

## 4.16. SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

In general, management of specially designated areas (such as ACECs, WSRs, and WSAs) is focused on protection of their special values, while allowing those uses and activities that are considered compatible with the specific, special resources of concern, and restricting those uses and activities that would impact those identified value(s). In the case of ACECs, the management focuses on protecting and preventing irreparable damage to specific, identified relevant and important values. For river segments that are eligible / suitable for congressional designation into the National Wild and Scenic River System, the management focuses on protecting the identified, outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing water, and tentative classifications for eligible river segments. For WSAs, the management focuses on maintaining the wilderness setting, characteristics and experience.

Some of the actions proposed in this plan would have no adverse impacts on existing or potential ACECs, eligible river segments, or wilderness characteristics regardless of the alternative chosen. Only decisions that may affect the values of these areas are analyzed further.

### 4.16.1. ACECs

#### 4.16.1.1. IMPACTS COMMON TO THE PROPOSED RMP AND ALL ALTERNATIVES

With the Proposed RMP and all alternatives, seven currently designated ACECs (Browns Park, Nine Mile Canyon, Lears Canyon, Lower Green River Corridor, Red Mountain-Dry Fork, Red Creek Watershed, and Pariette Wetlands) would be designated and continue to be managed as ACECs, and their relevant and important values, including historic, cultural, scenic, and fish and wildlife resources, would continue to be protected, subject to valid existing rights. See Table 4.16.1 that follows for acreages under the Proposed RMP and each alternative.

With the Proposed RMP and all alternatives, relevant and important values of existing and potential ACECs would benefit from the special management attention they would receive if designated, including development of comprehensive, integrated activity plans in some cases. The plans would address the maintenance and development of OHV or non-motorized trails, minimal facilities necessary for human health and safety, and other surface-disturbing activities that would be complementary to the goals and objectives of each ACEC.

In the Proposed RMP and alternatives where some potential ACECs would not be designated or where surface disturbance would occur, the relevance and importance of these areas may be at some risk of irreparable damage during the life of the plan, depending upon the specific resource use or other actions proposed by the Proposed RMP or alternative.

Decisions that would generally have a positive impact on existing and potential ACECs, regardless of whether the Proposed RMP or other alternative are chosen, include those involving fire management, soil and watershed, and vegetation (including riparian and upland vegetation) management. Vegetation treatments would, in the long-term, restore vegetative communities to

resemble more natural ecosystems, which are important to protecting the identified relevant and important values in some of the ACECs.

In general, the more acres where mineral development is likely within existing and potential ACECs, the fewer acres there would be that would retain relevant and important values. In cases where mineral development would be allowed, the likelihood of surface disturbance affecting relevant and important values would be much greater in areas where standard stipulations or timing and controlled surface use stipulations would be applied. Also, some areas are at risk where cross country OHV travel ("open" areas) would continue under the Alternative D (No Action).

#### 4.16.1.2. ALTERNATIVES IMPACTS

The following table summarizes the acres proposed for ACEC designation by the Proposed RMP and alternatives.

**Table 4.16.1. Areas and Acres of ACECs That Would Be Designated by Alternative**

| Area                        | Proposed RMP (acres) | Alternative A (acres) | Alternative B (acres) | Alternative C (acres) | Alternative D (No Action) (acres) | Alternative E (acres) |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Bitter Creek                | 0                    | 68,834                | 0                     | 68,834                | 0                                 | 68,834                |
| Bitter Creek – P.R. Spring  | 0                    | 0                     | 0                     | 78,591                | 0                                 | 78,591                |
| Browns Park                 | 18,490               | 52,721                | 18,474                | 52,721                | 52,721                            | 52,721                |
| Coyote Basin                | 0                    | 87,743                | 47,659                | 0                     | 0                                 | 0                     |
| Coyote Basin – Coyote Basin | 0                    | 0                     | 0                     | 26,590                | 0                                 | 26,590                |
| Coyote Basin – Kennedy Wash | 0                    | 0                     | 0                     | 10,670                | 0                                 | 10,670                |
| Coyote Basin – Myton Bench  | 0                    | 0                     | 0                     | 36,670                | 0                                 | 36,670                |
| Coyote Basin – Shiner       | 0                    | 0                     | 0                     | 21,957                | 0                                 | 21,957                |
| Coyote Basin – Snake John   | 0                    | 0                     | 0                     | 28,274                | 0                                 | 28,274                |
| Four Mile Wash              | 0                    | 0                     | 0                     | 50,280                | 0                                 | 50,280                |
| Lears Canyon                | 1,375                | 1,375                 | 1,375                 | 1,375                 | 1,375                             | 1,375                 |
| Lower Green River           | 8,470                | 10,170                | 8,470                 | 10,170                | 8,470                             | 10,170                |
| Main Canyon                 | 0                    | 0                     | 0                     | 100,915               | 0                                 | 100,915               |
| Middle Green River          | 0                    | 0                     | 0                     | 6,768                 | 0                                 | 6,768                 |
| Nine Mile Canyon            | 44,168               | 48,000                | 44,181                | 81,168                | 44,181                            | 81,168                |

**Table 4.16.1. Areas and Acres of ACECs That Would Be Designated by Alternative**

| Area                  | Proposed RMP (acres) | Alternative A (acres) | Alternative B (acres) | Alternative C (acres) | Alternative D (No Action) (acres) | Alternative E (acres) |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Red Creek Watershed   | 24,475               | 24,475                | 24,475                | 24,475                | 24,475                            | 24,475                |
| Red Mountain-Dry Fork | 24,285               | 24,285                | 24,285                | 24,285                | 24,285                            | 24,285                |
| Pariette Wetlands     | 10,437               | 10,437                | 10,437                | 10,437                | 10,437                            | 10,437                |
| White River Corridor  | 0                    | 17,810                | 0                     | 47,130                | 0                                 | 47,130                |
| <b>Totals</b>         | <b>131,700</b>       | <b>345,850</b>        | <b>179,356</b>        | <b>681,310</b>        | <b>165,944</b>                    | <b>681,310</b>        |

**4.16.1.2.1. BITTER CREEK AND BITTER CREEK-P.R. SPRING ACECS**

The Proposed RMP and Alternatives B and D (No Action) would not designate Bitter Creek or Bitter Creek-P.R. Springs as ACECs and would not afford special management protection. However, other resource decisions would continue to protect some of the relevance and importance values. Leasing for oil and gas development would be limited to NSO for the old growth pinyon pine area (160 acres). These management actions would preserve pinyon pine habitat, with indirect positive benefits to wildlife that use that type of habitat (See Wildlife Section). These management actions would also result in decreased fire risk and improved water quality in streams in the Bitter Creek Watershed.

