

APPENDIX 18—REVIEW OF WILDERNESS INFORMATION

In December 2000, the Rock Springs Field Office (RSFO) received a submission from the Wyoming Wilderness Coalition containing wilderness inventory information for lands within the Jack Morrow Hills (JMH) Coordinated Activity Plan (CAP) planning area. This submission provided information on potential wilderness characteristics in the JMH CAP area. The BLM interdisciplinary (ID) team evaluated the new information. A detailed report on the evaluation is on file at the RSFO.

Ten areas involving about 127,000 acres were included in the Wyoming Wilderness Coalition submission. File and field reviews were conducted on the areas. Resource data were compiled from existing databases and from the field reviews. BLM ID team members then reviewed this information and the areas in accordance with the guidance provided in the Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures Handbook H-6310-1. As a result of this evaluation, one area was found to meet the wilderness criteria for further consideration as management as a Wilderness Study Area under section 202 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA). This area was then analyzed as part of two alternatives in the supplemental draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the JMH CAP.

THE INVENTORY PROCESS

The following is a summary from the Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures Handbook and the steps applied to review the information submitted to BLM by the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance (formerly Biodiversity Associates).

The handbook contains BLM's policy, direction, general procedures, and guidance for all future wilderness inventories and future designations of Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) under provisions of Sections 201 and 202 of the FLPMA of 1976.

Criteria to Evaluate and Analyze the Wilderness Proposals

- A. Inventory
 - 1. Analysis of Roads
 - a. Vehicle Ways, i.e., two track trails
 - b. Roads, i.e., crowned and ditched (improved and maintained)
 - c. WSAs should be free of roads but may have vehicle ways.
 - 2. Analysis of Wilderness Character
 - a. Size—Determine if the inventory area is roadless and contains at least 5,000 acres of land or is sufficient size to make practical its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.
 - b. Naturalness—Determine if the area generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

An area may include some human impacts provided they are substantially unnoticeable in the area as a whole.

- c. Solitude or a Primitive and Unconfined Type of Recreation—Determine if the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements or need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre.
- d. Supplemental Values—Determine if the area contains ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Supplemental values are not required for wilderness but their presence should be documented where they exist.

B. Study

Inventory areas will be evaluated through the land use planning process, using regulations at 43 CFR 1600, and the BLM 1600 Manual and Handbook series.

The wilderness study must evaluate wilderness values, the ability to manage the area as a WSA, and other resource values and uses. These elements are then used to determine the most appropriate land use allocations for the affected public lands.

C. Decision

The State Director approves land use plan decisions. The planning process should document the rationale for WSA designations or nondesignations to ensure that wilderness values are being adequately addressed in an environmental analysis and to address impacts on other resource values and uses if an area is designated as a WSA.

Steps in Review of the Wilderness Information Provided By the Wyoming Wilderness Coalition in the JMH CAP Area

About 127,000 acres were reviewed for wilderness characteristics using the procedures described in part A above. To ensure the process and documentation are complete and accurate, all the areas underwent a thorough review by specialists and were reviewed and completed by the BLM interdisciplinary team. Based on the review, one area, the Pinnacles, was determined to have wilderness characteristics of size, outstanding opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, and supplemental values.

Following a determination that an area has wilderness characteristics, is an evaluation of the manageability of that area as wilderness. The evaluation of wilderness manageability is conducted through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis of the alternatives. In the case of the supplemental draft EIS for the JMH CAP, two alternatives consider designating the Pinnacles area a WSA and provide an analysis of the manageability and environmental effects of wilderness management. Three alternatives, including the Preferred Alternative, do not consider wilderness designation and provide an analysis of the environmental effects of not managing the area as wilderness.

General Description of the Preliminary Draft Alternatives

The No Action Alternative is defined as a continuation of the present course of management until that management is changed. Ongoing programs initiated under existing legislation and regulations would continue, even as new plans are developed. Thus, this alternative addresses the current land management decisions stated in the Green River Resource Management Plan (RMP), dated October 1997, that provides for multiple use management of public lands and resources to meet foreseeable needs. The No Action Alternative allows for development of valid existing rights. No additional areas would be considered for WSAs, and there would not be any changes proposed for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

Alternative 1 provides for expanded opportunities to use and develop the planning area, but resources would still be protected to the extent required by applicable laws and regulations. Alternative 1 would allow new leases and permits for oil, gas, and mineral development throughout the planning area, to the degree possible, consistent with existing regulatory requirements and statutory withdrawals and closures. No additional areas would be considered for WSAs, and there would not be any changes proposed for ACECs.

Alternative 2 reduces opportunities to use and develop the planning area. The alternative focuses on improving and protecting habitat for wildlife and sensitive plant and animal species; improving riparian areas and water quality; and protecting historic, cultural, and Native American sites. Boundaries of existing ACECs would be expanded as necessary to protect sensitive resources and Research Natural Area designations would be pursued as appropriate. Additional areas would be considered as WSAs.

Alternative 3 provides more opportunities for use and development of the planning area than Alternative 2, but less than Alternative 1. Boundaries of existing ACECs would be expanded as necessary to protect sensitive resources. Additional areas that fully meet the characteristics of wilderness and fall within the existing management scheme for wilderness would be considered for designation as WSAs.

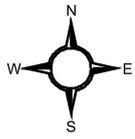
The Preferred Alternative provides opportunities for uses and development by providing a balance of uses through timing and sequencing of events. An implementation strategy would be initiated, and monitoring and evaluation of activities would occur. No additional ACEC areas would be designated, and no areas would be considered for WSA designation.

