

## **SOUTH REVEILLE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 106,200 acres**

The South Reveille WSA (NV-060-112) is located in northeastern Nye County, approximately 70 miles east of Tonopah, Nevada. The WSA includes 106,200 acres of BLM lands. There are no split estate lands or privately owned inholdings. This WSA is completely surrounded by BLM public lands. State Highway 375 forms about four miles of the north eastern boundary. The east, south, and west boundaries are unnamed dirt roads to the Reveille mine road, which is the northern boundary of the WSA. The South Reveille WSA is oblong shaped, measuring 17 miles north to south and from 6 to 13 miles east to west. The study area covers a good portion of the Reveille Range and Reveille Valley.

There were three alternatives analyzed in the EIS; an all wilderness alternative, a no wilderness alternative, and a partial wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 33,000 acres recommended for wilderness 73,200 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 33,000 acres as wilderness and release 73,200 acres for uses other than wilderness.

The wilderness values of the 33,000 acres recommended for wilderness designation are outstanding. The area is very natural and the only imprints of man's work are a water impoundment and five developed springs. The opportunities for solitude are outstanding due to the combination of topographic and vegetative features. The large canyons with steep walls, the small canyons with the many rock outcrops, spires and ridges affords many outstanding places to find seclusion. Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation add to the outstanding wilderness values. The abundance of large rock cliffs and outcrops offer a variety of challenges to the climber. The availability and variety of game species along with the good cover makes this area attractive to hunters. The 33,000 acres are capable of being managed as wilderness over the long-term. Conflicts with other resource uses are slight on the 33,000 acres recommended for wilderness.

The 73,200 acres, recommended for uses other than wilderness, have a higher value for potential mineral and energy exploration and development. The mineral and energy resource values within the area recommended for nonwilderness include: 28,160 acres rated good for the potential occurrence of base, ferrous, and precious metals; 55,000 acres rated good for the potential occurrence of oil and gas; and 40,960 acres rated good for the potential occurrence of geothermal resources.

Within the area not recommended for wilderness, there are 145 mining claims. Although there are no developed mines, one small precious metals mine is anticipated in the northern part of the South Reveille WSA. About 10 acres within the WSA would be disturbed, including one mile (1.5 acres) of road, one acre of mine site, three acres for the mill site and 4.5 acres of tailings.

In the foreseeable future, it is assumed there would be a small producing oil field, in the area not recommended for wilderness designation. About 40 acres inside the WSA would be disturbed, including three miles (5 acres) of roads, 20 acres of storage, and 15 acres for load out facilities. About 55,000 acres have a moderate potential for oil and gas.

Although 40,960 acres are rated good for potential occurrence of geothermal resources, no activity or interest has been demonstrated in this area and no action is anticipated.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** The area within the 33,000 acres recommended for wilderness designation is natural. The rugged mountainous core, which forms the heart of the WSA, is a thick, multi-ridged strip of steep-sided mountains rising to crests and flat-topped summits between 8,000 and 9,000 feet. Sheer cliffs form the mountain sides in many places and large canyons with steep walls run out to the edge of the valleys. These canyons are further divided by small canyons joining at all angles with rock outcroppings, spires, rock faces, and ridges with sheer vertical drops of hundreds of feet. Vegetative cover is pinyon pine/juniper at the upper elevations and northern desert shrub type at the lower elevations.

Within the 73,200 acres not recommended for wilderness are approximately five miles of vehicle ways, a five surface-acre water impoundment, and five spring developments. The vehicle ways are found in the valley areas. The water impoundment is located adjacent to the western boundary of the WSA. The spring developments and water troughs are located in the northern and central portions of the WSA. Total acreage involved is approximately twenty acres.

**B. Solitude:** The opportunities for solitude are outstanding due to the topographic and vegetative features. The large canyons with steep walls, the small canyons with the many rock outcrops, spires and ridges affords many outstanding places to find seclusion. The abundance of pinyon pine and juniper on the upper slopes and mountain tops add to the opportunities for solitude. The size and the shape of the WSA would offer the user a nearly endless choice of secluded spots.

Seclusion, in the 73,200 acres not recommended for wilderness, is some what limited.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are outstanding. The WSA provides for hiking, backpacking, hunting, horseback riding, mountain or rock climbing, photography, bird watching and sightseeing.

