

Flume Canyon

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
4,300	2,770	7,070 (88%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
500	500	1,000 (12%)
Inventory Unit Total		
4,800	3,270	8,070
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Flume Canyon WSA (UT-060-100B)		50,800
Spruce Canyon WSA (UT-060-100C1)		20,990

About 7,070 acres of the eight Flume Canyon inventory units have wilderness characteristics. Most of the inventory area is in a natural condition, with little or no evidence of human presence. The units contain several long and deep canyons, unusual geologic features, visual diversity, and a variety of wildlife species, all of which enhance wilderness values. However, about 1,000 acres in the eastern portion of Unit 3 are unnatural and lack wilderness characteristics because of the development and operation of oil and gas wells.

Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation are outstanding throughout the units because of topographic and vegetative screening. The units enhance the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation found in the contiguous Spruce Canyon and Flume Canyon Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). Hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, camping, and viewing natural resources are all opportunities found in the WSAs, as well as in the inventory units.

The upper portion (about half) of the vehicle route in Diamond Canyon, which forms the boundary between Flume Canyon and Spruce Canyon WSAs, has returned to a natural state. This route has been reclaimed by beavers that have constructed dams and created ponds in the canyon, obliterating the boundary road. The route is no longer passable by vehicles without major reconstruction.

Unit Description

The inventory units are in Grand County about 43 miles northeast of Green River, in the northeastern portion of the Colorado Plateau Province/Ecoregion. The units are one of seven contiguous inventory areas across much of the Roan Cliffs and Book Cliffs, the longest continuous escarpment in the world. They lie between the face of the Book Cliffs and the top of the Roan Cliffs. Contiguous to the Flume Canyon and Spruce Canyon WSAs as well as a state roadless area, the units are extremely rugged, with few vehicle ways or roads. Stands of aspen, Douglas fir, and piñon and juniper woodland inhabit most of the area, with mountain shrubs, sagebrush, and shadscale covering the remainder. Human uses include recreation, livestock grazing, and oil and gas production.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Most of the units retain their natural character, although the eastern portion of Unit 3 is unnatural because of visual impacts of oil and gas exploration activities. Unit 7, which is north of the Cisco Springs North Gas Field, is well screened from outside sights and sounds by dense piñon and juniper trees and a 200-foot vertical escarpment; it is also more than a mile north of any oil and gas development activities. A gas production well has been cherry-stemmed from Unit 5, as have exploration roads and the drill pad in the Pear Park Gas Field. Other vehicle ways and minor disturbances are substantially unnoticeable because of vegetative screening or because they have naturally rehabilitated and now appear natural in the landscape. As a result of beaver dam building, vehicular access in the upper end of Diamond Canyon has been blocked by ponds; the road in the canyon bottom has been naturally reclaimed.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

All eight units are contiguous to and are logical extensions of the Flume Canyon WSA. Unit 1 is also contiguous to the Spruce Canyon WSA and a state roadless area. These WSAs have outstanding opportunities for solitude. All of the units enhance the opportunities for solitude found in the WSAs, especially Unit 4, which contains a section of the Book Cliffs. The numerous canyons and ridges provide excellent topographic screening, while the heavily forested vegetation further enhances the opportunities for seclusion. Flume and Sulphur Canyons, the side canyons of Diamond and Westwater Canyons, and the broad flat areas in the Pear Park area all provide numerous opportunities for solitude. Overall, the units offer outstanding opportunities for solitude when viewed as extensions of the WSAs.

