

## 2.0 ALTERNATIVES

This chapter presents the range of alternatives considered for the Coachella Valley California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Trails Management Plan. Both of these plans are subject to environmental review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and are sharing the same environmental impact statement; however these plans are prepared under different Bureau planning authorities. A description of these different planning authorities and respective planning procedures follows.

The *Coachella Valley California Desert Conservation Area Plan* (1980, as amended) and any subsequent CDCA plan amendments are land use plans prepared in compliance with Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (BLM's organic act) and Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations Part 1610. Land use plans are regional plans which provide general guidance on how the public lands are to be managed and a cumulative impact analysis for the region. The BLM State Director is delegated to approve the proposed plan. Citizens who feel adversely affected by proposed decisions developed through the regional land use plan process may protest those proposed decisions to the Director of the BLM in accordance with the protest procedures outlined in Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations Part 1610.5-2.

The next level of planning, activity or implementation plans, are tiered to the regional land use plan and must be in conformance with the regional land use plan. Implementation plans are more focused on an area or plan element. Implementation plans tend to include site-specific or project-specific actions. Implementation plans are prepared in accordance with BLM's Manual guidance. The Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Trails Management Plan is an activity level plan prepared in accordance with BLM Manual 8322. The BLM Field Manager is delegated to approve the BLM portions of the final plan. Members of the public may appeal implementation level decisions, once they are made, to the Interior Board of Land Appeals in accordance with 43 CFR 4.4.

The range of alternative land use plan actions and implementation actions are presented in both summary table and narrative format. The preferred alternative represents BLM's likely choice for a decision at this time. BLM's final decision may or may not be the preferred alternative, depending on public input and additional information received during the public comment period for the draft EIS. The no action alternative does not mean that no actions or decisions are being made. If BLM were to select the no action alternative, BLM is making the decision to not change the existing decisions promulgated from existing plans.

Each alternative is arranged by plan element. Plan elements are resources or activities about which the public has expressed significant concern. The alternatives provide different approaches for managing a particular plan element. A detailed description of the plan elements is provided in the glossary.

## 2.1 Coachella Valley California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment

### 2.1.1 General Description of each Alternative

Four alternatives are presented in this California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley, labeled Alternative A, Alternative B, Alternative C and Alternative D. Alternatives A through C represent an array of options for each plan element, ranging from less restrictive land use (A) to more restrictive (C). Alternative D is the “no action” alternative. If Alternative D is selected, BLM would be opting to not change any of the decisions outlined in the *California Desert Conservation Area Plan* (1980, as amended) at this time, and to continue with the current management strategy. The BLM preferred alternative consists of an amalgamation of plan elements chosen from three alternatives (A through C). The preferred alternative for each plan element is highlighted in the “Summary of Alternatives” table and identified in the following narrative description of the alternatives.

As this is a plan amendment and not a revision, most of the guidance and land use plan decisions established in the *California Desert Conservation Area Plan* (1980 as amended) shall remain extant. The proposed plan amendment goals and conservation objectives are an addition to the existing CDCA Plan goals and objectives. The land use plan action alternatives identify specific proposed changes to the CDCA Plan, and are not meant to replace all decisions for a particular plan element.

### 2.1.2 Plan Goals Common to All Alternatives

The preferred alternative incorporates the following goals. Goals define a future desired condition or outcome for a resource or program, in order to resolve resource management issues. During plan implementation, goals serve as benchmarks for determining land use plan conformance. The following goals are a supplement to the goals presented in the California Desert Conservation Area Plan (1980, as amended).

1. Ensure a balance of multiple use and sustainable public land uses with progress toward attaining healthy, properly functioning ecosystems.
2. Achieve recovery of listed species, and manage species to avoid future listings.
3. Maintain a network of motorized vehicle routes necessary to meet recreational and other needs while minimizing affects to air quality and other resource values.
4. Provide opportunities for off-highway vehicle free-play in the Coachella Valley where compliance with the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act and other environmental laws will be attained.
5. Establish and maintain a network of hiking, biking and equestrian trails that provide opportunities for year-round recreation.
6. Make available public lands to support community infrastructure needs for southern California including energy production, mineral extraction and utilities, while minimizing resource use conflicts and promote species recovery in the plan area as a whole.
7. Work in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, the State of California and local jurisdictions to conserve the values of, and manage land uses in, the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument.
8. Work in collaboration with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians to manage the branded horses in the Indian Canyons effectively and efficiently.
9. Work in collaboration with the Torres Martinez Band of Cahuilla Indians to manage wetland habitats in the Whitewater Delta north of the Salton Sea.
10. Protect the free-flowing characteristics and outstandingly remarkable values of rivers that are eligible and may be suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation, and ensure their tentative classifications as “wild,” “scenic” or “recreational” are not affected.
11. Participate as a federal land management partner with the local Coachella Valley jurisdictions, and contribute to development and implementation of the Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan.
12. Develop an overall strategy for managing the public lands which is adaptable over time based on the results of resource monitoring in order to effectively achieve the above goals.

2.1.3 Land Use Plan Alternatives

2.1.3.1 **Wild and Scenic Rivers.**

Preferred Alternative (A, B & C). River segments on BLM-managed lands within the following areas are determined eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System with the following tentative classifications (Figure 2-1):

Table 2-1: River Segments Determined Eligible

Area	River Channel	Tentative Classification	Length (miles, BLM lands only)		Location
Whitewater Canyon	Main	Wild	6.5 (wilderness)		T1S R3E, Sec. 30 T2S R3E, Sec. 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 15
		Recreational	1.6 (non-wilderness)		T2S R3E, Sec. 15, 22, 23, 26
Mission Creek	Main	Wild	3.1 (wilderness)		T1S R3E, Sec. 16, 22, 28
		Recreational	2.1 wilderness	1.4 non-wilderness	T1S R3E, Sec. 34 T2S R3E, Sec. 2 T2S R4E, Sec. 17, 18
	North Fork	Wild	0.4 (wilderness)		T1N R3E, Sec. 32 T1S R3E, Sec. 4
	South Fork	Wild	1.1 (wilderness)		T1S R3E, Sec. 8
	West Fork	Recreational	2.9 (wilderness)		T1S R3E, Sec. 34 T2S R3E, Sec. 2, 3, 11
Palm Canyon	Main	Scenic	1.2 (non-wilderness)		T5S R4E, Sec. 36

Manage public lands within 1/4 mile of the identified river segments to protect their free-flowing characteristics; protect, and to the degree practicable, enhance the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) which contribute to their eligibility; and ensure that their eligibility or tentative classification will not be affected before a determination of their suitability or non-suitability as Wild and Scenic Rivers can be made. ORVs are identified in the documentation of eligibility (Appendix B). Protective management measures pending suitability determinations are also described in the same appendix.

