

The Henry Mountains and surrounding deserts

united states department of the interior ■ bureau of land management



GEOLOGY

Millions of years ago, semi-molten diorite from within the earth's interior forced itself upward into the overlying layers of the earth's crust to form high domes called laccoliths. Today these domes form the five major peaks of the Henry Mountains. Erosion has now exposed the hardened diorite core of the mountains. The domed and arched sedimentary rocks are seen as flanks of the mountains range. Elevation in the area ranges from 3,700 feet at the north shore of Lake Powell to over 11,600 feet at Mt. Ellen.

Many of the unique geological formations of the Henry Mountain area are worth viewing during your visit. Located south of Hanksville off U-95, Little Egypt displays an odd collection of sphinx-shaped rocks which were formed by the erosion of Entrada sandstone. Located between Mt. Pennell and Mt. Ellen, The Horn is a good example of a lateral intrusion off the Mt. Pennell laccolith.

Horseshoe Basin is located between Bull Mountain and Mt. Ellen along the Sawmill Basin Road. It is one of the geological show places of the Henry Mountains which exhibits the transition zone between the intrusive bodies and overlying sedimentary rocks.

On the extreme southern end of Mt. Hillers, the igneous intrusion process is dramatically displayed at the Pink Cliffs where several layers of pink sandstone were uplifted to a near vertical position.

The Blue Hills, south of Caineville, are of great importance to the science of geomorphology. The famous geologist G.K. Gilbert studied stream processes here in 1875-6. Studies by others continue today. These badlands can be viewed from Lost Springs and form the top of South Caineville Mesa.

The colorful Waterpocket Fold runs for 90 miles on the west side of the



Technical rock climbing at all levels of difficulty is found at The Horn, near Mt. Pennell.

Henry Mountains. You can view the fold from several points along the Notom-Bullfrog Road or see it from McMillan Springs campground and Bull Creek Pass.

Majestic, isolated spires of the Entrada sandstone rise from the bottom of Cathedral Valley between Capitol Reef National Park and Caineville. In some areas, black volcanic basalt has folded its way between sandstone layers or has filled fractures and cuts across rocks.

One of the richest uranium deposits in the region is found in Shitamaring Canyon. A new processing mill and town, Ticaboo, were constructed to develop the deposit.

RECREATION

CAMPING AND PICNICKING - BLM maintains three developed campgrounds and one picnic area in the Henry Mountain area; their location and facilities are shown on the reverse side. Also, there are numerous undeveloped camping areas throughout the region where you have little likelihood of meeting others. Please leave a clean camp for others. Take your refuse with you to an appropriate place of disposal.

SIGHTSEEING - Driving any of the roads and highways will offer rewarding views of the area's geological features and wildlife. In particular, Bull Creek Pass, Stanton Pass and Pennellen Pass offer outstanding scenic vistas of the lower deserts. The canyons of the Dirty Devil River are best viewed from Burr Point and Angel's Point. Geological formations include the Pink Cliffs, Waterpocket Fold, The Horn, and Little Egypt.

HIKING - Short day hikes are possible in several locations. By far, the most popular place is Mt. Ellen. A 4-mile route from Bull Creek Pass to the summit of Mt. Ellen offers spectacular vistas of central Utah. Another 4-mile trail leads from the Dandelion Flat picnic area near Lonesome Beaver Campground up to a ridge on Mt. Ellen. Short nature trails and day hikes are available at Starr Springs Campground and Hog Springs Picnic Area.

Overnight trips and extended back country trips are possible in a variety of locations throughout the area. Outstanding recreational opportunities are possible in the Little Rockies, the canyons of the Dirty Devil River, South Caineville Mesa, and Horseshoe Canyon. Further information on these and other areas can be obtained from the BLM office in Hanksville. For safety purposes, hikers should inform BLM personnel of their destination and length of visit.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES - Most of the Henry Mountain area is open to ORVs. However, the steep mountain-side, sheer canyon cliffs and generally rough terrain restrict ORV use to existing roads and trails in many locations. Please be careful where you ride so as not to cause unnecessary damage to vegetation or harassment of wildlife. Avoid riding on hillsides, especially those near roads where unsightly scars can develop.



