

Gravel and Long Canyons

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
37,100	5,100	42,200 (100%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
0	0	0 (0%)
Inventory Unit Total		
37,100	5,100	42,200
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
None		

All of the Gravel and Long Canyons inventory unit (42,200 acres) has wilderness characteristics. The unit's canyons are roadless and natural, providing outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Occasional old uranium exploration access ways on the mesas are substantially unnoticeable. Some of the canyon hiking routes are considered to be among the premier routes on the Colorado Plateau.

Unit Description

The Gravel and Long Canyons inventory unit is located in San Juan County, 40 miles west of Blanding. Terrain includes mesas, 1,000-foot red-rock cliffs, slickrock benchlands, and deeply incised canyons. Vegetation is predominantly thick piñons

and junipers that gradually transition into sparse desert shrub communities at lower elevations. Camping, hiking, all-terrain vehicle riding, mountain biking, and live-stock grazing are the current uses.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

The unit retains its natural character. Although some mining activity has occurred in the past, the remnants of this activity, such as old vehicle ways and mining prospects, are substantially unnoticeable and slowly being reclaimed by natural forces. The piñon and juniper woodlands appear natural in contrast to some large chainings near, but outside, the unit. White Canyon contains minor signs of human activity, but most of the canyon and its tributaries are pristine.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The unit provides outstanding opportunities for solitude, especially within the tributary canyons to White Canyon. For example, the upper reaches of Gravel Canyon are isolated from all human influence, except for jet contrails, and are rarely visited. The top of Found Mesa can be accessed in only one location and

provides opportunities for solitude above the canyons. Substantial piñon and juniper woodlands screen visitors from each other, as well as from uranium mining scars.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The unit provides outstanding opportunities for extended backpacking trips in narrow canyon environments. Some of these trips require advanced ability and specialized skill. The unit also offers easily accessible day-hiking trips in White Canyon, as well as challenging hikes along mesa tops and red-rock cliffs. While old uranium mining impacts detract somewhat from naturalness, some of the access ways provide outstanding routes for walking and horseback riding. Spectacular views of the nearby red-rock buttes and distant Dark Canyon Plateau, Little Rockies, and Henry Mountains provide interesting scenic diversity to trips into and out of the unit's narrow canyons.

Supplemental Values

The unit possesses spectacular scenic view points, including many unique angles for viewing Jacobs Chair. The unit is within a BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern, designated because of its outstanding scenic values.

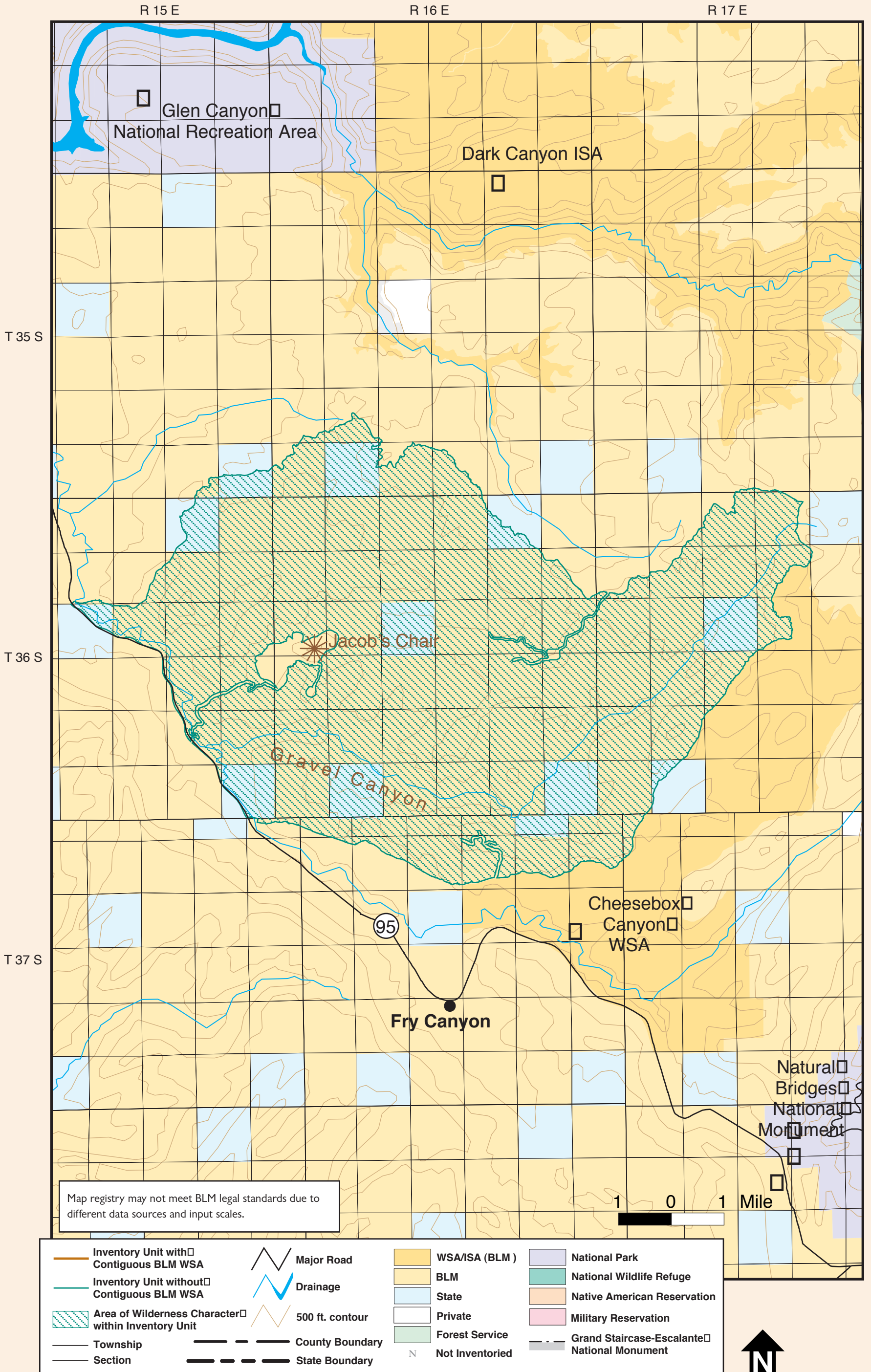
A small population of bighorn sheep uses the area year-round. In addition the isolated canyons reportedly contain well-preserved cultural sites.

GRAVEL AND LONG CANYONS—The unit is part of a designated scenic area that also includes Cheesebox Butte, the Cheesebox Canyon WSA, and two other inventory units.



BLM photo

Gravel and Long Canyons



SOUTHEAST REGION—Gravel and Long Canyons