

Manti – La Sal National Forest Plan Revision Assessments

Topic 15 -Wilderness; WSR; other designated
areas

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Introduction

The Chapter includes information on special designated areas including areas designated by legislation and areas administratively designated. The assessment will discuss current existing conditions and trends in these areas and discuss the potential need for new designation within the plan area.

Designated Wilderness Areas

Dark Canyon Wilderness Area

The Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-577) set up a system of wilderness areas across the United States and defined wilderness as a place “in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape... where earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain... an area of undeveloped federal lands retaining its primeval character and influences, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed to preserve its natural condition”. The 1964 Wilderness Act also set up a process by which new wilderness areas could become designated and managed under the Wilderness Act. Using this process the Utah Wilderness Act (Public Law 98-428), was passed in 1984 which designated among others, the Dark Canyon Wilderness.

Known to some as the “heart of the Colorado Plateau,” Dark Canyon is part of the iconic landscape that constitutes the canyon lands of southeastern Utah. The wilderness represents the first major Colorado Plateau terrain to be added to the national wilderness preservation system. This expansive canyon system, located within the Manti-La Sal National Forest in San Juan County, Utah, provides 46,353 acres of challenging terrain and opportunities for solitude.

Elevational change provides striking contrasts of vegetation ranging from aspen and Douglas fir forests to sage brush and pinyon juniper woodlands. Immense geological features consisting of soaring canyon walls with hanging gardens, glimpses of arches and sandstone spires, all add to the scenic value of the Dark Canyon Wilderness. Diverse species of wildlife fill the various habitats and provide a glimpse of the adaptability of species such as mule deer, cougar, turkey, Mexican spotted owl, black bear and elk to name a few. Within this diverse landscape lies world renowned archeological sites representing prehistoric and historic evidence that tell the story of ancient inhabitants as far back as 1100 A.D., to more recent remnants of ranching communities established during the late 1800s. This rugged terrain offers a variety of opportunities for those who seek solitude and the challenge of primitive recreation. Hiking and backpacking are the primary methods to experience the wilderness.

As a compromise during legislative negotiations the wilderness boundary was drawn around the Peavine Corridor, a motorized route that travels for 14 miles into several of the canyons in the wilderness. This boundary created a “cherrystem” of non-wilderness lands within the Dark Canyon Wilderness, which has created management challenges.

Dark Canyon is the only designated wilderness area on the Manti- La Sal National Forest.

Indicators

Starting in 2015 a new system of Wilderness Stewardship Performance Standards were adopted nationally. The new system included four mandatory elements but also allowed for individual wilderness areas to choose the other six elements that would best fit the management of the wilderness. These elements will be the new standards that the wilderness will be measured against in coming years and will serve as good indicators for ensuring that the wilderness quality of the Dark Canyon Wilderness are being maintained or enhanced.. Below are the ten elements selected for the Dark Canyon Wilderness.

1. Invasive Species
2. Natural role of Fire
3. Recreation Site Management
4. Trail System Management
5. Agency Management Actions
6. Managing Opportunities for Solitude
7. Cultural Resource Management
8. Baseline Work force Capacity
9. Wilderness Education
10. Wilderness Character Baseline

Scale

The scale used will be the official legal boundaries of the Dark Canyon Wilderness

Existing conditions

The Dark Canyon Wilderness is managed to maintain or enhance the wilderness qualities of ; naturalness, untrammled character, undeveloped character, opportunities for solitude and /or primitive recreation and any special features found within the wilderness.

General direction for the management of the wilderness is provided in the 1986 Land and Resource Management Plan. More specific direction is given in the *Dark Canyon Wilderness Implementation Schedule (WIS)* that was prepared in 1993. The WIS includes goals and implementation actions for important resources in the wilderness. The WIS also includes the *Peavine Corridor Management Activity Standards* which outlines management actions and standards for the Peavine Corridor cherrystem. A *Wilderness Air Quality Monitoring Guidance* prepared in 2012 and the *Dark Canyon Integrated Weed Management Plan* prepared in 2016 provide further guidance for management of the area.

The 10-year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge was developed by the Forest Service's wilderness advisory group as a quantifiable measurement of the Forest Service's success in wilderness stewardship. The goal of the challenge was to bring every one of the more than 400 wilderness areas under Forest Service management to a minimum stewardship level by the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act in 2014. The challenge had 10 elements against which wildernesses were evaluated:

1. Natural role of fire in wilderness and management responses to wild land fire.
2. Nonnatives invasive plants species identification and treated.

