



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

Wilderness Study Area Management: Module 1

# What is a Wilderness Study Area?



Florida Mountains WSA, New Mexico



At the end of this module, students will understand:

- ❖ What defines a WSA
- ❖ How WSAs are a part of BLM's mission
- ❖ Which laws authorize WSAs
- ❖ The process by which BLM established WSAs
- ❖ General management principles
- ❖ The difference between wilderness, WSAs, and lands with wilderness characteristics



## Wilderness Study Area:

A special designation that applies to lands managed to protect wilderness characteristics until Congress designates the WSA as wilderness or directs BLM to manage the area for other multiple uses.





**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

## Wilderness Study Area (WSA) Defined

Wilderness Study Areas are not designated wilderness...

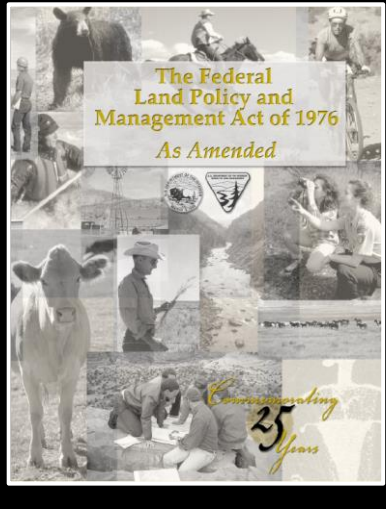
but Congress could designate them as wilderness in the future.





# NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

# Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)



The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 As Amended



Commemorating 25 Years

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT WILDERNESS STUDY

Sec. 603. [43 U.S.C. 1782] (a) Within fifteen years after the date of approval of this Act, the Secretary shall review those roadless areas of five thousand acres or more and roadless islands of the public lands, identified during the inventory required by section 201(a) of this Act as having wilderness characteristics described in the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (78 Stat. 890; 16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.) and shall from time to time report to the President his recommendation as to the suitability

44 ——— Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976

date of implementation of the comprehensive, long-range plan, the Secretary shall execute an interim program to manage, use, and protect the public lands, and their resources now in danger of destruction, in the California Desert Conservation Area, to provide for the public use of such lands in an orderly and reasonable manner such as through the development of campgrounds and visitor centers, and to provide for a uniformed desert ranger force.

(f) Subject to valid existing rights, nothing in this Act shall affect the applicability of the United States mining laws on the public lands within the California Desert Conservation Area, except that all mining claims located on public lands within the California Desert Conservation Area shall be subject to such reasonable regulations as the Secretary may prescribe to effectuate the purposes of this section. Any patent issued on any such mining claim shall recite this limitation and continue to be subject to such regulations. Such regulations shall provide for such measures as may be reasonable to protect the scenic, scientific, and environmental values of the public lands of the California Desert Conservation Area against undue impairment, and to assure against pollution of the streams and waters within the California Desert Conservation Area.

(g) (1) The Secretary, within sixty days after the date of approval of this Act, shall establish a California Desert Conservation Area Advisory Committee (hereinafter referred to as "advisory committee") in accordance with the provisions of section 309 of this Act.

(2) It shall be the function of the advisory committee to advise the Secretary with respect to the

Defense are authorized and directed to consult among themselves and take cooperative actions to carry out the provisions of this subsection, including a program of law enforcement in accordance with applicable authorities to protect the archeological and other values of the California Desert Conservation Area and adjacent lands.

(i) The Secretary shall report to the Congress no later than two years after the date of approval of this Act, and annually thereafter, on the progress in, and any problems concerning, the implementation of this section, together with any recommendations, which he may deem necessary, to remedy such problems.

(j) There are authorized to be appropriated for fiscal years 1977 through 1981 not to exceed \$40,000,000 for the purpose of this section, such amount to remain available until expended.

### KING RANGE

Sec. 602. Section 9 of the Act of October 21, 1970 (84 Stat. 1067), [16 U.S.C. 460y-8] is amended by adding a new subsection (c), as follows:

"(c) In addition to the lands described in subsection (a) of this section, the land identified as the Punta Gorda Addition and the Southern Additions on the map entitled "King Range National Conservation Area Boundary Map No. 2," dated July 29, 1975, is included in the survey and investigation area referred to in the first section of this Act."

