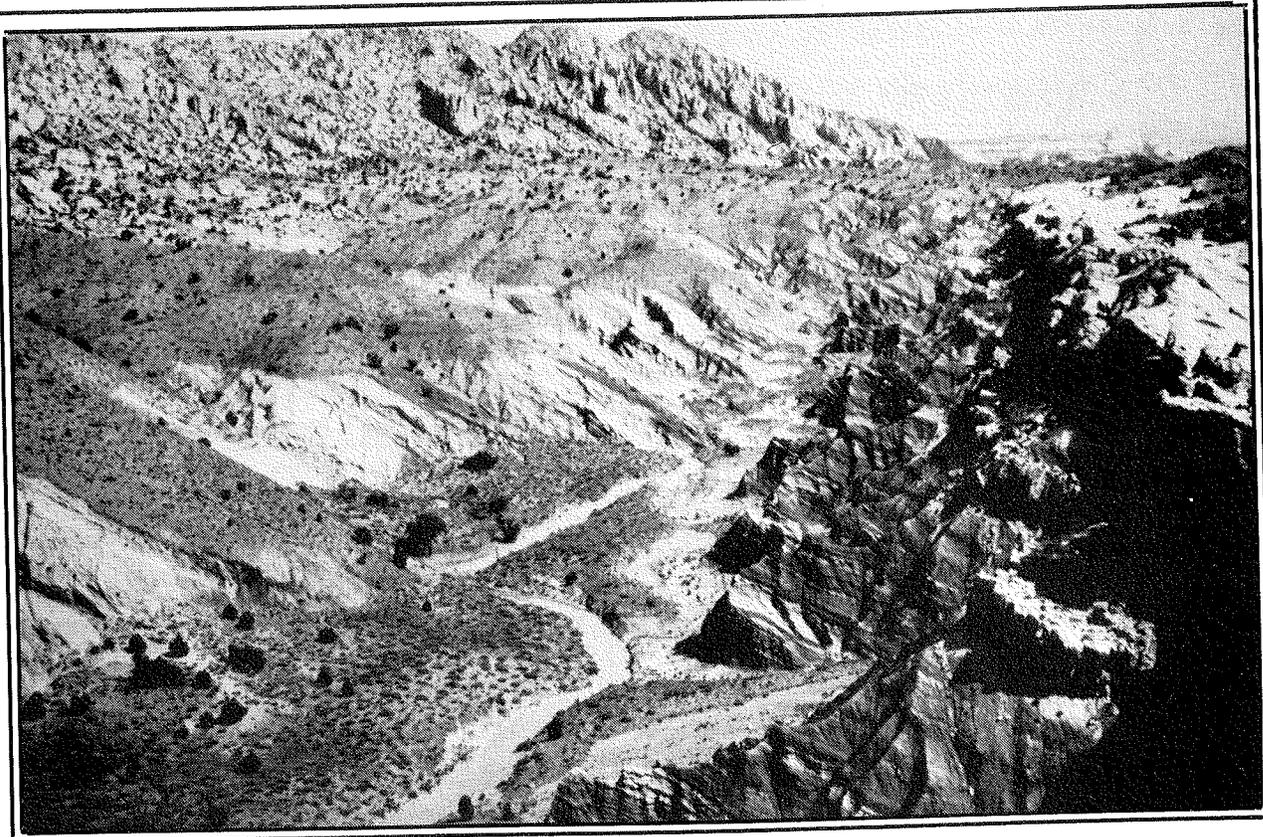


The Cockscomb WSA



THE COCKSCOMB WSA

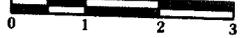
The Cockscomb WSA Proposal UT-040-275

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

SCALE IN MILES



SCALE IN KILOMETERS



ELEVATION EXPRESSED IN METERS



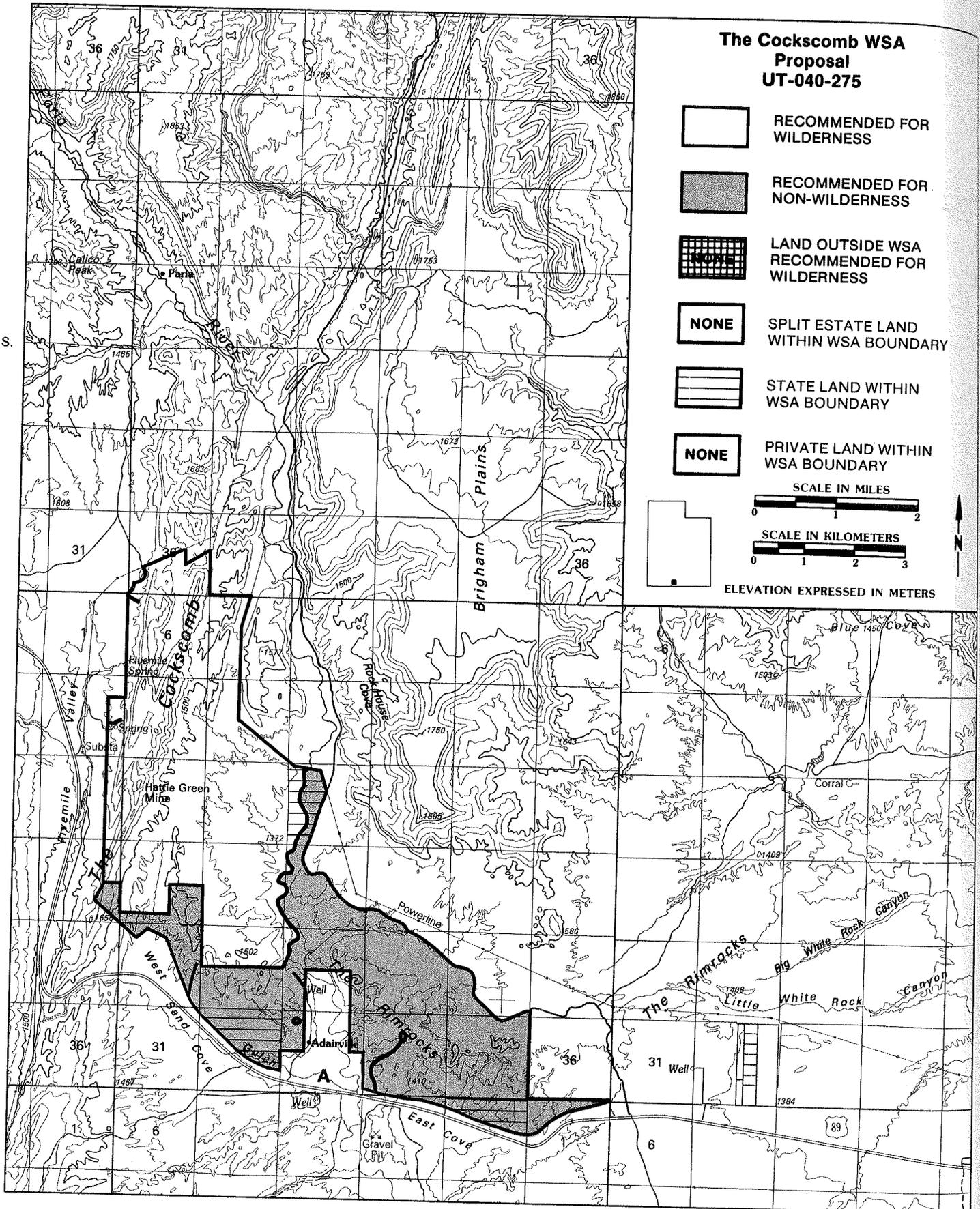
T. 41 S.

T. 42 S.

R. 1 W.

R. 1 E.

October 1991



THE COCKSCOMB WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 10,080 acres

The Cockscomb Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-040-275) is in central Kane County, about 40 miles east of Kanab, Utah (population 2,148). The study area is crescent-shaped, 6 miles long from north to south and 6 miles wide, from east to west (see Map). The WSA is bounded on the south by U.S. Highway 89 and State and private land, on the west by private land, and on the north and east by State lands and a powerline right-of-way.

The Cockscomb WSA is about 5 miles directly north of the northern boundary of the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness (BLM) in Utah and Arizona, and is south of the Paria-Hackberry/Paria-Hackberry 202 WSA (UT-040-247). The unit encompasses 10,080 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). No State or private lands are present in the WSA. Parts of three sections of split-estate (Federal surface and State minerals), comprising 747 acres, are in the study area (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA^a

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	10,080
Split-Estate (BLM surface only) ^b	747
In-holdings (State, Private)	0
Total	10,827
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	5,100
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	200
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	5,300
In-holdings (State, private)	0
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	4,980
Split-Estate	547
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	4,980
In-holdings (State, Private)	0

Source: BLM File Data

^a The Appendix is a detailed table of in-holdings and/or split-estate tracts included within the portion of the WSA recommended for designation.

^b In this report, split-estate lands are defined as only those lands with Federal surface and non-Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non-Federal surface are classified according to the owner of the surface.

THE COCKSCOMB WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The western edge of the WSA includes about 4.5 miles of The Cockscomb, a distinct, north-south trending ridge in south-central Utah. The Cockscomb is part of the East Kaibab monocline and is a notable local landmark because its near vertical sandstone beds form a sinuous hogsback of prominent, multicolored ridges. The eastern portion of the WSA consists of the tilted and horizontal sedimentary rocks of The Rimrocks. The intervening area includes the floodplain and terraces of the Paria River and the low hills west of the river. Three miles of the Paria River and a perennial stream flow through the WSA. Elevation within the WSA ranges from about 4,500 feet along the Paria River to more than 5,700 feet on The Cockscomb. Pinyon-juniper woodland is the dominant vegetative type on about half the study area and desert shrub is dominant on the remainder. Vegetation is sparse throughout the unit.

