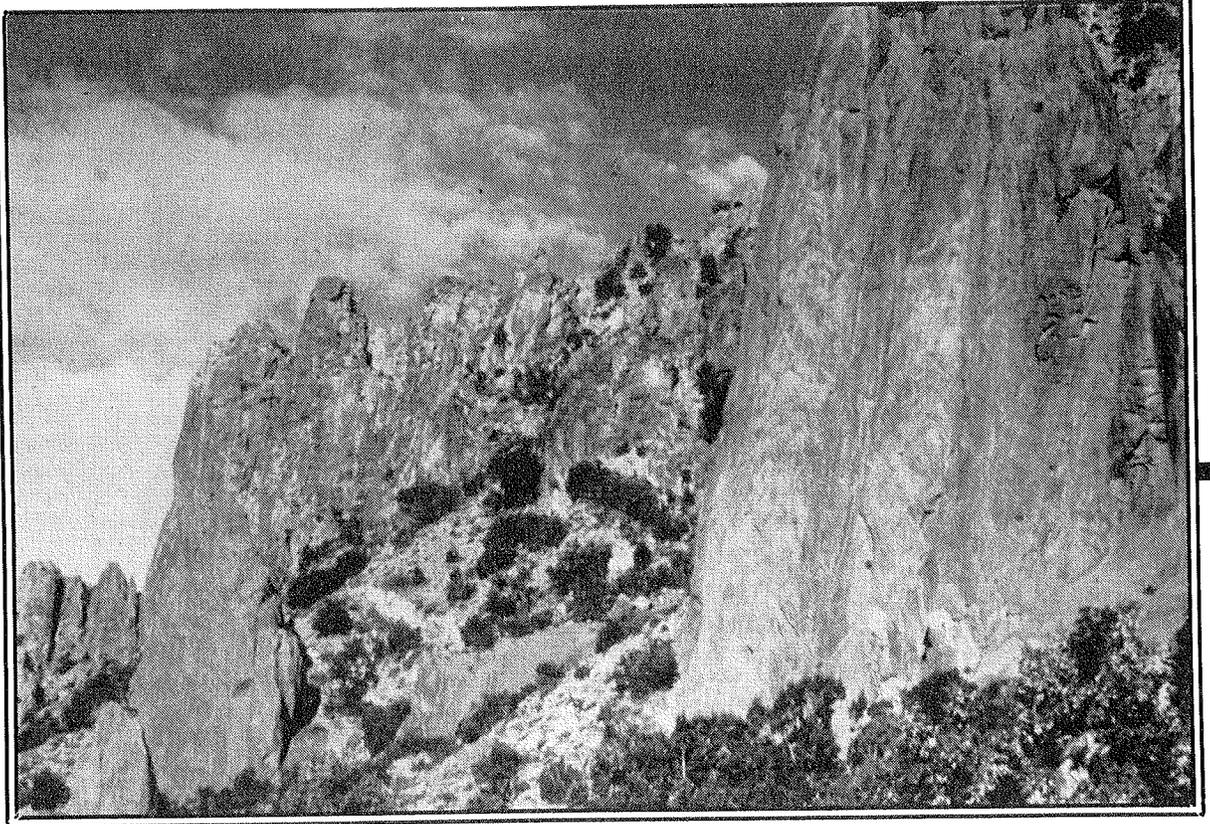


Mt. Hillers
WSA



MT. HILLERS WSA

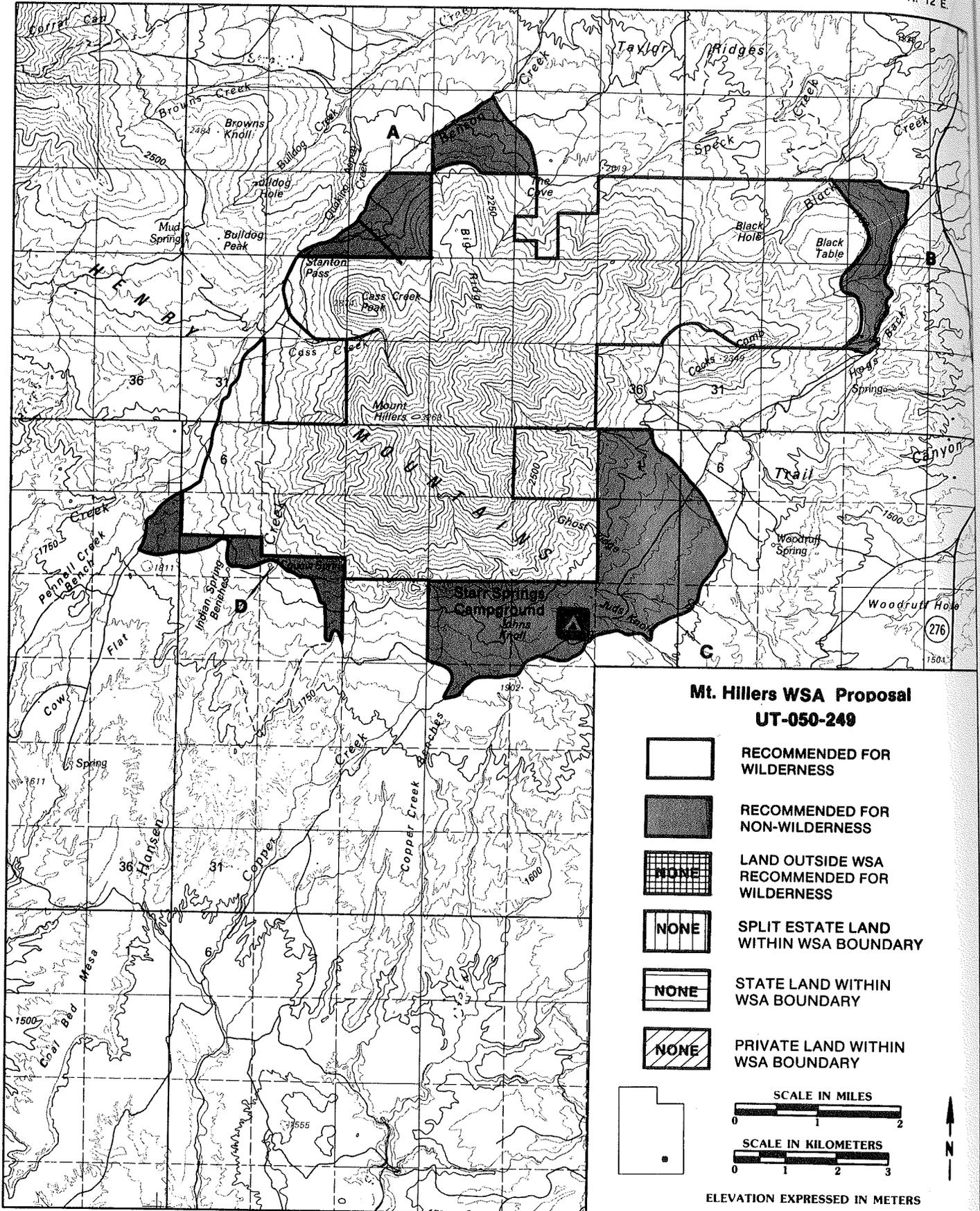
R. 11 E.

R. 12 E.

T. 33 S.

T. 34 S.

T. 35 S.



MT. HILLERS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 20,000 acres

The Mt. Hillers Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-050-249) is in northeastern Garfield County, about 30 miles south of Hanksville, Utah. The study area is about 7 miles long from north to south and 7 miles wide from east to west. The boundaries of the WSA are along roads and section lines of private and State lands (see Map). The boundary of the partial wilderness area that is recommended for designation essentially parallels the WSA boundaries, but excludes all State lands and was defined to include most of the wilderness values in the WSA. The Mt. Hillers WSA is immediately east of the Mt. Pennell WSA (UT-040-248) and about 3 miles west of the Little Rockies WSA (UT-040-247).

The WSA contains 20,000 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). No non-Federal lands are inheld within the WSA.

Mt. Hillers is a rugged peak with steep slopes carved by narrow canyons. Characteristic of the Henry Mountains, the Mt. Hillers is an igneous intrusion emplaced in a thick sequence of sedimentary rocks, which were deformed and faulted. Mt. Hillers is 5 to 6 miles across, and is cut by several radial narrow, steep, V-shaped valleys separated by elongated, jagged ridges. Hogbacks formed from upturned sedimentary rocks flank the mountain, and are vertical in the Pink Cliffs area. Elevations range from about 5,000 feet at the northeastern edge of the WSA to 10,723 feet at the summit of Mt. Hillers.

