

## SAN JUAN NATIONAL FOREST

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*San Juan National Forest Colorado Roadless Area Profiles*

## **Baldy (20,300 acres)**

### **1. Description**

Located on the Columbine Ranger District in the San Juan National Forest, this CRA includes much of the eastern flank of Missionary Ridge to the private land along the Florida River. The area borders subdivisions and home sites along its southern and eastern boundaries. Public road access within one-quarter mile of the roadless area includes NFSRs 076 (Red Rim), 071 (Durango Hills Parking Area), 599 (Red Creek) and La Plata County Road 250 (East Animas). Forest Service System trails that access and serve the area are: NFST 543 (Missionary Ridge), 557 (Haflin Creek), 558 (Shearer Creek), 726 (Red Creek), 727 (First Fork), and 728 (Stevens Creek). The CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G), with elevations ranging from between 6,800 feet near Durango up to 9,900 feet on Missionary Ridge. The area includes Missionary Ridge and is the southern exposure of a northward-slanting incline. It extends from the low valleys north of Durango, up to the high ridge tops of the hydrological divide, between the Animas River drainage and the area drained by the Florida River. The vegetative cover varies with elevation and exposure. Ponderosa pine at the lower elevations gives way to mixed conifer. Most of the area burned during the Missionary Ridge fire of 2002, which changed the vegetative structure of the CRA.

### **2. Roadless Characteristics**

The wide variety in vegetative cover for feeding and hiding provides outstanding habitat. Gambel oak has made a comeback from the Missionary Ridge fire of 2002, providing important habitat for numerous passerine birds and Merriam's turkey. The dead and dying trees provide important foraging spots for the many species of woodpeckers and nuthatches found on the forest. These species include: Lewis' woodpecker, three-toed woodpecker and pygmy nuthatch, all of which are listed as sensitive species by the US Forest Service. Those areas where the fire was less intense are covered in tall grasses and 8-10' aspen saplings. These areas are heavily used by wintering elk. Shearer Creek is located within this CRA. In 2005, Colorado River cutthroat trout were stocked into this creek as part of the ongoing recovery effort in Western Colorado. Big-game hunting is probably the primary recreational activity. Hiking and mountain-biking along NFST 543, as well as day hiking in the Baldy area are popular. The area is closed to motorized recreation. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). The CRA is within a 10-mile radius of a mandatory Class I airshed (Weminuche Wilderness) as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. Some cultural resource inventory has taken place in the area. Survey data from surrounding areas indicates that sites are likely to be found in open parks and meadows and along drainages and near permanent water sources.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

The area contains active grazing allotments and few facilities such as livestock ponds and fences. The area contains geothermal possibilities. Locatable mineral potential is low to nonexistent. The area contains low potential for oil and gas development, as well as coal. There are no existing oil and gas leases in the area. The area includes about 2,100 acres of suitable timber lands in the current Forest Plan, but none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

#### 4. Alternative Designations

2001 Inventory Acres	Colorado Roadless Area Acres	Reasons for the Change
Florida River – 35,400	Baldy – 20,300 Florida River – 5,700 Total – 26,000 and part of Weminuche Adjacent (23,600)	New area split from Florida River RARE II #2294.

### Blackhawk Mountain (17,500 acres)

#### 1. Description

This CRA contains the area radiating out from the high ridge between Blackhawk Mountain, Section Point Peak, and Hermosa Peak. The area is located on both the Dolores and Columbine Ranger Districts. It is located entirely within Dolores County. The western boundary is along the Dolores River. The northern and southern boundaries parallel Barlow and Scotch Creeks, respectively. The eastern boundary parallels the Hermosa Park Road. The area is accessible from Colorado Highway 145, NFSRs 496 (Barlow Creek Road), 578 (Hermosa Park Road), 550 (Hotel Draw Road), and 550.1 (Scotch Creek Road). Colorado Trail (Blackhawk segment) 501 is the only Forest trail that accesses and serves this roadless area. There are non-system trails in this area shown in the Rico town plan. This CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G), with elevations ranging from 8,600 feet near Spruce Gulch to 12,681 feet on the summit of Blackhawk. Numerous stream channels and ridges radiate in all directions from the high ridge formed by Blackhawk and Hermosa Peak. The area is highly dissected by the radiating stream channels. Above treeline on the three high peaks, the alpine tundra exists and is punctuated with cliffs and monolithic rock outcrops. Parent geology is made up of sedimentary layers with shallow to deep, unstable soils. Vegetative overstory of the mixed conifer type with ponderosa-aspen mix is dominant at the lower elevations and aspen-white fir mix at the upper elevations. Depending on exposure there are pockets of Douglas-fir and spruce.

#### 2. Roadless Characteristics

Wildlife species inhabiting the area are typical of wildlife found in the Southern Rocky Mountains. The variety of understory vegetation provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife. Elk use the areas for calving, spring and fall foraging areas, and hiding cover. The elevations above tree line are used extensively by elk, in the summer months, where they take advantage of high protein grasses and forbs. Mule deer fawn within the Blackhawk Mountain area. The CRA provides suitable Canada lynx habitat, a federally listed (threatened) species. Radio telemetry has confirmed Canada lynx use of the area. The areas in the river and stream bottoms provide a scenic backdrop for recreation travel along the surrounding roads. Blackhawk Mountain is a key attraction. The primary dispersed recreation use is hunting, hiking, and viewing the scenery. The northern half and portions around Rico are open to cross-country motorized use. The Deadwood, Circle, and McJunkin non-system trails are used for non-motorized use. Winter use includes snowmobiling in the open area, backcountry skiing, and snowshoeing. Big-game outfitters use this area. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). The CRA is within a 10-mile radius of a mandatory Class I airshed (Weminuche Wilderness) as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. Cultural resource inventories have been conducted in some parts of the area. Some sites have been recorded during these inventories that include isolated finds, lithic scatters, and historic mining features. There is

a moderate to high likelihood of additional sites occurring in open parks, meadows, and along stream courses. The likelihood of additional finds on the steep slopes and in the dense timber stands is low.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

The area contains active grazing allotments and few facilities such as livestock ponds and fences. Some summer home development is occurring on private lands. Mining claims along with associated road construction or development of patented lands could compromise parts of the area. The mining district around Rico is comprised of many mining patents that could be reactivated in future years. A small portion of the area, approximately 500 acres around Rico, is listed by the Department of Energy as very important for uranium. The area contains known quantities of hard-rock minerals and geothermal potential. There presently is no coal, oil, or gas activity. Oil and gas development potential is low. There are about 1,050 acres of suitable timber lands in the roadless area in the current Forest Plan, but none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
17,200	17,500	GIS mapping.

## **East Animas (16,900 acres)**

### **1. Description**

Located on the Columbine Ranger District, the northern boundary of this CRA abuts the Weminuche Wilderness. This roadless area lies between the Missionary Ridge Road, private lands, and National Forest System lands along the Animas River. Its western and northern boundaries are in the Animas River corridor. Its eastern boundary flanks the numerous timber sales on the slopes of Missionary Ridge. NFSR 682 (Missionary Ridge Road) provides the only road access to the area and NFST 676 (Lime Mesa Trail) provides the only trail to access the area, on the extreme northeastern boundary of the CRA. The CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G) with elevations ranging from 7,000 feet on Carson Creek up to 12,000 feet on the slopes leading up to Mountain View Crest. The area is characterized by the steep slopes rising out of the Animas River Canyon which is part of the overall slopes leading to the top of Mountain View Crest. Once out of the steep canyon walls, the area has a more moderate and constant rise in elevation. The area is highly dissected by numerous streams that are tributaries to the Animas River. The overstory vegetation cover is primarily mixed conifer with some ponderosa pine types in the lower elevations along the Animas River. Spruce and fir growth is predominant in the areas approaching the treeline. Extensive aspen stands are found on the east side of the boundary. The Missionary Ridge fire burned the southern portion in Bear Creek. The geology is a display of numerous rock outcrops and rock cliffs. They are a mix of sedimentary and igneous origin. There is a wide variety of soil types, most of which are fairly unstable on the steeper slopes.

### **2. Roadless Characteristics**

The area is rich in wildlife due to the wide variety of vegetation ranging from the dry ponderosa/Gambel oak type up through the aspen, spruce, and fir. Tank and Canyon Creek have

a fair to good trout fishery. This CRA provides potential habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened), which are known to inhabit the area. The CDOW states that this area serves as a migration corridor for deer and elk, as well as providing important winter range for elk. CDOW estimates that over 1000 elk use this area during a normal winter. The lower elevations are important habitat for black bears due to the abundance of Gambel oak. Some bears travel great distances in order to use the East Animas area as a feeding area, foraging on acorns. Gambel oak acorns provide high quality nutrition, allowing bears to store ample fat to survive hibernation. The Animas Canyon at the north end of this CRA is home to a herd of bighorn sheep, which were transplanted in 2000.

Key attractions to the area include: the Animas River, Grass Hopper Creek, and Tank Mesa. Dispersed recreational use of the area is limited to hunting and hiking. The area provides a scenic backdrop for scenic viewing from Highway 550, the Durango-Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, and recreation traffic along the Missionary Ridge Road. The area is closed to all summer motorized-vehicle use and the rocky topography restricts most winter snowmobile use to existing roads outside the area's boundary. Currently snowmobiling happens in Tank, Bear Creek, Canyon Creek, and on Mountain View Crest there are snowmobiling intrusions into the wilderness. This CRA is adjacent to a Mandatory Class I airshed as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. It borders the Weminuche Wilderness. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). Based on data from surveys in surrounding areas, there is a moderate to high likelihood that sites exist along drainages and in open parks and meadows. Historic features include one sawmill and cabins between Bear Creek and Canyon creek.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

This area is located within an active livestock allotment. The Colorado State Land Board has approximately 630 acres of mineral interest that underlies Forest Service surface ownership within the East Animas CRA. Potential mineral resources, both locatable and leasable, are not considered significant. No exploratory activities are foreseen at this time. There are currently no oil and gas leases in the area. The area contains 2,364 acres of suitable timber lands. These suitable stands include aspen stands near the Missionary Ridge Road.

### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
15,200	16,900	GIS mapping.

## **Fish Creek (13,500 acres)**

### **1. Description**

This area is located in the northeastern part of the Dolores Ranger District, in Dolores County, southwest of but not adjacent to, the Lizard Head Wilderness. It is bounded by Little Fish Creek and the National Forest boundary to the west, West Dolores Road and Fish Creek form the boundary to the east. This CRA includes both Little Fish Creek and Fish Creek drainages, spanning from Black Mesa south to the confluence of the two rivers. All immediate adjacent lands surrounding the Fish Creek roadless area are National Forest lands. The SJNF boundary is located just over a mile west of the area and is bounded by private lands.

Uncompahgre National Forest lands are 1-3 miles to the north of the roadless area. Lizard Head Wilderness is a few miles from the northeastern boundary of the Fish Creek roadless area. Lands south of the roadless area are a part of the SJNF. The Fish Creek State Wildlife Area is located less than a mile southwest of the roadless area. Access to the area is formed by points along the following roads, which are within one-quarter mile or less of the roadless area boundary: National Forest System Roads 452, 403, 611A, 404, 534, 64. NFST 647 (Fish Creek Trail) is a main attraction to the area.