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT WILDERNESS STUDY

Within fifteen years after the date of approval of this Act, the Secretary shall review those roadless areas of five thousand acres or more and roadless islands of the public lands, identified during the inventory required by section 201(a) of this Act as having wilderness characteristics described in the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (78 Stat. 890; 16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.) and shall from time to time report to the President his recommendation as to the suitability

(b) The Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Defense shall manage lands within their respective jurisdictions located in or adjacent to the California Desert Conservation Area, in accordance with the laws relating to such lands and wherever practicable, in a manner consonant with the purpose of this section. The Secretary, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Secretary of

## INVENTORY AND IDENTIFICATION

Sec. 201. [43 U.S.C. 1711] (a) The Secretary shall prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public lands and their resource and other values (including, but not limited to, outdoor recreation and scenic values), giving priority to areas of critical environmental concern. This inventory shall be kept current so as to reflect changes in conditions and to identify new and emerging resource and other values. The preparation and maintenance of such inventory or the identification of such areas shall not, of itself, change or prevent change of the management or use of public lands.

(b) As funds and manpower are made available, the Secretary shall ascertain the boundaries of the public lands; provide means of public identification thereof including, where appropriate, signs and maps; and provide State and local governments with data from the inventory for the purpose of planning and regulating the uses of non-Federal lands in proximity of such public lands.

## LAND USE PLANNING

Sec. 202. [43 U.S.C. 1712] (a) The Secretary shall, with public involvement and consistent with the terms and conditions of this Act, develop, maintain, and, when appropriate, revise land use plans which provide by tracts or areas for the use of the public lands. Land use plans shall be developed for the public lands regardless of whether such lands previously have been classified, withdrawn, set aside, or otherwise designated for one or more uses.

(b) In the development and revision of land use plans, the Secretary of Agriculture shall coordinate land use plans for lands in the National Forest

## TITLE II

### LAND USE PLANNING; LAND ACQUISITION AND DISPOSITION

#### INVENTORY AND IDENTIFICATION

Sec. 201. [43 U.S.C. 1711] (a) The Secretary shall prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public lands and their resource and other values (including, but not limited to, outdoor recreation and scenic values), giving priority to areas of critical environmental concern. This inventory shall be kept current so as to reflect changes in conditions and to identify new and emerging resource and other values. The preparation and maintenance of such inventory or the identification of such areas shall not, of itself, change or prevent change of the management or use of public lands.

(b) As funds and manpower are made available, the Secretary shall ascertain the boundaries of the public lands; provide means of public identification thereof including, where appropriate, signs and maps; and provide State and local governments with data from the inventory for the purpose of planning and regulating the uses of non-Federal lands in proximity of such public lands.

#### LAND USE PLANNING

(a) The Secretary shall, with public involvement and consistent with the terms and conditions of this Act, develop, maintain, and, when appropriate, revise land use plans which provide by tracts or areas for the use of the public lands. Land use plans shall be developed for the public lands regardless of whether such lands previously have been classified, withdrawn, set aside, or otherwise designated for one or more uses.

(b) In the development and revision of land use plans, the Secretary of Agriculture shall coordinate land use plans for lands in the National Forest

System with the land use planning and management programs of and for Indian tribes by, among other things, considering the policies of approved tribal land resource management programs.

(c) In the development and revision of land use plans, the Secretary shall—

- (1) use and observe the principles of multiple use and sustained yield set forth in this and other applicable law;
- (2) use a systematic interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences;
- (3) give priority to the designation and protection of areas of critical environmental concern;
- (4) rely, to the extent it is available, on the inventory of the public lands, their resources, and other values;

(5) consider present and potential uses of the public lands;

(6) consider the relative scarcity of the values involved and the availability of alternative means (including recycling) and sites for realization of those values;

(7) weigh long-term benefits to the public against short-term benefits;