Determinations of suitability would be undertaken subsequent to identification of eligible river segments through this CDCA Plan amendment. A separate legislative environmental impact statement would be prepared as part of a separate reporting package and plan amendment.

River segments on BLM-managed lands in Little Morongo Canyon, Big Morongo Canyon, and Whitewater Canyon south of Bonnie Bell were assessed and determined to be ineligible for inclusion into the NWSRS.

No Action Alternative (D). Determinations regarding the eligibility of river segments on BLM-managed lands for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System would not be made at this time.

### 2.1.3.2 Visual Resource Management.

Preferred Alternative (A, B & C). Based on the general characteristics of the BLM-managed public lands within the Coachella Valley, Visual Resource Management (VRM) classifications would be assigned as follows (Figure 2-2):

Table 2-2: Visual Resource Management Classifications

AREA DESCRIPTION	VRM CLASS	ACREAGE
BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Gorgonio Wilderness Additions	Class 1	91,327
BLM-managed lands within ACECs and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument (except for designated wilderness which is Class 1)	Class 2	94,637
BLM-managed lands within CVMSHCP conservation areas, except for wind energy facilities, and sand and gravel mining sites (see below)	Class 2	
BLM-managed lands associated with existing and future development of wind energy facilities, and sand and gravel mining sites, whether inside or outside the CVMSHCP conservation areas	Class 4	13,727
Remaining BLM-managed lands, other than those in the NECO overlap area	Class 4	
BLM-managed lands within the NECO overlap area	Not assigned	128,350

No Action Alternative (D). No Visual Resource Management classifications would be assigned at this time. Instead, VRM objectives would be established for affected lands on a case-by-case basis when project proposals are submitted to the BLM. In accordance with policy, BLM lands within the Santa Rosa and San Gorgonio Wilderness Additions are managed consistent with VRM Class 1 objectives.

### 2.1.3.3 Land Health Standards

Preferred Alternative (A, B & C). Adopt the rangeland health standards developed for livestock grazing in consultation with the California Desert District Advisory Council, for use as regional land health standards. These regional land health standards would apply to all BLM lands and programs, and would be implemented through terms and conditions of permits, leases and other authorizations, actions, resource monitoring, assessments undertaken in accordance with BLM's land use plans. BLM would seek to incorporate these standards into the multi-jurisdictional monitoring program for the CVMSHCP, and to coordinate with local jurisdictions in monitoring and assessment of land health. These standards may not be used to permanently prohibit allowable uses established by law, regulation or land use plans.

1. **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;
  - Maintain the presence of microbotic soil crusts that are in place;
  - Evidence of wind or water erosion does not exceed natural rates for the site;
  - Hydrologic and nutrient functions maintained by permeability of soil and water infiltration are appropriate for precipitation.
  
2. **Native Species.** Healthy, productive and diverse habitats for native species, including special status species (Federal T&E, Federal 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 litter within acceptable limits;
  - 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 to prevent the need for listing special status species.

3. **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; &
  - Adequate organic matter (litter and standing dead plant material) is present to protect the site and to replenish soil nutrients through decomposition.
4. **Water quality.** Surface and groundwater complies with objectives of the Clean Water Act and other applicable water quality requirements, including meeting the California State standards. Best Management Practices would be implemented to help achieve these standards. Achievement of standards would be indicated by:
- Chemical constituents, water temperature, nutrient loads, fecal coliform, turbidity, suspended sediment and dissolved oxygen do not exceed the applicable requirements.
  - Achievement of the standards for riparian, wetlands and water bodies;
  - Aquatic organisms and plants (e.g., macro invertebrates, fish, algae and plants) indicate support for beneficial uses; and
  - Monitoring results or other data that show water quality is meeting the standards.

No Action Alternative (D). Adopt the rangeland National Fallback Standards as regional land health standards. These regional land health standards would apply to all BLM lands and programs, and would be implemented through terms and conditions of permits, leases and other authorizations or actions undertaken in accordance with BLM's land use plans. These standards may not be used to permanently prohibit allowable uses established by law, regulation or land use plans.

1. **Soils**. Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate and landform.
2. **Riparian/ Wetland**. Riparian-wetland areas are in properly functioning condition.
3. **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.
4. **Native Species**. Healthy, productive and diverse populations of native species exist and are maintained.

#### 2.1.3.4 Air Quality

Activities on the BLM-managed lands must be in compliance with the objectives of the Clean Air Act, and Federal and State standards. Compliance with State Implementation Plans prepared by the Air Quality Management District would help to achieve the Federal and State standards. The following are alternative BLM strategies to facilitate compliance with the Coachella Valley PM10 State Implementation Plan in effect at the time of approval.

Alternative A. BLM's air quality management strategy would consist of the following:

- Install sand fencing where fencing can assist in reducing PM10 emissions and maintain habitat for sand dependent species.
- Authorized uses would be subject to the Coachella Valley PM10 State Implementation Plan and would include applicable measures to minimize fugitive dust emissions.

