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WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA STUDY AREAS

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT STATEMENT



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
CALIFORNIA

QH
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1986
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United States Department of the Interior

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1792
(CA-930)

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
CALIFORNIA STATE OFFICE
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, California 95825

Dear Reader:

Enclosed is the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for the Merced River, Panoche Hills North and South, Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous, Caliente Mountains, Owens Peak, and Piute Cypress Wilderness Study Areas in the Caliente, Folsom, and Hollister Resource Areas of the Bakersfield District. The EIS analyzes the impact of adding 83,722 acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Several No Wilderness and Partial Wilderness alternatives are also considered. The statement was prepared pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and responds to the mandates of Sections 202, 203 and 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 to review public land roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more and roadless islands having wilderness characteristics; determine their suitability or nonsuitability for wilderness designation; consider through the planning process additional areas that may be suitable; and report these suitability recommendations to the President no later than October 21, 1991.

For further information, please contact Bob Rheiner, District Manager, Bakersfield District, Federal Building, Room 302, 800 Truxton Avenue, Bakersfield, California 93301.

Sincerely yours,

Ed Hastey
State Director

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
PRELIMINARY WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE
CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AREA

Prepared by
Bureau of Land Management
Bakersfield District, California

Ed Hunter
State Director, California

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FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ON THE
PRELIMINARY WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AREA

Draft () Final (X) Environmental Impact Statement

1. Type of Action: Administrative () Legislative (X)

2. Abstract:

The Bureau of Land Management, Caliente, Folsom, and Hollister Resource Areas, Bakersfield District, California, has analyzed the impacts and resource tradeoffs of proposals to designate portions of the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous and Owens Peak Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) as wilderness and to not designate the Merced River, Panoche Hills North and South, Caliente Mountain, and Piute Cypress WSAs as wilderness. This environmental impact statement also analyzes the impacts and tradeoffs of several alternatives including wilderness, no wilderness, and other partial wilderness. Wilderness characteristics and special features are examined.

3. For Further Information Contact:

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is to document the environmental impacts of proposed actions on seven Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in the Bakersfield District that are being considered for inclusion within the National Wilderness Preservation System. These are the Merced River WSA (CA-040-203), the Panoche Hills North WSA (CA-040-301A), the Panoche Hills South WSA (CA-040-301B), the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous (CA-040-303), the Caliente Mountain WSA (CA-010-042), the Owens Peak WSA (CA-010-020), and the Piute Cypress WSA (CA-010-046 and USFS A5213). The Merced River WSA is located within Mariposa County, the Panoche Hills North and South WSAs are located within Fresno County, the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous is located within San Benito and Monterey Counties, the Caliente Mountain WSA is located within San Luis Obispo County, the Owens Peak WSA is located within Tulare and Kern Counties, and the Piute Cypress WSA is located within Kern County. This EIS assesses the environmental consequences of managing these WSAs as wilderness, partial wilderness, and no wilderness.

The Proposed Action for the Merced River WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal, none of the 12,835 acres will be designated wilderness, but will be managed for multiple use. One alternative was also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 12,835 acres as wilderness. Issues analyzed for this WSA were the impacts on wilderness values, recreational off-road vehicle (ORV) use, the preservation of archaeological resources, Federally-listed candidate species habitat, and upland game habitat management/improvement projects and hydropower development.

The Proposed Action for the Panoche Hills North WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal none of the 6,677 acres will be designated wilderness, but will be managed for multiple use. One alternative was also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which will designate all 6,677 acres as wilderness. Issues analyzed for this WSA were impacts on wilderness values, motorized hunting use levels, paleontological resources and investigations, and rare, threatened and endangered species.

The Proposed Action for the Panoche Hills South WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal, none of the 11,267 acres will be designated wilderness, but will be managed for multiple use. Two alternatives were also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 11,267 acres as wilderness and a Partial Wilderness Alternative which would designate 5,600 acres as wilderness; 5,667 acres would not be designated wilderness but managed for multiple use. Issues analyzed for this WSA were impacts on wilderness values, paleontological resources and investigations, and rare, threatened and endangered species.

The Proposed Action for the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA is Partial Wilderness. Under this proposal, 2,200 acres will be designated wilderness; 3,638 acres will not be designated but will be managed for multiple use. Two alternatives were also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 5,838 acres as wilderness and a No Wilderness/No Action Alternative which would not designate any of the 5,838 acres as wilderness but manage them for multiple use. The issue analyzed for this WSA was impact on wilderness values.

The Proposed Action for the Caliente Mountain WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal, none of the 19,018 acres will be designated wilderness, but will be managed for multiple use. One alternative was also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 19,018 acres as wilderness. Issues analyzed for this WSA were impacts on wilderness values, endangered species, and livestock grazing operations.

The Proposed Action for the Owens Peak WSA is Partial Wilderness. Under this proposal, 14,960 acres will be designated wilderness; 7,600 acres will not be designated but will be managed for multiple use. Two alternatives were also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 22,560 acres as wilderness; and a No Wilderness/No Action Alternative. Issues analyzed for this WSA were impacts on wilderness values, recreational ORV use, and preservation of archaeological resources.

The Proposed Action for the Piute Cypress WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal none of the 5,527 will be designated wilderness, but will be managed for multiple use. One alternative was also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 5,527 acres as wilderness. Issues analyzed for this WSA were impacts on wilderness values, and mineral exploration and development.

A Summary of Impacts for the Proposed Action and Alternatives for all WSAs is outlined on pp. 62-69, Chapter 2.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) presents the environmental impacts associated with seven proposals and considers the possible consequences of alternatives of wilderness, partial wilderness, and no wilderness designation for seven wilderness study areas (WSAs) in the Caliente, Folsom and Hollister Resource Areas in the Bakersfield District. They are the Merced River WSA (CA-040-203), the Panoche Hills North WSA (CA-040-301A), the Panoche Hills South WSA (CA-040-301B), the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous (CA-040-303), the Caliente Mountain WSA (CA-010-042); the Owens Peak WSA (CA-010-020), and the Piute Cypress WSA (CA-010-046 and USFS A5213) (see Map 1, Location Map, p. 2). The Merced River WSA is in the Folsom Resource Area and is located within Mariposa County, California, about 45 to the southeast of the City of Modesto, California. It is surrounded, for the most part, by private lands, and is proximate to the Stanislaus National Forest. The Panoche Hills North and South WSAs are in the Hollister Resource Area and are located within Fresno County, California, about 50 miles to the west of the City of Fresno, California, along U.S. Interstate 5. The Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous is also in the Hollister Resource Area and is located within San Benito and Monterey Counties, California, about 30 miles to the southeast of the City of Salinas, California. The unit contains five separate parcels of land which adjoin the Pinnacles National Monument Wilderness Area. The Caliente Mountain WSA is in the Caliente Resource Area and is located within San Luis Obispo County, about 50 miles to the southwest of the City of Bakersfield, California. It is surrounded for the most part by private land is proximate to the Los Padres National Forest,. The Owens Peak WSA is also in the Caliente Resource Area and is located within Tulare and Kern Counties, about 60 miles to the northeast of the City of Bakersfield, California. It is bounded on the northwest by Inyo County and is adjacent to the California Desert District's Owens Peak Wilderness Study Area (CA-060-158). The Sequoia National Forest lies one mile to the southwest of the WSA. The Piute Cypress WSA is also located within the Caliente Resource Area and is located within Kern County, about 35 miles to the northeast of the City of Bakersfield, California. It encompasses 1,949 acres of Forest Service's Cypress Further Planning Area (A5213) which lies within the Sequoia National Forest.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the Partial Wilderness proposals for the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous and Owens Peak WSAs and the No Wilderness/No Action proposal for the Merced River, Panoche Hills North, Panoche Hills South, Caliente Mountain, and Piute Cypress WSAs is to set forth a pattern of management action in each of the seven WSAs. This evolves from a requirement included by Congress in Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directing the Secretary of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to review roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more having wilderness characteristics and by 1991 to recommend to the President the suitability of such areas for preservation as wilderness. In determining these wilderness values, the law directs the Bureau



MAP-1

to use the criteria given by Congress in the Wilderness Act of 1964. In Section 2(c) of the Act, Congress states that wilderness is essentially an area of undeveloped Federal land in a natural condition, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

THE WILDERNESS REVIEW PROCESS AND ITS INTEGRATION WITH PLANNING

To accomplish the mandate of Section 603 of FLPMA, the BLM developed a wilderness review process containing three phases: inventory, study, and reporting.

The inventory phase of this process, initiated in 1978, involved examining the public lands to determine and locate the existence of areas containing wilderness characteristics that met the criteria established in the Wilderness Act. Areas clearly lacking wilderness characteristics were sorted out from lands that might have those characteristics. This intensive inventory was then followed by a 90-day public review period, after which final WSAs were identified.

This inventory process and a general description of all of California's WSAs are given in Wilderness: Final Intensive Inventory Public Lands Administered by BLM California Outside the California Desert Conservation Area (1979). A copy of this publication is available at any BLM office.

The second step in the review process was to integrate wilderness evaluation into the Bureau Planning System (43 CFR 1600), which, in this case, were Management Framework Plans (MFPs) developed for the Sierra, Fresno - San Benito, Monterey, Temblor-Caliente, and South Sierra Foothills Planning Areas. Resource Management Plans (RMPs) have since been developed for the Caliente and Hollister Resource Areas and the Sierra MFP for the Folsom Resource Area has been amended. The wilderness study criteria and quality standards containing the BLM's Wilderness Study Policy: Policies, Criteria and Guidelines for Conducting Wilderness Studies on Public Lands (47 FR 5098-5122) were applied to each WSA.

In addition to the above referenced criteria and standards, issues for discussion were identified through public comment and internal scoping; conflicts were analyzed, and alternatives were developed. See pages 5-10 for a discussion of which alternatives were selected and why. These alternatives are the basis for analysis of environmental consequences and resource tradeoffs.

Following public review of the draft EIS and analysis of all public comments, a final EIS and Wilderness Study Report were prepared. These were reviewed by the BLM Director and the Secretary of the Interior, who filed this final EIS and who will make a recommendation to the President. The President has up to two years to make his final recommendation to Congress, which has sole authority to designate an area as wilderness. Until Congress decides whether or not to designate an area as wilderness, the

WSAs will be managed in accordance with the Bureau's Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review (Department of the Interior, December 1979, as amended 1983).

SCOPING

The Council on Environmental Quality Regulations Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR Part 1501.7) and the BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-1) require an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action. Scoping determines in depth the scope and the significant issues to be analyzed in the EIS and identifies and eliminates from detailed study insignificant issues or issues addressed in earlier environmental reviews. Scoping thus reduces the length of the EIS and emphasizes the real alternatives and impacts of importance to be discussed.

During this process, the scope and importance of issues related to the proposed action and alternatives were identified. Information obtained during the scoping process was one of the sources used to determine which impact topics would be addressed in detail in this EIS. Additional purposes of the scoping process are to inform affected Federal, state, and local agencies and other interested parties about the proposed project, and to identify existing environmental reports and information related to the impact assessment.

The scoping process involved discussions with the public and resource specialists and managers of BLM and other relevant agencies. Written comments were received and compiled as a result of Federal Register announcements, news releases, mailings, and articles about the proposal. Comments were also solicited during public meetings. In addition, the initial scoping effort has been followed by an effort to continue agency and public involvement throughout the development of this EIS. This section outlines the steps taken by BLM for the scoping and public involvement process for the EIS.

SCOPING PROCESS

On February 19, 1982, the Bureau published a Federal Register notice describing its intent to conduct a wilderness study for central California. The notice identified the wilderness study areas (WSAs) to be analyzed the process to be used, and how the public could become involved. A second Federal Register notice was published on March 26, 1982, notifying the public of the availability of the planning criteria to be used in amending the land use plans in which these WSAs were founded. On April 15, a wilderness study announcement and mailing list renewal notice were sent to over 900 people on the Bakersfield District wilderness mailing list. The announcement described the current studies of Bakersfield District WSAs, including this study as well as the USFS/BLM joint wilderness studies presently being conducted by the Forest Service. A media release with similar information concerning this study effort was disseminated on April 26. During preparation of the Draft EIS, Area Managers briefed members of County Boards of Supervisors and provided on-the-ground talks with various interest groups.

Introduction

On May 13, 1982, a Federal Register notice indicated that the draft EIS had been prepared and announced the time, date, and location of the public hearing. Distribution of the DEIS to the public and the State Clearinghouse occurred on May 19. A May 20 media release gave details on the public hearing and identified review locations for the draft EIS (District and Area Office and 10 libraries throughout the EIS area) and the final date for public comments. Another letter was sent to the wilderness mailing list summarizing the draft EIS and identifying DEIS review locations, the final date for comments, and contacts for further information.

The June 4, 1982, Federal Register carried a Notice of Availability of the Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Area Draft EIS in which the Proposed Action and alternatives were summarized and the closing date of the public comment period.

The public hearing was held on June 22, 1982, in a split afternoon/evening session at the State Building in Fresno, California. Hearing details and a comment summary appeal in Chapter 5 on p. _____. On July 2, a separate media release was issued to solicit further involvement in the Hollister Area.

As a result of the issuance of new BLM Planning Regulations, published in the Federal Register on May 5, 1983, the public comment period on the draft EIS was extended an additional 30 days to comply with the 90-day review requirement. The extension notice, published in the Federal Register on August 9, 1983, identified September 12, 1983, as the closing date. A letter, dated August 19, 1983, was sent to the wilderness mailing list advertising the review period extension and summarizing the modifications to be made in the final EIS regarding the removal of areas less than 5,000 acres of contiguous Public Lands.

ISSUES SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

The environmental issues which were identified for analysis in this EIS as a result of the scoping process are presented below by WSA.

Merced River WSA

1. Impact on Wilderness Values. The existing wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation, and special resource characteristics could benefit from wilderness designation. The same values may be adversely affected by uses and actions that would occur should the Merced River WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these beneficial or adverse impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

2. Impact on Recreational ORV Use. Approximately 2,500-3,000 visitor days of ORV use per year are estimated to occur within the Merced River WSA. Wilderness designation would eliminate the use of recreation off-road vehicles in the WSA. Eliminating this use could affect the availability of recreation opportunities, and shift ORV use currently occurring on the WSA to adjacent lands. The impact of wilderness designation on recreational ORV use in the vicinity of the WSA is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
3. Impact on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources. Twenty-five known archaeological sites, several historic mining developments, and the Yosemite railroad grade are found within the WSA. These sites could be impacted by uses and actions that would occur should the WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these impacts on the area's archaeological resources is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
4. Impact on Federally-Listed Candidate Species Habitat. The Limestone salamander, a Federally-listed candidate and State-listed, rare species is found within the WSA, along the Merced River and its tributaries. In 1986, an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) was established to protect the salamander. Part of the ACEC is within the WSA. There are numerous mining claims in the area. These species could be adversely affected by uses -- primarily additional mining activity -- that would occur should the area not be designated wilderness. The significance of these impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
5. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development. Currently, over 200 placer and lode mining claims cover the Merced River WSA. Wilderness designation would restrict much of the mineral exploration and development within the WSA. The impact of designation on these activities is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

Panoche Hills North WSA

1. Impact on Wilderness Values. The existing wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation, and special resource characteristics could benefit from wilderness designation. The same values may be adversely affected by uses and actions that would occur should the Panoche Hills North WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these beneficial or adverse impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
2. Impact on Motorized Hunting Use Levels. Wilderness designation would eliminate vehicle use on roads and ways within the WSA. Eliminating this use could affect the availability of recreation opportunities, particularly hunting access and shift vehicle use currently occurring in the WSA to adjacent lands. The impact of wilderness designation on motorized hunting use in the vicinity of the WSA is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

3. Impact on Paleontological Resources. The Panoche Hills North WSA is part of one of the richest and most important fossil areas in California, especially for vertebrate fossils. These include plesiosaurs, mosasaurs, hadrosaurian dinosaurs, and prehistoric sharks, fish, and turtles. This area could be impacted by uses and actions that will occur should the WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these impacts on the area's paleontological resources is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
4. Impact on Paleontological Investigations. Wilderness designation could restrict certain paleontological resource management activities, particularly excavations. Paleontological surveys have revealed rich paleontological values, especially for vertebrate fossils within the area. The research potential for this area is extremely great, but would be restricted by wilderness designation. The significance of these restrictions on paleontological investigations is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
5. Impact on RT&E Species The Panoche Hills North WSA provides important habitat for a number of rare, threatened or endangered species. These include the San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, giant kangaroo rat, and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel. These species and their habitat could benefit from wilderness designation. Conversely these species could be affected by uses and actions that would occur should the WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these beneficial or adverse impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
6. Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development. Nearly 30 percent of the Panoche Hills North WSA is covered with post-FLPMA oil and gas leases. Wilderness designation could restrict oil and gas exploration and development on these leases and in the remainder of the WSA. The impact of these restrictions on oil and gas activities is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

Panoche Hills South WSA

1. Impact on Wilderness Values. The existing wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation, and special resource characteristics could benefit from wilderness designation. The same values may be adversely affected by uses and actions that would occur should the Panoche Hills South WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these beneficial or adverse impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
2. Impact on Paleontological Resources. The Panoche Hills South WSA is part of one of the richest and most important fossil areas in California, especially for vertebrate fossils. These include plesiosaurs, mosasaurs, hadrosaurian dinosaurs, and prehistoric sharks, fish, and turtles. This area could be impacted by uses and actions that will occur should the WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these impacts on the area's paleontological resources is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

3. Impact on Paleontological Investigations. Wilderness designation could restrict certain paleontological resource management activities, particularly excavations. Paleontological surveys have revealed rich paleontological values, especially for vertebrate fossils within the area. The research potential for this area is extremely great, but would be restricted by wilderness designation. The significance of these restrictions on paleontological investigations is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
4. Impact on RT&E Species The Panoche Hills South WSA provides important habitat for a number of rare, threatened or endangered species. These include the San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, giant kangaroo rat, and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel. These species and their habitat could benefit from wilderness designation. Conversely, these species could be affected by uses and actions that would occur should the WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these beneficial or adverse impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
5. Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development. Nearly 70 percent of the Panoche Hills South WSA is covered with pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases. These leases will expire in 1986. Wilderness designation could restrict oil and gas exploration and development on these leases and in the remainder of the WSA. The impact of these restrictions on oil and gas activities is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous

1. Impact on Wilderness Values. The existing wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation, and special resource characteristics could benefit from wilderness designation. The same values may be adversely affected by uses and actions that would occur should the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous not be designated wilderness. The significance of these beneficial or adverse impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

Caliente Mountain WSA

1. Impact on Wilderness Values. The existing wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation, and special resource characteristics could benefit from wilderness designation. The same values may be adversely affected by uses and actions that would occur should the Caliente Mountain WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these beneficial or adverse impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
2. Impact on Endangered Species. The Caliente Mountain WSA comprises a portion of the feeding territory for the California condor and the peregrine falcon. These species could be adversely affected by uses that would occur should the area not be designated wilderness. The significance of these impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

3. Impact on Livestock Grazing Operations. Approximately 1,000 acres of the Selby Ranch Allotment is proposed for prescribed burning to increase livestock forage production by 100 AUMs. Should the area be designated wilderness, prescribed burns would be eliminated and livestock forage would not be increased. The significance of this impact on livestock grazing operations is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
4. Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development. Nearly 46 percent of the Caliente Mountain WSA is covered with post-FLPMA oil and gas leases due to expire in 1993. Wilderness designation could restrict oil and gas exploration and development on these leases and the remainder of the WSA. The impact of these restrictions on oil and gas activities is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

Owens Peak WSA

1. Impact on Wilderness Values. The existing wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation, and special resource characteristics could benefit from wilderness designation. The same values may be adversely affected by uses and actions that would occur should the Owens Peak WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these beneficial or adverse impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
2. Impact on Recreational ORV Use. Approximately 650 visitor days of recreational off-road vehicle use per year are estimated to occur within the Owens Peak WSA. Wilderness designation would eliminate the use of ORVs in the WSA. Eliminating this use could affect the availability of recreation opportunities and shift ORV use currently occurring on the WSA to adjacent lands. The impact of wilderness designation on recreational ORV use in vicinity of the WSA is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
3. Impact on Preservation of Archaeological Resources. At least 23 archaeological sites have been recorded within the WSA. These sites could be impacted by uses and actions that would occur should the WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these impacts on the area's archaeological resources is an issue for analysis in the EIS.
4. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development. Currently, 16 placer and lode mining claims are located in the southeastern portion of the WSA. Wilderness designation would restrict any mineral exploration and development on these claims. The impact of designation on these activities is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

Piute Cypress WSA

1. Impact on Wilderness Values. The existing wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation, and special resource characteristics could benefit from wilderness designation. The same values may be adversely affected by uses and actions that would occur should the Piute Cypress WSA not be designated wilderness. The significance of these beneficial or adverse impacts is an issue for analysis in the EIS because of the values involved.

2. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development. Currently, 47 placer and lode mining claims and located in the eastern portion of the WSA. Wilderness designation could restrict mineral exploration and development on these and future claims. The impact of designation on these activities is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BUT DROPPED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

The following issues or concerns were identified in scoping but were not selected for detailed analysis in this EIS because after careful study of each, the degree of concern, environmental effect, or relevance was too small to justify further intensive study. The reasons for not analyzing these issues in depth are discussed below by WSA.

Merced River WSA

1. Impact on Fire Suppression Activities. Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation would have on fire suppression and presuppression activities. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. The WSA's terrain and dense cover of chaparral pose a high fire hazard. However, the area is encircled by improved roads, which serve as excellent firebreaks. Past presuppression activities have been nonexistent; the only future activity planned is a prescribed burn to maintain chaparral--a fire-dependent ecosystem--which is permitted under the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy. Fire suppression would still be allowed with only minor restrictions on methods and equipment.
2. Impact on Whitewater Rafting. Over 4,000 visitor days of whitewater rafting use per year is estimated to occur along the Merced River which flows through the Merced River WSA. Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation would have on this activity. This issue was considered but dropped from further detailed analysis. Whitewater boating is permissible in wilderness areas; no mechanized equipment is needed along the portion of the river flowing through the WSA, no boat-beaching occurs, and both "put-in" and "take-out" areas are outside the WSA.
3. Impact on Hydropower Development. Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation would have on hydropower development. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Most of the WSA, except for the higher elevations in the northwest quarter is under withdrawal for potential power site development. These withdrawals were filed by the Department to identify potential power sites and reserve these sites for future hydropower development. One hydropower project was studied by the Merced Irrigation District near Bagby at the east end of the WSA. However, legislative has been introduced to designate, this segment as a "recreational river area" under the Wild and Scenic River Act. As a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system, it will be precluded from this and any future power site development.

4. Impact on Water Quality. Over 140 placer claims are located along the rivers and creeks traversing the WSA. A concern regarding the potential impact of these mining activities on water quality was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Most mining is conducted using suction dredges. Dredging on California water ways is regulated by the California Department of Fish and Game who is responsible for ensuring that water quality is maintained at levels meeting Federally approved State standards for fish and wildlife propagation. In addition, once the Merced River is designated as a component of the wild and scenic rivers system, Federal law dictates that water quality in wild, scenic, and recreational river areas will be maintained or, where necessary improved to levels which meet Federal criteria or Federally approved State standards. Finally, because of the high potential for the occurrence and development of gold, it is assumed that the majority of claims would be deemed valid upon examination once the area was designated wilderness. Mining, therefore, would not be affected by wilderness designation nor would the levels of water quality.
5. Impact on Upland Game Habitat Improvement Projects. An issue dealing with the effect of wilderness designation on the implementation and maintenance of upland game habitat projects in the WSA was considered but dropped from further analysis. All projects have been implemented and no additional projects are planned. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy does impose certain restrictions on maintenance/monitoring wildlife management measures, much latitude is allowed so as not to constrain effective project maintenance and game monitoring efforts.

Panoche Hills North WSA

1. Impact on Fire Suppression Activities. Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation would have on fire-suppression activities. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Although the Bureau's wilderness management policy does impose certain restrictions on suppression measures and techniques, much latitude is allowed so as not to significantly constrain effective fire management.
2. Impact on Sensitive Plant Species Habitat. The northeastern portion of WSA contains habitat for the green fiddleneck (*Amsinkia furcata*), a BLM sensitive plant species. This portion the WSA was designated as the Moreno Paleontological ACEC in 1984. Concerns were raised regarding how the habitat would be affected by wilderness designation. This issue was dropped, however, from further consideration because projected developments (oil or gas and ORV use) in this area would not result in any significant change to the habitat. The area's existing designation restricts motorized use to four-wheeled vehicles on designated routes.

3. Impact on Upland Game Habitat Improvement Projects. An issue dealing with the effect of wilderness designation on the implementation and maintenance of upland game habitat projects in the WSA was considered but dropped from further analysis. All projects have been implemented and no additional projects are planned. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy does impose certain restrictions on maintenance/monitoring wildlife management measures, much latitude is allowed so as not to constrain effective project maintenance and game monitoring efforts.
4. Impact on Leasable and Salable Mineral Resource Development. An issue dealing with the development of leasable and salable mineral resources was also considered but dropped from further analysis. The area has a low to moderate potential for the occurrence of gypsite, phosphate, and uranium; however, there is no indication in present data that large, extractable deposits are present. Much more practical sources of gypsite are available in the same region outside the WSA, yet most of these have laid idle since the mid-1950's. This lack of industry interest is further evidenced by the absence of mining claims location. All of the deposits of phosphate and uranium are too small and low grade to be of economic significance. Salable minerals (i.e., sand and gravel) are mined in bulk and sold at low unit prices; hauling is the major cost of development. Markets are rarely more than 10 miles from deposits of this type., No such market exists near the WSA.

Panoche Hills South WSA

1. Impact on Motorized Hunting. A concern regarding impacts of wilderness designation on motorized hunting in the Panoche Hills South WSA was considered but not included in this EIS. Vehicle use is currently limited to ten miles of existing trails. Use of the trails for motorized hunting has been and is not projected to exceed 75 visitor days per year, primarily because of restricted legal public access. There are no plans to acquire public vehicle access. In addition, vehicle use will remain limited to existing trails under the Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action).
2. Impact on Upland Game Habitat Improvement Projects. An issue dealing with the effect of wilderness designation on the implementation and maintenance of upland game habitat projects in the WSA was considered but dropped from further analysis. All projects have been implemented and no additional projects are planned. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy does impose certain restrictions on maintenance/monitoring wildlife management measures, much latitude is allowed so as not to constrain effective project maintenance and game monitoring efforts.
3. Impact on Fire Suppression and Activities. Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation would have on fire-suppression activities. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Although the Bureau's wilderness management policy does impose certain restrictions on suppression measures and techniques, much latitude is allowed so as not to significantly constrain effective fire management.

4. Impact on Leasable and Salable Mineral Resource Development. An issue dealing with the development of the area's leasable and salable mineral resources was also considered but dropped from further analysis. The area has a low to moderate potential for the occurrence of diatomite, marl, gypsite, phosphate and uranium. While there is potential for mineral resource occurrence, there is no indication that large or economically extractable deposits are present in the WSA. In the past, marl has been excavated west of the WSA and gypsite has been excavated to the east, probably for use on nearby crop lands as a soil conditioner. Marl and gypsite are bulk commodities whose cost is directly related to distance from market. The lack of mining claims activity and material sales applications in the WSA indicates a lack of industry interest in deposits of phosphate, uranium and gypsite in this area.

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous

1. Impact on Motorized Hunting. A concern regarding impacts of wilderness designation on motorized hunting in the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous was considered but not included in the EIS. Vehicle use is currently limited to three miles of vehicle routes. The remainder of the WSA is closed to ORV use. Use of these routes for motorized hunting has been and is not projected to exceed 40 visitor days per year primarily because of the lack of any legal public access. There are no plans to acquire public vehicle access. In addition, vehicle use will remain limited to existing routes under the Proposed Action (Partial Wilderness).
2. Impact on Fire Management Activities. Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation would have on fire-suppression activities. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Although the Bureau's wilderness management policy does impose certain restrictions on suppression measures and techniques, much latitude is allowed so as not to significantly constrain effective fire management. Prescribed burning would still be allowed under the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy.
3. Impact on Mineral Resource Development. An issue dealing with the development of the area's mineral resources was considered but dropped from further analysis. The geology of the area favors the occurrence of metallic minerals; however, overburden composed of volcanic debris and thick alluvium would severely hamper exploration and development. The presence of Pinnacles National Monument further restricts access for any mining activity. These problems plus the minimal historic mining activity have been the basis for a lack of industry interest as evidenced by the absence of claims. Salable minerals, although present, are not close to any market which would make them valuable. The geologic environment, being primarily volcanic, does not favor the presence of oil and gas.

Caliente Mountain WSA

1. Impact on Leasable Mineral Development. An issue dealing with the development of the area's phosphate mineral resources was considered but dropped from further analysis. The area has a moderate potential for the occurrence of phosphate. While there is potential for mineral resource occurrence, there is no indication that large or extractable deposits are present in the WSA. Moreover, there is no legal public access; there has been no exploration or industry interest nor have any prospecting permits been filed in the WSA. No development is therefore, anticipated.
2. Impact on Fire Suppression Activities. Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation would have on fire-suppression activities. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Although the Bureau's wilderness management policy does impose certain restrictions on suppression measures and techniques, much latitude is allowed so as not to significantly constrain effective fire management.
3. Impact on Motorized Hunting. The effect of wilderness designation on motorized hunting was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Vehicle use is currently limited to 5 1/2 miles of four-wheeled vehicle routes along the main ridgeline which runs through the WSA. Use of this route for motorized hunting has been and is not projected to exceed 50 visitor days per year. Vehicle use is limited by a lack of legal motorized access to the WSA. The Coast/Valley RMP does not call for the acquisition of any legal motorized access easements. Legal access will be restricted to a hiker/equestrian trail developed in 1986 from Highway 166 to public lands southwest of the WSA.
4. Impact on Upland Game Habitat Improvement Projects. An issue dealing with the effect of wilderness designation on the implementation and maintenance of upland game habitat projects in the WSA was considered but dropped from further analysis. All projects have been implemented and no additional projects are planned. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy area imposes certain restrictions on maintenance/monitoring wildlife management measures, much latitude is allowed so as not to constrain effective project maintenance and game monitoring efforts.

Owens Peak WSA

1. Impact on Pinyon Nut Gathering. The issue of wilderness designation on pinyon nut (noncommercial) gathering was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Pinyon nut gathering would still be allowed under wilderness designation although vehicle access for this activity would not be allowed. This has been determined not to be a significant constraint on this activity due to the small area historically used in the WSA (northern end along Canebrake Road), use levels of less than 50 visitor days per year, and the availability of accessible opportunities in prime pinyon pine habitat outside of the WSA.

2. Impact on Upland Game Habitat Improvement Projects. An issue dealing with the effect of wilderness designation on the implementation and maintenance of upland game habitat projects in the WSA was considered but dropped from further analysis. With the exception of one water facility, all projects have been implemented and no additional projects are planned. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy does impose certain restrictions on implementation, maintenance and monitoring of wildlife management resources, much latitude is allowed as as not to constrain effective project implementation and maintenance and game monitoring efforts.
3. Impact on Sensitive Plant Species. Habitat for Phacelia novemillensis, a Federal Candidate Species is predicted to occur in the Owens Peak WSA due to known populations outside the WSA. This sensitive plant is generally found on open, south facing slopes at elevations above 6,000 feet. Since the mining claims in the WSA are located along the lower slopes of the west side, and recreational ORV use is designated as limited to existing routes and trails, the potential habitat within the WSA would not be affected by any of the projected uses or management actions. Therefore, the impact on sensitive plant species is not considered an issue for analysis in the EIS.

Piute Cypress WSA

1. Impact on Fire Suppression Activities. Concerns were raised regarding the constraints wilderness designation would have on fire-suppression activities. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Although the Bureau's wilderness management policy does impose certain restrictions on suppression measures and techniques, much latitude is allowed so as not to significantly constrain effective fire management.
2. Impact on Upland Game Habitat Improvement Projects. An issue dealing with the effect of wilderness designation on the implementation and maintenance of upland game habitat projects in the WSA was considered but dropped from further analysis. All projects have been implemented and no additional projects are planned. Although the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy area impose certain restrictions on maintenance/monitoring wildlife management measures, much latitude is allowed so as not to constrain effective project maintenance and game monitoring efforts.
3. Impact on Piute Cypress. An issue dealing with the Piute Cypress groves found with the WSA was considered but dropped from further analysis because no specific impacts to the cypress grove were identified by the EIS team or the public. Based on the projection of development in this portion of the WSA, its protective status, and the road closures under the Proposed Action and alternatives, little or no change is anticipated.

4. Impact on Recreational ORV use. The issue of wilderness designation on off-road vehicle use was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Vehicle use is currently limited to approximately 3 one-half miles of existing routes. Use of these routes has been 25 visitor days annually and is not expected to exceed 50 visitor days. Vehicle use is limited by the lack of access to the WSA, the area's very steep terrain, and dense vegetation and the availability of more scenic/interesting riding opportunities in other nearby location.
5. Impact on Water Quality. Currently, 37 placer and lode claims are located in the eastern portion of the WSA. A concern regarding the potential impact of the placer mining claims on water quality was considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Most placer mining is conducted using suction dredges. Dredging on California water ways is regulated by the California Department of Fish and Game who is responsible for ensuring that water quality is maintained at levels meeting Federally approved State standards for fish and wildlife propagation. In addition, because of the extensive historic workings underground, it is assumed that the majority of claims would be deemed valid upon designation of the area as wilderness. Mining, therefore, would not be affected by wilderness designation nor would the levels of water quality.
6. Impact on Sensitive Plant Species. There are 3 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service candidate RT&E plant species that occur on the western edge of the WSA: Streptanthus cordatus var. pintensis (Piutejewel), Periderdia pringlei (Squaw root), and Delphinium purpusin (Kern River Larkspur). An issue dealing with these sensitive plant species was considered but dropped from further analysis because no specific impacts were identified by the EIS team or the public. Based projected mineral development activities occurring along the eastern portion of the WSA, and recreational ORV use remaining at levels below 50 visitor days, per year there are no projected activities or management actions that would affect these species or their habitat.
7. Impacts on Future Community Expansion. Due to the proximity of the WSA to the community of Bodfish, which is approximately 1 mile north of the WSA, the potential impacts of wilderness designation on future community expansion of Bodfish was initially considered. While residential development is increasing adjacent to the WSA, the WSA boundary generally marks a break between lands more suitable for development due to its gently sloping nature and the steep terrain of the WSA. Development potential of the public lands within the WSA near the community of Bodfish would be restricted if not precluded due to the steep slopes of the public lands within the WSA. Additionally there are no plans which propose community expansion. Therefore, an issue dealing with future community expansion for Bodfish was not considered for detailed analysis in the EIS.

SELECTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

Development of the proposed actions is guided by requirements of the Bureau's Planning Regulations, 43 CFR Part 1600. The BLM's Wilderness Study Policy (published February 3, 1982, in the Federal Register) supplements the planning regulations by providing specific factors to be considered during the planning sequence in developing wilderness suitability recommendations.

Outlined below are the Proposed Actions and Alternatives developed for the Merced River, Panoche Hills North and South, Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous, Caliente Mountain, Owens Peak, and Piute Cypress WSAs selected for analysis.

Merced River WSA

The Proposed Action for the Merced River WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal, none of the 12,835 acres would be designated wilderness, but would continue to be managed for multiple use as described in this document and in detail in the Sierra MFP (1986).

The rationale for this proposal are: (1) the wilderness values of the area are not outstanding; (2) the area has a high probability for mineral development on the large number of placer and lode claims found throughout the area -- development of these claims and the noise and visual intrusions associated with this development will hinder effective management of the area as wilderness; and (3) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources, including the Limestone salamander, a Federally-listed candidate species.

One alternative was also considered--an All wilderness Alternative which would designate all 12,835 acres as wilderness. The All Wilderness Alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended for wilderness designation.

Panoche Hills North WSA

The Proposed Action for the Panoche Hills North WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal, none of the 6,677 acres will be designated wilderness, but will continue to be managed for multiple use as described in this document and the Hollister RMP (1984) and the Panoche Hills Management Plan (1982).

The rationale for this proposal are: (1) the wilderness values of the area are not outstanding; (2) 30 percent of the area is covered with post-FLPMA oil and gas leases and while the development potential is low, exploration would be precluded under wilderness designation; and (3) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources, including the green fiddleneck -- a BLM sensitive plant species -- and the area's important paleontological values.

One alternative was also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 6,677 acres as wilderness. The All Wilderness Alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended for wilderness designation.

Panoche Hills South WSA

The Proposed Action for the Panoche Hills South WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal, none of the 11,267 acres will be designated wilderness, but will continue to be managed for multiple use as described in this document and the Hollister RMP (1984) and the Panoche Hills Management Plan (1982).

The rationale for this proposal are: (1) the wilderness values of the area are not outstanding; (2) 70 percent of the area is covered by pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases and while these are slated to expire in 1986 and development potential is low, exploration would be precluded under wilderness designation; and (3) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources, including its important paleontological values.

Two alternatives were also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative, and a Partial Wilderness Alternative.

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 11,267 acres would be designated wilderness. This alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended for wilderness designation.

Under the Partial Wilderness Alternative, 5,600 acres would be designated wilderness; 5,667 acres would not be designated but managed for multiple use under the Hollister RMP (1984) and the Panoche Hills Management Plan (1982).

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous

The Proposed Action for the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous is Partial Wilderness. Under this proposal, 2,200 acres will be designated wilderness; 3,638 acres will not, but will be managed for multiple use as described in this document and in the Hollister RMP (1984).

The rationale for this proposal are: (1) the lands proposed for designation contain outstanding wilderness values; (2) deletion of the lands proposed for multiple use would improve manageability by placing the boundary along recognizable topographic features; and (3) the lands proposed for multiple use management do not possess outstanding wilderness values.

Two alternatives were also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative and a No Wilderness/No Action Alternative.

Under the All Wilderness Alternatives, all 5,838 acres would be designated wilderness. This alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended for wilderness designation.

Under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative, none of the 5,838 acres would be designated as wilderness, but managed for multiple use as described in this document and in the Hollister RMP (1984).

Caliente Mountain WSA

The Proposed Action for the Caliente Mountain WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposed none of the 19,018 acres will be designated wilderness, but managed for multiple use as described in this document and in detail in the Coast/Valley RMP(1985).

The rationale for this proposal are: (1) the wilderness values of the area are not outstanding; (2) 46 percent of the area is covered with post-FLPMA oil and gas leases and there is a moderate probability for discovery - wilderness designed would severely constrain exploration and development; (3) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources -- including Fritillaria agrestis, a Federal candidate plant species.

One alternative was also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 19,018 acres as wilderness. This alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended for wilderness designation.

Owens Peak WSA

The Proposed Action for Owens Peak WSA is Partial Wilderness. Under this proposal, 14,960 acres will be designated wilderness; 7,600 acres will not, but will be managed for multiple use as described in this document and in detail in the South Sierra Foothills Transitional MFP (1984), and the existing Recreation Area Management Plan for the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (1984).

The rationale for this proposal are: (1) the lands proposed for designation contain outstanding wilderness values; (2) they are adjacent to California Desert District lands recommended suitable for wilderness designation and as such, the two areas encompass a larger more complete ecosystem and a wider range of diversity; (3) deletion of the lands proposed for multiple use would improve manageability by placing the boundary along recognizable topographic boundaries providing natural barriers to the entry of vehicles and excluding large blocks of private inholdings; and (4) the lands proposed for multiple use management do not possess outstanding wilderness values.

Two alternatives were also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative, and a No Wilderness/No Action Alternative.

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 22,560 acres would be designated wilderness. This alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended for wilderness designation.

Under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative, none of the 22,560 acres would be designated as wilderness but managed for multiple use as described in this document and in the South Sierra Foothills Transitional MFP (1984) and the Recreation Area Management Plan for the PCNST (1984).

Introduction

Piute Cypress WSA

The Proposed Action for the Piute Cypress WSA is No Wilderness/No Action. Under this proposal, none of the 5,527 acres will be designated as wilderness, but would continue to be managed for multiple use as described in this document and in detail in the South Sierra Foothills MFP (19).

The rationale for this proposal are: (1) the wilderness values of the area are not outstanding; (2) the area has a moderate probability for mineral development on the 47 placer and lode claims found in the eastern portion of the WSA -- development of these claims and the noise and visual intrusions associated with this development will hinder effective management of the area as wilderness; and (3) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resource, including the Piute Cypress Grove found in the western portion of the WSA and the three candidates RT&E plant species that also occur in the western portion of the WSA.

One alternative was also considered--an All Wilderness Alternative which would designate all 5,527 acres as wilderness. This alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended for wilderness designation.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT DROPPED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

Merced River WSA

Although the Merced River WSA consists of 12,935 acres, No Partial Wilderness Alternatives are considered in the EIS. An attempt to develop additional alternatives during the planning process did not identify any boundaries that would improve the quality of wilderness by eliminating resource conflicts, e.g., the more than 200 placer and lode claims located throughout the WSA.

Panoche Hills North WSA

No additional alternatives were developed for the 6,677 acres Panoche Hills North WSA. Due to the WSA's small size and compact shape, a partial wilderness alternative was not identified that would improve wilderness values by eliminating areas with oil and gas leases or segregating areas with significant wilderness values.

Panoche Hills South WSA

For the Panoche Hills South WSA no additional alternatives were considered. The partial wilderness alternative analyzed in the EIS represents the only variation from the entire 11,267 acre WSA that was identified to establish an area with the WSA's most significant wilderness values.

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous

No additional alternatives were developed for the Pinnacles WSA. This 5,227 acre WSA consists of small areas contiguous to the Pinnacles National Monument for which a partial wilderness alternative analyzed in the EIS

was developed that compliments the existing National Park Service wilderness area designated within the Pinnacles National Monument.

Calliente Mountain WSA

Although the Calliente Mountain WSA consist of 19,018 acres, no partial wilderness alternatives are considered in the EIS. An attempt to develop additional alternatives did not identify any boundaries that would improve the quality of wilderness values by eliminating resource conflicts. A portion of the WSA northeast of the ridgeline for the Calliente Range was considered for a partial wilderness alternative however, an area of sufficient size could not be identified.

Owens Peak WSA

In the Draft EIS an additional partial wilderness alternative was analyzed that is not included in the Final EIS since it did not offer a significantly different range of alternatives or result in a noticeable different level of impacts. The alternative recommended 21,502 acres for wilderness.

Only 1,058 acres in the extreme northern portion of the WSA were considered unsuitable due to the existence of vehicle ways used for access to pinyon nut gathering and past casual use of the area for gravel (decomposed granite) excavation. Since these uses are considered casual and are not regular or continuing in nature, deleting this portion of the WSA did not result in significantly different management of the area nor resultant impacts. Additionally, opportunities for these activities are common outside the WSA with very limited if any expressed interest or demand within the WSA. Therefore this alternative has not been included for analysis in the Final EIS.

Plute Cypress WSA

The small size and irregular shape of this 5,527 acres WSA did not offer opportunities to develop a partial wilderness alternative. In order to eliminate potential conflicts with uses and access from the surrounding residential development on the northwest boundary of the WSA the remaining portions of the WSA would be almost dissected and result in an area less than 5,000 acres. Therefore, no additional alternatives were developed for analysis in the EIS.

CHAPTER 2

PROPOSED ACTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

CHAPTER 2

THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Since the pattern of future actions within the WSAs cannot be predicted with certainty, we have made projections of management actions to allow the analysis of impacts under the Proposed Action and alternatives. These projections are the basis of the impacts identified in this EIS. They represent reasonably feasible patterns of activities which could occur under the Proposed Action and alternatives analyzed.

MERCED RIVER WSA (CA-040-203)

PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness/No Action)

None of the 12,835 acres of public land in the Merced River WSA are recommended for wilderness designation (see Map 2 - Proposed Action, Merced River WSA). Under this proposal, the lands will be managed in accordance with the existing Sierra MFP (1986). With the exception of the Limestone Salamander ACEC, the area will remain open to recreational ORV use although no new trails or route improvements will be undertaken. Lands will remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mining laws with mineral development along the Merced River continuing. Full fire suppression using mechanized equipment will be practiced and existing levels of livestock use will be maintained.

Recreational Use Management Actions

The lands within the WSA would remain open to recreational ORV use. Approximately 2,500-3,000 visitor days of ORV use occur annually in the WSA and are concentrated along seven miles of ORV trails located in the eastern portion of the WSA. Projections indicate that motorized recreational use will increase but will remain at levels below 4,000 visitor use days annually for the foreseeable future. No other route improvements or additional route development is anticipated. Projections indicate this use will reach 6,000 visitor days annually once the Merced River is designated a component of the Wild and Scenic River System.

The WSA will also be open for nonmotorized recreation activities such as whitewater rafting, hiking and fishing. More than 4,000 visitor days whitewater rafting are estimated to occur along the Merced River annually; nearly three-quarters of this use is commercial. Hiking and fishing account for over 3,500 visitor days annually. Recreational use for these activities will increase slightly, but will remain at levels below 4,000 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future. Other than 4 miles of unmaintained hiking trails, no other recreational facilities or improvements exist in the WSA and none are planned.

Fire Management Actions

Fire suppression will continue to be practiced in accordance with the Merced River Fire Management Plan (1983). This plan allows for the use of mechanized equipment for suppression and pre-suppression activities and the

Alternatives

use of public lands within the WSA for support facilities for fire-fighting such as helipads. Nearly 5 miles of firebreaks are located within the WSA. These will not be maintained, however, but will be allowed to return to their natural state. Approximately 5,000 acres will be burned for livestock, wildlife, and vegetation management improvements.

Wildlife Management Actions

Under this alternatives, prescribed burns will be conducted over the course of the next three years in conjunction with the livestock and wildlife management program. Over 1,650 acres will be burned each year for a total of 5,000 acres. These burns will be limited to 30- to 40-acre patches to reduce any adverse impacts. In addition, a management plan for the 1,600 acre Limestone salamander ACEC will be completed in 1987 to regulate surface disturbing activities (such as mining) that may occur within the ACEC.

Vegetation Management Actions

Other than the prescribed burns described above, no other vegetation management actions are planned.

Grazing Management Actions

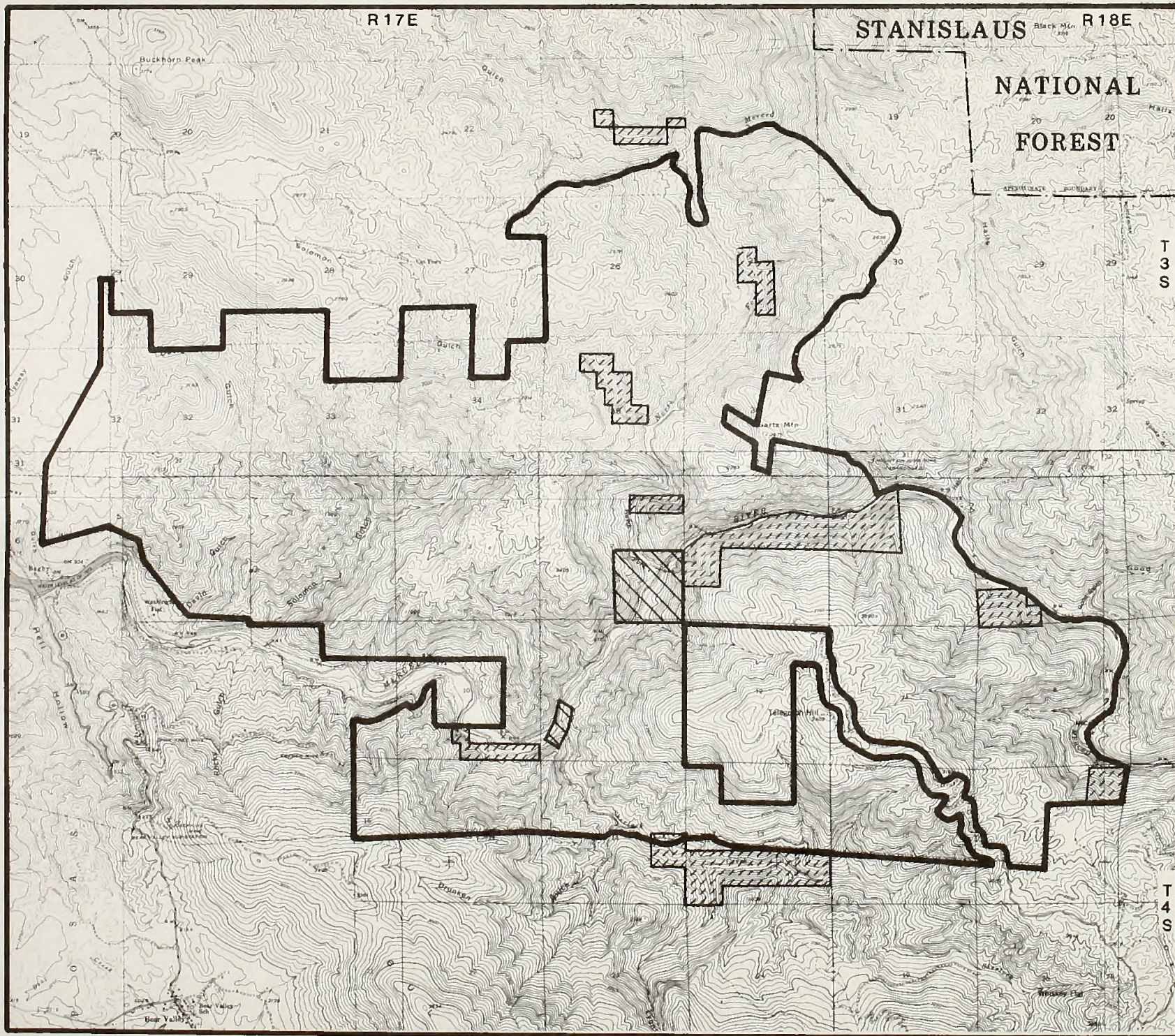
Approximately 90 percent of the Merced River WSA will continue to be used for livestock grazing. Projections indicate that livestock grazing will be maintained at the existing level of 500 animal unit months (AUMs) for cattle for the next 10 years. Two quarter-acre water reservoirs are located within the WSA and will continue to be used for livestock grazing purposes. Each will need to be reconstructed every 20 to 30 years and will require two days of earthwork, using tracked vehicles during reconstruction. One is scheduled for reconstruction by 1990; the other by 2,000. In addition to these improvements a 1,000 acre prescribed burn will be conducted over the next three years to improve both livestock and wildlife forage. Mechanical equipment will be used to establish fire-lines and burns will be limited to 30- to 40- acre patches to reduce any adverse impacts.

Cultural Resource Management Actions



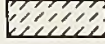
No management actions are planned under the Proposed Action other than reviewing Plans of Operation submitted for future mining activities to identify and eliminate surface disturbance in areas of cultural significance.

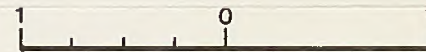
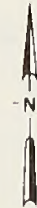
Mineral Development Actions

Under the Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action) it is assumed that the 140 placer claims located along the Merced River, the North Fork of the Merced River, and Sherlock Creek will continue to be mined. Most mining is conducted using suction dredges, confining the majority of disturbance associated with these mining operations to river and creek beds. Approximately 50 acres of disturbance along the northern bank of the rivers and



LEGEND

-  Wilderness Study Area
-  Private inholdings
-  Limestone Salamander Area of Critical Environmental Concern



MILES

MERCED RIVER

**WILDERNESS
STUDY AREA**

PROPOSED ACTION

**(No Wilderness/
No Action)**

CA-040-203

MAP-2

creek will continue to be used in support of those operations from late June to November, the period of low river flow. During the remainder of the year, river flows are usually too great and preclude most placer claim mining. No new roads or road improvements are anticipated.

All of the 69 lode mining claims located within the WSA are expected to be explored, minimally disturbing approximately 100 acres. In the event there is discovery, it is assumed it will be on claims in the extreme western portion of the WSA (jade), and in the north and south central portions (gold). It is anticipated that 3 small, jade mines will be developed using open-pit trenching. Each will disturb approximately 10 acres of land but will not require any additional roads or road improvements. The remaining lode gold claims will be explored but less than 10 will be developed using underground workings. Although this will limit the amount of surface disturbance, an additional 50 acres will be disturbed as a result of mine dumps, trailer site clearances, and the construction of surface facilities for milling, electrical generation, and air compression. While no new roads will be constructed, 2-3 miles of existing jeep trails will be regraded.

Energy Development Actions

The Merced River has been nominated as a "recreational river area" under the Wild and Scenic River Act. It is anticipated that the river will be designated component of the wild and scenic rivers system and preclude any future water resources projects. There are, therefore, no energy development actions under the Proposed Action.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

All 12,835 acres of public land in the Merced River WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. Under this alternative, the area would be closed to motorized recreational use. Motorized vehicles and mechanical equipment, however, would be permitted for mineral exploration and development on valid lode and placer claims located throughout the area. In addition existing levels of livestock grazing on 90 percent of the WSA would continue.

Recreational Use Management Actions

The Merced River WSA would be closed to recreational ORV use eliminating approximately 2,500 - 3,000 visitor days which are currently estimated to occur annually. Under this alternative, the WSA would be managed to provide a primitive setting to allow nonmotorized recreational pursuit such as whitewater rafting, hiking, and fishing. More than 4,000 visitor days of whitewater rafting are estimated to occur along the Merced annually, nearly three-quarters of this use is commercial. This use is expected to reach 6,000 visitor days per year once the Merced is designated a component of the Wild and Scenic River System.

Hiking and fishing account for over 3,500 visitor days annually. And is expected to climb to approximately 5,500 visitor days. Other than the 4 miles of unmaintained hiking trails, no other recreational facilities or improvements exist in the WSA and none are planned.

Fire Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the Merced River Fire Management Plan would be revised to comply with the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy. It would become an addendum to the Wilderness Management Plan. Fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and ground crews would be used for fire control. Cross-country vehicle travel would be permitted only when terrain and soil conditions would permit such travel without damage to vegetative cover and only with the approval of the District Manager. Heavy equipment such as tracked vehicles and dozers would not be permitted except to prevent loss of human life or to protect private or high value property. Existing firebreaks throughout the WSA would no longer be maintained but allowed to return to their natural state.

Approximately 3,000 acres of prescribed burns would be conducted over the next three years in conjunction with livestock grazing management and vegetation improvements. Ground crews would be used to establish and maintain fire-lines. Burns would be limited to 30- to 40- acre patches to reduce any adverse impacts.

Wildlife Management Actions

No wildlife management actions are planned under the All Wilderness Alternative.

Vegetation Management Actions

Under this alternative, 2,000 acres of prescribed burns will be conducted to maintain the area's fire-dependent ecosystems. These burns will be conducted over the course of three years and will be limited to 30- to 40-acre patches to reduce any adverse impacts.

Grazing Management Actions

The grazing management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would essentially be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. .

Cultural Resource Management Actions

No management actions are planned under the All Wilderness Alternative.

Mineral Development Actions

Prior to commencing mining operations, a formal validity exam would be conducted on the numerous lode and placer claims located throughout the area to determine the quantity and quality of material. For the purposes of analysis, it is assumed that 60 percent of the placer claims would be deemed valid and development would continue on these claims disturbing approximately 35 acres of land along the northern banks of the Merced River and portions of the North Fork. Only a quarter of the lode claims would be deemed valid and explored and developed. For purposes of analysis it is anticipated that 3 small jade mines will be developed using open-pit trenching. Each will disturb approximately 10 acres of land but will not

Alternatives

require any additional roads or road improvements. Less than 10 lode gold claims will be explored and developed using underground workings. Although this will limit the amount of surface disturbance, an additional 50 acres will be disturbed as a result of mine dumps, trailer site clearances, and the construction of surface facilities for milling, electrical generation, and air compression. While no new roads will be constructed, 2-3 miles of existing jeep trails will be regraded.

Energy Development Actions

The Merced River has been nominated as a "recreational river area" under the Wild and Scenic River Act. It is anticipated that the river will be designated component of the wild and scenic rivers system and preclude any future water resources projects. There are, therefore, no energy development actions under the All Wilderness Alternative.

PANOCHE HILLS NORTH WSA (CA-040-301A)

PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness/No Action)

None of the 6,677 acres of public land are recommended for wilderness, but will be managed for multiple use management in accordance with the Hollister RMP (1984) and the Panoche Hills Management Plan (1982) (see Map 3 - Proposed Action, Panoche Hills North WSA). Under this proposal, vehicle use on lands within the WSA will remain limited to four-wheeled vehicles on designated routes from mid-October to late April/early May. Motorized vehicles will be excluded for the remainder of the year due to the fire hazard they pose. Lands within the WSA will be available for oil and gas exploration and development and it is anticipated that some exploration will occur.

Recreational Use Management Actions

Vehicle use on lands within the WSA will remain limited to four-wheeled vehicles on designated routes from the start of quail and chukar hunting season in mid-October until the start of fire season in late April/early May. Motorcycles and three-wheeled vehicles will continue to be excluded from the WSA. Approximately 275 visitor days of four-wheeled vehicle use annually are currently occurring in the WSA; 250 of these visitor days are hunting-related. The remaining 25 visitor days are related to sightseeing. Projections indicate that recreational motorized use will increase slightly, but will remain at levels below 325 visitor use days annually for the foreseeable future.

Six miles of jeep trails exist in the WSA and will remain open to four-wheeled vehicle recreational use. No other ways or roads will be developed because of the low use the area currently receives and the low use it is projected to receive.

The WSA will also remain open for nonmotorized recreation activities including hiking. Recreational use for these activities will remain constant at levels below 50 visitor use days annually. No recreational facilities or trails exist in the WSA and none are planned because of the low use the area receives.

Fire Management Actions

Under the proposal, fire prevention and aggressive initial attack will continue to be given a high priority. The area will be patrolled periodically (at least 2 times per month during the fire season). The area will remain closed to public vehicular access during the fire season from late April/early May through mid-October. Foot access will be allowed year long.

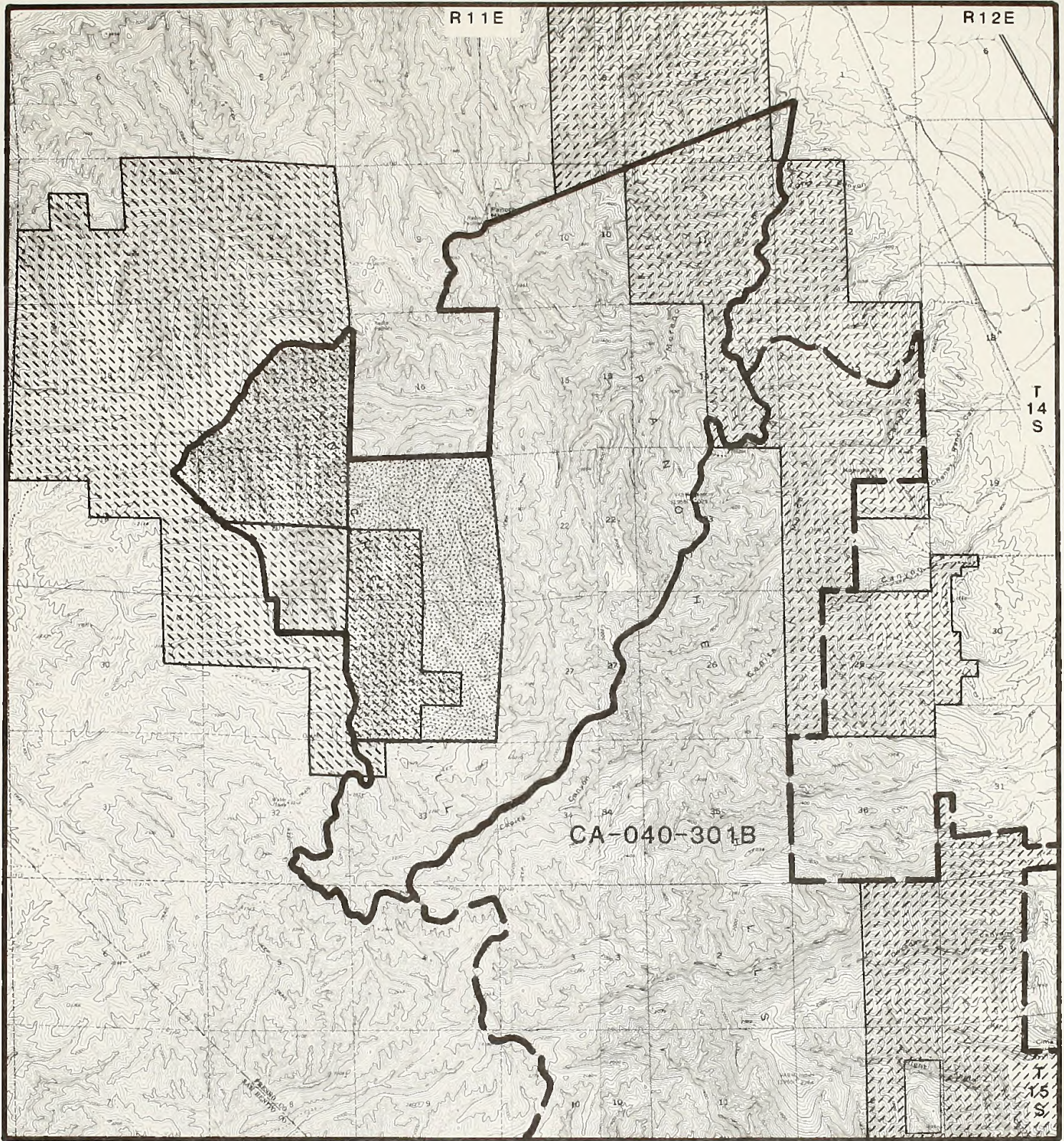
Initial attack efforts will include the use of dozers, engines and air tankers with the objective of keeping fires as small as possible to protect the native shrub cover which is easily killed by fire. The use of heavy equipment (primarily dozers in the extended attack phases) will be limited to the extent possible within the ACEC portion of the area. At a minimum, known giant kangaroo rat colonies and kit fox dens will be avoided. Fire rehabilitation efforts will focus on re-establishment of the native shrub cover (primarily Atriplex sp.). In order to reestablish these shrubs following a fire, mediterranean annuals will be temporarily eliminated by discing using motorized vehicles.

Wildlife Management Actions




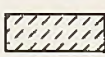

The area will continue to be managed under the precepts of the Panoche Hills Habitat Management Plan (HMP). Emphasis will be on project maintenance. The HMP is fully implemented and there are no new projects envisioned at this time.

