

Wilderness in the Jack Morrow Hills Plan

The Jack Morrow Hills planning area contains some of the most outstanding wilderness in the Red Desert, wilderness that has become increasingly scarce. Famous landmarks like the Oregon Buttes, Boar's Tusk, Killpecker Dunes, and Honeycomb Buttes are a part of this area's wilderness legacy. The BLM has established Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) to provide interim protection for 117,000 acres in this area until Congress can make the final decision. But intensive citizen inventories have identified an additional 147,000 acres that qualify for wilderness status. The establishment of new Wilderness Study Areas would NOT mean closing major access roads or jeep trails. The BLM should give these pristine wildlands the protection they deserve by making them new Wilderness Study Areas through the Jack Morrow Hills planning process.

Honeycomb Buttes

This maze of painted desert badlands stretches below Continental Peak. Part of this area is already a WSA, but an additional 39,000 acres of wilderness remain unprotected.

The Big Empty and Joe Hay Rim

A broad and trackless expanse, this pristine area is typical of the wide open spaces and high rims of the Red Desert. It contains 41,000 acres of completely unprotected lands.

Boar's Tusk Dunes and Buffalo Hump

Some of the largest and most active dunes of the Killpecker Dune Field occur near Boar's Tusk. This spectacular landscape is dotted with small wetlands of great ecological importance. While part of these dunes is an Off-Road Vehicle area, a substantial portion is protected as a WSA, and 16,000 additional acres qualify as wilderness.

Parnell Creek

This isolated series of deep draws is free from noticeable impacts and is an important security area for desert elk, yet the BLM has left it open to industrial development.

Alkali Draw

An Old West landscape of buttes and draws, most of this area is already protected as a WSA.

The Pinnacles

This cluster of eroded pillars were an important landmark for early travelers in the Red Desert. They also offer important raptor nesting habitat. The area to the south of the Pinnacles currently has WSA protection. But the Pinnacles themselves remain unprotected, despite the fact that the BLM recently determined that the Pinnacles qualify as wilderness.

Oregon Buttes and Whitehorse Creek Badlands

The Oregon Buttes are one of the Red Desert's best-known landmarks, and are bounded by the deeply eroded badlands of Whitehorse Creek. The BLM has established two small WSAs in this area; citizen groups would manage the area as a single large wilderness with the addition of 7,000 acres of pristine lands. The neighboring Oregon Buttes Badlands comprise a separate unit of 6,400 wilderness-quality acres of badlands and wide-open spaces just to the south.



The Pinnacles

Erik Molvar photo