1991

Wyoming Wilderness Study Report Statewide Overview

United States Bureau of Land Management

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The following are the wilderness recommendations for 42 wilderness study areas (WSAs) in the State of Wyoming. These recommendations were developed from the findings of a 15-year wilderness study process by the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Land Management. The wilderness studies considered each area's resource values, present and projected future uses of the areas, public input, the manageability of the areas as wilderness, the environmental consequences of designating or not designating the areas as wilderness, and mineral surveys prepared by the U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines.

Based on our review of those studies, I have concluded that 240,364 acres within 21 study areas should be designated as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System and that 337,140 acres within 30 study areas should be released from wilderness study for uses other than wilderness. The acreage recommendations for each WSA, with which I concur, are listed in the following table. The Wilderness Study Report accompanying this decision includes a detailed discussion of the recommendations and maps showing the boundaries of each area.
## WYOMING WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WSA Name</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>WSA Number</th>
<th>Area Recommended for Wilderness</th>
<th>Area Recommended for Non-Wilderness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Owl Creek</td>
<td>Grass Creek/Cody</td>
<td>WY-010-104</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Bobcat Draw Badlands</td>
<td>Grass Creek/Cody</td>
<td>WY-010-126</td>
<td>16,540</td>
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<td>Sheep Mountain</td>
<td>Grass Creek/Cody</td>
<td>WY-010-130</td>
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<td>23,250</td>
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<td>Red Butte</td>
<td>Grass Creek/Cody</td>
<td>WY-010-131</td>
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<td>Honeymoons</td>
<td>Washakie</td>
<td>WY-010-221</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cedar Mountain</td>
<td>Washakie</td>
<td>WY-010-222</td>
<td>10,223</td>
<td>11,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine Lodge</td>
<td>Washakie</td>
<td>WY-010-240</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>4,140</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alkali Creek</td>
<td>Washakie</td>
<td>WY-010-241</td>
<td>8,187</td>
<td>1,913</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trapper Creek</td>
<td>Washakie</td>
<td>WY-010-242</td>
<td>7,200</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>McCullough Peaks</td>
<td>Grass Creek/Cody</td>
<td>WY-010-335</td>
<td>8,020</td>
<td>16,550</td>
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<td>Sweetwater Canyon</td>
<td>Lander</td>
<td>WY-030-101</td>
<td>5,538</td>
<td>3,518</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copper Mountain</td>
<td>Lander</td>
<td>WY-030-111</td>
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<td>Sweetwater Rocks</td>
<td>Lander</td>
<td>WY-030-121</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweetwater Rocks</td>
<td>Lander</td>
<td>WY-030-122</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12,789</td>
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<td>Sweetwater Rocks</td>
<td>Lander</td>
<td>WY-030-123A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7,041</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dubois Badlands</td>
<td>Dubois/Whiskey</td>
<td>WY-030-109</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,520</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whiskey Mountain</td>
<td>Dubois/Whiskey</td>
<td>WY-030-110</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>487</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ferris Mountains</td>
<td>Duboletown/Ferris</td>
<td>WY-030-407</td>
<td>22,245</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adobetown</td>
<td>Adobetown/Ferris</td>
<td>WY-030-408/</td>
<td>10,920</td>
<td>74,790</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encampment River</td>
<td>Great Divide</td>
<td>WY-030-301</td>
<td>4,547</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospect Mountain</td>
<td>Great Divide</td>
<td>WY-030-303</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennett Mountain</td>
<td>Great Divide</td>
<td>WY-030-304</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scab Creek</td>
<td>Scab Creek ISA</td>
<td>WY-040-101</td>
<td>7,636</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake Mountain</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-110</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond Mountain</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-221</td>
<td>32,938</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buffalo Hump</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-306</td>
<td>6,080</td>
<td>4,220</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sand Dunes</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-307</td>
<td>21,304</td>
<td>5,805</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alkali Draw</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-311</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Pinnacles</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-313</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alkali Basin/</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-316/317</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Sand Dunes</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-318</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,915</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Lake</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-321</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9,515</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honeycomb Buttes</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-323</td>
<td>37,287</td>
<td>3,901</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oregon Buttes</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-324</td>
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<td>Whitehorse Creek</td>
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<td>Devil's Playground/</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
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<td>Twin Buttes</td>
<td>Rock Springs</td>
<td>WY-040-406</td>
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<td>8,020</td>
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<td>Gardner Mountain</td>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>WY-060-201</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6,423</td>
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<td>North Fork</td>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>WY-060-202</td>
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<td>10,089</td>
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<td>Fortification Creek</td>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>WY-060-209</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12,419</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pryor Mountain</td>
<td>Billings</td>
<td>MT-067-206</td>
<td>4,352</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Big Horn Tack-On</td>
<td>Billings</td>
<td>MT-067-207</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td><strong>Statewide Totals</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>240,364</td>
<td>337,140</td>
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WILDERNESS STUDY OVERVIEW