The Fish Creek roadless area was not identified in previous roadless inventories. The CRA falls within two Ecosections, the northern part is within the South-Central Highlands Ecosection (M331G) and the southern portion is within the Northern Canyon Lands (341B). The area's elevation ranges from 7,400 feet near the West Dolores River up to 9,763 feet at the Nipple Mountain summit. The area includes a variety of topographic features, including mountain peaks, mesas, deep canyons, steep valley slopes, and rolling high country. It is dissected by Fish Creek and Groundhog Creek, which are tributary to the West Dolores River. The area is characterized by Nipple Mountain, Fish Creek State Wildlife Area, and Willow Creek Divide. The geology of the area is manifested by rock outcrops and cliffs of both sedimentary and igneous origin. The soil types vary widely and run the full range of instability from stable and shallow to deep. The lowest elevations are covered with willow-dominated riparian zones with approximately 90 acres of old-growth ponderosa pine. Aspen dominates the south-facing slopes, while spruce-fir forests populate north-facing slopes.

## **2. Roadless Characteristics**

Wildlife species found in this area are typical of those found in the Southern Rocky Mountains. The large number of vegetative types has created an extremely diverse habitat. The Fish Creek CRA has several major elk migration corridors between winter range to the southwest and summer range around the Lizard Head Wilderness. Significant numbers of elk utilize the area for calving. Band-tailed pigeons nest in and utilize the area in spring, summer, and fall. Black bears find the area especially important, as the shrub community provides important feeding areas during the critical fall period. This CRA provides potential habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened). Through radio telemetry, lynx presence in the CRA has been documented.

The Fish Creek Trail offers hiking, horseback-riding, hunting, and fishing. The western boundary is open to cross country motorized use. The area east of Groundhog Creek is open to snowmobiling. The Fish Creek drainage is closed year round to motorized use. Some winter snowmobile use occurs in Willow Divide and on Nipple Mountain. Unauthorized ATV use has occurred in the area. The CRA is used for pack trips for fishing and hunting big-game outfitters. Overall, levels of recreation use are low off the main trails. Approximately 140 acres adjacent to the West Fork of the Dolores River within the CRA are in Forest Plan management area 10D, Wild and Scenic River Corridors. The West Fork was not found to be suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation in the draft revised Forest Plan. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). Groundhog Creek is the major outlet for Groundhog Reservoir. Fish Creek Trail has a ditch running along side it on National Forest lands. The western side has several reservoirs.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

This area has livestock-grazing use with numerous fences, stock ponds, and reservoirs on the western side. However, the only range developments consist of a couple of fences. There is a brush fence on the southern boundary of Mavreeso. The area is also used for pack trips by big-game outfitters. The area lies outside of known mineral-producing regions and has low potential for economic mineralization. This CRA has moderate oil and gas potential and low potential for coal. There are no other saleable minerals known in the area.

### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
Not included in IRAs	13,500	New area, not in pervious inventory.

## **Florida River (5,700 acres)**

### **1. Description**

Located on the Columbine Ranger District in the San Juan National Forest, this area includes much of the eastern flank of Missionary Ridge to the private land along the Florida River. The northern boundary of the Florida roadless area is adjacent to the Weminuche Wilderness. Road access within one-quarter mile of the roadless area includes 597 (East Florida Road) and 596/County Road 243 (Florida Road). Trails NFST 546 (Young’s Canyon), 663 (Lost Lake), and 667 (Burnt Timber) provide direct access to the CRA. This CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G) with elevations ranging from between 8,200 feet near Lemon Reservoir up to 10,500 feet at the ridgeline along Red Rim on Missionary Road. Rock types of the exposed geology are as varied as the landform. The Florida drainage contains some metamorphic and granites. Soils are variable in terms of depth, texture, and eroding character. The vegetative cover varies with elevation and exposure and is primarily a large band of mixed conifer. Most of the area burned during the Missionary Ridge fire of 2002. This 70,000-acre fire changed the vegetative structure of the area.

### **2. Roadless Characteristics**

This CRA provides potential habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened). The area is used by lynx and has had an active lynx den. The CRA provides excellent wildlife habitat for mule deer, elk, black bear, Merriam’s turkey, and numerous other wildlife species. Several large herds of elk have begun to use this area during the winter months. Also found in this area is an active bald eagle nest on the west shore of Lemon Reservoir. Most of this CRA was affected by the Missionary Ridge fire of 2002. Since then, many of the hillsides are recovering. In some places the grass is 2 feet tall and the aspen regeneration is remarkable. The area provides outstanding wildlife appreciation opportunities. Big-game hunting is probably the primary recreational activity. This CRA is closed to all types of motorized recreation. This CRA is adjacent to a Mandatory Class I airshed as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. It borders the Weminuche Wilderness. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). Some cultural resource inventories have taken place in the area. Survey data from surrounding areas indicates that sites are likely to be found in open parks, meadows, along drainages, and near permanent water sources.



### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

The area contains active grazing allotments and a few facilities such as livestock ponds and fences. The area contains geothermal possibilities. Locatable minerals potential is low to nonexistent. The area contains low potential for oil and gas development. Potential for coal is low as well. There are no existing oil and gas leases in the area. There are about 1,200 acres of suitable timber lands in the roadless area in the current Forest Plan, but none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
Florida River – 35,400	Florida River – 5,700 Baldy – 20,300 Total – 26,000 and part of Weminuche Adjacent (23,600)	Acres split between three CRAs: Baldy, Florida River and Weminuche Adjacent.

## **Graham Park (17,800 acres)**

### **1. Description**

The Graham Park roadless area is made up of two distinct areas. The larger of the two areas is west of the Weminuche Valley and is generally confined between the Weminuche Wilderness to the north, and a roaded/harvested area to the south. The smaller portion east of the Weminuche Valley is actually two distinct polygons – one west of Williams Creek, and the other east of Williams Creek and including the Williams Creek Research Natural Area.

The CRA is located in Hinsdale County in the north-central portion of the Pagosa Ranger District. The area is known for its views of the Weminuche Wilderness. Roaded access to the area is primarily available via NFSR 631 (Piedra Road) and NFSR 640. The following Forest trails access the western area: NFST 524, 673, 584, and 591. NFST accessing the eastern area include 592, 586, and 587. This CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecosession (M331G) with elevations ranging from 8,200 feet in the Weminuche Valley and 12,531 feet on the summit of Graham Peak. The western areas physical characteristics are dominated by the high ridge separating the Weminuche drainage from the upper Los Pinos river drainage. This area covers the upper one-fourth of the slope between the Piedra River and the hydrological divide with the Pine River. Being near the top of the ridge, it is moderately dissected by cross-drainages and has three named streams draining the area: Bear Creek, Shaw Creek and Falls Creek, all of which are tributaries to Weminuche Creek. The area contains the headwaters of Mosca Creek, Sand Creek, and the west and east forks of Coldwater Creek.

Although the exposure of the area is generally southern and eastern, the dissecting stream channels have resulted in some northern and southwestern exposures. Geology of the area ranges from sedimentary outcrops in the Weminuche Valley to granitic formations that form the major peak along the Weminuche Wilderness boundary. Soils vary. The area has some mixed conifer types on the slopes rising out of the Weminuche Valley floor. Once the bench is reached in the Bear, Shaw, and Falls Creeks area the timber type is in uniform stands of spruce and fir. Above the treeline, on the higher peaks the alpine tundra is mixed with rock cliffs and talus slopes. One distinguishing characteristic is the abundance of open meadows, wet meadows and fens along the upper reaches of Shaw and Falls Creeks.

The eastern area's physical characteristics are dominated by steep to moderate slopes beneath volcanic palisades that largely form the Weminuche Wilderness boundary. Upper slopes and northwest to east-facing aspects are mostly spruce-fir. Lower slopes and warmer aspects are largely mixed conifer and aspen with conifer.

## **2. Roadless Characteristics**

The spruce-fir forests and high mountain meadows found in this area create an unusual mosaic of vegetation that provides excellent elk and deer summer and fall habitat, as well as numerous other species. The wet meadows in the Shaw and Falls Creek drainages are important elk calving and summer ranges. Radio-collared mule deer studies have shown that many mule deer in the Pine and Piedra drainages use the high country and Graham Peak for summer habitat and fawn rearing. This CRA provides potential habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened). Lynx are known to use the adjacent wilderness area. Lynx have been released in a nearby area through the CDOW lynx augmentation program. The CDOW and Forest Service have conducted snowshoe hare surveys since 1998 along NFSR 631 (Mosca Road) south of the CRA and found significant numbers of snowshoe hares, an important prey species for the lynx. Bighorn sheep are found along the Pine-Piedra divide on Granite and Graham Peaks, as well as in the cliffs which form the Weminuche Wilderness boundary in the Poison Park, Cimarrona, and Williams Creek areas. The Pine River bighorn sheep herd summers and rears lambs in the Graham Peak area. Several creeks in the Graham Park CRA are important in the Colorado River Cutthroat Trout recovery plan. Shaw Creek, from the headwaters to the confluence with Weminuche Creek, has a wild population of cutthroats of unknown purity. Sand Creek, from its headwaters to NFSR 631, and Falls Creek, from its headwaters to Weminuche Creek have both been stocked with the pure Weminuche strain of Colorado River cutthroat trout in 2005. Recreational use of the area is mostly hunting. Some trail use occurs by horse packers and backpackers using system and non-system trails for hunting. Recreation use of the Williams Creek and Weminuche Trails is heavy in the summer and fall, but in other areas of the CRA, recreation use is low outside of hunting season. The area is a prime spot for observing wildlife. The only trail open to motorized use is a short section of NFST 593. Snowmobiling is permitted off NFSR 631 in the winter.

This CRA is adjacent to a Mandatory Class I airshed as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. It borders the Weminuche Wilderness. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). Previous cultural resource surveys in the area resulted in the location of only a few sites of isolated artifacts and lithic scatter. These sites were located in meadows, thus indicating likely site locations in the upper Piedra Valley. There is a moderate likelihood of sites being present in meadows and along drainages.

## **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

As of 2011, an on-going spruce beetle epidemic has killed up to 90% of standing mature Engelmann spruce in the adjacent Weminuche Wilderness. This outbreak, which as of 2011 was at or near epidemic levels, is now spreading downslope in the eastern portions of the CRA, and is progressing southward over the Pine/Piedra divide, and downslope into the headwaters of Shaw, Sand, and Mosca Creeks.

There are two outfitters and guides in the area with two camps. Livestock grazing is occurring in the eastern portion of the CRA, but the higher elevation allotments in the western portion of the CRA were closed to domestic sheep grazing in 2010. The current level of livestock-grazing is expected to continue with only the ranching economy causing any major changes. Existing range improvements on active allotments will be maintained. One timber sale has affected the area since the RARE II study and analysis. The Mosca 2 timber sale modified the roadless character on approximately 920 acres. The 1.8 miles of new road to connect the scattered cutting blocks also impacted another 80 acres. There are about 3,230 acres of suitable timber lands within the CRA in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft revised Forest Plan. The area includes the Williams Creek Research Natural Area, one of the two existing Research Natural Areas on the San Juan National Forest.

#### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
Graham Park - 11,100; Part of Piedra – 53,900; Part of Poison Park – 7,900; Williams Creek Research Natural Area - 500	17,800	GIS mapping.

