

december, 1979

DECISIONS
for wilderness inventory units
in the overthrust belt
and certain other units

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WYOMING STATE OFFICE

Introduction

This publication announces the final decisions for 12 of the 13 wilderness inventory units included in the accelerated intensive inventory conducted by the Bureau of Land Management in Wyoming. The decision for one of the 13 units is being deferred until April 1980, when the proposed decision for the remaining inventory units will be announced.

Three units of public land containing approximately 48,000 acres are being recommended as Wilderness Study Areas.

The units were among 13 inventory units considered in an accelerated intensive inventory conducted for lands in the "Overthrust Belt" in the Rock Springs district, as well as certain other units in the Rawlins district.

Seven of the inventory units in this accelerated inventory were in the Overthrust Belt of the Rock Springs district. The Secretary of the Interior had directed that the wilderness inventory for all units on the Overthrust Belt, which is a geologic formation with high oil and gas potential, be completed by December 31, 1979.

The other six inventory units for which the intensive inventory has been completed are located in the Rawlins district. One of the units, WY-030-303 Prospect Mountain, was found to have part of the unit with wilderness characteristics and part without; therefore, it was divided into two sub-units.

The final decision identifying the three units as Wilderness Study Areas appeared in the December 14, 1979 issue of the *Federal Register*. This decision will become final January 17, 1980.

The following three units or parts of units are identified as Wilderness Study Areas to be further evaluated, along with all other resource values, in the Bureau planning system.

Rock Springs District

WY-040-110 Lake Mountain 13,970 acres
WY-040-221 Raymond Mountain 33,236 acres

Rawlins District

WY-030-303a Prospect Mountain 1,000 acres

The following ten units or parts of units do not possess wilderness characteristics as set forth in section 2(c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act and are, therefore, dropped from further consideration and released from interim management as specified in section 603(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Rock Springs District

WY-040-109 Cabin Creek 7,040 acres
WY-040-111 Beaver Creek 4,000 acres
WY-040-126 Red Canyon 5,300 acres
WY-040-222 IGO Speedway 6,646 acres
WY-040-223 Coal Creek 13,174 acres

Rawlins District

WY-030-114 Copper Mountain 8,704 acres
WY-030-116 Moneta Sand Dunes 8,640 acres
WY-030-117 Moneta Sand Dunes 10,048 acres
WY-030-134 Agate Flats 22,544 acres
WY-030-303b Prospect Mountain 4,700 acres

The decision on the following unit is being deferred pending further analysis of inventory data and public comment. This unit will be included in the proposed decision for other units in Wyoming in early April 1980, and will be subject to public comment for 90 days after said proposed decision.

Rawlins District

WY-030-115 Lysite Badlands 14,272 acres

Wilderness Study Areas

The following three units or parts of units are identified as Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's), which will be further evaluated along with all other resource values in the Bureau planning process, and a wilderness study report will be prepared. A recommendation will then be made to the Congress regarding whether or not the unit should be made a part of the national wilderness system. The designation of these units as WSA's will retain them under the constraints of interim management (Sec. 603(C) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act) pending a decision by the Congress.

WY-040-110 Lake Mountain 13,970 acres

Public comment on this unit provided no substantial information that would change the proposed decision. Neither the comments favoring wilderness nor the comments against wilderness study area status indicated any rationale or specific information for their positions. The potential for oil and gas deposits or existence of designated wilderness areas in Wyoming are not applicable in determining wilderness characteristics in this or any inventory unit.

Several comments did address wilderness characteristics and stated that the presence of fences, ways and several dry drill holes affected the naturalness of the unit. It is recognized that the naturalness of an area is a subjective judgement. However, after reviewing the comments, it is determined that the intrusion present within this unit, when viewed in the context of the overall unit, are not substantially noticeable. **Therefore, this unit is identified as a wilderness study area and will be further evaluated for wilderness in the study phase.**

WY-040-221 Raymond Mountain 33,236 acres

This unit received more comments than any of the 13 units in the Overthrust announcement. Many of the comments were specifically addressed to wilderness characteristics. A number of notarized affidavits attempted to establish that the unit did not possess wilderness qualities. All statements made in these affidavits as well as other correspondence have been evaluated.