3. Monitoring of wilderness air quality values.
4. Wilderness education plan identified and implemented.
5. Protection of solitude or primitive unconfined recreation.
6. Recreation site inventories completed.
7. Operating plans for existing outfitters and guides. Needs assessments completed for new operations or major changes.
8. Adequate wilderness direction in forest plans.
9. Information needs met through field data collection, storage and analysis.
10. Baseline workforce in place with staffing levels necessary for effective wilderness stewardship.

During the 10-year challenge the Dark Canyon Wilderness gradually increasing in its evaluation scores and finished the challenge in 2014 with a score of 76, above the minimum stewardship level of 60. Scores for individual elements during the 10 year challenge are found in the table below and provide a good summary of the existing conditions of the wilderness resource.

Elements	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Natural Fire	6	6	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Non-natives Treated	5	6	8	6	10	10	10	10	10
Air Quality	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	10
Wilderness Education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Protect solitude and/or primitive and unconfined recreation	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Completed Recreation Site Inventory	2	8	8	8	8	10	10	10	10
Existing Outfitter and Guide	6	6	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Adequate Direction in the Forest Plan	3	3	2	2	4	6	6	6	10
Information needs met	2	4	4	4	6	8	8	10	10
Baseline Work Force in Place	2	2	4	4	4	6	6	6	6
Total	34	43	48	48	56	64	64	66	76

Naturalness

Dark Canyon generally remains in a natural state with very few impacts to its naturalness. Impacts to naturalness consist of impacts associated with livestock grazing, unauthorized motorized use associated with the Peavine Corridor, impact associated with recreation use and several exotic plant species that are found in the wilderness.

Commercial Livestock grazing is authorized within the wilderness. The entire wilderness is located within the Twin Springs Cattle allotment but only the eastern portion of the wilderness is grazed. Woodenshoe Canyon and Dark Canyon below its junction with Rig Canyon are closed to grazing. Horses are also allowed to be grazed in Horse Pasture Canyon in conjunction with the Twin Springs Cattle Allotment operations. Conflicts between wilderness users and livestock occur when cattle impact the quantity and quality of water located in the wilderness.

The “cherrystemmed” Peavine Corridor provides for motorized use within a 66 foot wide non-wilderness corridor, 33 feet on each side from the centerline of the route. The motorized route is often washed out by flash floods and which has caused some motorized users to create their own routes outside of the cherry stem and within the wilderness which has impacted adjacent riparian areas. The motorized use associated with the Peavine Corridor has become a challenge to maintaining wilderness character in Dark Canyon.

Several species of exotic invasive plants have been inventoried and treated in the wilderness including; Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and tamarisk (*Tamarix. Ramosissima*). Canada thistle is primarily located in the Horse Pasture Canyon drainage and tamarisk found throughout the wilderness near springs seep and riparian areas. Both species are treated annually with hand tools and minimal amounts of herbicide.

The wilderness provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife including the threatened Mexican spotted owl.

Untrammled Character

The untrammled character of Dark Canyon is primarily intact. The area experiences a few management actions that impact the untrammled character of the area. These actions include livestock grazing and fire suppression in the wilderness and surrounding areas.

Undeveloped Character

Dark Canyon retains its undeveloped character. The only developments within the wilderness are fences, corrals and troughs associated with livestock grazing.

Opportunities for Solitude and /or Primitive Recreation

Six trailheads and approximately 56 miles of system trails provide access to the Dark Canyon Wilderness. Current use levels within the wilderness remain relatively low when compared to similar public lands in the area. The National Visitor Use Monitoring done every five years estimates that the Dark Canyon Wilderness receives approximately 1,000 visitors per year. This estimate has remained stable over the last ten years. Solitude is easy find in the wilderness.

As of 2016 there were six authorized Recreation Special Permits issued for outfitter and guides to operate within the wilderness. In 2013 a moratorium was placed on issuing new commercial outfitter and guide permits within the wilderness until a capacity study was prepared.

Special Features

The cultural and archaeological resources found in this wilderness are diverse in type and size and cover a wide variety of prehistoric and historic evidences of man. Cultural resources range from Paleolithic scatters to the remains of early 20th century Anglo livestock ranching. Ancestral Puebloan remains dot the canyon walls in the form of living structures, kivas and granaries, some of which still have intact roofs and walls. Damage to these sites from both intentional looting and from unintentional recreationists does occur.