### **HD Mountains (25,000 acres)**

#### **1. Description**

Located on the Columbine Ranger District, on the San Juan National Forest, the HD Mountain roadless area is located to the southeast of Bayfield, Colorado. It is partially located in four townships, in both Archuleta and La Plata counties. The area is located south of Highway 160. The area has an irregular boundary that generally inscribes the mountain ridge that separates the many old roads and timber-cutting areas on the eastern and western flanks of the HD Mountains. Public access roads leading to the area include: NFSRs 132 (Lange Canyon), 613(Fosset Gulch), 615a (Turkey Creek), 756 (Boundary), 743 (Relay Station), and 537 (Spring Creek). National Forest System trails serving the area are NFST 524 (Pine-Piedra Trail), and motorized trails 712 (Lange Canyon Loop), 666, (Ute Creek), 682 (Bull Creek), and 683 (Little Bull Creek). This CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecosection (M331G), with elevations ranging from 6,500 feet in Skull Creek to 8,936 feet on Pargin Mountain. A 10-mile-long north-south low mountain range made up of individual peaks, mesas, and cuerdas characterizes this roadless area. It is a transition area between the geomorphology of the Colorado Plateau and the higher Rocky Mountains along the Continental Divide. The general ridge line is dissected by a series of relatively flat, narrow stream bottoms and some rolling hills. The major geology of the area is composed of sedimentary rock formations and their resulting soil types. Many of the soils are considered poor and highly susceptible to erosion. Many are of shale origin and have a moderate to high shrink characteristic and are of low strength. Vegetation lies in a vegetative transition zone between the pinyon-juniper type and the ponderosa pine type. Pinyon pine, juniper, ponderosa pine, and mixed conifer vegetation dominate the southern exposures and ponderosa pine is present on the northerly exposures. Large Gambel oak stands are along the western side of the area. Gambel oak is intermingled beneath the ponderosa pine

and at the lower elevations of the pinyon-juniper type. There are a large number of open grass meadows in the drainage bottoms. On the northern exposures there are some pockets of Douglas-fir. Old-growth ponderosa pine stands are in Turkey Creek and Ignacio Canyon. Springs are found within the area.

## **2. Roadless Characteristics**

The HD Mountains CRA is important winter range, severe winter range, and winter concentration areas for mule deer and elk. This is due to the open grassy meadows provided by the area. The HDs are also overall range and summer range for mule deer. The CRA contains habitat for four species of big game as well as small mammals. The area is important to black bears due to the large quantity of oak brush. Mountain lions are prevalent in the area due to the concentrations of big game. Because of the number of old ponderosa pine snags in the area, this CRA provides suitable habitat for the federally listed Mexican spotted owl (threatened), as well as other cavity-nesting birds. Historically, peregrine falcons have nested in the HD Mountains area. It provides overall winter range for bald eagle and a golden eagle foraging area. It is mapped as overall range and as a winter concentration area for Merriam's turkey. This area hosts a variety of raptors and passerine bird species.

A notable scenic feature of the area is Pargin Mountain. Key attractions to the area also include Turkey Creek and Ignacio Canyon. Although a full spectrum of recreational activities exists in the area such as hiking, mountain-biking, and ATV use due to the area's location near Bayfield, recreation use is considered moderate due of the absence of water, vegetation, and terrain. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). Cultural resource inventories conducted in the area have identified a large number of properties that include isolated finds, archaic campsites, lithic and ceramic scatters, habitations with subsurface architecture, and a large number of historic features relating to the logging and ranching era. Some of these properties will be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. There is a high probability of finds on the ridge or mesa tops, in the meadows, and along the intermittent stream drainages.

## **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

Grazing allotments cover much of the area, although the utilized area is relatively small due to topographic limitations. Coal-bed methane, natural gas, and other hydrocarbons offer the largest substantial extractive resource. In 1978 the Department of Energy listed the entire area as being highly important for oil and gas. The Colorado Geological Survey also pointed out high oil and gas potential as well as coal beds underlying the entire area. These early studies are collaborated by the large interest in leasing and drilling expressed today. The largest impact to the roadless character of the area is the leasing and drilling activity associated with the gas wells in this region of the San Juan Basin. A portion of the CRA has existing oil and gas leases. There have been wells drilled on the boundary and in the interior, resulting in some road construction. There are no planned timber sales within the area. There are about 3,640 acres of suitable timber lands within the roadless area in the current Forest Plan. However, topography limits utility of the area for timber management. The draft revised Forest Plan does not include any suitable timber lands in this area.

**4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
20,000	25,000	GIS mapping.

**Hermosa (148,100 acres)**

**1. Description**

This is the largest of the roadless areas on the San Juan National Forest, and is located within the Columbine and Dolores Ranger Districts. The area is located in portions of 12 townships in the central part of the Forest. Most of the area is in La Plata County, but the western portions fall into Montezuma County. The irregular boundary is caused by roads that penetrate into the general area and deep narrow valleys, like Bear Creek, that have remained unroaded. The area is totally surrounded by National Forest System lands and private lands in the corridor along Highway 550. The nearest existing designated wilderness is located across the Animas River Valley. This area is within one-quarter mile or less to 13 Forest Service System roads, Colorado State Highway 550, 10 four-wheel-drive roads, and one private mining road. The area is served by the following major National Forest system trails into the Hermosa drainage: 512, (Elbert Creek/Big Lick), 514 (Hermosa Creek Trail), 515 (Little Elk Creek), 516 (Dutch Creek), 517 (Goulding Creek), 518 (Jones Creek), 519 (Big Bend), 521 (Corral Draw), 522 (Pinkerton-Flagstaff), 547 (Neglected), and 549 (South Fork), 550 (Clear Creek), and 559 (Salt Creek). Other NFSTs include: 520 (Colorado Trail, Highline segment), 658 (Grindstone Loop), 607 (Bear Creek), 609 (Little Bear), 618 (Gold Run), 621 (West Mancos), 736 (Rio Lado), 435 (Rough Canyon), 620 (Sharkstooth), 610 (Morrison), 746 (Owens Basin). The Rico/Silverton toll road, a historical feature, is located in the northern part of the roadless area. This is a portion of the Colorado Trail which is a system of trails connecting Durango with Denver.

This CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G) with elevations ranging from between 7000 and 13,200 feet. The area’s physical characteristics vary from flat to vertical cliffs. The highly dissected valleys also have a wide variety of surface geology. Soil types, depths, and erodibility vary widely. Every slope aspect (exposure) on the compass exists somewhere in the roadless area. The four major streams that drain the area have numerous year-long and intermittent streams that dissect the surface of the area. The wide range of elevations, slope aspects, soil, and geology types has resulted in an extremely complex mixture of plant communities. At the lower elevations pine and oak dominate the vegetative type. As elevation increases, a transition to fir-aspen (mixed conifer) occurs and then on to a spruce-aspen complex. Douglas-fir is found on the northern aspects throughout the mixed conifer type. The higher elevations, near tree line, have spruce-fir forest. Interspersed throughout the forested areas are open grassland parks and occasional wet meadows.

**2. Roadless Characteristics**

The Hermosa CRA is important to many wildlife species, including several big game species. The spruce-fir forests and high mountain meadows in the area provide production, summer, fall, and transitional habitats for mule deer and elk. The higher elevations of this area provide excellent summer habitat for elk. The Hermosa drainage has long been known for its quality habitat for elk calving and summer range. Elk winter below Baldy Mountain and in

Perins Peak State Wildlife Area (SWA) and remain in the area year round unless pushed down by heavy snow in severe winters. Mule deer winter below US Hwy 160 and utilize the CRA for fawning, transition, and summer ranges. The area also contains important movement corridors connecting the summer range areas with winter ranges in the lower country outside the roadless area and the National Forest. The cliffs between Durango Mountain Ski Resort and Elbert Creek are historic range for bighorn sheep. Although not located in the CRA, historically, sheep utilized the nearby "Hermosa Cliffs" summer range. Recently, bighorn sheep have begun to re-occupy this habitat as a result of a transplant into the Animas River Drainage in 2000. The area between Baker Peak and Baldy Peak is also documented historical range for bighorn sheep. Bighorn sheep inhabited the area during the summer and moved into lower elevation near the Decker Tract of Perins Peak SWA, Junction Creek, and Hermosa Creek in the winter when pushed out by snow.

This CRA provides potential habitat for the federally and state listed, Canada lynx (threatened). Lynx presence in the CRA is documented. Although lynx were not initially released in the Hermosa CRA, they have been located in the area during on-going lynx monitoring associated with the recovery effort. The area supports a healthy prey base for the lynx including: snowshoe hare, pine squirrel, mice, and blue grouse. Because of the high concentration of big game prey species, the area is also important for mountain lions. Black bear depend on the mixture of native grasses, shrubs, and forbs during the den emergence and summer hyperphagia. The southern portion of the Hermosa CRA also provides diverse habitat for small mammals, rodents, cavity nesting birds, and smaller predators. Pike inhabit rocky canyons. Pine squirrel, Williamson's sapsucker, gray jay, and Cooper's hawk thrive and nest in the mixed spruce/fir/ponderosa habitat. Pine marten, a USFS sensitive species, are also found in forested areas in La Plata Canyon and Junction Creek. Forest Service sensitive species that occupy the area also include: flammulated owl, Northern leopard frog, Lewis' woodpecker, as well as others.

Merriam's turkey and blue grouse are plentiful and utilize the forested areas for nesting and fall feeding habitat. Peregrine falcons nest on the nearby cliffs of Elbert Creek and Hermosa Cliffs. Several pairs usually produce two or more chicks each year. Peregrines are sensitive to human disturbance and are listed as a USFS sensitive species. Bald eagles and osprey have been sighted in the area.

The Colorado River cutthroat trout, a Forest Service Sensitive Species, occupy Hermosa Creek, Rio Lado, and its tributary streams. Several creeks within the CRA are important in the Colorado River Cutthroat Trout recovery plan. The CDOW introduced the Nanita Lake strain of Colorado River cutthroat trout in the East Fork of Hermosa Creek above the waterfall near Sig Creek in 1992. Big Bend Creek, from the headwaters to the confluence with Hermosa Creek, contains a population of genetically pure Colorado cutthroat trout, as does Clear Creek (part of the Hermosa Creek Drainage). Flager Creek within the Junction Creek Drainage was stocked with the Weminuche strain of Colorado River cutthroat trout in the summer of 2005. Future plans include re-introducing the species to North Hope Creek, Hermosa Creek above Hotel Draw, and stocking several creeks in the Junction Creek drainage.

The area has high scenic values from its undisturbed nature and high alpine peaks. This area is the largest CRA in Colorado. The CRA contains Hesperus Mountain and Hermosa Creek. The draft revised Forest Plan includes a proposed Hermosa RNA about 13 miles north of the

town of Durango, on 8,000 acres at elevations ranging from 7,000 to 12,000 feet. Legislation has been introduced in Congress which would make the western side of the Hermosa drainage a Wilderness area, and much more of the Hermosa CRA would be designated as a “Special Management Area.”

The area is characterized by highly dissected mountain topography and sedimentary geology. Key features include: old-growth forests, Colorado cutthroat trout, alpine tundra, spruce-fir forests, aspen forests, ponderosa pine forests, mixed conifer forests, and mountain shrublands. The Hermosa CRA has long been a special area, providing an opportunity to enjoy activities in a natural setting that would otherwise be prohibited in a classified wilderness. More than 125 miles of trails cross the roadless area, some of which are designated open to motorcycles and ATVs. Mountain-bike use has become increasingly popular on many of the trails. Stream fishing and fall hunting (outfitting/guiding) are primarily dispersed off-trail uses.