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. Three alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative where 5,100 acres would be designated as wilderness and 4,980 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:

- 5,100 acres
(recommended for wilderness)
- 4,980 acres
(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 5,100 acres of the WSA as wilderness and to release the remaining 4,980 acres 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 adverse environmental impacts.

The portion recommended for wilderness designation includes most of the total area with outstanding opportunities for solitude, almost half of the total area with outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, and all of the area with exceptional scenic quality. It would also reduce or avoid conflicts with wilderness preservation by allowing in the nondesignated portion the possibility of siting a reservoir on the Paria River and by leaving a portion of the Paria River drainage open for off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation. In general, the more inaccessible northwest portion of the WSA would be wilderness and the more accessible southeast portion, which is bordered by roads, would be released for uses other than wilderness, including possible future coal transportation routes. Nondesignation of this portion would be commensurate with providing a vehicular use or right-of-way corridor along the Paria River in the adjacent Paria-Hackberry/Paria-Hackberry 202 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 substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. The more remote areas of the Cockscomb and the rough terrain in The Rimrocks west of the Paria River offer the best opportunities to experience the naturalness of the WSA. More than 99 percent of the WSA is in a natural condition with respect to Wilderness Act criteria. About 51 acres are substantially affected by an open pit coal prospect, two livestock reservoirs, an irrigation reservoir on the Paria River, a coal mine, and a 300-foot gap fence.

B. Solitude

In about 4,319 acres or 43 percent of the WSA, the screening from terrain features provides outstanding opportunities for solitude. Approximately 2,650 acres of the outstanding opportunities

THE COCKSCOMB WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

occupy about 52 percent of the portion recommended for wilderness designation. The terrain in The Cockscomb and The Rimrocks blocks the sight of powerlines and roads along the edge of the WSA and muffles outside sounds. The portion recommended for wilderness would include all of The Cockscomb and the western portion of The Rimrocks.

The remaining 5,761 acres, or 57 percent of the WSA, do not meet the criteria for outstanding solitude. Except in the areas with features that provide solitude, the WSA is too small and too open for visitors to avoid sights and sounds of Highway 89 and the County road on the east side of the WSA.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for hiking, photography, and sightseeing are outstanding on about 5,600 acres (56 percent of the WSA), almost entirely in The Cockscomb and The Rimrocks portions of the WSA. No hiking trails are in the study area, but hiking is not difficult and the WSA can be hiked in 1 day. Approximately 2,750 acres with outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation occupy about 54 percent of the portion recommended for designation.

The remainder of the WSA, 4,480 acres, does not have outstanding primitive recreational opportunities.

D. Special Features

More than 2,000 acres and about 41 percent of the area being recommended possess scenic special features. No threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur in the WSA. Six U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) candidate threatened or endangered plant species that may grow in the study area are the Psoralea epipsila, Psoralea pariensis, Penstemon ammophilum, Lesquerella tumulosa, Xylorhiza cronquistii, and Astragalus ampullarius.

The endangered bald eagle and peregrine falcon have been reported in the WSA. Both species are present along Lake Powell, 20 miles east of the WSA, and can be expected to migrate through the study area. FWS candidate animal species, which may be present in the study

area include the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, southern spotted owl, long-billed curlew, Arizona Bell's vireo, western snowy plover, white-faced ibis, and Great Basin Silverspot butterfly.

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 add a potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystem not presently represented in the NWPS. PNV is the vegetation that would develop over time if an area remains free of disturbance by human interference. The WSA is in the Colorado Plateau Province/Ecoregion, and the PNV would be entirely saltbush-greasewood (10,080 acres).

The PNV of the WSA is represented in the NWPS and in BLM study areas 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 WSA is within a 5-hour drive of Las Vegas, Nevada.

Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated wilderness and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of this population center.

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

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

As of January, 1987, the NWPS included 64 wilderness areas comprising 2,834,115 acres in Utah and Arizona.

Twelve designated wilderness areas are within 100 miles of the WSA.

THE COCKSCOMB WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION

	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)				
NATIONWIDE (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Saltbush-Greasewood	1	20,000	17	383,923
UTAH (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Saltbush-Greasewood	1	20,000	17	383,923

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
Las Vegas, Nevada	38	3,132,130	54	2,166,418

Source: BLM File Data.

In a clockwise direction beginning to the northeast, are the 26,000-acre Box-Death Hollow Wilderness (Forest Service [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), 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), the 7,000-acre Ashdown Gorge Wilderness (FS), 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.)

