

Muddy Creek-Crack Canyon

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
184,500	30,500	215,000 (90%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
22,700	2,060	24,760 (10%)
Inventory Unit Total		
207,200	32,560	239,760
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Muddy Creek WSA (UT-060-007)		31,400
Crack Canyon WSA (UT-060-028A)		25,385
Link Flats ISA		

The six Muddy Creek-Crack Canyon inventory units are contiguous to and surround two Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)—Muddy Creek WSA and Crack Canyon WSA—and a small portion of the Link Flats Instant Study Area. Most of the inventory units (215,000 acres) retain their wilderness characteristics. This large and diverse area is natural and offers outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. However, approximately 24,760 acres lack wilderness characteristics. These areas have been impacted by a combination of intrusions, including a gypsum mine, oil wells, roads and vehicle ways, range developments, and disturbance from both mineral exploration and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. Two BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), a Special Emphasis Area, and several free-flowing river segments eligible for inclusion as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System are located within the units.

Unit Description

The six units extend from southwestern Emery County in the San Rafael Swell just south of Interstate 70 to north-central Wayne County bordering on Utah Highway 24. They are located about 50 miles southwest of Green River and 10 miles northwest of Hanksville. The units are over 30 miles from north to south and 25 miles from east to west. This inventory area is one of the largest in Utah. Vegetation is extremely varied, encompassing piñon and juniper woodlands, park-like flats containing a variety of grasses, and riparian vegetation in wash bottoms. Below the San Rafael Reef, vegetation is nearly nonexistent on the barren Mancos Shale substrate. The

MUDDY CREEK-CRACK CANYON—
This view of North Caineville Mesa provides a glimpse of the vastness and remoteness of this quarter-million-acre-plus roadless area.

terrain varies greatly, exhibiting nearly every type of terrain and geologic strata found in the canyon country. Visitors are often awed by the stark Mancos Shale moonscape and multicolored bentonite hills.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Most of the Muddy Canyon-Crack Canyon inventory units are natural. Each of the six units has areas that are natural as well as small areas that are not natural in appearance. Areas that lack naturalness have been impacted by a combination of mines, oil wells, mineral exploration, OHV use, roads and vehicle ways, and range developments.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The units are contiguous to and are an extension of the Muddy Creek and Crack Canyon WSAs. In combination with these WSAs, the units provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The large acreage, combined with diverse topographic and vegetation screening, creates numerous outstanding opportunities for visitors to feel remote and isolated. While many of the more popular slot canyons are heavily visited along the southern San Rafael Reef, there are dozens of spectacular and remote canyons on the Moroni Slopes that are almost never visited. Although the entire area has outstanding opportunities for solitude, a few areas merit special discussion. Cat Canyon is a twisting wild chasm up to 600 feet deep; a visitor can wander in the canyon for several days and experience profound isolation. The extensive complex of canyon systems—including Cistern, Bell, Little Wild Horse, and Chute—and the Crack Canyon drainage provide an opportunity for days of exploration within complete, intact watersheds.

The extensive red badlands known as Kessle Country is bordered by Penitentiary Canyon, another complete system drainage that flows directly into Muddy Creek near Tomsich Butte in Unit 4. Finding a route within this broken country would challenge even an experienced orienteer.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The units are contiguous to the Muddy Creek and Crack Canyon WSAs. In conjunction with these WSAs, the units provide outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. There are numerous challenging opportunities for hikes of various lengths, sightseeing, camping, rock climbing, backpacking, photography, and rockhounding. The San Rafael Swell has long been recognized and publicized in dozens of publications that highlight the area's adventure hikes and beautiful scenery. In fact, Factory Butte is one of the most photographed features in the region. The Chute of the Muddy River offers adventure float boating and kayaking opportunities during spring runoff, as well as hiking during the summer months.

