



United States  
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# Trail Plan

## Nelson Mountain Wilderness Area

Manti-La Sal National Forest



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## Trail Plan

### *Background*

The Nelson Mountain Wilderness was designated in 2019 by the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Dingell Act). One of the requirements of the act is to establish a trail plan that addresses hiking and equestrian trails in the wilderness area in a manner consistent with the Wilderness Act of 1964.

“(c) TRAIL PLAN.—After providing opportunities for public comment, the Secretary shall establish a trail plan that addresses hiking and equestrian trails on the wilderness areas in a manner consistent with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.).”

The Wilderness Act defines wilderness as, “...in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”

### *Agency Policy*

The USDA Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2320.13 instructs managers to: “Design, construct, and maintain the transportation system in wilderness to provide access to and within a wilderness that meets the wilderness objectives described in the forest plan. Trails are an acceptable improvement. Construct and maintain trails to standards described in FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook.”

### *Purpose of this Document*

To identify action items for any existing system or non-system trails within the wilderness and to consider potential future trail opportunities based on visitor use while preserving wilderness character. The qualities of wilderness character include untrammelled, undeveloped, natural, opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, and other features of value. Together these qualities are wilderness character. See Appendix 3 for detailed definitions.

### *Existing Condition*

There are currently no system trails within the Nelson Mountain Wilderness. An off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail borders the wilderness on the east and north. One non-system “cow” trail exists within the wilderness. Other than associated grazing activities there is no or very little visitor use associated with the trail. Visitor use within the wilderness is minimal.

### ***Desired Future Condition***

In general, preserve wilderness character and provide new trail opportunities only if necessary to manage visitor use, protect ecological systems or provide for wilderness opportunities commensurate with visitor use.

- Cow trail – No action taken. Allow to remain for use by permittee as necessary. Monitor for sustainability and resource damage.
- OHV Trails outside wilderness boundary – No Action Taken. Monitor for potential incursions. Sign boundaries if needed and obliterate any future incursions into the wilderness.
- Visitor Use – Develop solitude monitoring protocol.
- Social Trails – Monitor for user created trails and use the trails management matrix to identify actions (See Appendix 1).

### ***Public Involvement***

As required by the Dingell Act, this draft trail plan will serve as a starting point to encourage and consider input from the public and stakeholders, particularly local communities and Emery County. To that end, the staff of the Manti-La Sal presented this plan to the Emery County Lands Council in February 2022, soliciting comments from the Council, the County Commission, and numerous state and local agencies, including the state's Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office and the county's trail committee.

### ***Monitoring***

Generally, because visitor use is minimal in the area, anecdotal observation along the wilderness boundary and where motorized routes are near the boundary is adequate to identify potential user created routes. If anecdotal observation reveals an increase in visitor use and user created trails begin to appear, then a more thorough inventory of these routes should be completed and appropriate actions taken to preserve wilderness character.

