

San Rafael Reef

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
37,600	7,980	45,580 (62%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
23,800	4,400	28,200 (38%)
Inventory Unit Total		
61,400	12,380	73,780
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
San Rafael Reef WSA (UT-060-029A)		55,540

Most of the seven San Rafael Reef inventory units (45,580 acres) have wilderness characteristics. The units do contain several old seismic lines and vehicle ways, but these were found to be substantially unnoticeable. Wilderness characteristics is enhanced by the contiguous San Rafael Reef Wilderness Study Area (WSA), the rugged character of Sinbad Country, and the outstanding opportunities for hiking in many of the units. Portions of the units (28,200 acres) have been impacted by human activities, such as livestock grazing, mineral exploration, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use to the degree that wilderness characteristics has been lost. Unit 5 does not have wilderness characteristics because of numerous seismic lines, vehicle routes, and its proximity to Highway 24.

Unit Description

The San Rafael Reef inventory units are contiguous to the San Rafael Reef WSA. They are located approximately 20 miles south of Green River and are characterized by a variety of landforms and vegetation. The entire area is popular with recreationists. Several of the cherry-stemmed roads provided vehicle access for mining activity up to the 1960s. These routes are now popular with visitors driving OHVs, mountain bikers, and hikers, and are used for hunting access. The numerous washes and slot canyons provide additional access for backpackers, and opportunities for photography abound. Car camping and touring are popular around the edges of the units. The entire area is used for seasonal grazing, the flatter areas by cattle and pronghorn antelope and the more rugged areas by desert bighorn sheep.

Unit 1 is wedged between the WSA and I-70 west of Spotted Wolf Canyon. Unit 2 is a small area that lies west and south of Unit 1. The large Unit 3 is south of I-70 and west of the WSA; its southern portion is bounded by historic mining areas

associated with the post-World War II demand for uranium. Unit 4 is east of Temple Mountain. Units 5, 6, and 7 are located on the east edge of the geologically spectacular San Rafael Reef, a plunging anticline that rises dramatically from the desert floor to the east. These eastern units contain benchlands below the steep sandstone cliffs that form the eastern edge of the uplifted area.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Most of Units 1, 4, 6, and 7 retain their natural character. Naturalness is enhanced by the rugged nature of the terrain, the healing nature of the erodible soils, and seasonal rains that have washed out many old vehicle ways, obliterating the relatively few human intrusions. In Units 2 and 3 there is evidence of vehicle use on the ridges or in the valleys leading out to numerous scenic overlooks and to several stock ponds and abandoned drill sites. Most of these routes are primitive vehicle ways and are maintained solely by the passage of vehicles. However, these impacts have resulted in about half of the acreage in these units no longer retaining their natural character. In the southern part of Unit 3 there are some mineral prospect areas where dirt has been moved or scooped out into small piles; however, these areas are revegetating or naturally eroding, and the highly eroded character of the unit makes these old mining prospects difficult to discern.

Numerous seismograph lines and vehicle ways are noticeable in Unit 5. While none have been maintained, most continue to be used for recreational access into the washes or for hunting or grazing access. The highway department has also borrowed and/or stockpiled dirt in several areas adjacent to Utah Highway 24. With the lack of topographic and vegetative screening and the proximity to the highway, the overall result is a lack of naturalness throughout Unit 5.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The inventory units are contiguous to and

are an extension of the San Rafael Reef WSA. In conjunction with this WSA, the inventory units provide outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The inventory units are contiguous to and are an extension of the San Rafael Reef WSA. In conjunction with this WSA, the areas have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Many of the incised canyons on the eastern flank of the San Rafael Swell offer popular hiking and backpacking opportunities that are well documented in many hiking guides for Utah. The area also has outstanding opportunities for sightseeing and photography and is used for hunting and other outdoor activities.

