

Butler Wash

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
2,000	1,780	3,780 (78%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
1,000	40	1,040 (22%)
Inventory Unit Total		
3,000	1,820	4,820
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
Canyonlands National Park—		
The Needles Unit		61,182
Butler Wash WSA (UT-060-169)		24,190
South Needles WSA (UT-060-169A)		160

Most of the five Butler Wash inventory units (3,780 acres) have wilderness characteristics. Units 1 and 3 are entirely roadless and natural. However, portions of Units 2 and 4 and all of Unit 5 (1,040 acres total) lack wilderness characteristics because of roads, a substantially noticeable livestock water pipeline system, a chaining project, and oil and gas exploration impacts. The units with wilderness characteristics have outstanding opportunities for solitude, which are enhanced by the contiguous Butler Wash Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and the South Needles WSA. Opportunities for primitive recreation are also outstanding; extended backpacking trips can be taken through the units and two WSAs into a remote corner of the Needles Section of Canyonlands National Park.

BUTLER WASH— Opportunities exist for extended backpacking trips through the scenic inventory units, as well as through the contiguous Butler Wash WSA, into a remote corner of the Needles Section of Canyonlands National Park.

Unit Description

The Butler Wash inventory units are located in San Juan County about 55 miles west of Monticello. The five separate units are contiguous to either the Butler Wash WSA or the South Needles WSA. Terrain consists of relatively small flat mesas and shallow canyons that deepen and drain to the north. Vegetation is predominantly piñon and juniper woodland interspersed with sagebrush parks. Hiking, camping, viewing of archaeological sites, and cattle grazing are all current uses.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Units 1 and 3 are natural. However, portions of Units 2 and 4 are unnatural because of roads, livestock-related developments, and disturbance from mining and oil and gas exploration. The portions of these units that appear natural overall contain a few substantially unnoticeable fences and five short vehicle ways leading to primitive campsites. Unit 5 contains a chaining that is unnatural in appearance. In addition, Units 4 and 5 are contiguous with BLM land recommended suitable for wilderness in 1991 to protect adjacent National Park values.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

The five units are contiguous to and form an extension of the Butler Wash WSA and

a portion of the Needles Section of Canyonlands National Park that has been administratively endorsed for wilderness. The WSA and National Park Service (NPS) areas have already been determined to possess outstanding opportunities for solitude. The remoteness, varied topography, and vegetative screening of the Butler Wash inventory units further enhance these solitude opportunities.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The units offer outstanding opportunities for beginning or ending high-quality extended backpacking trips into the contiguous Butler Wash WSA and the Needles Section of Canyonlands National Park. Although dramatic scenery and challenge is found mostly within the contiguous areas, the Butler Wash inventory units also have outstanding opportunities when considered in combination with the WSA and NPS lands. Day hikes or horseback rides from the boundary road can involve off-trail travel to spectacular viewpoints as well as to archaeological features. The roadless and open sagebrush parks provide a diverse setting for primitive recreation, in contrast with the dramatic topography and deep canyons to the north.

Supplemental Values

Scenic quality is high for most of the five units. There are expansive views into Canyonlands National Park and Beef Basin. The units also contain a number of well-preserved archaeological sites.



BLM photo

Butler Wash