In the assessment of manageability, it was determined that the Pinnacles area as a whole did not have the features for wilderness. The area with the most characteristics was the Pinnacles themselves, roughly four sections. The ID team also reviewed relevance and importance for ACEC management and found the portion of the area around the Pinnacles themselves scenic (Relevance criterion 1) and important for circumstances that make it fragile, irreplaceable, vulnerable to adverse change (Importance Criterion 2) but did not recommend designation as the area could be managed without a designation.

Table A18-1 lists the areas reviewed for wilderness characteristics (also see Map A18-1).

Table A18-1. Wilderness Study Area Review Summary

Area	Approximate Acres	Wilderness Character
Alkali Draw	7,800	No
Big Empty	32,400	No
Buffalo Hump	13,000	No
Harris Slough	13,400	No
Honeycomb Buttes	16,300	No
Joe Hay Rim	6,400	No
Oregon Buttes (contiguous to existing WSA)	2,500	No
Oregon Buttes Badlands	6,100	No
Parnell Creek	14,700	No
Pinnacles	14,400	Yes (partial 8,600 acres)
Total-10 areas	127,000	



Proposed Wilderness Study Areas

-  Alkali Draw
-  Big Empty
-  Buffalo Hump
-  Honeycomb Buttes
-  Joe Hay Rim
-  Oregon Buttes
-  Oregon Buttes Badlands
-  Parnell Creek
-  Harris Slough
-  The Pinnacles

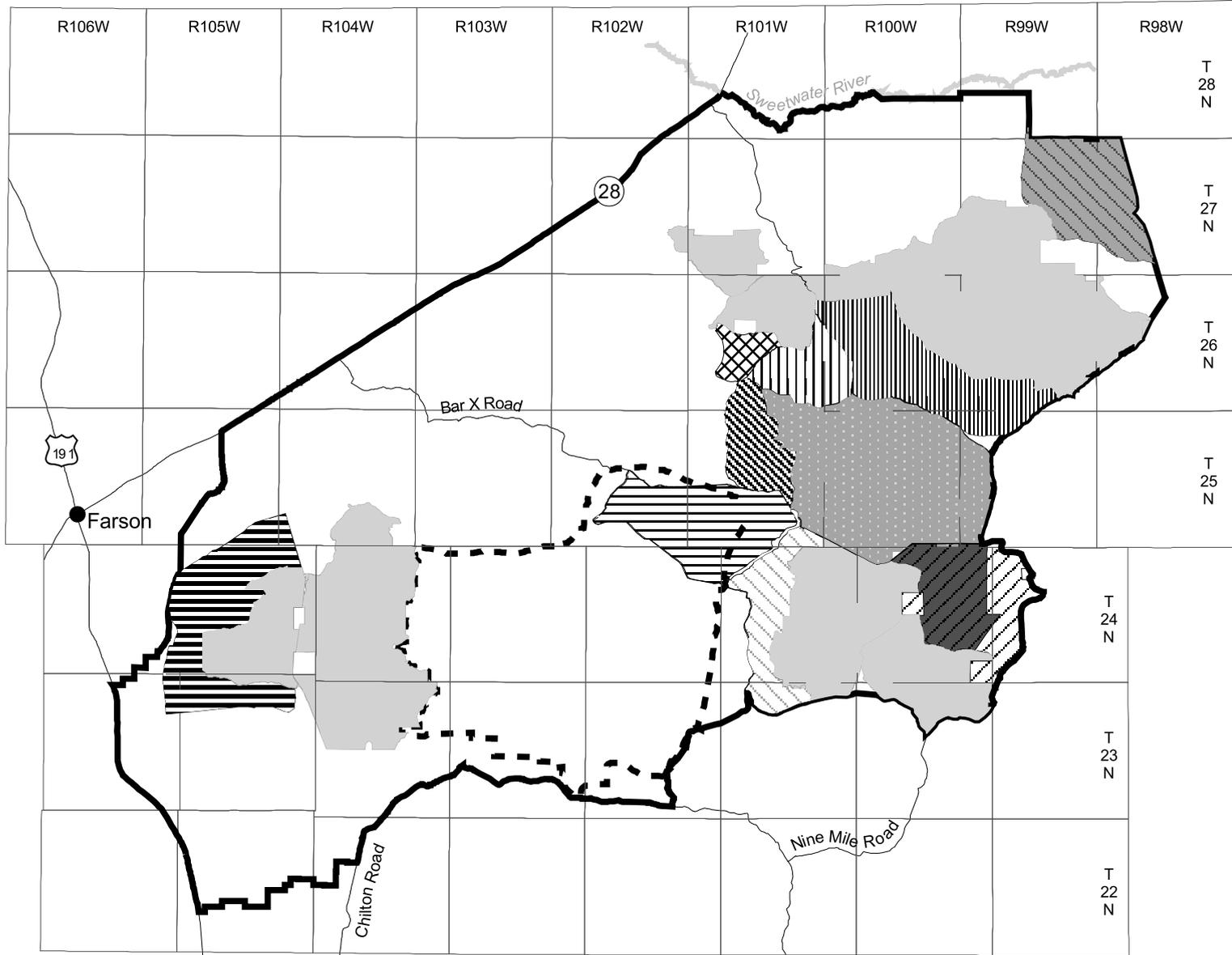
Potential Wilderness Study Areas

-  The Pinnacles

Existing Wilderness Study Areas

-  Wilderness Study Areas

-  Core Area
-  JMH Boundary



Map A18 - 1

Wilderness Study Areas and Proposals