

Chapter 2 - Alternatives

Alternative Elements

Four land use management alternatives have been developed for Federal lands in the NECO Planning Area. These are listed and described below and throughout Chapter 2. Management for some of the resources in the alternatives would not differ from current management.

Alternatives are organized by the eight issues: standards and guidelines, recovery of the desert tortoise, management of other special status animals and plants and natural communities, wild horses and burros, motorized-vehicle access/routes of travel designations/recreation, land ownership pattern, access to resources for economic and social needs and maintenance of the CDCA Plan. The issue of access to resources is addressed in the combination of proposals described for the other issue categories.

Each issue is further organized by goals, objectives and proposed actions. Goals and objectives form the basis for resolving issues and are constant through the array of alternatives. Achieving goals and objectives would be accomplished through implementation of proposed actions. The proposed actions are the substance of the plan for which decisions will be made in the Record of Decision document at the end of the planning process.

Actions which are common to all or most alternatives within each issue section are grouped together at the beginning of each issue section while those actions which are new proposals are labeled **Action**. Those which reflect current management are indicated with a **CM** and those which are referred to elsewhere in the document for full description are indicated with **REF**.

Alternatives

Four alternatives were developed for this management area. They provide decision makers with a range of realistic and distinct options relating to the eight scoping issues.

1. No Action -Current Management

This alternative describes existing resource conditions with current management practices and present land use allocations. Included are many decisions previously made but not implemented.

2. Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative

This alternative provides for managing public lands using strong conservation measures to provide for recovery of the desert tortoise with an emphasis on ecosystem management while balancing for multiple-uses.

3. Small DWMA A Alternative

This alternative provides for managing public lands for recovery of the desert tortoise through recommendations contained in the *Tortoise Recovery Plan* and with general emphasis on conserving biodiversity and non-consumptive uses.

4. Small DWMA B Alternative

This alternative provides for managing public lands with a reduced emphasis on ecosystem

management and increased emphasis on multiple use of public resources while still providing for recovery of the desert tortoise.

Vision and Concept for Shared Ecosystems Conservation and Use

Each local, state, and Federal agency and public interest with a stake in the Plan has a mandate, or vision, or an influence related to the conservation of desert ecosystems. The three Federal land-managing agencies, in particular, have very different mission mandates: multiple-use (BLM), preservation (JTNP), and military training (USMC). Visions and mandates for this planning area are well-stated in existing land use plans, laws, and issue positions. The important and unique task in producing this Plan was to search for synthesis of mandates and interests - to determine the nature and extent that agencies and interests shared desert ecosystems in common and, by this nature, also shared in their conservation? The difficult search for land management common ground defined the planning process. While a definitive common vision never was articulated during the planning process, and all stakeholders were not unanimous in their support for the details of proposals which follow, some fundamental points of ecosystem conservation and human use did evolve and suggest that overall management should:

- a. *conform to Standards for Public Land Health which would provide for the recovery of the desert tortoise and eliminate the need for more listings of species under state and Federal endangered species acts,*
- b. *meet as much as possible the arrayed needs for human economic and social pursuits as defined by administrative mandate and articulated interest,*
- c. *impose as little additional restriction and expense burden as possible, and*
- d. *include large areas of conservation to best allow for both the stresses of nature (on fragile desert ecosystems) and allowable human uses.*

Alternatives included in the Plan describe an array of existing and new conservation areas or zones and prescriptions that address the conservation points noted above. In reading the Plan the reader should keep in mind the above points and the following hierarchical zones for conservation and use:

- (a) **Existing restricted areas** - include all JTNP lands, non-target CMAGR lands, and BLM wilderness lands. Many uses and mechanical equipment are restricted, primarily by law. They are fixed and not negotiable. They provide a considerably high degree of protection and preservation of species and habitats, but alone they do not address ecosystem management on an overall basis. They provide the foundation for species and habitats conservation.
- (b) **Proposed Desert Wildlife Management Areas (DWMAs)** - address the recovery of the desert tortoise. These are stand-alone areas which cover much of currently designated critical habitat. As such they may and do overlap some existing restricted areas. On BLM and CMAGR lands DWMAs are designated areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC). Some additional use restrictions are proposed, but emphasis is placed on minimizing disturbance and maximizing mitigation, compensation, and restoration from authorized allowable uses.
- (c) **Proposed Wildlife Habitat Management Areas (WHMAs)** - address other special status species and habitats management. Two kinds are proposed: one for bighorn sheep, one for all other special status species and habitats. Bighorn sheep WHMAs overlay the entire range of their occurrence and movement corridors. Multi-species WHMAs are complementary to existing restricted areas and

DWMAs (which also cover other special status species and habitats). No restrictions are proposed other than closure of some routes of travel. Management emphasis is placed on active management, specific species and habitats mitigation and restoration for authorized allowable uses. The special situation of “fixed point” rare plants and some animals is also addressed.

- (d) **Other areas** - are the remainder of areas not contained in one of the three areas above. These include some target areas in CMAGR and areas of relatively low value, common biological diversity contained mostly (but not entirely) in BLM multiple use class M zone. In these areas Federal lands may be disposed of to accomplish management goals for DWMAs and WHMAs and land uses may occur which are discouraged in more sensitive areas. Except as provided for such situations as tortoise mitigation and some specific species, design and rehabilitation measures based on biological considerations would be less than in other areas.

As much as possible the array of DWMAs and WHMAs does not incorporate areas high in human use values, although this situation does vary by alternative. Finally, an additional significant feature of managing the BLM portion of these areas is a strategic approach to land acquisitions and disposals. See Appendix H for an expanded explanation of the development of DWMAs and WHMAs and Appendix P for a detailed description of boundaries.

Amendments to BLM’s California Desert Conservation Area Plan 1980

This chapter identified a range of alternatives to address the purpose and need statements described in Chapter one. Some of the actions require amendment of the California Desert Conservation Area Plan in order to implement them, while others do not. A summary list of proposed Plan Amendments is given in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1 Summary of CDCA Plan Amendments, Preferred Alternative/Large DWMA

Issue-Category	Section Number	Amendment Description
Public Land Health	2.1	Amendment 1: Proposed standards for Public Land Health and grazing management guidelines
Recovery of the Desert Tortoise		Amendment 2: Establish Desert Tortoise Wildlife Management Areas (DWMAs) and manage as Areas of Critical Environmental concern (ACECs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change mixed MUC M and L to all MUC L; • Change desert tortoise CAT II and CAT III to all CAT I inside DWMA, change all CAT I and CAT II outside DWMAs to CAT III • Delete some existing ACECs and HMPs • Adopt a set of DWMA (ACEC) management prescriptions
		Amendment 3: Changes to cattle grazing management to recover the desert tortoise and incorporate 1994 BO in livestock grazing.
		Amendment 4: Changes to the stopping, parking, and vehicle camping to recover the desert tortoise.
Management of Special Status Animals and Plants and Natural Communities	2.3	Amendment 5: Establish Wildlife Habitat Management Areas (WHMA) for Sonoran and Southern Mojave Bighorn Sheep Metapopulations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delete some existing HMPs
		Amendment 6: Change MUC I in the Eagle Mountains area to MUC L and MUC M
		Amendment 7: Changes to domestic sheep grazing management for management of the bighorn sheep and incorporate 1994 BO in livestock grazing..
		Amendment 8: Designate Multi-species Wildlife Habitat Management Areas (WHMAs) for about 60 wildlife and rare plant species
		Amendment 9: Change OHV designation for Palen Dry Lake, Palen Dunes, Rice Valley Dunes, Ford Dry Lake and Ford Dry Lake Dunes
Management of Wild Horses and Burros	2.4	Amendment 10 Changes to burro management to recover the desert tortoise and reduce conflicts with other agencies/values.
Motorized Access/Routes of Travel/Recreation	2.5	Amendment 11: Changes to organized competitive vehicle events to protect sensitive resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delete Parker 400 • Delete or modify Johnson Valley to Parker • Delete MUC Guideline criteria in Recreation Element
		Amendment 12: Changes to Routes of Travel Designation process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make MUC M the same as MUC L • Designate routes of travel open, closed, or limited
		Amendment 13: Changes the distance measurement for stopping, parking off a road from road edge to road centerline.
Incorporate Changes created by 1994 CDPA	2.8	Amendment 14: Incorporate wilderness areas into CDCA Plan.

2.1 Issue: Standards and Guidelines

BLM's grazing regulations in Part 43 CFR 4180 require that State Directors, in consultation with Resource Advisory Councils, develop Standards of Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing management. The grazing regulations require that Standards be in conformance with the "Fundamentals of Rangeland Health" (BLM policy developed in 1993) and that the Standards and Guidelines address each of the "guiding principles" as defined in the regulations (see Appendix B). Standards and Guidelines are to be incorporated into BLM's land use plans to improve ecological conditions. Improving ecological conditions is based upon attainment and maintenance of basic fundamentals for healthy systems. Standards and Guidelines are defined as follows:

1. A Standard is an expression of the level of physical and biological condition or degree of function required for healthy, sustainable rangelands.
2. Guidelines for grazing management are the types of grazing management activities and practices determined to be appropriate to ensure that the Standards can be met or significant progress can be made toward meeting standards.

Plan Alternatives and Scope

By this plan amendment Public Land Health Standards will be developed and applied to resources and uses on the public (BLM) lands and grazing management guidelines will be developed and applied to grazing leases. The current regulations include a set of National "fallback" Standards and guidelines, both which apply only to livestock grazing in the Current Management/No Action Alternative. For all other alternatives a common set of "Regional" Standards and guidelines have been developed. Regional Standards apply to all BLM lands and programs, while Regional guidelines still only apply to livestock grazing. BLM staff, in consultation with the California Desert District Advisory Council, have developed the Regional Standards and guidelines which action satisfies the requirements of BLM's strategic plan, complies with the fundamentals of rangeland health, and addresses each of the guiding principles as required by the grazing regulations (see Appendix B). The development of guidelines for grazing management addresses each of the guiding principles as well. At this time there are no plans to develop guidelines for other activities.

While the definition and adoption of Standards and Guidelines applies specifically and only to BLM lands, the spirit of initiative is reflected throughout the Planning Area in developing the strategic approach to managing species and habitats.

Required Action on Grazing Leases

Standards and grazing management guidelines apply to grazing related portions of activity plans, terms and conditions of permits, leases, and other authorizations, and range improvement activities such as vegetation manipulation, fence construction and development of water. For lands leased for grazing uses the grazing regulations require the authorized officer to "take appropriate action" prior to the beginning of the next grazing season when standards or guidelines are not achieved and livestock grazing has been determined to be a significant factor in the failure to achieve the standard or comply with the guideline.

Adoption of Standards and Guidelines

If the No Action alternative is adopted, the National Fallback Standards and Guidelines will be adopted for the California Desert District. If any one of the other three alternatives are selected, the Regional Standards and Guidelines will be adopted. This decision will amend the CDCA Plan so

that only one set of Standards and Guidelines will be adopted in the CDCA.

Application of Standards in Land Use Planning

If Regional Standards of Public Land Health are adopted, they will be applied to all resources and uses of the public lands in the following manner:

- Public Land Health Standards. A single set of Public Land Health Standards will be applied desert-wide and to all resources and uses. Standards have their foundation in the physical and biological laws of nature. These laws are consistent regardless of the resource or use.
- Assessment of Public Land Health. The health of public lands and resources will be assessed using the Standards as the measurement of desired function.
- Assessment Scale. The health of public lands will be assessed on a landscape/watershed scale. While it may be useful and necessary to examine certain environmental components on a smaller scale, or at various scales, it is intended the conclusion of overall Public Land Health be made at a landscape or watershed scale.
- Health Determination. Since Standards are a statement of goals for physical and biological function, determinations will be based strictly on the result of resource assessments and be independent of the uses on the public land.
- Resource Objectives. Resource management objectives are decisions made in consideration of resource values and capabilities and use needs through land use and activity plans. Public Land Health will be used to determine if resource management objectives are being met. In some cases, particularly where intensive land uses are allowed, resource management objectives could be met while the Public Land Health determination may indicate non-conformance with the Standards.
- Causal factors. Where Public Land Health assessments indicate that resource management objectives are not being met, a determination will be made as to the causal factors.
- Action/Adaptive Management. Where public land health does not conform to resource management objectives, appropriate action - including changes to land use or activity plans - will be initiated using existing regulatory authorities for each authorized activity. In the case of livestock grazing the regulations require that the authorized officer “take appropriate action” prior to the beginning of the next grazing season when Standards or guidelines are not achieved and livestock grazing has been determined to be a significant factor in the failure to achieve the standard or comply with the guideline.

Application of Standards in NEPA Analyses

Analyses of resources and issues guided by Standards will help NEPA review of projects. Consideration of Standards should improve identification and analyses of:

1. relevant resource conditions and ecosystem functions
2. actions in terms of affects on resources and ecosystem functions
3. the relationship of biological and physical resources and functions
4. the most important resources and functions
5. project design and mitigation
6. cumulative effects
7. short-term and long-term affects
8. project compliance

Goals of Standards and Guidelines

- a. Develop Standards that would meet or exceed the National policy for:
 - Watersheds
 - Ecological processes
 - Water quality
 - Habitats
- b. Develop Guidelines to meet National policy and the grazing regulations.

Objectives

- a. Implement Standards as directed by National policy and grazing regulations.
- b. Implement Guidelines to conform grazing activities to achieve Standards.

2.1.1 No Action Alternative

Objective a - Implement Standards

CM Manage grazing activities under the National Fallback Standards:

Soils:

Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to the soil type, climate, and landform.

Riparian/Wetland:

Riparian-wetland areas are in properly functioning condition.

Stream Function:

Stream channel morphology (including but not limited to gradient, width/depth ratio, channel roughness and sinuosity) and functions are appropriate for the climate and landform.

Native Species:

Healthy, productive, and diverse populations of native species exist and are maintained.

Objective b - Conform grazing activities

CM Manage grazing activities under the following fallback guidelines:

1. Management practices maintain or promote adequate amounts of ground cover to support infiltration, maintain soil moisture, and stabilize soils.
2. Management practices maintain or promote sufficient residual vegetation to maintain, improve, or restore riparian-wetland functions of energy dissipation, sediment capture, groundwater recharge and stream bank stability.
3. Management practices maintain or promote stream channel morphology (e.g., gradient, width/depth ratio, channel roughness and sinuosity) and functions that are appropriate to climate and landform.

4. Management practices maintain or promote the appropriate kinds and amounts of soil organisms, plants and animals to support the hydrologic cycle, nutrient cycle, and energy flow.
5. Management practice maintain or promote the physical and biological conditions necessary to sustain native populations and communities.
6. Desired species are being allowed to complete seed dissemination in one out of every three years (Management actions will promote the opportunity for seedling establishment when climatic conditions and space allow.)
7. Conservation of Federal threatened or endangered, Proposed, Category 1 and 2 candidate, and other special status species is promoted by restoration and maintenance of their habitats.
8. Native species are emphasized in the support of ecological function.
9. Nonnative plant species are used only in those situations in which native species are not readily available in sufficient quantities or are incapable of maintaining or achieving properly functioning conditions and biological health.
10. Periods of rest from disturbance or livestock use during times of critical plant growth or regrowth are provided when needed to achieve healthy, properly functioning conditions (The timing and duration of use periods will be determined by the authorized officer).
11. Continuous, season-long livestock use is allowed to occur only when it has been demonstrated to be consistent with achieving healthy, properly functioning ecosystems.
12. Facilities are located away from riparian-wetland areas wherever they conflict with achieving or maintaining riparian-wetland function.
13. The development of springs and seeps or other projects affecting water and associated resources shall be designed to protect the ecological functions and processes of those sites.
14. Grazing on designated ephemeral (annual and perennial) rangeland is allowed to occur only if reliable estimates of production have been made, an identified level of annual growth or residue to remain on site at the end of the grazing season has been established, and adverse effects on perennial species are avoided.

2.1.2 Preferred /Large DWMA Alternative Objective a - Implement Standards

Action Manage all activities under the following Regional standards of Public Land Health :

Soils:

Soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, geology, landform, and past uses. Adequate infiltration and permeability of soils allow accumulation of soil moisture necessary for optimal plant growth and vigor, and provide a stable watershed.

As indicated by:

- Canopy and ground cover are appropriate for the site;
- There is diversity of plant species with a variety of root depths;
- Litter and soil organic matter are present at suitable sites;
- Microbiotic soil crusts are maintained and in place;
- Evidence of wind or water erosion does not exceed natural rates for the site; and
- Hydrologic and nutrient functions maintained by permeability of soil and water infiltration are appropriate for precipitation.

Native Species:

Healthy, productive and diverse habitats for native species, including special status species (Federal T&E, Federally proposed, Federal candidates, BLM sensitive, or California State T&E, and CDD UPAs) are maintained in places of natural occurrence.

As indicated by:

- Photosynthetic and ecological processes continue at levels suitable for the site, season, and precipitation regimes;
- Plant vigor, nutrient cycle, and energy flow are maintaining desirable plants and ensuring reproduction and recruitment;
- Plant communities are producing sufficient litter;
- Age class distribution of plants and animals are sufficient to overcome mortality fluctuations;
- Distribution and cover of plant species and their habitats allow for reproduction and recovery from localized catastrophic events;
- Alien and noxious plants and wildlife do not exceed acceptable levels;
- Appropriate natural disturbances are evident; and
- Populations and their habitats are sufficiently distributed and healthy to prevent the need for listing special status species.

Riparian/Wetland and Stream Function:

Wetland systems associated with subsurface, running, and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbances. Hydrologic conditions are maintained.

As indicated by:

- Vegetative cover will adequately protect banks, and dissipate energy during peak water flows;
- Dominant vegetation is an appropriate mixture of vigorous riparian species;
- Recruitment of preferred species is adequate to sustain the plant community;
- Stable soils store and release water slowly;
- Plant species present indicate soil moisture characteristics are being maintained;
- There is minimal cover of invader/shallow-rooted species, and they are not displacing deep-rooted native species;
- Maintain shading of stream courses and water sources for riparian dependent species;
- Stream is in balance with water and sediment being supplied by the watershed;
- Stream channel size and meander is appropriate for soils, geology, and landscape; and
- Adequate organic matter (litter and standing dead plant material) is present to protect the site and to replenish soil nutrients through decomposition.

Water Quality:¹

Surface and groundwater complies with objectives of the Clean Water Act and other applicable

¹Management Objective: For water bodies, the primary objective is to maintain the existing quality and beneficial uses of water, protect them where they are threatened (and livestock grazing activities are a contributing factor), and restore them where they are currently degraded (and livestock grazing activities are contributing factor). This objective is of even higher priority in the following situations:

- a. where beneficial uses of water bodies have been listed as threatened or impaired pursuant to Section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act;
- b. where aquatic habitat is present or has been present for Federal threatened or endangered, candidate, and other special status species dependent on water resources: and,
- c. in designated water resource sensitive areas such as riparian and wetland areas.

water quality requirements, including meeting the California State standards.

As Indicated By:

- The following do not exceed the applicable requirements: chemical constituents, water temperature, nutrient loads, fecal coliform, turbidity, suspended sediment, and dissolved oxygen;
- Achievement of the standards for riparian, wetlands, and water bodies;
- Aquatic organisms and plants (e.g., macroinvertebrates, fish, algae, and plants) indicate support for beneficial uses; and
- Monitoring results or other data that show water quality is meeting the standard.

Objective b - Conform grazing activities

Action Manage grazing activities with the following Regional guidelines:

1. Facilities shall be located away from riparian-wetland areas wherever they conflict with achieving or maintaining riparian-wetland functions.
2. The development of springs and seeps or other projects affecting water and associated resources will be designed to protect the ecological functions and processes of those sites.
3. The development of springs and seeps or other projects affecting water and associated resources shall be designed to protect the ecological functions and processes of those sites.
4. Grazing activities at an existing range improvement that conflict with achieving proper functioning conditions (PFC) and resource objectives for wetland systems (lentic, lotic, springs, addits, and seeps) shall be modified so PFC and resource objectives can be met, and incompatible projects shall be modified to bring into compliance. The BLM will consult, cooperate, and coordinate with affected interest and livestock producers(s) prior to authorizing modification of existing projects and initiation of new projects. New range improvement facilities shall be located away from wetland systems if they conflict with achieving or maintaining PFC and resource objectives.
5. Supplements shall be located a sufficient distance away from wetland systems so they do not conflict with maintaining riparian wetland functions.
6. Management practices shall maintain or promote perennial stream channel morphology (e.g., gradient, width/depth ration, channel roughness, and sinuosity) and functions that are appropriate to climate and landform.
7. Grazing management practices shall meet State and Federal water quality standards. Where impoundments (stock ponds) and having a sustained discharge yield of less than 200 gallons per day to surface or groundwater are excepted from meeting State drinking water standards per SWRCB Resolution Number 88-63.
8. In the California Desert Conservation Area all wildfires in grazing allotments shall be suppressed. However, to restore degraded habitats infested with invasive weeds (e.g., tamarisk) prescribed burning may be utilized as a tool for restoration. Prescribed burns may be used as a management tool where fire is a natural part of the regime.
9. In years when weather results in extraordinary conditions seed germination, seedling establishment and native plant species growth shall be allowed by modifying grazing use.
10. Grazing on designated ephemeral rangeland shall be allowed only if reliable estimates of production have been made, an identified level of annual growth or residue to remain on site at the end of the grazing season has been established, and adverse effects on perennial species are avoided.
11. During prolonged drought, range stocking shall be reduced to achieve resource objectives

and /or prescribed perennial forage utilization. Livestock utilization of key perennial species on year-long allotments shall be checked about March 1 when the Palmer Severity Drought Index/Standardized Precipitation Index indicate dry conditions are expected to continue.