Preferred Alternative (B & C). Implement the air quality management strategy summarized below and presented in (Appendix C):

- Reduce the number of unpaved routes upwind of sensitive receptors.
- Manage unauthorized off-road use by posting signs and enforcing closures. Provide opportunities for OHV use away from sensitive receptors.
- Install sand fencing where fencing can assist in reducing PM10 emissions and maintain habitat for sand dependent species.
- Authorized uses would include terms and conditions to minimize fugitive dust emissions, based on the Coachella Valley PM10 State Implementation Plan. Proposed projects with the potential to exceed National Ambient Air Quality Standards shall include in the site-specific environmental analysis, a dust control plan prepared in coordination with the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

No Action Alternative (D). Authorized uses would include terms and conditions to minimize fugitive dust emissions, based on the Coachella Valley PM10 State Implementation Plan. Proposed projects with the potential to exceed National Ambient Air Quality Standards shall include in the site-specific environmental analysis, a dust control plan prepared in coordination with the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

### 2.1.3.5 Multiple Use Classification

Public lands are assigned a multiple use classification (MUC) according to the allowable level of multiple use. Class C (Controlled Use) designation is the most restrictive, and is assigned to wilderness with minimal levels of multiple use. Class L (Limited Use) lands are managed to provide lower-intensity, carefully controlled multiple use of resources while ensuring that sensitive values are not significantly diminished. Class M (Moderate Use) lands are managed to provide for a wider variety of uses such as mining, livestock grazing, recreation, utilities and energy development, while conserving desert resources and mitigating damages permitted uses may cause. Class I (Intensive Use) provides for concentrated uses of lands and resources to meet human needs.

Alternative A. Classify BLM-managed lands within wilderness areas as Multiple-Use Class “C” (Controlled Use). Classify BLM-managed lands within conservation areas and outside wilderness as Multiple-Use Class “L” (Limited Use), except for those within the Windy Point, Indio Hills (both units), and Iron Door OHV open areas which would be classified as Multiple-Use Class “I” (Intensive Use). Classify BLM-managed lands outside conservation areas as Multiple-Use Class “M” (Moderate Use), except for those within the Drop 31 OHV open area which would be classified as Multiple-Use Class “I.” BLM-managed lands within the identified sand and gravel mining areas would be classified as Multiple-Use Class “I” as an exception to these management prescriptions.

Preferred Alternative (B). Same as Alternative A, except that BLM-managed lands at Windy Point (partial), Indio Hills (east unit only), and Iron Door would be classified as Multiple-Use “L”; BLM-managed lands within the remainder of Windy Point and Indio Hills (west unit only) would be classified as Multiple-Use Class “M” (Figure 2-3a).

Alternative C. Same as Alternative B except that BLM-managed lands at Drop 31 would be classified as Multiple-Use Class “M,” and sand and gravel mining areas would be classified as Multiple-Use Class “L” within conservation areas and Class “M” outside of conservation areas.

No Action Alternative (D). BLM Multiple-Use classifications would remain unchanged (Figure 2-3b).

Table 2-3: Alternative Multiple Use Classification Acreages

Multiple Use Classification	Alternative A Acreage	Alternative B Acreage	Alternative C Acreage	Alternative D Acreage
C - Controlled Use	160,550	160,550	160,550	160,550
L - Limited Use	144,492	146,448	148,680	92,087
M - Moderate Use	15,510	15,910	18,811	24,505
I - Intensive Use	7,489	5,133	n/a	n/a
Unclassified	n/a	n/a	n/a	49,862

### 2.1.3.6 Habitat Conservation Objectives

For the purposes of this Coachella Valley CDCA Plan Amendment, the BLM lands were categorized into eight vegetation community types: (1) sand dunes and sand fields, (2) desert scrub communities, (3) chaparral communities, (4) desert alkali scrub communities, (5) marsh communities, (6) dry wash woodland and mesquite communities, (7) riparian communities, and (8) woodland and forest communities. Conservation objectives were established based on the resource needs for each community type. The term “conservation areas” refers to areas with a special area designation in order to protect biological resources, such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wildlife Habitat Management Areas, Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, and BLM managed lands within the conservation system approved by BLM in support of the Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP).

Preferred Alternative (B & C). For each of the eight vegetation community types (Figure 2-4), the habitat conservation objectives outlined in Table 2-4 would be used to assess compatible uses and to develop appropriate mitigation measures within conservation areas on BLM-managed lands. Future activities would be required to conform to the habitat conservation objectives established for a particular community type within the conservation areas. Activities which cannot meet the habitat conservation objectives would be disallowed. New utilities within utility corridors would be designed to avoid impacts to sensitive plants, endemic species and their habitats, and significant cultural resources.

Application of the Habitat Conservation Objectives would utilize BLM's normal processes for evaluating and managing proposed land uses. For example, on receipt of an application, BLM would conduct interdisciplinary analysis to determine the effects of the proposal, to inform the consultation and decision making processes, and to develop mitigation measures for projects which are approved. The analysis team would use the objectives as both a standard for assessing the proposal and as a basis for development of mitigation measures.

No Action Alternative (A & D). Guidelines provided in the CDCA Plan, as amended would be used to determine allowable uses within conservation areas.

### 2.1.3.7 Fire Management

Preferred Alternative (B & C). Response to wildland fire is based on ecological, social and legal consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and cultural resources, and other values to be protected dictate the appropriate management response to the fire. Based these factors, the following fire management categories are identified for the following vegetation communities (Figure 2-5):

**Fire Management Category A.** The following communities are areas where fire would not be desired at all: sand dunes and sand fields. Immediate suppression is a critical element of fire management in these desert environments because fire historically has never played a large role in the development and maintenance of the ecosystem.

**Fire Management Category B.** The following vegetation communities are areas where wildfire is not desired: (1) desert scrub, (2) desert alkali scrub, (3) marsh, (4) dry wash woodland, pinyon-juniper woodland and mesquite, and (5) riparian areas. Immediate suppression is a critical element of fire management in these desert communities because fire historically has never played a large role in the development and maintenance of these communities. Prescribed fire may be utilized as a resource management tool in very select situations, for example to effectively manage exotic vegetation.

**Fire Management Category C.** (1) Oak woodlands and forest communities and (2) chaparral communities are areas where wildland fire (including prescribed burning) may be allowed. The following constraints must be considered in determining the appropriate level of suppression: (1) emphasize protection of life and property, especially trail users and montane communities, (2) evaluate potential beneficial or adverse effects on threatened and endangered species habitat, especially endemic species, (3) evaluate potential for adverse effects to significant or sensitive cultural and other natural resources, (4) promote mosaic pattern of vegetation resulting from different fire histories within the larger landscape, (5) protect areas so that they do not burn at less than 15 year intervals.

