

Critical Lands

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The Navajo Sandstone Aquifer

As populations grow in the arid southwestern United States and desert bedrock aquifers are increasingly targeted for future development, understanding and quantifying the spatial variability of net infiltration and recharge becomes critically important for inventorying ground-water resources and mapping contamination vulnerability. A Geographic Information System (GIS)-based model utilizing readily available soils, topographic, precipitation, and outcrop data has been developed for predicting net infiltration to exposed and soil-covered areas of the Navajo Sandstone outcrop area of southwestern Utah. The Navajo Sandstone is an important regional bedrock aquifer for drinking water. The areas of Leeds, New Harmony and Apple Valley are concerns because of increased septic tanks possibly contaminating ground water.

Because of both the recent increase in ground-water development and urban growth into areas with exposed or soil-covered sandstone in western Washington County, a tool is needed for evaluating both water-resources availability and aquifer susceptibility to surface contamination.

Potential contaminant sources include septic systems, agricultural pesticides and fertilizers, and contaminant spills associated with highway transport and pipelines.

This map is important for land-use zoning for protecting high net-infiltration parts of the aquifer from potential surface contamination.

[Read the full USGS Report here.](#)

[See a map of the aquifer.](#)

Watershed Areas

The newly designated Wilderness areas protect the headwaters of rivers and creeks in the Washington County. These areas should be expanded.

[What is Wilderness?](#)

[Map of Wilderness Areas](#)

Scenic Landscapes

CDF nominated the Zion Scenic Corridor Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) on BLM land. [Read more.](#)

Zion Scenic Byway

The Zion Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (Plan) is a written plan developed by the communities along a scenic byway corridor that outlines how to protect and enhance the byway's intrinsic qualities and character that define their byway corridor. The Planning corridor is from La Verkin to Zion National Park along Highway 9. [Read more.](#)

Scenic Landscape Protection

In the Vision Dixie process residents wanted the scenic landscapes protected. BLM land includes a unique blend of geologic land-forms that creates a wealth of varying landscapes, open vistas and spectacular scenery that is recognized in national and international sectors. "Viewing scenery is ranked as the number one pursuit of all visitors to public lands." The scenery is viewed by every sightseeing tourist on the I-15 and on Highway 9 to Zion National Park.

CDF's Scenic landscapes that should be protected include:

- The highway SR9 corridor from the LaVerkin twist to Zion National Park
- The NCAs
- All wilderness areas and ACECs
- The cliff face and ridge line of Canaan Mountain; the wilderness boundary is on the top of Canaan Mountain and leaves the cliff face of Smithsonian Butte unprotected
- Silver Reef-Leeds Navajo sandstone formations
- The ridge line of the Black Ridge
- The Hurricane Cliffs
- The Virgin, Santa Clara River and North Creek corridors
- The red cliff face of Sand Mountain in Warner Valley
- Beaver Dam Mountains
- East face of the Apex slope, Little Creek Mountain, Castle Cliff Wash Area, Tobin bench9
- Hwy 18 corridor

[Read more.](#)

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) on BLM Land

ACEC's are areas where BLM determines that certain public land areas require special management to prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural systems, it may, with appropriate public participation, designate such lands as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs).

[ACEC Maps](#)

CDF has nominated several ACEC's for consideration. Read more about these areas below:

[Virgin River](#)

[Upper Santa Clara River](#)

[Zion Scenic Corridor](#)

[Moody Wash](#)

[Gunlock Square Top](#)

BLM's Ecological Regions

Landscape-Level Studies Will Help Protect High Value Lands. These assessments will document area of high ecological value, including regionally significant habitats and species of concern. In Washington County the regions are the Mojave Desert, the Central Great Basin, Utah high Plateaus and the Colorado Plateau.

[See Map](#)

[Read More](#)

Big Game Seasonal Range

Wildlife Corridors

It is well known that habitat fragmentation leads to species extinction. Scientists have been recommending landscape connectivity to reduce the effect of habitat isolation as a means of ensuring species migratory mobility and genetic diversity. In this BLM process, BLM must consider the impacts of increased OHV use in the back country on wildlife corridors and winter range or lambing areas. BLM should reduce motorized road and trail density in important wildlife areas and roads and trails should be a mile apart. With the impacts of warming BLM should preserve as much habitat and connectivity as possible to build ecological resiliency.

