

# Mount Ellen-Blue Hills

## Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
<b>With Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
32,600	7,840	40,440 (53%)
<b>Without Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
32,800	4,100	36,900 (47%)
<b>Inventory Unit Total</b>		
65,400	11,940	77,340
<b>Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
Mount Ellen-Blue Hills WSA (UT-050-238)		81,726

About 40,440 acres of the five Mount Ellen-Blue Hills inventory units have wilderness characteristics, while about 36,900 acres lack wilderness characteristics because of intrusions that have affected naturalness. The units are contiguous to and are an extension of the Mount Ellen-Blue Hills Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The units' diverse terrain, steep slopes, isolated basins, dense forest, and barren alpine ridge tops all contribute to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. A road in Unit 3 and a forked road in Unit 5 have been cherry-stemmed from the unit.

## Unit Description

The Mount Ellen-Blue Hills inventory units are in south-central Wayne County and northeastern Garfield County, about 10 miles southwest of Hanksville and 2 miles east of Capitol Reef National Park. The units are scattered around the edges of the Mount Ellen-Blue Hills WSA.

Extreme variations in terrain, elevation, climate, and vegetation exist among these units. The units include part of the ridge

just south of Mount Ellen Peak (11,508 feet), which supports alpine tundra vegetation. Montane communities and piñon and juniper woodlands are represented at the middle and lower elevations. There is a portion of badlands to the west, north, and east. Riparian vegetation is found along the Fremont River at 4,400-foot elevations.

The higher peaks and ridges offer sweeping scenic panoramas, and the mountain slopes provide important bison habitat. The viewing and hunting of bison is a major recreation activity in the Henry Mountains.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### Naturalness

A large portion of the units is natural, with any human imprints being substantially unnoticeable. However, almost half of the inventory area is unnatural in appearance. Intrusions consist primarily of scattered roads, vehicle ways, and live-stock reservoirs located along the outside edges of the units. Because of numerous roads, vehicle ways, a water pipeline, stock watering troughs, and range developments, natural character has been lost in the area east of the WSA and adjacent to Blue Valley Benches. The concentration of mining and range developments along Oak Creek Ridge and west of Sandy Creek has resulted in portions of these units losing their naturalness.

## Outstanding Opportunities

### Solitude

The units are contiguous to and an extension of the Mount Ellen-Blue Hills

WSA, which has outstanding opportunities for solitude. The unit's diverse rugged terrain, steep slopes, isolated basins, isolated ridge lines, and dense forest are features that augment these opportunities.

## Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The units are contiguous to and an extension of the Mount Ellen-Blue Hills WSA which has outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. There are abundant opportunities for sightseeing, day hiking, photography, backpacking, geological study, and wildlife observation. Resources in these units have been written about in guidebooks and recognized through the Watchable Wildlife and National Back Country Byway programs. When considered in conjunction with other lands in the Henry Mountains, these units offer excellent opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

## Supplemental Values

The Henry Mountains are considered by geologists to be an outstanding example of igneous intrusions that have deformed their host sedimentary formations. This area yields excellent mineral specimens sought by mineralogists. Portions of the units serve as a summer range for the largest free-roaming bison herd in Utah. People travel from around the world to the Henry Mountains to catch a glimpse of this herd. With the discovery of bristlecone pine in 1973, the Henry Mountains are now considered to be the southeast range limit for the Great Basin variety of bristlecone pine in North America.

### MOUNT ELLEN-BLUE HILLS—

Badlands within the unit near the Notom Road cutoff; Mount Ellen rises in the background, with Thompson Mesa in between.



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