

Fiftymile Mountain

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
27,410	4,470	31,880 (87%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
4,100	500	4,600 (13%)
Inventory Unit Total		
31,510	4,970	36,480
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Fifty Mile Mountain WSA (UT-040-080)		146,143

About 31,880 acres of the nine Fiftymile Mountain inventory units have wilderness characteristics; specifically, Units 1-6 and 9 have wilderness characteristics. However, portions of Units 7 and 8 (4,600 acres) are lacking in wilderness characteristics. The areas with wilderness characteristics appear primarily natural and provide visitors with outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. These areas also enhance the natural integrity of the landforms and resource values within the contiguous Fifty Mile Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA). In addition to their wilderness attributes, the units have scenic, historic, and archaeological values.

Unit Description

The units are located almost entirely within Kane County, although most of Unit 7 extends into southern Garfield County. The topography and vegetation within the units are extremely varied since the units are on the periphery of the vast Fifty Mile Mountain WSA. The western units are in the south-central portion of the Kaiparowits Plateau and are characterized by vegetation that ranges from the cactus, yucca, and blackbrush typical of the northern Mojave Desert, to piñon and juniper woodland and ponderosa pine forest. Riparian vegetation is found in the labyrinthine canyons. The eastern units consist primarily of sagebrush, blackbrush and grasslands. Juniper trees are sparsely distributed throughout these benchlands, while occasional thick stands of piñon and juniper lie near the eastern WSA boundary.

The western Units (1-6) are geological continuations of the principal canyons represented in the contiguous WSA, including both the upper headwaters and tributaries. On the other hand, the sagebrush benchlands of the eastern Units (7-9) that lie beneath the striking eastern face of Fiftymile Mountain and the Straight Cliffs represent landscapes not contained in the WSA.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Most of the units retain their natural character. Units 1, 2, and 5 are nearly pristine, while Units 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9 are mostly natural and pristine in portions. Evidence of human impacts on the western Units (1-6) is limited to those caused by previous exploration for coal, oil, and gas; these disturbances are now largely rehabilitated and returning to a natural appearance. Vehicle ways associated with mineral exploration, range activities, recreation, and woodcutting have been documented in some units, along with unauthorized blading of vehicle routes. Units 7, 8, and 9 on the eastern side of the Fifty Mile Mountain WSA also retain most of their natural character, although there is evidence of extensive grazing activities, especially in Unit 8, and seismic lines, along with associated roads and vehicle way access. Cattle grazing is perhaps the most apparent impact in these units, with its attendant fencing, earthen stock ponds, salt locations, pipelines, and supplemental feed locations. Other human impacts include old seismic lines that are mostly overgrown by vegetation and some lightly used vehicle ways.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The western Units (1-6) have the same combination of topographic and vegetative screening and relative isolation from human activity that provide outstanding opportunities for solitude in the contiguous Fifty Mile Mountain WSA. Units 3 and 6, in particular, provide outstanding solitude opportunities because of dense woodlands, deep canyons, and rugged uplands. The eastern units, including the Black

Ridge and Batty Pass areas, also provide an extension of the solitude opportunities found in the contiguous WSA. Although the landscapes of Units 7, 8, and 9 are open, with less topographic and vegetative screening, the units front the expansive and dramatic eastern face of Fiftymile Mountain and the Straight Cliffs, evoking feelings of isolation.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The western Units (1-6) offer outstanding opportunities for hiking, backpacking, hunting, horseback riding, photography, and sightseeing similar to those found in the adjacent Fifty Mile Mountain WSA. The same landscapes and associated outstanding opportunities in the WSA extend into these contiguous units. The eastern Units (7-9) are sagebrush benchlands with scattered juniper woodlands; these landscapes are less rugged and more open. The primitive recreation opportunities here are both individually and as a group less diverse and less challenging than those afforded within the Fifty Mile Mountain WSA. Three unquestionably outstanding opportunities exist in all three units—photography, geologic study, and viewing the abrupt rise of the Fiftymile Mountain and Straight Cliffs escarpments.