12. Through the assessment process or monitoring efforts, the extent of invasive and/or exotic plants and animals shall be recorded and evaluated for future control measures. Methods and prescriptions shall be implemented, and an evaluation will be completed to ascertain future control measures.
13. Restore, maintain or enhance habitats to assist in the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species. Restore, maintain or enhance habitats of special status species including federally proposed, Federal candidates, BLM sensitive, or California State T&E to promote their conservation.
14. Grazing activities shall support biological diversity across the landscape and native species and micro biotic crusts are to be maintained.
15. Experimental research efforts shall be encouraged to provide answers to grazing management and related resource concerns through cooperative and collaborative efforts with outside agencies, groups, and entities.

Based on Holechek's (et al., 1998) work or the best scientific information available, livestock utilization level of key perennial species in the Mojave Desert range type will not exceed 40 percent on ranges that are grazed during the dormant season and are meeting standards. Rangelands that are grazed during the active growing season and are meeting standards shall not exceed 25 percent utilization of key species. The utilization range between 25 and 40 percent is for those forage species with a proper use factor that will allow consumption up to and between 25 and 40 percent otherwise lower use limits will prevail. Until modified with current information, utilization of the following general range types as shown in Table 2-2 below shall be prescribed for grazing use.

Table 2-2 Preferred Alternative Utilization Guidelines for Different Vegetative Community Types in the CDD*				
Cm.	In.	Percent Use of Key	Vegetative	Reference
10-13	4-8	25-35	Salt desert shrubland	Hutchings and Stewart 1953; Cook and Child 1971
13-30	8-12	30-40	Semidesert grass and shrubland	Valentine 1970; Paulsen and Ares 1961; Martin and Cable 1974; Holechek 1991
13-30	8-12	30-40	Sagebrush grassland	Pechanec and Stewart 1949; Laycock and Conrad 1981
40-130	16-50	30-40	Mountain shrub land	Pickford and Reid 1948; Skovlin et al. 1976

Monitoring of grazing allotments resource conditions will be routinely assessed to determine if Public Land Health Standards are being met. In those areas not meeting one of more standards, monitoring processes will be established where none exist to monitor indicators of health until the standard or resource objective has been attained. Livestock trail networks, grazed plants, livestock

facilities, and animal waste are expected impacts in all grazing allotments and will be considered during analysis of the assessment and monitoring process. Activity plans for other uses or resources that overlap an allotment could have prescribed resource objectives that may further constrain grazing activities (e.g., ACEC). In an area where a standard has not been met, the results from monitoring changes to grazing management required to meet standards will be reviewed annually. During the final phase of the assessment process, the Range Determination includes the schedule for the next assessment of resource conditions. To attain standards and resource objectives, the best science will be used to determine appropriate grazing management actions. Cooperative funding and assistance from other agencies, individuals, and groups will be sought to collect prescribed monitoring data for indicators of each standard.

2.1.3 Small DWMA A Alternative

Objective a - Implement Standards

REF Same as Preferred Alternative.

Objective b - Conform grazing activities

REF Same as Preferred Alternative.

2.1.4 Small DWMA B Alternative

Objective a - Implement Standards

REF Same as Preferred Alternative.

Objective b - Conform grazing activities

REF Same as Preferred Alternative.

2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise

The Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) was listed as a threatened species in 1990 under the Federal Endangered Species Act. In 1994 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated desert tortoise critical habitat and completed a recovery plan, which contains recommendations for protective action. This listing and need to provide for recovery affects several local, State, and Federal agencies, each with differing mandates for conservation and protection of the tortoise.

Goal of Desert Tortoise Conservation Strategy

The overall goal of the desert tortoise conservation strategy in the Planning Area is to recover populations of the desert tortoise in the two NECO recovery units (see USFW Desert Recovery Plan 1994) by meeting the criteria for recovery as specified in the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. A summary of these criteria are the following (see page 43 of the Recovery Plan for details):

- a. There is an upward or stationary trend in population for at least 25 years;
- b. Sufficient habitat is managed intensively to ensure long-term tortoise population viability (given in the Recovery Plan as at least one area of 1000 square miles in each recovery unit);
- c. Population lambda (discrete population growth rate, see Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan pg. C31-C32) is at least 1.0. (i.e., death rate is equal to recruitment rate):
 - Land management commitment is sufficient to ensure long-term protection of tortoise populations and habitat;
 - Management is sufficient without the use of regulatory mechanisms in the Endangered Species Act.

Objectives

- a. Establish desert wildlife management areas (DWMAs) where viable desert tortoise populations can be maintained;
- b. Implement management actions for these areas to address conflicts with the goal;
- c. Acquire sufficient habitat within the DWMAs to ensure that management actions are effective in the DWMAs as a unit;
- d. Reduce tortoise direct mortality resulting from interspecific (e.g. raven predation) and intraspecific (e.g., disease) conflicts that likely result from human-induced changes in ecosystem processes.
- e. Mitigate effects on tortoise populations and habitat outside DWMAs to provide connectivity between DWMAs;

Decisions and Policy Common to all Alternatives

Regardless of the Alternative selected, public lands within the Planning Area will be managed in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. In addition, current policies complete the overall desert tortoise recovery strategy. The following section lists current policy and management guidance which are common to all alternatives but is not exhaustive.

1. New surface disturbing projects include specific design features (see Appendix D, Desert Tortoise Mitigation Measures) to minimize potential impacts to desert tortoise and desert

- tortoise habitat.
2. All mining and mineral activities are subject to mitigation and compensation requirements. Whenever feasible, existing pits will be utilized for sand and gravel operations.
 3. In areas of high fire incidence or in years of heavy fuel loading, campfire closures are enforced.
 4. Wildfire suppression occurs with the minimum surface disturbance practical in all habitats. Wildfires are suppressed using only a mix of the following methods to avoid habitat disturbance:
 - aerial attack
 - crews using hand tools to create fire breaks
 - mobile attack engines limited to public roads, designated open routes, and routes authorized for limited-use
 - use of foam and/or fire retardant, and
 - earth-moving equipment or tracked vehicles (such as bulldozers) in critical situations to protect life, property, or high-value resource
 5. Post-suppression mitigation includes rehabilitation of firebreaks and other ground disturbances and obliteration of vehicle tracks sufficient to discourage future casual use. Hand tools are used for rehabilitation activities whenever feasible.
 6. All major, new linear utilities are placed in existing, designated utility corridors consistent with the existing CDCA Plan Energy Production and Utility Element. To the extent feasible, existing routes are utilized to provide access for maintenance of new ROWs (Map 2-1 Appendix A).
 7. Existing wildlife guzzlers will be modified to minimize mortality to desert tortoises and other wildlife, and new guzzlers will incorporate appropriate design features to do the same.
 8. Federal agencies will maintain a law enforcement presence to enforce wildlife regulations, and reduce illegal dumping, littering, arson, off-road vehicle travel, and vandalism, and otherwise identify problems and concerns in proposed DWMA.
 9. The BLM will cooperate with other groups and agencies to identify areas where uncontrolled dogs are causing desert tortoise mortality. In the event such a situation is discovered, BLM will encourage counties to adopt or enforce ordinances prohibiting uncontrolled dogs in those areas.

Planning Area-wide Decisions and Management Strategy Common to Preferred Large DWMA, Small DWMA A, and Small DWMA B Alternatives

1. A restoration performance bond will be required for projects that count against projects that would create a significant disturbance. The project proponent may be required to periodically maintain restoration work including repeat of initial work. Restoration work may include, but is not limited to seeding, planting, surface preparation, treating weed species, fence repair and watering. For details on implementation of this measure, see Appendix E.
2. Restoration of areas disturbed by projects will vary from site to site by design, costs, and methods. Restoration will be guided by site planning and standard or experimental technologies as defined in publications and generally described in Appendix E.
3. Key segments of closed routes of travel (described in Appendix I) will be restored to meet two goals: 1) protection and enhancement of habitat and species, and 2) implement route

- closure decisions.
4. Participate with other agencies in development and implementation of a region-wide desert tortoise public education program. The desert Information Resource Task Group Program Coordinator will coordinate the program under direction of the Desert Managers' Group. Until the new program is developed, implementation of the applicable elements of the public education program (Appendix F) presented in the California Statewide Desert Tortoise Management Policy.
 5. Agencies will work with Cal Trans to design and install separate, freestanding, interpretive kiosks with desert tortoise protection information at Interstate Highway rest areas (e.g., Sand Hills on I-8, Cactus City and Wiley's Well on I-10, and Fenner Valley on I-40).
 6. A Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan Cooperator's Meeting will be held at least annually. The agenda will include a review of implementation actions in this plan, population trends as indicated by monitoring, progress in research actions, status of public education programs, and cumulative new surface disturbance. Each of the cooperating agencies- BLM, NPS, USMC, USFWS, CDFG - will have an official representative present at the meeting. Among these representatives, a meeting moderator selected will prepare an agenda and minutes and will ensure that an annual report is assembled at least 10 days prior to the meeting. The general public, interest groups, and other agencies will be invited and will be given time on the agenda to comment on plan implementation.
 7. Public comment on critical issues will be solicited from the California Desert Advisory Council for actions on BLM lands and from the Joshua Tree National Park Commission for actions on Park lands. The NEPA process will be used to provide information to the public and to solicit comments on proposed projects occurring on federally administered lands in the Planning Area.
 8. The MOG will oversee activities of the Desert Tortoise Coordinator and will have approval for various tortoise technical procedures.
 9. The Desert Managers Group will continue to provide strategic fiscal planning and will oversee activities of the Integrated Ecosystem Monitoring Coordinator, the Public Information Coordinator, and the Habitat Restoration Coordinator. The Desert Managers Group will address interagency relations in the Planning Area.
 10. The BLM and USMC will develop an interagency agreement for management of the Chocolate Mountains Gunnery Range as required by the California Desert Protection Act (Title VIII).
 11. The BLM will formally consult with USFWS as required by the Endangered Species Act on all listed species affected by the CDCA Plan in the NECO Planning Area. The consultation will cover BLM-administered lands and may lead to modifications to Biological Opinions issued to NPS and USMC. The consultation will include all plan actions and will programmatically include all projects on Federal land or a combination of Federal and other ownership in which there is Federal nexus, that meet the specific or general scope of the types of anticipated projects with the exception of any project which:
 - disturbs more than 100 acres
 - requires an EIS
 - requires a CDCA Plan amendment
 - electrical transmission lines or pipelines within existing CDCA Plan utility corridors, regardless of acres disturbed

An EA will accompany the Report of Proposed Action to be covered by the Programmatic Consultation Form.

12. In working with local and state governments on land use authorizations within their jurisdictions, Federal land management agencies will advocate the following with respect to reducing raven populations and their negative effects on the tortoise:
 - reduce the availability of solid wastes at sanitary landfills,
 - reduce the availability of organic wastes (related to facilities and methods for trash service, dump stations, and composting practices) unrelated to landfills, and
 - reduce the availability of water (related to facilities and methods for sewage treatment, pool/pond design, and irrigation)
13. The Desert Managers Group and the NECO cooperators will hold a management review when surface disturbance limit (1% or 3% depending on alternative selected) has reached the halfway point on an individual tortoise recovery unit basis.

2.2.1 No Action Alternative

Objective a - Desert Wildlife Management Areas

Northern Colorado Desert Recovery Unit

- CM** Manage current Category I and II desert tortoise habitat (Map 2-3 Appendix A) according to the *California Statewide Desert Tortoise Management Policy* and current Multiple-Use Class designations (Map 2-2 Appendix A). Manage Critical Habitat on CMAGR with the current biological opinion.

Eastern Colorado Desert Recovery Unit

- CM** Manage current Category I and II desert tortoise habitat (Map 2-2 Appendix A) according to the *California Statewide Desert Tortoise Management Policy*. Manage *Chuckwalla Bench ACEC* and *Milpitas Wash HMP* (Map 2-4 Appendix A) according to existing plans and MUC Classes (Map 2-2 Appendix A).
- CM** JTNP's is managed according to the General Plan and with an emphasis on natural ecosystem management policies which provide adequate protection against potential habitat-altering activities.

Objective b - Management Actions within Category I and II Habitat

A. General Actions

- CM** Proposed activities and projects which cause new surface disturbance are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- CM** Compensation for disturbance of public lands within Category I & II is required according to the California Statewide Policy. This formula requires compensation in a range between 4-6 acres compensation lands required for each 1 acre disturbed. Equivalent funds may be directed toward habitat enhancement or rehabilitation. All compensation is directed to the Recovery Unit where the disturbance occurs. Compensation is required for uses authorized to all entities including agencies with the land administration responsibility.
- CM** ACECs entry points are signed and in certain cases such as the Desert Lily Preserve, are fenced to protect sensitive habitat from impacts related to vehicular access.

B. Grazing Management

- CM** Management of the Chemehuevi Cattle Allotment (Map 2-5 Appendix A) will continue with

- current boundaries (encompasses 137,321 acres) and management practices.
- CM** Management of the Lazy Daisy Cattle Allotment (Map 2-5 Appendix A) will continue with current boundaries (encompassing 332,886 acres), forage allocation of 3,192 AUM, and management practices.
- CM** Cattle Grazing is permitted between April 1 and June 1 on ephemeral grazing authorizations only in years when annual plant biomass exceeds 350 pounds per acre.
- CM** Perennial plant utilization may not exceed 40 percent in any key area within desert tortoise habitat.
- CM** Table 2-3 indicates additional proposed range improvements.

Table 2-3 No Action Alternative Proposed Range Improvements

<i>Allotment Name</i>	<i>Range Improvement</i>	<i>Quantity and Unit</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>	<i>Desert Tortoise Category/DWMA</i>
Chemehuevi	Fence	.1 mile	\$1,000	III
	Water Site ¹	1 each	750	III
	Water Facility ¹	1 each	3,500	III
Lazy Daisy	Fence	5.5 miles	22,000	I
	Cattleguard	1 each	3,760	I
	Water Site ¹	3 each	3,000	I
		1 each	1,000	III
	Water Facility ¹	4 miles of pipe	21,200	I
		4 each	4,000	I
		2 each	2,000	III
	Corrals	2 each	4,000	I
	1 each	2,000	III	
Total All Allotments			\$68,210	

^{1/} Water sites include any water accessible to cattle i.e., troughs, springs, and reservoirs. Water facilities include facilities associated with water sites such as windmills, water storage tanks, and pipeline.

C. Vegetation Resources

- CM** Permits for live vegetation harvest may be issued in non-wilderness areas after environmental review.

D. Lands and Land-Use Authorizations

- CM** Lands acquired through compensation or mitigation are classified OPEN for disposal or use, under the following authorities:
- Agricultural Land Laws (e.g., Desert Land Entry, Carey Act, Indian Allotment)
 - Recreation and Public Purposes Act Lease or conveyance
 - FLPMA Lease/Sale (exceptions may be considered for sale of HAZMAT sites to potentially responsible parties)
 - Airport Lease/Grant
 - Non-protective withdrawals

E. Transportation/Access

- CM** Fencing of major highways and railroads are considered as mitigation when new construction projects are proposed.
- CM** Bridges and culverts are considered as mitigation when new construction projects are proposed.
- CM** Stopping, parking, and vehicle camping are allowed within 300 feet of a route except within sensitive areas (such as ACECs) where the limit is 100 feet. Where a wilderness area is closer to a route than the indicated standard, stopping, parking and vehicle camping are allowed only to

the wilderness boundary.

REF See section 2.5 Issue: Designation of Routes of Travel for prescriptions relating to transportation and access.

F. Recreation

CM Use of firearms is permitted and regulated according to State regulations and county ordinances.

REF See section 2.5 Issue: Designation of Routes of Travel for prescriptions relating to recreation.

G. Wild Horses and Burros

REF See section 2.4 Issue: Wild Horses and Burros for prescriptions relating to management of wild horses and burros.

Objective c - Acquire Sufficient Habitat

CM Federal agencies retain public lands within Category 1 and exchanges in Category II habitat is allowed only if an equivalent or greater amount of Category I or II habitat is acquired in public ownership as a result of the exchange (disposals through any methods may occur in Category III).

REF See section 2.6 Issue: Land Ownership Pattern Federal for land ownership management.

Objective d - Reduce Tortoise Direct Mortality Due to Changes in Ecosystem Processes

CM Raven management is accomplished by evaluating projects on a case project by case basis and appropriate mitigation is prescribed.

Objective e - Mitigate Effects on Tortoise Populations Outside Category I and II Habitat

CM Grazing within desert tortoise habitat but outside Category I and II habitat is conducted under the terms and conditions of the 1994 biological opinion and the "Fallback" Standards and Guidelines.

REF Stopping, parking, and vehicle camping are allowed within 300 feet of a route except within sensitive areas (such as ACECs) where the limit is 100 feet. Where a wilderness area is closer to a route than the indicated standard, stopping, parking and vehicle camping are allowed only to the wilderness boundary.

2.2.2 Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative

Objective a - Desert Wildlife Management Areas

Northern Colorado Desert Recovery Unit

Action Designate the *Chemehuevi DWMA* an ACEC, as shown in Map 2-6 Appendix A to protect desert tortoise and significant natural resources including special status plant and animal species and natural communities; USFWS will modify desert tortoise critical habitat to coincide with the DWMA. This area encompasses about 874,843 acres and contains some exclusions to allow for existing and future development (i.e., freeway exits, towns). Table 2-4 shows the distribution of land ownership in this area.

Table 2-4. Distribution of Land Ownership in the Chemehuevi DWMA.

Landowner	No Action Alternative (Category I, II)		Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative		Small DWMA A /Small DWMA B	
	Acres	% of area	Acres	% of area	Acres	% of area
BLM	866,986	91	815,843	93	695,500	94
State Lands	23,782	3	25,193	3	20,230	3
Private/Other	59,271	6	33,807	4	25,710	3

Eastern Colorado Desert Recovery Unit

Action Designate the *Chuckwalla DWMA*, an ACEC, as shown in Map 2-6 Appendix A to protect desert tortoise and significant natural resources including special status plant and animal species and natural communities; USFWS will modify desert tortoise critical habitat to coincide with the DWMA. This area encompasses about 820,077 acres and contains some exclusions to allow for existing and future development (i.e., freeway exits, towns). Table 2-5 shows the distribution of land ownership in this area.

Table 2-5. Distribution of Land Ownership in the Chuckwalla DWMA.

Landowner	No Action Alternative (Category I, II and Critical Habitat in CMAGR)		Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative		Small DWMA A/ Small DWMA B Alternative	
	Acres	% of area	Acres	% of area	Acres	% of area
BLM	365,599	52	465,287	57	355,929	56
USMC	187,815	27	187,815	23	187,815	30
State Lands	14,146	2	19,882	2	13,958	2
Private/Other	129,170	19	147,093	18	74,392	12

Action Designate JTNP as shown in Map 2-6 Appendix A as the Joshua Tree DWMA. The remainder of JTNP may be added to this DWMA through the West Mojave Coordinated Management Plan.

Objective b - Management Actions within DWMA

A. General Actions

- Action** Delete Chuckwalla Bench ACEC and Milpitas Wash HMP which are captured inside the proposed Chuckwalla DWMA.
- Action** Re-designate all Multiple-Use Class M lands within the proposed DWMA's to Multiple-Use Class L (Map 2-7 Appendix A).
- Action** Designate proposed DWMA's as Category I Desert Tortoise Habitat.
- Action** Limit cumulative new surface disturbance on lands administered by Federal agencies within any

DWMA to 1 percent of the Federal portion of the DWMA (Appendix G). The amount that may be disturbed will be proportional to the holding of the administering agency.

Action Compensation for disturbance of public lands within DWMA's will be required at a 5:1 ratio within desert tortoise habitat. Equivalent funds may be directed toward habitat enhancement or rehabilitation (only option for CMAGR). All compensation will be directed to the Recovery Unit where the disturbance occurs. Compensation is required for uses authorized to all entities including agencies with the land administration responsibility.

Action The periphery of DWMA's will be fenced, signed or patrolled to ensure that conflicts with adjacent land uses are controlled. Where there are open or limited routes of travel, fencing will not hinder access.

B. Grazing Management

Action That portion of the Lazy Daisy Cattle Allotment falling within the highest density of desert tortoise habitat will be eliminated. This will reduce the allotment from 332,886 acres to 311,280 acres (reduction of 21,606 acres)(Map 2-8 Appendix A).

Action The Lazy Daisy Allotment lessee may voluntarily relinquish all grazing use authorizations thereby initiating a grazing decision to terminate forage allocation and range improvement authorizations and to eliminate the allotment designation in the CDCA Plan. The intent of this alternative is to allocate the land to tortoise conservation, but grazing will continue until the lessee desires to terminate the lease.

Action The terms and conditions in the 1994 biological opinion (Appendix C) will be added to the CDCA Plan Grazing Element as permanent requirements for cattle and sheep grazing in desert tortoise critical habitat and other tortoise habitat.

