

Mill Creek Canyon

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
2,910	1,310	4,220 (36%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
3,800	3,770	7,570 (64%)
Inventory Unit Total		
6,710	5,080	11,790
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Mill Creek Canyon WSA (UT-060-139A)		9,780

Three of the five inventory units contiguous to the Mill Creek Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) have considerable disturbance. Although these units are undeniably beautiful, countless travel routes impact and reduce naturalness in a large portion of them. As a result, approximately 7,570 acres do not have wilderness characteristics.

However, portions of the Mill Creek Canyon units (4,220 acres) are natural. These natural portions enhance the adjacent WSA's outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive forms of recreation such as hiking, horseback riding, camping, photography, and climbing. In addition, these portions are logical extensions of the WSA.

Unit Description

The Mill Creek Canyon inventory units are located in south-central Grand County. They are just east of Moab and are contiguous to the Mill Creek Canyon WSA.

Unit 1 is north of the WSA and south of the Sand Flats Road. Unit 2 encompasses most of the remainder of the land between Sand Flats Road and the WSA. Unit 3 abuts the western side of the WSA and includes the lower South Fork of Mill Creek. Unit 4, the largest of the Mill Creek Canyon inventory units, is south of the WSA. It includes the areas known as South Mesa, Between-the-Creeks, and Johnsons-Up-On-Top and has a 40-acre private inholding. Unit 5 is on the eastern side of the WSA.

At the highest elevations, the land is predominantly covered by piñon woodland. At lower elevations, juniper becomes more and more prevalent, along with single-leaf ash, cliffrose, serviceberry, blackbrush, Mormon tea, and scrub-oak. Cottonwood, willow, and Russian olive are the primary riparian plants.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

The portion of Unit 3 within the South Fork of Mill Creek Canyon appears natural. However, the remainder of the unit is unnatural, with most of the western part dominated by the adjacent county landfill and the southern edge located adjacent to a subdivision. An access way forms the boundary between the area with and without wilderness characteristics.

Unit 4 includes highly scenic portions of the South Fork of Mill Creek. However, the bladed roads north of this canyon and the maze of roads and ways on Johnsons-Up-On-Top have impaired the naturalness of most of this unit. Only South Mesa still appears natural. A route out to South Mesa Point was originally constructed through the piñon woodland, but the route is rarely used and is accessible only through private land.

Unit 5 is natural throughout. The state section is dominated by steep walls dropping precipitously off the mesa into the North Fork of Mill Creek.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The units are contiguous with the Mill Creek Canyon WSA, which has outstanding opportunities for solitude. Unit 1 is small; so opportunities for solitude are outstanding only in conjunction with the WSA. Unit 2 offers little opportunity for solitude in the areas without naturalness, but in the south half of the state section

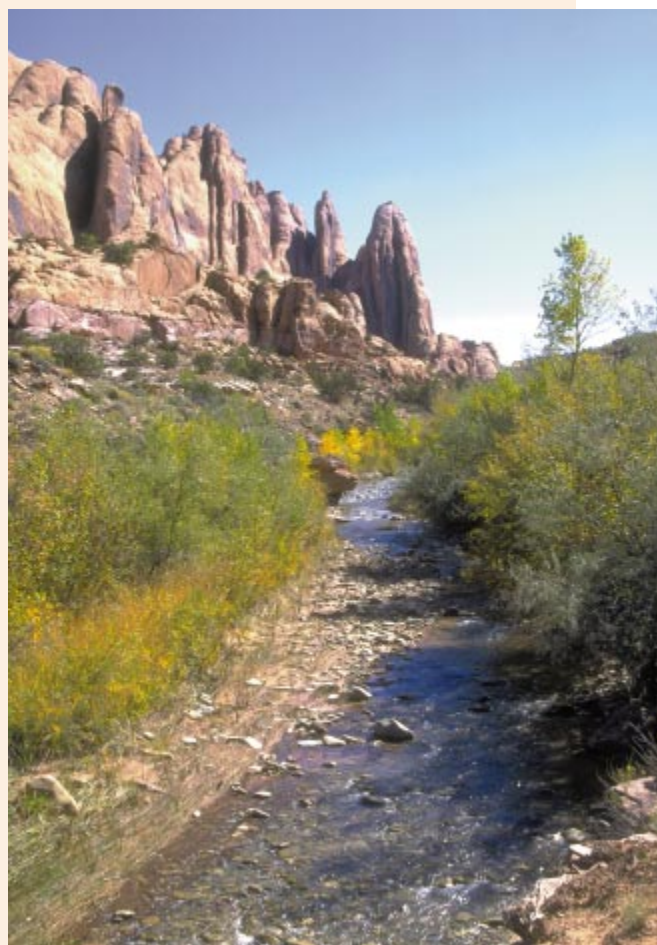
the opportunities are outstanding. In Unit 3, the opportunities for solitude are low because of the ease of access from Moab. Most of Unit 4, which is adjacent to four-wheel-drive routes, offers limited opportunities for solitude. However, the hike or horseback ride to South Mesa offers excellent opportunities for feeling alone. Unit 5 offers outstanding opportunities for solitude. As with the South Mesa portion of Unit 4, the view from the mesa top heightens the sense of isolation from the world below.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

When evaluated in the context of the contiguous Mill Creek Canyon WSA, opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation in all five units are considered to be outstanding. Unit 1 has opportunities for primitive recreation only in conjunction with the adjacent WSA. Unit 2 offers outstanding opportunities for primitive climbing, backpacking, hiking, and photography. The opportunities for hiking, photography, cultural exploration, and horseback riding are excellent in Unit 3. Unit 4, by itself, offers negligible opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation except for South Mesa, where opportunities for hiking, backpacking, photography, and horseback riding are exceptional. One outfitter currently provides horse trips to the area. As with Unit 1, primitive recreational opportunities in Unit 5 exist only when considered in conjunction with the adjacent WSA.

