

MEXICAN MOUNTAIN WSA

VOLUNTEER MONITORING ORIENTATION:

WSA Citizen Monitoring Coordinator:

Mark Swenson

Phone: (801) 946 – 5201

Email: mswenson@usaconservation.org

BLM Field Office Location and Phone Number

Price Field Office

125 S 600 W

Price, UT 84501

Phone: (435) 636 - 3600

Setting and Terrain

Mexican Mountain WSA is located in Emery County about 18 miles west of Green River, Utah (pop. 973). The unit is approximately 10 miles from north to south and about 15 miles from east to west with the San Rafael River flowing across the landscape from the northwest corner to the southeast corner. The area consists of 59,600 acres of BLM managed land with 5 parcels of state owned land (2,608 acres) existing within the WSA boundary.

Mexican Mountain landscape is characterized by features resulting from erosion of the multi-colored sedimentary rocks of the eastern San Rafael Swell. Brightly colored cliffs, buttes, ridges, alcoves, and pinnacles dominate the viewscape with elevations ranging from 4,700 feet in the southeast to 6,900 feet on Mexican Mountain. Roughly half the area is barren rock with pinyon-juniper woodlands, brush, and grass covering the remaining land. This vegetation along with riparian growth provides for diverse habitat making the WSA home to bighorn sheep, cougars, raptors, and several reptile species. Two endangered plant species (Maguire daisy, Wright fishhook cactus) may also occur within the unit.

Outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive recreation exist in the Mexican Mountain WSA, all of which can be enjoyed in a dramatic and beautiful landscape. The unique geologic features coupled with entrenched narrow gorges formed by the San Rafael River is not to be found anywhere else in the San Rafael Swell.

BLM Management Strategy

Mexican Mountain WSA is managed in accordance with BLM Manual 6330 – Management of Wilderness Study Areas (WSA). Since WSAs are areas that have been recommended to Congress for potential designation as wilderness under the Wilderness Act, the guiding requirement of managing WSAs is the “non-impairment” principle. BLM is directed by policy to prevent any activities that would impair or degrade the area’s suitability for future consideration as designated wilderness. This means that BLM must prevent activities that are neither temporary or would create a new surface disturbance within the WSA.