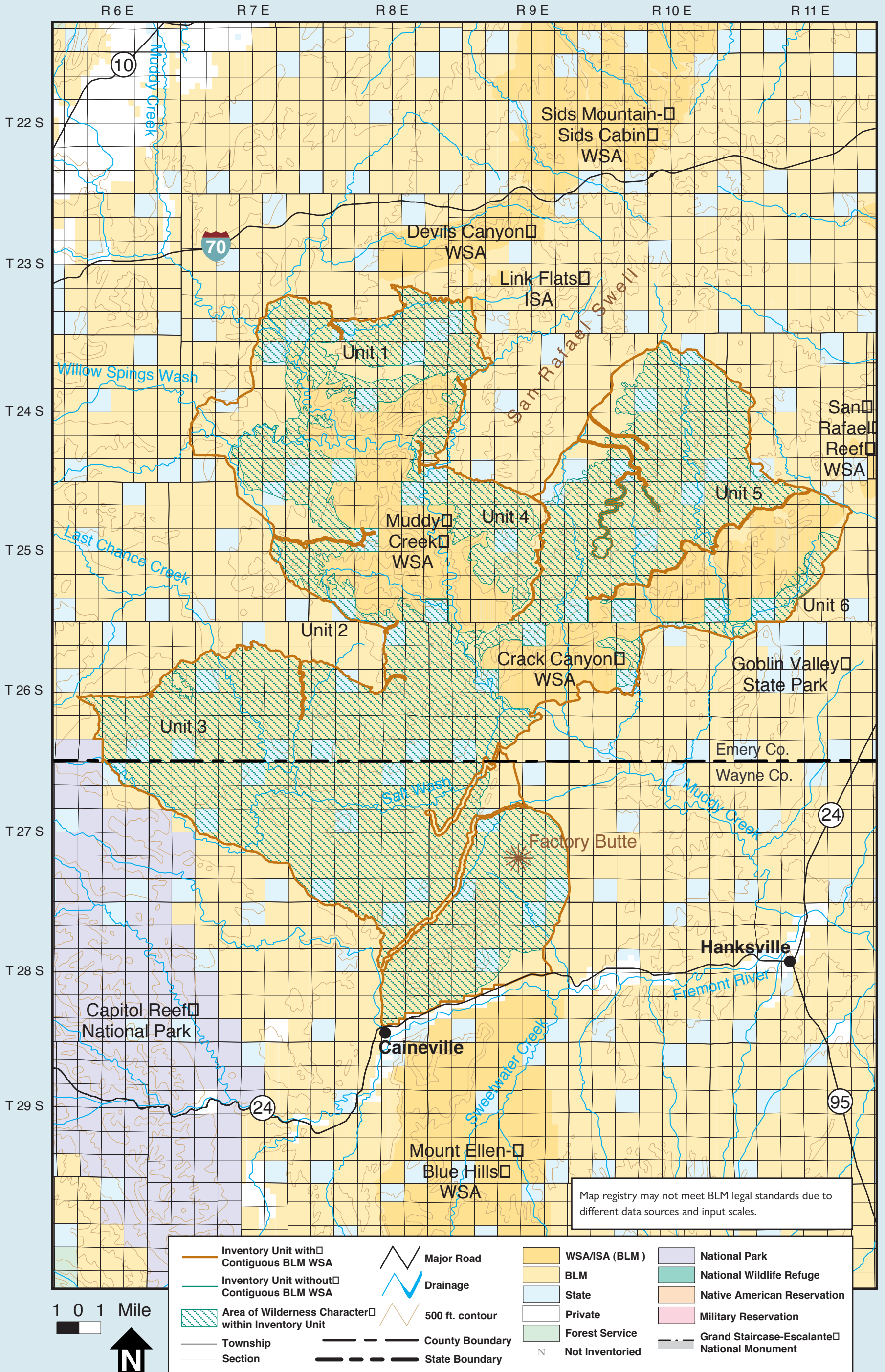
Supplemental Values

Archaeological surveys have been limited within the unit, but extensive evidence of tool-making is evident in several locations near Horse Heaven and the Frying Pan. This area is rich in chert and flint. Sharks teeth can be found on Factory Bench, as well as many interesting rock specimens. Muddy Creek has been identified by the BLM as eligible for inclusion as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Seger's Hole and Muddy Creek ACECs were established to protect scenic values. A Special Emphasis Area within the Muddy Creek ACEC at Tomsich Butte protects historic mine workings and Hondu Arch. The units also contain outstanding examples of various geologic formations.



Jerry Sintz

Muddy Creek-Crack Canyon



EAST CENTRAL REGION—Muddy Creek-Crack Canyon