Supplemental Values

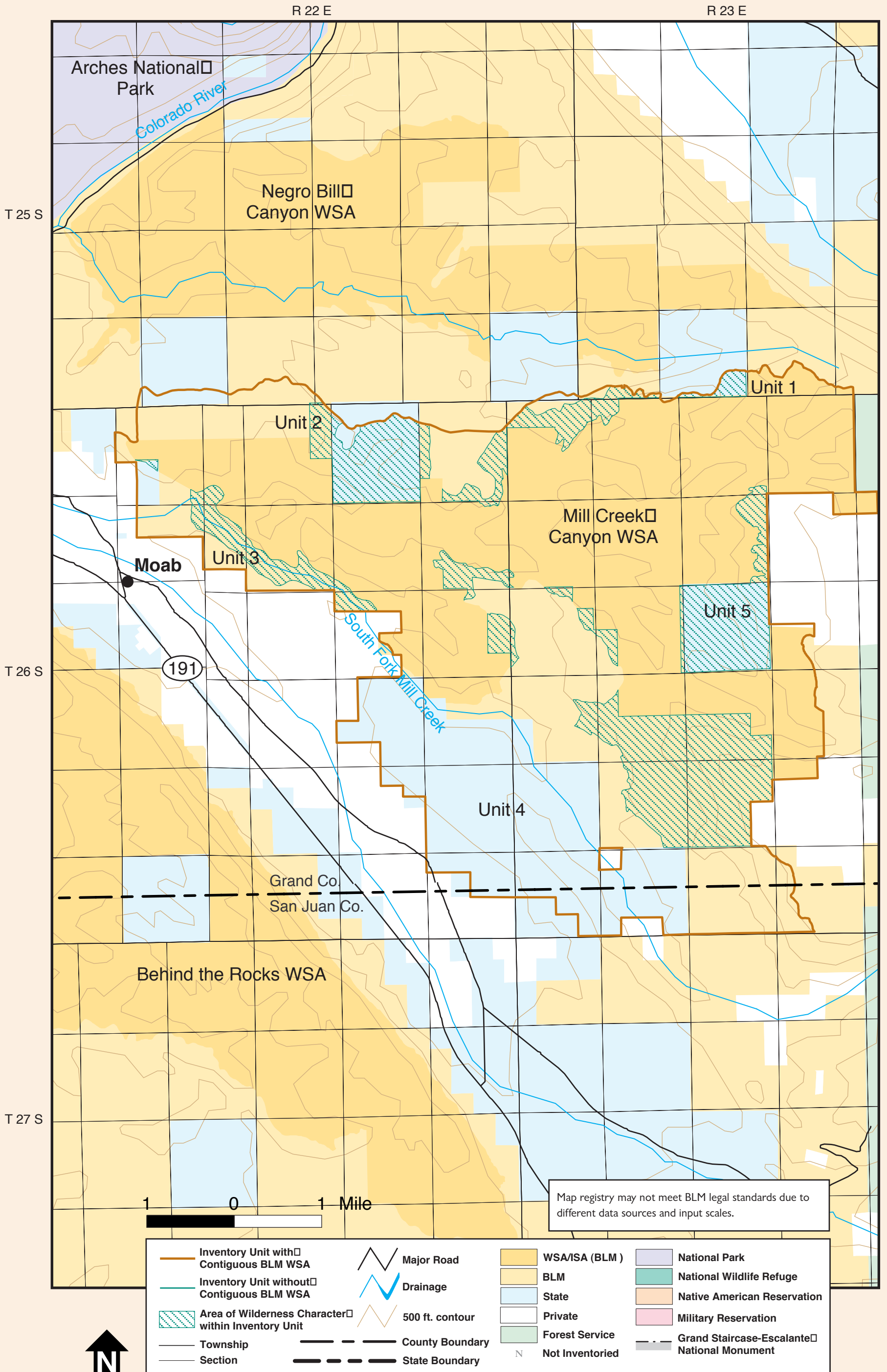
Mill Creek is a perennial stream, which is a rarity in the small canyons of southeast Utah. Several of the units provide critical winter range for deer. In addition to beautiful scenery, there is impressive and easily accessible rock art. Overall, the units are exceptionally diverse and scenic, from the sandstone fins of Unit 2 to the cliffs of Units 4 and 5.



Jerry Sintz

MILL CREEK CANYON—The South Fork of Mill Creek Canyon, as well as the adjacent Mill Creek WSA, offers excellent opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, cultural exploration, and photography.

Mill Creek Canyon



SOUTHEAST REGION—Mill Creek Canyon