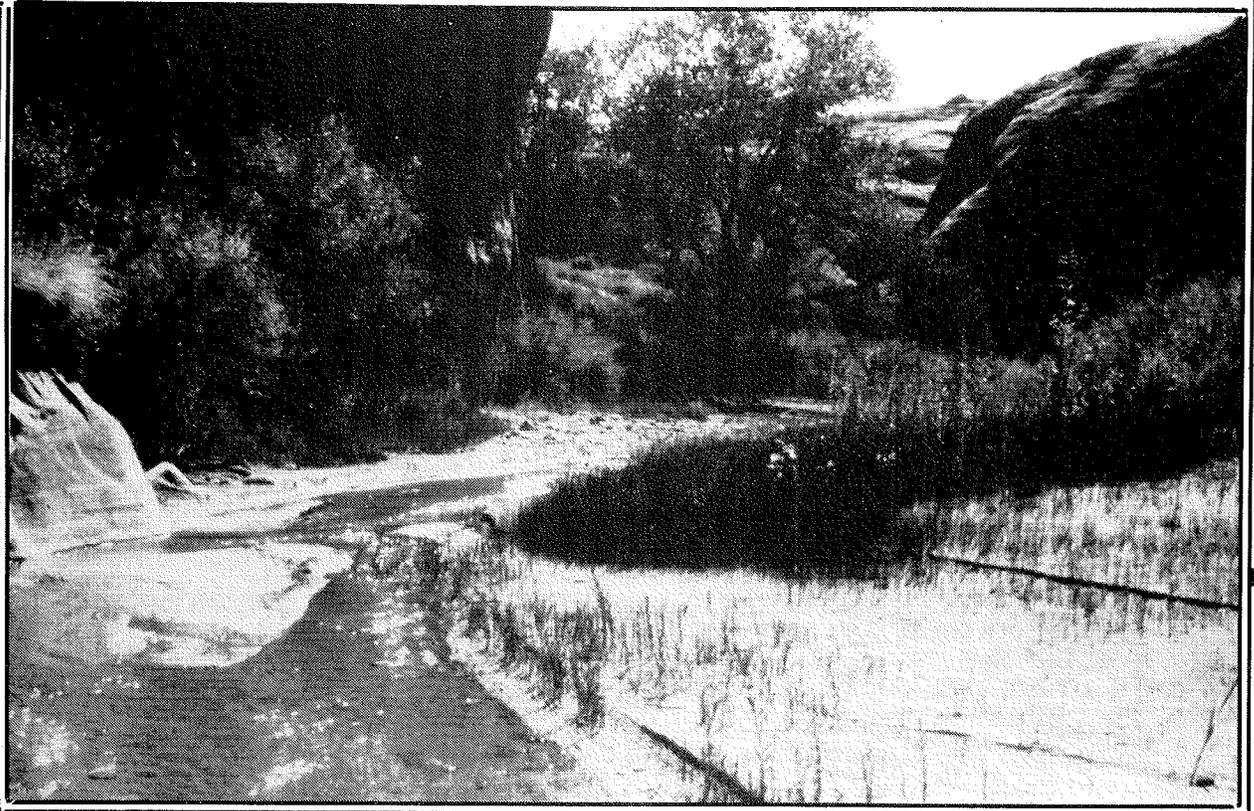
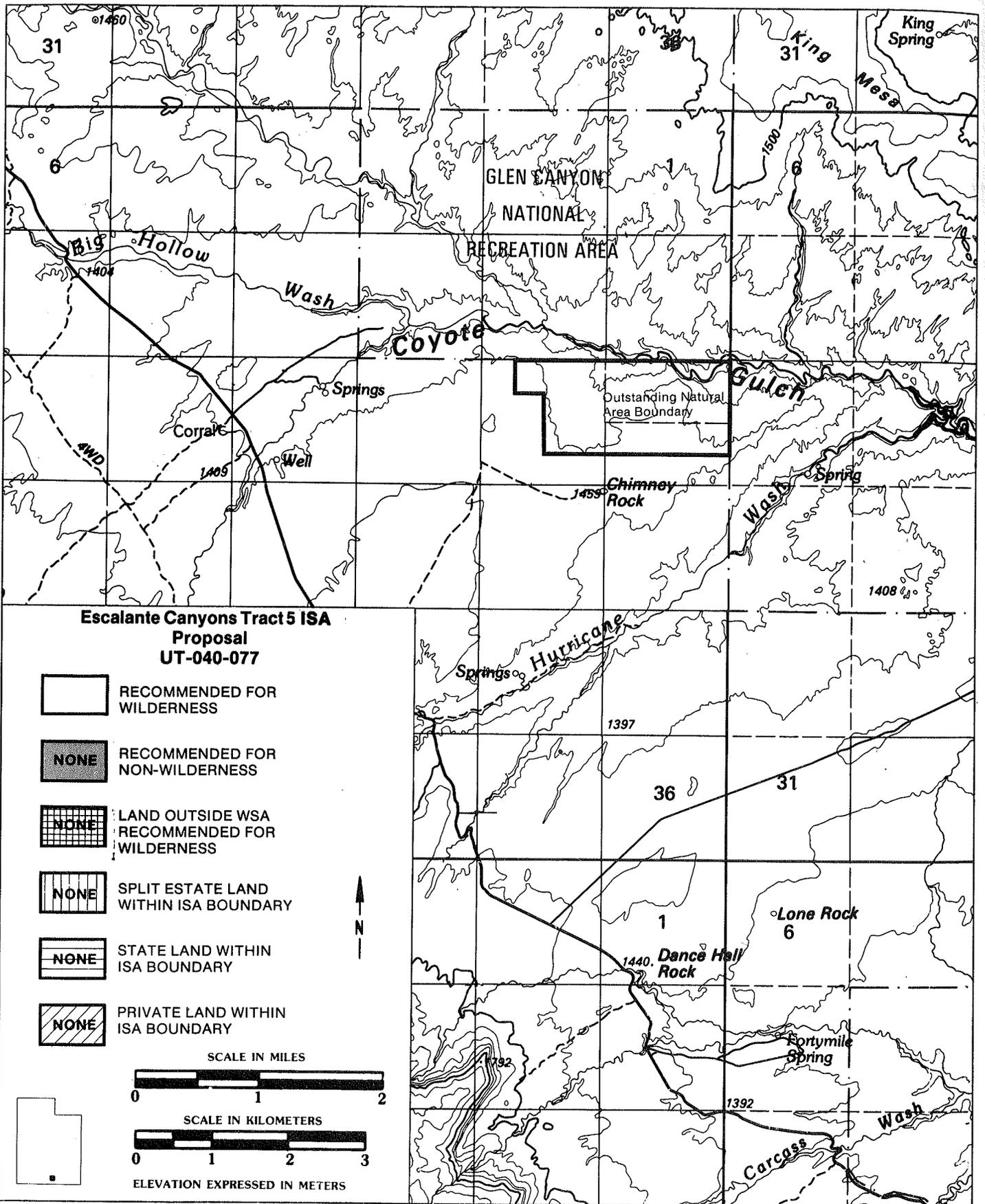