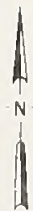
Project inspections and habitat monitoring activities will involve one to two weeks annually by BLM and CDFG personnel. Most activities will involve the use of vehicles on existing roads and trails.

Although maintenance will not take place on a regular schedule, it is estimated that approximately one or two projects, mostly guzzlers, will be maintained on an annual basis (several years may pass with a half-dozen projects maintained at one time). Maintenance activities will typically involve the use of a dump truck and two to three support vehicles for re-construction of guzzler aprons (collection surfaces) by mixing and pouring concrete. Occasionally, guzzler tanks will require replacement. Total surface disturbance at each site will involve less than one-quarter acres (mostly from vehicle passage). New aprons will be camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding landscape. Although silt catchments and spring developments will require only infrequent maintenance, one-half-to-one acre of land surface will be disturbed if any dam or spillway is damaged and requires reconstruction.

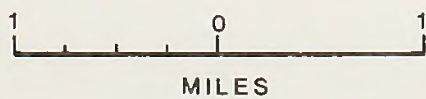


LEGEND

-  Wilderness Study Area
-  Adjacent Wilderness Study Area
-  Post-FLPMA Oil & Gas leases
-  Moreno Paleontological Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
-  Panoche/Coalinga Rare-Threatened-Endangered Area of Critical Environmental Concern



**PANOCHÉ HILLS
 NORTH
 WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
 PROPOSED ACTION
 (No Wilderness/No Action)
 CA-040-301A**



MAP-3

Spring developments will require only hand labor to replace the spring boxes. Most of the existing projects are concentrated in the western portion of the WSA. The western portion of the WSA lies within a sub-unit of the Panoche/Coalinga ACEC. This ACEC was designated in the Hollister RMP of 1984 in recognition of important habitat areas for rare, threatened, or endangered animals. This particular sub-unit was designated because of the presence of a number of giant kangaroo rat colonies as well as the blunt nosed leopard lizard and San Joaquin antelope squirrel. Management actions will be detailed in an activity plan being prepared for the ACEC (to be completed in October 1986). It is envisioned that management actions will concentrate on annual or semi-annual monitoring activities (documenting evidence of use, relative abundance, etc.), as well as establishing guidelines for surface disturbance related to sheep grazing and mineral and energy development, though no development is anticipated (see Mineral Development Actions).

Vegetation Management Actions

The extreme northeast corner of the WSA (Section 11 and the east half of Section 14) lies within the Moreno Paleontological ACEC which was designated in the Hollister RMP (1984). Although the primary purpose of the ACEC was to recognize the significant paleontological resources in the area, the ACEC also recognized the existence of sensitive plant habitat for the green fiddleneck (Amsinkia furcata). Management actions will be detailed in an activity plan being prepared for the ACEC (to be completed in October, 1986). It is envisioned that management actions will concentrate on annual or semi-annual monitoring activities. These activities will include photo plots (less than 5 total, marked by a small stake or post), visual monitoring, etc.

Grazing Management Actions

Portions of four sheep grazing leases are encompassed by the WSA. All are managed under Allotment Management Plans (AMP's). Grazing Management will continue under the auspices of the four existing AMPs and the Panoche Hills Management Plan. All AMPs have seasons of use corresponding to the green forage season -- generally January 1 to April 30. All are managed to leave a minimum of 700 pounds of residual forage (after grazing). This equates to an average of about two to three inches of stubble. There are no existing livestock management facilities within any of the grazing leases. Sheep operators will continue to haul water livestock on existing roads and trails. They will also continue to utilize existing roads and trails for movement of sheep camps (trailers).

Three photo plots are scattered throughout the WSA to monitor livestock use during grazing season. These plots will be checked six times per year using a motorized vehicle for access and will require clipping to determine residual amounts of forage.

Cultural Management Actions

Based on the low cultural sensitivity in the area, and lack of known sites, there are no planned activities related to cultural resource management.

Paleontological Management Action

The extreme northeast corner of the WSA lies within the Moreno Paleontological ACEC (also see Vegetation Management section). The ACEC plan (under development) will detail management actions for these important fossil resources and will establish guidelines for surface disturbing activities including rehabilitation methods. It should be noted that the bulk of these resources lie within the Panoche Hills South WSA. It is envisioned that management actions will concentrate on annual or semi-annual monitoring by BLM personnel (i.e., photo plots) as well as additional inventory and excavation by academic institutions. Excavation activities would involve the use of hand tools only (no heavy equipment). It is anticipated that academic institutions (engaged in inventory and/or excavation activities) would spend one to two weeks annually in the area. Total surface surface disturbance would probably be less than 5 cubic meters per year. Designated existing routes will be utilized for vehicular access. Foot access will be used in areas that are not open to vehicles.

Mineral Development Actions

Although oil and gas rights have been leased on nearly 30 percent of the WSA, the potential for development is low. In 1939, three shallow wildcat wells (4,000 feet deep) were drilled immediately east of the WSA; all were abandoned. Ten other wildcat wells, all abandoned, have been drilled within 3 miles of the eastern boundary. Under the Proposed Action, the WSA will remain open for oil and gas exploration. Vibroseis (thumper) trucks will be used in the initial stages of exploration along existing roads. These activities and the use of small explosive charges for seismic testing will cause some minor short-term surface disturbance.

It is anticipated that some wildcat drilling activity will occur. For the propose of analysis, the level of drilling activity is assumed to be equivalent to the same rates and densities that have occurred on adjacent areas to the east of the WSA. Based on the number of wells in the adjacent 15 square mile area, one wildcat well on every 900 acres will be drilled, or no more than 7 wells within the WSA. It is estimated that the surface required for each well will be about 2 acres, or 14 acres in all. Two to 3 miles of access road 16 feet wide (or 6 acres) will be constructed to each well-site. It is anticipated that these wells will be nonproducing and eventually will be abandoned. Following abandonment, the wells will be plugged, well casings will be removed, and the lands will be recontoured and reseeded. Revegetation should take one to two growing seasons.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

All 6,677 acres of public land in the Panoche Hills North WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. Under this alternative the area would be closed to motorized vehicle use. None of the 2,000 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases would be explored or developed and the entire WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws.

Recreational Use Management Actions

The Panoche Hills North WSA would be closed to motorized vehicle use eliminating approximately 275 visitor days of motorized recreational use that are estimated to occur in the area annually. About 250 of these visitor days are currently devoted to motorized hunting. This visitor use would continue but on a walk-in basis from the western perimeter of the WSA. Other nonmotorized recreational use such as hiking would also increase as a result of designation from the current 50 visitor days annually to about 75 visitor days.

All other recreational management actions would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action, pp. 27-28.

Fire Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, a fire management plan would be written for the WSA. It would become an addendum to the Wilderness Management Plan. As under the Proposed Action, fire prevention would be a high priority; however, vehicle patrols would be precluded within the designated wilderness area.

Initial and extended attack actions would concentrate on the use of air tankers and hand crews, using indirect methods (backfiring, burning out) as much as possible. The use of equipment such as dozers and engines would be limited to situations where life or property are threatened or to protect wilderness values. Fire rehabilitation using dozers or vehicles would be precluded under most situations (except where downstream values are directly affected by erosion hazards). Aerial seeding would still be utilized for fire rehabilitation but seedbeds would be prepared manually in lieu of heavy equipment.

Wildlife Management Actions

The wildlife management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action, on pp. 28-30.

Vegetation Management Actions

The vegetation management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 30.

Grazing Management Actions

The grazing management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 30.

Cultural Management Actions

The cultural management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 31; i.e., no planned actions.

Paleontological Management Actions

No excavations of the area's paleontological resources for scientific purposes will be conducted, except on a case-by-case basis where such activities do not impair wilderness values. Otherwise the management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 31.

Mineral Development Actions

Upon designation of the area as wilderness, all 6,677 acres would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws subject to valid and existing rights. It is anticipated that none of the the 2,000 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases in the western portion of the WSA would be explored or developed because of the imposition of wilderness protection stipulations on operations such as these within designated wilderness areas (see Appendix 1, Wilderness Protection Stipulation).

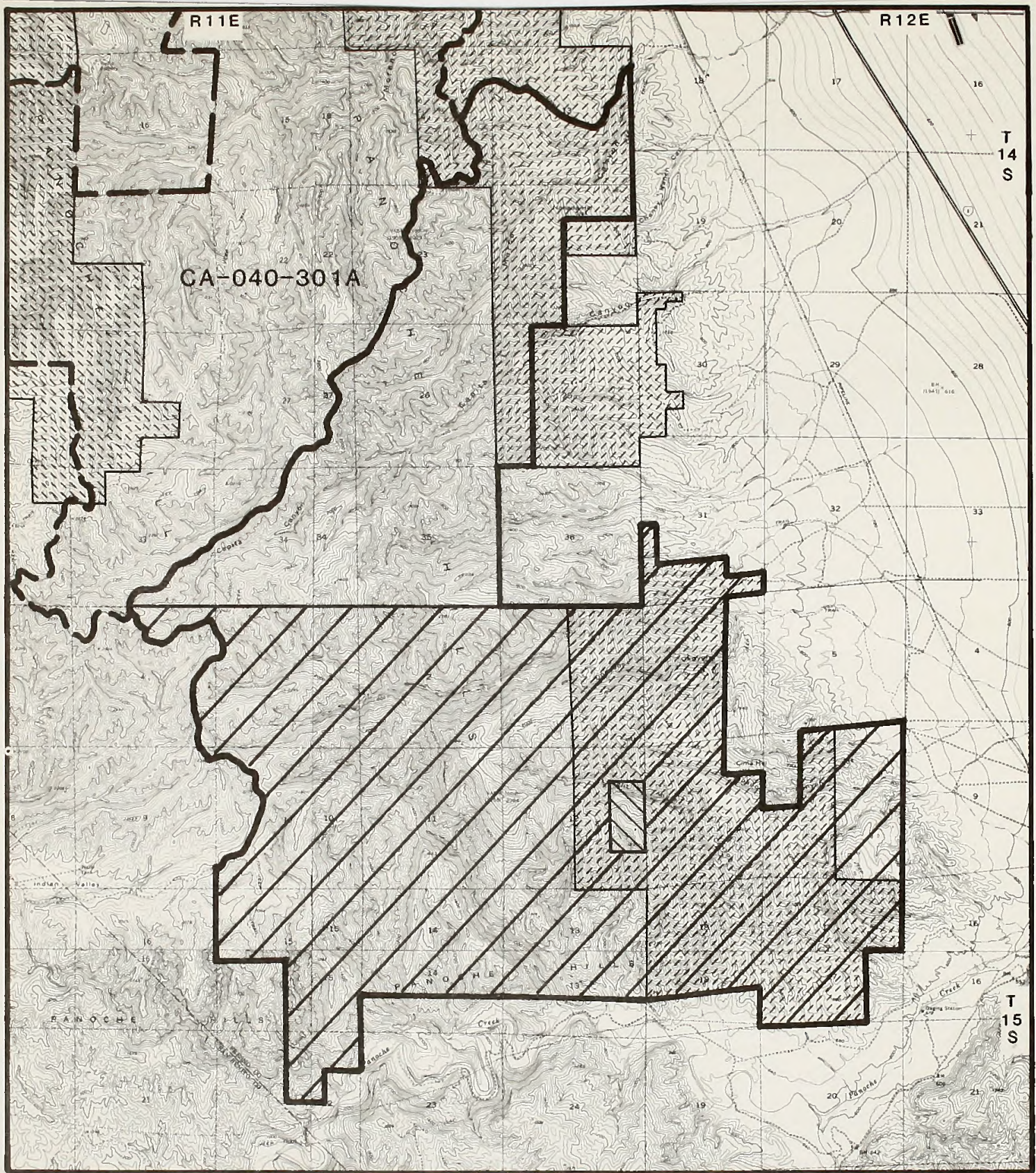
PANOCHÉ HILLS SOUTH WSA (CA-040-301B)

PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness/No Action)

None of the 11,267 acres of public lands in the Panoche Hills South WSA are recommended for wilderness, but will be managed for multiple use management in accordance with the Hollister RMP (1984) and the Panoche Hills Management Plan (1982) (see Map 4 - Proposed Action, Panoche Hills South WSA). Under this proposal vehicle use on lands within the WSA will remain limited to four-wheeled vehicles on designated routes from mid-October to late April/early May. Motorized vehicles will be excluded for the remainder of the year due to the fire hazard they pose. Lands within the WSA will be available for oil and gas exploration and development and it is anticipated that some exploration will occur.




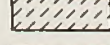
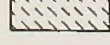

Recreational Use Management Actions

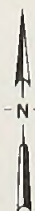
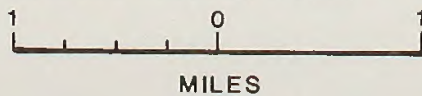
Vehicle use on lands within the WSA will remain limited to four-wheeled vehicles on designated routes from the start of the quail and chukar hunting season in mid-October until the start of the fire season in late April or early May. Motorcycles and three-wheeled vehicles will continue to be excluded from the WSA. Approximately 50 visitor days of four-wheeled



CA-040-301A

LEGEND

-  Wilderness Study Area
-  Adjacent Wilderness Study Area
-  Private inholdings
-  Moreno Paleontological Area of Critical Environmental Concern
-  Panoche/Coalinga Rare-Threatened-Endangered Area of Critical Environmental Concern
-  Pre-FLPMA Oil & Gas leases (expired August, 1986)



**PANOCHÉ HILLS
SOUTH
WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
PROPOSED ACTION
(No Wilderness/No Action)
CA-040-301B**

MAP-4

vehicle use annually are currently occurring in the eastern portion of the WSA along seven miles of vehicle ways. These roads are without legal public access. Three miles of vehicle ways are located within the western portion of the WSA and have legal public access. Motorized recreation use in the western portion is limited to 25 visitor days per year along these ways. Almost all the motorized users in the WSA is for hunting. These visitor use levels will remain constant over the next 15-20 years.

The WSA will also remain open for nonmotorized recreation activities. Recreational use for these activities will remain constant at levels below 25 visitor use days annually. No trails or other recreational facilities exist in the WSA and none are planned because of the low use the area receives.

Projections indicate that motorized recreational use will increase slightly, but will remain at levels below 125 visitor use days annually for the foreseeable future.

Fire Management Actions

The fire management actions for the Proposal Action are the same as those described under the Proposed Action for the Panoche Hills North WSA, p. 28.

Wildlife Management Actions

The area will continue to be managed under the precepts of the Panoche National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area and the Panoche Hills Habitat Management Plan (HMP). Emphasis will be on project maintenance. The HMP is fully implemented and there are no new projects envisioned at this time.

Project inspections and habitat monitoring activities will involve one to two weeks annually by BLM and CDFG personnel. Most activities will involve the use of vehicles on existing roads and trails.

Although maintenance will not take place on a regular schedule, it is estimated that approximately one or two projects, mostly guzzlers, will be maintained on an annual basis (several years may pass with a half-dozen projects maintained at one time). Maintenance activities typically involve the use of a dump truck and two to three support vehicles for reconstruction of guzzler aprons (collection surfaces) by mixing and pouring concrete. Occasionally, the guzzler tanks will require replacement. Total surface disturbance at each site would involve less than one-quarter acre (mostly from vehicle passage). New aprons will be camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding landscape. Although silt catchments and spring developments will require only infrequent maintenance, one-half to one acre of land surface will be disturbed if any dam or spillway is damaged and requires reconstruction.

Spring developments would require only hand labor to replace or clean out the spring boxes. Most are currently inaccessible to vehicles and require walk-in access. There are fewer existing projects in this WSA than in the Panoche Hills North WSA and they are scattered throughout the area.

Vegetation Management Actions

The eastern portion of the WSA lies within the Moreno Paleontological ACEC which was designated in the Hollister RMP (1984). Although the primary purpose of the ACEC was to recognize the significant paleontological resources in the area, the ACEC also recognized the existence of sensitive plant habitat for the green fiddleneck (Amsinkia furcata). Management actions will be detailed in an activity plan being prepared for the ACEC (to be completed in October 1986). It is envisioned that management actions will concentrate on annual or semi-annual monitoring activities. These activities will include photo plots (less than 5 total, marked by a small stake or post), visual monitoring, etc.

Grazing Management Actions

Portions of two grazing leases are encompassed by the WSA. Both are managed under Allotment Management Plans (AMP's). Grazing management will continue under the auspices of the two existing AMPs and the Panoche Hills Management Plan. One lease is for sheep grazing and one (extreme south end) is for cattle. All have seasons of use corresponding to the green forage season (generally January 1 to April 30). All are managed to leave a minimum of 700 pounds of residual forage (after grazing). This equates to an average of about two to three inches of stubble. The only existing livestock management facility is a fence which lies within the southern portion of WSA. There are no planned livestock management facilities. Sheep operators haul water to livestock on existing roads and trails. They will continue to utilize existing roads and trails for movement of sheep camps (trailers). Cattle rely on water in Panoche Creek on private lands south of the WSA.

Cultural Management Actions

Based on the low cultural sensitivity in the area, and lack of known sites, there are no planned activities related to cultural resource management.

Paleontological Management Actions

The eastern portion of the WSA lies within the Moreno Paleontological ACEC (also see Vegetation Management section). The ACEC plan (under development) will detail management actions for these important fossil resources. It is envisioned that management actions will concentrate on annual or semi-annual monitoring by BLM personnel (i.e., photo plots) as well as additional inventory and excavation by academic institutions. Excavation activities will involve the use of hand tools only (no heavy equipment). It is anticipated that academic institutions (engaged in inventory and/or excavation activities) would spend one to two weeks annually in the area. Total surface surface disturbance would probably be less than less than 5 cubic meters per year. Existing routes would be utilized for vehicular access. Foot access would be used in areas that are not open to vehicles.

Mineral Development Actions

Although oil and gas rights have been leased on nearly 70 percent of the WSA, the potential for development is low. These leases are slated to expire in August 1986. Extension of the lease terms by reason of drilling or production is unlikely as no surface disturbing activities have been proposed to date, nor has any drilling occurred within the WSA. In addition, 21 wildcat wells have been drilled within 3 miles of the WSAs northern, eastern, and southern boundary; all have been abandoned. Under this proposal it is expected that most, if not all of the area will be offered for noncompetitive leasing and explored once the leases expire. Vibroseis (thumper) trucks will be used in the initial stages of exploration along existing roads. These activities and the use of small explosive charges for seismic testing will cause some minor short-term surface disturbance.

It is anticipated that some wildcat drilling activity will occur. For the propose of analysis, the level of drilling activity is assumed to be equivalent to the same rates and densities that have occurred on adjacent lands. Based on the number of wells in a 15 square mile area, one wildcat well on every 900 acres will be drilled in the southern portion of the WSA outside the Moreno Paleontological ACEC, or approximately 12 wells within the WSA. It is estimated that the surface required for each well will be about 2 acres, or 25 acres in all, two to three miles new access roads, 16 feet wide (or 6 acres) will be required for each well. It is anticipated that these wells will be nonproducing and will be abandoned. Following abandonment, the wells will be plugged, well casings will be removed, and the lands will be recontoured and reseeded. Revegetation should take one to two growing seasons.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

All 11,267 acres of public land in the Panoche Hills South WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness. Under this alternative. The area would be closed to motorized vehicle use. The 7,570 acres of pre-FLPMA leases would expire and no oil or gas exploration would occur.

Recreational Use Management Actions

The Panoche Hills South WSA would be closed to motorized vehicle use eliminating approximately 75 visitor days of motorized recreational use that are estimated to occur in the area annually for hunting. This visitor use would continue on a walk in basis from the perimeter of the WSA. Projections indicate that, nonmotorized recreation use would increase slightly, but would remain at levels below 50 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future as a result of designation. No recreational facilities or hiking trails exist and none are planned because of the low use the area currently receives and is likely to receive.

Fire Management Actions

The fire management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the All Wilderness Alternative for the Panoche Hills North WSA on p. 28.

Alternatives

Wildlife Management Actions

The wildlife management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 35.

Vegetation Management Actions

The vegetation management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 36.

Grazing Management Actions

The grazing management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 36.

Cultural Management Actions

The cultural management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 36; i.e., no planned actions.

Paleontological Management Actions

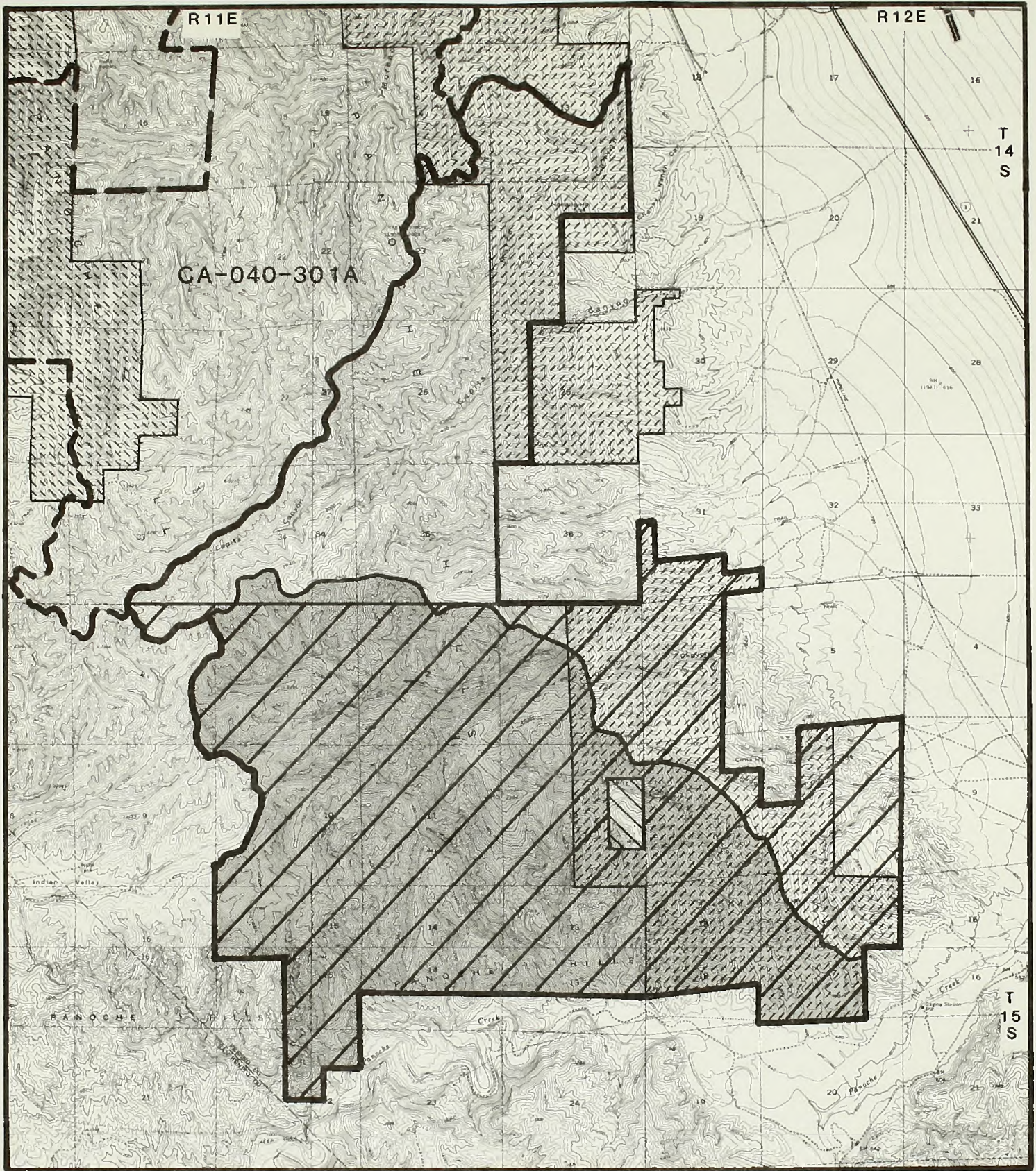
The paleontological management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the All Wilderness Alternative for the Panoche Hills North WSA on p. 33.

Mineral Development Actions

Upon designation of the area as wilderness, the 7,570 acres of pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases in the southern portion of the WSA would expire and the area would not be reoffered. No oil and gas exploration would occur. These lands would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws.









PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

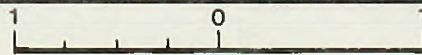
Approximately 5,600 acres of public lands in the Panoche Hill South WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The remaining 5,667 acres would not be recommended for wilderness designation, but will be managed in accordance with the Hollister RMP (1984) and the Panoche Hills Management Plan (1982) (see Map 5 - Partial Wilderness Alternative, Panoche Hills South WSA). Under this alternative vehicle use on lands within the WSA would remain limited to four-wheeled vehicles use on designated routes from mid-October to late April/early May. Four miles of existing vehicle ways would be closed restricting vehicle use to six miles of designated routes. Lands within the northern half of the WSA will be available for oil and gas exploration and development and it is anticipated that some exploration will occur.



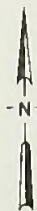
CA-040-301A

LEGEND

-  Wilderness Study Area
-  Adjacent Wilderness Study Area
-  Private inholdings
-  Moreno Palenontological Area of Critical Environmental Concern
-  Panoche/Coalinga Rare-Threatened-Endangred Area of Critical Environmental Concern
-  Pre-FLPMA Oil & Gas leases (expired August, 1986)
-  Land recommended suitable for Wilderness Designation
-  Land recommended nonsuitable for Wilderness Designation



MILES



**PANOCHÉ HILLS
SOUTH
WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
PARTIAL WILDERNESS
(Alternative)
CA-040-301B**

MAP-5

Recreational Use Management Actions

Under the Partial Wilderness Alternative, 1 one-half miles of vehicle ways in the eastern portion of the WSA and 2 one-half miles in the western portion of the WSA would be closed to motorized vehicle use. Other than these actions, recreational management actions and levels under the Partial Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on pp. 33-35.

Fire Management Actions

Under this alternative, fire prevention and aggressive initial attack would be given a high priority. In the northern nonsuitable portion of the WSA, patrols would be conducted periodically (at least two time a month during the fire season). Vehicular access by the public would be prohibited during the fire season (from late April/early May through mid-October). Initial attack efforts would include the use of dozers, engines, and air tankers. The use of heavy equipment (primarily dozers in the extended attack phases) would be limited to the extent possible within the ACEC portion of the WSA. In addition, known giant kangaroo rat colonies and kit fox dens would also be avoided. Fire rehabilitation efforts would focus on reestablishment of the native shrub cover (primarily Atriplex sp.). In order to reestablish these shrubs following a fire, mediterranean annuals would be temporarily suppressed by discing using motorized vehicles.

In the southern suitable portion of the WSA, initial and extended attack actions would concentrate on the use of air tankers and hand crews using indirect methods (such as backfiring, burning out, etc.) as much as possible. The use of mechanized equipment would be limited to situations where life or property are threatened or to protect wilderness values. Fire rehabilitation using dozers or vehicles would be precluded under most situations (except where downstream values are directly affected by erosion hazards). Aerial seeding would still be utilized for fire rehabilitation but seedbeds would be prepared manually in lieu of heavy equipment.

Wildlife Management Actions

The wildlife management actions under the Partial Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 35.

Vegetation Management Actions

The vegetative management actions under the Partial Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 36.

Grazing Management Actions

The grazing management actions under the Partial Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 36.

Cultural Management Actions

The cultural management actions under the Partial Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 36; i.e., no planned actions.

Paleontological Management Actions

The paleontological management actions in the northern nonsuitable portion of the WSA would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action p. 36. In the southern suitable portion; however, there would be no excavation of these resources for scientific purposes except on a case-by-case basis where such activities would not impair wilderness values.

Mineral Development Actions

Under the alternative, 5,600 acres would be designated wilderness and would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the Mining and Mineral Leasing Laws. Over 5,600 would remain open to mineral entry. The 7,570 acres of pre-FLPMA leases would expire, but it is anticipated that the 5,667 acres outside the suitable portion of the WSA would be offered for noncompetitive leasing and explored. Vibroseis (thumper) trucks will be used for the initial stages of exploration along existing roads. These activities and the use of small explosive charges for seismic testing will cause some minor, short-term surface disturbance.

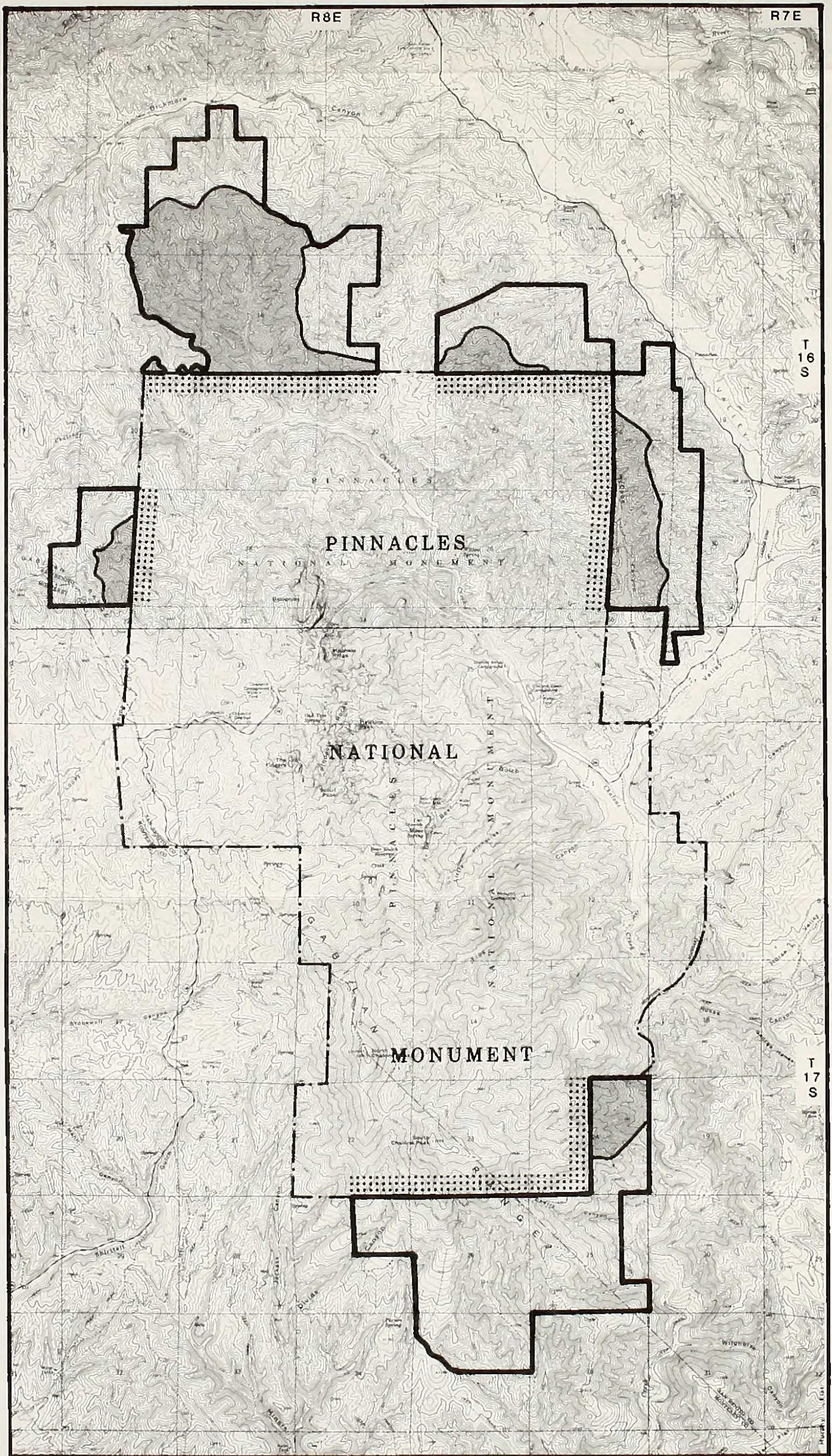
It is anticipated that some wildcat drilling activity will occur. For the purpose of analysis, the level of drilling activity is assumed to be equivalent to the same rates and densities that have occurred on adjacent lands. Based on these activities five wildcat wells will be drilled in the northern portion of the WSA. The surface area required for the wells would be approximately 10 acres for the drilling location and 10 to 15 miles, or approximately 25 acres for a 16-foot access road. It is anticipated that the wells would be nonproducing and would be abandoned. Following abandonment, the wells will be plugged, well casings would be removed, and the lands would be reconstructed and reseeded. Revegetation should take one to two growing seasons.





PINNACLES WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS (CA-040-303)

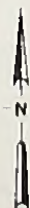
PROPOSED ACTION (Partial Wilderness)

Approximately 2,200 acres of public land in the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous are recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. The remaining 3,638 acres will not be recommended suitable, but will be managed in accordance with the existing Hollister RMP (1984). (See Map 6 - Proposed Action, Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous). Under this proposal, motorized recreational use will remain limited to 4½ miles of designated primitive vehicle ways in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA. The remainder of the area will remain closed to motorized vehicle use and will be managed to enhance nonmotorized recreation use. Existing levels of grazing in the Pinnacles Contiguous will continue.

Alternatives



-  Wilderness Study Area
-  Land recommended suitable for Wilderness Designation
-  Land recommended nonsuitable for Wilderness Designation
-  Boundary of WSA with an existing National Monument Wilderness



**PINNACLES
WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS
PROPOSED ACTION
(Partial Wilderness)
CA-040-303**

MAP-6

Recreational Use Management Actions

Motorized recreational use will remain limited to the 4½ miles of designated primitive vehicle ways in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA and 1¼ miles of cherrystemmed roads. The remainder of the nonsuitable portion will remain closed to motorized vehicle use. Approximately 40 visitor days of motorized use annually are currently occurring along these ways and are principally for hunting access. There is currently no legal public access for motorized vehicle use. Access is across adjacent private land with the landowners permission. An additional 40 visitor days of nonmotorized hunting also occur annually on these portions of the WSA. Although no legal public access currently exists, for hunting, a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service, California Department of Fish and Game, adjacent private landowners, and the BLM is planned to allow controlled access to these parcels. This agreement, would support a controlled hunting situation for feral pigs and compliment other control methods undertaken by the NPS. Use would be regulated by a lottery-type system with actual use estimated at less than 50 visitor days per year. Total nonmotorized hunting will increase but will not exceed 100 visitor days annually. Motorized hunting will remain constant and not exceed 40 visitor days annually for the foreseeable future.

Both the suitable and nonsuitable portions of the WSA will be open for other nonmotorized activities including hiking and backpacking. Public access for nonmotorized recreational uses other than hunting such as hiking and camping is available through the Pinnacles National Monument. Recreational use for these activities are low, less than 10 visitor days annually. A cooperative agreement with the National Park Service will be developed to enhance public access to these areas from the adjacent National Monument and will increase recreational use from 10 visitor days annually to nearly 250 visitor days.

No recreational facilities or trails exist in the WSA and none are planned. Development of recreation facilities, such as campgrounds, is not anticipated because of the low use the area receives.

Fire Management Actions

Prescribed burning will continue to be the major management tool used in the area. Within the 2,200 acres designated as wilderness, fire will be used to perpetrate natural processes in the fire dependent chaparral community on a rotational cycle consistent with natural fire frequency (30 + years) and per the fire management plan being developed for the Pinnacles National Monument. It is anticipated that 1,500-2,000 acres will be burned every 30-35 years in mosaic patterns of patches and strips to minimize any adverse impacts to the area's wilderness values. There would be no use of heavy equipment or construction of fire-lines for prescribed burn projects within the area designated as wilderness.

Outside the area designated as wilderness, fire will continue to be used for fuel hazard reduction and range improvement purposes. Prescribed burning in this portion of the area will likely utilize shorter rotation periods (10 to 15 years) in order to maintain forage and fuel reduction benefits. Mechanical pre-treatment of brush (chaining, crushing) and fire-line construction will also be conducted in some areas. It is anticipated that 2,000-3,000 acres will be burned every 30-35 years. Approximately 500 acres will be mechanically pre-treated every 10-15 years and 3 to 4 miles of fire-line will be reconstructed in the northeastern portion of the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

No Wildlife management actions are planned under the Proposed Action.

Vegetation Management Actions

Other than the prescribed burns and pre-treatments described under the fire management actions above, no vegetation management actions are planned under the Proposed Action.

Grazing Management Actions

Portions of four cattle grazing, leases are encompassed by the WSA. There are 2,200 acres and 460 AUMs of available forage within the WSA; approximately 1,350 acres and 93 AUMs are under lease. There are no existing range improvements in the area. As per the Hollister RMP, the boundary of the area designated as wilderness will be fenced to exclude livestock from the area as well as the adjacent Pinnacles National Monument, eliminating 150 acres and 10 AUMs currently under lease. The fence will be constructed and maintained by the NPS. Livestock grazing will continue outside the area designated as wilderness.

Cultural Resource Management Actions

Due to the low cultural sensitivity on public lands within the WSA, there are no Cultural Resource management actions planned.

Mineral Development Actions

Under this alternative, 2,200 acres of the WSA will be designated wilderness and withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws. The remaining 3,638 acres will be open to mineral entry and location. However, no mineral exploration or development is anticipated.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

All 5,838 acres of public land in the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. Under this alternative the area would be closed to motorized vehicular use and the area managed to enhance nonmotorized recreational use. Prescribed burns would be used to perpetuate the area's fire-dependent species but mechanized fire-fighting equipment would be restricted within the WSA. Existing levels of grazing in the Pinnacles Contiguous would continue.

Alternatives

Recreational Use Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous would be closed to motorized vehicular use eliminating 6 miles of vehicle routes and 40 visitor days of motorized hunting that are estimated to occur in the area annually. All other management actions, including the development of cooperative agreements to allow controlled access to the boundary of the WSA for hunting purposes and to enhance public access to the Pinnacles Contiguous parcels from the National Monument, would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action, p. 43.

Fire Management Actions

The fire management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described for the area designated as wilderness under the Proposed Action on p. 43. Prescribed burns would be used to perpetuate natural processes (fire-dependent chaparral communities) on a rotational cycle consistent with natural fire frequency (30 + years) and per the Fire Management Plan being developed for the Pinnacles National Monument. It is anticipated that 4,000-5,000 acres will be burned every 30-35 years throughout the WSA in mosaic patterns of strips and patches to minimize any adverse impacts to the area's wilderness values.

Fire suppression activities would be restricted to the use of air tankers and hand crews. Engine and heavy equipment would be restricted unless life or high value property were threatened.

Wildlife Management Actions

The wildlife management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 44; i.e., no planned actions.

Vegetation Management Actions

Other than the prescribed burns described under the fire management actions for the area designated as wilderness under the Proposed Action on p. 44; no vegetation management action are planned.

Grazing Management Actions

The grazing management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as there described under the Proposed Action on p. 44.

Cultural Resource Management Actions

The cultural resource Management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 44; i.e., no planned actions.

Mineral Development Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative the entire area would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws.

NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

None of 5,838 acres of public land in the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation but managed in accordance with the Hollister RMP (1984). Under this alternative, motorized recreational use would remain limited to 6 miles of designated vehicle routes. The remainder of the WSA would remain closed to motorized vehicles and managed to enhance nonmotorized recreation use. Prescribed burns would be used to maintain the area's fire-dependent species. Mechanized fire-fighting equipment would be permitted, but restricted to existing routes of travel.

Recreational Use Management Actions

The recreational use management actions under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 43.

Fire Management Actions

Under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative, fire management actions would essentially be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on pp. 43-44. Engines and other motorized vehicles would be allowed in the WSA, but would be restricted to existing routes in order to protect the watershed area as per the Hollister RMP.

Wildlife Management Actions

The wildlife management actions for the No Wilderness/No Action alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 44, i.e., no planned actions.

Vegetation Management Actions

The vegetation management actions for the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 44.

Grazing Management Actions

The grazing management actions for the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 44.

Cultural Resource Management Actions

The cultural resource management actions for the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 44.

Mineral Development Actions

Under this alternative, the entire area would remain open to mineral entry. However, no mineral exploration or development is anticipated.

CALIENTE MOUNTAIN WSA (CA-010-042)

PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness/No Action)

None of the 19,018 acres of public land in the Caliente Mountains WSA are recommended for wilderness, but will be managed for multiple use management in accordance with the Coast/Valley RMP, 1985, (see Map 7 - Proposed Action, Caliente Mountain WSA). Under this proposal recreational management actions will be directed toward enhancing nonmotorized recreational use. Motorized recreational use will be restricted to 5 one-half miles of designated four-wheel trails. Existing grazing levels will continue for the next eight years but will be increased once a 1,000-acre prescribed burn is conducted in the northern portion of the WSA. In addition, the area will be open to mineral location and entry. It is anticipated that some oil exploration and development will occur.

Recreational Use Management Actions

Recreational management actions will be directed toward enhancing non-motorized recreation opportunities such as hiking and equestrian use to the summit of Caliente Mountain along a 2.4 mile access trail developed by BLM in 1986. This trail provides nonmotorized access from the southwest across private lands. Use of the area's 5 one-half miles of trails within the WSA is expected to climb from the current level of 75 visitor use days per year to approximately 1,500 visitor use days by 1990 as springs/wells are developed outside the WSA.

Lands within the WSA will remain designated as "limited" to existing routes of travel for motorized vehicle use. The remainder of the area will be closed to motorized vehicle use. Approximately 50 visitor days of motorized recreational use currently occur within the WSA. Projections indicate that recreational use will increase slightly, but would remain at levels below 75 visitor use days annually for the foreseeable future.

Five and one-half miles of designated four-wheel trails exist within the WSA. These are, however, without legal access and must be accessed across private lands with the landowners permission. No public vehicular access is available nor is any planned. Neither are any route improvements or development planned.

Fire Management Actions

Fire suppression within the Caliente Mountain WSA will continue to be provided by the California Department of Forestry (under contract to the BLM) using mechanized fire-fighting equipment. Support facilities such as helipads will involve the use of public lands within the WSA. However, no

roads or trails will be improved for fire management nor will any new fire-brakes be constructed. Existing fuel brakes will not be maintained but will be allowed to return to their natural condition. No pre-suppression activities are planned for the WSA other than a 1,000 acre prescribed burn for range management (see Grazing Management Actions).

Wildlife Management Actions

Under the Proposed Action, the WSA will continue to be cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game as a portion of the 58,867 acre Caliente National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area. No wildlife management projects, however, are planned for the WSA, nor will any existing projects require maintenance or monitoring.

Vegetation Management Actions

No improvements, including grading and widening the 5 one-half miles of existing four-wheel jeep trails, will be allowed to protect the Federal candidate species Fritillaria agrestis which is found growing along the ridgetops in the vicinity of these trails. An intensive field inventory will be conducted by 1990 to establish the range of candidate species within the WSA.

Grazing Management Actions

Approximately 15,498 acres of the Caliente Mountain WSA will continue to be used for livestock grazing. Livestock use will continue to be maintained at the existing level of 1,699 AUMs for cattle under an Allotment Management Plan for the next eight years and beyond.

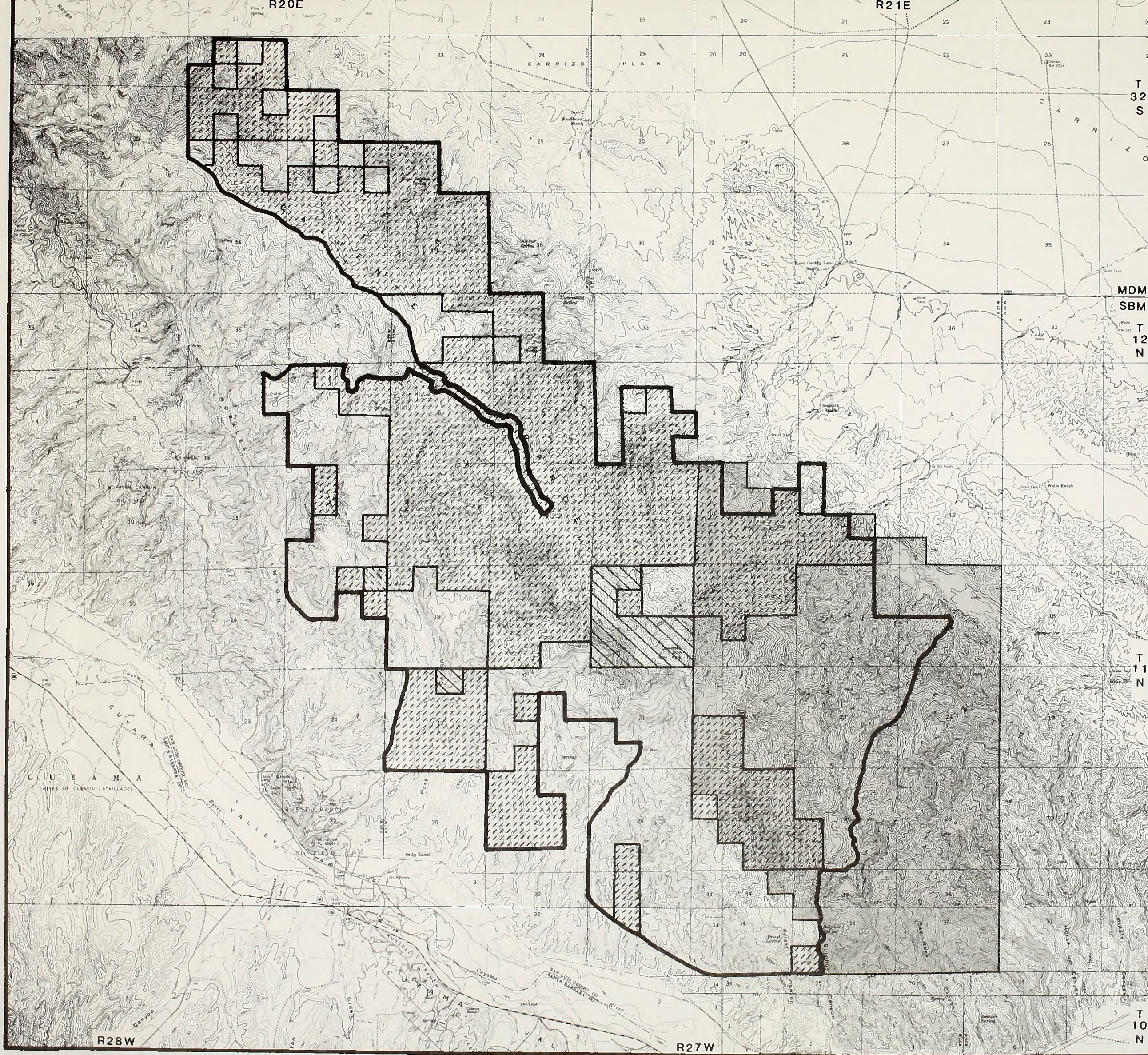
Six spring developments, four reservoirs, one corral with loading facilities, and a two-mile pipeline with trough currently exist and will continue to be maintained with the use of motor vehicles. The springs will be cleaned or reconstructed every 10 years. The reservoirs will be reconstructed by tractor every 10 years.






Each reservoir will require two days of earthwork to scrape out sediment in the bottoms during reconstruction. The pipeline will be reconstructed with new line every 30 years, requiring 2 weeks of trenching by tractor.

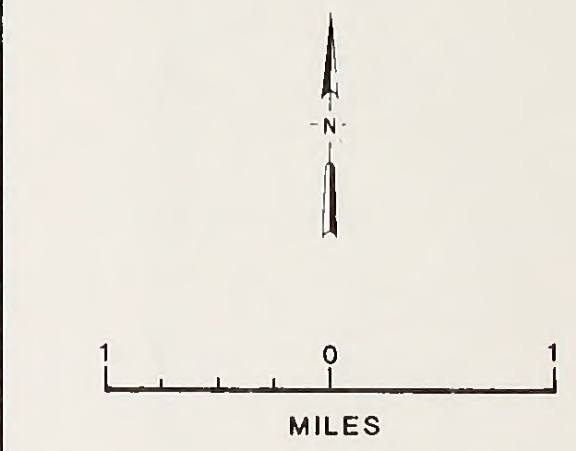
One additional new project will be implemented. A 1,000 acre prescribed burn will occur on the northern portion of the WSA, with a projected increase of 100 AUMS of livestock forage. No additional range developments will be constructed within the WSA, and maintenance activities would not change.

Land Tenure Adjustment Management Actions

Under the Proposed Action, no effort will be made to acquire any of the 480 acres of private lands within the WSA.



- LEGEND**
-  Wilderness Study Area
 -  Private inholdings
 -  Post-FLPMA Oil & Gas leases
 -  Pre-FLPMA Oil & Gas leases
 -  Cuyama Valley undefined Known Geologic Structure



**CALIENTE MOUNTAIN
WILDERNESS
STUDY AREA**

PROPOSED ACTION
(No Wilderness/No Action)
CA-010-042

MAP-7

Mineral Development Management Actions

Under the Proposed Action the entire area will be open to mineral location and entry. Because of the intense leasing activities adjacent to the WSA and its recognition as a promising exploration target by the oil and gas industry, it is anticipated that some exploration and development will occur. Most if not all of the area is expected to be explored. Vibroseis trucks will be used in the initial stages of exploration along existing roads. These activities and the use of small explosive charges for seismic testing will cause some minor short-term noise and surface disturbance.

It is anticipated that some wildcat drilling will occur. For the purpose of analysis, the level of drilling activity is assumed to be equivalent to the same rates and densities that have occurred on adjacent lands. Based on exploration activities northeast of the Russell Ranch Oil Field, one wildcat well on every 160 acres will be drilled over the next 20 years, or approximately 54 wells. It is estimated that the surface required for each well will be about 2 acres -- nearly 110 acres in all. Four to five miles of new access road 16-foot wide will be required for each well. It is anticipated that 90 percent of these wells, or 49 wells, will be non-producing and will be abandoned. Following abandonment, the wells will be plugged, well casings will be removed, and the lands will be recontoured and reseeded. Revegetation should take one to two growing seasons.

The one 40-acre pre-FLPMA lease located in the east central portion of the WSA will also be developed. Following exploration, one wildcat well will be drilled disturbing approximately 2 to 3 acres of land. One mile of new access road will be required for the well.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

All 19,018 acres of public land in the Caliente Mountain WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. Under this alternative the area would be closed to motorized recreational use. Recreational management actions will be directed toward enhancing nonmotorized recreational use. None of the 8,720 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases would be explored or developed. Exploration and development would, however, occur on the 40-acre pre-FLPMA lease in the east central portion of the WSA.

Recreational Use Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the Caliente Mountain WSA would be closed to motorized recreational use eliminating 5 one-half miles of existing four-wheel jeep trails and 50 visitor days of motorized recreational use that are estimated to occur in the area annually. Other than this action, the recreational use management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 50.

Fire Management Actions

Under this alternative, a fire management plan would be written for the WSA and would become an addendum to the Wilderness Management Plan. Fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and ground crews would be used for fire control. Cross-country vehicle travel would be permitted only when the terrain and soil conditions would permit such travel without damage to vegetative cover. Heavy equipment such as tracked vehicles and dozers would not be permitted except to prevent loss of human life or to protect private or high-value property and only with the approval of the District Manager. Existing routes would be used as firebreaks but would not be maintained and would be allowed to return to their natural state. No new firebreaks would be constructed.

Wildlife Management Actions

The wildlife management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 49.

Vegetation Management Actions

Other than conducting an intensive field inventory to establish the range of the candidate species (Fritillaria agrestis) within the WSA in 1990, no vegetation management actions are planned.

Grazing Management Actions

The grazing management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would essentially be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 49. However, unlike the Proposed Action, no prescribed burns would be conducted.

Land Tenure Adjustment Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, every effort would be made to acquire the 440-acre parcel of State land at Caliente Peak and the 40-acre parcel of private land in Port Canyon.

Mineral Development Management Actions

Upon designation of the area as wilderness, all 19,018 acres would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws, subject to valid and existing rights. It is anticipated that none of the 8,720 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases in the southeastern portion of the WSA would be explored or developed because of the imposition of wilderness protection stipulations on operations such as these within designated wilderness areas (see Appendix 1). All post-FLPMA oil and gas leases are expected to have expired by 1993 at the end of their primary terms. Exploration and development would, however, occur on the one 40-acre pre-FLPMA lease in the east-central portion of the WSA. Following possible seismic exploration of the lease, one wildcat well would be drilled disturbing approximately 2 to 3 acres and one-half mile of new access road would be constructed.

OWENS PEAK WSA
(CA-010-026)

PROPOSED ACTION (Partial Wilderness)

Approximately 14,960 acres of public land in the Owens Peak WSA are recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. The remaining 7,600 acres will not be recommended suitable, but will be managed in accordance with the South Sierra Foothills Transitional MFP (1984) and the existing Recreation Area Management Plan for the PCNST, 1984, (see Map 8 - Proposed Action, Owens Peak WSA). Under this proposal, the lands will be managed to enhance nonmotorized recreation opportunities on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCNST) which runs the length of the WSA. Roughly 8 miles of primitive, four-wheeled vehicles ways in the suitable portion of the WSA will be closed to motorized vehicle use. The remainder of the WSA will be "limited" to ORV use. Mineral exploration and development will be precluded in the suitable portion of the WSA but will continue in that portion not recommended suitable. Only a small amount of mining activity is anticipated.

Recreational Use Management Actions

Recreational management actions would be directed toward enhancing non-motorized recreation opportunities on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCNST). Use of the 24 mile segment of the PCNST within the WSA is expected to climb from the current level of 600 visitors days per year to approximately 2,500 visitor days by 1992 when 8 miles of the Spanish Needles section of the trail within the WSA is completed. Construction of the trail will be accomplished by 15-person crews spike-camped within the WSA for two months per year and resupplied every two weeks by helicopter or vehicles on existing ways.

Approximately eight miles of primitive, four-wheeled vehicles ways will be closed in the suitable portion of the WSA eliminating 50 visitor days of ORV use annually. The remainder of the WSA not designated as suitable will be "limited" to ORV use. Motorized recreational use will be restricted to the 16 miles of primitive, four-wheel ways along the western edge of the WSA. ORV visitor use is not expected to exceed the 600 visitor days that are currently estimated to occur in this portion of the WSA annually.

Fire Management Actions

Under the Proposed Action, the existing modified suppression plan will be revised for the suitable portion of the WSA and will become an addendum to the Wilderness Management Plan. Fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and ground crews would be used for fire control. Cross-country vehicle travel would be permitted only when the terrain and soil conditions would permit such travel without damage to vegetative cover and only with the approval of the District Manager. Heavy equipment such as tracked vehicles and dozers would not be permitted except to prevent loss of human life or to protect private or high-value property. Existing firebreaks throughout the WSA would no longer be maintained but allowed to return to their natural state.

Alternatives

In the remaining 7,600 acres of the WSA not recommended as suitable, a modified fire suppression plan will continue to be carried out by BLM force account.

Wildlife Management Actions

Under the proposed action, all 22,560 acres will continue to be cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game as a portion of the 306,422 acre Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area. Within the 14,960 acres recommended as suitable for wilderness, one water facility for wildlife will be developed in conjunction with the range management program in Cow Canyon (see Grazing Management Actions). The wildlife water facility will be monitored for wildlife use by one to two Bureau or California Department of Fish and Game employees, once a year, using one vehicle on existing routes. One California Department of Fish and Game Warden will continue to routinely (twice a week) patrol 16 miles of road in the 7,600 acres recommended as unsuitable for wilderness. Routine patrol on the 8 miles of road within the 14,960 acres recommended as suitable for wilderness will be discontinued. There are no existing wildlife projects requiring maintenance within the 22,560 acre WSA nor are any planned.

Vegetation Management Actions

No vegetation management actions are planned under the Proposed Action.

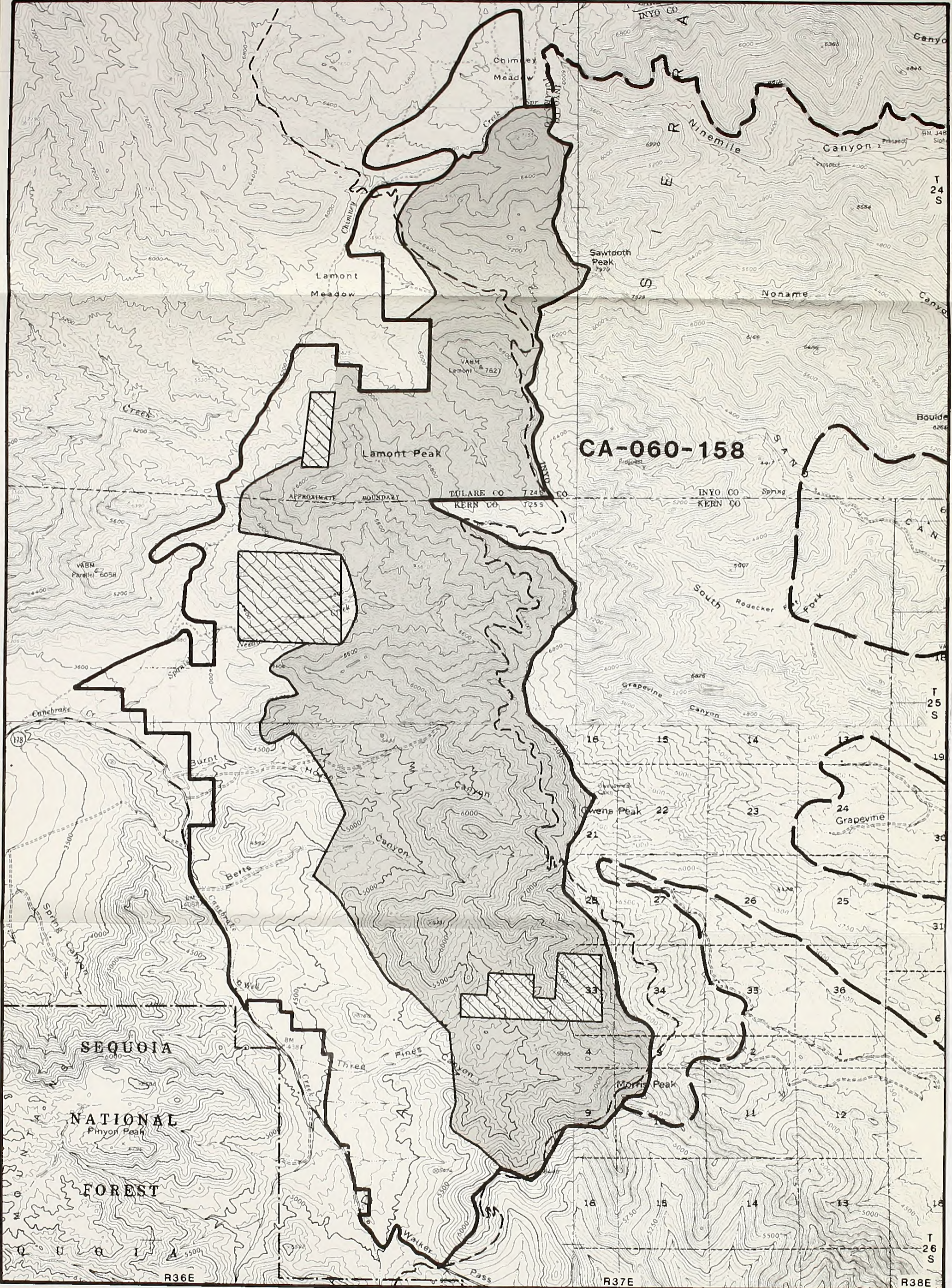
Grazing Management Actions

All 22,560 acres of the Owens Peak WSA will continue to be used for livestock grazing. Livestock use will continue to be maintained at the existing level of 681 AUMs of cattle use under an Allotment Management Plan (AMP) for the next eight years and beyond.







Three existing spring developments and two miles of fence will continue to be maintained. All projects will receive light maintenance annually, requiring one vehicle trip to each along existing routes. The springs will be cleaned or reconstructed every 10 years using a tracked vehicle. The fence will be reconstructed at 50 years, with four weeks of construction and vehicle resupply required.

One additional mile of new fence will be constructed in Cow Canyon, and two of the existing springs will be reconstructed. This would require four weeks of construction and vehicle resupply. These projects are needed to improve livestock distribution to eventually improve forage projection. Only one of the springs to be reconstructed is within the area recommended as suitable.

No additional range developments would be constructed within the WSA, and maintenance activities would not change.



LEGEND

-  Wilderness Study Area
-  Adjacent Wilderness Study Area
-  Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail
-  Private Inholdings
-  Land recommended suitable for Wilderness Designation
-  Land recommended nonsuitable for Wilderness Designation



**OWENS PEAK
WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
PROPOSED ACTION
(Partial Wilderness)
CA-010-026**

Land Tenure Adjustment Actions

Under the Proposed Action, approximately 360 acres of private lands will be acquired.

Cultural Resource Management Actions

No cultural resource management actions planned under the Proposed Action.

Mineral Development Management Actions

Under the Proposed Action, 14,960 acres will be designated wilderness and withdrawn from all forms of mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid existing rights. The remaining 7,000 acres would be open to mineral entry. There are 6 mining claims in the central portion of the area recommended suitable. Approximately 240 acres of these claims are placer claims and 100 acres are lode. These will be subject to validity exams to determine the quantity and quality of the mineral deposit. It is anticipated that these claims will be determined invalid precluding any further exploration/development. Mineral potentials for gold, tungston and zinc are low and these has been very little mining activity on the existing claim.

There are 10 mining claims in the west central portion of the WSA on the 7,600 acres not recommended suitable. Approximately 480 acres of these claims are placer claims and 40 acres are lode. Although some surface disturbance is anticipated on these claims, no significant exploration or development activity is expected because of the remoteness of the area, the terrain, the low mineral potentials involved, the characteristic small size of the ore deposits, and the current trends toward development of bulk deposits. Surface disturbance will not exceed 5 acres per claim, or roughly 50 acres. Mining operations will consist of dredging, trenching, or underground development. No new access will be required.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVES

All 22,560 acres of public land in the Owens Peak WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. Under this alternative, the area will be managed to enhance nonmotorized recreation opportunities on the PCNST. The area would be closed to motorized vehicle use and mining exploration/development would be precluded.

Recreational Use Management Actions

The Owens Peak WSA would be closed to recreational ORV use eliminating the 650 visitor days of ORV use estimated to occur annually along the area's 24 miles of primitive, four-wheeled vehicles ways. Other than these actions and projections, the recreational use management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 52.

Fire Management Actions

The fire management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative are the same as those described for the suitable portion of the WSA under the Proposed Action on p. 52.

