

Beaver Creek

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
26,000	1,500	27,500 (79%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
6,600	800	7,400 (21%)
Inventory Unit Total		
32,600	2,300	34,900
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
None		

A portion of the Beaver Creek inventory unit (27,500 acres) has wilderness characteristics. This portion is defined by many deep, rugged canyons, including about 10 miles of the Dolores River Canyon, and it also contains over 6 miles of Beaver Creek, a notable native trout stream. The natural portions of the unit contain outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The remaining 7,400 acres lack wilderness characteristics because of uranium mining impacts, old and current farming activity, oil and gas exploration impacts, chainings, stock pond developments, and vehicle use.

Unit Description

All of the Beaver Creek inventory unit is within Grand County. It is located on the northeastern flank of the La Sal Mountains about 25 air miles northeast of Moab. The unit has a convoluted shape as a result of its multiple winding canyons. The boundary generally follows roads, uranium mining activity, and extensive chainings. The Dolores River runs through the north-central part of the unit and represents the lowest elevation point. Beaver Creek drops 1,700 feet in its canyon between North and South Beaver mesas to the Dolores River. Sevenmile Mesa towers over 1,600 feet above the Dolores River. Vegetation is mostly piñon and juniper woodland, giving way to open sage and blackbrush in the north. Canyon bottoms have cottonwood, tamarisk, and other riparian species, while aspen, ponderosa pine, and Douglas fir grow in the upper

reaches of Beaver Creek. The Dolores River is used by raft and kayak groups during its short spring season. Kokopelli's Trail, a 147-mile mountain bike and all-terrain vehicle trail between Grand Junction and Moab, forms portions of the unit's western boundary. The unit is leased for livestock grazing and also provides quality deer and elk hunting.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Most of the inventory unit appears natural. The deep canyons and some upland segments have not experienced much surface disturbance. However, substantially noticeable and extensive impacts exist around the boundary. There are over a dozen separate areas along the edge of the unit that appear unnatural because of roads, uranium mining impacts, farm activity, oil and gas exploration, stock pond developments, chainings, and vehicle use.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The natural portion of the inventory unit contains outstanding opportunities for solitude. Most of this area consists of deep, remote, and seldom-visited canyons. The many canyons and intricate side drainages combine with the mostly wooded remnants of the upland area to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The general area does not have good road access. Reaching the inventory unit boundary requires a four-wheel drive vehicle and two hours of driving time from the nearest town. The canyon systems are isolated from

each other and from the outside world. In the canyon bottoms, thick riparian vegetation contributes to feelings of solitude.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The natural portion of the inventory unit contains outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. A study and environmental review completed by the National Park Service (NPS) in September 1979 as part of a congressional river study found that the Dolores River had outstanding recreational values for whitewater boating. Opportunities for backpacking, hiking, photography, primitive hunting, and backcountry fishing are also outstanding. The unit's deep canyons, perennial streams, and wide range of topography and vegetation all enhance opportunities for backcountry exploring.

Supplemental Values

In 1979 the NPS determined that the Dolores River had outstandingly remarkable scenic, geologic, and wildlife values. The Dolores River Canyon features steep red-rock cliffs that contrast with the dark green riparian vegetation along the shoreline. The natural portion of the inventory unit includes the only section of the river in Utah recommended by the NPS for designation as a Wild River. The character of the area has not changed since 1979.