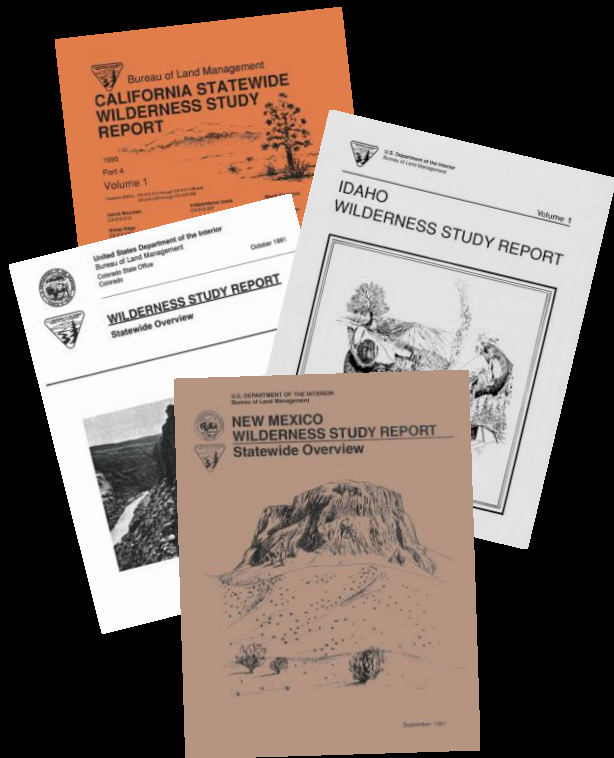
(8) provide for compliance with applicable pollution control laws, including State and Federal air, water, noise, or other pollution standards or implementation plans; and

(9) to the extent consistent with the laws governing the administration of the public lands, coordinate the land use inventory, planning, and management activities of or for such lands with the land use planning and management programs of other Federal departments and agencies and of the States and local governments within which the



# NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

## Wilderness Study Process





The BLM's Wilderness Program manages:

- ❖ Wilderness
- ❖ Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)
- ❖ Lands with wilderness characteristics

*"In the Public Lands will be found wilderness regions of charm and beauty."*

- Robert Yard, 1926 (a founding member of the Wilderness Society)



## The Wilderness Act, Section 2(a):

- ❖ “...to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization does not occupy and modify all areas...”
- ❖ “...there is hereby established a **National Wilderness Preservation System** to be composed of federally owned areas designated by the Congress as ‘**wilderness areas**’...”
- ❖ “...for the use and enjoyment of the American People...”





# NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

## Key Laws and Dates in BLM's Wilderness Program



Wilderness Act



Federal Land Policy and Management Act



Oregon Wilderness Act



Wilderness Study Reports Sent to Congress



Congress and the President authorize the BLM's system of National Conservation Lands

1964

1964

1976

1978

1984

1991

1993

2000

2009

Classification and Multiple Use Act

Endangered American Wilderness Act

Completion of FLPMA mandated study

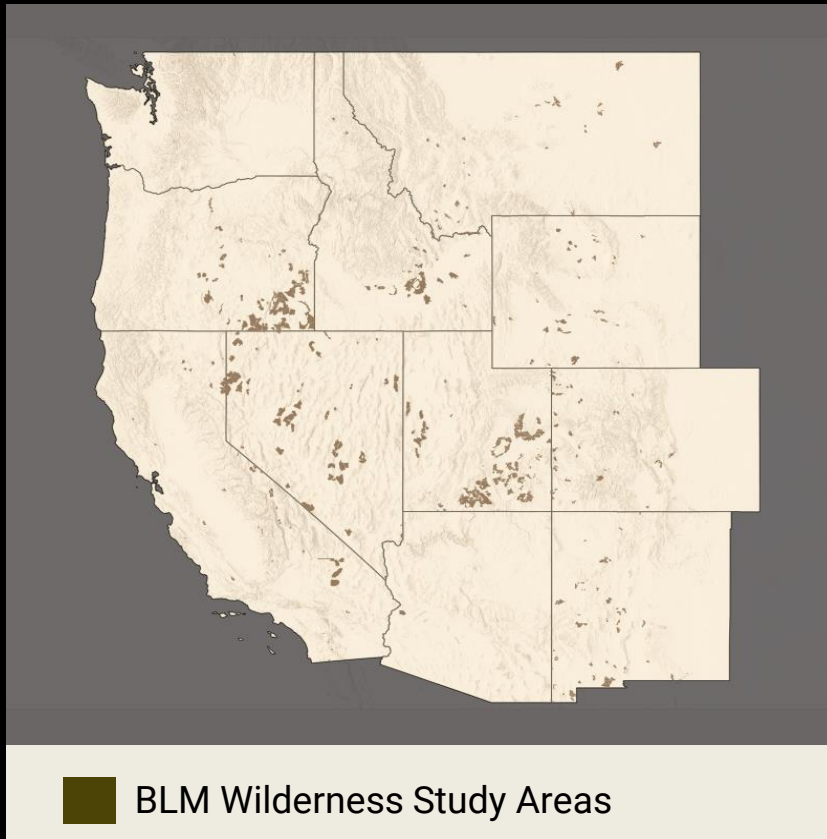
Secretarial Order Establishes BLM's system of National Conservation Lands