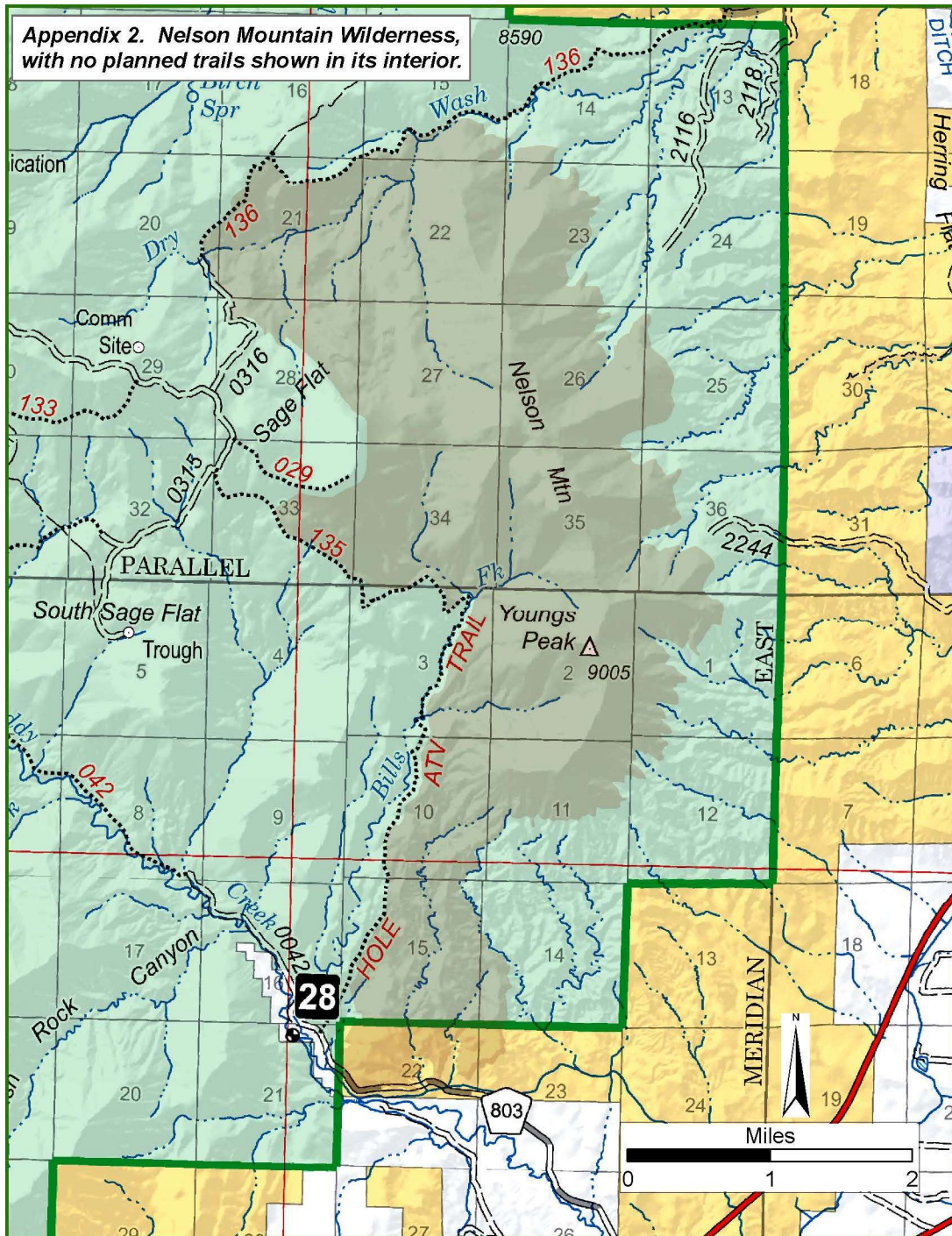
## Appendix 1. Matrix for User Created Trails Management

**Table 1. Matrix for User Created Trails Management.**

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Threshold</b>	<b>Potential Action</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Existing cow trail.	Resource damage associated with erosion. Presence of invasive plants.	Maintenance including erosion control features. Remove invasive plants using the appropriate treatment method to preserve wilderness character.	Only correct erosion that is clearly caused by the trail. Erosion is a natural process. carefully consider all actions. Take action only if necessary to preserve wilderness character.
User-created trails from exterior into wilderness.	Motorized use or resource damage such as erosion, long term vegetation damage, spread of invasive species.	Consider signing boundary if motorized use is occurring within wilderness. Obliterate and revegetate user created motorized trails. Monitor social trails created by non-motorized / non mechanized use. If resource damage is occurring, consider obliterating trails or construction of a sustainable trail if necessary to preserve wilderness character.	
User-created interior trails (social trails).	Resource damage	Generally obliterate if these are leading to resource damage.	Game trails are a natural process, so only consider action for human caused trails. Generally cow trails should be monitored and addressed through the grazing permit.
Visitor use has increased to the point where multiple user-created trails are leading to resource damage.	Significant increase in visitor use as determined by solitude monitoring and impacts associated with user created trails are occurring.	Consider designing a trail system that meets the minimum requirement to administer the area as wilderness if necessary to preserve wilderness character.	This will require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and public participation.



