

The Wilderness Plan

An amendment to the

Grand County General Plan

Adopted September 20, 1999

The Grand County General Planning Process Continues

Why a Wilderness Plan?

- ◆ During the adoption of the *Grand County General Plan*, the Grand County Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission recognized the need to adopt sub-area plans areas outside of the Spanish Valley as a priority.
- ◆ The *Grand County General Plan* provides a framework for future, detailed Area Planning targeted toward a sustainable community of enduring value.
- ◆ The *Grand County General Plan* recommends that citizens be involved in a continuing planning process and that the Plan be updated as necessary, and that contemporary planning concepts be welcomed.
- ◆ In early 1995, the Utah Delegation and Governor Leavitt requested all rural Utah county governing bodies to discuss and recommend areas to be set aside as wilderness.
- ◆ The Grand County Council and Planning Commission recognize that a detailed plan based on local community preferences is required to guide decision-making relative to wilderness designations in the County.
- ◆ In the spring of 1995, the Grand County Council passed and approved the Wilderness Plan as a reflection of local citizen preferences relative to wilderness designations in Grand County.
- ◆ The County wishes to formally make the Wilderness Plan a part of the *Grand County General Plan*.

The Planning Process

INTRODUCTION

The Grand County Wilderness Plan was prepared by the Grand County Council in cooperation with and at the request of the Utah Congressional Delegation and Governor Mike Leavitt. In early 1995, the Grand County Council organized and held a series of public hearings to solicit public comment regarding wilderness designations in Grand County. Citizen input, ideas and participation was documented throughout the process and used to determine planning project's direction.

The resulting Wilderness Plan was not the first time a wilderness recommendation had been developed for lands in Grand County. In fact, several different entities had previously developed specific wilderness recommendations. At the beginning of the planning process, wilderness recommendations for the State as a whole included:

- **BLM:** Recommended approximately 2,000,000 acres.
- **Utah Wilderness Association:** Recommended a slightly larger area than the BLM.
- **Utah Wilderness Coalition:** Recommended almost 6,000,000 acres, in support of HR 1500.
- **Congressman Bill Orton:** Recommended a little more than 1,000,000 acres of wilderness along with close to 2,000,000 acres of less restrictive National Conservation Areas.

The County Council considered all Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's) and additional areas recommended by the Utah Wilderness Coalition (UWC). The BLM units form the framework of this recommendation except in cases where areas dropped from the BLM Wilderness Inventory were deemed worthy of further study. In those cases, the UWC Units were examined. Some Units are considered unsuitable

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for Wilderness designation and are recommended for multiple use management; some are recommended for alternative types of protective management; and some are recommended for Wilderness designation.

*Comparison of Wilderness Plan w/ BLM WSAs,
BLM Wilderness Recommendation as of 1995,
And H.R. 1500 Utah Wilderness Coalition Proposal, 1996*

Wilderness Unit Name	H.R. 1500 Acres	BLM WSA Acres	BLM Rec Acres	Grand County
Mill Creek Canyon	15,700	9,780	9,780	7,838
Negro Bill Canyon	20,600	7,620	7,620	7,432
Lost Spring Canyon	16,900	3,880	3,880	0
Floy Canyon	159,105	72,605	23,140	24,294
Desolation Canyon**		89,580	64,716	58,620
Coal Canyon	154,600	61,430	20,774	31,744
Spruce Canyon		20,350	14,736	18,999
Flume Canyon		50,800	16,495	34,621
Westwater Canyon	32,500	31,160	26,000	24,223
Black Ridge Canyon*	5,100	5,100	5,100	*
Behind the Rocks**	29,697	7,056	6,954	6,764
Labyrinth Canyon**	75,319	0	0	5,608
Beaver Creek	28,200	0	0	31,698
Fisher Towers	15,100	0	0	0
Mary Jane Canyon	24,200	0	0	0
Goldbar Canyon	12,500	0	0	RSMA
Granite Creek*	5,100	0	0	ACEC
Hunter Canyon	4,000	0	0	0
Sewenup Mesa Unit*	600	0	0	0
TOTALS	599,221	359,141	198,975	251,841

*The majority of this unit lies in Colorado. Only the portion of the acreage in Grand County is shown. In the case of Black Ridge Canyon, the Grand County Council recommended the land be left in WSA management until the Colorado portion of 49,165 acres was designated or not, and the Grand County portion be designated consistent with the Colorado decision re wilderness.

