

## WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS REVIEW

Date of Submission: N/A

Date(s) of Field Office Review: 02/06/2007

Submitter: N/A

Name of Area to be Reviewed: Valley of the Gods (A-B)

BLM Field Office(s) Affected: Monticello

### EVALUATION

1.) Was new information submitted by a member of the public for this area?

YES \_\_\_\_\_. NO X.

2.) If new information was submitted, describe the submission. For example, did the submission include a map that identifies the specific boundaries of the area(s) in question; a narrative that describes the wilderness characteristics of the area and documents how that information differs from the information gathered and reviewed in prior BLM inventories; photographic documentation; etc?

*The area reviewed was derived from a GIS Data Layer provided by the Utah Wilderness Coalition (UWC). Additional Materials such as maps, photographs, or narratives were not included.*

3. As a result of interdisciplinary review of relevant information (which may include aerial photographs, state and county road information, road maintenance agreements, documentation from prior BLM inventories, field observations, maps, master title plats, evidence presented as new information by a proponent, etc.), do you conclude:

\_\_\_\_\_ a) the decision reached in previous BLM inventories, that the area lacks wilderness characteristics, is still valid.

(or)

X b) some or all of the area has wilderness characteristics as shown on the attached map.

4. Describe your findings regarding specific wilderness characteristics and provide detailed rationale.

**Size:**

*The Valley of the Gods area proposed by the UWC for wilderness consideration totals approximately 14,558 acres, collectively. This area was previously identified in the 1979 Initial Wilderness Inventory as Valley of the Gods (UT-060-200), but was not carried forward for intensive field inventory. The 1979 area, and the UWC proposal, follow the same boundaries and subsequently contain the same acreage. The area as proposed does meet the size requirements for wilderness management. However, a substantial vehicle route leading to a well in a state section, and an adjoining state section, effectively bisect the unit into eastern and western parcels. These parcels have been identified as Unit A (eastern area) and Unit B (western area). It has been determined that these areas will be analyzed separately.*

*The eastern area (Unit A) is approximately 13,667 acres, and thus meets the size requirement for wilderness management. The northwestern area (Unit B) is approximately 891 acres and contains significant human disturbances along the southwestern boundary in the form of vehicle routes, a backcountry airstrip and seismic lines. The exclusion of these intrusions will decrease the size of Unit B significantly. Unit B is also separated from lands with wilderness character to the north (Road Canyon WSA) by the Valley of The Gods road which forms the boundary. Because of these reasons, Unit B does not meet the size requirement for wilderness management and will not be analyzed further.*

**Appearance of Naturalness:**

*The ID team reviewed the area within Unit A using GIS data layers, which included recent aerial photography (August 2006), San Juan County Road Data, og-wells GIS Layer, range allotment files, and Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD) Data. The ID Team undertook a detailed review of high resolution aerial photos from 2006 to both verify information from the GIS review, as well as to look for additional impacts not incorporated in GIS. These impacts could include such things as seismic exploration lines not included in the county road inventory and other disturbances from past minerals activities. ID Team members have visited this area over several years while administering their respective resources, and have noted that the area, other than minimal access roads, does not contain substantially noticeable human impacts and contains no other known landscape scale surface disturbances, such as significant recreation development, etc. The Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD) Scenario indicates minimal oil and gas activity in the area. Law enforcement patrol logs indicate limited Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) activity in the area. Therefore, with minimal human impacts in the area, Unit A appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature and is natural in character.*

**Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:**

*With minimal evidence of human disturbances in Unit A, outstanding opportunities for solitude can be found throughout the area. Opportunities for primitive recreation uses such as hiking and photography are available. The Valley of the Gods area is also nationally known for its quintessential southwestern landscape.*

5. Document all information considered during the interdisciplinary team review (e.g. aerial photographs, state and county road information, road maintenance agreements, documentation from prior BLM inventories, field observations, maps, master title plats, evidence presented as new information by a proponent, etc.)

*Utah Wilderness Coalition (UWC) GIS Data Layer Proposal (2005)*

*Perkins Brothers Allotment File*

*Master Title Plats*

*Law Enforcement Patrol Logs: Cedar Mesa Sector*

*GIS Aerial Photography (NAIP 2006: San Juan County north and south)*

*GIS Oil and Gas Data (og-wells)*

*Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenario for Oil and Gas (2005)*

*Mineral Potential Report (2005)*

*BLM 1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory Revision (May 2003)*

*San Juan Resource Area Management Plan (1991)*

*Analysis of the Management Situation (2005)*

**Attachments:**

- *Map of Valley of the Gods Units A-B*

6. List the members of the interdisciplinary team and resource specialties represented.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>RESOURCE (S) REPRESENTED</b>
Gary Torres	Planner, NEPA Coordinator
Brad Colin	Recreation, OHV, Wilderness
Jed Carling	Range
Maxine Deeter	Lands, VRM
Marie Tuxhorn	Law Enforcement
Doug Paul	Fire, Fuels
Nick Sandberg	Range, Assistant Field Manager
Sandra Meyers	Field Manager
Brian Quigley	Recreation
Tammy Wallace	Wildlife
Nancy Shearin	Cultural, Paleontology
Jeff Brown	Oil and Gas, Hazardous Materials
Ted McDougall	Minerals
Paul Curtis	Range, Riparian, Soils, Vegetation
Dave Mermejo	BLM Utah State Office
Paul Leatherbury	GIS

Field Office Manager \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_.

This determination is part of an interim step in BLM’s internal decision-making process and does not constitute a decision that can be appealed.