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Forest Service

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests

DRAFT Wilderness Evaluation Report

August 2018



Designated in the original Wilderness Act of 1964, the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness covers more than 183,000 acres spanning the Gunnison and White River National Forests.

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Introduction

When revising the land management plan, the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG) are required to identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness. A description of this process can be found in the 2012 Forest Service Planning Rule and [Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 70](#). This process includes the following four steps:

1. Inventory. Identify and inventory all lands that may or may not be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System using a required set of criteria.
2. **Evaluation. Evaluate the wilderness characteristics of each inventoried area (polygon) using a required set of criteria.**
3. Analysis. The forest supervisor will determine which polygons to further analyze in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.
4. Recommendation. The forest supervisor will decide which polygons, if any, to recommend for inclusion in the NWPS. Lands evaluated and analyzed through this process and the resulting NEPA analysis are only preliminary administrative recommendations. Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.

Step 2: Evaluation of Wilderness Characteristics

The primary function of Step 2, the Evaluation step, which is the focus of this document, is to evaluate the *wilderness characteristics* of lands included in the final Inventory, using the criteria set forth in the Wilderness Act of 1964 as described in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 70, section 72. The Evaluation step assesses lands included in the final Inventory for the following wilderness characteristics:

1. Apparent naturalness,
2. Outstanding opportunities for solitude *or* primitive/unconfined type of recreation,
3. Sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable,
4. Ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value, and
5. Degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The Draft Wilderness Evaluation Report includes narratives that correspond with each [mapped](#) Evaluation polygon, describing current conditions and providing rationale for the wilderness characteristics rating. The Draft Wilderness Evaluation Report and map include all polygons that met the Inventory criteria listed in the [Revised Inventory Criteria document](#). The [Revised Evaluation Criteria document](#) provides detailed information on how the polygons were evaluated to possess a **High**, **Moderate**, **Low**, or **No** degree of wilderness characteristics.

Gunnison Ranger District

Area G1: East Elk (11,245 acres)

Summary

*Area G1 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of improvements, as well as high-quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation available throughout the year. The shape of the area is somewhat contiguous, with one cherry-stemmed road bisecting the area into two separate east and west polygons. The northern and western sections of the area are adjacent to West Elk Wilderness. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Colorado Roadless Areas, and natural features could provide manageable boundaries.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen. The central portion of this polygon includes a distinct, long and narrow canyon surrounding East Elk Creek. Riparian habitat occurs along the East Elk Creek drainage. This area provides suitable lynx habitat, as well as excellent big game habitat. Other wildlife species include elk, mule deer, black bear, bighorn sheep, Gunnison sage grouse, and flammulated owl. The area also hosts diverse songbird communities due to the presence of aspen habitat throughout.

Prescribed burns to improve wildlife habitat, primarily for big game species, and reduce hazardous fuels have occurred within the area. These prescribed burns have intended to restart the natural fire regime. There is little evidence of improvements or human activity throughout the polygon. A portion of Lion Gulch Trail (NFST 9536) traverses the southwestern corner of the area. There is one abandoned trail on the landscape, as well as a decommissioned road with just enough of a remaining bench for the route to still be negotiated. Some fencing also occurs in the area. Overall, the limited evidence of human intervention does not detract from the area's high degree of apparent naturalness.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is limited to portions of the area near Red Creek Road (cherry-stemmed) and Rainbow Lake Road (adjacent to eastern side). Rainbow Lake Road is used heavily for timber harvest activities. However, sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon do not detract from opportunities for solitude throughout the majority of the area. The southwest corner receives some use along Lion Gulch Trail. Due to the precipitous access, little to no activity is

associated with the private in-holding located within the canyon. The interior portions of the polygon above the canyon rims provide a lesser degree of solitude, but opportunities still exist due to limited evidence of human activity throughout the polygon. Overall, opportunities for visitors to experience solitude are abundant throughout the majority of the year, particularly within the canyon.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers high-quality opportunities for primitive hiking, backcountry hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The distinct, long and narrow canyon is locally significant. East Elk Creek offers important habitat. The National Park Service classified the water here as “pristine” after testing.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is somewhat contiguous, with one cherry-stemmed road bisecting the area into two separate east and west polygons. The northern and western sections of the area are adjacent to West Elk Wilderness and the southern boundary abuts Sapinero State Wildlife Area. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Colorado Roadless Areas. The Red Creek and Rainbow cattle allotments are located in the area. The presence of the private in- holding could present management challenges depending on how and when future access might occur. The majority of the area lends itself to be managed for its wilderness characteristics due to its adjacency to existing designated wilderness, limited improvements and existing rights and uses, and natural features that could provide manageable boundaries. For example, the ridgeline between Lion Gulch Trail and West Red Creek could serve as a manageable eastern boundary for the separate, western polygon.

Area G2: Steuben (13,404 acres)

Summary

*Area G2 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities and as well as high-quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation available throughout the year. The shape of the area is separated into four separate but contiguous polygons. The area is adjacent to West Elk Wilderness to the north, the majority of the polygon is currently managed as Colorado Roadless Areas, and natural features could provide manageable boundaries.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by aspen mixed with spruce fir, Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, spruce, lodgepole, and sagebrush. Riparian habitats occur along Steuben Creek and its tributaries. The area includes bighorn sheep and lynx habitat. The northeast portion of the polygon provides important elk calving area. Seasonal closures associated with elk calving occur in this area from winter to July 1st. Other wildlife species include mule deer, black bear, bald eagle, and Gunnison sage grouse. The East Beaver Creek managed fire occurred in the area about six years ago. In 2002, the Steuben fire, 600-acre lightning-ignition, occurred in the area. Some of the area's aspen and Douglas-fir were burned. Beyond the fire history in this area, the vegetation appears natural without much evidence of human intervention.

The area includes Sun Creek (NFST 726) and Black Gulch (NFST 9574) motorized trails. These trails were previously roads that have since been converted to trails. These two trails are overgrown by grass in the summer but reappear during hunting season from heavy use. Some decommissioned roads are evident on the landscape due to continued use. A non-motorized trail, Beaver Creek Trail (NFST 447), provides a portal into West Elk Wilderness from the eastern polygon. The area includes some fencing and other range improvements throughout the area. There are also some trespass cabins. Overall, these improvements are somewhat evident in isolated portions of the area but do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole. The improvements are scattered and the terrain and thick vegetation provide screening.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is limited to portions of the area near Sun Creek Road (cherry-stemmed). However, sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon do not detract from opportunities for solitude throughout the majority of the area. The terrain throughout much of the area is rugged with dense vegetation, particularly below the canyon rims, which provides high-quality opportunities for solitude. A portion of the area is effectively closed when Beaver Creek State Wildlife Area is closed. Overall, opportunities for visitors to experience solitude are abundant throughout the majority of the year, particularly within the canyons.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive hiking, backcountry hunting, fishing (particularly in Beaver Creek), and wildlife viewing.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Green lineage Colorado River Cutthroat Trout occur in Beaver Creek, and the National Park Service classified the water here as “pristine” after testing. Two eligible historic cabins are located in the area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is four separate polygons, but the individual polygons are contiguous. The area is adjacent to West Elk Wilderness to the north, and the majority of the polygon is currently managed as Willow Creek, Steuben, and Beaver Colorado Roadless Areas. A private in-holding within the northern section of the central polygon along the existing wilderness boundary. The Antelope, Beaver, and Rainbow/Red Creek cattle allotments are located in the area. The majority of the area lends itself to be managed for its wilderness characteristics due to its adjacency to existing designated wilderness, limited improvements and existing rights and uses, and natural features that could provide manageable boundaries.

Area G4: Pass Creek (3,175 acres)

Summary

*Area G4 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics, particularly on the western and northern portions adjacent to West Elk Wilderness. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of improvements throughout the majority of the area, and prevalent high-quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation throughout much of the year. The area also possesses quality habitat and iconic scenic traits. The shape of the area is contiguous, it is adjacent to existing wilderness, much of the area is currently managed as a Colorado Roadless Area, and a manageable boundary is identified.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.

The existing vegetation has aspen mixed with spruce/fir and lodgepole pine. Riparian habitat occurs along Little Pass and Pass creeks, and around ponds and wetlands. The area hosts a healthy beaver population due to the large, high-quality wetlands. Historically, there have been several observances of boreal toads and Northern leopard frogs. The area contains bighorn sheep overall range and is part of a Lynx Analysis Unit. The area provides summer range for mule deer, black bear, and mountain lion. The overall composition of plants and animals appear natural, with isolated spots of non-native species.

Timber harvest activities occurred within the eastern portion of the polygon in the 1930s and 1940s, but these activities are not very evident on the landscape. The area is part of the Beckwith Cattle allotment which has been grazed for over 100 years. However, these past and current activities do not reflect noticeable human intervention to the area’s natural ecological conditions.

The landscape appears very natural close to the wilderness boundary, with some evident influence of human intervention within the eastern portion of the polygon.

Little Pass Creek Trail traverses the polygon from the southwestern to northeastern corners. This trail is managed for hiking and horseback riding, and allows mechanized use. Limited portions of the Swampy Pass Trail occur within the northern portion of the polygon, adjacent to existing wilderness. Portions of six ditches and some fences occur along the edges of the area. An administrative road inside the area provides access to a cow camp located outside of the polygon. The majority of the polygon does not contain many improvements, especially on the western and northern portions, and the rolling terrain and thick vegetation conceals most improvements that are present here.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is limited to portions of the area on or near Little Pass Creek Trail and the administrative route, as well as areas close to adjacent private properties. Outfitter and guide activities occur here, with heavier activity occurring during fall big game hunting season. Some of the eastern portion of the area is popular for cutting firewood. There is more potential for encounters with other visitors in the area during the late summer and fall, with less potential for encounters during the winter season. Some sights and sounds of human activity originate from outside the area via adjacent private properties, adjacent cow camp, and nearby travel ways. Snowmobile activity occurring outside the area can be heard within the area at times during the winter season. However, sights and sounds originating from outside the area are not pervasively observed from within the polygon due to screening that dense vegetation provides, as well as the distance from roads and developments. Overall, there are many opportunities for solitude within the area, especially in the western and northern portions of the area (within the Castle Colorado Roadless Area) and outside of hunting season.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

There are opportunities for hunting, angling, hiking, and horseback riding. The area has many meadows to explore, beautiful scenery, and excellent fishing (brook trout). Access is pretty limited (main access point Swampy Pass) which makes much of the area is somewhat challenging to reach. Overall, the area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive/unconfined recreation activities.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The view of the Castles from within the polygon is notable and iconic, and is especially prominent from the Swampy Pass Trail. This view often serves as the representative photo of the West Elk Wilderness and the area is especially popular for viewing foliage in the fall. The

Anthracite Range receives a lot of precipitation and releases snowmelt well into July, making this area particularly wet and hosting important high-quality riparian habitat.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the polygon is contiguous, adjacent to West Elk Wilderness to the north and west, and most of the polygon is currently managed as a Colorado Roadless Area. The portion of the area located northwest of Pass Creek Trail and adjacent to existing wilderness would be very manageable, and Pass Creek Trail itself could provide a manageable boundary. The portion of the area south and east of Pass Creek Trail would be less manageable. Portions of six ditches (one main ditch associated with the adjacent private lands), and associated access and maintenance needs, could impact the ability to manage for wilderness characteristics due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for the spread of invasive species and associated treatments. While these legally-established rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics, the majority of the area lends itself to be preserved in an unimpaired state due to its contiguous shape, adjacency to existing designated wilderness on two sides, and relatively limited access.

Area G20-N: Sawtooth (28,041 acres)

Summary

*Area G20-N was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of improvements, and abundant opportunities for high-quality solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses high-quality habitat, as well as scenic and cultural traits. The size and shape of the area is large and mostly contiguous within the central and southern portions. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Sawtooth Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen, lodgepole, and montane sagebrush, and some grassy meadows. Pockets of blue spruce and montane subalpine bristlecone pine can also be found within this area. Riparian habitats occur along the major drainages. There are limited, isolated pockets of cheatgrass on the eastern side of the polygon. Three goshawk nest sites are located in the area. Other wildlife species include black bear, mule deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, bald eagle, as well as Abert's squirrels in the ponderosa pine on the southern edge. The area contains mapped lynx habitat as well as a portion of Gunnison sage grouse critical habitat.

The majority of the area has not been cut or treated and generally appears very natural, particularly within the central and southern portions currently managed as Sawtooth Colorado Roadless Area. Wildfire activity and spruce beetle kill, natural processes, have occurred in some portions of the area. There are limited improvements throughout the area beyond fencing and other range-related infrastructure. The northern portion of the area contains some previous roads

that have since been converted to trails. These limited improvements are evident on the landscape in very isolated portions and do not detract from the apparent naturalness of this large area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives very little use aside from some hunting, hiking, birding, and grazing. The converted roads are typically only used in the fall to cut firewood. The rugged terrain, dense vegetation, distance from sights and sounds of/from development, and the absence of recreation infrastructure within the area create a very remote atmosphere. This area offers outstanding opportunities for visitors to experience solitude.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, including hunting, horseback riding, hiking, wildlife viewing, birding, and peak-bagging Sawtooth Mountain (about 12,000 feet).

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Conservation populations of blue lineage Colorado River Cutthroat Trout are located in South Beaver & Deer Beaver Creeks. Sawtooth Mountain provides a scenic backdrop viewed from Gunnison and serves as a reference point for the Gunnison Basin. A Ute fortified site is located within the area, as well as an ash seam known as “The Thunderbird” due to its resemblance to bird wings.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and mostly contiguous within the central and southern portions. The area is adjacent to Bureau of Land Management lands to the north, west, and east. Private lands are adjacent to portions of the northern section of the polygon. The majority of the area is currently managed as Sawtooth Colorado Roadless Area. The East Beaver, South Beaver, Los Pinos, Sawtooth, and Beak Creek cattle allotments are located within the area. The majority of the central and southern portions, currently managed as Sawtooth Colorado Roadless Area, would be manageable to preserve for wilderness characteristics due to its large contiguous size, limited access, rugged terrain, and natural features that could provide manageable boundaries. The northern-most portion would not be manageable due to its scattered configuration, presence of improvements, multiple access routes, and adjacent private lands.

Area G21-E: Sylvan Canyon (6,055 acres)

Summary

*Area G21-E was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of improvements, and high-quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is mostly contiguous, with one cherry-stemmed road. The area is adjacent to La Garita Wilderness to the south and the majority of the polygon is currently managed as Cochetopa Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by forested stands mixed with aspen, lodgepole pine, limber pine, bristlecone pine, and Engelmann spruce. Riparian habitat extends along Cochetopa Creek and large meadows occur near the Continental Divide. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, and mountain lion. This area is a large migration corridor for mule deer. Based on Colorado Parks and Wildlife remote camera monitoring, an established resident lynx home range is located in this area. This is unique because resident lynx have previously been undocumented within this part of the Gunnison District. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail traverses the center of the polygon from north to south. One access trail is located in the southern portion of the polygon. The area also contains some fencing. This area represents a relatively undisturbed, very naturally-appearing landscape that provides important connectivity.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is limited to portions of the area on or near Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. This through-trail and the whole area receives relatively high use at times. However, quality opportunities to experience solitude are available in this area, particularly within the canyon and in the southern portion adjacent to La Garita Wilderness.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation such as through-hiking, backpacking, fishing, and hunting.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail traverses the length of the polygon's core.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the polygon is mostly contiguous, with one cherry-stemmed road. The area is adjacent to La Garita Wilderness to the south, Bureau of Land Management lands to the north, and Rio Grande National Forest to the east. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Cochetopa Colorado Roadless Area. The Saguache Park and Cochetopa cattle allotments are located in this area. The area lends itself to be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics in an unimpaired state due to its mostly contiguous shape, lack of human influence or improvements, and adjacency to existing designated wilderness.

Area G23: Mineral Mountain (7,684 acres)

Summary

*Area G23 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of improvements, and opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is separated into three separate polygons, all of which are adjacent to La Garita Wilderness to the south. The southern section of the polygon is currently managed as Mineral Mountain Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Spruce-Fire-Aspen. Alpine tundra and willow carr occurs at the higher elevations within the southern portion. Bristlecone pine occurs in some portions. Evidence of invasive plant species is isolated. Wildlife species include elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, black bear, and mountain lion. This area includes a Lynx Analysis Unit (with resident lynx). The vegetation appears natural without much evidence of human intervention from limited treatments occurring in this area due to the terrain.

The Cebolla Trail (NFST 9459) traverses the southern-most portion of the area. Decommissioned roads occur on the landscape within the western portion and are actively used for hiking and horseback riding. These limited improvements are evident in isolated portions of the area but do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The area does not receive much use and the cherry-stemmed road, bisecting the two main polygons, is only open to vehicles for the purposes of the private property owners located along the road. Limited traffic occurs on NFSR 788 to the north. Sights and sounds originating from

these two roads and the adjacent private property can be observed from some places within the polygon. However, portions of the area away from the roads offer opportunities to experience solitude, particularly in sections closer to La Garita Wilderness.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation such as hiking, backcountry hunting, and fishing. Some of these opportunities are high quality. The Cebolla Trail offers a portal into the adjacent La Garita Wilderness to the south.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area offers outstanding views of the Cathedral cliffs, an iconic “mountain cathedral.”

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is separated into three smaller, separate polygons, all of which are adjacent to La Garita Wilderness to the south. The southern section of the polygon is currently managed as Mineral Mountain Colorado Roadless Area. Adjacent private lands, and associated ditches, are located in the northern, southern, and eastern portions of the area. Despite the fact that this area is adjacent to existing wilderness and lacks improvements or existing rights within the area, the shape and configuration of the polygon coupled with several adjacent private properties could pose challenges to managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area G25: Cannibal Plateau (15,447 acres)

Summary

*Area G25 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited improvements, and high-quality opportunities for primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses quality habitat and a geologic traits. The size and shape of the area is large and contiguous, it is adjacent to Powderhorn Wilderness, and the majority of the area is currently managed as Cannibal Plateau Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.

The existing vegetation in this area is very diverse due to the variations in elevation, terrain, and aspect. The vegetation is dominated by spruce/fir and aspen mixed forests, with some areas of bristlecone pine. Alpine habitat exists on Cannibal Plateau, including areas of bare rock, gross/forb types, and willow. The area includes some riparian habitat. Wildlife species include

white-tailed ptarmigan, bald eagle, mule deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, black bear, and lynx. Lynx habitat is mapped throughout the polygon. The area generally reflects ecological conditions normally associated with areas without human intervention.

Cannibal Plateau Trail (NFST 9464) and Brush Creek Trail (9457) traverse and meet within the center of the polygon. Calf Creek (NFST 9458) and Infierno Canyon (NFST 9461) trails also occur within the eastern portion of the area. The area includes a groomed, marked snowmobile trail during the winter. A small reservoir is also located in the area. The west side of the area is very steep with no improvements. Overall, the limited improvements are somewhat evident in isolated portions of the area but do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is evident on or near the trails, and near adjacent Deer Lakes campground, NFSR 788, and Highway 149. The town of Lake City and associated developments can be viewed from within the polygon along the western rim. Sights and sounds originating from outside the area are pervasive within some portions of the polygon due to the terrain. Portions of this area offer quality opportunities for solitude, especially in the northeastern portion adjacent to Powderhorn Wilderness.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

There are high-quality opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation such as hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, alpine wildflower viewing, and observing the Slumgullion slide (geologic feature).

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The Slumgullion slide and the area's alpine landscape are interesting geologic attributes. The area also offers outstanding the views of the Uncompahgre Wilderness to the west.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and contiguous. It is adjacent to Powderhorn Wilderness to the east (administered by the Forest Service) and to the north (administered by the Bureau of Land Management). Other Bureau of Land Management lands are adjacent to the east side of the area. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Cannibal Plateau Colorado Roadless Area. The Cannibal sheep allotment is located in the area. The majority of the area lends itself to be managed for preserving its wilderness characteristics in an unimpaired state due to its large

size, contiguous shape, limited improvements and existing rights and uses, and adjacency to existing designated wilderness.

Area G26-W: Pigtail End (10,405 acres)

Summary

*Area G26-W was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited improvements, and prevalent opportunities for high-quality primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses high-quality habitat and scenic traits. The size and shape of the area is large and contiguous, the terrain is steep and rugged, and the vast majority of the polygon is currently managed as Cataract Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The area is dominated by alpine habitats with riparian habitats scattered throughout. Spruce/fir forests occur at lower elevations of the drainages, as well as some aspen and small colonies of white fir. The area has been mapped as suitable lynx habitat in the forested areas, and resident lynx inhabit Razor Gulch. This area is adjacent to the Silverton-Lake City lynx linkage area. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, black bear, wolverine, and white-tailed ptarmigan. The waterfall habitat in the area indicates the likely presence of black swifts. Three non-motorized trails traverse the area – Cuba Gulch Trail (NFST 9477), Cataract Gulch Trail (NFST 9475), and the Continental National Scenic Trail. Some range improvements occur in the very northeast corner of the area. This area appears very natural due to the intact natural communities, lack of human intervention, and limited improvements throughout.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is primarily limited to portions of the area near the trails, particularly Cataract Trail. However, the many waterfalls along this popular trail muffle most noise of other visitors within the area. Some traffic along the nearby road can be heard within some parts of the northeastern end. These sounds originating from outside of the polygon are not pervasively observed within the area and do not detract from opportunities for solitude. The area receives more use during the summer season since the precipitous terrain reduces winter recreation opportunities here. Due to the area's size, dense vegetation, topography, and distance from roads and development, there are abundant high-quality opportunities to experience solitude throughout the majority of the polygon.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

Access to this area is difficult and there are high quality opportunities to experience primitive and unconfined recreation, such as primitive hiking, wildlife viewing, fishing in Cataract Lake, and some hunting. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, which traverses the area's southern boundary, offers opportunities for primitive hiking, horseback riding, and backpacking.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area is located within 10 miles of four different designated wilderness areas – Uncompahgre, La Garita, Powderhorn, and Weminuche. The views from within the area are outstanding, including vistas of several 14,000-foot peaks. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail traverses the southern boundary of the polygon and offers spectacular views. Cataract Lake is a scenic high alpine lake, which are fairly rare in the Gunnison National Forest. The waterfalls along the Cataract Trail leading to Cataract Lake are outstanding. This area includes an Iron Fen within Wager Gulch. The Half Peak Potential Conservation Area is located within the polygon, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program for several alpine plants.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and contiguous. The area is sandwiched between Handies Peak Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Area to the north, and Pole Mountain/Finger Mesa Colorado Roadless Area on the Rio Grande National Forest to the south. Other Bureau of Land Management lands are adjacent to the west, and private lands are adjacent to the east. The vast majority of the polygon is currently managed as Cataract Colorado Roadless Area. The Cottonwood and Cataract-Cuba cattle allotments are located in the area. This area lends itself to be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics in an unimpaired state due to its large contiguous size and shape, limited access, lack of improvements and existing rights, and rugged terrain. Complementary management of most adjacent lands also contributes to the ability to manage this area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area GP1: Soap Creek/Mendicant (27,685 acres)

*Area GP1 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of noticeable improvements throughout the majority of the area, as well as high-quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation available within most of the area throughout the year. The area also possesses high-quality habitat and scenic traits. The size and shape of the area is large and mostly contiguous, with one cherry-stemmed road. The area is adjacent to West Elk Wilderness, natural features could provide manageable boundaries in some portions of the area, and nearly all of the polygon is currently managed as Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Areas.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by spruce and mixed conifer, and also includes ponderosa pine, Gambel oak, Douglas-fir, aspen, serviceberry, some spruce-fir and sagebrush, as well as interspersed meadows. The vegetation throughout this polygon provides excellent habitat with lots of forage and cover. The area also hosts goshawk, mule deer, elk, American marten, peregrine falcon, bighorn sheep, and wild turkeys. The area includes bald eagle winter range, with several roost site locations occurring along Soap Creek. The Soap Creek corridor is a hugely important elk migration corridor with high-quality winter range. The area provides suitable habitat for lynx (with documented cases of collared lynx from Colorado Parks and Wildlife). A resident lynx was located just northeast of the polygon and its home range would likely overlap this polygon.

The topography and geology of the area is steep and unstable, resulting in a very natural-appearing landscape because few treatments have occurred here. This area has experienced a history of wildfire activity (natural), and most of the affected areas have recovered. The western portion of the polygon includes a few non-motorized trails, as well as a repeater on Bald Mountain. A few non-functioning ditches are associated with Elk Creek. The central portion of the polygon includes a couple non-motorized trails, along with water improvements along the Curecanti Trail. The eastern section includes some range improvements, decommissioned roads, and a ditch extending out of the wilderness adjacent to private lands in the northern portion. Overall, these improvements are somewhat evident in isolated portions of the area but do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole. The improvements are scattered and the terrain and thick vegetation provide extensive screening.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is primarily limited to portions of the area near Soap Creek Road (cherry-stemmed). Sights from Soap Creek Road cannot easily be observed from within the polygon, but use along the road can be heard from many nearby portions of the area due to the terrain. Soap Creek Road is a high-clearance four-wheel drive route that is heavily trafficked by ATV/UTVs during the hunting season. The impacts from outside disturbance to opportunities for solitude within the polygon are limited to some portions of the area during one season. Private land activities may affect a sense of solitude near Big Soap Park. Activity on Blue Mesa Reservoir to the south is visible in the distance within some parts of the area, but these sights do detract from solitude. Portions of the area such as Dillon Mesa and West Elk Creek offer high-quality opportunities for solitude. Opportunities for visitors to experience solitude are abundant throughout the majority of the year, particularly within the western-most and eastern-most portions of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The terrain is very steep, rugged, and challenging to navigate. Access is pretty limited (main access via Soap Creek Road) which makes much of the area somewhat difficult to reach. The area's non-motorized trails provide portals into West Elk Wilderness. There are abundant opportunities for hunting, as well as fishing, horseback riding, and hiking. Some of these opportunities are outstanding, particularly near Dillion Mesa and West Elk Creek, and along the ridge between Curecanti and Soap Creek.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The views of the West Elks from within the polygon there are outstanding. Some portions of the area offer views of Black Canyon as well. The area's geology is interesting and the southern portion provides a very scenic backdrop to the Blue Mesa Reservoir, characterized by cliff outcrops of eroded West Elk Breccia (an old earthflow). Portions of the Upper Smith Fork Drainage, Cow Creek at Soap Creek, and Soap Creek Potential Conservation Areas identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program are located in the area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and mostly contiguous, with one cherry-stemmed road. The area is adjacent to West Elk Wilderness to the north, with a private in-holding located along the wilderness boundary within the north-central section of the polygon. State of Colorado, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service lands are located to the south. Nearly all of the polygon is currently managed as Curecanti, Soap Creek, and Mendicant Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Areas. A couple outfitter and guides operate in the area for hunting. The West Elk, Mesa, and Soap Creek cattle allotments, along with the Dyer sheep allotment, are located in the area. The communication site and the three ditches would require access and maintenance that could impact the ability to manage for wilderness characteristics due the presence of existing water rights, use of equipment, and the increased potential for the spread of invasive species. A few existing non-active mining claims are located on the edge of the polygon. While these legally-established rights and uses could reduce the ability the manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics, a large portion of the area lends itself to be preserved in an unimpaired state due to its adjacency to existing designated wilderness, relatively limited access, and natural features that could provide manageable boundaries. The western portion of the area would be more easily manageable for preserving wilderness characteristics.

Area G3: Castle (11,405 acres)

Summary

*Area G3 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, some non-native plant species and improvements, and quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is large and somewhat contiguous, with the central and southern portions broken up by adjacent private lands, a cherry-stemmed road, and excluded lands. The polygon abuts West Elk Wilderness to the west and Bureau of Land Management lands to the east. The northern portion of the area is currently managed as Castle Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by spruce-fir and aspen, as well as some montane sub-alpine grasslands. Spruce-fir dominates the northern portion of the polygon, while aspen and mixed conifer spreads throughout the south portion of the polygon. Riparian habitats occur along the creeks. Non-native plant species (such as ox-eye daisy, absinthe, musk thistle, and cheatgrass) occur in isolated spots within the central portion near Mill Creek and along the east side near adjacent Bureau of Land Management lands. This area hosts very diverse bird communities, raptors, and moose. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, bighorn sheep, pine marten, peregrine falcon, and Northern goshawk. The area also contains suitable lynx habitat and occasional individuals have been documented in the area. The plant and animal communities appear natural throughout the polygon. Improvements are scattered throughout this large area, including range-related infrastructure such as fencing. Numerous trails traverse the landscape. Other improvements include evident road beds of decommissioned roads and several ditches. During the winter, the landscape includes a network of groomed, marked Nordic trails. These improvements are evident on the landscape in isolated portions of the area but do not detract from the area's apparent naturalness as a whole due to dense vegetation that provides extensive screening throughout much of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area is a Nordic destination that receives consistent, and increasing, use around Mill Creek during the winter. The area also receives consistent use during the fall hunting season, but experiences modest use during the rest of the year. Dense vegetation provides effective screening for sights and sounds originating both from within and outside of the polygon. Quality opportunities for solitude are available within this area throughout the year, particularly in the northern portion of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation in this area include hiking, backcountry hunting, horseback riding, and winter recreation such as snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Backcountry skiing opportunities are available during big snow years. Some of these opportunities are high quality, particularly in the more rugged northern section of the polygon. Three trails in the area – Costco Lake (NFST 9425), Mill Castle (NFST 9450), and Little Mill (NFST 9455) – provide access portals into adjacent West Elk Wilderness to the west, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

West Antelope Creek contains green lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout. The view of the Castles from within the polygon is notable and iconic.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and somewhat contiguous. The central and southern portions are broken up by adjacent private lands, a cherry-stemmed road (Mill Creek Road, NFSR 727), and excluded substantially-noticeable lands. The polygon abuts West Elk Wilderness to the west and some Bureau of Land Management lands to the east. The northern portion of the area is currently managed as Castle Colorado Roadless Area. A commercial outfitter and guide operates within this area for big game hunting and the polygon contains established range activities. The ditches in the area would require continued access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, and the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. It would be difficult to effectively manage the central and southern portions of the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its disjointed shape, evidence of human influence, and adjacent private lands. However, the northern portion of the area could be more effectively managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the relatively contiguous shape, limited improvements, and adjacency to existing wilderness.

Area G5-N: Poverty Gulch (7,168 acres)

Summary

*Area G5-N was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, isolated non-native plant species, scattered human influence and improvements, and quality opportunities to experience solitude and engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is somewhat contiguous, broken up by a couple cherry-stemmed roads and adjacent private properties. The polygon abuts White River National Forest to the north and west, as well as*

Raggeds Wilderness to the west. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Poverty Gulch Colorado Roadless Area.

