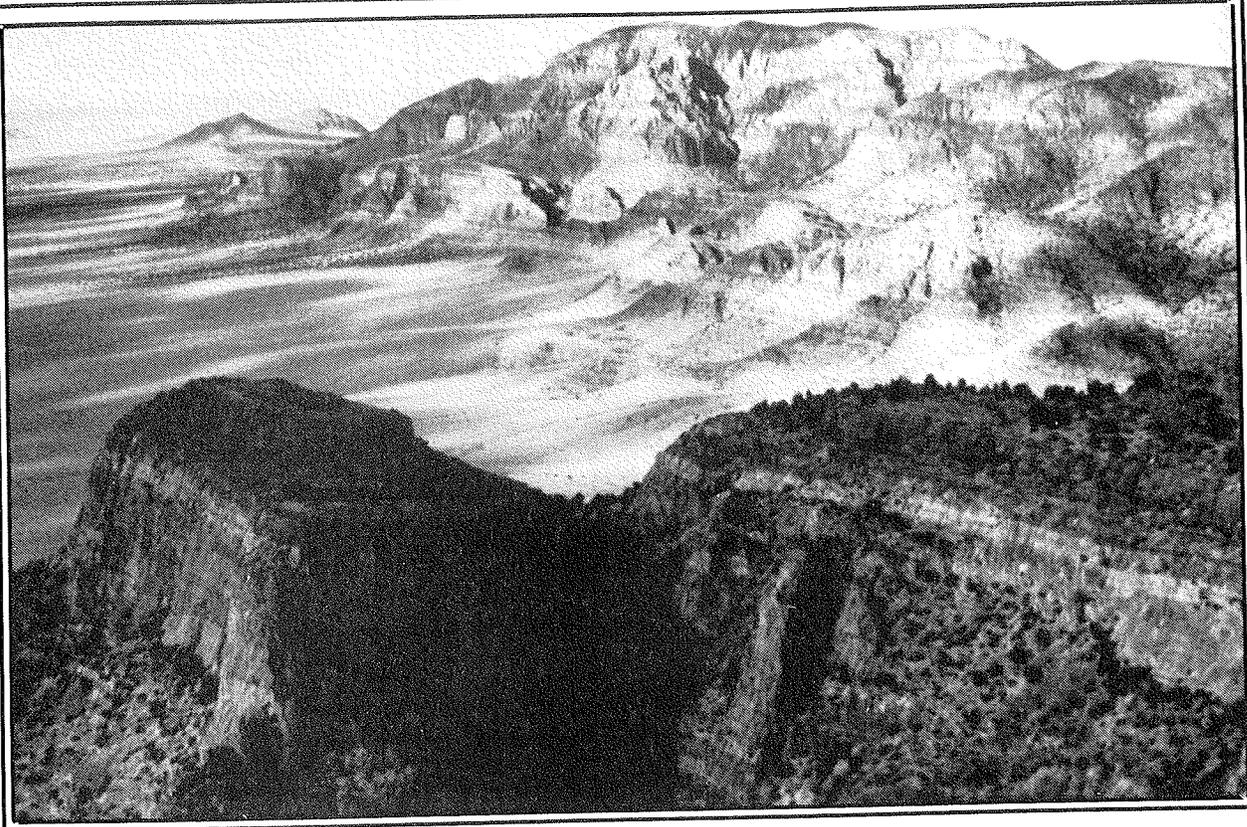


Wah Wah
Mountains WSA



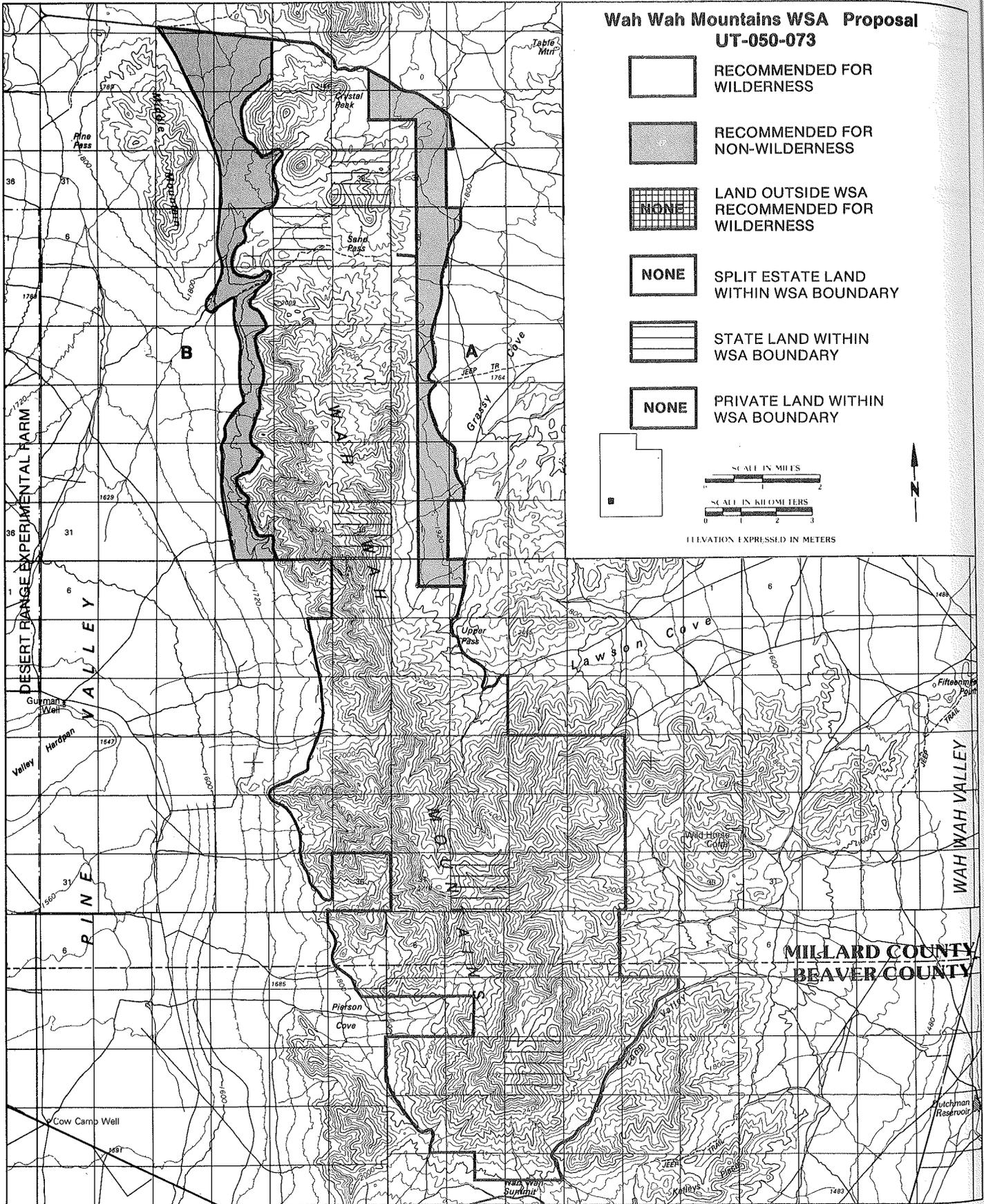
WAH WAH MOUNTAINS WSA

T. 23 S.

T. 24 S.

T. 25 S.

T. 26 S.



Wah Wah Mountains WSA Proposal UT-050-073



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

R. 16 W.

R. 15 W.

R. 14 W.

WAH WAH MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 42,140 acres

The Wah Wah Mountains Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-050-073, UT-040-205) includes most of the Wah Wah Mountains in southwestern Millard County and northwestern Beaver County, about 30 miles west of Milford, Utah (population 1,293). The study area is an elongated unit, 20 miles from north to south by 5 miles, east to west (see Map). The WSA includes 42,140 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and five sections (3,202 acres) of State land (see Table 1). Approximately 35,000 acres are in Millard County and approximately 7,140 acres are in Beaver County.

Improved and unimproved roads along with legal subdivisions and section lines from much of the boundary of the WSA. The Wah Wah Mountains WSA is surrounded mostly by public lands.

The WSA encloses a narrow, flat-topped mountain range with steep, rugged sides. Elevations range from about 5,600 feet at the edges of the WSA to 8,980 feet. Pinyon-juniper woodland is the dominant vegetation type. Approximately 6,610 acres of the WSA are identified as a Resource Natural Area (RNA) or Outstanding Natural Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ONA/ACEC).

