

Fisher Towers

Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
With Wilderness Characteristics		
17,000	2,100	19,100 (98%)
Without Wilderness Characteristics		
400	0	400 (2%)
Inventory Unit Total		
17,400	2,100	19,500
Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics		
None		

Most of the Fisher Towers inventory unit (19,100 acres) retains its natural appearance and has wilderness characteristics. The area consists of a highly eroded mesa top dissected by twisting canyons. The mesa terminates at a 2,000-foot sheer cliff overlooking spectacular eroded badlands and red-rock grottoes. Fisher Towers, the tallest of which reaches over 900 feet above its surroundings, is one of the best known and most photographed geologic formations in Utah.

The popular and extremely rough four-wheel route to "The Top of the World" has been cherry-stemmed from the unit. An area contiguous to this cherry-stemmed route (400 acres) lacks wilderness characteristics because of a concentration of disturbances from mining exploration.

Unit Description

The Fisher Towers inventory unit is located in southeastern Grand County, 20 miles northeast of Moab. The boundary follows roads, private land, or substantially noticeable human impacts. The terrain consists of a gently sloping and highly broken mesa, that is dissected by Waring and Cottonwood Canyons. The top of the mesa ends at a sheer 2,000-foot cliff overlooking Fisher Towers, one of the best known geologic formations in Utah. The narrow Onion Creek Canyon along the southern boundary twists through spectacular red-rock grottoes and heavily eroded badlands formations.

Vegetation consists of piñon and juniper woodland, along with a variety of large shrubs (such as sagebrush, greasewood, blackbrush, and rabbitbrush), cacti, perennial grasses, and annual plants. Riparian vegetation consisting of cottonwoods, willows, tamarisk, and a wide variety of shrubs, reeds, and grasses is found along the perennial streams in Waring, Onion, and Cottonwood Canyons.

Primary human uses include recreation, grazing, mining exploration, and commercial filming.

Wilderness Characteristics

Naturalness

Most of the unit appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature and retains its natural character. Human disturbances are substantially unnoticeable. Minor disturbances consist of a few vehicle ways, fences, and old seismic exploration lines. These are all well screened by the area's broken terrain and vegetation. The vehicle ways receive little use and are highly eroded, rough, and washed out.

A small area contiguous to a cherry-stemmed route that accesses "The Top of the World" does not appear natural because of cumulative disturbances from past mining exploration. A number of lightly bladed mining exploration impacts extending off the cherry-stemmed route, along with an old seismic exploration line, are not being used by vehicles and are thus growing in with vegetation. Individually, any of these imprints would be substantially unnoticeable because of natural revegetation, screening, and the lack of use. However, given the high concentration of imprints in a small area, the cumulative disturbance is substantially noticeable.

Outstanding Opportunities

Solitude

Solitude opportunities are outstanding. The varied topography, including over nine miles of twisting Waring and

Cottonwood Canyons; the numerous small side canyons; the highly eroded badlands between the cliff face and Onion Creek Canyon; and the broken plateau all provide abundant opportunities to find seclusion. The unit's size and configuration, along with the vegetative screening provided by the piñon and juniper trees, also contribute to outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The unit provides outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The rugged terrain offers impressive scenery and unique landforms. Opportunities for hiking, backpacking, camping, sightseeing, photography, nature study, and rock climbing are all outstanding. Fisher Towers is a popular destination area for hikers and photographers. The 900-foot Fisher Towers provide a challenging and popular technical rock climb. Scenic views from the top of the mesa are spectacular. The badlands between the cliff and Onion Creek Canyon provide a highly scenic and challenging area for hiking, exploring, and photography. Waring Canyon provides excellent hiking opportunities in a remote and rugged setting.

Supplemental Values

Scenic values are exceptional. The spectacular Fisher Towers are carved from siltstone of the Moenkopi and Cutler Formations. From the top of the mesa, visitors have outstanding views of Fisher Towers, the red sandstone cliffs and spires of Richardson Amphitheater, the badlands of Onion Creek Canyon, the Colorado River, and the La Sal Mountains. Special status plants include the Dolores River skeleton plant and Schultz stickleaf. Bighorn sheep and peregrine falcon inhabit the area, and the southern portion is critical deer winter range.

FISHER TOWERS—The 900-foot Fisher Towers area is a popular destination for technical rock climbers seeking a challenge and photographers looking for that "perfect" scenic shot.



Jerry Sintz

Fisher Towers