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by aspen and spruce forests in lower elevations and open alpine habitats at higher elevations. A variety of wildflower species occur here and the meadows of wildflowers make the area particularly important for pollinators. Non-native plant species (such as ox-eye daisy, yellow toadflax, and Canada thistle) occur in isolated portions of the area. Wildlife species include mountain goat, pika, white-tailed ptarmigan, and many big game species. Lynx habitat has been mapped in the area. This polygon represents a unique ecosystem that hosts lots of important species. Large portions of the vegetation in the area reflect a high degree of apparent naturalness. The terrain is very avalanche prone, which results in natural disturbances to the vegetation. Much of the area includes extensive evidence of historic mining activity, including tailing piles and an open adit (mine entrance for access or drainage). Other improvements on the landscape include several trails, old road beds, unauthorized cabins, some water developments, and range-related infrastructure. Improvements are scattered and detract from apparent naturalness in some portions of the area, particularly above timberline where the lack of vegetation provides no screening.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Considerable portions of the area provide opportunities to experience solitude away from adjacent private properties, evidence of historic mining, and range activities. Some intermittent disturbance originating from nearby motorized use detracts from opportunities for solitude within some portions of the area. The town of Crested Butte is visible to the southeast from high vantage points, but this does not detract from the ability to experience solitude throughout much of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers abundant opportunities to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation such as backcountry hunting, primitive hiking, mountaineering, Nordic skiing in lower elevations, and backcountry skiing on Schuykill and Purple Mountains. Oh Be Joyful Creek (southern boundary) offers Class VI whitewater opportunities. Some intermittent disturbance originates from nearby motorized use and motorized equipment used for backcountry skiing within the area, but these disturbances are limited and do not detract from the outstanding primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities this area offers. Several trails in the area provide access portals into adjacent Raggeds Wilderness, a larger and more primitive landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

None known.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is somewhat contiguous. Portions of the area are broken up by cherry-stemmed roads and adjacent private properties. The polygon is adjacent to White River National Forest to the north and west, as well as Raggeds Wilderness to the west. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Poverty Gulch Colorado Roadless Area. The Slate River cattle allotment is located in the area. Portions of the area contain active mining claims. Infrastructure associated with water developments permitted to the Rocky Mountain Biological Lab would require continued access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state due the presence of existing water and access rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. However, sizable portions of the area away from adjacent private properties could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its adjacency to existing wilderness, rugged terrain, and identifiable landscape features that could create effective boundaries.

Area G6-128: Whetstone (18,973 acres)

Summary

*Area G6-128 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, scattered human influence and improvements, and quality opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses scenic traits. The size and configuration of the area is large and somewhat contiguous, with portions of the area broken up by excluded lands, adjacent private properties, and some cherry-stemmed roads. A large section of the area is currently managed as Whetstone Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by spruce-fir, aspen, along with interspersed grass/forb meadows and alpine habitats on the three mountain peaks. This area includes lynx habitat and is adjacent to home ranges for several lynx. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, Northern goshawk, pine marten, white-tail ptarmigan, and tiger salamander. Evidence of historic mining activity has influenced the vegetation in isolated portions of the area and the northwestern section of the polygon reflects evidence of vegetation management. However, the majority of the polygon has a

high degree of apparent naturalness. Several trails traverse the area, including Baxter Gulch (NFST 565), Carbon (NFST 436), Green Lake (NFST 566), and Lily Lake (NFST 639). Other improvements include a cabin near the Baxter Gulch trail, some old roads, and range-related infrastructure such as fencing. The alignment for the Denver, South Park and Pacific Railroad is located on the western side of the polygon. Improvements are scattered throughout this large landscape and detract from the apparent naturalness only in isolated portions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Portions of this area receive consistent and sometimes heavy use throughout the year, including two popular trails – Baxter Gulch (NFST 565) and Carbon (NFST 436). Human presence associated with adjacent private properties, evidence of historic mining, and range activities is noticeable in some sections. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon are pervasive within isolated portions of the area. Intermittent disturbance originating from nearby motorized use detracts from opportunities for solitude within some portions of the area, particularly during the winter season. Other outside sources include traffic along Highway 135 to the east and activity around Kebler Pass to the northwest. The towns of Crested Butte and Gunnison, as well as Crested Butte ski area are visible from some vantage points in the polygon. However, considerable sections of this large landscape provide opportunities to experience solitude where the terrain and vegetation provide sufficient screening.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers outstanding opportunities for mountaineering (Axtell, Carbon, and Whetstone), backcountry hunting, hiking, backcountry skiing, and cross-country skiing.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Axtell, Carbon, and Whetstone are iconic peaks that contribute to Crested Butte’s scenic backdrop.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of this large area is somewhat contiguous. The northwest portion of the area is broken up by substantially-noticeable, excluded lands and two cherry-stemmed roads. Two other cherry-stemmed roads create intrusions on the south side. Adjacent private properties surround the polygon, including an in-holding owned by Mount Emmons Mining Company and lands managed by the State of Colorado. A large section of the polygon is currently managed as Whetstone Colorado Roadless Area. Range activities are established in the area, including the Baxter Gulch and Carbon cattle allotments. About half of the polygon includes active mining

claims. Portions of the area are stipulated as No Surface Occupancy for riparian areas, but there are no current oil or gas leases. Existing legally-established rights and uses, as well as the amount of adjacent private properties, could pose significant challenges to the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state. However, large sections of the polygon could potentially be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the fairly contiguous shape, lack of improvements, and identifiable landscape features that could create effective boundaries.

Area G6-136: Flattop Mountain (20,376 acres)

Summary

*Area G6-136 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, prevalent non-native plant species and improvements, and some opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possess important habitat. The configuration of this large area is somewhat contiguous, separated into two polygons by cherry-stemmed roads and adjacent private property. A section of the area is currently managed as Flattop Mountain Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation on top of the plateau is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen, with montane subalpine grasslands at the lower elevations, and sagebrush at the lowest elevations. This area contains the largest contiguous sagebrush ecosystem on the GMUG and supports a variety sagebrush-dependent species. Non-native plant species (cheatgrass, Canada thistle, toadflax, and musk thistle) are prevalent throughout the area and are being actively managed. This area contains mapped lynx habitat and important critical habitat for Gunnison sage grouse. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, bald eagle, Northern goshawk, and Brewer's sparrow.

The landscape is currently skewed to a higher seral state, especially on the south side. Despite this area's history of vegetation management and grazing activities, the vegetation appears relatively natural. The landscape includes a lot of decommissioned roads, a couple trails, and significant range-related infrastructure such as fencing, ponds, water and water tanks. Other improvements include a few rock barriers that have been constructed with the objective to improve the riparian areas. These improvements are evident throughout the majority of the landscape due to inadequate vegetation screening (sagebrush).

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives heavy use during the fall hunting season and modest use throughout the rest of the year. Human presence associated with range activities is noticeable in some sections. Sights

and sounds originating from outside of the polygon are pervasive within isolated portions of the area. Outside sources include adjacent private properties and traffic along Highway 135. The town of Gunnison is visible from some vantage points in the polygon. However, some sections of this large landscape provide opportunities to experience solitude where the terrain provides sufficient screening. The area contains a winter and spring seasonal closure (motorized) between January 1 and June 1, which provides more opportunities to experience solitude.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers opportunities for backcountry hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. During heavy winters, this area is completely closed in order to entice the wildlife away from Highway 135 and onto public lands.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area contains the most important critical habitat for Gunnison sage grouse on the GMUG which supports the majority of the Gunnison Basin population.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of this large area is somewhat contiguous. The area is separated into two northern and southern polygons by adjacent private property and cherry-stemmed roads. Adjacent private properties surround both polygons, and two other cherry-stemmed roads create intrusions on the west side of the southern polygon. A portion of the southern polygon is currently managed as Flattop Mountain Colorado Roadless Area. Range activities are established in the area, including several allotments. Portions of the area include inactive mining claims. Existing legally-established rights and uses, as well as the amount of adjacent private properties, could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state. It would be challenging to manage the majority of this area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the extensive amount of improvements, presence of designated critical habitat for Gunnison sage grouse, and lack of landscape features to effectively manage access into and within the area.

Area G7: Gothic (5,882 acres)

Summary

*Area G7 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, pervasive temporary improvements, and quality opportunities to engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important ecosystem and scenic traits. The size and shape of the area is small and contiguous. Adjacent private properties are located on the east and west sides, and the polygon abuts the White River National Forest to the north. The area is currently managed as Gothic Colorado Roadless Area and contains one of two Research Natural Areas on the GMUG.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by spruce-fir and aspen, along with meadows that support a variety of wildflower species. Non-native plant species occur within isolate areas near private properties, including toadflax, chamomile, and Canada thistle. Invasive species are aggressively contained. Lynx habitat occurs within this area. Other wildlife species include white-tailed ptarmigan, boreal toad, pygmy shrew, pine marten, and many big game species. Western bumblebee occur in the meadow habitat. The vegetation here is outstanding due to the Morrison shale substrate combined with the high amount of annual precipitation the area receives. The high elevations yield unusual habitats that are extensively researched. Despite the area's history of mining activity in the northern portion, the area appears very natural throughout.

One trail – Washington Gulch (NFST 9403) – traverses the center of the area from east to west. A decommissioned road also occurs on the landscape. The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory complex is located in the polygon which produces an extensive amount of temporary, research-related infrastructure positioned across the landscape. These non-permanent fixtures include flags and fencing. Groomed, marked routes occur on the landscape during the winter. Evidence of human activity associated with research and range activities is evident throughout the polygon and detracts from apparent naturalness in some portions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

There are generally limited opportunities to experience solitude within this popular area. This area is a focal point on the GMUG with iconic scenic features, such as Gothic Mountain and Emerald Lake, which produce high visitation. The Gunnison District has taken action to reduce the impacts from extensive dispersed camping –currently prohibited for two months every summer. The area is also known as the “wildflower capitol of Colorado” where a wildflower festival is held each year. The area receives extensive use throughout the summer season, with slightly less heavy use during the winter season. Some opportunities for solitude are available during the winter season, particularly within the northern portion of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

Despite the high levels of use this area receives, the rugged and remote portions of the area offer outstanding opportunities for backcountry skiing, hiking, hunting, fishing, and mountaineering, including climbing Gothic Peak and Mount Baldy.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The polygon contains Gothic Research Natural Area (1,080 acres), originally established in 1931 and later expanded in 1959. This Research Natural Area was established as a representative Engelmann spruce/subalpine fir community. The polygon also contains two Potential Conservation Areas identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is small and contiguous. Adjacent private properties are located on the east and west sides, including a private in-holding owned by Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory that hosts professors for research efforts primarily focused on climate change. The polygon abuts the White River National Forest to the north. The area is currently managed as Gothic Colorado Roadless Area and contains one of the two Research Natural Areas on the GMUG. This area contains extensive, multi-decadal permitted research plots. The Gothic and Slate River cattle allotments are located in the polygon. Mining activity occurs near Elkton on the west side. Despite the polygon's contiguous configuration, it would be very challenging to manage this area in an unimpaired state to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the pervasive amount of existing rights and uses.

Area G8: Schofield Pass (1,966 acres)

Summary

*Area G8 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, noticeable temporary improvements, and some opportunities to engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important ecological and scenic traits. The configuration of this small area is separated into two individual polygons by a cherry-stemmed road. The two polygons are mostly contiguous, with adjacent private properties breaking up the southern polygon. Both are adjacent to Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness to the east and the northern polygon is currently managed as Schofield Pass Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by spruce-fir, aspen, and alpine habitat, with some willow and a variety of wildflower species at lower elevations. Riparian habitats occur in some of the drainages. Lynx habitat is located in the area. Other wildlife species include pygmy shrew, white-tailed ptarmigan, pine marten, boreal owls, song birds, and many big game species. Not many vegetation treatments have occurred here and the area is a class 5 fire regime which allows stand replacement fires to occur at very long intervals of 150 to 200 years. Portions of the terrain are very prone to avalanches and flash flooding which result in natural disturbances to the vegetation. The plant and animal communities appear very natural throughout both polygons.

Portions of the area are extensively researched and historic mining activity has occurred along the East River drainage and near Schofield Pass. One trail – Trail Riders (NFST 401) – traverses the area from north to south. A decommissioned road and a closed road accessing adjacent private property also occur on the landscape. The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory produces an extensive amount of temporary, research-related infrastructure positioned across the landscape. These non-permanent fixtures include flags and fencing. Evidence of human activity associated with research and range activities is scattered and detracts from apparent naturalness in some portions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

There are generally limited opportunities to experience solitude within this small area. The Trail Riders Trail (NFST 401), an extremely popular single-track mountain bike trail, traverses the entirety of the area from north to south. This trail was originally used during the 1920s and 1930s as a horseback route between Aspen Crested Butte. Currently, the 401 trail is an iconic, top-ranked mountain biking trail in the continental United States and receives hundreds of users per day during the summer, including visitors from around the world. Human activity occurring along the trail is pervasive throughout the area due to the polygons' slender size. Human presence associated with research and range activities are also evident throughout portions of the landscape, and sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are pervasively observed from within. Outside sources include Schofield Pass Road, Crested Butte ski area, as well as adjacent developed recreation sites and private properties. The area receives extensive use throughout the summer season, with slightly less heavy use during the winter season. Some opportunities for solitude are available during the winter in small portions of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation are available within Virginia Basin in the southern polygon away from adjacent private properties. These opportunities include hiking, backcountry camping, and some backcountry skiing and cross-country skiing. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area offers iconic scenic vistas.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of this small area is separated into two individual polygons by a cherry-stemmed road. The two polygons are mostly contiguous, with adjacent private properties

breaking up the southern polygon. Both polygons are adjacent to Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness to the east. The northern polygon abuts the White River National Forest to the north and is currently managed as Schofield Pass Colorado Roadless Area. This area contains extensive, multi-decadal permitted research plots as well as established range activities. Existing rights, extensive use, and adjacent private properties would pose challenges to managing this area in an unimpaired state. However, portions of this small area could be managed preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its adjacency to existing wilderness and relatively contiguous configuration.

Area G9: Brush Creek (53,319 acres)

Summary

*Area G9 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to predominately naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, scattered evidence of human activity and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The configuration of this large area is separated into two individual polygons by a cherry-stemmed road. Other cherry-stemmed roads and adjacent private properties fragment the periphery of the area. The area abuts Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness and White River National Forest to the north. The majority of the area is currently managed as Deer Creek, Double Top, and Italian Mountain Colorado Roadless Areas.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in this area consists of aspen, lodgepole pine, montane subalpine fir and grasslands, Engelmann spruce, as well as some alpine areas and open areas of grass/forb and sagebrush. Some non-native plant species (such as ox-eye daisy, musk, Canada thistle) occur within the area, but are contained in isolated portions. Lynx habitat is mapped throughout the area, and resident lynx occur in the northeast portion of the area. Other wildlife species include black bear, mountain lion, mule deer, elk, white-tailed ptarmigan, American marten, Northern goshawk, Gunnison sage grouse, boreal owl, and boreal toad. Some breeding populations of boreal toads exist in Brush Creek and Cement Creek. Bighorn sheep mostly occur to the north of the area in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness, but individuals have been documented near Brush Creek and Cement Creek.

Limited landscape manipulation has taken place in the area, with some salvage logging occurring within the last century. Some wildfires have occurred in the area, but these are natural processes. The majority of the area appears to reflect normal ecological conditions. Evidence of historic mining activities occur within small sections of the area. The western-most portion of the area includes some temporary, research-related infrastructure. Other improvements include numerous trails, two backcountry huts (Friends and Opus huts), and range-related infrastructure such as stock tanks, fencing, and cattle guards. Given that these improvements are spread across a large area, evidence of these improvements detract from apparent naturalness only in concentrated proportions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The majority of this area receives consistent use and human presence associated with range activities is also evident. Nearby motorized use detracts from opportunities to experience solitude within some portions of the area, particularly during the summer season. Other outside sources include the town of Crested Butte, adjacent developed recreation sites and private properties, as well as nearby travel routes such as Gothic Road, State Highway 135, and Taylor Park Road. These sights and sounds are observed within some portions of the area, but sizeable portions of the landscape contain dense vegetation that provide adequate screening. Some remote sections of this polygon offer places to get away from signs of civilization. There are more opportunities to experience solitude in this area during the winter season.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The portions of the area between trails and improvements are relatively large, offering many quality opportunities for unconfined recreation across this large area. Primitive activities include backcountry hunting, hut-to-hut hiking, and backcountry skiing. Nearby motorized use detracts from primitive experiences within some portions of the area, particularly during the summer season. More opportunities to engage in primitive recreation are available during the winter season. Several trails in the area – including West Brush Creek (NFST 9569), Twin Lakes (NFST 9402), and Cumberland Basin (NFST 9579) – provide access portals into the adjacent Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness to the north, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area contains about five Potential Conservation Areas identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. The area also includes Cement Creek where an iron fen is located.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of this large area is separated into two individual polygons by a cherry-stemmed road. Several other cherry-stemmed roads and scattered adjacent private properties fragment the periphery of the two polygons. The western portion of the area abuts Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness to the north, and the eastern portion is adjacent to White River National Forest to the north. The majority of the area is currently managed as Deer Creek, Double Top, and Italian Mountain Colorado Roadless Areas. Range activity is established throughout the area, including several cattle allotments. Permitted special uses occur throughout the area, including outfitter-guide operations and recreation events. Some inactive mining claims are located around the periphery of the area. Some of these existing rights and uses, as well as the accessibility of the area, could pose challenges to managing the area in an unimpaired state. However, the large

size and adjacency to existing wilderness lends portions of the area to be able to be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area G10: Spring Creek (87,961 acres)

Summary

*Area G10 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, scattered evidence of human activity and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The configuration of this expansive area is separated into three individual polygons by cherry-stemmed roads. Portions of the area are fragmented by excluded substantially-noticeable lands, cherry-stemmed roads, and some adjacent private properties. The majority of the area is currently managed as Granite Basin, Matchless, and American Flag Colorado Roadless Areas.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in this area consists of lodgepole and spruce-fir, along with some aspen, ponderosa pine, juniper, and Douglas fir. Matchless Mountain includes some alpine habitat and riparian habitat occurs within the drainages. Some non-native plant species (such as cheatgrass and mistletoe) occur within isolated portions of the area. This area provides important habitat for a native herd of bighorn sheep (once numbered in the hundreds, but now only about 40). Lynx habitat occurs throughout the area. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, black bear, white-tailed ptarmigan, American martin, boreal owl, Gunnison sage grouse, Northern goshawk, peregrine falcon, and bald eagle. Several populations of boreal toad are found in Rocky Brook and Mysterious Creek. The majority of the area appears to reflect normal ecological conditions.

Evidence of historic mining activities occur within portions of the area and numerous trails traverse the landscape. Other improvements include a radio repeater on Matchless Mountain, several decommissioned roads, a ditch, and some range-related infrastructure such as fencing, troughs, and cattle guards. Given that these improvements are scattered across an expansive landscape, evidence of improvements detract from apparent naturalness only in isolated proportions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives consistent, heavy use throughout most of the year with some seasonal differentiation. Human presence associated with historic mining and current range activities is also evident within portions of the area. Noise from the extensive motorized use is pervasive throughout most of the area and detracts from opportunities for solitude during the summer and

fall. However, some portions of the landscape contain dense vegetation that provide adequate screening, such as Granite Basin and Hell's half acre. The southwest portion of the area contains a seasonal "quiet closure" during hunting season. More remote sections of this polygon offer places to get away from signs of civilization such as the swath of land between Spring Creek and Taylor River. There are more opportunities to experience solitude in this area during the winter season, but some opportunities for solitude can be found during the summer within some pockets of this massive landscape.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This large area offers many opportunities to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation, such as backcountry hunting, mountaineering on Matchless and South Matchless Mountains, and whitewater rafting Spring and Cement creeks. Popular, high-quality rock climbing opportunities are available on the periphery of the area within Taylor Canyon (known as Harmel's).

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area contains about three Potential Conservation Areas identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of this expansive area is separated into three individual polygons by cherry-stemmed roads. Portions of the area are fragmented by excluded substantially-noticeable lands, cherry-stemmed roads, and some adjacent private properties. The majority of the area is currently managed as Granite Basin, Matchless, and American Flag Colorado Roadless Areas. Range activity is established throughout the area, including multiple cattle allotments. Permitted special uses such as outfitter-guide operations occur in the area. The ditch located in the southwest portion of the area would require continued access and maintenance. Numerous active and inactive mining claims are located in the area. Some of these existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state. It would be challenging to manage the majority of this area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the disjointed configuration and lack of natural landscape features to manage access into and within the area.

Area G11: Tellurium (312 acres)

Summary

*Area G11 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation, limited improvements, and very limited opportunities to engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The configuration of the area is two very small, slender polygons adjacent to two travel routes and Collegiate Peaks Wilderness.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by lodgepole pine and some spruce-fir. The area includes lynx habitat and the vegetation generally appears natural. This small area contains very few improvements other than short segments of several trails.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The sights and sounds originating from the adjacent roads are pervasively observed throughout the entire area due to the very small, slender size of the polygons. Despite the fact that this small area is adjacent to existing wilderness, there are no opportunities to experience solitude here.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The northern polygon provides limited opportunities for dispersed camping and hunting. Several trail segments in the area provide access portals into the adjacent Collegiate Peaks Wilderness, a primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

None known.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is separated into two very small, slender polygons sandwiched between NFSR 584, NFSR 742, and Collegiate Peaks Wilderness. Although adjacency to existing wilderness is typically a manageable trait, these odd pieces of land would be challenging to manage to preserve the limited wilderness characteristics due to the very small size, slender configuration, and immediate proximity to travel routes. As is, this area provides an effective buffer between travel routes and Collegiate Peaks Wilderness.

Area G12: Illinois Creek (16,303 acres)

Summary

*Area G12 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, pervasive non-native plant species, evidence of human intervention and improvements, and limited*

opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important heritage traits. The configuration of the area is separated into three disjointed polygons. The area is adjacent to Collegiate Peaks Wilderness to the east and a section is currently managed as Texas Creek Colorado Roadless Area.

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by lodgepole pine with some Engelmann spruce. Canada thistle, a non-native plant species, is pervasive throughout much of the area. Riparian habitat occurs along the drainages and Pieplant Creek provides a heavenly environment for moose. The area also includes mapped lynx habitat and a lynx linkage area. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, black bear, bighorn sheep, pine marten, and Northern goshawk. Evidence of past mining and current range activities are noticeable in portions of the area, but large sections of the vegetation generally appear natural. Several trails occur on the landscape, including the Timberline Trail (NFST 9414) that traverses the periphery of the area along the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness boundary. Other improvements include some range-related infrastructure, old mining cabins associated with unpatented mining claims, a network of divergent ditches accompanying an old placer mine, as well as temporary, decommissioned, or old roadbeds. These scattered improvements are evident on the landscape and detract from the apparent naturalness of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives heavy use during the fall hunting season and moderate use throughout the rest of the year. Sights and sounds originating from nearby motorized use, adjacent timber harvest activities, and Taylor Park are pervasive throughout much of the area and detract from opportunities to experience solitude. There are very limited opportunities to experience solitude in this area throughout the majority of the year.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

Some portions of the area offer opportunities for backcountry hunting, primitive hiking, and wildlife viewing (particularly for moose). Some of these opportunities are high quality. Two trails in the area – Lake Ann (NFST 9592) and Texas Ridge (NFST 9571) – provide access portals into Collegiate Peaks Wilderness, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area includes a Priority Heritage Asset identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program. A segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail traverses the southern portion of the area along the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness boundary.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is separated into three individual polygons. The majority of the area is disjointed by cherry-stemmed roads, adjacent private property, and excluded substantially-noticeable lands. The northern portion is sandwiched between a historic road and a ditch while the southern portion is bound by two heavily-trafficked roads. The area is adjacent to Collegiate Peaks Wilderness to the east and a small section of the area is currently managed as Texas Creek Colorado Roadless Area. Range activity is established in the area. Despite the fact that the area is adjacent to existing wilderness, it would be difficult to manage the majority of the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the disjointed shape, pervasive adjacent activities, and lack of natural landscape features to manage access into and within the area.

Area G13: Mirror Lake (25,252 acres)

Summary

*Area G13 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, evident human influence and improvements, and quality opportunities to experience solitude and engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important ecological and heritage traits. The configuration of the area is two individual polygons separated by a cherry-stemmed road, with the northern polygon more contiguous than the southern polygon. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Sanford Basin and Mirror Lake Colorado Roadless Areas. The area abuts the Pike-San Isabel National Forest to the east (three Colorado Roadless Areas).*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by lodgepole pine, along with spruce-fir, alpine tundra, and willow carr. Riparian habitats occur within the drainages, including Cow Creek and Pass Creek. Suitable lynx habitat is mapped in the area and a lynx linkage area is located here. Portions of the area provide suitable habitat for Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly and a breeding population of boreal toads is located in Sanford Basin. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, black bear, pika, white-tailed ptarmigan, and mountain goat. Large portions of the vegetation in the area reflect a high degree of apparent naturalness, particularly the sage brush and riparian areas. Much of the area includes pervasive evidence of historic mining activity, including tailings and abandoned structures. Other improvements include some decommissioned roads, a few trails, and range-related infrastructure such as fencing and cattle guards. Improvements are scattered throughout this large landscape and detract from apparent naturalness in portions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives modest use and considerable portions of the area provide opportunities to experience solitude away from adjacent travel routes and private properties, historic mining infrastructure, and range activities. Some intermittent disturbance originating from nearby motorized use detracts from opportunities for solitude within some portions of the area, but the terrain and vegetation provide sufficient screening within most parts of the area. Taylor Park Reservoir is visible from some vantage points within the northern end, but this does not detract from the ability to experience solitude throughout much of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers opportunities for primitive hiking, backcountry hunting, camping, and fishing. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail provides opportunities for primitive hiking and horseback riding, including a particularly challenging one-mile section.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area includes a Priority Heritage Asset identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program. The area also includes parts of the Pass Creek Potential Conservation Area identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. A segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail traverses the area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is two individual polygons separated by a cherry-stemmed road (NFSR 267). The northern polygon more contiguous than the southern polygon, with the west side of both broken up by adjacent private properties and excluded lands. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Sanford Basin and Mirror Lake Colorado Roadless Areas. The area abuts a section of the Pike-San Isabel National Forest to the east comprised of three Colorado Roadless Areas. Range activities are established in the area, including the Pitkin and Taylor Park cattle allotments. Portions of the area contain active mining claims. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state. However, sizable sections of the area away from adjacent private properties could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the relatively contiguous shape, rugged terrain, and identifiable landscape features that could create effective boundaries.

Area G14: Union Park (14,851 acres)

Summary

*Area G14 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, some non-native plant species, scattered improvements, and some opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses ecological traits. The area is configured into three somewhat contiguous polygons, separated by adjacent private properties and cherry-stemmed roads. The area is adjacent to both Fossil Ridge Wilderness to the west and Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area to the south. A section of the area is currently managed as Union Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by lodgepole pine, spruce-fir, as well as some sagebrush and subalpine riparian shrublands. Non-native plant species, including ox-eye daisy and Canada thistle, occur in isolated portions of the area. Wildlife species include moose, bighorn sheep, lynx, and American dipper. The plant and animal communities generally appear natural throughout the area. The landscape includes many improvements such as decommissioned roads, trails, and extensive range-related infrastructure such as fencing, cattle guards, corrals, and stock driveways. Several roads connect the excluded clear-cut lands within the periphery of the area. Due to the large size of the landscape and dense vegetation, these scattered improvements detract from apparent naturalness only in concentrated portions of the area primarily within the eastern side.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Portions of the area receive consistent, heavy use throughout the year while some sections receive very little use. Generally, the western portions of the area offer more opportunities to experience solitude than the eastern side. Sights and sounds originating from nearby motorized use and Taylor Park are pervasive and detract from opportunities to experience solitude within some parts of the area. However, the terrain and dense vegetation provides adequate screening in many parts of the area. Park Cone offers quality opportunities for solitude during the winter, but there are limited opportunities to experience solitude within Union Park due to its popularity for dispersed recreation.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area provides some quality opportunities for primitive hiking, backcountry skiing (Park Cone), cross-country skiing (Union Canyon), as well as some opportunities for backcountry hunting, snowshoeing, and rock climbing. One short trail segment in the area – South Lottis

(NFST 9428) – provides an access portal into Fossil Ridge Wilderness, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area includes Union Park Potential Conservation Area, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of this large area is three somewhat contiguous polygons, separated by cherry-stemmed roads and adjacent private properties. The northern and eastern extents of the area are broken up by excluded, substantially-noticeable lands. The area is adjacent to Fossil Ridge Wilderness to the west and Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area to the south. The portion of the area adjacent to Fossil Ridge Wilderness is currently managed as Union Colorado Roadless Area. Range activity is established in the area and numerous inactive mining claims are located throughout the area. Existing rights and uses could potentially impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state. However, sizable sections of the area away from adjacent private properties could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the rugged terrain, identifiable landscape features that could create effective boundaries, and partial adjacency to existing wilderness.

Area G15: Taylor Canyon (1,539 acres)

Summary

*Area G15 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation, limited improvements, and very few opportunities to experience solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The configuration of this small area is long and slender. It is adjacent to NFSR 742 to the north and both Fossil Ridge Wilderness and Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area to the south. The eastern portion of the polygon is currently managed as Crystal Creek Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

This area is very steep and densely vegetated, dominated by lodgepole pine and spruce-fir. Limited vegetation management has occurred within this corridor and the area generally appears natural. This small area has very few improvements. Two short trail segments traverse the central portion of the polygon. Some range-related infrastructure (fencing) occurs on the landscape. These limited improvements are scattered in isolated spots and human activity is mostly unnoticeable within this steeply-sloped area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This corridor receives heavy use throughout the year. The sights and sounds originating from the adjacent road (NFSR 742) and developed recreation sites (including five campgrounds) are pervasively observed throughout the area due to the small, slender shape of the polygon and the precipitous gradient of the terrain. Despite the fact that this small polygon is adjacent to existing wilderness, there are very limited opportunities to experience solitude in this area – perhaps occasionally during the winter.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The eastern portion provides limited opportunities for backcountry hunting. One trail in the area – Summerville (NFST 9430) – provides an access portal into the adjacent Fossil Ridge Wilderness to the south, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

A World War II bomber crash site is located in the area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

This area is a small, steep, and slender piece of land sandwiched between NFSR 742 to the north and both Fossil Ridge Wilderness and Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area to the south. The eastern portion of the polygon is currently managed as Crystal Creek Colorado Roadless Area, and the eastern-most section is broken up by excluded substantially-noticeable lands. A portion of the Taylor Park cattle allotment is located in this area. Although steep terrain and adjacency to existing wilderness are typically highly manageable traits, this odd piece of land would be difficult to manage to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its small size, slender configuration, and immediate proximity to NFSR 742 and several developed recreation sites. As is, this area provides an effective buffer between NFSR 742 and both Fossil Ridge Wilderness and Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area.