**No Action Alternative (A & D).** No habitats would be categorized at this time. Manage fire in accordance with CDCA Plan (1980, as amended) and the California Desert District-wide Fire Management Plan.

#### 2.1.3.8 Special Area Designations

Special areas, those in need of special management attention, may be designated as such through a variety of mechanisms and titles. Wilderness Areas are designated legislatively and are the most restrictive in terms of allowable uses. National Monuments may be designated legislatively or by Presidential order. The level of use restrictions within National Monuments can be established by the law, executive order or through a collaborative planning process. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are designated through the BLM land use planning process in accordance with 43 CFR 1610.7-2 for the protection of natural and cultural resources and human health and safety. The level of allowable use within an ACEC is established through the collaborative planning process. Designation of an ACEC allows for resource use limitations in order to protect identified resources or values. ACECs are subject to stricter guidelines to support their designation.

Wildlife habitat management areas (WHMAs) are an administrative designation (BLM Manual 6780) also established through the 43 CFR 1610 land use planning process. WHMA are designed to identify areas requiring special management attention for the protection of important wildlife resources. Establishment of a WHMA may include a more intensive, active management program. In practice, both ACECs and WHMAs can achieve the same resource condition objectives. However, ACEC designation often connotes a higher level of political sensitivity and public awareness.

Preferred Alternative (A). Designate BLM-managed lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas which are outside existing ACECs, Wilderness Areas, National Monuments and freeway interchanges in the NECO overlap area as the Coachella Valley Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) (Figure 2-6a). Existing ACEC boundaries would remain unchanged.

Alternative B. Expand Dos Palmas ACEC to include public lands within the Dos Palmas CVMSHCP conservation sub-area. Designate the Mission Creek ACEC to include public lands within the Upper Mission Creek conservation sub-area. Designate remaining BLM-managed lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas and outside ACECs and existing Wilderness Areas and National Monuments as the Coachella Valley WHMA (Figure 2-6b).

Alternative C. Designate BLM-managed lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas, and outside existing ACECs, Wilderness Areas and National Monuments as the Coachella Valley ACEC (Figure 2-6c).

No Action Alternative (D). No BLM-managed lands would be given additional designations beyond those currently listed in the CDCA Plan as amended and those established by law. Existing ACEC boundaries shall remain unchanged.

Table 2-5: Alternative Special Area Designation Acreages

<b>Special Area Designation</b>	<b>Alternative A Acreage</b>	<b>Alternative B Acreage</b>	<b>Alternative C Acreage</b>	<b>Alternative D Acreage</b>
Potential ACECs	0	7,292	23,631	0
Potential Wildlife Habitat Mgt Area	23,631	16,338	0	0
Existing ACECs	51,190	51,190	51,190	51,190
Wilderness Areas	91,327 acres; Set by law and not changeable through planning			
National Mon.	86,400 acres; Set by law and not changeable through planning			

### 2.1.3.9 Land Tenure: Exchange & Sale Criteria

Land tenure refers to ownership of a parcel of land. BLM-managed public lands are owned by the United States Government as the land steward for the citizens of the United States. Land tenure adjustments can be made through a couple of mechanisms. BLM lands acquired through acquisition are purchased from willing sellers or are donated by members of the public. Monies for acquisition are generally appropriated by Congress through the Lands and Water Conservation Fund. Land may also be acquired through exchange in which the private landowner proposes “offered lands” and identifies BLM-managed “selected lands” for exchange. All proposed land exchanges are subject to environmental review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and other environmental laws, are subject to public review and input, and are subject to land appraisals, to ensure the proposed exchange is in the public’s best interest. Selected BLM lands will be evaluated for presence of mineral resources and significant cultural and Native American sites. If found, these values will be compensated, mitigated or not available for exchange in accordance with law, regulation, and policy. BLM may also sell unclassified public lands.

All land exchange, sale and acquisition proposals are discretionary Bureau actions, depending on overall Bureau priorities and resource capabilities at the time. In other words, even if a proposed land exchange meets all of the criteria listed below, the BLM authorized officer may opt to not consider the land exchange at that time.

Preferred Alternative (B & C). BLM lands in the Coachella Valley would generally be retained in public ownership. The following criteria would be applied in evaluating the suitability of land exchanges and sales. Land sales would only be conducted if reasonable opportunities for land exchange are not available in order to provide land base in support of the CVMSHCP. Land exchanges and sales may be considered if they would:

1. Facilitate effective and efficient management of conservation areas;
2. Be conducted in coordination with the local jurisdictions;
3. Would result in a net benefit to the conservation areas or divert intensive uses away from sensitive areas;
4. Not remove endemic species nor rare habitat types from conservation management;
5. Not dispose of eligible historic properties from public ownership except for stewardship transfer to Native American Tribes of Native American historic properties; and
6. Not divest of public domain lands in a manner which eliminates a significant public benefit.

Proposed exchanges or sales would be conducted in coordination with the local jurisdictions to ensure the proposed exchange would meet the larger multi-jurisdictional objectives of habitat conservation and support to local communities in the Coachella

Valley. All land exchanges and sales would be subject to consultation requirements under the Endangered Species Act. Disposal of specific parcels through exchange or sale may require biological or cultural field surveys in order to complete consultation. Site specific application of the criteria and determinations identifying necessary surveys would occur once project proposals are received.

The following is an example of how these criteria may be employed. Public lands in the Coachella Valley with significant sand and gravel resources have especially high monetary values. If such parcels were selected for a proposed exchange, the offered lands must be within the conservation areas, and the offered lands would help to block up the public land ownership pattern, thereby facilitating effective and efficient management of the conservation areas. The selected BLM parcels may not contain endemic species, rare habitat types, nor historic properties. The exchange may be designed such that sand and gravel resources on selected BLM parcel would continue to be available to support community needs, providing it meets environmental and zoning requirements administered by Riverside County. In summary, an exchange which benefits assembly and management of conservation areas, as well as providing for community needs for materials to support home construction and road maintenance, could be approved.