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

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	20,000
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0
Total	20,000
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	16,360
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	16,360
In-holdings (State, private)	0
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	3,640
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	3,640
In-holdings (State, Private)	0

Source: BLM File Data

MT. HILLERS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Vegetation is predominantly sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodlands on the southern slopes, and ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and bristlecone pine on the northern and the higher slopes. The Henry Mountains are believed to be at the southeastern limit of growth for the Great Basin variety of bristlecone pine.

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 16,360 acres would be designated as wilderness and the remaining 3,640 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:

- 16,360 acres
(recommended for wilderness)
- 3,640 acres
(not recommended for wilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 16,360 acres as wilderness and to release the remaining 3,640 acres for uses other than wilderness (see Map). 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.

All of the area recommended is in a natural state. Mt. Hillers is the third highest peak in the Henry Mountains. The exposed igneous ridges of Mt. Hillers along with the Pink Cliffs and large slabs of Navajo Sandstone tilted up by the igneous intrusion on the south slope of the mountain are highly scenic, geologically interesting, and appear untouched. Buffalo graze while roaming through stands of aspen, spruce, fir, ponderosa, and bristlecone pine trees that grow on the steep slopes of this picturesque mountain. Approximately 83

percent (16,608 acres) of the WSA, including all of the area recommended as wilderness, is rated Class A for scenic quality. About 92 percent of the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. The diversity of vegetation and presence of water add value and interest to the recommended portion of the WSA.

The portion of the WSA (Areas A through D) that is not recommended for wilderness designation comprise the locations at the base of Mt. Hillers where opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation are not outstanding or are lacking. Generally, these are areas of pinyon-juniper vegetation typical of the lower elevations in the region. BLM believes that wilderness values are of a high quality in areas where outstanding opportunities for solitude and/or primitive recreation exist, preferably in combination with special features. In forming this recommendation, the portions of the WSA with outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and special features were included where possible within a manageable boundary.

Area C excludes Starr Springs Campground so that the campground could be expanded and maintained using motorized equipment. In addition, moving the boundary on the south end near Starr Springs a 0.5 mile to the north along the section line, moves the boundary off the alluvial slopes where most of the grazing occurs.

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. About 19,000 acres of this WSA are in a natural condition. Approximately 3.5 miles of way and the Starr Springs Campground detract from the naturalness of the remaining 1,000 acres. The ways are in the Cass Creek Peak area, north of Big Ridge, and

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at Ghost Ridge. The way at Ghost Ridge could be rehabilitated by natural processes. The ways are substantially unnoticeable.

In November 1988, unauthorized mining claim assessment work disturbed less than a 0.2 acre on about a 0.75 mile of an old trail beyond the cherrystem in the vicinity of Cass Creek Peak. This site is being rehabilitated to a substantially unnoticeable condition.

B. Solitude

Overall, opportunities for solitude are outstanding on 15,630 acres and less than outstanding on about 4,370 acres on the lower benchlands, where screening by terrain and vegetation is limited.

Opportunities for recreationists to find solitude (i.e., a secluded spot away from others) within the WSA are influenced by size, topography, vegetation, and the absence of distracting sights and sounds.

The WSA consists of a large central peak, Mt. Hillers, with several prominent satellite peaks on ridges that radiate away from the central peak. The ridges are separated by at least 10 drainages reaching far up the mountain. Most of these are irregular in shape. On the mountain top, there is room for several groups to occupy proximate areas and be unaware of each other. Thick stands of spruce, fir, pine, and mountain mahogany on the north slope further screen users from each other.

Feelings of solitude and isolation are enhanced by the size and configuration of the WSA and the vistas of central Utah at the summit. Due to distance, topography, and vegetation, few, if any, marks of man are visible. One exception is the wildlife chaining projects on Coyote Benches outside the WSA.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for primitive, unconfined recreation are outstanding on 15,630 acres of the WSA. Portions of the WSA along the lower benchlands offer limited opportunities on approximately 4,370 acres.

Hiking opportunities are particularly challenging. The summit of Mt. Hillers is the most difficult to reach in the Henry Mountains.

D. Special Features

The WSA has geological and scenic special features, including scenic views and geologic formations of stocks and laccoliths. Approximately 83 percent (16,608 acres) of the WSA has outstanding scenic values.