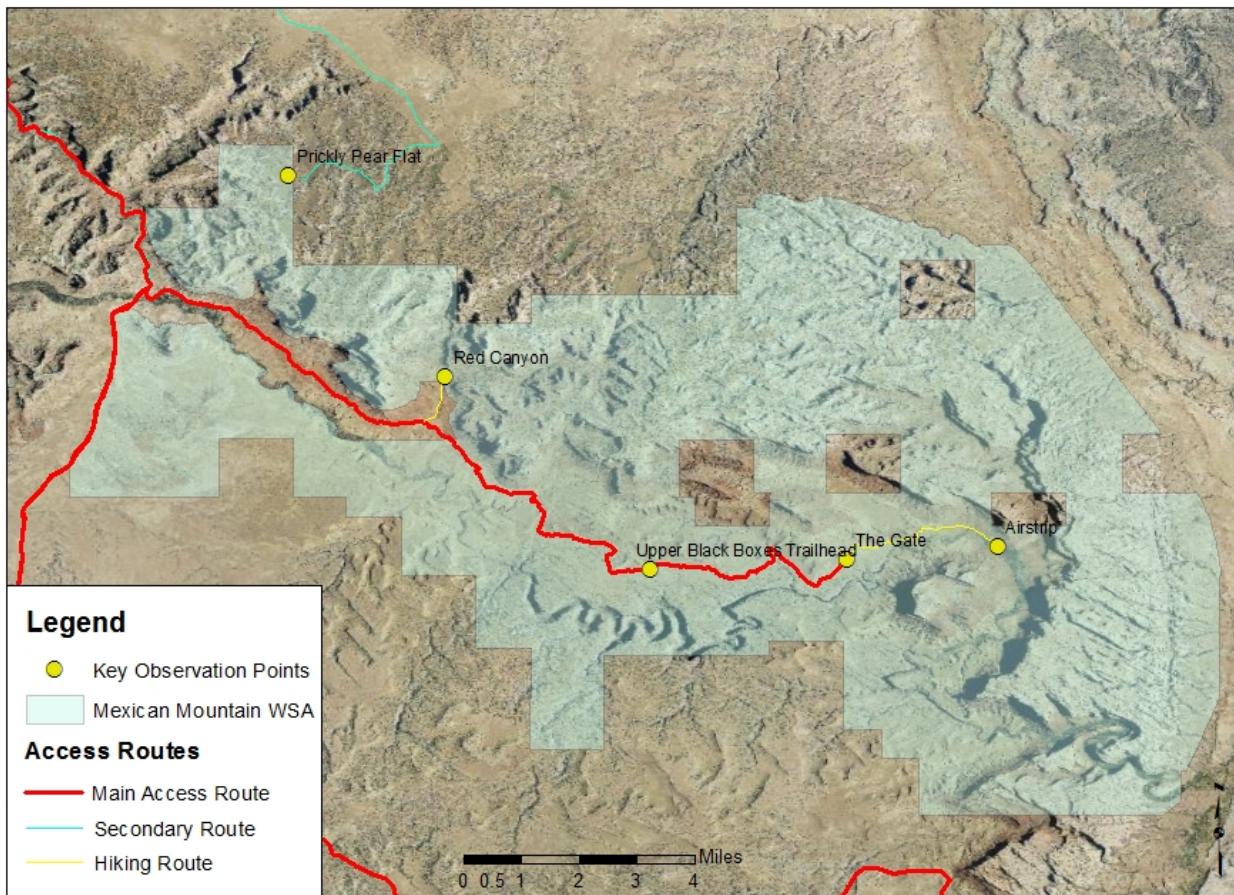
In the practical sense, this management strategy involves preventing the placement of new permanent structures. Construction of new trails or vehicle routes is prohibited. Motorized and mechanized activities are not permitted except on valid, existing routes authorized within the WSA. Vehicular or mechanical cross country travel is strictly forbidden except in emergencies. Commercial activities are also restricted. While landing aircraft in a WSA is typically prohibited, there is an active runway within the WSA boundary that sees some use from backcountry aviation travelers.

Permissible activities would include camping, backpacking, rock climbing, skiing, caving, hunting, and other primitive pursuits. Installing bolts for climbing is not allowable. Activities such as mountain biking, geocaching, rock hounding, gold panning, and aerial activities like hang gliding or paragliding may be permissible as long as they do not create new surface disturbance or establish the precedent of a new discretionary use in a WSA where it did not previously exist. Prior authorization to conduct non-primitive, mechanized, or surface disturbing activities must be obtained from BLM.

Monitoring Areas and Key Observation Points (KOP's)

Monitoring areas are general areas, trails, or routes within a WSA. Key Observation Points (KOP's) are exact locations of significant management interest. Management areas and KOP's could be of significant management interest because they are high-use, experience surface disturbance, or provide a viewpoint where pictures of the landscape can be taken to track impacts and/or changes to habitat over time. The following is a list of the monitoring areas of the Mexican Mountain WSA, and their associated KOP's. The Mexican Mountain WSA has four monitoring areas, and five KOP's. The four monitoring areas are: 1) Red Canyon; 2) Black Boxes Canyons; 3) Airstrip access trail; 4) Prickly Pear Flat.

Figure 1: All Mexican Mountain Key Observation Points



The following maps and tables show the exact locations and GPS coordinates for each Key Observation Point within each monitoring area. Following each table is a short description for reaching each monitoring area. These monitoring points are all located at sites identified as experiencing repeated disturbances due to unauthorized use.

