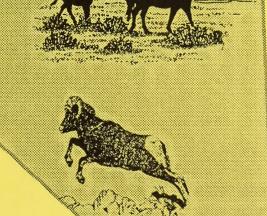




### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT Nevada State Office

# NEVADA BLM STATEWIDE WILDERNESS REPORT





**OCTOBER 1991** 

Volume I ILDERNESS STUDY OVERVIEW

HD 243 .N3 N383 1991

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#### **NEVADA**

#### WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT

Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

October 1991

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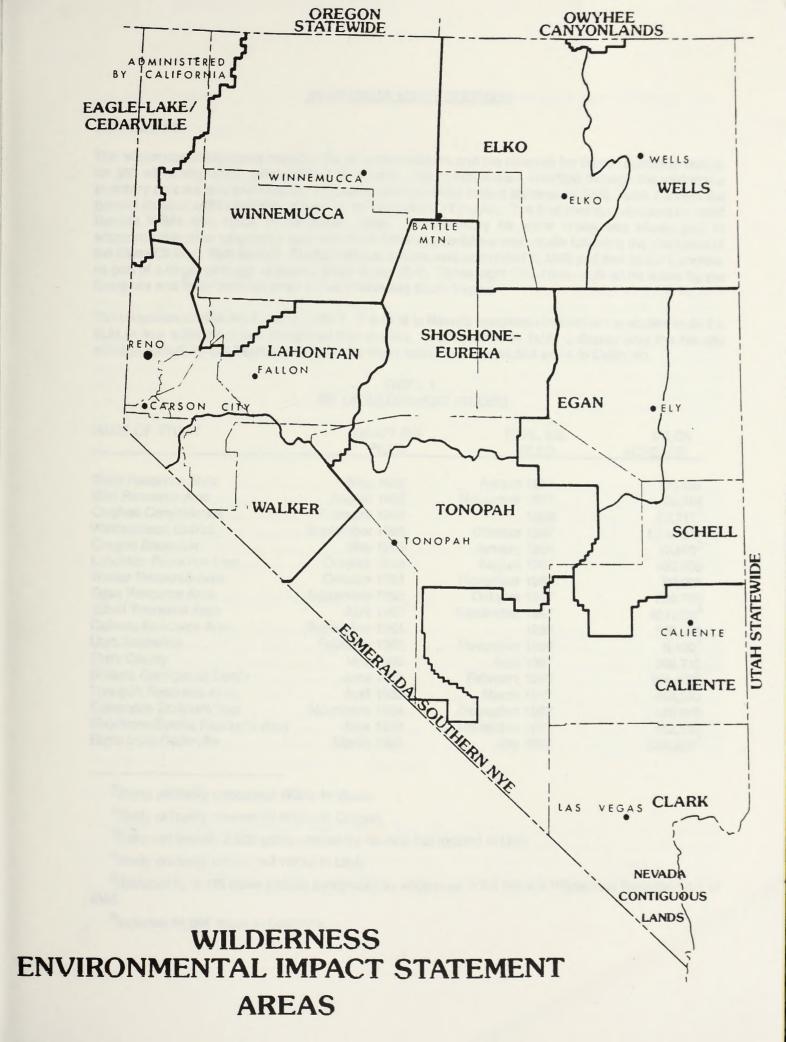
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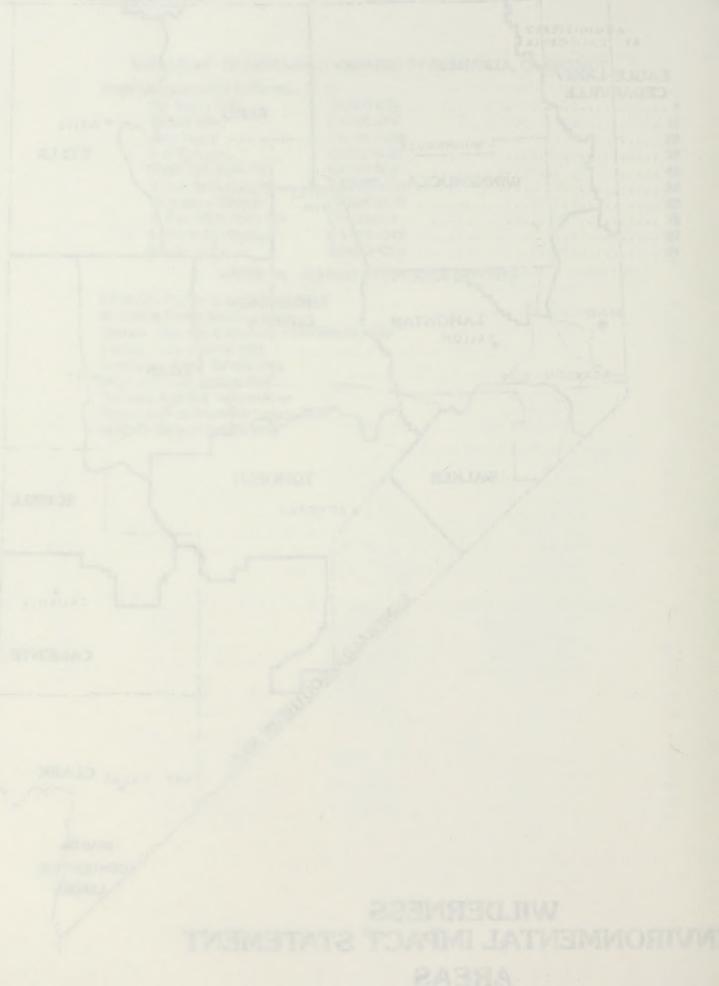
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#### WILDERNESS STUDY OVERVIEW

