

Wahweap-Death Ridge

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
34,230	10,320	44,550 (98%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
690	210	900 (2%)
Inventory Unit Total		
34,920	10,530	45,450
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Death Ridge WSA (UT-040-078)		62,870
Wahweap WSA (UT-040-248)		134,400

The findings for the Death Ridge inventory units and the Wahweap inventory units are being presented in one combined evaluation. The BLM's 1996 field inventories determined that the inventory units and the contiguous Death Ridge and Wahweap Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) actually represent an unbroken roadless block of land.

The Wahweap-Death Ridge inventory units include 19 separate inventory tracts on the Kaiparowits Plateau. These units surround the periphery of the Wahweap and Death Ridge WSAs. Most of the inventory units (44,550 acres) have wilderness characteristics. Inventory Unit 5, a pivotal tract containing lands separating the Wahweap WSA from the Death Ridge WSA, has wilderness characteristics. The two WSAs are not separated from each other or from Unit 5 by roads or other significant human intrusions. The 19 inventory units are natural geographic extensions of the contiguous lands within the Death Ridge and Wahweap WSAs. The units clearly represent legitimate and enhancing additions to the untamed landscapes found in the bordering WSAs. The outstanding solitude opportunities provided by the WSAs extend into the natural parts of the 19 units.

Approximately 900 acres in the units do lack wilderness characteristics because of chainings, graded roads, mineral exploration impacts, power lines, and vehicle routes receiving regular and continuous use.

Unit Description

The 19 Wahweap-Death Ridge inventory units are located in southern Garfield County and northern Kane County. Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 18, and 19 are contiguous to the Death Ridge WSA, while Units 6-17 are contiguous to the Wahweap WSA. Unit 5 is contiguous to both WSAs. All of the units are located within BLM's Grand

Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The terrain includes high-elevation benchland flats with steep and rugged drainages that lead into narrow, vertical-walled canyons. The vegetation is dense piñon and juniper woodland (with some ponderosa pine) on the high benchlands and desert shrub and grasslands at the lower elevations. Riparian vegetation is found in several creeks and canyons. The inventory unit boundaries are formed by land ownership, roads, and other human features.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Most of the units retain their natural character. Several units, including the drainages at Drip Tank (Unit 6) and Nipple Spring (Unit 12), the segment of Cads Crotch along Cottonwood Canyon Road (Unit 15), and the section of state land at Horse Flat (Unit 17) appear completely natural and untouched by man. The Pilot Rock (Unit 7), Nipple Butte (Unit 10), and Trap Canyon (Unit 19) areas contain only insignificant vehicle ways and appear natural overall. Large natural areas several square miles in size are found on Squaw Bench and Caine Bench (Unit 5) and Long Flat (Unit 16). Initial aerial observation and photo interpretation revealed a web of linear mechanized disturbances. However, ground-truthing revealed that many of these impacts are single-pass bulldozer ways and drill pads created by past mineral exploration that are abandoned, revegetating, and substantially unnoticeable. Other vehicle ways are mostly unmaintained two-tracks to range developments, woodcutting sites, or scenic overlooks.

Portions of Units 1, 2, 4, 5, and 13 do lack naturalness because of mineral exploration impacts, power lines, and vehicle routes that receive regular and continuous use. Chained areas in Units 1, 2, 4, and 5 are also unnatural. However, human imprints in many of the inventory units are substantially unnoticeable because of the effects of erosion, natural revegetation, and nonuse. Six roads have been cherry-stemmed from Units 5, 11, 13, 16, and 17.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The inventory units are contiguous to both the Wahweap WSA and the Death Ridge WSA, which possess outstanding solitude opportunities. These inventory

units increase the WSAs' size, improve their configuration, and offer a combination of topographic and vegetative screening that enhances the opportunities for solitude within the WSAs. All inventory units are extensions of the existing WSAs and provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The remoteness of the area further enhances opportunities for seclusion and feelings of isolation. The inventory units containing lands within Paradise Canyon (Unit 5), Escalante Canyon (Units 3, 5, and 18), Trap Canyon (Unit 19), Cottonwood Canyon (Unit 15), Wesses Cove (Units 8 and 9), and East Clark Bench (Unit 14) provide the same landforms and outstanding opportunities for solitude that are within the contiguous WSAs. The ancient piñon and juniper woodlands of Fourmile Bench and Paradise Bench (Unit 5) provide dense vegetative screening.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