**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

# BLM Wilderness Program

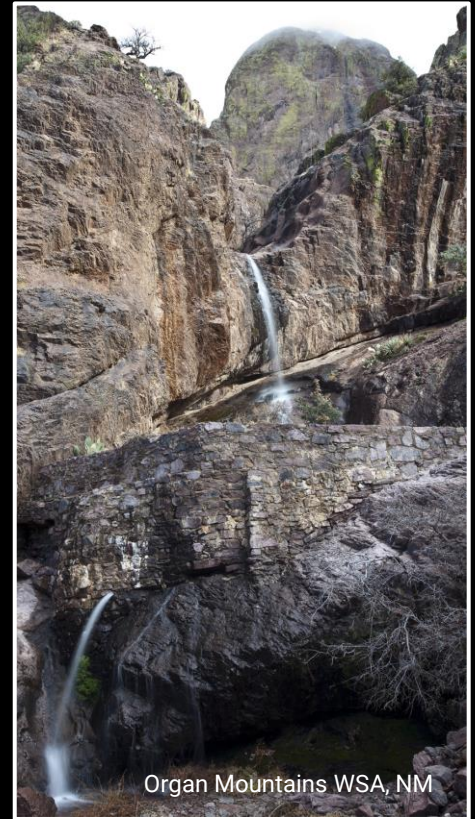


BLM Director Neil Kornze



## Wilderness Act, Section 2(a):

- ❖ “It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring **resource of wilderness.**”

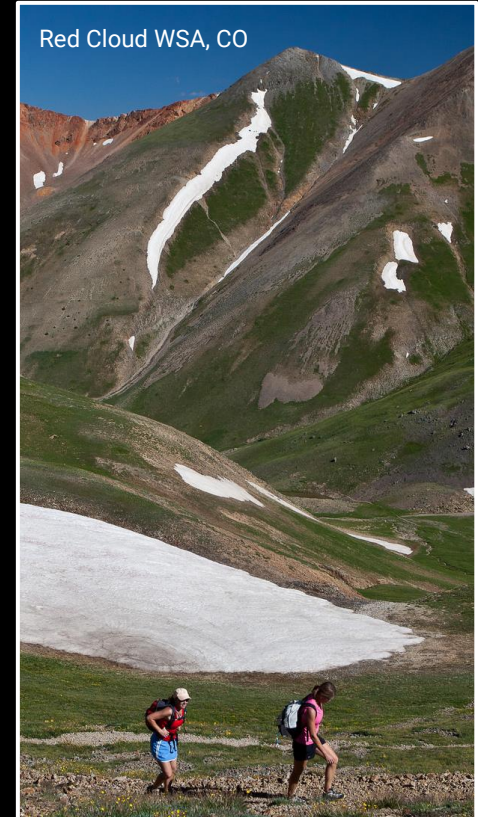




## Wilderness is part of BLM's multiple use mandate

Definition of multiple use (FLPMA, Sec 103):

- ❖ "...making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services"
- ❖ "the use of some land for less than all of the resources."





The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) requires an inventory of all resources.

- ❖ Sec. 201(a): “The Secretary shall prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public lands and their resource and other values....”



FLPMA required special consideration of wilderness resources.

- ❖ Sec. 603 (a) “the Secretary shall review those roadless areas... identified during the inventory required by section 201(a)... as having **wilderness characteristics** described in the Wilderness Act... [and] report his recommendation... as wilderness.”



- ❖ Size
- ❖ Naturalness
- ❖ Outstanding opportunities
- ❖ Other features



Select the button below to  
access the definition of  
wilderness as written in the  
Wilderness Act of 1964

**[Definition of Wilderness](#)**



Gardner Mountain WSA, WY

## Size

❖ **Roadless Areas  
over 5,000 acres**





## What is a “road”?

A road is:

- ❖ constructed
- ❖ maintained
- ❖ receives regular use



Select the button below to access House Report 94-1163 defining what a road is in order to identify roadless areas

[House Report 94-1163](#)



## Is this a “road”?

Is it:

❖ constructed?

YES

NO

❖ maintained?

YES

NO

❖ receives regular use?

