

Road Canyon

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
11,850	5,150	17,000 (88%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
2,110	300	2,410 (12%)
Inventory Unit Total		
13,960	5,450	19,410
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Road Canyon WSA (UT-060-201)		54,820

All ten Road Canyon inventory units are contiguous with the Road Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and have portions with wilderness characteristics (17,000 acres). These units are predominantly natural and enhance the WSA's outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive forms of recreation.

Recreation opportunities include hiking, horseback riding, camping, climbing, photography, and cultural exploration. Small portions of several units (2,410 acres) are unnatural and lack wilderness characteristics because of extensive woodcutting, recreational use, or agricultural practices.

Unit Description

The Road Canyon inventory units are located in south-central San Juan County 15 miles west of Bluff. They surround the Road Canyon WSA, with their boundaries following substantially noticeable human impacts wherever possible. Unit 1 includes the upper watershed of Road Canyon; its boundaries are located along the closest roads west of the WSA boundary, chained areas, and private land. Unit 2 is on Cedar Mesa between Utah Highway 261 and the tributaries of Lime Creek on the western boundary of the Road Canyon WSA. The vegetation in Units 1 and 2 is predominantly juniper and piñon. Units 3 and 4 lie north of the Valley of the Gods Road and are dominated by impressive sandstone buttes. The sparse vegetation here and in Units 5 and 6 is

predominantly sagebrush and rabbitbrush. Unit 5, one of the smaller units, is situated northeast of San Juan County Route 226 and east of Lime Creek. Its terrain slopes gently toward Lime Creek.

Unit 6, by far the largest of the units, drains into Comb Wash. In the east and north, this unit is dominated by the rolling hills surrounding lower Road Canyon. The unit is bordered by San Juan County Route 226 or the original alignment of this road on the southwest, a power line and U.S. Highway 163 on the south, and San Juan County Route 237 on the east and northeast. Unit 7, the smallest unit, is State land south of San Juan County Route 237. Units 8, 9, and 10 are state inholdings within the Road Canyon WSA that are accessed by cherry-stemmed roads or vehicle ways. The road to Unit 8 leads nearly to the edge of Road Canyon. The road to Unit 9 leads to the edge of Lime Canyon. The vehicle way leading to Unit 10 provides access to Cigarette Spring Cave.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

All of the smaller units—3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10—appear natural throughout, as does the larger Unit 6. At the southwestern edge of Unit 6, the routes used to define part of the WSA boundary are either substantially or (in most places) completely unnoticeable on the ground, resulting in Unit 6 being contiguous to the WSA.

Portions of Units 1, 2, and 4 are also natural. The natural portion of Unit 1 includes much of a densely forested upper watershed but excludes a connected series of bladed areas in the southwestern corner. A large portion of Unit 2 is a maze of woodcutting routes; the cumulative effect of these numerous vehicle ways has created an area that appears unnatural. Unit 4 appears natural throughout, with the exception of a popular camping loop off the Valley of the Gods Road.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The inventory units are contiguous with the Road Canyon WSA, which has outstanding opportunities for solitude. Given their small size, Units 1-5 and 7-10 possess outstanding opportunities for solitude only in conjunction with the contiguous WSA. Unit 6, on the other hand, is large enough and has enough topographic variation to provide solitude opportunities on its own.

