RED SPRING WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 7,847 acres

The Red Spring WSA (NV-010-091), located approximately 20 miles south of Elko, Nevada, is the northern end of Cedar Ridge. Bladed dirt roads form the west and south boundaries. Mile-long sections of private property form a sawtooth boundary along the northern and eastern boundaries which are not easily discernible on the ground. BLM lands comprise the entire WSA.

2. <u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u>- 0 acres recommended for wilderness 7,847 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The 7,847-acre Red Spring WSA is not recommended for wilderness. The WSA has high value woodland products, high potential for oil and gas, and moderate potentials for uranium and barite. The availability of these commodities is considered more important than the less than outstanding wilderness values. The area would be difficult to manage under a wilderness designation.

Naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude are limited to small areas within the WSA. Less than outstanding wilderness values dominate the WSA. Unsubstantial, but inescapable, stumpage from years of wood cutting is evident throughout much of the WSA. Although topographic and vegetative screening provides opportunities for solitude, the quality is diminished by sights and sounds outside the WSA. Additionally, the sounds of low-flying military jets within Military Training Routes affect part of the WSA.

The WSA does not contain any outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Although the WSA could be managed as wilderness, it would be difficult and would require extensive fencing, signing, and vehicle barriers, in addition to constant and intensive patrolling. The area's history of woodcutting would probably cause many woodcutting trespasses.

The area contains a very high value woodland resource of 3,200 acres of pinyon pine and Utah juniper. As one of only three woodland areas close to Elko, the demand for this resource is high. The recommendation would make these resources available for harvest.

The WSA has high potential for oil and gas and moderate potential for precious metals, barite, and uranium. The recommendation allows access to explore for these potential resources.

3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

- **A.** <u>Naturalness</u>: The area is an eroded limestone ridge of rolling hills and drainages with dense pinyon-juniper woodland. Elevations vary between 5500 and 6400 feet. With the exceptions of past and ongoing woodcutting and the Red Spring development (230 feet inside the north boundary), the overall area is natural. The WSA contains extensive evidence from over a hundred years of woodcutting. The imprint of man's work that is subtle and possible to escape in much of the area, but is not entirely avoidable. Naturalness is not outstanding.
- **B.** <u>Solitude</u>: While most of the WSA contains sufficient topographic and vegetative screening, the quality is only fair to good because of outside influences. The remaining portion, along the eastern and western boundaries, offers no opportunities for solitude. Additionally, the quality is diminished by the sights and sounds of activities outside the WSA.
- **C.** <u>Primitive and Unconfined Recreation</u>: The area does not have outstanding or diverse primitive recreation opportunities. There is little challenging terrain for hiking. While camping opportunities exist, the lack of water, short hiking

distances, and less than outstanding attractiveness discourage this use. Small populations and low wildlife diversity provide limited hunting and wildlife observation opportunities. Horseback riding opportunities are fair to good, but less outstanding because of limited water, short riding distances, and less than outstanding scenery.

D. Special Features: The WSA does not contain any special features.

4. MANAGEABILITY

The WSA could be managed as wilderness, but it would be hard to protect the area's resources. There are no private inholdings or valid rights. The Red Spring development and access road could cause site-specific management concerns, but would not preclude spring maintenance. The extreme pressure from nonconforming woodcutting would make long-term management extremely difficult. The effort necessary to effectively contain this pressure would require extensive fencing, signing, vehicle barriers, and constant patrols and could impair the wilderness values. Wood harvesting has been a long-term historical use. Access to the area is good and cross-country vehicle travel within the WSA is easy.

5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES

The WSA has high oil and gas potential. This potential is based on favorable oil maturation levels, excellent source rocks, nearby oil production and shows, and a favorable structural setting. The entire WSA would be leased, if available for leasing, because of past leasing, nearby seismic exploration, and industry interest.

Much of the WSA has moderate potential for precious metals, barium, and uranium. The WSA has low to no potential for other locatable minerals. As of April 1990, there were no mining claims in the WSA.

The WSA is unfavorable for geothermal resources. All leasable minerals, except oil and gas, are unlikely to occur.

6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

The BLM received 31 comments on the draft EIS; 16 mentioned wilderness. Eight of these comments were specific to the Red Spring WSA. Five supported the BLM's no wilderness proposal. Three preferred wilderness designation for the entire WSA.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, USGS, Fish and Wildlife Service, and EPA commented on the draft EIS, but had no specific comments on this WSA. The Governor of Nevada's consistency review concurred with the BLM's recommendation.

The BLM received one comment on the Elko Final Wilderness EIS; the EPA addressed wilderness recommendations for other WSAs.