(above) Reminders of earlier inhabitants, such as pictographs and petroglyphs, can be found in many canyons throughout the region.

CAUTION!

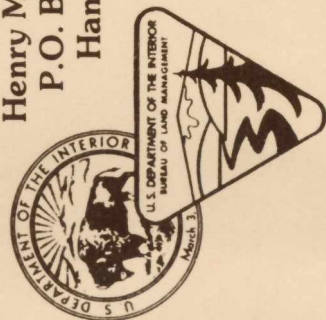
The Henry Mountains area is extremely remote; BLM personnel **do not** make regular patrols of the area and the chances of meeting other people in the area is low.

The region is very rugged and dry. Carry extra water regardless of your planned length of stay. Be sure your vehicle is in good working condition.

Over 30 percent of the precipitation in the Henry Mountains falls in July and August, usually in the form of heavy thunderstorms which may temporarily wash out roads. Roads other than Utah highways are either gravel or dirt and not all are regularly maintained, making them unsuitable for some automobiles. Roads at high elevations can be impassible due to rockslides and snow. Bull Creek Pass is usually blocked by snowdrifts until late July. The BLM Office at Hanksville can provide current information on road conditions.

(below) Looking south from the summit of Mt. Ellen which rises over 6,000 feet above the surrounding desert.





TO:

WELCOME

The Henry Mountains and the surrounding deserts are located in central Utah. Here, almost 2 million acres of public land are administered by the Bureau of Land Management. There is a wide variety of outstanding recreational opportunities including hunting, hiking, camping, sightseeing, photography, and nature study available for those who are willing to seek them out. For further information or assistance, contact the BLM Area Manager, Box 99, Hanksville, Utah 84734. Telephone (801) 542-3461.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The Henry Mountains are the home of the only free-roaming and huntable herd of American bison in the 48 contiguous United States. In 1941, 18 head were transplanted from Yellowstone National Park to the Henry Mountain area. Today over 200 buffalo roam the lower benches of the Henry Mountains in the winter and the higher areas during the summer. Approximately 44 permits to hunt the bison are issued annually by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

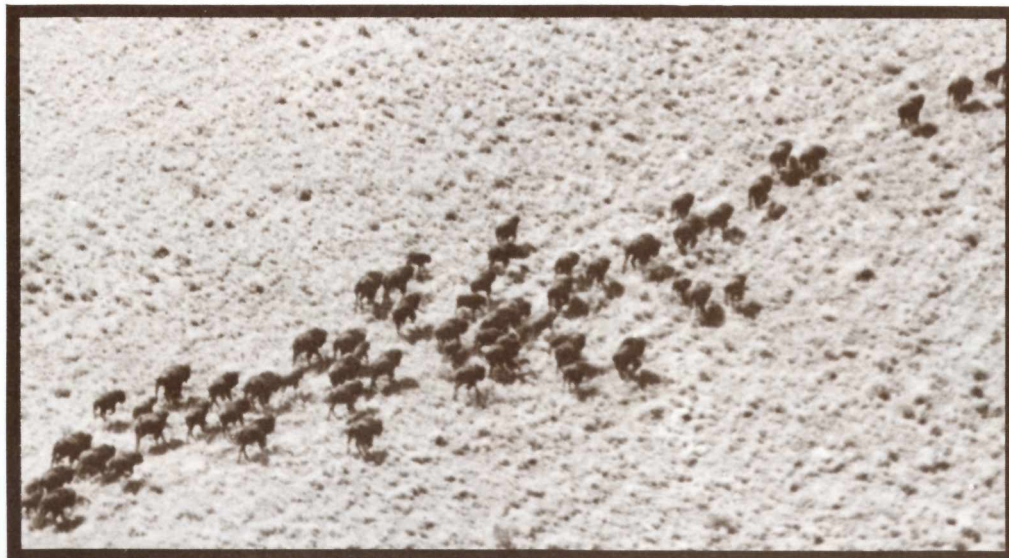
Please remember that bison are wild animals. Do not leave your vehicles and chase the herd, as they can become quite dangerous if provoked. If you wish to photograph bison, drive slowly by and take the pictures from your vehicle.

