upgrading of municipal water facilities in Kanarra Creek will provide adequate municipal water for Kanarraville.

The northern portion of the WSA also is in a natural condition. Approximately 62 percent of this area has outstanding opportunities for solitude and 54 percent has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation. Designation of the northern portion of the WSA could not complement or influence Park values. The northern section is separated from both the recommended portion and Zion National Park by State and private lands. Wilderness management of this portion of the WSA would not be effective or cohesive because the two portions of the WSA are linked only at a section corner.

### 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. The WSA basically appears as untouched deep canyon systems cutting through rocky ledges and cliffs. The southern portion of the WSA has outstanding scenic values equal in quality to those of Zion National Park. All of the WSA is in a natural condition. Short ways in the mouths of Spring

## SPRING CREEK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Creek and Kanarra Canyon total about a 0.5 mile. There is also a water pipeline on State lands in Kanarra Canyon that crosses about a 0.5 mile of the WSA. A fenced community dump site near the mouth of Spring Creek Canyon is outside the WSA boundaries.

### B. Solitude

Approximately 3,728 acres (84 percent) of the WSA possess outstanding opportunities for solitude.

The WSA is in an extremely rugged area and terrain is the major factor contributing to the opportunity for solitude. Woodlands and dense riparian vegetation in Kanarra and Spring Creek Canyons enhance the screening provided by terrain.

Kanarra and Spring Creek Canyons occupy more than 66 percent of the WSA. The Spring Creek Canyon system is intricately dissected. The higher elevations and the upper portions of the canyon have a moderately dense spruce-fir cover. The northern part of the WSA, including Kanarra Canyon, is similar to the Spring Creek Canyon area, and also provides solitude.

The gradient in the WSA is almost 3,000 feet in 1 mile throughout the unit. At the base of the WSA, the flats and the face of the initial ridge do not provide an opportunity for solitude. In the upper portions, where Woods Hollow and Oak Spring Flat extend into the WSA, the opportunity for solitude is also lacking.

### C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Overall, outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are present on approximately 3,568 acres (81 percent) of the WSA.

The Spring Creek and Kanarra Canyon systems offer outstanding hiking, exploring, and backpacking opportunities. Almost 50 percent of the 2.5-mile Spring Creek Canyon system is within the unit, including the most entrenched portion of the canyon system.

The sandstone ridge and cliffs north of Kanarra Canyon also provide numerous

options for hiking and backpacking. Much of this rugged area lacks well-defined routes, but is conducive to exploration. Woods Hollow, the Saucer, and Oak Springs Flat in the WSA are excellent hiking areas. Hiking on some of the lower ridges is less interesting.

### D. Special Features

Approximately 73 percent (3,233 acres) of the WSA is rated as outstanding for scenic quality. The WSA has scenic values similar to those found in contiguous Zion National Park.

The WSA may be habitat for or be visited by two endangered bird species (bald eagle and peregrine falcon) and 13 animal and four plant species that are considered sensitive. Although these species add to the wilderness values of the WSA, they are not confined to the Spring Creek Canyon study area.

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.

### 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 combination of potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystems or an individual 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 a transition zone between the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Ecoregion and the Rocky Mountain Forest Province/Ecoregion. The PNV in both provinces in the WSA is juniper-pinyon woodland (2,217 acres and 2,216 acres, respectively, in the two provinces).

**SPRING CREEK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

The PNV in the Intermountain Sagebrush Province is represented in the NWPS only in Utah but would be in other BLM study areas both in and outside of Utah.

The PNV in the Rocky Mountain Forest Province (juniper-pinyon woodland) is represented in the NWPS outside of Utah only.

This information is summarized in Table 2 from data compiled in December 1989.

**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 Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah; Provo-Orem, Utah; and Las Vegas, Nevada. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated wilderness and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.

**TABLE 2  
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION**

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	6	93,656	75	2,151,690
NATIONWIDE (ROCKY MOUNTAIN FOREST PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	2	41,451	19	165,420
UTAH (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	2	14,995	13	257,216
UTAH (ROCKY MOUNTAIN FOREST PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	3	44,852

Source: BLM File Data.

**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	2,249,195
Provo-Orem, Utah	11	721,793	80	2,776,308
Las Vegas, Nevada	38	3,132,130	54	2,175,694

Source: BLM File Data.

## SPRING CREEK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

### C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Spring Creek Canyon WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas within the NWPS.

As of January, 1987, the NWPS included 65 wilderness areas comprising 2,898,792 acres in Utah, Arizona, and Nevada.

Twelve designated wilderness areas are within 100 miles of the WSA. In a clockwise direction beginning to the north, are the 7,000-acre Ashdown Gorge Wilderness (Forest Service [FS]), the 25,751-acre Box-Death Hollow Wilderness (FS), the 112,400-acre Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness (BLM), the 40,539-acre Saddle Mountain Wilderness (FS), the 70,500-acre Kanab Creek Wilderness (FS and BLM units), the 6,860-acre Cottonwood Point Wilderness (BLM), the 7,880-acre Mt. Trumbull Wilderness (BLM), the 14,650-acre Mt. Logan Wilderness (BLM), the 37,030-acre Grand Wash Cliffs Wilderness (BLM), the 87,900-acre Paiute Wilderness (BLM), the 18,630-acre Beaver Dam Mountains Wilderness (BLM), and, to the west, the 50,000-acre Pine Valley Mountain Wilderness (FS).