WILDERNESS STUDY PROCESS

The BLM began the wilderness review in accordance with the requirements of Section 603(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) dated October 21, 1976. This Act mandated that within 15 years the BLM would inventory and study its lands for their wilderness suitability and that based on this review, the Secretary of Interior would forward his wilderness recommendations to the President.

Minimum standards for the evaluation of BLM-administered lands in Wyoming were set by Congress in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. These standards require an area to generally have at least 5,000 acres of land or is sufficiently large to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and may also contain ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historic value. In addition, each WSA was further evaluated for its multiple use value for other purposes such as mining, grazing or timber harvest. Guidelines were provided by the BLM wilderness study process (Federal Register, February 3, 1982). A summary of the findings for each WSA can be found in the summary analysis of study area recommendations.

THE STUDIES

The wilderness study report includes the recommendations and the rationale for those recommendations for 42 wilderness study areas (WSAs) in Wyoming. These WSAs were identified through the wilderness inventory process and analyzed in nine separate environmental impact statements (EIS). Map 1 shows the general location within the State of Wyoming for each of the nine studies. The final inventory decision for most Wyoming WSAs was made in May 1981. The inventory for some WSAs was accelerated to accommodate other resource needs and some inventory decisions were made following the resolution of the Sierra Club v. Watt lawsuit.

One additional study was completed in 1985 and sent to the Congress as part of a larger package of Instant Study Areas (ISAs). The ISA in Wyoming has received no action by the Congress and has been included in the Wilderness Study Report so that BLM's recommendations on wilderness designation may be viewed in their entirety.

The-nine studies are listed in Table 2. The BLM in Wyoming completed eight of the studies while the BLM in Montana completed one study. Studies listed in Table 1 display only the Wyoming acreage. The ISA in Wyoming is listed in Table 3.

TABLE 2

LIST OF WILDERNESS STUDIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Study</th>
<th>Draft EIS Filed</th>
<th>Final EIS Filed</th>
<th>Study Acreage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rock Springs District</td>
<td>September 1988</td>
<td>October 1990</td>
<td>224,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adobetown/Ferret</td>
<td>May 1983</td>
<td>January 1988</td>
<td>107,955</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grass Creek/Cody</td>
<td>July 1984</td>
<td>August 1990</td>
<td>77,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>August 1984</td>
<td>June 1986</td>
<td>28,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lander</td>
<td>January 1985</td>
<td>March 1990</td>
<td>48,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washakie</td>
<td>November 1986</td>
<td>November 1990</td>
<td>67,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Divide</td>
<td>January 1987</td>
<td>August 1990</td>
<td>11,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubois/Whiskey Mtn</td>
<td>September 1988</td>
<td>March 1990</td>
<td>5,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billings</td>
<td>April 1983</td>
<td>June 1988</td>
<td>4,705</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Includes ISA acreage.
2 Study primarily concerned WSAs in Montana.

TABLE 3

INSTANT STUDY AREA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Study</th>
<th>ISA Acreage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scab Creek</td>
<td>7,636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WYOMING STUDY Considerations

Wyoming's approach through the study process was to recommend wilderness designation for the WSAs where the overall wilderness quality is high and represents the best examples of ecosystems, landforms, or land offering special geological or scientific values within the State. These areas warrant permanent protection and inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This recommendation will:

- Establish 20 new wilderness units spanning a wide variety of Wyoming landforms, ecosytems, and other natural features.
- Improve the geographic distribution of wilderness areas and complement existing areas of Federal wilderness.
- Increase protection of nationwide ecosystem diversity.