The Bear Creek drainage and associated trails provide a wide opportunity for most uses, including: motorcycling, snowmobiling, hiking, horseback-riding, mountain bikes, goat packing, fishing, backcountry skiing, and snowshoeing. Outfitters and guides use upper Bear Creek for hunting opportunities. The popular Hermosa Trail is open to all forms of backcountry recreation, including hiking, horses, mountain bikes, motorcycles, and ATVs. Ten tributary trails branch from the main Hermosa Trail and offer access to numerous more remote valleys. The Hermosa Creek Trail serves as one of the most popular and scenic mountain-bike routes in Colorado. A western spur descends along Bear Creek to the Dolores River. Travelers can traverse from the Animas to Dolores Rivers, over the crest of the La Platas, without crossing a road or otherwise encountering signs of civilization. There is approximately 7.6 miles (12,250 meters) of the East Mancos River, within the Hermosa CRA, identified on the 303(d) list for impairment under the Clean Water Act as not meeting state standards for water quality.

This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). The CRA is within a 10-mile radius of a mandatory Class I airshed (Weminuche Wilderness) as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. Previous cultural resource surveys within the area have identified numerous artifacts and properties, some of which are likely to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The properties include both historic and pre-historic resources. They range from isolated finds and lithic scatters to historic mines and structures. The predictability of further survey finds is high to moderate in the level areas and stream bottoms and low in the heavily timbered areas and on steeper slopes. The La Plata Mountains on the south side of the area are known to be an area of special interest to the Navajos. There are numerous records of historic and prehistoric cultural finds from the vicinity of Hope Creek (Colorado Historical Society records). The finds include aspen art (carvings from sheep herders and early settlers), culturally significant trails, stone tools and tool-making artifacts, and remnants of early European settlement.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

The ongoing spruce beetle epidemic, which until recently has been largely confined to the Weminuche Wilderness, is now impacting spruce-fir stands in the upper reaches of the CRA. The current level of livestock-grazing is expected to continue and existing range improvements will be maintained and/or upgraded when needed. There are a fair amount of livestock improvements along the east side of the Hermosa drainage including reservoirs, springs, stock ponds, fences, cabins (three: Albert Park, Little Elk and Goulding Creek). The Colorado State

Land Board has approximately 2,570 acres of mineral interest that underlies Forest Service surface ownership within the Hermosa CRA. Mining development is found off of Sharkstooth Trail. Portions of the area in and around the La Plata Mountains are mineralized and have current ongoing prospecting and mining operations. Mineral potential for the Hermosa Drainage portion is low and there are no known mineral development activities. The southernmost extensions of the roadless area into the high peaks of the La Plata Mountains, south of Kennebec Pass, contain a number of patented mining claims. There are currently no oil and gas leases in the area. There are about 6,970 acres of suitable timber lands in the roadless area in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

**4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
141,500	148,100	GIS mapping.

**Lizard Head Adjacent (5,800 acres)**

**1. Description**

This CRA is adjacent to the southern boundary of the existing Lizard Head Wilderness, west of Colorado Highway 145 near Lizard Head Pass, on the Dolores Ranger District in Dolores County. The current roadless area consists of approximately 5,000 acres immediately south of the present wilderness boundary and north of Colorado Highway 145. The area is accessible via Colorado Highway 145, NFSR 535 (West Dolores Road), and NFSR 611 (Black Mesa Road). The following trails access the area: NFST 637 (Cross Mountain Trail), 203 (Kill Packer Trail), 634, 635 (Navajo Lake Trail), and Burro Bridge Trail. The CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G) with elevations ranging from 9,400 feet, on the West Dolores River, to nearly 11,200 feet near Lizard Head Creek. Toe slopes extend southward from the Mount Wilson massif. The toe slope is only moderately dissected by Slate Creek, Coke Oven Creek, and the West Dolores River (three tributaries to the Dolores River). The geology is of igneous origin resulting when the Wilson Mountains were thrust up through sedimentary formations. The soils are the result of the disintegration of the Mancos shale, Dakota sandstone, and McElmo sedimentary and vary from clay to sandy loam. Most of the soils are shallow and easily eroded. Spruce-fir is the only significant overstory vegetative type. Riparian habitat and open grassy meadows are the other predominant site types. There are isolated patches of aspen in the West Dolores River drainage.

**2. Roadless Characteristics**

Wildlife species that may inhabit the area are those that are common and typically found in the Southern Rocky Mountains. Diversity in wildlife habitat is high because the roadless area is a narrow band with a variety of meadow and forest types. Coke Oven Creek and Slate Creek have marginal fishery value and will probably not be locations for future fishery habitat projects. Little Fish Creek and Meadow Creek are marginal because of their steep gradients and low flows. This CRA provides potential habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened). The area provides a scenic foreground view of colorful aspens in fall for motorists traveling along Colorado Highway 145, which is a portion of the San Juan Skyway, a designated scenic byway



and All American Road. Two 14,000 foot peaks, El Diente Peak and Mount Wilson, can be seen from within the roadless area.

Most recreation use is hunting or casual hiking from Highway 145. The area along the highway provides ample opportunity for sledding, backcountry skiing, and snowshoeing in the winter. Mountain-biking is gaining popularity along the Groundhog Stock Drive, as are hiking and horseback-riding. There is dispersed camping next to vehicles along the NFSR 535 (West Dolores Road) and the east side of NFSR 611. The area next to Lizard Head Pass is open to snowmobiling. Roads are closed on the south and west side of Lizard Head CRA. Slate Creek and Meadows areas are closed year-long to motorized vehicle use. Upper Fish Creek is closed in summer to motorized use, but open in winter to snowmobiling. National Forest System lands to the south and west are managed for a wide variety of recreational and commodity uses. The adjacent area on the north side is the Lizard Head Wilderness, managed according to the dictates of the 1980 Wilderness Act. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). There are approximately 400 acres of Forest Plan management area 10D, Wild and Scenic River Corridor, within the CRA adjacent to the West Dolores River. The West Dolores was not found to be suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation in the draft revised Forest Plan. The few cultural resource surveys conducted in the area have identified isolated lithic artifacts and lithic scatters. There is a moderate to high likelihood of cultural resources occurring in meadows and along drainages. In densely forested areas and on steep slopes the probability of cultural resource finds is low. There are no known areas of interest that any tribes may have under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. There is aspen art along the Groundhog Stock Drive.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

Inactive sheep allotments are in the area. Livestock developments in the area include stock ponds, fences, and the stock driveway. The area has low to moderate potential of locatable mineral. It has moderate potential for geothermal, uranium, oil and gas, and coal. There are no existing oil and gas leases within the Lizard Head adjacent roadless area. The Slate Creek and Meadows portions of the area are outside suitable timber base in 1992 Plan Amendment. The Upper Fish Creek portion is identified as suitable for commercial timber harvest. There are about 750 acres of suitable timber lands in the Lizard Head adjacent roadless area in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
5,300	5,800	GIS mapping.

## **Piedra Area Adjacent (40,800 acres)**

### **1. Description**

The Piedra Area adjacent CRA is in two Ranger Districts, Columbine and Pagosa. It consists of unroaded parcels that are adjacent to the Piedra Area (a 60,340 acre area designated in the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993 to be managed to preserve its wilderness character, but not included in the National Wilderness Preservation System). The area is bounded by 16 National Forest System Roads and a number of roads located in the large block of private land

known as the Piedra Valley Ranch. The number of Forest System trails that access and serve the area are too numerous to list. The area borders other National Forest System lands and private holdings. It shares a common boundary with the Weminuche Wilderness, between the Pine River Valley and Granite Peak, on its northwest end.

The CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G) with elevations ranging from 6,800 feet, along the Piedra River, to over 12,000 feet near Granite Peak. The east side of the area is characterized by south-facing slopes that are deeply dissected by the Piedra River and associated drainages. A few isolated plateau-like areas are scattered throughout. The Piedra River is the dominant drainage feature of the area, while the Pine River and East Creek share the far western side of the roadless area. Except for the slopes of Granite Peak and the First Box Canyon, the geology of the area consists of a sequence of sedimentary rock layers overlying the pre-Cambrian basement of granite and quartzite.

The vegetation of the area varies with elevation. Coniferous vegetation occurs in over 70% of the area. Aspen stands cover approximately 25% of the area. The conifers include Douglas-fir, spruce, white fir, and ponderosa pine. These forest stands are interspersed with grasses, rock, or riparian vegetation. Browse species such as oak and serviceberry are represented in only a few scattered areas, mostly at lower elevations. Significant stands of old-growth ponderosa pine are located along the Piedra River in the southeast portion of the Piedra Area Adjacent roadless area. Such a large expanse of undisturbed, lower-elevation forest is rare in the Rocky Mountains.

## **2. Roadless Characteristics**

The diversity of vegetation types present provides optimal wildlife habitat for many species including Forest Service sensitive species such as northern goshawk, flammulated owl, olive-sided flycatcher, American marten, and boreal owl. A Colorado Division of Wildlife survey identified the Piedra's western forests as potential habitat for lynx based on snowshoe hare populations. The mixed conifer, aspen, spruce-fir, and oak vegetation types provide summer and fall habitat for numerous species including: mule deer, elk, black bear, and mountain lion. The forests of Piedra comprise an important elk migration corridor between winter range in oak and pinyon-juniper woodlands along the lower Piedra and summer range in the adjacent Weminuche Wilderness and in the headwaters of Piedra River tributaries. The First Fork drainage is a critical migration corridor for wintering big game animals. During severe winters these animals use the First Fork corridor to migrate south to critical winter ranges around the HD Mountains. Preliminary results from a mule deer radio-collar study, conducted jointly with the CDOW and Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT), have verified the existence and importance of this corridor.

Similarly, East Creek and the First Fork of the Piedra have unique and significant wildlife values. The Missionary Ridge fire in 2002 burned into East Creek and altered the habitat greatly, increasing the amount and quality of forage for a variety of herbivores. It has become especially attractive to wintering elk herds and provides high quality transitional range for many animals. The Missionary Ridge fire created a mosaic pattern of burned and unburned areas. This habitat diversity provides high quality habitat for a variety of bird and small mammal species. Cavity nesting birds, in particular, have responded favorably to the change. An expanding Merriam's turkey population is increasing each year. The Piedra River contains river otters (state threatened species and Forest Service sensitive species). Sightings have been reported in the

drainage. In addition, evidence of otter reproduction has been found in the Williams Creek drainage, near the identified roadless area. Most of the larger streams in this roadless area provide fishing opportunities. Some of the major streams for fishing are East Creek, Mosca Creek, Coldwater Creek, First Fork, Sand Creek, Weminuche Creek, and the Piedra River. Creeks with marginal fisheries include West Prong, Red Creek, Clear Creek, and Trout Creek. Fisheries habitat improvement projects have occurred on East Creek and the Piedra River.

Key attractions to the area include Coldwater Creek, Devils Hole, and NFST 600/601 (Devil Mountain Trail). There are no significant human imprints other than evidence of hunting camps and similar recreational activities in the roadless additions around Devil Creek and the upper Piedra. A full spectrum of recreational opportunities and activities is available and enjoyed by many users. A trail system provides foot and horse access throughout the area, while leaving plenty of escape and hiding cover for wildlife.

On the Columbine District portion of the CRA, motorized recreation is available in the form of several roads and ATV trails immediately adjacent to the CRA; one motorized trail is within the CRA (698 Bear Creek). Winter snowmobile use is popular both in and adjacent to the CRA. The upper end of the First Fork Trail (538) beginning at Beaver Meadows is included within one large adjacent roadless addition to the west. This trail is popular with backcountry horseback riders and during hunting season, and is not open to ATVs.

