

Fencemaker Ridge

Current Proposed Acres: 14,942

CBLC Proposed Acres: 45,680

Current Management Status: BLM Lands with Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)

Area Description

Fencemaker Ridge forms the heart of this wild area with elevations varying from almost 7300 feet at the highpoint down to 4000 feet at the edge of the adjacent Dixie Valley. A dense piñon pine/juniper forest covers much of the higher elevations, creating a secluded natural habitat. Prevalent sagebrush intermingles with the woodlands at higher elevations, then becomes the dominant vegetation below 5000 feet. Massive gray limestone creates dramatic topography on the west side of the area. Huge cliffs tower above the Buena Vista Valley and several deep canyons cut deep into Fencemaker Ridge. The most pronounced of these, Grayson Canyon, offers a scenic route of passage from the area's west slope. This region is characterized by tall cliffs and strange rock formations. At the south-eastern corner of this area, topographic relief becomes even more extreme with tall, steep slopes forming an imposing wall above Dixie Valley. Here, Old Man Canyon cuts into the Fencemaker Ridge and forms a complex and steep landscape accentuated by deep and scenic clefts.

Naturalness

Fencemaker Ridge supports excellent and relatively undisturbed natural habitat for many wild creatures. Antelope utilize the open foothills and surrounding flats, both solitary and in larger herds. Mule deer hide throughout the hills. The exposed rocky terrain of this region provides an excellent habitat for desert bighorn. This area is known to be home to predators including bobcats, coyotes, and the elusive mountain lion. The rugged terrain of this area creates an excellent habitat for wildlife, providing vegetative cover, seclude hideouts, and rock shelters for protection, escape, and denning. Numerous song birds, reptiles, and rodents frequent this area as well. These can be spotted throughout the hills, and are often difficult to identify due to distance or quick encounters. The multitude of cliffs and rock faces within this area provide secure nesting sites and perches for large predatory birds.



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Recreation and Solitude

Recreation opportunities are plentiful here, spanning a wide range of activities and interests. These mountains offer expansive terrain for exploration and hiking, numerous scenic vistas, canyon routes, and pleasant lunch spots. Some of the area's less rugged terrain is well-suited for horseback riding and horsepacking, with pleasant routes and destinations. Fencemaker Ridge offers rich opportunities for hunting and sport, with ample wildlife spread across the region. The area offers abundant wildlife viewing, birdwatching, and photography opportunities. In addition, the rugged terrain and steep cliffs provide opportunities for rock climbing, scrambling, and other play. The limestone of these mountains is tough and structurally sound, creating a natural playground inviting exploration. Other recreation opportunities include fossil hunting, night sky viewing, rock-hounding, and searching for mineral specimens.

Special Features

Fencemaker Ridge is an important pine nut gathering area for the tribes.

Issues and Proposed Resolution

During the Checkerboard Lands Committee process sponsored by Pershing County Commission over the period of time from 2004-2006. After a series of meetings and field trips, the Checkerboard Committee recommended to the Pershing County Commission Fencemaker be considered for wilderness. This proposal was then adopted by the Pershing County Commission on March 1, 2006. When the Winnemucca BLM began working on identifying resource inventory information as a part of the Resource Management Plan, based on the Checkerboard Lands Committee recommendation, Fencemaker was included as having wilderness values. When the Winnemucca BLM resource management plan was finalized, Fencemaker was included as part of the final decision.

During the Pershing County Public Lands Bill process in 2015 and 2016, a number of issues surfaced about conflicts with potential wilderness in the eastern portion of the Fencemaker area. These conflicts included geothermal leases, large claim blocks, ranching access and woodcutting. As a part of resolving these issues, a smaller boundary was drawn that totally eliminated the mining, leasing, access issues and nearly all of accessible woodcutting area.

Maps

The maps on the following pages show the original Fencemaker area as well as the revised area where conflicts have been resolved.

