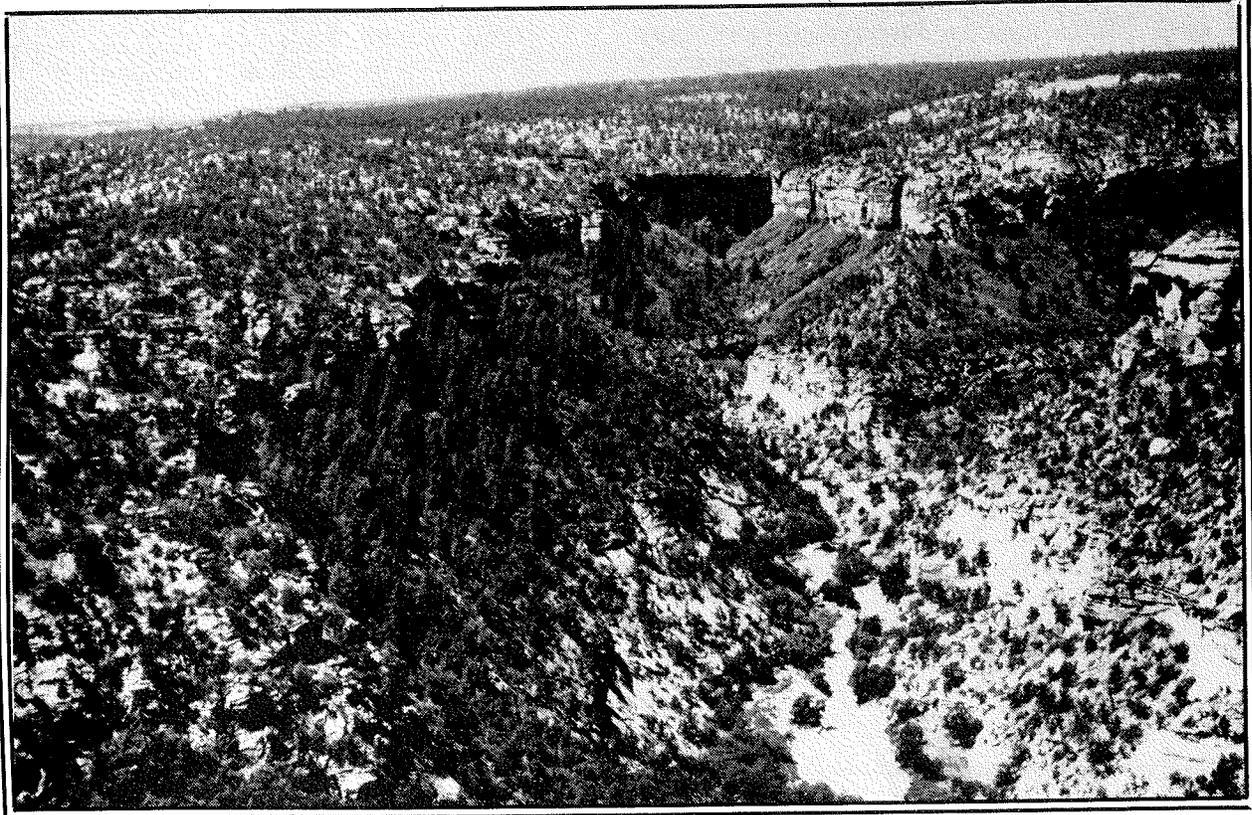


Moquith
Mountain WSA



MOQUITH MOUNTAIN WSA

R. 8 W.

R. 7 W.

T. 42 S.

T. 43 S.

Moquith Mountain WSA Proposal UT-040-217



RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS



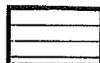
RECOMMENDED FOR NON-WILDERNESS



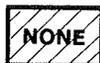
LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY



STATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY



PRIVATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY



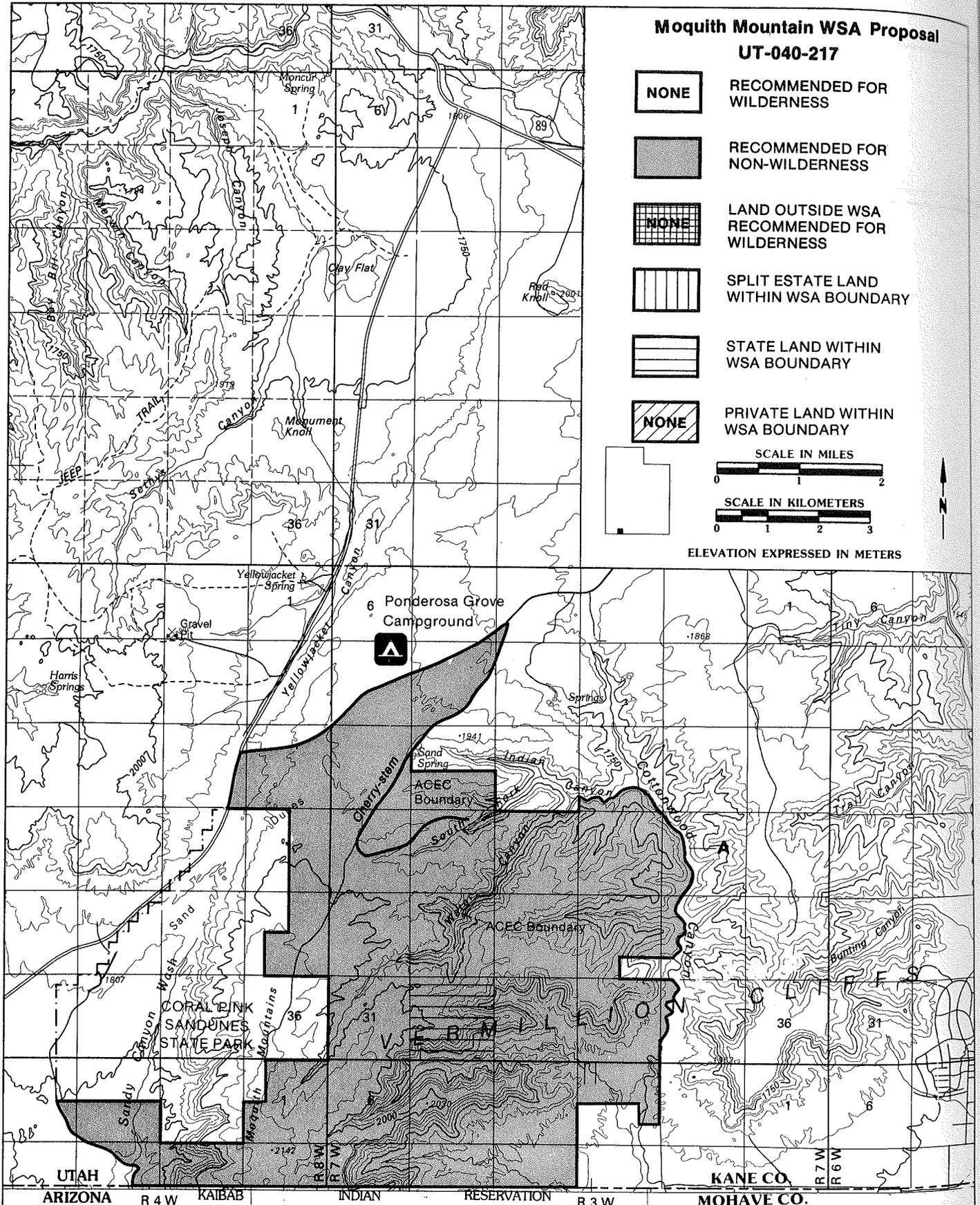
SCALE IN MILES



SCALE IN KILOMETERS



ELEVATION EXPRESSED IN METERS



MOQUITH MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 14,830 acres

The Moquith Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-040-217) is in southwestern Kane County just north of the Arizona state line and about 4 miles west of Kanab, Utah (population 2,148). The WSA includes 14,830 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Within the boundaries of the WSA are, 680 acres of State land, including 40 acres of private land with State-owned mineral rights (see Table 1). No split-estate lands (Federal surface ownership with non-Federal mineral ownership) are in the study area. The Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park borders most of the WSA on the west, the Kaibab Indian Reservation in Arizona borders the WSA for 5.25 miles on the south, and roads and non-Federal lands border the unit on the north and east (see Map).