On the Pagosa portion of the CRA, NFST 596 (Piedra River Trail) is closed year round to mechanized recreation (mountain bikes). In the southeast, NFST 600, 654, and 582 all receive regular motorized use. Trails 601, 603, 604 and 654 are currently being considered for motorized trail designation. A decision regarding their designation is expected in October 2011. In addition, approximately 2 miles of new motorized trail may also be constructed, pending the October 2011 decision. The upper Piedra River Trail is popular with anglers downstream of the Piedra picnic ground in the eastern roadless addition. The remote setting and complex terrain requires wilderness skill and navigational skill. A very short (400 feet) motorized section of the Piedra Stock Driveway (NFST) runs along the eastern boundary of the CRA.

This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). There are approximately 1,200 acres of Forest Plan management area 10-D, Wild and Scenic River Corridors, adjacent to the Piedra River, within the CRA, with many more acres within the congressionally designated Piedra Area. The CRA is within a 10-mile radius of a mandatory Class I airshed (Weminuche Wilderness) as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. One significant aboriginal camp has been identified in this CRA. Other camps may be discovered in the area, although it is unlikely that finds will be numerous or that any structural ruins exist. Inventories have recorded numerous cultural resource properties consisting primarily of isolated artifacts, lithic scatters, and some mixed artifacts. Historic properties include Ute Scarred Trees, aspen art, historic stock driveways, and logging sites.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

There are epidemic levels of Douglas-fir beetle on the east side of the Piedra River near the headwaters of the West Fork of Devil Creek which continue to kill large old Douglas-fir in this CRA. The current level of livestock-grazing is expected to continue with only the ranching economy causing any major changes. Existing range improvements will be maintained. The Colorado State Land Board has approximately 670 acres of mineral interest that underlies Forest

Service surface ownership within the Piedra Area Adjacent CRA. The potential for significant development of locatable and leasable minerals in the area is relatively low. This is evidenced in part by the historic low level of exploration activity. Several lease tracts have been applied for, but no leases have been issued and no geophysical exploration activity has been proposed. The areas lie north of the Fruitland outcrop, which is generally considered the northern extent of prospective coal-bed methane deposits. At the lowest end of the adjacent area, there is low potential for conventional gas. There are currently no existing oil or gas leases in the area, but there is moderate potential for oil and gas development in the area. In the areas where timber harvest has occurred, there are opportunities for additional wildlife habitat improvement projects. Some fisheries habitat improvement projects are planned for East Creek, but these will be hand-constructed and will not modify the roadless character. Old fisheries habitat surveys recommend placing log structures near the mouths of Mosca and Coldwater Creeks. The Piedra Area Adjacent contains about 17,760 acres of suitable timber lands in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

**4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
53,900	Piedra Area Adjacent - 40,800 and part of Graham Park (17,800)	Timber sales, gas exploration, and GIS mapping.

**Runlett Park (5,600 acres)**

**1. Description**

Located on the Columbine Ranger District on the San Juan National Forest, Runlett Park’s northeast boundary abuts the Weminuche Wilderness. The rest of the irregular-shaped boundary is adjacent to other National Forest System lands and private lands in the lower Pine River drainage below the wilderness. The area is surrounded on two sides by the NFSR 602 (Pine River Road) and on the third, non-wilderness side, by NFSR 724 (Middle Mountain Road). National Forest System motorized trails 530 (Runlett Park) and 814 (Dark Canyon) serve the area. This CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecosession (M331G), with elevations ranging from 8,000 feet, near the Pine River’s entry into Vallecito Reservoir, and 11,288 feet at the summit of Runlett Peak. The soils are varied but all are subject to erosion. Along the west side of Middle Mountain are deep slumped soils. The overstory vegetation in the area consists of ponderosa pine at the lower end and spruce-fir on the higher elevations of Runlett Peak. The mid elevations are forested by the mixed conifer type that is prevalent on the San Juan National Forest in the mid elevations. The bottom (southern) third of the area was burned in the Missionary Ridge Fire of 2002.

**2. Roadless Characteristics**

As a result of the Missionary Ridge fire, this CRA offers a variety of understory vegetation, providing high quality forage for herbivores and habitat diversity for a variety of bird and small mammal species. The cliffs below Runlett Park are critical winter range for the Pine River bighorn sheep. This herd of sheep is one of the historical, original, herds in the state. When the animals are pushed out of the high mountains in the Weminuche Wilderness Area because of

deep snow, these south facing cliff sides are critical for winter survival. Research has shown that bighorns do not respond well to human disturbance. The roadless nature of the area is essential for their survival. For many years, peregrine falcons have nested on the cliffs below Runlet Park. The nests usually produce two or more chicks a year. Breeding peregrines are sensitive to human disturbance and therefore dependent on the roadless qualities of the CRA. This CRA provides habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened). The Lynx Recovery Project has released lynx near Runlet Park because of the high numbers of snowshoe hare in the area. Lynx are often located in the vicinity as part of the on-going lynx monitoring associated with the recovery effort.

The area serves as a scenic backdrop for the scenery around Vallecito Reservoir. The primary recreation uses are hunting and hiking. The quality forage and wildlife habitat in the CRA in turn provides for quality backcountry big game hunting experiences. Outfitters use the area for day rides and big-game hunting. This CRA is adjacent to a Mandatory Class I airshed, as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. It borders the Weminuche Wilderness. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). Only two historic sites relating to mining activities are known to occur in the area. Few surveys have been conducted in the area. It is likely that additional sites could occur in open parks and meadows along the drainage.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

This area contains active allotments with small facilities such as stock ponds and fences. Potential mineral activity appears to be minimal even though there was some historic mining activity in the general area. There are no oil and gas leases in the area. There are 2,267 acres of suitable timber lands within the area.

### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
5,000	5,600	GIS mapping.

## **Ryman (8,700 acres)**

### **1. Description**

The Ryman CRA covers steep slopes and canyons on the east side of the Dolores River, between Scotch Creek and Roaring Fork. The CRA is administered by the Dolores Ranger District. Most of the area is located in Montezuma County, with about 600 or 700 acres in Dolores County. Its western boundary parallels the Dolores River, with its northern and southern boundaries paralleling the Scotch Creek and Roaring Fork roads. The eastern boundary is along the past timber-sale areas at the top of the Roaring Fork Road. The area is generally surrounded by Colorado Highway 145, NFSR 550 (Scotch Creek Road), and NFSR 435 (Roaring Fork Road). NFST 735 (Ryman) and 559 (Salt Creek) provide access to and through the area for recreation use. This CRA is within South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G) with elevations ranging from 8,200 ft, near the confluence of Roaring Fork and the Dolores River, to 10,200 ft near the headwaters of Ryman creek. The area is generally composed of steep slopes originating out of the Dolores River and the Hermosa drainage. These slopes, that form the Dolores River Valley, are highly dissected with side drainages that have formed steep-gradient

stream bottoms. The vegetation of the unit is of a mixed conifer type with ponderosa-aspen mix in the lower elevations and aspen-white fir mix at the upper end. There are pockets of Douglas-fir and spruce growth which is dependent on the exposure. The parent geology of the area is of a sedimentary origin. The soils are varied between shallow and deep, but are consistently unstable.

**2. Roadless Characteristics**

Wildlife species inhabiting the area are typical of wildlife found in the Southern Rocky Mountains. There is a good animal species mix because of the varied habitats created by the extent and variety of understory vegetation. Fish improvements have been made on Ryman Creek. This CRA supports a significant population of elk year round. Elk use decreases during the winter months. Elk calving areas in aspen/moist meadow habitats are found throughout the CRA. The area also provides important mule deer fawning areas and habitat during the spring, summer, and fall. Black bear and mountain lion use the area along with a variety of small mammals and birds, Merriam’s turkey and blue grouse. Hunting and hiking are the primary dispersed recreational uses in the area. Snowshoeing, backcountry skiing, and mountain-biking occur on the Ryman Trail. Upper Ryman is open to motorized use (motorcycle). Portions of the area contribute to the scenic enjoyment of visitors driving along the Scotch Creek and Roaring Fork roads. Snowmobiling use is limited and is not an issue in this CRA. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). Previous cultural resource surveys in the adjacent area resulted in the location of only a few sites. These sites included lithics, lithic scatters, and some isolated artifacts located in meadows. There is a moderate to high likelihood of additional sites being present in meadows, along drainages, and near permanent water sources. The likelihood is lower for the steep slopes and dense tree-covered areas. There are no known areas of interest that any tribes may have under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

**3. Current Conditions and Uses**

There has been a watershed project (fish project) in Ryman Creek but its development did not affect the roadless character of the area. There are no other planned developments and projects for any of the National Forest resources in this area. There is no potential for locatable minerals or leasable coal in this area. Potential for oil and gas development is also low. There are no existing oil and gas leases. There are about 900 acres of suitable timber lands in the roadless area in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

**4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
7,400	8,700	GIS mapping.

**San Miguel (64,300 acres)**

**1. Description**

This area is located in seven townships in San Juan County west of Silverton. Its irregular boundary defines a large area that borders Bureau of Land Management lands west of Silverton, and National Forest System lands along the rugged divide between the San Juan National Forest and the Uncompahgre National Forest. The western and southern parts of the

boundary include lands along the upper Dolores River, Greysill Mountain, Engineer Mountain, and Sultan Mountain. This CRA is adjacent to the Hope Lake CRA (8,200 acres) on the Uncompahgre National Forest. Points along the following open roads are within one-quarter mile of the roadless area: Colorado Highways 145 and 550, NFSR 578 (Hermosa Park), 578.B (Tin Can Basin), 579 (Cascade Divide), 580 (Relay Creek), 584 (Little Molas), 585 (South Mineral), 590 (Andrews Lake), 679 (Ophir Pass), 783 (Cascade Creek), and 815 (Ice Lake). The area is accessible and served by the following National Forest System Trails (NFST): 500 (Pass Creek), 505 (Ice Lake), 506 (Graysill), 507 (Colorado Trail, Rico-Silverton segment), 508 (Engineer Mt.), 510 (Cascade Creek), 555 (Colorado Trail, Twin Sisters segment), 623 (Crater Lake), 638 (East Fork), 657 (Engine Creek), 677 (Coal Creek), 678 (Deer Creek), and 679 (W. Lime Creek). Parts of several of the trails are now included as a portion of the Colorado Trail. This CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G) with elevations ranging from 9,600 feet near Cayton Campground, to 13,752 feet at the summit of San Miguel Peak. A variety of geological processes formed the high mountain peaks and broad expanses of open rolling alpine tundra areas of the San Miguel roadless area. Glaciers carved deep U-shaped valleys and exposed numerous vertical cliffs. There are numerous peaks over 12,000 feet and three peaks over 13,000 feet. This area is characterized by many summits above 13,000 feet in elevation with many alpine lakes in between the cliffs. The area has a great variety of exposed surface geology and numerous soil types that are shallow and deep; eroding or stable. This CRA is characterized by aspen forests on lower slopes (e.g., around Cascade Creek) and spruce and fir forests on the western side around Sheep Mountain and Lizard Head Pass. However, most of the area is above treeline. The Lime Creek forest fire in 1879 left stumps and skeletal trees. Vegetation types vary with aspect and elevation. The forested areas are predominantly spruce and fir in the elevations near treeline and the mixed conifer type in the lower valleys with white fir, Douglas fir, and aspen. Above treeline, the alpine shrubs and forbs dominate. They are punctuated with rock points, mountain peaks and rock cliffs.

