



# Colorado's Canyon Country Wilderness Proposal

## Sagebrush Pillows

As you approach from the south east, the sage-covered landscape billows in a series of rolling hills resembling pillows, and as you wander through the landscape the sent of sage cleanses the soul.

Kurt Kunkle, Rifle

**Citizens Wilderness Proposal:** 5,143 acres  
**BLM Wilderness Study Area:** not studied  
**BLM Field Office:** Grand Junction Field Office (Grand Junction)  
**Location:** Sagebrush Pillows is located in Mesa County, five miles northwest of Gateway along the Colorado-Utah state line.

### Wilderness Qualities

Climbing to the top of the red rock cliffs along castellated canyon rims, one sees right away why Sagebrush Pillows was so named. In the vast plain below, two large expanses of sagebrush are divided by a drainage. These bisected sagebrush meadows appear as two large pillows in an undulating, semidesert landscape of sage shrublands and pinyon-juniper woodlands.

From the Dolores River, on the edge of the unit, the area slopes gently upward to the northeast through large desert shrublands. Multi-colored adobe cliffs line the center of the unit and are topped with pinyon-juniper woodlands. The elevation range is 4,400-7,500 feet.

The unit borders the Dolores River that is a popular multi-day wilderness river trip running from Gateway, Colorado, to Dewey Bridge, Utah. This river stretch receives hundreds of floaters each spring and is the only wilderness segment of the Dolores that flows dependably every year.

Views of The Palisade, Beaver Creek, and the Dolores River canyon are available from numerous vantage points in the unit and the area is known for its rugged mountain lion habitat.

Other species that frequent the unit include peregrine falcon and bald eagle. Sagebrush Pillows has been identified as "suitable habitat" by the Colorado Division of Wildlife for the pikeminnow and humpback chub (in the Dolores River adjacent to the unit), Mexican spotted owl, southwest willow flycatcher, western burro owl, and whooping crane.

The Sagebrush Pillows unit is adjacent to Utah's Beaver Creek proposed wilderness area (40,589 acres). The contiguity of these two proposed wilderness areas is an important consideration in the wilderness designation of each. Taken as a whole, this seamless wilderness would exceed 45,000 acres, protecting important wildlife habitat and "providing" or "offering" unparalleled opportunities for dispersed recreation and solitude.

### Resource Information

Livestock grazing occurs in the area. No wells have been drilled to date. There are oil and gas leases. There has been minimal mining activity in the past and some scars remain from uranium exploration in the southern portion of the unit.

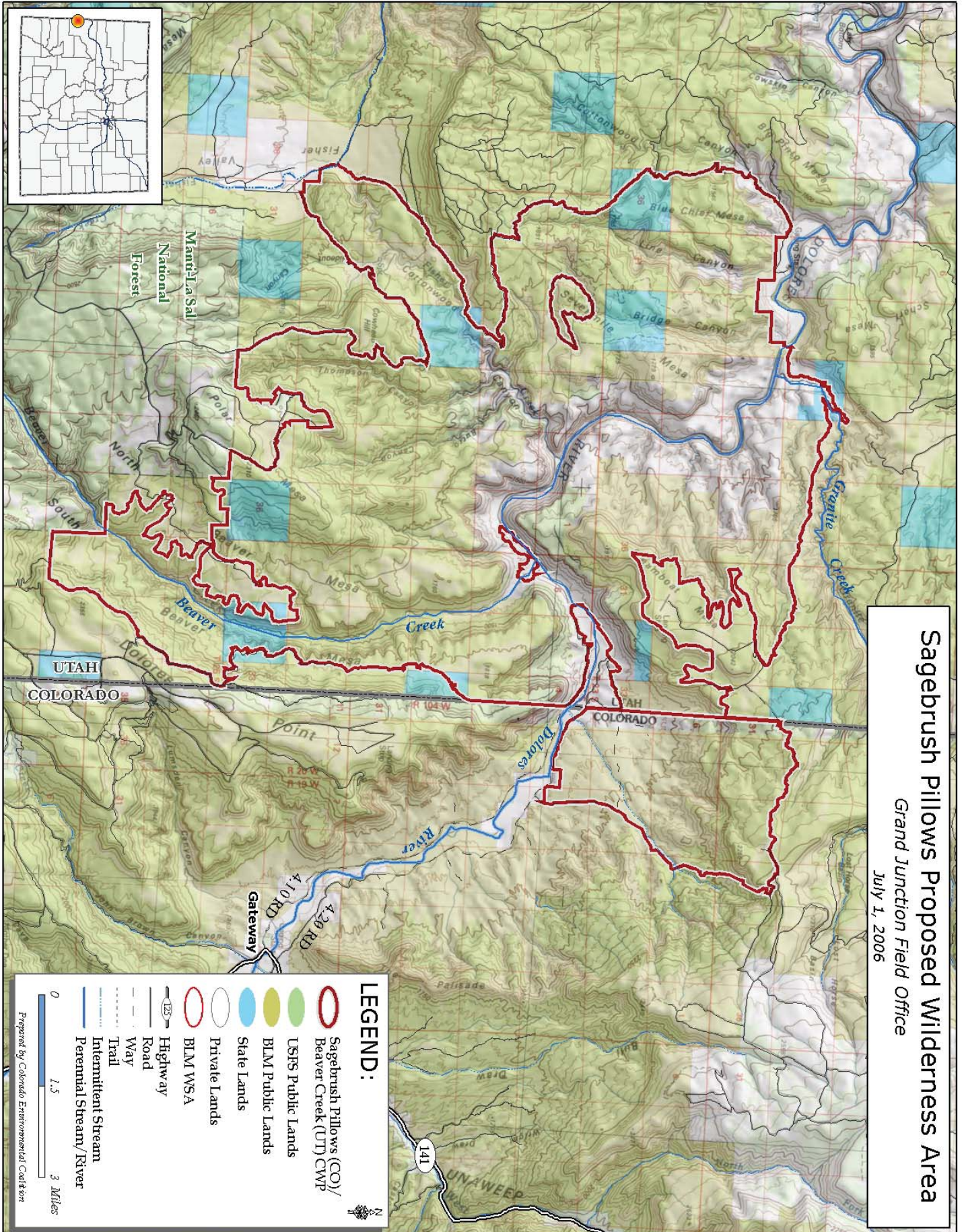
Recreational uses include hiking, backpacking, limited four-wheeling on boundary roads, and hunting for mountain lion and mule deer. The unit is currently open to motorized use.

Sagebrush Pillows is a headwaters area comprised of the mesas and steep cliffs above the Dolores River.

### Boundary Issues

Sagebrush Pillows was inventoried by the BLM as part of the Granite Creek area and was dropped from that area because of a road that now acts as the southern boundary of the Granite Creek area. Some old mining exploration impacts (mostly seismic lines) in the area's southern end have since been reclaimed by vegetation.

The western boundary of the area follows the Colorado-Utah state line. The unit is contiguous to the citizen-proposed Beaver Creek unit in Utah.



**Sagebrush Pillows Proposed Wilderness Area**  
 Grand Junction Field Office  
 July 1, 2006