

Wyoming Environmental Quality Council
Adobetown Tour
August 28, 2007

FILED

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Terri A. Lorenzon, Director
Environmental Quality Council

9:00 **Rock Springs Airport, General Aviation**
East on I 80 to Bitter Creek turnoff (mile marker 139.5)
South on Cnty. road 4-19 to Bitter Creek
Continue south on 4-19 to BLM road 4411
East on 4411 to Basic pit road
South on two track to Haystacks overlook
Return west via 4411 to 4-19
South on 4-19 to 4412 thru Eversole Ranch
 South on 4412 3.7 miles to two track, east to Adobetown Rim
Lunch (?)
Return to 4412 then south 7.7 miles to two track
East to Skull Creek Rim
Return to 4412
South on 4412 to Powder Rim
North east to Powder Mountain Overlook (this road is rough)
And / Or Proceed south to Powder Wash
Proceed west at Powder Wash to Wyoming Highway 430
North on 430 to Rock Springs
Upon reaching Rock Springs turn left thru the Canyon Court Trailer Park
 Follow Highway 430 signs to
 Rock Springs Belt Route Left to west side of town (Holiday Inn)
 Right to east and north side of town
 (Outlaw Inn)

Please be careful. There are no restrooms, gas stations or services on this route. There are washed out roads, steep grades, sometimes heavy (by weight) traffic, no shoulders on roads, sand and sometimes mud. These roads are impassable when wet. There are very limited points of egress. There are rattlesnakes. Watch where you put your hands and feet.

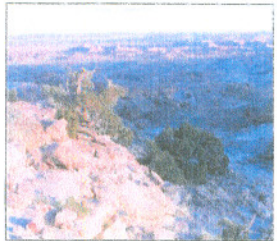
From I 80 south for about 35 miles we will be on the "checker board". About half the land is private and managed by the Rock Springs Grazing Association. Much of the rest is public land managed by the BLM.

Prepared by Don Hartley on August 26, 2007.

Adobe Town's Signature Landscapes

The Haystacks

Rising one thousand feet above the surrounding desert, The Haystacks are a broad arc of deeply dissected badlands that form the northern extension of the Adobe Town Rim. Loosely wooded in juniper, the many ravines and ridges of this area offer habitat to an abundance of wildlife from mule deer to mountain lions. This area is in "checkerboard" land ownership, with every other square in public ownership, dating back to the railroad land grants of the 1860s. Check with the Bureau of Land Management about current access rules.



Junipers in the Haystacks glow in the sunset

The Skull Creek Rim

The thousand-foot palisades of the Skull Creek Rim present the geologic wonders of Adobe Town at a magnificent scale. Here, the lofty promontories descend through badlands banded in pinks and reds to the vast and empty desert floor below. Atop the rims, there is easy traveling through eerily eroded boulders and among sand dunes stabilized by sagebrush and prickly pears, lit in the early summer by the tiny blossoms of wildflowers.



Mist settles over Skull Creek Rim

The Willow Creek Badlands

Along the eastern edge of Adobe Town are the Willow Creek Badlands, where buttes and small canyons of dun colored sandstone guard the dry wash of Willow Creek. The tall cliffs of the Willow Creek Rim rise to the west of the creek.

The Powder Rim

A broad swell of country rising along the Wyoming-Colorado border, the Powder Rim defines the southern boundary of Adobe Town. Robed in some of the largest juniper woodlands in Wyoming, this unique and wildlife-rich area is home to nine of Wyoming's rare juniper-obligate songbirds, including the Scott's oriole and juniper tilmouse. The Petition Elk Herd, one of Wyoming's few desert elk herds, makes its home here, and there is crucial winter range for pronghorn antelope and mule deer. Along the base of the Powder Rim, erosion has carved colorful badlands ideal for exploration on foot.

The Adobe Town Rim

One of the lower rims in Adobe Town, this is the area with the greatest complexity of geological features. Arches, window rocks, and mazes of pinnacles characterize this area, which shows off the variety and rare beauty that makes Adobe Town famous.