#### THE STUDIES

This wilderness study report includes the recommendations and the rationale for those recommendations for 103 wilderness study areas (WSAs) in Nevada. These WSAs were identified through the wilderness inventory process and analyzed in 17 separate environmental impact statements (EIS). Map 1 shows the general location within the State of Nevada for each of the 17 studies. The final inventory decision for most Nevada WSAs was made in November, 1980. The inventory for some WSAs was accelerated to accommodate other resource needs and some inventory decisions were made following the resolution of the Sierra Club vs. Watt lawsuit. Eight additional studies were completed in 1985 and sent to the Congress as part of a larger package of Instant Study Areas (ISA). These eight ISAs have received no action by the Congress and have been included in this Wilderness Study Report.

The seventeen studies are listed in Table 1. The BLM in Nevada completed thirteen of the studies while the BLM in four adjacent states completed four studies. Studies listed in Table 1 display only the Nevada acreage except for the Eagle Lake-Cedarville study which includes 44,664 acres in California.

TABLE 1 LIST OF WILDERNESS STUDIES

NAME OF STUDY	DRAFT EIS FILED	FINAL EIS FILED	STUDY ACREAGE	
Wells Resource Area	May 1983	August 1987	175,951	
Elko Resource Area	August 1985	November 1987	66,754	
Owyhee Canyonlands	February 1984	1989	29,717 <sup>1</sup>	
Winnemucca District	September 1983	October 1987	1,118,347	
Oregon Statewide	May 1985	January 1990	13,800 <sup>2</sup>	
Lahontan Resource Area	October 1983	August 1987	432,206	
Walker Resource Area	October 1984	November 1987	92,995	
Egan Resource Area	September 1983	October 1987	236,780	
Schell Resource Area	April 1983	September 1987	421,203 <sup>3</sup>	
Caliente Resource Area	September 1984	1989	588,423	
Utah Statewide	February 1986	November 1990	5,400 <sup>4</sup>	
Clark County	May 1983	April 1987	388,710	
Nevada Contiguous Lands	June 1988	February 1990	194,483 <sup>5</sup>	
Tonopah Resource Area	April 1982	March 1987	483,050	
Esmeralda-Southern Nye	November 1984	December 1987	189,675	
Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area	June 1983	November 1987	152,160	
Eagle Lake-Cedarville	March 1985	July 1987	555,325 <sup>6</sup>	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Study primarily concerned WSAs in Idaho.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Study primarily concerned WSAs in Oregon.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Does not include 3,820 acres studied by Nevada but located in Utah

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Study primarily concerned WSAs in Utah

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Reduced by 6,435 acres already designated as wilderness in the Nevada Wilderness Protection Act of 1989.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Includes 44,664 acres in California.

The eight instant study areas are listed in Table 2.