Escalante Canyons
Tract 5 ISA



ESCALANTE CANYONS TRACT 5 ISA



ESCALANTE CANYONS TRACT 5 INSTANT STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 760 acres

The Escalante Canyons Tract 5 Instant Study Area (ISA) is in eastern Kane County, about 41 miles south of Escalante, Utah (population 652). The study area extends about 1.75 miles from east to west and 0.75 mile from north to south. The northern and eastern boundaries of the ISA are adjacent to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (GCNRA). The western and southern boundaries are along section and subsection lines, which administratively define the ISA (see Map). The ISA contains 760 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). No State or split-estate lands are in the ISA. The study area encloses 320 acres of the Escalante Canyons Outstanding Natural Area (ONA).

The northeastern portion of the ISA includes about 0.5 mile of Coyote Gulch. Coyote Gulch is a major segment of the canyon complex of the Escalante River, which flows into the Escalante arm of Lake Powell in the GCNRA. The remainder of the ISA is benchland that slopes northward into Coyote Gulch. Elevations in the ISA range from less than 4,200 feet to 4,715 feet. Desert shrub is the only vegetative type in the ISA.

The ISA 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.

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

WITHIN THE ISA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	760
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0
Total	760
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the ISA)	760
BLM (outside the ISA)	0
Split-Estate (within the ISA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the ISA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	760
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

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Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation of this report and a no wilderness (no action) alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

760 acres

(recommended for wilderness)

0 acres

(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this ISA is to designate the entire area as wilderness. This 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 ISA is proposed for wilderness designation only in conjunction with wilderness proposed for adjacent portions of the GCNRA. The 0.5 mile section of Coyote Gulch in the ISA is an integral portion of a 15-mile hiking route in the GCNRA, leading down the Coyote Gulch to the Escalante River.

All of the ISA is in a natural state. About 30 percent of the ISA has outstanding opportunities for solitude but only about 4 percent, in the backpacking route of Coyote Gulch, has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation.

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 entire ISA is in a natural condition with no imprints of man. The high quality of naturalness has not changed since the BLM's Intensive Wilderness Inventory (1980).

B. Solitude

Approximately 230 acres (30 percent) of the ISA have outstanding opportunities for solitude, but 530 acres (70 percent) do not meet the standard for an outstanding opportunity.

The outstanding opportunity for solitude in this ISA is entirely in the canyon of Coyote Gulch. The canyon is separated from the remainder of the ISA by its canyon walls. Views within the canyon are limited to 0.25 mile or less. The screening in the canyon provides opportunities for seclusion when considered in conjunction with contiguous National Park Service (NPS) lands in the GCNRA that are proposed for wilderness designation. Outside sights and sounds are an insignificant influence on solitude in this ISA.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Primitive recreation opportunities are outstanding on 33 acres (4 percent) of the ISA. The remaining 727 acres (96 percent) do not meet the criteria. As with opportunities for solitude, the best opportunities for primitive recreation are confined to the hikeable route in the canyon of Coyote Gulch.

