

# **SPRING CREEK CANYON WSA**

## **VOLUNTEER MONITORING ORIENTATION:**

### **WSA Citizen Monitoring Coordinator:**

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### **BLM Field Office Location and Phone Number**

Cedar City Field Office

176 E D.L. Sargent Drive

Cedar City, UT 84721

Phone: (435) 865 - 3000

### **Setting and Terrain**

Spring Creek Canyon WSA is located in the southeastern corner of Iron County, Utah about 7 miles southwest of Cedar City. The WSA is 4,433 acres and extends about 6 miles from north to south and 3 miles from east to west. Private and state land surrounds most of the WSA with the state land almost bisecting the study area. The southern boundary adjoins Zion National Park. All land within the WSA is publicly managed by the BLM Cedar City Field Office.

Spring Creek Canyon WSA includes a portion of the Hurricane Cliffs, an awesome west facing escarpment that extends from north of Cedar City into northwestern Arizona. Two major canyons, Kanarra and Spring Creek, bisect the WSA with elevations ranging from 5,600 feet at the base of the cliffs to almost 7,900 feet on the ridge tops. Vegetation consists primarily of juniper, scrub oak, shrubs, and grasses; however, along the riparian zone, sedges, rushes, cottonwoods, and willows are prevalent. The area provides habitat for various birds of prey such as the bald eagle and peregrine falcon as well as 13 species of animals and 4 plant species that are considered sensitive.

Approximately 73% of the WSA is rated outstanding for scenic quality due to the stunning, narrow red rock canyons that offer spectacular hiking along the streambeds. In particular, hiking in Kanarra Canyon involves traveling (and sometimes wading) along Kanarra Creek and climbing up and over several beautiful waterfalls. Due to its immense beauty and unique hiking opportunities, this area sees a large number of visitors every year.

### **BLM Management Strategy**

Spring Creek Canyon 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.

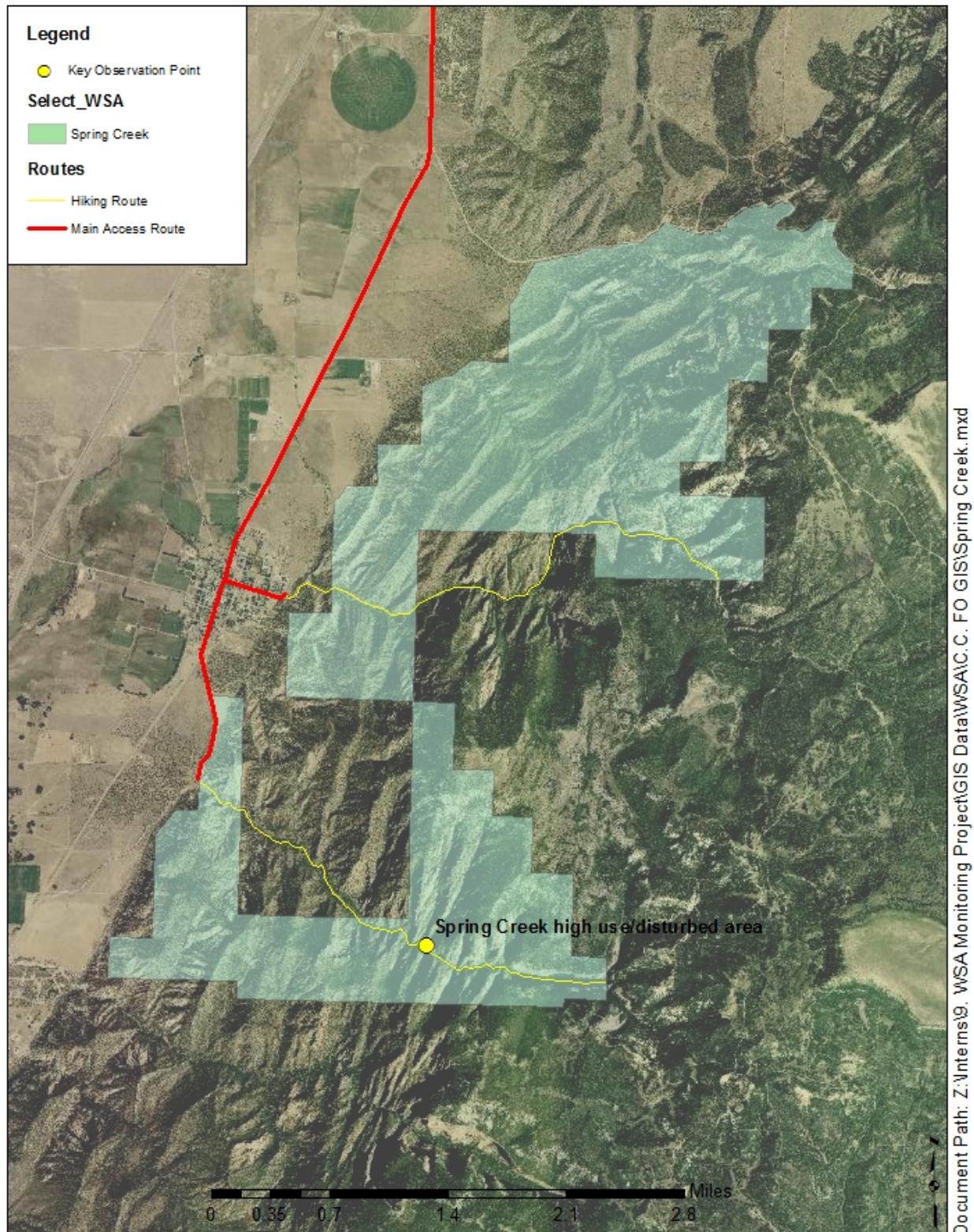
### **Monitoring Areas and Key Observation Points (KOP's)**