Trends

According to the NVUM, visitation to the Dark Canyon Wilderness has remained fairly stable over the last 5 years. However, this may change as other areas in the region begin to experience crowding and with the increase in attention to the area due to the movement to create a new Bears Ears National Monument which may include the Dark Canyon Wilderness.

Campsite inventories were conducted in the early 1990s and then again in 2007. The inventories show a trend over time of less overall campsite sites but the ones that continue to exist being more heavily impacted. This may be due having less water available in the canyon as springs have dried up and backpackers are using the campsite near the remaining reliable water sources.

Data Gaps

Reliable and accurate data on visitor use is missing

Reliable data on visitor's sense of solitude is missing

A Capacity Study for commercial use has not been prepared

Literature Cited

Dark Canyon Wilderness Implementation Schedule (USDA Forest Service, 1993)

Peavine Corridor Management Activity Standards (USDA Forest Service, 1993)

Wilderness Air Quality Monitoring Guidance (USDA Forest Service, 2012)

Dark Canyon Integrated Weed Management Plan (USDA Forest Service, 2016)

Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation

As required by the 2012 Planning Rule an updated wilderness inventory and evaluation will be part of the Forest Plan Revision process. The result of the inventory and evaluation will be to determine if any areas will be recommended for wilderness designation.

National Monuments

Bears Ears National Monument

On December 28, 2016 President Obama used the Antiquities Act to designate 1.35 million acres as the Bears Ears National Monument. Approximately 289,000 acres of the monument are located on the Monticello portion of the Manti –La Sal National Forest.

The Proclamation designating the monument identified the values and objects that the monument was designated to protect which includes it's cultural, prehistoric, and historic legacy and maintaining its diverse array of natural and scientific resources, and ensuring that the prehistoric, historic, and scientific values of this area remain for the benefit of all Americans.

The Proclamation directs the BLM and USFS to prepare a management plan for the monument and set up a Bears Ears Coalition including members from the Hopi Nation, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah Ouray, and Zuni Tribe to inform decisions on the management of the monument. The Proclamation also directed the BLM and Forest Service to set a up an Advisory Committee to provide information and advice regarding the development of the management plan and, as appropriate, management of the monument.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

River and stream segments on the Manti-La Sal National Forest were evaluated for their eligibility under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 2003. Findings of the evaluation are in the "Manti- La Sal National Forest Final Determination of Eligibility for Wild and Scenic Rivers Report". The report was supplemented in 2007 with additional information regarding ephemeral streams. Streams found eligible through this process were then evaluated for their suitability. A Record of Decision (ROD) for the "Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study for National Forest System Lands in the State of Utah" was issued in 2008. No rivers or streams on the Manti-La Sal National Forest were determined to be suitable.

Currently the Forest Service is determining if there are any stream segments that were missed during prior evaluations that need to be evaluated for eligibility and suitability. If there are stream segments that require evaluation the evaluation will be done in conjunction with this Forest Planning effort.

Literature Cited

Manti- La Sal National Forest Final Determination of Eligibility for Wild and Scenic Rivers Report (USDA Forest Service, 2003)

Supplement to the Manti- La Sal National Forest Final Determination of Eligibility for Wild and Scenic Rivers Report (USDA, Forest Service, 2007)

Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study for National Forest System Lands in the State of Utah (USDA Forest Service, 2008)

Inventoried Roadless and Roadless Areas

Inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) were first inventoried by the Forest Service in 1972, as part of the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation I (RARE I). The RARE I process initiated a review of National

Forest System roadless areas, generally larger than 5,000 acres, to determine their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

RARE I received a fair amount of criticism and was never finalized. To supplement this original work, from 1977 to 1979, the Forest Service conducted a second review of these roadless lands. This second review was known as Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II (RARE II). The purpose of RARE II was to inventory all roadless and undeveloped areas in the National Forest System and recommend their allocations to “wilderness, further planning, or non-wilderness”. Additional acres were added to the IRA inventory that was started in RARE I as a result of the RARE II.

The Manti-La Sal National Forest inventory contained 40 roadless areas, totaling approximately 645,000 acres. The Utah Wilderness Act designated 706,736 acres of wilderness statewide, including the 45,000 acre Dark Canyon Wilderness on the Manti- La Sal National Forest.

