



Another manageability concern was that projected mineral exploration and development in the northern portion of the WSA would impair wilderness values regardless of wilderness designation. Gold-producing ore is intermittently processed at the Atlanta Mine, located three miles north of the WSA.

While the Table Mountain WSA does offer outstanding opportunities for solitude, the wilderness inventory found that it lacked the same high level of recreation opportunities and offered few special features. The recommendation for the WSA was partially based on these lower wilderness values.

Lastly, the Table Mountain WSA is one of four WSA's clustered within a radius of 25 miles. All of these WSA's are comprised of similar landforms and ecosystems. Two of these WSA's - Parsnip Peak (NV-040-206), also within the Wilson Creek Range and the White Rock Range (NV-040-202) - are recommended for wilderness designation.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** Nearly the entire Table Mountain WSA is in a natural condition. The central and southern portions are in an especially pristine condition. The central ridgeline in the WSA is separated from the 'Table' by rocky, precipitous canyons. Within these canyons, spectacular scenic pockets of ponderosa pines nestle up against colorful volcanic cliff faces. From the central ridgeline, a jumbled array of conical peaks, most over 8,000 feet in elevation, spread out and form the forested southern half of the WSA.

A few cherrystemmed roads and ways intrude into the area and affect the naturalness of the periphery, but are noticeable only when in their immediate proximity.

**B. Solitude:** The 'Table' portion of the WSA receives the most visitor use, while the remainder of the WSA is virtually unknown and infrequently visited. Topography characterized by numerous peaks, jutting outcrops, steep drainages and vegetative screening of thick forest cover allow for outstanding opportunities for solitude. There are no destination points in the WSA and the abundance of springs throughout the area would further serve to disperse visitors and minimize user contacts.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Opportunities for recreation exist in the Table Mountain WSA, but fall short of "outstanding." These include most of the usual forms of recreation such as hiking, camping, horseback riding, nature study, and hunting (deer and upland game). Opportunities for some of these are limited in much of the area by the thick vegetative cover, which at times can become impenetrable maze of mountain brush. Once these barriers are overcome, hidden riparian areas only lightly grazed by elk are revealed and offer excellent destination points for visitors. Interesting rock formations, meadows, and ponderosa pine all enhance recreational opportunities. Wildlife is particularly abundant in portions of the WSA and includes mule deer, elk, and wintering bald eagles.

**D. Special Features:** The scenic quality of a small area within the central portion of the WSA is considered to be a special feature. This area offers the visitor a relatively pristine meadow complex, a healthy regeneration of ponderosa pine forest, and the beautifully sculptured hoodoo rock formations all found in close proximity to each other. Bald eagles which can be found roosting within the WSA in the winter time are also considered a special feature in the area.

### **4. MANAGEABILITY** (the area must be capable of being managed to preserve its wilderness character)

The Table Mountain WSA is unmanageable as wilderness. If it were designated wilderness, it is likely that the wilderness values of the area would be lost over the long term to incompatible but allowable uses. The first use of the land which would be incompatible with wilderness management is access development to the dispersed private inholdings in the south half of the WSA. The Wilderness Management Policy allows for reasonable

development of access; and in the rugged terrain in which the private parcels are located, access development would likely be very impairing to naturalness and to opportunities for solitude.

This area is expected to contain mineralization similar to that in the vicinity of the Atlanta Mine, 3 miles north of the WSA, where a disseminated gold deposit has been extensively mined resulting in massive areas of surface disturbance.

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

The 1983 GEM study evaluates the mineral and energy potential of the Table Mountain WSA. The study indicates that the entire WSA has moderate potential for the occurrence of metallic minerals. Potential for energy (oil, gas, geothermal) resources is low for the entire WSA (GEM, 1983).

Precious-metal mineralization occurs within the Atlanta/Silver Peak Mining District located just north of the WSA. The Atlanta mine has produced gold and silver in the past and is currently in operation on a sporadic basis. Precious-metal mineralization is also observed in the volcanics to the south of the Atlanta/Silver Peak District in the west-central portion of the WSA.

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

During the inventory phase, one comment was received which raised the issue of livestock grazing conflicts. No other comments were received which raised issues needing to be analyzed during the study phase.

There were a total of 35 comments received during the study process which mentioned the Table Mountain WSA. Of those, 21 supported the unit for wilderness designation citing the excellent hiking in the forests and undulating uplands, the solitude, archaeological sites and rare flora. The Nevada Division of Parks supports this unit as wilderness. Sixteen comments opposed wilderness designation stating they were generally opposed to wilderness, the unit had mineral potential for gold and silver, roads, intrusions and deeded property. The Nevada Departments of Wildlife and Agriculture opposed wilderness designation. During formal public review of the draft EIS and Wilderness Technical Report held between April 8 to July 8, 1983 a total of six comments were received specifically addressing the White Rock Range WSA. Of those, five were written comments and one was an oral testimony. In general, no comments specifically supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA; four commentors supported no wilderness for the WSA and one commentor took no position on designation.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Mines, and Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, and the Department of the Air Force all commented on the draft EIS. None of these agencies had a jurisdictional conflict with either of the alternatives. The Governor of Nevada as well as the State Divisions of State Lands, Parks, Forestry, and Historic Preservation and Archeology supported a no wilderness recommendation for the Table Mountain WSA, stating the unit "...has many resource conflicts." The Lincoln County Conservation District also opposed wilderness designation.

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