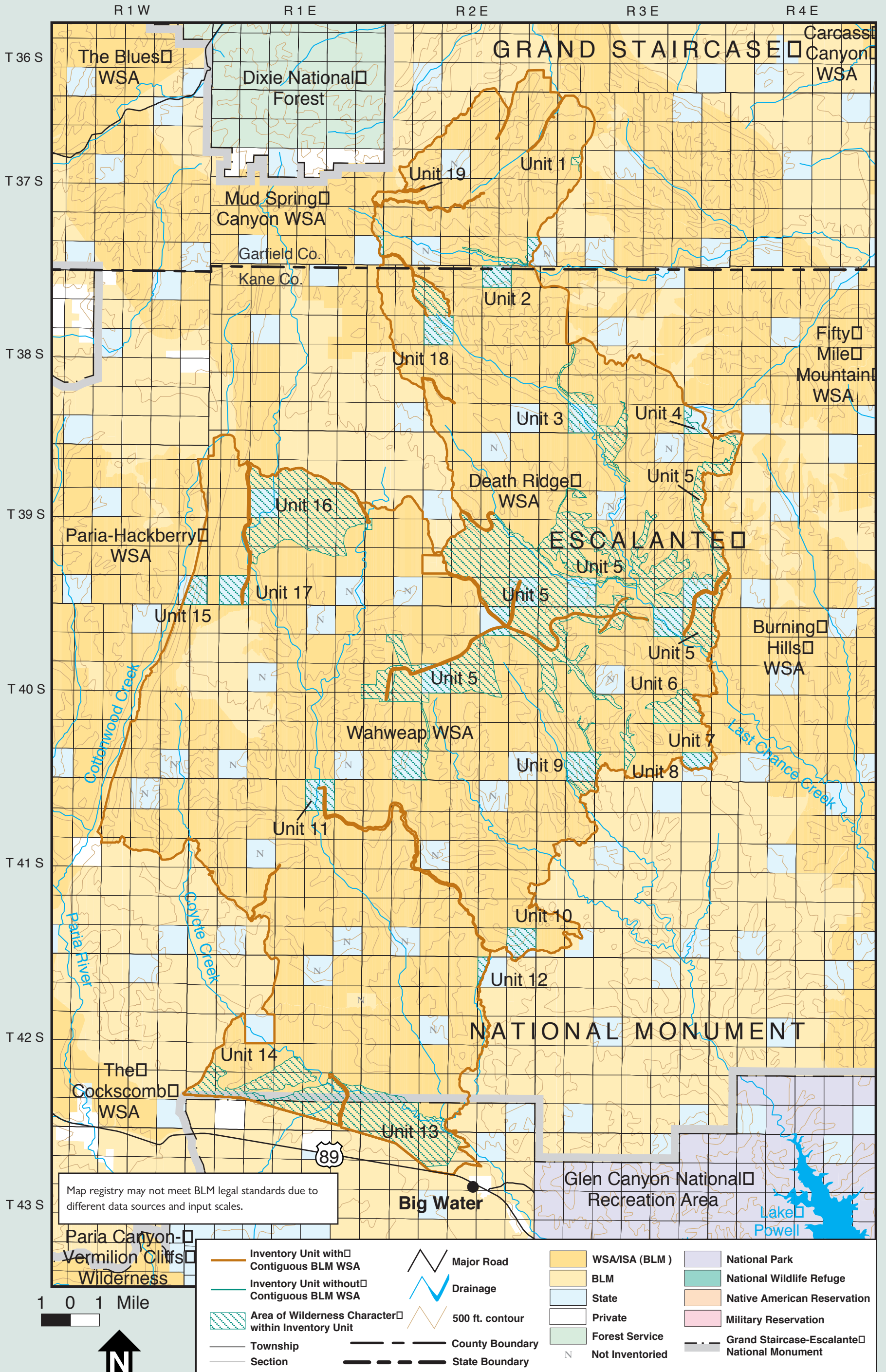
The two contiguous WSAs provide no identified outstanding primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities. Potential recreation opportunities in the inventory units include hiking, camping, backpacking, horseback riding, sightseeing, and photography. Opportunities are particularly noteworthy in Paradise Canyon and Petes Cove (Unit 5), Escalante Canyon (Units 3, 5, and 18), Wesses Cove (Units 8 and 9), and numerous other unnamed side canyons. Hiking and ecological study opportunities are available in the expansive piñon and juniper woodlands found on Fourmile Bench, Paradise Bench, and Squaw Bench, all in Unit 5.

Good opportunities for sightseeing and photography are found in the units containing the Cockscomb Ridge (Unit 15), the Little White Rock Canyon (Unit 14), the Trap Canyon narrows (Unit 19), the Nipple Butte standing rocks (Unit 10), the Pilot Rock (Unit 7), the Coyote Creek badlands (Units 13 and 14), Paradise Canyon (Unit 5), and Wahweap Canyon (Units 11 and 16).

Supplemental Values

Many of the units possess ecological, geological, scientific, and scenic values. Of particular interest are the 1,400-year old juniper trees located on Fourmile Bench and Squaw Bench (Unit 5). The diversity of plant life, ranging from desert shrub to ponderosa pine, and the abundance and variety of wildlife provide special opportunities for ecological study (Units 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 17, and 18).

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SOUTH CENTRAL REGION—Wahweap-Death Ridge