Under Alternative A, 68,834 acres would be designated as the Bitter Creek ACEC/Research Natural Area to protect high-value old-growth pinyon pine, cultural resources, historic features, and watersheds. Special management actions would include establishing a research/monitoring program, enhancing habitat using forest treatments, and restricting wood-cutting around the old growth pinyon. Leasing for oil and gas development would be limited to NSO for the old growth pinyon pine area (160 acres). These management actions would preserve pinyon pine habitat, with indirect positive benefits to wildlife that use that type of habitat (See Wildlife Section). These management actions would also result in decreased fire risk and improved water quality in streams in the Bitter Creek Watershed.

Under Alternatives C and E, 68,834 acres would be designated as the Bitter Creek ACEC and 78,591 acres would be designated as the Bitter Creek/P.R. Spring ACEC. The ACECs are adjoining, and together would be managed as a contiguous polygon of 147,425 acres. For either alternative the management would be the same. The area would be managed to protect old-growth pinyon pine, cultural resources, historical features, and watersheds. Special management actions would include the following: establishing a research/monitoring program, enhancing habitat through forest manipulation, and restricting wood cutting around old-growth pinyon forests. These management actions would preserve pinyon pine habitat, with indirect positive benefits to wildlife that use that type of habitat. These management actions would also result in decreased fire risk and improved water quality in streams in the Bitter Creek Watershed.

Alternatives C and E would designate both ACECs, and there would be more than double the acreage protected, compared with Alternative A. This would result in roughly twice the protection to existing habitat and watershed health in the area.

Alternatives C and E would also place similar restrictions on OHV use and mineral development in the area. These two alternatives would require somewhat more area to be closed to leasing or leased with an NSO stipulation. Based on the acres designated under each alternative and these increased restrictions, Alternative C and E would result in greater restrictions to mineral development in the ACEC, followed by Alternatives A and the Proposed RMP and Alternatives B and D (No Action), respectively.

Under Alternative E, parts of the ACECs would be managed to protect non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, including Bitter Creek (33,488 acres), Rat Hole Ridge (11,367 acres), Cripple Cowboy (13,603 acres), and Sweet Water Canyon (6,994 acres). To protect those values, management of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would limit surface disturbance, including avoidance from rights-of-way location; management to VRM Class I objectives; and closure to OHV use, oil and gas leasing, fire wood cutting, mineral material sales, and road construction (see Table 2.1.10). These measures would limit the vegetation manipulation needed to enhance the relevant and important watershed values of the ACEC to the use of prescribed fire. On the other hand, limitations on surface disturbance would protect the relevant and important old growth pinyon, cultural resources, and historic values of the ACEC.

#### **4.16.1.2.2. COYOTE BASIN ACEC AND THE COYOTE BASIN COMPLEX ACEC<sup>18</sup>**

Under the Proposed RMP and Alternative D (No Action), Coyote Basin would not be designated as an ACEC, affording no special management attention or protection to the identified relevant and important values. However, other resource decisions would continue to protect some of the relevance and importance values. The VRM Class II objectives, limiting OHV travel to designated routes, and oil and gas leasing with controlled surface use would limit surface disturbance that would protect habitat for the white-tailed prairie dogs.

Alternative A would designate 87,743 acres as a Research Natural Area ACEC for protection of critical ecosystem for the white-tailed prairie dog and other special status species associated with the ecosystem. Under Alternative B, the Coyote Basin ACEC would include 47,659 acres of critical ecosystem for the black-footed ferret. Under Alternatives C and E, the Coyote Basin Complex ACEC would include the sub-complexes of Coyote Basin, Snake John, Shiner, Kennedy Wash, and Myton Bench for a total of 124,161 acres. These areas are proposed as ACECs because they contain populations of white-tailed prairie dogs and/or habitat. Plague has resulted in adverse impacts to white-tailed prairie dog in Utah. Designation of the Coyote Basin ACEC and the Coyote Basin Complex ACEC would not prevent the continued adverse impacts from the plague, but it would preserve essential habitat for remaining prairie dog populations in the planning area.

<sup>18</sup> There are two different polygons under the title Coyote Basin ACEC. One is proposed in Alternatives A and B and comprises 87,743 acres and 47,659 acres, respectively. In addition, there is a Coyote Basin sub-complex called Coyote Basin under Alternatives C and E that comprises 26,590 acres. They are all somewhat inclusive of one another regarding geographic location. Refer to Figures 29–32.

Alternatives C and E would provide the greatest amount of habitat and, therefore, the greatest potential protection to prairie dogs. Alternative A would provide the next greatest benefit followed by Alternative B. The Proposed RMP and Alternative D (No Action) would not designate either ACEC, offering no additional protection of the white-tailed prairie dog or black-footed ferret.

Each of the areas under Alternatives A, B, C, and E would be designated as a Research Natural Area, which would provide additional opportunities for research to identify the potential vectors for transmission of plague. This, in turn, could provide some long-term information for the treatment of this disease. However, designation of these ACECs does not guarantee the continued population viability of the white-tailed prairie dog in view of the potential mortality from continued spread of the disease.

Designation of the Coyote Basin ACEC or the Coyote Basin Complex ACEC would impact other resources found within the ACECs. These ACECs would provide essential habitat for the potential reintroduction of black-footed ferret. The white-tailed prairie dog provides forage for the black-footed ferret and is considered necessary for its successful recovery in the project area.