Action Ephemeral authorization will be terminated in the Lazy Daisy and Chemehuevi allotments. As a result the Lazy Daisy "perennial/ephemeral" designation will be changed to "perennial only" and the Chemehuevi Grazing Allotment will be terminated.

Action Perennial plant utilization may not exceed 25 percent in any key area; this will reduce forage quantity on the Lazy Daisy Allotment by 22 percent and AUMs to 2,483 from 3,192 (reduction of 709 AUMs).

Action For cattle grazing allotments which are entirely or partially included in DWMA's, a grazing strategy will be developed to address forage competition between cattle and desert tortoise specifically, when ephemeral forage production is less than 230 pounds per acre, cattle shall be substantially removed from the DWMA as per the grazing strategy from 3/15 to 11/1. The grazing strategy will be developed within a year and implemented within two years. The Strategy shall be a written plan detailing the area of removal, natural cattle movements, existing and potential improvements, and other constraints of cattle management.

Action Table 2-6 indicates anticipated additional proposed range improvements to improve cattle distribution and to substantially remove cattle from the DWMA as per strategy.

Action All existing cattle guards will be modified to prevent entrapment of desert tortoises. New cattle guards will be designed to prevent entrapment of desert tortoise.

Table 2-6 Preferred Alternative Proposed Range Improvements

<i>Allotment Name</i>	<i>Proposed Range Improvement</i>	<i>Quantity and Unit</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>	<i>Desert Tortoise Category/DWMA</i>
Lazy Daisy	Fence	18 miles	72,000	DWMA
	Cattleguard	3 each	11,280	DWMA
	Water Site ¹	3 each	3,000	DWMA
		1 each	1,000	III
	Water Facility ¹	4 miles of pipe	21,200	DWMA
		4 each	4,000	DWMA
		2 each	2,000	III
	Corrals	2 each	4,000	DWMA
		1 each	2,000	III
Total All Allotments			\$196,010	

^{1/} Water sites include any water accessible to cattle i.e., troughs, springs, and reservoirs.
 Water facilities include facilities associated with water sites such as windmills, water storage tanks, and pipeline.

C. Vegetation Resources

Action Permits for live vegetation harvest may be issued after environmental review only within salvage areas where surface disturbance has been authorized.

D. Lands and Land-Use Authorizations

Action Lands acquired through compensation or mitigation will be classified as CLOSED to disposal and use, through the following authorities:

- Agricultural Land Laws (e.g., Desert Land Entry, Carey Act, Indian Allotment)
- Recreation and Public Purposes Act Lease or conveyance
- FLPMA Lease/Sale (exceptions may be considered for sale of HAZMAT sites to potentially responsible parties)
- Airport Lease/Grant
- Non-protective withdrawals

E. Transportation/Access

Action Interstate Highways 40 and 10 will be fenced by Cal Trans along their common boundaries with DWMA's to preclude tortoise mortality and limit other wildlife mortality. In addition State Highway 95 will be fenced by Cal Trans in that section of the Chemehuevi DWMA in which the tortoise population density is 50+ per square mile. On this highway the fence will be installed only when highway upgrade occurs (washes are spanned with bridges and culverts to complement the fencing). Everywhere that fencing is installed it will be placed on both sides of highways. Fencing will meet standard design and installation specifications. Placement of fencing will not affect driving on connecting or nearby routes designated "open" or "limited". Fencing will be installed in sections of varying lengths according to routine highway maintenance cycles. Map 2-9 Appendix A and Table 2-7 show the locations, amounts and costs of fencing.

Action Bridges and culverts for animal passage will be required for new linear projects, such as roads and railroads.

Action Portions of DWMA's are designated as "washes closed zones" wherein vehicle use is restricted to specific routes, including navigable washes, that are individually designated "open" or "limited" (Map 2-10 Appendix A).

Action Stopping, parking, and vehicle camping are allowed no more than 100 feet from the centerline of an approved route of travel within DWMA's. Where wilderness area is closer to an approved route

than the indicated standard, stopping, parking, and vehicle camping are allowed only to the boundary.

REF See section 2.5 Issue: Motorized-Vehicle Access/Routes of Travel Designation/Recreation for management transportation and access, which includes definitions of terms related to routes and washes.

F. Recreation

Action Use of firearms will be permitted and regulated according to state and county ordinances.

REF See section 2.5 Issue: Motorized-Vehicle Access/Routes of Travel Designation/Recreation for management prescriptions relating to recreation.

G. Wild Horses and Burros

REF See section 2.4 Issue: Wild Horses and Burros for management prescriptions related wild horses and burros.

Objective c - Acquire Sufficient Habitat

Action Federal agencies will retain public lands within DWMA and Category I habitat.

REF See section 2.6 Issue: Land Ownership Pattern for acquisition management.

Objective d - Reduce Tortoise Direct Mortality Due to Changes in Ecosystem Processes

Action Remove ravens that are known to prey on tortoise through selective shooting, poisoning, or trapping and euthanization where there is evidence of raven predation in or within 1 mile of tortoise habitat.

Action Proposed projects on Federal lands anywhere in the Planning Area which have a potential for increasing raven populations will be reviewed for design and operations features and will require mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate the opportunity for proliferation of ravens.

REF Highway roadkills as a raven food source will be reduced by fencing Interstate and State highways to limit animal access.

Objective e - Mitigate effects on Tortoise Populations outside DWMA

Action All existing Desert Tortoise Category I, II or III outside of DWMA boundaries will be converted to and managed as Category III habitat.

Action Grazing within desert tortoise habitat will be conducted under the terms and conditions of the 1994 biological opinion and the Regional Standards and Guidelines.

REF See section 2.5 Issue: Motorized-Vehicle Access/Routes of Travel Designations/Recreation. The “300-foot rule” for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping applied and is modified to reflect that the standard is measured from the *centerline* of a route outside DWMA. Where a wilderness area is closer to a route than the indicated standard, stopping, parking and vehicle camping are allowed only to the wilderness boundary.

Table 2-7. Length (miles) and costs (millions) of fencing proposed for highways, major roads, and railroads for the three alternative actions. Length shown includes both sides of the highways. Cost is estimated at \$10/LF.

Highway or Railroad	Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative Miles	Small DWMA A Alternative Miles	Small DWMA B Alternative Miles
<i>Chemehuevi DWMA</i>			
Interstate 40	68	40	18
Highway 95	28	46	28
Historic Routes 66	0	75	
Havasu Road	0	12	
Ward Valley	0	80	
ATSF Railroad	0	40	
Subtotal	96	293	46
<i>Chuckwalla DWMA</i>			
Interstate 10	112	102	12
Box Canyon Road	0	8	
Wiley Well/Milpitas Road	0	70	
Bradshaw Road	0	104	
Subtotal	112	302	12
<i>Joshua Tree DWMA</i>			
Cottonwood Road	0	60	0
Total all DWMA's	208	637	58
Estimated cost @ \$10/ft	\$10.9 million	\$33.6 million	\$1.5 million

2.2.3 Small DWMA A Alternative Objective a - Desert Wildlife Management Areas

Northern Colorado Desert Recovery Unit

Action Designate the *Chemehuevi DWMA* an ACEC, as shown in Map 2-11 Appendix A to protect desert tortoise and significant natural resources including special status plant and animal species and natural communities; USFWS will modify desert tortoise critical habitat to coincide with the DWMA. This area encompasses about 741,440 acres and contains some exclusions to allow for existing and future development (i.e., freeway exits, towns). This alternative DWMA was designed to minimize conflicts between tortoise habitat protection and grazing.

Eastern Colorado Desert Recovery Unit

Action Designate the *Chuckwalla DWMA* an ACEC, as shown in Map 2-11 Appendix A to protect desert tortoise and significant natural resources including special status plant and animal species and natural communities; USFWS will modify desert tortoise critical habitat to coincide with the DWMA. This area encompasses about 632,094 acres and contains some exclusions to allow for

existing and future development (i.e., freeway exits, towns). This alternative DWMA was designed to minimize conflicts between tortoise habitat protection and recreation, hunting, and high proportion of private land with many owners.

Action Designate JTNP as shown in Map 2-11 Appendix A as *the Joshua Tree DWMA*. The remainder of JTNP may be added to this DWMA through the West Mojave Coordinated Management Plan.

Objective b - Management Actions within DWMA

A. General Actions

- Action** Delete *the Chuckwalla Bench ACEC* which is incorporated in *the Chuckwalla DWMA*.
- Action** Designate all Multiple-Use Class M lands in the proposed DWMA as Multiple-Use Class L (Map 2-12 Appendix A).
- Action** Designate proposed DWMA as Category I Desert Tortoise Habitat.
- Action** There will be no threshold on new surface disturbance.
- Action** Compensation for disturbance of public lands within DWMA will be required according to the California Statewide Policy (for Category I). This formula will require compensation in range between 4-6 acres compensation lands required for each 1 acre disturbed. Equivalent funds may be directed toward habitat enhancement or rehabilitation. All compensation will be directed to the Recovery Unit where the disturbance occurs. Compensation is required for uses authorized to all entities including agencies with the land administration responsibility.
- Action** The periphery of DWMA will be fenced where there are conflicts with adjacent land uses and access cannot be otherwise controlled. Where there are open or limited routes of travel, fencing will not hinder access.

B. Grazing Management

- Action** Terminate the Chemehuevi Allotment and eliminate use on 137,321 acres (Map 2-13 Appendix A).
- Action** That portion of the Lazy Daisy Allotment falling within the Chemehuevi DWMA will be eliminated. This will reduce the allotment from 332,886 acres to 192,529 acres (reduction of 140,357 acres) and reduce forage quantity from 3,192 AUMs to 2,554 AUMs (reduction of 638 AUMs)(Map 2-13 Appendix A).
- Action** The terms and conditions in the 1994 biological opinions will be added to the CDCA Plan Grazing Element as permanent requirements for cattle and sheep grazing in desert tortoise critical habitat and other tortoise habitat.
- Action** All existing cattle guards will be modified to prevent entrapment of desert tortoises. New cattle guards will be designed to prevent entrapment of desert tortoise.
- Action** Table 2-8 indicates anticipated additional proposed range improvements to improve cattle distribution and to substantially remove cattle from the DWMA as per strategy.

C. Vegetation Resources

REF Same as the Preferred Alternative.

D. Lands and Land-Use Authorizations

REF Same as the Preferred Alternative.

Table 2-8 Small DWMA A Alternative Proposed Range Improvements

<i>Allotment Name</i>	<i>Proposed Range Improvement</i>	<i>Quantity and Unit</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>	<i>Desert Tortoise Category/DWMA</i>
Lazy Daisy	Fence	61.5 miles	246,000	I
	Cattleguard	7 each	26,320	I
	Water Site ¹	3 each	3,000	I
		1 each	1,000	Non-category
	Water Facility ¹	4 miles of pipe	21,200	I
		4 each	4,000	I
		2 each	2,000	Non-category
	Corrals	2 each	4,000	I
		1 each	2,000	Non-category
	Total All Allotments			\$309,520

^{1/} Water sites include any water accessible to cattle i.e., troughs, springs, and reservoirs.
 Water facilities include facilities associated with water sites such as windmills, water storage tanks, and pipeline.

E. Transportation/Access

Action Portions of several interstate highways, state highways, maintained roads, and railroads in and adjacent to DWMA's will be fenced as recommended in the *Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan* to preclude tortoise mortality and limit other wildlife mortality. The work will be accomplished by various agencies and utilities companies which have the operation and maintenance responsibilities for the indicated road/railroad. For highways scheduled to be elevated over washes, fences will be installed when highway upgrade occurs. Installation along highways and roads which will never be elevated over washes may require design solutions which result in "leaky" fences and may incompletely reduce highway/road mortality. Where fencing is installed it will be placed on both sides of highways/roads. Fencing will meet standard design and installation specifications. Placement of fencing will not affect driving on connecting or nearby routes designated "open" or "limited". Fencing will be installed in sections of varying lengths according to routine highway maintenance cycles. Map 2-14 Appendix A and Table 2-7 show the locations, amounts and costs of fencing.

Action Bridges and culverts for animal passage will be required for new linear projects, such as roads and railroads; existing linear projects will be retrofitted with bridges and culverts.

Action All DWMA's are designated as "washed closed zones" wherein vehicle use is restricted to specific routes, including navigable washes, that are individually designated "open" or "limited".

Action Stopping and parking are allowed no more than 30 feet from the centerline of an approved route of travel within DWMA's. Vehicle camping is allowed only in designed area. Where a wilderness area is closer to an approved route than the indicated standard, stopping, parking, and vehicle camping are allowed only to the boundary.

REF See section 2.5 Issue: Motorized-Vehicle Access/Routes of Travel Designation/Recreation for management of transportation and access.

F. Recreation

Action Discharge of firearms will not be allowed in DWMA's except for hunting of game between September 1 and March 1.

REF See section 2.5 Issue: Motorized-Vehicle Access/Routes of Travel Designation/Recreation for management prescriptions related to recreation.

G. Wild Horses and Burros

REF See section 2.4 Issue: Wild Horses and Burros for management prescriptions related to wild horses and burros.

Objective c - Acquire Sufficient Habitat

Action Federal agencies will retain public lands within DWMA's.

REF See section 2.6 Issue: Land Ownership Pattern for acquisition management.

Objective d - Reduce Tortoise Direct Mortality Due to Changes in Ecosystem Processes

REF Same as Preferred Alternative with the following exception:

Action Ravens that are known to prey on tortoise may be removed through non-lethal means, only.

Objective e - Mitigate effects on Tortoise Populations outside DWMA's

REF Same as the Preferred Alternative.

2.2.4 Small DWMA B Alternative

Objective a - Desert Wildlife Management Areas

Northern Colorado Desert Recovery Unit

REF Same as Small DWMA A Alternative.

Eastern Colorado Desert Recovery Unit

REF Same as Small DWMA A Alternative.

Objective b - Management Actions within DWMA's

A. General Actions

Action Delete *the Chuckwalla Bench ACEC* which is incorporated in *the Chuckwalla DWMA* (Map 2-4 Appendix A).

Action Designate all Multiple-Use Class M lands in the proposed DWMA's as Multiple-Use Class L (Map 2-12 Appendix A).

Action Designate proposed DWMA's as Category I Desert Tortoise Habitat.

Action Cumulative new surface disturbance on lands administered by Federal agencies within any DWMA to 3 percent of the Federal portion of the DWMA (Appendix G). The amount that may be disturbed will be proportional to the holding of the administering agency. For projects over 40 acres, a restoration performance bond may be required for projects that count against the 3% DWMA disturbance limit. This may require the project proponent to periodically maintain restoration work including repeat of initial work. Work may include, but is not limited to: seeding/planting, surface preparation, mowing weed species, fence repair, watering and road closure. For details on implementation of this measure, see Appendix D.

Action Compensation for disturbance of public lands within DWMA's will be required according to the

California Statewide Policy (for Category I). This formula will require compensation in range between 4-6 acres compensation lands required for each 1 acre disturbed. Equivalent funds may be directed toward habitat enhancement or rehabilitation. All compensation will be directed to the Recovery Unit where the disturbance occurs. Compensation is required for uses authorized to all entities including agencies with the land administration responsibility.

Action Boundaries of DWMA's will not be fenced when there are conflicts with uses.

B. Grazing Management

Action That portion of the Lazy Daisy Allotment falling within the proposed Chemehuevi DWMA will be eliminated (Map 2-15 Appendix A). This will reduce the size of the allotment from 332,886 acres to 192,529 acres (reduction of 140,357 acres) and reduce forage quantity from 3,192 AUMs to 2,554 AUMs (Reduction of 638 AUMs).

Action That portion of the Chemehuevi Allotment falling within the highest density of desert tortoise habitat (Map 2-15 Appendix A) will be eliminated. This will reduce the size of the allotment from 137,321 acres to 100,841 acres (reduction of 36,480 acres).

Action The Chemehuevi Allotment lessee may voluntarily relinquish all grazing use authorizations thereby initiating a grazing decision to terminate forage allocation and range improvement authorizations and to eliminate the allotment designation in the CDCA Plan. The intent of this alternative is to allocate the primary use of land to tortoise conservation, but grazing will continue until the lessee desires to terminate the lease.

Action The terms and conditions in the 1994 biological opinions will be added to the CDCA Plan Grazing Element as permanent requirements for cattle and sheep grazing in desert tortoise critical habitat and other tortoise habitat.

Action All existing cattle guards will be modified to prevent entrapment of desert tortoises. New cattle guards will be designed to prevent entrapment of desert tortoise.

Action Table 2-9 indicates anticipated additional proposed range improvements to improve cattle distribution.

Table 2-9 Small DWMA B Proposed Range Improvements

<i>Allotment Name</i>	<i>Proposed Range Improvement</i>	<i>Quantity and Unit</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>	<i>Desert Tortoise Category/DWMA</i>
Chemehuevi	Fence	15 miles	\$60,000	DWMA
	Cattleguard	3 each	11,280	III
	Water Site ¹	1 each	750	III
	Water Facility ¹	1 each	3,500	
Lazy Daisy	Fence	5.5 miles	22,000	I
	Cattleguard	1 each	3,760	I
	Water Site ¹	3 each	3,000	I
		1 each	1,000	Non-category
	Water Facility ¹	4 miles of pipe	21,200	I
		4 each	4,000	I
		2 each	2,000	Non-category
	Corrals	2 each	4,000	I
		1 each	2,000	Non-category
Total All Allotments			\$385,050	

^{1/} Water sites include any water accessible to cattle i.e., troughs, springs, and reservoirs.

Water facilities include facilities associated with water sites such as windmills, water storage tanks, and pipeline.

C. Vegetation Resources

Action Permits for live vegetation harvest may be issued after environmental review for creosote bush stems or for any plant within salvage areas where surface disturbance has been authorized.

D. Lands and Land-Use Authorizations

REF Same as Small DWMA A.

E. Transportation/Access

Action Portions of Interstate Highways 40 and 10 and State Highways 95 will be fenced by Cal Trans along their common boundaries with DWMA's to preclude tortoise mortality and limit other wildlife mortality. Because of the extreme cost involved, fencing will only be installed where two criteria are met: 1) highways have more than 1000 vehicles per day, and 2) the adjacent tortoise population is 50+ per square mile. State Highway 95 fencing will be installed only when highway upgrade occurs (washes are spanned with bridges and culverts to complement the fencing). Where fencing is installed it will be placed on both sides of highways. Fencing will meet standard design and installation specifications. Placement of fencing will not affect driving on connecting or nearby routes designated "open" or "limited". Fencing will be installed in sections of varying lengths according to routine highway maintenance cycles. Map 2-16 Appendix A and Table 2-7 show the locations, amounts and cost of fencing.

Action Bridges and culverts for animal passage will be required for new linear projects, such as roads and railroads.

Action Stopping, parking, and vehicle camping are allowed no more than 300 feet from the centerline of an approved route of travel within DWMA's. Where a wilderness area is closer to a route than the indicated standard, stopping, parking, and vehicle camping are allowed only to the wilderness boundary.

REF See section 2.4 Issue: Motorized-Vehicle Access/Routes of Travel Designation/Recreation for management of transportation and access.

F. Recreation

REF See section 2.4 Issue: Motorized-Vehicle Access/Routes of Travel Designation/Recreation for management of recreation.

G. Wild Horses and Burros

REF See section 2.4 Issue: Wild Horses and Burros for management prescriptions related to wild horses and burros.

Objective c - Acquire Sufficient Habitat

Action BLM may dispose of public lands within a DWMA if it augments the overall management strategy.

REF See section 2.6 Issue: Land Ownership Pattern for land acquisition management.

Objective d - Reduce Tortoise Direct Mortality Due to Changes in Ecosystem Processes

REF Same as Small DWMA A Alternative with the following exception:

Action Ravens known to prey on tortoise may be removed through non-lethal measures only.

Objective e - Management Actions Outside DWMA

REF Same as Small DWMA A Alternative.

2.3 Issue: Management of Special Status Animals and Plants and Natural Communities

This section is organized into three parts:

1. Bighorn sheep are addressed separately because a set of wildlife habitat management areas (WHMAs) are proposed that are particular to their complex geographic occurrence, or metapopulation and needs.
2. Desert Mule Deer are addressed separately because their management is related to the aesthetic, education, and recreational uses rather than conservation as a special status species.
3. Other Special Status Animals and Plants and Natural Communities are grouped together into a proposed common set of WHMAs that are different than those proposed for bighorn sheep.

Goals of Desert Bighorn Sheep Conservation Strategy

The overall goal of the desert bighorn sheep conservation strategy in the Planning Area is to ensure the long-term viability of the Sonoran Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation and the Southern Mojave Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation. To achieve this goal, the following subgoals have been identified:

- a. Maintain genetic variation in each Metapopulation by conserving and enhancing individual bighorn sheep *demes* (subpopulations).
- b. Maintain genetic variation in and viability of individual demes by improving or increasing usable habitat and by augmenting populations.
- c. Maintain habitat connectivity within and between demes.