Monitoring areas are general areas, trails, or routes within a WSA. Key Observation Points (KOP's) are exact locations of significant management interest. Monitoring areas and KOP's may be of significant management interest because they experience high-use, surface disturbance, or provide a viewpoint where pictures of the landscape can be taken to track impacts and/or changes to habitat over time. There are two monitoring areas/routes designated within the Spring Creek WSA – the Spring Creek hiking trail, and the Kanarra Creek hiking trail. There is one KOP located along the Spring Creek hiking trail, the GPS coordinates for this point are listed below, and displayed in the following map.

**Table 1:** Spring Creek Key Observation Point

Key Observation Point (KOP) Name	Decimal Degrees		Degrees, minutes, seconds	
	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
Spring Creek high use/disturbed area	37.507654	-113.159667	37° 30' 27.55" N	113° 9' 34.8" W

**Figure 1:** Spring Creek monitoring areas/routes and KOP



Volunteers visiting either monitoring area will have to cross the two creeks several times, and will likely wade through 2-3 foot deep pools. Volunteers should take measures to prevent water damage to equipment or personal belongings. Both monitoring routes also cross state owned land that is not Wilderness Study Area. Volunteers should focus monitoring efforts on WSA areas along the monitoring routes/areas.

Both canyons see an incredibly high use and visitation during the spring, summer, and fall months. Focus should be directed on illegal ATV use in the Canyons and the construction of new tracks and roadways, particularly during spring holiday weekends.

### **Access Routes and Transportation**

Spring Creek Canyon portion of the WSA is best accessed from the town of Kanarraville which is approximately 12 miles south of Cedar City. Just before the south edge of town, a dirt track leaves US Hwy 91, turns south and follows beneath the cliffs to the canyon mouth. The track is marked with a Spring Creek Canyon sign. Once the canyon is reached, a rougher track continues up the valley that includes several stream crossings; however, this track was constructed illegally in 1999 and is for foot traffic only although it continues to be used by ATVs. The track continues up the canyon for approximately 1.5 miles and eventually splits into two branches. Approximate travel time from the trailhead to the canyon split is 2 hours.

Also a part of the WSA is Kanarra Creek Canyon which is a separate canyon just north of Spring Creek. From Kanarraville, drive east along 100 North Street which soon turns to gravel as it ascends steep cliffs and eventually drops over a ridge and descends to the creek. It crosses the creek twice (4WD recommended) before ending at a parking area. Another option is to park on top of the ridge and hike the 0.4 miles to the end of the road. The trail follows the streambed and requires some intense climbing up and over canyon walls at times. A parking area and gate are maintained at the mouth of the canyon by the city of Kanarraville.

Transportation to and from the Spring Creek Canyon WSA will be the responsibility of volunteers. Travel to the canyons is relatively tame (with the exception of two stream crossings) but it is recommended that all vehicles should be equipped with at least one spare tire, tools, and supplies to deal with emergencies.

### **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 carsonite 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

Access to both canyons is along streambeds with water available for consumption. The stream in Spring Creek Canyon disappears toward the end of the hike so adequate water should be stored before that point.

## Services and Facilities

No services are available in the WSA although the nearby town of Kanarraville (pop. 311) can be used to buy food, gas, water and any other necessary items.

## Communications

Cell phone coverage in Spring Creek Canyon 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 Kanarraville have phones that you could request the use of in an emergency.

## Resource Issues

Spring Creek WSA is a highly used area due to its outstanding recreational opportunities and the popular Kanarraville Falls. Main resource concerns in the WSA are illegal OHV use, BLM sign vandalism, and litter.

## Safety Recommendations

The following table of safety recommendations should be adhered to before and during monitoring visits. Additionally, 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**

<b>Hazard:</b> Slipping, tripping or falling on rocky or uneven terrain.
<b>Control measure:</b> 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.
<b>Hazard:</b> Snakes, insect bites, bees, encounters with wild animals and poisonous plants.
<b>Control measure:</b> 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.
<b>Hazard:</b> Unsafe tool use
<b>Control measure:</b> 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.
<b>Hazard:</b> Cuts, scrapes and splinters from fencing and/or barrier materials
<b>Control measure:</b> 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
<b>Hazard:</b> Sprains, strains from hiking, lifting loads, swinging tools, etc.
<b>Control measure:</b> 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.
<b>Hazard:</b> Weather related illness or injury. Extreme heat or cold.
<b>Control measure:</b> 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.
<b>Hazard:</b> Lightning or thunderstorm.
<b>Control measure:</b> 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.
<b>Hazard:</b> Flash flood
<b>Control measure:</b> 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.
<b>Hazard:</b> Confrontation with verbal and/or abusive public.
<b>Control measure:</b> 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.
<b>Hazard:</b> Lost, missing, or overdue volunteer
<b>Control measure:</b> 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.
<b>Hazard:</b> Motor vehicle breakdown or accident
<b>Control measure:</b> 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 the location of Spring Creek Canyon WSA within the state of Utah. The Cedar City BLM office can provide more detailed topographic maps.

# Wilderness Study Areas in Utah - Spring Creek Canyon