No Action Alternative (A & D). Public land disposal will be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the CDCA Plan (1980 as amended). Class C, L and I lands may be exchanged, but not sold.

#### 2.1.3.10 Land Tenure: Acquisition Criteria

Preferred Alternative (B & C). Acquisition proposals are discretionary Bureau actions, depending on overall Bureau priorities and resource capabilities at the time. Acquisition proposals would be required to meet the following criteria. Proposed acquisitions would:

1. Be acquired from willing sellers only;
2. Be conducted in coordination with the local jurisdictions;
3. Benefit the Coachella Valley conservation areas by directly augmenting public ownership in a sensitive area or diverting intensive uses away from sensitive areas; or
4. Improve the presence of a variety of biotic or abiotic habitat components under conservation management;

No Action Alternative (A & D). Acquisitions would be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the CDCA Plan 1980 as amended.

2.1.3.11 **Management of Acquired Lands and Formerly Withdrawn Lands**

Preferred Alternative (A, B & C). Lands acquired by purchase, donation or lands removed from withdrawal status shall be managed in accordance with the CDCA Plan, as amended and the applicable land and mineral laws upon issuance of an opening order published in the *Federal Register*. Lands located within the boundaries of ACECs or any other area having an administrative designation established through the land use planning process shall become part of the area within which they are located and managed accordingly upon issuance of the opening order.

No Action Alternative (D). Acquired and formerly withdrawn lands are not subject to the applicable land and minerals laws until an opening order is issued by BLM and published in the *Federal Register* (43 CFR 2091.6 and 2091.8)

2.1.3.12 **Communication Sites & Utilities**

Alternative A. Rights-of-way for new and renewals of windparks, communications sites, and utilities would be considered within conservation areas, if habitat conservation objectives could be met using appropriate mitigation measures.

Preferred Alternative (B). Windpark development would be permitted in designated areas (Figure 2-7) and new towers within existing communication sites on a space available basis and consistent with habitat conservation objectives using appropriate mitigation measures. Proposed utilities within designated utility corridors and within conservation areas may be considered, consistent with the habitat conservation objectives. Proposed utilities would be designed or mitigation measures imposed to ensure new utilities within conservation areas avoid impacts to sensitive plants, endemic species and their habitats, and to significant cultural resources.

Alternative C. No new communication sites nor windparks within CVMSHCP conservation areas. Renewals would be considered on a case-by-case basis consistent with habitat conservation objectives. Retire inactive windpark sites. Proposed utilities within designated utility corridors and within conservation areas may be considered, consistent with the habitat conservation objectives. Proposed utilities would be designed or mitigation measures imposed to ensure new utilities within conservation areas avoid impacts to sensitive plants, endemic species and their habitats, and to significant cultural resources.

No Action Alternative D. Rights-of-way for new windparks, renewals of existing windparks, communications sites, and utilities will be considered on a space available basis in conformance with CDCA Plan, as amended.

### 2.1.3.13 Sand and Gravel Mining

Alternative A. Saleable mineral material extraction would be allowed within CVMSHCP conservation areas and outside of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, if habitat conservation objectives could be met using appropriate mitigation measures.

Preferred Alternative (B). Mineral materials sales within the CVMSHCP conservation areas would be restricted to State of California Division of Mines and Geology designated resource areas (Figure 2-7), and new mining proposals would be allowed if habitat conservation objectives could be met using appropriate mitigation measures. Outside the conservation areas, mining may be considered consistent with federal laws and regulations.

Alternative C. BLM lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas would be closed to saleable mineral material extraction.

No Action Alternative (D). Saleable mining actions would be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the CDCA Plan (1980 as amended).

### 2.1.3.14 Livestock Grazing

Preferred Alternative (A). Discontinue grazing on Whitewater Canyon allotment (Figure 2-8) pending completion of a study within the next 10 years that assesses livestock grazing compatibility with conservation of the desert tortoise, arroyo toad, riparian values, and with use of, and access to, intermingled private lands. Following study completion, conduct NEPA analysis of management alternatives intended to conserve and provide for these resources and values consistent with the study and subsequently issue a grazing decision that implements compatible management provisions.

Alternative B. Retire that portion of the Whitewater Canyon grazing allotment north of the San Bernardino/Riverside County Line. Adjust season of use and grazing capacity accordingly.

Alternative C. Retire the entire Whitewater Canyon grazing allotment.

No Action Alternative (D). Current management of the Whitewater Canyon grazing allotment as provided in the CDCA Plan, as amended.

### 2.1.3.15 Wild Horse and Burro Program

The Palm Canyon Herd Management Area encompasses 11,500 acres, located immediately south of the City of Palm Springs, and wholly within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument. Land ownership within this HMA is 21% BLM, 26% Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians tribal lands (ACBCI), 14% San Bernardino National Forest, and 39% private. The BLM portion of the HMA is located in T. 5 S., R. 4 E., sections 22, 23, 26, 27, 34 and 35. The Palm Canyon herd management level is set at six horses. There currently are eight horses within this HMA. Only one of these horses qualifies as a “wild horse” (the oldest mare) per the Wild Horse and Burro Act. The rest are illegally released freeze-branded horses, or offspring of these branded horses. The herd is currently being watered by Dos Palmas Spring, a developed spring located on Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indian land and maintained by the Tribe. Due to the spring, the horses appear to spend most of their time on tribal land. These horses forage on public, private and Tribal lands, and have created conflicts with equestrian trail users due to the aggressiveness of the herd stallion, and potential habitat conflicts with the peninsular ranges bighorn sheep. There also may be sentiments within the Agua Caliente Tribal membership to maintain these animals, at least on Tribal lands. The BLM would like to work closely with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians to determine the future of these horses. The BLM has already entered into a cooperative management agreement with the Tribe for management of the National Monument. Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Act of 2000 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to exchange lands with the Tribe. The Morongo Herd Management Area is located approximately 15 miles northwest of the City of Palm Springs. This 39,100 acre HMA is composed of 65% BLM lands and 35% private lands. Much of this HMA is now within the San Gorgonio Wilderness. The HMA level is set at 16 burros. There are currently no burros within this HMA .