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

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	42,140
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	3,202
Total	45,342
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	36,382
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	36,382
In-holdings (State, private)	3,202
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	5,758
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	5,758
In-holdings (State, Private)	0

Source: BLM File Data

^a The Appendix is a detailed table of in-holdings included within the portion of the WSA recommended for designation.

WAH WAH MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

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 36,382 acres would be designated as wilderness and 5,758 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:

36,382 acres
(recommended for wilderness)
5,758 acres
(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 36,382 acres as wilderness and to release the remaining 5,758 acres of the WSA for other 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. This recommendation for wilderness will further apply to any additional inholding acreage acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners. The Appendix lists all inholdings in the portion recommended for designation and provides information on acquisition of the inholdings.

The central, most mountainous 36,382 acres of public lands within the WSA are recommended for wilderness designation because they include the best wilderness values. The WSA is remote. All of the area recommended for wilderness designation is natural and has outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Both ACEC's in the WSA would be in the designated area. Diversity of terrain and vegetative cover are distinctive. No conflict exists with other uses.

The portion of the WSA that is not recommended for wilderness designation is mostly benchlands in the northern part

of the WSA (Areas A and B). Although about 79 percent of the portion not recommended for wilderness has opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, it lacks high quality scenic values, special features, and variety. Overall, open terrain and sparse vegetation in combination with adjacent roads make the nonrecommended area less valuable for wilderness than the recommended area.

3. CRITERIA USED 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. Crystal Peak, visible for more than 50 miles, is a white mountain of tuff remaining as a result of an ancient volcano. A stand of bristlecone pine, some over 50 feet tall and more than 4,000 years old, grow on the main ridge. Cougar, antelope, mule deer, chuckar, and raptors live in the unit. Impressive views from the central ridgeline of mountains give one a sense of the region's vastness and of the desert's profound solitude. Essentially all of the WSA meets the naturalness criteria of the Wilderness Act. Approximately 5 miles of ways within the WSA are substantially unnoticeable. In 1984, wildfire burned about 1,800 acres in Grassy Cove. The fire was controlled by hand and reclamation was not necessary. The Wah Wah Mountains are one of the most remote untouched mountain ranges in the West Desert. The WSA is comprised of grey tones of limestone cliffs and light-tan deserts dotted with dark green juniper trees.

B. Solitude

About 40,940 acres, including all of the area proposed for wilderness designation, meet the Wilderness Act standards for solitude, or seclusion from other people.

The WSA is sufficiently large (approximately 20 miles long, north to south) to

WAH WAH MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

allow visitors to be unaware of others in the vicinity. Canyons in the WSA and steep cliffs on both sides of the range provide screening. Vegetation also contributes to seclusion, especially in the higher elevations. Stands of pinyon and bristlecone pine enhance seclusion in all seasons. Vistas in all directions from the crest of the WSA contribute to the feeling of vastness and of being alone.

The Wah Wah Mountains WSA is in the South range of the U.S. Air Force (USAF) Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR), one of the country's busiest military air spaces. From 100 to 150 daily flights, 6 days a week, are made in the UTTR. Some flights are as low as 100 feet above ground level. The WSA is in the southern portion of the UTTR and is less affected by air traffic. Nevertheless, aircraft occasionally fly over the WSA and can be an annoyance that detracts from but generally does not eliminate overall opportunities for solitude.

About 1,200 acres in the WSA, in the benchlands west of Crystal Peak, do not meet the standards for solitude. The terrain and sparse vegetation do not offer seclusion.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Wilderness Act standards for opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are substantially met on 40,940 acres. Currently it is estimated that 155 visitor days annually can be attributed to recreational activities in the WSA, including 25 days for fossil collecting, 32 days for geological sightseeing, and 98 days for biological sightseeing. The major primitive recreational use is hiking in conjunction with biological and geological viewing. The sheer limestone cliffs and Crystal Peak provide excellent geological sightseeing opportunities, and bristlecone and ponderosa pines and eagles, hawks, and other wildlife provide opportunities for nature studies and photography. Opportunities for rock climbing, horseback riding, camping, hunting, skiing, and cultural sightseeing were considered to be average or poor because of lack of water and steep terrain.

