

NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

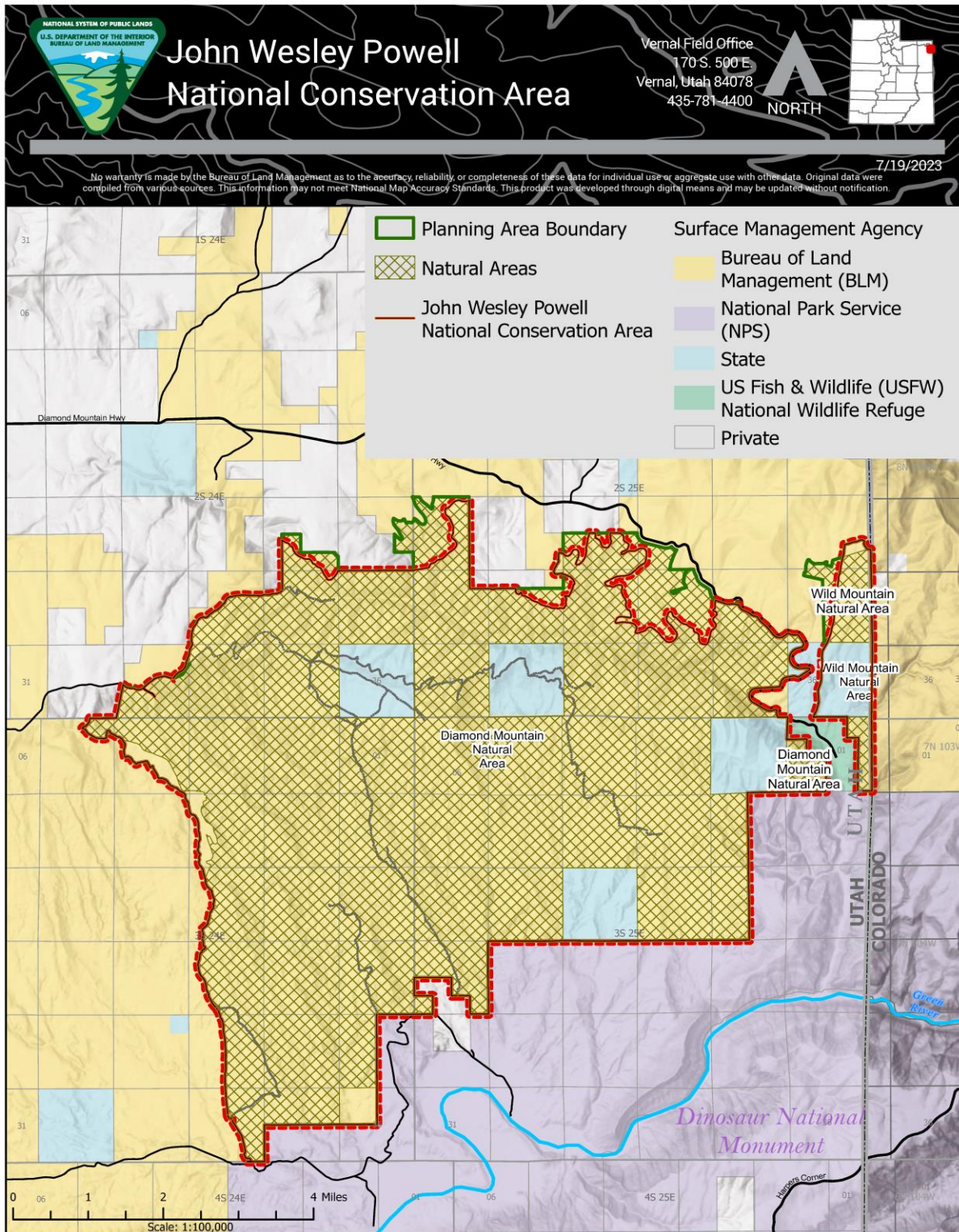
Utah
2023: Annual Manager's Report

John Wesley Powell

National Conservation Area



Map



Accomplishments

The John Wesley Powell (JWP) National Conservation Area (NCA) saw accomplishments primarily related to the develop of a resource management plan (RMP). The public scoping report for the development of the RMP was finalized and released to the public in October of 2023.