Area G16: Canyon Creek (22,827 acres)

Summary

*Area G16 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited human influence and improvements, and quality opportunities to experience solitude and engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important ecological and heritage*

traits. The size and configuration of the area is large and somewhat contiguous, with portions of the area broken up by cherry-stemmed roads, adjacent private properties, and some excluded lands. Portions of the area are currently managed as Canyon Creek Colorado Roadless Area. The polygon abuts the Pike-San Isabel National Forest to the east, including Mount Antero Colorado Roadless Area.

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by lodgepole pine mixed with spruce-fir forests, alpine habitats, and some sagebrush. Non-native plant species (thistle) occur in isolated portions along the west side. Suitable lynx habitat is mapped in the area, including an important lynx linkage area. Portions of the area provide suitable habitat for Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly. Other wildlife species include bighorn sheep, flammulated owl, white-tailed ptarmigan, and mountain goat. Spruce beetle mortality is occurring at higher elevations, but this is a natural process. Large portions of the vegetation reflect a high degree of apparent naturalness, particularly within the alpine and riparian habitats. The area has not been actively managed due to the steep and erosive terrain. Several trails and one decommissioned road traverse the area. Other improvements include some range-related and historic mining infrastructure. These limited improvements are scattered throughout the landscape and do not detract from the apparent naturalness of this large area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives modest use and considerable portions of the area provide opportunities to experience solitude away from adjacent travel routes and private properties. Some intermittent disturbance originating from nearby motorized use detracts from opportunities for solitude within some portions of the area, but the terrain and vegetation provide sufficient screening within most parts of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers opportunities for primitive hiking, backcountry hunting, as well as winter activities such as backcountry skiing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail provides outstanding opportunities for primitive hiking and horseback riding.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area includes a Priority Heritage Asset identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program. The area also includes Whitepine Iron Fen Potential Conservation Area identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. A segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail traverses the area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of this large area is somewhat contiguous. Portions of the area are broken up by cherry-stemmed roads, adjacent private properties, and some substantially-noticeable excluded lands. Sections of the polygon are currently managed as Canyon Creek Colorado Roadless Area. The polygon abuts the Pike-San Isabel National Forest to the east, including Mount Antero Colorado Roadless Area. Range activities are established in the area, including the Pitkin and Tomichi cattle allotments. Portions of the area contain patented, active mining claims. These existing rights and uses could potentially impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state. However, the core section of the area away from adjacent private properties could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the relatively contiguous shape, lack of improvements, and identifiable landscape features that could create effective boundaries.

Area G17: Agate Creek (18,636 acres)

Summary

*Area G17 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited improvements, and some opportunities to experience solitude and engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses scenic traits. The size and configuration of the area is large and somewhat contiguous, with the southern section disjointed by cherry-stemmed roads, adjacent private properties, and some excluded lands. A large portion of the area is currently managed as Agate Creek Colorado Roadless Area. The polygon abuts a portion of the Pike-San Isabel National Forest to the east currently managed as Chipeta Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by lodgepole pine and spruce with some aspen. The southwestern portion of the area includes a large, unique limber pine community. Riparian habitats occur within the drainages and active beaver colonies are located in the polygon. This area is mapped as Canada lynx habitat and contains the Poncha Pass lynx linkage area. Portions of the area provide suitable habitat for Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, white-tailed ptarmigan, boreal owl, flammulated owl, and pine marten. Spruce beetle mortality is occurring in the area, but this is a natural process. The southern portion of the area was harvested in the early 1900s. Limited recent vegetation management has occurred here and the majority of the area reflects a high degree of apparent naturalness. Several trails

traverse the area, including the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Colorado Trail, and Monarch Crest Trail. Some range-related infrastructure occurs on the landscape, including fencing and gates. Ditches are also located in the area. These limited improvements are scattered throughout the large, densely-vegetated landscape and do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Sections of this area receive consistent, and sometimes heavy use. However, considerable portions of the area provide opportunities to experience solitude away from adjacent travel routes and private properties. Some disturbance originating from Highway 50 and nearby motorized use detracts from opportunities for solitude within some portions of the area, but the terrain and vegetation provide sufficient screening within most parts of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers opportunities for backcountry hunting, as well as fishing in Agate Creek. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail provides opportunities for primitive hiking and horseback riding. Nearby motorized use detracts from primitive experiences in isolated portions of this large landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

A segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail traverses the area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of this large area is somewhat contiguous. The southern portion disjointed by cherry-stemmed roads, adjacent private properties, and excluded substantially-noticeable lands. A large section of the area is currently managed as Agate Creek Colorado Roadless Area. The polygon abuts a portion of the Pike-San Isabel National Forest to the east currently managed as Chipeta Colorado Roadless Area. Range activities are established in the area, including the Agate Creek cattle allotment. Portions of the area contain active and inactive mining claims. The ditches in the area would require continued access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could potentially impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state. However, the core section of the area away from adjacent private properties and Highway 50 could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the relatively contiguous shape, lack of improvements, and identifiable landscape features that could create effective boundaries.

Area G18: Quakey Mountain (12,206 acres)

Summary

*Area G18 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited improvements, and some opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is somewhat contiguous, with the periphery broken up by many adjacent private properties and some excluded lands. The polygon abuts some Bureau of Land Management lands to the west.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by lodgepole pine and aspen, with some ponderosa pine and sagebrush, as well as limited spruce-fir and Douglas fir. Non-native plant species (cheatgrass) occur in isolated portions of the southern side. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, flammulated owl, and Northern goshawk. The landscape has experienced wildfire activity (natural) and historic tie-hacking activities. Overall, the plant and animal communities generally appear natural. This area contains few improvements. A couple trails traverse the polygon and some range-related infrastructure is situated on the landscape such as fencing and troughs. These limited improvements are scattered across a large area and do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Some portions of the area receive consistent use throughout the year while others receive modest use. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are observed within portions of the area near adjacent motorized routes (such as Highway 50) and private properties. However, sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are not pervasively observed within the majority of the polygon. The area offers some opportunities for visitors to experience solitude, particularly within the northeastern section.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers quality opportunities for backcountry hunting, primitive hiking, and horseback riding.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area contains critical habitat for Gunnison sage grouse.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is somewhat contiguous. The periphery is broken up by a substantial amount of adjacent private properties and some excluded, substantially-noticeable lands. A large in-holding located within the northern portion of the polygon is owned/managed by the state of Colorado. Some Bureau of Land Management lands abut the western-most corner of the polygon. Historic mining claims are located in some portions of the area. Range activities are established in the area, including sections of three cattle allotments (Black Sage, Daily Dawson, and Tomichi). Existing rights and uses and the extensive amount of adjacent private properties could pose challenges to managing the area in an unimpaired state. However, portions of the area could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the rugged terrain and limited improvements.

Area G19: Cochetopa Hills (73,743 acres)

Summary

*Area G19 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, scattered evidence of human influence and improvements, and some opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important ecological and scenic traits. The configuration of this expansive area is somewhat contiguous. Portions of the area are disjointed by cherry-stemmed roads, excluded substantially-noticeable lands, and some adjacent private properties. The majority of the area is currently managed as Cochetopa Hills Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by lodgepole pine with some Douglas-fir, limber pine, and sagebrush. Riparian habitats occur along the drainages. Some non-native plant species, such as cheatgrass, occur within isolated portions of the area. This area contains lynx habitat, including the North Pass/Cochetopa Hills lynx linkage area. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, black bear, Northern goshawk, Gunnison sage grouse, and bald eagle. Beetle kill is occurring at higher elevations, but this is a natural process. Portions of the area contain evidence of old tie-hack cuts and burns, as well as current salvage. Despite the area's history of vegetation management, the majority of the area appears to reflect normal ecological conditions. Numerous trails traverse the polygon, including the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and Colorado Trail. Other improvements include old dozer lines, evidence of historic mining, two Remote Automated Weather stations, two saw mills, railroad sidings, as well as prevalent range-related infrastructure such as fencing, water developments, and gates. Given that these improvements are scattered across an expansive landscape, evidence of improvements detract from apparent naturalness only in isolated proportions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives consistent use throughout most of the year with some seasonal differentiation – more use occurs during the summer than winter. Human presence associated with recreation and range activities is evident within concentrated portions of the area. Noise from nearby motorized use detracts from opportunities for solitude in some sections. Highway 50 and Highway 114 can be seen from the northern and southern ends of the polygon, respectively. However, these sights and sounds are not pervasive and many sections of this large landscape contain dense vegetation that provide adequate screening from sights and sounds that originate both from within and outside of the polygon.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This large area offers opportunities for backcountry hunting and fishing in Baldy Lake and Razor Creek. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail provides opportunities for primitive hiking and horseback riding.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area contains a Potential Conservation Area identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. A segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail traverses the area. The area also includes critical habitat for Gunnison sage grouse, and the highest documented winter site for sage grouse at 9,600 feet.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of this expansive area is somewhat contiguous. Portions of the area are disjointed by cherry-stemmed roads, excluded substantially-noticeable lands, and some adjacent private properties. The eastern-most and western-most sections of the area are highly disjointed while the central section is relatively contiguous, particularly along the forest boundary. The majority of the area is currently managed as Cochetopa Hills Colorado Roadless Area. The polygon abuts the Rio Grande National Forest to the south and Bureau of Land Management lands to the north. Range activity is established throughout the area, including Long Branch, Razor, Needle, and Rock cattle allotments. The water developments in the area would require continued access and maintenance. Portions of the polygon contain mining claims. Some of these existing rights and uses could potentially impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state. However, portions of this large landscape could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to contiguous swaths of land and rugged terrain.

Area G21-W: Ignacio (5,033 acres)

Summary

*Area G21-W was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited improvements, and some opportunities for primitive/unconfined recreation. The configuration of this slender area is separated into two polygons. A small section of the area is currently managed as Cochetopa Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by spruce, aspen, bristlecone pine, as well as sagebrush and shrubby cinquefoil. The northern polygon is Burro Park – a flat, open meadow. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, lynx, and Northern goshawk. Beaver ponds and wetlands occur along Nutras Creek in the southern-most portion of the area. Beetle kill is occurring in the area, but this is a natural process and the understory is relatively healthy. Some range-related infrastructure occur on the landscape, such as stock tanks and fencing, as well as some old road beds. These limited improvements are scattered on the landscape and do not detract from the area's apparent naturalness.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives light use throughout the year. Human presence associated with range activities is evident in portions of the area. Sights and sounds originating from NFSR 794 outside of the polygon are intermittently pervasive in some portions due to the flat terrain. More opportunities for solitude are available during the winter – the adjacent roads are not plowed.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for backcountry hunting, hiking, and winter activities such as snowshoeing. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

None known.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is separated into two polygons – the northern polygon much smaller than the southern polygon. A small section of the area is currently managed as Cochetopa Colorado Roadless Area. The northern-most portion of the area is adjacent to Bureau of Land Management lands. Range activities are established in the area. It would be challenging to effectively manage this area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the small, slender shape and lack of natural landscape features to manage access into and within the area.

Area G24: Slumgullion (2,648 acres)

Summary

*Area G24 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, pervasive non-native plant species, some improvements, and limited opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The configuration of the area is five individual polygons scattered along the La Garita Wilderness boundary. The southern-most polygon abuts the Rio Grande National Forest to the south.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen as well as mixed conifer. A colony of ponderosa and bristlecone pine occurs in the area. The polygons are heavily-infested with non-native plant species (thistle). Wetlands occur in portions of the area. A Lynx Analysis Unit and a lynx linkage area are located here, and a lynx spent the past winter just adjacent to the area. Other wildlife species include white-tailed ptarmigan, elk, moose, and pine marten. Some vegetation treatments have occurred throughout the landscape recently, including some substantially-noticeable clear-cuts. Improvements include two decommissioned roads, two short trail segments, and some range-related infrastructure such as fencing. Groomed, marked routes are evident on the landscape during the winter. Despite the evidence of vegetation treatments and some limited improvements, the area appears somewhat natural.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives consistent use throughout the year, and the trails are also quite popular in the winter. Sights and sounds originating from the adjacent roads (Highway 149 and NFSR 788) are pervasively observed throughout most of the area due to the terrain and small size of the polygons. Despite the fact that this small area is adjacent to existing wilderness, there are very limited opportunities to experience solitude here.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, and mushroom foraging. Two trail segments in the area – Mineral Creek (NFST 9466) and Skyline (9465) – provide access portals into adjacent La Garita Wilderness, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area is a visual component of the Silver Thread Scenic Byway (Highway 149).

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is five individual polygons scattered along the La Garita Wilderness boundary. Adjacent private properties abut the largest polygon on the west side of La Garita Wilderness, as well as the eastern-most polygon on the north side of La Garita Wilderness. The southern-most polygon abuts the Rio Grande National Forest to the south. A snowmobile club is permitted to maintain portions during the winter. The area also contains a few leased sections that are not currently being developed. Although adjacency to existing wilderness is typically manageable trait, it would be difficult to effectively manage these scattered pockets of land to preserve their limited wilderness characteristics due to the small size, disjointed configuration, and immediate proximity to travel routes and adjacent private property. As is, these polygons provide effective buffers to La Garita Wilderness.

Area G26-E: Pigtail (7,048 acres)

Summary

*Area G26-E was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited improvements, and opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the polygon is relatively contiguous, with one cherry-stemmed road and some adjacent private lands on the northwest side separating the area into two individual polygons. A large section of the polygon is currently managed as Carson Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by aspen and spruce, with scattered riparian and alpine habitats. There are some small colonies of white fir and a variety of wildflower species. This area contains key Canada lynx habitat, with several identified dens and resident lynx in Razor Gulch. Other wildlife species include elk, mule deer, moose, white-tailed ptarmigan, bighorn sheep, bald eagle, as well as black swifts in the waterfall habitats. The majority of the area reflects a high

degree of apparent naturalness. Williams Creek Trail (NFST 9476) traverses the northern portion of the area from the Bureau of Land Management boundary up to the Continental Divide, a section of Wagner Gulch (NFST 9248) occurs on the western end, and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail barely weaves in and out of the southwestern edge of the main polygon. These limited improvements do not detract from the area's apparent naturalness.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The majority of the area receives light use and provides opportunities for visitors to experience solitude throughout the year. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon can be observed from within the northwestern portion of the area. Outside sources include nearby motorized use, adjacent private lands, Williams Creek campground, and the heavily-trafficked County Road. However, these sights and sounds are not pervasive and only detract from opportunities for solitude within a portion of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area provides opportunities for primitive hiking, horseback riding, some backcountry hunting, as well as opportunities for wildlife, wildflower, and waterfall viewing.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area includes the highest point along the Continental Divide – Coney, located on the southern end.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the polygon is relatively contiguous. A cherry-stemmed road and adjacent private lands on the northwest side separate the area into two individual polygons on either side of Williams Creek campground. The smaller polygon is adjacent to Red Cloud Peak Wilderness Study Area, administered by the Bureau of Land Management, to the north and west. The main polygon is adjacent to Rio Grande National Forest to the south, including Big Buck/Ruby/Kitty Colorado Roadless Area. Adjacent private property is also located at the southwestern end of the main polygon. A large section of the area is currently managed as Carson Colorado Roadless Area. A small portion of the area contains active mining claims. While these existing rights could impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state, the majority of the area could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its contiguous shape, difficult terrain, and limited improvements and access.

Area G27: Nellie Creek / Matterhorn (15,920 acres)

Summary

*Area G27 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, scattered improvements, and some quality opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The configuration of the area is four individual polygons, three of which are adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness to the north. The fourth polygon is adjacent to American Flats Wilderness Study Area, administered by the Bureau of Land Management, to the south. The majority of the area is currently managed as Matterhorn, North Henson, and Crystal Peak Colorado Roadless Areas.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The majority of the area is very steep, rugged terrain. The vegetation is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen, with some willow, alpine tundra, and rocky areas. Riparian habitats occur along the streams and scattered alpine wetlands. The area includes mapped lynx habitat, including documented resident lynx. A known colony of Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly inhabits the area. Other wildlife species include bighorn sheep, mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, mountain lion, white-tailed ptarmigan, Northern goshawk, and bald eagle. Large portions of the area reflect a high degree of apparent naturalness. Portions of the area include evidence of historic mining activity, including old roads. Numerous trails traverse the area, including routes that provide access to 14,000-foot peaks in adjacent Uncompahgre Wilderness. Some range-related infrastructure is located in the area as well as an irrigation ditch. Improvements are scattered across a large landscape and detract from apparent naturalness in isolated portions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives modest use throughout the year, with pulses of high use in isolated sections. Adjacent Nellie Creek trailhead and NFSR 877 receive extensive use (provide access to Uncompahgre Peak, a 14,000-foot peak) which can be observed within nearby portions of the two eastern polygons. However, concentrated sections of high use are generally dispersed throughout the large landscape and do not detract from the ability to experience solitude throughout the majority of the area. Considerable portions of the area provide opportunities to experience solitude away from the popular trails and lakes, particularly within the western two polygons.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers quality opportunities for primitive hiking, horseback riding, backcountry hunting, fishing, backpacking, and wildlife viewing (including Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly).

Several trails in the area provide access portals into Uncompahgre Wilderness to the north, a larger and more primitive landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The Uncompahgre Potential Conservation Area, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, is located in the area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is four individual but contiguous polygons, separated by cherry-stemmed roads and existing wilderness boundaries. Three polygons are adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness to the north and the two eastern polygons are also adjacent to Bureau of Land Management lands to the south. The southern-most polygon is adjacent to American Flats Wilderness Study Area, administered by Bureau of Land Management, to the south. Adjacent private properties are located next to the western two polygons. The majority of the area is currently managed as Matterhorn, North Henson, and Crystal Peak Colorado Roadless Areas. Range activity is established in the area, including sheep allotments. The San Juan Springs Irrigation ditch is a special use permit to Colorado Division of Wildlife at Larson Lakes for fish culture. Some of these existing rights and uses could potentially impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state. However, the majority of the area could be effectively managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its adjacency to existing wilderness, contiguous shape, and natural landscape features that could create effective boundaries.

Area G28: Cochetopa Dome (5,731 acres)

Summary

*Area G28 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of this small area is somewhat contiguous, with the northern portion disjointed by excluded, substantially-noticeable lands and adjacent private properties. The polygon abuts Bureau of Land Management lands to the north and west.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

This area is essentially a large lava dome surround by caldera. The vegetation is dominated by Douglas-fir, spruce, and some lodgepole pine. Some non-native plant species (cheatgrass) occur within isolated portions of the area. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, antelope, black bear,

Albert's squirrel, osprey, and Northern goshawk. Landscape-level tree mortality is currently occurring here, but this is a natural process and the area generally reflects natural ecological conditions. The area contains limited improvements on the landscape – two wildlife guzzlers, a couple decommissioned roads along the periphery, and some range-related infrastructure such as fencing. These improvements do not detract from the area's apparent naturalness as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives light use and offers some opportunities for visitors to experience solitude away from the adjacent travel routes and private property. Activity at Dome Lakes State Wildlife Area is visible to the southwest within some portions of the polygon. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are not pervasively observed from within the polygon and do not substantially detract from opportunities for solitude. Dense vegetation provides adequate screening in the majority of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers some opportunities for backcountry hunting and primitive hiking. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Cochetopa Dome is a unique landscape feature and is culturally significant.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of this small area is somewhat contiguous. The northern portion of the polygon is disjointed by excluded, substantially-noticeable lands and some adjacent private properties. Bureau of Land Management lands abut the area to the north and west. Range activity is established in the area. The southern portion of the area could potentially be effectively managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics but this section is comprised of less than 5,000 acres and the topography does not present adequate natural boundaries.

Area G30: Four Mile (4,013 acres)

Summary

*Area G30 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of noticeable improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined*

recreation. A determination of size sufficiency is dependent on whether or not the adjacent Rio Grande National Forest Wilderness Inventory polygon is recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System in the Rio Grande National Forest Plan final Record of Decision.

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is characterized by Engelmann Spruce and Arizona Fescue plant communities on steep mountain slopes. Other species include Douglas fir, Rocky Mountain juniper, mixed conifer, and some aspen. The vegetation is diverse with over 10 different species of trees. Colorado tansy aster can be found in the area. Some invasive species (Canada thistle and some musk thistle) are scattered and evident throughout the landscape. Considerable moose activity occurs in the southern portion of the polygon.

This area reflects the ecosystem break between Central Rockies and Southern Rockies. This landscape is fairly pristine along the slope, with some evidence of past treatments located at the northern end that are not very evident. There is an active timber sale (Divide salvage) located in the southern end near Saguache Park.

The eastern boundary of the polygon runs along the Continental Divide. The area includes very little improvements other than some spring developments and range fencing. Improvements are scattered in isolated spots and human activity is mostly unnoticeable throughout this steeply sloped area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The area does not receive much visitor use during the winter or summer, but some use occurs here during hunting season. The high-clearance road (NFSR 864), adjacent to the western side of the polygon, is typically only used during the hunting season. The shape of the area is long and slender (about 1 mile at its widest portion), so the majority of the landscape is exposed to the sights and sounds originating from NFSR 864 when use does occur. However, sights and sounds originating from outside the area are not pervasively observed from within the polygon throughout the majority of the year since motorized traffic along NFSR 864 is primarily limited to hunting season.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area can be accessed via NFSR 864 during the summer and fall, but is more challenging to access during the winter. There are opportunities for wildlife viewing and hunting. The landscape is densely vegetated within steep terrain, so it is not easy nor desirable to navigate. While some opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation exist, these opportunities are not outstanding.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Old growth Douglas fir in the area represents a unique natural resource present in the area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The area is long, narrow, and steep. Topography would help offset the risk of motorized intrusions into the area, but the entirety of the area is located within a couple miles of a motorized route. The shape is mostly contiguous except for a small, detached portion on the northeastern end. The eastern boundary is the Continental Divide. There is an active timber sale (Divide salvage) located in the southern end near Saguache Park.

Size (less than 5,000 acres)

Is the area of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable?

Area G30 is less than 5,000 acres and *not* adjacent to existing designated wilderness. This polygon is included in the GMUG Wilderness Inventory, and therefore Evaluation, due to its adjacency to a Rio Grande National Forest Wilderness Inventory polygon (10,291 acres). The adjacent polygon was evaluated to have a *Moderate/High* degree of wilderness characteristics by the Rio Grande National Forest Wilderness Evaluation. It is unknown at this time if the adjacent RGNF polygon will be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System in the forthcoming Rio Grande National Forest Plan final Record of Decision. At present, this 4,000-acre area on the GMUG would not be large enough to make preservation of its wilderness characteristics practicable because the entirety of the polygon is located within a couple miles from a road.

Area G31: Millswitch (4,125 acres)

Summary

*Area G31 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, noticeable evidence of human intervention and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. A determination of size sufficiency is dependent on whether or not the adjacent Rio Grande National Forest Wilderness Inventory polygon is recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System in the Rio Grande National Forest Plan final Record of Decision.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by lodgepole pine, with spruce at the upper end, as well as some aspen in southern the aspects. Canada thistle occurs throughout the polygon. A goshawk nest is located here, pine martin occur here, and the area is a lynx habitat corridor. This area has been heavily harvested since 1878. Evidence of timber harvests, located inside the polygon, are evident on the landscape. There are quite a few range improvements in the area, including fences and spring developments, as well as timber roads. There is also a motorized trail and two decommissioned roads.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

All of the roads into the area are gated during the summer which limits the amount of visitors within the area itself. During the winter, snowmobile activity occurring outside of the area can be heard at times. Active timber harvest activities occurring outside of the polygon are within eyesight and earshot throughout much of the area, although these activities are temporary and intermittent. There are some opportunities for solitude in limited pockets of the area, but sights and sounds originating from human activities outside of the polygon are pervasive throughout the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The Continental Divide National Scenic trail traverses the southern portion of the polygon and offers opportunities for primitive hiking, backpacking, and horseback riding. However, this section of the trail is also available for motorcycle use which do not render many high-quality opportunities for primitive recreation along the trail. However, the polygon offers high-quality hunting opportunities due to the lack of easy access.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area includes Headwaters Hill, the headwaters of the Colorado, Rio Grande, and Arkansas rivers. The area also includes very old logging cabins and logging roads, as well as railroad sidings.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of this area is small and scattered. There is range activity throughout the polygon, as well as active contracts for timber harvest. Preventing motorized use incursions into this area during the winter would be very difficult due to the terrain and accessibility. The area is adjacent to both the Rio Grande and Pike-San Isabel National Forests, blending complex forest management strategies.

Size (less than 5,000 acres)

Is the area of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable?

Area G31 is less than 5,000 acres and *not* adjacent to existing designated wilderness. This polygon is included in the GMUG Wilderness Inventory, and therefore Evaluation, due to its adjacency to a Rio Grande National Forest Wilderness Inventory polygon (53,803 acres). The adjacent polygon was evaluated to have a *Moderate* degree of wilderness characteristics by the Rio Grande National Forest Wilderness Evaluation and includes a Colorado Roadless Area and an Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Area. It is unknown at this time if the adjacent Rio Grande National Forest polygon will be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System in the forthcoming Rio Grande National Forest Plan final Record of Decision. At present, this 4,000-acre area on the GMUG would not be large enough to make preservation of its wilderness characteristics practicable because the shape is small and scattered.

Area G32: Lookout Mountain (6,007 acres)

Summary

*Area G32 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, some evidence of human intervention, prevalent improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is contiguous in the northern portion, disjointed scattered in the southeastern portion, with no adequate natural boundaries present on the landscape. Existing rights could present management challenges.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by very dense lodgepole pine, with some aspen in the western portion. Very few invasive plant species occur in this area. Bighorn sheep winter range is located on the western portion of this polygon. The area contains some lynx habitat, as well as big game winter range along the southern edges. The dense lodgepole pine is small in diameter as a result of being clear cut in the 1930s and 1940s. Regardless of this history, the vegetation still appears relatively natural. The area has many improvements throughout the landscape, including many mining features and associated mining roads, old logging roads, fences, and a wildlife guzzler. Improvements occur more than occasionally, but some areas within the polygon that are free of improvements.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

There are some opportunities for visitors to experience solitude within the central portion of the polygon around Lookout Mountain. There is little to no public access on the north and northwest side of the polygon where the area abuts private property. The area receives more use during the fall hunting season. OHV activity occurring outside of the polygon can be heard within some portions of the area during the fall, and noise originating from Highway 76 is audible in some portions of the polygon throughout the year. However, sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are not pervasively observed from within the polygon.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers some opportunities for hunting, hiking, and wildlife viewing. Hiking opportunities are primarily limited to hiking around Lookout Mountain or the ridgetop between Lookout Mountain and Rosebud Gulch. These opportunities are not outstanding.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

A Priority Heritage Asset, identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program, is located within the polygon. The area contains an old saw mill (Box Canyon), historic mining features (old mine prospects), and old log skid chutes (on the north slope).

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

This area is located southeast of Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area and abuts private property associated with the town of Ohio. The shape of this area is contiguous in the northern portion, but the southeastern portion is disjointed and scattered. The south aspect contains a lot of old roads and trails across the landscape which would pose a challenge in managing access and use. The topography does not present adequate natural boundaries. Active mining claims occur throughout the area, and these existing rights could present challenges to managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area G33: Rambouillet (4,967 acres)

Summary

*Area G33 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, noticeable evidence of human intervention, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. A determination of size sufficiency is dependent on whether or not the adjacent Rio Grande National Forest Wilderness Inventory polygon is recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System in the Rio Grande National Forest Plan final Record of Decision.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen and willow. Wetlands are in the area (Rambouillet and West Fork Cebolla creeks) and some Canada thistle occurs near Rambouillet Creek. The polygon hosts healthy wildlife, including ptarmigan, elk, and moose. An active pika colony exists on the northeastern edge of the polygon near Highway 149. The area also includes a lynx linkage area. A lynx spent the past winter just outside of the polygon on the east side of the highway.

The eastern portion of the polygon has been heavily harvested, and there is on-going timber harvest occurring the western portion. Two timber sales on the eastern end are Extra Salvage (cut) and Last Tree Salvage (sold). There are limited improvements in the area beyond a few range improvements, one temporary road, and some closed timber roads.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The area is not particularly popular for recreation use, but some recreation use does occur here during the winter season. The middle portion of the area around West Fork Cebolla Creek offers many quality opportunities for visitors to experience solitude throughout much of the year. Timber activity occurring within the polygon would detract from opportunities for solitude, but these activities are intermittent. During the winter, noise from snowmobiles can be heard for miles because of the terrain; however, these sounds originating from outside the polygon are infrequent and not pervasive.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for hunting and camping, some of which are high quality. There are also opportunities for fishing, particularly in West Fork Cebolla and Rambouillet creeks, and some of these fishing opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Views of nearby La Garita Wilderness, Needles, and Rio Grande National Forest lands can be seen from within the polygon. The Collegiate Peaks are also visible from here on a clear day. This polygon itself is also a visual component of the Silver Thread Scenic Byway (Highway 149).

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape and configuration of the area is small and severed. The area consists of three distinct polygons – one larger polygon and two smaller pieces. All together, these lands are about 4,900 acres. The southern portion of the main polygon is bisected by a cherry-stemmed road (NFSR 735). Active and completed timber sales occur throughout the polygon. Preventing motorized use incursions into this area would be difficult due to the terrain and accessibility. The area is adjacent to the Rio Grande National Forest to the south.

Size (less than 5,000 acres)

Is the area of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable?

Area G33 is less than 5,000 acres and *not* adjacent to existing designated wilderness. This polygon is included in the GMUG Wilderness Inventory, and therefore Evaluation, due to its adjacency to a Rio Grande National Forest Wilderness Inventory polygon (47,812 acres). The adjacent polygon was evaluated to have a *Low* degree of wilderness characteristics by the RGNF Wilderness Evaluation. It is unknown at this time if the adjacent Rio Grande National Forest polygon will be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System in the forthcoming Rio Grande National Forest Plan final Record of Decision. At present, this 4,000-acre area on the GMUG would not be large enough to make preservation of its wilderness characteristics practicable because the shape is small and severed, and consists of three separate polygons. The main polygon alone is about 4,650 acres.

