The 6,614 acre Browns Canyon Wilderness Study Area was surveyed in 1980 and designated in 1993. The Bureau of Land Management's 27 million acres of National Conservation Lands include Wilderness Areas, National Monuments and Conservation Areas. Mostly in the western U.S., WSAs are large, undisturbed areas which may be considered candidates for Congressional designation under the 1964 Wilderness Act. Of the 530 current BLM WSAs, 54 are in Colorado.

At 7,600' - 9,000' elevation, the WSAs smooth granitic outcrops and pitted limestones are markedly different from the glaciated 14,000' peaks of the Continental Divide across the Arkansas Valley. In the rain shadow and snow shadow of the Divide, the WSA is drier, with sparse snowpack, no permanent streams and few springs. Hardy pinyon and ponderosa pine, juniper, aspen and dense brush survive in dry watercourses. Elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep, and predators such as mountain lion, bobcat, coyote and black bear thrive here, in spite of water scarcity. Wildlife rely on the Arkansas River, just outside WSA boundaries, managed jointly by BLM and the State of Colorado as the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area. The most rafted whitewater river in the US, the Arkansas River is also the state's premier cold-water fishery, recently designated as Gold Medal Waters.

Little evidence remains of limited mining attempted here 1880 - 1900. The Saluten Mining District to the east spurred construction of the short-lived narrow gauge railroad down Railroad Gulch south of the WSA to transport ore to the Salida smelter via the Denver & Rio Grande RR. No private lands lie within the WSA, although a few private parcels are adjacent. One primitive route, the Turret Trail, and several spur trails traverse the northern section and are open and passable only to foot and horse travel.

Enjoy and take care of the WSA!

Travel and recreate with minimum impact.
Respect the environment and the rights of others.
Educate yourself, plan and prepare before you go.
Avoid streams, meadows, ponds, muddy roads and trails, steep hill sides, wildlife and livestock.
Discover the rewards of responsible recreation.

Further information contact BLM Front Range Field Office in Canon City at 719 269-8500 or visit www.blm.gov/co