It should be recognized that the criteria used to establish roads are definitive and that further analysis of those criteria reveal that several of the "ways" which the affidavits purport to be roads are in fact ways. The presence of intrusions or evidence of man's activities within the unit are recognized. The determination to be made is: are these intrusions substantially noticeable when viewed in the context of the whole unit? There is no question that the unit possesses outstanding opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation even though only one of these qualities is required. **After a thorough evaluation of all comments and other materials submitted, the decision is to identify this unit as a wilderness study area.**

WY-030-303a Prospect Mountain 1,000 acres

Most of the comments received on this unit support the proposed decision to identify 1,000 acres as a wilderness study area. Several comments were opposed to wilderness study area status, saying that there is enough wilderness already or that a wilderness designation would preclude big game hunting with vehicles.

After consideration of the comments, it is determined that the 1,000 acre sub-unit is identified as a wilderness study area, and will be further evaluated, along with all other resource values present in the Bureau planning system.

Units Dropped From Further Consideration

WY-040-222 IGO Speedway 6,244 acres

The bowl shape of this unit and the open sagebrush slopes combine to create a situation where vehicle traffic on the boundaries of the unit is readily visible and audible from anywhere in the unit. Some public comment said BLM was improperly considering sights and sounds outside the unit; however, in this particular case, it is impossible to ignore vehicle traffic on the boundaries. The lack of vegetative or topographic screening compounds the difficulty in finding an opportunity for outstanding solitude anywhere in the unit. **For these reasons the proposed decision to drop this unit from the inventory remains unchanged.**

WY-040-223 Coal Creek 13,174 acres

In the proposed decision narrative last August, BLM stated that it was difficult to determine if this unit possessed outstanding opportunity for solitude. Further evaluation of the opportunity for solitude was made during the comment period.

Public comment on this unit was mostly favorable to wilderness study area status but provided little supporting information for this position. Those comments opposing wilderness study area status were primarily based on other resource values such as oil and gas potential, which are not appropriate considerations at this point.

Since the comments were inconclusive or inappropriate and since further evaluation indicates that this unit does not possess outstanding opportunity for solitude or primitive recreation, the decision is to drop this unit from the inventory.

WY-040-109 Cabin Creek 7,040 acres

WY-040-111 Beaver Creek 4,000 acres

WY-040-126 Red Canyon 5,300 acres

Much of the comment received on these three units expressed concern with wildlife habitat and particularly habitat for the Colorado River Cutthroat trout. Other comments were concerned with off-road vehicle use in these units and felt it should be retained. Some comments recommended that wildlife values be protected by establishing an area of critical environmental concern.

The wildlife habitat values, off-road vehicle designation and potential areas of critical environmental concern designation are all more properly addressed through the Bureau planning system.

In the context of the wilderness inventory, these units do not possess the qualities to become wilderness study areas and are therefore dropped from the inventory.

WY-030-114 Copper Mountain 8,704 acres

Comment on this unit generally supported the proposed decision to drop the unit. Some comments said BLM improperly used visual intrusions on the southern and eastern boundaries to drop the unit.

After further evaluation of the intrusions in the unit and the potential for solitude in the northern part of the unit, it is determined that the unit does not possess wilderness characteristics and is therefore dropped from the inventory.

WY-030-116 Moneta Sand Dunes 8,640 acres

WY-030-117 Moneta Sand Dunes 10,048 acres

WY-030-134 Agate Flats 22,544 acres

WY-030-303b Prospect Mountain 4,760 acres

Little comment was received on these units; however, the comments did support the proposed decision to drop these units. **Therefore, the proposed decision to drop these units remains as the final decision.**

Deferred Decisions

WY-030-115 Lysite Badlands 14,272 acres
Public comment indicated that BLM used improper criteria such as visual intrusions on the boundary and fences within the unit to say the unit does not possess naturalness.