D. Special Features

Bald eagles and peregrine falcons, both endangered species, and golden eagles, a BLM sensitive species, inhabit the WSA. Other candidate threatened or endangered species that could inhabit the WSA include the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, long-billed curlew, western snowy plover, and white-faced ibis. These birds also frequent areas throughout the Great Basin and western United States. Three sensitive plant species that may be found in the WSA are the Cryptantha compacta, Eriogonum ammophilum, and Sphaeralcea caespitosa.

Bristlecone pine grows on about 190 acres in the higher parts of the WSA. Bristlecones are rare in this area and those in the WSA are exceptionally large, reaching heights of 50 feet or more. Bristlecone pines are among the oldest living trees.

Crystal Peak in the extreme north end of the WSA within the area recommended for wilderness designation, is a white mountain of tuff (weathered volcanic ash) that is visible for 50 miles.

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 not presently represented in the NWPS, but it would add an ecosystem (saltbush-greasewood) not represented in the NWPS in Utah. 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 Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Ecoregion. The PNV ecosystems in the WSA are juniper-pinyon woodland (25,000 acres) and saltbush-greasewood (17,140 acres). Both ecosystems are represented in the NWPS outside of Utah and in BLM study areas both in and outside of Utah. This information is summarized in Table 2 from data compiled in December 1989.

WAH WAH MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

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	2,128,907
Saltbush-Greasewood	3	45,553	37	1,014,467
UTAH (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	2	14,955	13	234,433
Saltbush-Greasewood	0	0	7	129,705

Source: BLM File Data.

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

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

A Wah Wah Mountains wilderness would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS in the western-central United States. Including the Wah Wah Mountains WSA in the NWPS could contribute to balancing the NWPS in the Great Basin, however.

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	10	1,079,807	78	2,217,535
Provo-Orem, Utah	11	708,638	90	2,744,728
Las Vegas, Nevada	38	3,132,130	54	2,134,358

Source: BLM File Data.

As of January 1987, the NWPS included 65 areas comprising 2,898,792 acres in Utah and Arizona and Nevada, the adjacent states nearest the WSA. Within 100 miles of the WSA, the 7,000-acre Ashdown Gorge Wilderness is to the southeast and the 50,000-acre Pine Valley Mountain Wilder-

ness is to the south. Both are in the Dixie National Forest.

No wilderness areas have been designated to the north, east, or west in the vicinity of the WSA, however. Only six wilderness areas, totaling 272,994 acres,

WAH WAH MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

are in the Great Basin. Three wilderness areas in the NWPS have the same combination of PNV types as the Wah Wah Mountains WSA would have (see "Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems . . ."). All three are in California. If designated, a Wah Wah Mountains Wilderness would supplement the distribution of wilderness in this region.

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

The portion of the WSA that is recommended for wilderness designation can be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. Resource and land conflicts are not now a problem in the WSA and are not anticipated to be in the future.

There are no oil and gas leases in the portion of the WSA recommended as wilderness and new leases would not be issued. Thirty mining claims in the WSA are in the area recommended for wilderness, but development is not projected in the foreseeable future and they are not expected to be a manageability problem.

There are five State-owned sections (3,202 acres) scattered from north to south in the central portion of the recommended area. Major developments on these sections and related access and activity would reduce the quality of wilderness values in the southern portion of the wilderness, but the potential for development is low.

Livestock grazing could continue as at present, requiring little or no change in management.

The USAF has stated that military flights will continue in the vicinity of the WSA, whether it is designated or not. Overflights would detract from solitude and BLM management could not mitigate such disturbance. This conflict can be resolved only at the Congressional level.

The area not recommended as wilderness also could be managed as wilderness. There are presently no mining claims in this portion of the WSA. There is one post-FLPMA oil and gas lease with the

nonimpairment stipulation, but developments that would reduce the quality of wilderness values are not projected.

It would be administratively more difficult to protect this portion of the WSA from vehicle use and noise because the area is flatter and is bordered by roads. However, significant increases in vehicle use are not projected in the foreseeable future, and surface features such as rock are somewhat limiting to vehicle use.