Alternative A. Retain Palm Canyon and Morongo Herd Management Area (HMA) designations. Maintain levels set in accordance with current CDCA Plan, as amended. Establish Palm Canyon HMA as a grazing allotment for branded horses.

Preferred Alternative (B). Retire Palm Canyon & Morongo HMAs. BLM parcels within and adjacent to the Palm Canyon HMA (T.5 S., R.4 E.) and T.4 S., R. 4 E. would be transferred to the Agua Caliente Tribe via land exchange, in accordance with the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Act of 2000 (Figure 2-9). Amend existing MOU to allow BLM to provide management assistance for horses on tribal lands until such time as the Tribe chooses to no longer maintain a horse herd.

Alternative C. Retire Palm Canyon and Morongo HMAs. Remove existing animals from BLM-managed lands.

No Action Alternative (D). Retain Palm Canyon and Morongo and Herd Management Areas (HMA) designations. Levels set at six and 16 animals, respectively in accordance with current CDCA Plan, as amended.

### 2.1.3.16 Motorized-Vehicle Area Designations

Areas open, limited, and closed to motorized-vehicle access are clearly-defined areas designated through the land use planning process. In open areas, vehicle travel is permitted anywhere if the vehicle is operated responsibly in accordance with regulations (43 CFR Subparts 8341 and 8343), and is subject to permission of private land owners if applicable. In limited areas, motorized-vehicle access is allowed only on certain routes of travel; at the minimum, use is restricted to existing routes. In closed areas, vehicle travel is not allowed.

As required by 43 CFR §8342.1, the designation of public lands as either open, limited, or closed to off-highway vehicles (OHVs) shall be based on the protection of the resources of the public lands, the promotion of the safety of all the users of the public lands, and the minimization of conflicts among various uses of the public lands; and in accordance with the following criteria:

- (a) Areas shall be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, air, or other resources of the public lands, and to prevent impairment of wilderness suitability.
- (b) Areas shall be located to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats. Special attention will be given to protect endangered or threatened species and their habitats.
- (c) Areas shall be located to minimize conflicts between off-highway vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands, and to ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors.
- (d) Open or limited use areas shall not be located in officially designated wilderness areas or primitive areas. Open or limited use areas shall be located in natural areas only if the authorized officer determines that off-highway vehicle use in such locations will not adversely affect their natural, esthetic, scenic, or other values for which such areas are established.

#### Alternative A.

- Establish four OHV Open Areas described as follows (Figure 2-10a):

<b>Windy Point</b>	T.3 S., R.3 E., Section 14, E2E2; Section 23, N2; Section 24, N2N2, SW4NW4
<b>Indio Hills</b>	T.3 S., R.5 E, Section 26, N2, N2SE4; T.3 S., R.6 E, Section 32, all;
<b>Iron Door</b>	T.5 S., R.8 E., Section 6, all;
<b>Drop 31</b>	T.7 S., R.10 E., Section 24, all; Section 26, N2E2; T. 7 S., R.11 E., Section 30 all.

- Drop 31 would be managed in accordance with objectives outlined below for the Meccacopia Special Recreation Management Area.
- Indian Avenue Preserve and Willow Hole-Edom Hill would be designated

- “closed.”
- Big Morongo Canyon ACEC and Dos Palmas ACEC would remain “closed.”
- All other BLM-managed public lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas would remain “limited.”
- Wilderness areas are closed to casual motorized-vehicle use by statute.

Table 2-6a: Motorized Vehicle Area Designations - Alternative A

Open OHV Areas	Closed OHV Areas	Limited OHV Areas
Windy Point - 680 acres	Big Morongo Canyon Preserve - 20,559 acres	Motorized-vehicle use in the remainder of CVMSHCP conservation areas is limited to approved routes
Drop 31 - 1,440 acres	Dos Palmas Preserve - 7,160 acres	
Iron Door - 640 acres	Indian Ave Preserve - 1,175 acres	
Indio Hills - 1,040 acres (two separate units)	Willow Hole/Edom Hill Preserve - 1,863 acres	
	Wilderness - 160,551 acres	
<b>Total - 3,800 acres</b>	<b>Total - 191,308 acres</b>	<b>Total - 135,408 acres</b>

Preferred Alternative (B).

- Establish Drop 31 as an OHV Open Area (see description above under Alternative A); manage in accordance with objectives outlined below for the Meccacopia Special Recreation Management Area.
- Windy Point south of Highway 111 would be designated “closed” (Figure 2-10b).
- Indian Avenue Preserve and Willow Hole-Edom Hill would be designated “closed.”
- Big Morongo Canyon ACEC and Dos Palmas ACEC would remain “closed.”
- The expanded area of Dos Palmas ACEC would be additionally be designated “closed.”
- All other BLM-managed public lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas would remain “limited.”
- Wilderness areas are closed to casual motorized-vehicle use by statute.

**Table 2-6b: Motorized Vehicle Area Designations - Alternative B**

<b>Open OHV Areas</b>	<b>Closed OHV Areas</b>	<b>Limited OHV Areas</b>
Drop 31 - 1,440 acres	Big Morongo Canyon ACEC - 20,559 acres	Motorized-vehicle use in the remainder of CVMSHCP conservation areas is limited to approved routes
	Dos Palmas ACEC - 7,160 acres	
	Additions to Dos Palmas ACEC - 2,706	
	Indian Ave Preserve - 1,175 acres	
	Willow Hole/Edom Hill Preserve - 1,863 acres	
	Windy Point - 270 acres	
	Wilderness - 160,551 acres	
<b>Total - 1,440 acres</b>	<b>Total- 194,284 acres</b>	<b>Total - 134,792 acres</b>

- Work with the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation to establish a vehicle free-play area north of Interstate 10 and east of Dillon Road on acquired lands as an outlet and opportunity for displaced off-highway vehicle users.

Alternative C.

- Windy Point south of Highway 111 would be designated “closed.”
- Indian Avenue Preserve and Willow Hole-Edom Hill would be designated “closed.”
- Big Morongo Canyon ACEC and Dos Palmas ACEC would remain “closed.”
- All other BLM-managed public lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas would remain as “limited.”
- Wilderness areas are closed to casual motorized-vehicle use by statute.