Recreationists could choose to camp in a sagebrush covered flat and hills, sagebrush covered hillsides and canyons, or pinyon pine and juniper covered mesas and mountains. Potable water sources are present along the eastern side of the range and in the central portion of the WSA. Two specific attractions in the WSA would be Fang Ridge and Reveille Peak. Trips along the length of the range would be challenging and offer spectacular views. Trips across the WSA would provide a transect of several Great Basin Province ecosystems.

The abundance of large cliffs and outcroppings offer a variety of rock climbing routes. Many of the mountain tops are accessible, from certain directions, only by technical climbing routes.

Due to the large size of the WSA, horseback trips could vary considerably in length. Water is available at springs within the area. Horses could be turned out to graze, but would have to be hobbled to prevent them from being run off by wild horses present in the area.

The terrain and vegetation are such that a hunter could move freely through much of the WSA. Many of the hillsides and all the valley bottom lands are covered with sparse, low growing desert plants. The rock cliffs and outcroppings around Fang Ridge and Reveille Peak are impressive. Sunrise and sunsets turn the rock faces into rainbows of pastel colors. Wildlife sightseeing opportunities are readily available with mule deer, pronghorn antelope, coyote, redtail hawk, prairie falcon, mountain loin, wild horses, and numerous other birds and reptiles of a wide variety present.

**D. Special Features:** No special features have been identified within the WSA.

#### **4. MANAGEABILITY**

The 33,000 acre rugged mountainous core of the WSA, can be managed as wilderness. The boundaries generally follow the base of the mountains. The central core is steep-sided mountains which limit travel by vehicles to the alluvial fans that penetrate the WSA.

The 73,200 acre alluvial fans, not recommended for wilderness designation, can be managed as wilderness but have a potential for impairment of wilderness values due to future mineral and energy activities. Also, the area is classified as having 55,000 acres of moderate potential for oil and gas.

#### **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

The U.S. Bureau of Mines and the U.S. Geological Service studied the 33,000 acres recommended for wilderness designation with the following identified mineral resources and mineral resource potential: A single mineralized area was identified in the study area. This area is located within a two square mile area just inside the southern boundary of the WSA as having a moderate potential for gold and silver in a highly fractured quartz vein. The surrounding six square miles are identified as having a low potential for the same metals. The area east of Reveille Peak has little evidence of mineralization. The Fang Ridge area has little evidence of mineralization. The 33,000 acres within the South Reveille WSA, recommended for wilderness designation, have little chance for oil and gas accumulations. No hot springs are present at the surface and no geothermal leases are present in the WSA.

The 73,200 acres not recommended for wilderness designation is classified as having 28,160 acres with moderate potential for metallic mineral resources. Although there are no developed mines, one small precious metals mine is anticipated in the northern part of the South Reveille WSA.

Also, the area, not recommended for wilderness designation, is classified as having 55,000 acres of moderate potential for oil and gas. It is assumed there would be a small producing oil field, in the foreseeable future.

#### **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During the inventory phase, three comments were received which did not favor wilderness study area designation. Three other comments were received which favored the area being designated a wilderness study area.

Two public hearings were held during the public review period on the draft environmental impact statement, Tonopah, Nevada, June 9, 1982, and Reno, Nevada, June 7, 1982. A total of 28 comments were received. Of these, 25 comments favored wilderness designation and three comments favored a nonsuitable recommendation for the South Reveille WSA. Opposition to the designation stated the areas favorable geology, over 90 mining claims are present, and return to multiple-use management due to enormous mineral and energy potential. Support for wilderness designation cited an outstanding area, follow manageability alternative, larger area has greater benefit, untrammelled basin and range topography, pristine area with very high wilderness values, one of the few valley areas in Nevada that still qualifies as wilderness, add diversity to the National Wilderness Preservation System, and wilderness designation should encompass the valley not just the mountainous core.

Two State agencies commented in favor of wilderness designation for this WSA. The Nevada Division of State Parks confirmed the BLM analysis. The Nevada Division of Mineral Resources stated that the southwest corner of the WSA be recommended as wilderness due to the low mineral potential. The State,

during its consistency review, concurred with the Preferred Alternative.