

Mary Jane Canyon

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
25,000	3,000	28,000 (99%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
400	0	400 (1%)
Inventory Unit Total		
25,400	3,000	28,400
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
None		

Most of the Mary Jane Canyon inventory unit (28,000 acres) is natural and has wilderness characteristics. However, a few small portions (400 acres) are unnatural and lack wilderness characteristics. These areas have been impacted by off-road vehicle activity along the boundaries in Castle Valley, mining scars near Professor Valley Ranch, and chaining on the mesa tops.

Rugged terrain that provides both topographic and vegetative screening enhances outstanding opportunities for solitude, especially within the Professor Creek drainage. Primitive recreation opportunities, such as rock climbing at Castle Rock and hiking in Mary Jane Canyon, are outstanding.

Unit Description

The Mary Jane Canyon inventory unit is on the northwest flank of the La Sal Mountains in southeastern Grand County, 14 air miles east-northeast of Moab. The broad, cliff-rimmed valley of Mary Jane Canyon dominates the center of the area, with the sheer Wingate Sandstone cliffs of Fisher and Adobe Mesas flanking the canyon's sides. Professor Creek, a

perennial stream, flows from the La Sal Mountains through the unit on its way to the Colorado River. Remnants of the northern portion of Adobe Mesa have eroded into the spectacular rock towers known as Castle Rock, the Rectory, the Priest and Nuns, and Parriott Mesa. Vegetation consists of blackbrush and other desert shrubs at lower elevations, and piñon pine and juniper at higher elevations. Drainages contain cottonwood, tamarisk, and other riparian species, with some aspen and Douglas fir in the higher reaches of canyons.

Current uses include rock climbing, hiking, car camping, and mountain biking along the boundary roads, as well as cattle grazing. The unit is also popular for filming commercials and movies.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Most of the unit appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature and retains its natural character. Livestock development projects (such as stock ponds and fences) found mostly on top of Fisher and Adobe Mesas are small, widely dispersed, and substantially unnoticeable. Level areas of Fisher Mesa that were once chained are outside of the unit.

A few minor access ways remain, but these are substantially unnoticeable and in most instances are impassable because of erosion of the drainages in which they are found. Old seismic lines are also substantially unnoticeable, except for a portion of one on top of Adobe Mesa. Areas no longer retaining their natural character include popular camping and vehicle play areas along Castle Valley, historic mining disturbances, developments, and scars near Professor Valley Ranch.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

Most of the unit provides outstanding opportunities for solitude. Solitude opportunities are greatest within the Professor Creek drainage (especially in the upper reaches of Mary Jane Canyon), within Hellroaring Canyon, and in the many tributary drainages of Onion Creek. Rugged terrain in these areas provides both topographic and vegetative screening, providing the visitor with many opportunities for isolation and solitude. Given the presence of increased human activity around the boundary of the unit, there are fewer opportunities for solitude along Utah Highway 128, within Onion Creek Canyon, along the unit's boundary in Castle Valley, and in some of the areas close to Professor Valley Ranch.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The ruggedness of the terrain and the excellent scenery afforded by the geology and unique landforms combine to provide truly outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Opportunities for hiking can be found in Mary Jane Canyon along perennial Professor Creek, in many of the drainages of Onion Creek, around the butte formations above Ida Gulch, and on the mesa tops. Opportunities for camping and rock climbing (especially at Castle Rock) are excellent.

Supplemental Values

The buttes and cliffs within the unit make up a portion of what is known as the Richardson Amphitheater, well known for its spectacular scenery. Commercial filming and photography have long been popular in the narrows of Onion Creek and in Ida Gulch. The famous rock towers known as Castle Rock and the Priest and Nuns on the east, as well as picturesque Parriott Mesa dominating the western edge of the drainage, are popular filming locations.

MARY JANE CANYON—Professor Creek, flowing through the unit on its way to the Colorado River, provides the visitor with outstanding opportunities for hiking and solitude.



Jerry Sintz

Mary Jane Canyon