The area also provides habitat for mule deer and a small population of antelope. Mountain lions dwell in the Henry Mountains and are seen by travelers on rare occasions. Deer and a variety of birds are best viewed from McMillan Springs, Lonesome Beaver Campground and The Horn.

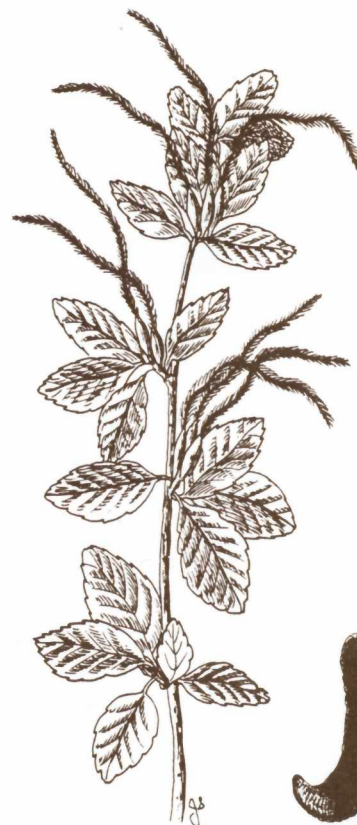
Game birds found in the area include pheasant, snipe, chukar, quail, dove, band-tailed pigeons, blue grouse, and occasional waterfowl during the fall and spring. Small birds include Clark's nutcracker, ravens, kestrels, chickadees, stellar jays, pinyon jays, towhees, and desert horned lark.

There are also cottontail and jackrabbits and, in the lower desert areas, numerous reptiles (including some rattlesnakes) and small rodents.

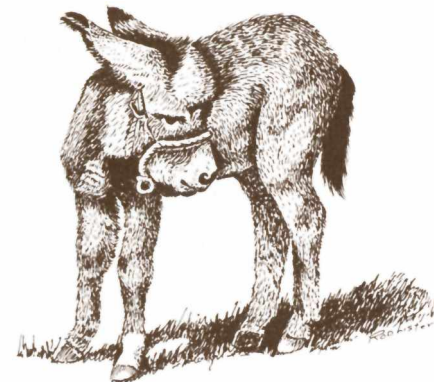
You will notice several distinctive plant zones in the Henry Mountain area. The distribution of plant life reflects the changes in topography, soil, temperature, and moisture relationships. The lower zones support primarily salt desert shrubs, blackbrush, and galleta grass. The intermediate zone is predominantly juniper and pinyon trees, and the higher elevations have several varieties of timber, including Douglas fir, spruce, ponderosa pine, and aspen. The highest elevations on Mt. Pennell and Mt. Ellen have alpine grasslands.



(above) Historic Wolverton Mill as it appeared in 1927 near Mt. Pennell. Photo courtesy of Barbara Ekker.



Mountain-mahogany



(below) Desert bighorn sheep are relatively rare. However, the remote areas of the Orange Cliffs, the Little Rockies and the canyons of the Dirty Devil River offer excellent opportunities for future relocation efforts to their historic ranges.



(left) The famous Henry Mountains bison herd can frequently be observed along the South Summit Ridge of Mt. Ellen during the summer.

HISTORY

The Henry Mountains are a rugged, dry, and sparsely settled region of the Colorado Plateau. Aridity and ruggedness are major obstacles to development and have kept this area in a generally primitive state.

Prehistoric people may have inhabited the Henry Mountain area as early as 10,000 B.C. By 900 A.D. semi-permanent villages of Fremont Indians were scattered throughout the region. Characteristic of Fremont culture are deep pit houses, gray pottery, and stone or mud storage bins commonly called granaries. Piute Indians migrated to the area about the time Columbus discovered America.