Monitoring Area 1: Red Canyon

Red Canyon is the first KOP located off the Mexican Mountain access route, approximately 5 mile from the Swinging Bridge/BLM campsite along the access route. Directions for reaching the swinging bridge are as follows:

- From Price, travel south on Hwy. 10 to the turnoff between mileposts 39 and 40, signed for Buckhorn Wash/ Wedge Overlook.
- Take a left onto the dirt road heading east. At the mile 14.9 junction, follow the sign that reads "Buckhorn Wash 6, San Rafael Bridge Rec Site 10, and I-70 30". This will lead

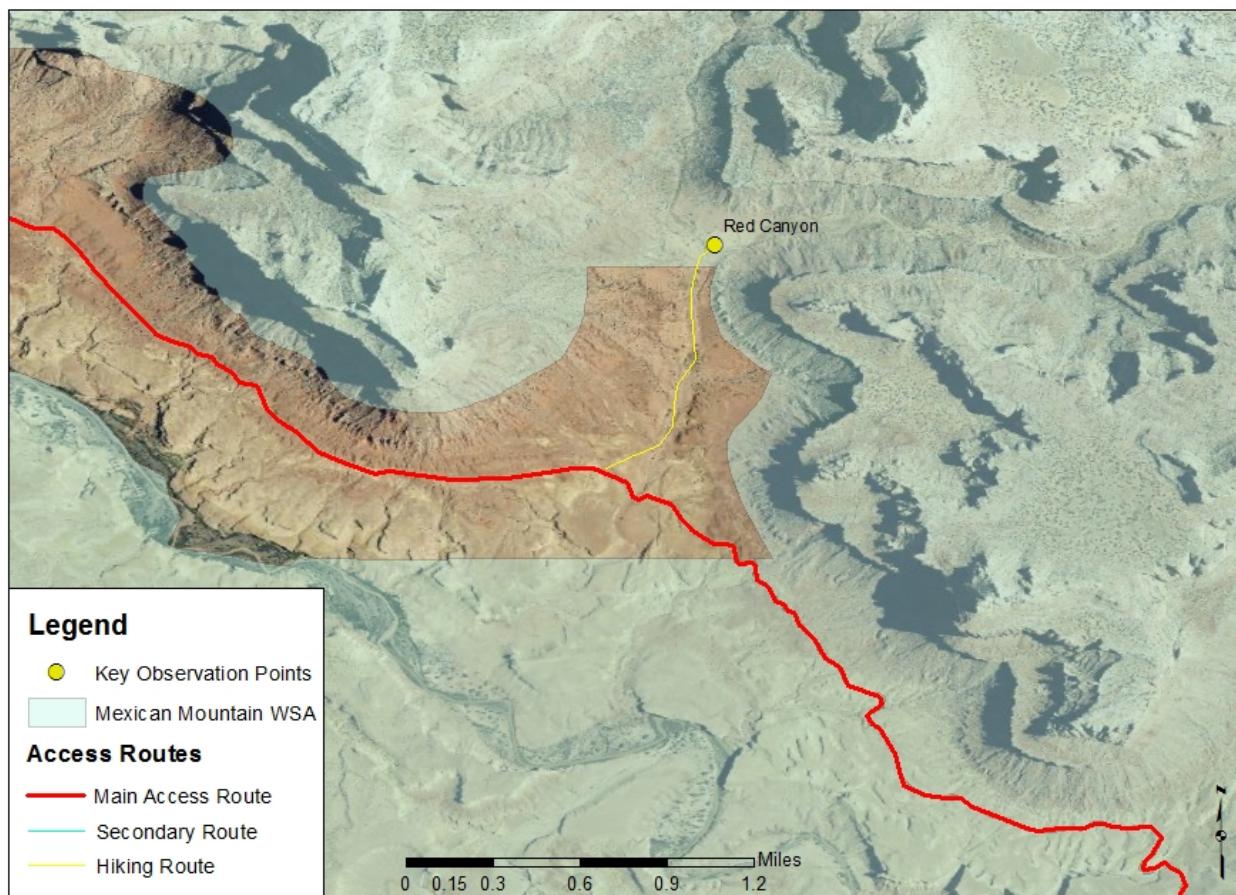
you through Buckhorn Wash to the campground at the old swinging bridge spanning the river.

- From the swinging bridge/campground area, travel approximately 5 miles on the “River Road”. The path to the Red Canon KOP will be located on your left.