Wildlife Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 22,560 acres will continue to be cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game as a portion of the 306,422 acre Monache-Walker pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area. One water facility for wildlife will be developed in conjunction with the range management program in Cow Canyon (see Grazing Management Action). The wildlife water facility will be monitored for wildlife use once a year, using one vehicle on existing routes. Routine patrol on the 24 miles of road within the WSA by the California Department of Fish and Game will be discontinued.

Vegetation Management Actions

No vegetation management actions are planned under the All Wilderness Alternative.

Grazing Management Actions

The grazing management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 54.

Land Tenure Adjustment Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, every effort would be made to acquire the approximately 1,220 acres of private lands within the WSA.

Cultural Resource Management Actions

No cultural resource management actions are planned under the All Wilderness Alternative.

Mineral Development Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 22,560 acres would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid exist rights. Validity exams would be performed on the 16 mining leases within the area--720 acres of placer claims and 140 acres of lode. Based upon mineral development to date, it is anticipated that these claims will be determined invalid precluding any further mining activity. No mineral development actions are, therefore, planned.

NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTIONS ALTERNATIVE

All 22,560 acres of public land in the Owens Peak WSA would not be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation but managed in accordance with the South Sierra Foothills Transitional MFP (1984) and the Recreation Area Management Plan for the PCNST (1984). Under this alternative the area would be managed to enhance nonmotorized recreation opportunities on the PCNST. Motorized recreation use would be restricted to designated routes of travel and small scale mining would occur primarily on existing claims found in the central portion of the WSA.

Recreational Use Management Actions

Under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative, the Owens Peak WSA would be designated as "limited" for recreational ORV use. Motorized recreational use would be restricted to the 24 miles of existing, four-wheeled vehicles ways. Projections indicate that ORV use would increase, but would remain at levels below 1,000 visitor days annually. Other than these actions and use levels, the recreational use management actions for the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 52.

Fire Management Actions

The fire management actions for the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative would be the same as those described for the nonsuitable portion of the WSA under the Proposed Action on pp. 52 and 53.

Wildlife Management Actions

Under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative, all 22,560 acres would continue to be cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game as a portion of the 306,422 acre Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area. The water facility for wildlife would be developed in conjunction with the range management program in Cow Canyon (see Grazing Management Action). The wildlife water facility would be monitored for wildlife use by one to two Bureau or California Department of Fish and Game employees once a year, using one vehicle on existing routes. The California Department of Fish and Game would continue to routinely (twice a week) patrol all 24 miles of road within the WSA.

Vegetation Management Actions

No vegetation management actions are planned under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative.

Grazing Management Actions

The grazing management actions for the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 54.

Land Tenure Adjustment Actions

Under this alternative no effort would be made to acquire any of the parcels of private, undeveloped land within the WSA.

Cultural Resource Management Actions

No cultural resource management actions are planned under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative.

Mineral Development Management Actions

Under the No Wilderness/No Action Alternative, all 22,560 acres would be open to mineral exploration and development under the mining and mineral leasing laws. Surface disturbance would be limited to the 17 existing placer and lode claims as very little increase in prospecting is anticipated. Surface disturbance would not exceed 5 acres on each claim, or roughly 85 acres. No significant exploration or development is anticipated because of the remoteness of the area, the terrain, the low mineral potentials involved, the characteristic small size of the ore deposits, and the current trends toward development of bulk deposits.

PIUTE CYPRESS WSA (CA-010-46 and USFS A5213)

PROPOSED ACTIONS (No Wilderness/No Action)

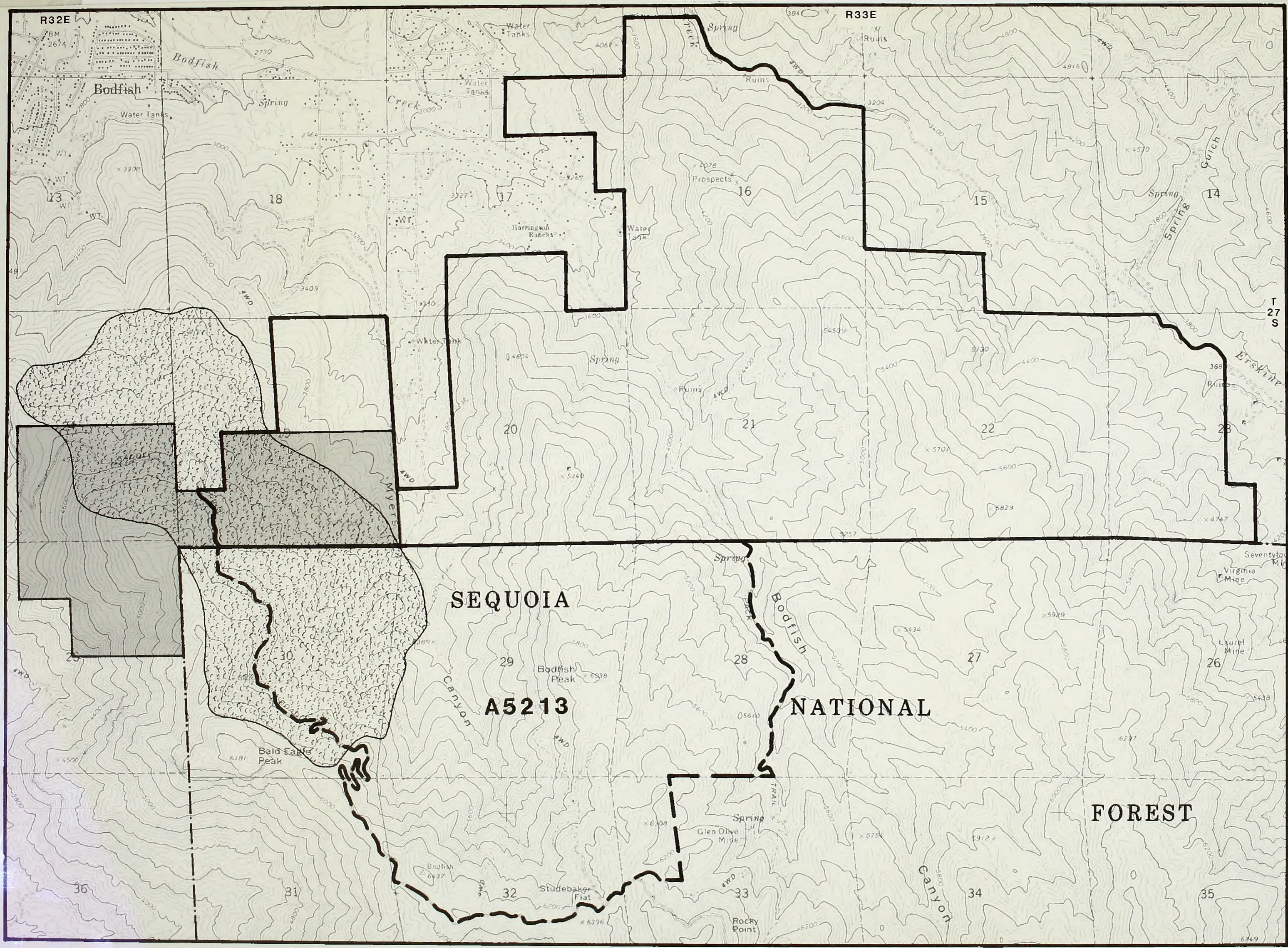
None of the 5,527 acres of public land in the Piute Cypress WSA are recommended for wilderness designation, but will be managed for multiple use management in accordance with the South Sierra MFP, 19 , (see Map 9 - Proposed Action, Piute Cypress WSA). Under the proposal the area will remain open to recreational ORV use. However, motorized use and other surface disturbing activities will be precluded from the Piute Cypress National Botanical Area. The area will be open to mineral entry and location and small scale mining development is anticipated.




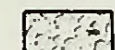
Recreational Use Management Actions

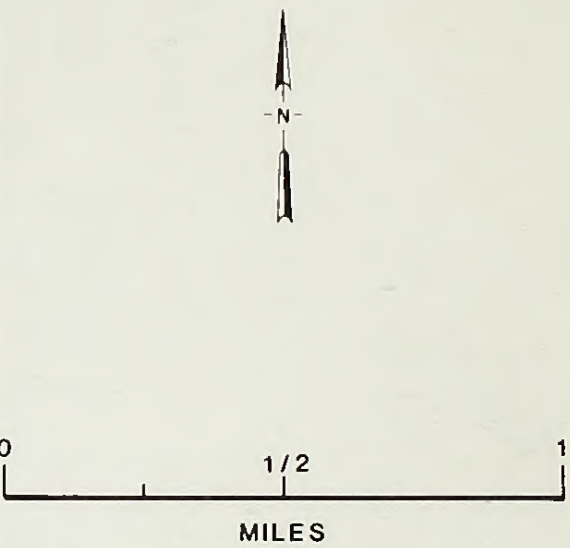
With the exception of the Piute Cypress Natural/Botanical Area, the lands within the WSA will remain open to recreational ORV use. Approximately 25 visitor days of ORV use are estimated to occur annually in the WSA along 3 3/4 miles of jeep trails which provide access to Bodfish Canyon and several old mine sites near Erskin Creek Canyon. Projections indicate that recreational use would increase slightly, but would remain at levels below 50 visitor use days annually for the foreseeable future because of the lack of public access and very steep and rugged terrain.

The WSA will also be open to nonmotorized recreation activities including hiking, birdwatching, and some equestrian use. Recreational use for these activities will remain consistent at levels below 500 visitor days annually. No recreational facilities or trails exist in the WSA and none are planned. Development of recreation facilities, such as campgrounds is not anticipated because of the low use the area receives.

Alternatives



- LEGEND**
-  Wilderness Study Area
 -  Forest Service further planning area
 -  Piute Cypress Natural Area (Instant Study Area)
 -  Piute Cypress Grove



**PIUTE CYPRESS
WILDERNESS
STUDY AREA**

**PROPOSED ACTION
(No Wilderness/No Action)**

CA-010-046/A5213

MAP-9

Fire Management Actions

Fire suppression will be practiced in the Piute Cypress WSA until a fire management plan is completed. It is anticipated that this plan will allow the use of mechanized equipment in all but the Piute Cypress Natural/Botanical Area. Support facilities for fire fighting will involve the use of public lands within the WSA. None of the existing firebreaks will be maintained but will be allowed to return to their natural state. No new firebreaks will be cleared.

Wildlife Management Actions

Under the Proposed Action, the entire 5,527 acres of the Piute Cypress WSA will continue to be cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game as a portion of the 306,442 acre Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area. Other than conducting random patrols for unauthorized hunting/poaching and possibly manipulating the grazing season, no other wildlife management actions are planned.

Vegetation Management Actions

No vegetative management actions are planned under the Proposed Action.

Mineral Development Management Actions

The entire area will be open to mineral exploration and development under the mining and mineral leasing laws. It is anticipated that in addition to the 47 existing placer and lode claims that cover approximately 725 acres in the eastern portion of the WSA, 10 more claims will be located covering an additional 200 acres. Small surface development is also likely to occur. The 4 existing lode claims covering 45 acres within the National Forest near Bodfish Peak, would be developed resulting in less than 20 acres of surface disturbance. Placer claims will likely involve motorized dredges and sluices with little additional support. Lode claims will be developed using underground mining methods. Some blasting and the use of heavy equipment will be required. In all, approximately 250-300 acres of surface will be disturbed on a result of these mining activities. An additional 2 to 3 miles will also be required for access.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVES

All 5,527 acres of public land in the Piute Cypress WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designations. Under this alternative the area would be closed to motorized recreation. No new mining claims would be located within the WSA, but small-scale mining development on the existing claims would occur.

Recreational Use Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative the WSA would be closed as recreational ORV use eliminating 25 visitor days of ORV use which are estimated to occur annually on the area's 3 3/4 miles of jeep trails. Other than these actions and use levels, the recreational use management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 58.

Fire Management Actions

Under this alternative, a fire management plan would be written for the WSA and would become an addendum to the Wilderness Management Plan. Fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and ground crews would be used for fire control. Cross-country vehicle travel would be permitted only when the terrain to vegetative cover. Heavy equipment such as tracked vehicles and dozers would not be permitted except to prevent loss of human life or to protect private or high-value property.

Wildlife Management Actions

The wildlife management actions for the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 60.

Vegetation Management Actions

No vegetation management actions are planned under the All Wilderness Alternative.

Minerals Development Management Actions

Upon designation, the entire area would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights. Validity exams would be performed on the 51 placer and lode claims within the area. It is anticipated that based on extensive historic workings underground, the majority of these claims would be determined to be valid. No additional claims would be located but small scale development and 2 to 3 miles of new road would be built.

TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND
ALTERNATIVES FOR THE MERCED RIVER WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	There will be a moderate adverse impact on the area's wilderness values over approximately 15 to 20 percent of the WSA as a result of continued ORV use and the exploration and development of the WSA's placer and lode claims.	There would be a moderate adverse impact on the area's wilderness values over approximately 8 to 10 percent of the WSA as a result of the exploration and development of 60 percent of the placer gold claims and 20 percent of the lode jade and gold claims.
Impact on Recreational ORV Use	Recreational ORV use will be slightly enhanced as a result of the road improvements associated with the exploration and development of the areas mineral resources. The levels of recreational ORV use will increase from 2,500-3,000 visitor days per year to nearly 4,000 visitor days.	Recreation ORV use would be foregone, eliminating the 2,500-3,000 visitor days estimated to occur annually within the WSA. The impact would be moderate, however, because of the availability of similar opportunities for motorized recreational use on lands proximate to the WSA.
Impact on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources	The area's archaeological resources will be slightly impacted as a result of the surface disturbance from continued mining activity and theft and vandalism associated with increased motorized and pedestrian use.	Impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action. Motorized vehicles would be prohibited eliminating the 2,500-3,000 visitor days estimated to occur annually, negligibly benefiting these resources.
Impact on Federally-Listed Candidate Species	There will be no impact to the habitat of the area's Federally-listed candidate species--the Limestone salamander.	Impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action.
Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development	There will be no impact on mineral exploration and development.	Less than half of the area's 209 lode and placer claims would be explored/development. Future mining activity would be foregone.

TABLE 2
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND
ALTERNATIVES FOR THE PANOCHE HILLS NORTH WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	There will be a minor, adverse impact on the area's wilderness values on approximately 15 percent of the WSA as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources and continued vehicle use.	There would be a minor positive impact on the area's wilderness values as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreation use and oil and gas exploration.
Impact on Motorized Hunting Use Levels	Motorized hunting use will continue and will increase from the current 250 visitor days annually to under 325 visitor days.	Motorized hunting use would be foregone eliminating 250 visitor days annually. Adverse impacts would be minimal as similar opportunities are available on other public lands within the region.
Impact on Paleontological Resources	There will be no impact on the area's paleontological resources.	Impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action.
Impact on RT&E Species	The area's RT&E plant and animal species will be negligibly impacted as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with continued four-wheeled vehicle use, oil and gas exploration, and mechanized fire suppression.	There would be a slight positive impact on the area's RT&E plant and animal species as a result of eliminating the noise and surface disturbance associated with motorized vehicle use and oil and gas exploration.
Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development	There will be no impact on oil and gas exploration. However, the potential for oil and gas is low.	Oil and gas exploration and development would be foregone on the entire WSA including the 2,000 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases.

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND
ALTERNATIVES FOR THE PANOCHE HILLS SOUTH WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	There will be a minor, adverse impact on the area's wilderness values on 20 to 25 percent of the WSA as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the projected 125 visitor days of motorized vehicle use and exploration of the area's oil and gas resources.	There would be a minor, positive impact on the area's wilderness values as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreation use and displacing the 75 visitor days estimated to occur annually along the 10 miles of jeep trails and prohibiting oil and gas exploration. Walk in access for hunting and other visitor use would continue from the edge of the WSA.	There would be a minor, adverse impact on the wilderness values on 15 to 20 percent of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA as a result of continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration. The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources would moderately impact these values, but will be short-term since production is not anticipated.
Impact on Paleontological Resources	The area's paleontological resources will be negligibly impacted as a result of continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration and the special stipulations and conditions placed on surface disturbing activities within the Moreno Paleontological ACEC.	Wilderness designation would negligibly benefit the area's paleontological resources as a result of eliminating motorized vehicle use and oil and gas exploration and the surface disturbance associated with these activities.	Because of the special stipulations and conditions placed on surface disturbing activities in the Moreno ACEC, there would be only negligible adverse impacts on the paleontological resources in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA. Wilderness designation would negligibly benefit these resources in the suitable portion as a result of eliminating motorized vehicle use and oil and gas exploration.
Impact on Paleontological Investigation	There will be no impact on paleontological investigations	There would be a slight adverse impact on paleontological investigations as a result of the limitations placed on motorized vehicle access.	Paleontological investigations (including excavations) would be permitted in both the suitable and nonsuitable portions of the WSA. However, there would be a slight adverse impact on investigations in the suitable portion of the WSA due to the limitations placed on motorized vehicle access.

TABLE 3 (continued)
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND
ALTERNATIVES FOR THE PANOCHE HILLS SOUTH WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on RT&E Species	There will be a minor, adverse impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered species as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration. Impacts on oil and gas exploration, however, will be short-term since production is not anticipated.	There would be a slight, positive impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered species as a result of eliminating the noise and surface disturbance associated with motorized vehicle use and oil and gas exploration.	Impact for the rare, threatened, and endangered species in the nonsuitable portion of the the WSA would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action. In the suitable portion of the WSA, the 30 visitor days of motorized vehicle use would be eliminated and oil and gas exploration would be prohibited, slightly benefitting the area's rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species.
Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development	There will be no impact on oil and gas exploration. However, the potential for development is low.	Oil and gas exploration and development would be foregone on the entire WSA.	There would be no impact on oil and gas exploration on the 5,067 acres not recommended suitable. However, oil and gas exploration would be foregone on the remaining 5,000 acres recommended suitable.

TABLE 4
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND
ALTERNATIVES FOR THE PINNACLES WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL WILDERNESS)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	Overall, wilderness values will be negligibly impacted on less than 1 percent of the WSA. Prescribed burns conducted on 3,500 to 5,000 acres over the next 30 to 35 years and pre-treatments on 500 acres of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA every 10 to 15 years will have a minor impact on these values but these impacts will be short-term and highly localized.	Impacts on wilderness values, overall, would basically be the same as those described under the Proposed Action. However, there would be a negligible positive impact to these values as a result of eliminating motorized vehicle use and precluding mechanized pre-treatments and fire-break construction.	Impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action. Motorized vehicle use would be limited to 4 1/2 miles of designated primitive ways and precluded in the remainder of the area. Engines and other motorized vehicles would be allowed for fire suppression but would be restricted to existing routes as much as possible.

TABLE 5
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND
ALTERNATIVES FOR THE CALIENTE MOUNTAIN WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	<p>There will be a moderate, adverse impact on wilderness values on 15 to 20 percent of the WSA as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources. These impacts, for the most part, will be short-term since production is not anticipated on 90 percent of the wells. Five wells will be developed, however, permanently impairing wilderness values on approximately 2 to 3 percent of the area.</p> <p>The present and projected levels of motorized and non-motorized recreational use, coupled with continued grazing use, prescribed burning, and the occasional maintenance of existing grazing developments will minimally impair these values.</p>	<p>For the most part, wilderness values would be only negligibly impaired as a result of increased nonmotorized recreation use and livestock grazing use and the maintenance of existing livestock improvements. However, the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of 40 acres of pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases would significantly impact the wilderness values on and in the immediate vicinity of these lands.</p>
Impact on Endangered Species	<p>There will be a moderate adverse impact on the foraging habitat of both the peregrine falcon and California condor as a result of the noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources. These impacts will, for the most part, be short-term since production is not anticipated on 90 percent of the wells. Five wells will be developed, however, permanently impairing forage habitat on approximately 2 to 3 percent of the area.</p>	<p>There will be a negligible impact on the foraging habitat of the peregrine falcon and California condor as a result of increased nonmotorized recreational use. Noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the 40-acre pre-FLPMA oil and gas lease would significantly impact the habitat on and in the immediate vicinity of these pre-FLPMA leased lands.</p>

TABLE 5 (Cont.)
 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND
 ALTERNATIVES FOR THE CALIENTE MOUNTAIN WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Endangered Species (Continued)	The present and projected levels of motorized and non-motorized recreational use, coupled with continued grazing use, prescribed burning, and the occasional maintenance of existing grazing developments will minimally impact these values.	
Impact on Livestock Grazing Use	Under the Proposed Action, livestock forage production will increase by 100 animal unit months (AUMs) slightly benefiting livestock grazing use.	There would be no impact on existing livestock grazing levels. However, prescribed burns would be prohibited and the potential 100 animal unit months of increased livestock forage would be foregone.
Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development	There will be no impact on oil and gas exploration.	With the exception of one 40-acre pre-FLPMA oil and gas lease, opportunities for oil and gas exploration over the entire WSA would be foregone.

TABLE 6
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND
ALTERNATIVES FOR THE OWENS PEAK WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL WILDERNESS)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	<p>Wilderness designation of 14,960 acres would result in a minor positive benefit to wilderness values particularly naturalness and solitude as a result of closing this area to recreational ORV use and mineral development. Also, restricting the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression would slightly benefit naturalness.</p> <p>Generally, wilderness values would be retained throughout the WSA with the exception of mineral development including a loss of naturalness on approximately 50 acres. Additionally, placer and lode mining activities would impair the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude on 1,250 acres surrounding the mine sites. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, a special feature of the WSA, would be slightly enhanced by closure of the designated portion to vehicular use. Long-term security from unanticipated adverse future actions would be provided to the 14,960 acres recommended for wilderness.</p>	<p>Under the All Wilderness Alternative wilderness values would be retained and slightly enhanced within the 22,560-acre WSA. Naturalness and solitude would particularly benefit from eliminating 650 visitor days of recreational ORV use and prohibiting mineral development including 16 mining claims covering 860 acres. As a special feature of the WSA, the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail would be slightly enhanced as a result of closing the WSA to recreational ORV use. In addition, long-term security from unanticipated adverse actions would be provided.</p>	<p>There would be a minor impact to wilderness values within the WSA as a result of increased ORV use from the current 650 visitor days to 1,000 visitor days. Additionally, low-level exploration and development of mineral resources on 16 placer and lode mining claims would result in a loss of naturalness on 80 acres as well as an impairment of the WSA's perception of naturalness and sense of solitude within 2,000 acres in the western portion of the WSA. Increased ORV use would disrupt hiking and backpacking use on the PCNST and increase the threat of vehicle use on the trail.</p>
Impact on Recreational ORV Use	<p>Recreational ORV use of 50 visitor days annually would be foregone within the designated portion of the WSA. The impact of this action on recreational ORV use would be negligible because of the similar opportunities available on public lands outside the WSA and the relatively small amount of use displaced. Approximately 600 visitor days</p>	<p>Recreational ORV use of 650 visitor days annually would be foregone. The impact of this action on recreational ORV use would be minor since similar opportunities are available on other public lands.</p>	<p>Motorized recreation use would continue and is projected to increase from the current 650 visitor days annually to under 1,000 visitor days.</p>

TABLE 6 (Cont.)
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND
ALTERNATIVES FOR THE OWENS PEAK WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL WILDERNESS)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Recreational ORV Use (Continued)	of recreational ORV use annually would continue within the nondesignated portion of the WSA.		
Impact on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources	Overall, the WSA's archaeological resources will be retained under the Proposed Action. Surface-disturbing activities such as mineral development and mechanized fire suppression will be restricted and vehicular access along 8 miles of primitive vehicle routes will be eliminated. Adverse impacts associated with continued mineral development and vehicular access in the non-suitable portion of the WSA will be minor.	Wilderness designation of the Owens Peak WSA will enhance the preservation of archaeological resources. Surface-disturbing activities such as mineral development and mechanized fire suppression will be restricted and vehicle access along 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways will be eliminated.	Overall, the WSA's archaeological resources will be minimally impacted by continued vehicular access and increased recreational ORV use as well as surface disturbance from projected mineral development activities and the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression throughout the WSA.
Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development	Wilderness designation would withdraw 14,960 acres from mineral entry while 7,600 acres would remain available for exploration and development. Due to the low potential for the occurrence and development of minerals within the WSA, there would be negligible impacts on mineral exploration and development. No significant exploration or development is anticipated within the portion of the WSA not recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.	There would be a minor impact on mineral exploration and development due to withdrawing the entire WSA from mineral appropriation and entry. There are no known economic concentrations of mineral resources that would be foregone.	There would be no impacts on mineral exploration and development as the WSA would remain open to mining and mineral exploration and development. Due to the low potential for occurrence and development of minerals within the WSA, there is no significant mining activity projected for the existing 16 mining claims.

TABLE 7
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS AND
ALTERNATIVES FOR THE PIUTE CYPRESS WSA

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values within 600 acres would be adversely impacted as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of mineral resources. Approximately 300 acres of naturalness would be lost with the preception of naturalness and the sense of solitude impaired within an area of approximately 600 acres as a result of mining activities. Projected recreational ORV use (50 visitor days per year) would have negligilbe impacts on wilderness values. The use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression would result in short-term minor impacts to naturalness. Special features would be retained within the WSA.	Wilderness values within 500 acres would be adversely impacted by projected mineral development which would continue as a result of anticipated valid existing rights. Surface disturbance and noise associated with mining activities would result in a loss of naturalnes on 250 acres with the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude impaired within 500 acres. Wilderness values throughout the remainder of the WSA would be retained.
Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development	Mineral exploration and development would not be impacted under the Proposed Action. The WSA would remain open to mineral exploration and development of existing and future mining claims.	Wilderness designation would withdraw the entire WSA from mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid existing right. It is anticipated that the majority of the 51 mining claims within the WSA would be determined to be valid and small scale development of potential mineral resources (other than within valid existing claims) would be foregone.

CHAPTER 3

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

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AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This chapter briefly describes each WSA and the resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action and alternatives.

More detailed descriptions of the resources in the study area and the regional socioeconomic conditions may be found in the planning documents for the area. Copies of these documents may be reviewed in the Bakersfield District and Caliente, Folsom, and Hollister Resource Area Offices.

MERCED RIVER WSA (CA-040-203)

The Merced River WSA contains 12,935 acres and is bounded on the west and south by private lands and electrical power transmission lines, on the east by the Briceburg Road, and on the north by private lands, USFS-administered lands, and roads.

The vegetation of the unit is primarily chamise with some pines and oak occurring along the major drainages. Manzanita, other low shrubs, and annuals also occur at varying densities throughout the unit. The unit includes the Merced River Canyon, the North Fork of the Merced River Canyon, and numerous other small canyons. Elevations vary from approximately 850 to 3,400 feet above sea level.

WILDERNESS VALUES

Naturalness

The Merced River WSA generally appears to have been affected by the forces of nature with human influences unnoticeable for the most part. An abandoned railroad grade parallels the Merced River through the center of the WSA. Other abandoned projects occurring in the canyon include a diversion dam, a powerhouse foundation, and old mining developments located throughout the WSA. All of these projects have been abandoned and the area can be returned to substantially natural condition by hand labor and/or natural processes. Numerous firebreaks and ways are located throughout the WSA but are, for the most part substantially unnoticeable.

Solitude

The area's topographic variation, low visitation and dense vegetation combine to form outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

Outstanding opportunities for water-related primitive and unconfined types of recreation can be found along the Merced River. Some unmaintained foot trails currently exist in the unit and provide opportunities for hiking and backpacking. Dense, low-lying vegetation does, however, cover the area restricting human movement and limiting opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation.

Special Features

The Merced River flows for four miles through the WSA and offers outstanding opportunities for water-related activities such as whitewater rafting.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The Merced River WSA contains 12,935 acres of public land. It is bounded on the northwest, portions of the east, and the southwest by private lands. The remainder of the WSA is surrounded by public lands. Two 160-acre parcels belonging to the Merced Irrigation District, one 20-acre patented mining claim, and one 640-acre private parcel are located within the WSA. Access to the 20-acre mining claim is along an existing road.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Merced River WSA contains twenty-eight known archeological sites. Of the total fifteen are associated with the prehistoric period of Native American occupation. These sites are all characterized by the presence of bedrock mortar holes, varying in number from one to seventy-four per site, and represent locations of food grinding activity. Evidence of other activities or occupation at these sites is lacking, since all but one have no debris or remains except the grinding holes. The Native American group which inhabited this area was the Sierra Miwok, but there is little evidence to directly link these people with the grinding sites, or to assign the use of the sites to any specific time period within the last 1,500 years.

The remaining thirteen sites represent the structural remains of occupation during the historic period. All features recorded on the sites are of native rock masonry, with six being the remains of rock cabins and another six being rock fireplaces, chimneys, or foundations presumably associated with wooden cabins. One historic site is characterized only by rock walls of unknown function, while one of the cabin sites also has a grave. The type of rock construction evident at the sites is generally thought to date to the last half of the nineteenth century, and all sites are assumed to represent occupancy related to gold mining during that period. At the time, mining was a major land use in the WSA, and many unrecorded historic mines and mineral prospects are known to exist.

Also present is the grade of the Yosemite Railroad, dating to the first half of the twentieth century and significant due to its association with Yosemite National Park. The recorded historic cabin sites are of unknown significance, but could be important if research linked them to important people or events, or if they contained intact archeological deposits.

Environment

All of the sites discussed above are located along the river corridors. Only a small portion of the WSA has been inventoried for cultural resources and most of that inventory was concentrated along the rivers. Any number of unrecorded cultural sites could be present on the upland, but since this environment is generally inhospitable, the bulk of the occupation and land use was probably along the river during both the historic and prehistoric periods.

RECREATION

The WSA receives a moderate amount of ORV use along the seven miles of ways and firebreaks located in the eastern portion of the WSA. Approximately 2,500-3,000 visitor days of ORV use are estimated to occur annually within the area -- primarily motorcycles and four-wheel drive vehicles.

Whitewater boating along the Merced River accounts for over 4,000 visitor days per year; three-quarters of this use is commercial. Hiking and fishing along the Merced are also popular activities accounting for over 3,500 visitor day user year.

VISUAL RESOURCES

The area is rated as having only fair scenic quality. This is due largely to the lack of unusual or unique visual features and monotonous land forms, vegetation and color. The area includes two rating areas: Cat Town (O10), VRM Class IV and Merced Canyon (O12), VRM Class II. These areas are viewed as foregrounds or middleground from highways, access roads and trails.

VEGETATION

The primary vegetation is chamise chaparral interspersed with manzanita, oak and some conifers. The area is dominated by chamise, manzanita and digger pine. This chaparral is adapted to summer drought, limited winter rain and rocky, coarse-textured soils. Oak savannah sub-communities occur on deeper soil sites. Annual grasses are found on the better soil sites and scattered stands of oaks and riparian vegetation occur along the Merced River.

Chamise dominates the chaparral at the lower elevations. Toyon, coffeeberry and yerba santa appear as the elevation increases. These are followed by buckeye, flannel bush, redberry, redbud, mountain mahogany, scrub oak, poison oak and buckbrush. A few digger pines tower over the shrubs. Understory is restricted to the more open areas.

Scrub oak replaces the chamise in the more mesic situations at the intermediate elevations. Aspect also interacts with elevation: Often chamise-dominated communities occur on south-facing slopes, while north-facing slopes at the same elevation have scrub oak chaparral. Higher elevation chaparral stands are an equal mix of manzanita and chamise. High above the Merced River there is a thick stand of knobcone pine and occasional small areas of open stands of ponderosa pine also occur.

WILDLIFE

The area contains a variety of game species including mule deer, valley quail, bob cats, coyote, black bear, band-tail pigeons, morning doves, and cottontail, brush rabbits and jackrabbits. Two fully protected species - the mountain lion and bald eagle - are also known to occur in the area, although there are no known bald eagle nesting sites. The area also includes habitat for the state-listed (as rare) limestone salamander.

The WSA is within the completed and partially implemented North Fork-Halls Gulch Habitat Management Plan. Considerable investment has been made for the improvement of deer and upland game habitat. Projects have centered around prescribed burning of decadent chaparral; and the development of water, including two spring developments, two charco pits, and one reservoir.

MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES

The WSA has a high mineral potential for jade, placer gold, and lode gold. There has been significant production of all three commodities. A total of over 200 placer and lode claims are located within the WSA.

Placer Claims

There are approximately 140 placer mining claims located within the WSA. These claims are primarily located on the Merced River, North Fork of the Merced River and Sherlock Creek. Most of mining is conducted using suction dredges. Dredging on California water ways is regulated by the California Department of Fish and Game. They allow dredging throughout the year within the WSA.

The Merced River downstream to Halls Gulch, Sherlock Creek and down the North Fork of Merced River nearly to Section 36 are readily accessible by four-wheel drive vehicles. The remainder of the North Fork of the Merced and the Merced below the Mountain King mine are accessible only by foot, and perhaps motorcycle.

Most placer mining on the Merced is conducted in the summer when water levels are low, on the other water courses it is conducted earlier in the summer, since they tend to dry up. However, sporadic mining is conducted year-round.

The dredges are powered by light duty air cooled gasoline engines although some dredges have been used on the Merced which use water cooled automobile engines. Occasionally a dozer or backhoe has been used in the past to excavate "overburden" so the gravel at bedrock can be dredged. Use of this equipment requires special permits from Fish and Game.

The accessible portions of the North Fork and the Merced are the site of permanent miners camps. These camps are on the boundary of the WSA but the occupants mine within the WSA. Overnight camping perhaps several weeks in duration probably occurs at mining sites within the WSA.

Environment

Lode Mining

There are 69 lode mining claims located within the WSA. Two minerals have been sought within the WSA gold, and jade.

The Mother Lode Fault System in Mariposa County yielded around 441,000 ounces of gold. A segment of the Mother Lode passes through the WSA, however, this segment known not for its gold but for jade. Several jade deposits were discovered within the WSA in the 1960's. These deposits have been mined and prospected by surface workings. Gold prospects occur here as well.

Lode gold has been discovered in quartz veins scattered throughout the remainder of the WSA. The Cat Town Mining District which lies almost wholly within the WSA yielded at least 3,300 ounces of gold. This district is a northern extension of the Whitlock Mining District which lies to the south. The mines of the Whitlock District yielded around 87,000 ounces of gold. One of most productive mines in the area, the Mountain King lies between the two districts. This mine, which is just outside of the WSA produced at least 40,000 ounces of gold.

Along the North Fork of the Merced River in Section 25 lode gold has been discovered on the recently staked KPTL No. 1 claim and at Gold Bug Mine at the bend in the river.

Southeast of the confluence of Sherlock Creek and the Merced River rich pockets of gold were discovered in the 1920's on the Odell claim group.

In the southeast corner of the WSA is the extension of the French Mine which yielded around 20,000 ounces of gold.

The lode gold deposits adjacent to the within the WSA are by today's standards relatively small. However, their high grade has encouraged individuals and small companies to explore for additional reserves at mines in the vicinity, outside of the WSA.

Power Site Reserves

Most of the WSA, except for the higher elevations in the northwest quarter, is under withdrawal for potential power site development. These power site reserves were established through Executive Orders and Federal Power Commission Orders issued between 1915 and 1970.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

There are four authorized grazing leases covering approximately 90% of WSA and allocating 500 animal unit months (AUMs). Forty-five percent of the WSA is within the existing Merced River Allotment Management Plan. This AMP involves two of the four leases in the WSA. There is one existing reservoir in good condition which should not need reconstruction for approximately 10 years. Another reservoir is proposed for reconstruction with an expected life span of 20 to 30 years. All reservoir reconstruction will require motorized access. A 1,000-acre prescribed burn is also planned to meet both livestock forage and wildlife habitat objectives.

SOIL AND WATERSHED RESOURCES

Soils

Two major soil associations found in the WSA are the Maymen-Mariposa association and the Auburn-Dalton association.

The Maymen-Mariposa association occurs extensively in the area. These types of soils are well drained, 8 to 20 inches in depth, moderately to strongly acidic, and have metasedimentary bedrock. The texture is from gravelly loam to very rocky loam.

The Auburn-Dalton association is the next most common type found. These soils are well drained, 8 to 20 inches in depth, slightly acidic, and have basic igneous bedrock. The texture is rocky of very rocky loam (Butler and Jones, 1974).

Watershed

The area is part of the Merced River drainage. Major tributaries include Sherlock Creek, David Gulch, Solomon Gulch, and the north fork for the Merced River. The Merced River flows west into Lake McClure.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

The WSA encompasses portions of the Limestone Salamander ACEC (about 470 acres, or 4 percent of the WSA).



Photo 1 - View looking east up the Merced River Canyon to Yosemite Valley.



Photo 2 - Merced River WSA

PANOCHÉ HILLS NORTH WSA
(CA-0407301A)

The Panoche Hills North WSA contains 6,677 acres and is located just west of the San Joaquin Valley in western Fresno County. The WSA includes very steep rugged terrain accentuated by intermittent creeks. Elevations vary from approximately 800 to 2,600 feet above sea level. Vegetation within the WSA is primarily annual grasses, interspersed with low-growing shrubs.

The WSA is bounded on the west by the Panoche Access Road, on the north by a powerline right-of-way, and on the south and east by roads.

WILDERNESS VALUES

Naturalness

The WSA remains relatively free from man's influence. Some ORV tracks and exploratory mining pits occur within the WSA. There are numerous improved springs, guzzlers, silt basins, and other wildlife management facilities located within the WSA. Most of these facilities are accessible by unimproved ways. These improvements and ways do not detract from the naturalness of the WSA, however. Approximately one mile of road in the southwest portion of the WSA is excluded from the area by a cherrystem.

Solitude

The terrain variety and the steep canyons along the intermittent creeks provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. This opportunity is less near the perimeter of the WSA due to the roads, communication towers, and/or views of U.S. Interstate 5.

Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The area provides good opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreational pursuits. These include hunting, hiking, and bird-watching. Annual game bird populations vary greatly from year to year with hunting activity varying accordingly.

Special Features

Four rare, threatened and endangered species - the San Joaquin kit fox, the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, the giant kangaroo rat, and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel - occur throughout the area. An ACEC to protect the habitat of these species was established in the western portion of the area in 1984. The northeast portion of the WSA is also part of one of the richest and most important fossil areas in California, and was designated an ACEC in 1984. In addition, the area contains mediterranean annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The Panoche Hills North WSA contains 6,677 acres of public land. There are no private inholdings within the boundaries. There are two adjacent parcels of private land - one along the north boundary and one along the west boundary. All the rest of the WSA is bounded by other public lands. This WSA is separated from the Panoche Hills South WSA by a road.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are no recorded sites within the WSA. No archaeological inventories have been conducted but cultural sensitivity is thought to be very low. Any sites present in the area will most likely consist of small, temporary campsites located in proximity to creeks and drainages. There are no known historical sites within the WSA.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The northeastern portion of the WSA has been recognized as part of one of the most important and richest fossil areas in California, especially for vertebrate fossils. Fossil bearing rocks are associated with the Moreno shale formation. The fossils include plesiosaurs, mosasaurs, hadrosaurian dinosaurs, and prehistoric sharks, fish, and turtles.

The significant paleontological sites in this WSA are occasionally studied on-site by university researchers and visited by groups of students from universities in Northern California. Access by vehicle is important to the use of these sites for laboratory exercise in university courses on paleontology. Many sites, however, are restricted to foot access at the present time.

This area is part of the Moreno Paleontological ACEC established in 1984 to help protect these important resources. A management plan for the ACEC is being developed at the present time and will be completed in October 1986.

RECREATION

There is light to moderate hunting-use during the upland game bird season. The amount of use in any given year depends upon the highly variable annual bird populations. There is also some bird watching and sightseeing use. Vehicle ways in the western part of the WSA help to disperse hunting and other uses to the interior portion of the area.

About 6 miles of vehicle ways within the WSA and one mile of a cherrystemed road are located in the western part of the WSA. Approximately 250 visitor days of hunting use and 25 days of sightseeing and other uses occur within the WSA. All most all of this existing use occurs through motorized access.

There is legal public access to the area from the west, via the Panoche Access Road. There is also access to the north and east side of the area across private farm lands in the San Joaquin Valley. While the latter is not a legal public access, it is unrestricted by the private landowners at this time.

Environment

Vehicle use is limited to four-wheeled vehicles on designated routes from the start of the quail and chukar hunting season in mid-October until the start of fire season in late April or early May the following year. The area is closed to motorcycles and three-wheeled vehicles at all times. Walk in access to the Panoche Hills Management Area is permitted all year. The walk in point is located along the Panoche Access Road about one mile from the north west boundary of the WSA.

The Panoche Hills Management Area has been closed to motorcycle use since 1970. However, there has continued to be some trespass use originating primarily from the San Joaquin Valley. This use is presently estimated to be 50 visitor days within this WSA.

There are no recreational developments within the WSA. No recreation developments are planned nor are any additional vehicle routes planned.

VISUAL RESOURCES

The ridgeline and east side of the area is highly visible from Interstate Highway 5. Scenery in this area is typical of the grassy hills along the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley. Two large communications sites are visible on the ridgeline but they do not dominate the landscape.

VEGETATION

Vegetation in the area consists of valley grassland and shrub-grass plant communities. The herbaceous vegetation, predominately mediterranean annual grasses (mostly Bromus sp.), is highly dependent on seasonal rainfall. Annual production may range from as low as two or three hundred pounds of dry herbage per acre to over 3,000 pounds depending on yearly rainfall and temperature regimes. South slopes are drier and always produce less than north slopes. Many herbs such as filaree (Erodium sp.), fiddleneck (Amsinckia sp.), popcorn flower (Plagiobothrys sp.), and lupines (Lupinus sp.), are also common. Common shrub species include saltbush (Atriplex sp.), Mexican tea (Ephedra californica), golden bush (Haplopappus sp.), buckwheat (Eriogonum sp.).

It should be noted that most of the annual grasses are of mediterranean origin. As such they are not endemic to the area but are now considered naturalized. These annual grasses form thick swards (areas) of fine, dry fuel which have dramatically altered fire frequency and occurrence in the area. Prior to the advent of these mediterranean annuals the vegetation most likely consisted of scattered native annuals, perennial bunchgrasses and shrubs. Fire frequency and occurrence were probably low and fires did not reach very large sizes. As such the native vegetation is not fire dependent. Shrubs such as saltbush (Atriplex sp.) are easily killed by fire. Other shrubs such as Mexican tea (Ephedra sp.) will resprout to some degree but are also killed if the fire is too intense. In 1979, a wildfire burned 60,000 acres in the Ciervo Hills just to the south in 12 hours. Shrub mortality was estimated at 95%. In 1985, a wildfire burned 6,000 acres in the northeastern portion of the Panoche Hills, including 2,500 acres within the WSA. These are essentially desert ecosystems and damage by fire takes many years to heal. As such fire prevention and aggressive suppression action are important to maintain the area's natural values.

Environment

A portion of the WSA also contains suitable habitat for the green fiddle-neck (*Amsinckia furcata*), a BLM sensitive plant species, although no populations are known to occur in the area. This portion of the WSA was designated as the Moreno Paleontological ACEC in 1984. Although established primarily for recognition of important paleontological values, the designation also recognized the existence of suitable habitat for this species.

WILDLIFE

The Panoche National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA) withdrawal covers most of the public lands in the Management Area. Much habitat improvement work for upland game -- California quail and chukar partridge (guzzlers, silt catchments, spring developments and exclosures) -- has been done in this Management Area by the California Department of Fish and Game and the Fresno County Sportsmen's Club.

A wildlife management plan for the area -- the Panoche Hills Management Plan -- was prepared in 1982. All projects outlined in the plan have been implemented. There are two developed springs, 12 silt catchments and seven guzzlers within the WSA.

Public lands in the WSA provide limited foraging habitat for the San Joaquin kit fox. No den sites have been observed or documented. Scattered observations of blunt-nosed leopard lizards have also been recorded, particularly in the "plateau area" in the western portion of the WSA. Giant kangaroo rat burrows are scattered in limited numbers on major ridgetops and significant habitat exists in the "plateau area." Overall, except for the "plateau area", the majority of the area appears to be marginal habitat for these species because of steep, rugged topography. Mining activities and past ORV use have impacted significant habitat especially in the "plateau area." Sheep bedding and trailing have also impacted some of the giant kangaroo rat colonies.

The "plateau" area (western portion of WSA) was designated as a sub-unit of the Panoche/Coalinga RT&E ACEC in 1984 in recognition of the important habitat for these species. A management plan is currently being prepared for the ACEC which will detail specific actions for protection and monitoring of this area.

Other species that occur in the area include golden eagles, prairie falcons, badger, coyotes, bobcat, and a variety of smaller non-game animals and songbirds.

MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES

Potential for occurrence of diatomite, gypsite, marl, phosphate and uranium has been identified, based on the geologic environment. In the past, marl has been excavated west of the WSA, gypsite to the east. One mining claim is located on the edge of the WSA in Section 19, T. 14 S., R. 11 E. Minimal surface disturbance has taken place on the claim but the commodity claimed is unknown. The WSA has no other history of mining activity or production.

2,000 acres of the WSA is covered by oil and gas leases. All leases will have expired by December of 1995 unless extended by drilling/production. No drilling has occurred within the WSA. The closest producing oilfields are the Vallecitos field six miles to the south and the Chendy Ranch field seven miles to the east. In 1939, three shallow wildcat wells (less than 1,000 feet deep) were drilled in Section 12, T. 14 S., R. 11 E., immediately east of the WSA boundary. All were abandoned. Ten other wildcat wells, all abandoned, have been drilled within 3 miles of the eastern boundary.

Other minerals may be present as gypsite or marl but these are considered subeconomic due to the size of the deposits, and the availability of commercial sources outside the WSA.

There is no current mineral production from the WSA. The opportunities for future production are slight due to low potentials. Though oil and gas rights have been leased, there has been no drilling and the potential is expected to be low, even though the area around the Panoche Hills has been producing oil and gas for many years.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

The WSA encompasses portions of four sheep grazing leases. All are managed under Allotment Management Plans (AMPs). A total of approximately 993 animal unit months (AUMs) are leased as base preference within the WSA (see table below). Grazing is managed to leave a minimum of 700 pounds of residual forage (after grazing). Seasons of use generally run from January 1 to April 30, consistent with the Panoche Hills Management Plan and Hollister RMP decisions. There are no existing or planned livestock management projects or facilities. Forage condition is good and trend is generally stable.

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>	<u>Total AUMs</u>	<u>Acreage in WSA</u>	<u>AUMS in WSA</u>
4386 - Talbott (Panoche)	5,635	508	3,944	356
4375 - Sagardia (Dosados Canyon)	7,779	1,016	778	102
4404 - Yparraguire (Little Panoche)	3,187	700	1,593	350
4385 - Talbott (Moreno Gulch)	2,720	308	1,632	<u>185</u> 993

SOIL AND WATERSHED RESOURCES

Soils

Soils consist of Kettleman, Mercy, Rough Broken, Badland and Rockland Association. Fertility is low to moderate. Some of the badlands soils are naturally barren and produce severe natural erosion. Others have moderate to high erosion potential.

Watershed

There are no perennial streams and very few springs in the area. Water quality is naturally poor due to high alkalinity

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

The WSA encompasses portions of two ACECs - the Moreno Paleontological and Panoche/Coalinga RT&E ACECs (see Map 3, p. 29). About 1,300 acres of the Panoche/Coalinga ACEC and 700 acres of the Moreno Paleontological ACEC are encompassed by the WSA (about one-third of the WSA).





Photo 3 - Panoche Hills North WSA



Photo 4 - Panoche Hills North WSA
Environment

PANOCHIE HILLS SOUTH WSA
(CA-040-301B)

The Panoche Hills South WSA contains 11,267 acres of BLM land and is located just west of the San Joaquin Valley in western Fresno County.

The WSA includes very steep rugged terrain accentuated by intermittent creeks. Elevations vary from approximately 700 to 2,500 feet above sea level. Vegetation within the WSA is primarily annual grasses, interspersed with low-growing shrubs. The WSA is bounded on the west by the Panoche Access Road, on the north by a road, and on the south and east by non-public lands.

WILDERNESS VALUES

Naturalness

The WSA remains relatively free from man's influence. There are numerous improved springs, guzzlers, and other wildlife management facilities located within the WSA. Most of these facilities are accessible by unimproved ways and do not detract from the naturalness of the area.

Solitude

The terrain variety and the steep canyons along the intermittent creeks provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. This opportunity is less near the perimeter of the WSA on the north and west sides due to the presence of roads and along the east side due to views Interstate Highway 5.

Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The area provides good opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreational pursuits. These include hunting, hiking, and bird-watching. Annual game bird populations vary greatly from year to year with hunting opportunities varying accordingly.

Special Features

The eastern portion of the WSA is part of one of the most important and richest fossil areas in California and was designated as an ACEC in 1984.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The Panoche Hill South WSA contains 11,267 acres of BLM land. There are 80 acres of privately owned and undeveloped grazing land within the southeastern part of the WSA.

The WSA is bounded on the north and west by other BLM lands separated from the WSA by roads. On the east and south the WSA is bounded by private lands. This WSA is separated from the Panoche Hills North WSA by a road.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are no recorded sites within the WSA. No archaeological inventories have been conducted but cultural sensitivity is thought to be very low. Any sites present in the area will most likely consist of small, temporary campsites located in proximity to creeks and drainages. There are no known historical sites within the WSA.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The eastern portion of the WSA has been recognized as part of one of the most important and richest fossil areas in California, especially for vertebrate fossils. The fossil bearing rocks are associated with the Moreno shale formation. The fossils include plesiosaurs, mosasaurs, hadrosaurian dinosaurs, and prehistoric sharks, fish, and turtles.

The significant paleontological sites in this WSA are occasionally studied on-site by university researchers and visited by groups of students from universities in Northern California. Access by vehicle is important to the use of these sites for laboratory exercise in university courses on paleontology. Many sites, however, are restricted to foot access at the present time.

This area is part of the Moreno Paleontological ACEC established in 1984 to help protect these important resources. A management plan for the ACEC is being developed at the present time and will be completed in October 1986.

RECREATION

There is light to moderate hunting use during the upland game bird season. The amount of use in any given year depends upon the highly variable annual bird populations. There is also some bird watching and sightseeing use. Vehicle ways in the western part of the WSA help to disperse hunting and other uses to the interior portions of the area.

About 7 miles of vehicle ways exist within the eastern portion of the WSA and about 3 miles of ways exist within the western portion. These ways help disperse motorized visitor use within the WSA. Use is limited to about 25 visitor days per year.

There is legal public access to the area from the northwest, via the Panoche Access Road. There is also access to the east side of the area across private farm lands in the San Joaquin Valley. While the latter is not a legal public access, it is unrestricted by the private landowners at this time.

Vehicle use is limited to four-wheeled vehicles on designated routes from the start of the quail and chukar hunting season in mid-October until the start of fire season in late April on early May the following year. The area is closed to motorcycles and three-wheeled vehicles at all times. Walk in access to the Panoche Hills Management Area is permitted all year. The walk-in point is located along the Panoche Access Road about 4 miles from the northwest boundary of the WSA.

While the vehicle routes along the east side are officially closed they are used year round for access to this part of the area.

The Panoche Hills Management Area has been closed to ORV use since 1970. However, there has continued to be some trespass use (originating from the San Joaquin Valley) by motorcycles since that time. This is presently estimated as 25 visitor days annually within the WSA.

There are no recreational developments nor are any additional vehicle routes planned.

VISUAL RESOURCES

The ridgeline and east side of the area is highly visible from Interstate Highway 5. Scenery in this area is typical of the grassy hills along the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley.

VEGETATION

Vegetation in the area consists of valley grassland and shrub-grass plant communities. The herbaceous vegetation, predominately mediterranean annual grasses (mostly Bromus sp.), is highly dependent on seasonal rainfall. Annual production may range from as low as two or three hundred pounds of dry herbage per acre to over 3,000 pounds depending on yearly rainfall and temperature regimes. South slopes are drier and always produce less than north slopes. Many herbs such as filaree (Erodium sp.), fiddleneck (Amsinckia sp.), popcorn flower (Plagiobothrys sp.), and lupines (Lupinus sp.), are also common. Common shrub species include saltbush (Atriplex sp.), Mexican tea (Ephedra californica), golden bush (Haplopappus sp.), buckwheat (Eriogonum sp.).

It should be noted that most of the annual grasses are of mediterranean origin. As such they are not endemic to the area but are now considered naturalized. These annual grasses form thick swards (areas) of fine, dry fuel which have dramatically altered fire frequency and occurrence in the area. Prior to the advent of these mediterranean annuals the vegetation most likely consisted of scattered native annuals, perennial bunchgrasses and shrubs. Fire frequency and occurrence were probably low and fires did not reach very large sizes. As such the native vegetation is not fire dependent. Shrubs such as saltbush (Atriplex sp.) are easily killed by fire. Other shrubs such as Mexican tea (Ephedra sp.) will resprout to some degree but are also killed if the fire is too intense. In 1979, a

wildfire burned 60,000 acres in the Ciervo Hills just to the south in 12 hours. Shrub mortality was estimated at 95%. In 1985, a wildfire burned 6,000 acres in the northeastern portion of the Panoche Hills, including 2,500 acres within the Panoche North WSA. These are essentially desert ecosystems and damage by fire takes many years to heal. As such fire prevention and aggressive suppression action are important to maintain the area's natural values.

A portion of the WSA also contains suitable habitat for the green fiddle-neck (Amsinckia furcata), a BLM sensitive plant species although no populations are known to occur in the area. This portion of the WSA was designated as the Moreno Paleontological ACEC in 1984. Although established primarily for recognition of important paleontological values, the designation also recognized the existence of suitable habitat for this species.

WILDLIFE

The Panoche National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA) withdrawal covers most of the public lands in the Management Area. Much habitat improvement work for upland game -- California quail and chukar partridge (guzzlers, silt catchments, spring developments and exclosures) -- has been done in this Management Area by the California Department of Fish and Game and the Fresno County Sportsmen's Club.

A wildlife management plan for the area -- the Panoche Hills Management Plan -- was prepared in 1982. All projects outlined in the plan have been implemented. These include nine developed springs, and two guzzlers within the WSA.

Public lands in the WSA provide limited foraging habitat for the San Joaquin kit fox. No den sites have been observed or documented. Scattered observations of blunt-nosed leopard lizards have been recorded. The majority of the area appears to be marginal habitat for these because of steep, rugged topography.

Other species that occur in the area include golden eagles, prairie falcons, badger, coyotes, bobcat, and a variety of smaller non-game animals and songbirds.

MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES

Potential for occurrence of diatomite, gypsite, marl, phosphate and uranium has been identified. In the past, marl has been excavated west of the WSA, and gypsite to the east. Uranium has been found to occur in diatomite outside the WSA south of Panoche Creek. Similar occurrences may also exist within the WSA. There are no mining claims in the WSA; there is no history of activity or production described in the literature. The uranium market in the United States clearly favors imported sources of this commodity; development potential is very low.

7,570 acres of the WSA is covered by pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases expiring August 1, 1986. Extension of these lease terms by reason of drilling or production is unlikely as no surface disturbing activities have been proposed to date, nor has any drilling occurred within the WSA. The closest producing oilfields are the Vallecitos field six miles to the south and the Chendy Ranch field seven miles to the east. Twenty-one wildcat wells have been drilled within 3 miles of the WSAs northern, eastern, and southern boundary. The deepest of these is 7,835 feet. All of these wells have been abandoned. Thus, while the WSA is a recognized exploration target, development potential is low.

Salable minerals may be present as gypsite or marl. These are considered subeconomic due to their distance from market and transport routes.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

The WSA encompasses portions of three grazing leases (see table below). Two are for sheep and one for cattle; all are managed under Allotment Management Plans (AMP). A total of approximately 1,955 AUMs are leased as base preference within the WSA. Grazing is managed to leave a minimum of 700 pounds of residual forage (after grazing). Seasons of use generally run from January 1 to April 30, consistent with the Panoche Hills Management Plan and Hollister RMP decisions. The only existing or planned livestock management project is a fence in the southern part of the WSA. Forage condition is good and the trend is generally stable.

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>	<u>Total AUMs</u>	<u>Acreage in WSA</u>	<u>AUMS in WSA</u>
4426 Eade (Silver Creek)	22,083	4,588	4,416	918
4375 - Sagardia (Dosados Canyon)	7,779	1,016	7,001	914
4385 - Talbott (Moreno Gulch)	2,720	308	1,088	<u>123</u>
				1,955

SOILS AND WATERSHED RESOURCES

Soils

Soils consist of Kettleman, Merced, Rough Broken, Badland and Rockland Association. Fertility is low to moderate. Some of the badlands soils are naturally barren and produce severe natural erosion. Others have moderate to high erosion potential.

Watersheds

There are no perennial streams and very few springs in the area. Water quality is naturally poor due to high alkalinity

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

The WSA encompasses portions of the Moreno Paleontological ACEC (about 4,000 acres or one-third of the WSA).



Photo 5 - Panoche Hills South WSA



Photo 6 - Panoche Hills South WSA
Environment

PINNACLES WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS
(CA-040-303)

The Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous contains 5,838 acres and is located in both Monterey and San Benito counties.

This WSA contains five separate parcels of contiguous, roadless, BLM-administered lands which adjoin designated wilderness lands located within the Pinnacles National Monument.

All of the separate WSA parcels contain steep rugged topography surrounding small canyons. The topography of the area varies from approximately 800 to 2,750 feet above sea level. The primary vegetation of the WSA is chamise with some oak and pine occurring along intermittent creeks. The separate parcels of this WSA blend in naturally with the rugged terrain of the Pinnacles National Monument Wilderness Area.

WILDERNESS VALUES

Naturalness

The primary imprint of man's work within the area is associated with firebreaks constructed along some ridgelines. Some vegetation manipulation has occurred in the northern and southern parcels of the WSA. Portions of the WSA located north and east of the Pinnacles Wilderness were burned by a wildfire during the summer of 1978. During fire control operations, numerous firebreaks were constructed but were reseeded and have largely returned to natural conditions. A prescribed burn escape in 1984 in a portion of the WSA north of the Monument Wilderness Area resulted in some new firebreaks which have since been reseeded with native shrubs and are returning to natural conditions. The firebreaks and vegetation manipulation projects are substantially unnoticeable and do not detract from the naturalness of the unit.

Solitude

The terrain variety, canyons along streams and drainages, and primitive character of the surrounding private ranch lands and adjacent Pinnacles National Monument lands provide outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation found within the unit are closely associated with the Pinnacles Wilderness and the primitive character of the entire area.

Special Features

There are spectacular views of the pinnacles formation within the National Monument from some portions of the WSA, especially the northern parcels.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous contains 5,838 acres of BLM land in five separate parcels, one side of each parcel adjoins designated wilderness lands within the Pinnacles National Monument. The other three sides of each WSA parcel adjoins undeveloped private ranch lands or roaded BLM lands. There are no private inholdings within these WSA parcels.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are no previously recorded cultural resources within this WSA. However, no intensive archeological inventory has been undertaken within the WSA. A number of sites have been recorded in Pinnacles National Monument. Sites present within the WSA are probably similar to those recorded nearby. These consist of bedrock milling stations, rockshelters, and small temporary camps.

No known historical sites are located within the WSA.

RECREATION

Six miles of vehicle routes are utilized by private hunting clubs, who derive access from adjacent private property owners. This hunting use accounts for approximately 40 visitor days annually. An additional 40 visitor days of nonmotorized hunting use also occurs annually in the WSA. The use of the WSA for hunting is limited by the steep terrain, heavy brush and absence of legal public access for hunting.

Legal public access is available only through the Pinnacles National Monument in which firearms are prohibited. Such use is very limited - less than 10 visitor days per year. There are no recreational developments within this WSA and none are planned at this time.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Visual resources are important in this WSA because much of the public lands are near to and visible from Pinnacles National Monument, a designated Wilderness Area. Scenery on public land is not outstanding and is common to the region.

Any actions on lands within the watershed of the Pinnacles National Monument must meet VRM Class 2 standards. Actions on the remaining lands must meet VRM Class 3 standards.

VEGETATION

Vegetation in the area consists of the chaparral and oak woodland communities. Chaparral is by far the most prevalent vegetation type within the WSA.

Environment

The chaparral has two major subtypes--chamise and mixed chaparral. Chamise chaparral consists almost entirely chamise (Adenostoma fasciculatum). Some digger pines (Pinus sabiniana) usually occur scattered in favorable locations. Chamise chaparral is most often found on south slopes. Mixed chaparral contains chamise, digger pine, manzanita (Arctostaphylos sp.), buckbrush (Ceanothus cuneatus), red berry (Rhamnus crocea), coffee berry (R. californica), choke cherry (Prunus sp.), toyon (Heteromeles arbutifolia), silk-tassel bush (Garrya fremontii), mountain mahogany (Cercocarpus betuloides), California buckeye (Aesculus californica), interior live oak (Quercus wislizenii), and scrub oak (Quercus dumosa).

The foothill woodland or oak woodland commonly consists of open parklike stands of blue oak (Quercus douglasii) with an annual grass and herb understory (oak savannah).

The oak woodland type is very limited within the WSA and usually occurs in small, scattered patches of a few acres. Riparian areas (which are also very limited) are characterized by stands of coast live oak (Quercus agrifolia). These areas usually occur in drainage bottoms along the major watercourses in the area.

The chaparral community, in particular, is considered a fire dependent community in that it requires periodic fires to perpetuate itself. Most of the chaparral within the WSA has burned within the last 30 years, either by wildfire or prescribed burns. Some small areas have not burned for over 50-75 years. The average fire cycle in chamise chaparral is about 30 to 35 years. The average fire cycle in mixed chaparral may vary from 50 to 100 years.

A candidate plant species, the Pinnacles buckwheat (Eriogonum nortonii), occurs within the WSA. It is a fire following species and has been noted on most recently burned areas within the WSA. It is on USFWS list 3 and as such is not considered a sensitive species by BLM.

WILDLIFE

Wildlife species typical of the chaparral ecosystem occur within the WSA. Common mammals include: Black-tailed deer, grey foxes, bobcats, coyotes, and badgers. Wild pigs also occur in the area. The term wild pig encompasses wild boar and feral hogs, both varieties of Sus scrofa. Feral hogs have existed in California since the Spanish introduced domestic swine in 1769. Wild boar were introduced into Monterey County in 1925. Since then, wild pigs have dispersed both naturally and assisted by humans into many parts of California where they freely interbreed with feral hogs. Sport hunting for wild pigs has become extremely popular in Central California and the demand for hunting opportunities is quite high in this particular area. Rooting activities can cause damage to crops, rangeland and management facilities. Wild pigs possibly act as predators or compete with native wildlife, especially in years of low mast (acorn crops). The NPS has proposed elimination of wild pigs from the National Monument because they are not native and are causing documented damage to the ecosystem and to trails and other facilities.