**Part of this unit lies in other Utah county(ies). Acreage shown is Grand County portion only.

Throughout the public hearing process, described in more detail below, the Grand County Council made decisions regarding specific areas to include or not to include in the Wilderness Plan based on the results of "straw votes" taken from the hearing participants and attendees.

Public Hearings

Three public hearings were held on the *Grand County Wilderness Plan* at the Civic Center in Moab, Utah in the Spring of 1995. Each public hearing was noticed in the local newspaper of record at least 15 days prior to the hearing. Public participation was tremendous, more citizens participated in the hearings regarding the Wilderness Plan than in any hearings in recent history.

- ◆ 27 February 1995 Hearing – Addressed General Wilderness Issues
- ◆ 7 March 1995 Hearing – Considered, in detail, wilderness values and conflicts in the proposed wilderness areas of the southeast part of the County, specifically:
 - La Sal Canyons proposed wilderness areas:
 - ⇒ Beaver Creek Unit
 - ⇒ Fisher Towers Unit

- ⇒ Granite Creek Unit
- ⇒ Sewenup Mesa Unit
- ⇒ Mill Creek Unit
- ⇒ Negro Bill Canyon Unit
- Westwater proposed wilderness area
 - ⇒ Black Ridge Unit
 - ⇒ Westwater Canyon Unit
- Arches – Lost Spring Canyon proposed wilderness unit
- ◆ 13 March 1995 Hearing – Considered, in detail, wilderness values and conflicts in the proposed wilderness areas of balance of the County, specifically:
 - Behind the Rocks Proposed Wilderness Area
 - ⇒ Behind the Rocks Unit
 - ⇒ Goldbar Unit
 - ⇒ Hunter Canyon Unit
 - Labyrinth Canyon Proposed Wilderness Area, eastern portion of County
 - Desolation Canyon Proposed Wilderness Area
 - ⇒ Desolation Canyon Unit
 - ⇒ Coal Canyon Unit
 - ⇒ Flume Canyon Unit
 - ⇒ Spruce Canyon Unit

Public Comments

At the first Public Hearing on 27 February 1995, 208 citizens signed in and 63 spoke, expressing a wide variety of opinions regarding the respective merits of “wilderness”. Most speakers seemed to support a larger wilderness designation than that proposed by the Council, but strong opposition was expressed as well.

At the second Public Hearing on 7 March 1995, the hearing began as a formal public hearing, but the format was changed following 19 public statements in effort to obtain more specific comments without rhetorical statement. The meeting was divided it two (2) groups so that comments could be better organized by topic area. A total 140 written opinions were submitted -- 92 supported the Council's proposed wilderness designations, and 48 opposed the designations.

At the third, and final, Public Hearing on 13 March 1995, extensive public comment was again received. Many citizens spoke supporting the UWC plan, and many others opposed all wilderness designation in specific areas and in general.

After considering all written and verbal public comments, the Grand County Council passed and approved the Wilderness Plan with County Council Resolution #2238 on 20 March 1995. The Plan recommended approximately 200,000 acres of land in Grand County be designated as Wilderness, slightly more the BLM recommended for the County.

Subsequently, and in response to addition information regarding the Beaver Creek and Behind the Rocks Units caused the Grand County Council to reconsider the Wilderness Plan adopted with Resolution #2238. The County Council amended the Wilderness Plan with County Council Resolution #2239 on 3 April 1995 relative to the Beaver Creek and Behind the Rocks Units.

In a follow-up editorial regarding the adoption of the Grand County Wilderness Plan, the editor of the local Times-Independent Newspaper noted that the Council is "pretty diversified" and that "the Council had made an extraordinary effort to solicit their constituents opinions and concerns"; and, furthermore, that "the resulting Plan was unanimously approved, an incredible conclusion for the diverse body". It should be noted; however, that subsequently, one Council member publicly withdrew his support because he felt that less of the Beaver Creek area should be designated as wilderness that is recommended in the approved Wilderness Plan. Also following the adoption of the Plan, the Grand County Western Association of Land Users passed a resolution roundly condemning the Grand County Council's endorsement of creating Federal wilderness areas in Grand County.