Five distinct landforms comprise the WSA. In the central part are the Vermilion Cliffs, a "step" in the Grand Staircase, the southern end of the High Plateaus of Utah Section of the Colorado Plateau Physiographic Province. The north side of the Vermilion Cliffs terrace includes a portion of the Coral Pink Sand Dunes and an escarpment above the dunes. Several canyons cut into the WSA. The upper part of the study area is a rocky tableland covered with pinyon-juniper woodland. Elevations range from 5,000 feet in the southeast, at the foot of the cliffs, to 7,000 feet on Moquith Mountain in the southwest corner of the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Utah

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

WITHIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	14,830
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	680
Total	15,510
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	0
In-holdings (State, private)	0
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	14,830
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	14,830
In-holdings (State, Private)	680

Source: BLM File Data

MOQUITH MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in November 1990. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness (no action) alternative which is the recommendation in this report, and an all wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

- 0 acres
(recommended for wilderness)
- 14,830 acres
(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to release the entire area for uses other than wilderness. 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 environmental impacts.

Essentially all of the WSA is natural and includes special features. More than half of the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude, and almost half has outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. However, nonprimitive recreational uses and users frequently overflow into the WSA from the adjacent Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park. The need to accommodate what has become established use associated with developed facilities and vehicle recreation, including off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, outweighs the wilderness values present in the WSA. Current vehicular recreational use is estimated at 5,700 visitor days annually, compared with about 300 visitor days attributed to nonvehicular recreation. Sights and sounds of vehicle activities in the adjacent State Park detract from solitude in portions of the WSA.

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 substan-

tially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. Approximately 14,760 acres (99.5 percent) of the WSA are in a natural condition. Although the visible evidence of man is found on only a very small total acreage of the WSA, individual imprints can be encountered throughout much of this relatively small WSA. The effect is to reduce the overall quality of the naturalness attribute. In certain of the more remote and scenic canyon systems such as Water Canyon, the naturalness characteristic is of very high quality. There are substantially noticeable imprints on a 70-acre flat in the northwest part of the WSA adjacent to Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park. The imprints consist of trails and disturbance caused by camping associated with recreation in the State Park and have probably been occurring since the 1960s. A water well with associated reservoir, access road, and trail have been in the same area since 1976. Construction of a culinary water line, including cutting down several trees and leaving the stumps, disturbed a small portion of the WSA. Altogether these disturbances comprise about 70 acres (0.5 percent of the WSA).

B. Solitude

Approximately 8,800 acres, 59 percent of the WSA, contain outstanding opportunities for solitude. Areas that provide solitude include the 1,500 acres of Coral Pink Sand Dunes within the WSA; short steep canyons in the cliffs on the western side of Moquith Mountain above the Coral Pink Sand Dunes; and the summit of Moquith Mountain where isolation, sandstone outcroppings, and ponderosa pines provide screening. The areas are dispersed throughout the WSA, but in general, the southern portion and parts of the eastern segment of the WSA provide solitude.

The remaining 6,030 acres of the study area do not contain outstanding opportunities for solitude. Vehicles can be seen and heard in the northern parts of the WSA, and sights and sounds from the sand dunes in the State Park detract from solitude in the northwest.

MOQUITH MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities are outstanding for hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, hunting, photography, and sightseeing on 7,300 acres, or 49 percent of the WSA. Some activities, such as horseback riding and visiting archaeological features, are limited by terrain or by location. Opportunities for other activities, such as photography and hiking, are available virtually throughout the study area, hampered only by sheer cliffs and the possible difficulty of traversing the sand dunes. Backpacking opportunities are more limited because of the relatively small size of the WSA.