Table 1: Monitoring Area - Red Canyon

Key Observation Point (KOP) Name	Decimal Degrees		Degrees, minutes, seconds	
	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
Red Canyon Entrance	39.0609	-110.5894	39° 3' 39.24" N	110° 35' 21.84" W

Figure 2: Red Canyon



Monitoring Area 2: Upper Black Box Canyons

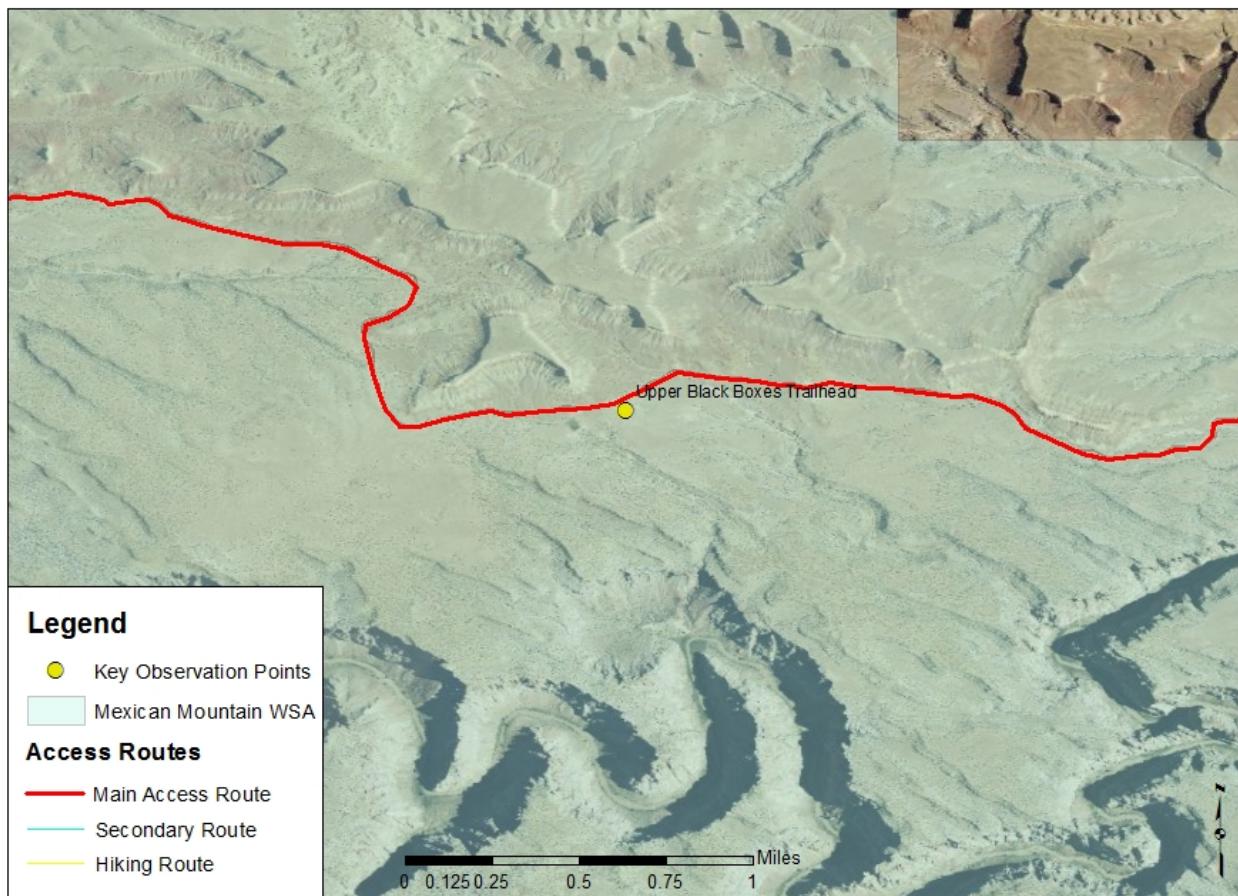
To reach the Upper Black Boxes Trailhead and monitoring area from Red Canyon, continue east an additional 5 miles on the River Road. Do not enter the canyons if there is potential for flash

flooding. Check the weather report carefully if you plan to explore the Upper Black Box Canyons.