The current inventoried roadless areas of the Manti-La Sal National Forest are mapped in the *Roadless and Undeveloped Area Evaluation RARE II Final Environmental Assessment* (USDA Forest Service, 1979). Maps were updated as of October 1999, in response to the Roadless Area Conservation; Final Rule (36 CFR 294). A current list of IRAs and acreages are found in the table below.

Current Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Manti-La Sal National Forest	
North Zone	
Name of IRA	Acreage
Cedar Knoll	22,483
North Horn	8,300
Heliotrope	4,522
Muddy Creek-Nelson Mountain	59,113
Big Bear Creek	28,424
Coal Hollow	6,352
Bennion Creek	11,572
Dairy Fork	30,494
East Mountain	34,012
Gentry Mountain	6,436
Boulger-Black Canyon	23,267
Big Horseshoe	17,542
Straight Canyon	6,012
Biddlecome-Rock Canyon	18,728
Black Mountain	6,385
Birch Creek	7,998
Twelve Mile Creek	10,227
Wildcat Knolls	5,726
White Knoll	13,766
Price River	25,532
Oak Creek	19,341
Sanpitch	30,940
Nuck Woodward	12,168
Rolfson-Staker	7,317
Levan Peak	23,383
White Mountain	29,620
Musinia Peak	11,994

South Zone	
Roc Creek	12,809
Horse Mountain-Manns Peak	22,394
Mt. Peale	9,620
South Mountain	14,970
Shay Mountain	13,025
Blue Mountain	21,364
Allen Canyon-Dry Wash	13,988
Arch Canyon	12,773
Hammond-Notch Canyon	16,559
Ruin Canyon	8,232
Dark-Woodenshoe Canyon	59,392

Indicators

Indicators for managing IRAs include;

- Naturalness
- Untrammeled Character
- Undeveloped Character
- Opportunities for solitude and/or primitive recreation
- Special Features
- Manageability as wilderness

Scale

Boundaries of the Inventoried Roadless Areas

Existing conditions

The IRAs are managed under the 2001 Roadless Rule to protect their roadless characteristics and generally prohibits road construction and reconstruction and commercial logging. All actions proposed within the IRAs are evaluated for their potential to impact the roadless and wilderness character of the areas. Proposed projects in IRAs also need Regional Office concurrence prior to authorization.

Overall the IRAs have maintained their roadless character and remain in relatively pristine condition. The IRAs do contain minor developments such as range developments (troughs, fences, etc.) and motorized trails as well as past vegetation treatments.

Trends

Like recreation use across the forest the IRAs are also seeing increased recreational use.

Data Gaps

Reliable and accurate data on visitor use is missing

Literature Cited

Roadless and Undeveloped Area Evaluation RARE II Final Environmental Assessment (USDA Forest Service, 1979)

Roadless Area Conservation; Final Rule (36 CFR 294).

National Recreation Trails

Two National Recreation Trails (NRT) exist on the forest. Both of the trails are located on the North Zone. The trails are the Left Fork Huntington NRT and the Fish Creek NRT.

The Left Fork of Huntington NRT #5131 is 5.8 miles long. It begins at Forest Road #50058 and ends at Forest Road #50014. The trail is located along the bottom and north side of Left Fork of Huntington Creek. It climbs 847 feet from the trailhead at Forks of Huntington Campground (7,696 feet) to Miller Flat Road (8,543 feet). The trailhead at Miller Flat begins in sagebrush/grass habitat and then continues the rest of the way through scenic stands of spruce and fir. The trail is normally hiked from Miller Flat Trailhead down to the Forks of Huntington; however, many people also hike and fish along the lower sections of the trail. The trail has been rerouted around debris jams resulting from post-fire flooding following the 2012 Seeley Wildfire. This trail is open to foot and equestrian use only.

The Fish Creek National Recreation Trail #5130 is 10.0 miles long. The lower trailhead is located at the end of Forest Road #50123 (Fish Creek Campground). The trail ends at the upper trailhead on North Skyline Drive (Forest Road #50150). The trail is located along the bottom of Fish Creek drainage and generally parallels the stream with two bridged crossings. It climbs 1,080 feet from Fish Creek Campground (7,696 feet) to Skyline Drive (8,776 feet). Vegetation ranges from willows and grass along the immediate stream course, to sagebrush-grass on the south exposures of the canyon. Aspen stands and mixed aspen-conifer are visible on the north facing slope

Indicators

Trail Management Objectives for each of the trails would be used as indicators

Scale

Existing trail designations and boundaries

Trends

Use of the Left Fork of Huntington NRT has gone down dramatically since the 2012 Seeley Wildfire, as the trail and campground were closed for public safety. The fishery of the Left Fork of Huntington Creek was also decimated by post-fire flooding and has been slow to recover. Although now re-opened, use of the trail has been slow to rebound. It is expected that as the fishery improves, and visitors resume camping in campground, that trail use will also increase.