YES

NO



Check Expert Answer



The 1,145-acre Prospect Mountain WSA (red) adjacent to the 23,300-acre Platte River Wilderness (green) in Wyoming

## Size

- ❖ Roadless Areas over 5,000 acres
- ❖ Roadless Islands
- ❖ **Sufficient size to be practicable for wilderness management**



## Naturalness

- ❖ “...appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable....”

Wilderness Act, Section 2(c)(1)



Centennial Mountains WSA, MT

## Outstanding Opportunities

❖ “...has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation...”

Wilderness Act, Section 2(c)(2)



Ah-shi-sle-pah WSA, NM

## Other Features

- ❖ “...may also contain ecological, geological,... scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”

Wilderness Act, Section 2(c)(4)



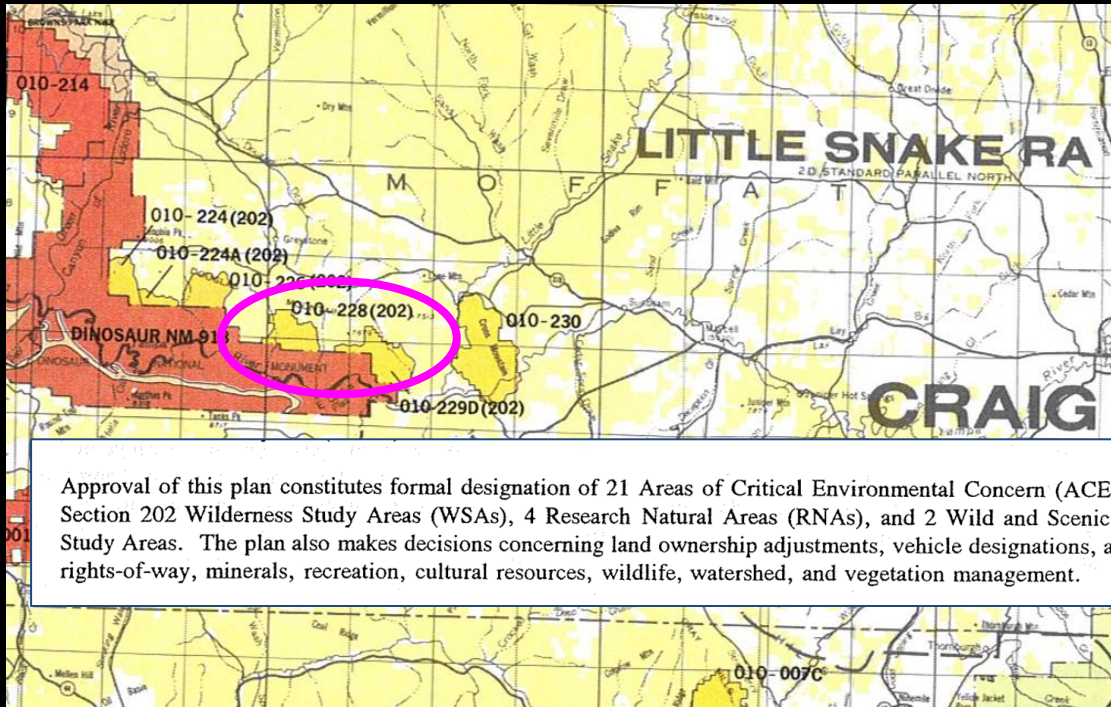
McCullough Peak WSA, WY

Not all WSAs have the same origin.

- ❖ Two sections of FLPMA resulted in the establishment of WSAs:
  - Section 603 – Wilderness Study
  - Section 202 – Land Use Planning



## 202 WSAs



Approval of this plan constitutes formal designation of 21 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), 4 Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), 4 Research Natural Areas (RNAs), and 2 Wild and Scenic River Study Areas. The plan also makes decisions concerning land ownership adjustments, vehicle designations, access, rights-of-way, minerals, recreation, cultural resources, wildlife, watershed, and vegetation management.

### RECORD OF DECISION

#### INTRODUCTION

This document formally records the Bureau of Land Management's decisions for managing approximately 3 million surface acres of public land and 4.1 million subsurface acres in the Mimbres Resource Area. The Mimbres Resource Area encompasses BLM-administered public land in Dona Ana, Luna, Hidalgo, and Grant Counties in southwestern New Mexico.

#### DECISION

The proposed decisions as described in the Proposed Mimbres Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), dated October 1992 (as modified in the Modifications and Corrections Section, ROD page 4 and 5) are selected as the Approved Plan.