BLM Participation and Notification

Several employees of the BLM participated in the hearings and spoke as individuals. Following the adoption of the Wilderness Plan by the Grand County Council, the Plan was forward Governor Leavitt. Governor Leavitt subsequently included the Grand County Wilderness Plan in the statewide report and presented the entire report to the State BLM Director and the Utah Congressional Delegation.

Authority and Purpose

The Utah Code authorizes counties to plan their communities as provided in Title 17-27-3, Utah Code Annotated 1953, as amended, and more specifically in:

- 17-27-301 General plan
- 17-27-302 Plan preparation

Under 43 Code of Federal Regulations, current County-adopted plans, maps, resolutions, policies, etc. must be considered in Federal resource management planning, specifically:

- 43 CFR 1610.2 Public participation
- 43 CFR 1610.3-1 Coordination of planning efforts
- 43 CFR 1610.3-2 Consistency requirements
- 43 CFR 1610.4-5 Formulation of alternatives
- 43 CFR 1610.4-6 Estimation of effects of alternatives
- 40 CFR 1502.16 Environmental consequences

The Wilderness Plan is intended to be used as an alternative for analysis during environmental impact statement process as provided for by Code of Federal Regulations and the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA"). It is not intended to usurp any non-discretionary decision-making authority of any state or federal agencies.

The Wilderness Plan

THE GRAND COUNTY WILDERNESS PLAN RECOMMENDS WILDERNESS DESIGNATIONS AS ILLUSTRATED ON THE ATTACHED EXHIBIT "A", AND MORE SPECIFICALLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS DESIGNATION (Numbers in parentheses indicate the County Council's 1995 vote on the individual areas.)

WESTWATER CANYON UNIT (BLM proposal) (4-3). The entire 26,000-acre area recommended by BLM, excluding the road and the area west of the road that provides access to the area above Little Hole in Sec. 28 and 33, T. 20S., R. 25 E, SLBM, and also excluding the rectangular area surrounding the Pussycat Placer claims (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal") in portions of Sec. 22, 23, 26 and 27, T. 20S, R. 25E, SLBM.

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BEAVER CREEK UNIT (UWC proposal) (5-2). The entire 28,200-acre UWC unit excluding the roaded top of Sevenmile Mesa and that portion traversed by the annual Jeep Safari Trail (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal").

NEGRO BILL CANYON UNIT (BLM proposal) (7-0). The entire area recommended by BLM excluding the small area where the Porcupine Rim Trail rounds the end of Jackass Canyon and enters the Colorado River Canyon (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal").

MILL CREEK UNIT (BLM proposal) (5-2). Only that portion of the BLM recommendation lying north of the road coming out of Hidden Valley and east of the line dividing Sec. 10 and 11, T. 26 S., R. 22 E., SLBM is recommended for Wilderness designation (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal").

BEHIND THE ROCKS UNIT (BLM proposal) (4-2-1). The entire area within Grand County recommended by BLM, excluding Moonflower Canyon with its waterworks, and withdraw the boundary by 200 yards around the perimeter of the Portal Recreation Development property (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal").

LABYRINTH CANYON UNIT (UWC proposal) (4-3). Wilderness designation is recommended for the lower reaches of Ten Mile Canyon and the east side of the Green River Canyon downstream to Hey Joe Canyon. Wilderness is also recommended for the east side of the Green River Canyon downstream from Spring Canyon to the mouth of Hell Roaring Canyon (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal"). This latter area could continue on the west side of the Green River all the way to the Canyonlands National Park boundary. These areas are considered contiguous with the Upper Horseshoe Canyon Unit in Emery County.

EASTERN BOOKCLIFFS UNIT

FLUME CANYON AREA (BLM WSA) (7-0) (Expanded area 4-3). Wilderness designation is recommended for the entire BLM recommendation plus the rugged country above the heads of Flume, Antone, and Sulphur Canyons (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal").