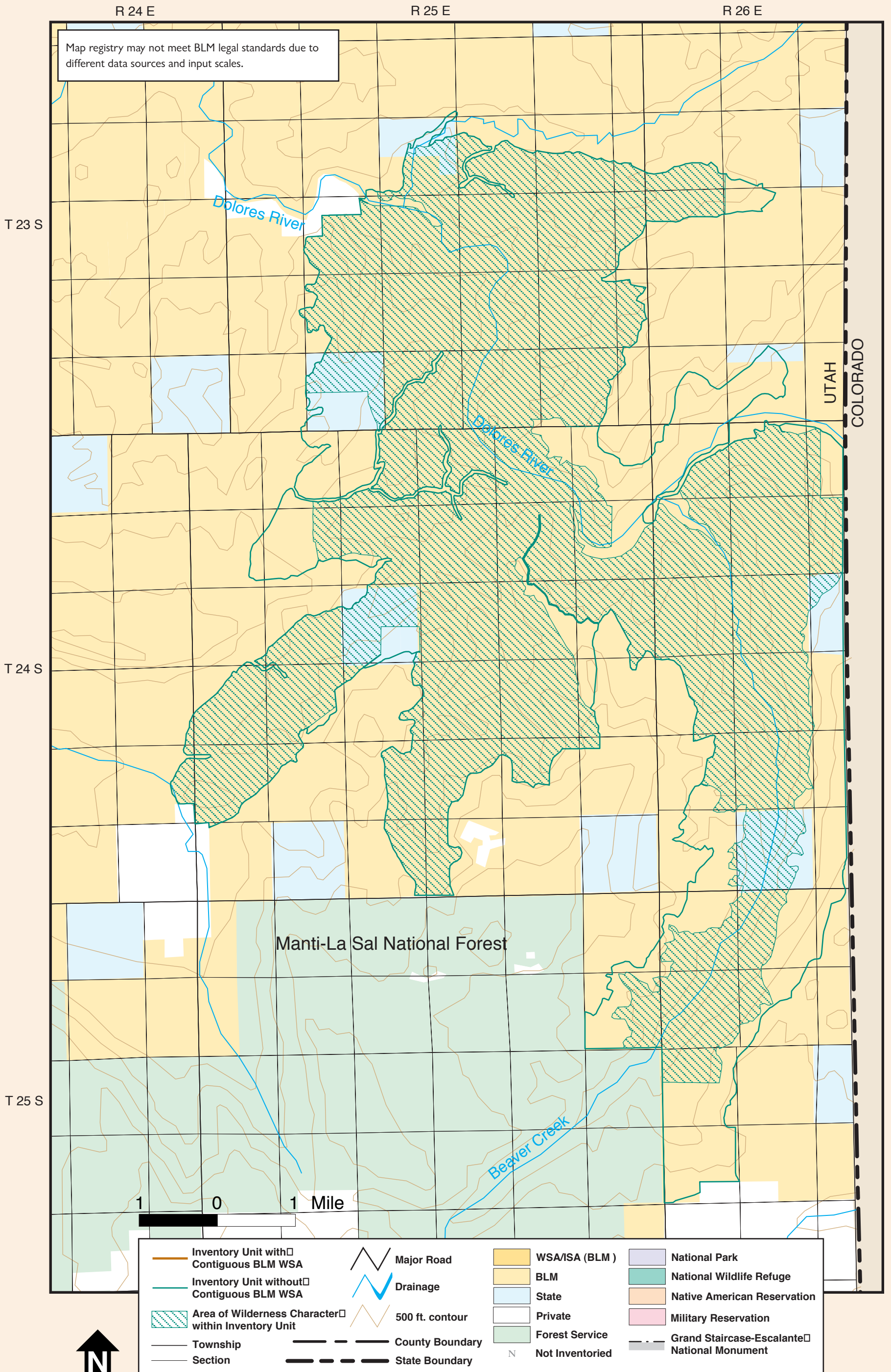
Beaver Creek, a deeply entrenched sandstone canyon with Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, cottonwood, and piñon and juniper woodland, is especially scenic. Beaver Creek supports a population of Colorado cut-throat trout. Other wildlife species include elk, mule deer, mountain lion, and black bear. Several prehistoric cultural sites are located within the unit.



BEAVER CREEK—The upper end of Thompson Canyon is just one of the many deep, rugged canyons in this unit.

BLM Photo

Beaver Creek



SOUTHEAST REGION—Beaver Creek