Accordingly, Alternatives C and E would provide the greatest potential positive benefit to the black-footed ferret, followed by Alternatives A and B. Under Alternatives A, B, C, and E, habitat in the ACEC would also be managed to protect critical habitat for other wildlife species that use the Coyote Basin ACEC. These species include the pronghorn, and sensitive species such as Bobolink, Ferruginous Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Sage Grouse, Long-billed Curlew, Grasshopper Sparrow, Short-eared Owl, big free-tailed bat, black-footed ferret, ringtail cat, and dwarf shrew. Accordingly, Alternatives C and E would have the greatest potential benefits to these species and their habitat, followed by Alternatives A and B.

Under Alternatives C and E, the area would be subject primarily to standard lease terms, but would include areas managed with timing and controlled surface use and NSO for oil and gas leasing. Alternatives A and B would be subject primarily to standard lease terms and timing and controlled surface use. OHV use would be limited to designated routes and closed under all alternatives. These stipulations, combined with the size of the proposed Coyote Basin ACEC or Coyote Basin Complex ACEC, would manage oil and gas development and OHV use to ensure protection of the species and their habitat under Alternatives A, B, C, and E. These surface management stipulations would also apply to the development of other solid mineral resources in the ACEC.

#### **4.16.1.2.3. FOUR MILE WASH ACEC**

Under the Proposed RMP and Alternatives A, B, and D, Four Mile Wash would not be designated as an ACEC. Alternatives C and E would designate 50,280 acres in the Four Mile Wash area as an Outstanding Natural Area ACEC to protect high-value scenery, riparian ecosystems, and special status fish species. Management actions include closing the area to oil and gas leasing. Visual resources would be managed as Class II, III, and IV. OHV use would be limited to designated routes. However, under the Proposed RMP, other resource decisions would continue to protect some of the relevance and importance values. The VRM Class II objectives,

limiting OHV travel to designated routes, and oil and gas leasing with NSO in the river corridor and controlled surface use would limit surface disturbance that impact T&E species in the Green River.

Under Alternative E, much of the ACEC would be managed to preserve the wilderness characteristics on 43,013 acres of the Desolation Canyon non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics that lie within the ACEC. Protection of wilderness characteristics would limit surface disturbance in the ACEC by closing the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics to OHV use and oil and gas leasing and by managing for little or no change to the landscape under VRM Class I objectives. Alternative E would limit surface disturbances, offering more protection to the relevant and important scenery, riparian ecosystem, and fisheries than offered by Alternative C. These limits on surface disturbance and motorized vehicle use would emphasize primitive and non-motorized recreation activities and experiences by preserving a natural setting and prohibiting motorized recreation that intrudes upon primitive activities.

Accordingly, Alternatives C and E would provide the greatest protection to wildlife and their habitat, scenery, and recreation opportunities in the area. The Proposed RMP and Alternatives A, B, and D (No Action) would have greater impacts to these resources, as they would impose the fewest restrictions to oil and gas development.

#### **4.16.1.2.4. MIDDLE GREEN RIVER ACEC**

The Proposed RMP and Alternatives A, B, and D would not designate this area as an ACEC. Currently, this section of the river is used for recreational use (hunting and fishing), as well as some OHV use. However, other resource decisions would continue to protect some of the relevance and importance values. The VRM Class II objectives, limiting OHV travel to designated routes, and oil and gas leasing with controlled surface use would limit surface disturbance that would protect riparian resources, water quality, as well as T&E species.

Under Alternatives C and E, 6,768 acres of the Middle Green River (line of sight from the centerline of the river up to one-half mile along both sides) between Dinosaur National Monument and the boundary of the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge would be designated as an ACEC to protect the riparian ecosystem. Special management attention would include permitting only surface-disturbing activities found complimentary to the goals and objectives of the ACEC. The area would be open to oil and gas leasing subject mostly to standard lease terms and managed with timing and controlled surface use stipulations. Visual resources would be managed as Class II (115 acres), III (3,492 acres) or IV (3,161 acres). OHV use would be limited to designated routes.

ACEC designation would result in some protection to riparian resources. Impacts to riparian resources under Alternative C would be protective in the form of reduced potential disturbance to riparian resources with associated improvements in riparian wildlife habitat and water quality. This section of the Green River provides habitat for Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker. Accordingly, designation of this section as an ACEC would have some positive impact on these species. However, the management actions associated with this ACEC would not extensively change the use of the area, therefore, these benefits are unlikely to be substantial in relation to

the other existing threats to these species (i.e., exotic fish introductions and existing dams on the Green River). This section of the Green River is used for recreational boaters. Limiting development along this corridor to activities complimentary to maintaining the riparian area would improve the recreational experience for these users.

#### **4.16.1.2.5. LOWER GREEN RIVER CORRIDOR AND EXPANSION ACECS**

The Proposed RMP and Alternatives B and D (No Action) would designate 8,470 acres of the Lower Green River Corridor as an ACEC to provide special management attention to scenery and the riparian ecosystem, extending only west from the centerline of the river. Oil and gas leases would be issued primarily with an NSO stipulation. Visual resources would be managed as Class II. OHV would be limited to designated routes. These restrictions would limit surface disturbance and protect both riparian and upland habitat along the corridor. This would have a protective effect on resident and migrating birds and other wildlife. It would also protect critical habitat for such sensitive species as the American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Long-billed Curlew, Black Tern, Mountain Plover, Caspian Tern, Common Yellow Throat, Ferruginous Hawk, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lewis' Woodpecker, Short-eared Owl, black-footed ferret, Townsend's big-eared bat, Utah milk snake, Colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker, roundtail chub, and the Uinta Basin hookless cactus. The river corridor is a prime location for prehistoric and historical cultural sites as well. Therefore, this alternative would result in reduced potential surface disturbance and impacts to these resources, and enhance recreational opportunities. The Proposed RMP as well as Alternatives B and D would not designate 1,700 acres of the Lower Green River Expansion as an ACEC. However, other resource decisions would continue to protect some of the relevance and importance values. The VRM Class II objectives, limiting OHV travel to designated routes, and oil and gas leasing (NSO) would limit surface disturbance that would protect riparian resources, water quality, as well as T&E species. Alternatives A, C, and E would designate 10,170 acres of the Lower Green River between the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge and the Carbon County line as an ACEC. This is an expansion of the existing Lower Green River ACEC as described in the Proposed RMP and Alternatives B and D (No Action). The 1,700-acre increase adds the eastern portion of the river (line of sight from the center line of the river up to 0.5 mile). The impacts of ACEC management on other resource values and uses under Alternatives A, C, and E would be similar to those under the Proposed RMP and Alternatives B and D (No Action), affecting a larger area of land.