Supplemental Values

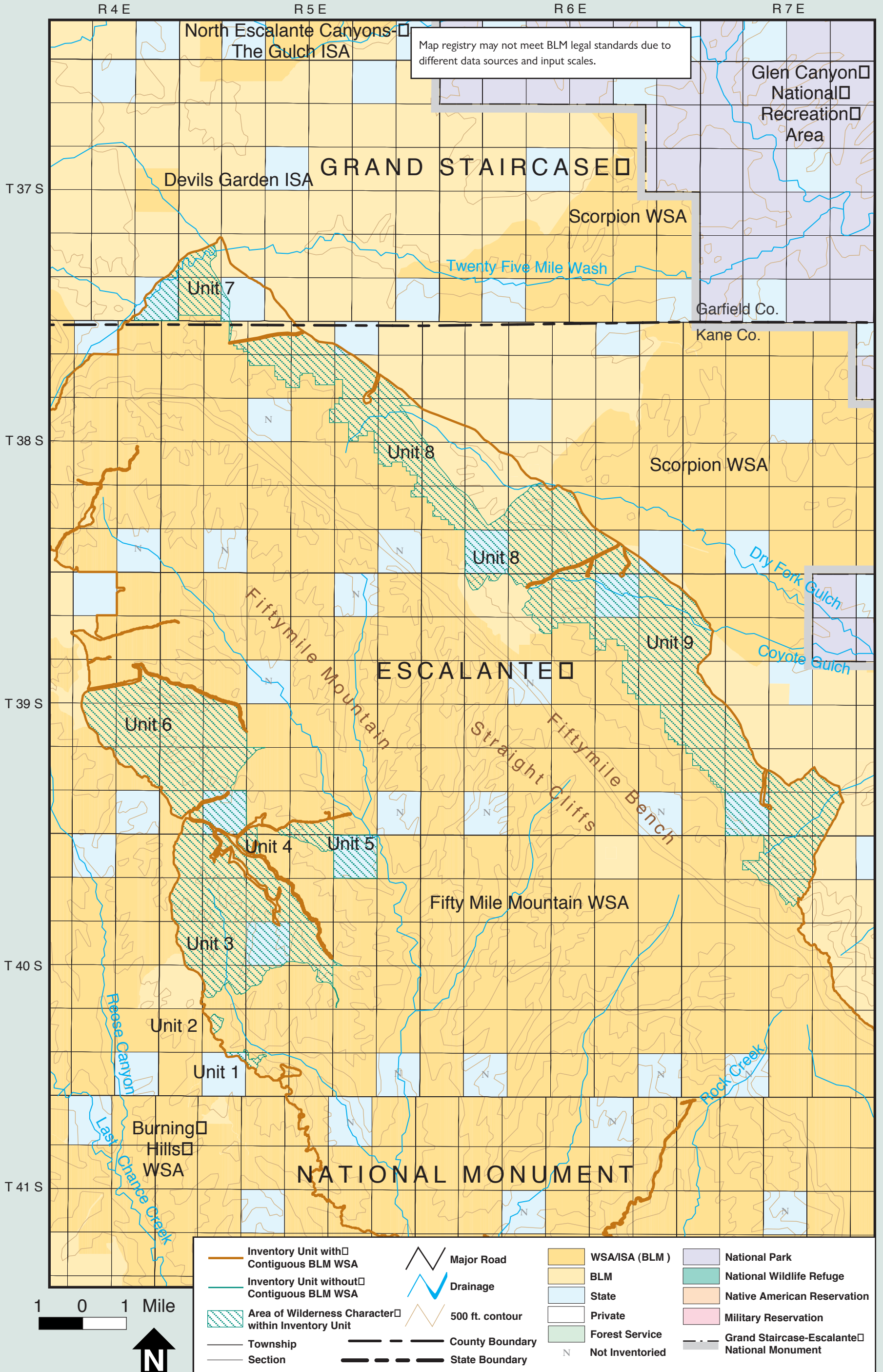
Units 1-6 contain the upper reaches of the canyons of the contiguous Fifty Mile Mountain WSA. Some of these tributaries are themselves picturesque and are likely to have archaeological sites or features of interest or significance. The Fiftymile Mountain area is recognized as a valuable archaeological resource for scientific and education purposes. Units 8 and 9 include segments of the historic Hole-in-the-Rock Trail. The desert benchlands in Units 7, 8, and 9, lying below the Straight Cliffs and Fiftymile Mountain promontories, provide unsurpassed views of the skyscraper-like rise of this escarpment.

FIFTYMILE MOUNTAIN—Fiftymile Mountain within the contiguous WSA looms in the background in this typical view of the open benchlands found in Units 8 and 9.



BLM photo

Fiftymile Mountain



SOUTH CENTRAL REGION—Fiftymile Mountain