Area G5-S: Mount Emmons (4,760 acres)

Summary

*Area G5-S was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to an unnaturally-appearing landscape, prevalent evidence of human influence and improvements throughout the area, and limited opportunities for solitude or high-quality primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is small and disjointed, broken-up by private lands and cherry-stemmed roads. It would not be possible to effectively manage the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The area is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen and bare, rocky slopes. Lynx movement has been documented throughout the area, and there are historic observances of boreal toad. However, the available habitat within this area has been compromised by substantial human influence. Extensive mining activity in the area that has impacted the area's natural composition. The southern portion of the area includes a Super Fund site (Standard Mine) with associated, on-going remediation activities using heavy equipment. The area includes prevalent mining infrastructure throughout the landscape, including test pits. Other improvements include abundant old mining roads, a few trail segments, as well as marked snowmobile routes during

the winter. The density of the mining features on the landscape are intense, pervasive, and detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The area receives extensive use during both the summer and winter seasons. Mount Emmons and Lake Irwin are heavily visited. During the summer season, Lake Irwin takes on the appearance of a small town with the amount of visitors participating in water-based recreation activities. Blasting and other noise from remediation activity associated with Standard Mine is pervasive throughout much of the area. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are pervasive within many portions of the area near adjacent motorized routes. Some opportunities to experience solitude are available near Wolverine Basin during some parts of the year. However, it is very difficult to be out of earshot of noise impacts originating from within and outside of the polygon.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers some opportunities for hiking, as well as backcountry skiing Mount Emmons during the winter. Some of these opportunities are high quality in areas away from snowmobile and snowcat use. Two non-motorized trails – Daisy Pass Trail (NFST 9404) and Oh-Be-Joyful Trail (NFST 9836) – provide access portals into adjacent Raggeds Wilderness to the west.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Viewpoints within this area offer vistas of nearly a dozen 14,000-foot peaks. The top of Scarp Ridge provides spectacular views of Raggeds Wilderness, including Peeler Basin, Peeler Peak, and Oh-Be-Joyful Peak. The views from this area are outstanding and iconic.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is small and broken up by two cherry-stemmed roads and numerous, interspersed adjacent private lands. The area is also adjacent to Raggeds Wilderness to the north and west. During the winter, a snowcat outfit operates in the northwest portion of the area, and a snowmobile club is permitted to maintain the trails for motorized winter use. On-going remediation activities associated with Standard Mine are likely to continue. The eastern half of the polygon is covered in active mining claims. Due to the substantial amount of existing rights, uses, and improvements, as well as the extensive presence of adjacent private lands, it would not be possible to effectively manage the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.

Area G20-S: Los Pinos (23,240 acres)

Summary

*Area G20-S was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally natural-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, non-native plant species throughout the area, evidence of human intervention and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is disjointed, separated into two north and south polygons with several cherry-stemmed roads and excluded lands breaking up the eastern side of both. The area's configuration, and existing rights and uses, could pose significant challenges to managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by lodgepole pine. Specifically, this area is located at the southern edge of lodgepole pine natural range. The area also includes Douglas-fir, aspen, blue spruce, mixed conifer, sagebrush, and grasslands. Non-native plant species are prevalently scattered throughout the area, such as Canada thistle, toadflax, and cheatgrass, particularly within the southern portion. This area includes mapped lynx habitat. Other wildlife species include black bear, mule deer, elk, moose, Northern goshawk (10 known nests), golden eagles, osprey, red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk. There is evident tree mortality (natural process) and on-going timber harvest activities. The majority of the vegetation generally appears to be associated with the area's natural conditions.

Improvements are scattered throughout this large landscape, but primarily concentrated within the southern portion. Improvements include fencing, decommissioned roads, a couple trails, a gravel pit, and a reservoir. These improvements are evident on the landscape within some portions of the area, but they do not substantially detract from the apparent naturalness of this large area as a whole. There is limited evidence of human disturbance within the northern two-thirds of the area in the lodgepole pine.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives limited use during the summer, but heavy use during the fall hunting season. Sights and sounds originating from outside the area can be seen and heard within much of the area near adjacent motorized routes and private property. Throughout the majority of the year, encounters with other visitors in the area are infrequent but it is difficult to reach areas out of sight and earshot of adjacent roads. Some opportunities for solitude are available within the northern portion in sections of dense lodgepole pine away from trails and roadbeds.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for hunting (deer, elk, and grouse), hiking, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Bluehead Sucker occur in Los Pinos Creek.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is disjointed across a large landscape. It is divided into two, separate north and south polygons with several cherry-stemmed roads and excluded, substantially-noticeable lands breaking up the eastern side of both polygons. Adjacent private property is located in the northeastern portion of the area. An active mining claim is located in the area, as well as a reservoir. On-going timber harvest activities are occurring within the area. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state. This area could not be effectively managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the disjointed configuration, previous and on-going human intervention, and lack of natural features to manage access into and within the area.

Area G22: Willow Mesa (2,232 acres)

Summary

*Area G22 was evaluated to possess **No** wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to the pervasive amount of human intervention and improvements that have left the landscape appearing substantially unnatural, as well as limited opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is entirely disjointed, broken-up by excluded lands. It would not be possible to effectively manage the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by spruce-fir. Non-native plant species are common in the area, especially Canada thistle and bull thistle, particularly in the Big Meadows portion. A fen is located in a small segment of the area. The entire landscape area has experienced very high timber use over a long period of time. The vast majority of the remaining forested pockets have suffered from spruce-beetle kill (natural process) because natural mosaic burns are no longer occurring. A small area near Stewart Creek is the only part of the landscape that appears natural. Overall, the area shows obvious human intervention and appears substantially unnatural.

Improvements are pervasive throughout the area. There are range infrastructure throughout the area, including stock ponds, fences, corrals, and buildings. There is obvious evidence of timber harvest activities and associated temporary roads that scar the landscape. Many timber harvests have occurred recently and/or are on-going, which makes them very evident on the landscape. A ditch is located at Big Meadows, and another ditch crosses over to the headwaters of Miners Creek in the southeast portion of the polygon. A small portion of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is located on the eastern portion of the area. Due to the small, disjointed shape and configuration of this polygon, the improvements are very evident on the landscape. There are very few spots where improvements are absent or unseen, and these improvements detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

There are some opportunities for solitude on the eastern, disconnected “elbow” of the polygon near Table Mountain. Otherwise, there are very few opportunities to experience solitude within this polygon because it is very difficult to escape the sights and sounds originating from roads and on-going timber harvest activities. There are several cutting units (sold since 2016) are located near Willow Mesa. The terrain is very steep and exposed – the adjacent La Garita Wilderness boundary is at timberline. Three trailheads directly adjacent to the area provide access into La Garita Wilderness on the eastern side. The Stewart Creek trailhead provides access to San Luis Peak (popular 14,000-foot peak) and the Eddiesville North trailhead provides access to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area provides limited, poor-quality opportunities for primitive recreation such as hunting in the open park area.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

None known.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of this area is disjointed and scattered along the adjacent La Garita Wilderness boundary in three disconnected polygons, the largest of which is about 1,800 acres. The diversion south of Table Mountain is an established water right, and a ditch line is located at Big Meadows in the northern portion of the area. On-going timber activity occurs throughout the area, including close to the wilderness boundary. A private in-holding is located in the southern portion. Due to the extensive amount of existing rights, uses, and improvements, as well as the

disjointed shape, it would not be possible to effectively manage the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.

Paonia Ranger District

Area P4-82: Beckwiths (21,528 acres)

Summary

*Area P4-82 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics, particularly within the central and southern portions adjacent to West Elk Wilderness. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of improvements throughout the majority of the area, and prevalent high-quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses quality habitat and iconic scenic traits. The shape of the area is mostly contiguous, with two cherry-stemmed roads. It is adjacent to existing wilderness and much of the area is currently managed as Beckwiths Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The existing vegetation consists of Spruce-Fir-Aspen mixed forest, with alpine habitats in the higher elevations bordering West Elk Wilderness, and mixed mountain shrub habitats at the lower elevations. Riparian habitats occur along streams within the area. Noxious weeds, toadflax, thistles, and houndstongue are evident in isolated spots throughout the area. Wildlife species in the area include elk, black bear, wolverine, white-tailed ptarmigan in alpine areas, bald eagle, Northern goshawk, purple marten, American marten, and American three-toed woodpecker. Lynx habitat has been mapped within the forested areas of the polygon.

The area generally reflects ecological conditions normally associated with areas without human intervention because no other vegetation treatments have occurred in the area other than weed treatments. Three non-motorized trails traverse the eastern portion of the polygon – Three Lakes Trail (NFST 8843), Beckwith pass Trail (NFST 8842), and Cliff Creek Trail (NFST 8840). Some range improvements are scattered throughout the area. One small reservoir is also located here. Overall, the limited improvements are somewhat evident in isolated portions of the area but do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is limited to portions of the area on or near the three popular non-motorized trails, Lost Lake campground, Kebler Pass Road, and areas close to adjacent private lands. The area receives higher use during hunting season within some concentrated areas. Snowmobile activity occurring outside the area can be heard within the area at times during the winter season. However, sights and sounds originating from outside the area are not pervasively observed from

within the polygon due to screening that dense vegetation provides and the large size of the polygon. The majority of this large area offers high-quality opportunities for solitude, especially in the central and southern portions adjacent to West Elk Wilderness.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

There are very high-quality opportunities primitive hunting, hiking, and horseback riding. In particular, mountaineering on the West and East Beckwith Mountains offers opportunities for high-quality primitive and unconfined recreation experiences here.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area includes distinctive scenery and contains viewpoints that offer outstanding views, including views of and from West and East Beckwith Mountains, as well as views of Marcellina Mountain in Raggeds Wilderness to the north. The area also contains the second largest aspen stand on the planet which is highly photographed, from points outside the polygon, during the fall season. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program has identified three Potential Conservation Areas within the area for montane riparian forest and shrub land types. Schaeffer Creek contains green lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the polygon is mostly contiguous, with two cherry-stemmed roads. It is adjacent to West Elk Wilderness to the south and much of the area is currently managed as Beckwiths Colorado Roadless Area. A cluster of adjacent private lands are located within the north-central portion of the polygon. Portions of other adjacent private lands are also located in the southwest, northwest, and southeast corners. The Snowshoe Cattle allotment and the Norris Ditch are existing rights and uses in the area. While these legally-established rights and uses might pose small challenges in managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics, the majority of the area lends itself to be preserved in an unimpaired state due to its large size, mostly contiguous shape, limited improvements and existing rights and uses, and adjacency to existing designated wilderness.

Area P7: Mount Lamborn (8,643 acres)

Summary

*Area P7 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of improvements, and quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses high-quality habitat and scenic traits. The shape of the area is contiguous, it is adjacent to West Elk Wilderness, and natural features could provide manageable boundaries. The entire polygon is currently managed as an Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The area is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen, as well as some alpine vegetation. There are areas of bare rock along the slopes of Landsend Peak and Mount Lamborn. Some invasive plant species (thistle) occur in isolated portions of the area, and brook trout can be found in some streams. The area also hosts mule deer, elk, black bear, lynx, goshawk, bald eagle, wild turkeys, and Northern Leopard frog. Portions of three non-motorized trails traverse the center of the polygon – Mount Lamborn Trail (NFST 8895), Lamborn Trail (NFST 8894), and Inter Ocean Pass Trail (NFST 8890). Small portions of two other non-motorized trails (NFST 8875 and NFST 8892) clip the eastern and southern portions, respectively. There are no other notable improvements within this area beyond these trail segments. The area is very rugged and has a high degree of apparent naturalness.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The town of Paonia is visible in the distance from within the western side of the area. However, these sights from outside the polygon are not pervasive and do not detract from solitude. Portions of the area away from the non-motorized trails and adjacent to West Elk Wilderness feel remote and offer quality opportunities to experience solitude.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The terrain is steep, rugged, and challenging to navigate. Access is limited which makes much of the area difficult to reach. Climbing Mount Lamborn is a popular, high-quality opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The area also offers opportunities for primitive hunting and horseback riding.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The western-most portion of the polygon provides a very scenic backdrop to the town of Paonia. There are viewpoints throughout the polygon that offer outstanding views of Landsend Peak and Mount Lamborn (located within the area), adjacent West Elk Wilderness, Marcellina, and Raggeds Wilderness.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape and configuration of the area is wholly contiguous, adjacent to West Elk Wilderness to the east, and surrounded by other GMUG National Forest lands currently managed as a Colorado

Roadless Area to the north, west, and south. The entire polygon is currently managed as Mount Lamborn Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Area. It would be easy to preserve the high-quality wilderness characteristics within these lands due to its adjacency to existing designated wilderness, limited access, no other existing rights or uses, and identifiable natural features that could provide manageable boundaries.

Area P1-60: Electric Mountain (10,869 acres)

Summary

*Area P1-60 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited noticeable improvements, and some opportunities to experience solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is large and generally contiguous. The majority of the area is currently managed as Electric Mountain Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by aspen and spruce/fir forests. Snowberry growth occurs in openings and within the understory of some aspen stands. Non-native plant species occur within some portions of the area, including the western side near the adjacent powerline corridor that was seeded with non-native species. Riparian habitat occurs along the drainages of Beaver Creek and Cow Creek. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, Northern goshawk, purple martin, American marten, and Northern leopard frog. Lynx habitat is mapped throughout the area, but lynx observations are not typical. The majority of the vegetation generally reflects ecological conditions normally associated with areas without human intervention.

Improvements are scattered throughout the landscape. Several trails occur in the area, including Terror Trail (NFST 8802) that traverses the center of the area from the southwest corner to the east side. Other improvements include infrastructure associated with range activities such as fencing and ponds. Many of the ponds were natural that have since been improved for range activities. Ditches are also located within the area. Due to the size of the polygon, these improvements are evident within isolated portions of the area and do not substantially detract from the apparent naturalness of the landscape as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area offers some opportunities to experience solitude. A modest amount of dispersed recreation use occurs within the area and some visitors may encounter sheep camp activity that could impact solitude. Portions of the area receive heavier use during hunting season. Sights and sounds originating from outside the area are observed within some parts of the area near adjacent motorized routes and private properties, particularly near NFSR 701 and the Western Area Power Administration powerline to the west. However, vegetation provides an effective buffer from sights and sounds throughout much of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area provides opportunities for backcountry hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and camping. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

None known.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and generally contiguous. The periphery of the area is broken up by a cherry-stemmed road, some excluded lands, and scattered adjacent private properties along all sides of the area. The majority of the area is currently managed as Electric Mountain Colorado Roadless Area. The Electric Mountain, Condemit Park, Hubbard Park, and West Muddy sheep allotments are located within this polygon. The ditches in the area would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. The shape and configuration of the area lends it to be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics, but the amount of adjacent private properties and associated access could pose management challenges.

Area P3: McClure Pass/Horse Ranch Park (23,450 acres)

Summary

*Area P3 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, scattered non-native plant species, prevalent improvements, and some opportunities for primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of this large, slender area is generally contiguous and wraps around the western and southern sides of Raggeds Wilderness. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Tomahawk, Munsey/Ericson, and Horse Ranch Park Colorado Roadless Areas.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by aspen, as well as spruce/fir, Gambel oak, and sagebrush. Non-native plant species such as thistle and houndstongue occur throughout the area. Riparian habitat occurs along the many creeks and water bodies. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, mountain lion, wolverine, turkey, American marten, and purple martin. Lynx habitat has been mapped in this area. Mountain goats that reside in Raggeds Wilderness sometimes frequent this area. The area includes sections of tree mortality (natural process). Otherwise, large portions of the vegetation in the area retain a high degree of apparent naturalness. The landscape includes prevalent improvements. Numerous trails traverse the area, as well as administrative routes, fencing, and other range-related infrastructure. Reservoirs, water transmission lines, and several ditches are also located in the area. Improvements are prevalent throughout much of the area and detract from apparent naturalness in many portions.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The majority of this area receives consistent use throughout the year and one of the Paonia District's most popular trails is located here – Raggeds Trail (NFST 8820). Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon detract from opportunities for solitude throughout much of the area, particularly near the western and southern edges. Outside sources include Highway 133 to the west, Kebler Pass Road to the south, a communication site, developed recreation sites (campgrounds and trailheads), and several adjacent private properties. Some opportunities for solitude are available within the northern portion of the polygon away from Highway 133 and private property, as well as within the central portion of the area adjacent to Raggeds Wilderness.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area provides some opportunities for backcountry hunting, hiking, and horseback riding. Some of these opportunities are high quality within portions of the area away from improvements and adjacent travel routes. Numerous trails throughout the area provide access portals into the adjacent Raggeds Wilderness, a larger and more primitive landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Green lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout occur in Deep Creek and Chair Creek. Bluehead sucker occur in Lee Creek. This area includes the McClure Pass, Dark Canyon, and Horse Ranch Park Potential Conservation Areas, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of this large area is generally contiguous, with one very slender section within the southern side. The majority of the area is adjacent to Raggeds Wilderness to the east and north. Adjacent private lands and associated access routes are located in the southern, central, and northern portions of the polygon. Nearly all of the polygon is currently managed as Tomahawk, Munsey/Ericson, and Horse Ranch Park Colorado Roadless Areas. The Spring Creek, Buck Creek, Williams Creek, Chair Creek, Munsey Creek, and Snowshoe cattle allotments and located in the area, as well as the Ruby sheep allotment. A 22-acre special use permit for entomology research is located in the area. The southeastern portion of the area includes several active mining claims. The ditches and other water developments in the area would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due the presence of existing water and access rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. The area's slender shape, and extensive improvements throughout most of the area could pose challenges to managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics. The central portion of this area adjacent to Raggeds Wilderness could be more easily managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the high level of apparent naturalness and adjacency to existing wilderness.

Area P5: NFSR 709 (689 acres)

Summary

*Area P5 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation, prevalent non-native plant species, and lack of improvements. Opportunities to experience solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation are not available within the area. It would be difficult to manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its very small size, slender configuration, and immediate proximity to NFSR 709 and private lands.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

This area is very steep and vegetated. The vegetation in the area is dominated by ponderosa pine, oak brush, Douglas-fir, and some aspen. Non-native plant species are pervasive throughout the area – this is the Paonia District's highest priority treatment area. Other than treatments to control non-native plant species, limited vegetation management has occurred within this corridor. In areas where native species dominate, the vegetation appears natural. This small area has very few improvements. Short segments of three trails are located in the southern end of the polygon. A small domestic water system is also located along the southern end. These limited improvements are scattered in isolated spots and human activity is mostly unnoticeable throughout this steeply sloped area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The sights and sounds originating from the adjacent road and private properties are pervasively observed throughout the entire area due to the very small, slender size of the polygon and the precipitous gradient of the terrain. Despite the fact that this small polygon is adjacent to existing wilderness, there are no opportunities to experience solitude in this area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This small area is simply a corridor for hunting and hiking access. The area itself does not provide any opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation. Three trails at the southern end of the polygon provide access portals into the adjacent West Elk Wilderness, a primitive landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

None known.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

This area is a very small, steep, and slender piece of land sandwiched between NFSR 709 to the west, and West Elks Wilderness to the east, south, and west. Adjacent private property is located on both the northern and southern ends of the polygon. Water rights are associated with the private property at the southern end. Although steep terrain and adjacency to existing wilderness are typically highly manageable traits, this odd piece of land would be difficult to manage to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its very small size, slender configuration, and immediate proximity to NFSR 709 and private lands. As is, this area provides an effective buffer between NFSR 709/private property and West Elk Wilderness.

Area P6: Black Mesa (30,356 acres)

Summary

*Area P6 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, extensive improvements, and some opportunities to experience solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. This large area is separated into three separate, disjointed polygons. Portions of the area are currently managed as Curecanti and Mendicant Colorado Roadless Areas.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by aspen, spruce/fir, and interspersed meadows and grasslands. Non-native species such as thistle and knapweed occur in some parts of the area, particularly within the lower elevations. Brook trout occur in some streams. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, turkey, bald eagle, Northern goshawk, and American martin. Lynx habitat has been mapped in this area. The majority of the area appears natural, with some isolated areas reflecting disturbance related to human intervention. An extensive amount of improvements are scattered throughout the landscape. Improvements include fencing, stock ponds, reservoirs, and other water developments. A series of old roads previously associated with timber harvest activities are evident on the landscape. Several ditches are also located in the area. Improvements are pervasive throughout the area and detract from apparent naturalness.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area offers some opportunities to experience solitude during some parts of the year. The area receives a modest amount of use during the winter season, lighter use during the summer, and heavy use during the fall hunting season. Sights and sounds originating from outside the area are observed within some parts of the area near adjacent motorized routes and private properties; however, these sights and sounds are not pervasive throughout the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area provides opportunities for backcountry hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area includes critical habitat for Gunnison sage grouse.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

This large area is separated into three separate polygons. Each of the three polygons are broken up by cherry-stemmed roads, adjacent private lands, and excluded substantially-noticeable lands. Portions of the area are currently managed as Curecanti and Mendicant Colorado Roadless Areas. Cattle allotments are located in the area. The ditches in the area would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the

potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. The area's very disjointed configuration, extensive improvements, and lack of natural features to manage access into and within the area could pose challenges to managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area P1-68: Thousand Acre Flat (18,154 acres)

*Area P1-68 was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, as well as some non-native plant species, evidence of human influence, and improvements. The area offers limited opportunities to experience solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is generally contiguous, broken up by three cherry-stemmed roads. The pervasive presence of active oil and gas leases, a portion of the North Fork Coal Mining Area, as well as other existing rights and uses would make managing the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics extremely difficult.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by aspen forests, Gambel oak, spruce, and snowberry. Riparian habitats, including fens, occur in Springhouse Park and around ponds and lakes. Non-native plant species are somewhat noticeable throughout the area. Wildlife species include black bear, mountain lion, moose, elk, mule deer, bald eagle, purple martin, American marten, and Northern leopard frog. This area has also been mapped as lynx habitat. Isolated landscape modifications have occurred near the methane drainage wells. However, the majority of the vegetation reflects ecological conditions normally associated with areas without human intervention.

Improvements are scattered throughout the landscape. Methane drainage wells associated with coal mining activities are located in the southwest corner of the area. Two motorized trails (NFST 8804 and 8806) traverse the southern portion of the polygon, and several decommissioned roads also exist in the area. Four ditches, and associated access routes and diversion points, are located in this area. Due to the size of the polygon, these improvements are evident within some sections but do not substantially detract from the apparent naturalness of the landscape as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The area receives heavy use during the summer and fall seasons, particularly during the fall hunting season. The northern portion of the area offers more opportunities to experience solitude than the southern portion. Sights and sounds originating from outside the area are pervasively observed throughout much of the area, particularly within the southern portion where limited vegetation results in insufficient screening. However, dense vegetation within sections of the

northern portion provides an effective buffer from sights and sounds. Outside sources include adjacent motorized routes (849.1A, 849, 783, 784, 704.4A, 503.1, 704.4D1, and 704.4D), a radio repeater tower, as well as the town of Somerset, Highway 133, and mining infrastructure to the south. Due to the extensive amount of use within the polygon and outside influences, this area offers limited opportunities to experience solitude.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area provides opportunities for backcountry hunting, hiking, and camping. Some of these opportunities are high quality during some parts of the year.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

None known.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and generally contiguous, with three cherry-stemmed roads creating incursions on the western side of the polygon. Adjacent private properties are located on the northern end. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as the Pilot Knob Colorado Roadless Area. About 5,000 acres of the Pilot Knob Colorado Roadless Area is included in the North Fork Coal Mining Area (exception to the Colorado Roadless Rule) in the southern portion of this polygon. The North Fork Coal Mining Area allows temporary roads for coal exploration and/or coal-related surface activities within a 19,500-acre area on the GMUG [36 CFR § 294.43(c)(ix)]. The Condemit Park and Hotchkiss sheep allotments are located within the polygon. The four ditches in the area would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. Additionally, active oil and gas leases cover the entirety of the area. These leases are stipulated mostly as Controlled Surface Use, with some stipulated as No Surface Occupancy. The pervasive presence of active oil and gas leases, as well as a portion of the North Fork Coal Mining Area, would make managing this landscape to preserve its wilderness characteristics extremely difficult.

Area P2: Clear Fork/Huntsman Ridge (35,527 acres)

Summary

*Area P2 was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, prevalent non-native plant species, and evidence of improvements. The area offers some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is large and mostly contiguous with a couple cherry-stemmed roads and private property breaking up the western portion of the area. The pervasive presence of active oil and gas leasing areas, as well as other existing rights*

and uses, would make managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics extremely difficult.

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in this area is dominated by spruce/fir, aspen, Gambel oak, and snowberry. A pervasive amount of thistle and other non-native plant species occur throughout the lower part of the drainage. In some areas, the invasive plant species dominate over the native plant species. Vegetation does not appear natural in isolated spots near travel corridors, as well as portions of the area infested with pervasive non-native plant species. Riparian habitats occur in the drainages. Wildlife species include black bear, mountain lion, mule deer, elk, moose, turkey, purple martin, Northern goshawk, and flammulated owl. Lynx habitat has been mapped throughout this area, and part of the McClure Pass lynx linkage area is located here. This drainage includes the highest concentration of green lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout on the GMUG.

The landscape includes improvements such as administrative routes, sheep trails, numerous recreation trails, as well as gas wells and pads. An administrative route originating from the White River National Forest to the north provides access to the Clear Fork ditch located inside the polygon. Other ditches are located in the southern portion of the area. Given the large size of the polygon, the appearance of these improvements detract from apparent naturalness in relatively small proportions of the area and the dense vegetation screens many of the improvements.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area experiences heavy use during hunting season and is very popular for elk hunting in particular. Human presence is evident in portions of the area near McClure Pass (Highway 133) to the south, as well as near adjacent access routes, private properties, and areas of oil and gas development. Sights and sounds originating from these outside sources can be observed from some portions of the area but are not pervasive because impacts are screened by dense vegetation throughout the majority of the area. About half of this large, densely forested area offers opportunities to experience solitude away from the trails, administrative routes, and gas infrastructure.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for backcountry hunting, fishing, and primitive hiking. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area contains green lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout in numerous streams of the Clear Fork Muddy Creek drainage, as well as Roberts Creek. Lower portions of Lee Creek contain bluehead sucker.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and mostly contiguous. Three cherry-stemmed roads and adjacent private property break up the central western portion of the area. A couple other private properties are adjacent to the northern and southern portions of the area. The polygon abuts the Turner Creek Colorado Roadless Area to the west, and is adjacent to the East Willow and Thompson Creek Colorado Roadless Areas on the White River National Forest to the north. Nearly the entire polygon is currently managed as the Clear Fork (north) and Huntsman Ridge (south) Colorado Roadless Areas. The Deadhorse, Muddy, and Huntsman sheep allotments are located in this area. The ditches in the area which would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. Additionally, the vast majority of the polygon is committed to valid oil and gas leases. Aside from the aforementioned rights and uses, the pervasive presence of active oil and gas leasing areas would make managing this landscape to preserve its wilderness characteristics extremely difficult.

Area P4-71: Raven Mesa/Flat Irons (16,229 acres)

Summary

*Area P4-71 was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, pervasive non-native plant species, and extensive human influence and improvements. The area offers some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is somewhat contiguous. The presence of active coal leases and the North Fork Coal Mining Area, as well as other existing rights and uses, would make managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics extremely difficult.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by Gambel oak and mixed mountain shrub. Aspen mixed with spruce/fir and Douglas-fir occur at higher elevations. A pervasive amount of thistle, toadflax, houndstongue, and other non-native plant species are scattered throughout the area.

Wildlife species include black bear, mule deer, elk, purple martin, and Lewis' woodpecker. This area has been mapped as lynx habitat. The area has experienced fire activity. Mining activity within the western portion of the polygon has created surface disturbance and impacted this section of the area's natural composition. However, the majority of the vegetation reflects ecological conditions normally associated with areas without human intervention.

The area includes extensive improvements on the landscape. Improvements include trails, temporary roads for mining and water developments, three active methane drainage wells, fencing, cow camps, and ponds. Each of the major ridgelines within the polygon include a motorized trail or road, which are very evident on the landscape. Portions of a ditch are located within the southern edge of the polygon. The landscape is highly fractured by improvements that detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Most use in this area occurs along the ridgelines where the sights and sounds originating from the town of Somerset, Highway 133, NFSR 709, and surrounding mining infrastructure are pervasively observed. Portions of the area within Deep Creek or Raven Gulch, or adjacent to West Elk Wilderness, offer some opportunities to experience solitude away from improvements and nearby motorized use.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area provides opportunities for hunting and hiking, some of which are high quality. The Hammond Trail provides an access portal into adjacent West Elk Wilderness to the south.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

A Priority Heritage Asset, identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program, is located within the polygon.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and somewhat contiguous. Several cherry-stemmed roads break up the western portion of the polygon, and adjacent private properties are located in the northwest and northeast corners. The area abuts West Elk Wilderness to the south, and the majority of the polygon is currently managed as the Sunset and Flatirons Colorado Roadless Areas. The Sunset Colorado Roadless Area, and a large portion of the Flatirons Colorado Roadless Area, are included in the North Fork Coal Mining Area (exception to the Colorado Roadless Rule). The North Fork Coal Mining Area allows temporary roads for coal exploration and/or coal-related surface activities within a 19,500-acre area on the GMUG [36 CFR §

294.43(c)(ix)]. The Dry Fork cattle allotment is also located in the polygon. The ditch and other water developments in the area would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. Additionally, most of the polygon includes active coal leases. Aside from the aforementioned existing rights and uses, the presence of active coal leases and the North Fork Coal Mining Area would make managing this landscape to preserve its wilderness characteristics extremely difficult.

Area P8: Lower Lamborn (27,826 acres)

Summary

*Area P8 was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, pervasive non-native plant species, and evidence of human influence and improvements. The area offers some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation near the adjacent West Elk Wilderness. The size and shape of the area is large and generally contiguous. The presence of active coal leases and the North Fork Coal Mining Area, as well as other existing rights and uses, would make managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics extremely difficult.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The area is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen, Gambel oak, pinyon juniper, juniper, and oak brush. A pervasive amount of thistle, knapweed, and other non-native plant species occur throughout portions of the area. Brook trout occur in some streams. Wildlife species include black bear, mule deer, elk, turkey, bald eagle, Northern goshawk, and Northern Leopard frog. Prescribed burns have occurred throughout the area since the 1980's. Mining activity in the northeast portion of the polygon has impacted this section of the area's natural composition. Grazing activities have also compromised the area's natural composition within the allotments.

The area includes extensive improvements on the landscape. The northeast portion of the polygon includes past and current methane drainage wells and associated access roads. Other improvements in the area include range-related infrastructure, motorized and non-motorized trails, and Todd Reservoir. The area also includes water pipelines for both the town of Paonia and Crawford, as well as Bone Mesa, Crawford Mesa, and Little Coal Creek water systems. Given the large size of the polygon, the appearance of these improvements detract from apparent naturalness in small proportions of the area and the dense vegetation screens some of the improvements.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The towns of Paonia and Crawford are visible from the entire western side of the polygon, and sounds originating from these towns are observed within some portions of the polygon. These sights and sounds from outside the polygon detract from solitude within the western half of the polygon. Portions of the area adjacent to West Elk Wilderness in the northeastern and southeastern sections offer some opportunities to experience solitude away from the coal mining activities and nearby motorized use.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers some opportunities for hiking, but these opportunities are very limited and not high quality. Three trails in the southern portion of the area – Little Elk Basin (NFST 8892), Through Line (NFST 8860), and Sink Creek (8861) – provide access portals into adjacent West Elk Wilderness to the east.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The western-most portion of the polygon provides part of the scenic backdrop to the towns of Paonia and Crawford.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and generally contiguous. Cherry-stemmed roads and adjacent private properties break up the periphery of the polygon. The polygon abuts West Elk Wilderness to the east. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as the Sunset (northern portion), Mount Lamborn (central portion), and Mendicant (southern portion) Colorado Roadless Areas. The entire Sunset Colorado Roadless Area is included in the North Fork Coal Mining Area (exception to the Colorado Roadless Rule). The North Fork Coal Mining Area allows temporary roads for coal exploration and/or coal-related surface activities within a 19,500-acre area on the GMUG [36 CFR § 294.43(c)(ix)]. The Dry Fork and West Elk cattle allotments are also located in the area. The developed water systems and infrastructure in the area would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due the extensive presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. Additionally, there are portions of two active coal leases in the area. Aside from the aforementioned existing rights and uses, the presence of active coal leases and the North Fork Coal Mining Area would make managing this landscape to preserve its wilderness characteristics extremely difficult.