Common avifauna in the area include: golden eagles (there is at least one active nest on the south border of the Monument), prairie falcons, red-tailed hawks, turkey vultures, California quail and a variety of songbirds.

In addition to the birds and mammals, there is a variety of reptiles and amphibian species that occur in the area.

MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES

There are no mining claims, mineral leases or mineral material sales in the WSA. Mineral development interest is low. The area has no mining history, except for a dozen prospects located in the Pinnacles National Monument. These prospects occur in swarms of rhyolite dikes in the Santa Lucia quarterly diorite. Similar geology occurs on portions of the WSA, but have not been prospected. These geologic conditions often host deposits of copper, molybdenum, gold, silver and uranium but the potential for occurrence is considered low.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Portions of four cattle grazing leases are encompassed by the WSA (see table below). None are managed under an Allotment Management Plan (AMP). A total of approximately 93 AUMs are leased as base preference. Much of the area is unsuitable for grazing because of steep slopes and shallow rocky soils with poor forage production. The Willow Creek allotment is managed for residual mulch (700 lbs/acre) and a season of use from December 1 to May 31. The other leases are managed custodially. There are no existing livestock management facilities within the WSA. The only planned facility is a fence to exclude livestock from the Monument and the 2,200 acre watershed area. The fence would be constructed and maintained by the NPS. Forage conditions are fair to good and generally stable to slowly declining following the chaparral burns.

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>	<u>Total AUMs</u>	<u>Acreage in WSA</u>	<u>AUMS in WSA</u>
4430 - Willow Creek Ranch	4,772	556	2,386	30
4376 - Schmidt	80	8	40	4
4397 - Verasconi	400	8	400	8
4422 - Hansen Farms	1,560	80	1,000	<u>51</u>
				93

SOILS AND WATERSHED RESOURCES

Soils

The areas north of Pinnacles National Monument are primarily of the Cieneba-Sheridan and Ahwahwee-Vista Associations. The soils to the west and south are Cieneba-Sheridan and Rough Broken Rockland Association. All but the Rough Broken Rockland are formed from weathered granite. The Rough Broken Rockland is of sedimentary origin. All have high erosion susceptibility.

Environment

Watersheds

Most of the area lies within the Chalone Creek drainage. All drainages are intermittent. There are a number of scattered springs and surface water is generally of good quality.



Photo 7 - View Looking Southeast into Pinnacles National Mounment



Photo 8 - Pinnacles Wilderson Contiguous Environment

CALIENTE MOUNTAIN WSA
(CA-010-042)

The Caliente Mountain WSA contains 19,018 acres in southeastern San Luis Obispo County, north of the community of New Cuyama. It is bounded to the north and west by non-public land, to the south by non-public land and a ranch road, and to the east by Horse Canyon Road.

The unit includes a sizable portion of the Caliente Mountain Range. The rugged and precipitous hills rise steeply from the valley floor with peaks along the primary ridgeline reaching elevations of 3,000 to 5,000 feet. Caliente Peak is the most prominent at 5,106 feet. Vegetation ranges from dense chaparral and juniper along the ridgeline to scattered shrubs and annual grasses in canyon floors. Panoramic and scenic views from Caliente Peak include Los Padres National Forest, Soda Lake, the Temblor Mountain Range, and the Elkhorn Plain and Scarp.

WILDERNESS VALUES

Naturalness

The WSA has retained a high degree of natural character and primeval influence having been affected primarily by the forces of nature and exhibiting substantially unnoticeable man-made imprints.

Various man-made activities and developments do impair several segments of the unit's natural integrity, however. The area west of Morales Canyon has been extensively utilized for oil and gas exploration. Developments such as oil drilling sites and structures, an associated network of roads and vehicle routes, and a FAA communication site visually dominate the western portion of the unit. The imprints impart the overall presence of man's work and, in addition, severely degrade the natural character of the immediate area.

Solitude

Outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined types of recreation are available throughout the WSA.

Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

Along the primary ridgeline, in the juniper flats, within the canyon and in the lower foothills, visitors can find extensive opportunities for isolation as well as unconfined freedom of movement for primitive recreational activities.

Special Features

The WSA is along the historic flight path of the Federally listed endangered California condor which flew over the Caliente Mountains enroute to the the San Emigdio feeding area from its Machesna Mountain roost. The peregrine falcon, also a Federally listed endangered species is also suspected to occur within the WSA.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The Caliente Mountain WSA contains 19,018 acres of public land and is bounded by private land on the north and public lands on the east, south and west. One forty-acre parcel of private land is located within the WSA in the NW1/4NE1/4, Section 19, T. 11 N., R. 27 W., MDBM. A 400 acre inholding of State of California land contains the summit of Caliente Mountain.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The WSA contains no known archaeological sites and has a low potential for cultural values.

RECREATION

Recreation use in the Caliente Mountain WSA is minimal because (less than 125 visitor days annually) of the lack of public access. Backpacking, hiking, and equestrian use are some of the nonmotorized recreational activities that have been recorded in the unit and account for approximately 60 per cent of the recreational use. Motorized recreational use occur along the area's five and one-half miles of four-wheel trails and account for the remainder of vehicle use.

VISUAL RESOURCES

The unit is within the Sierra foothill and low coastal mountain landscape province. Color and vegetation within the unit are uniform and do not provide major contrasts. Water is not a factor. Scenic quality in the WSA is rated as excellent, with a VRM Class II rating.

VEGETATION

Lower elevations and drier sites are characterized by the Valley Grassland and Valley Grassland - Saltbush vegetation types. The higher elevations and wetter sites are characterized by Oak Chaparral. Some common plant species encountered are: filaree Erodium botrys, E. cicutarium, red brome Bromus rubens, allscah saltbush Altriplex polycarpa, golden bush Haplopappus linearifolius, buckwheat Eriogonum fasciculatum, scrub oak Quercus sp., California juniper Juniperus californica.

WILDLIFE

The WSA lies entirely within the 58,867 acre Caliente National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA), established on April 6, 1961 by Public Land Order No. 2326. The NCLWMA is cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game, and has been withdrawn from entry under the nonmineral public land laws and disposition under the homestead, desert land and scrip selection laws. The management objective for the NCLWMA is to develop, conserve utilize and maintain the area's natural resources, including those for recreation and wildlife.

The WSA is along the historic flight path of the Federally endangered California condor (Gymnogyps californianus) which flew over the Caliente Mountains enroute to the San Emigdio feeding area from the Machesna Mountain roost. Prairie falcons (Falco mexicanus) and golden eagles (Aquila chrysaelos) are known to occur and suspected to nest, within the WSA. Federally endangered peregrine falcons (Falco peregrinus) also are suspected to occur within the WSA. The area also serves as wintering grounds for numerous ferruginous (Buteo regalis) and marsh (Circus cyaneus) hawks.

A relict population of black-bellied slender salamander (Batrachoseps nigriventris) is also known to occur in Sulfur Canyon, located just inside the southwestern WSA boundary, and are suspected to occur throughout the area. An unusual overlap of ranges for the striped (Masticophis lateralis) and red (M. flagellum) racers occurs in the western portion of the WSA. The desert night lizard (Xantusia vigilis), an animal typical of the Mojave desert, occurs in the western portion of the WSA, while the California legless lizard (Anniella nigra argentea) is abundant along the ridge crest.

Two subspecies of deer inhabit the Caliente Mountains; California mule deer (Odocoileus hemionus californicus) and Columbian black-tailed deer (O. h. columbianus). California quail (Lophortyx californicus) occur throughout the area, concentrating in areas with free water. Chukar partridge (Alectoris chukar) occur primarily at the upper elevations. Mourning doves (Zenaida macroura) occur throughout the WSA, but there is very little nesting. Brush rabbits (Sylvilagus bachmani), black tailed jack-rabbits (Lepus californicus), coyotes (Canis latrans), bobcats (Lynx rufus), badgers (Taxidea taxus), gray foxes (Urocyon cinereoargenteus), and mountain lions (Felis concolor) also occur through the Caliente Mountain range.

MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES

The WSA contains one pre-FLPMA oil and gas lease covering 40 acres in NE1/4NE1/4, Section 13, T. 11 N., R. 18 W. This lease is part of a unit; as long as production continues on the unit, the lease will remain viable. Operations may extend into the WSA to the same manner and degree to which they are presently occurring on the unit.

Approximately 8,720 acres of the WSA (46%) are presently covered by post-FLPMA oil and gas leases. All of the WSA has been leased at some time. The Calientes have been recognized by the industry as a promising exploration target; this is illustrated by intense leasing activity. The Calientes remain unexplored and potential for commercial petroleum deposits is unknown.

During the late 1940s to 1950s, and again in the early 1970s, 5 wells were spudded; 3 in the S1/2 Section 21, one the NW1/4, Section 26, and one in NE1/4, Section 34, T., 11 N., R. 27 W. The deepest of these was drilled to 11,662 feet. The southwestern and western boundaries are within 1.0 mile of a KGS (Morales Canyon & Russel Ranch). The eastern portion is within the Cuyama Valley undefined KGS, effective January 17, 1982.

Approximately 800 acres of the western portion of the WSA has been identified as prospectively valuable for phosphate. To date, only uneconomic occurrences of this commodity are known. Commercial size deposits in California have laid idle for years; there is little market incentive to develop this commodity in the foreseeable future.

No mining claims have been filed in the WSA; the geologic environment is not conducive to the occurrence of most locatable minerals.

Salable minerals, if present, are too far from a suitable market to be developed.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

The WSA contains 15,498 acres of three grazing allotments, which are under lease to two different ranching operations (see table below). The remaining WSA acreage is unallotted, which is approximately 3,520 acres.

All three grazing allotments are I category allotments and are scheduled for AMPs. The allotments are:

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>	<u>Acreage in WSA</u>	<u>AUMS in WSA</u>
Selby Ranch	15,001	6,940	1,699
Carrizo Ranch	3,791	2,000	309
Sulphur Canyon	15,268	6,558	654
Total	34,060	15,498	1,699

All allotments are in good condition, will annual forage production dependent upon yearly rainfall and temperature.

1,000 acres of the Selby Ranch Allotment has old stands of oak chaparral which could be prescribed burned to increase livestock forage by as much as 100 AUMs.

The existing projects are six spring developments, four reservoirs, one corral with loading facilities, and a two mile pipeline with trough.

SOILS AND WATERSHED RESOURCES

Soils

Slopes within this area are generally steep to very steep (30-80%), except for the ridgetop area where slopes are more rolling (5-30%). Rainfall runoff is potentially rapid due to the steep slopes and many shallow soils. The soils are generally 5 to 40 inches deep over sandstone or shale bedrock. Soil textures are generally sandy loams or loams with 5 to 30 percent rock fragments (gravel and/or cabbles). The water erosion hazard under bare soil conditions is high because of the steep slopes, many shallow soils, and sandy or loamy textures. Under current conditions the soils are relatively stable.

Environment

Watersheds

Several small springs occur within the area, however, the area as a whole is quite dry during summer and fall.



Photo 9 - View Looking Northwest to Caliente Peak and the World War II Lookout.



Photo 10 - View Looking North-Northwest up Morales Canyon into the Caliente Mountain.

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OWENS PEAK WSA
(CA-101-026)

The Owens Peak WSA contain 22,560 acres and is located in eastern Kern County, bounded on the north by the Nine Mile Canyon Road, on the south by Highway 178, on the east by the California Desert District boundary, and on the west by the Canebrake Road. The CDD WSA CA-06-158 borders this WSA along its eastern edge; a portion of CDD CA-06-158 has been recommended suitable for wilderness designation. This unit includes the west face of the Sierra Nevada Crest from Walker Pass to north of Nine Mile Canyon. The ridge rises rather abruptly from the sagebrush meadows to the rugged rocky peaks.

WILDERNESS VALUES

Naturalness

With the exception of the Chimney Creek Campground and associated developments, 24 miles of primitive vehicle routes the line and associated maintenance route paralleling Highway 178, and 23 miles of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, the area is in a natural condition. The imprint of man's work is substantially unnoticeable throughout the unit.

The unit displays a unique melting of vegetative types. The primary vegetative type is pinyon; however, there are outstanding examples of Joshua tree woodland near the Walker Pass area, big sage/rabbit brush associations and mixed conifer at the higher elevations. Where these vegetative types come together, interesting and unusual combinations of plants can be seen growing in association with one another.

Solitude

The WSA has a variety of steep canyons and small ridges that isolate the visitor from most outside sounds and provide excellent solitude.

Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The area offers good opportunities for primitive or unconfined types of recreation. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail enhances primitive and unconfined recreation along the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada crest, although these opportunities are currently limited by lack of potable water.

Special Features

The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail winds 23 miles through the WSA along the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada crest.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The Owens Peak WSA contains 22,560 acres of public land and is bounded by public land on the east, the Nine Mile Canyon Road on the north, the Canebrake Road on the west, and Highway 178 on the south. Over 1,200 acres of private land are found within the WSA including 720 acres in Spanish Needle Creek, 360 acres north of Morris Peak, and 120 acres at Lamont Peak.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Ethnographically, the Owens Peak WSA was occupied by two major groups which were closely related to the Western Mono. The Tubatulabal speaking group inhabited the upper Kern drainages while the Southern Numie speaking Kawaiisu lived to the south of the Tubatulabal. The eastern periphery of the WSA was utilized by the Panaming Shoshone.

Cultural resource sensitivity is moderate to very high. At least 23 archaeological sites have been recorded within the WSA and over 40 sites are within four miles of the WSA. The Chimney Peak area, located approximately 1 mile north of Owens Peak WSA is considered moderately high for cultural resource sensitivity. In addition, Native Americans have traditionally used the Chimney Peak area for gathering pinyon pine nuts (non-commercial use).

Archaeological site types most commonly occurring within the WSA are bedrock milling features, lithic scatters, and middens. These features often will occur together. Rock cave shelters, rock rings (and other arrangements) and rock art are also found in the WSA area. The more complex sites - those with a combination of features - are located near permanent water sources such as springs and streams.

In 1856, the discovery of gold near Keyesville a few miles west of the WSA resulted in the initial settlement of the area. However, there are no known historic habitation sites within the WSA.

RECREATION

The WSA currently receives approximately 600 visitor days of nonmotorized recreational use which is associated with hiking and backpacking primarily along the 24-mile segment of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail located in the western portion of the WSA.

Motorized recreational activities are restricted to the 24 miles of existing four-wheel vehicle ways located in the southwestern portion of the WSA. This use accounts for 650 visitor days annually.

VISUAL RESOURCES

The BLM Visual Resources Inventory rates the WSA as having excellent scenic quality. The majority of the WSA has been rated VRM Class II, with the low lying areas in the southwestern portion of the WSA and rated VRM Class III.

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VEGETATION

The WSA is characterized by Pinyon-juniper covered slopes in the higher elevations and mixed desert shrubs with annual plants in the lower elevations. There are occasional pockets of scrub oak and coniferous forest near the crest of the Sierra Nevada to the east side of the WSA. The WSA is located in an ecotone between Mediterranean annual, Great Basin, and Mojave Desert vegetation types.

Habitat for Phacelia novemmillensis, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife candidate species is predicted to occur within the WSA. Based on known populations outside the WSA, south facing slopes with sparse vegetation at elevations above 6,000 feet within the Owens Peak WSA are suspected of supporting this sensitive annual plant.

WILDLIFE

The WSA lies within the 306,422 acre Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA) established on January 26, 1962 by Public Land Order 2594. The NCLWMA is cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game, and has been withdrawn from entry under the nonmineral public land laws and disposition under the homestead, desert land and scrip selection laws. The management objective for the NCLWMA is to develop, conserve, utilize, and maintain the area's natural resources, including those for recreation and wildlife.

Golden eagles (Aquila chrysaetos) are known to occur and prairie falcons (Falco mexicanus) are suspected to occur throughout the WSA. Suitable habitat also exists for the Federally endangered peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus). California mule deer (Odocoileus hemionus californicus) in the Lamont Peak area are the extreme southeastern extension of the Long Valley Wintering Sub-herd of the Monache Deer Herd. California mule deer in the balance of the WSA are nonmigratory, resident deer. Concentrations of Chukar partridge (Alectoris chukar) and California quail (Lophortyx californicus) occur in Berts and Cow Canyons. Band-tailed pigeons (Columbia fasciata) are concentrated in Lamont Meadow. Mountain lions (Felis concolor), coyote (Canis latrans), gray fox (Urocyon cinereoargenteus), bobcat (Lynx rufus), black bear (Ursus americanus) and mourning doves (Zenaida macroura) occur throughout the area.

MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES

The WSA has no history of prospecting or production. Currently, 16 mining claims covering about 620 acres occur in the WSA. These are located in T. 25 S., R. 37 E., Sections 19 and 20, T. 25 S., R. 36 E., Sections 12, 14, and 25, and T. 26 S., R. 37 E., Section 5.

Occurrences of gold, tungsten, zinc and possibly copper have been identified; however, no economic concentrations of these minerals is known.

The area is underlain by granitic intrusive rocks of the Sierra Nevada Range. This is not a geologic environment in which leasable (except geothermal) minerals occur.

Although recent interest in geothermal leasing has been expressed in the Monache area, none has extended into the WSA. No thermal waters or circulation systems have been identified.

Salable minerals in the form of decomposed granite occur in the WSA but are too inaccessible and distant from local markets to have any value.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

One entire grazing allotment is within the WSA which is under permit to one operator. A portion of a larger grazing allotment which is permitted to three grazing operators who run in common, is also within the WSA (see table below). Both allotments are I category allotments and are scheduled for AMPs. The allotments are:

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>	<u>Acreage in WSA</u>	<u>AUMS in WSA</u>
Spanish Needle	3,160	3,160	40
Walker Pass Common	90,506	19,400	<u>641</u>
Total			681

The Spanish Needles Allotment is in good range condition. The portion of the Walker Pass Common within the WSA is in far too good condition and will be managed as a perennial/annual range.

One additional mile of new fence is proposed, as well as reconstruction of two existing springs within the WSA.

The existing projects are three spring developments and two miles of fence.

SOILS AND WATERSHED RESOURCES

Soils

Slopes within this area are generally steep to very steep (30-80%), except on ridgetops and saddles where slopes are more gentle (5-30%). The soils are generally 5 to 40 inches deep over decomposing granitic bedrock or hard metamorphic rock (schist, slate, quartzite, etc.). Surface stones, boulder, and large rock outcrops are common on granitic areas. An extensive pavement of angular gravel and cobbles is present on metamorphic areas. Soil textures are generally loamy coarse sand in granitic areas and sandy loam in metamorphic areas, with variable amounts of rock fragments. Rainfall runoff is potentially rapid due to the steep slopes and many shallow soils. The water erosion hazard under bare soil conditions is high because of the steep slopes, many shallow soils, and sandy or loamy textures. Under current conditions, the soils are relatively stable. Some mass movement occurs slowly on very steep rubble piles of metamorphic cobbles and stones.

Watersheds

Some small springs are present in drainageways; however, the area as a whole is quite dry during summer and fall.

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Photo 11 - Owens Peak and the PCNST Ridgeline Route.



Photo 12 - View Looking East to Spanish Peak.

PIUTE CYPRESS WSA
(CA-010-046 and USFS A5213)

The Piute Cypress WSA contains 5,527 acres and is located southwest of the town of Lake Isabella.

The WSA is bounded on the north by non-public developed lands and the Erskine Creek Road, and on the south and west by the Saddle Springs Road. The WSA is a joint BLM/USFS Study area with 3,578 acres BLM and 1,949 acres USFS, totaling 5,527 acres. The heart of the unit is the Piute Cypress Grove. This dense grove of dwarfed Piute cypress trees grows on the steep north face of Bald Eagle Peak. The lower slopes are digger pine, California juniper, and dense brush.

WILDERNESS VALUES

Naturalness

These lands are essentially natural. Numerous adits, prospects and a few jeep trails are found throughout the area, but they are substantially unnoticeable.

Solitude

Steep canyons and dense vegetation provide excellent solitude opportunities in the southern end of the WSA. Toward the northern end of the WSA, sparse vegetation, private land practices and generally open terrain provide limited opportunities for solitude.

Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The area offers good opportunities for users to participate in primitive or unconfined recreational activities such as hiking, primitive camping, and horseback riding. Much of the area is covered with very dense, low lying brush forming normal boundaries that restrict human movement within the area.

Special Features

The WSA contains part of the world's largest Piute Cypress grove. Portions of this grove were designated as a Natural Area in 1965. In addition, there are three candidate RT&E plant species that occur on the western edge of the WSA. They are: Streptanthus cordatus var. pintensis (Piute jewel), Periderdia pringlei (Squaw root), and Delphinium purpusii (Kern River larkspur).

LAND OWNERSHIP

The Piute Cypress WSA contains 5,527 acres of public land of which 3,578 acres are managed by the BLM and 1,949 acres are maintained by the Forest Service. The unit is bordered by private developed lands on the north, public and private lands on the east, and USFS lands on the south. No private property is located within the WSA.

RECREATION

Recreation use in the Piute Cypress WSA is minimal consisting primarily of some ORV riding, hiking, birdwatching, and some equestrian use. Nonmotorized recreational use accounts for the majority of recreational use - approximately 500 visitor days per year. Approximately 25 visitor days per year are devoted to motorized recreational use. This use is limited to the area's 3 3/4 miles of primitive jeep trails due to lack of motorized public access, steep terrain, and dense vegetation. The western portion of the unit, the Piute Cypress Natural Area, is closed to all vehicle use.

VISUAL RESOURCES

The BLM Visual Resource Inventory rated the unit as having good scenic quality. The scenic management zone is managed as VRM Class III.

The unit is within the Sierra foothill landscape province. Color and vegetation within the unit are uniform and do not provide major contrasts. Water is not a factor.

VEGETATION

Pinyon-juniper occur on the upland slopes of the WSA, with dense stands of chaparral on the south and west aspects. Digger pine, scattered oaks, and Piute cypress also occur on the WSA.

The WSA contains part of the largest grove of Piute cypress (Cupressus nevedensis) in the world. In addition to Piute cypress, there are three USFWS candidate RT&E plant species that occur on the western edge of the WSA. They are: Streptanthus cordatus var. pintensis (Piute jewel flower), Perideridia pringlei (squaw root), and Delphinium purpusii (Kern River larkspur).

WILDLIFE

The WSA lies within the 306,422 acre Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA) established on January 26, 1962 by Public Land Order 2594. The NCLWMA is cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game, and has been withdrawn from entry under the nonmineral public land laws and disposition under the homestead, desert land and scrip selection laws. The management objective for the NCLWMA is to develop, conserve, utilize, and maintain the area's natural resources, including those for recreation and wildlife.

California mule deer (Odocoileus hemionus californicus) in the WSA belong to the non-migratory Piute Deer herd. The WSA also provides habitat for numerous wildlife species including California quail (Lophortyx californicus), mourning doves (Zenaida macroura), band-tailed pigeons (Columba fasciata), coyotes (Canis latrans), bobcats (Lynx rufus), gray foxes (Urocyon cinereoargenteus), raccoons (Procyon lotor), and opossum (Didelphis marsupialis). No rare, threatened, or endangered wildlife species are known to occur within the WSA.

MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES

Locatables

The study area is in the Erskine Creek Mining District which covers an area about 5 miles long and 2 miles wide. The district contains deposits of tungsten, gold, and antimony which were productive around the turn of the century, and in the case of tungsten, in the 1940s and 1950s. Occurrences of copper, silver, and uranium are also documented.

Metamorphic rocks are the primary source of tungsten; gold and antimony occur in quartz veins in or near metamorphic rocks. Gold is also present in placer material.

The WSA contains 47 mining claims (an additional four claims on USFS portion) covering 725 acres (an additional 45 acres on USFS). Most of the claims are located in Sections 9, 16, 21, NE1/4 22, and NW1/4 23. Most of these claims contain underground workings or prospects left by previous mining. Claims are worked sporadically, generally by crude hand methods, or to keep up assessment work.

Leasables

The WSA does not contain geologic units which generate, or form a reservoir for, petroleum resources. There is no potential for oil and gas development; other leasable minerals are not present in the WSA.

Saleable minerals in the form of decomposed granite occur in the WSA but are too inaccessible and distant from local markets to have any value.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Permits have not been issued in this area for livestock grazing nor are any likely to be issued

SOIL AND WATERSHED RESOURCES

Soils

Slopes within this area are generally hilly to steep (20%-50%), except on ridgetops and saddles where slopes are more gentle (5%-20%). The soils are generally 15 to 60 inches deep over decomposing olivine gabbro bedrock. Textures are loamy or clayey, with the deeper soils generally having more clayey textures. Some surface gravels and cobbles are present. Rainfall runoff is potentially rapid due to the hilly slopes and

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heavy-textured soils with slower permeability rates. The water erosion hazard under bare soil conditions is medium to high because of the slopes and rapid runoff potential. The area may be subject to some landslides in very wet years.

Watersheds

No springs are known to occur in the area, and it is quite dry during summer and fall.



Photo 13 - View Within the Piute Cypress Instant Study Area.



Photo 14 - View Looking West Across Piute Cypress WSA to Western Boundary
Road
Environment

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This chapter focuses directly on the issues identified in Chapter 1. For each WSA the environmental impacts of each alternative are described issue by issue. The environmental impacts of these alternatives on the areas' other resources have also been analyzed and have been found to be insignificant.

Because of the general nature of this analysis and the lack of numerical and statistical information regarding the areas' resources, impacts in this chapter are often expressed in relative terms. For the purpose of this analysis the meanings of these terms are as follows:

- Negligible impact - the degree of anticipated environmental impact is considered less than minor.
- Minor impact - comparatively unimportant; in terms of the area's wildlife resources, a minor impact is one affecting a specific group of individuals of a population in a localized area for one generation or less; the integrity of the regional population is not likely to be affected.
- Moderate impact - an effect sufficient enough to cause a change in the abundance of a resource or its distribution. In terms of the area's wildlife, the abundance or distribution of a portion of the regional or local population would change over more than one generation, but would not affect the integrity of the regional population as a whole.
- Major impact - an effect sufficient enough to cause a decline in the abundance of a resource or a change in distribution of a resource. In terms of the area's wildlife, the abundance or distribution of the regional or local population of a species would decline beyond which natural recruitment would not likely return that population to its former level within several generations.

MERCED RIVER WSA (CA-040-203)

PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness/No Action)

Under the Proposed Action, the entire 12,835 acres of the Merced River WSA will not be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

The primary impacts under this proposal relate to wilderness values and archaeological resources.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

None of the WSA will be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation and none of the wilderness values on 12,835 acres will receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. Moderate increases in ORV use are projected in the eastern portion of the WSA. These increases and the exploration and development of the area's placer and lode claims will adversely affect the area's naturalness, solitude, primitive or unconfined recreation, and archaeological resources.

- Naturalness

There will be a moderate, adverse impact on naturalness along the Merced River and in the eastern portion of the WSA as a result of continued recreational ORV use. Approximately 3,000 visitor days of motorized recreation use currently occur along the area's 7 miles of jeep trails. Projections indicate that this use will increase to nearly 4,000 visitor days. Motorized vehicular use associated with the exploration and development of the area's existing placer and lode claims will also affect the area's naturalness values. As a result of these actions, the perception of naturalness will be adversely impacted on 750-900 acres along the Merced River and the North Fork and in the extreme western, northeastern and south central portion of the WSA.

Under the Proposed Action, it is anticipated that all of the placer and lode claims will be explored, minimally disturbing over 100 acres. Most placer claims are located along the Merced River, the North Fork of the Merced, and Sherlock Creek. While the majority of disturbance associated with these operations will be confined to the river and creek beds, approximately 50 acres of disturbance along the northern banks of the Merced and either side of the North Fork and Sherlock Creek will occur impairing naturalness characteristics on these lands. Most of the mining on these claims will be conducted using suction dredges. The noise associated with this dredging will impair the perception of naturalness on 250 to 300 acres along the rivers and canyons in which they occur. These impacts will, for the most part, be "seasonal" as the majority of placer claim activity is restricted to five months -- from late-June to November -- because of high water volumes during the remainder of the year.

It is anticipated that 3 jade mines will be developed in the extreme western portion of the WSA and 10 small gold mines will be developed in the north and south-central portion. The jade mines will be developed using open-pit trenching. Each will disturb approximately 10 acres of land impairing the perception of naturalness on and in the immediate vicinity of these operations -- on a total of approximately 75 to 100 acres. The lode gold claims will be developed using underground workings. Although this will limit the amount of surface disturbance, an additional 50 acres will be disturbed as a result of mine dumps, trailer site clearances, and the construction of surface facilities. This disturbance will impair the perception of naturalness on these sites and on the lands immediately surrounding the sites -- approximately 175 to 200 acres.

In addition to the impacts from motorized vehicular use and mining development and exploration, the continued use of the Merced River for non-motorized recreational pursuits such as whitewater rafting, which are projected to increase from 4,000 visitor days to 6,000 per year, and hiking and fishing, which are projected to increase from 3,500 visitor days to 4,000 visitor days per year, will also impair naturalness in the immediate vicinity of the Merced River canyon.

Fire suppression will have a minor impact on the area's naturalness if mechanized fire-fighting equipment is used, but will be reduced by post-suppression reclamation (rehabilitation by burning and machine seeding). Prescribed burns on 3,000 acres (approximately 1,000 acres per year) will have a short-term adverse impact on naturalness. These burns will be limited to 30- to 40- acre patches to minimize any impacts. In addition, preference will be given to the least disturbing suppression methods.

- Solitude

Impacts on solitude will basically be the same as those described for naturalness. The continued use of ORVs for recreation and mining exploration and development will have a moderate adverse impact on approximately 1,000 acres of land in the extreme western portion of the WSA, the north eastern and south central portions of the WSA, and along the Merced River. The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the area's placer claims will further impair these values, especially from late-June thru November, the period of most placer claim activity. During this period, the perception of solitude will be significantly impacted on an additional 300 acres along the rivers and canyons in which those activities occur.

The exploration and development of the 3 jade mines in the extreme western portion of the WSA and the noise and surface disturbance associated with these activities will have a localized, moderate impact on solitude proximate to these sites on over 150 acres. Ten lode gold claims will be developed using underground workings. The construction and surface disturbance associated with this development will impact the perception of solitude on 200-250 acres immediately surrounding these sites.

Non-motorized recreational use is also expected to increase along the Merced River once it is designated a "recreational river area" under the Wild and Scenic River Act. Currently, over 4,000 visitor days of whitewater rafting use and 3,500 visitor days of hiking and fishing use are estimated to occur along the River per year. These uses will increase but will remain at levels below 10,000 visitor days annually and have a minor adverse impact on solitude within the Merced River canyon area.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation will diminish as a result of continued recreational ORV use. Approximately 3,000 visitor days of motorized recreation use currently occur along the area's 7 miles of jeep trails along the Merced River and in the eastern portion of the WSA. Projections indicate that this will increase to nearly 4,000 visitor days. This increase together with the increase in motorized vehicular use associated with the exploration and development of the area's existing placer and lode claims will moderately diminish the quality of primitive or unconfined recreation on approximately 1,000 acres of land in the extreme western portion of the WSA, the north eastern and south central portions of the WSA and along the Merced River.

The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the 140 placer claims will diminish the opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation on 500 acres along the Merced River, the North Fork of the Merced, and Sherlock Creek where the majority of those claims are located. With the exception of approximately 50 acres of surface disturbance along the northern banks of the Merced and on either side of the North Fork and Sherlock Creek, these impacts will, for the most part, be seasonal since most placer claim activity is restricted by high water volumes the majority of the year.

The exploration and development of the 69 lode claims will also diminish the opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation. The noise and 30 acres of surface disturbance associated with the mining activities on the 3 jade mines in the extreme western portion of the WSA will impair the quality of primitive or unconfined recreation on over 150 acres proximate to these claims. The construction and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the 10 lode gold claims will further diminish the opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation on 200-250 acres surrounding these sites.

Designation of the Merced River as a "recreational river area" under the Wild and Scenic River Act will benefit primitive or unconfined recreation opportunities, such as whitewater rafting, as a result of restrictions placed on water resource projects. Over 4,000 visitor days of whitewater rafting use and 3,500 visitor days of hiking and fishing are currently estimated to occur annually along the river. These uses will increase nearly 2,500 visitor days over the next 5 to 10 years.

The prescribed burns that will be conducted on 3,000 acres of the WSA over the next 3 years will have a minor, positive impact on primitive or unconfined recreation by providing greater dispersal of users throughout the area by eliminating dense, low-lying vegetation.

- Special Features

The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the placer claims located along the Merced River will have a minor, adverse impact on the recreational opportunities available along the river. These impacts, however, will be short-term and of a temporary nature as the majority of placer claim activity is restricted to five months -- from late-June to November -- because of high water volumes during the remainder of the year. Water quality will not be adversely affected because of the regulatory control of suction dredging activities by the State's Department of Fish and Game.

This segment of the Merced has been recommended as a "recreational river area" under the Wild and Scenic River Act. Designation of the river as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system will have a moderate, beneficial impact on the recreational use of the river since power site developments will be precluded and water quality will be maintained or, where necessary, improved to levels which meet Federal criteria or Federally approved State standards.

Conclusion:

There will be a moderate adverse impact on the area's wilderness values over approximately 15 to 20 percent of the WSA as a result of continued ORV use and the exploration and development of the WSA's placer and lode claims. The designation of the Merced River on a "recreational river area" under the Wild and Scenic River Act will benefit primitive or unconfined recreation, but will have negligible benefits to the area's wilderness values.

Impact on Recreational ORV Use

Under the Proposed Action, the area will remain open to recreational ORV use (except on lands designated part of the Limestone Salamander ACEC) and recreational motorized use will increase from 2,500 to 3,000 visitor days annually to nearly 4,000 visitor days. Road improvements associated with the exploration and development of the area's mineral resources will have a minor, benefitting impact on recreation ORV use in the eastern portion of the WSA. Since motorized vehicular use is not prohibited in "recreational river areas", recreational ORV use would not be affected by the designation of the Merced River as a component of the National Scenic River system.

Conclusion:

Recreational ORV use will be slightly enhanced as a result of the road improvements associated with the exploration and development of the area's mineral resources. The levels will increase from 2,500-3,000 visitor days annually to nearly 4,000 visitor days.

Impact on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources

Of the 29 known archaeological sites in the Merced River WSA, 15 are associated with the prehistoric period of Native American occupation and are characterized by the presence of bedrock mortar holes. Evidence of these activities or occupation is lacking since all but one have no debris or remains except grinding stones. Damage to these sites as a result of increased motorized use will be negligible. None of the sites are located along the 7 miles of jeep trails that receive the majority of vehicle use and no damage has occurred as a result of ORV use. The area's archaeological resources will be slightly impacted as a result of the surface disturbance from continued mining activity and theft and vandalism associated with increased motorized and non-motorized use. Non-motorized recreational use will increase from the current 7,500 visitor days annually to 10,000 visitor days but will not adversely impact these sites. As the majority of these sites are located along the river, there will be a minor adverse impact to them as a result of the surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the 140 placer gold claims. Plans of operation for all future mining activity will be reviewed, however, to minimize any adverse impacts to these sites.

The remaining thirteen sites represent the structural remains of occupation during the historic period and are characterized by native rock masonry. Increased motorized and non-motorized recreational use will have a negligible adverse impact on these sites as a result of increased theft and vandalism. In addition, the surface disturbance associated with the development of both the lode and placer gold claims will adversely impact these sites. These impacts will be mitigated as plans of operation for future mining activities are reviewed and possible threats to these resources are identified.

Conclusion:

The area's archaeological resources will be slight impacted as a result of the surface disturbance from continued mining activity and theft and vandalism associated with increased motorized and nonmotorized use.

Impact on Federally-Listed Candidate Species

The Merced River WSA contains habitat for the Limestone salamander, a Federally-listed candidate species. In 1986, 470 acres within the WSA and 1,130 acres outside the area were designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to protect the habitat from surface disturbances associated with mining activities along the Merced River. Under the Proposed Action, it is anticipated that all of the existing placer claims along the river will be developed, minimally impacting 50 acres along the northern banks of the Merced. The habitat is located along the north facing slopes on the southern side of the river and will not be impacted by any of the anticipated surface disturbance. In addition, the designation of the habitat as an ACEC provides significant discretionary control on surface disturbances associated with mining claims by requiring plans of operation for non-casual use; e.g., those activities that result in more than negligible disturbance, or involve the use of mechanized earth-moving equipment 5 explosives.

Consequences

Conclusion:

There will be no impact to the habitat of the area's Federally-listed candidate species -- the Limestone salamander.

Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development

Under the Proposed Action, the area will be open to mineral entry and location and the existing lode and placer claims will be explored and developed.

Conclusion:

There will be no impact on mineral exploration and development within the Merced River WSA under the Proposed Action.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot Be Avoided

The noise and surface disturbance associated with the continued use of motorized vehicles and the exploration and development of the area's lode and placer claims will cause some unavoidable adverse impacts. These include moderate adverse impacts on the area's wilderness values over 20-25 percent of the WSA and slight adverse impacts on the area's archaeological resources.

Relationship Between Local Short-term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity

If the WSA is not designated wilderness, all present short-term uses will continue including motorized vehicle use and mining exploration and development. While these activities will cause some surface disturbance, they will not significantly impair long-term productivity -- soil productivity or hydrologic characteristics. Much of the placer claim activity in the area is restricted over half the year because of high of water volumes, and is closely regulated by the California Department of Fish and Game. Lode claims will be developed using underground workings causing only minimal surface disturbance.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

No irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources are anticipated.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under the alternative, the entire 12,835 acres of the Merced River WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

The primary impacts under this alternative relate to wilderness values, archaeological resources and mineral exploration and development.

Impact of Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 12,835 acres of the Merced River WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation and withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws, subject to valid existing rights. Surface disturbances associated with the exploration and development of the area's valid lode and placer claims would adversely affect the area's naturalness, solitude, primitive or unconfined recreation and archaeological resources.

- Naturalness

There would be a minor benefit on naturalness as a result of closing the WSA to recreational ORV use and eliminating 2,500-3,000 visitor days of motorized recreational use estimated to occur annually along the 7 miles of existing jeep trails. Motorized vehicle use associated with the exploration and development of the area's lode and placer claims would continue but would only negligibly impact naturalness along existing jeep trails along the northern bank of the Merced River and in the extreme western, north eastern and south central portion of the WSA.

Formal validity exams would be conducted on the numerous lode and placer claims located throughout the area. Sixty percent of the placer claims would be deemed valid and development would continue on these claims disturbing approximately 35 acres of land along the northern banks of the Merced River and portions of the North Fork and Sherlock Creek and impairing the perception of naturalness on 150 to 200 acres on and in the immediate vicinity of these claims. Only a quarter of the lode claims would be deemed valid and explored and developed. Three lode jade mines in the extreme western portion of the area would be developed using open-pit trenching and would disturb approximately 30 acres of land, impairing the perception of naturalness on 75 to 100 acres on and in the immediate vicinity of these mining operations.

Ten small lode gold mines will be developed in the north-and south-central portion of the WSA and will be underground workings. Although this will limit the amount of surface disturbance, an additional 50 acres will be disturbed as a result of mine dumps, trailer site clearances, and the construction of surface facilities. This disturbance will impair the perception of naturalness on these sites and on lands immediately surrounding the sites -- approximately 175 to 200 acres.

The continued use of the Merced River for non-motorized recreational pursuits such as whitewater rafting (which is expected to increase from 4,000 visitor days to over 6,000 visitor days per year) and hiking and fishing (which is expected to increase from 3,500 visitor days to over 5,500 visitor days per year) would also impair the perception of naturalness in the immediate vicinity of the Merced River canyon.

Like the Proposed Action, prescribed burns would be conducted on 3,000 acres within the WSA and would have a short-term adverse impact on naturalness. These burns would be limited to 30- to -40 acre patches to minimize any impact.

- Solitude

Impacts on solitude will basically be the same as those described for naturalness. The closure of the area to motorized recreational use would have a minor benefit on the feeling of solitude on 5 to 10 percent of the area - Motorized vehicle use associated with the exploration and development of the area's lode and placer claims would continue but would only negligibly impact the perception of solitude on and in the immediate vicinity of 7 miles of existing jeep trails along the Merced River and in the extreme western, northeast-ern and south central portion of the WSA.

Noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration and development of the area's valid placer claims will also impair the perception of solitude along the Merced River and portions of the North Fork of the Merced and Sherlock Creek. These impacts, will, for, the most part, be "seasonal" as the majority of placer claims activity is restricted to five months -- from late-June to November -- because of high water volumes during the remainder of the year. Noise and visual intrusions from the development of the 3 lode jade mines in the extreme western portion of the area would impair the perception of solitude on 100 acres in the vicinity of those mining operations. The feeling of solitude would also be impaired on approximately 20 acres surrounding each of these mines, or, roughly 200 acres.

The continued use of the Merced River for non-motorized recreational use (whitewater rafting, hiking and fishing) would also impair the perception of solitude in the immediate vicinity of the Merced River canyon. This use is expected to increase from a total of 7,500 visitor days annually to 11,500 visitor days.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation would benefit as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreational use along the area's 7 miles of jeep trails and eliminating the noise and surface disturbance associated with this use. Motorized vehicle use associated with the exploration and development of the area's lode and placer claims would continue but would only negligibly impair primitive or unconfined recreation in the immediate vicinity of the existing jeep trails along the northern bank of the Merced River and in the extreme western, northeastern and south central portion of WSA.

The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the valid placer claims will diminish the opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation on 250 to 300 acres along the Merced River, the North Fork of the Merced, and Sherlock Creek where the majority of those claims are located. With the exception of approximately 30-35 acres of surface disturbance along the northern banks of the Merced and on either side of the North Fork and Sherlock Creek, these impacts would be seasonal since most placer claim activity is restricted by the high water volumes during seven months of the year.

The exploration and development of the 3 lode claims will also diminish the opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation in the extreme western portion of the WSA on over 150 acres proximate to these claims. The construction and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the 10 lode gold claims will further diminish the opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation on 200 to 250 acres surrounding these sites.

Designation of the Merced River as a "recreational river area" under the Wild and Scenic River Act will moderately benefit primitive or unconfined recreation opportunities, such as whitewater rafting, as a result of restrictions placed on water resource projects which would adversely impact these opportunities.

Finally, the prescribed burns that will be conducted on 3,000 acres of the WSA over the next 3 years will have a minor, positive impact on primitive or unconfined recreation by providing greater dispersal of users throughout the area by eliminating dense, low-lying vegetation.

- Special Features

The impacts to the Limestone salamander habitat under the All Wilderness Alternative would be the same as those described for the Proposed Action on p. 115. As the bulk of current motorized recreational use occurs north of the Merced River, the closing of the area to motorized recreational vehicles will have a negligible benefit to the habitat.

Conclusion:

There would be a moderate adverse impact on the area's wilderness values over approximately 8 to 10 percent of the WSA as a result of the exploration and development of 60 percent of the placer gold claim and 20 percent of the lode jade and gold claims. Primitive or unconfined recreation opportunities will be slightly enhanced once the Merced River is designated a component of the Wild and Scenic River system. There will be no impact to the area's Federally-listed candidate species as a result of designation.

Consequences

Impact of Recreational ORV Use

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the WSA would be closed to motorized vehicular use, eliminating the 2,500 to 3,000 visitor days of recreational motorized use estimated to presently occur annually within the area. Future recreational ORV opportunities would be foregone. Similar opportunities, however, are available on adjacent public lands and the Stanislaus National Forest. Recreational ORV use foregone in the WSA would be absorbed on surrounding public and National Forest lands.

Conclusion:

2,500 to 3,000 visitor days of recreational ORV use annually would be foregone. The impacts would be moderate because of the availability of similar opportunities for motorized recreational ORV use on lands proximate to the WSA.

Impact on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources

The closing of the area to motorized vehicles and the elimination of the current 2,500 to 3,000 visitor days of motorized recreation use will have a slight benefit on the preservation of the area's archaeological resources. Non-motorized recreational use, will increase the current 7,500 visitor days annually to 11,500 visitor days increasing the risk of damage to these resources as a result of theft of vandalism.

Sixty percent of the placer claims located along the Merced River, the North Fork of the Merced, and Sherlock Creek would be explored and developed, adversely impacting the 15 prehistoric sites located in the vicinity of these claims. These impacts will be slight, however, since most are only characterized by the presence of bedrock mortar holes and evidence of other activities is lacking, and most mining is confined to river and creek beds.

Three lode jade claims and 10 lode gold claims will also be explored and developed. The surface disturbance associated with the development of these sites will have a slight adverse impact on the area's 13 historic sites.

Conclusion:

The area's archaeological resources will be slightly impacted as a result of the surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of valid lode and placer claims. The closing of the area to motorized recreational use will negligibly benefit these resources.

Impact on Federally-Listed Candidate Species Habitat

The impacts on the area's Limestone salamander habitat under the All Wilderness Alternative are the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 117.

Conclusion:

There will be no impact to the habitat of the area's Federally-listed candidate species -- the Limestone salamander.

Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws subject to valid existing rights. For purposes of analysis, it is assumed that 60 percent of the placer claims would be deemed valid and development would continue on these claims. Only a quarter of the lode claims would be deemed valid and explored and developed. The opportunity to explore for, and develop mineral resources on the remainder of the WSA would be foregone.

Conclusion:

Less than half of the areas lode and placer claims would be explored or developed. Future mining activity would be foregone.

PANOCHÉ HILLS NORTH WSA
(CA-040-301A)

PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness/No Action)

Under the Proposed Action, none of the 6,677 acres of the Panoche Hills North WSA will be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

The primary impacts under this proposal relate to wilderness values and rare, threatened, and endangered species.

Impact on Wilderness Values

None of the WSA will be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation and none of the wilderness values on 6,677 acres will receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. Lands within the WSA will be available for oil and gas exploration and development and it is anticipated some exploration will occur. This exploration, and projected increases in vehicle use under this proposal, will negligibly impact the area's wilderness values.

- Naturalness

Under the Proposed Action, 6 miles of jeep-trails will remain open to four-wheeled vehicle use; all other motorized vehicle use will continue to be excluded. Motorized use along these trails will be limited to six months--from the start of quail and chukar hunting season in mid-October until the start of fire season in late April/early May. Projections indicate that this use will increase slightly

Consequences

from the current 275 visitor days annually to approximately 325 visitor days. As a result of these actions, the perception of naturalness will be negligibly impacted by the noise and visual intrusions associated with this use. Non-motorized vehicle use will remain constant at levels below 50 visitor days annually and will have no adverse impact on naturalness.

Leasing for oil and gas will be allowed on all 6,677 acres of the WSA. The potential for oil and gas is low; however, it is anticipated that the area will be explored. Vibroseis (thumper) trucks will be used in the initial stages along existing roads and jeep trails. These activities and the use of small explosive charges for seismic testing will have a minor, short-term adverse impact on naturalness. No more than 7 wildcat wells will be drilled within the WSA disturbing approximately 15 acres and 20 miles of access road will be constructed disturbing 40 to 50 acres. The noise, traffic, and visual intrusions associated with these activities will have a moderate adverse impact on the perception of naturalness on 750 to 1,000 acres. It is anticipated that these wells will be nonproducing, and eventually will be abandoned. Following abandonment, the wells will be plugged, well casings will be removed, and the lands (including roads) will be recontoured, and reseeded.

Fire suppression will have a minor short-term adverse impact on the area's naturalness if mechanized fire-fighting equipment is used. However, these impacts will be offset by the benefiting impacts of keeping fires as small as possible to protect the native shrub cover which, in this area, is easily killed by fire. Adverse, surface disturbing impacts will be further mitigated by post-suppression reclamation and will focus on the re-establishment of native shrub cover.

The WSA will continue to be utilized indefinitely for sheep grazing which will negligibly impact naturalness. These impacts, however, will be mitigated by monitoring livestock use during the grazing season (from January 1 to April 30) using photo plots scattered throughout the WSA.

No new wildlife management projects are planned although project maintenance and habitat monitoring will continue. These activities will be conducted one to two weeks each year and will require the use of vehicles on existing roads and trails. Although maintenance will not take place on a regular schedule, it is estimated that one or two projects, mostly guzzlers, will be maintained on an annual basis. Maintenance activities typically involve the use of a dump truck and two to three support vehicles for reconstruction of guzzler aprons by mixing and pouring concrete. Total surface disturbance at each site will involve less than one-quarter acre (mostly from vehicle passage). New aprons will be camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding landscape. Spring developments will require only hand labor to replace or clean out spring boxes. Most are currently inaccessible to vehicles and require walk-in access. While there may be some minor adverse impact on the area's naturalness as a result of surface disturbance associated with habitat monitoring and project maintenance, these impacts will be short-term.

- Solitude

Impacts on solitude would basically be the same as those described for naturalness. The time, location, and vehicle-type restrictions placed on motorized vehicle use will have a negligible, adverse impact on the perception of solitude. Non-motorized recreational use is also expected to increase but will have no impact on the opportunities for solitude.

The noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources will have a moderate adverse impact on 10 to 15 percent of the area. These impacts, however, will be short-term, since production is not anticipated. Roads and sites will be reclaimed once the wildcat wells drilled in exploring the area are abandoned.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The projected increase in motorized vehicular use (from 275 visitor days per year to nearly 325 visitor days) will have a negligible, adverse impact on the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation. These impacts will be "seasonal" since motorized use is prohibited during fire season--from late April/early May through mid-October.

As described above, the noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources will have a moderate, adverse impact on primitive or unconfined recreation on 10 to 15 percent of the area. Those impacts will be short-term as production is not anticipated and the roads and drill-sites will be reclaimed once the wildcat wells drilled in exploring the area are abandoned.

- Special Features

The continued use of four-wheeled vehicles along the 6 miles of existing jeep-trails in the western portion of the WSA and within the Panoche/Coalinga RT&E ACEC will have a minor, adverse impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered species--the San Joaquin kit-fox, the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, the giant kangaroo rat, and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel--and a slight, adverse impact on the mediterranean annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem. There will be no impact to the area's paleontological resources since no motorized use presently occurs in the northeastern portion of the area within the Moreno Paleontological ACEC and none is projected.

Although the potential for oil and gas leasing is low under this proposal, it is assumed the area will be explored. Special stipulations and conditions are currently being developed for both the Panoche/Coalinga RT&E and Moreno Paleontological ACECs. Exploration

and development will be subject to these conditions and stipulations which will be directed primarily at site location, season of drilling, and road construction. These special stipulations will minimize impacts on the area's special features from oil and gas exploration.

The use of heavy equipment for fire suppression will be limited to the extent possible within the ACEC portions of the area. At a minimum, known giant kangaroo rat colonies and kit fox dens will be avoided as well as those areas of high paleontological value, thereby minimizing any adverse impacts from fire suppression efforts. Grazing will also continue at current levels but will have no adverse impacts on the areas special features.

Conclusion:

There will be a minor, adverse impact on the area's wilderness values on approximately 15 percent of the WSA as a result of the management actions under the Proposed Action. The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources will moderately impact naturalness, solitude and primitive or unconfined recreation but will be short-term since production is not anticipated and the road and exploratory drill sites will be reclaimed.

Impact on Motorized Hunting Use Levels

Under the Proposed Action, lands within the WSA will remain limited to four-wheel vehicle use on the 6 miles of designated routes from the start of quail and chukar hunting season in mid-October until the start of fire season in late April/early May. Approximately 275 visitor days of four-wheeled use occur in the WSA--250 visitor days are hunting-related. Projections indicate that this use will increase slightly, but will remain at levels below 325 visitor days annually.

Conclusion:

Motorized hunting use will continue and will slightly increase from the current 250 visitor days annually to under 325 visitor days.

Impact on Paleontological Resources

No motorized vehicle use presently occurs in the northeastern portion of the WSA within the Moreno Paleontological ACEC and none is projected. Oil and gas exploration will occur throughout the WSA but will be subject to special lease stipulations and conditions currently being developed as a part of the Moreno Paleontological ACEC Management Plan. These stipulations and conditions will be directed primarily at site location, season of drilling, and road construction and will mitigate any adverse impacts to the area's paleontological resources. In addition, the use of heavy equipment for fire suppression will be limited to the extent possible within the ACEC. At a minimum, areas of high paleontological values will be avoided, thereby minimizing any adverse impacts from fire suppression efforts.

Grazing will also continue at current levels but will have no impact on the area's paleontological resources.

Conclusion:

There will be no impact on the area's paleontological resources.

Impact on Paleontological Investigation

Under the Proposed Action, paleontological investigations, including excavations, will be permitted.

Conclusion:

There will be no impact on paleontological investigations.

Impact on RT&E Species

The continued use and projected increase of four-wheeled vehicles along the 6 miles of jeep-trails in the western portion of the WSA and within the Panoche/Coalinga RT&E ACEC will have a minor, adverse impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered animal species--the San Joaquin kit-fox, the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, the giant kangaroo rat, and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel. This use, will be limited to 6 months of the year (from mid-October to late April/early May), and only on approved or designated routes of travel. Two and three-wheeled vehicles will be excluded.

Although there are no known occurrences of the green fiddleneck (Amsinkia furcata) within the area, the northeastern portion contains potential habitat for this BLM sensitive plant species. This area is within the Moreno Paleontological ACEC. There will be no impact to this habitat under the Proposed Action as no motorized vehicle use presently occurs within this area and none is projected.

It is anticipated that oil and gas exploration will occur throughout the WSA. This activity, however, will be subject to special lease stipulations and conditions currently being developed as a part of the management plan for the area's two ACECs. These stipulations and conditions will be directed primarily at site location, season of drilling, and road construction and will mitigate any adverse impacts to the area's RT&E species. In addition, the use of heavy equipment for fire suppression will be limited to the extent possible within both ACECs. At a minimum, known giant kangaroo rat colonies and kit fox dens will be avoided as well as sensitive plant species potential habitat.

Grazing will also continue at current levels but will have no adverse impact on the area's RT&E species.

Consequences

Conclusion:

There will be a negligible, adverse impact on the area's RT&E species as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with continued four-wheeled vehicle use, oil and gas exploration, and mechanized fire suppression.

Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development

Under the Proposed Action, the entire area will be available for oil and gas leasing, subject to stipulations on approximately 2,100 acres for the protection of marine fossils and sensitive plant surface and wildlife resources in the Moreno Paleontological ACEC and the Panoche/Coalinga RT&E ACEC. It is anticipated that some exploration will occur and that 7 wildcat wells will be drilled, but that these wells will be nonproducing.

Conclusion:

There will be no impact on oil and gas exploration.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot be Avoided

The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources will cause some moderate, short-term impact to the area's wilderness values which cannot be avoided.

Relationships Between Short-term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity

Under the Proposed Action, all current and projected short-term uses will continue. However, none of these activities will result in a loss of long-term productivity. There will be some surface disturbances as a result of the anticipated oil and gas exploration but this will not significantly offset the area's long-term productivity.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

There will be no irreversible or irretrievable impacts under the Proposed Actions.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under this alternative, the entire 6,677 acres of the Panoche Hills North WSA would be designated wilderness.

The primary impacts under this alternative relate to motorized hunting use levels and oil and gas exploration.

Impact on Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 6,677 acres of Panoche Hills North WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation and all values would be protected by legislative mandate. Motorized use

would be prohibited and none of the area, including the 2,000 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases would be explored or developed. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive or unconfined recreation and the area's special features--the RT&E species, the California Steppe ecosystem, and paleontological resources--would be retained.

- Naturalness

Although the current vehicular use of the area is low (275 visitor days annually), and limited to certain types of vehicles during certain times of the year, there would be a slight beneficial impact on the area's naturalness as a result of closing the area to motorized vehicle use. And eliminating the noise and visual intrusions associated with this use. Non-motorized recreational uses would increase from 50 visitor days annually to about 325 visitor days, but would have no adverse impacts on the area's naturalness.

Upon designation, the area would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws eliminating future oil and gas exploration and development. Development of the 2000 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases would be permitted, but only in accordance with the Bureau's wilderness protection stipulations (see Appendix 1). Because of the restrictive nature of these stipulations, however, it is anticipated that none of the 2,000 acres would be developed. The area's naturalness would, therefore, be retained.

Fire suppression using mechanized fire-fighting equipment would also be precluded (except to prevent loss of human life or to protect private or high value property) further minimizing any surface disturbance and any impact to the area's naturalness.

The WSA would continue to be utilized indefinitely for sheep grazing which would negligibly impact naturalness. These impacts, however, would be mitigated by monitoring livestock use during grazing season (from January 1 to April 30) using photo plots scattered throughout the WSA.

As described in the Proposed Action, no new wildlife management projects are planned although maintenance and herd monitoring will continue. These activities will be conducted one or two weeks each year and would require the use of vehicles on existing roads and trails. Although maintenance would not take place on a regular schedule, it is estimated that one or two projects, mostly guzzlers, would be maintained on an annual basis. Maintenance activities typically involve the use of a dump truck and two to three support vehicles for reconstruction of guzzler aprons by mixing and pouring concrete. Total surface disturbance at each site would involve less than one-quarter acre (mostly from vehicle passage). New aprons would be camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding landscape. Spring developments would require only hand labor to replace or

clean out spring boxes. Most are currently inaccessible to vehicles and require walk-in access. While there may be some minor adverse impact on the area's naturalness as a result of surface disturbance associated with herd monitoring and project maintenance, these impacts would be short-term.

- Solitude

The impacts of wilderness designation on the area's solitude would be the same as those described under "Naturalness" above. The area would be closed to motorized vehicle use, slightly benefiting solitude; non-motorized recreation use would increase but would have no adverse impact. However, those visitor days would continue within the WSA on a walk in basis from the perimeter of the WSA. Oil and gas exploration and the use of mechanized fire-fighting equipment would be restricted, eliminating the noise and surface disturbance associated with these activities and retaining opportunities for solitude. Finally, grazing would continue at current levels but would have no significant impact on solitude.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation would benefit as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreational use and eliminating the 275 visitor days of motorized use which are estimated to occur annually along the area's six miles of jeep-trails. Oil and gas exploration and the noise and visual intrusions associated with this activity would also be eliminated retaining the opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation throughout the WSA. Grazing would continue at current levels but would have no impact on significant primitive or unconfined recreation.

- Special Features

The closure of the area to four-wheeled vehicles and elimination of the 275 visitor days along the 6 miles of jeep-trails in the northeastern portion of the WSA would have a minor, positive impact on the area's rare, threatened, and endangered species found in this portion of the WSA, and the mediterranean annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem. Oil and gas exploration and the noise and surface disturbance associated with this activity would also be eliminated, further protecting these features, as well as the paleontological resources in the northeastern portion of the WSA. Aggressive initial fire attack would continue to be given a high priority, although the use of mechanized, ground fire-fighting equipment would be limited.

Conclusion:

There would be a minor, positive impact on the area's wilderness values as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreation use and eliminating the 275 visitor days of motorized use, estimated to occur along the area's 6 miles of jeep trails, and restricting future oil and gas exploration.

Impact on Motorized Hunting Use Levels

Under this alternative, the lands within the Panoche Hills North WSA would be closed to motorized vehicle use eliminating the 275 visitor days estimated to occur within the WSA. Approximately 250 of these visitor use days are used for hunting. Future opportunities for motorized recreation use within the WSA would be foregone. However, there are similar opportunities for motorized hunting use on other public lands throughout the region. Any motorized vehicle use displaced from the WSA would be absorbed with no consequence on nearby public lands.

Conclusion:

Motorized hunting use of 250 visitor days annually would be foregone. The impact of this action on motorized hunting in the Panoche Hills North WSA would be minimal because of similar opportunities for motorized hunting on other public lands within the region.

Impact on Paleontological Resources

Impacts on the paleontological resources located in the northeastern portion of the WSA under the All Wilderness Alternative would be similar to those described under the Proposed Action. Oil and gas exploration, however, would be prohibited altogether, eliminating surface disturbance associated with road building and drill pad construction and the chance of any damage to these resources.

Conclusion:

There would be no impact on the area's paleontological resources.

Impact on Paleontological Investigations

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, excavation of the area's paleontological resources for scientific purposes would be permitted, but only on a case-by-case basis where such activities would not impair wilderness values. Motorized vehicles would be prohibited, limiting access to paleontological sites.

Conclusion:

There would be a slight, adverse impact to paleontological investigation as a result of the limitations placed on motorized vehicle access.

Impact on RT&E Species

Under this alternative, the area would be closed to motorized vehicles. The 275 visitor days of motorized use estimated to occur within the Panoche/Coalinga RT&E ACEC annually and the noise and surface disturbance associated with this use would be eliminated slightly benefiting the area's rare, threatened and endangered species. Development of the 2,000 acres of post-FLPMA resources also located within this portion of the WSA

Consequences

would not occur because of the restrictive nature of the Bureau's wilderness protection stipulations on operations such as these. The noise and surface disturbance associated with road construction and drill pad construction would also be eliminated further protecting the area's rare, threatened and endangered species.

The remainder of the WSA would be withdrawn from mineral leasing, precluding any future oil and gas exploration, and protecting the habitat of the green fiddleneck, a BLM sensitive plant species, from any future disturbance.

Conclusion:

There would be a slight, positive impact on the area's RT&E plant and animal species as a result of eliminating the noise and surface disturbance associated with motorized vehicle use and oil and gas exploration.

Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development

Upon designation, the entire area would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws subject to valid existing rights. Development of the 2,000 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases would be permitted, but only in accordance with the Bureau's wilderness protection stipulations (see Appendix 1). Because of the restrictive nature of these stipulations, however, it is anticipated that none of the 2,000 acres would be developed. Oil and gas exploration would therefore, be foregone on the 2,000 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases as well as the remainder of the WSA.

Conclusion:

Oil and gas exploration and development would be forgone on the entire WSA. However, the potential for producing well is considered to be low.

PANOCHÉ HILLS SOUTH WSA
(CA-040-301B)

PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness/No Action)

Under the Proposed Action, none of the 11,267 acres of the Panoche Hills South WSA will be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

The primary impacts under this proposal relate to wilderness values and RT&E species.

Impact on Wilderness Values

None of the WSA will be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation and none of the wilderness values on 11,267 acres will receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. Lands within the WSA will be available for oil and gas exploration and development, and it is anticipated some exploration will occur. This exploration and projected increases in vehicle use under this proposal will moderately impact the area's wilderness values over the short term, but will only negligibly impact these values over the long-term.

