

Name: **Courthouse Butte WY-030-15N94W27-2012**

FORM 1

Documentation of BLM Wilderness Inventory Findings on Record

1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area?

No X Yes _____ (if yes, and if more than one area is within the area, list the names of those areas):

a) Inventory Source: _____

b) Inventory Area Name(s)/Number(s): _____

c) Map Name(s)/Number(s): _____

d) BLM District (s)/Field Office(s): _____

2. BLM Inventory Finds on Record:

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics (if more than one BLM inventory area is associated with the area, list each area and answer each question individually for each inventory area):

Inventory Source:

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

a. Area Number/Name **Courthouse Butte WY-030-15N94W27-2012** Acreage 5257.16

(1) Is the area of sufficient size?

Yes No

Describe the boundaries of the area (roads, property lines, etc.). If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception. If more than one inventory area is involved, list the acres in each and evaluate each area/sub-area separately. In completing steps (1) – (5), use additional space as necessary.

The unit is triangular. The unit is bound on the northwest by the CIG Natural Gas Pipelines Designated Right-of-Way Corridor (Rawlins Resource Management Plan, Appendix 34). The unit is bound to the north by a 50 foot wide pipeline disturbance with Rawlins Field Office right-of-way number WYW-149847. The unit is bound to the northeast by a 50 foot wide pipeline disturbance with Rawlins Field Office rights-of-way numbers WYW-149847, WYW-166478, WYW-134745 and WYW-164091. The unit is bound to the south by a series of Class 3 Light Duty Roads with aggregate surface maintained by industry with Rawlins Field Offices rights-of-way numbers WYW-122499, WYW-117947, WYW-81384, WYW-148147, *et al.* The unit is also bound to the south by a 50 foot wide pipeline disturbance with Rawlins Field Office rights-of-way numbers WYW-147535, WYW-130923 and WYW-123061.

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS: The Courthouse Butte area under consideration is 5,257.16 acres of BLM public land. It is located within the following townships: 6th P.M., T. 15 N., R. 93 W., Sections 30-31; and T. 15 N., R. 94 W., Sections 14-15, 21-23, 24-29, and 32-36. The terrain consists mainly of a long drainage leading to Willow Creek on the west, South Barrel Springs Draw on the east, and Courthouse Butte near the center of the unit. The elevation ranges from 7,100 feet at the highest point of Courthouse Butte, to 6,600 feet where long drainage leading to Willow Creek leaves the unit in T. 15 N., R. 94 W., Section 32. The dominant vegetation cover is sagebrush-grassland. The primary land uses are for oil & gas exploration and livestock grazing. There are two natural gas well pads within the unit and two access roads, maintained by mechanized equipment, which extend into the unit. Among range improvements, there are two fences, one of which crosses the area, and two small ponds. The area also contains a number of unimproved two-track trails accessible only by 4wd. The primary, dispersed recreational activity in the area is hunting.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes No N/A

Description: The 25.41 miles of primitive routes (i.e., unimproved roads and two-track trails) and .28 miles of wilderness inventory roads (i.e., well roads) detract from the unit's naturalness. Examples of these primitive routes are demonstrated in photos 1-10 and 13-15. When hiking across the Courthouse Butte Unit, the casual observer cannot escape the constant view of primitive routes. These primitive routes create noticeable linear intrusions and disturbances that interrupt the experience of any wilderness character briefly encountered in areas untrammelled by the works of man.

The area contains two oil and gas wells throughout the Courthouse Butte Unit (see locations in the large-scale aerial photo). These oil and gas installations within the unit represent permanent improvements and loss of primeval character. The status of these two oil and gas wells is flowing. These wells remain as existing installations that detract from the naturalness and are substantially noticeable to the casual observer while hiking through the unit. All wells, which are not abandoned, are managed as active wells and receive commercial vehicle traffic for periodic maintenance. This traffic would interrupt the casual observer's experience of wilderness character due to road dust plumes and the contrast between the white coloration of these vehicles moving across the tan, brown, and olive landscape. Well pads do not receive final reclamation approval until they have been plugged and abandoned. Visual contrasts created by surface disturbances, including well pad turn-arounds, soil exposure around the facilities, and a rectangular area of wheat grass, remain until final reclamation is established.

The Courthouse Butte Unit also contains three substantially noticeable man-made reservoirs. When the casual observer encounters these reservoirs, the linear and textural contrast on the landscape attracts the attention of the observer to this obvious man-made modification constructed with mechanized equipment.

The casual observer is often attracted to bodies of water while hiking. Water adds interest and diversity to the landscape. When arriving at each of the three reservoirs, the casual observer would notice that it is not a natural lake and that they have encountered an impounded, muddy borrow pit. The hiker seeking refreshment from clean water, would quickly notice that this "reservoir" is designed for cattle operations where the water is unfit for human consumption or swimming. The casual observer would encounter a similar experience when seeking to replenish water supplies from wells and reservoirs within this unit. The numerous range improvements, including two fences, one water well, and three reservoirs, were constructed, primarily, for commercial grazing operations giving the casual observer a perception that they are visitors to a cattle range rather than a wilderness untrammelled by the works of man. While the presence of cattle is compatible with a natural landscape for wilderness inventory purposes, the noticeable presence of numerous grazing-related developments in this unit is not.

In sum, the cumulative impacts on naturalness including the numerous oil and gas wells, primitive routes and permanent range improvements have impaired the naturalness in the Courthouse Butte Unit to a level that is incompatible with the definitions of wilderness provided in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (incorporated in FLPMA 1976):

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

(3) Does the area or the remainder of the area (if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

Yes No N/A

Description:

(4) Does the area or the remainder of the area (if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?

Yes No N/A

Description:

(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational scenic or historical value)?

Yes No N/A

Description:

Summary of Analysis

Area Name and/or Number: Courthouse Butte WY-030-15N94W27-2012

Summary

Results of analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? Yes No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? Yes No N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities of solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? Yes No N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? Yes No N/A

Check one:

_____ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC).

___X___ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

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