The Proposed RMP and Alternatives B and D (No Action) would have benefits similar to those described above for Alternatives A, C, and E but to a lesser degree because fewer acres would be designated for special management protection. Alternative E would have the same impacts of ACEC designation and management as Alternatives A and C, except that under Alternative E a portion of the ACEC would be managed to preserve the wilderness characteristics on 5,329 acres of the Desolation Canyon non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics that lie within the ACEC. Protection of wilderness characteristics would limit surface disturbance in a portion of the ACEC by closing the area to OHV use and to oil and gas leasing and by managing the landscape under VRM Class I objectives. This prescription would limit surface disturbances, offering protection to the relevant and important scenery and riparian ecosystem.

#### 4.16.1.2.6. WHITE RIVER ACEC

The Proposed RMP and Alternatives B and D (No Action) would not designate the White River as an ACEC. Accordingly, the Proposed RMP and these alternatives would not afford special management attention to the relevant and important geologic formations, scenery, and riparian ecosystems, and result in greater adverse impacts to these values from other resource uses along the river corridor. However, other resource decisions would limit surface disturbance and continue to protect some of the relevance and importance values. The central portion of the river canyon would be managed with emphasis on protection of its wilderness characteristics. Most of the public lands along the river canyon would be closed to oil and gas leasing or would be available for leasing with an NSO stipulations. The river downstream of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be managed as a special recreation management area (SMRA) providing primitive recreation activities such a floating, primitive camping, fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing. Much of the river corridor would be closed to disposal of sand, gravel, and building stone. Most of the river canyon would be managed VRM Class II for retention of the characteristic landscape. Surface disturbance would be prohibited within floodplains and 100 meters of riparian zones. OHV use would be limited to designated routes. Furthermore, compliance with endangered species and cultural resource protection laws would continue to afford protection of those elements of the ACEC relevant and important values.

Under Alternatives C and E, 47,130 acres along the White River would be managed as an ACEC to protect unique geologic formations with spectacular vistas and the high-value river riparian ecosystem. The ACEC would be managed as VRM Class I, II, III, and IV and would be closed and limited to designated routes for OHV use to meet the management objectives of the ACEC. Oil and gas leasing would be permitted with an NSO stipulation within line of sight from the centerline, up to one-half mile either side of the river. Areas beyond the 0.5-mile buffer would be open to oil and gas leasing subject to standard lease terms and timing and controlled surface use stipulations, or closed to leasing. This larger ACEC would result in an associated increase in the protections to geological formations, riparian and upland habitat, and the recreational experience.

A portion of the ACEC under Alternative E would include the White River non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics (21,167 acres) and would be managed to preserve those characteristics. Protection of wilderness characteristics would limit surface disturbance by closing the area to OHV use and oil and gas leasing and by managing the landscape for little or no change according to VRM Class I objectives. Protection of wilderness characteristics in part of the ACEC would offer further protection to the relevant and important geology, scenery, and riparian values.

The White River provides critical habitat for the endangered Colorado pikeminnow, as well as habitat for other threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, including the razorback sucker, flannel mouth sucker, roundtail chub, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Peregrine Falcon, and Bald Eagle.

Alternatives C and E would benefit these species through the preservation of riparian habitat and the associated improvements to water quality. These alternatives, in particular, close OHV use in the western portion of the ACEC. This management prescription would limit surface disturbance and provide have additional benefits for the species.

Alternative A would designate 17,810 acres of the river corridor as an ACEC to provide special management attention to the identified values of the area. The management prescription would be very similar to that described for Alternatives C and E, but applicable to a smaller area. The resultant impacts, thus, would be similar on a smaller portion of the river corridor.

#### **4.16.1.2.7. NINE MILE CANYON ACEC**

The Proposed RMP and Alternative A would designate an ACEC to provide special management attention to the relevant and important values, to 44,168 acres and 48,000 acres, respectively. The management prescription under the Proposed RMP and Alternative A would be very similar to that of Alternatives B, C, D, and E, and thus so would the resultant impacts to the relevant and important values of the ACEC. The designation of 44,168 acres from upper rim to upper rim of the canyon as an ACEC would protect identified relevant and important values. See the analysis of Alternatives of B, C, D and E below. This designation is consistent with the ACEC designation in the Price Field Office Proposed RMP. The relevant and important values of historic properties would be protected through cultural laws, rules and regulations.

Alternatives C and E would designate 81,168 acres in Nine Mile Canyon as an ACEC. Each alternative would require the development and implementation of a comprehensive integrated activity plan. Under these alternatives, the ACEC would be open to oil and gas leasing subject to standard lease terms, timing and controlled surface use, and NSO stipulations. Visual resources would be managed, in part, as Class II and III to meet different management objectives in different parts of the ACEC. OHV use would be limited to designated routes or closed. These actions would manage surface disturbance to ensure the protection of relevant and important values.

These alternatives would provide protection to existing cultural resources in Nine Mile Canyon, including nationally significant Fremont, Ute, and Archaic rock art and structures. Additionally, this ACEC would protect wildlife habitat, vegetation (including special status species), and visual resources. Protection of the cultural resources and wildlife values would enhance recreational opportunities in the ACEC.

Alternative E would have the same impacts as those described for Alternative C except that 20,963 acres of the Desolation Canyon non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics located in the ACEC would be managed to preserve the area's wilderness values. In the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, the area would be closed to oil and gas leasing and OHV use, and an avoidance area for ROWs. The landscape would be managed for little to no change according to VRM Class I objectives. This prescription for the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics is more restrictive than the prescription for the remainder of the ACEC and would allow little surface disturbance or intrusion by motorized vehicles. These limitations would protect cultural resources in place, preserve the natural landscapes (scenery), protect sensitive plants, and limit disturbance to wildlife utilizing the area, all relevant and important ACEC values.

