

Name: **The Bluffs Central WY-030-14N92W25-2012, a subunit of Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408**

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 _____ Yes (if yes, and if more than one area is within the area, list the names of those areas):

a) **Inventory Source:** _____ Wild Horse Basin _____

b) **Inventory Area Name(s)/Number(s):** _____ Wild Horse Initial Inventory _____

c) **Map Name(s)/Number(s):** _____ Wild Horse Basin; WY-030-048 _____

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

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:

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Area #/Name	Sufficient Size? Yes/No (acres)	Naturalness? Yes/No	Outstanding Solitude? Yes/No	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Yes/No	Supplemental Values? Yes/No
Wild Horse Basin WYW-030-408	Yes (375,000 acres)	No	No	No	No

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

a. Area Number/Name **The Bluffs Central WY-030-14N92W25-2012, a subunit of Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408** Acreage 7524.59

(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 bound on the east by Highway 789 and a right-of-way corridor which includes a 50 foot wide pipeline disturbance and a transmission line with Rawlins Field Office numbers WYW-77885, WYW-75999, and WYW-136480. The unit is bound to the south by BLM Road 3318, a.k.a. Shell Creek Truck Trail. The unit is bound to the west and north by a series of Class 3 Light Duty Road with aggregate surface maintained by industry with several Rawlins Field Office rights-of-way such as WYW-123033 and WYW-129347.

See also **The Bluffs Outlier WY-030-13N91W5-2012, a subunit of Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408.**

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS: (Include acreage, land ownership, location, topography, vegetation and summary of the major human uses/activities)

The Bluffs Central area under consideration is 7,524.59 acres of BLM public land. It is located within the following townships: 6th P.M., T. 13 N., R. 91 W., Sections 4-7; T. 14 N., R. 91 W., Sections 18-19 and 29-32; T. 13 N., R. 92 W., Sections 1-2 and 11-13; and T. 14 N., R 92 W., Sections 13-14, 23-26, and 34-35. There is one 640 acre inholding owned by the State of Wyoming in T. 14 N., R. 92 W., Section 36. The terrain consists mainly of the main stem and North Fork of Cottonwood Creek, Streckfus Draw, and The Bluffs, which is a large rim at the east end of the unit overlooking Wyoming State Highway 789. The elevation ranges from 6,818 feet at the highest point of The Bluffs in T. 14 N., R. 91 W., Section 31, to 6,360 feet where Cottonwood Creek leaves the area in T. 13 N., R. 91 W., Section 5. The dominant vegetation cover is sagebrush-grassland. The primary land uses are for oil & gas exploration and livestock grazing. There is one natural gas well pad within the unit and one access road, maintained by mechanized equipment, which extends into the unit. Among range improvements, there are two fences, one of which crosses the area, four dams which create small reservoirs, and one other small pond spread throughout the area. The area also contains a number of unimproved two-track trails accessible only by 4wd vehicles. The primary, dispersed recreational activities in the area are hunting.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes No N/A

Description: The 36.99 miles of primitive routes (i.e., unimproved roads and two-track trails) and .46 miles of wilderness inventory roads (i.e., well roads) detract from the unit's naturalness. Examples of these primitive routes are demonstrated in the large-scale aerial photo. When hiking across the Bluffs Central 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 seven oil and gas wells throughout the Bluffs Central 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. When examining the status of the oil and gas wells, one of these wells has an expired permit, one well is flowing, and five are permanently abandoned. Despite the variation in status, 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 Bluffs Central Unit also contains five man-made reservoirs (see locations in the large-scale aerial photo). When the casual observer encounters these man-made borrow pits and impounded reservoirs, the linear and textual contrast on the landscape attracts the attention of the observer to these modifications 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 any of the five 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 numerous range improvements, including five reservoirs and one fence, were constructed, primarily, for commercial grazing operations. These improvements give 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 wilderness inventory roads, and permanent range improvements have

impaired the naturalness in the Bluffs Central 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: The Bluffs Central WY-030-14N92W25-2012

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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