At the same time, this recommendation will release all or parts of 30 WSAs having potential for mineral and energy resources, nonwildelessness recreation, timber harvest, and other land uses. The lands not recommended for wilderness also generally have lower wilderness values which would not enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) or were determined by BLM to be unmanageable as wilderness, due to land status or existing private rights in the area.

KEY STUDY ISSUES - MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

Impacts on Wilderness Values

The WSAs all have the minimum characteristics necessary to qualify for wilderness consideration. These areas are roadless, natural in condition, and possess either outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. Wilderness designation will ensure the protection of wilderness values in these areas. Nondesignation of the WSAs would, over the long term, allow uses such as mineral exploration and development, woodlands product sales, vegetative manipulation, and recreational off-road vehicle use, to degrade existing wilderness characteristics to a point where the areas would no longer qualify for wilderness consideration. Each of the nine studies considered the impact of designation or nondesignation on the wilderness values of each WSA.

Impacts on the Exploration for and Development of Mineral and Energy Resources

Lands designated as wilderness are withdrawn from mineral entry and leasing subject to rights associated with valid claims and leases existing at the time of designation. How wilderness designation would impact exploration for and development of mineral resources was an issue in seven of the nine studies. Many of the WSAs have the potential for undiscovered mineral resources. For some, this potential is low while for others a higher rating was assigned. The U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Bureau of Mines studied the mineral potential of 21 WSAs recommended all or partially suitable for wilderness.

Impacts on Recreational Off-Road Vehicle Use

Lands designated as wilderness would be closed to all motorized recreational off-road vehicle use. During the inventory process, WSA boundaries were drawn to exclude constructed and maintained roads. This issue's primary focus relates to vehicle use on four-wheel drive trails and cross-country vehicle travel. The impact of wilderness designation on ORV use was an issue in seven studies. In general, all studies concluded that while some ORV use would be displaced, this use could...
easily be absorbed by and recommended on other public lands in Wyoming with negligible impacts.

**Impacts on Grazing Management**

The ability of BLM and its permittees to manage existing and construct new grazing facilities, and to manage livestock was an issue in six studies. One study analyzed the impacts of wilderness designation on the ranching operations on adjacent private land. Both Congressional direction and BLM policy allow the continuation of existing grazing use in designated wilderness. Therefore, facilities required for the management of grazing use will remain in those areas designated wilderness. New improvements may be allowed to improve livestock management or to aid in the management of wilderness value. The studies concluded that existing facilities would not be impacted and new facilities in some cases may be appropriate, although controls on access and the scheduling and type of maintenance would be determined through wilderness management plans for specific areas.

**Impacts on Timber Harvest**

Wilderness designation would close the designated lands to the sale and harvest of commercial timber, fuelwood, and posts and poles. Most studies concluded that a certain amount of timber harvest would be foregone. However, in almost all cases, the amount of harvest foregone was not significant and would not significantly affect local economies.

**Impacts on Wildlife Management**

There are many species of fish and wildlife inhabiting WSA's in Wyoming, including Colorado Cutthroat Trout, antelope, mule deer, moose, elk, bighorn sheep, and a variety of birds of prey. Wilderness designation generally could help preserve and protect the habitats of these species, while nondesignation may lead to other resource uses that could be detrimental to the habitat. However, in some instances, the wildlife management actions required to preserve/enhance wildlife and fish populations would be precluded by wilderness designation or nondesignation on the wildlife habitat in the WSA's.

**Impacts on Water Quality**

Several WSA's in Wyoming contain all or portions of highly erodible watersheds. Wilderness designation would significantly reduce the threat of surface-disturbing activities, but could also limit BLM's ability to take erosion control measures. Four studies analyzed the impact of designation or nondesignation on water quality.

**OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION RELATING TO THE WYOMING STATEWIDE RECOMMENDATION**

The Billings (Montana) study contains study areas which cross into Wyoming. Each state's recommendation will contain the same WSA-specific analysis for the cross-border WSA's to provide continuity and clarity. The acres in the WSA's split between Wyoming and Montana are being reported in their respective state's packages and are split between the reporting state's draft legislation.

Each of the nine study efforts considered the plans and policies of Federal, State, and local governments, and Indian tribes to identify any conflicts with the proposed actions in the wilderness EISs. Although some local governments disagreed with BLM's recommendations to designate areas as wilderness, the Environmental Protection Agency supported all wilderness to ensure environmental protection, no direct conflicts with other agency land use plans was discovered.

Appendix 1 of the study report is a table showing the inholdings in several of the WSA's that are recommended suitable for wilderness designation. These inholdings are either State land, where the State owns both the surface and mineral estate; split estate where the State owns the minerals and BLM owns the surface; or the inholding is private land.

Appendix 2 of the report contains a summary of the two-volume wilderness suitability study report for the Scab Creek ISA. This document details the recommendation and rationale for Wyoming BLM's only ISA. Originately designated as a "primitive area" in 1975, Scab Creek was one of several natural or primitive areas throughout BLM that became ISAs by virtue of Section 603(a) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). This section of FLPMA directed the Secretary of the Interior to report wilderness recommendations on natural and primitive areas to the President by July 1, 1980. Only one such unit - Scab Creek - existed in Wyoming. The draft suitability report and EIS for Scab Creek was released for public review in late 1980. The final Wilderness Study Report was released in 1984.

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE STUDIES**

A total of 1,693 comments, both oral and written, on the Wyoming WSA's were submitted during the formal comment period for the eight draft wilderness EISs listed below. Approximately 65 percent of the comments that were received, generally favored wilderness designation for some or all of the WSA's. About 30 percent of the comments generally opposed designation of any wilderness. Many comments (5%) did not express an opinion on wilderness designation.

Other Federal, State, and local agencies with an interest in or jurisdiction within the WSA's were asked to comment on each of the EIS's.

The total number of comments received on each of the eight study efforts is summarized in the following Table. Public comments are summarized in the Summary Analysis of WSA Recommendations for each WSA.

**TABLE 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Name</th>
<th>Draft Comment Period</th>
<th>Total Comments on Wilderness Issue</th>
<th>Final EIS Released</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adobetown/Ferris</td>
<td>May-July 1983</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Jan. 1988</td>
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</table>
Wilderness Study Areas in Wyoming

A - Grass Creek/Cody Wilderness EIS
  1. Owl Creek
  2. Bobcat Draw Badlands
  3. Sheep Mountain
  4. Red Butte
  5. McCullough Peaks

B - Washakie Wilderness EIS
  6. Honeycombs
  7. Cedar Mountain
  8. Medicine Lodge
  9. Alkali Creek
  10. Trapper Creek

C - Whiskey Mountain- Dubois Badlands Wilderness EIS
  11. Whiskey Mountain
  12. Dubois Badlands

D - Lander Wilderness EIS
  13. Sweetwater Canyon
  14. Copper Mountain
  15. Sweetwater Rocks (4 Areas)

E - Adobe Town-Ferris Mountains Wilderness EIS
  16. Adobe Town
  17. Ferris Mountains

F - Scab Creek Wilderness EIS
  18. Scab Creek

G - Great Divide Wilderness EIS
  19. Encampment River Canyon
  20. Prospect Mountain
  21. Bennett Mountain

H - Rock Springs Wilderness EIS
  22. Lake Mountain
  23. Raymond Mountain
  24. Buffalo Hump
  25. Sand Dunes
  26. Alkali Draw
  27. South Pinnacles
  28. Alkali Basin/East Sand Dunes
  29. Red Lake
  30. Honeycomb Buttes
  31. Oregon Buttes
  32. Whiskey Creek
  33. Devil's Playground/Twin Buttes
  34. Red Creek Badlands

I - Buffalo Wilderness EIS
  35. Gardner Mountain
  36. North Fork
  37. Fortification Creek

J - Billings Wilderness EIS
  38. Pryor Mountain
  39. Bighorn Tack-on