Portions of the WSA are used by the Henry Mountain bison herd. Bald eagles and peregrine falcons, listed as endangered and five animal species considered as sensitive may occur in the WSA.

One plant species that is listed as endangered or threatened (Sclerocactus wrightiae) may be in the WSA. Three other special status plant species 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.

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 combination of potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystems 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 Arizona pine forest (3,000 acres), juniper-pinyon woodland (15,000 acres), and spruce-fir-Douglas fir forest (2,000 acres). Juniper-pinyon woodland PNV is well represented in the NWPS and in

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other BLM study areas, both in and outside of Utah.

The Arizona pine forest PNV is represented in the NWPS only outside of Utah. Spruce-fir-Douglas fir PNV is not currently represented at all in the NWPS.

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 not within a 5-hour drive of any major population center.

**TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION**

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Arizona Pine Forest	3	26,300	8	17,050
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	11	1,401,745	84	2,129,005
Spruce-Fir-Douglas Fir	0	0	2	4,000
UTAH (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Arizona Pine Forest	0	0	8	17,050
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	26,000	53	1,691,198
Spruce-Fir-Douglas Fir	0	0	2	4,000

Source: BLM File Data.

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Mt. Hillers 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.

A Mt. Hillers 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 two designated wilderness areas within 100 miles of the WSA. To the southeast is the 45,000-acre Dark Canyon Wilderness, and to the west-southwest is the 25,751-acre Box-Death Hollow Wilderness. Both are administered by the U.S. Forest Service (FS).

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

With the exception of a small area around the Starr Springs Campground, the WSA can be effectively managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. Current uses such as livestock grazing and maintenance of 3.75 miles of fence and 1 mile of small diameter water pipeline, would continue with little or no effect on wilderness values. Only 1.75 miles of fence is in the area recommended for wilderness.

Even though there are 640 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases in the WSA, all of which are in the recommended area, the leases are subject to nonimpairment of wilderness values and it is expected that they will expire and not be renewed.

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There are 7,660 acres of mining claims in the WSA of which 5,740 acres in the recommended area and 1,920 acres in the area not recommended for wilderness. Because there is some potential for uranium deposits and other locatable minerals in the WSA, it is expected that a portion of these and future claims existing at the time of designation will be explored and possibly developed. It is projected that uranium exploration and development would disturb only small areas (approximately 15 acres in the recommended portion and 14 acres in the area not recommended) following wilderness designation.

These activities would reduce the quality of wilderness values on portions of the surrounding wilderness but would not affect the over all manageability of the area.

Part of the area not recommended for wilderness would be difficult to manage because it includes the Starr Springs Campground where noise and activity on a graveled road and in the developed campsites would conflict with wilderness management.

There are no in-holdings or other valid rights within the WSA that would detract from wilderness management.

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 Mt. Hillers WSA (USGS Bulletin 1751-C, Russell F. Dubiel, et al., 1988). The report indicates that small occurrences of uranium and vanadium are present near the northeastern and southern boundaries of the study area, and that copper, gold, lead, and zinc also occur, but no identified resources of these commodities are present. Inferred subeconomic resources of the common variety materials, sand, gravel, and stone, are present in the WSA but have no unique qualities and are not likely to be developed. The eastern part of the WSA has a high potential for uranium and vanadium and a low mineral resource potential for all other metals, and for coal. The central part of the study area has moderate mineral resource potential for copper, lead, zinc, and gold, and low potential

for uranium, vanadium, and coal. The western part of the WSA has moderate potential for coal, uranium, and vanadium, and low potential for all other metals. The entire WSA has low mineral resource potential for oil and gas and for geothermal energy.

Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 3) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the area as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Partial wilderness designation would result in temporary impacts on local economic conditions through a reduction of 34 short-term jobs and 5 long-term jobs that could be provided with the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative. Regional economic conditions would not be significantly affected.

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 45 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 433 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, 84 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 345 commenters were opposed. Four commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the wilderness values and special features contained in the WSA and noted

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that designation protects wilderness values. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from urban Utah and other states.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would preclude mineral exploration and development; restrict livestock management, public access, and flood/erosion control; wilderness management is not compatible with multiple use; the area would remain the same without wilderness designation which therefore is unnecessary; and that wilderness would conflict with other uses. Almost all of those opposing wilderness designation were from rural Utah.