- Naturalness

Under the Proposed Action, 10 miles of jeep trails within the WSA will remain open to four-wheeled vehicle use; all other motorized vehicle use (i.e., motorcycles and three-wheeled vehicles) will continue to be excluded. Motorized use along these trails will be limited to six months--from the start of quail and chukar hunting season in mid-October until the start of fire season in late April/early May. Projections indicate that this use will increase slightly from the current 75 visitor days annually to less than 125 visitor days. As a result of these actions, the perception of naturalness will be negligibly impacted by the noise and visual intrusions associated with this use. There will be no impact to the area's wilderness characteristics. Non-motorized recreational use will remain constant at levels below 25 visitor days annually and will have no adverse impact on naturalness.

Leasing for oil and gas will be allowed on all 11,267 acres of the WSA. The potential for oil and gas is low; however, it is anticipated that the area will be explored. Vibroseis (thumper) trucks will be used in the initial stages along the seven miles of trails in the eastern portion of the WSA and the three miles of trails in the western portion of the WSA. These activities and the use of small explosive charges for seismic testing will have a minor, short term, adverse impact on the perception of naturalness along these trails. Approximately 12 wildcat wells will be drilled within the WSA disturbing approximately 25 to 30 acres; 36 miles of road will be constructed disturbing approximately 70 acres. The noise and visual intrusions associated with these activities will have a moderate, adverse impact on the perception of naturalness on 1,500

Consequences

to 2,000 acres. It is anticipated that these wells will be nonproducing and eventually will be abandoned. Following abandonment, the wells will be plugged, well casings will be removed, and the lands (including roads) will be recontoured and reseeded.

Fire suppression will have minor, short term adverse impacts on the area's naturalness if mechanized fire-fighting equipment is used but these impacts will be offset by the benefiting impacts of keeping fires as small as possible to promote native shrub cover which in this area is easily killed by fire. Adverse, surface disturbing impacts will be further mitigated by post-suppression reclamation and will focus on reestablishment of native shrub cover.

The WSA will continue to be used indefinitely for sheep and cattle grazing but with no adverse impact to the area's naturalness.

No new wildlife management projects are planned although maintenance and habitat herd monitoring will continue. These activities will be conducted one or two weeks each year and will require the use of vehicles on existing roads and trails. Although maintenance will not take place on a regular schedule, it is estimated that one or two projects, mostly guzzlers, will be maintained on an annual basis. Maintenance activities typically involve the use of a dump truck and two to three support vehicles for reconstruction of guzzler aprons by mixing and pouring concrete. Total surface disturbance at each site will involve less than one-quarter acre (mostly from vehicle passage). New aprons will be camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding landscape. Spring developments will require only hand labor to replace or clean out spring boxes. Most are currently inaccessible to vehicles and require walk-in access. While there may be some minor adverse impact on the area's naturalness as a result of surface disturbance associated with habitat herd monitoring and project maintenance, these impacts will be short-term.

- Solitude

Impacts on solitude would basically be the same as those described for naturalness. The time, locational, and vehicle-type restrictions placed on motorized vehicle use would have a negligible, adverse impact on the perception of solitude. Non-motorized recreational use will also increase but will remain at levels below 75 visitor use days and will not adversely impact solitude.

The noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources will have a moderate adverse impact on roughly 20 to 25 percent of the area. These impacts, however, will be short-term, since production is not anticipated. Roads and drilling sites will be reclaimed once the wildcat wells drilled in exploring the area are abandoned. Disturbed lands will be recontoured and reseeded.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The projected 125 visitor days of four-wheeled vehicle use along the 10 miles of jeep trails within the WSA will have a negligible adverse impact on the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation. These impacts will be "seasonal" since motorized use is prohibited during fire season -- from late-April/early May through mid-October.

The noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources will have a moderate adverse impact on primitive or unconfined recreation on 20 to 25 percent of the area. These impacts will be short-term, however, since production is not anticipated and the roads and drill sites will be reclaimed once the wildcat wells drilled in exploring the area are abandoned.

- Special Features

The continued use of four-wheeled vehicles along the 10 miles of jeep trails within the WSA will have a negligible adverse impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species -- the green fiddleneck habitat, the San Joaquin kit-fox, the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, the giant kangaroo rat, and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel -- and the mediterranean annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem. Vehicle use will also negligibly impact the area's paleontological resources in the eastern portion of the WSA but will be negated by the restrictions and actions described above.

Although the potential for oil and gas leasing is low, it is assumed that under this proposal the area will be explored. Approximately 12 wildcat wells will be drilled and 36 miles of road will be constructed disturbing approximately 100 acres and having a minor impact on the areas rare, threatened and endangered species and the mediterranean annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem which cover the area. Special stipulations and conditions are currently being developed for the Moreno Paleontological ACEC. Exploration and development will be subject to these conditions and stipulations which will be directed primarily at site location, season of drilling, and road construction. These special stipulations will minimize impacts on the area's paleontological resources.

The use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression will be limited to the extent possible in those portions of the WSA where rare, threatened or endangered plant and animal species are known to occur (e.g., known giant kargaroo rat colonies, kit fox dens, etc.), thereby minimizing any adverse impacts to these species. Grazing will continue at current levels but will have no adverse impacts on the area's special features.

Conclusion:

There will be minor, adverse impacts on the area's wilderness values on 20 to 25 percent of the WSA as a result of continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration. The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources will moderately impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive or unconfined recreation but will be short-term since production is not anticipated and the road and exploratory drill sites will be reclaimed.

Impact on Paleontological Resources

Approximately 50 visitor days of four-wheeled vehicle use are estimated to occur annually in the eastern portion of the WSA in the vicinity of the Moreno Paleontological ACEC. This use is projected to increase but will remain at levels below 100 visitor days, negligibly impacting the area's paleontological resources.

Oil and gas exploration will occur throughout the WSA including the Moreno Paleontological ACEC. Oil and gas exploration within the ACEC, however, will be subject to special lease stipulations and conditions currently being developed as a part of the Moreno Paleontological ACEC Management Plan. These stipulations and conditions will be directed primarily at site location, season of drilling, and road construction and will mitigate any adverse impacts to the area's paleontological resources. In addition, the use of heavy equipment for fire suppression will be limited to the extent possible within the ACEC. At a minimum, areas of high paleontological values will be avoided, thereby minimizing any adverse impacts from fire suppression efforts.

Grazing will also continue at current levels but will have no impact on the area's paleontological resources.

Conclusion:

There will be a negligible impact on the area's paleontological resources as a result of continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration.

Impact on Paleontological Investigations

Under the Proposed Action, paleontological investigations, including excavation, will be permitted.

Conclusion:

There will be no impact on paleontological investigations.

Impact on RT&E Species

The continued use and projected increase of four-wheeled vehicle use along the 10 miles of jeep trails throughout the WSA will have a negligible adverse impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered plant and

animal species -- the green fiddleneck habitat, the San Joaquin kit-fox, the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, the giant kangaroo rat, and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel. This use will be limited to 6 months of the year (from mid-October to late-April/early-May), on approved or designated routes of travel. Motorcycles and three-wheeled vehicles will be excluded all year.

Approximately 12 wildcat wells will be drilled and 36 miles of road will be constructed disturbing approximately 100 acres and having a minor impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered species. These impacts, however, will be short-term since production is not anticipated and the roads and drill-sites will be reclaimed once the wildcat wells drilled in exploring the area are abandoned. Wildlife monitoring will continue and will further mitigate the impact of this and other surface disturbing activities.

Finally, the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression will be limited to the extent possible in those portions of the WSA where rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species are known to occur (e.g., known giant kangaroo rat colonies, kit fox dens, etc.), thereby minimizing any adverse impacts to these species. Grazing will continue at current levels, but will have no adverse impacts on the area's special features.

Conclusion:

There will be minor, adverse impacts on the area's rare, threatened, or endangered species as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration. Impacts from oil and gas exploration, however, will be short-term since production is not anticipated.

Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development

Under the Proposed Action, the entire area will be available for oil and gas leasing, subject to stipulations on approximately 4,110 acres for the protection of paleontological resources in the Moreno Paleontological ACEC. It is anticipated that some exploration will occur and that 12 wildcat wells will be drilled; however, there is little probability that production will occur.

Conclusion:

There will be no impact on oil and gas exploration.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot be Avoided

The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources will cause some moderate, short-term impact to the area's wilderness values which cannot be avoided.

Consequences

Relationship Between the Short-Term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity.

Under the Proposed Action, all current and projected short-term uses will continue. However, none of these activities will result in a loss of long-term productivity. There will be some surface disturbance as a result of the anticipated oil and gas exploration but this will not significantly affect the area's long-term productivity.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

There will be no irreversible or irretrievable impacts under the Proposed Action.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under the alternative, the entire 11,267 acres of the Panoche Hills South WSA would be designated wilderness.

The primary impacts under this alternative relate to oil and gas exploration and development.

Impact on Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 11,267 acres of the Panoche Hills South WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation and all values would be protected by legislative mandate. Motorized use would be prohibited and none of the area (including the 7,570 acres of recently expired pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases) would be explored or developed. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive or unconfined recreation, and the area's special features--the RT&E plant and animal species and paleontological resources--would be retained.

- Naturalness

Although current vehicle use is low (75 visitor days per year) and limited to certain types of vehicles during certain times of the year, there would be a slight beneficial impact on the area's naturalness as a result of closing the area to motorized vehicle use and eliminating the noise and visual intrusions associated with this use. Non-motorized recreation use would increase slightly from the 25 visitor days estimated to occur annually within the WSA to approximately 50 visitor days, but will not impact the area's naturalness.

Under designation the entire area (including the recently expired 7,570 acres of pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases) would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws eliminating future oil and gas exploration and development and retaining the area's naturalness.

As described in the Proposed Action, no new wildlife management projects are planned although maintenance and habitat monitoring would continue. These activities will be conducted one to two weeks each year and will require the use of vehicles on existing roads and trails. Although maintenance will not take place on a regular schedule, it is estimated that one or two projects, mostly guzzlers, will be maintained on an annual basis. Maintenance activities typically involve the use of a dump truck and two to three support vehicles for reconstruction of guzzler aprons by mixing and pouring concrete. Total surface disturbance at each site will involve less than one-quarter acre (mostly from vehicle passage). New aprons will be camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding landscape. Spring developments will require only hand labor to replace or clean out spring boxes. Most are currently inaccessible to vehicles and require walk-in access. While there may be some minor adverse impact on the area's naturalness as a result of surface disturbance associated with habitat monitoring and project maintenance, these impacts will be short-term.

Finally, the WSA will continue to be used indefinitely for sheep and cattle grazing but with no adverse impact to the area's naturalness.

- Solitude

Impacts on solitude would basically be the same as those described for "Naturalness" above. The area would be closed to motorized vehicle use, slightly benefiting solitude; non-motorized recreational use would increase slightly but would have no adverse impact on the perception of solitude. Oil and gas exploration would be restricted, eliminating the noise and surface disturbance associated with this activity and retaining opportunities for solitude. While there may be some minor adverse impact on the perception of solitude as a result of the surface disturbance associated with habitat monitoring, and project maintenance, these impacts would be short-term. Finally, grazing would continue at current levels but would have no impact on solitude.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation would slightly benefit as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreational use and eliminating the 75 visitor days of motorized use which are estimated to occur annually along the area's ten miles of jeep trails. Oil and gas exploration and the noise and visual intrusions associated with this activity would also be eliminated retaining the opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation throughout the WSA. Grazing would continue at current levels but would have no impact on primitive or unconfined recreation.

- Special Features

The closure of the area to four-wheeled vehicles and elimination of 75 visitor days along the ten miles of jeep trails would have minor positive impacts on the area's rare, threatened, and endangered species, paleontological resources, and the mediterranean annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem. Oil and gas exploration and the noise and surface disturbance associated with this activity would also be eliminated, further protecting these features. Aggressive initial fire attack would continue to be given a high priority, although the use of mechanized, ground fire-fighting equipment would be limited.

Conclusion:

There would be minor, positive impacts on the area's wilderness values as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreational use and eliminating the 75 visitor days estimated to occur annually along the area's 10 miles of jeep trails and eliminating oil and gas exploration and the noise and surface disturbance associated with this use.

Impact on Paleontological Resources

The closure of the area to four-wheeled vehicle use and elimination of the 50 visitor days of motorized recreational use estimated to occur in the eastern portion of the WSA would have a negligible benefiting impact on the paleontological resources found in this portion of the WSA. Oil and gas exploration and the surface disturbance associated with this activity would also be eliminated further protecting these resources.

Wildlife monitoring and project maintenance would continue under this alternative but would not impact the area's paleontological resources since most projects and habitat maintenance activities are located outside the Moreno Paleontological ACEC.

Conclusion:

Wilderness designation would negligibly benefit the area's paleontological resources as a result of eliminating motorized vehicle use and oil and gas exploration and the surface disturbance associated with these activities.

Impact on Paleontological Investigations

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, excavation of the area's paleontological resource for scientific purposes would be permitted, but only on a case-by-case basis where such activities would not impair wilderness values. Motorized vehicles would be prohibited, limiting access to paleontological sites.

Conclusion:

There would be a slight, adverse impact to paleontological investigations as a result of the limitations placed on motorized vehicle access.

Impact on RT&E Species

Under this alternative, the area would be closed to motorized vehicles. The 75 visitor days of motorized vehicle use estimated to occur within the WSA annually and the noise and surface disturbance associated with this use would be eliminated slightly benefiting the area's rare, threatened, and endangered species. Oil and gas exploration and the noise and surface disturbance associated with this activity would also be eliminated, further benefiting these species. Aggressive initial fire attack would continue to be given a high priority, although the use of mechanized ground fire-fighting equipment would be limited minimizing any impacts to the area's rare, threatened and endangered species.

Wildlife monitoring and wildlife project maintenance would continue under this alternative, enhancing these species and improving their habitat.

Conclusion:

There would be a slight, positive impact on the area's RT&E plant and animal species as a result of eliminating the noise and surface disturbance associated with motorized vehicle use and oil and gas exploration.

Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration

Upon designation the entire WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws. Since the 7,570 acres of pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases have recently expired, the opportunities for oil and gas exploration would be foregone on the entire WSA.

Conclusion:

Oil and gas exploration and development would be foregone on the entire WSA.

PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under the alternative, 5,600 acres of public land in the Panoche Hills South WSA would be recommended for wilderness. The remaining 5,667 acres would not be recommended for wilderness designation, but managed in accordance with the Hollister RMP (1984) and the Panoche Hills Management Plan (1982).

The primary impacts under this alternative relate to wilderness values, rare, threatened or endangered species, and oil and gas exploration and development.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

Wilderness values on 5,600 acres of the WSA would be protected by legislative mandate while 5,667 acres would not receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness. These values would be negligibly impacted as a result of continued ORV use and oil and gas exploration.

Consequences

- Naturalness

Under the Partial Wilderness Alternative, 1 1/2 miles of vehicle routes in the southeastern portion of the WSA and 2 1/2 miles in the southwestern portion would be closed to motorized vehicle use eliminating the noise and visual intrusions associated with this use and negligibly benefiting the perception of solitude in the southern portion of the WSA. Six miles of jeep trails within the northern portion of the WSA would remain open to four-wheeled vehicle use; all other motorized vehicle use (i.e., motorcycles and three-wheeled vehicles) would continue to be excluded. Motorized use along these trails would be limited to six months--from the start of quail and chukar hunting season in mid-October until the start of fire season in late April/early May. Projections indicate that this use in the northern portion will increase slightly from the current 45 visitor days annually to less than 75 visitor days and will negligibly impact the perception of naturalness along these trails as a result of the noise and visual intrusions associated with this use. Non-motorized recreational use will remain constant at levels below 25 visitor days annually and will have no adverse impact on naturalness.

Leasing for oil and gas will be allowed on 5,667 acres in the northern portion of the WSA. The potential for oil and gas is low; however, it is anticipated that the area will be explored. Vibroseis (thumper) trucks will be used in the initial exploration stages along the six miles of road in the northern portion of the WSA. These activities and the use of small explosive charges for seismic testing would have a minor, short-term adverse impact on the perception of naturalness along these roads. Approximately five wildcat wells would be drilled within this area disturbing approximately 10 acres. Ten to 15 miles of road would be constructed disturbing approximately 25 acres. The noise and visual intrusions associated with these activities would have a moderate adverse impact on the perception of naturalness on 750 to 1,000 acres in the northern portion of the WSA. It is anticipated that these wells would be nonproducing and eventually would be abandoned. Following abandonment, the wells would be plugged, well casings would be removed, and the lands (including roads) would be recontoured and reseeded. The 5,000 acres in the southern portion of the WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws eliminating any future oil and gas exploration and retaining the perception of naturalness in the southern portion of the WSA.

Fire suppression would have a minor, short-term adverse impact on the WSA's naturalness if mechanized fire-fighting equipment is used, but these impacts will be offset by the benefiting impacts of keeping fires as small as possible to protect native shrub cover which in this area is easily killed by fire. Adverse, surface disturbing impacts will be further mitigated by post-suppression reclamation and will focus on re-establishment of native shrub cover.

No new wildlife management projects are planned, although project maintenance and wildlife monitoring would continue in both the suitable and nonsuitable portion of the WSA. These activities will be conducted one to two weeks each year and will require the use of vehicles on existing roads and trails. Although maintenance will not take place on a regular schedule, it is estimated that one or two projects, mostly guzzlers, will be maintained on an annual basis. One guzzler and 4 spring developments are located within that portion of the WSA recommended suitable under this alternative. Maintenance activities typically involve the use of a dump truck and two to three support vehicles for reconstruction of guzzler aprons by mixing and pouring concrete. Total surface disturbance at each site will involve less than one-quarter acre (mostly from vehicle passage. New aprons will be camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding landscape. Spring developments will require only hand labor to replace or clean out spring boxes. Most are currently inaccessible to vehicles and require walk-in access. While there may be some minor adverse impact on the area's naturalness as a result of surface disturbance associated with habitat monitoring and project maintenance, these impacts will be short-term.

The entire WSA would continue to be used indefinitely for sheep and cattle grazing but with no adverse impact to the area's naturalness.

- Solitude

Impacts on solitude within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA would basically be the same as those described above for naturalness. The time, locational, and vehicle-type restrictions placed on motorized vehicle use would have a negligible, adverse impact on the perception of solitude. Motorized vehicle use would be prohibited in the southern suitable portion of the WSA slightly benefiting solitude.

The noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration of the oil and gas resources in the northern portion of the WSA would have a moderate adverse impact on roughly 15 to 20 percent of the area. These impacts, however, would be short-term, since production is not anticipated. Roads and drilling sites would be reclaimed once the five wildcat wells drilled exploring the area are abandoned. Disturbed lands will be recontoured and reseeded.

Oil and gas exploration would be prohibited in the southern portion of the WSA eliminating the noise and surface disturbance associated with this activity and retaining opportunities for solitude.

While there may be some minor adverse impact on the perception of solitude in both the suitable and nonsuitable portions of the WSA as a result of the surface disturbance associated with habitat monitoring and project maintenance, these impacts would be short-term. Finally, grazing would continue at current levels but would have no impact on solitude.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The projected 75 visitor days of four-wheeled vehicle use along the six miles of jeep trails in the northern (nonsuitable) portion of the WSA would have a negligible adverse impact on the opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation. These impacts would be "seasonal" since motorized use is prohibited during fire season--from late April/early May through mid-October. Oil and gas exploration and the noise and visual intrusions associated with this activity would have a moderate adverse impact on primitive or unconfined recreation on roughly 15 to 20 percent of the area. As described above, these impacts will be short-term since production is not anticipated.

Conversely, the opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation in the southern (suitable) portion of the WSA would slightly benefit as a result of closing the area to motorized recreation use and eliminating oil and gas exploration and the noise and visual intrusions associated with these activities.

- Special Features

The continued use of four-wheeled vehicles along the 6 miles of jeep trails within the northern portion of the WSA would have a negligible adverse impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species including the mediterranean annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steepe ecosystem. Vehicle use in the eastern portion of the nonsuitable area would also negligibly impact the area's paleontological resources.

Although the potential for oil and gas leasing in this portion of the WSA is low, under this alternative it is assumed that the area would be explored. Approximately 5 wildcat wells would be drilled and 10 to 15 miles or roads would be constructed disturbing approximately 70 acres and having a minor impact on the area's rare, threatened, and endangered species. Special stipulations and conditions are currently being developed for the Moreno Paleontological ACEC. Exploration and development would be subject to these stipulations and conditions which will be directed primarily at site location, season of drilling, and road construction. These special stipulations will minimize impacts on the area's paleontological resources.

The closing of the southern portion of the WSA to four-wheeled vehicles and elimination of the 30 visitor days along the four miles of jeep trails in this area would have a negligible benefiting impact on the rare, threatened and endangered species, paleontological resources, and the mediterranean annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steepe ecosystem found within the area. Oil and gas exploration and the noise and surface disturbance associated with this activity would also be eliminated, further protecting these features.

Aggressive initial fire attack would continue to be given a high priority in both the suitable and unsuitable portions of the WSA. The use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression would be limited to the extent possible in those portions of the WSA where rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species are known to occur, thereby minimizing any adverse impact to these species.

Conclusion:

There would be minor, adverse impact on the wilderness values on 15 to 20 percent of the unsuitable portion of the WSA as a result of continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration. The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources would moderately impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive or unconfined recreation, but would be short-term since production is not anticipated and the road and exploratory drill sites would be reclaimed.

Conversely, there would be a negligible, positive impact on the area's wilderness values in the southern (suitable) portion of the WSA as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreational use and oil and gas exploration.

Impact on Paleontological Resources

The continued use of four-wheeled vehicles along the 5 1/2 miles of jeep trails in the northeastern portion of the WSA in the vicinity of the Moreno Paleontological ACEC would negligibly impact the area's paleontological resources. Oil and gas exploration would also be permitted in this area but would be subject to special lease stipulations and conditions currently being developed as a part of the Moreno Paleontological ACEC Management Plan. These stipulations and conditions will be directed primarily at site location, season of drilling, and road construction and would mitigate any adverse impact to the area's paleontological resources. In addition, the use of heavy equipment for fire suppression will be limited to the extent possible within the ACEC. At a minimum, areas of high paleontological values would be avoided, thereby minimizing any adverse impacts from fire suppression efforts.

The closure of 1,380 acres in the southeastern (suitable) portion of the WSA to four-wheeled vehicle use would have a negligible benefiting impact on the paleontological resources found within this portion of the WSA. Oil and gas exploration and the surface disturbance associated with this activity would also be eliminated further protecting these resources.

Wildlife monitoring and project maintenance would continue in both the suitable and unsuitable portions but would not impact the area's paleontological resources since most projects and habitat maintenance activities are located outside the Moreno Paleontological ACEC.

Conclusion:

There would be a negligible adverse impact on the paleontological resources located in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA as a result of continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration. Conversely, paleontological resources in the suitable portion of the WSA would negligibly benefit as a result of eliminating these activities and the surface disturbance associated with this.

Impact on Paleontological Investigations

Under the Partial Wilderness Alternative, paleontological investigations, including excavations, would be permitted in both the suitable and nonsuitable portion. However, in the suitable portion, excavations would be permitted on a case-by-case basis where such activities would not impair wilderness values. In addition, motorized vehicles would be prohibited in the suitable portion, limiting access to paleontological sites.

Conclusion:

There would be no impact on paleontological investigations in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA. Investigations in the suitable portion would be slightly impacted as a result of the limitations placed on motorized vehicle access.

Impact on RT&E Species

The continued use of four-wheeled vehicles along the 6 miles of jeep trails within the northern portion of the WSA would have a negligible adverse impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered species. This use will be limited to 6 months of the year on approved or designated routes of travel and is projected to slightly increase from the current 45 visitor days annually to less than 75 visitor days. Motorcycles and three-wheeled vehicles would be excluded. Oil and gas exploration would also be permitted and it is anticipated that 5 wildcat wells would be drilled and 10 to 15 miles of road would be constructed disturbing approximately 40 acres of land. This would have a minor adverse impact on the area's rare, threatened, and endangered species. These impacts, however, would be short-term since production is not anticipated. Road and drill sites would be reclaimed once the 5 wildcat wells drilled in exploring the area were abandoned and the lands recontoured and reseeded. Wildlife monitoring, conducted in conjunction with the wildlife management program, would mitigate the impact of these surface disturbing activities during the exploratory phases.

Approximately 30 visitor days of motorized vehicle use estimated to occur in the suitable portion of the WSA will be eliminated under this alternative, slightly benefiting the area's rare, threatened, and endangered species. Oil and gas exploration and the noise and surface disturbance associated with this activity would also be eliminated, further benefiting these species.

Aggressive initial fire attack would continue to be given a high priority in both the suitable and unsuitable portions of the WSA. The use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression would be limited to the extent possible in those portions of the WSA where rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species are known to occur, thereby minimizing any adverse impact to the species.

Wildlife monitoring and wildlife project maintenance would also continue under this alternative, enhancing these species and improving their habitat.

Conclusion:

There would be a minor, adverse impact on the rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species in the unsuitable portion of the WSA as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the projected 75 visitor days of motorized recreation use annually and oil and gas exploration. Impact from oil and gas exploration, however, would be short-term since production is not anticipated. In the suitable portion of the WSA, the 30 visitor days of motorized vehicle use estimated to occur annually and oil and gas exploration would be eliminated slightly benefiting the area's rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species.

Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration

Under the Partial Wilderness Alternative, 5,667 acres would be available for oil and gas leasing subject to stipulations on approximately 1,380 acres for the protection of paleontological resources in the Moreno Paleontological ACEC. It is anticipated that some exploration would occur and that 5 wildcat wells will be drilled; however, there is little probability that production would occur. The remaining 5,600 acres of the WSA recommended suitable would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws eliminating any opportunity for oil and gas exploration.

Conclusion:

There would be no impact on oil and gas exploration in the 5,667 acres not recommended suitable. However, oil and gas exploration would be foregone on the remaining 5,600 acres recommended suitable.

PINNACLES WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS
(CA-040-303)

PROPOSED ACTION (Partial Wilderness)

Under the Proposed Action, 2,200 acres of public land in the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous are recommended for wilderness. The remaining 3,638 acres will not be recommended suitable, but will be managed in accordance with the Hollister RMP (1984).

The primary impacts under the proposal relate to wilderness values.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

Wilderness values on 2,200 acres of the WSA will be protected by legislative mandate while 3,638 acres will not receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation wilderness values.

- Naturalness

Under this proposal, motorized recreational use will remain limited to the 4 1/2 miles of designated primitive vehicle ways in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA and to the 1 1/4 miles of cherrystemmed roads. Approximately 40 visitor days are currently estimated to occur along these routes annually and are principally hunting-related. Projections indicate that these use levels will remain constant over the foreseeable future because of the lack of legal public access for motorized vehicle use. As a result, the perception of naturalness will be negligibly impacted along these routes of travel. The suitable portion of the WSA will be closed to motorized vehicle use retaining the perception of naturalness in this area.

Approximately 40 visitor days of non-motorized hunting use also occur within the WSA. Although no legal public access currently exists for hunting, a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service, California Department of Fish and Game, adjacent private land owners, and the BLM will be developed to allow access to these parcels for the controlled hunting of feral pigs. Use will be regulated by a lottery-type system with actual use estimated at less than 50 visitor days per year. Total non-motorized hunting will increase but will not exceed 100 visitor days annually and will not impact the area's naturalness. A cooperative agreement with the National Park Service will also be developed to further enhance public access to these areas from the adjacent National Monument. Non-motorized recreational uses such as hiking and backpacking will increase from 10 visitor days annually to nearly 250 visitor days but will not adversely impact naturalness.

Prescribed burning will continue to be the major management tool in the area. Within the 2,200 acres designated as wilderness 1,500 to 2,000 acres will be burned every 30 to 35 years in mosaic patterns of patches and strips to minimize any adverse impacts to the area's wilderness values. These burns will have a minor adverse impact on the perception of naturalness but the impacts will be short-term and highly localized affecting naturalness in the immediate vicinity of these burns. In the nonsuitable portion of the WSA, prescribed burning will utilize shorter rotation periods. It is anticipated that 2,000 to 3,000 acres will be burned every 30 to 35 years and approximately 500 acres will be pre-treated every 10 to 15 years slightly impacting wilderness values in this portion of the WSA. Like those burns conducted in the suitable portion, they will be burned in mosaic patterns of patches and strips to minimize any adverse impact. These burns will also be short-term and highly localized. In addition 3 to 4 miles of fireline will be constructed in the northeastern portion of the WSA impairing naturalness characteristics on approximately 15 acres.

Currently, 1,350 acres within the WSA and 93 animal unit months (AUMs) are under lease. As per the Hollister RMP, the boundary of the area designated as wilderness will be fenced to exclude livestock from the area as well as the adjacent Pinnacles National Monument. Approximately 150 acres and 10 AUMs currently under lease available will be eliminated as per the Hollister PMP (1984). The perception of naturalness will be adversely impacted along and in the immediate vicinity of the 8 to 10 miles of new fence.

- Solitude

The impacts on solitude would basically be the same as those described for naturalness. The noise and visual intrusions associated with the motorized recreational use along the 4 1/2 miles of designated primitive vehicle trails in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA will negligibly impair the feeling of solitude on and in the immediate vicinity of these trails, or on less than 1 percent of the area. Solitude in the remainder of the area and in the suitable portion will be retained. Non-motorized use levels will increase from the currently estimated 40 visitor days annually to less than 100 visitor days but will not impair solitude.

Approximately 3,500 to 5,000 acres will be burned every 30-35 years slightly impacting the feeling of solitude in the immediate vicinity of these burns. The burns will be conducted using mosaic patterns of patches and strips to minimize any adverse impacts. In the nonsuitable portion of the WSA, mechanical pre-treatment of brush (chaining, crushing, etc.) and fireline construction will also be conducted moderately impairing the perception of solitude during these operations.

Grazing will also continue in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA near current levels but will not adversely impact solitude. Eight to ten miles of fence will be constructed impairing the perception of solitude along and in the immediately vicinity of the fence.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

There will be a negligible adverse impact on primitive or unconfined recreation as a result of the continued use of motorized vehicles along the 4 1/2 miles of primitive vehicle trails in the nonsuitable portions of the WSA. Motorized recreation use will continue to be prohibited over the remainder of the WSA. Development of the two cooperative agreements with the National Park Service and the California Department of Fish and Game and adjacent private landowners to enhance access will have a minor, positive impact, increasing the number of non-motorized visitor days from 50 per year to nearly 350 visitor days.

- Special Features

The prescribed burns to be conducted throughout the WSA will have a negligible adverse visual impact on the area's spectacular views of the pinnacles formation within the National Monument, from some portions of the WSA. Mosaic burn patterns of patches and strips will be used to minimize these impacts.

Conclusion:

Overall, wilderness values will be negligibly impaired on less than 1 percent of the WSA. Prescribed burns conducted on 3,500 to 5,000 acres over the next 30 to 35 years and pre-treatments on 500 acres of the non-suitable portion of the WSA every 10 to 15 years will have a minor impact on these values but these impacts will be short-term and highly localized.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot be Avoided

Despite the use of mosaic patterns of patches and strips on the 3,500 to 5,000 acres of prescribed burns to be conducted over the next 30 to 35 years, there will be some negligible adverse impacts on the area's naturalness and special features, which cannot be avoided.

Relationship Between Local Short-term Use of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity

Under the Proposed Action all current and projected short-term uses will continue on both the suitable and nonsuitable portions of the WSA. These include motorized vehicle use on the 3,638 acres not recommended suitable, and prescribed burning on the entire WSA. Livestock grazing of 93 AUMs on 1,350 acres will continue. Ten AUMs on 150 acres will be eliminated as per the Hollister RMP (1984). However, none of these activities will result in a loss of any long-term productivity.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

There will be no irreversible or irretrievable impacts under the Proposed Action.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under this alternative, the entire 5,838 acres of the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

The primary impact under the alternative relates to wilderness values.

Impact on Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 5,838 acres of the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous would be recommended for wilderness designation and all values would be protected by legislative mandate. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive or unconfined recreation, and special features (the area's outstanding scenic quality) would be retained.

- Naturalness

The impacts on the area's naturalness would basically be the same as those described for naturalness under the Proposed Action on p. 147-148. However, motorized vehicle use, would be precluded on the 4 1/2 miles of designated jeep trails, eliminating 40 visitor days of motorized recreational use. Mechanical pre-treatments of brush on 500 acres every 10 to 15 years would also be eliminated, and no firelines would be constructed. These actions would negligibly benefit the perception of naturalness.

- Solitude

As described above, motorized vehicle use would be eliminated, negligibly benefiting the perception of solitude on and along the 4 1/2 miles of primitive jeep trails currently designated for travel. Mechanized pre-treatments and fire-break construction would also be eliminated, thereby retaining solitude in isolated portions of the area. Other than this, the impacts on solitude would be the same as those described under "Solitude" for the Proposed Action. Prescribed burns on 3,500 to 5,000 acres of the area would impair the feeling of solitude in the immediate vicinity of these burns as would the construction of an 8 to 10 mile fence for grazing control purposes.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The elimination of the 40 visitor days of motorized vehicle use estimated to occur annually in the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous, would negligibly benefit opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation. These opportunities would be retained throughout the area as a result of precluding mechanical pre-treatments on 500 acres every 10 to 15 years and the construction of any new fire breaks. Prescribed burns and livestock grazing improvements described under the Proposed Action would negligibly impair these opportunities.

- Special Features

The impacts on special features for this alternative are the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 149.

Conclusion:

Impacts on wilderness values, overall, under the All Wilderness Alternative would basically be the same as those described under the Proposed Action. However, there would be a negligible positive impact to these values as a result of eliminating mechanical pre-treatments and fire break construction.

NO ACTION/NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under this alternative, none of the 5,838 acres of the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

The primary impact under this alternative relates to wilderness values.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

None of the WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation and none of the wilderness values on 5,838 acres would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. The short and foreseeable long-term impact of this action will be negligible since no development activity or increased motorized recreational use is anticipated.

- Naturalness

Impacts on naturalness under this alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on pp. 147-148. Motorized vehicle use would be limited to 4 1/2 miles of designated primitive vehicle ways and precluded in the remainder of the area. Engines and other motorized vehicles would be allowed for fire suppression but would also be restricted to existing routes.

- Solitude

Impacts on solitude under this alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 148.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

Impacts on primitive or unconfined recreation under this alternative would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 149.

- Special Features

Impacts on the area's outstanding scenic views would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action on p. 149.

Conclusion:

Overall, wilderness values will be negligibly impaired in less than 1 percent of the WSA. Prescribed burns conducted on 3,500 to 5,000 acres over the next 30 to 35 years and pre-treatments on 500 acres of the area every 10 to 15 years will have a minor impact on these values but these impacts will be short-term and highly localized.

CALIENTE MOUNTAIN WSA (CA-010-042)

PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness/No Action)

Under the Proposed Action, none of the 19,018 acres of the Caliente Mountain WSA will be recommended suitable for wilderness.

The primary impacts under this proposal relate to wilderness values and endangered species.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

None of the WSA will be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation and none of the wilderness values on 19,018 acres will receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. Lands within the WSA will be available for oil and gas exploration and development and it is anticipated that some exploration and development will occur. This exploration and development will have a moderate negative impact on the area's wilderness values, and permanently impair these values on 2 to 3 percent of the WSA.

- Naturalness

Under the Proposed Action, 5 1/2 miles of four-wheeled vehicle trails will remain open to motorized vehicle use. Approximately 50 visitor days of motorized recreational use are estimated to occur along these trails. Because these routes are without legal public access, it is estimated that motorized recreation use will increase only slightly and remain at levels below 75 visitor days annually, negligibly impairing the perception of naturalness on and along these routes. There are no plans to acquire motorized vehicle access nor are there any plans to improve (e.g., grade or widen) the existing 5 1/2 miles of vehicle routes. Nonmotorized recreation use along the 5 1/2 miles of trails within the WSA is expected to climb from the current level of 75 visitor days annually to approximately 1,500 visitor days as a result of developing a 2.4-mile access trail from State Highway 166 and hiker/equestrian water sources. These increases will have a minor, adverse impact on the perception of naturalness along the area's trails.

Consequences

Fire suppression will have a minor, short-term negative impact on the area's naturalness if mechanized fire equipment is used, but will be reduced by post-reclamation (rehabilitation by harrowing and hand seeding). The 1,000-acre burn to be conducted in the northern portion of the WSA over the next 10 years will have a minor, short-term, very localized adverse impact on the perception of naturalness. These burns will be limited to 20- to 30-acre patches to minimize any adverse visual impact and minimize erosion.

Leasing for oil and gas will be allowed on all 19,018 acres of the WSA and it is anticipated that exploration and some development will occur. Vibroseis trucks will be used in the initial exploratory stages. These activities and the use of small explosive charges for seismic testing will have a minor, short-term adverse impact on naturalness. It is also anticipated that some wildcat drilling will occur. Based on exploration activities northeast of the Russell Ranch oil field, it is estimated that one wildcat well on every 160 acres will be drilled over the next 20 years, or approximately 54 wells. These wells and the 100 to 150 miles of new road will disturb approximately 300 to 400 acres and moderately impair the perception of naturalness on 15 to 20 percent of the WSA. Based on exploration activities in the vicinity of the WSA, it is assumed that 90 percent of these wells (49 of the 54 wells) will be nonproducing and will be abandoned. Following abandonment, these wells will be plugged, the well casings removed, and the lands recontoured and reseeded. Approximately 5 of the wells will become producers. Pipelines for these wells will be routed along existing access roads to help reduce surface disturbance. As a result, naturalness values will be lost on approximately 2 to 3 percent of the WSA.

The one 40-acre pre-FLPMA lease located in the east-central portion of the WSA will also be developed. Following exploration, one wildcat well will be drilled disturbing approximately 2 to 3 acres of land. One mile of new access road will be required for the new well. It is assumed this well will also become a producer significantly impacting the perception of naturalness on this parcel.

Finally, livestock grazing will continue at the existing levels of 1,699 animal unit months for the next 8 years and beyond. This use and the presence of six spring developments, four reservoirs, one corral and a 2-mile pipeline will have a minor adverse impact on the perception of naturalness in the immediate vicinity of these developments. Maintenance of these facilities will be done using motor vehicles, negligibly impairing naturalness.

- Solitude

Impacts on solitude will basically be the same as those described for naturalness. Motorized vehicle use will increase slightly, negligibly impairing the perception of solitude on and along the area's vehicle routes. Nonmotorized recreation use will also increase from the current level of 75 visitor days annually to approximately 1,500 visitor days as a result of the acquisition and development of an access trail and water sources, slightly impairing solitude along the 5 1/2 miles of existing trails.

Consequences

The 1,000 acres of prescribed burns to be conducted in the northern portion of the WSA over the next 10 years will have a very minor, short-term, and localized adverse impact on the perception of solitude. Continued grazing use, and the occasional maintenance of existing grazing improvements will have a negligible adverse impact on the perception of solitude.

The noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources will have a moderate impact on the perception of solitude on 15 to 20 percent of the WSA. These impacts will, for the most part, be short-term since production is not anticipated on 90 percent of the wells and these sites and roads will be reclaimed. Five wells will become producers and will permanently impair the perception of solitude on approximately 2 to 3 percent of the area. Solitude values on the 40-acre pre-FLPMA lease will also be significantly impacted as a result of the noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration and development of the area's oil and gas resources.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The acquisition and development of the 2.4-mile access trail from State Highway 166 will moderately enhance primitive or unconfined recreation increasing nonmotorized recreation uses, such as hiking and backpacking, from the currently estimated 75 visitor days annually to approximately 1,500 visitor days.

Continued grazing use and the occasional maintenance of the existing grazing improvements will have a negligible adverse impact on opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation. The 1,000 acres of prescribed burns conducted to improve livestock forage over the next 10 years will have a negligible adverse impact on these opportunities in the short term but will enhance primitive or unconfined recreation in the long term by providing for greater dispersion of users throughout the southern portion of the WSA by eliminating dense, low-lying vegetation.

The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the area's oil and gas resources will have a moderate adverse impact on the opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation on 15 to 20 percent of the WSA. These impacts will, for the most part, be short-term since production is not anticipated on 90 percent of the wells. Five wells will become producers and will permanently impact primitive or unconfined recreation on approximately 2 to 3 percent of the area. These values will also be significantly impacted as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the area's oil and gas resources.

- Special Features

The present and projected levels of motorized and nonmotorized recreational use will have a negligible adverse impact on the foraging habitat for the peregrine falcon and California condor. The 1,000-acre

prescribed burn conducted to improve livestock forage over the next 10 years will have an initial, short-term negligible impact, but will benefit these species in the long term, increasing their foraging area. The other grazing activities would have no significant adverse impact.

The entire 19,018 acres of the WSA will also be available for oil and gas exploration and development. As described above, it is anticipated that approximately 54 exploration wells will be drilled over the next 20 years. These wells and the 100 to 150 miles of new roads needed to develop these sites will disturb approximately 300 to 400 acres and will have a moderate, short-term impact on the foraging habitat of both the peregrine falcon and California condor. It is anticipated that 90 percent of the wells will be nonproducing and will be abandoned. Following abandonment, the wells will be plugged, well casings will be removed, and the roads will be recontoured and reseeded. Revegetation should take one to two growing seasons. Five wells will become producers. Pipelines for these wells will be routed along existing access roads to help reduce surface disturbance. As a result, the noise, traffic, and construction associated with developing the oil and gas resources on these sites will have a major impact on 2 to 3 percent of the foraging habitat within the WSA.

Conclusion:

There will be a moderate, adverse impact on wilderness values on 15 to 20 percent of the WSA as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources. These impacts, for the most part, will be short-term since production is not anticipated on 90 percent of the wells. Five wells will be developed, however, permanently impairing wilderness values on approximately 2 to 3 percent of the area.

The present and projected levels of motorized and nonmotorized recreational use coupled with continued grazing use, prescribed burning, and the occasional maintenance of existing grazing developments will minimally impair these values.

Impact on Endangered Species

The impacts on the foraging habitat of the peregrine falcon and California condor are described above in the "Special Features" section.

Conclusion:

There will be a moderate adverse impact on the foraging habitat of both the peregrine falcon and California condor as a result of the noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources. These impacts will, for the most part, be short-term since production is not anticipated on 90 percent of the wells. Five wells will be developed, however, permanently impairing forage habitat on approximately 2 to 3 percent of the area.

The present and projected levels of motorized and nonmotorized recreational use coupled with continued grazing use, prescribed burning, and the occasional maintenance of existing grazing developments will minimally impact these values.

Impact on Livestock Grazing Use

Livestock grazing will continue to be maintained at the existing level of 1,699 animal unit months (AUMs) in the next 8 years and beyond. Existing developments will be maintained using motorized vehicles and a 1,000-acre prescribed burn will be conducted in the northern portion of the WSA increasing livestock use by 100 animal unit months.

Conclusion:

Under the Proposed Action, livestock forage production will increase by 100 animal unit months (AUMs) slightly benefiting livestock grazing use.

Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development

Under the Proposed Action, the area will remain open for oil and gas exploration and development. Because of leasing activities adjacent to the WSA and its recognition as a promising exploration target by the oil and gas industry, it is anticipated that some exploration and development will occur. Based on exploration activities northeast of the Russell Ranch oil field, one wildcat well on every 160 acres will be drilled over the next 20 years, or approximately 54 wells.

Conclusion:

There will be no impact on oil and gas exploration.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot Be Avoided

The exploration of the area's oil and gas resources will have a moderate adverse impact on the area's wilderness values. These will, for the most part, be short-term since production is not anticipated on 90 percent of the wells. Ten percent of the wells will be developed and will have a significant adverse impact on 2 to 3 percent of the WSA.

Relationship Between Local Short-term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity

Under the Proposed Action, the WSA will not be designated wilderness and all current and projected short-term uses would continue. However, oil and gas development is the only activity projected for the WSA that will result in a loss of long-term productivity on 2 to 3 percent of the WSA. The productivity of the remainder of the area will be maintained and not significantly affected by continued motorized and nonmotorized recreation use and livestock improvement projects.

Consequences

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

The only irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources within the WSA is the projected development of the area's oil and gas resources. Wilderness values on 2 to 3 percent of the area would be irreversibly and irretrievably committed to development of production facilities for oil and gas development. No other activities are projected that would result in any anticipated irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under this alternative, the entire 19,018 acres of the Caliente Mountain WSA would be designated wilderness.

The primary impacts under this alternative relate to wilderness values and oil and gas exploration and development.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 19,018 acres of the Caliente Mountain WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation and all values will be protected by legislative mandate. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive or unconfined recreation, and the area's special features (the peregrine falcon and California condor) would be retained.

- Naturalness

Under this alternative, the area would be closed to motorized vehicles eliminating the 50 visitor days of motorized recreational use estimated to occur within the WSA annually and negligibly benefiting the perception of naturalness along the area's 5 1/2 miles of vehicle routes. Nonmotorized recreational use along the 5 1/2 miles of trails within the WSA is expected to climb from the current level of 75 visitor days annually to approximately 1,500 visitor days as a result of developing a 2.4-mile access trail from State Highway 166 and hiker/equestrian water sources. These increases will have a minor, adverse impact on the perception of naturalness along the area's trails.

Livestock grazing will continue at the existing levels of 1,699 animal unit months for the next 8 years and beyond. This use and the presence of six spring developments, four reservoirs, one corral and a 2-mile pipeline will have a minor adverse impact on the perception of naturalness in the immediate vicinity of these developments. Maintenance of these facilities will be done using motor vehicles, negligibly impairing naturalness. No prescribed burns will be conducted.

The one 40-acre pre-FLPMA lease located in the east-central portion of the WSA would be developed. Following initial exploration, one wildcat well will be drilled disturbing approximately 2 to 3 acres of land. One mile of new access road will be required for the new well. It is

assumed this well will be developed significantly impacting the perception of naturalness on this parcel. None of the 8,720 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases would be explored or developed because of the imposition of wilderness protection stipulations on operations such as these within designated wilderness areas (see Appendix 1).

- Solitude

Impacts on solitude will basically be the same as those described for naturalness. Motorized vehicle use would be prohibited, negligibly benefiting the perception of solitude along the area's 5 1/2 miles of vehicle routes. Nonmotorized recreation use will increase from the current level of 75 visitor days annually to approximately 1,500 visitor days as a result of the acquisition and development of an access trail and water sources, slightly impairing solitude along the 5 1/2 miles of existing trails.

Continued grazing use and the occasional maintenance of existing grazing improvements will have a negligible adverse impact on the perception of solitude.

Finally, the noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration and development of the 40-acre pre-FLPMA lease in the east-central portion of the WSA would significantly impact the feeling of solitude on this parcel.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

The acquisition and development of the 2.4-mile access trail from State Highway 166 will moderately enhance primitive or unconfined recreation increasing nonmotorized recreation uses, such as hiking and backpacking, from the currently estimated 75 visitor days annually to approximately 1,500 visitor days. Motorized vehicles would be prohibited, eliminating the 50 visitor days of motorized recreational use estimated to occur within the WSA, negligibly benefiting primitive or unconfined recreation.

Continued grazing use and the occasional maintenance of the existing grazing improvements will have a negligible adverse impact on opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation.

Finally, the noise and visual intrusions associated with the pre-FLPMA lease in the east-central portion of the WSA would significantly impact the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation on this parcel.

- Special Features

The present and projected levels of nonmotorized recreational use would have a negligible adverse impact on the foraging habitat for the peregrine falcon and California condor. Motorized vehicles would be prohibited eliminating the 50 visitor days of motorized vehicle use estimated to occur annually within the WSA, slightly benefiting the habitat.

In the east-central portion of the WSA, the 40-acre pre-FLPMA lease would be explored and developed. The noise and surface disturbance associated with these activities would significantly impact this parcel, adversely affecting the foraging habitat of the peregrine falcon and California condor on and in the immediate vicinity of the parcel.

Livestock grazing would continue at existing levels. This use, the presence of the existing grazing improvements located throughout the area, and the occasional maintenance of the improvements would have no significant impacts.

Conclusion:

For the most part, wilderness values would be only negligibly impaired as a result of increased nonmotorized recreation use and livestock grazing use and the maintenance of existing livestock improvements. However, the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of 40 acres of pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases would significantly impact the wilderness values on and in the immediate vicinity of these lands.

Impact on Endangered Species

The impacts on the foraging habitat of the peregrine falcon and California condor are described above in the "Special Features" section.

Conclusion:

There will be a negligible impact on the foraging habitat of the peregrine falcon and California condor as a result of increased nonmotorized recreational use. Noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of the 40-acre pre-FLPMA oil and gas lease would significantly impact the habitat on and in the immediate vicinity of these pre-FLPMA leased lands.

Impact on Livestock Grazing Use

Livestock grazing would continue to be maintained at the existing level of 1,699 animal unit months (AUMs) for the next 8 years and beyond. Existing developments will be maintained and when necessary reconstructed using motor vehicles; however, no prescribed burns would be conducted.

Conclusion:

There would be no impact on existing livestock grazing levels. However, prescribed burns would be prohibited and the potential 100 animal unit months of increased livestock forage would be foregone.

Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development

Upon designation, the entire area would be withdrawn to all forms of appropriation under the mining and mineral leasing laws subject to valid existing rights. Exploration and development of the 8,720 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases would be permitted, but only in accordance

with the Bureau's wilderness protection stipulations (see Appendix 1). Because of the restrictive nature of these stipulations, however, it is anticipated that none of the 8,720 acres of post-FLPMA leases would be explored or developed. Oil and gas exploration would, therefore, be foregone.

The one 40-acre pre-FLPMA lease located in the east-central portion of the WSA would be developed.

Conclusion:

With the exception of one 40-acre pre-FLPMA oil and gas lease, opportunities for oil and gas exploration over the entire WSA would be foregone.

OWENS PEAK WSA (CA-010-026)

PROPOSED ACTION (Partial Wilderness)

Under the Proposed Action, 14,960 acres of public land in the Owens Peak WSA are recommended for wilderness designation. The remaining 7,600 acres, primarily along the western edge of the WSA are not recommended as suitable for wilderness designation and will be managed in accordance with the existing South Sierra Foothills Transitional MFP (1984 and the Recreation Area Management Plan for the PCNST (1984).

The primary impacts under this proposal relate to wilderness values, recreational ORV use, archaeological resources, and mineral development.

Impact on Wilderness Values

Wilderness values on 14,960 acres would be protected by legislative mandate while 7,600 acres would not receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. Wilderness values would be retained and somewhat enhanced over approximately 70 percent of the WSA as a result of prohibiting recreational ORV use and mineral development as well as restricting the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression. Within the remainder of the WSA continued recreational ORV use and projected mining activities would have an adverse impact on wilderness values.

- Naturalness

There would be a slight positive benefit to naturalness as a result of closing the 14,960-acre wilderness portion of the WSA to recreational ORV use eliminating 50 visitor days annually of vehicle use. Approximately 8 miles of primitive vehicle ways would be closed and would slowly revert to their natural conditions.

Consequences

Within the 7,600 acres not designated wilderness, 600 visitor days annually of recreational ORV use would continue on 16 miles of existing primitive vehicle ways. This use would have an adverse impact on maintaining the perception of naturalness within the immediate vicinity of the vehicle ways. Since vehicle use in the area is designated as limited to existing routes and trails, impacts to naturalness are expected to be minor.

Wilderness designation of 14,960 acres will have a slight, positive impact on the area's naturalness by precluding full fire suppression with mechanized equipment (except to prevent loss of human life or to protect private or high value property) and the surface disturbance associated with this activity. Existing firebreaks would no longer be maintained but allowed to return to their natural condition.

Fire suppression within the 7,600 acres not designated wilderness would have a minor impact on the area's naturalness, if mechanized fire-fighting equipment is used. This impact would be reduced by post-suppression reclamation (rehabilitation by harrowing and machine seeding).

A proposed post and wire livestock fence (1 mile) would appear incongruous in the landscape. The fence would be visible for 300 feet, however, there would be some partial vegetative screening. The perception of naturalness would be impaired locally over less than 50 acres in the west-central portion of the WSA. Reconstruction of two existing springs would not result in any impacts to naturalness except for minor, short-term impacts as a result of minimal surface disturbance within the immediate area of the existing spring developments.

Acquisition of 360 acres of private land north of Morris Peak within the suitable area would enhance naturalness values.

Within the 14,960 acres designated as wilderness, six mining claims would be terminated and no additional mining activities would be allowed. These claims include approximately 340 acres in the central and southern portions of the WSA. The perception of naturalness would be retained throughout the suitable portion by precluding mineral development. Naturalness would be enhanced within the existing claim areas by precluding any additional surface disturbance.

Mining activities associated with exploration and development on 10 mining claims would result in localized adverse impacts to naturalness. Although no significant exploration and development activities are projected, approximately 5 acres of surface disturbance is anticipated for mining activities including drilling, trenching and/or dredging on each claim. The loss of naturalness would not exceed 50 acres which, although it would not occur within one site, would be concentrated within three areas along the western edge of the WSA. The perception of naturalness would be impaired over an area of approximately 125 acres for each mining claim for a total of 1,250 acres.

- Solitude

Impacts on solitude would be similar to those described for naturalness. The closure of approximately 70 percent of the WSA including 8 miles of existing primitive vehicle ways eliminating 50 visitor days annually of vehicle use would have a slight positive impact on solitude, particularly within the vicinity of the vehicle ways. Occasional vehicle use (600 visitor days) dispersed throughout 16 miles of existing primitive vehicle ways in the western portion of the WSA not designated as wilderness would result in minor impacts on the sense of solitude along the existing vehicle ways.

Construction of 1 mile of new livestock fence and reconstruction of two spring developments as well as maintenance of these projects including 2 miles of existing fence and one additional spring development would result in short-term impacts to solitude. Vehicle use would be infrequent and amount to less than five vehicle trips per year except for reconstruction of the spring developments on a 10-year cycle and the fences on a 50-year cycle when there would be concentrated vehicle use for a short-term period.

Twice-weekly patrols including annual monitoring of one spring development by the California Department of Fish and Game as part of the

National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area Agreement would continue. These routine patrols would result in a slight impact along 16 miles of primitive vehicle ways in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

Solitude would be enhanced within approximately 750 acres surrounding the existing mining claims that would be terminated as a result of wilderness designation. Mining activities such as drilling, trenching, and dredging within the 10 placer and lode mining claims in the non-designated portion would have localized adverse impacts on the sense of solitude. Due to the low level of projected mineral exploration and development impacts to solitude would be minor within 1,250 acres surrounding the mining claims.

- Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Eliminating 50 visitor days annually of ORV use on 8 miles of primitive vehicle ways and precluding mineral development, including six mining claims within the 14,960-acre suitable portion, would have a slight positive impact on the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Within the 7,600 acres not designated wilderness, continued ORV use of 600 visitor days annually would diminish opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation along the 16 miles of primitive vehicle ways that would remain open. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would also be limited within the 750 acres surrounding the projected mineral development on 10 mining claims due to surface disturbance, noise, traffic and construction related to mining activities.

Special Features

Continued hiking and backpacking use along the 23-mile segment of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCNST) would be slightly enhanced as a result of eliminating 50 visitor days annually of vehicle use within the WSA. Occasional, ORV use would disrupt foot travel use on the 23-mile segment of the PCNST.

Conclusion:

Wilderness designation of 14,960 acres would result in a minor positive benefit to wilderness values particularly naturalness and solitude as a result of closing this area to recreational ORV use and mineral development. Also, restricting the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression would slightly benefit naturalness.

Generally, wilderness values would be retained throughout the WSA with the exception of projected low levels of mineral development including a loss of naturalness on approximately 50 acres. Additionally, placer and lode mining activities would impair the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude on 1,250 acres surrounding the mine sites. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, a special feature of the WSA, would be slightly enhanced by closure of the designated portion to vehicular use. Long-term security from unanticipated adverse future actions would be provided to the 14,960 acres recommended for wilderness.

Impact on Recreational ORV Use

Under the Proposed Action, almost 70 percent of the WSA (14,960 acres) will be closed to recreational ORV use and approximately 8 miles of primitive vehicle ways will be closed. As a result, 50 visitor days of recreational ORV use would be eliminated annually from the WSA. Future opportunities would be foregone. However, there are similar opportunities for recreational ORV use on public lands throughout the region. Any ORV use displaced would be absorbed with no consequence on nearby public land. Within the remaining 7,600 acres, recreational ORV use would continue to be restricted to the existing 16 miles of primitive vehicle ways and is not expected to exceed the current 600 visitor days.

Conclusion:

Recreational ORV use of 50 visitor days annually would be foregone within the designated portion of the WSA. The impact of this action on recreational ORV use would be negligible because of the similar opportunities available on public lands outside the WSA and the relatively small amount of use displaced. Approximately 600 visitor days of recreational ORV use annually would continue within the nondesignated portion of the WSA.

Impacts on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources

Wilderness designation of 14,960 acres would enhance the protection of archaeological resources. Elimination of recreational ORV use, and surface disturbance resulting from mining activities related to development of 16 placer and lode mining claims, as well as the restriction of mechanized fire-fighting equipment on the wilderness portion of the WSA will result in a moderate, positive impact.

Within the remaining 7,600 acres, continued recreational ORV use would be limited to existing primitive vehicle ways and not likely result in any surface disturbance that would impact archaeological resources. However, continued vehicle access would increase the risk of theft or vandalism of archaeological sites. Mining activities are projected to result in approximately 50 acres of surface disturbance that could potentially impact archaeological sites in the WSA. However, prior to approval of mining plans of operations a surface inventory will be conducted to identify potential archaeological resources and develop mitigating measures to minimize adverse impacts. The continued use of mechanized equipment for fire fighting would increase the potential for impacts to archaeological sites from surface disturbance. Livestock projects including construction of 1 mile of new fence and reconstruction of two existing springs are not expected to result in any significant impacts to archaeological resources due to the limited amount of surface disturbance, particularly in relation to the existing springs.

Conclusion:

Overall, the WSA's archaeological resources will be retained under the Proposed Action. Surface-disturbing activities such as mineral development and mechanized fire suppression will be restricted and vehicular access along 8 miles of primitive vehicle routes will be eliminated. Adverse impacts associated with continued mineral development and vehicular access in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA will be minor.

Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development

Under the Proposed Action, wilderness designation, 14,960 acres will be withdrawn from all forms of mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid existing rights. It is anticipated that the seven mining claims in this portion of the WSA would be determined invalid based on quantity and quality of the potential mineral resource. There are no known economic concentrations of metallic minerals (gold, tungsten, zinc, and possibly copper) identified within the WSA.

The 7,600 acres not recommended as suitable will remain open to mineral entry under the appropriate laws and regulations. Ten mining claims, both placer and lode, would be available for development. However, due to the remoteness of the area, the terrain, low mineral potentials, the characteristic small size of ore deposits, and the current trends toward development of bulk deposits, no significant exploration and development is anticipated.

Consequences

Conclusion:

Wilderness designation would withdraw 14,960 acres from mineral entry while 7,600 acres would remain available for exploration and development. Due to the low potential for the occurrence and development of minerals within the WSA, there would be negligible impacts on mineral exploration and development. No significant exploration or development is anticipated within the portion of the WSA not recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot Be Avoided

The projected low level of mineral development within approximately 50 acres as well as continued recreational ORV use (600 visitor days annually) on 16 miles of primitive vehicle ways would result in very minor adverse impacts. Preplanning on mining activities would minimize potential related adverse impacts. The use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression within the 7,600 acres not designated as wilderness would result in unavoidable adverse impacts.

Relationship Between Local Short-term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity

Under the Proposed Action development options would be restricted within the 14,960 acres of the WSA designated as wilderness. However, all current short-term use would continue except for recreational ORV use and low intensity mining of six placer and lode claims which would be prohibited in the designated portion. The long-term productivity would be slightly enhanced.

Within the 7,600 acres of the WSA not designated wilderness, all present short-term uses would continue including motorized recreation use, hiking, hunting, wildlife management, and livestock grazing. Additionally, without wilderness designation, projected mineral development would reduce long-term productivity on approximately 50 acres. However, since mineral potential in the WSA is low, mineral development activities are expected to remain limited and small-scale in nature.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

Activities such as mining could create an irreversible commitment of the wilderness resource in the western portion of the WSA. However, large-scale development is not anticipated now or in the foreseeable future. Mining activities are anticipated to result in less than 5 acres of disturbance for each of the 10 mining claims that would be available for development. Based on the projected total of less than 50 acres of the WSA that would be disturbed, no significant irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources are anticipated.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under this alternative, the entire 22,560 acres of the Owens Peak WSA would be designated wilderness.

The primary impacts under this alternative relate to wilderness values and archaeological resources as well as the prohibition of recreational ORV use and mineral development.

Impact on Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 22,560 acres of the Owens Peak WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation and all wilderness values would be protected by legislative mandate. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation, and the area's special feature which is the 23 miles of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail will be retained and slightly enhanced.

- Naturalness

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, naturalness would be retained and slightly enhanced. Wilderness designation would close the entire 22,560-acre WSA to recreational ORV use eliminating 650 visitor days annually of vehicle use. Approximately 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways would be closed and slowly revert to the natural condition as grasses, annuals, and shrubs invade the tread and begin to blend with the surrounding vegetation.

Wilderness designation would restrict the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression (except to prevent loss of human life or to protect private or higher value property) and the surface disturbance associated with this activity. There would be a slight, positive benefit to naturalness throughout the WSA. Existing firebreaks will no longer be maintained but allowed to return to their natural condition.

The proposed livestock projects (1 mile of fence and reconstruction of two existing springs) would result in the same minor impacts as described under the Proposed Action. The perception of naturalness would locally be impaired over a 50-acre area extending 300 feet on either side of the proposed fenceline.

Acquisition of 1,220 acres of private land within the WSA would further enhance naturalness. One of these parcels is north of Morris Peak with the remaining three parcels located along the northwest boundary of the WSA.

All 22,560 acres within the WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid existing rights. Validity exams would be performed on the 16 mining claims within the WSA which include 720 acres of placer claims and 140 acres of lode claims. It is anticipated that these claims will be determined invalid. Therefore, no mining activity and associated surface disturbance would occur. Naturalness in the WSA would be retained, and slightly enhanced as a result of terminating these 16 mining claims and precluding any additional surface disturbance.