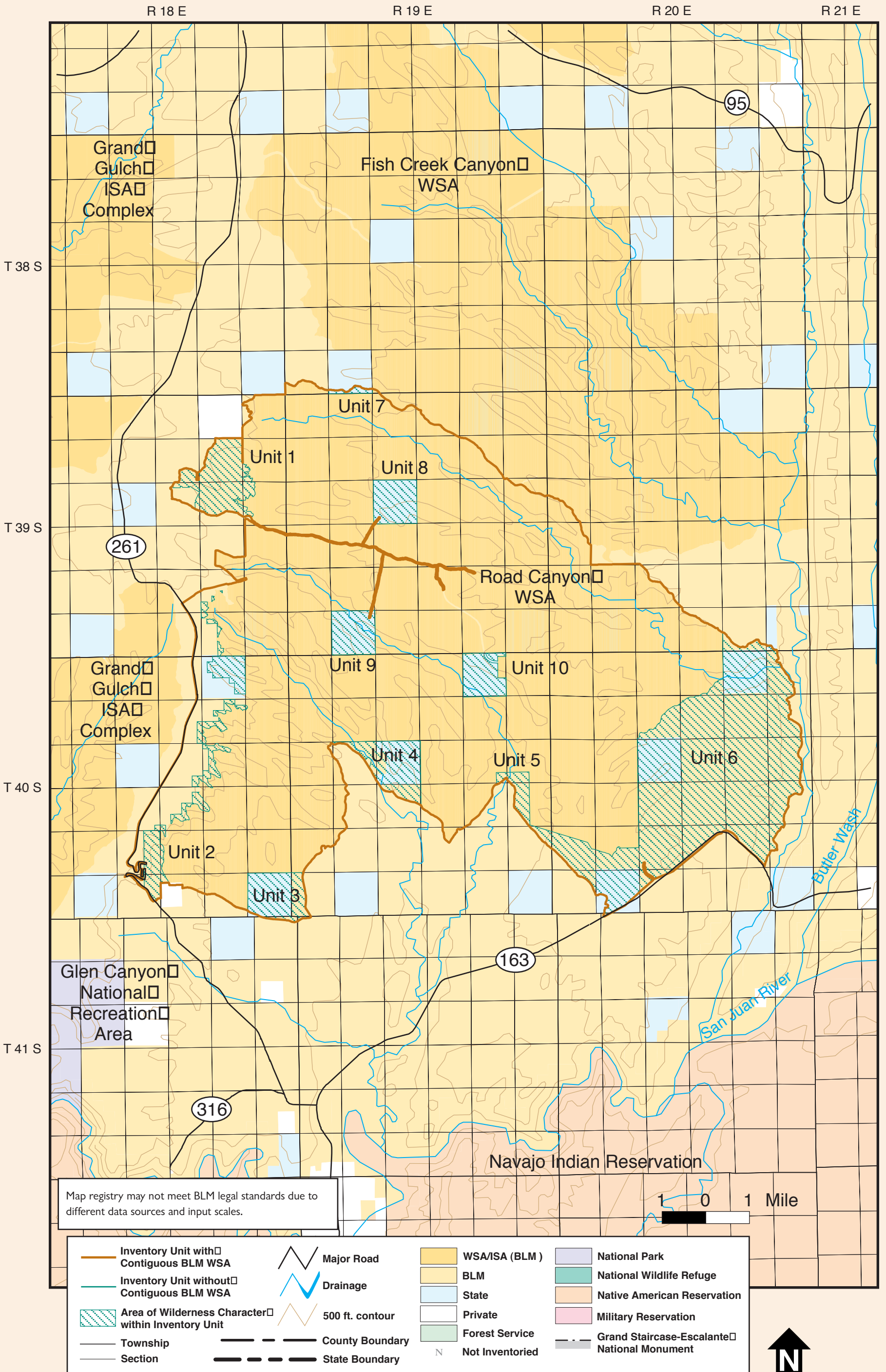
Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The units are contiguous with the Road Canyon WSA, which has outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Units 1, 2, and 7-10 offer recreation opportunities only in conjunction with the WSA. Despite their small size, Units 3-5 offer rock formations for outstanding primitive climbing opportunities, challenging for even the most accomplished rock climbers. Unit 6 presents outstanding opportunities for hiking, camping, horseback riding, and photography on its own.

Supplemental Values

The important archaeological sites within the unit probably number in the hundreds. Scenic quality for the unit is exceptionally high in both the Road Canyon and Lime Creek areas. The latter is part of the Valley of the Gods, a destination for tourists from around the globe.

Road Canyon



SOUTHEAST REGION—Road Canyon