

# Steep Creek

## Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
<b>With Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
8,100	0	8,100 (70%)
<b>Without Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
3,400	0	3,400 (30%)
<b>Inventory Unit Total</b>		
11,500	0	11,500
<b>Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
Steep Creek WSA (UT-040-061)		21,896

Most of the Steep Creek inventory unit (8,100 acres) has wilderness characteristics. Although fringe areas contain range developments and other disturbances, the interior remains natural. However, several portions of the unit (3,400 acres) are unnatural and lack wilderness characteristics because of prominent range developments, vegetation manipulations, and mining disturbances. A 0.2-mile road that enters the unit off the Burr Trail has been cherry-stemmed from the unit.

From this unit there are spectacular views of the Circle Cliffs. The unit contains a portion of these cliffs, as well as deep washes that wind through colorful red-soil benches dotted with piñon and juniper. Outstanding solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities are available within these disparate landscapes.

The unit is bounded on the west by the rugged Steep Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA), which contains colorful and dramatic portions of the Circle Cliffs north of the Burr Trail. The Steep Creek inventory unit's solitude and primitive recreation opportunities are enhanced by

the presence of the WSA, with its pristine 34 square miles of canyons and benches.

## Unit Description

The Steep Creek inventory unit is located in central Garfield County about 25 miles east of Boulder, just east of the Circle Cliffs. The unit is within BLM's Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The vegetation is predominantly piñon and juniper woodland on the benches, while the deep washes contain willows and other riparian species. The inventory unit boundary follows the Steep Creek WSA boundary on the west, drawn on a mineral exploration route from the 1950s. This route has been largely obliterated through vegetative regrowth and erosion.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### Naturalness

Several portions of the inventory unit are unnatural because of mining, range water developments, drill seedings, and chainings. However, the unit's interior appears to be entirely natural with the exception of a barbed wire fence, an underground pipeline, and washed out vehicle ways in the western portion, all of which are substantially unnoticeable.

## Outstanding Opportunities

### Solitude

The Steep Creek inventory unit provides outstanding opportunities for solitude.

The foremost opportunities are found within the deep winding washes in the unit's interior. Other outstanding opportunities exist on top of the benches below the Circle Cliffs and within the broad, deep canyons. The benches and rolling hills are covered by dense juniper and piñon woodland that screens visitors from each other. The inventory unit extends the size, vegetation, configuration, and topography factors that create the notable solitude opportunities provided by the Steep Creek WSA.

## Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The inventory unit provides outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. There are excellent opportunities for hiking, backpacking, camping, horseback riding, geological and cultural study, sightseeing, and photography. The area is a logical extension of the Steep Creek WSA and augments these same outstanding opportunities found within the WSA. From the higher elevations, visitors are provided with scenic vistas of the surrounding Circle Cliffs, the Lampstand area, and Capitol Reef National Park.

## Supplemental Values

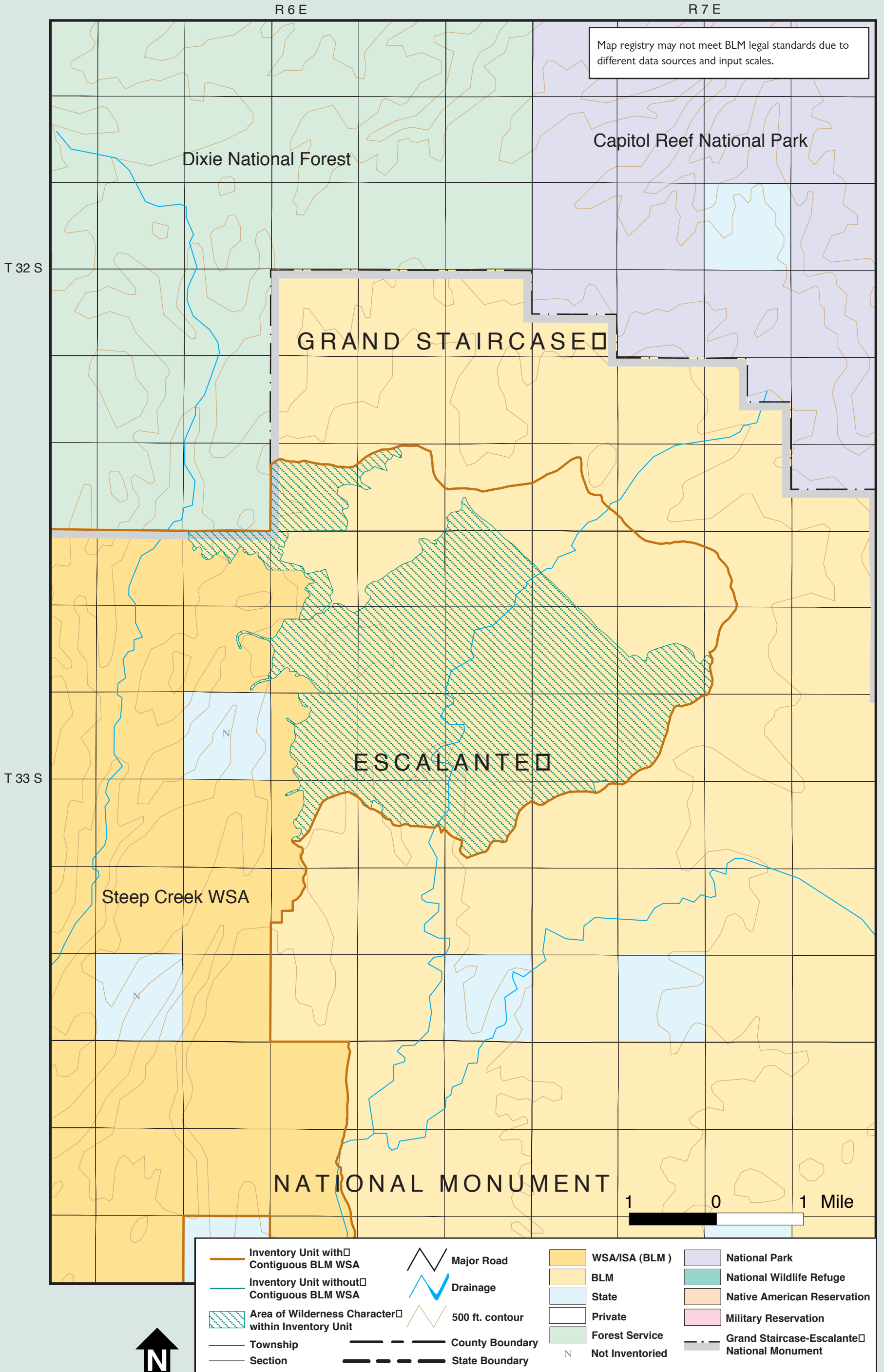
The unit is scenic and also has geologic and cultural resource values. A portion of the Circle Cliffs and the distinctive erosional Chinle formation soils beneath them are contained within the unit. Evidence of prehistoric human occupation is relatively common.

STEEP CREEK—Piñon and juniper woodlands and the unit's rugged terrain provide solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation experiences, especially when considered along with the contiguous Steep Creek WSA.



Jerry Sintz

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SOUTH CENTRAL REGION—Steep Creek