Use of the Fish Creek NRT has remained consistent, with spikes in usage occurring during the opening of the fishing season in July and during the fall hunting seasons. During the fall hunts, equestrian use is the predominant use of the trail. Recreational hiking occurs primarily in the lower and upper two miles of the trail during the summer months, with minimal mountain biking taking place.

Data Gaps

Trail use data from these two NRT's is not available.

Research Natural Areas

Research Natural Areas (RNAs) are lands within the National Forest System that are permanently protected as places to conduct research and monitoring, maintain biological diversity, and foster education.

The Organic Administration Act of June 4, 1897 authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to designate research natural areas. Special designations, 36 CFR 219.23 and 36 CFR 219.25, advise that forest planning shall provide for the establishment of research natural areas. Areas of important forest, scrubland, grassland, alpine, aquatic, and geologic types that have special or unique characteristics of scientific interest and importance will be identified and proposed as lands needed to complete the national research natural area network. Additionally, research natural area identification, establishment and management are outlined in FSM 4063.

As part of the Forest Plan Revision, potential new RNAs identified through the planning process will be evaluated.

Currently Sinbad Ridge has been proposed by the Nature Conservancy for RNA designation.

Indicators

Indicators will vary by RNA depending on the purpose it was established for.

Scale

Existing boundaries of the RNAs

Existing conditions

Since implementation of the Forest Plan, the Forest has designated the following Research Natural Areas: Nelson Mountain, Mount Peale, Cliff Dweller's Pasture, Mill Creek Gorge, and Hideout Mesa. A Forest Plan amendment, approved in November 1998, established direction for and set aside Mill Creek Gorge and Hideout Mesa as RNAs. Since the Nelson Mountain, Mount Peale, and Cliff Dweller's Pasture RNAs were designated after the completion of the Forest Plan, applicable management direction needs to be incorporated for these areas during plan revision. Current Forest Plan direction calls for the prohibition of roads, prospecting, seismic activity, livestock grazing, and construction of utility corridors within RNAs

The table below shows the six RNAs, the year they were established, their size and a description of the RNA.

Research Natural Areas on the Manti – La Sal National Forest			
<u>Name of RNA</u>	<u>Year Est.</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Description</u>
Cliff Dwellers Pasture	1991	264	Water birch & Gambel oak-bigtooth maple bottomland communities; pinyon-juniper woodlands; Navajo sandstone cliffs; sandstone arch; packrat middens; rare plants

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Elk Knoll	1957	40	Relatively level bench supporting subalpine tall forb vegetation, forests on adjacent slopes of subalpine fir & Engelmann spruce
Hideout Mesa	1998	360	Two-leaf pinyon & Utah juniper woodlands at upper elevational limits; patches of mountain brush and grassland; limited areas of ponderosa pine and big sagebrush
Mill Creek Gorge	1998	680	Deep gorge containing the steep-gradient Mill Creek; south exposures support pinyon-juniper woodlands; north exposures support mesic mountain brush communities with Gambel oak, Utah serviceberry & birchleaf mountain mahogany; Douglas-fir is associated with moist microsites; riparian
Mount Peale	1988	2380	Subalpine fir & Engelmann spruce forest & krummholz; cirque basins, rock glaciers & talus; alpine turf & boulder-field communities; rare plant
Nelson Mountain	1988	490	Diverse assemblage of woodland & shrublands including forests of white fir & Douglas-fir, and shrublands of curleaf mountain mahogany, mountain big sagebrush & black sagebrush; rare plant

Both the Mount Peale and Mill Creek Gorge RNAs are closed to issuing any new Special Use Permits, to protect the vegetation communities they were established to protect.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) introduced mountain goats into the La Sal Mountains including the Mount Peale RNA. The UDWR and USFS biologists are currently monitoring alpine vegetation to determine if any impacts are occurring within the RNA.

Trends

Increased recreational use associated with climbing the high peaks of the La Sals is occurring in the Mount Peale RNA. A trail counter was placed on the Tuk Trail that leads to the Mount Peale RNA in 2016.