Two Federal agencies, the USBM and the National Park Service (NPS), commented on the Draft EIS for this WSA. 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.

The NPS commented that there were no clear rationale provided in the Draft EIS for why the proposed wilderness alternative was chosen. NPS stated that the proposed wilderness in many of the WSAs, including Mt. Hillers WSA, were drastically reduced in size when there is no real difference in impacts of the various alternatives.

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 noted that in the geology section there was no mention of sedimentary formations present or of igneous rock types. The State believes that economic uranium deposits exist in the Shitamarine Canyon district south of Mt. Hillers and on Taylor Ridges, northeast of the WSA. The State also noted the possibility that small-scale, high-grade precious metals deposit in the WSA and that they should be considered.

According to the State, Mt. Hillers has moderate to low wilderness values and moderate to low conflicts relative to other WSAs in the region. The State believes that important wilderness and wildlife values are present as well as conflicts with potential uranium and water resources. The State pointed out that livestock conflicts could be reduced by moving the boundary on the southend near Starr Springs a half mile to the north so that it runs along the section line.

The Mt. Hillers WSA is in northeastern Garfield County. The Garfield County Master Plan covers this WSA. In the plan, Garfield County proposed that 142,653 acres in three BLM and one FS area be recommended to the Utah Congressional delegation as wilderness. The County plan recommends that the remaining lands within the County, including the Mt. Hillers WSA, be retained for multiple uses.

The County Commission is opposed to designation of this WSA because they believe that there are commercial deposits of uranium and silver in the WSA that should not be handicapped by wilderness designation. The Commission pointed out that Garfield County's average family income is approximately 25 percent below the State average, and therefore the County cannot afford to bypass any possible future resource development opportunities. The County Commission has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation of BLM lands in Utah.

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Table 3
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Alternatives

Issue Topic	Recommendation Partial Wilderness (16,360 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (20,000 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p>Wilderness values would be preserved overall in the designated area which is approximately 82 percent of the WSA. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 75 acres of the WSA because of locatable mineral exploration and development, and indirectly reduced in quality on up to an additional 1,400 acres. Most of the impact would be in the non-designated area. Special features would be preserved with the exception that some Class A scenery would be reduced in quality. Vehicular use of 2 miles of ways in the non-designated portion would detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Starr Springs Campground would be in the non-designated area and management and expansion would not conflict with wilderness management.</p>	<p>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 116 acres because of locatable mineral exploration and development and campground expansion and would be indirectly reduced in quality on up to 2,000 acres. Class A scenery would be reduced in quality in some of the disturbed areas. Vehicular use of future mining roads and 3.5 miles of vehicular ways would detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in the WSA. Visitor use would be mostly motorized in nature and would detract from wilderness values.</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would preserve wilderness values overall in the WSA. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 29 acres because of locatable mineral exploration and development and would be indirectly reduced in quality on up to an additional 600 acres. Special features would be preserved overall, although some Class A scenery would be reduced in quality. Visitor use would be primitive in nature and managed to protect wilderness values. Operation of the Starr Springs Campground would not be consistent with wilderness management goals.</p>
Impacts on Vegetation	<p>Vegetation types and special status plant species would receive additional protection on 82 percent of the WSA. Impacts on these resources from projected surface disturbance would not be significant because less than 1 percent of the WSA would be disturbed.</p>	<p>The composition of vegetation types would be altered on less than 1 percent of the WSA and the viability of special status plant species would be maintained.</p>	<p>The vegetation types and special status plant species would be provided additional protection because the potential for surface disturbance would be reduced.</p>
Impacts on Water Resources	<p>Impacts and conclusions would be similar to those described in the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative because the degree and location of surface disturbance would be about the same.</p>	<p>This alternative would not alter present or future water quality and uses because most drainages are ephemeral and developments would be designed to mitigate or reduce erosion and sedimentation.</p>	<p>Wilderness designation may preclude development of additional water for the Starr Springs Campground, otherwise, it would not alter present or future water quality or uses.</p>

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Table 3 (Continued) Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