## **2. Roadless Characteristics**

The spruce-fir forests and high mountain meadows provide important habitat for numerous wildlife species. The area has been mapped as important calving, summer, and transitional habitat for elk. Mule deer use the area as summer range, migrating from winter ranges as far away as Montrose, Telluride, and Durango. The area is mapped as historical habitat and overall range for bighorn sheep. This CRA provides potential habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened). The Lynx's Recovery Project has released lynx in and around Silverton because of the high numbers of snowshoe hare. Lynx use, documented by radio telemetry data, includes travel between Silverton and Telluride. Due to the concentration of big game prey species, the area is important mountain lion habitat. Pine marten have been found in the San Miguel area and are currently listed as a USFS sensitive species. The USFS increased monitoring efforts in 2005 to help determine population viability across the San Juan National Forest. Two wild Colorado cutthroat trout populations live in waters within the San Miguel roadless area; Deep Creek, from headwaters to confluence with the San Miguel River and Elk Creek, from headwaters to confluence with Fall Creek.

Ice Lake Basin, Engineer Mountain, and Grizzly Peak are just some of the scenic features the area has to offer. Key attractions include trails to Engineer Mountain and Ice Lake Basin; and a 20-mile segment of the Colorado Trail. The CRA contains a proposed Research Natural Area in the draft revised Forest Plan, Grizzly Peak, in the northwest portion of roadless area. It is

proposed as a RNA for its tufted hairgrass, wet spruce-fir forest and alpine vegetation on large areas of shale geology. Because of its large size and spectacular scenery, the area provides a wide variety of recreation including hiking and backpacking in isolated areas to motor-biking along trails. Multiple uses of the National Forest System lands surrounding the area include a wide spectrum of uses from primitive activities to downhill skiing and helicopter skiing. Most of the area on the Dolores District is open for motorized travel and includes snowmobiling (Tin Can Basin) and ATV use. Big-game hunting outfitters and guides use the area. Within the Columbine District, most of the area is closed to motorized recreation other than during the winter. Snowmobiling use occurs in the extreme southwest corner of the area near Bolam Pass and around Little Molas Lake. There are groomed snowmobile routes on the east side by Molas Lake within the CRA. Sno-Cat skiing occurs around Cascade Divide. Heli-skiing also occurs in the CRA. Mountain-bike use occurs on the Colorado Trail and trails feeding into it. The trail up Engineer Mountain is one of the busiest on the Columbine District. Hunting and big-game outfitters use the area. The Little Molas and South Mineral areas have recreation campgrounds and power lines which were cherry-stemmed out of the CRA.

This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). Municipal watershed structure for Silverton is located in the northeast corner of the area. From Grizzly Peak RNA evaluation (1996): The CRA is within a 10-mile radius of a mandatory Class I airshed (Weminuche Wilderness) as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. Three archeological sites and one historic locality are known from Grizzly Peak, including an open camp, two concentrations of stone tool chips, and an abandoned piece of mining machinery. Cultural resource inventories in the area have identified a number of artifact sites. Most prehistoric sites are lithic scatters and the historic sites include Ute Scarred Trees, historic mining features, and segments of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad. Many of these cultural resource properties may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

There is an active sheep and livestock allotment within the CRA and there are livestock reservoirs in the area. There are no other Forest Service recreation developments or wildlife habitat improvement projects planned. The area immediately north of Durango Mountain Ski Area has been inventoried as an expansion area for the ski area. There is some potential for cabins being built on patented mines. Unplanned impacts to the area could result from access roads and utility corridors if the private lands were to be developed. Impacts to the larger landscape include: a jeep road accessing a 320-acre private inholding (Lodge) near Sheep Mountain used by the landowner, an abandoned Jeep trail leading into headwaters of South Mineral Creek, and a hiking trail to Hope Lake overlook.

The Colorado State Land Board has approximately 560 acres of mineral interest that underlies Forest Service surface ownership within the San Miguel CRA. There is low to no potential for oil, gas, or coal. There are no existing oil and gas leases within the San Miguel roadless area. Overall, the area is highly mineralized and could experience a resurgence of hard-rock mining activity. Numerous patented mining claims in high valleys have large portions that are underlain by shale, sandstone, limestone, and other sedimentary strata lacking in potential for hard-rock minerals. The northern portions of the unit contain more volcanic rocks. The Mineral Creek drainage was the focus of historic mining activities. From the Grizzly Peak RNA evaluation (1996): Grizzly Peak occurs in an area of concentrated historic mining activity. There



are no active mines or mining claims within the potential RNA boundaries. The Graysill Mine, an abandoned gold works, is located 0.5 miles (0.8 km) south of the boundary near Bolam Pass. Tin Can and East Flattop are in the suitable base for timber. Previous timber sales proposed for the slopes of Sheep Mountain in mature and old-growth spruce-fir generated intense public controversy. It is anticipated any future timber sales proposed for the roadless forests within San Miguel would result in similar public controversy. There is no ecological need to manipulate these forests through mechanical means. There are 2,523 acres of suitable timber lands in the roadless area in the current Forest Plan, non in the draft revised Forest Plan.

#### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
58,100	64,300	GIS mapping, 90 acres within Durango Mountain Ski Area permit boundary were removed.

### **South San Juan Adjacent (34,900 acres)**

#### **1. Description**

The area borders the Continental Divide and the Rio Grande National Forest on the north and east, the large Banded Peaks Ranch on the south, and mixed National Forest System lands and private lands on the west. This CRA is adjacent to the South San Juan Wilderness. It is administered by the Pagosa Ranger District. The area is one-quarter mile or closer to 13 National Forest System roads and Highway 160. The area is accessible and served by a large Forest trail system. As a result of historic livestock use in the area, nearly every drainage has a trail leading from a road into the area and then connecting with other trails in the area. These CRAs are within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G), with elevations ranging from 7,600 feet, on the Blanco River, to 13,300 feet at Summit Peak. The physical characteristics of this roadless area vary from open rolling terrain to the spectacular vertical cliffs and peaks of the rugged mountains along the Continental Divide. The areas water courses include numerous streams and rivers, all of which are tributaries of the San Juan or Navajo rivers. The highly dissected valleys contain a large variety of surface geology and soil types.

The wide range of elevation, slope, aspect, and soil types have resulted in an extremely complex mixture of vegetation communities. However, the southern portion of the roadless area contains one of Colorado’s largest and oldest stands of aspen trees, making it an outstanding fall color viewing area on the San Juan National Forest. Pine and oak are the dominant vegetation types at the lower elevations. As elevation increases, a transition to mixed conifer occurs and then on to a fir-aspen complex. Douglas-fir is found on the northern aspects throughout the mixed conifer type. The higher elevations near the tree line have spruce-fir forests with the alpine tundra above. Interspersed throughout the forested areas are open grassland parks and occasional wet meadows. The area has a great variety of exposed surface geology and numerous soil types that are shallow to moderately deep and mostly subject to erosion.

#### **2. Roadless Characteristics**

This area contains numerous wildlife species native to the Southern Rocky Mountains. Some of the unique and interesting species are the white-tailed ptarmigan and bighorn sheep.

Economic game animals such as deer, elk, and bear are abundant. The wide variety of understory vegetation in the mixed conifer forest type coupled with the many different combinations of overstory tree species results in high-quality habitat for many animal species. This area is used heavily by deer and elk in the spring, summer, and fall. Merriam's turkeys are prominent throughout the CRA. Mountain lion is also common to the area. Black bear rely on the Gambel oak found along the western and southern end of this roadless area. This CRA provides potential habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened). Fisheries include the headwaters of Blanco River, Quartz Creek, Castle Creek, and Sand Creek.

Primary recreation uses include hunting, hiking, hobby gold-panning and scenic viewing. The fall color season enhances the scenic vistas of this roadless area. A small portion of this CRA is within management area 1B, which provides for existing and potential winter sports sites. Management area 1B is found along the northern side of the CRA, just south of the East Fork private land. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). The CRA is within a 10-mile radius of a mandatory Class I airshed (Weminuche Wilderness) as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. Previous cultural resource surveys in this roadless area have identified numerous sites and properties. Prehistoric finds include everything from isolated artifacts to lithic groups. Historic resources and features related to mining and ranching activities and historic aspen art have also been identified in the area. Predicted sensitivity for cultural resource finds is moderate in meadows and along drainages; it is low to moderate in the dense forested areas. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe expressed that the East Fork of the San Juan River has some historic significance to their peoples but they did not elaborate.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

Mortality of Douglas-fir from Douglas-fir beetle is occurring in the northern portion of this CRA, spreading southward from the Treasure Mountain CRA. The area contains active grazing allotments. Two sections of the motorized portion of NFST 577, as well as a short section of the motorized portion of NFST 581, are within this CRA. The east section of the motorized portion of NFST 577 is currently being considered for non-motorized trail designation, as well as NFST 581. A decision regarding their designation is expected in September 2011. This area is separated from the Treasure Mountain roadless area by the Elwood Pass Road, which contains a buried natural gas line. The potential for a significant mineral discovery is high. A portion of the CRA contains oil and gas leases. Oil and gas exploration activities can be considered probable. Low potential for coal development exists in the southwestern one-third of the area. Fifteen oil and gas leases exist in the area and drilling activities are expected in this decade. The majority of the mineralized areas are located in the portion of the roadless area that was not designated for wilderness. There are about 2,630 acres of suitable timber lands in the roadless area in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft proposed Forest Plan.

**4. Alternative Designations**

2001 Inventory Acres	Colorado Roadless Area Acres	Reasons for the Change
51,300	South San Juan Adjacent - 34,900 Winter Hills/Serviceberry Mountain - 5,100 Total = 40,000	Change in inventory after South San Juan Wilderness Bill. These areas were combined.

**Storm Peak (57,600 acres)**

**1. Description**

The Storm Peak roadless area is located in Montezuma and Dolores counties. The area is located in portions of nine townships near the center of the Dolores Ranger District. The northwestern boundary roughly parallels the West Dolores River except for setbacks to exclude the Stoner Mesa and Eagle Creek roads. Where the boundary drops down to the Dolores River near Cayton Campground, it turns and meanders southeast along the Dolores River, except for setbacks to exclude the roaded areas around Rico and on Taylor Mesa. Access points to the CRA occur along the following roads and are within one-quarter mile or less of the roadless area boundary: NFSR 535,686,471,545,692,547, 538, and Colorado Highway 145. The following trails access or serve the area: Calico National Recreation Trail 208, NFST 207, 639, 640, 641, 645, 739, 200, 102, 639, 644, 648, 660, 633, 625, 208,640,648,626,624,627, 729, 738, 200, Stoner Mesa Trail, and School House 660 Trails (all non-motorized). This CRA falls within two Eco sections, the northern part is within the South-Central Highlands Ecosection (M331G) and the southwestern corner is within the Northern Canyon Lands (341B). The area’s elevation ranges from 7,400 feet, near the confluence of the two Dolores Rivers, up to 12,340 feet at the Elliott Mountain summit in the Stoner Mesa roadless portion. The area has a variety of topographic features including: mountain peaks, mesas, deep canyons, steep valley slopes, and rolling high country. It is highly dissected by numerous streams that are tributary to the Dolores and West Dolores Rivers. The area is characterized by Stoner Mesa, its sloping sides, and the Stoner Creek valley. The area is bounded on the west by the Dolores River and contains various creeks and draws such as Stoner Creek.