Table 2: Monitoring Area - Black Boxes Canyons

Key Observation Point (KOP) Name	Decimal Degrees		Degrees, minutes, seconds	
	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
Upper Black Boxes Trailhead	39.012521	-110.538123	39° 0' 45.08"N	110° 32' 17.24"W

Figure 3: Upper Black Boxes



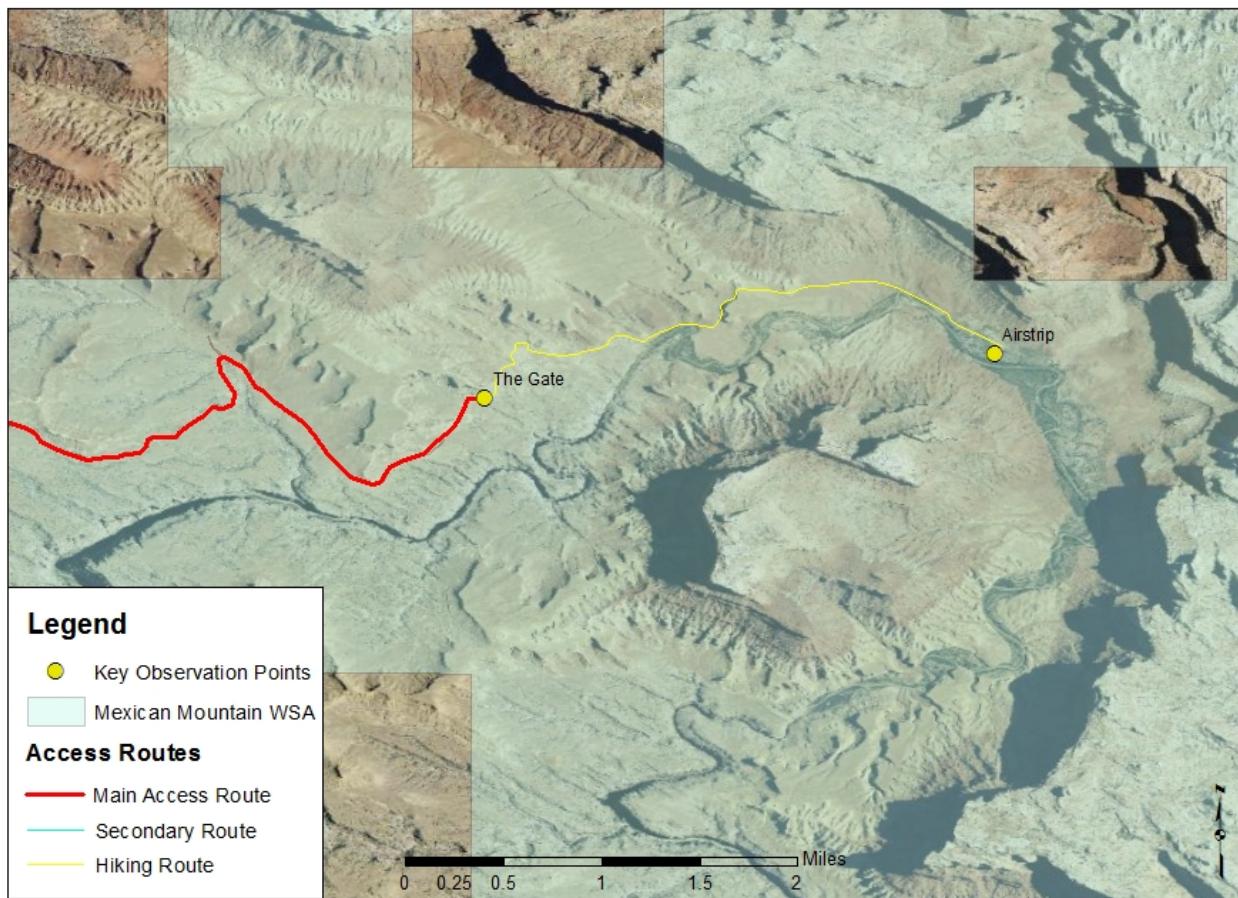
Monitoring Area 3: Airstrip access trail

The airstrip access trail begins at the end of the River Road access route, and is marked by the first KOP, “The Gate”. The river road is very rough after the Upper Black Boxes Trailhead, and should only be attempted by high-clearance 4WD vehicles.

