

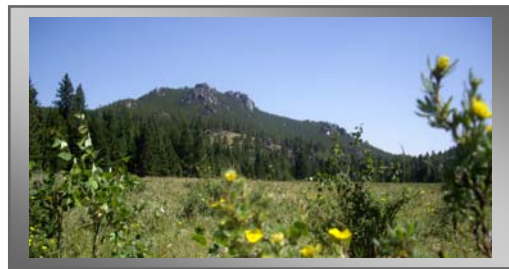
Rock Creek Proposed Wilderness Area



The Economic Benefit: Recreational, Historical, Cultural and Community Values of Wilderness

Friends of Rock Creek
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The Rock Creek recommended wilderness area encompasses 34,000 acres of pristine public lands in the Bighorn Mountains. In 2001 the U.S. Forest Service determined that the Rock Creek area is currently the only roadless area in the Bighorn National Forest with the unique characteristics suitable for wilderness designation. The proposed Rock Creek wilderness would add much-needed lower elevation forestlands to the adjacent Cloud Peak Wilderness, creating a complete ecosystem from prairies to high peaks, protecting key watersheds and wildlife habitat. The designation of Rock Creek as wilderness would be the first wilderness designation in Wyoming in over 25 years.



The proposed Rock Creek Wilderness area lies on the east face of the Big Horn Mountains, between Story and Buffalo, Wyoming. Its location makes the area easily accessible to nearby residents of local communities, utilizing seven public access points to Rock Creek.

Sheridan and Johnson County's close proximity to the Cloud Peak Wilderness promotes a healthy society and lasting outdoor legacy for future generations by providing permanent access to pristine landscapes, solitude, and escape from modern society as well as abundant opportunities for recreation.

Wilderness areas are of vital importance to sustainable wildlife populations. The Rock Creek area contains the largest area of elk security habitat in the Big Horn Mountains and serves as a habitat corridor connecting the high country to the Bud Love Habitat Management Area, protecting year-round elk habitat.

The "multiple uses" of the Rock Creek area include: cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, fishing, hunting, photography, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, scientific research, rock climbing, mountaineering, backpacking, religious study, educational outdoor labs and volunteer opportunities.

The Wyoming Wilderness Act of 1984 was a bipartisan, statewide effort to preserve undeveloped national forest areas, primarily limited to high altitude features such as rock and ice. By 1984 Congress had three million Wyoming acres of U.S. Forest Service lands added to the National Wilderness system. Rock Creek, considered for Wilderness in 1984, was the last area to be removed from the Act.

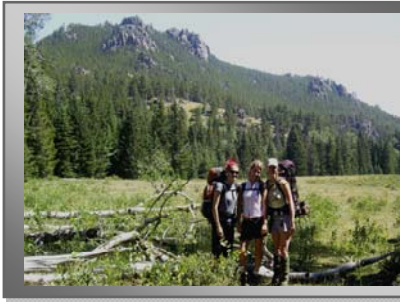
U.S.F.S. Wilderness Capability Assessment for Rock Creek

Opportunity for solitude.....	high
Natural and free from disturbance	high
Challenge	high
Primitive & unconfined recreation.....	high
Environmental & special features	high
Manageability	high

***"The Wyoming Wilderness Act was
one of my proudest achievements
as a member of congress."***

**– Former Vice President and U.S.
Congressman, Dick Cheney**

2000 PBS Interview



Rock Creek Hikers 2008

Wilderness Values in Wyoming



Mike Leon (70's)
Story resident/writer

The Rock Creek area is genuinely valuable to the people of Wyoming for its cultural, economic, scientific, educational and abundant recreational contributions, enriching our opportunities.

