

# Friends of Nevada Wilderness

## Recommendations on Inventoried Roadless Areas for RUBY MOUNTAINS RANGER DISTRICT [circa 2006] *[Excerpts on the areas threatened by oil and gas leasing]*

### **Ruby- Seitz (03-21C)- 11,408 acres- Overall Rating H**

Environment- H

Solitude/Primitive Recreation: H

Special Features: H

Manageability: M

#### FNW Recommendations:

We agree that this unit has very high wilderness potential in addition to being contiguous to existing wilderness, and should therefore be added to the system. The addition of this unit to the Ruby Mountain Wilderness would greatly improve existing boundary issues and make management for the Forest Service easier. The sheer size of this unit shows the benefits inclusion would reap- the wildlife habitat protected would be very significant.

### **Pearl Peak (03-27)- 29,922 acres- Overall Rating H**

Environment- H

Solitude/Primitive Recreation: H

Special Features: H

Manageability: M

#### FNW Recommendations:

We agree that this unit has high wilderness values, should be considered capable and recommended for Wilderness. **Friends of Nevada Wilderness previously recommended Pearl Peak on October 19, 2005 for wilderness designation, and we continue to support recommendation of this unit.**

We have not been able to understand why Pearl Peak has been divided into two separate units from the previous inventory. These two areas (03-27, 03-27A), which should be one unit, provides perhaps the largest contiguous high elevation block of Bristlecone Pine / Limber Pine / White Bark Pine / Curlleaf Mountain Mahogany / Dwarf Juniper subalpine coniferous forest wilderness in the Great Basin. Some of the bristlecones near Pearl Peak (10,847 ft) may also be some of the oldest in the Intermountain West. Individual trees exceed 30 feet in circumference. This unique plant composition provides a diversity and abundance of wildlife that is different from the rest of the Ruby Mountains. While many of the same species can be found here as in other parts of the Ruby Mountains, the abundance of species like Blue Grouse, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Flammulated Owl, Pine Siskin, Clark's Nutcracker, Western Tanager, Cedar Waxwing, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Red-breasted Nuthatch is much higher here than in the rest of the range. Also, there are species that have been documented in the Pearl Complex that have not been seen in the rest of the Ruby Mountains including the Williamson's Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Rock Squirrel and Steller's Jay. The Pearl Complex is also one of the best areas in the west to observe vertical upturned ancient seabeds and the 400 million-year-old marine fossils therein. Limestone solution caves in the

area have proven to be full of paleontological and cultural resources and likely house large populations of insectivorous bats. Bats found in the area include but are not limited to Long-legged Myotis, Long-eared Myotis and California Myotis. Finally, this limestone fault block provides summer, winter and intermediate migration range for the largest Mule Deer herd in Nevada and predictably the highest known concentration of Mountain Lions in the Great Basin. Annually, this wilderness produces so many Mountain Lions that it serves as a nursery stock for less productive mountain ranges to the east. We recommend this area be protected as wilderness.

\* **SEE ATTACHED NOTES**

**Pearl Peak- south (03-27A)- 29,322 acres- Overall Rating M**

Environment- M

Solitude/Primitive Recreation: M

Special Features: H

Manageability: M

**FNW Recommendations:**

We believe that this unit has high wilderness values, should be considered capable and recommended for Wilderness. **Friends of Nevada Wilderness previously recommended Pearl Peak on October 19, 2005 for wilderness designation, and we continue to support recommendation of this unit.** It is unclear why Pearl Peak, which was originally one contiguous unit, has been separated into two individual units. We see no reasons why the southern portion of the unit does not meet the same qualifications for wilderness as the northern portion does.

The number of unique species listed in the area alone is proof of the need for protection of this area as wilderness. It is noted in the Forest Service capability write-up that there is ATV use in the area; designating the unit as wilderness would afford protection against this type of disturbance. It is also noted as a use conflict that NDOW wants to install guzzlers in the area. This is not exactly in conflict with wilderness values; Friends of Nevada Wilderness has been instrumental in getting volunteers out to monitor existing guzzlers in wilderness so that there does not have to be vehicle access to manage them.

This unit should not be evaluated separately from the rest of the Pearl Peak unit. They are both part of one large contiguous ecosystem worthy of wilderness designation.

**SUMMARY:**

Any units that are contiguous to existing Wilderness should be evaluated within the context of the greater area to which they are connected. The units identified below are potential additions to existing Wilderness and their values should be assessed together with the designated Wilderness:

**East Humboldt Wilderness plus its additions totals 44,850 acres:**

- Humboldt- Trout Cr. (03-01)
- Humboldt- Angel Lk (03-03)
- Humboldt- Checkers east (03-07)
- Humboldt- Checkers west (03-07A)
- Humboldt- South (03-17)

**Ruby Mountain Wilderness plus its additions totals 162,879 acres:**

The addition of 57,000 acres to the existing Ruby Wilderness would protect additional winter, summer and intermediate migration range for American Pika, Yellow-bellied Marmot, Mule Deer, Rocky Mountain Bighorn, Mountain Goat, Black Rosy Finch, Brewer's Sparrow, Lewis' Woodpecker, Pinyon Jay, Greater Sage-Grouse, Blue Grouse, Golden Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Prairie Falcon. These additions would also reduce the chronic and illegal incursion by snowmobiles and other OHVs into the body of the Ruby Wilderness and reflect more accurately the wilderness reality on the ground while still leaving plenty of room for the Heliski Operation.

- Ruby- Secret Pk. south (03-18A)
- Ruby- Cold Ck (03-19)
- Ruby- Horse Mtn (03-20)
- Ruby- Lamille Cyn (03-21)
- Ruby-Talbout (03-21A)
- Ruby-Thomas (03-21B)
- Ruby- Seitz (03-21C)
- Ruby- Segunda (03-25)
- Ruby- Marsh (03-25A)
- Ruby- Smith Ck (03-26)
- Ruby- South (03-26A)

**Contiguous roadless areas:**

The units listed below should be combined and considered together as one unit. The Forest Service's PDF file with map shows no road bisecting these units, yet they are still listed as two units with two separate capability results. This could be a GIS error. Not only has the area been chopped in half, but there is a different capability status given to each unit even though they appear to be contiguous to one another. There should be one capability analysis for both of these contiguous units:

- Pearl Peak (03-27)
- Pearl Peak – south (03-27A)