

Wild Horse Mesa

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
48,600	5,400	54,000 (75%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
16,300	2,500	18,800 (25%)
Inventory Unit Total		
64,900	7,900	72,800
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
None		

Most of the Wild Horse Mesa inventory unit (54,000 acres) has wilderness characteristics. However, about 18,800 acres, including the northern portion of Middle Wild Horse Mesa, the benchlands just north of the town of Hanksville, and the desert lands east of Goblin Valley State Park, were found to lack wilderness characteristics. Most intrusions within the unit are vehicle ways and seismic lines created years ago for mineral exploration. Wild Horse Mesa is a diverse area with a variety of topographical and geological features, ranging from high, vertical buttes and broken rocky mesas and spires, to colorful canyons. A segment of Muddy Creek that runs through the unit is eligible for inclusion as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Unit Description

The unit is located in southern Emery and northern Wayne Counties. Its southern tip is located about one mile north of Hanksville. Wild Horse Mesa is adjacent to Goblin Valley State Park. Wild Horse Mesa is a diverse area with a variety of topographic and geological features. The widely varying formations include goblins, domes, striated vertical cliffs, and other features of interest. Numerous canyons, drainages, and badlands add diversity. The badlands, crisscrossed by occasional deep canyons, create a moon-like effect and are extremely colorful. There are many "goblin" formations that resemble those found in Goblin Valley State Park.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Most of the unit retains its natural character. Most intrusions are vehicle ways and

seismic lines created years ago by mineral exploration for uranium and, more recently, by coal development on Factory Bench. Many of these vehicle ways receive little or no use and are slowly being rehabilitated through natural processes. However, naturalness has been lost on portions of the unit because of substantially noticeable intrusions. An extensive area of intrusions occurs around a state section in the western portion of the unit. Between Hunt Draw and Muddy Creek is a small homestead along a maintained road. The northwest portion of Middle Wild Horse Mesa has an extensive network of seismograph lines and old roads. Adjacent and to the west is a strip of land that contains numerous vehicle ways leading to dispersed campsites. One cherry-stemmed road extends for approximately 8 miles southward into the unit. East and south of the state park along Well Draw is an area of vehicle ways. The southern portion of the unit contains several vehicle ways, seismic lines, a dump, and other developments. Several lightly used, substantially unnoticeable vehicle ways extend off the cherry-stemmed route. Range developments are found throughout the unit, including fences and a number of stock ponds. None of these intrusions impair the naturalness of the unit.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

This unit contains outstanding opportunities for solitude that are enhanced by the size of the unit and its rugged topography. The topography ranges from spectacular vertical buttes to high, broken mesas cut by countless drainages and canyons. Muddy Creek Canyon is the dominant canyon, but there are many others, including Red Canyon, Wild Horse Canyon, Little Wild Horse Canyon, Coal Mine Wash, and other smaller drainages. A visitor simply has to hike up one of these canyons, or traverse the top of one of the mesas, to feel totally alone.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Over 20 miles of Muddy Creek runs through the unit, part of its 70-mile stretch from Interstate 70 to Hanksville.

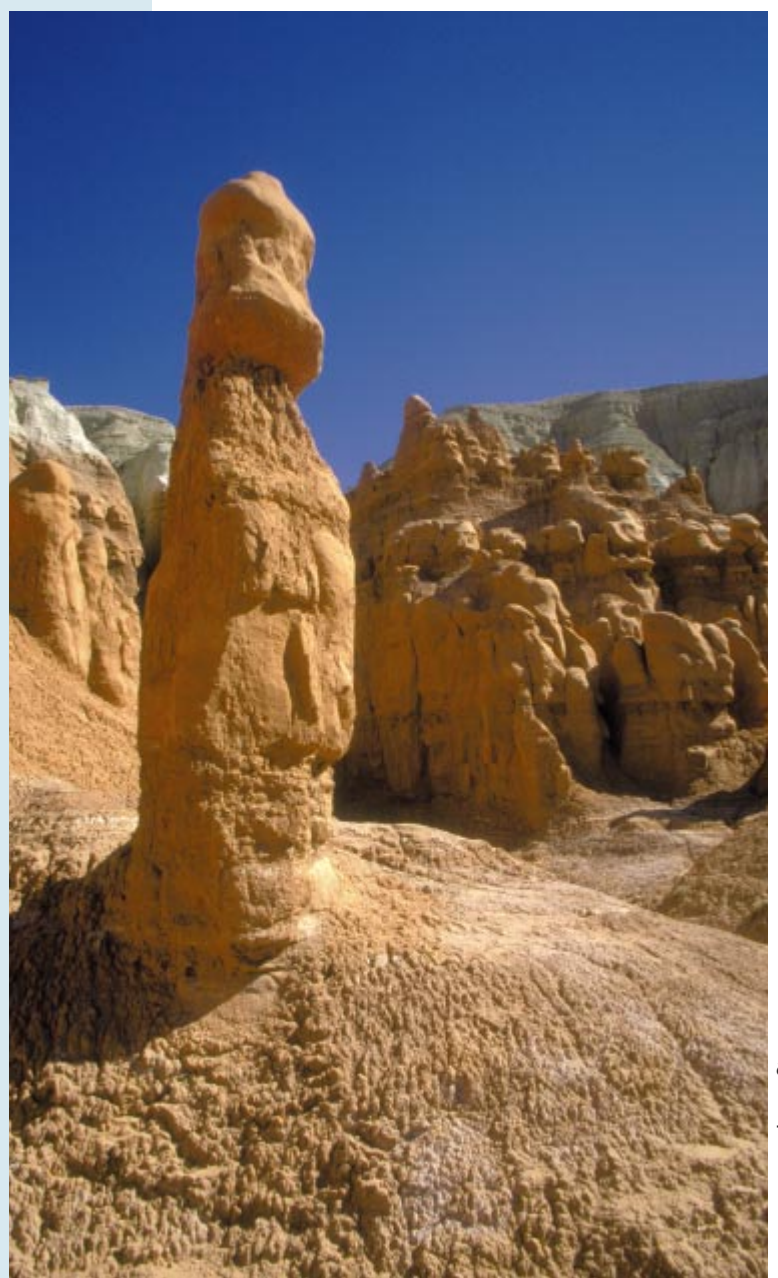
WILD HORSE MESA—Spectacular Entrada Sandstone "goblins" and pinnacles extend for miles from Goblin Valley State Park into this unit.

Muddy Creek is becoming a popular float trip during the high spring-runoff period. Although the most dramatic segment of Muddy Creek runs through the San Rafael Reef just to the north, the portion within this unit provides diversity to the recreational experience. It is an easy day float from the Muddy Creek Road to the creek's confluence with the Fremont River (where the two waterways form the Dirty Devil River) at Hanksville.

Truly outstanding opportunities abound for hiking, horseback riding, geological sightseeing, and photography. What makes this unit outstanding, however, is the geological formations within the eastern Red Canyon area. Red Canyon runs just south of Goblin Valley and is essentially an extension of the spectacular Entrada Formation from which "goblins" and other naturally sculpted faces and figures are formed. These unique features extend for several miles.

Supplemental Values

In addition to the diverse geological and topographical features already discussed, the area contains geological and paleontological specimens such as agates, petrified wood, sharks teeth, and occasional dinosaur bones. University and commercial geological field trips are frequently taken to the area to view the exposed formations and strata. The segment of Muddy Creek within the unit has been determined by the BLM to be eligible for inclusion as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.



Jerry Sintz

Wild Horse Mesa