Both the designated portion and the non-designated portion could be managed as wilderness. To do so in the non-designated portion, however, would require prohibiting or constraining other uses related to water rights or to pub-

lic benefit, such as vehicular recreation and rights of way, which would conflict with wilderness preservation.

With designation, the 5,100 acres would be withdrawn from mineral location. Some detractor from solitude would result from construction and use of a coal transportation corridor and a dam and reservoir in the non-designated portion. Special management would be required to mitigate the visual, noise, and air quality disturbances that would result during construction.

There are 340 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases in the portion of the WSA recommended as wilderness, but these leases are subject to the nonimpairment stipulation and likely will expire and not be renewed. There are 100 acres of mining claims in the recommended area and 300 acres of mining claims in the area not recommended for wilderness designation. However, the potential for significant amounts of locatable minerals is low, and development is not expected in the foreseeable future.

THE COCKSCOMB WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The 747 acres of split-estate land in the WSA is along the southern boundary of the area. Therefore, provision of access to these sections would not create wilderness management problems.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) assessed the mineral resource potential of 5,100 acres of the portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness, and prepared a mineral assessment report (USGS Bulletin 1748-A, Henry Bell III, et al., 1990). The report indicates that no identified resources of metallic or nonmetallic minerals occur, but about 1.8 million tons of identified subbituminous coal resources are estimated in the WSA. The mineral resource potential for all metals, including gold and uranium, is low. Gravel deposits have been mined nearby, and the mineral resource potential is high for additional deposits of sand and gravel in the southern end of the WSA. A moderate energy resource potential exists for coal. The resource potential is moderate for oil and gas, and is low for geothermal energy.

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 37 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 42 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, 24 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 12 commenters were opposed. Six commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the special features in the WSA. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from outside the state.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would restrict public access to the benefit of special groups, interfere with water control and uses, and the WSA would not be manageable as wilderness. The majority of those commenting were from rural Utah.

One Federal agency, the USBM commented on the Draft EIS. The USBM noted that the BLM's Final EIS should include the findings of the USGS and USBM mineral investigations and those findings would be available in November 1988. These findings have been incorporated into the Final EIS and study report.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are no State lands 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 the WSA is considered to have high wilderness values that are a natural continuation of the values found in the adjacent Paria-Hackberry/Paria-Hackberry 202 WSA (UT-040-247/UT-040-247A). The State commented that it appears that the moderate conflicts would have a low impact under a partial wilderness designation. The State suggested that manageability of the entire WSA as wilderness might be a problem.

THE COCKSCOMB WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The Kane County Commission is opposed to wilderness designation of The Cockscomb WSA and has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation of BLM lands in Utah. The Kane County Master Plan rejects wilderness as an exclusionary form of recreation that cannot be used by the average visitor. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the County noted that the Cockscomb area is surrounded by numerous activities and land uses which make effective wilderness management difficult. The conflicts include Highway 89, Cottonwood Canyon Road, power transmission lines, and mining areas. In their opinion, the BLM proposed action is barely large enough to meet wilderness criteria, but does not exclude all of the conflicts. The County is concerned that designation of this WSA would interfere with possible coal transportation corridors which are essential to the development of coal in Kane County.

THE COCKSCOMB WSA

Table 4
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topic	Alternatives	
	No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (10,080 Acres)
Recommendation Partial Wilderness (5,100 Acres)		
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p>Wilderness values would be preserved in the designated portion. Other effects would be the same as for the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative.</p>	<p>Wilderness values would be preserved by wilderness designation.</p>
Impacts on Recreation	<p>Primitive recreational opportunities would be preserved in the designated area. Other impacts would be the same as for the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative.</p>	<p>Primitive recreational opportunities would be preserved and enhanced. Motorized use of the Paria riverbed would be precluded. Overall, visitation would decline initially. Designation would provide additional protection of 3 miles of the Paria River, a segment of the wild and scenic river inventory.</p>

THE COCKSCOMB WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Appendix
Estimated Costs of Acquisition of Non-Federal Holdings Within Areas Recommended for Designation ^a

Legal Description (Prior to any Subdivision)	Total Acreage	Number of Owners (if Parcel has been subdivided)	Type of Ownership by Estate (Federal, State, Private, Other) (Surface Estate) (Subsurface Estate)	Presently Proposed for Acquisition (Yes, No)	Preferred Method of Acquisition (Purchase, Exchange, Other)	Estimated Cost of Acquisition (Land Costs)	Estimated Cost of Acquisition (Processing Costs)
T. 42 S., R. 1 W., Sec. 16	200.00		Federal State	No	Exchange		\$ 650

^a The estimated costs listed in this appendix in no way represent a Federal appraised value of the land or mineral estate, but are rough estimates based on sales or exchanges of lands or mineral estates with similar characteristics to those included in the WSA. The estimates are for purposes of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring non-Federal holdings and in no way represent an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimate included in this appendix.