- Solitude

The impacts on solitude would be basically the same as described for naturalness. The closure of the WSA to recreational ORV use will retain solitude with solitude being slightly enhanced along the 24 miles of primitive vehicle routes to be closed. The prohibition of mining activities will retain and enhance solitude in the immediate vicinity of the 16 mining claims covering 860 acres in the western portion of the WSA.

Construction and maintenance of livestock projects would result in the same negligible short-term impacts to solitude as described under the Proposed Action. Vehicle use required for construction and maintenance of proposed and existing facilities would be infrequent occurring primarily in the west-central portion of the WSA.

Routine patrols (twice-weekly) and annual monitoring of one spring development by the California Department of Fish and Game along 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways will be discontinued resulting in a slight positive benefit to solitude.

- Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Under the All Wilderness Alternative opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation will be enhanced by closing the entire 22,560-acre WSA to recreational ORV use. Eliminating 650 visitor days annually of vehicle use on 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways would have a slight positive impact on the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation throughout the WSA.

As a result of prohibiting mineral development, opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be retained within the areas around the mining claims that would be terminated.

- Special Features

Continued hiking and backpacking along the 23-mile segment of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCNST) would be slightly enhanced as a result of eliminating 650 visitor days annually of vehicle use within the WSA. Occasional ORV use and disruption along the PCNST would not occur.

Conclusion:

Under the All Wilderness Alternative wilderness values would be retained and slightly enhanced within the 22,560-acre WSA. Naturalness and solitude would particularly benefit from eliminating 650 visitor days of recreational ORV use and prohibiting mineral development including 16 mining claims covering 860 acres. As a special feature of the WSA, the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail would be slightly enhanced as a result of closing the WSA to recreational ORV use. In addition, long-term security from unanticipated adverse actions would be provided.

Impacts on Recreational ORV Use

Wilderness designation would close the entire 22,560 acres within the WSA to recreational ORV use. Sixteen miles of existing primitive vehicle ways would be closed, eliminating 650 visitor days of recreational ORV use. Boundary roads along the western edge of the WSA would continue to provide access points for foot travel and hunting as well as popular pinyon nut collection areas in the northern portion of the WSA. Future opportunities would be foregone. Additionally, there are similar opportunities for recreational ORV use on public lands throughout the region.

Conclusion:

Recreational ORV use of 650 visitor days annually would be foregone. The impact of this action on recreational ORV use would be minor since similar opportunities are available on other public lands.

Impacts on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources

The preservation of archaeological resources will be enhanced under the All Wilderness Alternative. The prohibition of mineral development as well as restrictions on the use of mechanized equipment for fire fighting will minimize any surface disturbance that could result in potential adverse impacts. Additionally, eliminating 650 days of recreational ORV use and vehicular access will decrease the risk of vandalism or theft. As described under the Proposed Action, livestock projects are not expected to result in any significant impacts to archaeological resources.

Conclusion:

Wilderness designation of the Owens Peak WSA will enhance the preservation of archaeological resources. Surface-disturbing activities such as mineral development and mechanized fire suppression will be restricted and vehicle access along 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways will be eliminated.

Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid existing rights. Based on the low potential for occurrence and low development potential, the existing 16 mining claims in the western portion of the WSA would be determined invalid and terminated. There are no known economic concentrations of identified minerals including gold, tungsten, zinc and possibly copper that would be foregone under this alternative.

Conclusion:

There would be a minor impact on mineral exploration and development due to withdrawing the entire WSA from mineral appropriation and entry. There are no known economic concentrations of mineral resources that would be foregone.

Consequences

NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under this alternative, none of 22,560 acre within the Owens Peak WSA would be designated wilderness.

The primary impacts relate to wilderness values and the preservation of archaeological resources.

Impact on Wilderness Values

None of the WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation and none of the wilderness values on 22,560 acres would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. Moderate increases in ORV use are projected throughout the WSA. These increases along with mineral exploration and development would adversely affect the WSA's naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation, and special features.

- Naturalness

Projected increases in recreational ORV use from the current 650 visitor days annually to an anticipated level of approximately 1,000 visitor days would have an adverse impact on naturalness. This increased level of use, although dispersed throughout the 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways within the 22,560-acre WSA, would noticeably maintain a pronounced bare soil appearance of the existing ways. There would be a minor impact on the perception of naturalness throughout the WSA.

A modified fire suppression plan would include the use of mechanized fire-fighting equipment throughout the WSA, resulting in a minor impact. If mechanized equipment is used, there would be a post-suppression rehabilitation of disturbed areas by harrowing and machine seeding to reduce the potential adverse impacts.

The proposed livestock projects including 1 mile of new fence and reconstruction of two existing springs would result in the same minor impacts as described under the Proposed Action. The perception of naturalness would be locally impaired over a 50-acre area extending 300 feet on either side of the proposed fenceline.

Mining activities associated with mineral exploration and development on 16 placer and lode mining claims in the WSA would result in localized adverse impacts. Very little increase in prospecting is anticipated and surface disturbance is anticipated to be less than 5 acres on each claim as a result of drilling, trenching, and dredging. Due to the remoteness of the area, the terrain, the low mineral potentials, the characteristic small size of the ore deposits, and the current trends toward development of bulk deposits, no significant exploration or development is anticipated. The perception of naturalness would be impaired over an area of 125 acres on each claim with naturalness being lost on 5 acres each. Overall, 80 acres of surface disturbance would

result in a direct loss of naturalness which would occur as three separate concentrations along the western portion of the WSA. The perception of naturalness would impair approximately 2,000 acres of naturalness along the western edge of the WSA.

- Solitude

Increased recreational vehicle use from the current 650 visitor days annually would adversely impact solitude along the 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways. This increased use would be dispersed throughout the WSA resulting in minor impacts on solitude.

Construction and maintenance of livestock projects would result in the same negligible short-term impacts to solitude as described under the Proposed Action. Vehicle use required for construction and maintenance of proposed and existing facilities would be infrequent occurring primarily in the west-central portion of the WSA.

Routine patrols (twice-weekly) and annual monitoring of one spring development by the California Department of Fish and Game along all 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways within the WSA would continue. These patrols would result in a slight impact to a visitor's sense of solitude along these existing routes.

Mining activities such as drilling, trenching, and dredging within the 16 placer and lode mining claims would adversely impact the sense of solitude. As a result of mining activities there would be minor localized impacts to solitude within a 2,000-acre area. However, the impacts would remain minimal due to the low level of use projected.

- Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be diminished throughout the WSA as a result of increased motorized recreation use. A total of 1,000 visitor days is projected for the WSA which would be dispersed over 24 miles of existing primitive vehicle routes resulting in minor impacts to primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities due to the relatively low level of use.

Mining activities would limit opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation on approximately 1,000 acres due to surface disturbance, noise, traffic, and construction associated with the low-level exploration and development of the 16 mining claims in the western portion of the WSA.

- Special Features

Increased recreational ORV use would disrupt the experiential qualities of hiking and backpacking along the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCNST). Increased vehicle use within the WSA increases the threat of vehicle use on this segment of the PCNST resulting in disruption of use as well as accelerated deterioration and erosion along the trail surface.

Conclusion:

There would be a minor impact to wilderness values within the WSA as a result of increased ORV use from the current 650 visitor days to 1,000 visitor days. Additionally, low-level exploration and development of mineral resources on 16 placer and lode mining claims would result in a loss of naturalness on 80 acres as well as an impairment of the WSA's perception of naturalness and sense of solitude within 2,000 acres in the western portion of the WSA. Increased ORV use would disrupt hiking and backpacking use on the PCNST and increase the threat of vehicle use on the trail.

Impact on Recreational ORV Use

Under the No Wilderness Alternative, recreational ORV use would continue and would remain restricted to the existing 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways. Approximately 650 visitor days annually of recreational ORV use occurs in the WSA. Projections indicate that this use will increase but will remain at levels below 1,000 visitor days annually.

Conclusion:

Motorized recreation use would continue and is projected to increase from the current 650 visitor days annually to under 1,000 visitor days.

Impact on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources

Continued vehicular access and projected increased recreational ORV use from the current 650 visitor days annually to under 1,000 visitor days will have a negative impact on the preservation of archaeological resources. While vehicle use will be restricted to existing routes and trails, this increased use will increase the risk of theft or vandalism.

Surface-disturbing activities associated with mineral development on 16 mining claims would disturb approximately 80 acres and would also impact archaeological values. Prior to approval of mining plans of operation, a surface inventory will be conducted to identify potential archaeological resources and develop mitigating measures to minimize adverse impacts.

The continued use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression would increase the potential for impacts to archaeological sites from surface disturbance.

Livestock projects as described under the Proposed Action are not expected to result in any significant impacts to archaeological resources.

Conclusion:

Overall, the WSA's archaeological resources will be minimally impacted by continued vehicular access and increased recreational ORV use as well as surface disturbance from projected mineral development activities and the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression throughout the WSA.

Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development

The entire 22,560 acres would remain open to mineral exploration and development under the mining and mineral leasing laws. Although gold, tungsten, zinc, and possibly copper have been identified within the WSA, the mineral potential is considered low and there are no known economic concentrations of these minerals. The 16 mining claims which are located in the western portion of the WSA are not expected to result in any significant exploration or development activities due to the remoteness of the area, the terrain, the characteristic small size of ore deposits, and the current trends toward development of bulk deposits.

Conclusion:

There would be no impacts on mineral exploration and development as the WSA would remain open to mining and mineral exploration and development. Due to the low potential for occurrence and development of minerals within the WSA, there is no significant mining activity projected for the existing 16 mining claims.

PIUTE CYPRESS WSA (CA-010-046 and USFS A 5213)

PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness/No Action)

Under the Proposed Action, none of the 5,527 acres within the Piute Cypress WSA would be designated wilderness.

The primary impacts under this alternative relate to wilderness values.

Impact on Wilderness Values

None of the WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation under this proposal and none of the wilderness values within the 5,527-acre WSA would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation. Mineral development along with slight increases in recreational ORV use would adversely affect the area's naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined recreation. Little or no change is anticipated for the WSA's special features which include the Piute Cypress grove and 3 species of sensitive plants.

- Naturalness

Projected increases in recreational ORV use from the current 25 visitor days per year to approximately 50 visitor days per year would result in negligible impacts to naturalness. The existing 3 3/4 miles of jeep trails would continue to be maintained by this low level of use primarily within Bodfish Canyon in the central portion of the WSA and along the northeast boundary of the WSA near Erskine Creek. Although the WSA is considered open to recreational ORV use, except for the Piute Cypress Natural/Botanical Area which is closed, steep slopes and dense vegetation restrict vehicle use to the existing jeep trails. There would be a negligible impact on the perception of naturalness.

Consequences

Completion of a fire suppression plan is anticipated to allow the use of mechanized equipment throughout approximately 80 percent of the WSA with the only exception being the Piute Cypress Natural/Botanical Area. Fire suppression would have a short-term minor impact on the area's naturalness if mechanized fire-fighting equipment is used, but would be reduced by post-suppression reclamation including harrowing and machine seeding for rehabilitation.

Mineral development would result in moderate localized adverse impacts due to the continued small scale development on the existing 51 placer and lode mining claims as well as a 10 addition claims which would be located. Fifty-seven of these claims will be developed within the eastern portion of the WSA near Erskine Canyon. The small scale development anticipated for these placer and lode claims will result in approximately 5 acres of surface disturbance associated with each claim. Motorized dredging operations, small structures, and waste rock piles would result in approximately 280 acres of surface disturbance scattered along this portion of the WSA. An additional 4 lode claims near Bodfish Peak in the central portion of the WSA would result in similar impacts to naturalness on 20 acres. Overall, approximately 300 acres of naturalness would be lost. Due to the localized nature of these impacts resulting from the steep topography and dense vegetation the perception of naturalness would be impaired over an area of less than 600 acres.

There are no other management actions or uses anticipated under the Proposed Action that would result in any impact to naturalness within the WSA.

- Solitude

Recreational ORV use, including the projected increase resulting in approximately 50 visitor days per year, would adversely impact solitude. However, since this use would be limited primarily to the 3 3/4 miles of existing jeep trails with the majority of use concentrated in the Bodfish Canyon area, the sense of solitude would be locally disrupted with the majority of the WSA not being affected by ORV use.

Mining activities associated with development of the projected 57 placer and lode mining claims within the eastern portion of the WSA and the 4 lode claims near Bodfish Peak would locally disrupt the sense of solitude within approximately 500 acres. Although only small scale development is projected, the use of mechanized equipment including motorized dredges and heavy equipment as well as occasional blasting would have moderate impacts on solitude; however, these impacts would mostly occur over short-term periods and would not be constant.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would generally be retained throughout the WSA under the Proposed Action. However, mineral development primarily near Erskine Creek and to a lesser

extent near Bodfish Peak would limit primitive or unconfined recreation opportunities on approximately 600 acres due to surface disturbance, noise, vehicle use, and construction associated with the small scale exploration and development of a projected 61 mining claims. Recreational ORV use, anticipated to increase from the current 25 visitor days per year to approximately 50 visitor days, would have little effect, if any, on primitive or unconfined recreation due to the low level of vehicle use and limited amount of jeep trails available for use.

- Special Features

Special features, would be retained within to WSA due the the low level of use and projected management actions that would affect the habitat of the Piute Cypress grove and the sensitive plants. Mining activities in the vicinity of Erskine Canyon and Bodfish Peak would not affect these habitat areas. Additionally, the Piute Cypress Natural/Botanical Area is closed to all vehicle use. The use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression within the Natural/Botanical Area which also includes the primary habitat for the 3 sensitive plant species is restricted. Therefore, no impacts to the Piute Cypress grove or sensitive plant habitat is anticipated.

Conclusion:

Wilderness values within 600 acres would be adversely impacted as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of mineral resources. Approximately 300 acres of naturalness would be lost with the perception of naturalness and the sense of solitude impaired within an area of approximately 600 acres as a result of mining activities. Projected recreational ORV use (50 visitor days per year) would have negligible impacts on wilderness values. The use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression would result in short-term minor impacts to naturalness. Special features would be retained within the WSA.

Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development

The entire 5,527 acres of the Piute Cypress WSA would remain open to mineral exploration and development under the mining and mineral leasing laws. The eastern portion of the WSA is within the Erskine Creek Mining District which contains deposits of tungsten, gold, and antimony as well as occurrences of copper, silver, and uranium. The WSA includes a total of 51 placer and lode mining claims covering 770 acres of BLM public lands and U.S. Forest Service lands. These mining claims as well as future mining claims would be available for exploration and development.

Conclusion:

Mineral exploration and development would not be impacted under the Proposed Action. The WSA would remain open to mineral exploration and development of existing and future mining claims.

Consequences

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot Be Avoided

Mineral exploration and development within the WSA would result in unavoidable adverse impacts. The use of mechanized equipment in fire suppression would result in some minor, short-term unavoidable adverse impacts. The low level of recreational ORV use would not result in any significant adverse impacts within the WSA.

Relationship Between Short-term Local Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity

If the WSA is not designated wilderness, all present short-term uses would continue. For the Piute Cypress WSA only a few uses (primarily recreational ORV use, wildlife management and hiking) activities are anticipated. Mineral exploration and development are projected for the WSA impacting long-term productivity on 270 acres. Throughout the remainder of the WSA long-term productivity would not be impacted and future development options would remain open except within the Piute Cypress Natural/Botanical Area.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Activities such as mining, mineral leasing, and material sales, could create an irreversible commitment of the wilderness resource within the WSA. Projected mineral development on 61 mining claims would result in 270 acres of surface disturbance resulting in an irretrievable commitment of the WSA's wilderness resource. Throughout the remainder of the WSA no irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources are anticipated.

ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE

Under the alternative, the entire 5,527 acres of the Piute Cypress WSA would be designated wilderness.

The primary impacts under the alternative relate to wilderness values, mineral exploration and development and recreational ORV use.

Impacts of Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, all 5,527 acres within the Piute Cypress WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation and all wilderness values would be protected by legislative mandate. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, and opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation would generally be retained although mineral development on mining claims with valid existing rights would result in localized moderate impacts. Special features which include the Piute Cypress grove and 3 sensitive plant species would be retained.

- Naturalness

Impacts to naturalness would be similar to those identified for the Proposed Action. Due to the anticipated determination of valid existing rights for the majority of the 51 existing mining claims small scale development and the construction of 2 to 3 miles of new road would result in a loss of naturalness on less than 250 acres with the perception of naturalness impaired within an area of 500 acres.

There would be a slight positive benefit to naturalness as a result of prohibiting recreational ORV use and restricting the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression.

- Solitude

There would be a slight positive benefit to solitude as a result of eliminating the existing 25 visitor days of recreational ORV use. Due to the low level of use solitude would be only slightly enhanced.

Since the majority of the existing 51 mining claims are projected to result in small scale development due to anticipated valid existing rights, the impacts to solitude would be similar to the Proposed Action. The sense of solitude would be disrupted within an area of 500 acres.

- Primitive or Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation would essentially be the same as described under the Proposed Action although mineral development would only limit opportunities on 500 acres. Eliminating 25 visitor days of recreational ORV use would only negligibly, affect opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation.

- Special Features

Special features, including for Piute Cypress grove and the 3 sensitive plant species would be retained as described under the Proposed Action.

Conclusion:

Wilderness values within 500 acres would be adversely impacted by projected mineral development which would continue as a result of anticipated valid existing rights. Surface disturbance and noise associated with mining activities would result in a loss of naturalness on 250 acres with the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude impaired within 500 acres. Wilderness values throughout the remainder of the WSA would be retained.

Impacts on Mineral Exploration and Development

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire 5,527 acres of the Piute Cypress WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid existing rights. Based on the extensive historic underground workings within the Erskine Creek Mining District and the known deposits of tungsten, gold, and antimony as well as occurrences of copper, silver, and uranium it is anticipated that the majority of the 51 placer and lode mining claims within the WSA would be determined to be valid. Small scale development of these claims would continue. However, no new claims could be filed and potential exploration and development activities would be foregone.

Conclusion:

Wilderness designation would withdraw the entire WSA from mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid existing right. It is anticipated that the majority of the 51 mining claims within the WSA would be determined to be valid and small scale development of potential mineral resources (other than within valid existing claims) would be foregone.

CHAPTER 5

CONSULTATION & COORDINATION

CHAPTER 5

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

The planning/EIS process leading up to the Final EIS has included numerous opportunities for public involvement. Solicitation of public input relative to the wilderness study effort began in January, 1982, with the media release from the California State Office requesting input on identification of energy and mineral potentials in all of the WSAs in the state. On February 19, 1982, a Federal Register Notice of Intent to conduct resource management planning signaled the initiation of the wilderness studies included in this EIS. The notice identified the areas to be studied, described the planning process, listed the disciplines to be represented on the study team, and invited the public to participate in the planning process by surfacing issues, commenting on the planning criteria, providing information to be considered in the planning process, and commenting on the proposals and analysis incorporated in the draft plans and EIS when developed.

Another Federal Register notice was published on March 26, 1982, notifying the public of the availability of planning criteria for the MFP-Amendments involved in this wilderness study. On April 15, a wilderness study announcement and mailing list renewal notice were sent to over 900 people on the Bakersfield District wilderness mailing list. The announcement described the current studies of Bakersfield District WSAs, including this study as well as the USFS/BLM joint wilderness studies presently being conducted under Forest Service lead. A media release with similar information concerning this study effort was disseminated on April 26. During preparation of the Draft EIS, Area Managers briefed members of County Boards of Supervisors and provided on-the-ground talks with various interest groups.

On May 13, 1982, a Federal Register Notice indicated that the draft EIS had been prepared and announced the time, date, and location of the public hearing. Distribution of the DEIS to the public and the State Clearinghouse occurred on May 19. A May 20 media release gave details on the public hearing as well as identified review locations of the draft EIS (District and Area Offices and 10 libraries throughout the EIS area) and the final date for public comments. Another letter was sent to the wilderness mailing list summarizing the draft EIS and identifying DEIS review locations, the final date for comments, and contacts for further information.

The June 4, 1982, Federal Register carried a Notice of Availability of the Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Area Draft EIS in which the Proposed Action and alternatives were summarized and the closing date of the public comment period was identified.

The public hearing was held on June 22, 1982, in a split afternoon/evening session at the State Building in Fresno, California. Hearing details and a comment summary appear below. On July 2, a separate media release to Hollister Resource Area media sources attempted to solicit further involvement from the local area.

As a result of the issuance of new BLM Planning Regulations, published in the Federal Register on May 5, 1983, the public comment period on the draft EIS was extended an additional 30 days to comply with the 90-day review requirement. The extension notice, published in the Federal Register on August 9, 1983, identified the September 12, 1983, closing date. A letter, dated August 19, 1983, was sent to the wilderness mailing list advertising the review period extension and summarizing the modifications to be made in the final EIS regarding the removal of areas containing less than 5,000 acres of contiguous Public Lands.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Throughout the Central California Wilderness Study process, close coordination has been maintained with other Federal, and State and local agencies. Aside from those agencies involved in reviewing the draft EIS, the Bureau has working closely with both the Forest Service and National Park Service in the development and analysis of alternatives for the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous which abuts the Pinnacles National Monument and the Cypress RARE II Study Area (USFS A5213) and has been included as a part of the USFS/BLM Joint Wilderness Study effort and studied in conjunction with the Piute Cypress WSA.

In addition, the Bureau has worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) with regard to Section 7 consultations. The FWS believes that on WSAs where endangered species are present, wilderness designation or non-designation would not, in itself, result in adverse impacts. To this end, Section 7 consultation with FWS will be deferred until there is a proposal to implement a management action that, in the Bureau's judgment, may affect a threatened or endangered species (see letter from FWS in the Appendix).

CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER PLANS

Wilderness Study Areas addressed in this Environmental Impact Statement fall within the framework of one of four Bureau planning efforts; The Sierra Management Framework Plan, The South Sierra Foothills Management Framework Plan, The Hollister Resource Area Resource Management Plan, The Coast/Valley Resource Management Plan. All of these planning efforts involved coordination with the affected local county planning departments to insure consistency with county plans. In addition all counties affected by this Wilderness EIS were asked to comment on the draft EIS. Two counties responded both Mariposa and Tulare, whose responses are included in this chapter.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC HEARING

A formal public hearing on the draft EIS was conducted on June 22, 1982, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the State Building in Fresno, California. Nineteen individuals (not including hearing and BLM

personnel) attended the hearing, and 11 testified. A representative from the Office of the Solicitor presided as Hearing Officer, and a court reporter recorded the proceedings verbatim. The full hearing transcripts may be reviewed in the Bakersfield District Office.

Some general comments made at the public hearing included the statement that wilderness, once lost, cannot be regained, whereas a wilderness designation can be reversed at a later date. This conclusion has been identified in the Final EIS under the Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources section. One statement dealt with the small percentage of total acreage recommended as suitable in the draft EIS Proposed Action. Recommendations are based solely on the criteria and quality standards outlined in the Bureau's Wilderness Study Policy (1982) and related public input. Ratios and percentages have no place or bearing in determining wilderness suitability or nonsuitability. One comment supported the Partial Wilderness Alternative. However, the Proposed Action, as modified in this Final EIS, has been chosen as the preferred alternative for reasons outlined throughout the EIS. One final general comment included a statement that the draft EIS was inadequate and did not comply with the requirements of N.E.P.A. and C.E.Q. guidelines. However, no information was provided to support this statement.

The remaining comments were specific to individual WSAs and are summarized by WSA below. However, those comments specific to Ventana Wilderness Contiguous, Sheep Ridge, and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain are not summarized, since those units have been removed from WSA status and, thus, the Central California Wilderness Study and EIS process (see page 11).

Merced River

One comment stated that the Merced River should be protected by wilderness designation to preserve its free flowing character. However, the WSA was recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation for a variety of manageability problems identified throughout the EIS. Management of the river corridor under the Proposed Action is guided by the Sierra Plan which includes protection of the whitewater resource.

Panoche Hills North and South

Two comments supported the draft EIS Partial Wilderness Alternative.

Several comments noted that wilderness designation would protect the endangered species and wildlife found in the area, the California steppe ecosystem which is not represented in the NWPS, and paleontological resources. Many of these features will receive protection as a result of the seasonal ORV closure and laws, regulations, and policy designed to protect them. A few comments cited ORV trespass as a staffing problem rather than a reason for disqualifying an area from wilderness designation. However, historical intensive use and continued uncontrollable trespass are valid measures of an area's potential to be adequately managed to preserve its wilderness character. Two comments reiterated the EIS conclusion that scientific paleontological excavation, guzzler maintenance, prescribed burning, and hunting would continue under wilderness designation, even though somewhat constrained. One final statement urged the

reopening of Panoche Hills to ORV use. This proposal is outside of the scope of this EIS. The wilderness study was conducted as an MFP-Amendment. Nonwilderness uses for this area were taken to be those already identified in the Fresno-San Benito MFP which, for a variety of reasons, supported closure of the area to ORVs. The long-term impacts of wilderness designation on ORV recreation in this area were considered in the EIS (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous

Five speakers supported the DEIS Proposed Action for the area, mainly with regard to enhanced manageability through the use of topographic boundaries. The suitable recommendation has remained unchanged with respect to boundaries, although public comments and new data have led to the recommendation to retain BLM administration of the suitable area rather than transfer title to the National Monument. Under BLM administration, grazing and hunting use would not be impacted. Three speakers (two of them adjacent landowners) supported nonsuitable recommendations due to restrictions on prescribed burning and recommended against transfer to the National Monument due to probable fencing and NPS restrictions on grazing and hunting. Prescribed burning is allowed in wilderness areas when wilderness values would be benefitted (e.g., fire-dependent ecosystems), although techniques may be constrained. Retention of BLM administration will allow grazing and hunting uses to continue. One comment identified Pinnacles as the only park unit where the Coast Range chaparral is preserved. Although true, the California Chaparral Province-Chaparral ecosystem is also protected within four existing wilderness areas administered by the U.S. Forest Service. A final comment suggested that the suitable area be extended to the outer edge of the public land parcels for easier management as a solid block. However, topographic features utilized as boundaries are easier to manage due to their identifiability and the separation they provide between incompatible uses.

Caliente Mountain

One speaker urged wilderness designation for this unit due to its wilderness character. However, poor manageability and conflicting resources have, in combination, resulted in the nonsuitable wilderness recommendation.

Owens Peak

Two comments stated that ORV trespass was a staffing problem only and should not be used to disqualify an area. However, an area's lack of barriers to historical ORV use is a valid consideration in determining wilderness manageability. The suitable area boundaries have been pulled back to points where topography aids in controlling incompatible encroachment.

Pinyon nut and Christmas tree harvesting were also not considered by the speakers to be valid criteria for excluding areas from the suitable recommendation. Resource trade-off decisions considered the wilderness values and the competing resource values of the entire area and resulted in the

boundaries as drawn in the Proposed Action. Forest product harvesting was only one factor in making the boundary decisions. Other factors included wilderness manageability, mineral values, and the rights of private inholders. Two comments supported the Partial Wilderness Alternative. But the Proposed Action remained unchanged for the reasons stated in the EIS and above.

Piute-Cypress

One comment addressed the unit's location adjacent to the Cypress RARE II area. However, the RARE II area is included within the recommendations in this EIS in accordance with a USFS/BLM Cooperative Agreement for joint wilderness studies. One comment recommended wilderness status to protect the area around the Piute-Cypress Natural and Botanical Areas. However, the Natural Area, as delineated, already provides some buffer around the actual Piute-Cypress groves. The protective designations are considered adequate for protection of the groves.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE DRAFT EIS

Comments on the Draft EIS were requested from the following agencies and interest groups as well as the many individuals who have requested to be placed on the Bakersfield District Wilderness Mailing List:

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Federal

Senator Alan Cranston
Senator S.I. Hayakawa
Representative Bill Thomas
Representative Terry Cielho
Representative Leon Panetta
Representative Richard Lehman
Representative Robert Lagomarizo

State

Senator Alfred Alquist
Senator Kenneth Maddy
Senator Rose Ann Vuich
Senator Walter Stiern
Senator Henry Mello
Assemblyman Dominic L. Cortese
Assemblyman Sam Farr
Assemblyman Carol Hallett
Assemblyman Jim Costa
Assemblyman Don Rogers
Assemblyman Philip Wyman
Assemblyman John Vasconcellos
Assemblyman Charles Imbrecht
Assemblyman Gilbert Marquth

Coordination

Local

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
Kern County Board of Supervisors
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
San Benito County Board of Supervisors
San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors

AGENCIES

Federal

Department of Agriculture

- Forest Service, Pacific southwest Regional office, Los padres National Forest, Sequoia National Forest

Department of Defense

- U.S. Air Force

Department of Interior

- Bureau of Mines
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Geological Survey
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, San Francisco, California

Federal Aviation Administration, Washington, D.C.

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

State

Office of the Governor

Office of Planning and Research (State Clearinghouse)

State Historic Preservation Office

Resource Agency

- Department of Water Resources
- Department of Forestry
- Native American Heritage Commission
- Department of Fish and Game
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- State Lands Commission
- Energy Resources and Conservation and Development Commission
- Division of Mines and Geology
- Division of Oil and Gas
- Air Resources, Solid Waste Management and Water Resources Control Board

Coordination

Local

Fresno County Department of Resources
Inyo County Health Department
Kern County Public Works Department
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
Planning Departments (Fresno, Kern, Mariposa, Monterey, San Benito,
San Luis Obispo, Tulare Counties)

ORGANIZATIONS

American Motorcyclist Association
American Wilderness Alliance
Antelope Valley Gem & Mineral Society
Audubon Society
CAHTO Coalition
California Association 4-WD Clubs
California Cattlemen's Association
California Mining Association
California Native Plant Society
California Off-Road Vehicle Association (C.O.R.V.A.)
California Wilderness Coalition
California Wildlife Federation
California Woolgrowers Association
Canyon City Lapidary Society
Caravan Club International
Cholame Township Sportsmen
Desert Protective Council
4-Wheel Drive Club of Fresno
Fresno County Sportsmen's Club
Friends of the Earth
Hollister Gem & Lapidary Society
Kern Valley Gem & Mineral Society
Monterey Bay Mineral Society
National Parks and Conservation Association
Needles Gem & Mineral Club
Off-Road Advisor
Outward Bound Adventures
Sierra Club
South Bay Lapidary & Mineral Society
South Council of Conservation Clubs
The Wilderness Society
United Mining Council of America
World of Rockhounds Association

COMMENT LETTERS AND RESPONSED

Sixty-four letters, postmarked on or before September 12, 1983, the end of the overall public comment period (including the 30-day extension period), were received by BLM, Bakersfield District. All comments both written and from the hearing transcripts, were utilized in developing the Final EIS. The written comments and the hearing transcripts will be sent, along with this Final EIS and the Wilderness Study Report, to the President and on to Congress.

Coordination

In preparation of the Final EIS, all comments, including those from the hearing transcripts, were reviewed and considered. Comments that presented new data, questioned findings and analyses, or raised questions or issues relating directly to the environmental impacts of the Proposed action or alternatives were responded to. General comments favoring a specific alternative have been noted and considered, but required no specific response. In addition, comments addressing items outside of the scope of this EIS were not responded to

Although the overall public review period ended on September 2, 1983, numerous comments were received through October 1, 1983, and are also addressed below. All letters are printed below. Comments that receive response are identified by a number corresponding with the response. Comment letters are numbered in the order they were received but are arranged by elected officials, agencies (Federal, State or local), organizations, and individuals.

INDEX OF WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Elected Officials

Letter No. 39 - Honorable Leon E. Panetta

Federal Agencies

Letter No. 43 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX
Letter No. 11 - U.S.D.A - Forest Service, Sequoia National Forest
Letter No. 26 - U.S.D.I. - National Park Service, Western Region
Letter No. 40 - U.S.D.I. - National Park Service, Western Region

State Agencies

Letter No. 14 - California Department of Fish and Game
Letter No. 19 - California Resources Agency
Letter No. 79 - California Resources Agency

Local Agencies

Letter No. 22 - Mariposa County Planning Commission
Letter No. 35 - Tulare County Planning Department

Organizations

Letter No. 2 - California Native Plant Society, Bristle Cove Pine
Letter No. 77 - California Native Plant Society, Sacramento Valley Chapter
Letter No. 10 - California Native Plant Society, San Luis Obispo Chapter
Letter No. 71 - California Native Plant Society, San Luis Obispo Chapter
Letter No. 20 - Desomount Club
Letter No. 46 - Earth First!
Letter No. 53 - Ecology Center of Southern California
Letter No. 76 - Kern Valley Wildlife Association

Coordination

Organizations (continued)

Letter No. 42 - Minerals Exploration Coalition
Letter No. 29 - National Parks and Conservation Association
Letter No. 41 - National Parks and Conservation Association
Letter No. 32 - Sierra Club, Tehipite Chapter
Letter No. 70 - The Wilderness Society
Letter No. 23 - White Rock Club

Individuals

Letter No. 38 - Atlantic Richfield Company
Letter No. 69 - Frederick A. Bacher, Jr.
Letter No. 4 - R.J. Bakker
Letter No. 52 - Mrs. Henry Bieber
Letter No. 7 - Bruce Boshard
Letter No. 5 - Sierra Club, Tehipite Chapter
Letter No. 78 - Chevron U.S.A. Inc.
Letter No. 44 - Dennis C. Coules
Letter No. 8 - Thomas J. Cullen
Letter No. 24 - William R. DeJager
Letter No. 57 - Harold L. Dittmer
Letter No. 65 - Frances Dollar
Letter No. 3 - Vincent L. Dollarhide
Letter No. 66 - Eleanor Elander
Letter No. 72 - James Arthur Ferrara
Letter No. 68 - Ed Fourt
Letter No. 61 - John L Frankel
Letter No. 55 - Frederic R. Gunsky
Letter No. 74 - Richard C. Hasbrouck
Letter No. 67 - Kathryn L. Heistand
Letter No. 9 - Mari Hoffman
Letter No. 21 - Donald E. Holmes
Letter No. 48 - William J. Laden
Letter No. 73 - Edward S. Loosli
Letter No. 17 - Roger J. Leibrand
Letter No. 59 - N. Maida
Letter No. 1 - John Miller
Letter No. 51 - John Miller (2nd Letter)
Letter No. 12 - Robert J. McLanghlin
Letter No. 34 - Patrick E. McSweeney
Letter No. 64 - Mike McWherter
Letter No. 16 - Harry Metzger
Letter No. 18 - Michael J. Moran
Letter No. 25 - Harold Miossi
Letter No. 15 - Stephen Newswanger
Letter No. 63 - Frank Norris
Letter No. 33 - Catherine O'Riley
Letter No. 30 - Pacific Gas and Electric Company
Letter No. 37 - Mark J. Palmer
Letter No. 54 - Victoria A. Peasley
Letter No. 62 - Arthur F. Peck, M.D.

Individuals (continued)

- Letter No. 47 - Kirk E. Peterson
- Letter No. 38 - Theresa G. Rumjahn
- Letter No. 36 - Jeff Sawers
- Letter No. 50 - Marion L. Sanford
- Letter No. 13 - Peter Owens Scott
- Letter No. 45 - Richard Spotts
- Letter No. 56 - Lynne Spotts
- Letter No. 75 - Tom Suk
- Letter No. 31 - John R. Swanson
- Letter No. 27 - Texaco U.S.A.
- Letter No. 6 - Paul R. Thomas
- Letter No. 58 - David Wallace
- Letter No. 49 - Nancy Woods

163 Del Monte Ave.
Los Altos, CA 94022
May 17, 1982

Mr. Dave Howell
Area Manager
B.L.M.
P.O. Box 365
Hollister, CA 95023

Dear Mr. Howell:

I am writing in regard to B.L.M. areas #CA -G40-303 North and South. I believe that these areas should become wilderness areas, especially because of their proximity to Pinnacles National Monument.

1-1

To further protect the Monument and because these lands are worthy in their own right of wilderness designation, I urge you to do all you can to protect these areas.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Miller

John Miller



8550 (C-013.4)
18-1

Please be advised that we are in favor of your letter to the BLM wilderness in connection with the draft FES for the Central California Study Area of BLM lands

May 30, 1982

*Enochson Line CNPS
% Vincent Goble
PO Box 370
Stone Line CA 93545*

Response to John Miller

Response 1.1

The proposed action contains a suitable wilderness recommendation for the lands within the watershed/viewshed of Pinnacles National Monument. The boundaries result in more efficient wilderness management of a more complete ecosystem. The remaining lands in the WSA were recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation primarily due to lack of manageability and competing resource values.

Re: 8500 (C-013-1)

LETTER # 3

6601

May 29, 1972

Dear Sirs,

After reading the five alternatives for the Ten Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) and the limited information I have, I lend my support to the second alternative.

I feel, as with Pinnacles National Monument, a lot of the areas we have set aside are islands of the way things once were. We often do not include enough area to insure that "island" is suitably buffered. By expanding the protected watershed area, Pinnacles is more apt to survive the onslaught of our demand for resources.

The Pierce River is a very lively river from its beginnings in the high Sierra around Yosemite National Park and flows without any major obstacle to Lake McClure. It would be a shame to have been turned from their natural course to a man-made one. Their flow is so restricted that it virtually eliminates the sediment created in and around the river. Although we do need water I feel that through conservation and better management of the water we possess we can find enough to take care of our needs. Therefore, I support protection of areas around rivers - the riparian habitats, and the rivers themselves from further impounding.

Unfortunately, time does not allow me to give each of the ten areas their due. So I will reiterate that I feel that alternative II is the best alternative for these areas.

Thank you for allowing me to express my views.

Sincerely,
Vincent L. Dollachide



Response to Vincent L. Dollachide

Response 3.1

The proposed action contains a suitable wilderness recommendation for the lands within the watershed/viewshed of Pinnacles National Monument. However, administration of the suitable area will be retained by BLM rather than be legislatively transferred to the Park Service. This change from the draft EIS was made in response to public and other agency comments concerning loss of hunting and livestock grazing use under the more restrictive NPS regulations. The proposed wilderness designation will enhance wilderness manageability, protect a more complete ecosystem than is presently managed by the Monument, and simultaneously allow compatible hunting and grazing use to continue.

Response 3.2

The area has been recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation due to overriding manageability problems and competing resource values. However, the area has been nominated as a "recreation river area" under the Wild and Scenic River Act. As a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System, this segment will be precluded from any future power site developments. In addition, management for the area, as guided by the Sierra Management Framework Plan, includes protection of the whitewater resource.

Gerald W. Lamb
Acting District Mgr.
Bureau of Land Management
800 Thurston Ave Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

LETTER #6



June 2, 1982

Dear Mr Lamb:

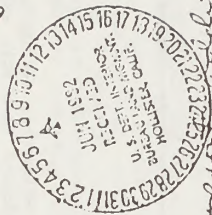
In reply to your letter 8500 (C-013.4) 1601, regarding Ten WSA's, I recommend that Alternative IV - No Wilderness be implemented. There already exists vast wilderness areas & any additional wilderness designation prevents the multiple use concept, which is needed far more than for a select few who are physically able & want to be backpackers.

Lets keep public land open to all, not just a small percentage of vocal "eliteists" who think they are the only ones that deserve access to it.

Sincerely
Paul R. Thomas
1 Maier Lane
Petaluma, CA

Copies: Representative Don Clausen
Sponsors: Alan Cronston
S. I. Hayakawa
President Bruce Reagan

LETTER # 7
6-3-82



Dear Alan Morgan

I strongly support your addition to the Pinnacles National Monument. I visit often to the Pinnacles, it is a favorite spot. A real gem. The Pinnacles are truly unique, being the only National Park unit which preserves the island coast range shrews community. I believe it should be managed as far as possible, as a natural ecological unit. That addition would help in protecting that ecosystem. The addition would also be easier to manage being a buffer zone helping to protect the forest. Please add to the Pinnacles, it is such a small gem, I would to see it protected by additions. Thank you.

Your truly,
Bruce Boshard
3933 Lincoln Ave
Oakland, CA 94602

Response to Bruce Boshard

Response 7.1

See Response 3.1

6-8-82

Dear BLM,

I hope Alternative II is chosen for the Caliente, Folsom + Hollister Area. All 10 of the proposed wildernesses are worthy of that distinction and should be protected as such.



Wilderness is an anchor to windward. Knowing it is there, we can also know that we are still a rich nation, tending to our resources as we should - not a people in despair scratching every last nook and cranny of our land for a board of lumber, a barrel of oil, a blade of grass, or a tank of water.

Clinton Anderson, 1961

Sincerely,
 Mari Hoffman

June 7th, 1982

Garold W. Lamb, Acting District Director
 Bureau of Land Management
 800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
 Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb,

Please include my comments at the Wilderness Public Hearing, June 22, 1982 in Fresno. The following comments regard the the wilderness recommendations and the Draft EIS.

After a thorough review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the wilderness suitability and nonsuitability recommendations for the 10 Wilderness Study Areas located in the Caliente, Folsom and Hollister Resource Areas, I have concluded that the only reasonable alternative is Alternative IV - No Wilderness. It is my studied opinion that all 95,049 acres of the Wilderness Study Areas are nonsuitable for wilderness designation. These areas should be managed for the utilization of all resources, including those not compatible with wilderness designation.

My continued interest in this important Wilderness Review Program leads me to believe that anytime additional acreage is designated as Wilderness, it then becomes unproductive to the many and usable by the few. This is not consistent with the justifiable needs of our people, nor is it consistent with the present animal, vegetable, mineral and energy needs of the greatest country on earth.

Please see that my opinions are registered.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Gollen
 523 Corbitt Drive
 Burlingame, California 94010

cc: (3) ama



THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CALIFORNIA NATIVE FLORA

10 June 1982

8707 Casitas Road,
Atascadero, CA. 93422.

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta,
U.S. House of Representatives,
437 Cannon Bldg.,
Washington, D.C. 20515.

Dear Mr. Panetta,

The 500 member San Luis Obispo County Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is absolutely stunned to learn that the Bureau of Land Management has chosen to recommend to the Department of Interior the designation of nonsuitability for wilderness status regarding the 19,000 acre Caliente Mountain Area (CA-010-023) in their recently completed DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact Study) for ten WSAS (Wilderness Study Areas).

The Caliente Mountain Area (in Southeastern SLO County) is of extreme interest to biologists and botanists because of its position relative to the Great Basin wildlife and plant elements overlapping with those of the Central Mountain and Coastal Areas. It is also the highest point (over 5,000 feet in elevation) and commands sweeping panoramic views of the surrounding territory. As of now, it is relatively unspoiled and to our knowledge there are no trails or roads in it and there are no mining or gas and oil leases in the proposed area. The Sierra Club and the CNPS have held overnight hikes in the area and can attest to its suitability as wilderness.

It is our belief that the planners in the BLM have been unduly influenced by the hunting and rockhound groups, mining, and gas and oil interests to keep this area open for their benefit and not enough consideration has been given to its value to the public as wilderness. We strongly protest this designation of non-suitability as being completely out of line.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

E. Craig Cunningham

E. Craig Cunningham, Chairman
The Conservation Committee,
The SLO County Chapter of the CNPS.

cc: Senator Alan Cranston
Garold W. Lamb, BLM Acting District Manager
Suzanne Schettler, CNPS Coordinator

Glenn A. Carpenter, Caliente Resource Area Manager
P.S.: Attention, Mr. Carpenter: Please see that this letter is read into the record at the upcoming public hearing to be held in Fresno, CA. on the 22nd of June, 1982. Thank you. ECC.

Response to the SLO Chapter of the CNPS

Response 10-1

Although many of the supplemental values that you have identified were noted in the EIS, the Caliente Mountain WSA (CA-010-042) has been recommended as unsuitable for wilderness primarily as a result of overriding manageability problems and significant competing resource values. A major competing resource value involves energy resources. A large portion of the WSA has moderate potential for oil and gas, and high interest has been shown in the form of existing leases and numerous pending lease applications. In addition, a portion of the WSA falls within a Known Geologic Structure (KGS). Manageability problems in the area, which include its highly irregular boundary configuration, lack of easily identifiable boundary features, nonpublic inholdings with incompatible development potential, susceptibility to outside influences (ridgelike character), and cherrystem ridgeline road, reduce its overall wildness value relative to competing resource values.

Land use plans for the area have addressed the need to protect its wildlife and plant communities in accordance with BLM regulations and policies.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Sequoia
National Forest

900 W. Grand Avenue
Porterville, CA 93257

LETTER #11

Received 1920

June 14, 1982



Mr. Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

We have reviewed the DEIS for the Central California Study Areas and offer the following comments:

11-1 { P. 2-12. It may be confusing to the public to show the southernmost parcel of CA-010-023 crosshatched as the remainder of CA-010-023 is. As the Sequoia has the planning lead on the southern parcel, and your acreage figure on p. 2-1 leaves it out, we suggest that it not be shown on the map.

pp. 2-10, 2-12, 2-14. We suggest the same parcel not be shown for the reasons listed above.

11-2 { P. 3-15. Suggest the last sentence under "Fire" be worded as follows: BLM portion of area under contract with CDF for fire suppression. And first sentence under "RTE/Sensitive Species" be worded "...Botanical Area status on BLM and Forest Service lands, respectively."

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

FOR JAMES A. CRATES
Forest Supervisor

Response to Sequoia National Forest

Response 11.1

The Milk Ranch/Case Mountain Unit (CA-010-023), as well as the Sheep Ridge (CA-100-022) and Ventana Wilderness Contiguous (CA-040-308) units, were eliminated from this wilderness effort as a result of the December 30, 1982, Secretarial Decision affecting areas less than 5,000 acres in size, but will be studied in a statewide wilderness study in 1987.

Response 11.2

The sentences have been revised (see Chapter 3).



6/15/82

Carold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District, BLM
500 Truxtun Ave., Room 302
Bakersfield, CA. 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb,

I am writing to provide comments on your draft environmental impact statement Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Areas. In your final impact statement, I urge you to adopt Alternative III--Partial Wilderness. In my view, this alternative provides the best balance of competing uses for the ten wilderness study areas you have identified. I believe the additional areas in Alternative III should definitely be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. I will consider each of these areas individually.

Panoche Hills South--ORV trespass was cited as a major problem. This should be considered a staffing or police problem rather than as part of an area's intrinsic wilderness values. Vehicular recreation would continue in other parts of Panoche under Alternative III--a fair compromise.

Sheep Ridge--Small size and lack of diversity were cited as major problems. I disagree on both counts. Small size is not an important factor because Sheep Ridge is contiguous with Sequoia National Park. Although you state that these National Park lands are not designated wilderness, you neglect the fact that they are proposed wilderness (in fact, this measure is now pending before Congress), and are now managed as de facto wilderness by the Park Service. Second, you state Sheep Ridge would, "... not significantly contribute diversity to the National Wilderness Preservation System." I disagree. Sheep Ridge is the type of lower elevation, chaparral and canyon country which is under-represented in the Wilderness Preservation System. In short, designation as outlined in Alternative III would provide more topographically rational boundaries for Sequoia National Park wilderness.

Owens Peak--ORV trespass appears to be the major reason for the smaller area in Alternative I compared to Alternative III. Again, I believe ORV trespass should be considered only as a police problem and not as an intrinsic wilderness value. In this light, I believe the larger area recommended as suitable for wilderness in Alternative III is justified.

Finally, I wish to support your recommendation that the Pinnacles Contiguous area be incorporated into the National Monument. This would logically solve the management problems associated with this area.

Sincerely,

Robert J. McLaughlin
Robert J. McLaughlin
22 Domingo Ave. #16
Berkeley, CA. 94705

Response to Robert J. McLaughlin

Response 12.1

ORV trespass can be a valid consideration when determining an area's relative wilderness value. Wilderness manageability, or the capability of an area to be effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character, is one of the two primary wilderness planning criteria identified in the Bureau's Wilderness Study Policy (1982). An area's susceptibility to impacts from incompatible encroachment (such as ORV trespass due to ease of access, lack of natural barriers, and historic popular use) reduces its capability to be effectively managed as wilderness, and thus, its manageability.

Response 12.2

See Response 11.1.

Response 12.3

See response 12.1 with regard to the validity of using ORV trespass when considering wilderness manageability. ORV trespass was not the sole reason for boundary adjustments. The proposed boundaries resolve major resource conflicts by using natural barriers to control incompatible uses. Due to rugged terrain, vehicle use is easier to control at the proposed boundary. Fence construction intended to control vehicular use at the southern WSA boundary would conflict with grazing management facilities and practices by improperly restricting livestock movement. Manageability problems resulting from access needs to private inholdings resulted in the western boundary adjustments. And an existing gravel pit and competing historic resource uses resulted in the northern boundary adjustment.

Response 12.4

See Response 3.1.

12-1

12-2

12-3

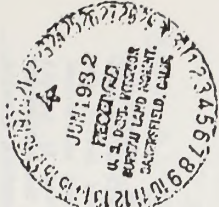
12-4

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—RESOURCES AGENCY

EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Post Office Box 47
Yountville, California 94599
(707) 944-4460



June 17, 1982

Jerry Magee, Wilderness Coordinator
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Avenue; Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Mr. Magee:

The Department of Fish and Game has reviewed the subject DEIS and recommends that parcel described as Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous (CA-40-303) not be included in the Wilderness Proposal. Currently, the major portion of the resource values in the area are protected by present use and the common boundary with Pinnacles National Monument. Wilderness designation would deprive a portion of the hunting community of a traditional place to pursue their sport, the fire restrictions would preclude optimum habitat management, and no real gain would accrue to National Monument users due to the configuration, topography and chaparral cover within the proposed wilderness addition.

14-1

Sincerely,

Brian Hunter
Brian Hunter
Regional Manager
Region 3

Response to California Department of Fish and Game

Response 14.1

See Response 3.1. Prescribed burning would be allowed to continue in the suitable area, since fire is a natural part of the chaparral ecosystem. It was felt that the constraints placed on some prescribed burning techniques were outweighed by the benefits of more consistent management with the adjacent wilderness area.

Dear Sir, Please put all lands being considered for wilderness designation into wilderness designation. No action future exploration for oil, gas, etc on any of the lands, acres, for wilderness designation. Peter Lawrence

June 18, 1982
P.O. Box 6033
Santa Barbara, CA. 93111

Mr. Jerry Magee
Outdoor Recreation Planner
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA. 93301

Dear Mr. Magee,

This letter is primarily a query for information and to present my preliminary review of the DEIS Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Area. My interest only applies to the Caliente Mountain (CA-010-042) Wilderness Study Area.

Information would be appreciated pertaining to the following questions and documents.

What type of public demand exists to develop access into the Caliente Range? What organizations or individuals (numbers) support this view?

What type of BLM regulations exist towards open camping in undeveloped sites?

What specific wildlife and botanical studies were used in the preparation of the Caliente Mountain DEIS? Are these documents available for review?

Tembler-Caliente URA/MFP. 1975. Caliente Resource Area Office, Bakersfield, CA. Is this document available for review?

And last, an examination of your five alternatives within the DEIS reveal that alternatives 1, 3, 4, and 5 are equivalent when applied to the Caliente Mountain area. These alternatives endorse non-suitability for Wilderness, degradation of naturalness and solitude; future management plans would result in improvement of public access and recreation (e.g. hunters and rock hounders). Alternative 2 proposes suitability for wilderness and implies uncontrollable degradation of naturalness, restricted access, and livestock grazing would degrade naturalness and solitude. I find none of these alternatives acceptable, there is little opportunity for action that can support Environmental Protection.

15-1

15-3

No apparent consideration has been presented for very valuable paleontological vertebrate beds along most of the NE boundary within this study area. These fossil beds also continue SW outside the study area on BLM land past Pedrones Spring. These natural resources are protected by the 1903 Antiquities Law. The Caliente Range is the type locality for miocene and pliocene mammalian fossils which are present within nonmarine muds of the Caliente Formation. As I understand the DEIS access is needed by rockhounds, many are amateur paleontologists and know little about the care of removing fragile-vertebrate remains. How will you then manage an protect this resource from these users?

Any management that leaves the Caliente Range undeveloped, natural, roadless, protects the flora and fauna, preserves natural resources, and provides a primitive recreational experience for the public would gain my support.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephen Newschwanger

Response to Stephen Newschwanger

Response 15.1

These questions were responded to in a personal letter as is standard for public inquiries.

Response 15.2

The alternatives outlined in the Draft EIS have been revised and are now organized by each WSA. For the Caliente Mountain WSA, an All Wilderness Alternative was considered in conjunction with the Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action). No partial wilderness alternative was considered viable since exclusion of the manageability problems resulted in a unit which lacked wilderness integrity (size and configuration). The statements concerning uncontrollable degradation of naturalness and livestock grazing impacts were referring to valid existing mineral rights and the grandfathered grazing rights which would be exercised if the area was designated as wilderness, resulting in potential degradation of wilderness values.

Response 15.3

Management use plans for the area and statutory requirements provide paleontological resource protection in the absence of wilderness designation.

June 25, 1982
Ref. 6500 (E-013.4) 1601
Subject - Recommendation for Alternative II -
All Wilderness, Ten WSA's
(95,049 Acres) Adoption.

Dear Mr. BLM Manager Lamb
1. Please recommend Alternative II -
All Wilderness, all ten WSA's (95,049 acres)
to The Congress for BLM wilderness status
because

- (a) All ten WSA areas are over 5,000 ac. or adjoin other proposed wilderness areas.
- (b) All ten WSA areas offer outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation with beautiful scenery.
- (c) All ten WSA areas support native plant, animal, and bird communities including some rare or unique species.
- (d) All ten WSA areas offer unique geological or paleontological values.

2. I hope that we can save all ten WSA areas from development, exploitation, and destruction for our future generations of America.

3. The remaining BLM non-wilderness areas are ample to develop, exploit, and destroy.
4. Please use this letter for your BLM wilderness program.
5. Thank you Sir, Mr. BLM Manager Lamb.
Sincerely,
Harry Metzger

These values were noted in Chapter 3, Affected Environment, where pertinent.



385 El Dorado Ave
Palo Alto, CA 94306
6-28-82

Bureau of Land Management
Berkeley, CA

Sir:

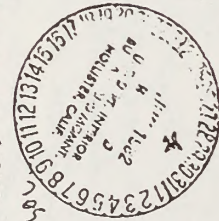
I was with considerable pleasure I recently read of the proposed "expansions" to the Pinnacles N.M. Any BLM - NPS cooperation in this unique area will be so highly appreciated by my family and myself - we have spent much time in the area and would like to see it kept as a natural area -

Sincerely,
Roger Teisend

Area Manager,

YES! Add all the land you can to Pinnacles' Manager. It is a total ecological unit. Incorporate those watersheds and watersheds of BLM lands as wilderness. DO IT!

Thank you,
Michael J. Moran



18-1

EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA



THE RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

- Air Resources Board
- California Commission on Resources
- California Conservation Corps
- Colorado River Board
- Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
- San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
- State Coastal Conservancy
- State Lands Commission
- State Reclamation Board
- State Water Resources Control Board

Resources Building
1416 Ninth Street
95814
(916) 445-5656

Department of Conservation
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Forestry
Department of Boating and Waterways
Department of Parks and Recreation
Department of Water Resources

Mr. Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

July 6, 1982

Dear Mr. Lamb:

The State has reviewed the draft EIS, Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations, Central California Study Areas, submitted through the Office of Planning and Research in accordance with OMB Circular A-95 and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. This review was coordinated with the Air Resources, Solid Waste Management, and Water Resources Control Boards; Energy and State Lands Commissions; and Departments of Fish and Game, Forestry, Parks and Recreation, Water Resources, and Transportation.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) comments that water resources should be included as an element to be considered in selecting areas for wilderness designation. Unwise land use can result in excessive erosion and increased sediment yield, impairing the operation of reservoirs and canals and adversely affecting public water supplies. An example of such impairment is the deposition of asbestos-laden debris in the California Aqueduct by Arroyo Pasajero (near Coalinga). Wilderness designation may be an appropriate technique for managing areas of high erosion risk upstream of water supply facilities.

DWR does not agree with BLM's contention that high probability for mineral development or off-road vehicle (ORV) trespass are valid reasons for concluding that certain Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) are not suitable for wilderness designation.

DWR also has the following specific comments regarding the subject document:

- 19-1 } Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA. DWR supports BLM's recommendation of 2,200 acres as "suitable". This area is within the watershed of the Pinnacles National Monument and will round out the monument boundaries.
- 19-2 } Owens Peak WSA. DWR supports the "suitable" recommendation, but also believes that it should be extended. Deleting some 8,000 acres from the suitable recommendation to allow for a gravel pit and Christmas tree harvesting is not justified, especially since the area contains Monache deer winter range and part of the Pacific Crest Trail.
- 19-3 }
- 19-4 }

Response to Michael J. Moran

Response 18.1

See Response 3.1

Response 19.1

The value of water resources is one of many values that are considered during the study of BLM lands for potential wilderness designation. A discussion of these values is included in Chapter 3 (Affected Environment) for each WSA. In addition, water quality was considered as an issue for the Merced River and the Piute Cypress WSAs, but was dropped from further analysis for the reasons outlined in Chapter 1. Furthermore, Bureau policy and regulations require environmental assessments of specific projects on public lands as these projects are proposed. These assessments consider impacts to water resources where significant and recommend appropriate mitigation.

Response 19.2

Both mineral development probabilities and susceptibility to ORV trespass are valid considerations for determining wilderness suitability or non-suitability insofar as they relate to manageability. Wilderness manageability, or the capability of an area to be effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character, is one of the two primary wilderness planning criteria identified in the Bureau's Wilderness Study Policy (1982). An area's susceptibility to impacts from incompatible encroachment (such as ORV trespass due to ease of access, lack of natural barriers, and historic popular use, or a high probability for mineral development in an area covered with claims that possess valid existing rights) reduces its capability to be effectively managed as wilderness, and thus, its manageability. High probability for mineral development would also be valid when considered as a competing resource value in resource trade-off decisions.

Response 19.3

See Response 3.1

Response 19.4

The 7,600 acres of the Owens Peak WSA not recommended as suitable under the Proposed Action were deleted as a result of manageability problems related to private inholdings and associated access needs, irregular boundaries, and ORV trespass problems due to the lack of natural barriers. Monache deer habitat management is being and will be provided for as part of the Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area. THE PCNST is being provided for in BLM land use planning.

Response 19.5

The fact that mining is allowed on existing claims (with valid existing rights) in wilderness areas is one of the primary reasons for the non-suitable recommendation. Although considered as a competing resource value, the main problem associated with mining activity on the many claims scattered throughout the area (and especially along the river) is the effect on wilderness manageability. With valid existing rights, BLM can only attempt to mitigate the impacts of the activities when practical or feasible; not preclude them. As such, degradation of certain wilderness values would be uncontrollable, and long-term preservation of wilderness characteristics could not be assured.

Response 19.6

As a result of public response, the impact of wilderness designation on the area's rare, threatened, or endangered species was selected as an issue for analysis and is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 - Environmental Consequences. While wilderness designation would preclude oil and gas exploration and retain the area's unique wildlife values, special stipulations currently being developed as a part of the management plans for the Panoche/Coalinga RT&E ACEC will also protect these values under the Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action).

Page Two
G.W. Lamb

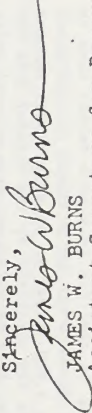
19-5 { Merced River WSA. This area should be recommended as "suitable" due to its outstanding wilderness features (numerous canyons, rugged mountains, historical and archeological sites). The Merced River provides primitive recreation in a spectacular canyon. Recommending the area as "nonsuitable" because of mining claims is not valid, since mining is allowed on existing claims in wilderness areas.

19-6 { Panoche Hills North and South WSAs. These areas have high wilderness values, including several rare, threatened, or endangered species (San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, giant kangaroo rat, etc.), significant paleontological resources, and a California steppe ecosystem which is not represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). Although there is a seasonal closure to ORVs in these areas, BLM states that it cannot provide a good wilderness experience because it would be difficult to control ORV trespass. The wilderness values here are sufficient to justify the greater effort needed to control ORV use in these areas.

19-7 { Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSAs. These areas were recommended as nonsuitable due to their size, but both are adjacent to areas of Sequoia National Park designated as wilderness by the House of Representatives in 1981. Milk Ranch/Case Mountain contains winter range for the Mineral King deer herd and also has several small redwood groves. BLM plans to log competing trees in these groves, an action that would undoubtedly damage the redwoods. Sequoia redwoods are unrepresented in the NWPS.

19-8 { Piute-Cypress WSA. This area is recommended for "nonsuitable" because of degradation by mining and ORVs. The area contains, however, the largest Piute cypress grove in existence and an ecosystem of juniper-pinyon woodland that is not represented in the NWPS. Although the Piute cypress grove is designated a BLM Natural Area and a U.S. Forest Service Botanical Area, protection is likely to be inadequate if the rest of the area is degraded.

19-9 { Caliente Mountain WSA. This area contains feeding range for the California condor and American peregrine falcon but was recommended as "nonsuitable" because of a heavy demand for vehicular access for hunting and rockhounding. BLM should not further endanger these species for short-term recreational activities.

Sincerely,

JAMES W. BURNS
Assistant Secretary for Resources

cc: Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(SCH 82051811)

Response 19.7

See Response 11.1.

Response 19.8

Mining and ORV degradation are occurring in specific locations rather than in the entire WSA. However, exclusion of these areas would result in the study area lacking sufficient size (less than 5,000 acres) to be effectively managed as wilderness. The White cypress groves are protected by the Natural Area and Botanical Area designations. The Natural Area is withdrawn from mineral entry and therefore protected from mining activity, while the Botanical Area has only zero to low mineral potential. The Sierran Forest Province - Juniper-Pinyon woodland ecosystem, although currently unrepresented in the MWPS, is represented in the Owens Peak suitable recommendation (14,960 acres).

Response 19.9

As a result of public response, the impact of wilderness designation on the California Condor and American peregrine falcon was selected as an issue for analysis in the final EIS for the Caliente Mountain WSA. These impacts are discussed in Chapter 4 - Environmental Consequences.

Document Only

LETTER #20

Nature Study

Conservation

Appreciation

Response 20.1

See Response 19.9.

Response 20.2

The EIS states that the "amount" of grazing use is dependent upon rainfall and the resultant vegetation, not that range is undependable. The range continues to be quite productive and loss of grazing privileges would result in severe economic impacts to grazing operators. Furthermore, wilderness designation would not remove grazing from the area, since existing grazing rights would be grandfathered in the wilderness area as specified in the Wilderness Act 1964.