Criteria for outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation are not met on 7,530 acres or about 51 percent of the WSA.

D. Special Features

About 7,300 acres in the WSA are of outstanding scenic quality. In addition, there are perennial streams, hanging gardens, isolated stands of Ponderosa pine and aspen, large alcoves, shifting sand dunes, and prehistoric sites, including the South Fork Indian Canyon Pictograph. As well as providing opportunities for photography, the diverse features of the WSA are relatively accessible, have scientific value, and the potential for environmental education and natural history interpretation.

A threatened plant species, Asclepias welshii, that grows in active sand dune areas in association with sagebrush, juniper, and Ponderosa pine, is found in the northwest part of the WSA. Astragalus ampullaris, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Category 2 candidate species, which is a species that may become listed as threatened or endangered pending more information, may also be found in the WSA, as it is known to occur in the vicinity.

The endangered bald eagle and peregrine falcon may occasionally visit the WSA, but neither species is believed to nest in the study area. Other FWS candidate

species which may inhabit the WSA include ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, southern spotted owl, long-billed curlew, western snowy plover, western yellow-billed cuckoo, white-faced ibis, Coral Pink Sand Dunes tiger beetle, and Great Basin silverspot butterfly. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources lists roadrunners, Lewis woodpeckers, and fox sparrows as sensitive species. All of these species inhabit the WSA.

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 ecosystems not presently represented in Utah or in the NWPS. Potential natural vegetation (PNV) is vegetation that would develop to a climax state if an area remains undisturbed by human interference. The WSA is in the Colorado Plateau Province/Ecoregion. The PNV type in the WSA is juniper-pinyon woodland which is represented nationally in the NWPS and is well represented in BLM study areas both in and outside of Utah. This information is summarized in Table 2, from data compiled in February 1989 and from BLM files.

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 Provo-Orem, Utah, and Las Vegas, Nevada. Table 3 shows the number and acreage of designated wilderness areas and of other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

Designation of the Moquith Mountain WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas within the NWPS.

MOQUITH MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

**TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION**

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV) NATIONWIDE (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	10	1,393,647	84	2,128,275
UTAH (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	26,000	53	1,691,368

Source: BLM File Data.

**TABLE 3
WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS**

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREA	ACRES
Las Vegas, Nevada	38	3,132,130	54	2,129,328
Provo-Orem	11	721,793	90	2,772,038

Source: BLM File Data.

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 26,000-acre Box-Death Hollow Wilderness (FS), the 112,000-acre Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness (BLM), the 6,860-acre Cottonwood Point Wilderness (BLM), the 70,500-acre Kanab Creek Wilderness (FS and BLM units), the 40,600-acre Saddle Mountain Wilderness (FS), the 7,880-acre Mt. Trumbull Wilderness (BLM), the 14,650-acre Mt. Logan Wilderness (BLM), the 18,630-acre Beaver Dam Mountains Wilderness (BLM), the 87,900-acre Paiute Wilderness (BLM), the 37,300-acre Grand Wash Cliffs Wilderness (BLM), and the 50,000-acre Pine Valley Mountain Wilderness (FS).

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

Portions of the WSA such as Water Canyon could be effectively managed as wilderness. In other areas such as the Coral Pink Sand Dunes, effective management would be difficult. It would be necessary to prevent the increasing recreational demand in the adjacent Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park from affecting about 3,200 acres in the northwestern part of the study area. The terrain changes little and the boundary of the WSA is indistinct to sand dune visitors in this area.

Livestock grazing and maintenance of existing facilities would continue and would not significantly reduce wilderness values. Maintenance of an existing water line to Fredonia, Arizona also would not unduly affect wilderness values or management.

There are no mineral leases or mining claims in the WSA to interfere with wilderness management. There are 680 acres of in-held lands, but the need for access is not expected in the foreseeable future.

