

WAH WAH MOUNTAINS WSA

VOLUNTEER MONITORING ORIENTATION:

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Setting and Terrain

Wah Wah Mountains WSA is located in southwestern Millard County and northwestern Beaver County approximately 30 miles west of Milford, UT. It is a part of the greater Wah Wah Mountain Range, a north-south trending range that extends 32 miles from Crystal Peak in the north to Wah Wah Peak in the south covering an intensely rugged cove and canyon landscape. The unit of interest is 42,140 acres in size and 20 miles north to south by 5 miles east to west with State Route 21 forming its southern boundary.

The WSA encloses a narrow, flat-topped mountain range with steep rugged sides exhibiting elevations ranging from 5,600 to 8,980 feet. Vegetation consists primarily of pinyon-juniper woodlands with mixed stands of ponderosa pine, white fir, and mountain mahogany. Stands of bristlecone pine more than 4,000 years old and 50 feet tall cover about 200 acres of the main ridge. The area is also teeming with wildlife as cougar, antelope, deer, chukar partridge, and various birds of prey all reside within the unit. The area also provides unique geological and archaeological characteristics particularly around the area of Crystal Peak.

Due to its remote location, the Wah Wahs offer outstanding opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation. With its steep limestone cliffs and rough secluded canyons, hiking, climbing, and sightseeing in this area are considered some of the best in western Utah.

BLM Management Strategy

The Wah Wah Mountains 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. Landing aircraft is prohibited.

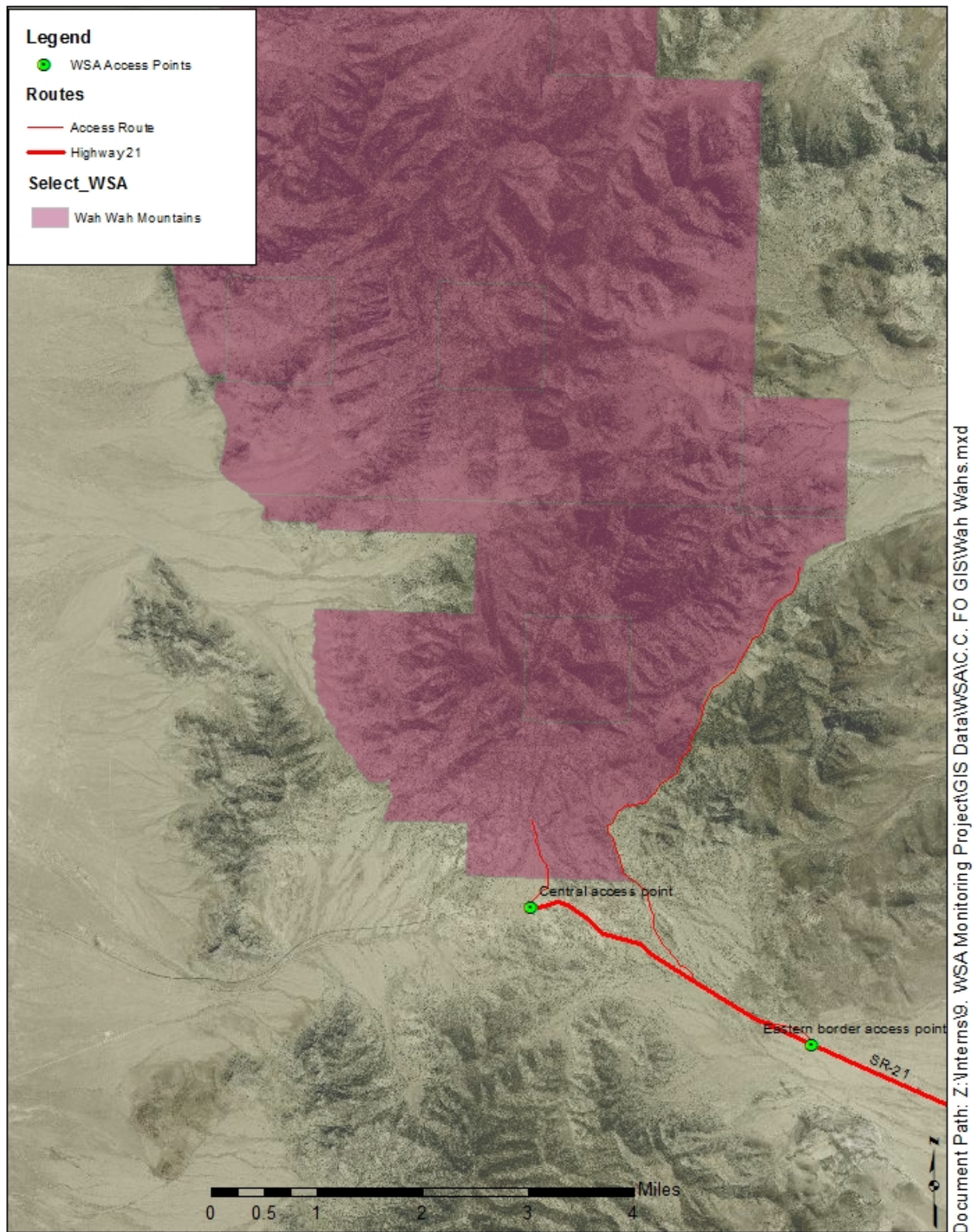
Permissible activities would include camping, backpacking, rock climbing, skiing, caving, hunting, and other primitive pursuits. Installing bolts for climbing is not allowable. Activities such as mountain biking, geocaching, rock hounding, gold panning, and aerial activities like hang gliding or paragliding 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 of Focus

