



Grandfathers'

Current Proposed Acres: 35,339

Original Proposed WSA Acres:

China Mountain, 10,214 Tobin Range, 13,116

The Tobin Crest Proposed Wilderness consists of portions of two BLM Wilderness Study Areas (China Mountain and Tobin Range) and the Tobin Crest BLM Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) recommended by the Pershing County Checkerboard Committee.

Area Description

The Tobin Crest area is characterized by a mountainous ridge anchored in the south by Mount Tobin and in the north by China Mountain. This entire area would protect outstanding wildlife habitat including crucial summer and crucial winter range for mule deer and priority habitat for Sage Grouse. On the north end of the area, China Mountain creates a massive, mountainous formation towering over the surrounding valleys. South of China Mountain, Tobin Crest becomes one long ridge or crest, running north-south, and gradually gaining elevation towards the south. Heavily altered sedimentary rock, outcropping as shale and slate, forms the bulk of these large mountains. This entire Tobin Crest supports the rangeland and/or the critical watershed that the adjacent ranches depend on, including the Marvel and Crawford operations, and the historic Saval and Siard operations. The name Grandfathers' Wilderness honors the more-than century old ranching heritage and history along the Tobin Crest, and honors the Grandfathers' who founded anchor ranches on the eastern and western flanks of the Crest, the Saval Ranch and the Siard Ranch. This name also honors the Grandfathers' of all the ranchers who today call this special land their home range.

Naturalness

On the north end of the area, China Mountain creates a massive, fortress-mountain towering over the surrounding valleys. This China Mountain portion includes the dramatic cliffs that cascade down the west side of the China Mountain Plateau. These limestone cliffs rise as high as several hundred feet, forming beautiful basins and rock formations. Within these basins, wildflowers are abundant and mingle with grasses and the ever-present sagebrush. The west side includes clusters of springs denoted by vibrant splashes of green. While the upper regions of this range are dominated by rough cliffs and topography, the middle elevations embrace a sagebrush ocean that rolls down into the foothills and continues out across the upper alluvial fans. Along the northern-most side of this area junipers begin to take hold and form a pleasant Nevada-style woodland. The summit plateau of China Mountain itself is an astounding wild and natural feature. Dramatic cliffs fall-off on all sides in a rugged display, dropping into rolling hills and sage-filled canyons. High, open basins comprise this summit plateau, alternating between open rocky meadows and sagebrush swales. Wildflower displays can be found throughout the summer on this high plateau.

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Naturalness (cont)

South of China Mountain the grey-green tinge of sagebrush reiterates the change to the more rolling aspect of the Grandfathers'. In addition to sage, numerous wildflowers and other high alpine vegetation carpets the higher elevations. Lupine and small sunflowers are especially common, and beautiful Indian paintbrush can be found extensively at slightly lower altitudes. Although generally lacking in large vegetation, junipers are sparsely scattered throughout the lands in small groves. Where not rounded and hilly, these mountains are cut by deep canyons, especially on the eastern side. Here the rock is tougher and rises dramatically into sharp outcrops. Flowing water travels through many of these canyons, and creates a lush desert ecosystem unique from the surrounding lands. Thick brush chokes these drainages, adding a splash of vibrant green to the muted desert pallet. Wildlife is abundant within the entire Grandfathers' area. Numerous song birds and other small animals thrive in the foothills including reptiles, rodents, and insects. Jackrabbits are particularly common, and can often be seen darting through the sagebrush. Numerous springs and ample sagebrush throughout the additions create an ideal habitat for Sage Grouse. Large raptors can frequently be spotted thermalling and soaring high above the cliffs and ridges of this region. Rugged cliffs and rock formations provide excellent roosting and perching opportunities for these magnificent birds. The extensive sagebrush plant community and associated native grasses provide high quality habitat for larger wild mammals and create prime range resources for livestock. Antelope and mule deer are particularly common throughout the area, roaming the hills both singularly and in small groups or herds. Bighorn sheep also find excellent habitat in the more exposed and rocky portions of this area. In addition, coyotes, mountain lions, and other predatory animals live in the area.

Recreation and Solitude

Hiking, climbing, peakbagging, and scrambling are inviting activities for this area, and numerous canyons provide routes and destinations. China Mountain and Mount Tobin are both worthy peak destinations for those seeking altitude. Mount Tobin, at the southern end of the Tobin Crest has 4800 feet of prominence, making it recognizable as the 62nd most prominent peaks in the lower 48 United States and the 12th most prominent peak in Nevada. This peak is a nationwide destination for peak-baggers and is listed in two websites dedicated to this sport.



The Tobin Crest ridge connecting these two prominences provides an interesting, longer hike for those wanting to prolong their time among numerous lesser peaks. The region provides excellent opportunities for bird watching, rock hounding, and activities plant identification. Winter introduces entirely different possibilities for recreation. High elevations and cold temperatures create excellent conditions for snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and backcountry skiing and snowboarding. Other recreation opportunities include horseback riding, horse packing, bird watching, rock hounding, and night sky viewing. The ample wildlife also provides opportunities for wildlife viewing and photography as well as excellent hunting for antelope, deer, and chukar. The Grandfathers' is truly a mountain island habitat surround by a sea of saltbush and alkali.

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Other

Mount Tobin also played a role in a tragic historic accident. In the mid-afternoon on January 10, 1968, a military transport plane carrying 19 passengers and crew flew into a winter storm over Nevada. The last radio contact stated that they were experiencing severe icing conditions and were “dropping fast” from their flight altitude of 12,000 feet. The next day wreckage of the plane was discovered. The plane had crashed into Mount Tobin near its 9,775-foot summit. There were no survivors. A family from California worked 3 months to cut-up the wrecked and melt the aluminum into ingots in a home-made ground furnace for salvage. Part of that work included constructing the 4-wheel drive jeep trail nearly to the top of Mount Tobin to be able to haul the ingots down to their truck.

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 the Grandfathers' 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, Grandfathers' was included as having as having wilderness values. When the Winnemucca BLM resource management plan was finalized, Tobin Crest was included as part of the final decision.

In 2016, Friends of Nevada Wilderness representatives met with the key ranching outfits on both side of the range. Working side-by-side with the ranchers, changes were made to the original boundaries to provide needed access for water developments and other grazing management needs. Access routes for ranching and hunting have been identified and will remain open for motorized use.

Maps

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