		Alternatives		
Issue Topic	Recommendation Partial Wilderness (16,360 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (20,000 Acres)	
Impacts on Mineral and Energy Exploration and Production	This alternative would limit the potential exploration and development opportunities for locatable minerals in the designated area. Development would be limited to minerals under valid mining claims at the time of designation. Opportunities for production of significant amounts of locatable minerals would be foregone. No significant leasable mineral production would be precluded.	This alternative would not adversely affect mineral and energy resource exploration and production because mineral leasing, location of mining claims, and mineral developments would occur without restrictions for protection of wilderness values.	Wilderness designation would limit potential exploration and development opportunities for locatable minerals known to occur in the WSA to those under valid mining claims at the time of designation. Opportunities for production of significant amounts of locatable minerals would be foregone.	
Impacts on Wildlife Habitat and Populations	There would be no significant impacts to wildlife or populations because less than 1 percent (75 acres) of the WSA would be disturbed. Wildlife would receive additional protection and would benefit from solitude on 82 percent of the WSA.	Wildlife habitat or populations, would not be significantly affected. Approximately 1 percent of the crucial deer summer range or limited value year-long bison range in the WSA would be disturbed.	The wildlife species would be protected by this alternative and would benefit from additional solitude.	
Impacts on Visual Resources	Visual quality would receive additional protection on 82 percent of the WSA. Visual quality on 15 acres in the designated area and 60 acres in the nondesignated area would be degraded with this alternative. Indirect reduction of visual quality would occur on up to 1,400 additional acres.	Visual quality would be directly reduced in quality on 96 acres due to mineral-related disturbance and indirectly reduced in quality on up to an additional 2,000 adjacent acres.	Visual resources would be preserved overall by this alternative. Direct loss of visual resources would occur on 29 acres as a result of mineral activities. The quality of visual resources could be reduced on an additional 600 adjacent acres of the WSA where disturbance would be visible.	

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Table 3 (Continued) Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

		Alternatives	
Issue Topic	Recommendation Partial Wilderness (16,360 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (20,000 Acres)
Impacts on Cultural Resources	Eighty-two percent of the WSA including 12 recorded sites would receive protection as a result of wilderness designation. Over the long term, protection from most surface disturbance would probably outweigh increased potential for vandalism. The nondesignated area including nine recorded sites would continue to be protected by existing laws and regulations. Inadvertent loss or damage to archaeological sites may occur in this area due to surface development and/or continued ORV use.	Inadvertent loss or damage to archaeological sites may occur due to surface disturbance and/or continued ORV use. Intentional vandalism and artifact collection may increase due to increased activity and accessibility. Cultural resources could be managed without restrictions for protection of other wilderness values.	Protection from most surface disturbance would probably outweigh any potential for increased vandalism. Closure to all vehicular access would protect sites from unintentional damage and decrease in accessibility in the unit.
Impacts on Recreation	Primitive recreation opportunities would be preserved overall in the designated area. Primitive recreation opportunities would be directly reduced in quality on about 75 acres of the WSA and would be indirectly reduced in quality on up to an additional 1,400 acres. Both primitive and motorized recreational use would increase. The Starr Springs Campground would be in the nondesignated area and could be expanded without conflicts with wilderness management.	Primitive recreation opportunities would be directly reduced in quality on 116 acres and indirectly reduced in quality on up to 2,000 acres more. Both primitive and vehicular recreational use would increase. Opportunities for mechanized-recreational activities would be improved with this alternative. The Starr Springs Campground could be expanded.	Primitive recreation opportunities would be preserved overall. Primitive recreation opportunities would be directly reduced in quality on 29 acres and indirectly reduced in quality on up to an additional 600 acres. Motorized recreational use (currently 542 visitor days per year) would be precluded. Expansion and motorized maintenance of the Starr Springs Campground would not be possible.
Impacts on Economic Conditions	Partial wilderness designation would result in temporary impacts on local economic conditions through a reduction of 34 short-term jobs and 5 long-term jobs that could be provided with the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative. Other economic conditions would not be significantly affected.	Present economic conditions would not be affected. In the foreseeable future, economic conditions would be affected by increased employment of 80 jobs over a short period due to mineral exploration. Mineral development would increase employment by 15 permanent jobs which is less than 1 percent of the present Garfield County employment or 1.8 percent of the present Wayne County employment. Other economic conditions would not be affected.	Current economic conditions would not be significantly affected. Wilderness designation would result in temporary impacts on local economic conditions through a reduction of 56 short-term jobs and 10 long-term jobs in the locatable mineral industry that could be provided with the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative. Other economic conditions would not be significantly affected.