Table 3: Monitoring Area - Airstrip access trail

Key Observation Point (KOP) Name	Decimal Degrees		Degrees, minutes, seconds	
	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
The Gate	39.012	-110.4917	39° 0'43.2"N	110° 29'30.12"W
Airstrip	39.018246	-110.451013	39° 1' 5.69" N	110° 27'3.65" W

Figure 4: Airstrip access trail



Monitoring Area 4: Prickly Pear Flat

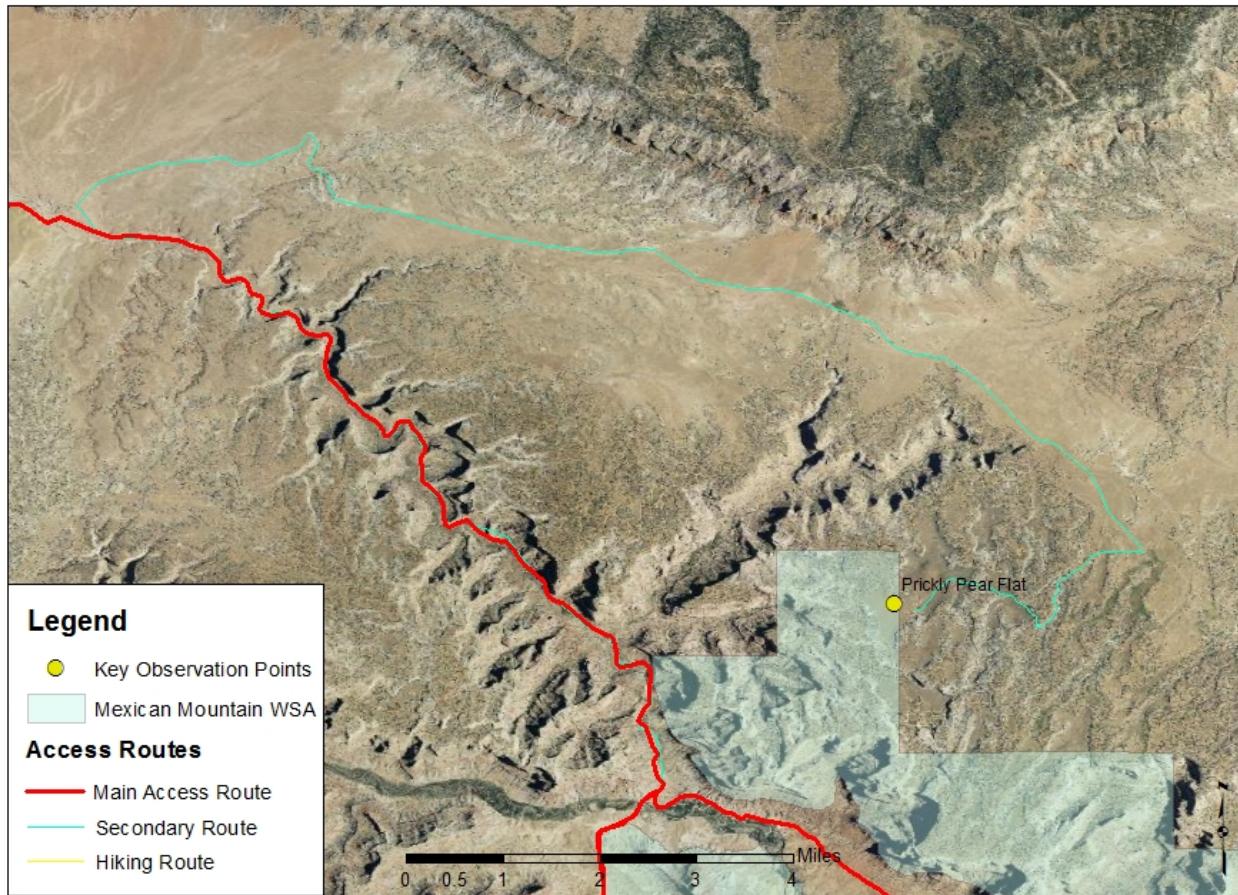
Prickly Pear Flat is not accessible from the river road access route. Directions for reaching Prickly Pear Flat are as follows:

From the swinging bridge/campground area, backtrack up the Buckhorn Draw Road as it leaves the canyon. After approximately 9 miles, turn right at the intersection with Green River Cutoff. Follow the Green River Cutoff Road for approximately 8 miles, keeping to the right at the fork. Keeping to the right, continue for 2.7 miles, at which point you will turn right once more, and continue the last 2.5 miles to Prickly Pear Flat KOP.

Table 4: Monitoring Area - Prickly Pear Flat

Key Observation Point (KOP) Name	Decimal Degrees		Degrees, minutes, seconds	
	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
Prickly Pear Flat	39.111029	-110.6285	39°6'39.70"N	110° 37'42.6" W

Figure 5: Prickly Pear Flat



Access Routes and Transportation

Transportation to and from Mexican Mountain WSA will be the responsibility of volunteers. All vehicles should be equipped with at least one spare tire, tools, and supplies to deal with emergencies. High-clearance 4WD and all-terrain tires are recommended, and are necessary if volunteers plan to travel past the swinging bridge/campground area.

Signing

Portal signs and visitor kiosks have been placed at strategic access points off of main routes along the WSA. The WSA boundary at the end of authorized vehicle routes, fiber-glass carbonite

signs and posts have been placed to notify the public that motorized access is not permissible beyond that point. Monitors should report the location of all signs and current condition to BLM.

Water Availability

The San Rafael River runs through the WSA and can be used as a source of water; however, due to the steep canyon formations, it cannot always be accessed. Be sure to pack plenty of water (1 gal/person/day) particularly when traveling in summer at higher elevations.

Services and Facilities

The town of Green River (pop. 973) can be used to purchase gas, groceries, water, and limited supplies before traveling to the WSA. Public phones and medical services are also available in the case of an emergency.

Communications

Cell phone coverage in Mexican Mountain WSA is spotty at best. Use of satellite phones or SPOT locators is the only reliable means of communication with the outside world. Local residents in Green River have phones that you could request the use of in an emergency.

Resource Issues

The main resource concerns in the WSA are illegal OHV use, BLM sign vandalism, and litter. On the whole, this WSA does not see high visitor use although numbers do increase in the spring and fall.

Safety Recommendations

The following table of safety recommendations should be adhered to before and during monitoring visits. Volunteers should never compromise their personal safety for the sake of monitoring. Be vigilant at all times about the weather, terrain, and personal physical condition. It is best to prepare for monitoring by using a checklist for pre-trip packing. Be sure you have sufficient shelter, clothing, equipment, food, water (1 gal/person/day), light, first aid, and survival gear for existing conditions. Be sure to wear bright colors (specifically orange) during hunting season. Table 5 below summarizes the potential hazards volunteers may experience in the field, and recommended measures to manage the hazards.