Geology of the area is manifested by rock outcrops and cliffs of both sedimentary and igneous origin. The soil types vary widely and run the full range of instability to stable and shallow to deep. Vegetation varies according to elevation and exposure. Typically, ponderosa pine and Gambel oak growth occur in the lower country and mixed conifer is found in the mid elevations. There are nine or more mountain peaks that have spruce and fir. There are limited amounts of alpine tundra. In the Stoner Mesa area aspen forests and ponderosa pine and oak brush are found at lower elevations. Spruce, aspen, and fir are found at higher elevations. Blue spruce occurs occasionally, particularly along streams and the steep slopes below Stoner Mesa’s rim. The area below the west rim of Taylor Mesa offers pure stands of uncut aspen.

**2. Roadless Characteristics**

Wildlife species found in this area are typical of those found in the Southern Rocky Mountains. The large number of vegetative types has created an extremely diverse habitat.

Mountain lions, black bears, elk, and mule deer utilize the CRA. This CRA provides habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened). Radio telemetry data shows that Canada lynx also occupy the Storm Peak area. The CDOW is evaluating Storm Peak as a potential release sight for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep as it provides necessary habitat requirements. Elk use the area during the spring, summer, and fall. In winter their use is restricted to south facing slopes and is dependent upon winter snow depths. Given the size of the Storm Peak CRA and the number of south facing slopes, even winter use can be significant. A wild population of pure native Colorado River cutthroat trout exists in the lower end of Little Taylor Creek. The entire drainage is designated as cutthroat habitat by Colorado Division of Wildlife's regulations. Additional populations of pure native cutthroat trout may exist in other waters within the CRA.

Approximately 1,550 acres of the CRA adjacent to the West Dolores River are within Forest Plan management area 10D, Wild and Scenic River Corridors. The West Dolores was not found to be suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation in the draft revised Forest Plan. There are six or seven stock reservoirs scattered across Stoner Mesa. Several of these blend closely into the environment and are almost indistinguishable from natural Stoner Lake. The others have obviously constructed earthen berms, but these six or seven stock ponds are widely scattered across the mesa and are usually screened by dense aspen forest. There also exist several range fences crossing the mesa from rim to rim, which are also well screened.

Recreational activities include: hiking, backpacking, horse packing, hunting, and fishing. The area is used for backcountry skiing and the northern portion is used by snowmobiles. Recreation outfitters use the area for big-game hunting and packing services, horseback-riding, and fishing. There are a number of trails which provide for a diverse travel-related recreational opportunity. The area contains the Calico National Recreation Trail, which was the first National Recreation Trail designated on the San Juan National Forest. It follows the ridgeline from the Dolores River to Storm Peak and continues on through spruce forests to Morrison Creek. The area also includes the NFST 645 (Priest Gulch Trail) and the upper end of NFST 624 (Stoner Mesa Trail). The Calico Trail and Priest Gulch Trail are open to motorized recreation use. The Stoner Mesa Trail runs the length of the mesa and the Eagle Peak Trail parallels Stoner Creek. A majority of trails are suitable for motorized use. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). The many cultural resource surveys in or about the area have located and identified numerous sites consisting of isolated lithics, lithic scatters, some ground stones, historic aspen art, and habitation structures. Many of these sites are likely to be eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. There is a moderate to high likelihood of additional sites occurring in open parks and meadows, along drainages, and on level areas near permanent water sources. The likelihood of sites occurring on steep slopes and in dense timber is low to moderate. There are no known areas of interest that any tribes may have under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

Access to approximately 17 private land holdings could impact roadless characteristics. The Colorado State Land Board has approximately 15 acres of mineral interest that underlies Forest Service surface ownership within the Storm Peak CRA. The Department of Energy shows that about 60 percent of the area may contain nuclear mineral resources. The area also contains known geothermal and locatable minerals. There are existing mineral leases within the area. Patented mining claims dot the Horse Creek watershed west of Rico. Oil and gas development

potential is low and there are no existing oil and gas leases in the roadless area. There is an existing oil lease on Taylor Mesa. All previous timber sales were removed in the new inventory. Suitable timber lands total approximately 5,600 acres in the CRA in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

#### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
49,400	57,600	GIS mapping.

### **Treasure Mountain (22,500 acres)**

#### **1. Description**

This roadless area is located in portions of seven townships, lying east of Highway 160, between the East Fork drainage and Wolf Creek. It is administered by the Pagosa Ranger District. Its southern boundary parallels the East Fork Road from the West Fork Valley up along Elwood Creek to the Continental Divide near Elwood Pass. The eastern leg of the northern boundary follows along the Continental Divide between Elwood and Treasure Pass. The northern boundary drops down along the timber sale areas along the highway on the west side of Wolf Creek Pass. Points along the following roads are within one-quarter mile of the roadless area: Highway 160, NFSR 667 (East Fork), 039 (Falls Creek), and 725 (Wolf Creek Road). The area can also be reached along the Continental Divide from the Rio Grande National Forest side via NFSR 388, 390/391, and 380 (Elwood Pass). The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail skirts the east side of the area. The area is accessible and served by the following National Forest System trails (NFST): 565, 566, 567 and 845. This CRA falls within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G), with elevations ranging from 8,400, near the confluence of the east and west forks of the San Juan River, to 12,000 feet along the Continental Divide. A prominent ridge descends westward from the Continental Divide with a few high points that are not individual mountains. The area is dissected by seven named tributaries to the forks of the San Juan River, creating an undulating southern exposure of the East Fork. The northern exposure of the Wolf Creek drainage is much steeper with little diversity in its geomorphologic form. The area has a great variety of exposed surface geology and numerous soil types that are shallow to moderately deep and mostly subject to erosion. Vegetation varies with elevation and exposure. On the higher slopes of the southern exposures the dominant cover is spruce and fir. On the mid to lower slopes the mixed conifer type, with aspen, is the predominant cover. The slopes of the northern exposure are nearly all covered with spruce-fir that is punctuated with an occasional cliff or rock outcrop. Near the higher elevations in the Elwood Pass area there are a number of open grassy parks.

#### **2. Roadless Characteristics**

The mixed-conifer forest offers a diversity of wildlife habitat for an equally diverse number of wildlife species. Wildlife species inhabiting the area are typical of the Southern Rocky Mountains. The CRA is heavily used by elk and deer in the spring, summer, and fall months. The area provides a migration corridor from east to west. Black bear, elk, and yellow-bellied marmot are abundant. There are some fishing opportunities in Wolf Creek and the East Fork of the San Juan River. The area contains an active eyrie of peregrine falcon on its west side. This CRA

provides potential habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened). This is the location of historic evidence of Canada lynx occurrence in the San Juan. This area is part of the Canada lynx linkage area between the South San Juan and Weminuche Wilderness Areas. A lynx track was identified in the East Fork in the early 1990s.

The area is adjacent to the Wolf Creek Ski Area, Elwood Pass four-wheel-drive route, and the Wolf Creek Pass highway corridor. These adjoining areas are managed for their recreation and scenic attributes. Under the 2011 Wolf Creek Ski Area master plan proposal, Wolf Creek Ski Area is proposing to expand into portions of this CRA. In addition, the Continental Divide runs through the area. The area is managed for semi-primitive non-motorized recreational opportunities. Dispersed activities are mostly land-based because the streams do not provide any measurable fishing. Most use, other than big-game hunting, occurs as day-use activities from points along the roadless area border. During the winter months the area around Treasure Mountain is heavily used by snowmobile riders from the top of Wolf Creek Pass and the old Wolf Creek timber access roads. The CRA has two trails open to motorized use and primarily used by motorcycles, NFST 566 (Windy Pass) and 565 (Treasure Mountain). This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). The CRA is within a 10-mile radius of a mandatory Class I airshed (Weminuche Wilderness) as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. Previous cultural resource inventories have resulted in some small limited lithic finds. The area is more known for its historic lore of the “Lost Treasure” for which the area was named. Based on the Forest Cultural Resources model and data from surveys in surrounding areas, there is a good chance of additional lithic finds occurring in open parks/meadows and along drainages.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

Epidemic levels of Douglas-fir beetle are killing concentrations of large, old Douglas-fir at the head of south-facing drainages above the East Fork. In the higher elevation forests near Treasure Mountain, as of 2011, epidemic levels of spruce beetle had killed up to 90% of mature Engelmann spruce. The area contains active grazing allotments and a few facilities such as livestock ponds and fences. Motorized portions of trails NFST 565 and 566 occur within this CRA. NFST 566 is currently being considered for non-motorized trail designation. A decision regarding its designation is expected in September 2011. There are no existing oil and gas leases within the Treasure Mountain roadless area. The potential for oil and gas development is high to moderate. There is high potential for hard-rock mining in the Elwood Pass area southwest of Summitville. One timber sale, in 1984, affected the area since the RARE II analysis. The Falls Creek timber sale modified the roadless character of approximately 80 acres. No permanent roads were constructed for this sale. In addition, the roadless area boundary was originally drawn around a portion of the old Falls Creek timber sale areas which actually have about 640 acres that included old logging roads and clearcut areas prior to the RARE II designation. The area contains about 60 acres suitable for timber production in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
20,900	22,500	GIS mapping.

## **Turkey Creek (25,300 acres)**

### **1. Description**

Turkey Creek is located in Mineral and Archuleta counties. Roads adjacent to the area include: Highway 160, NFSR 648 (West Fork Road), 645 (Fourmile Road), 646, 037, and 738. NFST 580 accesses the area and is the only trail bisecting the roadless area and continuing into the Weminuche Wilderness, which borders the CRA. This CRA falls within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G) with elevations ranging from 7,600 feet, near the mouth of Turkey Creek, to 12,137 feet at the summit of Eagle Peak No.2. Another prominent mountain peak and well-known landmark in the Pagosa Springs area is Saddle Mountain at 12,033 feet. A highly dissected slope descends from the higher peaks along the Weminuche Wilderness boundary. Turkey Creek and Quien Sabe Creek are the two main drainages and are tributaries of the San Juan River. The geology of the area is a variety of Quaternary Period deposits and is fairly unstable. The area is marked by many prehistoric slumps and slides. The soils are primarily shale, varying in depth, and considered fairly susceptible to erosion as evidenced by the amount of slips, slides, and gullies. There is a full range of forest cover types represented starting with ponderosa pine in the lower elevations, changing to spruce and fir at the higher elevations. There is some alpine tundra near the summits of Saddle and Eagle peaks. Since the area is generally a southern exposure there is a minimum of tree species that are usually found at comparable elevations on northern exposures.

### **2. Roadless Characteristics**

The varied elevations and topography of this CRA provides a wide array of habitat types from Gambel oak/ponderosa pine woodlands to alpine tundra. In particular, the extent and variety of understory vegetation provides for a large diversity of animal habitats, making the area very rich in all the common fauna species. Animals that inhabit this area are typical of the Southern Rocky Mountains. The area is used extensively by deer and elk in the spring, summer, and fall months. It comprises an important big game migration corridor. Stable populations of Merriam's turkeys are expanding their range here. A healthy population of bighorn sheep is present in the rocky alpine habitat. The CDOW has confirmed that both bald eagle and peregrine falcon nests are within the Turkey Creek CRA or on large, privately owned parcels adjacent to it. This CRA provides potential habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened) and is part of the Canada lynx linkage area between the South San Juan and Weminuche Wilderness area. Lynx presence has been documented by radio telemetry data. Habitat is also available for the wolverine, a Forest Service Sensitive species. This CRA contains a population of pure Colorado River cutthroat trout, a Forest Service sensitive species. Mountain lions rely heavily on prey animals that are abundant in this area. After exiting their dens in the spring, many black bears use the aspen habitat type for spring foraging. In the fall black bears rely on the Gambel oak in the southern edge of the unit as essential forage before hibernation.

