

Little Snake Assessment of Wilderness Character and Values
Draft —internal use only

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Important Note: This assessment is not a full technical analysis of wilderness character or values. Staff time and resources preclude a thorough application of the BLM Wilderness inventory procedures.

This is an assessment of likely wilderness characteristics based the LSFO staff specialists' current knowledge of the areas and professional judgment. A number of information sources were used in making this assessment. These include previous inventory documents, external documents and maps, and some limited field investigation. A staff technical team reviewed the available information and made this Assessment accordingly.

The essential building block for establishing wilderness character is the requirement for roadlessness. Several of these areas contain existing mechanically constructed or other vehicular routes. Technically, each route should be examined closely to determine if it is a road or a way as defined in the BLM Wilderness Inventory procedures. This is critical to determining the size of the roadless area.

Also, naturalness must be determined by a thorough inventory of human made features in the area. The requirements for determining outstanding opportunities are less technical in nature. However, comprehensive fieldwork is also helpful in making this determination.

With the above caveats in mind, the staff has attempted to offer its best judgment in assessing the existing wilderness character of these areas.

Cold Springs Mountain (area outside existing WSA)

Wilderness Character Analysis: Does the area meet the overall criteria for wilderness character (size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities)? **Yes.**

A. Size: Does the unit consist of more than 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless area? **Yes.**

Considerably larger than 5,000 acres.

B. Naturalness: Does the area appear to be natural? **Yes.**

The area retains a high degree of naturalness and appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature. Human impacts are few and appear to be substantially unnoticeable. There are a few (approx. four) primitive ways which provide access from north to south. There are relatively few stock ponds, fences, and stock drive ways present in the area which do not detract from the overall naturalness of the area.

C. Outstanding Opportunities: Does the area have outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation? **Yes.**

Solitude: Outstanding opportunities exist for solitude due to the large area, remoteness, and relatively few access points. The area contains many pockets of vegetation and topographic relief which provide visual isolation from other visitors. The area is remote and receives few visitors.

Primitive and unconfined Recreation: Some outstanding opportunities exist in some portions of the area for primitive and unconfined recreation (hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and backpacking). The area is rugged and remote with few signs of human development.

D. Supplemental Values: Does the area contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value? **Yes.**

Fish and Wildlife Resources: Cutthroat trout habitat (Beaver Creek). The elk herd in area 201 has regionally significant trophy elk hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities

Cultural Resources: Potentially regionally significant rock art and other cultural values exist both inside and outside of ACECs (prehistoric and historic resources).

Other Resources: The area includes portions of the Limestone Ridge and Irish Canyon Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). There is a high degree of visual resource values due to the naturalness and undeveloped character of the area. Sensitive plants and plant communities exist in the area both inside and outside of ACECs.

Cross Mountain (areas outside existing WSA)

Wilderness Character Analysis: Does the area meet the overall criteria for wilderness character (size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities)? **No.**

A. Size: Does the unit consist of more than 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless area? **No.**

The area outside of the WSA is less than 5,000 acres. These areas are not contiguous with the existing WSA because they are separated by existing mechanically constructed and maintained roads.

Note: the remaining criteria are not applicable and need not be considered because the size criterion is not met.

B. Naturalness: Does the area appear to be natural? **NA.**

A moderate degree of naturalness appears to be present. Seismic trails on east side. A mechanically created and maintained road runs E/W and N leading to the WSA boundary. A well-established, mechanically constructed road on is present on the west boundary, separating the area from the WSA. A number of fences, roads and two-tracks, and power lines exist within the area.

C. Outstanding Opportunities: Does the area have outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation? **NA .**

Solitude: NA

Primitive and unconfined Recreation: NA

D. Supplemental Values: Does the area contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value? **NA.**

No significant values noted.

Diamond Breaks (area outside WSA)

Wilderness Character Analysis: Does the area meet the overall criteria for wilderness character (size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities)? **No.**

A. Size: Does the unit consist of more than 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless area? **Yes.**

Area outside the WSA is larger than 5,000 acres if the Utah portion is included. Some small portions of the proposed area appear not to be contiguous with the existing WSA because they are separated by existing mechanically constructed and maintained roads.

B. Naturalness: Does the area appear to be natural? **No.**

Numerous ways, some well-established and possibly mechanically constructed, detract from the overall naturalness of the area. The larger western portions contain various range improvements which also detract from the naturalness of the area.

Note: the remaining criteria are not applicable and need not be considered because the naturalness criterion is not met.

C. Outstanding Opportunities: Does the area have outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation? **NA.**

Solitude: NA

Primitive and unconfined Recreation: NA

D. Supplemental Values: Does the area contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value? **NA.**

Dinosaur Adjacent (areas outside existing WSAs)

The proposed Dinosaur adjacent units must be considered as separate units because they are separated by roads. Four separate units have been identified: Wild Mountain, Chew Winter Camp North, Tepee Draw, and Vale of Tears North

1. Wild Mountain

Wilderness Character Analysis: Does the area meet the overall criteria for wilderness character (size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities)? **Yes.**

A. Size: Does the unit consist of more than 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless area? **Yes.**

Over 5,000 if Utah portion is included.

B. Naturalness: Does the area appear to be natural? **Yes.**

Imprints of man include OHV routes, fences, stock ponds and a wildlife guzzler. None of these imprints represent a major surface disturbance. Cumulatively their impact is slight due their scattered nature. The degree of naturalness is impacted by the presence of range improvements, routes, fences, etc. However, it appears likely the area meets the naturalness criteria.

C. Outstanding Opportunities: Does the area have outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation? **Yes.**

Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude exist primarily in remoteness. The area is generally open with little vegetative screening. However, the area's remoteness and topographic ruggedness do appear to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Primitive and unconfined Recreation: Some outstanding hunting opportunities, but not regionally significant. The topography and remoteness appear to provide outstanding opportunities for recreation. The area offers incredible opportunities for viewing scenery and photography. The terrain also presents outstanding hiking and hunting opportunities.