Monitoring areas of focus are general areas, trails, or routes within a WSA, or in the case of the Wah Wah WSA, a cherry stem route to the summit area, and a road bordering the eastern edge of the WSA. While this area sees little visitor use and there are no designated hiking trails, Wah Wah Summit (ele. 8,980 ft) in the southern portion of the WSA has been designated as one area of focus, and the eastern boundary as another monitoring area of focus. Both areas can be accessed easily from State Route 21. These two routes provide volunteers access to the areas of monitoring interest, as indicated by BLM staff. These monitoring areas are both located on the southern end of the WSA, as the management is divided between the Cedar City Field to the south, and the Fillmore Office to the north. This Orientation Guide is for the Cedar City portion.

The access routes for the areas of monitoring focus are displayed on the following map.

Figure 1: Wah Wah Mountains WSA Monitoring Area



Access Routes and Transportation

The Wah Wahs are best approached from Milford, Utah. From the BLM field office in Cedar City, take Highway 130 north 38 miles to Milford. Travel north through Milford until you intersect with State Route 21. Turn left on State Route – 21 and travel west out of Milford for approximately 45 miles. The access route for the eastern boundary monitoring area is located on the eastern side of the Wah Wah range, and the access route for the summit monitoring area is located just beyond mile marker 45, near a sign for the Wah Wah summit. The exact coordinates for the access roads are given in the following table:

Table 1: Access point GPS coordinates

Access Point Name	Decimal Degrees		Degrees, minutes, seconds	
	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
East access point	38.499146	-113.495204	38° 29'56.93"N	113° 32'41.32" W
Central access point	38.516951	-113.544810	38° 31' 1.02" N	113° 29'42.73" W

Once off the paved state route, roads become dirt tracks that typically require 4WD and high clearance. Motorized vehicles are permitted on most of the dirt tracks surrounding the WSA and these tracks can be used to access different points.

Transportation to and from the Wah Wah WSA will be the responsibility of volunteers. Due to the remote nature of this site, 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 for all vehicles.

Signing

Boundary signs 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 carsonite signs and posts have been placed to notify the public that motorized access is not permissible beyond that point. Monitors should document and provide GPS coordinates for any damaged or destroyed BLM signage observed during their visit.

Water Availability

Water is scarce in the WSA. There are a few intermittent springs that can only be located if you know where to look. Be sure to pack in all water (1 gallon/person/day in the summer) as no dependable source is available.

Services and Facilities

The Wah Wah WSA does not offer any services; however, the town of Milford (pop. 1,420) does offer opportunity to stock up on food, gas, and water before traveling to the WSA. In the case of an overnight visit, there is available lodging (Oak Tree Inn) for those who do not want to camp. There is also a local hospital in case of emergencies.

Communications

Cell phone coverage in the Wah Wahs 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 Milford 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 (primarily during hunting season), BLM sign vandalism, and illegal grazing. The Wah Wahs do not see a lot of visitors; however, they are a popular hunting destination and do see an increase in visitor use during holiday weekends.

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 2: 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.
- 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 the entire Wah Wah WSA. BLM can provide more detailed topographic maps with designated routes and directions to a particular area upon request.

Wilderness Study Areas in Utah - Wah Wah Mountains