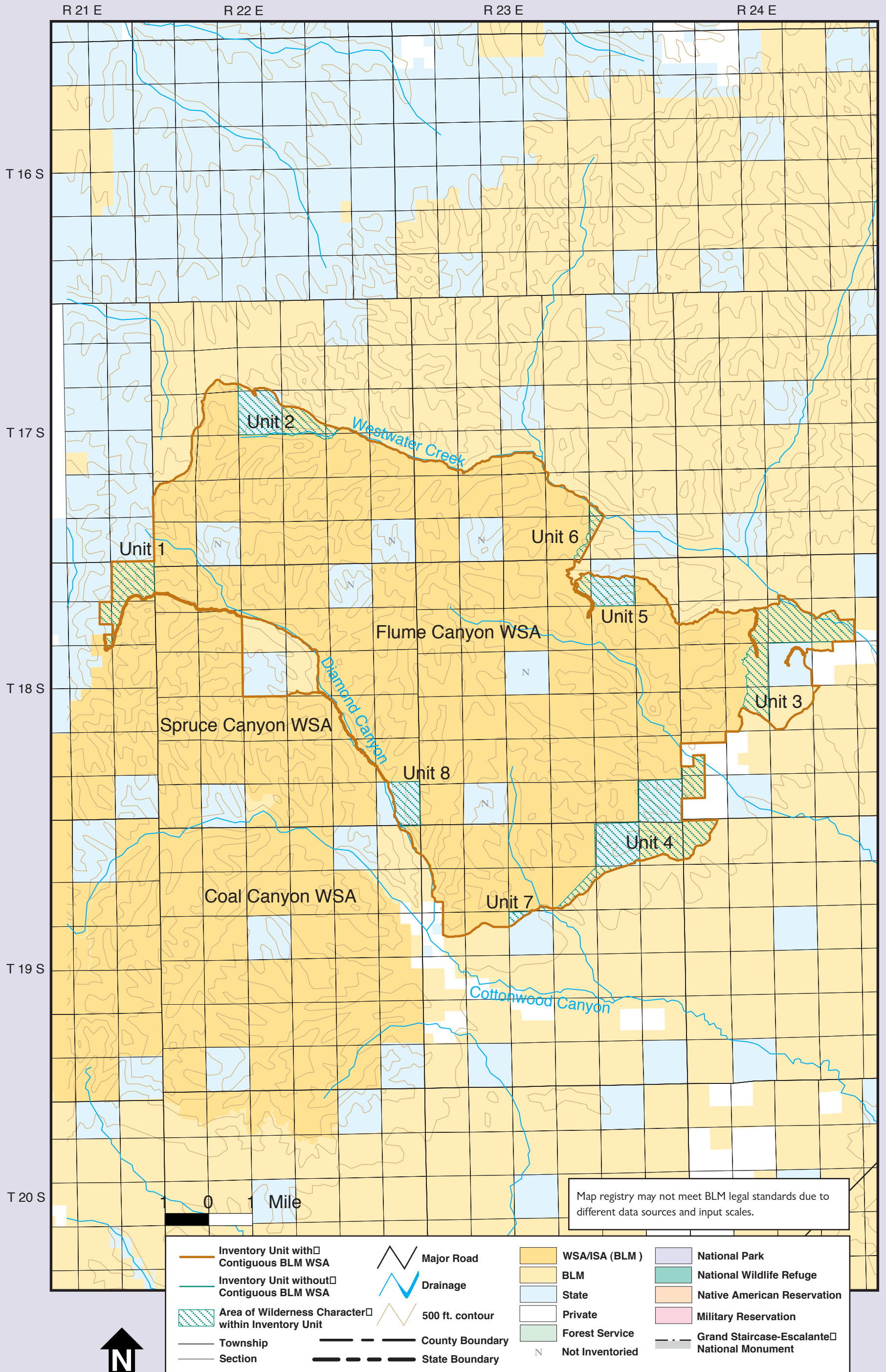
Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

All eight units are contiguous to and are logical extensions of the Flume Canyon WSA. Unit 1 is also contiguous to the Spruce Canyon WSA and a state roadless area. All of the units enhance the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation found in the WSAs. Opportunities for hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, camping, and viewing of natural resources are found in the WSAs, as well as in the units themselves. The Diamond Ridge pack trail traverses Unit 1, making it a logical extension of the state roadless area. The units provide outstanding primitive recreational opportunities when considered in conjunction with the contiguous WSAs.

Supplemental Values

A variety of topographic features enhance the scenic values of the units, including colorful rock outcrops, spires, steep-walled canyons, and dramatic scenic vistas from the top of the Jumping Off Point. Elk are in the area year-round, as are deer, mountain lions, black bears, and golden eagles. Beavers thrive in the canyon bottoms, where they build dams and ponds. Endangered black-footed ferrets, peregrine falcons, bald eagles, and six other animal species considered sensitive occur in or near the units, as do four candidate endangered species, including ferruginous hawks, longed-billed curlews, southern spotted owls, and western yellow-billed cuckoos.

Flume Canyon



NORTHEAST REGION—Flume Canyon