

Cripple Cowboy

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
13,700	1,500	15,200 (100%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
0	0	0 (0%)
Inventory Unit Total		
13,700	1,500	15,200
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
None		

The entire 15,200-acre Cripple Cowboy inventory unit has wilderness characteristics. The unit is natural and provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. The individual and cumulative impact of human intrusions on the natural character of the unit is minor.

Developments are scattered throughout the inventory unit but are well hidden by rugged topography and dense vegetation; they do not dominate the landscape. The diverse topography, dense vegetation, and large size of the unit combine to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. There are also outstanding opportunities for camping, hiking, photography, and wildlife watching and hunting. Many local residents believe this area provides the best elk hunting opportunities in Utah. Opportunities for horseback riding or pack trips are abundant. Additionally, the unit has exceptional scenic quality, wildlife habitat, and historical features.

Unit Description

The Cripple Cowboy inventory unit is located in southeastern Uintah County and northeastern Grand Country about 50 air miles south-southeast of Vernal. The unit's terrain is typical of the Book Cliffs, consisting of deep canyons with ridges that create spectacular scenic vistas. Elevations range from 6,000 to 8,000 feet, with steep canyon slopes rising 600 to 800 feet. The major drainage is Bitter Creek, which runs from the south-southeast to the north-northwest. The inventory unit lies south and west of Bitter Creek, from which numerous side canyons extend. Chipeta Canyon is the dominant canyon, providing the main access into the heart of the unit and to many side canyons. The inventory unit surrounds the Book Cliffs Mountain Browse Instant Study Area.

Canyon bottom vegetation consists of riparian species along waterways. Bench areas contain sagebrush, rabbitbrush, grasses, and greasewood. There are also some wet meadows. Above 7,400 feet in elevation, drainages are dominated by Douglas fir, piñon and juniper woodlands, and quaking aspen, with Douglas fir being more common on north-facing slopes. Ridgetop vegetation is dominated by sagebrush and piñon and juniper woodlands.

Considerable oil and gas activity takes place adjacent to the unit, but cattle grazing is the dominant use. Stock ponds, fences, and cattle are present. Hunting is a significant seasonal use; hunting impacts include camps and vehicle traffic on the unit's many vehicle ways.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

While several human disturbances exist in the unit, their individual and cumulative impact on natural character is minor. They are scattered throughout the unit, hidden by the diverse topography and dense vegetation, do not dominate the landscape, and are substantially unnoticeable in the area as a whole.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The inventory unit consists of rugged topography and is large enough to ensure outstanding opportunities for solitude. Topographic relief is varied and dramatic. The ridges, valley bottoms, and numerous

side canyons provide isolation from others. The diverse vegetation, which ranges from dense Douglas fir and quaking aspen stands to sagebrush and grasses, also screens visitors from each other. There are numerous places in this inventory unit where a visitor can be alone.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The unit provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hiking, photography, and wildlife watching. In addition, it provides excellent elk hunting opportunities. Opportunities for horseback riding or pack trips are abundant, given the unit's size and the presence of side canyons that possess outstanding beauty.

Supplemental Values

The Cripple Cowboy inventory unit is rich in natural beauty, offering exceptional scenery and wildlife viewing opportunities. Its deep canyons, high ridges, and sheer cliffs create spectacular scenic vistas. Vegetation is diverse, adding to the unit's scenic qualities. Deer and elk are common in the area, and bears have also been sighted. The streams and adjacent cliffs provide habitat for a variety of birds, including peregrine falcons and golden eagles.

The area is also rich in cattle ranching history and contains some cultural resource sites. Petroglyph sites and historic homesteads are present in the region. The first Ute Indian Reservation was in this area; early Ute Indian grazing allotments are adjacent to the unit. Ute history, especially that of Chipeta, Queen of the Utes, adds greatly to the area's cultural heritage.

CRIPPLE COWBOY—Chipeta Canyon provides the main access into the heart of the inventory unit.



BLM photo

Cripple Cowboy