MOQUITH MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Because the WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) did not prepare a mineral assessment report for the area. According to BLM geologists, the mineral and energy potential for oil and gas and uranium is moderate, but is low for all metals, geothermal sources, and undiscovered coal. Deposits of stream gravel and other loose rocks are present within the WSA, but these deposits are not economically significant because ample supplies of similar materials exist elsewhere.

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 42 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 55 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, 41 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 11 commenters were opposed. Three commenters addressed the

relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on special features in the WSA. Those commenting in favor of wilderness were from outside the state. Of particular concern was the need to protect wilderness values from off road vehicle use.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would harm local economy. All but two commenters, who were from outside Utah, were from rural Utah.

One Federal agency, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), commented on the Draft EIS. The EPA took no formal position on wilderness designation but suggested that additional consideration be given to off-road vehicle controls in the Moquith Mountain WSA as deemed appropriate by BLM.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There is one section (680 acres) of State land 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 considers the WSA to have low-quality wilderness values and moderately high conflicts. The conflicts are associated with water and nonwilderness recreational developments planned for areas within and adjacent to the WSA. The State noted that Fredonia, Arizona uses water from the WSA for culinary purposes.

The Kane County Commission is opposed to wilderness designation of the Moquith Mountain WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS the County Commission expressed support for BLM's No Action/No Wilderness proposal. The Kane County Master Plan rejects wilderness as an exclusionary recreational form that cannot be used by the average recreational visitor.

MOQUITH MOUNTAIN WSA

Table 4
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Recommendation No Action/No Wilderness	Alternatives	All Wilderness (14,830 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would not be preserved 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 or indirectly lost on up to 4,450 acres of the WSA due to campground and rangeland developments and ORV activity. Class A scenery would be reduced in quality in disturbed areas, and continued monitoring of threatened Welsh's milkweed would be necessary.	Wilderness values would be preserved. In the foreseeable future, wilderness values would be slightly reduced in quality on 3 acres by development of rangeland projects.	Wilderness values would be preserved. In the foreseeable future, wilderness values would be slightly reduced in quality on 3 acres by development of rangeland projects.
Impacts on Vegetation	No vegetation types would be significantly altered because less than 1 percent (104 acres) of the pinyon-juniper woodland in the WSA would be altered. Specific management of the threatened Welsh's milkweed would ensure the continued existence of the species.	Wilderness designation would aid in the protection of the Welsh's milkweed on the sand dunes. Vegetation types in the WSA would not be altered.	Wilderness designation would aid in the protection of the Welsh's milkweed on the sand dunes. Vegetation types in the WSA would not be altered.
Impacts on Water Resources	No significant impacts would occur to water quality because disturbance would not be near surface waters and mitigation would be required. Water uses and development could occur without wilderness restrictions.	Watershed values and recharge areas would be protected. Opportunities for expansion of existing facilities for the community of Fredonia's water supply would likely be foregone.	Watershed values and recharge areas would be protected. Opportunities for expansion of existing facilities for the community of Fredonia's water supply would likely be foregone.
Impacts on Livestock Management	Livestock management would not be significantly affected because new facilities could be installed to aid in livestock distribution and use of vehicles in livestock management would continue.	Restrictions on 11 miles of way would inconvenience seven permittees and increase management costs and time.	Restrictions on 11 miles of way would inconvenience seven permittees and increase management costs and time.
Impacts on Recreation	Opportunities for primitive recreation would be adversely affected in parts of the WSA by substantial increase in ORV recreational use and by rangeland developments. Development of the campsite next to the State park would help accommodate the increased ORV use.	Primitive recreation would be enhanced because ORV use and intensive recreation would be restricted. Overall visitation in the WSA would decline. Development of the planned overflow campsite would not be allowed in the wilderness. An established ORV use area would no longer be available for such use. Closure to vehicular use would be administratively difficult.	Primitive recreation would be enhanced because ORV use and intensive recreation would be restricted. Overall visitation in the WSA would decline. Development of the planned overflow campsite would not be allowed in the wilderness. An established ORV use area would no longer be available for such use. Closure to vehicular use would be administratively difficult.