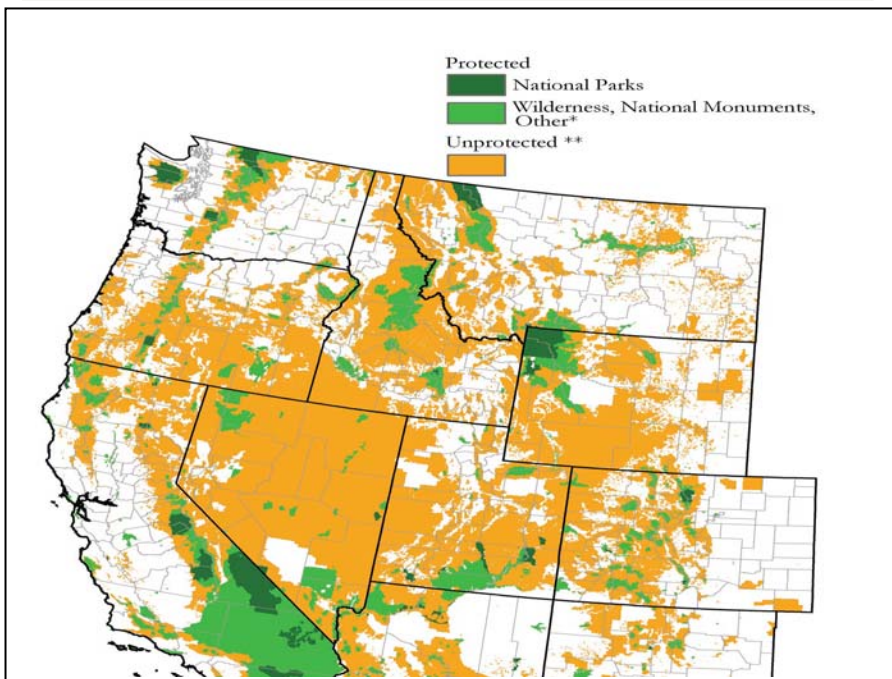
Outdoor recreation defines Wyoming's lifestyle, our unique culture and quality of life. In 2008, *Outdoor Life* magazine ranked Sheridan #3 in the country for places to live for outdoor recreation, mainly for its close proximity and abundant access to pristine public lands.

Nearly 500,000 people hunt and fish annually in Wyoming and another million participate in wildlife viewing. (US Dept. of Interior study)

Those communities in closest proximity to Wilderness areas derive the highest benefits. The residents of Sheridan, Big Horn, Johnson, and Washakie counties would directly benefit from the Rock Creek's protection as Wilderness. (See box below)

If our forest landscapes are permanently altered through development, we will lose irreplaceable scientific, cultural and historic values provided by the Big Horn Mountains. Undeveloped roadless areas will leave a heritage and history for future generations.

This map indicates the vast tracts of unprotected land in the west



The Economic Importance of Conservation on Public Lands

- A recent study looked at personal income growth between 1970 and 2000 in 11 Western states. It found that personal income grew much faster in places adjacent to public lands managed for conservation than it did in areas where the land is managed for resource development.
- A study on the Bighorn National Forest found that hunting quality dramatically declined in one hunt area that was logged and heavily roaded. Big game managers instituted a limited quota hunt because the elk were too vulnerable during the hunting season. By contrast, the adjacent hunt unit of Rock Creek, which was not roaded and logged, retained important elk security habitat and still offers a general hunt.

Wilderness is Local

The Friends of Rock Creek was formed to bring together citizens, long-time visitors, organizations and businesses within the local communities surrounding the Big Horn Mountains who support the addition of Rock Creek to the Cloud Peak Wilderness.

Wilderness designation cannot occur without the support of our local communities and citizens. The voice and support of local individuals, elected officials, businesses and organizations are the most important component of the effort to conserve our wildlife populations, pristine landscapes and diverse recreational opportunities. The Friends support the sustainable growth of our local communities and realize that wilderness creates a dynamic stream of revenue indefinitely for nearby local communities, making the protection of our public lands a vital part of Wyoming's sustainable economic future.