In the travel plan BLM should designate motor-free Quiet Use Zones in areas that emphasize wildlife needs and relatively low-impact non-motorized recreational activities. In wildlife corridor areas BLM should maintain a maximum road density threshold of 1 mile per square mile, which will serve to protect the important values of the area and ensure the recreation focus is on non-motorized recreation. In addition, BLM adopted the Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Recreation Management for BLM Lands In Utah. Which include Rangeland Health Standard 3:

1. “Protect wildlife and /or habitat by:
 - i. Maintaining interconnecting wildlife corridors and, to the extent practical, avoid fragmentation of areas used by wildlife.
 - ii. Controlling recreational activities that would interfere with critical wildlife stages such as nesting, reproduction, or seasonal concentration areas.
 - iii. And in the 1999 RMP BLM states preservation of migration routes are important¹”

Western Governors Wildlife Council

Pilot Projects

Wildlife and their habitat are what many people love most about the West, whether they are hunters, fishermen or wildlife watchers. Many rural communities also rely on these activities to generate revenues and support their local economies. To help ensure wildlife and local economies remain viable, states are working together through the Western Governors’ Wildlife Council to develop compatible Decision Support Systems that will help in protecting crucial wildlife habitat and corridors across the region.

[Read More](#)

Western Governors’ Wildlife Council

Pilot Project Statement of Work

Title: Decision Support System (DSS) Development for Wildlife Resources in California, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah (the Southwest).

¹ BLM RMP 1999 p 3.23

Project Objective: California, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah (SW States) will partner to identify areas of conservation potential at a landscape scale across the southwest region. Our goal is to develop a useful and consistent source of mapped biological information across the states, followed by a display tool – a Decision Support System (DSS) - within each state.

The Western Wildway Network Initiative

Though North America has benefitted in incalculable ways from several generations of conservation successes, our protected wild areas remain isolated often requiring that conservationists work in similar localized isolation. Rather than try to protect one discrete parcel of land or species at a time, Wildlands Network recognized that the West needs a systematic framework through which local, regional, and national-scale conservation efforts can coordinate and share expertise and resources.

A key strategy in this work recognizes that conservation projects must span state, provincial and national borders, and identify the critical connectivity projects necessary to close the gaps between protected areas within the Western Wildway. Through the Western Wildway Network Initiative, previously called the Spine of the Continent Initiative, we are developing a broad partnership network and have helped our partners conduct scientific analyses to determine the most ecologically important and vulnerable landscapes needing some form of protection.



[Read more](#)

Expansive and Soil Hazard Areas

FEDERALLY LISTED AND PROPOSED ENDANGERED, THREATENED AND CANDIDATE SPECIES in WASHINGTON COUNTY

An **endangered species** is a population of organisms which is at risk of becoming extinct because it is either few in numbers, or threatened by changing environmental or predation parameters. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has calculated the percentage of endangered species as 40 percent of all organisms based on the sample of species that have been evaluated through 2006.

Many nations have laws offering protection to conservation reliant species: for example, forbidding hunting, restricting land development or creating preserves.

Only a few of the many species at risk of extinction actually make it to the lists and obtain legal protection. Many more species become extinct, or potentially will become extinct, without gaining public notice.

Threatened species are any species (including animals, plants, fungi, etc.) which are vulnerable to endangerment in the near future.

Candidate species are those petitioned species that are actively being considered for listing as endangered or threatened under the ESA.

Proposed species are those candidate species that were found to warrant listing as either threatened or endangered and were officially proposed as such in a *Federal Register* notice after the completion of a status review and consideration of other protective conservation measures. Public comment is always sought on a proposal to list species under the ESA. NMFS generally has one year after a species is proposed for listing under the ESA to make a final determination whether to list a species as threatened or endangered.

Delisted species are those species that were formerly listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA.

| Endangered | Threatened | Candidate |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Virgin River Chub | Mexican Spotted Owl | Western Yellow-Billed Cuckoo |
| Woundfin | Silver Cholla Cactus | Gierisch Mallow |
| Dwarf Bear Poppy | | Gila Monster (Petitioned) |
| Holmgren Milkvetch | | |
| Shivwits Milkvetch | | |
| Southwest Willow Flycatcher | | |
| Desert Tortoise | | |