

# Letter of Transmittal

To: Secretary of the Interior

From: BLM State Director, Montana  
BLM State Director, Nevada

Subject: 1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory Report

Following nearly two decades of continuing national controversy concerning the status of certain public lands in Utah, and the presence or absence of wilderness values on those lands, you directed the Bureau of Land Management in 1996 to undertake a professional, comprehensive, objective review of the conditions on the ground today and to report our findings back to you.

We set out to make an administrative determination regarding wilderness characteristics in areas identified by legislation before Congress, using a team of dedicated career professionals from Utah and throughout the Bureau. You instructed us to apply the same legal criteria and definitions that have been used in all such exercises in the Bureau's history, and to focus strictly on the facts concerning each area within the review.

The team undertook a comprehensive document review of the public record over the last 20 years, consulted with the State of Utah regarding its recent review of lands with wilderness potential, and conducted extensive field examinations to "ground-truth" all of the areas contained in this report.

This administrative inventory was performed under authority of Section 201 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. That authority was affirmed by the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit in 1998, which overturned a 1996 order from a District Court judge in Utah enjoining BLM from continuing the inventory process. These legal proceedings, while eventually affirming the process by which the inventory was conducted, effectively delayed the transmittal of this report for two years.

This report represents the considered judgment of career professionals with decades of experience in the management of public lands; they applied all legal criteria for this phase of the inventory process, addressing the condition of these lands at the present time. We make no judgments regarding suitability or manageability of these lands as potential wilderness areas and make no recommendations regarding the ultimate status of these lands.

We appreciate the confidence you have expressed by having us complete this inventory. Each of the participants remains fully cognizant of the importance of this inventory, and of doing it right. It is presented in a format that we believe you will find straightforward and easy to follow.