Objectives

- a. Identify and protect bighorn sheep *essential habitat* (i.e., that habitat providing forage, water, cover, and space, including movement corridors, necessary for maintenance of a viable Metapopulation);
- b. Maintain, improve, and restore habitat quality within essential habitat;
- c. Transplant bighorn sheep as required to reestablish lost demes or to augment demes with less than 50 individuals;

Desert Bighorn Sheep Strategy

The bighorn sheep populations within the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Planning Area will be managed as two metapopulations - the *Sonoran Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation* and the *Southern Mojave Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation* - through decisions made in this Plan and more specific plans for these two meta-populations that CDFG is developing (Map 2-17 Appendix A). Although JTNP is a cooperator to managing *the Southern Mojave Metapopulation*, CDFG has no authority or lead role for management, monitoring, or other actions on JTNP lands (as otherwise outline below) . The CDFG plans will contain considerably more detail and site-specific proposals. All objectives and actions which follow, apply to both metapopulations unless specified otherwise. Most of the actions were taken from a draft management plan prepared by

CDFG for the Sonoran Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation. Work on the Southern Mojave plan has not yet commenced. At least one alternative in each action set implements BLMs Fish & Wildlife 2000 Plan entitled “Mountain Sheep Ecosystem Management Strategy in the 11 Western States and Alaska”.

Decisions and Policy Common to all Alternatives

1. Federal agencies will not dispose of National Park lands, military lands and wilderness lands within the Planning Area.
2. When sufficient numbers of bighorn sheep are available, demes will be augmented that 1) contain less than 50 adults, and 2) have sufficient habitat to support more than 50 adults. At current population levels, these demes (Map 2-17 Appendix A) include the following:
 - Sonoran Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation WHMA
 - Chuckwalla Mountains
 - Little Mule Mountains
 - Southern Mojave Bighorn Metapopulation WHMA
 - Coxcomb Mountains
 - Granite Mountains
 - Iron Mountains
 - Palen Mountains

CDFG will complete applicable meta-population plans and prepare a capture and relocation plans for each augmentation and will coordinate and direct operations. Approval of the BLM State Director or NPS Superintendent will be required prior to augmentation.
3. CDFG will provide regulations, permitting systems, law enforcement, and other agency action to support a sport hunting program where sustainable and where consistent with metapopulation management goals. Hunting will be permitted on BLM-administered lands, but will not be permitted in JTNP or CMAGR.
4. CDFG will continue to construct, improve, and maintain new and existing natural and artificial water sources and exclosures around them where required and coordinate such work through other agencies and volunteer groups according to CDFG standards and MOUs with BLM and CMAGR on land managed by BLM and CMAGR. *CDFG will consult with USFWS for proposed projects in desert tortoise habitat.
5. Public comment on critical issues will be solicited from established advisory councils.
6. The Desert Managers’ Group will address interagency relations in the Planning Area.
7. The BLM and CDFG will coordinate all wildlife management activities in BLM wilderness areas under the MOU on “Wildlife Management Activities in Wilderness” signed in 1997.
8. Barriers to bighorn sheep movement within demes and between demes will be limited to the extent possible. Installation of new roads, fences, and other linear projects will be mitigated to consider passage of bighorn sheep.
9. BLM Park rangers and CDFG wardens will continue to inform public land visitors where appropriate about bighorn sheep conservation issues.

Planning Area-wide Decisions and Management Strategy Common to Preferred, Small DWMA A, and Small DWMA B Alternatives

1. CDFG, BLM, and NPS will jointly develop a public education plan. Educational materials might include brochures, posters, interpretive displays and signs. The BLM’s Santa Rosa

Mountains Visitor Center and the JTNP Visitor Center will be primary contact points for public education for the Planning Area. Interpretive programs at the Big Morongo Reserve, Thousand Palms Preserve, Dos Palmas Reserve, BLM Information/Field Office Centers and National Parks will include information on desert bighorn sheep.

2. Plan implementation and other activities will be coordinated through the annual Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan Cooperator's Meeting.
3. The BLM and USMC will develop an interagency agreement for management of the Chocolate Mountains Aerial Gunnery Range as required by the California Desert Protection Act.
4. Artificial waters* proposed for construction in any given year will:
 - be submitted and considered as a group, by metapopulation, for both bighorn sheep and deer
 - be submitted in groups by June 1 so that field review can be planned, to occur in late summer/early fall for review and siting to reduce/eliminate effects upon other special status species, cultural resources, wilderness values, and optimal location for intended use, installation and operation and maintenance.
 - be supported by two levels of monitoring; population trends, and impact trends to tortoise or other special status species. The latter should include both direct (water hazard) and indirect (population dynamics/ecosystem change) monitoring.

*Any waters built on private land in the area of overlap between the NECO and Coachella Valley Plans is outside the scope of NECO and will have to meet conditions articulated in the Coachella Valley MSCP.

*NECO only addresses needs south of I-10 and artificial waters will generally be approved conditional to indicated monitoring support. Regardless of the number of waters installed, at such time monitoring indicates the total number of waters is adequate for bighorn sheep/deer goals or is creating landscape scale impact, the cooperating agencies will consider ending the installation program.

2.3.1 No Action Alternative

Objective a - Identify and Protect Essential Habitat

- CM** Continue implementation of current desert bighorn HMPs (Marble Mountains, Whipple Mountains, Sheep Hole Mountains, Chuckwalla Mountains, and Orocopia Mountains) (Map 2-4 Appendix A).
- CM** Continue management of the Ford Dry Lake and Rice Valley domestic sheep allotments with current boundaries (49,682 and 85,565 acres, respectively) and grazing prescriptions (Map 2-4 Appendix A).
- REF** See section 2.6 Issue: Land Ownership Pattern for acquisition management.

Objective b - Maintain, Improve, and Restore Habitat Quality

- CM** Proposals for new water developments will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Design, construction and maintenance information is included in Figures M-1 and M-2 Appendix M.
- REF** See section 2.4 Issue: Management of Wild Horses and Burros for management of burros inside bighorn sheep range.

Objective c - Reestablish Demes

CM Proposals to reestablish lost demes on BLM lands are addressed on a case-by-case basis and require an HMP and State director approval.

2.3.2 Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative

Objective a - Identify and Protect Essential Habitat

Action Designate essential habitat for the Sonoran Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation and the Southern Mojave Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation as the *Sonoran Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA)* and the *Southern Mojave Bighorn Metapopulation WHMA*, respectively. Map 2-18 Appendix A shows the two proposed WHMAs.

Action Delete *Marble Mountains, Whipple Mountains, Sheep Hole Mountains, Chuckwalla Mountains and Orocopia Mountains HMAPs* (Map 2-4 Appendix A) which are all captured inside the *Sonoran Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA)* and the *Southern Mojave Bighorn Metapopulation WHMA*.

Action Change the Multiple Use Class designation in the Eagle Mountains area on 20,600 acres of current MUC I to MUC L (18,000 acres) and MUC Unclassified (2,600 acres). The rationale for this change is 1) MUC L more appropriately supports the management goal and proposals for bighorn sheep while still allowing for the extraction of minerals, 2) MUC I supported open pit mining of iron which terminated over a decade ago, including the dismantling of the associated milling facility, 3) mineral market conditions are such that remaining mineral potential (mostly iron and gold) is currently uneconomical, and 4) gold deposits are in the form of veins, the extraction of which would most likely not involve the open pit methods. This applies to public lands only. See Map 2-7 Appendix A.

Action Fence potential hazards to bighorn sheep (e.g., canals, pitfalls) with substantial fencing materials (e.g., chainlink).

Action Eliminate the Ford Dry Lake Allotment (49,682 acres) because it is less than 9 miles from occupied bighorn range in the Palen Mountains. BLM guidelines given in Appendix C of the BLM's *Mountain Sheep Ecosystem Management Strategy in the 11 Western States and Alaska* (see Appendix J) require a 9-mile buffer between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep unless there is a significant barrier to physical contact.

Action Reduce the area of Rice Valley Allotment from 85,565 acres to 76,301 acres, eliminating 9,264 acres in the southern part of the lease for potential grazing use (Map 2-15 Appendix A). The area of the allotment eliminated is within 9 miles of current occupied range in the Granite and Palen demes. BLM guidelines given in Appendix C of the BLM's *Mountain Sheep Ecosystem Management Strategy in the 11 Western States and Alaska* (see Appendix J of this document) require a 9-mile buffer between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep unless there is a significant barrier to physical contact.

Action In areas managed for any combination of burros, deer, and bighorn sheep, natural waters will be allocated to each species on an equal shares basis. Such allocations will improve the opportunity of achieving viable populations of each species, prevent over-utilization of both forage and water, reduce conflicts from contact and improve the efficiency of gathering burros. This allocation only addresses the indicated species and does not mean fundamental exclusion of other elements of the ecosystem. Allocations would be achieved through installation of exclosures that allow access to waters for deer and bighorn sheep and prevent access to burros. However, a specific fencing proposal is not addressed in this plan but is deferred until the number of burros reaches appropriate

management level and a monitoring base has been established to include such information as animal numbers and water and forage utilization. Design, construction and maintenance information for exclosures is included in Figures M-1 and M-2 Appendix M.

- REF** See section 2.5 Issue: Designation of Routes of Travel for description of route closures.
REF See section 2.6 Issue: Land Ownership Pattern for description of land acquisition management.
REF See section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise for prescriptions relating to reduction of surface disturbance which cover parts of bighorn sheep range.

Objective b - Maintain, Improve, and Restore Habitat Quality

- Action** New water developments will be constructed to expand usable habitat. Some existing artificial water sources will also be removed over time. These include all nine windmills (which are no longer functional) and some pipe-tanks facilities which are old, high maintenance, have too little storage capacity, and are redundant to proposed new facilities. An unspecified number of those to be removed are located in wilderness areas. Map 2-19 Appendix A shows 87 prospective areas in the *Sonoran Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation WHMA* identified by CDFG with the assistance of bighorn conservation groups for new water developments. There are 58 sites common to both deer and bighorn sheep (see section 2.3.6). Design, construction and maintenance information is included in Figures M-1 and M-2 Appendix M. Proposed sites have been generally mapped. Twenty two sites proposed are located inside wilderness areas. Many more are located near the boundaries of wilderness areas. This location pattern was developed to best meet the objective with the minimum necessary inclusion in wilderness areas. Final sites selected will conform to the above mentioned numbers. Project-level environmental assessments will be written for sites when selected.
- REF** See section 2.4 Issue: Management of Wild Horses and Burros for management of burros inside bighorn sheep range.

Objective c - Reestablish Demes

- Action** After burro and domestic sheep conflicts are resolved and when sufficient numbers of bighorn sheep are available, reestablish the following lost demes (Maps 2-17 and 2-18 Appendix A):

Sonoran Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation WHMA
Cargo Muchacho Mountains
Mule Mountains
Palo Verde Mountains

CDFG will prepare a capture and relocation plan for each reestablishment and will coordinate and direct operations. Approval of the BLM State Director will be required prior to reestablishment.

2.3.3 Small DWMA A Alternative

Objective a - Identify and Protect Essential Habitat

- Action** Designate essential habitat for the Sonoran Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation and the Southern Mojave Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation as the *Sonoran Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA)* and the *Southern Mojave Bighorn sheep Metapopulation WHMA*, respectively. Map 2-18 Appendix A shows the two proposed

WHMAs.

- Action** Delete *Marble Mountains, Whipple Mountains, Sheep Hole Mountains, Chuckwalla Mountains and Orocopia Mountains HMPs* (Map 2-4 Appendix A) which are all captured inside the *Sonoran Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation Wildlife Habitat Management Area* (WHMA) and the *Southern Mojave Bighorn Metapopulation WHMA*.
- Action** Change the Multiple Use Class designation in the Eagle Mountains area on () acres of current MUC I to MUC L where current MUC I is concurrent with the proposed WHMA (Map 2-12 Appendix A). The rationale for this change is 1) MUC L more appropriately supports the management goal and proposals for bighorn sheep while still allowing for the extraction of minerals, 2) MUC I supported open pit mining of iron which terminated over a decade ago, including the dismantling of the associated milling facility, 3) mineral market conditions are such that remaining mineral potential (mostly iron and gold) is currently uneconomical, and 4) gold deposits are in the form of veins, the extraction of which would most likely not involve the open pit methods. This applies to public lands only.
- Action** Where they occur, wild burros will be fenced out of all natural and artificial waters within currently *occupied range* of the *Sonoran Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation WHMA* or the *Southern Mojave bighorn Metapopulation WHMA*. Design, construction and maintenance information is included in Figure M-1 and M-2 Appendix M. Site specific assessments will be prepared when sites are selected.
- Action** Eliminate the Ford Dry Lake Allotment (49,682 acres) because it is less than 9 miles from occupied bighorn range in the Palen Mountains (Map 2-13 Appendix A). BLM guidelines given in Appendix C of the BLM's *Mountain Sheep Ecosystem Management Strategy in the 11 Western States and Alaska* (see Appendix J of this document) require a 9-mile buffer between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep unless there is a significant barrier to physical contact.
- Action** Eliminate Rice Valley Allotment to reestablish the Little Maria Mountain deme (Map 2-13 Appendix A). The allotment is within 9 miles of proposed deme. BLM guidelines given in Appendix C of the BLM's *Mountain Sheep Ecosystem Management Strategy in the 11 Western States and Alaska* (see Appendix J of this document) require a 9-mile buffer between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep unless there is a significant barrier to physical contact.

Objective b - Maintain, Improve, and Restore Habitat Quality

REF Same as the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative.

Objective c - Reestablish Demes

REF Same as the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative.

2.3.4 Small DWMA B Alternative

Objective a - Identify and Protect Essential Habitat

REF Same as Preferred Alternative.

Objective b - Maintain, Improve, and Restore Habitat Quality

Action Construct new water developments outside of designated wilderness areas as generally described

below (not shown on a map) to expand usable habitat in the *Sonoran Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation WHMA*:

<u>Location</u>	<u>No.</u>
Little Chuckwalla Mountains	1
Between Hwy 78 and I-8	3
Chocolate Mountains (west side)	3
Little Mule Mountains	1
Orocopia Mountains	1
Little Picacho Mountains	1
Chuckwalla Mountains (north side)	2
Mule Mountains (to reestablish deme)	3
Palo Verde Mountains (to reestablish deme)	3
Cargo Muchacho Mountains (to reestablish deme)	3

Some existing artificial water sources will also be removed over time. These include all nine windmills (which are no longer functional) and some pipe-tanks facilities which are old, high maintenance, have too little storage capacity, and are redundant to proposed new facilities. An unspecified number of those to be removed are located in wilderness areas. Fewer of these existing facilities would be removed than proposed in the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative, however, because so few new waters are proposed. Some of these new water developments will benefit deer (see section 2.3.8). Design, construction and maintenance information is included in Figures M-1 and M-2 Appendix M. Agencies will attempt to site new water developments at least 1/4 mile from open routes or washes.

REF See section 2.4 Issue: Management of Wild Horses and Burros for management of burros inside bighorn sheep range.

Objective c - Reestablish Demes

REF Same as the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative.

Goal and Objective of Desert Mule Deer Management

Desert mule deer are a native species, but they are not a special status species. Deer are included in this section primarily because they are managed as a game species and artificial waters are proposed to support their population. Deer will potentially benefit from prescriptions related to protecting and enhancing habitat for both bighorn sheep and other special status animal and plant species, however management of mule deer are not dependent on designation of DWMA's or WHMA's.

Objective

- a. Maintain genetic variation in and viability of individual demes by improving or increasing usable habitat and by augmenting populations.
- b. Provide for the aesthetic, educational, and recreational uses of desert mule deer.

Desert Mule Deer Strategy

The desert mule deer populations within the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Planning Area will be managed as two populations identified by their current CDFG hunting zone designation: D-12 and D-17. Desert mule deer will continue to be conserved as a native species and managed as a game species. CDFG is currently rewriting the deer conservation and management plan for both of these herds in a document known as the Deer Management Plan for Deer Assessment Unit 11. When completed the CDFG plan will contain considerably more detail and site-specific proposals. While deer is a native species found in JTNP and CMAGR, hunting is not allowed on those lands. In addition, in JTNP there is no game management consideration for deer, including artificial waters, but there is in CMAGR in support of hunting that occurs outside CMAGR. Therefore, the bulk of this strategy is limited to BLM and CMAGR lands.

Decisions and Policy Common to all Alternatives

1. Manage deer in deer habitat throughout its range as currently delineated in the State's D-12 Deer Action Unit and manage harvesting through hunting. CDFG will provide regulations, permitting systems, law enforcement, and other action to support a hunting program where sustainable and consistent with Metapopulation management goals.
2. CDFG will continue to construct, improve, and maintain existing natural and artificial water sources and exclosures around them where required and coordinate such work through other agencies and volunteer groups according to CDFG standards and MOUs with BLM and CMAGR.

Planning Area-wide Decisions and Management Strategy Common to Preferred, Small DWMA A, and Small DWMA B Alternatives

1. Artificial waters proposed for construction will be considered as grouped proposal and environmental assessment on a yearly basis for administrative efficiency. A monitoring summary (population trends, and effects of waters) will be included to help support the annual proposal and the full strategic number and patten for the metatpopulation as outlined

in the Plan. Since about half of the proposed artificial waters for bighorn sheep and desert mule deer are mutually beneficial, they will also be considered simultaneously. In this plan new artificial waters are proposed only for the *Sonoran Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation*. Proposals for the *Southern Mojave Desert Bighorn Sheep Metapopulation*, including JTNP, will be considered at a later date.

2.3.5 No Action Alternative

Objective a -Provide for the aesthetic, educational, and recreational uses of desert mule deer.

CM Proposals for new water developments for burro deer are considered on a case-by-case basis. Design, construction and maintenance information is included in Figures M-1 and M-2 Appendix M.

2.3.6 Preferred Alternative

Objective a -Provide for the aesthetic, educational, and recreational uses of desert mule deer.

Action New water developments will be constructed to expand usable habitat. Map 2-19 Appendix A shows 108 prospective areas in the Planning Area identified by CDFG with the assistance of bighorn conservation groups for the new water developments. Of the 108, 58 are common to both deer and bighorn sheep. (See bighorn sheep 2.3.2 objective b for additional information). Design, construction and maintenance information is included in Figures M-1 and M-2 Appendix M. Proposed sites have been generally mapped. Eight sites proposed are located inside wilderness areas. Many more are located near the boundaries of wilderness areas. This location pattern was developed to best meet the objective with the minimum necessary inclusion in wilderness areas. Final sites selected will conform to the above mentioned numbers. Project-level environmental assessments will be written for sites when selected.

2.3.7 Small DWMA A Alternative

Objective a -Provide for the aesthetic, educational, and recreational uses of desert mule deer.

Action Same as the Preferred Alternative.

2.3.8 Small DWMA B Alternative

Objective a -Provide for the aesthetic, educational, and recreational uses of desert mule deer.

Action Construct 21 artificial waters for deer over the next several years (Figures M-1 and M-2 Appendix M). Use would be common to both deer and bighorn sheep at all sites. (See bighorn sheep 2.3.4 objective b for additional information).

Goals and Objectives of Other Special Status Animal and Plant Species and Natural Communities & Ecological Processes

- a. PLANTS AND ANIMALS - Maintain the naturally occurring distribution of 28 special status animal species and 30 special status plant species in the Planning Area. For bats, the term "naturally occurring" includes those populations that might occupy man-made mine shafts and adits.
- b. NATURAL COMMUNITIES - Maintain proper functioning condition in all natural communities with special emphasis on communities that a) are present in small quantity, b) have a high species richness, and c) support many special status species.
- c. ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES - Maintain naturally occurring interrelationships among various biotic and abiotic elements of the environment.

Objectives

- a. Protect and enhance habitat
- b. Protect connectivity between protected communities

Decisions and Policy Common to all Alternatives

1. Activities or projects authorized at or within 1 mile of a significant roost site shall have mitigation measures applicable to the bat species present and the project. Mitigation might include seasonal restrictions, light abatement, bat exclusion, and gating of alternate sites. If bats are to be excluded from an old mine prior to renewed mining, the exclusion must be performed at a non-critical time for the species present by a qualified bat biologist. Mitigation plans for large mines shall consider retaining some shafts and adits or creating new ones as compensation.
2. Within suitable habitat within the distribution of flat-tailed horned lizard, all applicable actions in the *Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Conservation Strategy* (FTHL Strategy available in BLM Riverside and El Centro offices) shall be applied. These include the following:
 - 1) Where occupied flat-tailed horned lizard habitat is identified, apply mitigation measures specified in the FTHL Strategy;
 - 2) Require compensation for disturbance of habitat at 1 acre acquired for each acre disturbed, which is the rate outside of FTHL Management Areas; and
 - 3) Document all habitat disturbance according to an interagency protocol.
3. Public comment on critical issues shall be solicited from the California Desert Advisory Council for actions on BLM lands and from the Advisory Commission for lands in JTNP. The NEPA process shall be used to provide information to the public and to solicit comments on proposed projects occurring on federally administered lands in the Planning Area.
4. The Desert Managers Group shall continue to provide strategic fiscal planning and shall oversee activities of the Integrated Ecosystem Coordinator, the Public Information Coordinator, and the Habitat Restoration Coordinator. The Desert Managers Group shall address interagency relations in the Planning Area.
5. The BLM and CDFG will coordinate all wildlife management activities in wilderness under the MOU (available in all BLM offices) on "Wildlife Management Activities in Wilderness" signed in 1997.