Grand Valley Ranger District

Area GVO1: Kelso (44,021 acres)

Summary

*Area GVO1 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities and opportunities for high-quality primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses high-quality habitat. The size and shape of the area is large and mostly contiguous within the central and eastern portions, with one cherry-stemmed road. Natural features could create manageable boundaries. A large portion of the polygon is currently managed as Kelso Mesa Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen, ponderosa pine, montane shrubland, Gambel oak, and pinyon-juniper. There are known invasive plant species along Kelso Mesa just north of the district boundary, and invasive species may occur in other isolated areas of the polygon. The southern portion of the polygon includes some fens and wetlands and riparian habitats occur along the major drainages of North Fork Escalante Creek, Kelso Creek, and Middle Fork Escalante Creek. Much of the area provides important habitat for elk, mule deer, black bear, and turkey. Other species include bald eagle, spotted bat, flammulated owl, and Northern goshawk.

The majority of the area has not been cut or treated and generally appears very natural, particularly within the central and eastern portions currently managed as Kelso Mesa Colorado Roadless Area. Wildfire activity, a natural process, has occurred in some portions of the area. The vegetation within some sections of the western side do not appear natural, but these are isolated.

The central and eastern portions of the area contain several non-motorized trails, livestock trails, old logging roads currently used by livestock, fencing, stock ponds, and several remaining dozer scars from stock ponds installation in the 1940s and 1950s. There are remnants of old buildings, as well as other infrastructure associated with range activities. The western-most portion of the polygon contains a higher concentration of improvements, including several trails, Jeep routes, and numerous spur routes. Improvements found in the western-most portion represent an evident departure from apparent naturalness. Within the majority of the area in the central and eastern portions, improvements are somewhat evident in isolated portions of the area but do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole. Due to the large size of the area, improvements are not pervasive throughout the entire polygon.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Within the central and eastern portions of the polygon, human presence is generally concentrated near Long Point Road (cherry-stemmed). Long Point Road is a high-clearance four-wheel drive route primarily used during the hunting season. Dispersed camping occurs along this route. Sights and sounds originating from Long Point Road and adjacent private lands can be heard from many nearby portions of the area. The majority of the polygon receives high volumes of use for backcountry hunting. However, there are opportunities to experience solitude in this large area away from Long Point Road, private lands, and backcountry camps, particularly within the steep canyons. In contrast, human presence is pervasive throughout the western-most portion of the polygon due to the extensive amount of adjacent private lands, many improvements and access routes, and activity along Divide Road (major travel route) that creates the western boundary as drawn. Overall, there are good opportunities for visitors to experience solitude throughout many portions of the area, particularly within the steep drainages that are difficult to access.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The majority of the polygon is known a premier backcountry hunting destination, with opportunities for primitive hunting, hiking, and camping. There are also opportunities for fishing within the drainages. These primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities are outstanding.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Escalante Creek Potential Conservation Area, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, is located in the area. Kelso Creek includes the most genetically pure population of green lineage Colorado River Cutthroat in all of Colorado. Green lineage Colorado River Cutthroat Trout are also found in North Fork of Escalante Creek. The northeastern offers views of interesting geology within the canyons.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and mostly contiguous within the central and eastern portions, with one cherry-stemmed road (Long Point Road). The area is adjacent to Dominguez-Escalante Natural Conservation Area, administered by the Bureau of Land Management, to the northeast. Numerous adjacent private lands are located throughout the western portion of the polygon, and a few adjacent private properties are located within the northeastern section. A large portion of the polygon is currently managed as Kelso Mesa Colorado Roadless Area. A commercial fall big game hunting operation is permitted to transport equipment and clients into the area using horse-drawn wagons. The Musser and Kelso cattle allotments are located in the area, and the existing range infrastructure is currently maintained with motorized equipment. There are a couple on-going timber activities occurring within the southern end. A few, small portions of the area are stipulated as Controlled Surface Use for oil and gas leasing, but these small areas are not actively leased. While these legally-established rights and uses could somewhat reduce the ability the manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics, a large

portion of the area lends itself to be preserved in an unimpaired state due to its large size, relatively limited access, and natural features that could provide manageable boundaries. The majority of the central and eastern portions, currently managed as a Colorado Roadless Area, would be manageable to preserve for wilderness characteristics with boundary adjustments to provide distance from Long Point Road. The western-most portion would not be manageable due to the pervasive amount of improvements, access routes, and adjacent private lands.

Area GV1-N: UnawEEP (31,926 acres)

Summary

*Area GV1-N was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to relatively naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, extensive improvements within most of the area, and some opportunities to experience solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possess quality habitat. The size and shape of the polygon is large and somewhat contiguous, with the east side broken up by numerous adjacent private properties and cherry-stemmed roads. The western portion of the polygon is currently managed as UnawEEP Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by pinyon-juniper mixed with sagebrush, Gambel oak, manzanita, spruce, aspen, ponderosa pine, and Douglas-fir. Non-native plant species such as oxeye daisy occur within some portions of the eastern side but are not pervasive. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk (production area), black bear, Merriam's turkey, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, and Northern goshawk. The eastern end of the landscape has an extensive history of vegetation management such as prescribed burns and timber management. Most of the southern portion has been more manipulated, including mastication, commercial thinning, and harvest activities. Some aspen stands in the area appear distorted/unnatural from past treatments. Despite the area's history of vegetation management and range activities, the majority of the vegetation appears natural.

An extensive amount of improvements are scattered throughout the landscape, with a higher density within the eastern and southern portions of the area. Numerous trails traverse the area and evidence of previous roads thread portions of the landscape. Other improvements include Casto and Big Creek reservoirs and prevalent range improvements such as fencing, stock tanks, and stock driveways. Several irrigation ditches are located in the area. Improvements are pervasive throughout the eastern and southern portions of the area and detract from apparent naturalness. Conversely, the western side of the area contains less noticeable evidence of improvements and human activity.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Opportunities to experience solitude in this area are available within the northwestern portion below the rim near the Unawep Trail, as well as near the adjacent Bureau of Land Management Inventoried Lands with Wilderness Character. These areas are difficult to access and receive limited use. Conversely, there are limited opportunities to experience solitude above the rim within the western side or within the majority of the eastern portion. The eastern side of the area receives relatively high seasonal use (March through October), including high use during the fall hunting season. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon are pervasive within many sections of the area. Outside sources include nearby heavily-used motorized routes, an adjacent communication site, numerous adjacent private properties, and Highway 141.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

Portions of the area provide opportunities for primitive hiking, backcountry hunting, wildlife viewing, camping, and cross-country skiing. Some of these opportunities are high quality, particularly elk hunting. During the summer and fall, noise from nearby motorized use detracts from primitive experiences. More opportunities to engage in primitive recreation are available during the winter.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The Unawep Seep Potential Conservation Area, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, is located in the area. This area also includes critical habitat for Gunnison sage grouse. Outstanding views are available along the Unawep Trail (NFST 601) and from other areas within the northwest portion of the polygon.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the polygon is large and somewhat contiguous. The east side of the area is broken up by several adjacent private properties and cherry-stemmed roads. The west side is more contiguous but also includes some adjacent private properties. Bureau of Land Management lands abut the north side of the polygon, and the western-most portion of the area is adjacent to Bureau of Land Management Inventoried Lands with Wilderness Character (Unawep West). The western section of the polygon is currently managed as Unawep Colorado Roadless Area. Cattle allotments are located in the area. The reservoirs and ditches in the area would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state due the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. The eastern and southern portions of the area would be very difficult to manage to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its disjointed configuration, extensive improvements and adjacent private lands, and lack of natural features to manage access into and within the area. The northwestern portion of the area could be more easily managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to limited improvements, difficult access, and identifiable landscape features that could provide effective boundaries.

Area GV1-S: Calamity Basin (12,696 acres)

Summary

*Area GV1-S was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation, evidence of human intervention and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important heritage aspects. The configuration of the area is disjointed, separated into two individual polygons, and broken up by cherry-stemmed roads and excluded lands. A large portion of the area is currently managed as Calamity Basin Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by pinyon-juniper and Gambel oak, with some aspen, ponderosa pine, manzanita, cottonwoods, montane shrubland, montane subalpine, and grasslands. Non-native plant species (burdock, Canada thistle, and cheatgrass) occur in isolated pockets. Wildlife species include elk, mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, Merriam's turkey, bald eagle, blue grouse, sparrows, and Northern goshawk. This landscape has a history of extensive management to reduce fuel loading and improve range conditions and important habitat for big game species. Despite the area's history of vegetation management, range activities, and mining exploration, the majority of the vegetation generally appears natural. A couple trails traverse this large area, including Ute Creek (NFST 608) and Cow Creek (NFST 611). Other improvements include range-related infrastructure such as fencing. These improvements are evident on the landscape throughout the area and detract from apparent naturalness; however, some sections are free of improvements.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives heavy use during the fall hunting season as well as the spring, but less use during the summer and winter. Human presence associated with range activities are prevalent throughout much of the area. Sights and sounds originating from outside the area are observed within some parts of the polygons, but these influences are not pervasive throughout the area. The primary outside sources are prevalent substantially-noticeable adjacent lands and nearby motorized activity. Due to terrain variations, the western portion of the area offers more opportunities for solitude than the eastern side. There are some opportunities to experience solitude within this large area, particularly outside of hunting season.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, hunting, and snowshoeing. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

A Priority Heritage Area, identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program, is located within the polygon.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is two separate polygons – the western polygon much smaller than the eastern polygon. The area is disjointed across a large landscape, broken up by cherry-stemmed roads and substantially-noticeable excluded lands. The northwestern portion of the area is adjacent to Bureau of Land Management Inventoried Lands with Wilderness Character (Maverick and Unawep West). A large portion of the area is currently managed as Calamity Basin Colorado Roadless Area. The area contains established range activities. Although adjacent lands to the northwest offer compatible management, it would be difficult to manage the majority of this area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the polygon's disjointed configuration, evidence of human influence, and lack of natural features to manage access into and within the area.

Area GV2-2: Blue Creek / Johnson Basin (34,109 acres)

Summary

*Area GV2-2 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, some evidence of human influence and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The configuration of the area is disjointed across a large landscape, separated into two individual polygons up by cherry-stemmed roads and excluded lands. The majority of the area is currently managed as Johnson Basin and Long Canyon Colorado Roadless Areas. Identifiable natural features occur on the landscape that could provide effective boundaries.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by pinyon-juniper at the lower elevations transitioning to Gambel oak and other mountain shrubs with elevation gain. At the highest elevations, ponderosa pine and aspen habitats occur, with limited Douglas-fir and spruce-fir growth occurring in the South Fork Mesa Creek drainage. Non-native species occur in isolated, scattered pockets, including cinquefoil, ox-eye daisy, Canada thistle, and white top. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, black bear, Merriam's turkey, blue grouse, and bald eagle. Despite the area's history of vegetation management (such as prescribed fire) and range activities, the majority of the

vegetation generally appears natural. Numerous trails traverse both polygons. Other improvements on the landscape include some range-related infrastructure such as fencing, stock ponds, and stock driveways. Old road beds and previous dozer cuts occur in isolated portions of the area, as well as an old wagon route and some evidence of previous uranium exploration. These scattered improvements are noticeable in portions of the area but do not detract from the overall apparent naturalness of the large area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives a moderate amount of use during the fall hunting season, but limited use throughout the rest of the year due to limited access. Human presence associated with range activities is noticeable throughout the area. Sights and sounds originating from outside the area are observed within portions of the eastern side of the area, but these influences are not pervasive throughout the area. The primary outside sources are cherry-stemmed motorized routes, including Divide Road (NFSR 402). However, there are many opportunities for visitors to experience solitude within this large landscape, particularly within the central and western portions.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and backcountry hunting. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The northeastern portion of the area contains critical habitat for Gunnison sage grouse.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is two separate polygons across a large landscape. The northern polygon is more disjointed by cherry-stemmed roads and excluded lands, while the southern polygon is primarily broken up by one main cherry-stemmed road (NFSR 425). Adjacent private lands are located on the eastern side of the northern polygon and Bureau of Land Management lands abut the west side of both polygons. The majority of both polygons are currently managed as Johnson Basin and Long Canyon Colorado Roadless Areas. The southern portion of the southern polygon contains an Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Area. This area contains extensive established range activities. The Club-Campbell Point, Blue Creek, and UC cattle allotments are located in the area. These legally-established rights and uses could somewhat reduce the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state. Despite the disjointed configuration of the area as a whole, large portions of this area could be managed to preserve its wilderness

characteristics due to difficult, limited use, and the presence of natural features to create effective boundaries.

Area GV3: Black Point (17,674 acres)

Summary

*Area GV3 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, evidence of human activity and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the polygon is large and relatively contiguous, with one cherry-stemmed road and some excluded lands. A large section of the polygon is currently managed as Dominguez Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Gambel oak mixed with serviceberry, mountain mahogany, and snowberry, which transitions into sage and pinyon-juniper. Pockets of ponderosa pine also occur in the area. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, turkey, black bear, mountain lion, bald eagle, Columbian sharp-tail grouse, and Gunnison sage grouse. Due to the fact that this area provides important big game habitat, the vegetation is actively managed (such as prescribed fire and mechanical activities) in many parts of the polygon. However, the vegetation throughout the area generally appears to reflect natural ecological conditions. Several trails traverse this large area. Extensive range-related infrastructure is scattered across the landscape, including stock ponds, fencing, a winter camp road, and a few cabins. These improvements are noticeable on the landscape and detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The area receives very heavy use during the fall hunting season, but light use throughout the rest of the year due to difficult terrain and limited access. Human presence associated with range activities are prevalent throughout the area. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon can be observed in portions of the area near motorized routes; however, these sights and sounds are not pervasive throughout the area. Some portions of the area, such as the canyon, offer opportunities for visitors to experience solitude outside of hunting season.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area provides opportunities for primitive hiking, horseback riding, hunting, and wildlife viewing. Two trails in the area – Bad Land (NFST 635) and Black Point (NFST 613) – provide

access portals into the adjacent Dominguez Canyons Wilderness, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area includes critical habitat for sage grouse along the western portion.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the polygon is large and relatively contiguous. One cherry-stemmed road (Black Point Road) and some excluded lands break up the northern portion of the area. Limited adjacent private lands are located in the southwestern corner. The northeast portion of the polygon is adjacent to Dominguez Canyons Wilderness and Dominguez Wilderness Study Area, both administered by the Bureau of Land Management. A large section of the polygon is currently managed as Dominguez Colorado Roadless Area. The Smith, Dominguez, and Musser cattle allotments are located in the area. While these legally-established rights and uses could somewhat reduce the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state, the area could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its large size and contiguous shape, limited access, and difficult terrain. Compatible management of adjacent designated wilderness could also contribute to the ability to manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area GV5: Flowing Park (56,074 acres)

Summary

*Area GV5 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to relatively naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, some evidence of human influence and improvements, and some opportunities to experience solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important heritage and scenic traits. The size and shape of the polygon is large and somewhat contiguous, with the east side broken up by cherry-stemmed roads and excluded lands. The western portion of the polygon is currently managed as Kannah Creek Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Douglas-fir and Spruce-Fir-Aspen at higher elevations with oak-serviceberry and pinyon juniper at lower elevations. Shrubby cinquefoil and snowberry dominate the Indian Point area. Non-native plant species occur in isolated portions of the area in relatively low densities. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, Canada lynx, wild turkey, pine martens, and Northern goshawks. Alkali Creek includes some notable aquatic species such as boreal toad.

Portions of the landscape have extensive history of vegetation management. Vegetation treatments have occurred, and are likely to continue, in order to reduce the potential effects of fire on water quality due to the fact that this area has the highest occurrence of lightning strikes on the Grand Mesa. Prescribed fire has been used to mimic the natural fire regime and other areas have been mechanically treated. Despite the area's history of vegetation management and range activities, the majority of the vegetation appears relatively natural. Numerous trails traverse this large area. Other improvements include some decommissioned roads that are still evident on the landscape, as well as numerous reservoirs, ditches, and other water developments. The area also includes some outfitter camps and range-related infrastructure. Most of these improvements are located within the eastern portion of the area close to roads. These scattered improvements are noticeable in some portions but do not detract from the apparent naturalness of this large area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Opportunities to experience solitude are available throughout the western portion of the area, particularly around Kannah Creek. This large portion is difficult to access and receives limited use. Conversely, there are limited opportunities to experience solitude within the majority of the eastern portion because this section receives consistent use throughout the year. Human presence associated with the reservoirs and range activities is noticeable. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon are pervasive within some sections of the eastern portion. Outside sources include excluded substantially-noticeable lands, cherry-stemmed motorized routes, several popular adjacent developed recreation sites (such as Carson Lake), Lands End Road (NFSR 100) to the north, and Highway 65 to the east.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

Portions of the area provide opportunities for primitive hiking, backpacking, camping, backcountry hunting, and wildflower viewing. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area includes three Priority Heritage Assets identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program. The geology of this area is interesting and representative of the Grand Mesa as a whole. The area provides part of the scenic backdrop to the adjacent Grand Mesa State Scenic Byway (NFSR 100), which includes Lands End viewpoint.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the polygon is large and somewhat contiguous. The east side of the area is broken up by swaths of substantially-noticeable, excluded lands and cherry-stemmed roads. The west side is generally contiguous. Bureau of Land Management lands abut the polygon to the south and west, and the area's southeastern corner is adjacent to a Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Area (Adobe Badlands). The western section of the polygon is currently managed as Kannah Creek Colorado Roadless Area. The Kannah Creek and Point cattle allotments are located in the area. The water developments in the area, including those that provide water supply for Cedaredge and Grand Junction, would require continued access and maintenance. A long-standing relationship between the City of Grand Junction and the Forest Service has ensured that the area be managed to provide high water quality. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state due the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. The eastern portion of the area would be very difficult to manage to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its disjointed configuration, adjacent popular developed recreation sites, extensive improvements, and lack of natural features on the landscape to manage access into and within the area. The western portion of the area could be more easily managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to limited improvements, difficult access, and identifiable landscape features that could provide effective boundaries.

Area GV6: Cottonwoods (28,711 acres)

Summary

*Area GV6 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to relatively naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, evidence of human influence and improvements throughout most of the area, and limited opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important recreation and scenic traits. The size and shape of the polygon is large and disjointed by cherry-stemmed roads and excluded lands. The northern portion of the polygon is more contiguous and currently managed as Cottonwoods Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen, with some sub-alpine montane shrublands. Riparian habitats occur along the creeks, ponds, and lakes. Many fens are scattered throughout the southern portion of the polygon. Non-native plant species occur throughout the area but are not pervasive. A Lynx Analysis Unit is located in the area and lynx habitat has been mapped here. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, bobcat, mountain lion, black bear, wild turkey, pine martens, and Northern goshawk. Portions of the landscape have extensive history of vegetation management. Prescribed burns have occurred in the northern-most portion of the area, recent hydro-axe activity has occurred in the northern section, and spruce salvage has occurred around the east end of the Crag Crest National Recreation Trail. Several on-going timber sales are currently being harvested and scheduled. Despite the area's history of vegetation

management, water developments, and range activities, the majority of the vegetation appears relatively natural.

Improvements are scattered throughout the landscape, but concentrated in the central and southern portions of the area. An extensive amount of reservoirs and water developments are scattered throughout the central and southern portions of the landscape. Other improvements include several trails, decommissioned roads, dozer trails, an old sawmill, and range-related infrastructure such as fencing and stock driveways. Very few areas within the central and southern portions of the area are free from improvements and these extensive improvements detract from the apparent naturalness. The northern section includes one trail (Crum Reservoir, NFST 2511), as well as a few old roads traversing into the area from adjacent Bureau of Land Management lands. The limited improvements within the northern portion are not very noticeable and do not detract from apparent naturalness.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives consistent, heavy use throughout the year, particularly the southern portion. Popular activities include fishing, hiking, and a variety of winter recreation activities. The Crag Crest National Recreation Trail is very popular during all seasons. Nearby motorized use detracts from opportunities for solitude throughout the year. Human presence associated with the water developments and range activities is also noticeable. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon are pervasive within most of the area. Outside sources include adjacent range and mining activities, cherry-stemmed motorized routes, popular adjacent developed recreation sites, and Highway 65 to the south. The northern portion of the area offers some opportunities to experience solitude due to limited use; however, noise from nearby motorized use occurring around Long Slough Road (NFSR 254) tempers the ability to find solitude here.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

Nearby motorized use detracts from primitive experiences throughout most of the year. The area offers some opportunities to engage in primitive recreation during the winter, such as snowshoeing and cross-country skiing away from groomed routes. This area is a Nordic destination that primarily features groomed routes. The northern-most portion of the area may offer the best chances to experience solitude in the area.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The Crag Crest National Recreation Trail is located in the southern portion of the area. Part of this area provides the scenic backdrop to the adjacent Grand Mesa State Scenic Byway (Highway 65).

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the polygon is large and disjointed along the periphery by cherry-stemmed roads and excluded, substantially-noticeable lands. Parcels of Bureau of Land Management lands abut the area to the north, and a section of adjacent private property is located in the southern portion. The northern section of the polygon is currently managed as Cottonwoods Colorado Roadless Area. The Spring Bull and Cottonwood Creek Cattle allotments are located in the area. The extensive water developments within and adjacent to the polygon would require continued routine access and maintenance. These legally-established rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. The majority of the area would be very difficult to manage to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its disjointed configuration, adjacent popular developed recreation sites and routes, extensive improvements, and lack of natural features on the landscape to manage access into and within the area. The northern section could be more easily managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its contiguous shape, limited improvements, and identifiable landscape features that could provide effective boundaries.

Area GV7: Leon (33,052 acres)

Summary

*Area GV7 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to relatively naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, prevalent non-native plant species, evidence of human influence and improvements, and limited opportunities to experience solitude. The area also possesses important heritage traits. This large area is separated into three individual polygons by cherry-stemmed roads. The northern and southern polygons are somewhat contiguous and the central polygon is entirely disjointed by excluded, substantially-noticeable lands. The northern portion of the area is currently managed as Salt Creek Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by spruce-fir, montane sub-alpine shrubland, and aspen. Riparian habitats occur along the creeks, wet seeps, springs, and wetlands. Many fens are scattered throughout the area. Non-native plant species are prevalent throughout the area including musk, Canada thistle, houndstongue, ox-eye daisy, toadflax, white top, scentless chamomile, and several others. Lynx habitat is mapped in this area. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, black bear, pine martens, boreal owl, and Northern goshawk. Despite the area's history of vegetation management, water developments, and range activities, the majority of the vegetation appears relatively natural. Several trails traverse the area. Other improvements include oil and gas pipelines and wells, several ditches, reservoirs, and range improvements. Improvements are

scattered throughout this large landscape and detract from apparent naturalness in concentrated areas.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence associated with the water developments and range activities is noticeable throughout the area. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon are pervasive within most of the area – primarily motorized use occurring on adjacent cherry-stemmed routes. There are some opportunities to experience solitude in isolated pockets across this large landscape, such as the north side of Sheep Flats within the northern polygon.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

There are no opportunities to engage in primitive or unconfined recreation in this area.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area includes one known Prehistoric Heritage Asset, as well as an area proposed as a historic district – Englehart Park Archaeological District. East Fork Big Creek contains a conservation population of blue lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout, and Youngs Creek contains a Bluehead Sucker population.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

This large area is separated into three individual polygons by cherry-stemmed roads. The northern and southern polygons are somewhat contiguous and the central polygon is entirely disjointed by excluded, substantially-noticeable lands. Parcels of Bureau of Land Management lands and private properties are adjacent to northern polygon. The northern-most portion of the area is currently managed as Salt Creek Colorado Roadless Area. This area contains established range activities, including the Leon and Big Creek cattle allotments in the northern polygon. The water developments within and adjacent to the polygon would require continued routine access and maintenance. These legally-established rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. The majority of the area would be very difficult to manage to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its disjointed configuration, scattered improvements, and lack of natural features on the landscape to manage access into and within the area.

Area GV8: Porter Mountain (5,986 acres)

Summary

*Area GV8 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, some improvements, and limited opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is generally contiguous, with the northern portion broken up by excluded substantially-noticeable lands.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by aspen and spruce-fir. Non-native plant species are present throughout the area, particularly around former timber sale areas. Despite the presence of non-native plant species, the vegetation generally appears natural throughout the area. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, black bear, Northern goshawk, purple martin, boreal toad, and tiger salamander. Three trails occur on the landscape – Two Peak (NFST 2521), Porter Mountain (NFST 2534), and Porter Cutoff (NFST 2534). Other improvements include irrigation ditches, an old mine, and range-related infrastructure such as fencing. These improvements are scattered throughout the landscape and do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The area receives consistent use throughout the year, and heavy use during the fall hunting season. Sights and sounds originating from adjacent motorized routes and private properties outside of the polygon are observed throughout the area and detract from opportunities for solitude.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

There are limited opportunities to engage in primitive recreation activities in the area due to the amount of consistent use this small area receives.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Buzzard Creek contains a Bluehead Sucker population.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is small and generally contiguous. The northern portion is broken up by some excluded, substantially-noticeable lands. Private properties abut the northern side. This area contains established range activities. The ditches located in the area would require continued access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, and the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. Portions of the area are stipulated as No Surface Occupancy for oil and gas leasing, but there are no active leases in the area. It would be challenging to manage this area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its lack of natural landscape features to manage access into and within the area.

Area GV9-28: Sunnyside (11,149 acres)

Summary

*Area GV9-28 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited improvements, and opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is large, narrow, and contiguous. The majority of this area is currently managed as Sunnyside Colorado Roadless Area. The presence of existing oil and gas leases in the area could challenge the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by pinyon-juniper at lower elevations with Douglas-fir increasing with the elevation. Gambel oak, serviceberry, and snowberry shrub species occur within the understories at higher elevations. This area is very steep and contains barren slopes and cliffs. This polygon provides important habitat for bighorn sheep and hosts some of the highest densities of wintering deer in the state of Colorado. Other wildlife species include elk and black bear. Not a lot of management occurs in this area. Some limited hand-thinning, herbicide treatment, and prescribed burning occurred in a small area to improve bighorn sheep habitat. Overall, the area appears to reflect very natural ecological conditions. There are very limited improvements on the landscape – a small well pad and three guzzlers. There are no trails or roads in the area and generally very limited evidence of human influence.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Large portions of the area offer quality opportunities for visitors to experience solitude due to the very limited access and absence of developed trails. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon can be observed within some portions of the polygon. Outside sources include the

nearby train, the Plateau Valley, and some oil and gas developments. However, these sights and sounds are not pervasive and do not detract from the ability to experience solitude.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The terrain is rugged and challenging, and the area provides opportunities to engage in primitive recreation due to the absence of trails and roads.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This polygon represents a unique geological formation and offers a visually striking backdrop to the Plateau Valley. The unique substrate in the area provides habitat for Debeque phacelia. Portions of four Potential Conservation Areas, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, occur in the area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the polygon is large and contiguous, with one small pocket of excluded substantially-noticeable lands. A section of private property is adjacent to the eastern side. The north side of the polygon abuts the White River National Forest, including Housetop Mountain Colorado Roadless Area and a Research Natural Area. Bureau of Land Management lands abut the south side of the polygon. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Sunnyside Colorado Roadless Area. Existing oil and gas leases are located in the polygon, stipulated as No Surface Occupancy. The presence of existing oil and gas leases would challenge the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state. However, the majority of the area lends itself to be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its large size, contiguous shape, very limited improvements and access, and rugged terrain. Similar management of adjacent lands to the north could also contribute to the ability to manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area GV9-49: Battlements (27,046 acres)

Summary

*Area GV9-49 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, evidence of human activity and improvements, and some opportunities to experience solitude or engage in primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of this large area is relatively contiguous, with some cherry-stemmed roads and adjacent private lands creating intrusions on the south side. The majority of this area is currently managed as Battlements Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Gambel oak mixed with serviceberry and other mountain shrubs at lower elevations, with aspen, spruce-fir, and Douglas fir occurring at higher elevations. Non-native plant species occur near travel corridors, particularly houndstongue. The vegetation diversity here allows this area to provide habitat to very large numbers of black bear, elk, mule deer, and wild turkey. Other wildlife species include Northern goshawk and pine marten. The eastern edge of the polygon includes the Battlement Mesa lynx linkage area and higher elevation areas are mapped as habitat for Canada lynx.

The area has experienced extensive controlled burning with objectives to increase big game and livestock forage and decrease fuel loading. No timber harvest activities have occurred in this area, but the oak has been heavily managed in some portions. Despite the history of vegetation management and range activities, the area generally appears to reflect natural ecological conditions. Several trails traverse this large area. Other improvements include two radio repeaters, cow camps, some gates and fencing, an old oil well site, as well as several water developments, including ditches. A road accessing Laramie Energy's reservoir also occurs on the landscape. Improvements are scattered across this large area and detract from the polygon's apparent naturalness in isolated areas.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives a modest amount of use due to the limited access, challenging terrain, and rugged trails. Heavy use occurs during the fall hunting season. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon can be observed in portions of the area near adjacent private properties and the utility corridor; however, these sights and sounds are not pervasive throughout the area. Opportunities to experience solitude are available throughout portions of the area outside of hunting season.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The terrain is rugged and challenging, and the area provides some opportunities for primitive hiking and backcountry hunting.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area is one of the original forest reserves, pre-dating the Forest Service. The Dry Fork Kimball Creek Potential Conservation Area, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, is located in the area. Brush Creek and West Fork Brush Creek contain green lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the polygon is large and relatively contiguous. A couple intrusions from cherry-stemmed roads and adjacent private lands occur on the south side. The north side of the polygon abuts the White River National Forest (Mamm Peak Colorado Roadless Area). Bureau of Land Management and Colorado State lands abut the south side of the polygon. The majority of the polygon is currently managed as Battlements Colorado Roadless Area. Range activities are established in the area, including three cattle allotments. Water rights are associated with adjacent private lands in the center of the area. The ditches and reservoirs in the area would require continued access and maintenance. While these legally-established rights and uses could somewhat reduce the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state, the majority of the area could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its large size and contiguous shape, limited access, and difficult terrain. Coordinated, discontinued access to the area from Mud Hill Pass could contribute to the ability to manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area GVP1: Flat Tops (101,720 acres)

Summary

*Area GVP1 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to predominately naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, evidence of human activity and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The majority of the area is managed as the Flattops/Elk Park and Currant Creek Colorado Roadless Areas. The shape of the area is contiguous throughout the large core, but fragmented by cherry-stemmed roads along the periphery.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in this area is characterized by large, open meadows and many pockets of spruce-fir. The area also has large expanses of aspen, wet meadows, and mountain shrub. There are some invasive plant species (thistles) throughout, but the native vegetation is dominant. Riparian areas are common surrounding the many streams, natural ponds, and reservoirs. Greenback cutthroat trout are found in some drainages. Brook trout (non-native) occur in two drainages, as well as rainbow trout. Wildlife species include elk, moose, mule deer, black bear, Northern goshawk, boreal owl, flammulated owl, American martin, pine martin, peregrine falcon, and American three-toed woodpecker. Lynx habitat is mapped throughout this area, although none have been observed by Forest Service personnel.