Table 5: Risk Management

Hazard: Slipping, tripping or falling on rocky or uneven terrain.
Control measure: Be aware of conditions. Wear lug soled boots with good ankle support. Walk, don't run. Side step down hill. Carry hand tools on downhill side. Measure implemented through: tailgate sessions. Reminders prior to monitoring visit.
Hazard: Snakes, insect bites, bees, encounters with wild animals and poisonous plants.
Control measure: Walk slowly through brush. Be aware of surroundings. Wear long sleeved shirts, long pants, and leather boots. Avoid scented lotions. Know your plants. Carry medication if allergies exist. Avoid attracting predators and other hazardous wildlife by keeping a clean camp. Be bear aware and know how to react if encountered by bears or other wild animals. Measure implemented through: training on poisonous plant and animal encounters. Seasonal reminders.
Hazard: Unsafe tool use
Control measure: If using hand tools, make sure handles are in good condition. If handles are cracked, broken, or have mushroom heads, do not use. Keep axes and other cutting tools sharp. Chop away from body. Wear gloves, boots. Wear goggles to prevent eye injury. Measure implemented through: Use tools for purpose intended. Wear personal protective equipment. Proper training prior to use.
Hazard: Cuts, scrapes and splinters from fencing and/or barrier materials
Control measure: Use gloves, long sleeved shirts, long pants and boots. Keep first aid kit close by. Measure implemented through: Volunteer focus on monitoring rather than maintenance. Use tools for purpose intended. Wear personal protective equipment. Proper training prior to visit
Hazard: Sprains, strains from hiking, lifting loads, swinging tools, etc.
Control measure: Use caution crossing uneven terrain. Use proper lifting techniques. Avoid twisting if swinging tools. Wear boots when digging with spade or posthole diggers. Use legs not back to lift and carry tools or supplies to work site. Measure implemented through: Use tools for purpose intended. Wear personal protective equipment. Proper training prior to use. Hike with a group or in pairs.
Hazard: Weather related illness or injury. Extreme heat or cold.
Control measure: Monitor weather closely. Wear clothing suited to weather. Carry and drink plenty of water. Know signs of heat stroke, heat exhaustion, frostbite, hypothermia and know how to treat. Measure implemented through: Check weather forecast prior to going to the field. First aid course recommended.
Hazard: Lightning or thunderstorm.
Control measure: Monitor weather closely and watch for approaching storms. Get to vehicle if possible. Stay away from trees, metal object and high ground. Measure implemented through: Check weather forecast prior to going to the field. First aid courses recommended.
Hazard: Flash flood
Control measure: Monitor weather closely when travelling in slot canyons as flash flood danger can be high and roads become impassable when wet. Watch flow in streams and washes, do not enter or cross if water is rising. Measure implemented through: Check weather forecast prior to going to the field. First aid courses recommended.
Hazard: Confrontation with verbal and/or abusive public.
Control measure: Do not engage in confrontation. Walk away. Use radio or cell phone communication to contact BLM or Law Enforcement if needed. Measure implemented through: Share contact information prior to each monitoring visit.
Hazard: Lost, missing, or overdue volunteer
Control measure: Leave a trip itinerary and your return time with your coordinator, friends, and/or family. Plan routes in advance and minimize deviation. Carry both hard copy maps, and gps

units. Familiarize volunteers with monitoring location and equipment. Travel with a group or in pairs. Regroup at predetermined times and locations. Measure implemented through: All volunteers will be instructed on the WSA's, monitoring locations, and proper use of maps/navigational equipment through trainings and informational sheets.

Hazard: Motor vehicle breakdown or accident

Control measure: Scout the route. Drivers and vehicles should not attempt to drive into areas beyond their capabilities. Provide volunteers with vehicle safety checklist. Check weather forecast prior to going to the field. Relate vehicle requirements (4WD, high clearance, etc.) based on access route conditions to volunteers. Provide emergency contact information. Measure implemented through: Training provided to volunteers and through the use of tail gate safety sessions.

Monitoring Goals

- Monitor existing vehicle routes for widening, significant deterioration, or motorized use beyond closure points. Provide photos and GPS points at key locations. Report all violations observed. If you witness illegal activity, avoid any conflict and only attempt to get identifying information (license plates and photos) if you feel it is safe.
- Rake out any vehicle tracks found beyond closed routes to a point where they are no longer visible from the closure point. Place dead vegetation across closed routes to provide camouflage.
- Document and report signs that have been damaged or need replacing.
- Document and pack out modern trash or debris whenever possible. Objects that may be historic or older than 50 years should not be disturbed.
- Deconstruct fire rings found in the backcountry.
- Document with photos and GPS any permanent structures or surface disturbance found away from existing routes.
- Photograph outstanding scenery and wildlife that you encounter.
- Enjoy yourself and have fun. Take pride in your contribution to public land conservation.

Maps

The map below shows an overview of Mexican Mountain WSA within the state of Utah. BLM Price Field Office can provide more detailed topographic maps and directions to a particular area upon request.

Wilderness Study Areas in Utah - Mexican Mountain