D. Supplemental Values: Does the area contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value? **No.**

2. Chew Winter Camp North

Wilderness Character Analysis: Does the area meet the overall criteria for wilderness character (size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities)? **Yes.**

A. Size: Does the unit consist of more than 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless area? **Yes.**

More than 5,000 acres. The area is bounded by well-established, mechanically constructed roads and other ways, but no mechanically constructed and maintained routes are known within the area.

B. Naturalness: Does the area appear to be natural? **Yes.**

Other than a few existing ways, here are few known human impacts within the area. The landforms are similar to those found in adjacent southern slopes of Douglas Mountain. Vegetation consists mainly of pinyon-juniper woodlands, sagebrush and native grass communities. The area provides habitat for mule deer and elk. Raptors and other birds, mammals and reptiles inhabit the area.

C. Outstanding Opportunities: Does the area have outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation? **Yes.**

Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude. Many hills, ridges, valleys, and thickets of vegetation provide effective visual screening. The remoteness of the area and difficult public access opportunities enhance these opportunities.

Primitive and unconfined Recreation: Outstanding opportunities for hunting, hiking, camping and other forms of primitive and unconfined recreation. The remoteness of the area and difficult public access opportunities enhance these opportunities.

D. Supplemental Values: Does the area contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value? **No.**

3. Tepee Draw

Wilderness Character Analysis: Does the area meet the overall criteria for wilderness character (size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities)? **Yes.**

Note: The area between Teepee Draw and Vale of Tears WSA is not included in this assessment. It could have similar characteristics and may also be worthy of consideration.

A. Size: Does the unit consist of more than 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless area? **Yes.**

Greater than 5,000. The area is bounded by well-established, mechanically constructed roads and other ways. A few mechanically constructed and maintained routes appear to extend into the area as cherry stemmed roads.

B. Naturalness: Does the area appear to be natural? **Yes.**

The cherry stemmed roads and existing ways do not significantly diminish the overall quality of naturalness due to their low density and the topography in the area. Few other human impacts are known within the area. The landforms are similar to those found in adjacent southern slopes of Douglas Mountain. Vegetation consists mainly of pinyon-juniper woodlands, sagebrush and

native grass communities. The area provides habitat for mule deer and elk. Raptors and other birds, mammals and reptiles inhabit the area.

Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude exist due to the many hills, ridges, valleys, and thickets of vegetation which provide visual screening. The remoteness of the area and difficult public access opportunities enhance these opportunities.

Primitive and unconfined Recreation: Outstanding opportunities for hunting, hiking, camping and other forms of primitive and unconfined recreation. The remoteness of the area and difficult public access opportunities enhance these opportunities.

D. Supplemental Values: Does the area contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value? **Yes.**

Visual resource/view sheds are high quality.

4. Vale of Tears North

Wilderness Character Analysis: Does the area meet the overall criteria for wilderness character (size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities)? **Yes.**

A. Size: Does the unit consist of more than 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless area? **Yes.**

Greater than 5,000. There are several vehicle routes which cross the area and provide access to private land parcels and passage through the area.

B. Naturalness: Does the area appear to be natural? **Yes.**

The area is bounded by well-established, mechanically constructed roads and crisscrossed by ways, but it remains essentially natural in character. Few other human impacts are known within the area. The landforms are similar to those found in adjacent Southeastern end of Douglas Mountain. Vegetation consists mainly of pinyon-juniper woodlands, sagebrush and native grass communities. The area provides habitat for mule deer and elk. Raptors and other birds, mammals and reptiles inhabit the area.

Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude. Many hills, ridges, valleys, and thickets of vegetation which provide visual screening. The remoteness of the area and difficult public access opportunities enhance these opportunities.

Primitive and unconfined Recreation: Outstanding opportunities for hunting, hiking, camping and other forms of primitive and unconfined recreation. The remoteness of the area and difficult public access opportunities enhance these opportunities.

D. Supplemental Values: Does the area contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value? **Yes.**

Visual resource/viewsheds are high quality.

Yampa River (areas outside SRMA only)

Wilderness Character Analysis: Does the area meet the overall criteria for wilderness character (size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities)? **No.**

A. Size: Does the unit consist of more than 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless area? **No.**

The area outside the SRMA is less than 5,000 acres and is not contiguous due the presence of existing mechanically created and maintained roads.

Note: the remaining criteria are not applicable and need not be considered because the size criterion is not met.

B. Naturalness: Does the area appear to be natural? **NA.**

Relatively high density improved roads. Major transmission line, range improvements, overall human impacts.

C. Outstanding Opportunities: Does the area have outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation? **NA.**

Solitude: **NA**

Primitive and unconfined Recreation: **NA**

D. Supplemental Values: Does the area contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value? **NA.**

Pinyon Ridge (LSFO-managed portion only)

Wilderness Character Analysis: Does the area meet the overall criteria for wilderness character (size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities)? **No.**

A. Size: Does the unit consist of more than 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless area? **No.**

The LSFO is less than 5,000 acres and is not contiguous due the presence of existing mechanically created and maintained roads.

Note: the remaining criteria are not applicable and need not be considered because the size criterion is not met.

B. Naturalness: Does the area appear to be natural? **NA.**

Small portion of the area in LSFO is crisscrossed with roads/routes. Many range improvements and fences. Imprint of man apparent.

C. Outstanding Opportunities: Does the area have outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation? **NA.**

Solitude: **NA**

Primitive and unconfined Recreation: **NA**

D. Supplemental Values: Does the area contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value? **NA.**