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Table 2-6c: Motorized Vehicle Area Designations - Alternative C

Open OHV Areas	Closed OHV Areas	Limited OHV Areas
None	Big Morongo Canyon ACEC - 20,559 acres	Motorized-vehicle use in the remainder of CVMSHCP conservation areas is limited to approved routes
	Dos Palmas ACEC - 7,160 acres	
	Indian Ave Preserve - 1,175 acres	
	Willow Hole/Edom Hill Preserve - 1,863 acres	
	Windy Point - 270 acres	
	Wilderness - 160,551 acres	
<b>Total - 0 acres</b>	<b>Total- 191,578 acres</b>	<b>Total - 138,938 acres</b>

Alternative D.

- No new area closures nor off-highway vehicle open areas would be established at this time.
- Big Morongo Canyon ACEC and Dos Palmas ACEC would remain “closed.”
- Wilderness areas are closed to casual motorized-vehicle use by statute.

Table 2-6d: Motorized Vehicle Area Designations - Alternative D

Open OHV Areas	Closed OHV Areas	Limited OHV Areas
None	Big Morongo Canyon ACEC - 20,559 acres	Motorized-vehicle use in the remainder of CVMSHCP conservation areas is limited to approved routes
	Dos Palmas ACEC - 7,160 acres	
	Wilderness - 160,551 acres	
<b>Total - 0 acres</b>	<b>Total - 188,270 acres</b>	<b>Total - 142,246 acres</b>

### 2.1.3.17 Motorized-Vehicle Access: Route Designations

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 or wind energy facilities). The designation of routes as “open,” “limited,” and “closed” is generally applicable to both casual and authorized users of BLM-managed lands. However, where there is a requirement for 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.

Route designations apply only to routes and portions thereof on BLM-managed lands. These designations constitute CDCA Plan decisions. Changes to these decisions would require amending the CDCA Plan.

As required by 43 CFR §8342.1, all route designations shall be based on the protection of the resources of the public lands, the promotion of the safety of all the users of the public lands, and the minimization of conflicts among various uses of the public lands; and in accordance with the following criteria:

- (a) Routes shall be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, air, or other resources of the public lands, and to prevent impairment of wilderness suitability.
- (b) Routes shall be located to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats. Special attention will be given to protect endangered or threatened species and their habitats.
- (c) Routes shall be located to minimize conflicts between off-highway vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands, and to ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors.
- (d) Routes shall not be located in officially designated wilderness areas or primitive areas. Routes shall be located in natural areas only if the authorized officer determines that off-highway vehicle use in such locations will not adversely affect their natural, esthetic, scenic, or other values for which such areas are established.

Alternative A. Existing routes outside areas closed to casual motorized-vehicle use would be designated as “open” (Figure 2-11a).

Table 2-7a: Motorized Vehicle Route Designations - Alternative A

Total miles open to motorized vehicles (BLM lands only)	71
Total miles closed to motorized vehicles (BLM lands only)	66

Maintain the public route network as needed and seek legal access across private land parcels from willing sellers in areas designated for public recreation. Manage vehicle access in the Dunn Road area (including the Dry Wash route and routes in Palm Canyon, totaling 15 miles on public land) primarily for administrative purposes such as flood control, law enforcement, search and rescue, fire control, and permitted uses such as research and commercial recreation, subject to permission of private landowners for use of non-federal lands.

Alternative B. Routes within CVMSHCP conservation areas would be designated in accordance with habitat conservation objectives and air quality management strategy, while allowing for recreation opportunities. Routes outside the conservation areas would be designated “open” except for redundant routes which would be “closed” to minimize air quality non-attainment in the Coachella Valley (Figure 2-11b). Off-road travel on public lands would not be allowed except in designated “open” areas. Short recreational spur roads west of the Indio air quality monitoring station would be closed.

Maintain the public route network as needed and seek legal access across private land parcels from willing sellers in areas designated for public recreation. Manage vehicle access in the Dunn Road area (including the Dry Wash route and routes in Palm Canyon, totaling 15 miles on public land) for administrative purposes such as flood control, law enforcement, search and rescue, and fire control, as well as controlled levels of permitted uses such as research and commercial recreation, subject to permission of private landowners for use of non-federal lands.

Existing gates would be maintained on **Dunn Road** and new gates would be installed to preclude unauthorized access from the Royal Carrizo area. Public land portions of Dunn Road, Dry Wash Road, and the access route from Royal Carrizo would be closed except for administrative and permitted access until bighorn sheep populations recover. The designation of these roads may be re-evaluated at that time. Permitted use may include limited research and recreational access by permit, contingent on acquiring access across private lands and compliance with the terms of a biological opinion. Motorized commercial recreational access would be confined to the fall months and both activities and the areas to be visited would be designed to avoid conflicts with bighorn sheep recovery, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Legal access to landowners and agencies may be provided through a right-of-way grant with terms and conditions based upon a biological opinion. Temporary landowner access may be authorized by permit.

**Table 2-7b: Motorized Vehicle Route Designations - Alternative B**

Total miles open to motorized vehicles (BLM lands only)	45
Total miles closed to motorized vehicles (BLM lands only)	92
Additional miles closed relative to Alternative A	26

Alternative C. Same as Alternative B except less emphasis would be placed on opportunities for recreation. Additional routes would be closed to minimize air quality non-attainment in the Coachella Valley (Figure 2-11c).

**Table 2-7c: Motorized Vehicle Route Designations - Alternative C**

Total miles open to motorized vehicles (BLM lands only)	25
Total miles closed to motorized vehicles (BLM lands only)	112
Additional miles closed relative to Alternative A	46
Additional miles closed relative to Alternative B	20

Maintain the public route network as needed and seek legal access across private land parcels from willing sellers in areas needed to maintain the route network. Manage vehicle access in the Dunn Road area (including the Dry Wash route and routes in Palm Canyon, totaling 15 miles on public land) in a manner that allows routes to naturally reclaim over time. Where the routes are passable, allow administrative vehicle access for flood control, law enforcement, search and rescue, and fire control.

