

Horseshoe Canyon South

Findings

| INVENTORY UNIT ACRES | | |
|---|-------|--------------|
| Federal | State | Total |
| With Wilderness Characteristics | | |
| 19,800 | 5,300 | 25,100 (96%) |
| Without Wilderness Characteristics | | |
| 900 | 200 | 1,100 (4%) |
| Inventory Unit Total | | |
| 20,700 | 5,500 | 26,200 |
| Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics | | |
| Horseshoe Canyon (South) WSA (UT-050-237) | | 38,800 |
| Canyonlands National Park—Horseshoe Canyon Unit | | 3,000 |

Most of the four Horseshoe Canyon South inventory units (25,100 acres) have wilderness characteristics, although a portion of the units (1,100 acres) is not natural and lacks wilderness characteristics. Four roads have been cherry-stemmed from the units. The units have a diverse combination of incised sandstone canyons and rugged benchlands and include the headwaters and entire upper drainage of Horseshoe Canyon. All four units are contiguous to the Horseshoe Canyon (South) Wilderness Study Area (WSA). Some of the units are also contiguous to portions of Canyonlands National Park's Horseshoe Canyon Unit, which has been administratively endorsed for wilderness designation. In conjunction with these lands, the inventory units provide outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Portions of the inventory units are also contiguous to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. Overall, the inventory units augment and enhance the natural values of this remote and culturally significant region.

Unit Description

The Horseshoe Canyon South inventory units are adjacent to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and surround Canyonlands National Park's Horseshoe Canyon Unit on three sides. They are located in northeastern Wayne County about 40 miles south of the city of Green River and 25 miles east of Hanksville. The units comprise expansive benches, rims, and canyons. Horseshoe, Spur Fork, Moqui Fork, and Bluejohn Canyons are included. The units contain the spectacular sandstone headwater canyons of the culturally significant Barrier Creek (which flows through Horseshoe Canyon, the largest side canyon of the Green River's Labyrinth Canyon). Vegetation above the

canyon bottoms is predominantly sagebrush and blackbrush grasslands, with scattered stands of piñon and juniper at the higher elevations and along the canyon breaks. Riparian species in the canyons include Fremont cottonwood, willow, common reed grass, and tamarisk. Grazing use continues throughout most of the units, although many areas remain largely ungrazed because of a lack of access and limited reliable water sources. Mineral and petroleum exploration activities have long since ceased, but they did create most of the travel routes in the area.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Most of Unit 1 and all of Unit 2 have natural character. The breaks, benchlands, and grasslands located between the Antelope Valley and Hans Flat Roads and the rims of Horseshoe and Bluejohn Canyons have experienced few impacts on their naturalness. The rolling topography west of Horseshoe Canyon does contain some widely scattered old seismograph lines and range developments; however, the seismograph lines are generally screened by the vegetation and topography. Most have revegetated and are nearly obliterated in many locations by shifting and blowing sands and erosion. Virtually all of these intrusions, including those marked on USGS maps as four-wheel-drive trails, are unnoticeable and would disappear if vehicle use was restricted. In addition, most of the range developments are not intrusive. Buffalo Pond, a livestock reservoir in Unit 1, along with the mile-long vehicle way leading to it, have been cherry-stemmed from the unit. Within Unit 2, a mile-long road extending from the Hans Flat Road to a corral has been cherry-stemmed from the unit. However, human development has affected the natural character of a portion of Unit 1. A two-track fence access road and an obliterated, rerouted section of the county road, range developments (line sheds, troughs, and tanks), and debris associated with Granary Spring in the upper Bluejohn Canyon area are unnatural appearing.

Units 3 and 4 retain their natural character. Disturbances within these units consist almost exclusively of scattered vehicle ways, occasional vehicle tracks, and grazing facilities. The unmaintained vehicle ways are used sporadically for access to livestock developments, recreational lands, and viewpoints. However, these disturbances are not substantially noticeable. One road constructed to a drill hole in Unit 4 has been cherry-stemmed from the unit.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The inventory units are contiguous to and are an extension of the Horseshoe Canyon (South) WSA, which has outstanding opportunities for solitude. The units contain expansive grasslands, open and rolling terrain, canyon breaks, extensive side canyons, cliffs, and other topographical features. The large scale of the country, the unit's expansive and rugged terrain, and ample topographic screening provide abundant opportunities for solitude.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The inventory units are contiguous to and are an extension of the Horseshoe Canyon (South) WSA, which has outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The inventory units augment these opportunities, with numerous routes and scenic viewpoints providing excitement and discovery. Travel by foot or horseback can vary from easy to extremely challenging. Most uniquely, the units offer significant opportunities to view and learn about Horseshoe Canyon's special cultural and natural history. The units' remoteness, expansive views, significant cultural history, limited visitation, and diversity and quality of recreational activities all combine to create outstanding opportunities for the visitor seeking remote recreation experiences.

Supplemental Values

The inventory units contain cultural resources associated with the canyon's prehistoric rock art and archaeological sites. Contiguous National Park lands are famous for their unique "Barrier Canyon" style of rock art pictographs. Several less well known archaeological sites and pictograph panels are also contained within the inventory units and contiguous WSA. Cowboy Cave, which is within the WSA, is rich with paleontological remains. The inventory units contain the entire upper watershed of Horseshoe Canyon. Horseshoe Canyon is significant because, at over 35 miles in length, it is the largest and most extensive side canyon of the Green River within Labyrinth Canyon. The extensive network of headwater canyons feeds washes and crevices that cut deeply into the Navajo and Wingate sandstones, eventually forming the spectacular walls and cliffs of the main canyon.

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