Alternatives B, and D would designate 44,181 acres in Nine Mile Canyon as an ACEC, with effects on the relevant and important values similar to those described under Alternatives C and E, but affecting a smaller ACEC.

Based on the acres that would be designated and the management prescriptions, Alternatives C and E would provide the greatest protection to relevant and important ACEC values, followed by Alternatives A, B, and D (No Action), then the Proposed RMP.

#### **4.16.1.2.8. MAIN CANYON ACEC**

The Proposed RMP and Alternatives A, B, and D (No Action) would not designate the Main Canyon ACEC or prescribe special management attention to protect the relevant and important values of the area. However, other resource decisions would continue to protect some of the relevant and important values. Nearly half of the Main Canyon acreage is within the Winter Ridge WSA. This area would be protected under the IMP with VRM Class I objectives, closed to oil and gas leasing, and closed to OHV travel. Lands outside of the Winter Ridge WSA would be limited to OHV travel; open to oil and gas leasing with moderate constraints; avoidance of steep slopes; timing limitations for crucial deer and elk winter range; habitat improvement with vegetation treatment; and protection of historic properties through cultural laws, rules and regulations.

Alternative C would designate 100,915 acres in Main Canyon as an ACEC to protect relevant and important cultural and historic resources and natural systems. Special management attention would include permitting only surface-disturbing activities found to be complementary or compatible with the goals and objectives of the ACEC. The area would be closed and managed with timing and controlled surface use for oil and gas leasing. Visual resources would be managed as VRM Class I and Class II. OHV use would be closed and limited to designated routes. These management actions would limit surface disturbance and protect numerous cultural sites, including sites associated with the historical Northern Ute migration route along Main Canyon. Management of the visual resources according to Class I and II objectives would limit landscape modifications, preserve the visual aesthetics of the area, and enhance the recreational experience.

Alternative E would also designate a 100,915-acre ACEC with impacts similar to those described for Alternative C. However, under this alternative, the ACEC includes portions of the Wolf Point non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics (11,802 acres within the ACEC), which would be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics. To protect the wilderness characteristics of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, Wolf Point would be closed to OHV use and oil and gas leasing, and a ROW avoidance area. To preserve the natural characteristics of the area, the landscape would be managed according to VRM Class I objectives. This prescription would limit or prohibit surface disturbance, protecting the relevant and important cultural, historic, and natural system values of the ACEC.

#### 4.16.1.2.9. BROWNS PARK ACEC

The Proposed RMP would designate an 18,490-acre ACEC for the same values, following a very similar management prescription to Alternative B. Under Alternative B, 18,475 acres would be designated as an ACEC to provide special management attention to the protection of scenery, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources. The area would be open to oil and gas leasing subject to standard lease terms, timing and controlled surface use, and NSO; and some parts of the ACEC would be closed to leasing. OHV use would be closed and limited to designated routes. The effect on the relevant and important scenery, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources would be the same as described for Alternative B. Under the Proposed RMP, Lower Flaming Gorge, Cold Spring Mountain and Mountain Home would also be managed to protect their wilderness characteristics, with a similar management prescription to Alternative E. The resultant impacts on ACEC values in Brown's Park would be similar to Alternative E.

The remaining 34,231 that would not be designated as an ACEC under the Proposed RMP would continue to protect the relevant and important values through VRM Class II objectives, OHVs limited to designated roads, and oil and gas leasing would be opened with moderate and major constraints such as timing limitations for crucial deer and elk winter range and NSO.

Alternatives A, C, and E would designate 52,721 acres in Browns Park as an ACEC. Under these alternatives, the BLM would develop a comprehensive integrated activity plan that would address protection of the relevant and important scenery, wildlife habitat, and cultural and historic resources.

The area would be closed to oil and gas leasing or leased primarily with NSO or timing and controlled surface use stipulations. Visual resources would be managed as according to VRM Class I or Class II objectives under Alternative E. OHV use would be closed or limited to designated routes. This prescription would limit surface disturbance and preserve wildlife habitat and cultural resources. It would also afford protection to visual resources and would consequently improve the recreational setting and experience in the area. Closing the area to OHV use and restricting OHV use to existing routes would decrease surface disturbance.

Because the ACEC would be larger and would have greater restrictions on minerals development and landscape modification under Alternatives A, C and E, there would be greater protection of wildlife habitat, cultural resources, and recreation opportunities, in comparison with the effects under Alternatives B.

Under Alternative E portions of Lower Flaming Gorge (11,274 acres), Dead Horse Pass (1,665 acres), Cold Spring Mountain (8,649 acres), and Mountain Home (2,089 acres) non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics are located in the ACEC, and they would be managed to protect their wilderness characteristics. To protect their wilderness characteristics, these non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be closed to OHV use, oil and gas leasing, mineral material sales, wood cutting, and road construction. The non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would also be managed for avoidance from location of ROWs. The landscape would be managed according to VRM Class I objectives to preserve its undeveloped character. This prescription would limit activities that disturb the landform and vegetation, protecting scenery, wildlife habitat, and cultural and historic resources values of the ACEC.

Under Alternative D (No Action), 52,721 acres of Browns Park would continue to be managed as an ACEC. The area would have similar restriction on oil and gas development. OHV use would be open, closed, and limited to designated routes in different parts of the ACEC. The effects on the relevant and important scenery, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources would be similar to Alternatives A, C, and E.

#### **4.16.1.3. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS**

Unavoidable adverse impacts to relevant and important ACEC values would occur from surface disturbance associated with mineral development and OHV activity, depending upon the ACEC values and Proposed RMP or alternative.

#### **4.16.1.4. SHORT-TERM USES VERSUS LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY**

Any loss of ACEC values due to surface disturbances would remain throughout the life of the plan.

