

GRANITE CREEK WILDERNESS PROPOSAL

"Now *this* is wild country! Our hike to Granite Creek was spectacular. This desert, riparian ecosystem filled with mature cottonwoods, a gushing creek, lush vegetation, and Remote with a capital R makes Granite Creek "Wilderness" in our book."

Mark Schmalz, Grand Junction



Aerial view of Dolores Point.
Photo © CEC



View looking west down Granite Creek taken from an overlook at a user-created campsite along BLM Route 7100. Photo © Kate Graham

A Wilderness Deserving Landscape – Located approximately 30 miles southwest of Grand Junction on the Colorado-Utah state line in Mesa County, CO and Grand County, Utah, the Granite Creek WP is part of the “Dolores Triangle,” a remote section of land known for superb big-game hunting and primitive recreational opportunities throughout a variety of ecosystems, from riparian to montane, ranging in elevation from 4,500 - 8,000 feet.

Geology, Ecology, & Wildlife Habitat – The Granite Creek WP features a red rock sandstone canyon tributary to the Dolores River that cuts as deep as 800 feet and is highlighted with picturesque rock fins, columns, windows and buttes. The remote, elevated stream canyon of Granite Creek supports a valuable and uncommon riparian plant community, recognized by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program as important to preserve. Willow carrs and mountain shrublands in this area provide great habitat for sensitive and important birds such as the Gray Vireo and Black-throated Gray Warbler. Additionally, this area is especially significant for its role in providing habitat connectivity with extensive conserved private lands to the east and north. Habitat for the extremely imperiled Gunnison Sage Grouse extends from Pinion Mesa into Granite Creek, while mule deer and elk range in abundance across the uplands and down to Unaweep Canyon.

Rich History & Iconic Western Landscape – If you are a history buff make sure to explore the rubble of the remote homesteads you find dotting the ever verdant Granite Creek. That said, be sure to also take notice of the lack of man’s footprint here. For it is the experience of bearing witness to an area’s sincerely untouched character that is quickly becoming the most significant historic experience in western landscapes such as this.

Wilderness Recreation – The high, eastern end of the creek in Utah is relatively open and straight, but by the time it approaches its confluence with the Dolores, in Colorado, the stream is so serpentine that it takes seven miles to travel just three linear miles – a backpacker’s dream! Be sure to take your camera the hoodoo are really something!

Adjacent Backcountry Recreation – Heading north out of Gateway Sheep Creek Road turns into BLM Route 7100 (visible on this map, and also accessible from Utah). This 4-wd route provides motorized backcountry access to otherwise undisturbed, well-inhabited big-game hunting grounds. There are a handful of user-created campsites, some with stunning views of Granite Creek, which can serve as either scenic campsites for a multi-day motorized tour, or ideal base camps for primitive hunting excursions into the wilderness area.

The Granite Creek WP contains 14,089 acres of public lands within the Grand Junction Field Office for the BLM.

