

Colt Mesa

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
25,400	2,900	28,300 (100%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
0	0	0 (0%)
Inventory Unit Total		
25,400	2,900	28,300
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Capitol Reef National Park		

The Colt Mesa inventory unit (28,300 acres) has wilderness characteristics. The area in large part appears natural and provides visitors with outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. In addition, the unit contains a portion of the Waterpocket Fold, the prominent geologic landmark within Capitol Reef National Park (CRNP). The entire 18-mile-long eastern boundary abuts portions of the CRNP that have been administratively endorsed for wilderness. The unit provides an extension to the wilderness values of those lands.

Several small portions of the unit are unnatural and lack wilderness characteristics because of abandoned structures, stock ponds, mining impacts, and vehicle routes. However, the boundary was drawn to eliminate these areas. Two roads that penetrate the unit have been cherry-stemmed.

Unit Description

The Colt Mesa unit is located in eastern Garfield County about 30 miles east of Escalante and lies within the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Four mesas dominate the review unit: Wagon Box Mesa to the north, Deer Point to the south, and Colt and Horse Pasture Mesas in between. Piñon and juniper trees are the dominant vegetation covering the rough hills, steep-sided buttes, and benchlands. Sagebrush and other shrubs are common in the lower valleys.

COLT MESA—Mesas separated by intervening washes and valleys characterize Colt Mesa's varied and rugged natural terrain; these features support the finding that Colt Mesa has wilderness characteristics. In this view, the Colt Mesa inventory unit is in the foreground, with Studhorse Peaks in the background.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

The unit appears natural and has been determined to have wilderness characteristics. The unit contains evidence of past mineral exploration and current ranching and recreation activities. However, these impacts are substantially unnoticeable in most of the unit. Most of the identified vehicle ways are single-pass bulldozer routes up the sides and across the tops of the mesas; these resulted from mineral exploration activities conducted some 30 to 40 years ago. These routes are now disappearing and are impassible because of non-use, extensive revegetation, and erosional processes. An airstrip constructed during mineral exploration after World War II is now completely revegetated and unnoticeable. Several stock ponds and an abandoned drill pad are also substantially unnoticeable.

A few areas on the edge of the unit do not have wilderness characteristics because of substantial disturbance from mining activity, stock ponds, abandoned structures, and associated access. The unit boundary was drawn to eliminate these disturbances. Two roads entering the unit have been cherry-stemmed. One road at the northern tip leads from the Burr Trail south to an area with significant disturbance from oil drill pads and spoils. Another short road west of Colt Mesa leads to an adit (this route is too short to depict on the unit map).

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The inventory unit provides outstanding opportunities for solitude. The rugged landscape features a diverse assemblage of mesas, washes, uplands, and rolling hills,

presenting a topography where visitors are easily separated from the view of others. Piñon and juniper forests on the uplands and mesas provide dense screening in some areas, isolating people from other users. Solitude is further enhanced by the area's size and ample opportunities to find seclusion in the rugged and broken terrain of the Waterpocket Fold. In addition, the area is contiguous to portions of CRNP that also have outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The unit provides outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Outstanding opportunities exist for backpacking, horseback riding, hiking, camping, geologic sightseeing, and photography. Views of the surrounding Circle Cliffs, Escalante Canyons, and Waterpocket Fold from the summits of Wagon Box and Deer Point Mesas are spectacular. A cross-country hike to Deep Point is featured in a Utah hiking guide. In addition, the unit is contiguous to portions of CRNP that possess outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation. The unit extends the opportunities for visitors to experience, both on foot and horseback, the jagged canyons and mesas of the Waterpocket Fold.

Supplemental Values

Spectacular scenic views from the unit include the Circle Cliffs portion of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, CRNP, the North Escalante Canyons, Boulder Mountain, and the Henry Mountains. The unit also has several outstanding geological features. Deer Point is a spectacular example of the 100-mile-long Waterpocket Fold monocline. The upper reaches of the Moody Canyons are cut into Kaibab limestone and Coconino sandstone, which are some of the oldest exposed rock layers in the region.



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Colt Mesa