#### **4.16.1.5. IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE IMPACTS**

In those potential ACECs, not proposed for management of their relevant and important values under any of the alternatives, any loss of identified ACEC values that would result from surface disturbance caused by mineral development, OHV use, or other development, would be irretrievable. It is not anticipated that any impacts would be irreversible.

### **4.16.2. WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS**

#### **4.16.2.1. IMPACTS COMMON TO THE PROPOSED RMP AND ALL ALTERNATIVES**

Under the Proposed RMP and all of the alternatives, segments of the Upper Green and Lower Green River would continue to be recommended to Congress as suitable and managed to protect the outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing water, and tentative classifications of these segments, subject to valid existing rights.

In the Proposed RMP and all alternatives where eligible rivers would be determined suitable, the BLM would protect the outstandingly remarkable values, tentative classification, and free-flowing water of these rivers to the extent of its authority, which is limited to those portions of the segment where BLM manages the shoreline or other lands within the corridor, and is subject to valid existing rights. The free-flowing character of eligible river segments would be protected to the extent that modifications such as stream impoundments, channelization, and/or rip-rapping would not be permitted along BLM shorelines. However, depending upon the alternative, values may be at risk from potential mineral development, OHV activity, or other surface-disturbing activities. Unless public land is somehow involved in a proposed land use, BLM has no control of potential modifications of the shoreline or other development (including development related to the perfection of water rights) on non-public lands. Because of this factor, there would be no affect on the Colorado River Compact from protective management of eligible/suitable segments.

Under the Alternative D (No Action), a suitability determination would not be made, and BLM would continue to manage some of the eligible river segments to protect their outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing water, and tentative classification to the extent of its authority as identified above, consistent with existing land use plan decisions and subject to valid existing rights. In the case of those river segments that were reviewed and determined unsuitable in the Diamond Mountain RMP, that decision would remain in effect.

For those river segments that would not be recommended suitable for wild and scenic river designation under the Proposed RMP and all alternatives, many other prescriptions of the Proposed RMP and alternatives would still afford protection to the river corridor, free-flowing water, and river values. For example, surface disturbance restrictions in riparian zones and floodplains would protect river shoreline and water quality. Actions proposed to protect riparian obligate and aquatic wildlife species and their habitat would protect river values. Vegetation treatments implemented to restore riparian and upland vegetation communities would enhance watershed health, water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, and recreation settings and experiences. However, varying degrees of construction, development, and use would be allowed in these river corridors, including recreation development, motorized travel, and placement of utility lines and facilities. These actions would result in some level of surface disturbance and development that could alter "wild" or "scenic" classifications.

Refer to Table 4.16.2 for a listing of river segments and total river miles that would be determined suitable by alternative.

**Table 4.16.2. River Segments That Would Be Determined Suitable and Total River Miles by Alternative**

| River/River Segment   | Proposed RMP (river miles) | Alternative A (river miles) | Alternative B (river miles) | Alternative C (river miles) | Alternative D (No Action) (river miles) <sup>1</sup> | Alternative E (river miles) |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| White River "scenic" between the state line and its confluence with Asphalt Wash (Segment 1)            | 0                          | 24                          | 0                           | 24                          | 0  | 2                           |
| White River "wild" between Asphalt Wash to where the river leaves Section 18 T10S R23E SLBM (Segment 2) | 0                          | 10                          | 0                           | 10                          | 0  | 10                          |

**Table 4.16.2. River Segments That Would Be Determined Suitable and Total River Miles by Alternative**

| River/River Segment   | Proposed RMP (river miles) | Alternative A (river miles) | Alternative B (river miles) | Alternative C (river miles) | Alternative D (No Action) (river miles) <sup>1</sup> | Alternative E (river miles) |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| White River "scenic" from where the river leaves Section 18 T10S R23E SLBM, and the Indian Trust land boundary (Segment 3)            | 0                          | 0                           | 0                           | 10                          | 0  | 10                          |
| Nine Mile Creek "scenic" within Duchesne County between the Green River and the Duchesne County Line (Segment A)                      | 0                          | 0                           | 0                           | 13                          | 0  | 13                          |
| Nine Mile Creek "recreational" within Duchesne County, between the Carbon county line and its confluence with Gate Canyon (Segment B) | 0                          | 0                           | 0                           | 6                           | 0  | 6                           |
| Upper Green River   | 22                         | 22                          | 22                          | 22                          | 22   | 22                          |
| Lower Green River   | 30                         | 30                          | 30                          | 30                          | 30   | 30                          |
| Middle Green River  | 0                          | 0                           | 0                           | 36                          | 0  | 36                          |
| Evacuation Creek  | 0                          | 0                           | 0                           | 21                          | 0  | 21                          |
| Bitter Creek  | 0                          | 0                           | 0                           | 22                          | 0  | 22                          |
| Argyle Creek  | 0                          | 0                           | 0                           | 22                          | 0  | 22                          |
| <b>Total River Miles</b>  | <b>52</b>                  | <b>86</b>                   | <b>52</b>                   | <b>216</b>                  | <b>52</b>  | <b>192</b>                  |
| <b>Total BLM Shoreline Miles</b>  | <b>39</b>                  | <b>57</b>                   | <b>39</b>                   | <b>112</b>                  | <b>39</b>  | <b>104</b>                  |

**Table 4.16.2. River Segments That Would Be Determined Suitable and Total River Miles by Alternative**

| River/River Segment | Proposed RMP (river miles) | Alternative A (river miles) | Alternative B (river miles) | Alternative C (river miles) | Alternative D (No Action) (river miles) <sup>1</sup> | Alternative E (river miles) |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|

<sup>1</sup> In addition, 87 miles of river involving the White River (Segments 1, 2, and 3), Evacuation Creek, and Bitter Creek would remain eligible with this alternative.

<sup>2</sup> Alternative E would not recommend Segment A suitable, but would manage and protect the segment as eligible pending completion of a review of the permit for dam construction.

Note: Mileage is approximate.