SPRUCE CANYON AREA (BLM WSA) (7-0) (Entire WSA 4-3). Wilderness designation is recommended for the entire BLM Wilderness Study Area (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal").

COAL CANYON AREA (BLM WSA) (7-0) (Expanded area 6-1). Wilderness designation is recommended for the entire BLM recommended area, excluding Sager's Canyon and the area west of it, but adding the Upper and Lower Twin Canyons, Horse Canyon Drainage and the upper part of Cottonwood Canyon (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal").

FLOY CANYON AREA (BLM proposal) (6-1) The entire BLM recommendation, but cherry-stemming the road from Right Hand Tusher Canyon into Tom Farrer Valley (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal").

DESOLATION CANYON UNIT (BLM proposal) (Northern half 7-0) (Southern Half 4-3) (Remainder of WSA 0-7). Wilderness designation is recommended for the entire BLM recommended area. It is the County Council's intention that designation of this area as Wilderness will not preclude building a gas pipeline in Right Hand Tusher Canyon should that become desirable in the future.

EXCHANGE OF APPROXIMATELY 30 SECTIONS OF UTAH TRUST LANDS LOCATED WITHIN PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREAS and AREAS PRIORITIZED FOR EXCHANGE.

The County Council proposes to work with Trust Lands, BLM and the National Park Service to identify an advantageous exchange area in the known oil and gas areas of Grand County.

AREAS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS DESIGNATION (Numbers in parentheses indicate the County Council Vote on the individual area.)

FISHER TOWERS UNIT (UWC proposal) (consensus). It was recommended that the three State Trust Land sections in the unit be prioritized for exchange in order to protect the integrity of the area for filming and recreation.

MARY JANE CANYON UNIT (UWC proposal) (consensus). Again, the Trust Land Sections should be prioritized for exchange to protect filming and recreation in the area.

HUNTER CANYON UNIT (UWC proposal) (consensus)

AREAS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS, BUT RECOMMENDED FOR ALTERNATIVE PROTECTIVE MANAGEMENT. (Numbers in parentheses indicate the County Council Vote on the individual area.)

GRANITE CREEK UNIT (UWC proposal) (consensus). It is recommended that the entire unit be studied by BLM for designation as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern because of the unique riparian habitat and high wildlife values there.

GOLDBAR CANYON UNIT (UWC proposal) (consensus). It is recommended that the unit be designated a Recreation Special Management Area to enhance opportunities for managing heavy recreational use.

BLACK RIDGE CANYONS UNIT (BLM WSA) (consensus). It is recommended that the unit be managed as a Wilderness Study Area until the designation of the much larger contiguous block in Colorado is decided. At that time, the Utah parcel should be designated to match the rest of the area.

ARCHES-LOST SPRING CANYON UNIT. It is recommended that an altered version of this unit be incorporated into Arches National Park after the following issues are satisfactorily resolved: continuation of existing grazing; maintenance of the existing pipeline; status of the road within the proposed expansion; and the intrusion of the Park into a section of State Trust Land. The proposed expansion would comprise some 3317 acres with a boundary generally following the rims of Cordova Canyon, Yellow Cat, Cottonwood Wash, Salt Wash, Lost Spring Canyon, and Fish Seep Draw, at elevations ranging between 4600 and 4840 feet (See attached map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal").

THE GRAND COUNTY COUNCIL VOTED 4-3 FOR RECOMMENDING HARD RELEASE LANGUAGE IN THE FINAL LEGISLATION.

Implementation

Implementation strategies include forwarding a copy of the Wilderness Plan and the map entitled "Grand County Wilderness Proposal" to the BLM and to other appropriate state and Federal agencies for their records and information, noting that the Plan has been adopted as a formal amendment to the *Grand County General Plan*.

The County should also request that the BLM conduct "consistency review" and submit a list of known inconsistencies, if any as well as a list of reasons why such inconsistencies cannot be corrected between the BLM plans and this amendment to the *Grand County General Plan*.

Economic Development Action Plan
for
Moab and Grand County, Utah

Moab/Grand County
Economic Development Coalition

August 1995

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