

# Black Ridge

## Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
<b>With Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
20,100	1,700	21,800 (91%)
<b>Without Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
2,100	0	2,100 (9%)
<b>Inventory Unit Total</b>		
22,200	1,700	23,900
<b>Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
Zion National Park - Kolob Unit		

About 21,800 acres of the Black Ridge inventory unit have wilderness characteristics, while 2,100 acres do not. The area with wilderness characteristics is natural and roadless, with little evidence of human activity. Most of the area is composed of the spectacular Hurricane Cliffs, Black Ridge, and the colorful western edge of Smith Mesa, all essentially pristine. Some of the human intrusions present include minor vehicle ways located near the unit's boundary. The vehicle ways located in the La Verkin Creek drainage have no legal public access, are impassible even with four-wheel drive, and are naturally rehabilitating. The La Verkin Creek drainage is a riparian area offering outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation for the hiker, hunter, and horseback rider. Black Ridge provides outstanding scenic vistas north into Zion National Park and west into the Pine Valley Mountain. The unit includes portions of a historic trail along Ash Creek as well as the historic Dominguez-Escalante Trail.

The southern portion of the unit lacks wilderness characteristics because of the cumulative effect of roads, vehicle ways, a buried pipeline, off-highway vehicle play areas, an ordnance contamination area, a shooting range, two drill pads, and two trash dumps. Small portions of the east side of the unit along Smith Mesa and Hurricane Mesa lack wilderness characteristics because of agricultural land clearings and a road.

## Unit Description

The Black Ridge inventory unit is located approximately 20 miles northeast of St. George in Washington County. The unit is immediately east of Interstate 15 and Utah State Route (SR) 17 at Toquerville and is north of SR 9. Approximately seven miles of the unit are contiguous to the Kolob Unit of Zion National Park, which has been administratively endorsed for wilderness by the National Park Service. The terrain rises from 3,320 feet in elevation in La Verkin Creek to 6,442 feet at the top of Black Ridge. La Verkin Creek and Ash Creek support cottonwood and desert willow riparian vegetation, while the multiple sandstone benches along Smith Mesa support a dense piñon and juniper woodland. The extremely rugged and steep Hurricane Cliffs rise 2,000 feet above Ash Creek in less than one mile.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Naturalness*

Most of the inventory unit retains its natural character. Many intrusions have been documented, but almost all of these are within the portions of the unit determined to lack naturalness character because of the cumulative effects of human activities. The portion of the unit with natural character shows little evidence of human activity. The principal human intrusions in the natural portion include 12 vehicle ways totaling 24.6 miles in length. However, these vehicle ways receive little or no use and are substantially unnoticeable.

## Outstanding Opportunities

### Solitude

The La Verkin Creek drainage on the unit's east side provides outstanding opportunities for solitude. The dense vegetation along the riparian bottoms and the piñon and juniper woodlands on the benches provide excellent screening, separating visitors from the sights and sounds of others in the unit and from external human activities. However, the western part of the unit does not offer outstanding opportunities for solitude. This unit shares a seven-mile border with the Kolob Unit of Zion National Park. The opportunities for solitude found within the Kolob Unit extend into the Black Ridge inventory unit, especially down La Verkin Creek.

### Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are available, including day hiking, overnight backpacking, hunting, horseback riding, photography, sightseeing, and geologic study. Students of geology can study rock exposures along the Hurricane fault. Opportunities for hiking or horseback riding the six miles of La Verkin Creek or along the benches of Smith Mesa are excellent.

### *Supplemental Values*

The Black Ridge, formed by the Hurricane Fault, is a major topographical and geological feature in Washington County.

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