Planning Area-wide Decisions and Management Strategy Common to Preferred, Small DWMA A, and Small DWMA B Alternatives

Various actions to benefit desert tortoise will add protection to special status species and natural communities within DWMA's depending upon the alternative selected. Additionally, there are many other important issues which will add additional commitment to the conservation of special status species and natural communities. These include, but are not limited to the following:

1. CDFG, BLM, and NPS will jointly develop a public education plan. Educational materials might include brochures, posters, interpretive displays and signs. The BLM's Santa Rosa Mountains Visitor Center and the JTNP Visitor Center will be primary contact points for public education for the Planning Area. Interpretive programs at Big Morongo Reserve, Thousand Palms Reserve, Dos Palmas Reserve, and National Parks will include topics such as needs of special status species, vegetation restoration, fire ecology, and off-highway vehicle use. BLM rangers, Park rangers, and CDFG wardens will continue to inform public land visitors on these issues.
2. A Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan Cooperator's Meeting shall be held at least annually. The agenda shall include a review of implementation actions in this plan, population trends as indicated by monitoring, progress in research actions, status of public education programs, and cumulative new surface disturbance. Each of the cooperating agencies- BLM, NPS, USMC, USFWS, CDFG - shall have an official representative present at the meetings. The general public, interest groups, and other agencies shall be invited and shall be given time on the agenda to comment on plan implementation.
3. The BLM and USMC shall develop an interagency agreement for management of the Chocolate Mountains Aerial Gunnery Range as required by the California Desert Protection Act.
4. Within one year after completing the plan, BLM and NPS will jointly develop and submit a monitoring plan to USFWS to assure that casual uses or other human activity are not affecting known occurrences of Coachella Valley Milkvetch.
5. During project construction, special effort shall be made to avoid disturbance of populations of any special status plant; avoidance shall be strongly encouraged. Where plants cannot be avoided, the effects of the project on the species as a whole will be assessed. If the project is not likely to jeopardize the species or lead to the need to list a candidate or sensitive species, the project may be approved. Disturbance of a listed plant species will not be allowed. Consideration shall be given to transplanting, seed collection and propagation, careful seedbed removal and replacement, and long-term, rigorous post-project monitoring of plant population recovery. Where a project approaches a population of a special status plant, permanent or temporary fencing shall be strongly considered.

2.3.9 No Action Alternative Objective a - Protect and enhance habitat

CM Habitat of each special status species and each natural community shall be protected using existing land use policies, designations such as existing MUC and ACECs, [Bigelow cholla, Desert Lily Preserve, Chuckwalla Bench, Corn Springs, Chuckwalla Valley Dune Thicket and Dos Palmas], Fallback Guidelines and by developing activity plans for proposed *Habitat Management Plans*

from the CDCA plan that have not yet been prepared. These HMPs (Map 2-4 Appendix A) include: Chemehuevi Wash, Vidal Wash, Whipple Mountains, Eagle Mountains bighorn habitat, Coxcomb Mountains bighorn habitat, Granite/Palen Mountains bighorn habitat, Rice Valley Dunes, McCoy Wash, Ford Dry Lake, Palo Verde Mountains and Indian Wash.

CM Impacts of proposed projects in suitable habitat within the range of a special status species and within natural community types shall be mitigated using commonly applied mitigation measures.

CM Standard mitigation practices for protection of raptors throughout the Planning Area shall be applied to construction of all new electric utility lines. Among these measures are the following: conductor spacing greater than 5 feet and/or perch guards or artificial perches on metal or unsafe crossarms. Mitigation techniques may be found in *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines* (Olendorff 1981). In areas of heavy raptor use, electrical distribution lines should be retrofitted appropriately.

CM Mitigation measures protecting raptors (and other birds) throughout the Planning Area shall be applied to cyanide-leaching mines. Measures shall include, but are not limited to, the following: 1) piping of cyanide solutions, 2) placement of balls or nets over pregnant ponds, and 3) use of drip-irrigation with no standing water on leach pads.

CM The following dunes and playas (see Maps 2-20 and 3-3 Appendix A) in the Planning Area are designated as "open" or "closed" to vehicle use regardless of the underlying multiple-use class (they are listed in Table 9 in the Motorized-Vehicle Access Element of the CDCA Plan and are given for information only):

Ford Dry Lake (portion of)	MUC M	Open
Cadiz Dunes	MUC L	Closed
Rice Valley Dunes (portion of)	MUC M	Open

Objective b - Protect connectivity between communities

CM The route designation process shall consider fragment size. A fragment is defined as an area un-bisected by route or linear disturbance.

2.3.10 Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative

Objective a - Protect and enhance habitat

Action Designate sixteen (542,443 acres) Multi-species WHMAs such that approximately 80 percent of the distribution of all special status species and all natural community types are included in the Multi-species Conservation Zone (Map 2-21 Appendix A). See Appendix H for a description of the process used to define the WHMA and the concept of conservation zones.

Action Delete the following unwritten HMPs: Fenner/Chemehuevi Valleys, Chemehuevi Wash, Vidal Wash, Eagle Mountains, Granite-Palen Mountains, Rice Valley Dunes, McCoy Wash, Chuckwalla Bench, Ford Dry Lake, Palo Verde Mountains, Indian Wash, Algodones Dunes and Coxcomb Mountains.

Action Mitigate impacts of proposed projects in suitable habitat within the range of a special status species and within natural community types using commonly applied mitigation measures and conduct surveys for special status species as follows (also see range maps 3-6a-f and 3-7a-f Appendix A):

- Most Animals: Only within Multi-species Conservation Zone.
- Plants with ranges mapped: Within ranges for species with range maps. Ranges may be both in and outside Multi-species Conservation Zone.

- Other: At all species locations in the Planning Area (see CM for special status species and special measures below for selected species or species groups).
Special mitigation measures shall be applied as given below for each species or species group.

Action Bat *gates* shall be constructed on caves or mine roosts only where there is significant potential for negative effects from human intrusion. Gates shall be constructed according to the most recent techniques considering human and bat passage, susceptibility to vandalism, and cost. Gates shall be inspected and maintained regularly. On BLM-managed lands placement of gates will include right-of-way protection unless sites are already afforded such protection.

Action All riparian habitat or permanently flowing streams within 5 miles of a maternity roost for Townsend's big-eared bat shall have a riparian proper functioning condition analysis and receive annual inspection and monitoring report. Those riparian/stream sites degraded by use or exotic plants or otherwise not functioning properly shall receive treatment and/or protection to restore it to proper functioning condition.

Action Closure of any route within 1/4 mile of any significant bat roost shall be strongly considered.

Action Throughout the Planning Area, closure of any route within 1/4 mile of a prairie falcon or golden eagle eyrie (cliff nests) shall be strongly considered.

Action OHV races, construction activities, blasting, and similar activities shall not be authorized within 1 mile of a prairie falcon or golden eagle eyrie between February 15 through June 15.

Action Habitat for elf owls at Corn Springs shall be improved by removing all remaining tamarisk to elevate water table, controlling starlings, planting cottonwoods, adding nest boxes or wood poles until cottonwoods mature, and minimizing groundwater pumping. (Other special status species benefitting might include vermilion flycatcher and Gila woodpecker).

Action Limit construction activity period to September 1 - February 1 if burrowing owls are present in a project area.

Action Harvest of live vegetation, especially cactus and yuccas, shall be prohibited in the Multi-species Conservation Zone to protect perching and nesting sites for thrashers.

Action Limit construction activity period to July 1 - December 1 if Crissal thrashers are present in a project area.

Action The following dunes and playas (see Map 2-20 Appendix A) shall be closed under CFR 8342 to vehicle use (except for routes designated open or limited) to protect essential blowsand habitat or sand source for populations of Mojave fringe-toed lizard. The following changes shall be made to Table 9 in Motorized-Vehicle Access Element of the CDCA Plan:

Palen Dunes	MUC M	Closed
Rice Valley Dunes	MUC M	Closed
Ford Dunes	MUC M	Closed
Palen Dry Lake	MUC L & M	Closed
Ford Dry Lake (portion of)	MUC M	Closed

See Section 2.5 Objective a for additional information.

Action On those playas which are designated MUC I for salt mining (Bristol, Cadiz, and the western half of Danby), areas of playa habitat with little to no mining infrastructure will be managed through design and rehabilitation of mining operations and other uses to mitigate alteration of natural ecological processes - primarily episodes of water flooding and ponding. This prescription will serve until either 1) the level of mining operations is significantly increased from the relatively low, constant level of activity of the past five decades; and 2) the level of knowledge is increased about the natural history of the specific playa environments and effects of salt mining operations - positive or negative.

Action Special mitigation measures avoiding disturbance of habitat of Couch's spadefoot toad shall be

strongly considered in all projects. Ephemeral impoundment areas should not be disturbed by vehicles or other activities in order to maintain soil percolation rates and preserve microfauna. Surface flow to such impoundments should not be blocked by projects.

- Action** Closure of any route within 1/4 mile of a site of known occurrence of Couch's spadefoot toad shall be strongly considered.
- Action** Install permanent fencing where unauthorized vehicle use is observed in temporary impoundment areas for Couch's spadefoot toad. These areas have not yet been identified.
- Action** Closure of any route within 1/4 mile of a natural or artificial water source (e.g., springs, seeps, stream, guzzler) shall be strongly considered.
- Action** Closure of "redundant" routes shall be strongly considered.
- Action** In the Multi-species WHMA, compensation for disturbance of Desert Dry Wash Woodland and Desert Chenopod Scrub communities as shown on Map 3-3 Appendix A shall be required at 3 acres for each acre disturbed. Equivalent funds may be directed toward community enhancement or rehabilitation. For compensation for habitat disturbance within DWMA's, see section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise Recovery, Small DWMA A.
- Action** In Sand Dune and Playa communities as shown on Map 3-3 Appendix A that are closed to vehicle use, compensation for surface disturbance shall be required at 3 acres for each acre disturbed. Compensation will not be required for existing salt mining operations on playas managed under MUC I. Equivalent funds may be directed toward community enhancement or rehabilitation. For compensation for habitat disturbance within DWMA's, see section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise Recovery, Small DWMA A.
- Action** Springs and Seep communities in need of rehabilitation or protection shall be improved through a number of means: removing tamarisk, controlling starlings, planting native species, adding nest boxes or wood poles until cottonwoods mature, adding fencing to exclude livestock and burros, discontinuing water diversions. These needs and measures would vary by the known or predicted occurrence of various species of concern. Where necessary habitat improvements shall be protected by right-of-way. Map 2-22 Appendix A indicates 45 sites are in need of tamarisk removal and 93 sites may need exclosures for cattle and burros (those within leases or herd areas), although these numbers may vary somewhat after performing on-site evaluations.
- Action** Construction projects will not disturb spring and seeps during duration of project.
- Action** BLM will acquire private and SLC lands outside NPS with known occurrence out to one mile from each occurrence of Coachella Valley Milkvetch.
- REF** See section 2.5 Issue: Designation of Routes of Travel for description of route closures.
- REF** See section 2.6 Issue: Land Ownership Pattern for description of land acquisition management.

Objectives b - Protect connectivity between communities

- Action** The route designation process shall consider fragment size. A fragment is defined as an area un-bisected by route or linear disturbance.
- Action** The fragmenting affects of projects should be considered in the placement, design, and permitting of new projects.
- REF** See section 2.5 Issue: Designation of Routes of Travel for description of route closures.

2.3.11 Small DWMA A Alternative

Objective a - Protect and enhance habitat

- Action** Same as Preferred Alternative with following exceptions:

- Action** Designate eighteen (812,323 acres) Multi-species WHMAs such that approximately 80 percent of the distribution of all special status species and all natural community types are included in the Multi-species Conservation Zone (Map 2-23 Appendix A). See Appendix H for a description of the process used to define the WHMA and the concept of conservation zones.
- Action** Bat *gates* shall be constructed on all caves or mine roosts where entry would pose a hazard to humans or bats outside of CMAGR. Gates shall be constructed according to the most recent techniques considering human and bat passage, susceptibility to vandalism, and cost. Gates shall be inspected and maintained regularly. On BLM-managed lands placement of gates will include right-of-way protection unless sites are already afforded such protection.
- Action** All significant roost sites shall be withdrawn, at generally 2.5 acres per site, from mineral entry, subject to valid existing rights.
- Action** In Sand Dune and Playa communities as shown on Map 3-3 Appendix A that are closed to vehicle use, compensation for surface disturbance shall be required at 3 acre for each acre disturbed. Compensation will not be required for existing salt mining operations on playas managed under MUC I. Equivalent funds may be directed toward community enhancement or rehabilitation.

Objectives c - Protect connectivity between communities

- Action** Same as Preferred Alternative.

2.3.12 Small DWMA B Alternative

Objective a - Protect and enhance habitat

- Action** Same as Preferred Alternative with following exceptions:
- Action** Designate twelve (512,455 acres) Multi-species WHMA s such that approximately 50 percent of the distribution of special status species and natural community types are included in the following combined areas: 1) Joshua Tree National Park, 2) Chocolate Mountains Aerial Gunnery Range, 3) designated wilderness 4) proposed DWMA s (see section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise Small DWMA B), and 5) the newly defined Multi-species WHMA (Map 2-24 Appendix A). These combined areas are hereafter referred to as the Multi-species Conservation Zone. Actions applied to the Multi-species WHMA will generally be pro-active and use-guiding rather than use-prohibiting. See Appendix H for a more precise definition of the WHMA.
- Action** Construction will not be limited to period between July 1 and December 1 in Conservation Zone when Crissal thrashers are present.
- Action** Fencing will not be considered where unauthorized vehicle use is observed in temporary impoundment areas for Couch's spadefoot toad.
- Action** In the Multi-species WHMA, compensation for disturbance of Desert Dry Wash Woodland and Desert Chenopod Scrub communities as shown on Map 3-3 Appendix A shall be required at 1 acre for each acre disturbed. Equivalent funds may be directed toward community enhancement or rehabilitation. For compensation for habitat disturbance within DWMA s, see section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise Recovery, Small DWMA A.
- Action** In Sand Dune and Playa communities as shown on Map 3-3 Appendix A that are closed to vehicle use, compensation for surface disturbance shall be required at 1 acre for each acre disturbed. Compensation will not be required for existing salt mining operations on playas managed under MUC I. Equivalent funds may be directed toward community enhancement or rehabilitation.
- Action** On Bristol Dry Lake (designated MUC I for salt mining), areas of playa habitat with little to no mining infrastructure will be managed through design and rehabilitation of mining operations and

other uses to mitigate alteration of natural ecological processes - primarily episodes of water flooding and ponding. This prescription will serve until either 1) the level of mining operations is significantly increased from the relatively low, constant level of activity of the past five decades; and 2) the level of knowledge is increased about the natural history of the specific playa environments and effects of salt mining operations - positive or negative.

Objectives c - Protect connectivity between communities

Action Same as Preferred Alternative.

2.4 Issue: Wild Horses and Burros

Managing wild burros along the Colorado River is a joint responsibility for BLM offices in California and Arizona. Management is further complicated by a complex land ownership pattern which includes three national wildlife refuges, one state recreation area, private lands (which include farmlands), Metropolitan Water District lands, and the Chemehuevi and Colorado River Indian tribal lands. As these jurisdictions are mostly adjacent to the Colorado River, they tend to have concentrations of wild burros during the summer months when water availability is limited to upland areas. Burros which range both on and off BLM public lands (as is the case throughout the NECO Planning Area), are subject to the Wild, Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971.

Two Herd Management Areas (HMAs), Havasu and Cibola-Trigo, established by Arizona BLM, exist on both sides of the Colorado River. Only the portions of each that are located on the California side are affected by the NECO Plan.

BLM's land use plans for the above-indicated California and Arizona BLM offices are proposed to be amended for their Wild Horses and Burros components because of the recommendations of *Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan*, the Pierson Report (see goal c) and conflicts with other uses.

The *Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan* recommends no burro grazing in DWMAs. The burros also share habitat used by bighorn sheep and deer. There are increasing concerns over forage competition between burros and deer, and even greater concern over competition between burros and bighorn sheep for available water in the uplands.

The reader is also referred to Issues 2.1 (Standards and Guidelines), 2.3 (Bighorn Sheep and Deer), and 2.2 (Recovery of the Desert Tortoise) for related issues and solutions. No permanent management facilities for wild burros (water developments, exclosures) are proposed at this time. At such time as burro populations reach appropriate management levels (AMLs) in herd management areas (HMAs), the need for these facilities will be evaluated. Methods, locations, and facilities related to the gathering and holding of captured burros, both temporary and permanent, will be utilized and specifically addressed in updated herd management area plans (HMAPs) and gathering plans which will follow the NECO Plan. Development of these documents also includes public review.

Goals for Managing Wild Burros

- a. Manage wild burro herds for healthy viable populations in a thriving natural ecological balance.
- b. Address the inconsistencies and complexities of management plans and program administration between California and Arizona BLM to better implement the BLM's management responsibilities under P.L. 92-195 and better accomplish the missions and mandates which govern other administrated lands.
- c. Follow the recommendations from the Wild Horse and Burro Emergency Evaluation Team, commonly known as the Pierson Report. The team recommended, to combine multiple HMAs to recognize an entire herd and designate only one field office be responsible for management of a herd.

Objectives

- a. Combine and adjust the boundaries and AMLs for herds and management units that are common to California and Arizona administrations and designate a single BLM field office to manage them to resolve management issues and improve program administration.

Change in Terminology and CDCA Plan

The following is a list of terms used to define wild horse and burro management. Some of this terminology represents a change in terminology used in the CDCA Plan and described in Chapter 3 (See section 3.8 for definitions and the relationships to the out of date terms). The correct terminology is used in planning documents developed by BLM in Arizona for that portion of the California Desert within its jurisdiction.

1. *Herd Area* (HA)
2. *Herd Management Area* (HMA)
3. *Appropriate Management Level* (AML)
4. Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP)

Additional Points of Management

The following additional notes of management are provided to help clarify details of management not addressed in the NECO Plan but are related to land use plan implementation.

HMAPs and Unitized Program Administration

Upon completion of the NECO Plan new HMAPs will be written which will replace the separate California and Arizona HMAPs. HMAPs contain the details of managing herds of wild horses and burros which are not contained in land use plans. Along with the writing of HMAPs, agreements will have to be developed between the BLM offices in California and Arizona for the combined program administration.

Gathering Operations and Plans

Gathering plans will be written and approved prior to conducting gathering operations. These plans may address time of year of operations; use of facilities and wranglers on horses; access into HMAs and other areas - including wilderness areas, refuges, lands managed by other agencies and private lands; and use of water/air/wheeled craft to help herd and haul animals.

2.4.1 No Action Alternative Objectives a - Combine Common Herds and Management Units

- CM** Manage all HMAs with current boundaries and AMLs as separately set in current California and Arizona land use and program management plans. (Table 2-10) (Map 2-25 Appendix A).
Manage Piute Mountain HA for zero burros.

Table 2-10

Herd Management Area (HMA)*	Appropriate Management Level (AML)
Chemehuevi HMA (CA)	150 (a single herd and AML are common to both HMAs)
Havasu HMA (AZ)	
Chocolate/Mule Mts. HMA (CA)	22 (California), 190 (Arizona) (a single herd is common to both HMAs, each of which has separate AMLs)
Cibola/Trigo HMA (AZ)	
Picacho HMA (CA)	AML: 42 horses

2.4.2 Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative
Objective a - Combine and Adjust Common Herds and Management Units

Action Combine Chemehuevi and Havasu HAs and HMAs into a single burro HA and single burro HMA to be named *Chemehuevi HA* and *HMA* and modify the new HMA boundary to more accurately reflect burro use and reduce conflicts in the northern portion of the Chemehuevi Indian Reservation, the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), and with issues defined in sections 2.2 and 2.3. The new HMA is reduced from a current combined 485,846 acres to 147,630 acres (Map 2-26 Appendix A). Reduce the current AML of 150 to a current management level of 108, which shall remain in effect until a new AML is established through monitoring of habitat and population. Reductions center primarily on the NWR and tribal land.

Action Eliminate the Picacho HMA for horses.

Action Combine historical burro range (see Chapter 3) and Chocolate/Mule Mountains and the Cibola-Trigo HAs and HMAs into a single burro HA and a single burro HMA to be named *Chocolate/Mule Mountains HA and HMA* and modify the boundary to more accurately reflect burro use and reduce conflicts in the Cibola and Imperial national wildlife refuges (NWRs) Fish and Wildlife Service lands, CMAGR, Picacho State Recreation Area (SRA), and with issues defined in sections 2.2 and 2.3. The new HMA is reduced from a current combined 422,598 acres to 223,542 acres (Map 2-26 Appendix A). Reduce the current combined AML of 212 to a single current management level of 121, which shall remain in effect until an AML is established through monitoring of habitat and population. Reductions center primarily on the NWRs, SRA, and CMAGR.

2.4.3 Small DWMA A Alternative
Objectives a - Combine and Adjust Common Herds and Management Units

Action Eliminate the Chemehuevi, Havasu, Chocolate/Mule Mountains, Cibola-Trigo and Picacho HMAs to eliminate conflicts which stem from a land pattern issue in which there are many entities which do not share burro management mandates (NWRs, SRA, CMAGR, private farmlands). (Map 2-27 Appendix A).

Action Combine the Chemehuevi and Havasu HAs into a single burro HA to be named *Chemehuevi HA*.