The majority of the area is currently managed as roadless – Flattops/Elk Park and Currant Creek Colorado Roadless Areas. Due to this current management, not many timber sales have occurred in the area which has left the vegetation appearing relatively unaltered. A large portion of this area is influenced by water developments and there are reservoirs and stock ponds throughout the

landscape. Additionally, three ditches are located along the edges of the polygon. Other improvements include fencing and infrastructure associated with sheep and cow camps. There are many non-motorized and motorized trails throughout the area. However, these extensive improvements are spread across a relatively large polygon. Given the massive size of the area, the appearance of these improvements detract from apparent naturalness in concentrated proportions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area is heavily trafficked for motorized use, particularly on the western side. There are also several cattle allotments within the area. Some sections of this polygon are a little more remote and more difficult to access than other areas. Opportunities for solitude can be found on the eastern side south of Overland Reservoir because not many visitors frequent this area. The relatively open vegetation and flat terrain in some portions of the area does not successfully screen the sights and sounds of motorized activities which influence the sense of solitude. However, large sections of the landscape have limited trails and dense vegetation that provide for opportunities to experience solitude.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The portions of the area between trails and improvements are relatively large, so there are opportunities for unconfined recreation across this massive polygon and some of these opportunities are high quality. There are more opportunities for primitive recreation activities during the summer, such as hiking, hunting, and fishing. Much of the area is rugged and difficult to traverse.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Unit contains green lineage Colorado River Cutthroat Trout and Bluehead Sucker, with historic observations of both boreal toad and Northern leopard frog. Dyke Creek supports both green lineage Colorado River Cutthroat Trout and Bluehead Sucker. The area includes the three highest points on the Grand Mesa which offer views of the West Elk and San Juan mountains. This area is excellent habitat for Cutthroat Trout, and Forest Service staff have been assisting Colorado Parks and Wildlife on a possible restoration project of Colorado River Cutthroat Trout in Clear Fork of Muddy Creek. At least two possible new populations of Conservation Importance have been located in North Twin and Gooseberry.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is contiguous throughout the large core, but fragmented by cherry-stemmed roads along the periphery. The majority of the area is managed as the Flattops/Elk Park and Currant Creek Colorado Roadless Areas. Some adjacent private lands are located on the north side of the polygon, and the area is adjacent to Bureau of Land Management lands and private property to the south. There are several cattle allotments within the area, along with a few cow camps. There is one commercial outfitter operation, including two authorized camps in the southwestern portion of the area. A portion of the area is encumbered with existing oil and gas leases and there are expressions of interest in oil and gas leasing within the Flattops/Elk Park Colorado Roadless Area. There are many reservoirs in the area (at least 20), as well as three ditches located along the edges of the polygon. The reservoirs and ditches would require access and maintenance. The massive size and relatively low accessibility of the landscape lends itself to easier management. However, the existing rights and uses in the area could impact the ability to manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area GVP2: Turner Creek (29,514 acres)

Summary

*Area GVP2 was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, evidence of human activity and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is somewhat contiguous in the northern and southern portions, but disjointed throughout the north-central section. The pervasive presence of active oil and gas leasing, as well as other existing rights and uses, in the area would make managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics extremely difficult.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by aspen, spruce-fir, with montane brush, mixed stands of conifer, gamble-oak, and open meadows. Some non-native plant species are present, including ox-eyed daisy. The overall natural plant composition is still dominant, with invasive species in isolated pockets. Fens and wetlands occur within the polygon and the native wildlife is intact throughout the area. Non-native fish occur in some of the streams (brook trout and Bluehead suckers), but these occurrences are limited due to the lack of flowing water in the area. The area includes lynx habitat and linkage areas, as well as moose and elk calving areas. Other species include mule deer, black bear, turkey, goshawks, pine martens, and American martens. The southern portion of the area hosts the core purple martin population for western Colorado, a regionally-rare but nationally-common species.

Overall, the vegetation has not really been manipulated in the area. An old fire scar located along the district boundary appears fairly natural. There are many geologically unstable areas throughout the landscape (scarps). The area includes many improvements, including fencing, stock ponds, and other range improvements for the active allotments. There are ditches and other water developments in the area, as well as improvements for mineral extraction activities. The

landscape also includes non-motorized trails, closed roads, and motorized trails (including an ATV trail along the boundary between the GMUG and the White River National Forest). Old ATV trails are still evident on the landscape and are maintained for sheep. Given the large size of the area, the appearance of these improvements detract from apparent naturalness in relatively small proportions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Motorized and non-motorized trails occur throughout the area, a gas development is located on the eastern side, and a major road and powerline are immediately adjacent to the western portion of the area. This area receives very high use during hunting season, but there are more opportunities for solitude during the summer and winter seasons in the northern portion of the polygon. The road and Western Area Power Administration powerline along the western boundary are visible from within some portions of the polygon; however, the sights and sounds from these adjacent improvements are screened by steep terrain and dense vegetation throughout the majority of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for big game hunting, primitive hiking when off-trail, cross-country skiing, and wildlife viewing. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area contains the Muddy Slide, which is geologically interesting but not necessarily a unique feature. Views of the West Elk and Ragged mountains are available in this area. This area contains the headwaters for Buzzard Creek and thereby Plateau Creek. Less than 50% of the area has been surveyed for cultural resources.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is somewhat contiguous in the northern and southern portions, but the north-central portion is disjointed with cherry-stemmed roads and excluded private or treated lands. Private lands are located adjacent to the northern and southern portions. The polygon abuts the Clear Fork Colorado Roadless Area to the east (following the Bull Mountain pipeline), and is adjacent to the Reno Mountain Colorado Roadless Area on the White River National Forest to the northeast. About half of the area is currently managed as roadless – Turner Creek Colorado Roadless Area in the south and Hightower Colorado Roadless Area in the north. The Western Area Power Administration powerline immediately adjacent to the western boundary would negatively impact the ability to manage wilderness characteristics within the polygon due to

helicopter use and motorized activity associated with access and maintenance. There are ditches in the area which would require access and maintenance, as well as existing range uses and mining activities. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage for wilderness characteristics due the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for the spread of invasive species and associated treatments. Aside from the aforementioned rights and uses, the pervasive presence of active oil and gas leasing (including drilled wells and a compressor station) in the southern portion of the area would make managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics extremely difficult.

Area GV2-4: Dominguez (14,344 acres)

Summary

*Area GV2-4 was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, evidence of human intervention, and noticeable improvements throughout the area. The area offers limited opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area receives extensive use and the shape of the area is disjointed, both of which could pose challenges to managing the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area consists of Gambel oak, pinyon/juniper stands, and open sage parks. Non-native plant species (toadflax and Canada thistle) occur in isolated portions throughout the area. Wildlife species include mule deer, elk, turkey, black bear, mountain lion, and bald eagle. Vegetation management activities have taken place on the landscape, including historic sage spraying on northern portion and recent mastication treatments. The history of management activities in the area has somewhat compromised the integrity of the ecosystem. The area includes many improvements throughout the landscape. Several trails traverse the western portion of the polygon. Bret Point (NFST 649), Carson Hole (NFST 610), and Smith Point (NFST 636) traverse the northern portion of the polygon. Other improvements include fencing, an old ranger station, numerous stock ponds, a large ditch, and closed roads with roadbeds still evident on the landscape. These improvements are noticeable and detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives extensive use during the summer and fall, particularly during hunting season. This particular area experiences the highest amount of hunting use in the state of Colorado. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are observed throughout the interior of

the polygon due to the long, slender shape of the area. The primary outside sources are activity along Divide Road and within the Divide Fork campground, as well as adjacent private properties. Portions of the area around Dominguez Creek present some opportunities for visitors to experience solitude. January through March would likely be the best time to seek out solitude in this area. Due to the extensive amount of use in the area throughout most of the year and outside influences, opportunities to experience solitude here are limited.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers extensive opportunities for hunting, but these are not high-quality primitive hunting experiences due to the intense, consistent use this area receives. The Smith Point Trail (NFST 636) provides an access portal into adjacent Bureau of Land Management lands to the north that are more primitive in nature than this landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area contains a Priority Heritage Asset identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program. Paleontological features are also located in this area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is oblong and disjointed. There is one main cherry-stemmed road and pockets of excluded, substantially noticeable lands. The polygon is adjacent to Dominguez-Escalante Natural Conservation Area, administered by the Bureau of Land Management, to the northeast. Adjacent private lands are located in the southwestern portion of the area. It would be difficult to manage the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics due to the polygon's disjointed configuration, extensive use, and pervasive amount of improvements throughout.

Area GV10: West Bench (6,376 acres)

Summary

*Area GV10 was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities with increasing presence of non-native plant species, as well as prevalent and evident improvements throughout the area. The area offers limited opportunities for solitude or high-quality primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is small and disjointed throughout the majority of the polygon. The presence of existing rights and uses, as well as the area's open terrain could pose challenges to managing the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by open grassland and montane shrubland, with some remaining spruce-fir forest. Non-native species, including ox-eye daisy and Canada thistle, are common in the area and have been increasing incrementally. The area includes several riparian areas and fens. The area contains part of a Lynx Analysis Unit. Other wildlife species include moose, elk (mapped elk security areas), and pine marten. Most of the vegetation reflects ecological conditions normally associated with areas without human intervention.

The area includes many improvements throughout the landscape. Deep Creek Cutoff Trail (NFST 2709) traverses the eastern portion of the polygon from south to north. Other improvements include fencing, quarries, borrow pits, several reservoirs, and other water developments. Several oil and gas drill pads are located in the area, as well as a ditch. Elements associated with a historic cow camp are evident on the landscape. The area also includes a groomed, marked snowmobile trail during the winter. Given the open terrain and thin vegetation, the majority of these improvements are readily visible and detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives extensive use for dispersed camping during the summer season, as well as heavy winter use. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are pervasively observed throughout the interior of the polygon due to the open terrain and thin vegetation. Outside sources include traffic along Lands End Road (Highway 100) to the south, telecommunications towers to the north, nearby heavy snowmobile use in the winter, and evidence of recent logging activity. The town of Grand Junction is visible from the west end of the polygon. Some portions of the middle of the polygon, away from improvements and adjacent travel routes, offer some opportunities for solitude, but these opportunities are not high quality.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers opportunities for wildflower viewing, hunting, and cross-country skiing. Few of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

A Priority Heritage Asset, identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program, is located within the polygon.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is disjointed throughout the majority of the polygon. The northern and eastern portions of the polygon are broken up by two cherry-stemmed roads and excluded,

substantially noticeable features. The terrain is open and thinly vegetated, which could pose challenges to maintaining access to and within the area. The municipal reservoirs and the ditch located within this area would require motorized access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for the further spread of invasive species. The area could not be effectively managed to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics due to the area's disjointed configuration and pervasive amount of improvements throughout.

Norwood Ranger District

Area N11-W: Windy Point (12,917 acres)

Summary

*Area N11-W was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities and opportunities for high-quality primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is large and nearly contiguous, with one small cherry-stemmed road. Access to this large area is limited and the terrain is steep and rugged. The vast majority of the polygon is currently managed as Windy Point Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated ponderosa pine, pinyon-juniper, Gambel oak, as well as some aspen stands mixed with Douglas-fir. Populations of invasive plant species occur in isolated pockets. Wildlife species include black bear, turkey, mule deer, elk, and bald eagle. Goshawks frequent the northern edge of the polygon. Limited timber harvest activities have occurred in this area due to the steep topography. Wildfire activity, a natural process, has occurred in some portions of the area and these affects are evident on the landscape.

The area includes evidence of previous roads. The Forty-Seven Trail (NFST 550.1A) is located in the southeastern portion of the polygon. Some two-track, non-system roads are located in the southwestern portion of the area that originate from private lands in the Campbell Creek area. Some fencing occurs within the area, including electric fencing that is put up and taken down each year (packed in on horses). There quite a few stock ponds in the area, as well as three ditches. Due to the large size of the area, improvements are not pervasive throughout the entire polygon. Improvements are evident on the landscape in isolated portions of the area but do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is primarily limited to portions of the area near Divide Road (major travel route) that creates the eastern boundary as drawn. This area does not receive much use, and it is rare to encounter another visitor even during hunting season. Due to the area's size and topography, there are abundant high-quality opportunities to experience solitude away from Divide Road, adjacent private lands, and scattered improvements.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

Access to this area is difficult and there are quality opportunities to experience primitive and unconfined recreation, such as primitive hiking, horseback riding, and hunting.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area provides a scenic view from Windy Point (just outside of the polygon to the east). Some unique beaver ponds are located in the area. With the exception of Campbell Creek, all water in this area is ephemeral.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and nearly contiguous, with one small cherry-stemmed road in the southwestern portion. The forest boundary to the west is bordered by developed Bureau of Land Management lands, as well as a private land development known as The Meadows Ranch in the southwestern-most portion. The central western portion of the area is adjacent to Bureau of Land Management Inventoried Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (Shavano Creek). Tabeguache congressionally-designated special area is located directly southeast of the polygon, separated by the Forty-Seven Road (NFSR 600). The vast majority of the polygon is currently managed as Windy Point Colorado Roadless Area. The Club/Campbell and Forty-Seven cattle allotments are located in the area. There are three active irrigation ditches with associated access routes that service The Meadows Ranch. There are some patented mines (including for copper) located in the area, but these areas are not currently being developed. The area is stipulated as Controlled Surface Use for geologic hazard and big game use, but there are no active leases. While some of these legally-established rights and uses could somewhat reduce the ability the manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics, a large portion of the area lends itself to be preserved in an unimpaired state due to its large size, limited access, and steep terrain.

Area N12: East Beaver (3,562 acres)

Summary

*Area N12 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of human intervention and improvements, and prevalent high-quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation throughout the majority of the year. The area also possesses quality habitat and iconic scenic traits. The size and shape of the area is small and somewhat contiguous. The area is adjacent to existing Lizard Head Wilderness to the east.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The existing vegetation is dominated mostly by Spruce-Fir-Aspen. Some thistle occurs within some isolated portions of the area. A few fens are located throughout the area, including larger fen in the southwest portion. This area is part of the Lone Cone Lynx Analysis Unit, and some goshawks inhabit the area. Past vegetation treatments and timber harvest have occurred in this area, but these areas are not very evident on the landscape. The Lone Cone Trail (NFST 426) traverses the polygon from the northwestern corner, south and east into the adjacent Lizard Head Wilderness. Other this trail, there are very few improvements within the area aside from some limited range infrastructure. The majority of the polygon does not contain improvements, and the area appears very natural.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The area receives a high amount of using during hunting season. Outside of hunting season, the area does not experience much use which results in a low frequency for encounters with other visitors. The polygon is located away from major travel routes and developments, aside from the Lone Cone Guard Station adjacent to the northwest corner. There are abundant, high-quality opportunities to experience solitude within the area throughout the majority of the year.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The Lone Cone trail provides the only access portal into the area and the adjacent portion of Lizard Head Wilderness. There are opportunities for primitive hiking, horseback riding, backpacking, and hunting. All of these opportunities are outstanding.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The views of Dolores, Middle, Dutton, and Lone Cone Peaks from within the polygon are notable and iconic. The laccolith geology of these peaks are unique to the area. Important fens are located within the polygon.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is small and somewhat contiguous. The eastern core of the area directly adjacent to existing Lizard Head Wilderness is mostly contiguous. The southern-most corner of the polygon abuts the San Juan National Forest. One closed allotment is located in the area. This area would lend itself to be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics in an

unimpaired state due to its limited access and use, lack of existing improvements and rights, and adjacency to existing designated wilderness.

Area N1: Last Dollar (2,605 acres)

Summary

*Area N1 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, some non-native plant species, limited improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is small and mostly contiguous. It is adjacent to Mount Sneffels Wilderness to the east. The majority of the area is currently managed as Last Dollar/Sheep Creek Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by forests of mixed Englemann spruce, subalpine fir, and aspen, with alpine habitat occurring on Whipple Mountain. Non-native species occur within the eastern side of the polygon including thistle, ox-eye daisy, and toadflax. State-listed noxious plant species are also dense in this section. Toadflax occurs within the western side of the polygon near Last Dollar Road. The area includes Iron Mountain Lynx Analysis Unit. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and white-tailed ptarmigan. Despite the history of active management in this area, the vegetation generally appears natural. The polygon includes limited improvements on the landscape. Two non-motorized trails traverse the middle of the polygon. A ski hut is situated between the two trails that is largely obscured by vegetation. An old, overgrown road is located within the eastern portion of the area. These limited improvements do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives consistent, heavy use due to the proximity to Telluride and the presence of two popular trails. Last Dollar Road, the polygon's western boundary, receives heavy use throughout the year. Sights and sounds originating from Telluride Airport, located just south of the polygon, are pervasively observed from within most portions of the area at an intermittent frequency. Other outside sources include sights and sounds from the numerous adjacent private properties. There are limited opportunities to experience solitude within much of the area; however, some opportunities may be available within the eastern portion of this small area adjacent to Mount Sneffels Wilderness.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for hiking, backpacking, climbing, hunting, and backcountry skiing. Some of these opportunities are high quality. Two trails in the polygon – Alder Creek (NFST 510) and Whipple Mountain (NFST 419) – provide access portals into adjacent Mount Sneffels Wilderness to the east, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area offers viewpoints of spectacular scenery into Lizard Head Wilderness to the south, including Wilson Peak.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is small and mostly contiguous. It is adjacent to Mount Sneffels Wilderness to the east. Numerous adjacent private properties surround the polygon to the north, west, and south. The majority of the area is currently managed as Last Dollar/Sheep Creek Colorado Roadless Area. The area includes some established range activities. The eastern portion of the area away from Last Dollar Road and private properties could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the contiguous shape, lack of improvements and existing rights, and adjacency to existing wilderness.

Area N2: Sunnyside Telluride (9,601 acres)

Summary

*Area N2 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, evidence of human influence and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is large and somewhat contiguous, with the eastern-most portion of the area broken up by numerous adjacent private lands. The polygon abuts Mount Sneffels Wilderness to the north. A large portion of the area is currently managed as Last Dollar/Sheep Creek Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by forests of mixed Englemann spruce, subalpine fir, and aspen, with some ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, pinyon-juniper, and mixed mountain shrubs. Limited non-native plant species (toadflax and houndstongue) occur here near road corridors. The area includes the Iron Mountain Lynx Analysis Unit. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, peregrine falcon, and white-tailed ptarmigan. Despite the evidence of past mining

activity in the area, the vegetation generally appears natural throughout the majority of the polygon.

Extensive improvements are scattered throughout the area that are evident on the landscape in many portions of the polygon. Improvements include historic mining infrastructure (Liberty Basin, Old Tram Towers, etc.), several trails, a via ferrata climbing route, and an irrigation ditch network located within the western portion. Temporary infrastructure associated with long-term residents is also evident throughout parts of the area. Historic mining infrastructure, as well as some infrastructure associated with modern development, is especially evident within the eastern-most portion of the polygon above Tomboy Road. These improvements are evident on the landscape, particularly within the eastern portion, and detract from apparent naturalness throughout sections of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives consistent, heavy use due to the proximity to Telluride and the presence of very popular trails such as Sneffels Highline and Jud Wiebe. Recreation use occurs in the area year-round, with activity concentrated within the central portion of the polygon near Mill Creek Road and along the trails. Outfitter-guide activity occurs on Imogene Pass. Evidence of human activity associated with long-term residents evident throughout parts of the area as well. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon are pervasive within many sections due to the immediate adjacency of the town of Telluride as well as Telluride ski area across the canyon. Sights and sounds from these areas can be seen and heard from the polygon's south-facing slopes in particular. Other outside sources include sights and sounds from adjacent private properties. There are limited opportunities to experience solitude within much of this popular area; however, some opportunities may be available within the northern portions of the polygon adjacent to Mount Sneffels Wilderness.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The northern portions of the area in higher elevations provide opportunities for climbing and mountaineering. Other portions of the area provide opportunities for primitive hiking and cross-country skiing. Some of these opportunities are high quality. Two trails in the polygon – Iron Mountain (NFST 418.1C) and Sneffels Highline (NFST 5434) – provide access portals into adjacent Mount Sneffels Wilderness to the north, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

None known.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and somewhat contiguous, with one cherry-stemmed road (Mill Creek Road) creating an intrusion in the central portion. The eastern-most portion of the area is entirely disjointed by a substantial amount of adjacent private properties. Other adjacent private properties surround the area to the west and south. Mount Sneffels Wilderness abuts the area to the north. A large portion of the polygon is currently managed as Last Dollar/Sheep Creek Colorado Roadless Area. The Ruffner sheep allotment is located within the area. The irrigation ditch network located on the west end would require continued access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, and the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. It would not be possible to effectively manage the eastern-most portion of the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the extensive amount of human influence, improvements, and numerous adjacent private lands. However, the northern portion of the area away from adjacent private properties could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the contiguous shape, lack of improvements, and adjacency to existing wilderness.

Area N4: Sheep Mountain (12,333 acres)

Summary

*Area N4 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, evidence of human intervention and improvements in portions of the area, and opportunities for primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the polygon is large and relatively contiguous, with portions of the area broken up by adjacent private properties and cherry-stemmed roads. A large section of the polygon is currently managed as Hope Lake Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by spruce-fir, along with some aspen, willow, and grass/forb. The landscape also includes areas of rocky slopes, scree cliffs, and bare areas. Riparian areas, including some fens, occur near Hope Lake. Limited non-native plant species (toadflax and ox-eye daisy) occur within some portions of the area. The polygon includes the Matterhorn Lynx Analysis Unit and Lizard Head Pass lynx linkage area. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, mountain lion, wolverine, and pika. Despite the history of mining and logging in the area, most previous sites have regenerated and the vegetation generally appears natural.

Old mining features are scattered throughout the northern portion of the area and significant mine remediation activity is occurring within this section. Other improvements on the landscape include the town of Ophir's water system with diversions and pipes. While the northern portion of the polygon has evidence of human influence and improvements, the large area south of Trout Lake lacks improvements other than Hope Lake Trail (NFST 410). Improvements are scattered

and detract from apparent naturalness throughout the northern portion of the area; however, the southern portion of the area appears more natural.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives consistent, heavy use throughout the year and the evidence of human activity within the polygon is obvious. Hope Lake Trail in the southern portion of the area is very popular. Sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon are pervasive within most of the area. Outside sources include adjacent summer and winter motorized use, overhead helicopter activity, adjacent private properties (including large remediation areas), adjacent developed recreation facilities, and Highway 145. Heavy winter motorized use occurs on the San Juan National Forest to the east. There are limited opportunities to experience solitude within the area due to the extensive amount of year-round use and pervasive sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for hiking, backpacking, and mountaineering on peaks such as Golden Horn and Sheep Mountain. There are more opportunities to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation during the summer season, and some of these opportunities are outstanding. Nearby motorized use and overhead helicopter activity detracts from the primitive setting during the winter season.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The area offers outstanding views from Lizard Head Pass, and Sheep Mountain is an iconic feature on the landscape.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and relatively contiguous. The northern and central portions of the area are broken up by adjacent private properties and cherry-stemmed roads. The polygon is adjacent to the town of Ophir to the north. The San Juan National Forest abuts the polygon to the south and east which includes the San Miguel Colorado Roadless Area. A large portion of the polygon is currently being managed as Hope Lake Colorado Roadless Area. A commercial heli-skiing operation is authorized to conduct tours within the area. Xcel Energy operates the Ames Hydroelectric Project in the area, which includes Hope Lake dam and water storage. A penstock and infrastructure associated with another hydropower project is located adjacent to the northwest section of the polygon, as well as a developed campground with a water system. These features located within and adjacent to the area would require continued

access and maintenance. An active unpatented mining claim is located in the southern portion of the area. In the northern portion of the area within Ophir Valley, mines are being remediated at an average pace of one mine per year. These remediation activities include heavy, but temporary ground disturbance and will likely continue. The existing rights and uses in the area, as well as the on-going remediation activities, could reduce the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, and the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. The southern portion of the polygon could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to limited improvements and access.

Area N5: Wilson Mesa (3,818 acres)

Summary

*Area N5 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, scattered evidence of human intervention and improvements, and some opportunities for primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possess quality habitat and heritage traits. The configuration of the area is five small, separate but contiguous polygons. The area is adjacent to Lizard Head Wilderness and portions of the area are currently managed as Wilson Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen. Limited non-native plant species (ox-eye daisy and yellow flax) occur within isolated pockets. The area includes the Matterhorn Lynx Analysis Unit. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, mountain lion, black bear, wolverine, black swifts, and white-tailed ptarmigan. The vegetation appears natural throughout the area and generally reflects ecological conditions associated without human intervention. Several trails traverse the area. The Wilson Mesa Trail (NFST 421) runs along the Lizard Head Wilderness boundary and is the only motorized single-track trail in the Telluride area. Other improvements on the landscape include historic mining infrastructure, several ditches, and range-related infrastructure such as fencing. Due to the small size of the area, these scattered improvements are evident on the landscape and detract from apparent naturalness throughout most portions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives consistent use throughout the year. Several popular trails are located here, including Galloping Goose (NFST 499) mechanized trail which receives the most service days of any trail on the Norwood District. Due to the small size of each polygon, there are limited opportunities to experience solitude because human activity within and adjacent to the area are

pervasively observed. Sources of sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon include Highway 145, adjacent private properties, and nearby motorized use. Limited opportunities to experience solitude are available within portions of the area immediately adjacent to Lizard Head Wilderness away from trails, roads, and private properties.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for primitive hiking and hunting, and some of these opportunities are high quality. An outfitter-guide bases operations out of Wilson Mesa trailhead, immediately adjacent to the area. Two segments of Lizard Head Trail (NFST 409) provide access portals into adjacent Lizard Head Wilderness, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

A Priority Heritage Asset, identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program, is located in the area. The Bilk Basin Potential Conservation Area, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, is also located in the area. Additionally, Bilk Creek supports one of the largest fens on the GMUG. Ames ice hose (frozen waterfall) is an iconic waterfall.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is five small, separate polygons. The individual polygons are each contiguous and separated by adjacent private properties and a cherry-stemmed road. The area is adjacent to Lizard Head Wilderness. Portions of two polygons are currently managed as Wilson Colorado Roadless Area. This area includes established range activities. The ditches in the area would require continued access and maintenance. These legally-established rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, and the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. Portions of the area immediately adjacent to Lizard Head Wilderness could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the lack of improvements in some sections and adjacency to existing wilderness. Galloping Goose and Lizard Head trails could provide an effective, identifiable boundaries.

Area N6: Silver Pick (5,490 acres)

Summary

*Area N6 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, scattered evidence of human intervention and improvements, and outstanding opportunities for primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses quality habitat and scenic traits. The configuration of the area is separated into two polygons and it is adjacent to Lizard Head Wilderness to the south. The eastern section of the area is currently managed as Wilson Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen, as well as alpine habitat with a lot of rocky slopes, scree cliffs, and bare areas. The area includes the Little Cone Lynx Analysis Unit. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, mountain lion, black bear, wolverine, American Marten, and Northern goshawk. Due to the lack of vegetation management in the area, the vegetation generally reflects ecological conditions associated without human intervention. Several trails traverse the area. Silver Pick Mine, an active mine, and associated old mining roads are located in the southern portion of the area. Other improvements on the landscape include old road beds associated with previous timber sales, several ditches, numerous campsites, and some historic mining infrastructure. These scattered improvements are evident on the landscape and detract from apparent naturalness in some portions of the area where the terrain and vegetation do not provide screening.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives consistent use throughout the year, particularly with Silver Pick Basin due to the popularity of Wilson Peak – a 14,000 foot peak located on the Lizard Head Wilderness boundary. The area around Woods Lake receives heavy use during the fall hunting season. Due to the relatively small size of the area, there are limited opportunities to experience solitude because human activity within and adjacent to the area are reliably observed. Sources of sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon include adjacent travel routes and private properties, including the historic and contemporary development within Silver Pick Basin. Limited opportunities to experience solitude are available immediately adjacent to Lizard Head Wilderness, particularly in the northeastern corner of the area where the steep terrain and dense vegetation provide adequate screening.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers outstanding opportunities for mountaineering and backcountry hunting. Some peaks in the area are heavily mountaineered. Opportunities for backcountry skiing are available in the Navajo Basin area. Four trails in the area – Lone Cone (NFST 426), Woods Lake (NFST 406), Elk Creek (NFST 407), and Rock of Ages (NFST 429) – provide access portals into Lizard Head Wilderness to the south, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The Silver Pick Potential Conservation Area, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, is located in the area. Wilson Peak is an iconic feature on the landscape. Fall Creek and

Muddy Creek contain green lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout, and Elk Creek contains blue lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The configuration of the area is two separate polygons – the western polygon much smaller than the eastern polygon. The area is adjacent to Lizard Head Wilderness to the south. Adjacent private properties are located on the north side of the area, as well as within the western and southern portions. The eastern section of the area is currently managed as Wilson Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Area. The Pick cattle allotment is located within this area. The ditches in the area would require continued access and maintenance. Portions of two active mining claims are located within the area. These legally-established rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, and the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. Portions of the area immediately adjacent to Lizard Head Wilderness could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the lack of improvements in some sections and adjacency to existing wilderness. Natural features within the southern portion of the area could be identified to provide effective boundaries.

Area N7: Lone Cone (7,037 acres)

Summary

*Area N7 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, pervasive non-native plant species, evidence of human intervention and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is relatively small and somewhat contiguous, with portions of the area broken up by excluded lands and one cherry-stemmed road.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by spruce-fir and some aspen. Some portions of the area have incredibly natural plant communities, including some unique Thurber's fescue stands. However, non-native plant species are prevalent throughout the majority of the area. Non-native plant species include white thistle, Canada thistle, houndstongue, and other noxious weeds that are expanding rapidly. This polygon includes the Lone Cone Lynx Analysis Unit. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, pine marten, and purple martin.