#### 4.16.2.2. ALTERNATIVE IMPACTS

##### 4.16.2.2.1. PROPOSED RMP AND ALTERNATIVE B

Under the Proposed RMP and Alternative B, 52 river miles (39 miles of BLM shoreline) would be recommended suitable for designation into the National Wild and Scenic River System. The Green River (Upper and Lower Segments) would be determined suitable for designation into the National Wild and Scenic River System (see Table 4.16.2) with a tentative classification of "Scenic" for both river segments. Where BLM manages the shoreline or other lands within the river corridors, BLM would protect the outstandingly remarkable values (unique natural, scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife and cultural values), tentative classification, and free-flowing nature of these rivers. Because other resource allocations would be consistent with management of the rivers' suitability, the Proposed RMP and Alternative B would provide greater protection to outstanding remarkable values than would the Alternative D (No Action). Under the Proposed RMP and Alternative B, a mineral withdrawal would be pursued to prevent mineral entry and related surface disturbance, and therefore protect the outstandingly remarkable values and tentative classification of the Upper Green River and the Lower Green River.

The Upper and Lower Green River would largely be protected from disturbance related to mineral development by either being closed to mineral leasing or by no surface occupancy stipulations.

Both suitable river segments would be in a limited or closed OHV category, with most of the segments limited to designated routes. River corridors would largely be protected from disturbance related to OHV activity. No loss of outstandingly remarkable values from OHV use would be anticipated during the life of the plan.

##### 4.16.2.2.2. ALTERNATIVE C

With Alternative C, 216 river miles (112 miles of BLM shoreline) including all 11 eligible river segments would be recommended suitable for designation into the National Wild and Scenic River System (see Table 4.16.2). Where BLM manages the shoreline or other lands within the river corridors, BLM would protect the outstandingly remarkable values (unique natural, scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife and cultural values), tentative classification, and free-flowing

nature of these rivers. Overall, this alternative would provide the greatest protection to the outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing nature and tentative classification of these segments. However, where mineral development would be allowed (on valid existing leases) with standard stipulations or timing and controlled surface use, or where other mineral development would be allowed within the corridor of Evacuation Creek, White River (Segments 1 and 3), Middle Green River, and Nine Mile Creek, segment B (on valid existing leases), the outstandingly remarkable values of these rivers would be at risk. The White River and Evacuation Creek segments are most at risk as they are within an area of foreseeable mineral development.

The proposed locatable mineral withdrawals would also be protective of the outstandingly remarkable values of the Upper Green River, the White River (Segment 2), and the Lower Green River. With this alternative, public access (which may involve easement or exchange and improvement of existing routes) would be pursued for Segment 1 of the White River at the mouth of Cowboy Canyon, Bonanza Bridge, and Wagon Hound Road. This would enhance access to the river corridor and this segment's recreational values, and would not affect the other outstandingly remarkable values. It would not affect the free-flowing nature of the river, and would be in keeping with the tentative classification of scenic.

The suitability recommendation for Segment 1 of the White River would result in the discontinuance of the existing permit for the dam site. Accordingly, the free-flowing nature of Segment 1 would be maintained.

Not grazing the lands acquired along Nine Mile Creek would limit surface disturbance caused by livestock grazing and protect the outstandingly remarkable cultural and scenic values, and would enhance water quality of the segment.

Overall, this alternative would provide the greatest protection to the outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing nature of the rivers, and tentative classification of all the suitable segments. The Upper and Lower Green River, the White River (Segments 1 and 2), Nine Mile Creek (Segment A), and Bitter Creek, would largely be protected from surface disturbance related to mineral development by either being closed to mineral leasing or by no surface occupancy stipulations. However, where mineral development would be allowed (on valid existing leases) with standard stipulations or timing and controlled surface use, or where other mineral development would be allowed within the corridor of Evacuation Creek, White River (Segments 1 and 3), and Nine Mile Creek, segment B (on valid existing leases), the outstandingly remarkable values of these rivers would be at risk. The White River and Evacuation Creek segments are most at risk as they are within an area of foreseeable mineral development.

All suitable river segments would be in a limited or closed OHV category, with most of the segments closed. This alternative would best protect these river corridors from surface disturbance and the presence and noise related to OHV activity. No loss of outstandingly remarkable values from OHV use would be anticipated during the life of the plan. The closed category for Segment 2 of the White River would be consistent with the tentative classification of wild.

**4.16.2.2.3. ALTERNATIVE A**

With Alternative A, 86 river miles (57 miles of BLM shoreline) involving four eligible river segments would be recommended suitable for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System (see Table 4.16.2). Under this alternative, the Upper and Lower Green Rivers and segments 1 and 2 of the White River would be recommended suitable for designation as wild and scenic rivers. The alternative would result in the same management prescription and resultant impacts to the outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing water, and tentative classification of these four river segments as described for these segments under Alternative C above.

**4.16.2.2.4. ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION)**

With Alternative D, the recommended suitable Upper and Lower Green River (see Table 4.16.2) segments, involving 52 river miles (39 miles of BLM shoreline), would remain suitable, and be managed so as to protect their outstandingly remarkable values, tentative classification, and free-flowing nature. Although suitability recommendations would not be made for the other eligible rivers under this alternative, non-suitable recommendations made for Nine Mile Creek, Argyle Creek, and Middle Green River in the Diamond Mountain RMP would continue with this alternative. However, in keeping with BLM Manual 8351, Sections .32C and .33C, the White River (Segments 1, 2, and 3) Evacuation Creek, and Bitter Creek would remain eligible with this alternative and, where BLM manages the shoreline or other lands within the river corridors, they would be managed in a manner that would protect their outstandingly remarkable values, tentative classification, and free-flowing water until such time as suitability findings are made. Approximately 87 river miles (34 miles of BLM shoreline) would be involved.

However, protective management would be restricted by other decisions made in the Diamond Mountain RMP. Where mineral development would be allowed on valid existing leases with standard stipulations or timing and controlled surface use, or where other mineral development would be allowed in the corridors of the Middle Green River, Bitter Creek, Nine Mile Creek, White River Segments 1 and 3, Argyle Creek, and Evacuation Creek (on valid existing leases), the outstandingly remarkable values of these rivers would be at risk. Segments 1 and 3 of the White River Corridor would be most at risk because they are in an area of foreseeable mineral development, and Segment 1 has been identified for a potential dam site. Also, river corridors which would remain in an open category for OHV use would also be at risk from increased surface disturbance.

