



Wilderness Characteristics Policy & Guidance for the BLM

Two manuals completed in March 2012:

- 6310 – Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory
- 6320 – Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in Land Use Plans



Authorities from FLPMA

❖ Section 201(a)

“...prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public lands and their resource and other values....This inventory shall be kept current so as to reflect changes in conditions and to identify new and emerging...values.”



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❖ Section 201(a)

“The...identification of such areas shall not, of itself, change or prevent change of the management...of public lands.”

Such changes are regulated through land use plans, as outlined in Section 202



Wilderness Characteristics Inventory Process- Manual 6310

- ❖ Wilderness Act, Section 2(c)
 - 1) Size
 - 2) Naturalness
 - 3) Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive & Unconfined Recreation
 - 4) Other supplemental values ?
- ❖ If 1-3 present = land with wilderness characteristics (LWC)





When to Inventory

Three basic circumstances

1. Wilderness Characteristics identified as an issue in NEPA scoping

- During RMP, RMP Amendment

2. Project proposal where inventory is not current or missing

- Newly acquired lands





When to Inventory

3. New information from the public outside specific NEPA analysis

- Public needs to supply:
 - map
 - narrative explaining how new info substantially differs from BLM's info
 - photos



When to Inventory

Frequently enough to maintain inventories as “current”

“Maintain” does NOT mean to discard previous inventories and start over

Use available information (if current) and field check as necessary





Inventory Maintenance

- Compare existing data with new data
- Does previous conclusion remain valid?
- Document & add to Permanent Files
- Make findings available to the public after finalizing and approval



Inventory Maintenance

Public does NOT have to use FOIA

Inventory findings cannot be appealed





Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in Land Use Plans Manual 6320

- Establishes BLM policy on considering lands with wilderness characteristics in land use plans and land use plan amendments or revisions.





Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in Land Use Plans

- Consider a full range of alternatives
- Analyze the effects of...
 - plan alternatives on lands with wilderness characteristics
 - management of lands with wilderness characteristics on other resources and resource uses





Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in Land Use Plans

Possible allocations include:

- Emphasizing other multiple uses as a priority
- Emphasizing other multiple uses while applying management restrictions
- Protecting wilderness characteristics as a priority over other multiple uses
- May be applied to all, none, or some LWCs





Factors to Consider

- **Manageability**
- **Resource Values and Uses**
 - what would be lost
 - what would be gained
- **Congressional release of WSAs**

Land Use Plan Alternatives

- LWCs identified as discrete units
- NEPA document must contain a full range of reasonable alternatives
- Each alternative should include management actions, allowable uses, and restrictions





Land Use Plan Alternatives

No uniform proscriptions across the BLM
Protection alternatives might include:

- *Withdrawal from mineral entry*
- *Close to leasing, or allow leasing only with NSO - no exceptions*
- *Establish a ROW exclusion area*
- *Designate vehicle restrictions*



LWCs and Project Planning

- Analyze impacts to all identified LWCs
- Inventories should reflect **current** conditions – not the conditions that “should” be or could be
- If new LWC’s identified – protection alternative can be considered in NEPA
- Minimize impacts to wilderness characteristics in LWCs not protected





LWCs

- Manuals 6310 and 6320
- No uniform management direction; each LWC may be managed differently
- Reallocated during the planning process by an RMP revision or amendment

WSAs

- Manual 6330
- Uniform management direction; all WSAs managed the same
- Released only by an Act of Congress