One of the most intriguing remnants of the ancient Indians' culture is rock art. Petroglyphs (rock etchings) and pictographs (rock paintings) give hints about the lives of these old peoples.

Explorers generally avoided this arid region until the late 1800s. John Wesley Powell and party made their first trip down the Green and Colorado Rivers into the region in 1869. They scaled cliffs, mapped rivers and side canyons, made a variety of scientific observations and named topographical features. The Henry Mountains were named after Professor Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian Institute, an active Powell supporter. The nearby Dirty Devil River was named by John Wesley Powell, who, when asked if it was a good trout stream, said; "No, it's a dirty devil." The name stuck.

The first permanent white settlement in the region was made in 1882 by Elijah Cutler Behunin and his family who moved down the Fremont River by wagon. They traveled by way of Capitol Wash and settled near the present site of Caineville. In the spring of 1882, Ebenezer Hanks and five families moved to the present townsite of Hanksville, at first called Graves Valley.

Prospectors have explored the Henry Mountains since the turn of the century. The old Wolverton Mill was located in Straight Creek Canyon on the east slope of Mt. Pennell. This mill, built about 1918 by E.T. Wolverton, was a surprisingly elaborate structure; the hand-built 20-foot-diameter water wheel is an engineering achievement. About 10 years after starting this project, Wolverton died without having produced much, if any, gold. Today, the mill can be seen at the BLM office in Hanksville.

Gold was discovered in the 1890s in Bromide Basin on the high eastern slope of Mt. Ellen. The cry of "gold" brought an influx of miners and the town of Eagle City blossomed on the

north bank of Crescent Creek. The gold ore body was small, however, and by 1900 Eagle City was a ghost town. Only one small building remains as a reminder of the past.

During this same period, a number of cattle ranches were established in the area. The Starr Ranch on the south side of Mt. Hillers is particularly interesting because of its fine stonework and keystone arch construction. Due to a prolonged drought, the ranch was abandoned in the early 1900s. However, ruins of the ranch are still in evidence near the Starr Springs Campground.

