

## WHITE ROCK RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 24,065 acres**

The White Rock Range WSA (NV-040-202) is mostly located in Lincoln County in the east-central portion of Nevada along the Nevada-Utah border. A portion of the WSA lies within the State of Utah on the western boundaries of Beaver and Iron Counties. The nearest communities are Ursine, Nevada (pop. 100) about 15 miles to the southwest; and Pioche, Nevada (pop. 800) about 25 miles to the southwest. The entire WSA is comprised of public land with no private inholdings. The boundaries of the White Rock Range WSA are formed on the southwest by a fenceline, on the west by the White Rock Wash jeep trail, on the north by two jeep trails, a legal boundary and a parcel of Utah State land. The southern and eastern boundaries are defined by the Reeds Cabin Summit Road.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 24,065 acres recommended for wilderness 0 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The White Rock Range was recommended for wilderness because of its high degree of naturalness and solitude, the ease of management, and the lack of conflicts.

The WSA is made up of gentle mountain terrain with associated foothills and benchlands. The broad, north-south trending range is dissected by numerous side canyons and drainages. Elevations range from over 9,000 feet to about 6,100 feet. Most of the WSA is forested with juniper, pinyon, and fir woodland. The north end, however, exhibits some interesting differences, including high open sagebrush country, ponderosa pines, white fir, aspen and two high (but intermittent) mountain lakes. Interspersed throughout the area are numerous small grassy meadows where springs support riparian vegetation.

The pristine nature of the WSA is apparent throughout. On the northern end, the ridge flattens into a high, broad windswept table interrupted only by pockets of aspen and fir. Large aspen trees, twisted and contorted by wind and weather provide for interesting photo opportunities. Volcanic boulders, colorful with splotches of lichens are strewn across the table. Signs of elk and deer are abundant.

Although hidden in many places by vegetation, the volcanic nature of the range is often apparent. Islands of strangely eroded volcanic ash and columnar peaks thrust out of and tower over the sea of green trees. Solitude is the primary wilderness value. Heavy tree cover, combined with jumbled mountain topography, results in outstanding opportunities for solitude.

The area is notable for its large number of springs which enhance opportunities for backpacking, camping, and hiking. The relatively large amount of riparian acreage supported by these provides habitat for a large variety of animal species and this diversity of flora and fauna provides good opportunities for nature study. The WSA's blocky configuration is ideal for management and requires no boundary modification.

Also leading to the wilderness recommendation is the fact that conflicts with other resource uses of this WSA are low. The USGS/BM mineral survey showed the area to have low potential for metallic minerals, oil, gas, and geothermal resources. Although the White Rock Range has good potential for commercial woodland product harvest, ample areas exist outside of the WSA to meet foreseeable demand.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** The pristine nature of the remote White Rock Range WSA is apparent throughout. Visitors have infrequently explored this little known area and few signs of man can be found.

The only unnatural features are five ways, none of which are more than a mile in length, and all but one of which are well screened by dense forest cover.

**B. Solitude:** The opportunities for solitude in this WSA are outstanding. The WSA's vegetative screening is exceptional, provided by an almost uninterrupted forest of pinyon and juniper, with a scattering of other conifers. This, combined with good topographic screening provided by the mountains themselves, as well as a good unit configuration, allow for outstanding solitude opportunities just about anywhere within the area.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Opportunities for recreation were found to be good but less than outstanding during the wilderness inventory. Current recreational opportunities such as hiking, camping, trapping, deer hunting, blue grouse hunting, and rockhounding are found throughout the WSA. About 18,000 acres of the area are crucial deer summer range.

In addition, the White Rock Range is notable for its large number of springs which enhance opportunities for backpacking, camping, and hiking. The relatively large amount of riparian acreage supported by these springs provides habitat for numerous animal species. This diversity of flora and fauna provides good opportunities for nature study.

**D. Special Features:** The original wilderness inventory did not list any special features. After completion of the inventory however, an elk herd of about 20-30 animals set up residence. The elk use the northern portion of the WSA and seeing these animals enhances the visitor's wilderness experience. They are now considered a special feature of the WSA.

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

The White Rock Range WSA is easily manageable as wilderness. The boundaries of the unit are easily found on the ground. There are no private inholdings in the area and no mineral leases. Cherrystemmed routes are few, and well screened by tree cover.

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

The U.S Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment report for the White Rock Range WSA in 1986, (U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1728-B).

The report indicates that the White Rock Range WSA has no identified mineral resources and has low mineral resource potential for metals. The report also states that the potential for oil, gas, coal, and geothermal energy resources within the unit is low.

The 1983 GEM study differs from the recent evaluation of the USGS/BM report. The GEM study rated the WSA as having moderate potential for mineral resources, with a low certainty factor.

### **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 10 comments were received specifically addressing the White Rock Range WSA. Of those,

six were written comments and four were oral testimonies. In general, six commentors supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA and three commentors supported no wilderness for the WSA and one commentor took no position on designation.

Specific comments opposing wilderness designation stated there were private lands and water holdings within the unit, current recreational access routes, and that options for wildlife habitat improvement should remain open.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Mines, Bureau of 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 White Rock Range WSA, stating the unit "lacks really positive and unique wilderness values." The Nevada Department of Wildlife opposes wilderness designation because of current recreational access routes and to keep management options open for range improvements. The Lincoln County Conservation District opposes wilderness designation stating it "has several old roads and has high potential for vegetation improvements" for wildlife and livestock.

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