In addition, a draft Recreation Management Areas evaluation report was completed and reviewed by the BLM. This report will help inform RMP alternatives specific to outdoor recreation.

Additional accomplishments include ongoing site visits, pre-planning of potential and future site-specific visitor information sites, and wayfinding to better accommodate future visitation to the NCA.



Figure 1: John Wesley Powell NCA looking east at sunset.

Challenges

Challenges include the absence of on-the-ground data related to recreation visitation as well as the lack of a finalized management plan with identified values and management objectives. Once the planning phase is complete the ongoing management of the JWP NCA will be improved and future projects and other initiatives will be implemented in order to conserve and showcase the outstanding resources found within the NCA.



Figure 2: Mule deer are an important wildlife species within the NCA.

Visitors

Visitation to the NCA appears to have stayed consistent with historical visitation which is relatively low compared to other areas in the Vernal Field Office. This may be due to the remoteness of much of the NCA as well as the historical use of the area mainly revolving around access to hunting areas and motorized recreation. The interior of the NCA is rugged and isolated which may deter some individuals from visiting the NCA. Traffic counters have been deployed along the main access roads in order to count visitation and begin to show trend data related to the number of visitors during various times of the year, as well as year to year. This data will help manage and provide optimal visitor information in the future.



Figure 3: Looking south from the heights of the NCA.

Partnerships

Partnerships, friends groups, and volunteers will likely play an important role in the future of the NCA. Partners and other interested publics will have the opportunity to inform future management in the NCA, helping shape the recreational landscape and conservation opportunities within the NCA.

With the existing scientific information, such as completed wildlife and plant surveys, there would be an opportunity for citizens science groups to help monitor various populations in order to provide ongoing data that would also help inform future decisions within the NCA.



Figure 4: Looking east into the NCA.

Science

Several ongoing science-based management support efforts were continued including noxious weeds inventory field work. Other ongoing data collection efforts made possible by cooperative agreements with educational institutions include: the ongoing monitoring of raptor nesting routes and known nest sites, a continuation of surveys for previously identified white-tailed prairie dog populations, monarch butterfly and bumble bee surveys completed in previously identified populations of milkweed, hundreds of camera trap days on several sites, and small mammal trapping surveys. One note-worthy finding has been the identification of a new population of the Flaming Gorge Evening Primrose; this plant is an endemic species to the east Uinta Mountains and occurs in small, isolated populations. The population identified within the NCA is the most southerly known population in Uintah County and was discovered within the NCA through Phase II of the Special Status Plant and Noxious Weed Inventory contract. This recent discovery is an example of the ecologic diversity and value within the NCA.



Figure 5: Flaming Gorge Evening Primrose

Climate Impacts and Resiliency

The John Wesley Powell NCA saw record snowfall in 2023, allowing conditions from recent drought years to improve. Pertaining to air quality, the majority of the NCA occurs within the Uinta Basin Non-Attainment Area for ozone. As part of the planning process, general conformity will be assessed for all implementation-level projects by analyzing probable emissions as needed in order to stay within the non-attainment threshold.



Figure 6: Looking southeast towards Flattop Mountain and the Green River.

Social and Environmental Justice

Social and environmental justice considerations for under-represented groups and tribal consultation continues to occur as part of the development of the resource management plan.

Events

No formal events were held in the JWP NCA in 2023.

Words from the staff

I am excited about the progress that has been made in 2023 with various planning efforts related to the John Wesley Powell National Conservation Area. We are one step closer to finalizing a management plan for the NCA. I am hopeful that in the future this spectacular corner of the world becomes a destination for many and a continued sanctuary for wildlife and plant species. Recreation, scientific, and scenic opportunities can be found in abundance within the NCA. I am confident that through the BLM's dedication to conservation and working closely with partners, agencies, and interested publics, these resources will continue to be enjoyed by visitors well into the future.

Thank you,

Rene Arce
Vernal Field Office, Assistant Field Manager



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National Conservation Area

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