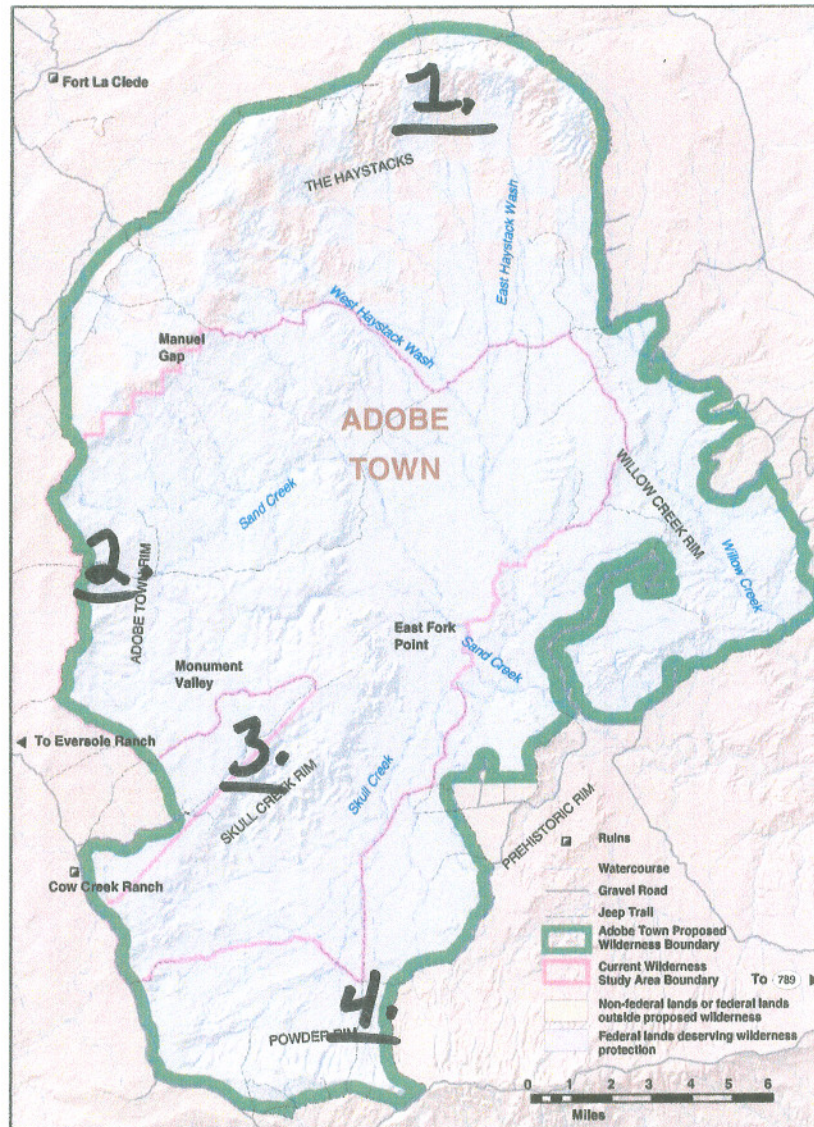
These striking spires are found on the Adobe Town Rim

Recreation in Adobe Town

Adobe Town is one of the Red Desert's most important recreation destinations. Ideal for short day hikes or extended backpacks, the open sagebrush of this area allows unlimited off-trail hiking options, bounded only by the architecture of cliffs and pinnacles. Adobe Town is really the only place in Wyoming's desert basins where horseback riders can enjoy a long day's ride without crossing a major road. Wildlife viewing is superb throughout the area, and hunting for pronghorn and mule deer is also outstanding.

Adobe Town offers a true wilderness experience. A good topographic map, compass, and cross-country navigation skills are a must, as the only trails were made by the wild horses, and there are no signs along the way. Water supplies are few and far between, so carry a full supply for your trip when you go.

A jeep trail follows the Adobe Town Rim along the northwestern boundary of the proposed wilderness, providing motorized access to some of the most spectacular formations. Following wilderness designation, this area will continue to provide easy access for small children, the elderly, and even wheelchair-bound visitors to some of Adobe Town's most impressive landscapes.



All photos courtesy of Erik MoVar, BCA, unless otherwise noted.