A locatable mineral withdrawal or other protective measures would be pursued that would preclude mineral entry and agricultural entry within the corridors of the Upper Green River, and the lower Green River. This withdrawal would prevent surface disturbance that would degrade the outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing nature of the rivers, and eligible classification of these river segments.

Under this alternative, the continued eligibility decision for Segment 1 of the White River would be incompatible with the existing permit for the dam site. Because this permit would continue under this alternative, the free-flowing nature of Segment 1 would not be maintained and this segment would no longer be eligible for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

#### **4.16.2.2.5. ALTERNATIVE E**

Under Alternative E, 192 river miles (104 miles of BLM shoreline) including all 11 eligible river segments would be recommended suitable for designation as wild and scenic rivers. (see Table 4.16.2 above). The only difference between this alternative and Alternative C is the exclusion of White River segment 1. This segment of the White River would not be recommended suitable for designation, pending completion of a review of the permit for dam construction. In the interim, the segment would remain eligible and managed to protect its river values. Thus the management prescription and resultant impact to wild and scenic river values would be the same for all 11 rivers as described under Alternative C above.

In addition, under this alternative, non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics in the river corridors would be managed to protect those characteristics, and, where suitable wild and scenic river segments include portions of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, additional protections would result from the protective management prescriptions. Portions of the White River non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics are located in the White River wild and scenic river corridor. Portions of Desolation Canyon non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics are in the Nine Mile Creek corridor. Parts of the Bitter Creek, Rat Hole Ridge, Cripple Cowboy, and Hell's Hole Canyon non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics are located in the Bitter Creek corridor. Parts of Lower Flaming Gorge non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics are in the Upper Green River corridor, and portions of Desolation Canyon non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics are located in the Lower Green River corridor.

To protect their wilderness characteristics, the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be closed to OHV use, oil and gas leasing, mineral material sales, wood cutting, and road construction. The non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be ROW avoidance areas. VRM Class I objectives would protect the natural characteristics from change in each of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. For those portions of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics located in suitable wild and scenic river corridors, this prescription would prevent surface disturbances that would have adverse impacts on the outstanding natural, scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife, and cultural values; tentative classification; and free-flowing nature of these rivers.

#### **4.16.2.3. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS**

Unavoidable adverse impacts to outstandingly remarkable river values, the free-flowing condition of the rivers, and their tentative classification would occur from mineral development and OHV activity, depending upon the river segment and Proposed RMP or alternative.

#### **4.16.2.4. SHORT-TERM USES VERSUS LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY**

Any loss of river values due to surface disturbances or alteration of the free-flowing nature of the rivers would remain throughout the life of the plan.

#### 4.16.2.5. IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE IMPACTS

Any loss of outstandingly remarkable values of eligible or recommended suitable river segments that would result from mineral development would be irretrievable. No irreversible impacts are anticipated under the Proposed RMP or any alternative.

#### 4.16.3. WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS (WSAs)

Wilderness study areas (WSAs) are managed under the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review (IMP) (BLM 1995) which directs the BLM to manage the areas so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness. This management policy applies to all uses and activities in WSAs but acknowledges those uses specifically exempted from this standard by FLPMA (such as grandfathered uses) and valid existing rights. Because of this protective standard, there would be no impacts to the wilderness characteristics of the WSAs from implementation of the Proposed RMP or any alternative except in areas with existing valid rights. The only area where valid existing rights are expected to impact the wilderness values is in the Winter Ridge WSA.

The Winter Ridge WSA (42,462 acres) is located in an area high oil and gas development potential (Mineral Potential Report, BLM 2002), with a demonstrated exploration and production history. About 25% of the lands in the WSA are currently under lease. Although, WSAs are closed to leasing, the IMP does recognize valid existing rights. Under the Proposed RMP and all alternatives, it is anticipated that the leaseholder(s) would exercise their rights under these leases to explore and develop oil and gas resources. The resulting surface disturbance (i.e., roads, well pads, pipelines) would degrade the natural characteristics on as much as 33% of the WSA. The presence and noise of people, vehicles, and equipment would also diminish opportunities for solitude and conflict with primitive recreational activities. Through the exercise of valid existing rights, it is anticipated that approximately 13,832 acres of the WSA would lose its wilderness characteristics.

Under the Proposed RMP and Alternatives A, B, C, and E, each WSA would be managed under VRM Class I objectives. This objective provides for preservation of the characteristic landscape and would preserve the natural characteristics of the WSAs. Preservation of an undeveloped landscape (the natural values) would also provide the setting needed to support outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreational activities.

Under the Proposed RMP and alternatives motorized use is either limited to designated "ways" or closed to all motorized use, depending on the WSA and alternative, and consistent with the IMP. In WSAs where motorized travel is permitted on designated routes, there would be no additional surface disturbance to the natural characteristics of the WSAs. However, the presence and noise of vehicles would temporarily disrupt opportunities for solitude and conflict with primitive forms of recreation. In WSAs where existing "ways" would be closed to motorized travel, there would be no added surface disturbance that would degrade the natural characteristics of the WSA and no conflicts with opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation activities.

**4.16.3.1. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS**

Because of the anticipated exercise of valid existing rights on existing oil and gas leases in the Winter Ridge WSA, 13,832 acres of the WSA would lose its wilderness characteristics resulting from surface disturbance created by exploration and development. While mitigation measures would be employed to reduce the effects on the wilderness values of the WSA, the leaseholder(s) have the right to develop the lease(s), and that development would degrade the wilderness values of the WSA. That impact cannot be avoided.

**4.16.3.2. SHORT-TERM USES VERSUS LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY**

The loss of wilderness values of Winter Ridge WSA is expected to remain for 25–30 years, the average life of a producing well, plus time for reclamation.

**4.16.3.3. IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE IMPACTS**

Any loss of wilderness characteristics that would result from mineral development would be irretrievable, but not irreversible. At the end of the production life of the well, the site would be reclaimed, and the natural characteristics of the land would return.