## Appendix 2. Map





## Appendix 3. Qualities of Wilderness Character

**Table 2. Qualities of Wilderness Character.**

UNTRAMMELED	NATURAL	UNDEVELOPED	OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES SOLITUDE OR PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION	OTHER FEATURES OF VALUE
<p>Wilderness ecological systems are unhindered and free from intentional actions of modern human control or manipulation</p> <p>"...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man..."</p> <p>"...affected primarily by the forces of nature" Wilderness Act, Section 2(c)</p> <p>Preserved when actions are not taken to manipulate or control ecological systems and its components.</p> <p>Degraded by actions that intentionally control or manipulate flora, fauna, or natural processes.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suppressing or lighting fire</li> <li>• Spraying weeds</li> <li>• Predator Control</li> <li>• Translocating wildlife</li> <li>• Damming streams</li> </ul> <p>Actions may be agency authorized actions or unauthorized public actions, and are trammeling while the actions are ongoing.</p>	<p>Wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization</p> <p>"...retaining its primeval character and influence..."</p> <p>"...protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions..." Wilderness Act, Section 2(c)</p> <p>Preserved when indigenous species and ecological processes are intact.</p> <p>Degraded by effects (intended or unintended) of modern civilization.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of non-native species</li> <li>• Extirpation of native species</li> <li>• Natural specie abundance or distribution disrupted</li> <li>• Degradation of water quantity or quality</li> <li>• Loss of soil</li> </ul> <p>Effects may be the result of actions within or outside the control of managers including from outside the wilderness or prior to wilderness designation.</p>	<p>Essentially without structures or installations, the use of motors or mechanical transport</p> <p>"...undeveloped Federal land..., without permanent improvements or human habitation..."</p> <p>"...where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Wilderness Act, Section 2(c)</p> <p>Preserved when human made features are not located in, and motors or mechanical transport are not used in the wilderness.</p> <p>Degraded by structures or installations, or the use of motors or mechanical transport.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of buildings</li> <li>• Presence of radio repeaters</li> <li>• Collaring wildlife in wilderness</li> <li>• Presence of water facilities</li> <li>• Use of chainsaws</li> <li>• Use of bicycles</li> </ul> <p>Degradation may result from agency or visitor actions.</p>	<p>Wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation</p> <p>"...outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation..." Wilderness Act, Section 2 (c)</p> <p>Preserved when visitors experience minimal encounters, observe landscapes without modern human effects, experience self-discovery, traditional skills, and challenge, and are not encumbered by regulatory restrictions.</p> <p>Degraded by encounters, indications of civilization, or restrictions on visitor behavior.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sights and sounds indicating other visitors</li> <li>• Infrastructure for visitor support</li> <li>• Entry restricted by permits</li> <li>• Designated camping areas</li> <li>• Sights and sounds nullifying remoteness</li> </ul> <p>Experiences may be degraded from influences inside or outside the wilderness.</p>	<p>A wilderness may have unique features of value</p> <p>"...may also contain ecological, geological...scientific, educational, scenic or historical value." Wilderness Act, Section 2(c)</p> <p>Preserved when each identified feature unique to the wilderness is protected consistent with protection of other wilderness qualities.</p> <p>Degraded by loss of the feature's wilderness context.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vandalism of cultural resources</li> <li>• Paleontological scientific value lost</li> <li>• Scenic quality lost to air pollution</li> <li>• Loss of unique habitats</li> </ul> <p>Features may be degraded from activities within or outside the wilderness, or when they are not protected consistent within a wilderness context.</p>