

Westwater Canyon

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
2,220	340	2,560 (77%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
770	0	770 (23%)
Inventory Unit Total		
2,990	340	3,330
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Westwater Canyon WSA (UT-060-118)		31,160

About 2,560 acres in five of the six Westwater Canyon inventory units have wilderness characteristics. These units are generally natural and are a logical extension of the Westwater Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA). They are characterized by open flats, gentle hillsides, small bluffs, and scattered piñon and juniper woodlands.

About 770 acres in Units 4 and 5 lack wilderness characteristics. Much of Unit 4 is unnatural because of past piñon-juniper chaining, while all of Unit 5 is unnatural because of a constructed vehicle route that bisects it.

Unit Description

The Westwater Canyon inventory units surround the Westwater Canyon WSA. They are located in Grand County about 36 air miles northeast of Moab (2 to 4 hours by vehicle). Unit 1, which is roughly 1.5 miles long and wide, is north of the Colorado River, while Units 2-6 are located south of the river.

Unit 1 includes a portion of the canyon of Cottonwood Wash as well as sandstone uplands northwest of the wash. The vegetation consists largely of Indian ricegrass. Unit 2 consists of the sloping, open area south and west of the mouth of Westwater Canyon. The vegetation is mostly Indian ricegrass, with scattered blackbrush and a few junipers along the WSA boundary.

Unit 3 encompasses a narrow strip of open, gently sloping land north of the Dry Gulch Road. The vegetation is mostly Indian ricegrass, with some junipers in the higher areas. Unit 4 is a series of short flat promontories. Most of the naturally occurring piñon-juniper woodland in this unit has been chained. Unit 5 is a small parcel of land along the northern boundary that is split in half by a vehicle route. Unit 6 is a small parcel of land at the upper end of Westwater Canyon.

All of the units have been leased for grazing. Some hunting may take place, especially in Unit 1, which is the most accessible by vehicle.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Units 1, 2, 3, and 6 are generally natural in appearance, as is a portion of Unit 4. Minor exceptions in Unit 1 include a fence and a vehicle way that traverses it from north to south, while Unit 2 has a fence and two vehicle ways. No intrusions were found in Units 3 and 6.

Much of Unit 4 has been chained. The piñon-juniper woodland is being reclaimed naturally, but evidence of the past chaining is still substantially noticeable. All of Unit 5 is unnatural because of a constructed vehicle route.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

Those units that are still natural in character contain outstanding opportunities for solitude only in conjunction with the contiguous Westwater Canyon WSA. The units are small and, with the exception of Units 1 and 4, have limited topographic or vegetative screening.

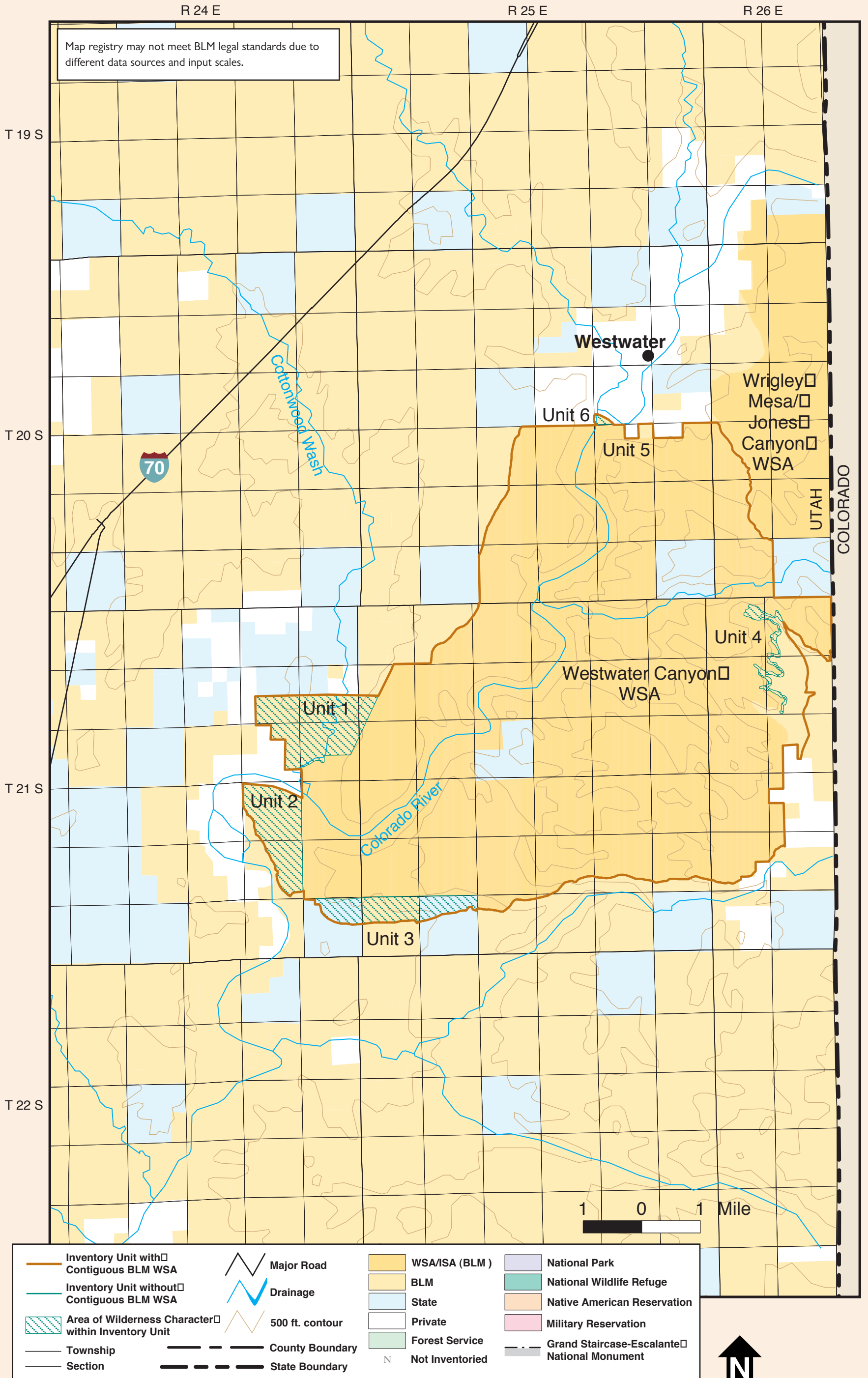
Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The units provide limited opportunities for hunting and hiking. Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation exist only in conjunction with the contiguous Westwater Canyon WSA.

Supplemental Values

Raptors are both transient and resident in the area; bald eagles use portions of the units for hunting. Big game species include mule deer and mountain lion.

Westwater Canyon



SOUTHEAST REGION — Westwater Canyon