

Colorado's Canyon Country Wilderness Proposal

McIntyre Hills

McIntyre Hills is a great place to quickly get lost, leaving behind the roads, cities and noise -- a place where you could even perhaps be watched by a mountain lion. Solitude awaits you just a few twists up any of the canyons that wind away from the highway.

John Stansfield

Citizens Wilderness Proposal: 17,318 acres
BLM Wilderness Study Area: 17,210 acres
BLM Field Office: Royal Gorge Field Office (Cañon City)
Location: McIntyre Hills is located in Fremont County, 12 miles west of Canon City and immediately south of U.S. Highway 50 and the Arkansas River.

Wilderness Qualities

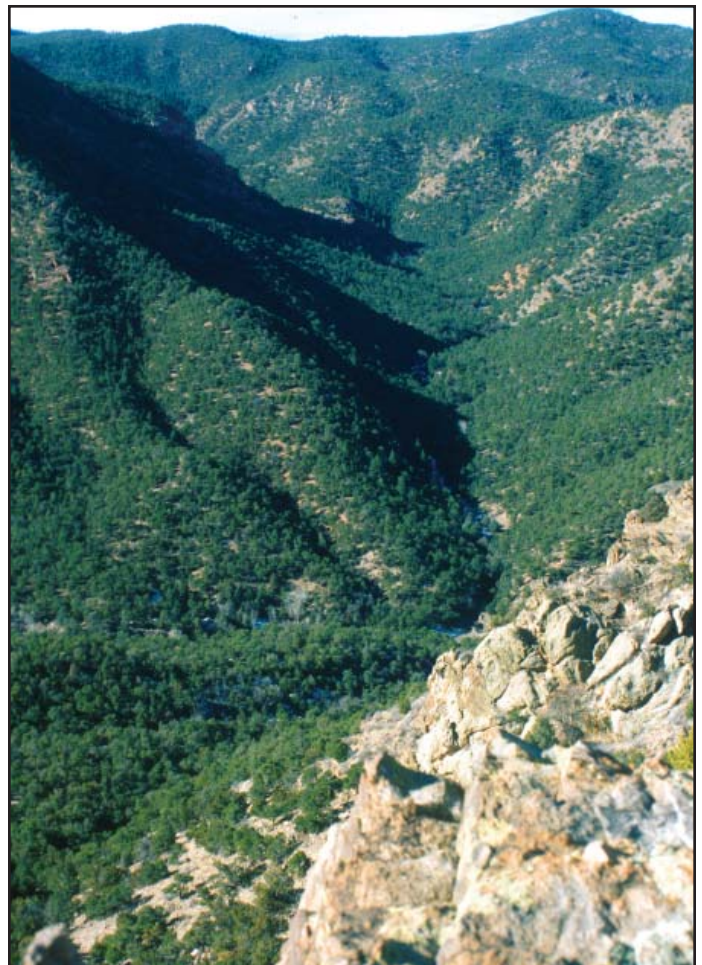
McIntyre Hills is characterized by semiarid rolling hills covered with pinyon-juniper forests, interspersed with steep rugged drainages. Elevations here range from 5,900 feet near the Arkansas River to 8,100 feet in the southern portion of the area. The higher elevations host some ponderosa pine and Douglas fir stands. A rare species of penstemon known to exist in only five locations also occurs in McIntyre Hills. Springs and pools in the major drainages provide a reliable water source for wildlife and recreation. The rugged topography and dense vegetation are excellent habitat for mule deer, black bear, turkey, and small mammals. Golden eagles and prairie falcons nest here. The area represents a sizable portion of the range of one of the densest populations of mountain lions in the western United States. McIntyre Hills holds top priority as a bighorn sheep transplant area for the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

The rugged nature of McIntyre Hills also creates outstanding opportunities for solitude and unconfined, primitive recreational experiences within a three-hour drive of the majority of Colorado's population. As a wilderness candidate, the area is a rarity which allows year-round access for hiking, backpacking, and associated activities. McIntyre Hills forms the scenic backdrop to a significant segment of Colorado's Arkansas Headwaters State Park, and its wild uplands complement the river-based recreation available in the state park. The Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation believes wilderness designation of McIntyre Hills will enhance the Arkansas River State Park.

Inclusion of the pinyon-juniper habitat found here would preserve an ecosystem rare in the National Wilderness Preservation System both nationally and in Colorado.

Resource Information

There are no significant resource conflicts with wilderness designation of McIntyre Hills. There is little possibility that salable, leasable, or locatable minerals exist in economic quantities in the WSA, according to the BLM. Without wilderness designation, the



Five Points Gulch.

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vegetation of a sizable portion of the area would be altered significantly with BLM proposals for over 2,000 acres of pinyon-juniper chaining, fuelwood, and sawtimber cutting which would require construction of at least temporary roads in this roadless area.

Within the proposed wilderness lie 1,260 acres of Colorado state land and 40 acres of private inholdings. These lands and their potential uses are basically indistinguishable from the condition and uses existing on surrounding BLM lands in the WSA, and thus there is no logical reason to exclude them.

McIntyre Hills falls within two grazing allotments that have a total of 231 and 469 AUMs respectively.

BLM considers the area to be generally poor for livestock forage production. The impact of wilderness designation on livestock forage would be minimal to nonexistent.

There are no perennial streams or surface water within the boundaries of the proposed wilderness.



Autumn in McIntyre Hills CWP. (Kurt Kunkle)

Boundary Issues

Citizens propose boundaries similar to the BLM WSA boundaries, but propose closing the small cherrystemmed road on the unit's north side.



Hikers in the CWP

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