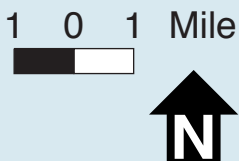
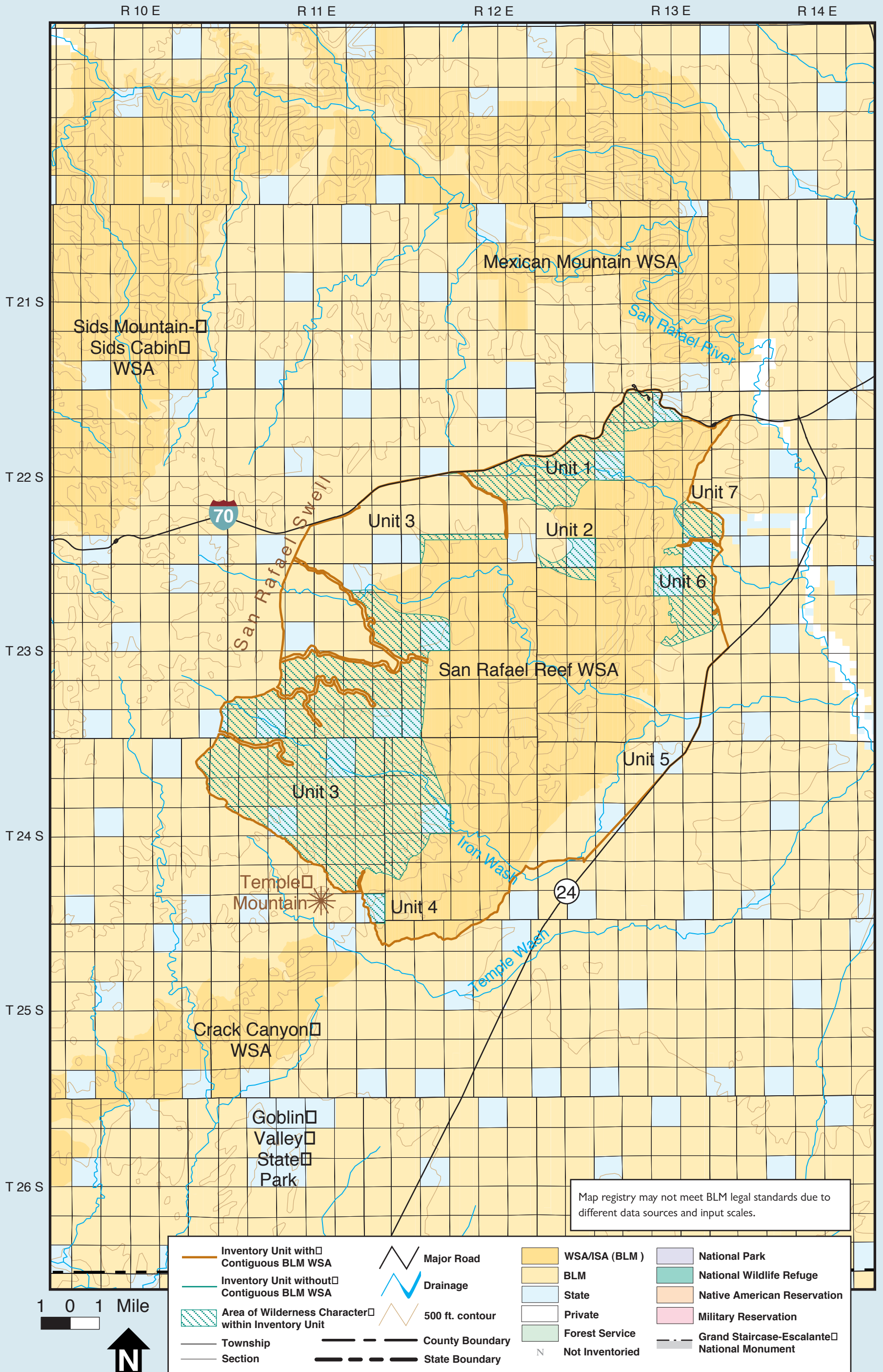
Supplemental Values

The San Rafael Swell has long been known for its outstanding scenery and geological formations. The San Rafael Reef WSA contains a number of ancient Indian pictograph sites, and several are likely to be located within the units themselves. Crucial habitat for a nationally significant herd of desert bighorn sheep exists within these units, as does habitat for listed species, including peregrine falcons, bald eagles and ferruginous hawks. The BLM has established several "special" categories for areas within the inventory units along the San Rafael Reef to manage and protect resource values. These include the San Rafael Swell Special Recreation Management Area to recognize the intensive and special recreation values of the area; the San Rafael Reef North Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to protect unique relict vegetation and scenic geological resources; the I-70 Scenic Corridor ACEC to protect visual resources adjacent to a popular travel route; and the Temple Mountain Historic District ACEC to protect the important historic resources remaining from the uranium boom days of the Cold War.

SAN RAFAEL REEF—View from the rest area along Interstate 70 into Unit 1.



San Rafael Reef



Map registry may not meet BLM legal standards due to different data sources and input scales.

Inventory Unit with Contiguous BLM WSA	Area of Wilderness Character within Inventory Unit	Major Road	Drainage	WSA/ISA (BLM)	National Park
Inventory Unit without Contiguous BLM WSA	Township	500 ft. contour	County Boundary	BLM	National Wildlife Refuge
Area of Wilderness Character within Inventory Unit	Section	State Boundary	State Boundary	State	Native American Reservation
Township				Private	Military Reservation
Section				Forest Service	Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument
				Not Inventoried	