The RMP was prepared under the regulations for implementing the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 CFR 1600). The EIS was prepared for this plan in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

Approval of this plan constitutes formal designation of 21 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), 4 Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), 4 Research Natural Areas (RNAs), and 2 Wild and Scenic River Study Areas. The plan also makes decisions concerning land ownership adjustments, vehicle designations, access, rights-of-way, minerals, recreation, cultural resources, wildlife, watershed, and vegetation management.

#### ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Four Alternatives were described and analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS. These Alternatives outlined the management of resources or programs that were considered issues or concerns by BLM and the public. The Alternatives in the Draft Plan represented a reasonable range of possible management options to resolve the identified issues and concerns.

The management of resources and programs not at issue was described in the Continuing Management Guidance section of the plan. The Continuing Management Guidance described how these resources and programs would continue to be managed, regardless of the Alternative selected.

#### Current Management (No Action) Alternative

This Alternative described the current management of resources and programs at issue, based upon existing land use plans. This Alternative would continue current management, however it does not resolve identified issues and concerns.

#### Resource Preservation Alternative

This Alternative described the resolution of issues and concerns in a manner that placed primary emphasis on maintaining or improving environmental values. This Alternative would have changed current management to emphasize noncommodity resources and programs such as wilderness, cultural resources, wildlife, and visual resources.





WSAs are managed to ensure they are **unimpaired** for preservation as wilderness until Congress has determined to designate them as wilderness or release them from WSA status.



Sweetwater Rocks (Lankin Dome) WSA, WY



## Non-impairment standard

New uses and facilities  
must be:

- ❖ temporary
- ❖ create no new  
surface disturbance



Scab Creek WSA, WY



No matter how a  
WSA was designated,  
the non-impairment  
standard applies.



Steelhead Falls WSA, OR  
(FLPMA Sec. 202 WSA)



## The Non-impairment standard applies until Congress:

- ❖ designates the WSA as Wilderness or
- ❖ releases the WSA to other uses

This could be a long time from now, or just around the corner.



Encampment River Canyon WSA, WY



There is no time  
limit on WSA  
management.



Dubois Badlands WSA, WY



FLPMA, Section 603(a):  
“the Secretary shall... report...  
his recommendation as to the  
suitability or nonsuitability of  
each such area or island for  
preservation as wilderness.”





- ❖ Regardless of the recommendation, all WSAs have wilderness characteristics.
- ❖ WSAs with non-suitable recommendations continue to be managed to prevent impairment.
- ❖ Over the decades, the basis of some of these recommendations may have changed.

Select the button below to access former BLM Director Bob Abbey testimony on suitability.

[Bob Abbey Testimony](#)



# What is the difference between a WSA and other wilderness land resources?

wilderness focused lands

**Wilderness**

**Lands with wilderness  
characteristics**

**Wilderness Study Area**

fundamental management principle

**Manage as described in RMP**

**No impairment of wilderness  
characteristics**

**Preserve wilderness character**





## Basic Differences

- ❖ **Wilderness Study Area**  
managed to not impair wilderness characteristics
- ❖ **Wilderness**  
designated in perpetuity to preserve  
wilderness character
- ❖ **Lands with wilderness characteristics**  
may or may not be protected in a RMP



# Know your key legislative authorities!

## Legislative authorities

**Federal Land Policy and Management Act,  
Sections 201 (a) & 202 (c)**

**Federal Land Policy and Management Act,  
Section 603 (a)**

**Wilderness Act, Section 2 (a)**

## wilderness focused lands

**Wilderness**

**Wilderness Study Area**

**Lands with wilderness  
characteristics**



# Know key regulations and policies directing management!

regulations and policies

**43 CFR 6300**

**BLM Manual 6320**

**BLM Manual 6330**

**BLM Manual 6340**

wilderness focused lands

**Wilderness**

**Wilderness Study Area**

**Lands with wilderness  
characteristics**



- ❖ A WSA is a special designation that applies to lands managed by BLM to protect wilderness characteristics until Congress decides to designate the WSA as Wilderness or no longer consider the area for wilderness designation
- ❖ The wilderness resource is part of BLM's multiple use mandate
- ❖ Authority for WSAs comes from Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) 1976



- ❖ WSAs were established through FLPMA or by Congress
- ❖ WSAs are managed to ensure they are unimpaired for preservation as wilderness
- ❖ Use information in this module to respond to questions that may come up in your daily work