Despite the history of logging in the area, most previous logging sites have regenerated and the vegetation generally appears natural throughout the majority of the area. Improvements on the landscape include extensive fencing, as well as numerous stock ponds, headgates, ditches, several spring developments, and old skid trails. Marked, groomed snowmobile trails are evident

on the landscape during the winter season. Improvements are scattered and detract from apparent naturalness within some portions of the area. Some sections of the area are free from evidence of human activity.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The area receives heavy use during the fall hunting season, but relatively light use throughout the rest of the year. The area offers opportunities for visitors to experience solitude throughout the majority of the year within portions of the area away from range activities.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for hunting and hiking. Climbing Lone Cone, foraging for mushrooms, and harvesting osha are other primitive-type activities available in the area.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Green lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout occur in Goat Creek. Lone Cone is the western-most peak of the San Juan Mountains.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is relatively small and somewhat contiguous. Portions of the area are broken up by substantially-noticeable, excluded lands and one long cherry-stemmed road. The polygon is adjacent to the San Juan National Forest to the south and Colorado State managed lands to the north. This polygon contains considerable established range activities. The ditches and other water developments in the area would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, and the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. The entire polygon is stipulated as Controlled Surface Use (geologic hazard) for oil and gas leasing, but there are no active leases in the area. A section of the southern portion could be more effectively managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to limited access and use; however, this small portion would be less than 5,000 acres in size.

Area N8: Naturita Canyon (8,569 acres)

Summary

*Area N8 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, scattered evidence of human intervention and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is relatively small and somewhat contiguous. The core of the polygon generally follows the rim of Naturita Canyon while the periphery is broken up by excluded lands and cherry-stemmed roads. The majority of the area is currently managed as Naturita Canyon Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by ponderosa pine, pinyon-juniper, and Gambel oak within the canyon. Other plant species include spruce-fir, Douglas-fir, cottonwoods, and aspen. Some pockets of non-native plant species occur within the periphery of the area. Wildlife species include black bear, mountain lion, turkey, mule deer, elk, Mexican Spotted Owl, and bald eagle. Vegetation management has occurred in some portions of the area, including timber activity and prescribed burns. Despite the history of active management in portions of the area, the vegetation generally appears natural. The area has also experienced natural wildfire activity, including the Burn Canyon wildfire in 2002.

Not much infrastructure is located within the canyon. Outside of the canyon, improvements include range-related infrastructure such as fencing and spring developments. The Lone Cone ditch is located in the area, along with a few other water developments. Other improvements on the landscape include a couple trails and an administrative route. Improvements are scattered throughout the polygon and detract from apparent naturalness in some portions of the area. Evidence of human intervention is more obvious above the rim while the core section of the area that includes Naturita Canyon possesses a higher degree of apparent naturalness.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Naturita Canyon itself receives light use. Portions of the area above the canyon rim experience consistent use, with high use occurring within the southern portion. There are limited opportunities to experience solitude in portions of the polygon above the canyon rim because human activity within and adjacent to the area are pervasively observed. Human activity includes recreation use as well as range and timber management. Opportunities to experience solitude in the polygon are available within the northern and central portions of Naturita Canyon. The nature of the canyon terrain isolates the area from sights and sounds originating from outside of the canyon, providing a sense of remoteness and solitude.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

Naturita Canyon is rugged and remote and offers opportunities for primitive hunting, fishing, and hiking. There are limited to no opportunities to engage in primitive or unconfined recreation activities in portions of the polygon above the canyon rim.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Naturita Creek contains one of the most contiguous populations of Bluehead Sucker on the GMUG.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of this relatively small area is somewhat contiguous. The central core of the polygon generally follows the rim of Naturita Canyon, with the periphery of the area broken up by substantially-noticeable excluded lands and cherry-stemmed roads. The area abuts Bureau of Land Management lands to the north. Colorado State managed lands are located in the immediate vicinity to the west. Adjacent private properties are located on the east side of the polygon. The majority of the area is currently managed as Naturita Canyon Colorado Roadless Area. The West Naturita, East Naturita, and Portis cattle allotments are located within this area. A permitted commercial hunting outfitter-guide operates in Naturita Canyon. The ditch and other water developments in the area would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage portions of the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, and the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. The polygon is stipulated for oil and gas leasing as Controlled Surface Use (Temporary) to not disturb big game winter habitat/behavior, but there are no active leases in the area. The core section of the polygon within Naturita Canyon could be more effectively managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the presence of natural features to manage access into and within the area. However, this core area is less than 5,000 acres in size.

Area N11-E: Copper Canyon (10,294 acres)

Summary

*Area N11-E was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities in some portions of the area, pervasive non-native plant species, evidence of human intervention and improvements, and opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation throughout the majority of the year. The shape of the area is disjointed across a large landscape, broken up by excluded lands and part of the adjacent Tabeguache congressionally-designated special area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by aspen and Douglas-fir at higher elevations and pinyon-juniper at lower elevations. Some ponderosa pine and Gambel oak occur in the overstory. Native understory plant species are no longer dominant. The area is infected by Sulphur cinquefoil and has been converted to Kentucky bluegrass and smooth brome. Timothy-grass has also been planted in this area. The meadows within this polygon do not contain native plant species. Wildlife species include black bear, turkey, mule deer, elk, bald eagle, pine marten, and Northern goshawks. A desert bighorn ram was documented at Columbine Pass in December 2017.

Portions of the area have experienced substantial vegetation management, including some prescribed fire. Much of the eastern portion of the area has changed from one ecological state to another as a result of human influence. Although the structure appears normal, the understory has been compromised. This area includes extensive improvements, particularly range-related infrastructure such as fencing, stock ponds, and other water developments. A significant amount of old, closed, and/or decommissioned roads thread the landscape. An active mining claim is located within the area. Not much infrastructure is associated with the active claim, but there is noticeable evidence of it being developed and/or disturbed at one point in time. Small portions of two trails occur in the area – 47 Trail Connector and Indian Trail. Most of these improvements are evident on the landscape and detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives heavy use during the fall hunting season, but light use during the summer and winter. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are observed within some parts of the area, but these influences are not pervasive. The primary outside sources are activity along Divide Road to the north and nearby motorized use. There are some opportunities to experience solitude in this area throughout most of the year, particularly within the western portion of the polygon.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for backcountry hunting and hiking. This polygon includes Game Management Unit 61, a very desirable trophy unit. There are high-quality hunting opportunities around Spruce Mountain, and some outfitter-guides operate here. Indian Trail (NFST 500), located in the southern-most portion of the area near Starvation Point, provides an access portal into the adjacent Tabeguache congressionally-designated special area which is a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Nork Fork Tabeguache Creek contains a population of blue lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is disjointed across a large landscape, broken up by excluded substantially-noticeable lands. The northern branch of Tabeguache congressionally-designated special area separates the eastern and western sections of area N11-E. This polygon contains considerable established range activities, as well as an active mining claim. These legally-established rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state. Although the adjacent Tabeguache special area offers compatible management, it would be difficult to manage the majority of this area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the polygon's disjointed configuration, evidence of human influence and improvements, and lack of natural features to manage access into and within the area. The western portion of the polygon could be more effectively managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the limited access and use on that side.

Area N9: Hanks Valley (24,748 acres)

Summary

*Area N9 was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, non-native species present throughout the area, and extensive evidence of human intervention and improvements throughout the majority of the area. Opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation are limited to some portions of the area. The disjointed configuration, as well as extensive human influence throughout much of the area, could pose challenges to managing the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by ponderosa pine, oak, and some aspen at higher elevations. Non-native plant species are prevalently scattered throughout the area, such as houndstongue, musk, Canada thistle, as well as some cheatgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, and smooth brome. Northern goshawk inhabit the central portion of the area, and the Spring Creek Lynx Analysis Unit is located in the northeastern portion. Other wildlife species include black bear, mountain lion, turkey, mule deer, and elk.

Vegetation treatments have occurred within some portions of the area, but these areas generally appear to be associated with the area's natural conditions. Many improvements are evident on the landscape. Extensive range infrastructure is located throughout the area, except within Horsefly Canyon in the southwestern portion of the area. Other improvements include trails, non-system trails, closed or decommissioned timber roads, and old road beds previously

associated with timber activities. These improvements are noticeable due to the relatively flat terrain and detract from apparent naturalness throughout the majority of the area. Very limited improvements occur within Horsefly Canyon other than Horsefly Trail (NFST 121), a non-motorized trail located in the western-most portion of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives heavy use during the summer and fall, particularly during hunting season. Human presence related to range activities is also pervasive throughout the area. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygons are pervasively observed throughout the interior of the area due to the flat terrain and thin vegetation. The primary outside sources are activity along the Divide Road to the east, cherry-stemmed motorized routes threaded throughout, and adjacent private properties. Horsefly Canyon offers some opportunities to experience solitude. Some of these could be quality opportunities during some parts of the year when adjacent motorized use is not within earshot. Due to the heavy amount of use in the area and outside influences, opportunities to experience solitude are limited to some parts of the year within Horsefly Canyon.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers opportunities for hunting and camping, but only some of these are high-quality experiences due to the heavy use most of the area receives, as well as the proximity to adjacent motorized routes in most sections. The Horsefly Trail (NFST 121), located in the western-most portion of the area, provides access into Horsefly Canyon which offers opportunities for primitive hiking and fishing.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Green lineage Colorado River Cutthroat Trout and Bluehead Sucker occur within this area in Big Red Canyon Creek and Horsefly Creek, respectively. The southern portion of the area includes some critical habitat for Gunnison sage grouse.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is broken up by several cherry-stemmed roads and excluded, substantially-noticeable lands. A Western Area Power Administration powerline separates the area into two polygons, and several powerline access routes are located within both polygons. Adjacent private properties are interspersed throughout the area. The Sanborn Park, Red Canyon, and Sheep Creek cattle allotments are located in this area which collectively yield a high concentration of cattle totaling close to 2,500. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage

the area in an unimpaired state. The majority of this area could not be effectively managed to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics due to the area's very disjointed configuration, pervasive amount of improvements, and substantial human influence. However, the southwestern portion of the area currently managed as part of Horsefly Canyon Colorado Roadless Area could be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to its topography, limited access, and lack of improvements or human influence.

Area N10: Glencoe (23,455 acres)

Summary

*Area N10 was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to unnaturally-appearing vegetation, non-native species present throughout the area, and extensive evidence of human intervention and improvements. The area offers limited opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area is heavily used, the shape of the area is entirely disjointed, and no identifiable boundaries exist on this flat landscape, all of which could pose challenges to managing the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by ponderosa pine, oak, aspen, pinyon juniper, and sagebrush. Non-native plant species are prevalent throughout the area, such as cheatgrass, knapweed, houndstongue, Canada thistle, Kentucky bluegrass, and sweet brome. Riparian habitats occur around the Tabeguache Creek headwaters. Wildlife species include black bear, turkey, mule deer, elk, bald eagle, Northern goshawk, flammulated owl, and pine marten.

Wildfire activity, a natural process, has occurred in some portions of the area and these effects are evident on the landscape. Large portions of the burned areas were thinned in the late 1990s and prescribed burned between 1999 and 2001. This area also has a long history of range and timber activities. Vegetation treatments have occurred within some portions of the area, including roller chopping in the southwestern corner. The entire landscape is heavily disturbed. Many improvements are evident on the landscape. Extensive range infrastructure is located throughout the area, including cow camps, corrals, and close to 100 water developments. Other improvements include trails (and one very wide mechanized trail), closed or decommissioned timber roads, and old road beds. The Glencoe Ditch traverses the middle of the area. These improvements are noticeable due to the relatively flat terrain and detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives heavy use, particularly during hunting season. Human presence related to range activities is also pervasive throughout the area. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygons are pervasively observed throughout the interior of the area due to the flat terrain and thin vegetation. The primary outside sources are activity along 25 Mesa (NFSR 503) which cuts through the middle of the area, numerous cherry-stemmed roads threaded throughout, and adjacent private properties. Portions of the area adjacent to Tabeguache could offer some opportunities to experience solitude, but none of these opportunities are high quality due to the pervasive amount of disturbance on the landscape and proximity to adjacent motorized routes. Due to the heavy amount of use in the area and outside influences, opportunities to experience solitude here are limited.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers some opportunities for hunting, but these are not high-quality primitive hunting experiences due to the heavy use this area receives, as well as the proximity to motorized routes in most sections. The Indian Trail (NFST 500) in the southwestern corner provides a portal into the adjacent Tabeguache congressionally-designated special area, which is a more primitive landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This is the only place on the Uncompahgre Plateau where the Northern leopard frog has been observed.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is entirely disjointed across a large landscape, separated into many individual polygons by cherry-stemmed roads and excluded lands. Several individual polygons abut Tabeguache congressionally-designated special area, including the area administered by the Forest Service and the section further west administered by the Bureau of Land Management. The portion of Tabeguache administered by the Forest Service separates the eastern and western polygons that comprise area N10. Several adjacent private properties are interspersed throughout the area, including one large private in-holding within the middle of the eastern polygon. This area is stipulated with a Controlled Surface Use for big game winter range and geologic hazard, but no current leases exist. The area contains established range activities, and the Glencoe Ditch is located in the middle of this area. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for the further spread of invasive plant species. It would not be effective to manage this area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics due to the polygon's very disjointed configuration, pervasive amount of improvements, heavy use and human influence, and lack of natural features to manage access into and within the area.

Area N3: Bridal Veil (10,115 acres)

Summary

*Area N3 was evaluated to possess **No** wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to the pervasive amount of improvements that detract from apparent naturalness throughout the entirety of the area and limited opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is entirely disjointed, broken-up by private lands and cherry-stemmed roads. It would not be possible to effectively manage the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation includes upper montane shrubland and spruce-fir, with some non-native plant species present on the landscape. The polygon includes alpine areas above timberline, as well as riparian vegetation associated with lakes, fens, and creeks. Black swifts and pika occur here, and the area also contains lynx habitat. Heavy logging activity has occurred in the area historically, including at Alta Lakes, but the landscape is relatively recovered. Evidence of mining activity throughout the area has impacted the vegetation. Some areas of vegetation appear altered by human activities while other areas relatively appear natural.

The area has a pervasive amount of improvements scattered throughout the landscape that are evident from almost anywhere in the polygon. There are extensive logging and mining roads, as well as some non-motorized trails. Historic structures associated with patented mining claims and private lands exist throughout the landscape. There are many reservoirs, as well as penstocks associated with two Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)-licensed hydropower plants (the first AC and DC hydropower plants) located inside the polygon. A penstock runs along the eastern portion of the polygon from Lewis Lake, to Blue Lake, to Bridal Veil. Lewis Mill, a historic site, is located within this polygon. The Ames powerline is mostly adjacent to the area, but is included in a small section of the polygon. There are old powerline poles along Bridal Veil Road, and a new pipe for the alternate water supply for Telluride. There is a private town site (Alta town site). There are very few spots where improvements are absent or unseen, and these improvements detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Few people frequent most of this area due to difficult access. Some opportunities to experience solitude exist along the ridgelines, as well as areas outside of Alta Lakes, Bear Creek Trail, Bridal Veil Basin. However, these opportunities are limited due to the extensive amount of improvements on the landscape that indicate evidence of civilization. There are popular travel routes throughout the polygon. Extensive use occurs within the Alta Lakes area on the southwestern side, and heli-skiing occurs in the eastern quarter of the area. This polygon is also

located within the approach routes for the nearby Telluride airport. The sights and sounds originating from outside of the polygon are pervasively observed from within the polygon at an intermittent frequency.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area provides opportunities for camping, hiking up to and along the ridgelines, and bagging 12,000-foot peaks. There are some opportunities for hunting here, but access is limited. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

There are outstanding viewpoints from this area, with more than three different ridgelines visible. Mount Sneffels can be seen from higher elevations and the geology of this big, rugged mountain landscape is interesting. There are many reservoirs in this area, including two historically-significant hydropower plants. This area is of the primary headwaters of the San Miguel River, supports snowmaking capabilities for Telluride ski area, and feeds into nearby Bridal Veil (significant tourism feature).

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is entirely disjointed, broken-up by private lands, reservoirs, and cherry-stemmed roads. This area is adjacent to the Telluride ski area to the west, the town of Telluride to the north, and the town of Ophir to the south. There are numerous patented mining claims (private lands) scattered throughout, as well as three active mining claims. A lot of the abandoned mines here will likely be closed due to safety over time. Remediation is currently occurring here and will likely be prioritized to continue. There is an administrative route on the southern end of the polygon. There are extensive permitted special uses that occur in the area with outfitter-guide use and events regularly occurring throughout the polygon. Due to the extensive amount of existing rights, uses, and improvements, as well as the extensive presence of adjacent private lands, it would not be possible to effectively manage the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.

Ouray Ranger District

Area O1-E: Turret Ridge (6,156 acres)

Summary

*Area O1-E was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of improvements, and high-quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses scenic and geologic traits. The shape of the area is mostly contiguous, with one long cherry-stemmed road and some excluded lands along the eastern side. The area is adjacent to the Uncompahgre Wilderness, and nearly all of the polygon is currently managed as Turret Ridge Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by spruce/fir forests, with some aspen and montane sub-alpine grasslands at the lower elevations. The higher elevations along the ridgeline contain areas of bare rock and scree. Wildlife species include black bear, mountain lion, bighorn sheep, turkey, mule deer, elk, moose, pika, peregrine falcon, boreal owls, and pine marten. This area appears very natural and characterized by unique geologic pinnacle tufts. The area is nearly free of improvements. Small portions of two non-motorized trails occur within the eastern portion of the polygon – Middle Fork Trail (NFST 6227) and Waterfall Trail (NFST 254). There are no other notable improvements within this area beyond these trail segments. The area is very rugged and has a high degree of apparent naturalness.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is limited to portions of the area near the adjacent roads (NFSR 858, 860, and 861). However, the sights and sounds originating from activity along these roads outside the polygon are not pervasive and do not detract from opportunities to solitude within the polygon. This area is a steep, forested ridgeline with little evidence of human activity. There are prevalent, high-quality opportunities to experience solitude.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The terrain is steep, rugged, and challenging to navigate. The area offers opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation such as hiking, backpacking, camping, and scrambling on a very steep ridgeline. Some of these opportunities are high-quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area offers outstanding views of the surrounding area that include huge mountains and incredible geology.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is mostly contiguous, with the eastern side broken up with some excluded lands and one, long cherry-stemmed road (NFSR 861). The area is adjacent to the Uncompahgre Wilderness to the south. Nearly all of the polygon is currently managed as Upper Tier Turret Ridge Colorado Roadless Area. The Big Cimarron and Green Mountain cattle allotments are located within the area. While this legally-established right and use could somewhat reduce the ability the manage portions of the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics, the majority of the area lends itself to be preserved in an unimpaired state due to its mostly contiguous configuration, lack of improvements, and adjacency to existing designated wilderness.

Area O5: Whitehouse Mountain (24,314 acres)

Summary

*Area O5 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to very naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities and opportunities for solitude or high-quality primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses scenic and geologic traits. The size and shape of the area is large and contiguous within the core area. The periphery of the area is broken up with cherry-stemmed roads, excluded lands, and adjacent private properties. The area is adjacent to Mount Sneffels Wilderness, and a large portion of the polygon is currently managed as Whitehouse Mountain Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by spruce/fir forests at the lower elevations. The northwestern corner is mostly Spruce-Fir-Aspen. Areas above 11,000 feet consist of alpine habitats that consist mostly of rocky slopes, scree, cliffs, with some spruce-fir. The area includes important winter range for bighorn sheep. Lynx habitat is mapped in the forested habitat, and lynx are present in the Dallas Creek and the Amphitheatre Lynx Analysis Units. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, wild turkey, as well as pika and white-tailed ptarmigan within the alpine areas. The majority of the vegetation appears very natural without much evidence of human intervention.

Improvements on the landscape are primarily concentrated along the periphery of the area, including numerous non-motorized trails. The Dallas Trail (NFST 200) traverses the northern

portion of the polygon from west to east. The Blue Lakes Trail (NFST 201) intersects with the Dallas Trail on the western side and provides a portal into the adjacent Mount Sneffels Wilderness to the southwest. The northwest corner includes the Blue Lakes hut, as well as a Bureau of Reclamation weather station used for managing the Ridgway reservoir. The northeast quadrant includes some fencing and other range improvements associated with allotments in the area. Two ditches are also located in the area. Minimal improvements are located within the central core of the area near Whitehouse Mountain, Cirque Mountain, and Mount Sneffels. Due to the large size of the area, improvements are not pervasive throughout the entire polygon. Improvements are evident in isolated portions of the area but do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Likewise to improvements, human presence is primarily concentrated along the periphery of the area near adjacent private properties, mines, and roads – including County Road 361 to the south and Highway 550 to the east. The town of Ridgway and Highway 550 can be seen from Whitehouse Mountain and other portions of the area. Some evidence of contemporary mining activity is evident from Potosi Peak and other parts of the area. Snowmobiling activity originating from the Miller Mesa area can be observed within some portions of the polygon. The sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are pervasively observed within the peripheral portions of the polygon. However, these sights and sounds are not pervasive throughout the majority of the polygon due to the terrain and expansive size of the area. The northwestern corner receives the highest amount of use in the area. The Blue Lakes Trail is extremely popular and many users frequent the Box Factory area. A lot of use also occurs within the northwest corner during hunting season; however, access to the area is limited to cherry-stemmed West Dallas Road (NFSR 850) because other roads into the area are gated. The Dallas Trail receives light use during the summer season, but experiences more winter use from cross-country skiers using the San Juan hut system. Overall, there are opportunities to experience solitude within this large area, particularly within the central core of the polygon away from trails, other improvements, and adjacent travel routes.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, including backcountry hiking, cross-country skiing, climbing, and hunting.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area contains viewpoints that offer outstanding views, including views of and from Whitehouse Mountain, Potosi Peak, and Mount Sneffels. The area also contains interesting geology – the rock here is stratified, with millions of years of history evident to the naked eye.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and contiguous within the core area around Whitehouse Mountain and Cirque Mountain. The periphery of the area is broken up with several cherry-stemmed roads, excluded lands, and numerous adjacent private properties. The area is adjacent to Mount Sneffels Wilderness to the west. A large portion of the polygon is currently managed as Whitehouse Mountain Colorado Roadless Area. The Coal Creek, Corbett Creek, and Cocan Flats cattle allotments are located in the area, as well as two ditches. There are several unpatented and patented mining claims within this area. While these legally-established rights and uses could somewhat reduce the ability to manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics, a large portion of the area lends itself to be preserved in an unimpaired state. The majority of the central core would be manageable to preserve for wilderness characteristics due to its large size, contiguous configuration, lack of improvements, and distance from adjacent private properties and busy travel routes.

Area O6: Leopard Creek (611 acres)

Summary

*Area O6 was evaluated to possess a **High** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, lack of improvements, and high-quality opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses iconic scenic traits. The size and shape of the area is very small and contiguous. The area is adjacent to existing Mount Sneffels Wilderness.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The existing vegetation is dominated by spruce-fir. The area's meadows are heavily infested with thistle. Riparian habitat occurs within the middle of the area along Leopard Creek, as well as a large fen. This area is part of the Dallas Creek Lynx Analysis Unit. Other wildlife species include bighorn sheep, snowshoe hares, pine marten, and Northern goshawk. The Alder Creek Trail (NFST 510) traverses the polygon from west to east, and the North Pole hut is located along the edge of the polygon close to the road. An upper, middle, and lower adit on a scree slope, associated with the two active mining claims, are located in the southern-most corner of the area near the wilderness boundary. The limited improvements within the area do not detract from the very naturally-appearing landscape as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The Alder Creek Trail provides an access portal into Mount Sneffels Wilderness to the west, and connects with The Dallas Trail (NFST 200) east of the polygon in the Box Factory area. Similar to the Dallas Trail, the Alder Creek Trail receives light use during the summer season and experiences more winter use from cross-country skiers using the San Juan hut system. The polygon is located away from busy travel routes and major developments. There are abundant, high-quality opportunities to experience solitude within the area throughout the year.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, including backcountry hiking, cross-country skiing, and hunting.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The views from within the polygon of North Pole and Hayden peaks within adjacent Mount Sneffels Wilderness are outstanding. This vista is notable and iconic, featured on the Colorado State Driver License.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is very small and contiguous. The area is adjacent to existing Mount Sneffels Wilderness to the west and south. The southern portion of the polygon is also adjacent to private property. Two active mining claims (Sunshine #1 and #2) are located in the southern-most corner of the area near the wilderness boundary. While this legally-established right could somewhat reduce the ability to manage this very small area to preserve its wilderness characteristics, the area lends itself to be preserved in an unimpaired state due to its limited access and use, lack of existing improvements, and adjacency to existing designated wilderness.

Area O1-NW: Cimarron Ridge (16,919 acres)

Summary

*Area O1-NW was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, prevalent non-native plant species, scattered evidence of human intervention and improvements, and opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The size and shape of the area is large and mostly contiguous, and the majority of the polygon is currently managed as Cimarron Ridge Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen. Non-native species occur throughout the area including thistle, mullein, ox-eye daisy, and houndstongue. Open parks are scattered throughout the area, along with cliff outcrops along the ridgeline. Riparian habitats occur within the drainages. The area includes the Chimney Rock and Turret Ridge Lynx Analysis Units. Other wildlife species include elk, moose, bighorn sheep, black bear, turkey, peregrine falcon, and boreal owls, and moose. The majority of the vegetation appears natural despite previous vegetation management within some portions of the area. The west side of the ridge possess a higher degree of naturalness in comparison to the east side which has been influenced by past timber harvests and remaining evidence of roads.

Limited improvements occur within this large landscape, and the northern part of the polygon is somewhat undeveloped. Several trails traverse the area including Lou Creek, Nate Creek, Deer Creek, and Fox Creek trails. Other improvements include fencing, water developments, and a portion of a ditch located in the southern portion. Improvements are scattered throughout this large polygon and do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area as a whole.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

Human presence is limited to the periphery portions of the area near adjacent roads (NFSR 858 and 860), Silver Jack Reservoir, and adjacent private properties. However, the sights and sounds originating from activity outside the polygon are not pervasively observed throughout the polygon and do not detract from opportunities to solitude within the majority of the area. There are opportunities to experience solitude within this large polygon, particularly within the northwestern portion of the area.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for backcountry hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and fishing. Some of these opportunities are high quality.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Two Potential Conservation Areas, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, are located in this area. The polygon also offers outstanding views of the Uncompahgre Wilderness.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is large and mostly contiguous, with some small areas of excluded lands and cherry-stemmed roads. The polygon is adjacent to Bureau of Land Management lands to the north and Bureau of Reclamation lands (Silver Jack Reservoir) to the east. Adjacent private lands are located along the western side of the polygon. The majority of the area is

currently managed as Cimarron Ridge Colorado Roadless Area. The Big Cimarron and Lou Creek cattle allotments are located within the polygon. The portion of the ditch located in the area would require access and maintenance, as well as the immediately adjacent Silver Jack Reservoir. These legally-established rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage some portions of the area in an unimpaired state. The contiguous shape of this large area could lend itself to be more easily managed; however, the presence of adjacent private properties and the lack of natural features to help manage access into and within the area could pose some challenges to effectively managing this area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area O1-SW: Owl Creek (7,094 acres)

Summary

*Area O1-SW was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, prevalent non-native plant species, scattered evidence of human intervention and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is somewhat disjointed, broken up by excluded lands and cherry-stemmed roads. The area is adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness to the south.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen. Non-native species occur throughout the area including thistle, mullein, ox-eye daisy, and houndstongue. Riparian habitats occur within the drainages. The Chimney Rock Lynx Analysis Unit is located within the polygon. Other wildlife species include moose, bighorn sheep, and Northern goshawk. Despite the history of active management in this area, the vegetation generally appears natural within the core of the area. Evidence of human intervention is more obvious within the two southern "fingers" of the polygon along NFSR 857 and NFSR 860. Numerous trails traverse the area. Other improvements on the landscape include range-related infrastructure, reservoirs, as well as a portion of a ditch. Improvements are scattered throughout the polygon and detract from apparent naturalness in some portions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives fairly high use throughout the year. There are limited opportunities to experience solitude in the polygon because human activity within and adjacent to the area are pervasively observed throughout the majority of the area. Some opportunities to experience solitude are available within the southern portion adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness away from trails and roads, but these opportunities are not high quality.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for backcountry hunting, hiking, horseback riding, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Some of these opportunities are high quality. Four trails in the polygon – Stealey Mountain (NFST 6258), Courthouse (NFST 6218), Cow Creek (NFST 226), and Wetterhorn Basin (NFST 226) – provide access portals into adjacent Uncompahgre Wilderness to the south, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area offers outstanding views of the Uncompahgre Wilderness, including Chimney Peak, Courthouse Mountain, and Precipice Peak.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is somewhat disjointed, broken up by pockets of excluded lands and several, long cherry-stemmed roads. The area is adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness to the south. Cattle allotments and a ditch are located in the area. These legally-established rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, and the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. Despite the fact that the area is adjacent to existing wilderness, the disjointed shape and the lack of natural features to help manage access into and within the area could pose challenges to effectively managing the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Area O2: Baldy Mountain (2,973 acres)

Summary

*Area O2 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, some non-native plant species, scattered improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is somewhat contiguous, it is adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness to the east, and the majority of the area is currently managed as Baldy Colorado Roadless Area.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by Gambel oak. The southern slope is very dry and hot, with montane shrubland and pinyon-juniper. The northern slope includes spruce-fir, Douglas-fir, with some white fir, ponderosa pine, and aspen. A large patch of cheatgrass occurs within the southern half of the polygon where a prescribed burn took place previously. Forest health issues (fir

engraver and fir beetle) are on-going in this area, but these are natural processes. This area provides critical habitat for bighorn sheep and is actively managed for this species with extensive habitat improvements. Other wildlife species include mule deer, elk, black bear, and Merriam turkey. The area also includes the Amphitheater Lynx Analysis Unit. Despite the history of active management in this area, the vegetation generally appears natural. Several trails traverse the area. Other improvements include range-related infrastructure (fencing and stock tanks), abandoned mining features, a closed road, and a ditch. Improvements are scattered throughout the polygon and detract from apparent naturalness in some portions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives light use throughout the majority of the year, but is heavily used during the fall. Horseback use in this area has been increasing, particularly by an outfitter-guide operation. Highway 550 and the town of Ridgway can be seen within some parts of the polygon. Open brush and grassland vegetation limits opportunities for solitude within much of the area. However, more opportunities to experience solitude are available within the eastern portion of this small area adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for backcountry hunting, hiking, and horseback riding. Some of these opportunities are high quality. Three trails in the polygon – Baldy (NFST 216), Storm Gulch (NFST 212), and Shortcut (NFST 138) – provide access portals into adjacent Uncompahgre Wilderness to the east, a more primitive and unconfined landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area offers viewpoints of spectacular scenery into Uncompahgre Wilderness to the east and Mount Sneffels Wilderness to the southwest.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The size and shape of the area is small and somewhat contiguous, with the southern portion broken up by cherry-stemmed roads and adjacent private property. Adjacent private properties are located on the northern and southern ends. The polygon is adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness to the east and Bureau of Land Management lands to the west. The majority of the area is currently managed as Baldy Colorado Roadless Area. Two cattle allotments are located in the area, and the ditch located in the polygon could require access and maintenance requiring the use of heavy equipment. While these legally-established rights and uses could reduce the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state, much of the area could be managed to preserve its

wilderness characteristics due to its mostly contiguous shape, adjacency to existing designated wilderness, and relatively limited access.