#### TABLE 2 LIST OF INSTANT STUDY AREAS

ISA ACREAGE	for 163 widowrese my
160	
1,240	
480	
3,200	
10,240	
6,560	
22	
560	
2,641	
	160 1,240 480 3,200 10,240 6,560 22 560

#### **KEY STUDY ISSUES**

#### Impacts on Wilderness Values

The WSAs all have the minimum characteristics necessary to qualify for wilderness consideration. These areas are roadless, natural in condition and possess either outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive unconfined recreation. Wilderness designation will insure the protection of wilderness values in these areas. Nondesignation of the WSAs would, over the long-term, allow uses such as mineral exploration and development, woodland product sales, vegetative manipulation, rangeland project development and recreational off-road vehicle use to degrade existing wilderness characteristics to a point where the areas would no longer qualify for wilderness consideration. Each of the seventeen studies considered the Impact of designation and nondesignation on the wilderness values of each WSA.

#### Impacts on the Exploration for and Development of Mineral and Energy Resources

Lands designated as wilderness are withdrawn from mineral entry and leasing subject to rights associated with valid claims and leases existing at the time of designation. How wilderness designation would impact exploration for and development of mineral resources was an issue in all seventeen studies. Many of the WSAs have the potential for undiscovered mineral resources. For some this potential is low while for others a higher rating was assigned. The U.S. Geologic Service and U.S. Bureau of Mines studied the mineral potential of fifty-four WSAs recommended all or partially suitable for wilderness.

#### Impacts on Recreational Off-Road Vehicle Use

Lands designated as wilderness would be closed to all motorized vehicle use. During the inventory process WSA boundaries were drawn to exclude constructed and maintained roads. This issue therefore, concerns vehicle use on jeep or four-wheel drive trails and cross-country. The impact of wilderness designation on ORV use was an issue in seventeen studies. In general, all studies concluded that while some ORV use would be displaced, this use could easily be absorbed by and accommodated on other public lands in Nevada with negligible impacts.

#### Impacts on Grazing Facility Maintenance and Construction

The ability of BLM and its permittees to maintain existing and construct new grazing management facilities was an issue in nine studies. Both Congressional direction and BLM policy allow the continuation of existing grazing use in designated wilderness. Therefore, facilities required for the management of this use will remain in designated wilderness and new improvements may be allowed for Improved livestock management or to aid in the management of wilderness values. The studies concluded that existing facilities would not be impacted (although controls on access and the scheduling and type of maintenance will be determined in conjunction with wilderness management requirements). New facilities may in some cases be appropriate and approved on a case-by-case basis but the studies did identify some proposed projects that could not be approved within the area if designated as wilderness.

#### Impacts on Vegetation Manipulation Projects

Vegetation manipulation projects, primarily pinyon pine reductions, have been proposed for several areas where increased forage for wintering deer and elk herds is desired. Wilderness designation would prevent the use of mechanical devices to accomplish these projects. Nine studies discussed this issue concluding in general, that the reduction objectives could be achieved through the use of prescribed fire (although with longer time frames required) and through moving the manipulation areas to nearby nonwilderness lands.

#### Impacts on Woodland Product Harvest

Wilderness designation would close the designated lands to the commercial sale and harvest of pine nuts, fuelwood and Christmas trees. This issue was raised in six studies. The studies concluded that in almost all cases, adequate woodland for expected demand exist outside of the areas proposed for wilderness.	
Vigalation manipulation projects, primary preprint the state of the control of th	

#### OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION RELATING TO THE NEVADA STATEWIDE RECOMMENDATION

#### USGS/BM Mineral Reports - Adjustments to Recommendations

The U.S. Geologic Survey and Bureau of Mines prepared mineral assessment reports for 58 areas encompassing all of some WSAs and portions of others. The areas studied were those which during the study and EIS process BLM initially proposed for wilderness designation. The reports were prepared between 1983 and 1990.

When received, each report was carefully reviewed by BLM minerals specialists and public comments were solicited in an effort to determine if new information previously unknown to BLM was included in the reports. Most of the reports depicted the mineral potentials similarly to those displayed and discussed in the BLM's Draft and Final Wilderness EISs. However, a number of reports covering twenty-one WSAs did project mineral potentials higher than those reported in the earlier EISs. Each of these higher potential areas was sent back to the BLM district which prepared the initial study for a determination of whether the new minerals information warranted a modified recommendation. At the same time the BLM's Nevada State Office Mineral Division conducted an overview of all the reports.

As a result of the additional review, it was determined that the recommendations for nine WSAs should be modified. For three WSAs, Mount Grafton (NV-040-169), Morey Peak (NV-060-191) and Antelope (NV-060-231/241), small portions of the areas recommended for wilderness were deleted to remove the areas of high mineral potential. The viability of the remaining areas for wilderness designation was not impacted by these deletions.