1260 Cliff Dr., Laguna Beach, Ca. 92651
June 27, 1982

Mr. Garold W. Lamb
BLM Acting District Manager
800 Ruxton Ave., Room 302
Bakersfield, Ca. 93301

Dear District Manager :


The classification of the Caliente Mountains' 19,018 acres as wilderness is alone justified on the basis of its being the feeding range of the endangered American Peregrine Falcon and the California Condor. The Endangered Species Act requires their protection.

But there are many other reasons, too, for the areas' having the protection wilderness classification provides. Possible commercial developments are relatively unproductive. Three grazing allotments mentioned in the " Draft Impact Statement " as dependent on the rainfall and productive vegetation " This suggests that there are seasons when the grazing industry cannot depend on the area for forage. Hence the loss of that privilege at such times is no loss to the sheep herder nor the cattleman. Grazing, moreover, competes with wildlife for food.

Phosphate mining, oil and gas leasing are cited as of " Zero to low potential ". These mining activities are environmentally destructive not only in gouging the earth but in necessitating roads that greatly complicate the management of the area by opening wide areas to vehicles, e.g., ORV's the operation of which is highly damaging to plant and animal life. The " Special interest" demand on the part of hunters for access roads poses similar management and environmental problems. Road construction damages the terrain and disrupts natural drainage. Mining activities pollute the air, are noisy and visually obnoxious. They disturb the wildlife.

WILDERNESS VALUES SHOULD NOT BE SACRIFICED FOR THE EXPLOITATION OF WHAT ARE MINOR BENEFITS TO BE OBTAINED IN THE CALIENTE MOUNTAINS.

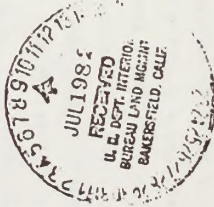
Respectfully yours,


Evelyn Gayman
Conservation Chairman

20-1

374 1/2 Ridgewood Ct.
Morgan Hill, CA 95037
July 2, 1982

District Manager, BLM
Room 302
800 Truxtun Ave.
Bakersfield, CA 93301



Dear Sir:

I would like to express my full support of the acquisition of additional land and addition to the Pinnacles National Monument. I am particularly pleased that it will be designated a wilderness area, acquiring, maintaining and protecting the area in its natural state and making it available to the public to share and enjoy is a worthwhile goal which I fully support.

Sincerely,
Donald E. Holmes

Response to Donald E. Holmes
Response 21.1
See Response 3.1

Mariposa County



Planning Commission

ROBERT L. BORCHARD
Planner/Grantsman
5101 Jones Street
Post Office Box 2038
Mariposa, California 95338
July 8, 1982



Gerald W. Lamb, Acting District Manager
United States Dept. of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Ave. Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Re: Mariposa County Responses to BLM
Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations

Dear Mr. Lamb:

On behalf of the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, I would like to provide your agency with the following comment. It has long been the position of Mariposa County that the Merced River (Survey Area CA-040-203) is inappropriate for wilderness uses. The county is pleased that your agency has arrived at the same conclusion for, fundamentally, the same reasons.

Obviously, the county supports the proposed action contained in your recommendations. Alternative I is the only reasonable alternative that could be applied to this site. If you have any further questions regarding the county's position on this matter please feel free to contact my office.

Sincerely,

ROBERT L. BORCHARD
Planner/Grantsman

RLB:bc
cc: Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

WHITE ROCK CLUB

Secretary
777 CUM STREET
MONTREY, CALIFORNIA
95040

July 10, 1982

Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301


Re: Your letter regarding wilderness suitability

Gentlemen:

At a recent Board of Directors meeting of the White Rock Club, Carmel Valley, California, the Board went on records of favoring the Alternative #IV and #V.

They were particularly favorable to protection for endangered species and cultural resources as well as a protection of soils, watershed, visual resources, air quality and other natural resources.

Very truly yours,


Ed Getz, President
White Rock Club



LETTER #24
William R de Jager
43094 Via Moraga
Fremont, CA 94539

Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Sir,



I am writing in response to the DEIS for the central California WSAs. I support your proposed allocation for area CA-040-308, Pinnacles Antiquarian. However, it seems that it would be desirable to relocate more of the National Monument boundary on ridgelines. Therefore, you should consider addition of non-WA BLM lands to the monument, as well as deletion of some land from the monument in order to put as much of the monument boundary as possible on ridgelines.

Despite the difficulty in managing area CA-040-308 and 301B as wilderness, they should still be designated as wilderness. These areas provide the only opportunity to add the California Broadland Province - California Steppes ecosystem to the wilderness system. In addition, they provide opportunities for wilderness recreation at some wilderness areas in the Sierra Nevada are covered with snow. Wilderness designation would not require the removal of existing improvements, and fencing could keep out ORVs.

The present boundary of Sequoia National Park is not very logical. Only one side of the canyon of the North Fork of the Kings River is included in the park. This does not provide very good protection

24-1

24-2

for the park's renewal, as would a ridgetop boundary. Further south, the park boundary runs along township boundaries, which bear no relationship to natural features. This portion of the boundary is not very manageable and again leaves the park's renewal unprotected. Therefore, it would make sense to relocate the park's boundary to ridgelines as much as possible. I therefore propose that the park's boundary be relocated as follows: from Chum Flat, southwest along minor ridgelines to Sheep Ridge, then south along Sheep Ridge to the North Fork of the Kaweah River, then southwest over the summit of Shepherd Peak, then east to the park entrance, then south to Red Hill, then southwest along the ridge to Case Mountain, then south along ridges to the South Fork of the Kaweah River, then south along ridges to Lemmon Ridge, then east to the existing park boundary. This park expansion would include portions of areas CA-010-022 and 023, as well as non-USFS BLM land and private land. This proposal would give both BLM and NPS lands more manageable and definable boundaries, would preserve some spectacular scenery, and would give the park a better sample of low-elevation Sierra ecosystems than it now has.

I regard to area CA-010-026 I think that the entire area should be designated as wilderness, except for the portion north of Chimney Creek. This area is ecologically outstanding; preserving a large area will provide a more diverse sample of the sierra and will enhance the value of the area. Denying may be required along

24-3

the southwest boundary to keep out ORVs.

Caliente Mountain (CA-010-042) is an outstanding area. It contains an ecosystem not presently represented in the wilderness system, and is highly scenic. I think that preservation of this area is important enough to justify buying back the oil leases that cover the area. Since this is accomplished, the area will be manageable as wilderness. While this area is hot, dry, and unattractive in summer, in winter it offers opportunities for primitive recreation while higher areas are snowed in. Its rugged topography combined with open vegetation offers opportunities for challenging cross-country travel that are not available in the impenetrable brushfields found in the roadless areas in the Los Padres National Forest. Most importantly, this area contains perhaps the best example of California Broadleaf Prairie - Juniper - Pinon Woodland ecosystem found in any roadless area. This area is highly deserving of wilderness designation.

In summary, I am proposing that further modification to the boundary of Pinnacles National Monument be considered, that most of Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch - Case Mountain, along with other lands, be added to Sequoia National Park, and that the Panocke Hill area and Caliente Mountain be designated as wilderness.

Sincerely yours,
William Safire

24-4

Response to William R. DeJager

Response 24.1

See Response 3.1. Relocation of the Monument boundaries within Pinnacles National Monument and on non-WSA BLM-administered lands is beyond the scope of this wilderness EIS. Adjustment in monument boundaries can be considered in future comprehensive land-use planning efforts.

Response 24.2

Although ecosystem diversity and wilderness recreation opportunities contribute to the area's wilderness values, certain manageability problems surrounding the exploration and development of the area's energy resources were considered to outweigh these values (see Chapter 3, Affected Environment, p. 91). In addition, the final EIS has been modified to analyze the impact of these activities on the California Steppe ecosystem (see Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences).

Response 24.3

See Response 11.1 regarding units CA-010-072 and CA-010-073.

Response 24.4

The boundary adjustments proposed south of Chimney Creek were intended to resolve manageability problems resulting from vehicle access needs to private inholdings and susceptibility to ORV trespass due to ease of access, lack of natural barriers, and historic popular use. Fence construction intended to restrict vehicular use in the southern portion would conflict with grazing management facilities and practices by improperly restricting livestock movement. The proposed boundary serves to restrict vehicular access through the use of natural barriers.

Response 24.5

See Response (10.1).

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA 93106
POST OFFICE BOX 606

July 14, 1982

Mr. Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Mgr.
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Ave
Bakersfield CA 93301

Re: CALIENTE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS
B L M Parcel # CA-010-042

This letter is intended as testimony in support of the Caliente Mountain Wilderness Area, so to be classified by the Bureau of Land Management hopefully for the full 60,000 acres.

I protest the reduction from 60,000 acres during the study process to slightly over 19,000 acres, but since the smaller number is likely all that we can for the present secure, I strongly support for the present Wilderness Classification for those 19,000 acres.

This area includes the highest point in my native county, San Luis Obispo, and encompasses some of the most primitive, rugged, barren canyon lands we have. The slopes are vegetated with Juniper and scrub oak, and provide habitat for much fauna, including the endangered condor and falcon.

In support of the BLM's position of no wilderness, the argument is made for cattle grazing conflicts. I am in the cattle business, a fourth generation of California cattleman. I see absolutely no conflict...and most general interpretations of the 1964 Wilderness Act likewise support no conflict here.

My conclusion for your record: Please include the full 60,000 acres. Absent ability so to classify that number of acres, please classify the 19,000+ acres considered qualifying.

Very truly yours,

Harold Mlossi

Response to Harold Mlossi

Response 25.1

The reduction from 60,000 acres to 19,018 acres took place during the Wilderness Inventory Phase which identified areas that met the minimum wilderness criteria outlined in the Wilderness Act of 1964. WSA boundary adjustments were documented in Wilderness: Final Initial Inventory/Draft Intensive Inventory, Public Lands Administered by BLM California Outside the California Desert Conservation Area (1979) for Initial Inventory Unit #CA-010-038 and in Wilderness: Final Intensive Inventory, Public Lands Administered by BLM California Outside the California Desert Conservation Area (1979) for Intensive Inventory Unit #CA-010-042. Following a 30-day protest period in January, 1980, the WSA designation became final.

Response 25.2

See Response 10.1. Grazing use is considered compatible and may be grandfathered into wilderness areas. The EIS only states that vehicle use for the construction and maintenance of grazing improvements could result in slight degradation of naturalness and solitude.



25-1

25-2



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

WESTERN REGION
450 GOLDEN GATE AVENUE, BOX 36063
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7617 (WR-RNE)

July 14, 1982

Memorandum

To: District Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Bakersfield
Attention: Garold W. Lamb

From: Regional Director, Western Region

Subject: National Park Service's comments on the draft environmental impact statement on the Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Areas.

The National Park Service is pleased to have this opportunity to comment on the draft environmental impact statement on the Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Areas. Our major area of concern is the potential impacts of Alternatives I, II, and IV on Pinnacles National Monument.

The National Park Service strongly endorses the proposed actions in Alternative I. We feel the use of natural topographical lines to determine boundaries and the inclusion, when possible, of complete ecosystems will significantly improve the wilderness character and manageability of the existing Pinnacles wilderness. Had the lands included in Alternative I been available for consideration during the wilderness evaluation process for Pinnacles National Monument in 1974, the National Park Service would have recommended their inclusion at that time. However, we do have numerous concerns about the other two alternatives which directly affect monument lands. Our comments are organized by alternatives below.

Alternative I

This alternative would designate 2,200 acres as wilderness, and transfer title and management of that land to the National Park Service. These lands would be contiguous with the existing Pinnacles wilderness and are also within the existing water and view sheds of the Monument. The boundaries of this proposal are established along natural topographical features that follow ridge tops or canyon bottoms. This maximizes protection of downstream resources while minimizing management problems. Fencing along natural topographical boundary lines is less expensive and does not create livestock "traps."

Of particular interest is the inclusion of portions of the east 1/2 of sections 24 and 25 T16S, R7E. These parcels were included in the 1906 Proclamation of the Pinnacles Forest Reserve and are the only areas that are not currently within Pinnacles National Monument. In addition to the historical significance of these two 1/2 sections, is the inclusion of McCabe Canyon which is an outstanding natural area with exceptional botanical and wildlife resources.

The proposed area north of the park will provide enhanced protection to the North Chalone Creek watershed and to the Pinnacles wilderness viewshed. This area will be accessible to the average park visitor via the North Wilderness Trail and provide excellent day hikes to the hardy visitor in search of a wilderness experience.

Alternative II

This alternative provides for designation of the entire 5,838-acre study area as wilderness. Based upon the Bureau of Land Management wilderness policies, this proposal would have little effect on the current management problems faced by the Monument. Grazing would continue, resulting in livestock trespass. Cattle trespass poses a significant threat to park resources, particularly in and around watering areas. This problem will continue until funds are made available to the National Park Service for boundary fencing.

Under this proposal, where boundary fencing is required, it would have to follow straight surveyed political lines instead of natural topographical lines along ridge tops and canyon bottoms. Many areas thus fenced would create cattle "traps" that frequently result in cattle losses. Additionally, the fences would divide critical ecosystems.

This proposal would result in the continuation of many current practices that are incompatible with our management goals. While providing some protection to the Pinnacles wilderness watershed, this alternative would not enhance public accessibility and would continue management problems associated with boundaries which don't follow natural topographical features. The National Park Service does not support this alternative.

Alternative IV

This alternative provides that none of the study area would be designated as wilderness. This proposal would result in the same problems from livestock and fencing that were discussed in Alternative II. Additionally, the use of motorized equipment to prepare the area for prescribed burn operations would result in increased downstream erosion resulting in degradation of the Pinnacles wilderness ecosystem. Under proposed departmental policies the lands found non-suitable as wilderness could be sold. This could result





PETROLEUM PRODUCTS

PRODUCING DEPARTMENT
LOS ANGELES DIVISION
G. F. CLARKE
PROMOTION VICE PRESIDENT

TEXACO
U.S.A.
A DIVISION OF TEXACO INC.
2030 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD
LOS ANGELES, CA 90006

July 15, 1982

REFERENCE: 1792 (C-010)



Mr. Harold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

In reviewing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Texaco has determined that there are four areas of potential hydrocarbon interest:

CA-010-042 - CALIENTE MOUNTAIN

This area, close to known hydrocarbon accumulations, is in a geologic province where potentially prospective Miocene sedimentary deposits exist.

CA-040-301A AND B - PANOCHE HILLS NORTH AND SOUTH

Established production in Cretaceous rocks is found to the south and east of this area. These same Cretaceous rock types outcrop in the Panoche Hills, indicating the potential for hydrocarbon development.

CA-040-303 - PINNACLES WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS

The northern portion of this area contains outcrops of Miocene-Pliocene sedimentary sections. These sedimentary sections bear hydrocarbons in a producing field some distance to the southeast.

Texaco believes that Alternative I, the Proposed Action, is the most viable selection, whereas Alternative II, All Wilderness, would preclude energy resource development activities.

27-1

3

in further encroachment and very little cooperative management. Due to probable degradation of the resources at Pinnacles National Monument, resulting from this alternative, the National Park Service does not support its selection.

The National Park Service would like to commend the Bureau of Land Management staff involved in this study. We hope this draft statement and the professional manner in which it was presented will become a model for future wilderness proposals.

Comments on the effects of these alternatives on Sequoia National Park will be forwarded to your office before the July 29, 1982 deadline.

Harold W. Chapman

Response to National Park Service Letter of July 14, 1982

Response 26.1

See Response 3.1. Management problems resulting from differences in NPS regulations and BLM wilderness management policy were felt to be outweighed by the multiple resource benefits of management under the less restrictive BLM policy.

AtlanticRichfieldCompany

July 15, 1982

-2-

Mr. Garold W. Lamb

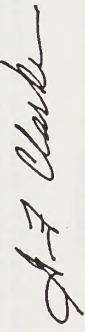
Telephone 303 575 7577

J. R. Mitchell
Public Lands Coordinator

Consequently, Alternative I or any other proposal that would maintain the integrity of those areas for natural resource exploration and development is acceptable.

Texaco would like to note that oil and gas exploration can be accomplished in a manner which adequately protects the environment and its resources.

Yours very truly,



DAA
pr4/nl



July 19, 1982

Mr. Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District Office
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Re: Central California Wilderness Study DEIS

Dear Mr. Lamb:

Atlantic Richfield Company appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Bureau of Land Management's Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Wilderness in Central California, Bakersfield District.

We support BLM's recommendations for nonwilderness for Merced River, Panoche Hills North and South, Ventana, Caliente Mountain, Sheep Ridge, Milk Ranch/Case Mountain and Piute Cypress Wilderness Study Areas. In addition, we support the boundary modifications made on Owens Peak and Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous Wilderness Study Areas. It is apparent that BLM utilized the available energy and mineral information in making these recommendations.

We endorse the concept of a thorough analysis of the resource values existing on Wilderness Study Areas in order to determine what the priorities are. Obviously, tradeoffs are necessary when there are conflicting resource values. Tradeoffs considered would include opportunities and restrictions for access to minerals and the relative value of each conflicting resource before recommendations are made for wilderness designation. Energy and mineral resources must play a major role in wilderness decisions. It is essential that the exploration for and development of these resources be provided for by

28-1

Response to Texaco U.S.A.

Response 27.1

The potential for oil and gas in these areas is noted in the EIS.

Mr. Garold W. Lamb
July 19, 1982
Page 2

opening or maintaining access to areas which may contain these values. Areas identified as having energy and mineral resource potential, such as the WSA's contained in the Central California Study, should remain open to energy and mineral activities.

In conclusion, we support the Bureau's recommendations as outlined in the Draft EIS on the Central California Wilderness Study. Given the energy and mineral potential existing in these WSA's, it is important that the BLM keep its preliminary recommendations in tact when making the final recommendations on these areas.

Sincerely,



J. R. Mitchell

CMM:drm

Response to Atlantic Richfield Company

Response 28.1

Available energy and mineral resource information was utilized in making the wilderness suitability recommendations, as was all other available resource information.



July 19, 1980

Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District
800 Truxtum Ave., Room 302
Bakersfield, CA

Dear Mr. Lamb:

National Parks and Conservation Association would like to take this opportunity to comment on the preliminary wilderness recommendations for the Central Californian study areas. Our primary concern is with those BLM WSAs that are contiguous with National Park System lands where wilderness designation and management would help ensure compatible land use with park resource protection.

Sheep Ridge (CA-010-022) and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain (CA-010-023)

NPCA recommends that Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSAs should be proposed for wilderness management by BLM. The fact that these areas are contiguous with Sequoia National Park should be taken into account when considering the size. The adjacent areas within Sequoia have been administratively endorsed as suitable for wilderness designation and currently are being managed as wilderness areas. Legislation designating the Sequoia NP wilderness has already passed the U.S. House of Representatives. NPS has expressed a willingness to help manage the wilderness area (ie., permits). Therefore, the reasoning that the WSAs are too small to be managed effectively is not legitimate. Also, the inaccessibility of certain areas, such as the North Fork block, is a point in favor of wilderness designation.

29-1

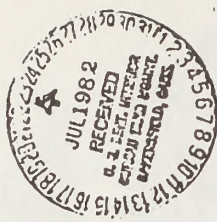
Resource protection should be one of the major factors when assessing an area for wilderness characteristics. There are a number of sequoia trees on Case Mountain which must be protected. Human use is secondary. Cherry Falls is the only area currently supporting a high level of human activity. Because of the location near the eastern edge of Sheep Ridge, it could be excluded from the wilderness area.

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA (CA-040-303)

NPCA agrees that the 2,200 acres of the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA within the watershed should be designated wilderness, as recommended. McCabe Canyon, a high quality piece of land on the northeast boundary of the monument, should definitely be designated wilderness, as well.

29-2

We question the decision to exclude the remaining 3,638 acres from the wilderness recommendation. Pinnacles National Monument is a small



PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY

77 BEALE STREET • SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94106 • (415) 781-4211 • TWX 910-372-6587

July 20, 1982

J. W. PASE
MANAGER
LAND MANAGEMENT



Mr. Garold W. Lamb
District Manager
Bakersfield District/BLM
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

Pacific Gas and Electric Company appreciates this opportunity to comment on "Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Areas - DEIS." As you are aware, BLM holdings in our service area are substantial. Consequently, we have great interest in any regulation, policy, or plan that will affect our ability to serve our customers in a reliable, efficient manner.

We support BLM's proposed action, Alternative I. All other alternatives either interfere with existing or potential transmission and generation facilities or fail to take appropriate action on areas suitable for wilderness designation.

Please contact Mike Ingram at (415) 541-5683 if you have any questions concerning our comments.

Sincerely,

MPIngram:MZ

cc: R. M. Rutledge
Southern California Edison

natural area which is extremely vulnerable to outside influence. Adjacent land use practices and control programs have a considerable impact on park resources, particularly predator populations. Although highly controversial, hunting and grazing on BLM lands adjacent to Pinnacles must be controlled to a greater extent. Therefore, the additional areas should be considered for wilderness designation and should then be carefully marked to eliminate existing boundary confusion.

Sincerely,

T. Destry Jarvis
Director
Federal Activities

Response to NPCA

Response 29.1

See Response 11.1.

Response 29.2

See Response 1.1. The ridgeline would effectively separate outside influences from the proposed BLM and existing National Monument wilderness areas.

JOHN R. SWANSON
P. O. Box 971
Berkeley, Calif. 94701

July 15, 1982

Mr. Gerold W. Lamb,
Acting District Manager,
Bakersfield District,
800 Truxtun Avenue - Room 302,
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I have written you regarding the preliminary wilderness study for the Central Sierra Nevada. I have been very disappointed in the results of the study. I am disappointed because I believe that the study was not done correctly. I believe that the study was not done in a way that would allow for a fair and accurate assessment of the area. I believe that the study was not done in a way that would allow for a fair and accurate assessment of the area. I believe that the study was not done in a way that would allow for a fair and accurate assessment of the area.

31-1

The following points were raised in the comments on the preliminary wilderness study for the Central Sierra Nevada. I am disappointed in the results of the study. I believe that the study was not done correctly. I believe that the study was not done in a way that would allow for a fair and accurate assessment of the area. I believe that the study was not done in a way that would allow for a fair and accurate assessment of the area. I believe that the study was not done in a way that would allow for a fair and accurate assessment of the area.

Response to John R. Swanson

Response 31.1

More accurate acreage figures for each WSA appear in the EIS Summary (see Pages 1 and 11).

TEHIPITE CHAPTER

SIERRA CLUB

P.O. Box 5396

Fresno, California 93755



Tehipite Dome by W. A. Starr 1936

Gerold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

July 20, 1982

Dear Mr. Lamb,

We have reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement of the Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Areas with reference to the Wilderness Study Areas in our chapter area, as well as attending the public hearing held in Fresno on June 22. Unfortunately, we disagree with your conclusions regarding these areas (Merced River CA-040-203, Panache Hills North and South CA-040-301A and B, and Sheep Ridge CA-010-022).

All of these areas are of some interest simply because they are so different from other areas already designated as wilderness. They are of lower elevation, whereas most designated wilderness (particularly in this area of California) is in middle or higher elevations. By failing to recommend these areas for wilderness, we are failing to use this good opportunity to introduce greater ecosystem diversity into the wilderness system.

Recreational use of all of these areas may indeed be light at present. However, future use patterns may be different. Of course the lack of a large and well organized recreational constituency is no reason to fail to protect these areas in their natural state: Wilderness status is the best way to preserve biological resources as well.

32-1

I hope you will find the enclosed material more...

LETTER #33

July 23, 1982
6371 Heather Ridge
Oakland, CA 94611

Jerry Magee
EIS Team leader
Bakersfield District
800 Truxtun Avenue
Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301



Dear Mr. Magee,

I wish to comment on the Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Areas Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

My alternative choice must be number two: all wilderness. This choice is based on the fact that some areas were deemed unsuitable which I felt should be included. Also, I can see no room for mitigation when we are in grave danger of destroying our wilderness areas for short term mineral exploration, livestock grazing, and ORV use.

It is imperative that we preserve all of the earth that we possibly can; for the finality of the consequences are devastating!

Sincerely,
Catherine O'Kiley

32-2 { Finally, we are unconvinced by some of BLM's reasons for failing to designate these areas, or part of them, as wilderness. We fail to see why the potential of illegal ORV intrusion, (in the case of Merced and the Panoche Hills) or small scale mining activity, (in Merced River-permitted by the current wilderness legislation) or small size, (Sheep Ridge- adjacent to Sequoia National Park) should deter wilderness recommendations for these areas.

Sincerely yours,

Ron Stork

Ron Stork, Chapter Secretary

Response to Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club

Response 32.1

Ecosystem diversity and significant biological ecosystems were considered in determining wilderness suitability for these lands. Merced River incorporates an ecosystem that is represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. In the Panoche Hills WSAs, certain manageability problems (see Response 19.6) were considered to outweigh the wilderness values. See Response 11.1 regarding Sheep Ridge.

Response 32.2

See Response 19.2 with respect to ORV trespass and mining activity. See Response 11.1 regarding Sheep Ridge.

7/24/82
 Att: Ass't District Manager,
 I favor Wilderness Designations for
 areas adjacent to Pinakto National
 Movement and for Panoche Hills.

Sincerely,
 Patrick E. McSweeney

PATRICK E. MCSWEENEY
 588 BELVEDERE STREET
 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94117



Response to Patrick E. McSweeney

Response 34.1

See Response 1.1. The Panoche Hills WSAs were recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation primarily due to overriding manageability problems.



Planning Department

Rooms 107-111 County Civic Center - Visalia - California - 93277
 Telephone (209) 733-6254

July 27, 1982

United States Department of the Interior
 Bureau of Land Management
 800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
 Bakersfield, CA 93301

ATTN: Garold W. Lamb, Acting District Manager

RE: Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Areas - Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Lamb:

The Tulare County Planning Department appreciates the opportunity to review and submit comments on the above-mentioned document.

Planning Department Staff reviewed the Draft EIS thoroughly and presented a report to the County Board of Supervisors in order to obtain for you their comments and recommendations.

35-1 The Board's feelings as set forth at their meeting of July 27, are as follows:
 Motion was made and carried unanimously to recommend in favor of the Proposed Action being Alternative I.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the proposal and Draft EIS. We look forward to receiving a copy of the Final Recommendations.

Sincerely,

TULARE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
 Eugene E. Smith, Planning Director

Mary E. Beatie
 Mary E. Beatie, Environmental Coordinator

EES:MEB:ke
 cc: Board of Supervisors

Response to Tulare County Planning Department

Response 35.1

The proposed action has been revised in the Final EIS. See Response 3.1.

4129 C "Remembrance"
Carson, CA 94619
July 26, 1982



MR. Andrew W. Lamb
District Manager, DEM
800 TRINITY AVE Room 302
Bakersfield, CA. 93301

DEAR SIR:

I TESTIFIED, BOTH IN DEPOSE AND MYSELF AND THE
SAN FRANCISCO BAY CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB,
IN FRESNO ON JUNE 23, 1982, CONCERNING
THE WSA'S OF CENTRAL CALIFORNIA.
I WOULD LIKE TO RE-STATE MY PREFERENCES
AND DISCUSSIONS. FIRST, I PREFER ALTERNATIVE
3 TO THE OTHER CHOICES. SINCE MANY OF THE
AREAS PROPOSED IN THE EIS CANNOT BE MAINTAINED
EFFECTIVELY AS WILDERNESS, ALTERNATIVE 3
DOES GIVE PROTECTION TO 4 WSA'S THAT
SHOULD BE PROTECTED. PACIFIC HILLS
IS AN EXAMPLE OF CENTRAL CALIFORNIA "STEPPE"
GEOMORPHY. PINNACLES IS ADJACENT TO
PINNACLES NAT. MONUMENT AND HAS
POSITIVE ADMINISTRATIVE BENEFITS; STATED
RIDGE IS ADJACENT TO SEQUOIA NAT'L PARK
AND HAS WILDLIFE HABITATS SO ADJACENT TO
WILDERNESS STATUS WOULD BE POSITIVE;
QUERNS PINE IS PART OF THE SIERRA LEONARD
PARK AND HAS NUMEROUS PLANT AND
ANIMAL HABITATS WITHIN ITS BOUNDARIES

36-2
SECOND, CRV USE, HEAVY OR OTHERWISE,
SHOULD NOT BE A MAIN CRITERIA FOR AN
WILDERNESS DESIGNATION. IT IS DIFFICULT
TO MANAGE CRV'S AND MANAGE THEIR
EFFECT, HOWEVER, ITS BETTER TO HAVE A
WILDERNESS AREA WITH SOME CRV PROBLEMS,
RATHER THAN NO MANAGEMENT AT ALL
AND HAVE MORE INTENSIVE RESOURCE
DESTRUCTION.

36-3
THIRD, ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY SHOULD
BE A MAIN CRITERION. WITH AS MANY
EXAMPLES OF GEOGRAPHICAL, PLANT, AND
ANIMAL, AND TECHNOLOGICAL SYSTEMS, THE
WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM WILL
SHOW AND EXEMPLIFY ITS VALUE COMPARED
TO PEOPLE AND IN FUTURE GENERATIONS
WE WILL BE CREATING FUTURE GENERATIONS
BECAUSE THESE UNIQUE AND IMPORTANT
AREAS WERE NOT PRESERVED.

FINALLY, ALTERNATIVE 3 IS A GOOD
COMPROMISE OF EXISTING WSA'S IN CENTRAL
CALIFORNIA. ALL THESE LANDS ARE IMPORTANT
AND MUST BE INCORPORATED INTO THE
WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM.

Sincerely,
Jeff Lawrence

Response 36.1

Although ecosystem diversity was considered, the Panoche Hills were recommended as unsuitable for wilderness designation primarily due to overriding manageability problems (see Response 19.6). See Response 3.1 with respect to Pinnacles, Response 11.1 with respect to Sheep Ridge, and Response 24.4 for Owens Peak.

Response 36.2

The Final EIS has been revised to analyze and display the different effects of ORV use on various resources such as wilderness values by the proposed actions and alternatives developed for each WSA (see Chapter 2, Alternatives).

Response 36.3

Ecosystem diversity was considered when determining wilderness suitability. However, in some areas, such as the Panoche Hills, overriding manageability problems lead to nonsuitable wilderness recommendations.

July 27, 1982



Area Manager
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Ave. Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Gentlemen:

I would like to make a few comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Study Area. These comments parallel my comments at public hearing in Fresno on June 22nd.

I work with the Sierra Club on wildlife and wilderness issues. I hold a bachelor's degree in zoology from the University of California at Berkeley.

I would like to speak specifically on the three Wilderness Study Areas addressed in this study with which I am personally familiar -- Panoche Hills North (CA-040-301A) and Panoche Hills South (CA-040-301B), which will be referred to as the Panoche Hills, since my comments apply to both areas, and the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous (CA-040-303). Others more familiar with the other areas discussed in this Draft EIS should address those areas; I will just note in passing that I feel Wilderness designation, in general, is an important management tool and should be employed much more widely to protect land resources than is now the case.

The Panoche Hills, consisting of the 6,577 acre northern unit and the 11,267 acre southern unit (separated by a meandering 4-wheel drive dirt road), is a complex matrix of rounded ridges and buttes sheering off into deep valleys carved by intermittent streams. This area, as an example of the San Joaquin Valley grassland community, deserves consideration as a part of the Wilderness system.

Several endangered species utilize the area, including the protected San Joaquin kit fox and the blunt-nosed leopard lizard. Other upland wildlife species are present, indeed abundant. Grasslands of any type, and the San Joaquin Valley grassland in particular, are poorly represented in the Wilderness system.

While I feel that the main value of Wilderness designation in the Panoche Hills is for the preservation of wildlife habitat, and while the Panoche Hills are certainly no garden spot in the traditional view, still the area does provide recreation of a unique sort not found in the present Wilderness system. A night out on these grasslands with no vehicles, lights extinguished, noise limited to natural sounds, would provide an unequalled opportunity for Wilderness recreation. Panoche will not draw crowds; but they will provide a quality experience to a few who care.

With respect to some of the objections raised by the Bureau:

Off-road vehicle use should be banned permanently from these last wild hills; Wilderness status should strengthen the hand of the Bureau in controlling trespass. The status of the land should be dependent on



July 27, 1982

Gerold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 202
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I have reviewed the DEIS for the preliminary wilderness recommendations for the Central California Study Area and find that none of the alternatives is satisfactory. The document was clearly written and followed a very readable and understandable progression. However, the unsuitability analyses for the Panocho Hills North and South and Sheep Ridge Wilderness Study Areas appeared to be inadequate for the following reasons.

Panocho Hills North and South

Table 3-1 (Wilderness Planning Criteria Matrix) identifies that outstanding opportunities for solitude/primitive wilderness recreation exist in the Panocho Hills North and South due to topographic screening. Additionally, these two WSA's contain the largest number of rare, threatened and endangered and sensitive species in the ten subject WSA's. Furthermore, the California Grassland Province which exists in only these two WSA's in the district is not represented anywhere else in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This vegetation ecosystem should be represented. The Panocho Hills North and South should be recommended for wilderness designation.

38-1

All of the above-mentioned excellent wilderness values have been outweighed by the anticipated manageability problems which are based solely on ORV use in closed areas. The DEIS states that motorcycle use in the two WSA's has been prohibited since 1970. The DEIS makes a poor argument for recommending these areas as unsuitable for wilderness by using the ORV enforcement problems as a manageability problem. It appears that BLM enforcement of ORV use prohibitions has not worked well in the past. This is a management issue which needs revision to bring it up to current management standards in order to adequately control soil erosion problems and possible damage to sensitive habitats.

Sheep Ridge

The objectives to "provide a high quality wilderness experience" as well as to "optimize the manageability of the wilderness resource" were not used in the analysis of the proposed action (Alternative I) for the Sheep Ridge/Cherry Falls WSA. The Sheep Ridge WSA achieves a high quality wilderness experience by being a "6.5 mile long, rugged, steep ridge trending southeast-northwest" which overlooks Sequoia National Park and a minor road (from page 3-12 of the DEIS). The Sheep Ridge WSA lies adjacent to the proposed Sequoia National Park Backcountry area. The Backcountry area is proposed for wilderness designation under the current California Wilderness Bill, presently in the Senate. The Backcountry area is presently managed by the National Park Service (NPS) in

38-2

2.

the best use of the land for all of the public, rather than on the potential threat of violation of that status by a few law-breakers.

Sport hunting is, of course, perfectly legal in designated Wilderness Areas. In my opinion, the sport hunting experience should be enhanced by Wilderness status. Plenty of other BLM lands are available for the mechanized hunter who cannot be pried from his vehicle.

As pointed out in the Draft EIS, guzzler maintenance, fire management, and removal of paleontological material can all be accommodated under the Wilderness system.

In summary, I feel, quite strongly, that the Panocho Hills should be recommended as a Wilderness Area.

Moving to the Pinnacles proposal, I feel the preferred alternative of designating BLM Wilderness contiguous with the park monument borders up to the appropriate ridgeline makes intrinsic sense. With natural boundaries set up for this area, management of watersheds, viewsheds, and fenced boundaries is facilitated. I hope this proposal will be recommended in the Final EIS.

37-2

In closing, let me thank you for the opportunity to comment; let me also thank the personnel of the BLM who accompanied our Sierra Club Group on our trips to these magnificent public lands.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely yours,

Mark J. Palmer

Response to Mark J. Palmer

Response 37.1

Both primary and supplemental wilderness characteristics were considered in determining the relative wilderness values of the Panocho Hills WSAs. However, certain manageability problems (see Response 19.6) were felt to outweigh these wilderness values, resulting in the nonsuitable recommendation.

Response 37.2

See Response 3.1

the same manner as other wilderness areas. Construction of a developed campground at Cherry Falls may severely impair the RPS wilderness manageability of their area as a result of increased accessibility. Furthermore, manageability (and protection) of the wilderness resource of the 4,095-acre Sheep Ridge WSA can be optimized by a cooperative agreement with Sequoia National Park. This agreement has been proposed in the DEIS as Alternative I for the five small, irregular parcels in the Pinnacles WSA. Additionally, solitude and dispersal of recreational users is not difficult in the Sheep Ridge WSA (refer to the last sentence on page 3-12) because the use in this area must be considered in conjunction with the many wilderness opportunities provided by the adjacent Sequoia National Park area managed as wilderness. Manageability is enhanced by the lack of identified illegal ORV use, lack of logging interest, and lack of mining leases. These multiple-use activities are apparent on other WSA's discussed in the report and appear to preclude wilderness suitability.

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

July 27, 1982

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
431 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-2811

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF BUDGET
380 ALABAMA STREET
MONTGOMERY, CALIFORNIA 95808
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WILDERNESS DIVISION
1001 J ST., S.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20540
(202) 646-2222

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WILDERNESS DIVISION
1001 J ST., S.W.
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LEON E. PANK
1870 E. PARK
DENVER, COLORADO

COMMITTEE ON BUDGET
CHIEF CLERK
TASK FORCE ON RECONCILIATION
AND BUDGET ENFORCEMENT

HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
AGRICULTURE
(ON LEAVE)

MAJORITY REGIONAL WHIP

Mr. Harold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I am writing to comment on the Proposed Action as forwarded in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement prepared on the preliminary Wilderness recommendations for the Caliente Wilderness Area. I do not feel that a "non-suitable for Wilderness" designation for this area is appropriate; instead I urge that the 19,018 acres of the Caliente WSA be made a Wilderness area.

In my view, Wilderness designation would not seriously reduce cattle grazing standards as some maintain. While the DEIS for the region mentions that a wilderness label would not realize maximum stocking rate of livestock, the stocking rate is primarily dependent upon rainfall, not upon wilderness designation.

Similarly, objections that rockhounds would be hindered by inaccessibility of the Wilderness area should be considered in light of the fact that accessibility for naturalists would be retained under wilderness designation. Scientific research, as well, would be permitted under wilderness designation.

Wilderness designation would permit continued management of the pre-FLPMA mineral rights in the area, but would not allow further degradation of the area's unique attributes through new mineral leasing. The Wilderness area lies within the feeding range of the California Condor, and the American Peregrine Falcon. Both are endangered species. Admittedly, the condors are rarely seen in the area, but this fact may be attributable more to the bird's dwindling numbers than any other cause. In fact, an annual viewing station for the falcon exists on Mt. Caliente.

I trust that this recommendation will be given full consideration by the Bureau in its consideration. I appreciate the time and attention you have given this matter. If I can ever be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,
LEON E. PANKETTA
Member of Congress

LEP:mcd

38-3

Based upon the inventory for the Merced River WSA, I recommend that recreational development of this WSA be seriously considered to provide for protection and cultivation of the rare, threatened and endangered species and sensitive species as well as the historical and cultural values.

I fully support the Pinnacles and Owens Peak WSA wilderness suitability proposals identified in Alternative I. Unfortunately, additional wilderness cannot be proposed based upon the existing information on the remaining WSA's. However, should the wilderness values increase on the remaining WSA's, special consideration should be given immediately.

Thank you for considering my comments. Please inform me of your final recommendations.

Sincerely,

Theresa G. Rumjahn
22 Domingo Avenue, #16
Berkeley, CA 94705

Response to Theresa G. Rumjahn

Response 38-1

Table 3-1 (Wilderness Planning Criteria Matrix) has been deleted from the Final EIS. In addition, the EIS has been revised to analyze and display the different effects of ORV use on various resources such as the wilderness values in Panoche Hills North and South by the Proposed Action for each of this WSAs and the alternatives. While manageability was one consideration in determining the area's suitability, it was not the only consideration. Others included resource conflicts (mineral exploration/development), resource values, etc.

Response 38-2

See Response 11.1.

Response 38-3

Management for the Merced River, as guided by the Sierra Planning effort, includes protection of endangered species and historic/cultural values in accordance with the Endangered Species Act, the Antiquities Act, and other Bureau policy and regulations.

See Response 11.1.

3. Study areas do not contribute diversity to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

40-1

The Sheep Ridge study area is the unique southern Sierra foothill oak/chaparral of California's Central Valley. The Milk Ranch/Case Mountain study area contains a good number of giant sequoias. Both of these ecosystems are unique to and would, in fact, add diversity to the wilderness preservation system.

4. Cherry Falls along the eastern boundary will need development to prevent further resource damage.

Cherry Falls is adjacent to the North Fork road and could be readily excluded from the study area along with the road.

5. Sheep Ridge has moderate potential for minerals (tungsten).

Development of this mineral material could adversely affect the air quality over and vistas from adjacent park lands.

6. Case Mountain/Milk Ranch have high potential for valuable forest products.

We recommend protection and enhancement of all sequoia trees.

7. The North Fork block will be difficult to manage for its wilderness value due to its small size and ease of access.

Comment number one covers the size question. Lack of easy access is a characteristic in favor of wilderness, and may be a liability in this case.

Both study areas are bordered by private lands on at least two sides. There is no separation between these private lands and the study areas. For this reason it would be difficult to control incompatible uses from encroaching into the study areas. This may be more of a deterrent to wilderness suitability than any of the reasons given in the DEIS.

We recommend that BLM further study suitability of these two study areas for wilderness designation. We suggest that the two areas are suitable and our reasoning is reflected in the numbered comments above.

Levi E. Lopp

cc: Superintendent, Sequoia and Kings Canyon



National Parks & Conservation Association

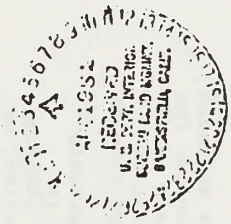
1701 Eighteenth Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20009

RUSSELLO BUTCHER
Regional Rep. *part-time*
SOUTHWEST
BOX 970
GLENDORE, CA 91740
(714) 963-1815

Box 67
Cottonwood, Arizona 86026
(602) 924-5758

(202) 265-2717

July 20, 1982



Mr. Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District
900 Truxton Avenue, Room 102
Bakersfield, California 93300

Dear Mr. Lamb:

National Parks & Conservation Association, a private nonprofit membership organization, is grateful for an opportunity to express strong support for the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous Proposal, Alternative One.

We favor this plan to designate some 2,200 acres in several units as wilderness and transferring them to Pinnacles National Monument, to create a more easily managed boundary for the monument. Such a transfer should be mutually beneficial to the BLM and BIA in providing boundaries more closely aligned to topography.

Our Association is especially grateful to your BLM staff who have worked so closely with the National Park Service staff on this issue.

May we please be placed on your mailing list regarding the Pinnacles Wilderness?

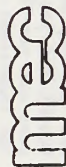
Sincerely yours,
Russello Butcher
Russello Butcher
Southwest Regional Representative

cc: Mr. Dave Howell
Hollister Res. Area
Manager

Response to National Parks and Conservation Association

Response 41.1

See Response 3.1



PLEASE NOTE NEW ADDRESS:

P. O. Box 15638
Denver, Colorado 80215

August 4, 1982

Mr. Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District
900 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Sir:

This letter constitutes the written comments of the Minerals Exploration Coalition (MEC) on the draft environmental impact statement on the preliminary wilderness recommendations, Central California Study Areas. The MEC represents mineral exploration companies and individuals conducting hard mineral exploration on federal land.

The information on geology, minerals and energy resources is brief and to the point. While the conclusions on mineral and energy resource potential may be valid, there is little opportunity for the reader to judge the quality and quantity of data used in determining potential. The maps are small scale and details are difficult to see. While the number of mining claims and oil and gas leases are given for some of the WSA's, there is no indication of the location of those in the text or on a map. We believe it is important to show the location of existing mining workings, the patented and unpatented claims, and oil and gas leases. Maps should also show the location of the areas with energy and mineral resource potential. Possibly more information will become available to you upon the completion of the Bureau of Land Management contracts for Geological, Energy, Minerals (GEM) resource assessments now underway.

In view of the fact that wilderness areas designated after December 31, 1981 will be withdrawn from appropriation under the mining and leasing laws, we believe that all areas with mineral potential should be excluded from wilderness designation, even though no economic deposit is now known. The withdrawal limitations will preclude collection of new data and new areas of mineral potential will not be found. With new discoveries effectively stopped, the policy of excluding all currently known mineral potential from



wilderness should be followed, so that exploration of these areas will not be restricted and minerals might yet be produced. Explorations tend to look at the long term because the lead time of discovery may be ten to fifteen years. The impact of wilderness on minerals should be assessed over the long term (a century or more). We believe that land use decisions should be in conformity with the policies statements made in the National Minerals Program Plan and Report to Congress released by the President in April.

Merced River

The MEC favors the preferred alternative of a recommendation of non-suitability for wilderness because of the high mineral potential and the large number of mining claims.

If a large number of unpatented claims are included in designated wilderness areas, costly and time-consuming administrative problems are likely to occur. After wilderness designation, the validity of all unpatented claims must be determined before a work plan can be approved. Mineral examiners must inspect and sample each claim and render their findings; the claimant will likely, in some cases, challenge these findings and legal action may follow.

Panoche Hills North and Panoche Hills South

These two WSA's appear to have similar geology and mineral and energy resource potential. Part of the area is covered by oil and gas leases; mineral claims are not mentioned. All areas with potential for mineral and energy should remain open. We favor the preferred alternative, a recommendation of unsuitability for wilderness.

Pinnacles

The preferred alternative recommends 2,200 acres as suitable and 3,638 acres as non-suitable. The area has potential for a number of minerals and energy. The fact that there is no indication of present existence of commercial quantities does not diminish the potential value. Without maps showing the location of the areas with and without mineral potential, as compared with the suitable and non-suitable areas, we cannot make a geographic comparison. It is conceivable that no mineral or energy potential is included in the suitable area. Based on the present information, we favor a recommendation of non-suitability for wilderness designation.

Ventana Contiguous

The MEC favors the preferred alternative of non-suitability.

Caliente Mountain

The preferred alternative of non-suitability is favored by MEC. The oil and gas and mineral potential should be fully explored.

Sheep Ridge

The potential for the strategic metal tungsten should remain open to exploration. We support the preferred alternative of non-suitability.

Milk Ranch/Case Mountain

This area also has potential for the strategic metal tungsten and should remain open to exploration. The MEC favors the preferred alternative on non-suitability for wilderness designation.

Owens Peak

This WSA contains mineral potential for the critical metal tungsten, and gold and zinc. The area should remain open for exploration. The MEC favors the recommendation of non-suitability for wilderness.

Plute-Cypress

The area should remain open for exploration for gold and other minerals that may exist. The preferred alternative of non-suitability is favored by MEC.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft environmental impact statement.

Sincerely,

MINERALS EXPLORATION COALITION

John D. Wells

John D. Wells
Managing Director

JDW/mh

Response to Minerals Exploration Coalition

Response 42.1

The Final EIS has been revised to address the impacts of existing and proposed mining activities including lode and placer claim activities on both the Merced River, the Owens Peak and the Plute Cypress WSAs and oil and gas exploration/development activities on Panoche Hills (North and South) and the Caliente Mountain WSAs. Maps depicting the location of post and pre-FLRMA oil and gas leases have also been included as well as the locational descriptions of the placer and lode claims in the

All available resource information has been utilized and potentials have been considered, where known, in developing the suitable and nonsuitable wilderness recommendations. All areas recommended as suitable for wilderness designation will undergo mineral surveys by USGS and Bureau of Mines as required in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. For this reason, the suitable recommendations contained within this EIS are considered preliminary, pending completion and analysis of the USGS/BM mineral surveys.

LETTER #43



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
215 Fremont Street
San Francisco, Ca 94105

Mr. Gerald W. Lamó
Acting District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Bakersfield District
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

AUG 4 1982

Dear Mr. Lamb:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has received and reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) titled PRELIMINARY WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS, CENTRAL CALIFORNIA STUDY AREAS.

EPA's comments on the DEIS have been classified as Category LO-2. Definitions of the categories are provided by the enclosure. The classification and the date of the EPA's comments will be published in the Federal Register in accordance with our responsibility to inform the public of our views on proposed federal actions under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Our procedure is to categorize our comments on both the environmental consequences of the proposed action and the adequacy of the environmental statement.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to comment on this DEIS and requests three copies of the Final Environmental Impact Statement when available.

If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Loreta Kahn Barsamian, Chief, EIS Review Section, at (415) 974-8188 or FTS 454-8188.

Sincerely yours,

William Arning

for John Wise, Acting Director
Office of Policy, Technical,
and Resources Management

Enclosures (2)

General Comments

1. The DEIS does not present sufficient information regarding the positive wilderness values of the individual wilderness study areas (WSAs). More attention is given to identifying the demand for non-wilderness uses in the WSA's. Therefore, it is difficult to weigh the merits of wilderness versus non-wilderness designation. Under NEPA 1502.14(b), the EIS should "Devote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits."

Included in an assessment of positive wilderness values should be environmental values such as water and air quality. Protection of water quality, water quality-dependent fisheries and air quality may be significantly different under wilderness versus non-wilderness management. In evaluating wilderness versus non-wilderness designation, the following factors should be considered:

- 1) The presence of highly valuable public resources which depend on pristine circumstances (anadromous fisheries, domestic water supplies, Wild and Scenic Rivers, etc.).
- 2) The presence of site conditions which would lead to severe environmental impacts if disturbed (unstable soil types, steep slopes, etc.).
- 3) The likelihood that sensitive areas would receive intensive use, especially where mitigation measures would be costly or difficult.

Of particular concern in evaluating the impacts of non-wilderness designation is non-point source water pollution. ORV activity, mining, road locations, silviculture, grazing, wells and septic tanks, hydrologic modifications and pesticide use are factors to take into account when assessing impacts to water quality in an area.

The DEIS points continually to the difficulty of managing areas as wilderness. The EIS should define what the criteria are for determining wilderness manageability. For example, if an area were otherwise a good candidate, why would pressure from ORV users and/or unusual boundary configurations necessarily determine an area to be too difficult to manage as wilderness?

2. The DEIS does not discuss economic issues related to resource development in the WSA's. The presence of minerals is discussed in the individual WSA's, but no information regarding commodity values and actual production levels is provided. It is difficult to evaluate whether the exploration for and development of these resources is economically feasible, or justifiable in light of environmental costs and tradeoffs associated with potential adverse impacts to sensitive environmental resources and loss of wilderness areas. Under NEPA 1502.23, "an EIS should at least indicate those considerations, including factors not related to environmental quality, which are likely to be relevant and important to a decision."

Response 43.1

The Final EIS has been revised to provide sufficient information regarding the wilderness values of each WSA, as well as the impact of the proposed actions and alternatives on these values.

Response 43.2

The impact of wilderness/nonwilderness designation on water quality was considered but dropped from further analysis in the Merced River and Plute Cypress WSAs. Both areas have some level of placer claim activity which was thought to impact water quality. However, most mining on these claims will be conducted using suction dredges. Dredging on California waterways is regulated by the California Department of Fish and Game who is responsible for ensuring that water quality is maintained at levels meeting Federally-approved State standards for fish and wildlife propagation.

Additionally, the management actions described in Chapter 2 of the EIS are intended to identify the extent of potential impact-causing activities (such as mining) that could occur in the WSA. These activities are the result of planning projections only, are one not described in the detail that will be required in a plan of operations or for processing a permit. Specific impacts to and water quality, soils, visual resources, and other natural resources will be assessed on a case-by-case basis as projects are proposed in accordance with Bureau policy and regulations.

Response 43.3

See Response 19.2 for a discussion of manageability. In addition, shape and boundary configurations become important in relation to topography, adjacent land uses, and other specific site features. Long, narrow ridgelines are especially susceptible to the influence of adjacent nonconforming land uses. Boundary configurations also relate to identifiability of the boundary. Highly irregular boundaries based on section lines rather than topographic features usually result in difficult manageability situations with respect to separating incompatible uses and avoiding accidental or intentional encroachment. Wilderness manageability is now defined in the FEIS glossary.

Response 43.4

All available resource information was utilized in developing the wilderness suitability/non suitability recommendations. Mineral potentials were identified, and used to determine the probability of validity of existing claims and the potential for development of leases in each area. As described in Chapter 3, these determinations were used with other indices (industry interest, current market conditions, the quality/quantity of the deposit, etc.) to assess the level of development and its impact on completed resources/values.

4. While we feel that the proposed action (Alternative I) contains the minimum acceptable amount of area to be recommended for wilderness designation, the above information is required to adequately assess whether or not additional areas should be recommended for wilderness designation as well.

EIS CATEGORY CODES

Environmental Impact of the Action

IO—Lack of Objections

EPA has no objection to the proposed action as described in the draft impact statement; or suggests only minor changes in the proposed action.

ER—Environmental Reservations

EPA has reservations concerning the environmental effects of certain aspects of the proposed action. EPA believes that further study of suggested alternatives or modifications is required and has asked the originating Federal agency to reassess these aspects.

EU—Environmentally Unsatisfactory

EPA believes that the proposed action is unsatisfactory because of its potentially harmful effect on the environment. Furthermore, the Agency believes that the potential safeguards which might be utilized may not adequately protect the environment from hazards arising from this action. The Agency recommends that alternatives to the action be analyzed further (including the possibility of no action at all).

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

Category 1—Adequate

The draft impact statement adequately sets forth the environmental impact of the proposed project or action as well as alternatives reasonably available to the project or action.

Category 2—Insufficient Information

EPA believes that the draft impact statement does not contain sufficient information to assess fully the environmental impact of the proposed project or action. However, from the information submitted, the Agency is able to make a preliminary determination of the impact on the environment. EPA has requested that the originator provide the information that was not included in the draft statement.

Category 3—Inadequate

EPA believes that the draft impact statement does not adequately assess the environmental impact of the proposed project or action, or that the statement inadequately analyzes reasonably available alternatives. The Agency has requested more information and analysis concerning the potential environmental hazards and has asked that substantial revision be made to the impact statement.

If a draft impact statement is assigned a Category 3, no rating will be made of the project or action, since a basis does not generally exist on which to make such a determination.

DENNIS C. COULES
522 OESTE DRIVE
DAVIS, CA 95616

July 31, 1992

Carold W. Lamb, Acting District Manager
Walkerfield District, DLG
227 Truckon Ave., Room 302
Walkerfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

This is in regard to the DLG's preliminary wilderness recommendations of the Central California Wilderness Study Area of the Walkerfield District. I am appalled to find that DLG is recommending that only portions of two areas out of ten WSA's under consideration be designated as wilderness.

I strongly urge that all 10 WSA's be recommended for wilderness designation, with only minor boundary adjustments if needed for grossly nonconforming existing uses (not anticipated ones). The suitability of these areas for wilderness designation was their compliance with Congressional guidelines as determined during the inventory stage. I submit that, given the relative paucity of remaining roadless and undeveloped lands in California, wilderness designation would be the best use of these lands. Wilderness designation would provide the necessary constraints on WSA management to assure that preservation of natural flora/fauna and other conditions of "naturalness" be given top priority in management decisions.

Wilderness designation would also lead to termination of the abuses of ORVs that have occurred on some of these areas.

Other reasons for supporting wilderness designation for specific WSA's include:

- 44-1 { (1) Piute Cypress WSA--as large a wilderness area as possible should be designated to provide protection to the rare Piute Cypress and a sizeable buffer zone.
- 44-2 { (2) Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Casa Alta.--should be designated on their own merits (including presence of archaeological sites) as well as for adjacency to likely WSA wilderness areas (contained in House-passed bill 1991).
- 44-3 { (3) Merced River WSA--should be designated to ameliorate the low representation of low-elevation areas in the WSA's, as well as for the sake of canyon wildlife habitat.
- 44-4 { (4) Pancho Hills North and South WSA's--designation extremely important to protect habitat of San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard (both federally-endangered) from current ORV abuse. Designation and elimination of ORV use in these areas should be given top priority by DLG.
- 44-5 { (5) Caliente Mountain WSA--protection of wildlife habitat.

Please revise the WSA recommendations as I have requested. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Response to Dennis C. Coules

Response 44.1

See Response 19.8. In addition, the Natural Area designation already includes some buffer around the actual groves.

Response 44.2

See Response 11.1.

Response 44.3

See Response 3.2. In addition, the Sierran Forest Province-Chaparral is represented by four existing wilderness areas (119,825 acres) and four administratively endorsed wilderness areas (28,272 acres). Wildlife habitat will be managed in accordance with the guidance in the Sierra Plan and Bureau policy and regulations.

Response 44.4

See Response 37.1.

Response 44.5

See Response 10.1.

August 7, 1982

Garold Lamb, Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I only recently learned of the opportunity to comment on your preliminary wilderness recommendations and, despite the July deadline which has already passed, I hope you will consider this letter pertaining to these recommendations.

I am greatly disappointed that BLM is only recommending portions of two wilderness study areas (WSAs) for wilderness designation. This underscores BLM's traditional reluctance to support wilderness; indeed, a heavy bias against such designations.

Please reconsider, and support wilderness designations for all ten WSAs. In particular, please support wilderness for the Merced River WSA. The wilderness system is lacking in low-elevation representation, and this canyon would add some important values to wilderness protection. Similarly, the Panoche Hills North and South WSAs need wilderness protection to ensure preservation of important wildlife values--including the federally-listed San Joaquin Kit Fox and Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard. BLM has a legal mandate to protect and restore endangered species populations, and this includes their critical habitats. Harmful off-road vehicle activities must NOT continue within these critical habitats. Finally, the Callente Mountain WSA contains wildlife habitat values which would benefit from wilderness status.

Thank you very much for considering my belated views.

Sincerely,
Richard Spotts

Richard Spotts

5604 Rosedale Way
Sacramento, CA 95822

Response to Richard Spotts

Response 45-1

See Response 44.3, 19.6, and 10.1, for the Merced River, Panoche Hills, and Callente Mountains WSAs, respectively.

EARTH FIRST!

Environmental Review Division

August 6, 1982



District Manager
BLM - Bakersfield District
800 Truxton Ave., Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear District Manager:

Earth First! is shocked that the Bakersfield District has proposed wilderness designation recommendations for only 16,430 acres in 2 WSAs of 95,049 acres in 10 WSAs under study. All ten existing WSAs should be considered as absolute minimum core areas upon which to build ecologically sound wilderness areas. Existing or anticipated non-conforming abuses, such as ongoing recreational ORV damage and large-scale mineral development, should be eliminated within the WSAs instead of being used as excuses to reject wilderness recommendations as has been done by the BLM.

Earth First! demands proper management and legitimate wilderness recommendations for the WSAs under consideration. All WSAs should be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation in the entire extent of their acreage. Only those areas that were unquestionably qualified for wilderness designation were even selected for WSA status in the first place.

Furthermore, the WSA boundaries should be expanded whenever possible to include all contiguous public lands and a concerted effort undertaken to remove roads, structures, non-native flora and fauna (including cows), and all other human impacts.

Thank you,

EFI Environmental
Review Division

Aug. 7 1982

AREA MANAGER, BLM
P.O. BOX 305
HOLISTER, CA. 95023

DEAR SIR/Ms

I AM WRITING TO EXPRESS MY
OPINION OF THE PROPOSAL TO MAKE
ADDITIONS TO THE PINNACLES NAT.
MON. IT SHOULD DEFINITELY BE DONE!

I, MYSELF, AND MY WIFE ARE
avid hikers, and especially like
to hike in the coast ranges.

THE PINNACLES OFFERS ONE OF THE
FEW PLACES WHERE WE CAN GET
ACCESS TO INLAND COASTAL MOUNTAINS,
AND ITS SPECIAL TERRAIN & ECOLOGY.
MOUNT DIABLO IS GOOD, TOO, BUT
IS UNFORTUNATELY NOW SURROUNDED
BY SUBURBIA.

I MIGHT ALSO ADD THAT
FOR MANY YEARS, MY FAMILY - PARENTS
COUSINS, ETC. - HAVE CHOSEN THE
PINNACLES AS A PICNIC OR DAY TRIP
SPOT.

THANKS -

KIRKE PETERSON
2130 8th AVE.
OAKLAND, CAL. 94606

47.1

Response to Kirk E. Peterson

Response 47.1

See Response 3.1

512 Valley Forge Way
Campbell, CA 95008

September 6, 1983

Robert D. Rheiner, Jr., District Manager
Bakersfield District
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Avenue, room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner:

I support wilderness designation for:

- (1) PINNACLES WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS WSA
- (2) OWENS PEAK WSA
- (3) MERCED RIVER WSA
- (4) PANOCHÉ HILLS NORTH AND SOUTH WSAs
- (5) PIUTE CYPRESS WSA
- (6) CALIENTE MOUNTAIN WSA
- (7) SHEEP RIDGE AND MILK RANCH/CASE MOUNTAIN WSAs
- (8) VENTANA WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS WSA

Sincerely,

William J. Leden
William J. Leden



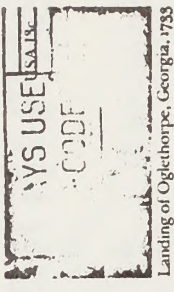
Robert D Rheiner, Jr., District Manager
Bakersfield District, BLM
800 Truxton Ave, Room 303
Bakersfield, CA 93301



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I support wilderness designation for the following areas: Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA, Owens Peak WSA, Merced River WSA, Panoche Hills North and South WSAs, Plute Cypress WSA, Caliente Mountain WSA, Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA, and Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA.

Nancy Woods
643 whiting
E1 seg. CA 90245



Landing of Oglethorpe, Georgia, 1733

Robert H. Rhainer, Jr., District Manager
Bakersfield District, Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 301
Bakersfield
California 93301

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There are very good reasons for including the following in wilderness designation. Some are small but adjacent to wilderness or parks. Some have high wilderness value etc.

- Owens Peak WSA
- Merced River WSA
- Panoche Hills North & South WSA
- Plute Cypress WSA
- Caliente Mountain WSA
- Sheep Ridge & Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA
- Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA

50.1

Marion L. Sanford
131 E. Valerio St.
Santa Barbara
California 93101

Response to Marion L. Sanford

Response 50.1

All available resource information was utilized, and all resource values were considered, where known, in developing wilderness suitability and nonsuitability recommendations.

163 Del Monte Ave.
Los Altos, CA 94022
Sept. 7, 1983

Mr. Robert D. Rheiner, Jr.
District Manager
Bakersfield District
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Ave., Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner:

I am writing regarding the BLM's decision to re-evaluate Wilderness Study Areas around the San Joaquin Valley.

51.1 I want to go on record in support of Wilderness designation for the entire 95,000 plus acres under review. I am particularly familiar with the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA and feel it would be a welcome addition to the Pinnacles National Monument Wilderness.

51.2 I am also very familiar with the Ventana Wilderness and believe that the 680 acres of BLM land contiguous to that Wilderness would be a valuable addition.

51.3 Finally, I believe that the presence of the California condor and American peregrine falcon makes the Caliente Mountain WSA especially important and worthy of official Wilderness designation.

