

Sunset Arch

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
4,800	600	5,400 (71%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
1,900	300	2,200 (29%)
Inventory Unit Total		
6,700	900	7,600
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Glen Canyon National Recreation Area		

Most of the Sunset Arch inventory unit (5,400 acres) has retained its wilderness characteristics and is natural, offering primitive recreation and solitude opportunities that extend from the contiguous Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (NRA). There are several seldom-used and overgrown vehicle ways, a revegetating old seismic line, and fence lines, but these imprints have little impact on the area's naturalness.

The western part of the unit (2,200 acres) does not have wilderness characteristics. This area is separated from the eastern part of the unit by a pipeline and its associated constructed maintenance route, and it does not meet the size criterion by itself. It contains the Dance Hall Rock Historic Site, Lone Rock, 2.5 miles of fence line, and a 2.2-mile remnant of seismic line.

Three roads and associated facilities have been cherry-stemmed from the inventory unit. These include a livestock water pipeline/trough system in the northeast, a major range water and line facility at Fortymile Spring, and the parking area at Dance Hall Rock.

Unit Description

The Sunset Arch inventory unit is located in Kane County about 44 miles southeast of Escalante. All public lands are within BLM's Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The inventory unit consists mainly of Fortymile Ridge and Fortymile Bench. The northern part of the unit contains the crest of Fortymile Ridge. From the crest, the benchlands below are open and look like sand dunes, with low shrubs and expansive views in all directions. The benchlands start high at the ridge and slope moderately downward toward Fortymile Gulch. The gradual fall of the bench to Fortymile Gulch is interrupted only by the abrupt appearance of scattered rock outcrops like Sunset Arch, Lone

Rock, and the Dance Hall Rocks. The benchlands are covered with low-growing desert shrubs and grasses. The area is currently used for livestock grazing, hunting, historical study, sightseeing, and hiking. Dance Hall Rock is a historic site associated with Mormon history and settlement.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

The area with wilderness characteristics is natural, although a few human imprints are present. These imprints consist of a one-time seismic line pass (2.8 miles), a fence line (3.4 miles), and five vehicle ways (6.8 miles). The seismic line is a long and linear feature stretching all the way from Hole-in-the-Rock Road to a tributary of Fortymile Gulch. On-the-ground checking revealed that this one-pass surface brush is generally unnoticeable and is being naturally reclaimed with desert shrubs. The vehicle ways are nearly abandoned. They pass through deep sand, and what little use they receive is mainly by livestock managers and recreationists. These minor routes have little impact on the unit's natural character. Two roads have been cherry-stemmed from the part of the unit with wilderness characteristics.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The inventory unit is an extension of the Glen Canyon NRA, an area with

outstanding solitude opportunities. The solitude opportunities are outstanding in conjunction with the Escalante River Canyon complex to the east. Moreover, the seven drainages and rolling hills of Fortymile Ridge offer an outstanding degree of seclusion in their own right. The ridge, while relatively open with only low sage and shrub cover, is expansive, with many swales and terrain dips. Visitors can easily distance themselves from each other.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The unit adjoins and is an extension of wild lands within the Glen Canyon NRA, which offers outstanding primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities. The best primitive recreation opportunity is day hiking to Sunset Arch. Navajo Mountain can be seen through Sunset Arch, presenting interesting photographic composition opportunities. Some hikes and backpacks down Fortymile Gulch and into the NRA begin in this unit, either down the gulch itself or through a scenic and incised tributary north of the canyon.

Supplemental Values

Sunset Arch is the only supplemental feature of note; this arch is located in a small outcrop of rocks near the unit's center. Some archaeological features are also present.

SUNSET ARCH—Sunset Arch provides scenic relief in the otherwise uninterrupted benchlands that slope downward from Fortymile Ridge to Fortymile Gulch.



BLM photo

Sunset Arch

