

# Bridger Jack Mesa

## Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
<b>With Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
23,500	2,900	26,400 (86%)
<b>Without Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
3,800	480	4,280 (14%)
<b>Inventory Unit Total</b>		
27,300	3,380	30,680
<b>Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
Bridger Jack Mesa WSA (UT-060-167)		5,290
Canyonlands National Park-Needles Unit		61,182

About 26,400 acres of the Sixshooters (Unit 1), Lavender Mesa (Unit 2), and Lavender Creek/Bridger Jack Mesa Cliffs (Unit 3) portions of the Bridger Jack Mesa inventory units have wilderness characteristics. The remaining 4,280 acres lack wilderness characteristics, including three small areas along the boundary of Unit 2, a portion of Unit 3 from the west side of Lavender Creek Wash to the bench west of Bridger Jack Mesa, and portions of Unit 3 off of San Juan County's Cottonwood Canyon Road. The three units include the major red-rock scenic cliffs and the Sixshooter Peaks located south of Utah Highway 211.

## Unit Description

The Bridger Jack Mesa inventory units are located entirely within San Juan County about 20 air miles northwest of Monticello along the southeastern side of Canyonlands National Park. All three units are contiguous to an area in the Park that has been administratively endorsed by the National Park Service for wilderness designation. Unit 3 is also contiguous to and surrounds the Bridger Jack Mesa Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The units encompass a variety of landforms, including mesas, buttes, canyons, and valleys. Lavender Mesa, with its sheer walls of Wingate sandstone, is the area's dominant feature. Vegetation includes riparian plants such as cottonwood and tamarisk as well as low-growing desert plants such as sage, rabbitbrush, and blackbrush on the flats and benches. Juniper trees are highly scattered at lower elevations, with denser stands of piñon and juniper at higher elevations.

Visitors heading for Davis and Lavender Canyons in Canyonlands National Park travel by vehicle between the inventory units. Car camping along the park border occurs within both of these canyons in the inventory units. Current uses include

recreation and livestock grazing. Past uses included uranium mining and exploration along the bench west of the Bridger Jack Mesa WSA boundary and along the east side of Lavender Mesa. The Dugout Ranch, which The Nature Conservancy recently purchased, is adjacent to the units.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### Naturalness

Most of Units 1 and 2 are natural. These natural areas include the major red-rock scenic cliffs and peaks south of Utah Scenic Byway 211, as well as the upper portion of the Dry Fork of Lavender Creek. In all three units, the natural areas are contiguous with the Bridger Jack Mesa WSA or with lands recommended for wilderness designation within Canyonlands National Park. Two vehicle routes and a large unnatural area within Unit 3 separate the natural portions of the units. The large unnatural area on the west side of Unit 3 contains uranium exploration and mining impacts, off-highway vehicle impacts, and multiple roads and vehicle ways. Other portions of Unit 3 were also found to be unnatural because of similar impacts and old chainings. Small portions of Unit 2 were found to be unnatural as the result of uranium mining.

## Outstanding Opportunities

### Solitude

The Sixshooters, Lavender Mesa, and upper Dry Fork of Lavender Creek portions of the inventory units are contiguous with the Needles Unit of Canyonlands National Park, which has been recommended for wilderness. In combination with the Needles Unit, the Sixshooters area and the upper Dry Fork of Lavender Creek contain outstanding opportunities for solitude. The Lavender Mesa unit, with its many side canyons, juniper benches, and isolated mesa tops, contains outstanding opportunities for solitude on its own. The natural portion of the

Lavender Creek/Bridger Jack Mesa Cliffs unit surrounds the Bridger Jack Mesa WSA. In combination with this WSA, the natural portion of this unit has outstanding opportunities for solitude.

## Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for climbing the North and South Sixshooter Peaks in Unit 1 are outstanding. There are also some opportunities for hiking and horseback riding. Opportunities for hiking, climbing, primitive camping, and viewing cultural resources in the Lavender Mesa and upper Dry Fork of Lavender Creek units are outstanding when considered in conjunction with the contiguous Needles Unit in Canyonlands National Park. The natural portion of the Lavender Creek/Bridger Jack Mesa Cliffs area, when considered along with the Bridger Jack Mesa WSA, also has outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

## Supplemental Values

Lavender Mesa, being virtually inaccessible, has undisturbed vegetation that may have research value. Lavender Mesa, North Sixshooter Peak, and South Sixshooter Peak are highly scenic and form a long segment of the view along Utah Scenic Byway 211 to Canyonlands National Park. Other scenic features within the units include at least one large natural arch and one natural bridge. The area is habitat for several species of raptors, including golden eagles and possibly peregrine falcons. Well-preserved cliff dwellings and other outstanding cultural resources are also present.



BRIDGER JACK MESA—One of many scenic highlights of these units, North Sixshooter Peak looms in the background.

Jerry Sintz

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