

# Westwater Creek

## Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
<b>With Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
0	0	0 (0%)
<b>Without Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
9,100	1,000	10,100 (100%)
<b>Inventory Unit Total</b>		
9,100	1,000	10,100
<b>Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
None		

None of the 10,100-acre Westwater Creek inventory unit has wilderness characteristics. It lacks outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation because of its size, topography, and adjacent land uses. The presence and operation of an active gas well at the end of a cherry-stemmed road adjacent to the south-central portion of the inventory unit, a gas line right-of-way on the southern boundary, and a major dirt road bordering the north side, coupled with the size and configuration of the unit, limit opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Although the unit is scenic and contains portions of several major canyons, it lacks wilderness qualities.

## Unit Description

The Westwater Creek inventory unit is located in eastern Grand County adjacent to the Flume Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA); it is about 55 air miles northeast of Moab and approximately 15 miles west of the Colorado border. The unit is teardrop-shaped, approximately three miles wide and five to six miles long. A natural gas pipeline and right-of-

way abuts the south side of the unit. Hay Canyon Road and a short stretch of a pack trail define the northeast boundary, while the northwest boundary is defined by a well-maintained dirt road and gas line right-of-way.

In the northwest portion of the unit, two public land sections and portions of three others are located within an oil shale reserve area that has been withdrawn for use by the Department of Energy. Current uses within the unit are oil and gas development, grazing, and some hunting.

The major physical feature is a central ridge, extending east to west, that drops into Preacher Canyon on the north and Pipeline Canyon and Westwater Creek on the south. Three short box canyons extend into the unit. Piñon and juniper woodlands are found in the canyons and along the ridge top, with sagebrush dominating the canyon bottoms. Other species include rabbitbrush, greasewood, and various grass species.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### Naturalness

The Westwater Creek inventory unit has natural character. It consists of a rugged single ridge with associated short box canyons. Large portions of the unit were burned in a wildfire several years ago. However, the area was reseeded and has begun to recover. Interesting scenic vegetation mosaics were created by the fire.

Human disturbance within the unit is substantially unnoticeable in the area as a whole. A large corral complex north and outside of the unit is used by hunters. A

cherry-stemmed vehicle way runs south for about a mile from the corrals to Survey Point. A gas well, pipeline, and constructed road have been cherry-stemmed from the south-central portion of the unit. There are no apparent human intrusions within the central core of the area.

## Outstanding Opportunities

### Solitude

Opportunities for solitude exist within the inventory unit but they are significantly limited, given the unit's size and physical configuration. The boundary road in Preacher and Hay Canyons limits opportunities for solitude to the far reaches of the two canyons that branch off from Preacher Canyon. Opportunities for solitude within the southern portion of the unit are much better, given the fact that it is adjacent to the Flume Canyon WSA, separated only by a 4-inch natural gas pipeline and its associated right-of-way. However, the constructed features (roads, pipelines, and the active gas well) that border upon the unit constrain not only the unit's size, but also the opportunities for a visitor to feel alone. As a result, the opportunities for solitude are not outstanding.

### Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Although the inventory unit is fairly rugged, the size of the area and its physical configuration limit opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Most hunting activity occurs on the ridge at Survey Point, where a popular hunter's camp exists. The scenic vistas from Survey Point and Jumping Off Point are excellent. However, there are only limited opportunities for hiking, photography, camping, and hunting.

## Supplemental Values

The unit provides winter habitat for deer and elk and is home to black bears and mountain lions. Four candidate endangered species may inhabit the unit: the ferruginous hawk, long-billed curlew, southern spotted owl, and western yellow-billed cuckoo.

WESTWATER CREEK—A view looking down Westwater Creek, which forms the boundary between this inventory unit (on the left side of the canyon) and the Flume Canyon inventory unit (on the right side).



BLM photo

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