Area O3: Amphitheatre (8,598 acres)

Summary

*Area O3 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, scattered evidence of human influence and improvements, and opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is disjointed, broken-up by private lands and cherry-stemmed roads in the northern and western portions. The eastern side of the area adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness could be more effectively managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by spruce-fir, limber pine, and white fir, with some ponderosa pine, higher elevation alpine, and a lot of areas of rock/bare/scree. The polygon includes the Amphitheater Lynx Analysis Unit. Other wildlife species include bighorn sheep, elk, moose, pika, peregrine falcon, and black bear. Forest health issues (such as Douglas-fir bark beetle, western spruce bud worm, and annosus root disease) are on-going in this area, but these are natural processes. Despite the prevalent amount of previous mining activity in the area, the vegetation generally appears natural. Old mining features are evident throughout the landscape. Several trails are located in the area, including the Bear Creek National Recreation Trail in the southern portion. Improvements are scattered throughout the polygon and detract from apparent naturalness in some portions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The trails in the polygon are very popular, and the western side of this area receives consistent use. Human presence related to mining activities is pervasive throughout much of the area. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are observed within most portions of the western half near adjacent developed recreation sites, private lands, Highway 550, and the town of Ouray. The more rugged, less travelled eastern portion of the polygon adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness offers many opportunities for solitude.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers many opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation such as backcountry hunting, hiking, rock climbing, and ice climbing. Some of these opportunities are outstanding.

The system trails within the area are rugged, and there are large sections of land between these trails. Two trails in the northern portion of the area – Dexter Creek (NFST 205) and Horsethief (NFST 6215) – provide access portals into the adjacent Uncompahgre Wilderness to the east, a more primitive landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This area offers viewpoints of spectacular scenery including waterfalls, ridgelines, and interesting geology. This polygon provides part of the scenic backdrop to the Ouray area, known as the “Switzerland of America”. The Bear Creek National Recreation Trail is also located in the area.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is disjointed by cherry-stemmed roads and numerous adjacent private properties, primarily within the northern and western portions. The polygon is adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness to the east, the town of Ouray to the west, and bound by NFSR 878 to the south. Numerous mining claims are scattered throughout the polygon, and some of these are active claims. An active and open mine is located at the very southern portion of the area. These legally-established rights could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state. However, the eastern portion of the area could be more easily managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to that section’s contiguous shape, lack of improvements, and adjacency to Uncompahgre Wilderness. Identifiable ridgelines could provide effective natural boundaries to create distance from private lands and active mining claims.

Area O4: Hayden Mountain (9,018 acres)

Summary

*Area O4 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, limited non-native plant species, scattered evidence of human influence and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important heritage aspects. The shape of the area is disjointed, broken-up by private lands and cherry-stemmed roads. It would be difficult to effectively manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated mostly by Spruce-Fir-Aspen, with areas of rocky slope, scree, alpine uplands, grasslands, and forblands. Limited non-native plant species occur in the area,

including thistle and ox-eye daisy. The polygon includes a Lynx Analysis Unit, lynx linkage area, bighorn sheep habitat, pika, and Northern goshawks. Not many vegetation treatments have occurred in the area. Native species dominate and the composition of plant and animal communities appear natural. Old mining features are evident throughout the landscape. Other improvements include trails (Hayden, Richmond Pass, Sutton Mine, and Neosho), a couple closed roads, Crystal Lake reservoir, and a Bureau of Reclamation weather station located just downstream. Improvements are scattered throughout the polygon and detract from apparent naturalness in some portions of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives consistent use throughout the perimeter, and light to moderate use along the system trails. Human presence related to mining activities is pervasive throughout much of the area. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are observed within some parts of the area, including near adjacent developed recreation sites, private lands, Highway 550, and other nearby motorized routes. The southern portion of the polygon offers limited opportunities for solitude due to the more slender configuration. Visitor encounters are unlikely north of Hayden Trail. The north-central portion of the polygon around Hayden Mountain offers the most opportunities for visitors to experience solitude within his area, particularly at higher elevations outside of earshot of activities occurring along Highway 550 and Camp Bird Road.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area provides opportunities for primitive hiking, backpacking, rock climbing, ice climbing, and backcountry skiing. Some of these opportunities are high quality. The system trails within the area are more primitive in nature, and there are large sections of land between these trails. Commodore Mountain provides outstanding opportunities for backcountry skiing.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

A Priority Heritage Area, identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program, is located within the polygon. The area also includes a large fen within Full Moon Basin that straddles the eastern polygon boundary.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is largely disjointed by cherry-stemmed roads and a significant amount of adjacent private properties. Adjacent private lands include the Mineral Farms subdivision to the northwest and an 80-acre in-holding owned by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The north-central portion of the polygon around Hayden Mountain is the only contiguous section. The polygon is

bordered by Highway 550 to the east and south, and the town of Ouray abuts the area to the north. Numerous mining claims are scattered throughout the polygon, and some of these are active claims. These existing rights could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state. It would be difficult to effectively manage this area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the disjointed shape, evidence of human influence and improvements, and the extensive presence of adjacent private lands.

Area O7: Dave Wood/Spring Creek (9,264 acres)

Summary

*Area O7 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, some evidence of human intervention, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The shape of the area is generally contiguous in the eastern portion, but disjointed on the western portion. Some identifiable natural features could provide manageable boundaries.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by spruce-fir and aspen, interspersed with mountain shrub, ponderosa pine, and oak. Some non-native plant species occur in isolated portions of the area, including houndstongue and thistle. The southwestern portion of the polygon includes the Spring Creek Lynx Analysis Unit. Other wildlife species include mule deer and elk. Vegetation treatments have occurred within some portions of the area, including roller chopping in the northwest section. The vegetation between harvest units appear less natural than the majority of the area. Improvements on the landscape include several trails, a ditch, and some range-related infrastructure. A boundary fence and other fencing occur on the landscape. Improvements are scattered and detract from apparent naturalness within some portions of the polygon. Large sections of the area away from trails and other improvements appear natural.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The area receives consistent use throughout the year on weekends, particularly during the fall hunting season. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are observed within portions of the area near adjacent motorized routes and private properties. A Western Area Power Administration utility corridor can be seen from within the northwest portion of the polygon. However, sights and sounds originating from outside the polygon are not pervasively observed within the polygon. The area offers some opportunities for visitors to experience solitude during some parts of the year, particularly within the northeastern section near Bureau of Land Management lands.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The area offers opportunities for hunting and hiking. Most of these opportunities are not considered to be outstanding due to the amount of use the area consistently receives.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

None known.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is generally contiguous in the eastern portion, but the western portion is disjointed by excluded, substantially-noticeable lands. Adjacent private lands are located in the northwest, southwest, and southeast corners. A Western Area Power Administration utility corridor is adjacent to the northwest corner of the polygon. Bureau of Land Management lands abut the polygon to the north. The ditch located in the area would require access and maintenance. Portions of the area are stipulated as Controlled Surface Use for oil and gas leasing, but there are no active leases in the area. Some of the canyons in the area could provide natural boundaries that could help manage access into and within the area.

Area O9: East Fork Escalante Creek (17,464 acres)

Summary

*Area O9 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation, some non-native plant species, evidence of human intervention and improvements, and some opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area also possesses important heritage aspects. The shape of the area is disjointed, separated into three individual polygons by cherry-stemmed roads.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation is dominated by pinyon-juniper and montane shrubland, with some ponderosa pine and aspen. Mixed conifer occurs within the drainages. Non-native plant species occur in some portions of the area including knapweed, thistle, and some ox-eye daisy. These non-native plant species are scattered and typically clumped near more disturbed areas. This landscape has experienced fire activity and mastication, including recent prescribed burns. Some portions of the area have been impacted by range activities and vegetation management. The northeastern portion reflects evidence of past chaining and other vegetation management activities. Despite the history of these activities, the majority of the vegetation generally appears natural. The western two polygons include extensive improvements such as fencing, old road beds, and water

developments. Several trails also traverse the western two polygons. A ditch that feeds into State trust lands is located in the northern portion of the area. All of these improvements are evident on the landscape throughout the majority of the area and detract from apparent naturalness. However, the northeastern portion of the area contains limited noticeable improvements.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives heavy use during the fall hunting season, but less use during the summer and winter. Access into the area is more difficult during the winter season which provides for more opportunities for solitude. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygons are observed within some parts of the area, but these influences are not pervasive. The primary outside sources are activity along Divide Road to the south and adjacent cherry-stemmed roads. There are some opportunities to experience solitude in this area throughout most of the year, particularly in East Fork Escalante Creek drainage or within the northeastern polygon.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers opportunities for hiking and hunting. Some of these opportunities involve primitive-type recreation within wilder portions of the area such as East Fork Escalante Creek drainage.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

A Priority Heritage Area, identified by the Forest Service Heritage Program, is located within the polygon. The area also includes the Dry Mesa Dinosaur Quarry Paleontological Site, a Special Interest Area that was actively excavated from 1972 to 2000. This site contains fossils from about 150 million years ago, some of species that were previously unknown (Supersaurus and Torvosaurus). Wickiups are also located in the area, as well as lithic scatters.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is disjointed across a large, long landscape. The area is separated into three individual polygons by cherry-stemmed roads, and each polygon is broken up by excluded substantially-noticeable lands. The northern section of the area is adjacent to the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area, administered by the Bureau of Land Management, as well as Bureau of Land Management Inventoried Lands with Wilderness Character (Escalante Slopes and Dry Fork). Escalante State Wildlife Area is adjacent to the northeastern portion of the polygon. Colorado State Wildlife Areas are state or privately-owned lands that offer wildlife-related recreation to the public, generally hunting and fishing. These areas are funded by sportsmen and managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife for wildlife benefits. A couple adjacent

private properties are located in the northern portion, as well as one private property to the south. Colorado Parks and Wildlife owns one of the in-holdings in the area. The area contains established range activities and the water developments located here would require access and maintenance. These existing rights and uses could impact the ability to manage the area in an unimpaired state due to the presence of existing water rights, use of heavy equipment, as well as the potential for continued spread of invasive plant species. Although adjacent lands to the north offer compatible management, it would be difficult to manage the majority of this area to preserve its wilderness characteristics due to the polygon's disjointed configuration, evidence of human influence, and lack of natural features to manage access into and within the area.

Area OG1: Little Cimarron (26,163 acres)

Summary

*Area OG1 was evaluated to possess a **Moderate** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to generally naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities throughout the majority of the polygon, scattered evidence of human activity and improvements, and opportunities for solitude or high-quality primitive/unconfined recreation. The majority of the area is currently managed as the Failes Creek/Soldier Creek, Failes Creek/Soldier Creek Upper Tier, and Little Cimarron Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Areas. The shape of the area is partially contiguous in the central portions adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness, but fragmented in some sections by cherry-stemmed roads and excluded lands.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation in the area is dominated by Spruce-Fir-Aspen. Many invasive plant species occur throughout the area, including thistle, houndstongue, ox-eye daisy, and Canada thistle particularly within the eastern portion (Alpine Plateau). There are several fens, wetlands, and riparian areas. Wildlife species include black bear, mountain lion, wolverines, lynx (Turret Ridge and Alpine Lynx Analysis Units), mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, turkey, peregrine falcons, moose, boreal owls, pine martens, American martens, Northern goshawks, snowshoe hares, and beavers. The Lake Fork drainage contains big game winter range.

Overall, the vegetation appears pretty natural within the western and central portions of the area that are currently managed as roadless. The majority of the vegetation on the Alpine Plateau section appears natural. However, the eastern-most portion of the polygon appears substantially unnatural due to evidence of previous or on-going timber harvest activities.

The western and central portions of the polygon contain a few non-motorized trails, one motorized route, spring developments and portions of ditches, and the Jackson repeater site on top of High Mesa. The eastern side contains corrals, a motorized trail that ties into the Ridge Stock Driveway, and marked and widened paths for groomed winter trails. The eastern-most portion of the polygon contains fencing, logging roads, and a ditch line. Improvements are concentrated in some spots within the eastern portion, but otherwise dispersed throughout the area do not detract too much from the naturalness of the landscape given the size of the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

The roads and trails adjacent to and within the western and central portions of the polygon do not receive much use, except for Alpine Trail (NFST 225). Fall Creek, Failes Creek, and Big Park receive some use for hiking and horseback riding. Hunting is extensive throughout the area, but this influx in use occurs seasonally. The cherry-stemmed and peripheral roads on the eastern side of the polygon receive heavier use throughout the year, including the Big Blue trailhead and the area near the Alpine Guard Station. Sights and sounds from these activities can be heard within some parts of the area but are not pervasively observed throughout. Many portions of the area offer opportunities for solitude, particularly between trails and adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The western and central portions of the polygon provide opportunities for hunting, fishing, backpacking, horseback riding, and gathering mushrooms. Most of these opportunities are very high quality. The eastern side offers opportunities for hiking, hunting, fishing, wildflower viewing, and horseback riding. Some of these opportunities are high quality. Motorized use throughout the area during the winter reduces the quality of these opportunities for three to four months out of the year. However, the core of the area within Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Areas and adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness offer abundant opportunities for high quality primitive-type recreation.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The ridgelines within this area offer really spectacular viewpoints with vistas of Uncompahgre Wilderness, Uncompahgre and Wetterhorn peaks (14,000-foot peaks), Precipice, and Turret Ridge. The geology in the area is very interesting, including glacial valleys and the avalanche chutes. A waterfall is located within Fall Creek. Big Blue Creek, the original namesake for what is now the Uncompahgre Wilderness, is a pristine stream with high-quality wetlands and contained within a scenic canyon. The Big Blue Potential Conservation Area has been identified in this area because of the subalpine riparian willow carr with aspen extending up the side slopes. The Little Cimarron Potential Conservation Area occurs in this area, identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program for montane riparian habitat types. The nearby Alpine Guard Station is the second oldest guard station in the nation. The area includes the historic Ridge Stock Driveway.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is partially contiguous in the portions adjacent to Uncompahgre Wilderness (to the south), but fragmented in some sections by cherry-stemmed roads and excluded lands. Private property abuts the northeastern and southeastern sections of the polygon, including a ditch in the southeastern portion. The northern-most portion of the area is adjacent to Bureau of Land Management lands. The Big Park, Alpine Plateau, Big Blue, and Fall Creek cattle allotments are within this area, as well as portions of several ditches. Harvest activities are ongoing within the northeastern portion of the polygon. The majority of the area (west and central) is managed as the Failes Creek/Soldier Creek, Failes Creek/Soldier Creek Upper Tier, and Little Cimarron Upper Tier Colorado Roadless Areas. The current wilderness boundary is very manageable as designated. Expanding the boundary to include this adjacent polygon would result in management challenges because the topography within the lower elevations do not contain adequate features to create natural boundaries for preventing use incursions.

Area O8: Escalante Mesa (29,615 acres)

Summary

*Area O8 was evaluated to possess a **Low** degree of wilderness characteristics. This finding is due to somewhat naturally-appearing vegetation and wildlife communities, non-native species present throughout the area, and extensive evidence of human intervention and improvements. The area offers limited opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area is heavily used, the shape of the area is entirely disjointed, and no identifiable boundaries exist on this flat landscape, all of which could pose challenges to managing the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics.*

Apparent Naturalness

The degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The vegetation composition is mixed spruce-fir with some montane shrubland, pinyon-juniper, dry mixed conifer, and cool mixed conifer. Non-native plant species occur throughout the area, such as ox-eye daisy and thistle. The eastern side of the area is treated frequently for invasive plant species. The area contains Northern goshawk habitat, and portions of the area include Traver Mesa Lynx Analysis Unit.

This area has been heavily managed over the last 150 years. Evidence of logging and grazing activity, heavy disturbances, and other activities are apparent on the landscape in isolated areas. Marked and contracted areas are located within this landscape, indicating imminent vegetation management. The eastern side of Roubideau congressionally-designated special area has been chained throughout. The remaining slivers of land that represent the eastern portion of Area O8 reflect the "leave areas" between previous treatment swaths. The history of management activities in the area has compromised the integrity of the ecosystem. The area includes many improvements throughout the landscape. Numerous trails are located in the western portion of the area. The motorized Roubideau Pack Trail (NFST 544) traverses the majority of the area from northwest to southeast, with several trails branching off of it. Other improvements include fencing, stock tanks and ponds, infrastructure associated with cow camps, old road beds, a few

cabins, and a ditch. These improvements are noticeable due to the flat terrain and detract from apparent naturalness throughout the area.

Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

The degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Solitude

This area receives heavy use during the summer and fall, particularly during hunting season. The trail network in this area is heavily used because it is easily accessed from many different travel routes. Human presence related to range activities is also pervasive throughout the area. Sights and sounds originating from outside the polygons are observed throughout the interior of the polygons due to the flat terrain. The primary outside sources are activity along Divide Road to the south, numerous cherry-stemmed roads threaded throughout the area, and adjacent private properties. The Westwide Energy Corridor traverses the southeastern side, directly adjacent. The winter season could offer some opportunities to experience solitude within portions of the area out of earshot of nearby snowmobile use. Due to the heavy amount of use in the area throughout most of the year and outside influences, opportunities to experience solitude here are limited.

Primitive/Unconfined Recreation

This area offers some opportunities for hunting, but these are not high-quality primitive hunting experiences due to the heavy, consistent use this area receives. About 10 trail segments within this area provide access portals into the adjacent Roubideau congressionally-designated special area, which is a more primitive landscape.

Unique and Outstanding Qualities

The degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

None known.

Manageability

The degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The shape of the area is entirely disjointed across a large landscape, separated into many individual polygons by cherry-stemmed roads and excluded lands. Several individual polygons abut Roubideau congressionally-designated special area. This large special area separates the majority of the polygons from additional portions located on the eastern side of Roubideau. The northern section of the area is adjacent to the Camel Back Wilderness Study Area, administered by the Bureau of Land Management, as well as Bureau of Land Management Inventoried Lands with Wilderness Character (Camel Back Wilderness Study Area Addition). Several adjacent private properties are located in the southeastern portion. The area contains established range activities and on-going timber harvest. It would be difficult to manage the area to preserve its limited wilderness characteristics due to the polygon's very disjointed configuration, pervasive

amount of improvements, heavy use, and lack of natural features to manage access into and within the area.

Appendix

Table 1. Supplemental information for Unique and Outstanding Qualities (Criteria 4a: Rare plant or animal communities or rare ecosystems)

[Data identified by Colorado Natural Heritage Program. See page 7 of the [Revised Evaluation Criteria document](#) for more information on how Criteria 4a was addressed. PCA, Potential Conservation Area; CPW, Colorado Parks and Wildlife; NRIS, Natural Resource Information System]

Evaluation Area ID	Potential Conservation Area	Animal	Plant	Additional data source: CPW	Additional data source: NRIS
G1	Gunnison Basin	American Peregrine Falcon	<i>Astragalus anisus</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range	
G10	Gunnison Basin, Cement Creek, Taylor Canyon, Taylor Canyon at Taylor Park Reservoir	Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population), Wolverine	<i>Carex diandra</i> , <i>Draba oligosperma</i> , <i>Astragalus molybdenus</i> , <i>Boechea crandallii</i> , <i>Draba incerta</i> , <i>Draba oligosperma</i> var. <i>oligosperma</i> , <i>Townsendia rothrockii</i> , <i>Erigeron lanatus</i>	Peregrine Nest, Bald Eagle Roost Site, Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Colonies, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G11		Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population)		Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G12	Middle and South Cottonwood Creeks	Dark Blue		Gunnisons Prairie Dog Colonies, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G13	Middle and South Cottonwood Creeks	Boreal Owl, Wolverine, Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population), Dark Blue	<i>Braya humilis</i> , <i>Physaria alpina</i> , <i>Astragalus molybdenus</i> , <i>Braya glabella</i> ssp. <i>Glabella</i> , <i>Draba oligosperma</i>	Gunnisons Prairie Dog Colonies, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G14	Taylor Canyon at Taylor Park Reservoir	Wolverine, Boreal Owl		Gunnisons Prairie Dog Colonies, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range, Bald Eagle Winter Range	
G15	Gunnison Basin, Taylor Canyon, Taylor Canyon at Taylor Park Reservoir	Wolverine		Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	North American Wolverine
G16	Whitepine Iron Fen		<i>Silene kingii</i>	Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	

Evaluation Area ID	Potential Conservation Area	Animal	Plant	Additional data source: CPW	Additional data source: NRIS
G17				Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G18	Gunnison Basin			Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G19	Gunnison Basin		<i>Arabis crandallii</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G2	Gunnison Basin		<i>Arabis crandallii</i> , <i>Boechea crandallii</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G20-N	Gunnison Basin			Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G20-S	Gunnison Basin		<i>Boechea crandallii</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G21-E				Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G21-W				Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G23				Bald Eagle Winter Range	
G24		Boreal Owl		Bald Eagle Winter Range	
G25		Wolverine	<i>Astragalus molybdenus</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range	
G26-E	Wager Gulch			Bald Eagle Winter Range	
G26-W	Half Peak, Wager Gulch		<i>Cystopteris montana</i> , <i>Erigeron humilis</i> , <i>Aliciella sedifolia</i> , <i>Gilia sedifolia</i>		
G27	Uncompahgre Site	Wolverine, Uncompahgre Fritillary Butterfly		Bald Eagle Winter Range	Uncompahgre Fritillary Butterfly

Evaluation Area ID	Potential Conservation Area	Animal	Plant	Additional data source: CPW	Additional data source: NRIS
G28	Gunnison Basin			Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G3	Gunnison Basin	Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population)		Peregrine Nest, Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G30				Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G32	Gunnison Basin	Wolverine		Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G33		Boreal Owl		Bald Eagle Winter Range	
G4		Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population)			Boreal Toad
G5-N	Mount Bellview	Boreal Owl, Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population), Wolverine, Townsend's Big-eared Bat Subsp	<i>Gastrolychnis kingii</i> , <i>Penstemon mensarum</i> , <i>Eriogonum coloradense</i>		
G5-S	Mount Emmons Iron Fen, Redwell Basin Iron Fen	Wolverine, Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population), Boreal Owl, Townsend's Big-eared Bat Subsp	<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i> , <i>Listera borealis</i>		
G6-128		Wolverine, Boreal Owl		Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
G6-136	Gunnison Basin	Gunnison Sage Grouse	<i>Astragalus anisus</i>	Bald Eagle Roost Site, Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Colonies, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	Gunnison Sage-grouse

Evaluation Area ID	Potential Conservation Area	Animal	Plant	Additional data source: CPW	Additional data source: NRIS
G7	Mount Bellview	Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population), Wolverine, Townsend's Big-eared Bat Subsp, Dark Blue, Boreal Owl, Pygmy Shrew	<i>Eriogonum coloradense</i> , <i>Draba incerta</i> , <i>Townsendia rothrockii</i> , <i>Muscaria monticola</i> , <i>Monardella glauca</i> , <i>Listera borealis</i> , <i>Cryptogramma stelleri</i> , <i>Astragalus molybdenus</i>	Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	Boreal Toad, Pygmy Shrew
G8	Mount Bellview	Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population), Wolverine, Townsend's Big-eared Bat Subsp, Dark Blue, Boreal Owl, Pygmy Shrew	<i>Draba oligosperma</i> , <i>Physaria alpina</i> , <i>Townsendia rothrockii</i> , <i>Eriogonum coloradense</i> , <i>Astragalus molybdenus</i> , <i>Draba incerta</i> , <i>Listera borealis</i> , <i>Cryptogramma stelleri</i>	Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	Boreal Owl, Boreal Toad
G9	Cement Creek, Taylor Pass	Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population), Wolverine, Townsend's Big-eared Bat Subsp, Boreal Owl, Pygmy Shrew, Lynx	<i>Draba oligosperma</i> , <i>Townsendia rothrockii</i> , <i>Physaria alpina</i> , <i>Astragalus molybdenus</i> , <i>Erigeron lanatus</i> , <i>Erigeron humilis</i> , <i>Draba incerta</i>	Peregrine Nest, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	Boreal Toad, Pygmy Shrew, Canada Lynx
GP1	Gunnison Basin	American Peregrine Falcon	<i>Cirsium perplexans</i> , <i>Penstemon mensarum</i> , <i>Astragalus anisus</i>	Peregrine Nest, Bald Eagle Roost Site, Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
GV10	Lands End		<i>Penstemon mensarum</i> , <i>Townsendia rothrockii</i>		
GV1-N	Unaweep Seep	Comstock's Hairstreak, Yuma Skipper, Rhesus Skipper,	<i>Myosurus cupulatus</i>	Peregrine Nest, Bald Eagle Winter Range	Gunnison Sage-grouse site, Comstock's Hairstreak
GV1-S		Comstock's Hairstreak		Bald Eagle Winter Range, Townsend Big Eared Bat	
GV2-2				Bald Eagle Winter Range	
GV2-4	Big Dominguez Creek		<i>Cirsium clavatum var. osterhoutii</i> , <i>Juncus bryoides</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range	Gunnison Sage-grouse site
GV3				Bald Eagle Winter Range	

Evaluation Area ID	Potential Conservation Area	Animal	Plant	Additional data source: CPW	Additional data source: NRIS
GV5	Lands End, Highway 65 at Grand Mesa NF Boundary	Boreal Owl	<i>Penstemon mensarum</i> , <i>Townsendia rothrockii</i> , <i>Utricularia minor</i> , <i>Carex scirpoidea</i> , <i>Carex limosa</i>		
GV6	Forest Road 251, Pine Park Reservoir	Short-eared Owl, Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population), Boreal Owl	<i>Subularia aquatica</i> , <i>Penstemon mensarum</i> , <i>Utricularia minor</i> , <i>Carex limosa</i> , <i>Cirsium clavatum</i> var. <i>osterhoutii</i> , <i>Carex scirpoidea</i> , <i>Subularia aquatica</i>		Boreal Owl site, Boreal Owl
GV7	Old Grand Mesa Road	Short-eared Owl, Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population), Boreal Owl	<i>Utricularia minor</i> , <i>Draba malpighiacea</i> , <i>Cirsium clavatum</i> var. <i>osterhoutii</i>		Boreal Owl site
GV8	Buzzard Creek				
GV9-28	Rare Plants of the Wasatch, Dry Fork Kimball Creek		<i>Astragalus naturitensis</i> , <i>Lesquerella parviflora</i> , <i>Thalictrum heliophilum</i>		
GV9-49	Dry Fork Kimball Creek				
GVO1	Escalante Creek		<i>Trifolium kingii</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range	
GVP1	Vega Reservoir, Buzzard Creek	Wolverine, Short-eared Owl	<i>Carex limosa</i> , <i>Carex livida</i> , <i>Equisetum variegatum</i> var. <i>variegatum</i> , <i>Utricularia minor</i>	Peregrine Nest	American Peregrine Falcon
GVP2		Wolverine	<i>Listera borealis</i> , <i>Penstemon mensarum</i>		
N10	Big Bucktail Creek, San Miguel River at Tabeguache Creek	Gray Vireo		Bald Eagle Winter Range	
N11-W				Bald Eagle Winter Range	
N2	Imogene Pass	Dark Blue		Gunnisons Prairie Dog Colonies, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
N3	Mineral Basin	Dark Blue	<i>Utricularia minor</i>		
N4	Rolling Mountain, Ice Lake Basin		<i>Draba graminea</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range	

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N5				Bald Eagle Winter Range	
N6	Silver Pick Basin	Wolverine	<i>Draba graminea</i>		North American Wolverine
N7			<i>Trifolium kingii</i>		
N8	San Miguel Basin			Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	
N9			<i>Carex stenoptila</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range	
O1-E		Boreal Owl, Lynx			Canada Lynx
O1-NW		Boreal Owl, Lynx		Peregrine Nest	
O1-SW	Cow Creek/Oben Creek	Boreal Owl, Lynx	<i>Iliamna grandiflora, Packera paupercula</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range	
O2		Great Basin Silverspot Butterfly		Bald Eagle Winter Range	
O3	Ouray Canyons	Great Basin Silverspot Butterfly, Dark Blue	<i>Polypodium hesperium, Cryptogramma stelleri, Adiantum capillus-veneris</i>	Peregrine Nest, Bald Eagle Winter Range	
O4	Ouray Canyons, Ironton Park, Mineral Basin, Imogene Pass	Great Basin Silverspot Butterfly, Dark Blue, Wolverine	<i>Sphagnum angustifolium, Draba graminea, Minuartia stricta, Iliamna grandiflora, Woodsia neomexicana, Polypodium hesperium, Draba incerta</i>		
O5	Ouray Canyons	Great Basin Silverspot Butterfly, Dark Blue, Wolverine		Bald Eagle Winter Range	
O7				Bald Eagle Winter Range	
O8	Robideau Creek			Bald Eagle Roost Site, Bald Eagle Winter Range	
O9	Ecalante Creek			Bald Eagle Winter Range	
OG1		American Peregrine Falcon, Lynx, Boreal Owl	<i>Carex stenoptila</i>	Peregrine Nest, Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	

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P1-60		Wolverine	<i>Penstemon mensarum</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range	
P1-68		Wolverine			
P2	McClure Pass	Wolverine	<i>Penstemon mensarum</i>		
P3	McClure Pass	Wolverine, Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population)	<i>Lomatium bicolor var. leptocarpum</i> , <i>Penstemon mensarum</i> , <i>Draba oligosperma</i>	Peregrine Nest, Bald Eagle Winter Range	North American Wolverine
P4-71			<i>Penstemon mensarum</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range	
P4-82		Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population)	<i>Kobresia simpliciuscula</i> , <i>Penstemon mensarum</i> , <i>Lomatium leptocarpum</i>	Bald Eagle Winter Range	Boreal Toad
P6		Wolverine, American Peregrine Falcon	<i>Arabis crandallii</i>	Peregrine Nest, Bald Eagle Winter Range, Gunnisons Prairie Dog Range	Boreal Owl site
P7		Dark Blue		Bald Eagle Winter Range	
P8	Little Coal Creek	Mohave Sooty-wing, Dark Blue, Wolverine	<i>Lomatium bicolor var. leptocarpum</i> , <i>Lomatium concinnum</i> , <i>Lomatium leptocarpum</i> , <i>Cirsium perplexans</i>	Peregrine Nest, Bald Eagle Winter Range	American Peregrine Falcon



**United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service**

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