Data Gaps

Reliable and accurate data on visitor use is missing

Data has been collected to determine recreation impacts from recreation use in the Mount Peale RNA and additional data is being collected on potential impacts to the RNA from mountain goats

Literature Cited

Research Natural Areas on National Forest System lands in Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Western Wyoming: A Guidebook for Scientists, Managers and Educators, (USDA Forest Service, 2001)

Scenic Byway-National

The Manti- La Sal National Forest hosts a portion of one nationally designated Scenic Byway; the Huntington and Eccles Canyons National Scenic Byway also known as the Energy Loop. This route follows Utah State Highways 31, 264, and 96 for 85 miles across the Wasatch Plateau and features three entry kiosks and fourteen interpretive stops along the way. Ten of the interpretive stops are located on the

forest. Visitors are introduced to the diversity of scenic, geologic, historic, cultural, and recreational resources found across the plateau.

Indicators

Visual Quality and Scenery Management Objectives along the Scenic Byway. Energy Loop Corridor Management Plan, 2011.

Scale

All of Utah State Highways 31, 264, and 96.

Existing conditions

Interpretive signing at the entry kiosks and at each of the fourteen interpretive stops was redesigned, fabricated, and installed in 2016. Emphasis on energy production was retained, recreational resources were more prominently featured, and interpretation of the 2012 Seeley Wildfire added. The recovery site of the 9,500 year-old mammoth skeleton remains a highlight of the byway experience.

Trends

Use of the byway routes by commercial truck traffic related to energy production, timber sale operations, and commuter traffic to the coal mines and Huntington Power Plant is expected to increase by about one percent annually. Tourism traffic is heaviest during the Memorial Day--Labor Day time period with another traffic spike occurring during the fall hunting seasons.

Data Gaps

Data on the number of visitors who stop at the entry kiosks and interpretive sites along the Byway is unknown.

Literature Cited

Energy Loop Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan Update, (Fehr and Peers, Bonneville Research, 2011).

Special Interest Areas

The purpose of special interest areas is to “protect and manage for public use and enjoyment special areas with scenic, geological, botanical, zoological, paleontological, archaeological, or other special interest characteristics or unique values” (FSM 2372.02). Current Forest Plan direction for special interest areas is to provide signing and protection, and to manage for long-term public enjoyment.

Indicators

The Special Interest Area indicators would vary depending on the values that the area was designated to protect.

Scale

The boundaries of the Special Interest Areas

Existing conditions

Existing Special Interest Areas

- The Great Basin Experimental Range (4,608 acres) was established for range and hydrological research.
- The Grove of Aspen Giants was established as a special scenic area (10 acres) containing some very large aspen trees. The majority of large aspens within this site have died.
- The Pinhook Battleground is the historic site (one acre) of a battle between early settlers and Americans Indians. The interpretive site was burned by the Porcupine Ranch Fires in 2008 but has since been replaced and a new trail was constructed to access the site.
- The Mont E. Lewis Botanical Area is a unique wet meadow containing plant species not normally found outside of arctic and alpine habitats. This area was proposed in the 1986 Forest Plan as the "Scad Valley Botanical Area" and designated in 1995 (USDA Forest Service, 1986, II-59). The area presently consists of 20 acres, however, the Forest botanist has recommended the area be expanded by 80 acres to protect against impacts from livestock and people.

As part of the Forest Plan Revision process additional Special Interest Areas can be identified and evaluated. Below are several potential areas that have been identified in past planning efforts.

Potential Special Interest Areas

- Archeological site(s), Monticello Ranger District: The Forest possesses a number of outstanding ancient cultural landscapes. The most notable of these are located within the Cottonwood basin in San Juan County. These resources represent some of the most significant archaeological resources in the greater Southwest.
- White Mountain, Ferron Ranger District: The White Mountain area is subalpine to near alpine in elevation (10,900 feet). Seventy plant species have been collected and identified from this site, including three sensitive species.
- Maloy Park, Moab Ranger District: This area contains both unique landforms and vegetation. It is primarily used as a recreation area and for livestock grazing.
- Maple Canyon, San Pitch Division: This area contains unique geology featuring a non-typical arch formed from conglomerate. This area is also renowned for its rock climbing.
- Little Dry Mesa, Monticello Ranger District: This area contains three sensitive plant species, along with many other common and unique plants.