A key attraction to the area is Turkey Creek. Recreational use of the area is mostly hiking, horseback-riding, and hunting. Fishing opportunities exist in Turkey Creek. The area is closed to motorized use except for snowmobiling on ungroomed routes. However, a motorized trail (a portion of NFST 580) runs about three miles up Turkey Creek from the trailhead. This CRA is adjacent to a Mandatory Class I airshed as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. It borders the Weminuche Wilderness. This CRA is within a state defined source

water assessment area (municipal water supply). Isolated lithics and lithic scatters do occur. Based on data from surrounding areas, there is a moderate to high likelihood of sites occurring in open parks and meadows, along drainages, and in level areas.

### **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

The area contains active grazing allotments and a number of fences and livestock watering ponds. The southern two-thirds of the area have low potential for coal development. Regional studies indicate that the area may contain limited hard-rock minerals. The southern two-thirds of the CRA has moderate to high potential for oil and gas development. There are currently no existing oil and gas leases. There are 3,900 acres of suitable timber lands in this roadless area in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

### **4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
22,300	25,300	GIS mapping.

## **Weminuche Adjacent (23,600 acres)**

### **1. Description**

This CRA is a combination of numerous roadless areas which occur as narrow bands along the west and north sides adjacent to the Weminuche Wilderness Area. It is appropriate to look at all of these roadless areas adjacent to the Weminuche Wilderness together because they have similar characteristics. Each area has an irregular shaped boundary that includes ridge areas, major river drainages and tributaries. The areas are located on both the Columbine and Pagosa Ranger Districts. There are many points along the boundaries of these areas where a Forest Service road or trail is located within one-quarter mile of the roadless boundary. This CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecosession (M331G) with elevations ranging from 8,000 and 12,000 feet above sea level. These roadless areas represent the toe slopes descending from the wilderness boundary. Geology of the area is the rocky moraines along the ridges and colluvial sedimentary rocks and shale along the narrow portion at top of the area. The soils are shallow to deep and subject to mass erosion along the cliffs, as evidenced by the large mud flow that covered NFSR 640 (Williams Creek) and 644 (Poison Park) in 1979. Soils along the ridges are shallow and are not prone to mass wasting. The major overstory vegetation cover is mixed conifer (spruce, white fir, Douglas-fir) with aspen in the higher elevations and ponderosa pine at the lower elevations. These areas also contain some open grassy parks. Vegetation types do not significantly vary except for elevation changes, aspect, and slope orientation.

### **2. Roadless Characteristics**

Wildlife species inhabiting this area are typical of the species that are found throughout the San Juan portion of the Southern Rocky Mountains. The mixed conifer vegetation type with its large variety of understory vegetation types makes this a prime area for many species. There are permanent streams that support fisheries habitat. The area provides habitat for several Forest Service sensitive species including northern goshawk, peregrine falcon, flammulated owl, boreal owl, American marten, and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. Bighorn sheep are known to lamb in the area above Tuckerville. Much of the CRA provides habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened).



The Monk Rock area has three major scenic rock features and the Keyhole, which provides a scenic backdrop. Approximately 400 acres of the CRA adjacent to the Piedra River are within Forest Plan management area 10D, Wild and Scenic River Corridors. It also possesses a segment of the Piedra River’s Middle Fork that is proposed for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (along the western boundary of the area). The draft revised Forest Plan includes the proposed Martinez Creek Research Natural Area within this CRA. Hiking and hunting are the two most popular dispersed recreation activities. Fishing in the many streams in this CRA is a popular activity. Four large campgrounds, the state recreation area at Williams Creek Reservoir, and three trailheads for wilderness users are found near or adjacent to the CRA. A short section of NFST 589 with motorized designation is found off the end of NFSR 636. A motorized section of the Fourmile Stock Driveway (NFST 569) runs along the south eastern boundary of the CRA. This CRA is adjacent to a Mandatory Class I airshed, as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. It borders the Weminuche Wilderness. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). A small number of cultural resource sites have been located in the area. They consist primarily of isolated lithic artifacts and lithic scatters. The likelihood of finding additional sites is moderate to high along the streams and in the open meadows. The probability of finds in all other areas is moderate.

**3. Current Conditions and Uses**

As of 2011, most of the overstory Engelmann spruce in this CRA has died from the current spruce beetle outbreak. Mortality of spruce is extending downslope into mixed conifer stands where pockets of Engelmann and blue spruce are succumbing to this epidemic. There are several active livestock allotments in the area. The Colorado State Land Board has approximately 320 acres of mineral interest that underlies Forest Service surface ownership within the Weminuche Adjacent CRA. The Martinez Creek portion has about 1,110 acres of suitable timber lands in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft revised Forest Plan.

**4. Alternative Designations**

2001 Inventory Acres	Colorado Roadless Area Acres	Reasons for the Change
Davis Mountain – 1,400 Part of Florida River – 35,400 Martinez Creek – 4,600 Monk Rock – 3,000 Part of Poison Park – 7,900 West Needle – 2,500	23,600	GIS mapping.

**West Needles (6,900 acres)**

**1. Description**

The West Needle CRA is located on the Columbine District in San Juan and La Plata counties, east of Highway 550 from Molas Pass to the southeast of Electra Lake. Access to the area is available via Colorado State Highway 550, NFSR 591 (Lime Creek Road), 671 (Haviland Lake Road), and private roads around Electra Lake. The area is also accessible by the Durango-Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and NFST 511 (Purgatory Flats trail). This CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecosession (M331G), with elevations ranging from 7,200 feet, near the

Animas River at the southern end, up to 9,676 on northern end. The San Juan uplift has characterized this roadless area, which contains rugged and steep terrain in the northern part and then slopes down to the southwest in a series of sedimentary benches. The mountains have been uplifted and subjected to glacial erosion and shaping. The geology of the area consists mostly of pre-Cambrian metamorphic and intrusive igneous rocks. Lower flanks of the mountains and canyon walls are veneered with talus, landslide deposits, and thin gravels. Rocks of the western half of the area are metamorphosed lava flows, called twilight gneiss. The southern two-thirds contain metamorphosed volcanics and sediments. Soil characteristics and production potentials within the area vary considerably as a function of landform, slope and parent material. The area has a great amount of natural ecological and vegetative diversity resulting from variations in landform, soils, and geology. The drainage patterns, steep slopes, and rocky areas which are characteristic of the area preclude the possibility that large continuous areas of a single vegetation type will ever dominate the area. Vegetation is mainly alpine and sub-alpine intermixed at lower elevations with deciduous and coniferous trees, with large natural openings and a mosaic of rock outcrops.

## **2. Roadless Characteristics**

Wildlife species presently found in the West Needle CRA include the typical species of the Southern Rocky Mountains. This CRA provides known habitat for the federally listed Canada lynx (threatened). The CRA also provides habitat for bighorn sheep, and pine marten, both Forest Service sensitive species. Bald eagle, a federally listed species, and osprey nest and forage near Electra Lake. Most lakes and streams in the roadless area contain fish. East Lime Creek is the only stream that has previous fisheries habitat improvement projects. The West Needle CRA provides one of the most scenic backdrops along Hwy 550 (the San Juan Skyway, the narrow gauge railroad along the east Animas, and the Durango Mountain Resort). The draft revised Forest Plan includes a proposed Research Natural Area, Electra Lake, in the CRA. Dispersed non-motorized recreational activities take place within the CRA including backpacking, rock-climbing, backcountry skiing, horseback riding, hunting, and fishing. There are no developed recreation sites in the area and no recreational structures other than trails. This CRA is adjacent to a Mandatory Class I airshed, as designated by Congress and listed in the Clean Air Act. It borders the Weminuche Wilderness. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). There are two dams within the IRA. There are some historic logging cabin (tie production) remnants in the area.

## **3. Current Conditions and Uses**

This CRA contains a vacant cattle allotment. Current mining activity, which is limited to a number of unpatented mining claims, is minimal. There are no applications or existing leases for leasable minerals. The potential for mineral deposits exists in the area, although there is little activity on existing claims. The geology indicates low potential for leasable minerals such as oil, gas, and geothermal resources. Low potential for oil, gas, and coal exists in this area. There are no existing oil and gas leases within the area. There are about 200 acres of suitable timber lands within the roadless area in the current Forest Plan, none in the draft revised Forest Plan. However, timber harvesting has not been encouraged due to scenic qualities of the area.

**4. Alternative Designations**

2001 Inventory Acres	Colorado Roadless Area Acres	Reasons for the Change
West Needles Wilderness IRA 5,900	6,900	GIS mapping.

**Winter Hills/Serviceberry Mountain (5,100 acres)**

**1. Description**

The Serviceberry CRA is bordered on the west by private land and Colorado Highway 84. This CRA is separated from the South San Juan Wilderness by a series of timber harvest units along with ancillary roads. It is administered by the Pagosa Ranger District. The area is one-quarter mile or closer to 8 National Forest System roads and Colorado Highway 84. There are no Forest trails in the CRA. This CRA is within the South-Central Highlands Ecoregion (M331G), with elevations ranging from 7,150 Feet, on the Blanco River, to 8,420 feet at Winter Hills. The physical character of this roadless area is dominated by Serviceberry Mountain and the Winter Hills. The area’s water courses include numerous streams, all of which are tributaries of the Rio Blanco River. The CRA surface geology is dominated by Picturecliff sandstone and Lewis shale while the soil types contain Hermette slit loam Cortado, Boulderpark, Pargin and Sixhorse Catchpole complex.

The range of elevation, slope, aspect, and soil types have resulted in a ponderosa pine and oak are the dominant vegetation types. Interspersed throughout the forested areas are open grassland parks and occasional wet meadows.

**2. Roadless Characteristics**

This area contains numerous wildlife species native to the Southern Rocky Mountains. Deer, elk, turkey, black bears, and mountain lions use the area extensively. CDOW has mapped this CRA as severe winter range for elk. The area is part of a major migration corridor for elk and mule deer. Due to its lower elevation, the southern aspects are used in the winter by Merriam’s turkey. The large amount of Gambel oak proves important fall forage for black bears.

Primary recreation uses include hunting, hiking, and scenic viewing. The fall color season enhances the scenic vistas of this roadless area. This CRA is within a state defined source water assessment area (municipal water supply). Previous cultural resource surveys in this roadless area have identified numerous sites and properties. Prehistoric finds include everything from isolated artifacts to lithic groups.

**3. Current Conditions and Uses**

There are 425 acres leased for oil and gas development. In addition, there are seven stock ponds, a guzzler, five reservoirs, one developed spring, a water pipeline and a headgate within the CRA.

**4. Alternative Designations**

<b>2001 Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Colorado Roadless Area Acres</b>	<b>Reasons for the Change</b>
51,300	Winter Hills/Serviceberry Mountain - 5,100 South San Juan Adjacent - 34,900 Total = 40,000	Change in inventory after South San Juan Wilderness Bill. These areas were previously combined.