

Sids Mountain

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
23,300	5,530	28,830 (61%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
16,050	2,400	18,450 (39%)
Inventory Unit Total		
39,350	7,930	47,280
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Sids Mountain-Sids Cabin (UT-060-023/060-023A)		80,970

About 28,830 acres within the ten Sids Mountain inventory units have wilderness characteristics, which is enhanced by the area's rugged terrain and vegetative screening. However, several units contain intrusions associated with old mineral exploration, range developments, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, and car camping; about 18,450 acres lack wilderness characteristics because of these intrusions. The ten units are contiguous to the Sids Mountain-Sids Cabin Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and have the same outstanding wilderness attributes as the WSA.

Unit Description

The units are located in Emery County southeast of Castle Dale between the Wedge Overlook on the north and Interstate 70 on the south. The San Rafael River traverses the northern portion, cutting a spectacular canyon known as "The Little Grand Canyon." The units are located within the San Rafael Swell, a dramatic geologic uplift featuring high mesas, deep canyons, domes, and spires. The topography varies from dramatic sheer cliff faces, spires, mesas, and deep canyons, to more gently undulating badlands broken by numerous shallow washes and gently sloping rangeland. Vegetation consists of scattered piñon and juniper woodlands and open grassland areas at higher elevations, while shrublands containing blackbrush, rabbitbrush, and various grasses are found at lower elevations. Willows and tamarisk abound on either side of the San Rafael River. Remote notch canyons and north-facing alcoves or slopes are dotted with ponderosa pine and Douglas fir.

Prehistoric people frequented the area, leaving behind lithic scatters, rock art, and structures. Present and historic human uses include mineral exploration, livestock grazing, and recreation. Old mineral exploration roads, drill holes, and occasional mining equipment remain as remnants of

the post-World War II uranium mining era. Occasional oil and gas drill holes are found on the lower benches.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Nearly all of Unit 1, most of Unit 9, half of Unit 4, and smaller pieces of the other units have been impacted by human development. This lack of naturalness is typically because of cumulative impacts from vehicle ways, OHV play areas, and heavily used undeveloped campsites.

Much of Unit 1 is unnatural because of the cumulative effects of multiple vehicle ways, OHV intrusions, and campsites. Several livestock water developments, including reservoirs, pipelines, and troughs, exist in the unit. Only the part of the unit east of Goodwater Canyon retains its natural character. The southern one-third of Unit 2 is natural. The area north of the WSA continuing to a wash bottom just south of Fuller Bottom Draw is natural; however, an area adjacent to the county-maintained access to The Wedge Overlook has so many vehicle ways, roads, and grazing facilities that much of its natural character is gone.

Unit 3 retains its natural character. A road originating at the confluence of Coal Wash with North Salt Wash has been cherry-stemmed from the unit. Two of the three parcels in Unit 4 retain their naturalness and have virtually no intrusions. A third parcel has some ranching developments and vehicular intrusions that, when coupled with a lack of vegetative and topographic screening, have resulted in a loss of naturalness. A portion of Unit 5 retains its natural character, although intrusions, combined with proximity to Interstate 70, result in substantial impairment of a portion of the area's naturalness.

Most of Unit 6 retains its natural character, primarily because of its rugged terrain and few intrusions. Unit 7 is a relatively large area retaining its natural appearance; this unit features rugged terrain and a prominent landmark, The Pinnacle. Unit 8 lies directly north of Unit 7 and is similar in character; most of it retains its natural character. Most of Unit 9 is unnatural appearing because of cumulative impacts from vehicle use, grazing, and camping south of the San Rafael River, as well as disturbance on Calf Mesa from uranium exploration and mining. Unit 10 appears natural except for a cherry-stemmed road leading to an area of dispersed primitive campsites.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The units are contiguous to and are an extension of the Sids Mountain-Sids Cabin WSA, which has outstanding opportunities for solitude. Much of the inventory area contains terrain similar to the WSA and also provides outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The units are contiguous to and are an extension of the Sids Mountain-Sids Cabin WSA, which has outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The units contain these same outstanding attributes. The popularity of this region for photography, hiking, primitive camping, and exploring is nationally recognized.

Supplemental Values

The units contain many supplemental values. Aside from their spectacular and colorful scenery, they provide important wildlife habitat and viewing opportunities for wildlife species such as desert bighorn sheep, bald eagles, and peregrine falcons. The units also contain populations of several threatened or endangered desert plants, including the San Rafael cactus (*Pediocactus despanii*). Although most known archaeological and historical sites within the area are found within the contiguous WSA, remains of the Fremont Indian habitation and old mining artifacts are also scattered within the inventory area. Petrified wood, geodes, and other mineral specimens can be found by visitors rockhounding in the area.

Several "special" categories for areas within the inventory units have been established to protect resource values and guide management direction. They include the San Rafael Swell Special Recreation Management Area to recognize the intensive and special recreation values of the area, the Sids Mountain Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to protect scenic geological resources, the I-70 Scenic Corridor ACEC to protect the visual resources of the area adjacent to a popular travel route, and the San Rafael Canyon ACEC to protect scenic resources.

A photograph of Sids Mountain is shown in the front part of this document on page xvi.

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EAST CENTRAL REGION—Sids Mountain