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 Wah Wah Mountains WSA (USGS Bulletin 1749-B, Leslie J. Cox, et al., 1989). The area investigated was the 36,382 acre portion of the WSA that is recommended for wilderness designation. The report states that identified resources in the Wah Wah Mountains WSA include two small iron occurrences on the southwestern boundary, consisting of less than 100 short tons of inferred subeconomic iron-rich material. The area that was studied also has millions of cubic yards of inferred subeconomic resources of limestone and dolomite suitable for industrial and agricultural uses; of sandstone and quartzite suitable for container glass and industrial use; and of limestone, sandstone, and volcanic rock suitable for construction purposes. The study area has moderate energy resource potential for undiscovered oil and gas, and low energy resource potential for undiscovered uranium and geothermal energy. Several areas in the southern half of the study area have moderate mineral resource potential for undiscovered zinc, cadmium, and antimony, and moderate resource potential for associated molybdenum, lead, arsenic, bismuth, tungsten, and gold in several types of vein and replacement bodies and in concealed igneous breccia deposits. The metal occurrences are attributed to episodes of low-temperature mineralization originating with igneous activity. Some of the metals occur within an alteration zone around igneous intrusions. The rest of the study area has low resource potential for undiscovered zinc, cadmium, antimony, tungsten, molybdenum, lead, arsenic, bismuth, and gold.

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Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for alternatives including designation of the entire area as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Social and economic factors concerning this WSA 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 46 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 53 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 was not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs. In general, 35 commenters supported the wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 14 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 special features present in the WSA. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were evenly from urban areas in Utah and outside the state. Of particular concern was the need to protect special features and primitive recreational opportunities.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would preclude mineral exploration and development, harm State and local economy, and restrict livestock management and rangeland improvements. The majority of these commenters

were from rural Utah, and were local to the area.

Two Federal agencies, the USAF and USBM, commented on the Draft EIS. The Federal agencies did not take a position regarding designation or nondesignation of the WSA. The USAF noted that low altitude flights will continue over the WSA with or without wilderness designation and that they will not negotiate nor sign any agreement to avoid the proposed wilderness area. This conflict can be resolved only on the Congressional level.

The USBM stated that BLM underrated the petroleum potential of the WSA.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are five State sections (3,202 acres) 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 Wah Wah Mountains WSA. The State of Utah commented that it generally agrees as to the existence of the pristine quality of the WSA's wilderness characteristics and that it has the second highest wilderness quality in the region.

The State of Utah also stated that there are no known serious mineral conflicts and impacts on grazing interests could be reduced by elimination of the northern bench areas. Specific State of Utah comments on the Draft EIS dealt with errors in the mapping and description of State in-holdings, need for additional geologic information, and inconsistencies in the Land Use Plans sections.

The Millard County and Beaver County Master Plans do not specifically address wilderness. The County Commissions favor protection of natural and esthetic resources on public lands as well as multiple use and believe that these objectives can be met without wilderness designation. They have endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation for BLM lands in Utah.

WAH WAH MOUNTAINS WSA

Table 4
Summary of Environmental Consequences

Alternatives	
Resource	No. Action/No. Wilderness
	All Wilderness (42,140 Acres)
	Designation would preserve wilderness values throughout the WSA. In the foreseeable future, opportunities for naturalness, solitude, and primitive recreation would be slightly reduced in quality on 2 acres from guzzler development, from which wildlife special features would benefit.
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation. In the foreseeable future, opportunities for naturalness, solitude, and primitive recreation would be slightly reduced in quality on 2 acres of the WSA from guzzler development, from which wildlife special features would benefit. Vehicular use of 5 miles of ways would continue to occasionally detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Special features would not be adversely affected.
Impacts on Livestock Management	Vehicular use restrictions could inconvenience livestock operators in the area and increase the costs of controlling predation of livestock.
	Wilderness designation of 36,382 acres would result in preservation of wilderness values on about 86 percent of the WSA. In the foreseeable future, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be slightly reduced in quality on 2 acres of the WSA from guzzler development, from which wildlife special features would benefit. Vehicular use of 4 miles of ways would continue to occasionally detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Special features would be preserved.
	Livestock grazing would not be adversely affected because management and access would continue as at present.
	This alternative would not adversely affect livestock management in the WSA because 4 of the 5 miles of ways and 58 percent of the forage would be in the nondesignated area.

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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. 23 S., R. 16 W., Sec. 36	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 24 S., R. 16 W., Sec. 2	641.84		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 24 S., R. 16 W., Sec. 36	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 25 S., R. 15 W., Sec. 32	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 26 S., R. 15 W., Sec. 16	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000

^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.