

# Arch and Mule Canyons

## Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
<b>With Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
0	0	0 (0%)
<b>Without Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
13,600	1,260	14,860 (100%)
<b>Inventory Unit Total</b>		
13,600	1,260	14,860
<b>Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
None		

The three Arch and Mule Canyons inventory units (14,860 acres) associated with the Mule Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) are separated from the WSA and each other by roads. While the units are predominantly natural, these roads create small, discrete, narrow inventory units without wilderness characteristics. If the Manti-La Sal National Forest were to complete wilderness suitability studies on the contiguous Forest Service lands, then these findings should be reevaluated. However, as stand-alone units, these units do not have wilderness characteristics.

## Unit Description

The Arch and Mule Canyons inventory units are located in south-central San Juan County about 15 miles west of Blanding. The units' boundaries follow legal land lines or, where possible, substantially noticeable human impacts. The route up Arch Canyon shows evidence of having been constructed and is readily passable (and frequently driven) beyond the National Forest boundary; it is a road and serves to separate Units 1 and 2. The route past Hotel Rock shows evidence of construction at both ends; although the portion coming off the south end of Little Baullie Mesa is impassable to all but the most ardent four-wheel drive enthusiasts, this route also is a road and separates Units 2 and 3. Vegetation is predominantly piñon and juniper woodland, with associated bitterbrush, manzanita, buffaloberry, sagebrush, oak, and serviceberry. Cottonwoods, willows, and tamarisk dominate Arch Canyon.

All three units have been grazed; there are numerous stock ponds, corrals, and fences present. Little Baullie Mesa was chained but has revegetated naturally; the chained area is unnoticeable except on aerial photographs. There is also a plugged and abandoned drill hole and a seismic exploration line on Little Baullie Mesa.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### Naturalness

Unit 1 has two vehicle routes (2.3 and 0.3 miles in length), four stock ponds, and a large corral on Texas Flat. The remainder of the unit, including Texas Canyon and the portion of Arch Canyon southwest of its boundary road, appears predominantly natural. Unit 2 is natural in Arch Canyon northeast of the boundary road. Although Little Baullie Mesa has been chained, the chaining is no longer noticeable on the ground. The area has revegetated with piñons that are now 15 feet tall and appears predominantly natural. A few noticeable piles of slash, several long vehicle ways, and one road (approximately 2 miles long) are all that remain of the chaining. There is also one seismic exploration line that has partially revegetated.

Conditions similar to the Little Baullie Mesa portion of Unit 2 exist in the Little Baullie Mesa portion of Unit 3. The remainder of Unit 3 appears predominantly natural and is without intrusions except for one vehicle route (0.5 mile long) that serves as an access to the Comb Wash Cave.

### ARCH AND MULE CANYONS—

Although the units are known for their inspiring archaeological remains and stunning scenery, none currently possesses wilderness characteristics.

## Outstanding Opportunities

### Solitude

The size of the inventory units, their separation from other areas having wilderness characteristics, and the frequent use of the roads up Arch Canyon and past Hotel Rock limit opportunities for solitude. The popularity and confining nature of Arch Canyon further limits opportunities for solitude in Units 1 and 2.

### Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for primitive recreation such as horseback riding, camping, hiking, backpacking, climbing, photography, and the discovery of cultural resources exist in all three inventory units. However, the size of the units, separated as they are from other areas with wilderness characteristics, and the fact that they are bounded by popular vehicle routes prevents these opportunities from being outstanding.

## Supplemental Values

The Arch and Mule Canyons inventory units are known for their combination of interesting archaeology and breathtaking scenery.



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