

**Vernal Field Office
Wilderness Characteristics in Planning
Questions and Answers**

Why is the Vernal Field Office preparing a supplemental draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) for wilderness characteristics?

Recent judicial decisions and internal review have identified the need for BLM Utah to adjust how non-wilderness study area (WSA) lands with wilderness characteristics are considered in the land use planning process.

What does this mean?

The supplemental document broadens the Vernal RMP's range of alternatives. In the final RMP, the BLM will not just simply "pick" one alternative. The BLM can choose aspects from any of the alternatives. No final decision has been made at this time.

Does this alter the existing alternatives?

All of the existing alternatives remain intact and are still a part of the range of decisions possible for the final RMP. A new alternative, "Alternative E," is being added.

What is contained in the new alternative?

The new alternative identifies 277,596 acres as having wilderness characteristics. This new alternative focuses primarily on protecting wilderness characteristics.

What are the benefits of this additional analysis?

- Adequate consideration is given to wilderness characteristics in ongoing RMPs.
- At least one alternative is analyzed for managing these lands.
- Adequate analysis is prepared for land use planning purposes and can be used for future oil and gas leasing decisions.

Will this process consider establishing new Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)?

This revised approach does not consider establishing new WSAs. The BLM does not have the authority to take this type of action.

Are there other BLM Field Offices that are preparing a "wilderness characteristics" supplemental?

The Price Field Office is also preparing a supplement to their plan. There are four other field offices that currently have plans underway but have not yet issued their draft plans. They are incorporating this information into their draft documents.

Does this supplemental make any final decisions?

The supplement does not make any final decisions. What it does do is broaden the range of management strategies that the BLM will consider when finalizing the RMP.

What percentage of the Vernal Field Office is made up of wilderness study areas and lands with wilderness characteristics?

There are 6 WSAs within the boundaries administered by the Vernal Field Office totaling 52,978 acres. There are 25 areas of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics totaling 277,596 acres. Therefore, 19.5 percent of the Vernal Field Office is either WSA lands (3.1%) or non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics (16.4%).