

Cheesebox Canyon

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
13,600	2,800	16,400 (86%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
2,480	250	2,730 (14%)
Inventory Unit Total		
16,080	3,050	19,130
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Cheesebox Canyon WSA (UT-060-191)		15,410
Natural Bridges National Monument		5,340

Most of the four Cheesebox Canyon inventory units (16,400 acres) are roadless, natural, and have wilderness characteristics. The spectacular canyons in the units lie between the Cheesebox Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and a portion of Natural Bridges National Monument that is administratively endorsed for wilderness. The units are a logical extension of and a link between the WSA and the National Monument. However, parts of Units 2, 3, and 4 (2,730 acres) lack wilderness characteristics. The unnatural portion of Unit 3 is separated from the rest of Unit 3 by a high-standard county road and contains additional roads, mining structures, a chaining, and several substantially noticeable vehicle ways. The unnatural portion of Unit 4 contains several structures and surface disturbances associated with a road and an airstrip. A cherry-stemmed loop road separates portions of Unit 2 from the WSA.

Unit Description

The Cheesebox Canyon inventory units are located in San Juan County about 45 miles west of Blanding. All of the units are contiguous either with the Cheesebox Canyon WSA or with an area administratively endorsed for wilderness within Natural Bridges National Monument. Elevations vary by as much as 3,000 feet. Topographic features include mesas, red cliffs, and relatively flat sandstone

benchlands cut by deeply incised canyons. Vegetation ranges from scattered Douglas fir and ponderosa pine to thick piñon and juniper woodlands to sparse desert shrub communities. Canyoneering, hiking, camping, and livestock grazing are the area's most dominant uses.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

All of Unit 1 appears natural. Most of the natural character of Units 2, 3, and 4 is also retained. A few human imprints are found in all four units within the portions having wilderness characteristics, but these imprints are dispersed and substantially unnoticeable. The canyons within the units are pristine. Old uranium exploration and mining remnants result in the most noticeable impacts on the naturalness of the general area and detract somewhat from the natural appearance of the uplands. Uranium mining impacts surround the units and form boundaries in several locations.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The deep and narrow canyons provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. Every canyon extends into the contiguous

WSA, with some also protruding into portions of Natural Bridges National Monument. Outstanding opportunities for solitude are present above the canyon rims when considered in conjunction with the contiguous WSA and National Monument.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The units offer outstanding and relatively accessible opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. These opportunities are similar to and frequently a continuation of the opportunities present in the contiguous WSA and the portion of the National Monument that is administratively endorsed for wilderness. Opportunities include exploring the wild and remote canyons, canyoneering, finding and viewing well-preserved cultural sites, and engaging in multiday backpacking trips involving several loop routes.

Supplemental Values

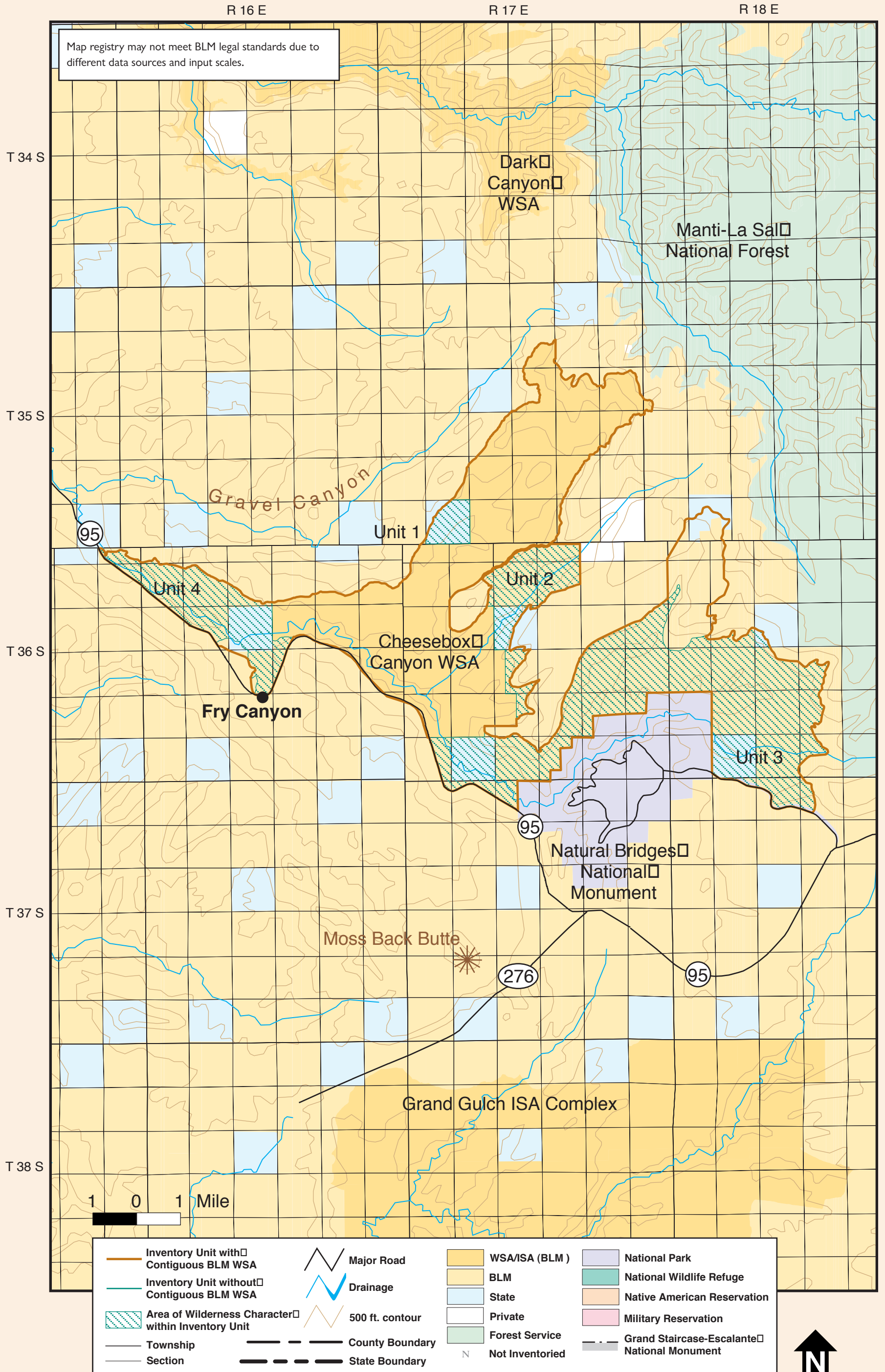
The area contains several historic names that are associated with outlaws, such as Hideout Canyon, and battle sites where skirmishes between Native Americans and Anglo-European settlers took place. Historic points of interest are found along a route traversing the rim of White Canyon and accessing the Colorado River crossing at Hite. A portion of the area has been designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern for its scenic values.

CHEESEBOX CANYON—A view of the upper ends of the intricate canyon systems that flow into Natural Bridges National Monument; the Bears Ears in the Manti-La Sal National Forest are in the background.



BLM photo

Cheesebox Canyon



SOUTHEAST REGION—Cheesebox Canyon