In order to provide time for further analysis of the inventory data and public comment, the decision on this unit is being deferred and will be announced in early April 1980, when the proposed decisions for the remaining units are published.

Maps Available

The following maps are available for purchase from the Wyoming State Office of BLM.

1:500,000 scale colored status
map \$5.00 each copy
Transparent overlay No. 4 dated
December, 1979 \$4.00 each copy
Paper copy of overlay
No. 4 \$2.50 each copy

Anyone wishing to review the intensive inventory files for the units listed in this document may do so at the appropriate district office or at the Wyoming State Office in Cheyenne.

Public Comment

Any person who has disagreement with this decision and has information which may influence this decision may file a protest with:

**State Director (931)
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 1828
Cheyenne, WY 82001**

Protests must be filed with the State Director by 4:30 p.m., January 17, 1980. No specific form need be used in filing a protest, however, protests must be specifically identified as follows:

**"Protest to Wyoming State
Director's Wilderness Intensive
Inventory Decision—Overthrust
Belt units."**

Should any protests be filed on any inventory unit, the State Director will consider such protests and issue a decision which will be subject to appeal on that inventory unit(s) to the Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). If the decision on the protest remains consistent with this decision, only the protester may appeal to the IBLA. If such decision reflects changes from this decision based upon information submitted by the protester, any adversely affected person may appeal to the IBLA.

This decision will become effective as of 4:30 p.m., January 17, 1980 (close of protest period), for all inventory units on which no protest was filed. A *Federal Register* notice and press release will be issued announcing this fact.

Who to Contact

These Wyoming BLM managers are available for contact regarding input to the wilderness inventory or to answer questions about BLM's wilderness review process.

STATE DIRECTOR, Bureau of Land Management, 2515 Warren Avenue, P.O. Box 1828, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001.

WORLAND DISTRICT MANAGER, P. O. Box 119, 1700 Robertson Avenue, Worland, Wyoming 82401.

AREA MANAGER, Washakie Resource Area, P. O. Box 119, 1700 Robertson Avenue, Worland, Wyoming 82401.

AREA MANAGER, Cody Resource Area, P. O. Box 528, Federal Building, 1131-13th, Cody, Wyoming 82414.

RAWLINS DISTRICT MANAGER, P. O. Box 670, 1300 Third Street, Rawlins, Wyoming 82301.

AREA MANAGER, Divide Resource Area, P. O. Box 670, 1300 Third Street, Rawlins, Wyoming 82301.

AREA MANAGER, Medicine Bow Resource Area, P. O. Box 670, 1300 Third Street, Rawlins, Wyoming 82301.

AREA MANAGER, Lander Resource Area, P. O. Box 589, Lander, Wyoming 82520.

ROCK SPRINGS DISTRICT MANAGER, P. O. Box 1869, Highway 187 North, Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901.

AREA MANAGER, Green River Resource Area, P. O. Box 1869, Highway 187 North, Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901.

AREA MANAGER, Salt Wells Resource Area, P. O. Box 1869, Highway 187 North, Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901.

AREA MANAGER, Pinedale Resource Area, P. O. Box 768, Molyneux Building, Pinedale, Wyoming 82941.

AREA MANAGER, Kemmerer Resource Area, P. O. Box 632, Kemmerer, Wyoming 83101.

CASPER DISTRICT MANAGER, 951 Union Boulevard, Casper, Wyoming 82601.

AREA MANAGER, Platte River Resource Area, 951 Union Boulevard, Casper, Wyoming 82601.

AREA MANAGER, Buffalo Resource Area, P. O. Box 670, Buffalo, Wyoming 82834.

AREA MANAGER, Newcastle Resource Area, Highway 16 Bypass, Newcastle, Wyoming 82701.