Economic development in northeastern Wyoming will increasingly depend upon pristine landscapes and natural attractions such as Wilderness. Our public lands are a great source of pride in our community, providing many vital benefits that draw visitors and new citizens to the area. Rock Creek's spectacular rock formations, canyons, free flowing rivers, wildlife and views provide a wealth of sources for marketing the region. As the development of natural resources continues to be a major contributor to the economy in northeast Wyoming, we need to preserve the magnificence of a place like Rock Creek for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations, providing the balance Wyomingites so richly deserve.

Thank you for your consideration and support of the proposed Rock Creek Wilderness!

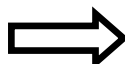
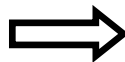


Economics of Wilderness

The West is moving away from economic dependence of extractive industries. Recreation and tourism industries, a mix of high and low wage service jobs, plus retirement and investment income are replacing the extractive economic base. Our public lands support incredible wildlife populations, abundant habitat, pristine landscapes and tremendous recreation opportunities that create a sustainable economy and draw for visitors, preserving our quality of life.

Wilderness Values

- **WILDERNESS SUPPORTS EXCELLENT HUNTING, FISHING** and wildlife viewing opportunities because it conserves habitat and water vital to Wyoming's wildlife and fish populations.
- **WILDERNESS PROVIDES FOR ECOLOGICAL SERVICES** such as ground water storage, climate moderation, flood control, storm damage prevention and air and water pollution abatement.
- **WILDERNESS OFFERS ABUNDANT OPPORTUNITY FOR PRIMITIVE RECREATION** such as hiking, camping, horseback riding, skiing, snowshoeing, and photography.
- **WILDERNESS PROMOTES INCREASED QUALITY OF LIFE** with its proximity to outdoor recreation opportunities and pristine and permanent habitat for wildlife.
- **WILDERNESS VIEWS PROVIDE PRIMARY MARKETING TOOLS** to attract new businesses, and increase revenue to local communities will create sustainable jobs.
- **INHERENT WILDERNESS VALUES SUCH AS PRISTINE LANDSCAPES**, spiritual renewal, scenic beauty, historic and cultural significance, scientific research and open space directly benefit human experience.



Economic Effect

- In 2007 over 4 million people participated in hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing in the Rocky Mountain region, spending over \$7 Billion. (*The Wilderness Society*)
- The ecological services provided by Wilderness are invaluable to local communities ensuring that residents have clean air to breathe and water to drink.
- Abundant open spaces and natural amenities promote a healthy and socially responsible way of life for residents of local communities. Attracting tourists and visitors to stay longer in our communities is directly related to our proximity to Wilderness areas.
- Americans spend nearly \$300 billion annually on gear and services for non-motorized outdoor recreation and generate an additional \$430 billion in spill-over economic activity. (*The Wilderness Society*)
- People are locating to Wyoming's rural towns for the high quality of life derived from our abundant natural amenities. This dynamic has created sustainable economies across Wyoming by attracting an educated workforce, increasing demand for the retail, service and tourism industries and creating new revenue streams from retirees and investors.
- The beautiful landscapes of Wyoming play a significant role in the lives of residents that is hard to fix a number too, however passive use values are said to amount to nearly \$300 million annually to local economies. (Loomis)

Outdoor Recreation in Wyoming contributes more than \$4.4 billion annually to local economies and supports 52,000 jobs.

Bighorn National Forest Economics

The local communities surrounding the Big Horn Mountains recognize that tourism, hunting and fishing contribute 79% of all dollars spent from the Bighorn National Forest. Diminishing the recreation and tourism opportunities throughout the region will have a negative impact on our local economies.

Economic contribution of the Bighorn National Forest to Local Economy	Base Year 2001 (millions)	Total Percentage 2001
Recreation	\$36.02	79%
Hunting and Fishing (Out of town users)	\$3.84	8.5%
Grazing (118,000 A.U.M)	\$4.90	11%
Timbering (Only on Big Horn Mountains)	\$0.70	1.5%
Total	\$45.46	100%

**Bighorn National Forest users contributed nearly \$46 million
in 2001 to our local communities.
Rock Creek alone accounted for \$3 million of the total revenue.**