For six WSAs, Bluebell (NV-010-027), Pahute Peak (NV-020-621), Riordan's Well (NV-040-166), Blue Eagle (NV-060-158/199), Silver Peak (NV-060-338) and Roberts Mountain (NV-020-541), the new minerals potential was determined to be significantly higher than that portrayed in the EIS studies and the recommendations for these four areas were changed from partial wilderness to nonwilderness. The recommendations for Bluebell, Pahute Peak, Silver Peak and Roberts Mountain were changed due to locatable mineral potential, primarily gold. The Bluebell WSA was rated as containing an identified ore body, the highest rating in the reports scale. The Riordan's Well and Blue Eagle recommendations were changed due to a high potential for oil and gas resources. These two WSAs are contiguous being separated only by a road.

For the other twelve areas the higher potentials were not deemed to be significant enough, when compared to the wilderness values of the areas, to warrant a change in the recommendation developed as a result of the EIS process. The minerals information developed by the USGS/BM is included in the Individual WSA reports accompanying this overview.

#### Reporting of WSAs which cross state lines

The Eagle Lake-Cedarville (California), Schell, Owyhee Canyonlands (Idaho), Utah Statewide and Oregon Statewide studies contain study areas which cross state lines. Each state's recommendation will contain the same WSA specific analysis for the cross border WSAs for purposes of continuity and clarity. The WSAs in the Eagle Lake-Cedarville study are being reported by the state, either Nevada or California, containing the majority of the WSA's acreage and are included in the majority state's draft legislation. The acres in the WSAs split between Idaho, Oregon and Utah are being reported in their respective state's packages and are split between the reporting state's draft legislation.

Five WSAs in the Eagle Lake-Cedarville study cross the state line between Nevada and California. These are Five Springs (CA-020-609), Skedaddle (CA-020-612), Dry Valley Rim (CA-020-615), Buffalo Hills (CA-020-619) and Twin Peaks (CA-020-619A). Each WSA is being dealt with as a whole within its respective reporting package and legislation. Five Springs and Skedaddle are included in legislation prepared to implement the

recommendations contained in the BLM's California Statewide Wilderness Study Report. Dry Valley Rim, Buffalo Hills and Twin Peaks are included in the legislation accompanying the BLM's Nevada Statewide Wilderness Study Report.

One WSA included in the Schell study, White Rock Range (NV-040-202/UT-040-216), crosses the Nevada-Utah state line. The 20,245 acres in Nevada are included in the BLM's Nevada Statewide Wilderness Study Report and accompanying legislation while the 3,820 acres in Utah will be included in the BLM's Utah Statewide Wilderness Study Report. Both of these pieces are recommended for wilderness designation.

Two WSAs included in the Owyhee Canyonlands study, South Fork Owyhee River (NV-010-103A/ID-16-53) and Owyhee Canyon (NV-010-106), cross the Nevada-Idaho state line. 7,842 acres of the South Fork Owyhee River WSA and all of the Owyhee Canyon WSA are located in Nevada and are included in the BLM's Nevada Statewide Wilderness

#### Reporting of WSAs Transferred to Forest Service Jurisdiction.

Public Law 100-550, the National Forest and Public Lands of Nevada Enhancement Act of 1988, transferred approximately 700,000 acres of BLM administered lands to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service. Included in this transfer were parts of six WSAs. Section 5, Paragraph (a) of the Act required BLM to continue the wilderness study process for these lands and include recommendations for them in the statewide BLM package. This has been done and the draft legislation indicates that, when designated, these wilderness areas will be under the jurisdiction of both the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. The WSAs which are now jointly managed by the BLM and the Forest Service and are included in this package are Pine Creek, LaMadre Mt., Mt. Stirling, Morey Peak, Fandango and Antelope Range.

#### BLM Lands Designated As Wilderness in the Nevada Wilderness Protection Act of 1989

The wilderness designations made in the Nevada Wilderness Protection Act of 1989, Public Law 101-195, included 6,435 acres of BLM administered lands within the Marble Canyon WSA. These lands were made a part of the Mount Moriah Wilderness. These lands were to have been recommended for wilderness by the BLM. The final recommendation for the Marble Canyon WSA has been adjusted to remove these acres.