Biodiversity Conservation Alliance seeks an open public debate on the Adobe Town wilderness proposal and the broader concept of a Red Desert National Conservation Area. We are working to build public support for withdrawing Adobe Town from future oil and gas leasing, while allowing existing lease rights to run their course. Ultimately, we would like to see National Conservation Area units established in the Jack Morrow Hills and in the southern Red Desert, with an Adobe Town wilderness area as one of the key centerpieces. We urge people in Wyoming, in the Rocky Mountain region, and throughout the nation who love wild deserts to join us in this important campaign.

Biodiversity Conservation Alliance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization dedicated to protecting wildlife and wild places in Wyoming and surrounding states. Donations can be sent to help protect Adobe Town. Contact us at (307) 742-7978, or write to Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, P.O. Box 1512, Laramie, WY 82073. Visit our website at www.voiceforthewild.org.



Today the Adobe Town Wilderness is only a vision. But you can help make this vision a reality.

The Red Desert is currently experiencing unprecedented levels of industrial activity. In the southern Red Desert, existing or planned oil and gas fields stretch across the entire breadth of the desert, gobbling up millions of acres of public lands and leaving scant habitat for native wildlife. In light of the massive scale of drilling and road construction, it would be wise to set aside at least a few of our most outstanding natural areas, like Adobe Town, the Jack Morrow Hills, and the Kinney Rim for the benefit of wildlife and public recreation.

Over half of the potential wilderness in Adobe Town is currently open to oil and gas drilling. Twenty years ago, all of it was open to drilling, but the BLM established the Adobe Town Wilderness Study Area for a little less than half of the qualifying lands; eventually the pre-existing oil and gas leases that covered most of this area expired. But even these protections could be reversed without the Congressional protection of wilderness designation. Today, the BLM should expand protections to include all of the wilderness quality lands in Adobe Town, including key parts of the Powder Rim and remote flats at the base of the Skull Creek Rim, which form the scenic backdrop for so many of Adobe Town's breathtaking views. And the U.S. Congress set aside all 180,910 acres of Adobe Town to protect its wilderness.



With strong public support, we can protect the pristine landscapes of Adobe Town, so future generations will be able to enjoy the same awe-inspiring vistas and abundant wildlife that we have today. This will take decisive action by the Bureau of Land Management to provide interim protection. It will take foresight and wisdom of our Congressional representatives to establish the long-lasting protections that this special part of the Red Desert deserves.

Getting There

It takes about an hour and a half to reach Adobe Town from the Bitter Creek Exit (Exit 142) on Interstate 80. Follow the Bitter Creek Road (County 19) south for seven miles to cross the Union Pacific railroad, then bear left and continue south on County 19, following signs for the Eversole Ranch. The ranch is about 27 miles from I-80 exit. Drive through the ranch, taking the left fork in the road, and go 1.8 miles to a second junction. County Road 19 bears away to the right, but stay left on the unmarked BLM road for 3.4 miles to reach a junction. Turn left here to travel 2.5 miles to the Adobe Town Rim. Or continue straight ahead for another 8 miles or so, and turn left on a gravel road when an abandoned ranch can be seen ahead. Follow this road for 1.4 miles to its end at an abandoned drilling pad; jeep trails run north and east from this pad to the Skull Creek Rim.

From the south, take Wyoming Highway 789 or Colorado Highway 13 toward Baggs, on the Wyoming-Colorado border. Just south of the state line, drive west on the paved County Road 4 for about 20 miles. The pavement runs out at the oilfield camp of Powder Wash; here, drive north on County Road 62, staying left at the major junctions. After about 17 miles, you will drive through the abandoned Cow Creek Ranch. Take the next major gravel road to your right for the Skull Creek Rim (following the directions above), or continue north for another 8 miles, where the next major right leads 2.5 miles to the Adobe Town Rim.

High-clearance vehicles are required to get around on most of the jeep trails in the Adobe Town area, although the gravel roads are suitable for most passenger cars in dry weather. All roads in this area have a high clay content, and in wet weather, even the main county roads become muddy and quagmires. Wise travelers wait for conditions before attempting to drive paved roads in this area.