Opportunities for hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and geological sight-seeing are outstanding in Coyote Gulch and are associated with contiguous GCNRA lands proposed for wilderness designation. The ISA canyon bottom is a short but integral portion of the Coyote Gulch hiking opportunity provided in the Escalante River drainage. The immediate canyon bottom and inner walls occupy approximately 33 acres of the ISA.

D. Special Features

Scenic features identified during the BLM wilderness inventory include the enclosed red Navajo Sandstone and sheer canyon walls associated with Coyote Gulch. An alcove-like natural arch is in Coyote Gulch. During the inventory, approximately 230 acres were identified as including special scenic features. Approximately 42 percent (319 acres) of the ISA is rated outstanding for scenic quality.

Peregrine falcons and bald eagles, which are listed as endangered species, may occasionally use the ISA. Seven other animal species and five plant species that are considered sensitive may occur, in the ISA. Refer to Appendix 4 and the

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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 the ISA would 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 ISA is in the Colorado Plateau Province/Ecoregion. The PNV in the ISA is blackbrush (760 acres).

The PNV in the ISA is not represented in the NWPS, although it is present in 11 other BLM study areas, all in Utah.

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 ISA is not within a 5-hour drive of any major population centers.

**TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION**

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Blackbrush	0	0	11	229,304
UTAH (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Blackbrush	0	0	11	229,304

Source: BLM File Data.

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Escalante Canyons Tract 5 ISA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas within the NWPS. As of January 1987, the NWPS included 64 areas comprising 2,834,115 acres in Utah and Arizona.

There are eight designated wilderness areas within 100 miles of the ISA. In a clockwise direction beginning to the north area the 26,000-acre Box-Death Hollow Wilderness (Forest Service [FS]), the 45,000-acre Dark Canyon 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), and the 7,000-acre Ashdown Gorge Wilderness (FS).

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

Although the ISA is small, BLM would be capable of effectively managing it to preserve its intrinsic wilderness characteristics. As is done presently, the most effective management of backpacker visitor use is in concert with visitor

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use management in the GCNRA portion of Coyote Gulch. There are no mineral leases, mining claims, in-held lands or other valid rights in the ISA that would complicate wilderness management. Live-stock grazing would continue, but would not detract from wilderness management.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) studied the 760 acres recommended for wilderness designation and prepared a mineral assessment report for the Escalante Canyons Tract 5 ISA (USGS Bulletin 1747-B, Susan Bartsch-Winkler, et al., 1988). The report indicates that inferred sub-economic resources of decorative and dimension stone are present in the ISA. The mineral resource potential for undiscovered bentonite, oil, gas, and carbon dioxide is moderate. The mineral resource potential for undiscovered uranium is unknown. The mineral resource potential for undiscovered iron, cobalt, nickel, copper, lead, molybdenum, tin, cadmium, strontium, and vanadium is low, as is the potential for geothermal energy. The potential for undiscovered gypsum resources is low.

Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 3) summarizes the effects of wilderness designation or nondesignation on wilderness values which are considered to be the only resource values that would be significantly affected.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

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

Summary of ISA-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 ISA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 40 inputs specifically addressing this ISA were received from

52 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 statement by the same commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual counted as one commenter regardless of the number of inputs.

In general, 46 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the ISA, while two commenters were opposed. Four commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented that the ISA contains significant wilderness values. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from other states. Of particular concern was the need to complement the proposed adjacent NPS wilderness (GCNRA).

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would conflict with or preclude mineral exploration and development, livestock operations, flood control and water rights, public access, or other uses; is not compatible with multiple use; would harm State and local economies; and that designation is not necessary to protect the ISA.

One Federal agency, the NPS commented on the Draft EIS. The NPS concurred with the recommendation to designate the ISA as wilderness.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are no State lands in the ISA. 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 ISA. The State considers the ISA to have high wilderness values and low conflicts.

The Kane County Commission is opposed to wilderness designation of the Escalante Canyons Tract 5 ISA and has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation of BLM lands in Utah.

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The Kane County Master Plan rejects wilderness as an exclusionary form of recreation that is not useable to the average visitor. In commenting on the Draft EIS the County stated that the ISA is too small to be considered as a wilderness area standing on its own merits. The County believes that the ISA should be considered for inclusion in the GCNRA under NPS guidelines and should not be included in the BLM wilderness process.

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Table 3
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

	Alternatives	
	Recommendation All Wilderness (760 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness designation would preserve the wilderness values of naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and special features including Class A scenery, other special scenic features, and endangered or sensitive species, wherever these values occur in the ISA.	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness values. However, no disturbance is expected in the foreseeable future that would affect wilderness values.