Combine the Chocolate/Mule Mountains, Cibola-Trigo, and historic burro range (see Chapter 3) into a single burro HA to be named *Chocolate/Mule Mountains HA* (Map 2-27 Appendix A). (HAs cannot be eliminated by law but can be managed for zero populations.)

2.4.4 Small DWMA B Alternative

Objectives a - Combine and Adjust Common Herds and Management Units

- Action** Combine Chemehuevi and Havasu HAs and HMAs into a single burro HA and single burro HMA to be named *Chemehuevi HA* and *HMA*. and modify the new HMA boundary to more accurately reflect burro use and reduce conflicts in the northern portion of the Chemehuevi Indian Reservation, the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), and with issues defined in sections 2.2 and 2.3. The new HMA is reduced from a current combined 485,846 acres to 263,021 acres (Map 2-28 Appendix A). Retain the current AML of, which shall remain in effect until a new AML is established through monitoring of habitat and population. The relatively small reduction in acres allows continuation of current management level
- Action** Eliminate the Picacho HMA for horses.
- Action** Combine historical burro range (see Chapter 3) and Chocolate/Mule Mountains and the Cibola-Trigo HAs and HMAs into a single, burro HA and a single burro HMA to be named *Chocolate/Mule Mountains HA and HMA* and modify the boundary to more accurately reflect burro use and reduce conflicts in the Cibola and Imperial national wildlife refuges (NWRs), CMAGR, Picacho State Recreation Area (SRA), and with issues defined in sections 2.2 and 2.3. The new HMA is reduced from a current combined 422,598 acres to 274,811 acres (Map 2-28 Appendix A). Reduce the current combined AML of 212 to a single current management level of 138, which shall remain in effect until an AML is established through monitoring of habitat and population. Reduction center primarily on the NWRs, SRA, and CMAGR.
- Action** Establish the *Piute Mountain HMA* (39,780 acres) at a current population level of 37 burros until an AML is established through monitoring of habitat and population. (Map 2-28 Appendix A).

2.5 Issue: Motorized-Vehicle Access / Routes of Travel Designations / Recreation

In the California Desert, motorized-vehicle access and recreation enjoy a close relationship whether motorized travel is the focus of recreational activities (e.g., driving for pleasure, participating in dual-sport motorcycle events, or racing in organized events) or simply a means of getting to recreation sites such as campgrounds and trailheads. Routes of travel designations directly influence opportunities for recreation while, at the same time, affect access for non-recreational pursuits. Accordingly, motorized-vehicle access, routes of travel designations, and recreation are addressed as a single issue

Casual v. Authorized Access

Casual use of public lands in the context of motorized-vehicle access is defined as the use of routes not requiring a specific authorization. *Authorized use* in such context is the use of routes approved through a permitting process for specific activities (e.g., rights-of-way issued for development of communication sites). The designation of routes as “open,” “limited,” and “closed” is generally applicable to both casual and authorized users of public lands. However, where there is a requirement for occasional access associated with an authorized use but it is determined that unlimited casual use may cause undesirable resource impacts, routes will be designated “closed” and available for use only by the authorized party. In such circumstances, the authorized use of a “closed” route usually limits this use in some manner or requires mitigation in some form. It is anticipated that few routes will be available for use *only* by authorized parties. Access for the use and enjoyment of private lands will be addressed on a case-by-case basis where private landowners are adversely affected by route designation decisions.

BLM / USMC / NPS

Map 2-29 Appendix A shows the current access network for all lands in the NECO planning area. Plan decisions will not address access on USMC and NPS lands. Accordingly, the following actions apply to BLM-managed lands only.

Goals for Motorized-Vehicle Access / Routes of Travel Designations / Recreation

The goals stated in the CDCA Plan’s Motorized-Vehicle Access Element (1985 Plan Amendment Six, approved January 15, 1987) are herein reiterated as goals of the NECO Plan for motorized-vehicle access and routes of travel designations:

- a. Provide for constrained motorized vehicle access in a manner that balances the needs of all desert users, private landowners, and other public agencies.
- b. When designating or amending areas or routes for motorized vehicle access, to the degree possible, avoid adverse impacts to desert resources.
- c. Use maps, signs, and published information to communicate the motorized vehicle access situation to desert users. Be sure all information materials are understandable and easy to follow.

The goals stated in the CDCA Plan’s Recreation Element (1985 Plan Amendment Six, approved

January 15, 1987; and 1987 Plan Amendment Nine, approved August 23, 1988) are herein reiterated as goals of the NECO Plan for recreation:

- a. Provide for a wide range of quality recreation opportunities and experiences emphasizing dispersed undeveloped use.
- b. Provide a minimum of recreation facilities. Those facilities should emphasize resource protection and visitor safety.
- c. Manage recreation use to minimize user conflicts, provide a safe recreation environment, and protect desert resources.
- d. Emphasize the use of public information and education techniques to increase public awareness, enjoyment, and sensitivity to desert resources.
- e. Adjust management approach to accommodate changing visitor use patterns and preferences.
- f. Encourage the use and enjoyment of desert recreation opportunities by special populations, and provide facilities to meet the needs of those groups.

Objectives²

- a. Designate routes of travel consistent with the criteria at 43 CFR 8342.1.
- b. Provide for organized competitive off-highway vehicle events in a manner that protects desert resources.
- c. Establish consistency in expressing limitations for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping.

2.5.1 No Action Alternative Objective a - Routes of Travel Designations³

CM Motorized-vehicle access is managed in accordance with Multiple-Use Class (MUC) guidelines established in the CDCA Plan, as amended (see section 3.10). Routes of travel are approved for motorized-vehicle use in accordance with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989 (issued on February 9, 1972, and May 24, 1977, respectively), and the criteria at 43 CFR 8342.1.

Action All “existing” routes (Map 2-29 Appendix A) in MUC “L” areas that have been inventoried and

²In response to a proposal to establish an Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area on public lands in the lower Chemehuevi Valley, the following objectives were initially considered for the NECO Plan: (1) amend area designations for motorized-vehicle access to meet the needs of desert users, enhance recreation opportunities, and protect desert resources; (2) amend Multiple-Use Class (MUC) designations to be consistent with amendments to area designations for motorized-vehicle access; and (3) designate Special Recreation Management Areas where site-specific management plans are necessary to address significant public recreation issues or management concerns. Consideration of the proposal to establish an OHV Recreation Area in the lower Chemehuevi Valley has been deferred until a coordinated effort between the Needles Field Office and the Lake Havasu Field Office (Arizona) to amend their respective land use plans can be initiated. Designation of a motorized-vehicle “open area” *only* within the CDCA at this time would be premature.

³(a) Route designations approved through the NECO Plan constitute CDCA Plan decisions; future changes to these decisions would require amending the CDCA Plan. (b) Route designations apply only to routes and portions thereof on public lands; the designation of routes as “open,” “limited,” and “closed” is not applicable on non-public lands. (c) Routes within Joshua Tree National Park are not subject to route designation through the NECO Plan; motorized-vehicle access is addressed through the Park’s General Management Plan and amendments thereto. (d) The Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range is closed to casual use; routes therein accordingly are not subject to the NECO Plan route designation process.

mapped for the NECO Plan,⁴ including navigable washes that have been individually identified, are designated “open” for motorized-vehicle use except (1) where such use has already been limited or prohibited through publication of a final notice in the *Federal Register*, (2) where specific biological parameters proposed through the NECO Plan are applied to minimize harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats relative to motorized-vehicle use,⁵ or (3) where restrictions on use are required to protect other resource values of the public lands, to promote the safety of all users of the public lands, or to minimize conflicts among various uses of the public lands. All navigable washes not individually inventoried and mapped in MUC “L” areas would be designated “open” as a class except where such washes occur within a “washes closed zone” created to meet management goals in section 2.2. Designation of “washes open zones” in Category I and II would be approved contingent upon long-term monitoring of use and impacts. (Maps 2-10 and 2-31 Appendix A).

All navigable washes not individually inventoried and mapped in MUC “L” areas would be designated “open” *as a class* except where such washes occur within a “washes closed zone.” All “existing” routes in MUC “M” areas and MUC “I” areas not designated “open” to motorized-vehicle access, whether non-wash routes or navigable washes, would be available for motorized-vehicle use except where such use has already been limited or prohibited, or where specific biological parameters proposed in sections 2.2 and 2.3 are applied to minimize harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats relative to motorized-vehicle use. (Map 2-31 Appendix A)

Cultural Resources⁶

For all MUCs, routes identified as having cultural resources located within a 600-foot Area of Potential Effect (APE)⁷ that are listed, determined eligible, or likely to be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and for which there is potential that activities associated with use of the route might adversely affect the resource, will remain undesignated until such time that the specific cultural resource can be assessed in the field and resource conflicts consequent to use of an adjacent route can be identified and resolved through review in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. If, after review, it is determined that use of the subject routes and activities associated with use of these routes will have no adverse effect

⁴Appendix L describes the route inventory process for the NECO Plan.

⁵The criteria at 43 CFR 8342.1(b) require that harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats be minimized where routes are available for use by motorized vehicles, that is, where routes are designated “open” or “limited.” Further, the regulatory criteria require that special attention be given to protect endangered or threatened species and their habitats. The biological parameters proposed in sections 2.2 and 2.3 are applicable to all alternatives as necessary to meet regulatory requirements.

⁶The criteria at 43 CFR 8342.1(a) require that damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, air, or other resources of the public lands be minimized where routes are available for use by motorized vehicles. Such “other resources” include cultural resources.

⁷The size of the APE for the No Action Alternative—600 feet—relates to limits for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping under this alternative. Such activities are allowed within 300 feet of a route of travel (except in sensitive areas such as ACECs where the limit is 100 feet), thereby creating a zone approximately 600 feet wide for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping.

on historic properties, these routes may be designated “open.”⁸ If it is determined that use of a route or activities associated with use of the route may have or have had an adverse effect on historic properties, the BLM will consult with SHPO on the appropriate course of action to resolve the effect and may designate the route as “closed.” Routes identified as having no known cultural resources located within the APE that are listed, determined eligible, or likely to be considered eligible, and routes where there are no identified cultural resources within the APE, may be designated “open.”

REF See section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise, and section 2.3 Issue: Management of Special Status Animals and Plants and Natural Communities regarding specific biological parameters to minimize harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats. Table 2-11 (below) summarizes the referenced actions.

Table 2-11

Section	Biological Parameters to Minimize Harassment of Wildlife and Significant Disruption of Wildlife Habitats ⁹
2.2	Portions of Desert Tortoise Recovery Units (No Action Alternative), portions of DWMA (Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative), or DWMA in their entirety (Small DWMA “A” and “B” Alternatives) are designated as “washes closed zones” wherein vehicle use is restricted to specific routes, including navigable washes, that are individually designated “open” or “limited” ¹⁰
2.3	The route designation process shall consider fragment size
2.3	Closure of any route within 1/4 mile of any significant bat roost shall be strongly considered. ¹¹

⁸ Designation of routes subsequent to Section 106 review would require an amendment to the CDCA Plan.

⁹ Recognizing the value of a motorized recreational touring network as identified through the NECO Plan and/or specific access requirements granted through the right-of-way process or other such authorizations, which generally are reflected by the presence of paved and/or maintained dirt roads, the following categories of routes are designated “open” as exceptions to the biological parameters described in this table, unless it is determined that use must be limited for other reasons: paved roads, maintained dirt roads, and recreational touring routes. In accordance with the CDCA Plan, as amended, a maintained road is defined as “regularly or frequently maintained by continuous use (e.g., passage of vehicles) or machine maintenance.” For the NECO Plan, a maintained dirt road is generally one that is maintained periodically with the use of machines (e.g., motorized graders). A “recreational touring route” is one that, in combination with other such routes, provides important recreational access primarily to meet the needs of individuals who “drive for pleasure.”

¹⁰ Within “washes closed zones,” washes not specifically designated “open” or “limited,” despite their navigability, will not be available for vehicle use; such washes are designated “closed” *as a class*. Outside “washes closed zones,” navigable washes are considered to occur within “washes open zones” and are available for motorized-vehicle use *as a class* unless it is determined that use in specific washes or wash zones must be further limited. In MUC “L” areas, navigable washes in “washes open zones” are designated “open” *as a class*. In MUC “M” areas and MUC “I” areas not designated “open” to motorized-vehicle access, navigable washes are considered “existing” routes (No Action Alternative only).

There are two different configurations of “washes closed zones” for the four alternatives. One configuration is applicable to the No Action Alternative and the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative; the other is applicable to both of the small DWMA alternatives. The former occurs entirely within DWMA as proposed under the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative, but extends outside the Desert Tortoise Recovery Units to a small degree. The latter, as indicated, is coincident with the small DWMA.

No “washes limited zones” are proposed in the NECO Plan.

¹¹ Applying “location-specific” biological parameters occasionally leads to the designation of an entire route as “closed” rather than limiting the closure to a portion of the route. Such broadening of the parameters in this manner is generally based on judgments regarding potential for manageability. Conversely, in light of judgments regarding maintenance of a viable

2.3	Closure of any route within 1/4 mile of prairie falcon and golden eagle eyries (cliff nests) shall be strongly considered. ¹²
2.3	Closure of any route within 1/4 mile of a site of known occurrence of Couch's spadefoot toad shall be strongly considered. ¹³
2.3	Closure of any route within 1/4 mile of a natural or artificial water source (e.g., springs, seeps, streams, guzzlers) shall be strongly considered. ¹⁴
2.3	Closure of "redundant" routes shall be strongly considered. ¹⁵

Route-Specific Designations (No Action Alternative)

Appendix I and Map 2-31 Appendix A identify the following:

- routes proposed for "open" designation in MUC "L" areas
- routes proposed for "limited" designation
- "existing" routes available for use in MUC "M" and "I" areas
- routes proposed for "closed" designation
- routes proposed for addition to the route network to enhance recreational opportunities

Routes proposed for addition to the network typically fall into one of three categories:

(1) those which have never existed, thereby requiring "construction";

"Construction" may be accomplished with the use of typical road construction equipment, or simply by repeated vehicular travel along a specified course.

(2) specific navigable washes;

Although use of navigable washes in a "washes open zone" would be allowed *as a class*—no proposal would be necessary for their inclusion in the route network—wash-specific designations of "open" or "limited" in MUC "L" areas would allow their use to be encouraged, that is, such routes could be mapped and signed "open" if consistent with "Implementation of Route Designation Decisions" (below).

route network and, again, potential for manageability, routes occurring within the prescribed distance as specified by the biological parameters are occasionally designated "open" or "limited."

¹² Same as footnote number 10.

¹³ Same as footnote number 10.

¹⁴ Same as footnote number 10.

¹⁵ Redundant routes are those deemed *excess or more than are needed*. In identifying redundant routes, the following definition is to be considered: A redundant route is one whose purpose is apparently the same or very similar to that of another route, inclusive of providing the same or very similar recreation opportunities or experiences.

In some instances, elimination of redundant routes also reduces fragmentation of wildlife habitats.

Identifying redundant routes requires that judgements be made relative to the uses and purposes of certain routes. A route may be considered redundant based on proximity to another route despite a lack of knowledge about its use and purpose. Whether it is recommended for closure may then be dependent on its *apparent* use and purpose, its contribution to maintenance of a viable route network, its proximity to navigable washes in an "open" wash zone, and/or the potential for management of the route as "closed." (If navigable washes within an "open" wash zone are in close proximity to a route determined as redundant of another route identified in the NECO inventory, the closure of such route may be deemed inconsequential in attaining wildlife-related objectives because access to the immediate area would be minimally affected. Therefore, although redundant, it may not be recommended for closure.)

(3) *those which are declared to be “non-routes” at the time of the inventory.*

Reestablishing these routes may be accomplished with the use of typical road construction equipment, or simply by repeated vehicular travel.

Any route requiring construction through use of road construction equipment or establishment by repeated vehicular travel will require a specific authorization consequent to preparation of a project-specific environmental assessment.

- *routes declared to be “non-routes” at the time of the inventory (April 1996 and thereafter) and, therefore, not available for use*

Non-routes are previously-existing routes which have been substantially reclaimed by the forces of nature. Some of these non-routes are delineated as existing routes on the most recent versions of 1:24,000 U.S.G.S. maps. Nevertheless, an on-the-ground survey revealed that such routes (1) cannot be located due to complete or near-complete reclamation, (2) are intermittently visible thereby encouraging intermittent cross-country travel where evidence of the route disappears, and/or (3) have been re-vegetated to the extent that, although visible, travel upon them would require the crushing of substantial vegetation, i.e., destruction of natural features.

Where only a *portion* of a route was declared to be a non-route at the time of the inventory, the entire route is recommended for closure to preclude impacts to the non-route portion and allow natural reclamation to continue. Such routes are identified as “partial non-routes.” Where a portion of the route connects other open routes and is not declared to be a non-route, only the non-route portion is recommended for closure.

All “non-routes” and “partial non-routes” would be designated “closed.”

- *routes for which designation decisions are deferred pending completion of a cultural resources assessment*

Given the nature and scale of the NECO Plan, no field survey for cultural resources was conducted to specifically address the probability, nature and extent of effects to historic properties that might result from designating routes as “open” or “limited.” Accordingly, routes within an Area of Potential Effect where the qualities or values of cultural resources that would qualify a site for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places might be compromised consequent to use of the route or uses associated with the route (e.g., stopping, parking, and vehicle camping) will not be designated until a cultural resources assessment has been completed (also see discussion under section 4.1.12).

Table 2-12 No Action Alternative¹⁶

Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated “Open” in MUC “L” Areas ¹⁷				
	Desert Tortoise Recovery Units		Outside Desert Tortoise Critical Habitat	Total
	Chemehuevi	Chuckwalla		
		453	552	960
Miles of “Existing” Vehicle Routes Available for Use in MUC “M” and MUC “I” Areas ¹⁸				
	373	569	1766	2708
Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated “Closed” to Minimize Harassment of Wildlife and Significant Disruption of Wildlife Habitats in Accordance with Biological Parameters				
Biological Parameter and NECO Section	Mileage of navigable washes closed <i>as a class</i> in “washes closed zones” is undetermined.			
Portions of Desert Tortoise Recovery Units (No Action Alternative), portions of DWMMAs (Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative), or DWMMAs in their entirety (Small DWMA “A” and “B” Alternatives) are designated as “washes closed zones” wherein vehicle use is restricted to specific routes, including navigable washes, that are individually designated “open” or “limited” (Section 2.2)				
Route designation shall consider fragment size (Section 2.3)	Fragmentation was considered in application of the other parameters, but no routes are proposed for closure due solely to this parameter.			
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of significant bat roosts shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	1	-	15	16
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of prairie falcon and golden eagle eyries shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	-	2	-	2
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of known occurrences of Couch’s spadefoot toad shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	-	-	-	-
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of natural or artificial water sources shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	3	9	17	29
Closure of redundant routes shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	30	44	59	133
Total miles of closed routes from application of biological parameters	34	55	91	180

¹⁶As previously indicated, route designations apply only to routes and portions thereof on public lands. To portray the actual extent of the access network, however, it is necessary to consider routes on both public and non-public lands. Therefore, miles of routes cited in this table pertain to lengths of routes in their entirety regardless of land ownership.

¹⁷These figures do not reflect the miles of wash routes designated “open” *as a class* in “washes open zones.” Routes designated “limited” (seasonal limitations on use) total nine (9) miles, but are included in this table as “open” routes.

¹⁸These figures do not reflect the miles of wash routes available for use as “existing” routes of travel in “washes open zones.”

Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated “Closed” to Protect Other Resource Values of the Public Lands, to Promote the Safety of All Users of the Public Lands, or to Minimize Conflicts Among Various Uses of the Public Lands¹⁹				
	-	2	41	43
Miles of Vehicle Routes Proposed for Addition to the Route Network to Enhance Recreational Opportunities²⁰				
	84	20	215	319
Miles of “Non-routes” Identified During the Route Inventory				
	25	6	38	69
Miles of “Partial Non-routes” Identified During the Route Inventory				
	25	6	38	69
Miles of Vehicle Routes in Designated Wilderness Closed to Casual Motorized-Vehicle Access through the California Desert Protection Act of 1994²¹				
	637			
Miles of Vehicle Routes for which Designation is Deferred Pending Completion of a Cultural Resources Assessment				
	4	7	34	45

Implementation of Route Designation Decisions

- a. Routes comprising a basic recreational access network within the NECO planning area would be individually signed in such a way as to signify their availability for use. This basic network is based on specific recreational touring routes identified for the NECO Plan.
- b. Information kiosks depicting the basic recreational access network would be installed at key locations throughout the NECO planning area. These kiosks would furnish information relating to access opportunities and limitations, resource protection, and visitor safety.
- c. Printed media (e.g., maps, brochures, etc.) depicting the basic recreational access network would be developed and distributed to the public. Information provided would be similar to that on the kiosks, but would likely be more comprehensive as space allows. Interpretive information may also be provided to enhance recreational experiences.
- d. Routes designated “closed” would be appropriately signed, barricaded, or rehabilitated as necessary to exclude access and allow the forces of nature to obliterate them, except where limited use is important to achieve resource management objectives (e.g., maintenance of small game guzzlers to support wildlife populations). In such cases, access would be controlled to exclude casual use by the general public yet allow continued administrative use.
- e. Routes that are not included in the basic recreational access network but are available for motorized-vehicle use (i.e., they have not been designated “closed”) would *not* be signed or depicted on information kiosks.

