



A few range developments exist within the WSA. A 1-mile section of fence extends into the south end of the WSA and is well screened. Cottonwood Spring in the northeast is developed and a pipeline extends down the canyon to a water tank located outside of the WSA. Other developments, include two small corrals, two fenceline tie-offs (less than 1,000 feet in length), and an abandoned pipeline. Due to the dense tree cover, these developments have little affect on the naturalness of the WSA as a whole.

**B. Solitude:** Excellent opportunities for solitude exist in the WSA, but fall short of outstanding. Good vegetative cover exists in nearly all parts of the WSA due to the dense pinyon-juniper woodland. Topographic screening is provided by the side canyons, however, with the exception of the northern portion of the unit the mountain range is gentle in relief with few outcrops and is composed of a single ridgeline. Overall, these characteristics, combined with good unit configuration and size, make for many 'secluded spot' where visitors may escape all visible and audible evidence of man.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation exist in the Fortification Range WSA mainly as a result of the outstanding scenery on the north end. Here, hiking, camping, and nature study are enhance by the extraordinary setting provided by the weathered rock formations. Opportunities for observing the geology of the area constitute a separate class of high quality recreation opportunities in themselves. As one moves south through the range from Cottonwood Canyon, the quality of recreation opportunities quickly declines. The diverse ecosystem of Cottonwood Canyon changes to a much less diverse pinyon-juniper ecosystem. Scenery is less spectacular, wildlife is less abundant and diverse. Opportunities for recreation exist, of course, but their quality is not especially noteworthy.

**D. Special Features:** The unique geologic formations which provide for the scenic quality of the WSA's north end is considered a special feature. The ponderosa pines located in and around Cottonwood Canyon are unusual in eastern Nevada; remnant populations of larger stands that existed under different climatological conditions. They also serve as a seed source and a source of genetic diversity, and contribute as one element of the northern area's scenic beauty.

#### **4. MANAGEABILITY**

The Fortification Range WSA can be managed to preserve its wilderness values in the long term. No private lands occur within the WSA, and no mining claims are located within it. Portions of the lower slopes of the range are leased for oil and gas and it is anticipated that a wildcat oil well would be drilled along the fringe of the WSA even with wilderness designation. Wilderness values would be temporarily lost on approximately 3 acres as a result. Most exploration interest is focused on the adjacent valleys (Lake Valley and Spring Valley) to the exclusion of the mountains. Occasional patrols would be necessary during the autumn hunting season to ensure vehicle use is confined to existing roads or trails.

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

The Fortification Range WSA has been assigned low mineral potential. No mining claims exist within the WSA. Oil and gas potential in the WSA has also been rated as low based on lack of geologic evidence. Some geophysical exploration has taken place on the western fringe of the unit in connection with exploration efforts in Lake Valley, where interest is centered.

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

During formal public review of the draft EIS and Wilderness Technical Report held between April 8 to July 8, 1983, a total of 38 comments were received specifically addressing the Fortification Range. Of those, 28 were written comments and 10 were oral testimonies. In general, 32 commentors supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA. Five commentors supported no wilderness for the WSA, while one commentor

mentioned the Fortification Range but took no formal position on wilderness designation. The majority of comments received were from California and Nevada, with three comments coming from the local area.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the area's scenic rock formations, habitat for raptors and mountain lions, dense forests, unique geology and lack of conflicts. The commentators opposing wilderness designation stated that designation was unnecessary because the area would always have wilderness characteristics due to its rugged setting. Concerns were also expressed over access closures; long term benefits to wildlife populations; and lack of size.

The Nevada Governor in his consistency review stated that the scenic values were outweighed by other resource conflicts. The Nevada Divisions of Lands, Forestry, Parks, and Historic Preservation and Archaeology in a joint comment, support the proposed action of No Wilderness although no specifics were given. The Department of Wildlife also supported No Wilderness stating "the area does not appear to provide high wilderness values nor would stringent protective measures enhance existing wildlife populations."

The Lincoln County Conservation District favored no wilderness and stated that although there are some unique land formations with aesthetic appeal, they are too small for wilderness designation.

One letter was received on the final EIS from the Environmental Protection Agency which supported the BLM's wilderness recommendation.