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

Overall, the WSA could be effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character. The WSA receives relatively little use. One grazing permittee is authorized to utilize 33 animal unit months (AUMs) of forage a year, but the area has not been grazed in recent years. Recreational visitors spend about 700 visitor days annually in the WSA. There are no private or State in-holdings to interfere with wilderness management. There are no mineral leases, mining claims or other valid rights that would significantly affect management of wilderness values in the recommended portion of the WSA.

The area not recommended as wilderness also could be managed as wilderness. There are 21 mining claims covering 420 acres in this portion of the WSA, but mineral values are relatively low and development is not expected in the fore-

seeable future. The area not recommended is separated from the recommended portion by a State section and is not adjacent to Zion National Park. Therefore, coordinated management of wilderness values in this area in conjunction with the 120,620-acre area of the park administratively endorsed as wilderness by the NPS, would not be practical.

### 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 Spring Creek Canyon WSA (USGS Bulletin 1746-F, R.E. Van Loenen, et al., 1989). The report indicates that inferred sub-economic resources of common variety sand, sandstone, and limestone occur in the study area. The study area has a moderate potential for undiscovered resources of oil and gas and low potential for all metallic resources (including copper, silver, and uranium), and geothermal resources. No potential exists for coal and gypsum resources.

### 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 Public 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 29 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 33 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

## SPRING CREEK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

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, 22 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while seven were opposed. Four commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented that wilderness designation would complement proposed wilderness in adjacent Zion National Park. Those commenting in favor of wilderness were almost evenly from rural and urban Utah and other states.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that the WSA is too small to be a designated wilderness. All of those opposed to wilderness designation were from rural Utah.

One Federal agency, the NPS commented on the Draft EIS for the Spring Creek WSA. The NPS supported wilderness designation for the WSA, provided information on potential for endangered species in the area, and questioned changes in livestock forage allocations in the WSA between 1982 and publication of the Draft EIS.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are no State sections 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 Spring Creek Canyon WSA. The State commented that the less than 5,000-acre areas surrounding Zion National Park, including the Spring Creek Canyon WSA, are natural, logical extensions of Zion National Park. The State noted that there are land use conflicts found in the gas company reports on the area. These reports identify oil and gas potential in LaVerkin Creek Canyon, Deep Creek, North Fork Virgin River, Red Butte, Spring Creek Canyon, and Beartrap Canyon WSAs. The State suggested that given the small size of the units and their adjacency to Zion National Park, additional study

should be given to the potential of transferring most of these WSAs from BLM to NPS management. The BLM and NPS agree that transferral of administration is a separate issue, independent of the wilderness review.

The State of Utah also noted that the mineral potential of the WSA is probably low.

The Spring Creek Canyon WSA is in Iron County. The Iron County Land Management Code identifies the WSA as an open space zone, and the Iron County Commission has indicated that they do not support wilderness designation for this WSA. The County Commission 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 County Commission stated that the Spring Creek Canyon WSA should not be designated as wilderness until legal decisions concerning water rights are reached. They reported the potential for conflicts with water development, and express their opinion that the recreational values of the area are less than outstanding because the WSA is separated into two pieces by a State section.

# SPRING CREEK CANYON WSA

Table 4  
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

		Alternatives	
Issue Topic	Proposed Action Partial Wilderness (1,607 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (4,433 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would be preserved in the designated portion which is approximately 36 percent of the WSA. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 2 acres and indirectly reduced in quality on up to an additional 18 adjacent acres in the nondesignated portion due to disturbance from mineral exploration. Class A scenery would be reduced in quality on disturbed and adjacent acres in the nondesignated area. Vehicular use of less than 0.5 mile of way in the nondesignated portion would occasionally detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.	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 21 acres and indirectly reduced in quality on up to an additional 180 acres due to disturbance from mineral exploration and water development. Special features would not be significantly affected except for loss of scenic quality in disturbed and adjacent areas. Vehicular use of 0.5 mile of ways in two areas would occasionally detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.	Wilderness designation would preserve the wilderness values of naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and special features, including Class A scenery, endangered or sensitive species, and wildlife associated with wilderness, wherever these values are found in the WSA.
Impacts on Water Resources	Wilderness designation would not affect current uses of Kanarra Creek, but development of a pipeline to deliver water from Spring Creek Canyon to Kanarraville would not occur.	Existing and future uses of the water resources in the WSA by the town of Kanarraville would not be affected because construction of a pipeline would be allowable.	Wilderness designation would not affect current uses of Kanarra Creek, but development of a pipeline to deliver water from Spring Creek Canyon to Kanarraville would not occur.
Impacts on Mineral and Energy Exploration and Production	Opportunities for mineral exploration would be eliminated in the designated area, but not in the nondesignated area. Due to the small size of potential mineral deposits in the WSA, and because development is unlikely even without wilderness designation, it is concluded that this alternative would not significantly affect mineral resource development.	Mineral exploration would not be affected because future leasing and location of mining claims and development could occur without constraints for preservation of wilderness values.	Wilderness designation would eliminate potential exploration opportunities for mineral resources in the WSA. Due to the small size of potential mineral deposits in the WSA and because development is unlikely even without wilderness designation, it is concluded that this alternative would not significantly affect mineral resource development.