#### Consultation and coordination with Federal, State, Local governments and Indian tribes

Each of the seventeen study efforts considered the plans and policies of Federal, State and local governments and Indian tribes to identify any conflicts with the EIS proposed actions. While some local governments expressed displeasure with the consideration of BLM lands for wilderness and the Environmental Protection Agency supported all wilderness to insure environmental protection, no direct conflicts with other agency land use plans was discovered.

#### "Instant" Study Area (ISA) Wilderness Review Process

Section 603.(a) of FLPMA required the Secretary of Interior to prepare wilderness suitability recommendations for all formally identified natural or primitive areas existing prior to November 1, 1975. This specific requirement was in addition to the direction to inventory, review and prepare suitability recommendations on all roadless areas on the public lands greater than 5,000 acres. These natural and primitive areas became known as "Instant" (Wilderness) Study Areas (ISAs).

There were eleven natural areas in Nevada which became ISAs. These areas and the public lands contiguous to them were inventoried to determine if they met the criteria for wilderness study and Wilderness Study Area designation. The criteria used for this review were size (5,000 acres or larger), roadless, natural and containing outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

Two areas, Pine Creek and and a portion of Goshute Canyon, and lands surrounding them were evaluated as meeting the criteria for wilderness study, designated as Wilderness Study Areas and subsequently studied in the Clark County and Egan Wilderness ElSs, respectively. Eight areas and a portion of Goshute Canyon (listed In Table 2) and their contiguous public lands were evaluated as not meeting the criteria for wilderness study. A recommendation to release these areas from wilderness study status was sent to Congress by the President as part a larger multi-state ISA package in early 1985. As of January 1990 no action had as yet been taken on the recommendations. The eleventh area, Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Natural Area, was mistakenly omitted from the 1985 package. This oversight was corrected by Including the area In the Nevada Contiguous Lands Wilderness ElS and reporting it with the 102 WSAs in Nevada.

All of the ISAs are included in this overview, the Record of Decision and the draft legislation for BLM wilderness in Nevada. This will allow all areas in Nevada which were studied under the requirements of FLPMA Sections 202 and 603 to be reviewed by Congress at the same time.

#### SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE STUDIES

A total of 4,616 comments, both oral and written, on the Nevada WSAs were submitted during the formal comment period for the 17 draft wilderness environmental impact statements listed below.

Approximately 75 percent of the comments received generally favored wilderness designation for some or all of the WSAs. Approximately 20 percent of the comments generally opposed designation of any wilderness. Five percent of the comments did not express an opinion on wilderness designation. It would however be in error to translate these figures to each area studied. The comments received on some areas were decidedly weighted towards support for wilderness designation while comments on other areas were mostly favoring nonwilderness. The public comment section in the individual Wilderness Study Reports accompanying this overview should be referenced for the spread of comments received specific to each area.

Other Federal, State and Local agencies with an interest or jurisdiction within the study areas were asked to comment on each of the EISs.

The total number of comments received on each of the 17 study efforts are summarized in Table 3. Public comments are summarized in the Summary Analysis of WSA Recommendations for each WSA.

Table 3

	Draft Comment	Total Comments	Final EIS	Total Comments
Study Name	Period	on Wilderness Issue	<u>released</u>	on Final EIS
Wells Resource Area	May-Aug., 1983	57	July, 1987	2
Elko Resource Area	AugNov., 1985	21	Nov., 1987	1
Owyhee Canyonlands	FebMay, 1984	520	Sept., 1989	1
Winnemucca District	SeptDec., 1983	166	Sept., 1987	1
Oregon Statewide	May-Aug., 1985	2,611	Jan., 1990	5
Lahontan Resource Area	Oct. 1983-Jan. 1984	94	Aug., 1987	3
Walker Resource Area	Oct. 1984-Jan. 1985	101	Nov., 1987	2
Egan Resource Area	SeptDec., 1983	96	Sept., 1987	2
Schell Resource Area	April-July, 1983	61	Sept., 1987	1
Caliente Resource Area	Sept. 1984-Jan. 198	5 180	June 1989	1
Utah Statewide	FebJune, 1986		Nov., 1990	
Clark County	May-Aug., 1983	76	April 1987	1
Nevada Contiguous Lands	June-Sept., 1988	64	Jan., 1990	1
Tonopah Resource Area	April-July, 1982	87	March 1987	3
Esmeralda-Southern Nye	Nov. 1984-Feb. 1985	5 59	Dec., 1987	1
Shoshone-Eureka RA	June-Sept., 1983	22	Oct., 1987	1
Eagle Lake-Cedarville	March-June, 1985	401	July 1987	1

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