¹⁹Mileages reflect application of the route designation criteria at 43 CFR 8342.1 other than those at 43 CFR 8342.1(b) (see footnote 4 of this section).

²⁰Any route requiring construction through use of road construction equipment or establishment by repeated vehicle travel will require a specific authorization consequent to preparation of a project-specific environmental assessment.

²¹The actual mileage of routes in wilderness that were closed to casual motorized-vehicle use consequent to the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 is undetermined as a complete inventory of routes does not exist for these areas.

The intent of this strategy is (1) to provide off-highway vehicle enthusiasts, especially novices, with well-defined, signed routes on which to explore the desert, and (2) to direct use to a limited number of primary routes, thereby decreasing use throughout the network of secondary routes. In general, it is anticipated that the identified primary routes will better accommodate higher levels of use with lower potential for adverse impacts to resource values than the secondary routes.

Implementation Priorities:

Implementation would occur first within MUC “L” areas and ACECs, then on the remaining public lands.

Route-Specific NEPA Documentation

Documentation of proposed decisions is generally displayed on the large format maps in the back-cover pouch. Documentation on a route by route basis (inventory route number) by alternative is not included in the DEIS but is available upon request. Route by route basis documentation will be included in the FEIS and Record of Decision at the conclusion of the planning process. The routes inventory is available on detailed maps (1:24,000 scale) for review at the following BLM offices: Needles, Palm Springs, El Centro, and Riverside.

Route Designation Revisions

Routes of travel designations would be revised in accordance with the CDCA Plan, as amended (see section 3.10).

Objective b - Competitive Off-Highway Vehicle Events

CM Competitive off-highway vehicle events are allowed on competitive recreation routes²² established through the CDCA Plan, as amended. Within the NECO Planning Area, these are the *Johnson Valley to Parker* and the *Parker 400* routes (Map 2-30 Appendix A). These routes are established and approved exclusively for permitted competitive recreation use, and are not for access or casual recreation unless specifically approved for such use.

Prior to authorizing a competitive off-highway vehicle event within a designated competitive recreation route, an event-specific environmental assessment (EA) shall be completed. It can be assumed the BLM will issue permits *absent a charge in the circumstances which led to the establishment of these corridors*. The purpose of the EA is to determine if changes have occurred. The BLM may deny a permit for a race in a designated corridor if there is reason to believe that changes have, in fact, occurred and a competitive off-highway vehicle event would result in substantial impacts to resource values that cannot be avoided or mitigated.

Permits issued for the use of these corridors will include stipulations consistent with the Multiple-Use Class guidelines for the areas through which they pass. All competitive events will require appropriate resource, safety, and management stipulations. Stipulations for the *Johnson Valley to Parker Motorcycle Race* will include those developed specifically for the event through the 1980 Environmental Impact Statement (see Appendix K).

²²The CDCA Plan identifies competitive recreation courses as “routes.” Actions proposed in the NECO Plan require distinguishing between an existing route on which casual motorized vehicle travel occurs and which establishes the basic alignment of the competitive recreation route, and a “corridor” that is comprised of the existing route and adjacent lands available for racing. Also see footnote 25 of this section.

Competitive off-highway vehicle events *outside* the established competitive recreation routes are allowed in accordance with the Multiple-Use Class guidelines for the areas through which they pass (see section 3.9 for guidelines). Prior to authorizing a competitive off-highway vehicle event outside a designated competitive recreation route, an event-specific environmental assessment or environmental impact statement will be completed.

Objective c - Stopping, Parking, and Vehicle Camping

CM In accordance with the CDCA Plan, as amended, stopping, parking, and vehicle camping are allowed within 300 feet of a route except within sensitive areas (such as ACECs) where the limit is 100 feet.²³

2.5.2 Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative Objective a - Routes of Travel Designations

Action Amend the CDCA Plan to require that motorized-vehicle access will be managed in accordance with current MUC “L” guidelines irrespective of Multiple-Use Class, except in MUC “C” (wilderness) and areas designated “open” for vehicle use.

Action All “existing” routes that have been inventoried and mapped for the NECO Plan (Map 2-29 Appendix A), including navigable washes that have been individually identified, would be designated “open” for motorized-vehicle use except (1) where such use has already been limited or prohibited through publication of a final notice in the *Federal Register*, (2) where specific biological parameters proposed through the NECO Plan are applied to minimize harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats relative to motorized-vehicle use, or (3) where restrictions on use are required to protect other resource values of the public lands, to promote the safety of all users of the public lands, or to minimize conflicts among various uses of the public lands. All navigable washes not individually inventoried and mapped would be designated “open” *as a class* except where such washes occur within a “washes closed zone”²⁴ created to meet management goals in section 2.2. Designation of “washes open zones” in DWMA’s would be approved contingent upon long-term monitoring of use and impacts. (Maps 2-10 and 2-32 Appendix A)

Cultural Resources

Actions to protect cultural resource values would be the same as described under the No Action

²³The 1982 CDCA Plan Amendments Three and Forty-Nine, approved May 17, 1983, lend themselves to confusion regarding limitations on stopping, parking, and vehicle camping. Amendment Three, which revised the Motorized-Vehicle Access Element, specifies that stopping, parking, and vehicle camping are allowed within 300 feet of routes, and that specific parking or stopping areas may be signed “open” or “closed” to protect fragile or sensitive resources adjacent to the route. Accordingly, these activities would not be further limited until such time that it is determined to be necessary. On the other hand, Amendment Forty-Nine establishes the 300-foot limit “except within sensitive areas (such as ACECs).” Determinations of where these activities need to be further limited were not deferred to a later date in the case of ACECs and other recognized sensitive areas (although prohibiting parking and stopping in specific areas to protect fragile or sensitive resources, regardless of location, remains discretionary with the BLM). As the CDCA Plan in 1980 established a 100-foot limitation and Amendment Forty-Nine changes it to 300 feet *except* in sensitive areas, the 100-foot limitation still applies in ACECs.

²⁴The configuration of the “washes closed zone” under this alternative is the same as for the No Action Alternative.

Alternative except the size of the APE is changed to 200 feet within DWMA^s.²⁵
REF See section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise, and section 2.3 Issue: Management of Special Status Animals and Plants and Natural Communities regarding specific biological parameters to minimize harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats relative to motorized-vehicle use: same as the No Action Alternative.

Route-Specific Designations (Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative)

Appendix I and Map 2-32 Appendix A identify the following:

- routes proposed for “open” designation
- routes proposed for “limited” designation
- routes proposed for “closed” designation
- routes proposed for addition to the route network to enhance recreational opportunities (See discussion under the No Action Alternative relative to this element.)
- routes declared to be “non-routes” at the time of the inventory (April 1996 and thereafter) and, therefore, not available for use (See discussion under the No Action Alternative relative to this element.)
- routes for which designation decisions are deferred pending completion of a cultural resources assessment (See discussion under the No Action Alternative relative to this element.)

Table 2-13 Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative (footnotes for Table 2-10 are applicable to this table)

Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated “Open”					
	DWMA ^s		WHMA ^s	Outside DWMA ^s and WHMA ^s	Total
	Chemehuevi	Chuckwalla			
		799	1006	1352	2016
Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated “Closed” to Minimize Harassment of Wildlife and Significant Disruption of Wildlife Habitats in Accordance with Biological Parameters					
Biological Parameter and NECO Section	Mileage of navigable washes closed <i>as a class</i> in “washes closed zones” is undetermined.				
Portions of Desert Tortoise Recovery Units (No Action Alternative), portions of DWMA ^s (Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative), or DWMA ^s in their entirety (Small DWMA “A” and “B” Alternatives) are designated as “washes closed zones” wherein vehicle use is restricted to specific routes, including navigable washes, that are individually designated “open” or “limited” (Section 2.2)					
Route designation shall consider fragment size (Section 2.3)					Fragmentation was considered in application of the other parameters, but no routes are proposed for closure due solely to this parameter.

²⁵The size of the APE within DWMA^s for the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative—200 feet—relates to limits for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping under this alternative. Such activities are allowed within 100 feet of centerline of a route of travel within DWMA^s, thereby creating a zone 200 feet wide for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping. Outside DWMA^s, the limit for such activities is 300 feet from a route’s centerline, thereby establishing an APE of 600 feet (except in sensitive areas such as ACECs where the limit for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping is 100 feet).

Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of significant bat roosts shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	-	-	11	3	14
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of prairie falcon and golden eagle eyries shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	-	2	-	-	2
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of known occurrences of Couch's spadefoot toad shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	-	-	-	-	0
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of natural or artificial water sources shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	3	9	13	3	28
Closure of redundant routes shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	26	42	54	11	133
Total miles of closed routes from application of biological parameters	29	53	80	17	177
Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated "Closed" to Protect Other Resource Values of the Public Lands, to Promote the Safety of All Users of the Public Lands, or to Minimize Conflicts Among Various Uses of the Public Lands					
	-	2	2	39	43
Miles of Vehicle Routes Proposed for Addition to the Route Network to Enhance Recreational Opportunities					
	3	7	-	-	10
Miles of "Non-routes" Identified During the Route Inventory					
	70	18	129	104	321
Miles of "Partial Non-routes" Identified During the Route Inventory					
	18	6	19	25	68
Miles of Vehicle Routes in Designated Wilderness Closed to Casual Motorized-Vehicle Access through the California Desert Protection Act of 1994					
	Same as the No Action Alternative (669 miles)				
Miles of Vehicle Routes for which Designation is Deferred Pending Completion of a Cultural Resources Assessment					
	2	1	22	15	40

Implementation of Route Designation Decisions

Same as the No Action Alternative except for implementation priorities.

Implementation priorities:

Implementation will occur first within DWMAs, followed by WHMAs, then on the remaining public lands.

Route-Specific NEPA Documentation

Same as the No Action Alternative.

Route Designation Revisions

Same as the No Action Alternative.

Objective b - Competitive Off-Highway Vehicle Events

Action The section entitled “Organized Competitive Vehicle Events” in the Recreation Element of the CDCA Plan would be amended as follows:

1. The *Parker 400* competitive recreation route (corridor) would be eliminated.
2. Competitive events in the *Johnson Valley to Parker* route would be permitted in accordance with requirements set forth in the CDCA Plan (see Section 3.9) and stipulations from the 1980 Environmental Impact Statement (see Appendix K) except for the following changes and additional requirements (some elements listed below provide clarification of existing requirements):
 - a. The *Johnson Valley to Parker* route is available for casual recreation use except on days when competitive events are conducted.
 - b. The *Johnson Valley to Parker* route will be designated “open” except where cross-country travel within the *Johnson Valley to Parker* corridor is permitted.²⁶
 - c. The maximum number of participants in any one event is 500.
 - d. The maximum number of participants in any one event is 500.
 - e. Participation is limited to motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).
 - f. The start area must be located sufficiently within and distant from the boundary of the Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area to allow the field of participants to narrow (given the differing speeds of the various contestants) such that the event could continue within the confines of the established race corridor outside the “open area.”²⁷
 - g. The maximum width of the race corridor outside the Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area is 200 feet.²⁸
 - h. Where the *Johnson Valley to Parker* route establishes the boundary of a DWMA or WHMA, or the boundary of a wilderness area is less than 100 feet from the centerline of the designated route, the race corridor shall not extend beyond the route’s edge on that side, nor shall it extend farther than 100 feet from the centerline of the route opposite these special areas. Identification of other sensitive areas (e.g., those containing significant cultural resources) may locally restrict corridor width to protect resource values.
 - i. Pits shall be limited to locations identified in the NECO Plan. All pit activities, including parking of service vehicles, are restricted to the designated pit areas. Only race participants, support crews, and race officials are allowed in pit areas; spectators are prohibited in the pits.

²⁶The maximum number of participants in any one event is 500. Cross-country portions of the *Johnson Valley to Parker* route—sections where no established route exists—will not be available to the casual user. Only race participants and race officials may use cross-country portions of the race route when a competitive event is approved; race officials may also use these portions of the route for purposes related to administration of the event. The *Johnson Valley to Parker* route designated “open” refers to the established route available for casual use; lands adjacent to the established route and within the race corridor are not available for casual use except for the purposes of stopping, parking, and vehicle camping unless such uses are otherwise restricted.

²⁷Depending on the number of participants, two or more starting waves may be necessary to meet this requirement.

²⁸Where an existing route establishes the alignment of the race corridor, the boundaries of the corridor shall be no more than 100 feet from the centerline of the route.

- j. Participants may officially finish at any pit area.
 - k. Access by race officials for delineating the route, monitoring events, and conducting post-event actions is limited to the established corridor and other routes of travel normally available to the casual user.
3. Prior to authorizing a competitive off-highway vehicle event in the *Johnson Valley to Parker* corridor, an event-specific environmental assessment would be completed. It can be assumed the BLM will issue a permit *absent a charge in the circumstances which led to establishment of the corridor*. The purpose of the EA is to determine if changes have occurred. The BLM may deny a permit for a race in the corridor if there is reason to believe that changes have, in fact, occurred and a competitive off-highway vehicle event would result in substantial impacts to resource values that cannot be avoided or mitigated.
 4. Competitive motorized-vehicle events in which speed is the primary competitive factor would be prohibited except on approved competitive recreation routes (e.g., *Johnson Valley to Parker* route) and within Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Areas.

Objective c - Stopping, Parking, and Vehicle Camping

- Action** The section entitled “Stopping and Parking” in the Motorized-Vehicle Access element of the CDCA Plan, as amended, would be modified such that stopping, parking, and vehicle camping are allowed within 300 feet from the *centerline* of an approved route except within sensitive areas (such as ACECs) where the limit is 100 feet.²⁹ This slight modification of current management would provide consistency as regards the width of the stopping, parking, and vehicle camping corridor along approved routes of travel.
- REF** See section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise. In accordance with the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative, it is proposed that stopping, parking, and vehicle camping be allowed no more than 100 feet from the *centerline* of a route within DWMA.

2.5.3 SMALL DWMA A Alternative Objective a - Routes of Travel Designations

- Action** Same as the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative except that vehicle routes designated “open” within DWMA are limited to (1) paved routes, (2) maintained dirt routes, and (3) recreational touring routes identified for the NECO Plan. (Map 2-33 Appendix A)
- Cultural Resources*
Actions to protect cultural resource values would be the same as described under the No Action Alternative except the size of the APE is changed to 60 feet within DWMA.³⁰
- REF** See section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise, and section 2.3 Issue: Management of Special Status Animals and Plants and Natural Communities regarding specific biological

²⁹Under this alternative, the “300-foot rule” would be applicable outside DWMA only.

³⁰The size of the APE within DWMA for the Small DWMA “A” Alternative—60 feet—relates to limits for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping under this alternative. Such activities are allowed within 30 feet of centerline of a route of travel within DWMA, thereby creating a zone 60 feet wide for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping. Outside DWMA, the limit for such activities is 300 feet from a route’s centerline, thereby establishing an APE of 600 feet (except in sensitive areas such as ACECs where the limit for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping is 100 feet).

parameters to minimize harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats relative to motorized-vehicle use: same as the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative except that DWMA's in their entirety would be designated as "washes closed zones" wherein vehicle use is restricted to specific routes, including navigable washes, that are individually designated "open" or "limited."³¹

Route-Specific Designations (Small DWMA "A" Alternative)

Appendix I and Map 2-33 Appendix A identify the following:

- routes proposed for "open" designation
- routes proposed for "limited" designation
- routes proposed for "closed" designation
- routes proposed for addition to the route network to enhance recreational opportunities (See discussion under the No Action Alternative relative to this element.)
- routes declared to be "non-routes" at the time of the inventory (April 1996 and thereafter) and, therefore, not available for use (See discussion under the No Action Alternative relative to this element.)
- routes for which designation decisions are deferred pending completion of a cultural resources assessment (See discussion under the No Action Alternative relative to this element.)

Table 2-14 Small DWMA A Alternative (footnotes for Table 2-10 are applicable to this table)

Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated "Open"					
	DWMAs		WHMAs	Outside DWMAs and WHMAs	Total
	Chemehuevi	Chuckwalla			
		430	328	1826	1997
Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated "Closed" to Minimize Harassment of Wildlife and Significant Disruption of Wildlife Habitats in Accordance with Biological Parameters					
Biological Parameter and NECO Section	Mileage of navigable washes closed <i>as a class</i> in "washes closed zones" is undetermined.				
Portions of Desert Tortoise Recovery Units (No Action Alternative), portions of DWMAs (Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative), or DWMAs in their entirety (Small DWMA "A" and "B" Alternatives) are designated as "washes closed zones" wherein vehicle use is restricted to specific routes, including navigable washes, that are individually designated "open" or "limited" (Section 2.2)					
Route designation shall consider fragment size (Section 2.3)					

³¹The configuration of DWMAs differs between the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative and the Small DWMA "A" and "B" Alternatives. Whereas DWMAs in their entirety under the Small DWMA "A" and "B" Alternatives would constitute "washes closed zones," only portions of DWMAs under the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative would be similarly designated.

Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of significant bat roosts shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	-	-	11	3	14
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of prairie falcon and golden eagle eyries shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	-	1	-	-	1
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of known occurrences of Couch's spadefoot toad shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	-	-	-	-	0
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of natural or artificial water sources shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	-	7	18	3	28
Closure of redundant routes shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	18	23	81	11	133
Total miles of closed routes from application of biological parameters	18	31	110	17	176
Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated "Closed" to Protect Other Resource Values of the Public Lands, to Promote the Safety of All Users of the Public Lands, or to Minimize Conflicts Among Various Uses of the Public Lands					
	-	1	2	39	42
Additional Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated "Closed" in Accordance with the Proposed Action under this Alternative³²					
	271	324			
Miles of Vehicle Routes Proposed for Addition to the Route Network to Enhance Recreational Opportunities					
	3	2	3	2	10
Miles of "Non-routes" Identified During the Route Inventory					
	61	17	139	104	321
Miles of "Partial Non-routes" Identified During the Route Inventory					
	16	6	21	25	68
Miles of Vehicle Routes in Designated Wilderness Closed to Casual Motorized-Vehicle Access through the California Desert Protection Act of 1994					
	Same as the No Action Alternative (669 miles)				
Miles of Vehicle Routes for which Designation is Deferred Pending Completion of a Cultural Resources Assessment					
	n/a	n/a	25	15	40

Implementation of Route Designation Decisions

Same as the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative.

Route-Specific NEPA Documentation

Same as the No Action Alternative.

³²The mileages shown here represent the proposed closure of unmaintained dirt routes in DWMA's that would not be designated "closed" under the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative.

Route Designation Revisions

Same as the No Action Alternative.

Objective b - Competitive Off-Highway Vehicle Events

- Action** The section entitled “Organized Competitive Vehicle Events” in the Recreation Element of the CDCA Plan would be amended as follows:
- a. The *Johnson Valley to Parker* and *Parker 400* competitive recreation routes (corridors) would be eliminated.
 - b. Competitive off-highway-vehicle events in which speed is the primary competitive factor would be restricted to Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Areas. Events in these “open areas” would be in accordance with MUC “I” guidelines and event-specific requirements as formulated by the authorized officer.

Objective c - Stopping, Parking, and Vehicle Camping

- Action** Same as the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative.
- REF** See section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise. In accordance with the Small DWMA “A” Alternative, it is proposed that stopping and parking be limited to an area no more than 30 feet from *centerline* of an approved route within DWMA. Vehicle camping would only be allowed in designated areas within DWMA.

2.5.4 SMALL DWMA B Alternative
Objective a - Routes of Travel Designations

- Action** Same as the Small DWMA A Alternative except that redundant routes outside DWMA would be designated “open.” (Map 2-34 Appendix A)

Cultural Resources

Actions to protect cultural resource values would be the same as described under the No Action Alternative.³³

- REF** See section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise, and section 2.3 Issue: Management of Special Status Animals and Plants and Natural Communities regarding specific biological parameters to minimize harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats relative to motorized-vehicle use: same as the Small DWMA “A” Alternative.

Route-Specific Designations (Small DWMA “B” Alternative)

Appendix I and Map 2-34 Appendix A identify the following:

- *routes proposed for “open” designation*
- *routes proposed for “limited” designation*
- *routes proposed for “closed” designation*

³³The size of the APE within DWMA for the Small DWMA “B” Alternative—600 feet—relates to limits for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping under this alternative. Such activities are allowed within 300 feet of centerline of a route of travel within DWMA, thereby creating a zone 600 feet wide for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping. Outside DWMA, the limit for such activities is also 300 feet from a route’s centerline, thereby establishing an APE of 600 feet (except in sensitive areas such as ACECs where the limit for stopping, parking, and vehicle camping is 100 feet).

- routes proposed for addition to the route network to enhance recreational opportunities
(See discussion under the No Action Alternative relative to this element.)
- routes declared to be “non-routes” at the time of the inventory (April 1996 and thereafter)
and, therefore, not available for use
(See discussion under the No Action Alternative relative to this element.)
- routes for which designation decisions are deferred pending completion of a cultural
resources assessment
(See discussion under the No Action Alternative relative to this element.)