Thanks for your consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

John Miller
John Miller

Response to John Miller (2nd Letter)

Response 51.1

See Response 1.1

Response 51.2

See Response 11.1

Response 51.3

See response 19.9.

45 Hillpark Avenue
Great Neck, NY 11021
Sept. 7, 1983

Robert D. Rheiner, Jr., District Manager
Bakersfield District, Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner:

My friends and I are very much concerned about our wilderness, and it is for this reason that my friends asked me to write this letter for them, as well as for myself. Please do not consider this as one letter, but as many and I will give you their names and addresses at the end of this letter.

We ask that you support the wilderness areas that we are listing below, for all of us writing this letter, all give our 100% support for these areas:

- Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA:
- Owens Peak WSA
- Merced River WSA (especially for the numerous canyons, mountains, etc.)
- Panoche Hills North & South WSAs
- Piute Cypress WSA
- Caliente Mountain WSA - especially since this area contains feeding range for the California Condor and American Peregrine Falcon
- Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSAs: Their size, although small, should not make this area marked for non support, because of their size. They are adjacent to areas of Sequoia Natl. Park which are in the Calif. Wilderness Bill passed by the House and their preservation as wilderness would place Sierra redwoods in our wilderness for the first time, and these redwoods must be saved.
- Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA: Another area that must not suffer because of it's size. This is adjacent to the 161,394 acre Ventana Wilderness managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

* (These areas, as you know, contain high wilderness values including many rare, threatened or endangered species, such as the San Joaquin Kit Fox, blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard, Giant Kangaroo rat, and many many others that need protection.)

Once again, we ask, please give these areas your full support and do not let them be razed and used to the point where everything will be ruined and the animals will have a rough time. Thank you in the hopes that you will give these lands the support they need so badly.

Sincerely yours

William Bieber
Mrs. Harry Bieber

AND
(SEE OVER)



ECOLOGY CENTER OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
 Project of Educational Communications, Inc.
 Mailing Address: PO Box 22222 Los Angeles, CA 90022
 37473

Telephone (213) 559-9160

Sept. 8, 1983



Mr. Robert D. Rheiner, Jr.
 District Manager
 Bakersfield District
 Bureau of Land Management
 800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
 Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner,

Members of the Ecology Center of Southern California are pleased that you have reopened your public comment period for Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) ringing the San Joaquin Valley. We hope that after this study phase your agency will recognize the necessity of preserving as much roadless area as possible. In 1982 the original plan only recommended wilderness for 16,630. In 1983, BLM should recommend wilderness for all of the 95,049 acres in over ten WSAs.

It is unfortunate that our own Secretary of the Interior doesn't understand land use planning and makes arbitrary decisions; simply because an area is small should not preclude it from wilderness status. For example, the Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA is 680 acres but since it is adjacent to the 161,394 acre Ventana Wilderness managed by the U.S. Forest Service the additional wilderness acreage would greatly benefit the wildlife. Other areas considered too small for consideration were the Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSAs. But again, a larger natural area could be preserved as an intact ecosystem with Wilderness Status because these areas are adjacent to areas of Sequoia National Park which are in the California Wilderness Bill which should be passing Congress. Isn't it time to include our Sierra redwoods in wilderness?

Other potential wilderness areas which need more acreage are:

53.2 Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous--next to Pinnacles National Monument Wilderness all of the 5,838 roadless acres are suitable (not just 2,200 acres)

53.3 Owens Peak WSA--With the Pacific Crest Trail passing this area, all 22,560 (not just 14,430 acres) acres should be wilderness

53.4 Merced River WSA--Certainly 12,835 acres are suitable due to the primitive recreation available in the Merced River canyon. Historical and archeological sites abound.

53.5 Panoche Hills North and South WSAs--it's time to include the California steppe ecosystem in the National Wilderness Preservation System and of course, the rare, threatened, and endangered species living here need utmost protection (Including the San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, giant kangaroo rat)

53.6 Piute Cypress WSA--would preserve the largest Piute Cypress grove in existence along with an ecosystem of juniper-pinyon woodland

53.6 Calliente Mountain WSA--With so few wild California condors left, they need all the help they can get, including saving their feeding ground.

- 2 -

All the persons hereon mentioned asked me to write: this letter for them:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| General & Mrs. B. VanderClute | Valley Stream, NY |
| Doctor Nathan Brody | Floral Park, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. Dan Novin | Great Neck, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. Asen | Great Neck, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. M. Bressack | Great Neck, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. Z. Talent | Great Neck, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. G. Roberts | Great Neck, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. I. Jones | Hendersonville, N. C. |
| Mr. & Mrs. D. Williamson | Export, Pa. |
| Mr. & Mrs. A. Freedman | W. Hempstead, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. S. Nevins | Baldwin, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. I. Levine | Raldwin, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. L. Farber | Woodbury, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. Levin | Syosset, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. S. Madingan | Glen Head, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. T. Douso | Glen Head, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. G. Linsky | Glen Head, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. K. Nesky | Genwood Landing, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. R. Raggazzi | Westbury, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. L. Bukzin | Rorest Hills, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. C. Nallow | Orlando, Fla. |
| Mr. & Mrs. C. Berman | Scarddale, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. R. Ettinger | Bellmore, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. M. Gould | Long Beach, Calif. |
| Mr. & Mrs. E. Kass | Flushing, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. E. Dukes | Queens Village, NY |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. O'Connell | Mineola, NY |
| Mrs. Dorothea Horaty | Mineola, NY |
| Mrs. Buddy Melnick | Mineola, NY |
| Mrs. Florence Klein | Great Neck, NY |
| Mrs. Anna Gregorio | Glen Head, NY |
| Miss Sue Wilson | Port Washington, NY |
| Miss Anne Marie McEvoy | E. Northport, NY |
| Miss Barbara Ferris | Atlanta, Ga. |
| Miss Susan Peterson | Asheville, N. C. |
| Mrs. Ceil Mills | Culver City, Calif. |
| Mrs. Barbara Mauierier | Ridgefield, Conn. |
| Mr. Peter Vanello | Brooklyn, NY |
| Mr. Franc Cicalese | Glen Cove, NY |
| Mr. Michael Rassin | Flushing, NY |
| Mr. Arthur Sullivan | Mienola, NY |

Response to Mrs. Harry Bieber

Response 52.1

Support for Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous, Owens Peak, and Piute-Cypress WSAs has been noted. See Responses 19.6, 19.9 and 11.1, for the Panoche Hills North and South and the Calliente Mountain WSAs, and the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain, Sheep Ridge, and Ventana Wilderness Contiguous units, respectively.

Rheiner/Ecology Center of Southern California letter--page 2

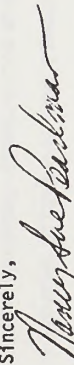
It should be obvious that our organization supports large portions of our public lands to be set aside as wilderness. Already the congested population of our cities are putting pressure on open space for recreational purposes. In order to have enough lands available that do not show significant signs of human use and habitation, wilderness must be established.

The scientific and educational values of wilderness should not be overlooked either. There are still many species of plants and animals that are yet to be identified. Opening this land to destructive uses such as grazing, mining, or vehicles would lose some resources that may prove to be very beneficial to humankind.

Needless to say, other species of animals as well as plants deserve a home. Wilderness gives them an area where they can live a natural life and where humans can go and enjoy seeing them in a natural environment.

Please keep us informed about your decisions. We look forward to working with you regarding the wilderness and wild lands in your district. Participation on citizen advisory committees may be another way in which we could assist your planning operation.

Sincerely,



Nancy Sae Pearlman
Director

NSP:cz

Response to the Ecology Center of Southern California

Response 53.1

See Response 11.1

Response 53.2

See Response 1.1

Response 53.3

See Response 19.4 with respect to partial designation rationale and consideration of the Pacific Crest Trail.

Response 53.4

See Response 3.2 and 38.3.

Response 53.5

See Response 24.2 with respect to ecosystem diversity and 37.1 with respect to supplemental characteristics.

Response 53.6

See Responses 19.8 and 19.9 for Piute-Cypress and Calliente Mountain, respectively.

4111 Olympiad Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90043

8 September 1983

Mr. Robert D. Rheiner, Jr., District Manager
Bakersfield District, Bureau of Land Management
900 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner:

I just recently learned of the public comment period for the Wilderness Study Areas around the San Joaquin Valley. It is unfortunate that the comment period was announced at such a late date, and I only hope that my comments reach your office by the September 12 deadline.

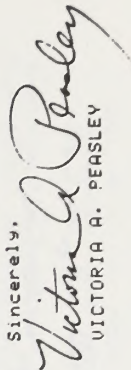
The ten wilderness areas under consideration (Pinnacles Wilderness, Owens Peak, Merced River, Panoche Hills--North & South, Piute Cypress, Calliente Mountain, Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Cose Mountain, and the Uantona Wilderness Contiguous areas) are surely all suitable for Wilderness designation. Each of these areas, even though some are quite small, has some value which should be preserved for future generations.

I am not personally familiar with all of these areas, although I have read considerably about them. I am familiar, however, with the Owens Peak, Piute Cypress and Calliente Mountain areas. I feel that all of the 22,560 proposed acres (not just the 14,430 proposed by BLM) of the Owens Peak area should be approved. And the beautiful old cypresses of the Piute Cypress grove should definitely be included for protection. The Calliente Mountain area, if it is not included in wilderness designation, means that the limited feeding range of the California condor will shrink even further than it has already due to the encroachment of civilization.

54.1

I hope your office will consider the inclusion of all of the above areas for wilderness protection.

Sincerely,



VICTORIA A. PEASLEY

Response to Victoria A Pearsley

Response 54.1

See Response 19.4 with respect to partial designation rationale in Owens Peak. See Responses 19.8 and 19.9 for Piute-Cypress and Calliente Mountain, respectively.

*Alpine Haven - Spotts
5604 Roadside Way
Sacramento, CA 95822*

Dear Mr. K. Rheiner, Jr.,

I was appalled to learn that only 16,630 acres in the San Joaquin Valley will be designated wilderness under BLM's proposed plan. You must act to designate the following as wilderness areas too:

- ① Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA - would add to the Ventana Wilderness
- ② Caliente Mountain WSA: contains an unique vegetation of juniper - piñon woodland + scrub for condor + falcons
- ③ Piute Cypress WSA - largest Piute Cypress grove in existence
- ④ Sheep Ridge and Hill Ranch / Case Mountain WSA - area is adjacent to Sequoia Natl Park
- ⑤ Owens Park WSA = acreage should be increased to 22,560 acres designated as wilderness; up from BLM's proposed 14,430.
- ⑥ Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA = increase acreage to 5,838.
- ⑦ Merced River WSA = contains outstanding areas
- ⑧ Panoche Hill Natl + Smith WSA = areas contain endangered species

Offensive private interests is driving out wildlife + ruining the land! Thank you - Anne Spott

56.1

7058 San Jacinto Court
Citrus Heights, CA 95610
September 8, 1983

Robert D. Rheiner, Jr.
District Manager
Bakersfield District, BLM
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner:

I am writing with reference to the plan for Wilderness Study Areas in the San Joaquin Valley region. I am one of many who enjoy and appreciate wilderness, not only as a recreational resource but as a remnant of original America with many values--open space, gene pool, wildlife habitat.

I have seen a list of ten candidate Wilderness Study Areas in this region. Three of them, especially, are personally significant to me--and all of them should be considered on their merits, regardless of acreage.

The three I know best are:

- 55.1 Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA;
- Merced River WSA;
- Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA.

From personal observation and experience, I know that these places are valuable for natural and cultural history concerns and associations. All adjoin or are near major forest and park reserves.

Please record me as supporting these three and the other seven San Joaquin Valley candidate areas.

Sincerely,

Frederic R. Gunsky
Frederic R. Gunsky

Response to Federick R. Gunsky

Response 55.1

See Responses 1.1, 3.2, and 11.1 for Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous, Merced River, and Ventana Wilderness Contiguous, respectively.

9/8/83

ROBERT D. RHEMER, DISTRICT MANAGER
BOKERSFIELD DISTRICT, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
500 TRUNKEN AVENUE, ROOM 302
BOKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA, 93301

DEAR MR. RHEMER:

INASMUCH AS YOU HAVE REQUESTED PUBLIC COMMENT FOR THE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA OF SAN JUAN VALLEY, I THOUGHT MY BRIEF COMMENTS CAN BE ADDED TO YOUR CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREAS.

LET ME BRIEFLY STATE MY VIEW ON WILDERNESS, AND MY OPINION WILL BE FAIRLY OBVIOUS. GOD GIVETH AND SECRETARY MUST TAKE IT AWAY. AND AT MY AGE, 70, I SHOULD BE WARRIED WHAT HAPPENS TO MY LAND, OUR COUNTRY, I AM. AND I AM DEEPLY OUTRAGED BY THE EFFECTS OF THIS ADMINISTRATION TO DIMINISH OUR NATURAL HERITAGE.

BRIEFLY, IT SEEMS TO ME THE ACREAGE CONSIDERED FOR WILDERNESS GETS SMALLER AND SMALLER. AND WHY EVEN 1 CONTIGUOUS ACRE OR 2000 ACRES ARE REJECTED IS BEYOND UNDERSTANDING. IF THAT LAND WERE 50 MILES Distant ONE COULD UNDERSTAND. BUT ADJACENT TO SOMETHING THAT EXISTS. WHAT DIFFICULTY IS THERE IN ADMINISTERING THE SMALLEST OF THE LARGEST. IT IS PART AND PARCE OF SOMETHING THAT CAN NEVER BE RECOVERED LATER. GET IT NOW! MANY OF THE AREAS UNDER CONSIDERATION I AM UNFAMILIAR WITH, BUT YET, A Distant KNOWLEDGE.

OF COURSE I AM FOR THE LARGE ACREAGES, SUCH AS THE MERCED RIVER. LET BE GREEDY AND TRY TO SAVE MORE AND MORE LAND, FOR THE GENERATIONS TO COME. THEY MAY NOT SEEM IMPORTANT NOW. BUT COME A TIME ALL ONE CAN SAY IS I WISH WE WOULD HAVE ADDED THIS OR THAT. FOR EXAMPLE WHY NOT THE OWENS PEAK WSA? ALL PACIFIC COAST TRAIL USERS WILL THANK U, WHY NOT PANACHE NORTH AND SOUTH? THERE ARE VALUES HERE, BUT WE HAVE TO SEARCH AND PRESERVE.

AND IF SECRETARY MUST CONSIDER A 680-ACRE VENTANA CONTIGUOUS WSA TO SMALL FOR BLM THEN ADD IT TO THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

YOU KNOW WHERE I STAND.

TRY YOUR BEST TO 'SAVE OUR LAND'

Harold L. Dittmer

57.1

HAROLD L. DITTMER
501 PINEWOOD AVE
LOS ANGELES CA 90027

Response to Lynne Spotts

Response 56.1

See Response 11.1 regarding Ventana Wilderness Contiguous, Sheep Ridge, and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain. See Responses 10.1 and 19.8 for Caliente Mountain and Plute-Cypress, respectively. See Response 19.4 with respect to partial designation rationale for Owens Peak. See Response 1.1 for Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous, Response 3.2 with respect to unsuitable rationale for Merced River, and Response 37.1 for Panoche Hills North and South.

Response to Harold L. Dittmer

Response 57.1

See Response 11.1 regarding removal of areas under 5,000 acres in size. See Response 3.2 for Merced River. A major portion of the Owens Peak WSA has been recommended suitable for wilderness designation. See Response 37.1 for Panoche Hills North and South.

D. Wallace
P.O. 517
Cevelo, CA 95428

Sept. 7, 1983



Robert D. Rheiner, Jr., District Manager
Bakersfield District, BLM
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Sir:

I am strongly in favor of wilderness designations in BLM lands surrounding the San Joaquin Valley. Valley natural ecosystems are among the most threatened in the state, and wilderness designation will help to perpetuate them.

I support wilderness designation for the following WSA's: Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous, Owens Peak, Merced River, North Panoche Hills, South Panoche Hills, Piute Cypress, Caliente Mountain, Sheep Ridge, Milk Ranch/Case Mountain, and Ventana Wilderness Contiguous.

The Pinnacles and Ventana Wilderness are both heavily used areas that will benefit from expansion. The Merced River area has outstanding scenic qualities which should be protected. The Panoche Hills contain outstanding wildlife values (San Joaquin Kit Fox, Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard, giant kangaroo rat) which should be preserved. Piute Cypress, Caliente Mountain, Sheep Ridge, and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain also contain botanical and zoological features worthy of protection.

Sincerely,

David Wallace

Response to David Wallace

Response 58.1

See Response 56.1



Robert RHEINER
DISTRICT MGR
BAKERSFIELD BLM
800 TRUXTON AVE RM 302
BAKERSFIELD, CA
93301



PINNACLES WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS WSA: PINNACLES IS

59.1 my favorite Pinnacles Monument, Pinnacles because it's so accessible to me in SF.

I urge you to include SHEEP RIDGE TRICKLE CREEK/CASE MT & VENTANA WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS WSAs.

59.2 THESE WSAs ARE ESSENTIAL TO PROTECT/SANCTUARY WILDERNESSES, AND IT'S STUPID TO IGNORE THESE UNUSABLE WILDERNESSES RESOURCES, THESE

THE SAN JOAQUIN LANDS WANT TO BE WILD WILDS PROTECTED. I SEE SO MANY PEOPLE NOW INTERESTED IN CAMPING HIKING & COUNTRY TRIPS NOW. THIS WAS NOT TRUE IN THE 60's. WE NEED TO REVISE THESE CARDS FOR USE NOW & IN THE FUTURE. *How Much* 2116441112 SF CA 94112

Response to M. Melida

Response 59.1

See Response 1.1

Response 59.2

See Response 11.1



THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CALIFORNIA NATIVE FLORA

10 September 1983

8707 Casitas Road,
Atascadero, CA. 93422.

Robert D. Rheiner, Jr., District Manager
Bakersfield District, BLM,
800 Truxton Ave., Room 302,
Bakersfield, CA. 93301.

Dear Mr. Rheiner,

The San Luis Obispo County Chapter of the California Native Plant Society wishes to make known it's support of the BLM's present recommendations for Wilderness ringing the San Joaquin Valley. Not only should these WSAs be designated as Wilderness but much of the original acreage that has been deleted from the previous plan should be reinstated. It has been shown that the larger a preserve is the more viable the ecosystem comprising it is. A candidate WSA small in acreage should not be considered "not suitable" especially if it is contiguous to an existing Wilderness Area, as additional acreage in most cases would enhance the values of the Wilderness and perhaps serve as an effective buffer zone from external influence of all types. It seems to us that given the present trend in government policies and private individuals to promote the development of our remaining public lands for monetary gain without a just concern for the environment in which we and other organisms live that we must begin now to conserve as much as is possible our remaining roadless areas and even those with roads in them. Future generations will be the beneficiaries of what we do today and we must not let them down.

We heartily support the following candidate WSAs and urge strongly that their original acreages be reinstated: Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA; Owens Peak WSA; Merced River WSA; Panoche Hills North and South WSAs; Piute Cypress WSA; Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSAs; Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA; and in particular the Caliente Mountain WSA. All these areas contain rare flora and fauna in addition to outstanding Wilderness values and are greatly deserving of Wilderness status.

The Caliente Mountain WSA has outstanding botanical values as well as scenic and recreational values. The plants of the Coastal Zone and those of the Great Basin Areas to the East overlap to a great extent on the Caliente Mountain Range thus creating a zone of great plant diversity. It is a unique area for the study of genetic mutations in plants. We strongly urge that BLM reconsider its designation of this area. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Very sincerely yours,
E. Bruce Cunningham
E. Bruce Cunningham, Chairman
The Conservation Committee,
The SLO County Chapter of the CNPS.

P.S.: We hope that this letter will be considered as we did not learn of the second chance to comment until the period was more than half over. SCC

JOHN L. FRANKEL
3229 CLUB DRIVE
LOS ANGELES, CA 90064

Sept 10, 1983

Robert D. Rheiner Jr. District Manager
Bakersfield District, Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, Ca 93301

Gentlemen:

We are writing to you in support of the San Joaquin Valley Wild Lands. We would like to see the following areas included in the Wilderness areas:

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA

Owens Peak WSA

Merced River WSA: We visited the Merced River this August and loved it.

Panoche Hills North and South WSA

Piute Cypress WSA

Calliente Mountain WSA

Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case MountaZin WSA

Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA

Thank you for your consideration!

Yours Truly,

John L. Frankel
Frankel

ARTHUR F. PECK, M.D., INC.
3756 SANTA ROSALIA DRIVE, SUITE 817
POST OFFICE BOX 8777
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90008

DIPLMATE
AMERICAN BOARD OF UROLOGY

TELEPHONE (213) 298-8318

9 September 1983

Robert D. Rheiner, Jr., District Manager
Bakersfield District
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner:

This letter is to express my belief that the ten Wilderness Study Areas around the San Joaquin Valley (Contiguous Pinnacles Wilderness, Owens Peak, Merced River, North and South Panoche Hills, Piute Cypress, Calliente Mountain, Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain and Contiguous Ventana Wilderness) should be included under wilderness protection. I am particularly familiar with the Piute Cypress land, and have taken many trips to that area. These cypresses are extremely limited, rare and vulnerable, and I feel that protecting them would be in the interest of future generations.

62.1

62.2

Although some of these areas are quite small, I feel that size should not be a factor in determining whether or not they should be preserved. The size of an area should not determine its worth--a fact I have come to appreciate through my membership in The Nature Conservancy.

Some of these areas under consideration are facing development, and I have seen the mobile home communities around Bodfish approaching the Piutes at an accelerating rate. I feel there is little time left to protect these natural resources, and encourage you to please include them.

Sincerely,

Arthur F. Peck

ARTHUR F. PECK, M.D.

Response to Arthur F Peck, M.D.

Response 62.1

See Response 19.8

Response 62.2

Size, as it relates to wilderness manageability, was only one of the many factors considered in developing the wilderness suitability and nonsuitability recommendations.

8558 La Jolla Shores Dr.
La Jolla, Calif., 92037
Sept. 7, 1983

Robert D. Rhiner, Jr., District Mgr.
Bakersfield District, BLM
500 Truxtun Ave., Room 302
Bakersfield, Calif., 93301

Mr. Rhiner -

I would like to comment on the wilderness suitability of ten WSA's in or near the San Joaquin Valley that are under your jurisdiction. The WSA's under your consideration are:

- 1) Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA
- 2) Owens Peak WSA
- 3) McLeod River WSA
- 4) Panache Hills North WSA
- 5) Panache Hills South WSA
- 6) Pine Cypress WSA
- 7) Caliente Mountains WSA
- 8) Sheep Ridge WSA
- 9) Milk Ranch / Case Mountain WSA
- 10) Ventura Wilderness Contiguous WSA

As a concerned conservationist, I would like to recommend that all be added to the wilderness system. All fulfill the definitions set forth in the 1964 Wilderness Act, and none would disrupt the economy of their surrounding areas. More important, important scenic vistas would be preserved, feeding ranges for condors and falcons would be saved, and trees and other plant species would have a guaranteed range. Despite the relatively small size of these areas, there is

no compelling reason why they should become wilderness. I urge their adoption as wilderness.
Thank you.

Sincerely,
Frank Norma



Response to Frank Morris

Response 63-1

See Response 50.1

9-8-83

Dear Mr. Rheiner:

I did not find out about the chance to comment on Wilderness designation until the review period was over, as you did not give notice to the Wilderness Coalition until the period was half over. It is difficult for the public to comment when they are not told of their opportunity to do so!

I wish to express my support of Wilderness designation of the following WSA's: Owens Peak, Merced River, Pancho Hills North and South, Pine Cypress, Caliente Mountain, Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch / Case Mountain, and Ventura Wilderness contiguous.

Sincerely,
Mike McWherter

Mike McWherter
1231 Bottlebrush Place
Oxnard, California, 93030

①

The following are the comments and opinion of:
 Francis Dolan
 6000 Goldwater Canyon #1
 North Hollywood, California, 91606
 regarding the Wilderness Study Areas of the San Joaquin Valley outlying area.



My first comment is about the timing of the B & N. Hadley knew anything about this review period until it was half over. This is just simply not enough time for me (for instance) to give a thorough commentary. I have lived in California all of my life, and know the region well surrounding the San Joaquin Valley. I have written a number of the areas being considered for wilderness, and the following should be included within our Wilderness Designation System:

- 1 - PINACLES WILDERNES CONTIGUOUS WSA
- 2 - OWENS PEAK WSA

In my opinion, the entire 5,838 acres of this area is eminently suitable for wilderness - especially since it is relatively small and adjacent to the Pinaclet National Monument Wilderness.

2 - OWENS PEAK WSA

Take in the entire 22,500 - acres of West at least 14,450 is much too small. It includes the Pacific Coast Trail. All of it should be named wilderness.

(2) SAN JOAQUIN WILDERNESS

3 - MERCED RIVER WSA

It's outstanding pristine quality, the Merced River winding through it, its gorges and mountains, its historical sites and archeological sites - and its supreme solitude, all mark this spot as an extraordinary wild place for the peace of man and wildlife. Include all of its 12,935 acres as wilderness.

4 - PINACLES HILLS NORTH & SOUTH WSAs

In addition to the opportunities this region has for outstanding solitude, are its wilderness population some of which are threatened or endangered. The whole area offers pristine assets that are found nowhere else - and should definitely be given wilderness status. The San Joaquin (to fox (endangered), the Cooper lizard, giant kangaroo rat (threatened), the paleontological resources, the California stoppage system - these things make of it an unguaranteed system - these things make of it an unguaranteed system - these things make of it an unguaranteed system.

Not only is this area valuable for its wilderness qualities and solitude, but it is another unique spot in that it contains the largest Pinite Cypress grove in the world, and is noted for its juniper-pinyon woods. None of these deserts is found anywhere else in the wilderness system. This entire area is wilderness designation and protection.

6 - CALIENTE MOUNTAIN WSA

Designate it wilderness for its harbors

65.1

(3) SAN JOAQUIN WILDERNESS

The California Condors, the American Peregrin Falcon's feeding grounds.

M-SHEEP RIDGE } WSA
MILK RANCH }
CASE MOUNTAIN }

Although these areas seemed too small for wilderness designation, and were dropped by the Interior Secretary, James Watt, this is not taking in the facts squarely. They are adjacent to Sequoia National Park (to close to exclude), and the Sierra Nevada's should come under wilderness protection because the redwoods have never been given federal protection and should be. They are unique to California, an integral part of our nation's forests and wilderness sections.

5 - VENTANA WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS WSA

Again, an area of only 680 acres, it was dropped from wilderness consideration. But, since it is next to the 16,394 acre Ventana Wilderness (managed by the US Forest Service) it should too come under wilderness designation.



Response to Franca Dollar

Response 65.1

See Response 1.1 for Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous; Response 19.4 for Owens Peak; Responses 3.2 and 38.3 for Merced River; Response 37.1 for Panoche Hills North and South; Response 19.8 for Piute-Cypress; Response 19.9 for Caliente Mountain; and Response 11.1 for Sheep Ridge, Milk Ranch/Case Mountain, and Ventana Wilderness Contiguous.

September 9, 1983

Dear Sir:

I hope you will retain the following areas for wilderness designation:

Quena Park WSA, The Pacific Crest Trail cross this area located North of Walker Pass.

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA This area is adjacent to the existing Pinnacles National Monument Wilderness.

Merced River WSA This 12,835-acre area is suitable due to its outstanding wilderness features, such as numerous canyons, rugged mountains, and historical and archeological sites. The Merced River provides opportunities for primitive recreation in a spectacular canyon.

Piute Cypress WSA This area contains the largest Piute Cypress grove in existence and an ecosystem of riparian-ponyon woodland which is not represented in our wilderness system.

66.1

-2-

Pinnache Hills North and South WSAs. These areas contain high wilderness values including threatened or endangered species such as the San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, giant kangaroo rat, etc., significant paleontological resources and California steppe ecosystem not represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

66.1

Caliente Mountain WSA This area contains feeding range for the California Condor and American Peregrine falcon. Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch Case Mountain WSAs. These areas are adjacent to areas of Sequoia National Park which are in the California Wilderness Bill passed by the House and now before the Senate. Their preservation as wilderness would place Serra redwoods in our wilderness system for the first time.

-5-

Ventana Wilderness Contiguous
USA: This 680-acre area al-
though small is adjacent to
the 161,394-acre Ventana Wilder-
ness managed by the U.S. Forest
Service.

I hope my letter arrives in
time to meet the September 12th
deadline since the California
Wilderness Coalition did not
receive enough notice for a
public comment. I am a
member.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Eleanor Elander
1108 64th Street
Sacramento, Calif. 95819

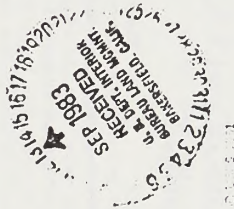
Response to Eleanor Elander

Response 66.1

See Response 65.1

LETTER # 67

Kathryn Heistand
D. Box 112
Hollister, CA
95025



Robert D. Rheiner Jr.
District Manager, Bakersfield
Bureau of Land Management
800 Tuxton Ave. Rm. 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Sept. 8, 1983
I am writing to you concerning those San Joaquin
valley wild lands which are wilderness study areas
The whole plan is not very promising for these
potential wilderness areas and the reasons to not
include them do not appear appropriate to me
Several areas (Ventana, sheep ridge, mill ranch / case
etc.) were dropped because they were considered
too small - in themselves perhaps - but they border
already existing wilderness areas which supports their
inclusion into the wilderness system. The merced river
is a very rugged, with canyons and archeological sites
USA is highly appropriate to wilderness. The Panache
hills North & South & the Piate Cypress USA: would
include things not yet represented in our wilderness
system. Caliente Mountain USA which includes Reding
of the Condor & Peregrine is a must as wilderness if the
BLM is to receive my support. I urge you to consider all the
USFS more carefully. K.H.H.

67.1

Response to Kathryn L. Heistand

Response 67.1

See Response 65.1 excepting Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous and Owens Peak.

Sept 10, 1983

TO: BLM San Joaquin area Wilderness Study

I would like to comment on the BLM wilderness study of lands ringing the San Joaquin valley done in June 1982. I understand comments are due by Sept. 12; I did not hear about the chance to comment until less than a week before this deadline, and hope this letter will be considered even if it should arrive a couple days late.

I support the designation as Wilderness of all ten of the WSA's I am familiar with. The Merced River WSA, in particular, is a favorite area of mine for early-season hiking, and should be preserved in its wild state. The Pinnacles, Sheep Ridge, Milk Ranch, and Ventana areas, while small in themselves, are all adjacent to already-declared wilderness, and should be preserved with their neighbors. The Owens Peak WSA, crossed by the Pacific Crest Trail, should be preserved in its entirety, all 22,000 acres. The 2 Panocho Hills areas, and the Piute Cypress and Caliente Mtn areas, all contain examples of ecosystems not currently preserved in our wilderness system, and the last contains feeding range for the California Condor, which in itself is sufficient reason for preservation. I repeat that all 10 of these areas should be preserved in their entirety.

Thank you for accepting my comments,

Ed Fout

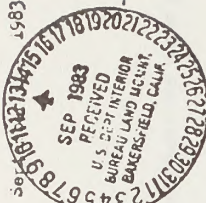


ED FOUNT
824 CORNELL
ALBANY, CA 94708

Response to Ed Fout

Response 68.1

See Response 65.1.



Robert D. Rheiner Jr
District Manager
Bakersfield District, BLM
300 Yuxton Ave., Room 302
Bakersfield Ca.

Dear Mr. Rheiner:

We strongly support all the following areas for wilderness designation:

Ventana wilderness Contiguous WSA; this 630 area is vital since it is adjoining the I61,394 Ventana Wilderness; we know this area and it is important wilderness potential.
Caliente Mountain WSA ; this area is highly important since it includes feeding range for the almost extinct California Condor and the equally endangered peregrine falcon.

Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA; though these are small areas they are adjacent to parts of the Sequoia National Park which are in the Wilderness Bill now being considered by Congress, and for the first time would place Sierra redwoods in our wilderness system ~~for the first time.~~

69.1

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA ; Owens Peak WSA, Panocho Hills North and South WSAs, Merced River WSA, are worthwhile areas for when these are gone there will be no other chance. The wild-life and plant life need habitat such as is offered in these Panocho Hills.

The Piute Cypress WSA contains the largest Piute Cypress grove in existence and an ecosystem of juniper-pinyon woodland not now in our wilderness system.

We ask that this letter be made a part of the official Hearing Record; if it is late it is because we were not alerted until over half of the review period was over.

Sincerely *Frederick A. Bacher*

Mrs Frederick A Bacher Jr 24 Jeca Place, Salinas, CA 93908

Response to Mrs. Frederick A. Bacher, Jr.

Response 69.1

See Response 65.1



THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

FOUNDED IN 1935

Mr. Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bakersfield District
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

September 12, 1983

Dear Mr. Lamb,

We are responding to the Environmental Impact Statement for the Central California Study Areas. We strongly support a much broader wilderness recommendation than you have suggested in your EIS, and urge you to adopt the All Wilderness alternative for this region.

Responding to each evaluation in the order listed in the EIS, our reaction is as follows:

Merced River

Under the Proposed Alternative (non-suitable for wilderness) this area -- which the BLM itself describes as having "outstanding opportunities for solitude ... (and) for water-related primitive and unconfined types of recreation..." -- would be degraded by mining, grazing, and ORV use. Rivers with such recreational values are becoming increasingly scarce, in California, and the demand for this type of recreation is growing; it would be foolish to destroy an area with such irreplaceable qualities because there are "management difficulties." The use of vehicles to maintain wildlife and range improvements need not hopelessly degrade the wilderness values of an area if wisely controlled. Problems posed by mining are serious, but this is an important wilderness area and the presence of mining claims alone cannot be allowed to bias the Wilderness Management Program against wilderness recommendation for the Merced River. Therefore, we urge wilderness designation for this river.

Panoche Hills (North and South)

Both the North and South WSA's are noted for their naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude, and the current recreational values. Since they have been closed to ORV's since the 1970's, we see no reason to change this policy -- originated as a means to protect recognized wilderness values from degradation, and as valid now as when first put into effect. In addition, the South WSA is noted for "the most important" vertebrate fossils on public land in California, and this resource needs the strong protection of wilderness designation. We urge wilderness designation for this area.

Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous

We urge wilderness designation for the entire Pinnacles WSA, due to the outstanding wilderness and wildlife values of this area when considered in

278 POST STREET, #400, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94108

(415) 982-2925
-2715

Mr. Garold W. Lamb
Central California EIS
September 12, 1983
Page Two

70.3

conjunction with the Pinnacles National Monument. Addition of the BLM Pinnacles WSA's to the Wilderness Preservation System is the only direction possible for a coherent land policy.

Caliente Mountain

This area should be designated wilderness. The BLM has already noted the high degree of "natural character and primeval influence" over much of the area, and the paleontological values. In addition, the BLM found -- in the Final Intensive Inventory -- that this area had the necessary wilderness characteristics, and support of the public as a wilderness area.

70.4

Owens Peak

We urge that the entire Owens Peak area be designated wilderness, but we do support, at a minimum, the wilderness designation of 14,430 acres recommended by the BLM. We would like to see this area given the maximum wilderness designation in order to better protect the values of the entire eco-system and reduce the possibility of lasting degradation of naturalness.

Piute-Cypress

This area has "the best grove of Piute Cypress in the world" according to the BLM Inventory, and deserves the maximum wilderness protection on this basis alone. With such resources dwindling nation-wide, it is a public trust to protect what we know to be unique and endangered. When considered in conjunction with the Forest Service RARE II Area, this makes a logical wilderness area. Manageability of ORV's, woodcutting, and mining may be difficult, but in exceptional areas such as this one it is part of the mandate of public agencies like the BLM to protect the land for future generations.

70.6

Sincerely yours,

Michael Burke (for Patricia Hedge)

Patricia Hedge
Regional Director, California-Nevada

Response to The Wilderness Society

Response 70.1

See Responses 3.2, 19.2, and 19.5. A large number of factors combine in the Merced River WSA (valid existing mining rights, distribution of claims, vehicle encroachment) to create a low manageability potential. As a factor used in determining wilderness value, the low manageability potential has a secondary effect of reducing the unit's overall wilderness value and, thus allowing other resource values to compete more favorably.

Response 70.2

See Response 37.1. As identified under the Proposed Action (No Wilderness/ No Action) for Panoche Hills North and South WSA, the ORV closure is a limited closure (specific to reason and type of vehicle) which protects the identified values while allowing continued vehicular access for hunting, as well as for habitat improvement projects and scientific study of the significant fossil sites.

Response 70.3

See Response 1.1.

Response 70.4

Both primary (as identified in the Wilderness Inventory) and supplementary wilderness characteristics were considered in determining the relative wilderness value of the Caliente Mountains WSA. However, the unit's significant manageability problems (see Response 10.1) were felt to outweigh its wilderness value in relation to competing resource values, resulting in the nonconsultable recommendation.

Response 70.5

See Response 19.4 with respect to partial designation rationale.

Response 70.6

See Response 44.1.

LETTER # 71

SAN LUIS OBISPO CHAPTER

Box 784, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406



THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CALIFORNIA NATIVE FLORA

Bureau of Land Management
300 Truxton Ave.
Bakersfield, CA 93301

11 Sept. 83

RE 8500 (C-013.4)

Dear Sirs:

We would like to comment on the Draft Environmental Report of Central California Wilderness Areas EIS. We do not feel that the celeration of the four areas under consideration is justifiable if the less than 5000 acres is next to an wilderness area or one that is under consideration for wilderness.

One the areas under consideration, our major interest is Caliente Mt. in San Luis Obispo County. We have had trips there and feel that it is a unique area of great botanical interest especially for this county. Since there is now no legal access to this area, we doubt that it would be difficult to administer, as suggested. Because it is a remote mountain, wilderness values are great even though one can see civilization in the distance. Wilderness classification may also reduce the overgrazing which is a problem. Good grazing levels will not cause any damage. We strongly recommend this area as wilderness.

71.1

71.2

Of the other areas, we feel that Panoche Hills, CA-040-301, a&b should merit protection because of the outstanding fossil beds. ORV use will destroy them. Other wildlife and plant values will be protected as the western part of the San Joaquin Valley is developed.

The Merced River and Owens Peak areas have wildlife and plant values that Wilderness designation will protect. The former there are serpentine plants and the latter Phacelia novemmillensis is the plant of concern. It is apparent that wilderness designation is the only way to protect these plants as development proceeds of BLM lands. This is also true of the Piute Cypress area (CA-040-046) which should be added to the Forest Service protected area. We have found that this cypress is a good horticultural plant and preservation of groves of it are needed to protect the sources of diversity. This should be protected as a wilderness area for that purpose.

Thank you for allowing us to make these comments.

Yours truly,

Judy Sack



Response to SLO County Chapter of the CNPS (letter of 9/11/83)

Response 71.1

See Response 11.1.

Response 71.2

See Response 10.1. With respect to grazing levels, the Wilderness Management Policy (Section III.H.1), through reference to the Wilderness Act and subsequent wilderness-related Congressional Reports (e.g., House Report 96-1126), states that "there shall be no curtailments of grazing in wilderness areas simply because an area is, or has been, designated as wilderness.... Any adjustments in the numbers of livestock permitted to graze in wilderness areas should be made as a result of revisions in the normal grazing and land management planning and policy setting process...."

Response 71.3

The Final EIS has been revised to analyze the impact of wilderness designation/non-designation on the Limestone salamander in the Merced River WSA, Phacelia novemmillensis in the Owens Peak WSA, and on the rare, threatened, or endangered species in the Piute Cypress WSA.

9-10-03

Box 522

Covelo, CA 95420

Robert D. Rheiner, Jr.
 District Manager, Bakerfield District
 Bureau of Land Management
 300 Aviation Avenue, Room 302
 Bakerfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner-

It just came to my attention two days ago that the public comment period for the San Joaquin VSA's had been reopened. Because the previous deadline was not known to me until the day after it ended, I welcome this second chance, although once again the deadline is so close that my comments cannot possibly arrive in time.

Be that as it may, I would like to suggest to you that all of the 95,000 plus acres under consideration for wilderness designation be recommended as suitable. The Pinnacles, Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain, and Ventana Hills are all contiguous to existing or proposed wilderness areas already managed by other agencies and therefore could easily be assimilated into management.

The Piute Cypress, with both its native and its juniper pinyon woodland, the North and South Panoche Hills, with their steppe ecosystem and rare mammals, and the Caliente, with its condor and falcon raptors, are all VSAs of unique floral and faunal value, whose features are not yet represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Since so much of the Owens Valley has been so fundamentally altered for human use, it seems that a balancing is due: to retain the entire Owens Peak VSA as wilderness. The spectacular Merced River Canyon is one of the places where it first dawned on me why it is that so many people are so devoted to preserving wilderness areas. Those rained upon mountains and valleys are true wilderness spectacles in their own right.

I believe that all of these VSAs have their highest multiple-use values in their pristine conditions, i.e., as wilderness. Preservation of these relatively small, yet diverse and unique areas would be an appropriately forthrightful gesture and a fine feather-in-the-cap for some land management practices.

Sincerely Yours,

James Arthur Ferrara

James Arthur Ferrara

Response to James Arthur Ferrara

Response 72.1

See Response 1.1 for Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous; Response 11.1 with respect to Sheep Ridge, Milk Ranch/Case Mountain, and Ventana Wilderness Contiguous; Response 19.8 for Piute-Cypress; Response 36.3 and 37.1 for Panoche Hills North and South; Response 19.9 for Caliente Mountain; and Response 19.4 with respect to partial designation rationale for Owens Peak. Although both primary and supplemental wilderness characteristics were considered in determining the relative wilderness value of the Merced River VSA, certain manageability problems (See Responses 19.2 and 19.5) and competing resource values were felt to outweigh the wilderness values, resulting in the unsuitable recommendation.

EDWARD ENTERPRISES

3435 Hermosa Ave. Hermosa Beach, California 90254 U.S.A. (213) 372-0285

Sept. 12, 1983

Robert D. Rheiner, Jr., District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, Ca. 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner,

Because of late notice you will receive my comments late regarding San Joaquin Valley roadless lands as Wilderness.

First of all, the entire 95,049 acres involved in the WSAs around the San Joaquin Valley should now be declared official Wilderness. James Watt illegally dropped three of the WSAs from further study even though they are next to existing or proposed Wilderness areas. Please reinstate as recommended Wilderness the Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSAs, as well as, the Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA.

73.1 The full 5,838 acre Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA should be Wilderness.

The full 22,560 acre Owens Peak WSA should become Wilderness. The following WSAs are excellently qualified to become official Wilderness: Merced River WSA, Panoche Hills North and South WSAs, Piute Cypress WSA, Caliente Mountain WSA.

It is about time the BLM started assuming their proper role as guardian and protector of our natural lands.

Sincerely,

Edward S. Loosli

Edward S. Loosli

Response to Edward S. Loosli

Response 73.1

See Response 72.1

258 Wayne Avenue
Oakland, CA 94606
September 11, 1983

Robert D. Rheiner, District Manager
Bakersfield District, BLM
800 Truxton Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner:

The following are my comments on the Wilderness Study Areas in the area of the San Joaquin Valley. Please accept my apologies for this late submitted, but I didn't learn about the reopening of the public comment period until September 1.

I support the inclusion of the following WSA's in the national Wilderness system: (in their entirety)

- 1) Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA
- 2) Owens Peak WSA
- 3) Merced River WSA
- 4) Panoche Hills North and South WSA's
- 5) Piute Cypress WSA
- 6) Caliente Mountain WSA
- 7) Sheep Ridge and Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA's
- 8) Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSA

I oppose Secretary Watt's practise of rejecting WSA's because of small size, even though they are adjacent to existing wilderness.

Sincerely,
Richard C. Hubbard

SEPTEMBER 12 1983

DEAR MR RHEINER:

I AM WRITING TO PROTEST THE SEPT 12 DEADLINE FOR COMMENT ON THE BLM WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS NEAR THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY. I FOUND OUT ABOUT THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ONLY DAYS AGO AND DO NOT HAVE ADEQUATE TIME TO PREPARE THOROUGH COMMENTS.

THEREFORE, I AM IN SUPPORT OF DESIGNATING ALL 10 WSA'S AS WILDERNESS.

THE FOLLOWING AREAS SHOULD BE DESIGNATED WILDERNESS:

- MERCED RIVER WSA 12,835 acres
- VENTANA 680
- SHEEP RIDGE, MILK RANCH/CASE MTN
- CALIENTE MTN
- PIUTE CYPRESS
- PANACHE HILLS NORTH & SOUTH
- PINNACLES ADDITIONS 5,838
- OWENS PEAK 22,560

PLEASE ENTER MY COMMENTS INTO THE FORMAL RECORD.

Thank you.

Tom Suk
PO Box 1164
Pinnacles
CA 95364

KERN VALLEY WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 2180
Lake Isabella, CA 93240

September 16, 1983

Mr. Robert D. Rheiner, Jr.
District Manager, Bakersfield District
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Sir:

This is with reference to the four study areas in our location that are presently being considered for wilderness designation:

1. Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous W.S.A. (Wilderness Study Area)
2. Owens Peak W.S.A.
3. Piute Cypress W.S.A.
4. Caliente Mountain W.S.A.

It is our sincere belief that the above areas should all be considered as deserving of wilderness classification.

In each case wilderness designation would not represent any sizeable economic sacrifice to any unit of society since all areas contain sparse commercial resources of measurable value to be exploited, yet each retains meaningful evidence of the natural forces that entered into its creation. Furthermore, there survive in these areas Federally Proposed threatened and endangered plants and animals. It is especially important that future generations be able to envision the fruits of creation back beyond a time of extinction for most of them.

The wilderness we can yet save represents but a fragile remnant of what was ours in days gone by.

Sincerely,

D.L. Heffner

D. L. Heffner, President

mm

76.1

Response to the Kern Valley Wildlife Association

Response 76.1

The Final EIS has been revised to analyze the impacts of wilderness designation/nondesignation on each area's wilderness values and other issue-related resources. In addition, the following areas have been added to the list of areas being considered for wilderness designation:

Robert D. Rheiner, Jr.
District Manager
Bakersfield District
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, California 93301

Dear Mr. Rheiner,


I am sorry these comments will get to you somewhat past your deadline, but I hope you will consider them anyway since many people were apparently not informed of the reopening of the comment period until it was almost over. I know that is true in my case.

I am particularly concerned about this comment reopening because I believe the Panoche Hills North and South WSAs are two of the most outstanding potential wilderness areas in the United States. Certainly California has no areas more deserving of wilderness protection. These WSAs not only include good virtually pristine examples of San Joaquin Desert and California Steppe, two ecosystems which are disappearing rapidly and are unrepresented in the national wilderness system; they also include inland sand dunes transitional between those of the desert and those at Antioch south of Suisun Bay. This inland sand dune ecosystem is one of the rarest and most endangered in California and is deserving of the priority protection which wilderness status would provide. Its endemic beetle fauna is particularly outstanding.

The San Joaquin Desert ecosystem which wilderness status for the Panoche Hills would help to protect is particularly outstanding for its numerous rare animals which, largely been displaced by irrigated farming. Among the more familiar examples are the Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard, the San Joaquin Kit Fox, the Giant Kangaroo Rat, and the Fresno Kangaroo Rat. The area is especially important as a center of Kangaroo Rat evolution and diversity, but its wild character critically needs the protection a Panoche Wilderness would provide.

I also strongly support wilderness designation for Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous, Owens Peak, Merced River, Piute Cypress (especially), Sheep Ridge, Milk Ranch/Case Mountain, Caliente Mountain, and Ventana Wilderness Contiguous WSAs. I favor giving the Panoche Hills the highest priority for wilderness status among the WSAs in your district, of course, and believe Piute Cypress and Caliente Mountain should receive the next highest priority in that order.

Sincerely,


Glen Holstein
Conservation Committee
Sacramento Valley Chapter
California Native Plant Society

Response to the Sacramento Valley Chapter CNPS.

Response 77.1

The Final EIS has been revised to analyze the impacts of wilderness designation/nondesignation on these special features of both the Panoche Hills North and South WSAs.

The inland sand dunes ecosystems is found outside the Panoche Hills North and South WSAs but is a part of the Moreno Paleontological ACRC. The median annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem have been included as a "special feature" in both the Panoche Hills North and South WSAs. The impacts of wilderness designation on these features is examined in Chapter 4 of the Final EIS.



Chevron U.S.A. Inc.
2525 North
Baker Street, Bakersfield, California
Mail Address: P.O. Box 8550, Bakersfield, CA 93308

September 30, 1983

PRELIMINARY WILDERNESS STUDIES AREAS
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
CENTRAL CALIFORNIA STUDY AREA
YOUR FILE 8500 (C-013.4)

Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Ave., Rm. 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Attn: District Manager
Centlemen:

This is a response to your August 19, 1983 letter requesting comments concerning the subject report.

78.1

Chevron believes that those areas contained in the report, which have oil and gas potential as recognized in the report, should be excluded from wilderness area consideration.

Very truly yours,


H. P. LYNCH

HPL/dm

Response to Chevron U.S.A., Inc.

Response 78.1

All resource values were considered in developing the wilderness suitability and nonsuitability recommendations. No one factor, alone, was responsible for a final recommendation.

Resources Building
1416 Ninth Street
95814

(916) 445-5656

- Department of Conservation
- Department of Fish and Game
- Department of Forestry
- Department of Boating and Waterways
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Department of Water Resources

GEORGE DEUKMEJIAN
GOVERNOR OF
CALIFORNIA



THE RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

Mr. Garold W. Lamb
Acting District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
800 Truxtun Avenue, Room 302
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mr. Lamb:

The Resources Agency has had occasion to re-evaluate its comments on the Draft EIS, Preliminary Wilgerness Recommendations, Central California Study Areas, contained in a July 6, 1982 letter signed by James W. Burns, Assistant Secretary for Resources.

A thorough review of the Draft EIS and the background documents supplied by the Department of Water Resources indicates the proposed action, which finds 16,630 acres suitable, and 78,419 acres non-suitable for the Wilderness Study Areas, will most adequately meet the needs of the State of California.

Sincerely,

Gordon F. Snow, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary for Resources

cc: Mr. Ed Hastey
State Director
Bureau of Land Management
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825

Mr. David Kennedy
Director
Department of Water Resources

Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(SCH #82051811)

- Air Resources Board
- California Commission on Resources
- California Conservation Corps
- Colorado River Board
- Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
- State Board of Conservation and Development Commission
- Solid Waste Management Board
- State Coastal Conservancy
- State Lands Commission
- State Reclamation Board
- State Water Resources Control Board

List of PREPARERS

LIST OF PREPARERS

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James Jennings
Outdoor Recreation Planner
B.S., Forestry/Resource Economics
Recreational Planner - BLM, 7 years

Mark Struble
Outdoor Recreation Planner
B.S., Park Administration
Recreation Planner - BLM, 5 years;
NPS, 3 years

Scott Florence
Staff Chief, Multi-Resource Staff
B.S., Range and Wildlife Management
Ranger Conservationist/Wildlife
Biologist - BLM, 10 years

Maureen J. Horne
Geologist
B.A., Geology
B.S., Oceanography
Geologist - BLM, 5 years

John Hervey
Outdoor Recreation Planner
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M.S., Fishery Management
Fishery Biologist - FWS, 16 years
Wilderness Specialist/NRS/ORP-
BLM, 7 years

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Staff Chief, Multi-Resource
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Environmental Specialist - FERC,
2 years
Recreation Planner - 12 years

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Resource Staff
Larry Vredenburgh, Geologist

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Carl Rountree
Chief, Planning and Environmental Coordination

Jonathon Foster
Environmental Coordinator

Richard F. Johnson
Deputy State Director, Lands & Renewable Resources

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:

WILDERNESS PROTECTION STIPULATION

By accepting this lease, the lessee acknowledges that the lands contained in this lease are being inventoried or evaluated for their wilderness potential by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 90 Stat. 2743 (43 USC Sec. 1782), and that exploration or production activities which are not in conformity with section 603 may never be permitted. Expenditures in leases on which exploration drilling or production are not allowed will create no additional rights in the lease, and such leases will expire in accordance with law.

Activities will be permitted under the lease so long as BLM determines they will not impair wilderness suitability. This will be the case either until the BLM wilderness inventory process has resulted in a final wilderness inventory decision that an area lacks wilderness characteristics, or in the case of a wilderness study area until Congress has decided not to designate the lands included within this lease as wilderness. Activities will be considered nonimpairing if the BLM determines that they meet each of the following three criteria:

(a) It is temporary. This means that the use or activity may continue until the time when it must be terminated in order to meet the reclamation requirement of paragraphs (b) and (c) below. A temporary use that creates no new surface disturbance may continue unless Congress designates the area as wilderness, so long as it can easily and immediately be terminated at that time, if necessary to management of the area as wilderness.

(b) Any temporary impacts caused by the activity must, at a minimum, be capable of being reclaimed to a condition of being substantially unnoticeable in the wilderness study area (or inventory unit) as a whole by the time the Secretary of the Interior is scheduled to send his recommendations on that area to the President, and the operator will be required to reclaim the impacts to that standard by that date. If the wilderness study is postponed, the reclamation deadline will be extended accordingly. If the wilderness study is accelerated, the reclamation deadline will not be changed. A full schedule of wilderness studies will be developed by the Department upon completion of the intensive wilderness inventory. In the meantime, in areas not yet scheduled for wilderness study, the reclamation will be scheduled for completion within 4 years after approval of the activity. (Obviously, if and when the Interim Management Policy ceases to apply to an inventory unit dropped from wilderness review

following a final wilderness inventory decision of the BLM State Director, the reclamation deadline previously specified will cease to apply.) The Secretary's schedule for transmitting his recommendations to the President will not be changed as a result of any unexpected inability to complete the reclamation by the specified date, and such inability will not constrain the Secretary's recommendation with respect to the area's suitability or nonsuitability for preservation as wilderness.

The reclamation will, to the extent practicable, be done while the activity is in progress. Reclamation will include the contouring of the topography to a natural appearance (not necessarily to the original contour), the replacement of topsoil, and the restoration of plant cover at least to the point where natural succession is occurring. Plant cover will be restored by means of reseeding or replanting, using species previously occurring in the area. If necessary, irrigation will be required. The reclamation schedule will be based on conservative assumptions with regard to growing conditions, so as to ensure that the reclamation will be complete, and the impacts will be substantially unnoticeable in the area as a whole, by the time the Secretary is scheduled to send his recommendations to the President. ("Substantially unnoticeable" is defined in Appendix F of the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands under Wilderness Review.)

(c) When the activity is terminated, and after any needed reclamation is complete, the area's wilderness values must not have been degraded so far, compared with the area's values for other purposes, as to significantly constrain the Secretary's recommendation with respect to the area's suitability or nonsuitability for preservation as wilderness. The wilderness values to be considered are those mentioned in section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act, including naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude or for primitive and unconfined recreation, and ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. If all or any part of the area included within the leasehold estate is formally designated by Congress as wilderness, exploration and development operations taking place or to take place on that part of the lease will remain subject to the requirements of this stipulation, except as modified by the Act of Congress designating the land as wilderness. If Congress does not specify in such act how existing leases like this one will be managed, then the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964 will apply, as implemented by rules and regulations promulgated by the Department of the Interior.

**APPENDIX 2: MEMORANDUM FROM
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

SACRAMENTO ENDANGERED SPECIES OFFICE
2800 Cottage Way, Room E-1823
Sacramento, California 95825-1846

RECEIVED
BUREAU OF LAND MGMT

MAY 12 11 00

Tel	Wh	Initial	Date
1	SO		
2	RES		
	ADMIN		
3	RES		
	OPER		
	PA		
	Minerals		
	EEO		

May 9, 1986

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Ed Hastey, State Director, Bureau of Land Management, California State Office, 2800 Cottage Way Sacramento, California 95825

FROM: Project Leader, Endangered Species Office, Sacramento, California 95825

SUBJECT: Consultation requirements for BLM Wilderness Designation 8500 (CA-930.1) (Case No. 1-1-86-I-321)

Action by _____
Surname by _____
Return to _____

In response to your May 6, 1986, request for informal consultation regarding designation or non-designation of wilderness status for Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's), we concur with your statement that this process does not require formal Section 7 consultation. Any future actions on WSA's that might affect a listed species can be evaluated at proposal stage and formal consultations initiated if needed.

If you have questions regarding this reply please contact me at FTS/460-4866.

Gail C. Kobetich

cc: Chief, Endangered Species, Portland, OR 97232 (AFA-SE)

Glossary

GLOSSARY

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACEC): Public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards.

CAMPSITES: Areas of permanent habitation (villages), or temporary camps. They tend to be located near water and near utilized resources.

CERAMIC SCATTER: Broken ceramic sherds, either isolated or in quantity.

CHERRYSTEM: Fingerlike intrusions into a WSA which are not themselves part of the WSA (for example, an access road).

COLOR: The property of reflecting light of a particular wavelength that enables the eye to differentiate otherwise unidentifiable objects.

CONTIGUOUS: Lands or legal subdivisions having a common boundary; lands having only a common corner are not contiguous.

CONTRAST: The effect of striking difference in the form, line, color, or texture of an area being viewed.

CROSS-COUNTRY: Refers to travel that is not on existing access routes (ways and trails) and does not involve any surface disturbance other than that caused solely by the passage of vehicles.

CUMULATIVE IMPACT: The aggregate impact of existing and proposed activities. Individual intrusions when considered by themselves may not impair wilderness suitability; however, when combined with other existing and proposed substantially unnoticeable impacts, the total effect may be sufficient to impair an area's suitability for preservation as a wilderness.

DISPERSED RECREATION USE: Recreation use that occurs outside developed recreation sites.

ENHANCEMENT: A short-term management alternative accomplished to increase visual variety where little or no variety exists at present.

ETHNOGRAPHY: The anthropological description of living cultures.

FLPMA: The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-579, 90 Stat. 2743.43 USC 1701).

FORM: The mass of an object(s) that appears unified.

IMPACT: The effect, influence, alteration, or imprint of an activity.

IMPAIR: To diminish in value or excellence.

INTERMITTENT STREAM: A stream that does not flow year round, but is periodically dry.

INTRUSION: A feature (land, vegetation, or structure) which is generally considered out of context with the characteristic landscape.

LINE: A point which has been extended; anything arranged in a row or sequence.

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN (MFP): Land-use plan for public lands that provides a set of goals, objectives, and constraints for a specific planning unit to guide the development of detailed plans for the management of each resource.

MITIGATION: Measures taken to minimize or eliminate adverse impacts. They constitute a real and committed action by the Bureau of Land Management.

MULTIPLE USE: "...the management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people; making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions; the use of some lands for less than all of the resources; a combination of balanced and diverse resource uses that take into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources, including, but not limited to, recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, wildlife and fish, and natural, scenic, scientific, and historical values; and harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land and the quality of the environment with consideration being given to the relative values of the resources and not necessarily to the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or the greatest unit output." (From Section 103, FLPMA.)

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE (ORV): Any motorized vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, or other terrain.

PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION: Nonmotorized and undeveloped types of outdoor recreation activities.

RIPARIAN: Situated on or pertaining to the bank of a stream or other body of water. Used to refer to the plants of all types that grow along streams, around springs, etc.

ROADLESS AREA: (1) a BLM-administered area bounded by a road using the edge of the physical change that creates the road or the adjacent edge of the right-of-way, other ownership, or water, as a boundary. (2) A formally designated State of California administered area that is equivalent to Federal wilderness study areas.

ROASTING PITS: Rock-lined pits, where plants (mainly agave) were processed.

ROCKSHELTERS: Small rock overhangs or caves usually found in mountainous areas. They may contain perishables.

ROCK ART/ROCK ALIGNMENTS: Rock art including pictographs and petroglyphs, stove circles and rock walls.

SCENIC QUALITY: The quality of the scenery as determined through the use of the scenic evaluation process.

SOLITUDE: 1. The state of being alone or remote from habitations; isolation. 2. A lonely, unfrequented, or secluded place.

SUBSTANTIALLY UNNOTICEABLE: Refers to something that either is so insignificant as to be only a very minor feature of the overall area or is not distinctly recognizable by the average visitor as being man-made or man-caused because of age, weathering, or biological change. An example of the first would be a few minor dams or abandoned mine buildings that are widely scattered over a large area, so that they are an inconspicuous part of the scene. Serious intrusions of this kind, or many of them, may preclude inclusion of the land in a wilderness study area. An example of the second would be an old juniper control project that has grown up to a natural appearance, the old fallen trees largely decomposed.

TEXTURE: The visual result of the tactile surface characteristics of an object.

UNNECESSARY OR UNDUE DEGRADATION: Impacts greater than those that would normally be expected from an activity being accomplished in compliance with current standards and regulations and based on sound practices, including use of the best reasonably available technology.

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (VRM): The planning, design, and implementation of visual resource management classes for all BLM resource management activities.

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (VRM) CLASSES: The degree of alternation that is acceptable with the characteristic landscape. The classes are based upon the physical and sociological characteristics of any given homogeneous area.

WATERSHED: The area drained by a principal river or stream system.

WILDERNESS: A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand

acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, education, scenic, or historical value.

The definition contained in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 891).

WILDERNESS AREA: (1) An area formally designated by Congress as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. (2) An area formally designated as part of the State of California's Wilderness Preservation System.

WILDERNESS INVENTORY: An evaluation of the public lands in the form of a written description and map showing those lands that meet the wilderness criteria as established under Section 603(a) of FLPMA and Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act, which will be referred to as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). See Wilderness Inventory Handbook, dated September 27, 1978.

WILDERNESS NONSUITABILITY: A management recommendation, based on the application of wilderness suitability criteria, that the best use of the resources comprising a Wilderness Study Area would be met without designation of the WSA as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System, permitting uses which might not necessarily be compatible with wilderness values.

WILDERNESS REPORTING: The process of preparing the report on each wilderness study area and submitting that report to the President and Congress through the Department of the Interior.

WILDERNESS REVIEW PROGRAM: The term used to cover the entire process of wilderness inventory, study, and reporting for the wilderness resource, culminating in recommendations submitted through the Secretary of the Interior and the President to Congress as to the suitability or nonsuitability of each wilderness study area for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

WILDERNESS STUDY: The process of analyzing and planning wilderness preservation opportunities along with other resource opportunities within the Bureau's Planning System.

WILDERNESS SUITABILITY: A management recommendation, based on the application of wilderness suitability criteria, that the best use of the resources comprising a Wilderness Study Area would be designation of the WSA as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

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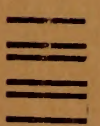
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