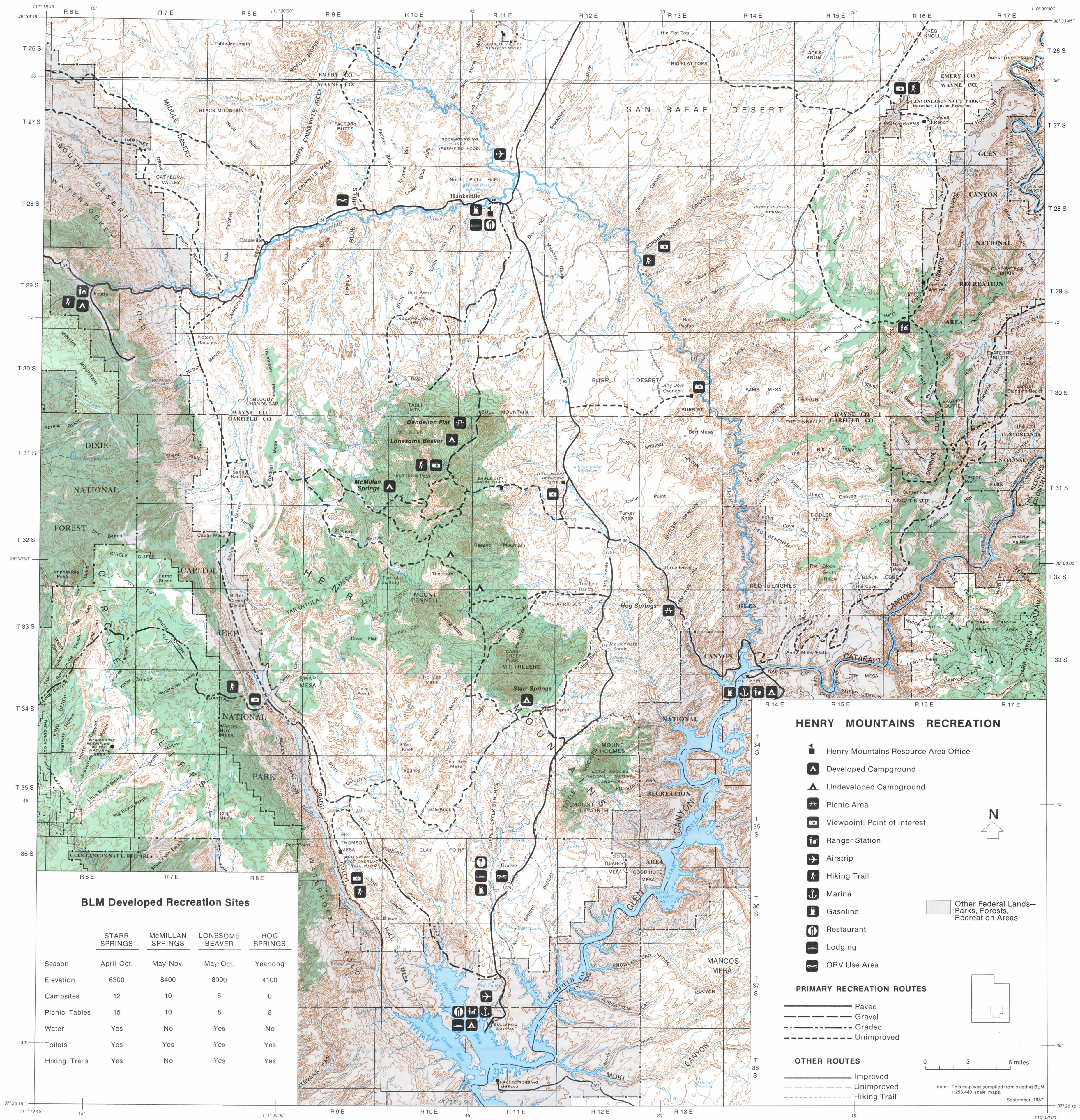
During the heyday of the ranching business, outlaw gangs roamed the area at will. Cattle roaming the open range fell easy prey to rustlers who



discovered that the canyons of the nearby Dirty Devil River offered an impregnable fortress hideout. One canyon appropriately named Robber's Roost, was an important stopping point on the "Outlaw Trail" which stretched from Canada to Mexico. Butch Cassidy, Harry Longbaugh (The "Sundance Kid"), "Silver Tip" Wall and others were active in the region throughout the early 1900s. Today, the "Roost" is still much as it was then; visitors still must enter the canyons just as the lawmen did when chasing the outlaws.

Today, cattle grazing continues to be an important part of the local economy. However, mineral production and outdoor recreation are becoming increasingly important. Although newly paved roads have improved access to the area, much of the land is still undeveloped and remote.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers about 1.8 million acres of public land in the Henry Mountain area for your use and enjoyment. BLM welcomes your comments and suggestions to improve the management of the lands and resources in the Henry Mountain area.



BLM Developed Recreation Sites

	STARR SPRINGS	McMILLAN SPRINGS	LONESOME BEAVER	HOG SPRINGS
Season	April-Oct.	May-Nov.	May-Oct.	Yearlong
Elevation	6300	8400	8000	4100
Campsites	12	10	5	0
Picnic Tables	15	10	8	8
Water	Yes	No	Yes	No
Toilets	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hiking Trails	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

HENRY MOUNTAINS RECREATION

- Henry Mountains Resource Area Office
- Developed Campground
- Undeveloped Campground
- Picnic Area
- Viewpoint; Point of Interest
- Ranger Station
- Airstrip
- Hiking Trail
- Marina
- Gasoline
- Restaurant
- Lodging
- ORV Use Area

PRIMARY RECREATION ROUTES

- Paved
- Gravel
- Graded
- Unimproved

OTHER ROUTES

- Improved
- Unimproved
- Hiking Trail

Other Federal Lands--
Parks, Forests,
Recreation Areas

0 3 6 miles

note: This map was compiled from existing BLM
1:253,440 scale maps.
September, 1987