Table 2-15 Small DWMA “B” Alternative (footnotes for Table 2-10 are applicable to this table)

Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated “Open”					
	DWMAs		WHMAs	Outside DWMAs and WHMAs	Total
	Chemehuevi	Chuckwalla			
		Same as the Small DWMA “A” Alternative		1637	2315
Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated “Closed” to Minimize Harassment of Wildlife and Significant Disruption of Wildlife Habitats in Accordance with Biological Parameters					
Biological Parameter and NECO Section	Mileage of navigable washes closed <i>as a class</i> in “washes closed zones” is undetermined.				
Portions of Desert Tortoise Recovery Units (No Action Alternative), portions of DWMAs (Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative), or DWMAs in their entirety (Small DWMA “A” and “B” Alternatives) are designated as “washes closed zones” wherein vehicle use is restricted to specific routes, including navigable washes, that are individually designated “open” or “limited” (Section 2.2)					
Route designation shall consider fragment size (Section 2.3)	Fragmentation was considered in application of the other parameters, but no routes are proposed for closure due solely to this parameter.				
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of significant bat roosts shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	Same as the Small DWMA “A” Alternative		11	3	14
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of prairie falcon and golden eagle eyries shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	Same as the Small DWMA “A” Alternative		-	-	1
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of known occurrences of Couch’s spadefoot toad shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	Same as the Small DWMA “A” Alternative		-	-	0
Closure of routes within 1/4 mile of natural or artificial water sources shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	Same as the Small DWMA “A” Alternative		18	4	29
Closure of redundant routes shall be strongly considered (Section 2.3)	Same as the Small DWMA “A” Alternative		n/a	n/a	n/a

Total miles of closed routes from application of biological parameters	Same as the Small DWMA "A" Alternative	29	7	44
Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated "Closed" to Protect Other Resource Values of the Public Lands, to Promote the Safety of All Users of the Public Lands, or to Minimize Conflicts Among Various Uses of the Public Lands				
	Same as the Small DWMA "A" Alternative	1	40	42
Additional Miles of Vehicle Routes Designated "Closed" in Accordance with the Proposed Action under this Alternative³⁴				
	Same as the Small DWMA "A" Alternative			
Miles of Redundant Routes Outside DWMA's Designated "Open" in Accordance with the Proposed Action under this Alternative³⁵				
		59	33	92
Miles of Vehicle Routes Proposed for Addition to the Route Network to Enhance Recreational Opportunities				
	Same as the Small DWMA "A" Alternative	3	2	10
Miles of "Non-routes" Identified During the Route Inventory				
	Same as the Small DWMA "A" Alternative	107	135	320
Miles of "Partial Non-routes" Identified During the Route Inventory				
	Same as the Small DWMA "A" Alternative	13	33	68
Miles of Vehicle Routes in Designated Wilderness Closed to Casual Motorized-Vehicle Access through the California Desert Protection Act of 1994				
	Same as the No Action Alternative (669 miles)			
Miles of Vehicle Routes for which Designation is Deferred Pending Completion of a Cultural Resources Assessment				
	Same as the Small DWMA "A" Alternative	5	35	40

Implementation of Route Designation Decisions

Same as the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative.

Route-Specific NEPA Documentation

Same as the No Action Alternative.

Route Designation Revisions

Same as the No Action Alternative.

³⁴As with the Small DWMA "A" Alternative, the additional miles of vehicle routes designated "closed" are relative to the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative.

³⁵The mileage of redundant routes are *included* in the mileage of vehicle routes designated "open" as shown under the first heading of this table.

Objective b - Competitive Off-Highway Vehicle Events

Action The section entitled “Organized Competitive Vehicle Events” in the Recreation Element of the CDCA Plan would be amended as follows:

1. The *Parker 400* competitive recreation route (corridor) would be eliminated.
2. Competitive motorized-vehicle events in the *Johnson Valley to Parker* corridor would be managed consistent with the requirements described for the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative except the maximum number of participants is 800.
3. The following *additional* criteria for competitive motorized-vehicle events in which speed is the primary competitive factor would be included except for such events occurring entirely within off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Areas:
 - a. Competitive motorized-vehicle events may occur only on routes designated “open” for casual use; routes designated “limited” or “closed” may not be used for such events.
 - b. The maximum number of participants in any one event is 800.
 - c. Participation is limited to motorcycles and ATVs.
 - d. Start areas shall be located within Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Areas. The start area must be located sufficiently within and distant from the boundary of the Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area to allow the field of participants to narrow (given the differing speeds of the various contestants) such that the event could continue within the confines of the established race corridor outside the “open area.”
 - e. The maximum width of the race corridor is 200 feet.³⁶
 - f. Competitive motorized-vehicle events are not allowed in wilderness areas, WSAs, ACECs, critical habitat designated by the USFWS, identified cultural resource sites or districts, riparian areas, and other sensitive areas. Course design shall not include trails and roads that (a) are on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, (b) are designated as National Historic Trails or eligible for such designation, or (c) have been otherwise specially designated.
 - g. Where the “open” route utilized for a competitive event establishes the boundary of a DWMA or WHMA, or the boundary of a wilderness area is less than 100 feet from the centerline of the route, the race corridor shall not extend beyond the route’s edge on that side, nor shall it extend farther than 100 feet from the centerline of the route opposite these special areas.
 - h. Pits shall be limited to suitable sites in MUC “M” and “I” areas. All pit activities, including parking of service vehicles, are restricted to the designated pit areas. Only race participants, support crews, and race officials are allowed in pit areas; spectators are prohibited in the pits.
 - i. Finish and spectator areas shall be limited to suitable sites in MUC “M” or “I” areas.
 - j. Access by race officials for delineating the route, monitoring events, and conducting post-event actions is limited to the established corridor and other routes of travel normally available to the casual user.
 - k. Written permission from landowners to cross private property shall be provided to the BLM.
 - l. Permits issued for competitive motorized-vehicle events shall include appropriate resource, safety, and management stipulations.

Prior to authorizing a competitive off-highway vehicle outside an approved competitive recreation route or Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area, an event-specific environmental assessment would be completed.

³⁶Where an “open” route establishes the alignment of the race corridor, the boundaries of the corridor shall be no more than 100 feet from the centerline of the route.

Objective c - Stopping, Parking, and Vehicle Camping

- Action** Same as the Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative.
- REF** See section 2.2 Issue: Recovery of the Desert Tortoise. In accordance with the Small DWMA “B” Alternative, it is proposed that stopping, parking, and vehicle camping be allowed within 300 feet from *centerline* of an approved route within DWMA.

2.6 Issue: Land Ownership Pattern

Eighty-one percent of the land within the Planning Area is in Federal (public) ownership (Map 1-3 Appendix A). The remainder is divided among primarily state land grants, railroad lands, private inholdings, and other properties. While the amount of Federal land is high and generally supports a “Federal solution” to managing species and habitats, there are zones of mixed or “checkerboard” ownership outside of JTNP and CMAGR where federal management and private agendas are difficult to pursue. Without an adjustment to the land ownership pattern BLM will continue to be at a disadvantage concerning the management of sensitive resources adjacent to private or State owned property. This section applied primarily to BLM management. Currently there is little development pressure on private lands within the Planning Area.

Goal for Land Ownership Pattern

Adjust the land ownership pattern through acquisition and disposal of selected lands to improve opportunities for both the management areas and conservation of natural resources within DWMA and WHMA and existing wilderness, and the use of public and private lands in areas of low natural resource values for private, commercial or social purposes, including the opportunity for community expansion. Acquisition of Catellus and SLC lands (as well as other private lands) in wilderness areas is a continuing independent process requiring no specific action through the NECO planning process.

All acquired lands will automatically be managed under the same criteria as the surrounding public lands.

Public ownership within DWMA and WHMA shall be retained according to the guidelines of multiple use classes, ACECs, wilderness areas and other federal requirements unless there is a compelling reason for disposal as determined through NEPA and land use plan amendments. Where decision may be made to dispose of federal lands, the following considerations will contribute to developing a pattern of use and conservation to protect special status species, and the habitats and ecological processes they depend upon:

- location of springs and artificial waters
- known/predicted occurrence of special status plants and wildlife species
- corridors for movement of bighorn sheep and other species
- flow of water and movement of sand and soil and other ecological processes.

Federal lands available for private acquisition (disposal) come from the remainder of lands outside CMAGR, JTNP, BLM wilderness, DWMA and WHMA. The design of DWMA and WHMA includes consideration (i.e. exclusions) for freeway exits and lands in and adjacent to urban and agricultural centers. “Fixed-site” special status species and habitats (e.g., rare plants, bats, springs) which lie outside DWMA and WHMA will also be retained in public ownership to the extent practical.

Acquisition of private lands will be accomplished as much as possible and practical through exchange to reduce the impact of loss of tax-base to counties and only from willing sellers.

Objectives

- a. Acquire habitat within the DWMA's and WHMA's (limited application in bighorn sheep corridors), to ensure long-term manageability of these areas for conservation of biological ecosystems.
- b. Dispose of public lands where environmentally suitable for community expansion and private ownership.

Planning Area-wide Decisions and Management Strategy Common to Preferred, Small DWMA A, and Small DWMA B Alternatives

- a. Acquisition will generally be prioritized as follows:
 - Occurrences of *Coachella Valley milkvetch*.
 - DWMA's
 1. High risk of development in areas of greatest habitat value (i.e., high tortoise density, populations connectivity points)
 2. Large acreage parcels
 3. High tortoise density
 4. High species richness
 5. All others
 - WHMA's
 1. Special habitat value
 2. High development risk
 3. Large acreage parcels
 4. High species richness
 5. All others
 - Wilderness Areas
 1. High development risk
 2. Special habitat value (e.g., springs, bat sites, bighorn sheep lambing areas)
 3. All others
- b. Acquisition methods will generally be applied as follows but is subject to variation in application:
 1. 1 owner sections (640 acres) - exchange/Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
 2. 2-5 owners/section - LWCF/exchange/compensation
 3. 6-19 owners/section - compensation/LWCF
 4. 20+ owners/section - compensation, conservancy support, donation, assembled exchange

2.6.1 No Action Alternative Objective a Acquire Sufficient Habitat

Action Federal agencies will seek to acquire state or private lands within some ACECs, tortoise Category I and II, and wilderness areas through purchase, donation, or exchange according to scheduled priorities. Low priority lands will be acquired only on a passive basis, i.e., federal funding will not be sought; acquisitions will occur through means which do not require expenditure of federal funds (i.e., compensation, donation). Examples of low priority lands are 1) lands with little opportunity or support for private development; or 2) lands with a high density of owners where probability of acquisition of a manageable unit would be low, and the cost of implementing such acquisitions high. Additional guidance is in the California Statewide Desert Tortoise Management

Policy.

Objective b -Identify Public Lands for Disposal into Private Ownership

Action Identify public lands suitable for disposal of least biological sensitivity and other management value into private ownership where consolidation and location of private land both promotes private development and increases tax base for local governments. Federal lands potentially suitable for disposal under this action could include lands along freeways and freeway exists, lands adjacent to urban, agricultural, and industrial centers, lands in checkerboard ownership outside other sensitive areas, lands in unclassified areas, and other lands deemed to be unmanageable under Federal ownership. Although exchange is the BLM’s preferred method of disposal, the sale of lands could be considered.

2.6.2 Preferred Large DWMA Alternative Objective a Acquire Sufficient Habitat

Action Federal agencies will actively seek to acquire lands or interests in lands within DWMA and WHMA (except within Bighorn Sheep corridors) through purchase, donation, or exchange according to scheduled priorities. In DWMA this includes both private and State Lands Commission (SLC) lands. In WHMA this includes only private lands. This action adds to existing policy to acquire both private and SLC lands in wilderness areas. Map 2-35 Appendix A and Tables 2-15, 2-16 and 2-17 show the locations and amounts of lands involved.

Objective b -Identify Public Lands for Disposal into Private Ownership

Action BLM will dispose of lands in areas outside wilderness, DWMA, and WHMA and not containing known occurrences of rare plants, springs, bat or other special status species and where such action supports consolidation and location of private land to promotes private development and increases tax base for local governments. In addition to the above Federal lands potentially suitable for disposal under this action could include lands along freeways and freeway exits, lands adjacent to urban, agricultural, and industrial centers, lands in checkerboard ownership outside other sensitive areas, lands in unclassified areas, and other lands deemed to be unmanageable under Federal ownership. Although exchange is the BLM’s preferred method of disposal, the sale of lands could be considered.

Table 2-16 Acres of Private Lands in Proposed Management Areas Under Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative.

Management Area	Acres by Density Class (Owners or Parcels per Section)				
	1	2-5	6-19	20+	Total
Chemehuevi DWMA	103,981	4,815	6,624	10,480	125,900
Chuckwalla DWMA	58,970	13,710	21,725	31,802	126,207
Joshua Tree DWMA	41,137	300	8	42	41,487
BLM wilderness outside DWMA	162,630	15,319	13,499	8,607	200,056
Bighorn Sheep & Multi-species WHMA outside all above*	35,588	1,906	7,055	2,019	46,568
Total	402,306	35,051	48,911	52,950	540,218

*excluding Bighorn Sheep corridors

Table 2-17 Acres of Private Lands in Proposed Management Areas Under Small DWMA A

Management Area	Acres by Density Class (Owners or Parcels per Section)				
	1	2-5	6-19	20+	Total
Chemehuevi DWMA	82,200	3,536	5,036	7,510	98,282
Chuckwalla DWMA	25,149	5,734	15,584	18,818	65,292
Joshua Tree DWMA	41,137	300	8	42	41,487
BLM wilderness outside DWMA's	219,111	24,638	23,412	32,520	299,680
Bighorn Sheep & Multi-species WHMA's outside all above*	35,589	1,907	7,096	2,019	46,610
Total	403,186	36,114	51,135	60,909	551,344

*excluding Bighorn Sheep corridors

Table 2-18 Acres of Private Lands in Proposed Management Areas Under Preferred Small DWMA B

Management Area	Acres by Density Class (Owners or Parcel per Section)				
	1	2-5	6-19	20+	Total
Chemehuevi DWMA	82,200	3,536	5,036	7,510	98,282
Chuckwalla DWMA	25,157	5,734	15,584	18,818	65,292
Joshua Tree DWMA	41,137	300	8	42	41,487
BLM wilderness outside DWMA's	184,536	19,741	22,420	32,963	259,659
Bighorn Sheep & Multi-species WHMA's outside all above*	35,642	1,907	7,096	2,055	46,699
Total	368,672	31,217	50,143	61,388	511,420

*excluding Bighorn Sheep corridors

2.6.3 Small DWMA A Alternative Objective a Acquire Sufficient Habitat

Action Federal agencies will actively seek to acquire lands or interests in lands within DWMA's and WHMA's (except within Bighorn Sheep corridors) through purchase, donation, or exchange according to scheduled priorities. In DWMA's this includes both private and State Lands Commission (SLC) lands. In WHMA's this includes only private lands. This action also adds to existing policy to acquire both private and SLC lands in wilderness areas. Map 2-36 Appendix A and Tables 2-15 and 2-17 show the locations and amounts of lands involved.

Objective b -Identify Public Lands for Disposal into Private Ownership

Action Same as Preferred Alternative.

2.6.4 Small DWMA B Alternative

Objective a Acquire Sufficient Habitat

Action Federal agencies will actively seek to acquire lands or interests in lands within DWMA's and WHMA's (except within Bighorn Sheep corridors) through purchase, donation, or exchange according to scheduled priorities. In DWMA's this includes both private and State Lands Commission (SLC) lands. In WHMA's this includes only private lands. This action also adds to existing policy to acquire both private and SLC lands in wilderness areas. Map 2-37 Appendix A and Tables 2-16 and 2-17 show the locations and amounts of lands involved.

Objective b -Identify Public Lands for Disposal into Private Ownership

Action Same as No Action Alternative.

2.7 Access to Resources for Economic and Social needs

No plan actions are described, but there are some important points to note. While no specific action is included here, this public scoping issue has provide fundamental guidance in developing decisions that address other issue items. The intent in developing this Plan was to address all the major issues on an equal basis, to meet the goal of Public Land Health with the least expense to access and use of resources. A summation of the decisions proposed for these other issue items in Chapter 2 and the cumulative effects described in Chapter 4 will suggest to what extent this intent has been achieved.

Since the public scoping meetings were held and issue conclusions developed for the Plan, the CDPA passed (October, 1994). The CDPA had a considerable effect on this subject. It created new data, analyses, and obvious areas for protection of species and habitats. It also reduces access and heightened the sensitivity on this issue.

The emphasis that this issue provides is translated into the following guidance:

- a. Utilize existing Congressional and protective land use designations as much as possible to develop areas of conservation emphasis for the desert tortoise and other species and habitats and minimize the need for additional area for this purpose.
- b. Develop management areas with management emphases that are commensurate with the issues contained - i.e., the degree of restriction and cost of use should be in line with what is appropriate the array of species issues.
- c. Manage species and habitats by increasing the cost of doing business as opposed to imposing additional restrictions.
- d. Decisions based on science and science-based judgement, on Regional and long-term perspectives, and on cooperative approaches have the best chance of standing the test of time, minimize further need for restrictive management, and maximize possible future relaxation of current restrictions and expenses.

2.8 Incorporation of Changes to the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan created by the California Desert Protection Act (CDPA)

The Congressionally created CDPA created 23 new BLM wilderness areas in the Planning Area, added lands to and changed Joshua Tree National Monument to a Park, and created new wilderness areas in JTNP. The new wilderness designations must also be incorporated into JTNP and BLM land use plans. This has already occurred for JTNP, but will occur through NECO for BLM lands. For BLM lands an additional land use change associated with their creation is required as is described below under the heading, MUC Remnants. The changes are required and allow for no choice (except as noted below), so what is described below is the same for all alternatives.

2.8.1 No Action Alternative

Not addressed.

2.8.2 Preferred/Large DWMA Alternative

Action ³⁷Incorporate 23 CDPA-designated wilderness areas into the CDCA Plan. Wilderness areas will be managed according to law, regulations, policies and manuals for wilderness management. Additionally Wilderness areas will be designed MUC C and closed to vehicle use under CFR 8342. designated and closed to vehicle use under CFR 8342. These areas are listed below (from north to south) and depicted on Map 2-38 Appendix A:

- Bigelow Cholla Garden
- Clipper Mountains
- Stepladder Mountains
- Whipple Mountains
- Old Woman Mountains
- Sheephole Valley
- Rice Valley
- Palen/McCoy
- Orocopia Mountains
- Little Chuckwalla Mountains
- Indian Pass
- Little Picacho Peak
- Piute Mountains
- Trilobite
- Chemehuevi Mountains
- Turtle Mountains
- Cadiz Dunes
- Riverside Mountains
- Big Maria Mountains
- Mecca Hills
- Chuckwalla Mountains
- Palo Verde Mountains
- Picacho Peak

MUC Remnants

Background

The new set of BLM wilderness areas overlaid all or portions of previously designated MUC C, L, and M areas. Wilderness designation supercedes any previous MUC designation. However, the “edge fit” of the wilderness areas over the previous designations - even areas proposed for wilderness - MUC C, L and M areas- was not an exact fit in many cases. The result is that many small portions of previously large MUCs extend beyond wilderness boundaries. These small areas are referred to as “remnants”. All the wilderness areas in the NECO Planning Area have gone

³⁷ All BLM wilderness study areas which were identified under the wilderness review requirements of section 603 of FLPMA have been released and no longer exist.

through the boundary refinement process and approval and are GIS mapped. Most remnants are extremely long and narrow and small and are unmanageable as independent MUCs and should be reassigned as another MUC. They lie between the various wilderness areas and some different adjacent MUC areas. In the case of remnant MUC C areas the Desert Plan directs that they automatically and temporarily be reassigned as MUC L until such time as they are permanently assigned a MUC through the plan amendment process. Because the boundaries of wilderness areas cannot be changed, the compelling solution for reassigning most remnants is to assign them to the adjacent non-wilderness MUC as described in the action below. Reassignments vary among alternatives depending upon the nature of DWMA and other proposals. The scope of this action does not include the following:

1. large MUC L and M remnants which can stand alone
2. Access road “cherry stems” into wilderness areas

As a reminder and as noted in the Desert Plan, MUCs C, L, M, and I designations apply only to federal lands portion of the MUC areas so this subject and the action below has no effect on private lands.

Action Reassign all “remnant” MUCs identified in 2-2 to new MUCs, as indicated on Map 2-7 Appendix A.

Although not specifically identified as such, remnants are shown as a group on Map 2-2 Appendix A. The smallest sized remnants are too small to be observable on this map. More information and details are available at the Riverside Office of the Bureau of Land Management.

2.8.3 Small DWMA A Alternative

Action Reassign all “remnant” MUCs identified in 2-2 to new MUCs, as indicated on Map 2-12 Appendix A. Although not specifically identified as such, remnants are shown as a group on Map 2-2 Appendix A. The smallest sized remnants are too small to be observable on this map. More information and details are available at the Riverside Office of the Bureau of Land Management.

2.8.4 Small DWMA B Alternative

Action Reassign all “remnant” MUCs identified in 2-2 to new MUCs, as indicated on Map 2-12 Appendix A. Although not specifically identified as such, remnants are shown as a group on Map 2-2 Appendix A. The smallest sized remnants are too small to be observable on this map. More information and details are available at the Riverside Office of the Bureau of Land Management.