Alternative D. Motorized-vehicle access would continue on existing routes outside areas closed to casual motorized-vehicle use, unless otherwise closed through supplemental rules (Figure 2-11d). Route designation would not occur at this time. Routes within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument must be designated by October 2003 in accordance with the Monument Act.

**Table 2-7d: Motorized Vehicle Route Designations - Alternative D**

Total miles open to motorized vehicles (BLM lands only)	71
Total miles closed to motorized vehicles (BLM lands only)	66

Maintain the public route network as needed and seek legal access across private land parcels from willing sellers in areas designated for public recreation. Manage vehicle access in the Dunn Road area (including the Dry Wash route and routes in Palm Canyon, totaling 15 miles on public land) for administrative purposes such as flood control, law enforcement, search and rescue, fire control, research and commercial recreational uses.

### 2.1.3.18 Special Recreation Management Area

Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA) are designated where significant public recreation issues or management concerns occur. Special or more intensive types of management are typically needed. Detailed recreation planning is usually required through preparation of a Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP), and greater managerial investment (e.g. facilities, supervision, etc.) is likely.

Alternative A. An SRMA which includes the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses, Drop 31, and the Red Canyon Jeep Trail would be designated and named the Meccacopia Special Recreation Management Area (Figure 2-10b). As part of the overall Meccacopia SRMA management strategy to be addressed through the RAMP:

- a) Protect wilderness values to include minimizing motorized vehicle and mechanized equipment intrusions into the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses.
- b) Enhance the quality of motorized recreation on public lands surrounding the two wilderness areas by providing adequate facilities and management to direct use and protect environmental values.
- c) Enhance the quality of non-motorized recreation on public lands by minimizing the potential for conflicts with motorized vehicles, and providing adequate facilities and management to direct use and protect environmental values.

Preferred Alternative (B). An SRMA which includes the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses, Drop 31, and the Red Canyon Jeep Trail would be designated and named the Meccacopia Special Recreation Management Area (Figure 2-10b). As part of the overall Meccacopia SRMA management strategy:

- a) Protect wilderness values to include minimizing motorized vehicle and mechanized equipment intrusions into the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses.
- b) Enhance the quality of motorized recreation on public lands surrounding the two wilderness areas and wildlife watering zones (see “d” below) by providing adequate facilities and management to direct use and protect environmental values.
- c) Enhance the quality of non-motorized recreation on public lands by minimizing the potential for conflicts with motorized vehicles, and providing adequate facilities and management to direct use and protect environmental values.
- d) Construct and maintain additional water sources with limited vehicle access to discourage bighorn sheep from using the Coachella Canal and to minimize conflicts with off-highway vehicle users. Development of water sources inside wilderness areas would be consistent with limits and guidelines established in the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert (NECO) Plan. Also per the NECO Plan, additional guzzlers in wilderness may be considered upon completion of the relevant meta-population plan by the CDFG. Wildlife water sources outside wilderness could be developed based on analysis and approval of site specific proposals developed in consultation with CDFG.

Alternative C. An SRMA which includes the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses, and the Red Canyon Jeep Trail would be designated and named the Meccacopia Special Recreation Management Area (Figure 2-10b). As part of the overall Meccacopia SRMA management strategy:

- a) Protect wilderness values to include minimizing motorized vehicle and mechanized equipment intrusions into the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses.
- b) Enhance the quality of motorized recreation on public lands surrounding the two wilderness areas by providing adequate facilities and management to direct use and protect environmental values.
- c) Enhance the quality of non-motorized recreation on public lands by minimizing the potential for conflicts with motorized vehicles, and providing adequate facilities and management to direct use and protect environmental values.
- d) Close areas where vehicle use is significantly limiting or preventing wildlife access to water.

No Action Alternative (D). No SRMA would be designated at this time. Management would continue based on existing uses and designations.

#### 2.1.3.19 Recreation: Stopping, Parking, and Vehicle Camping

This plan element describes the maximum distance which motorized vehicles may pull off an approved route to stop, park, or camp. For all of these alternatives, the following exception applies: *Where wilderness boundaries are coincident with approved routes, stopping, parking, and vehicle camping must remain outside the wilderness boundary.*

Preferred Alternative (A & B). Stopping, parking, and vehicle camping would be allowed within 100 feet from the *centerline* of an approved route except where fenced.

Alternative C. Stopping, parking, and vehicle camping would be allowed within 300 feet from the *centerline* of an approved route except within ACECs and conservation areas where the limit would be 30 feet for stopping and parking. Vehicle camping within CVMSHCP conservation areas would not be allowed.

No Action Alternative (D). Stopping, parking, and vehicle camping would be allowed within 300 feet of a route of travel except within ACECs where the limit would be 100 feet.

### 2.1.3.20 Recovery Strategy for Peninsular Ranges Bighorn Sheep

This plan element describes the overall management strategy BLM proposes and alternative strategies for achieving recovery of the Peninsular Ranges bighorn sheep. These alternative recovery strategies were developed based on guidance provided in the *Peninsular Ranges Bighorn Sheep Recovery Plan* (October, 2000), and many of the ideas and proposals contributed by Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as academic researchers, conservation organizations, private individuals, and major land users. While recovery plans do provide relevant advice and recommendations, recovery plans are not land use plan decision documents and are therefore exempt from review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). BLM is required to develop land management alternatives for achieving recovery, analyze their effects, provide opportunity for public review and comment, and then adopt land management decisions which relate various land uses to species recovery. The alternatives developed through this land use plan amendment are closely tied to the bighorn sheep recovery plan as indicated in Chapter 1. The page numbers indicated below refer to the bighorn sheep recovery plan.

Land Use Plan Decisions Common to All Alternatives. Adopt a recovery strategy for Peninsular Ranges bighorn sheep habitat on BLM-administered public lands. Part of the bighorn sheep recovery strategy would include the following decisions which are common to all alternatives:

1. Acquire, or exchange to acquire, bighorn sheep habitat from willing landowners (p.75).
2. Manage aircraft activities to reduce or eliminate habitat fragmentation or interference with bighorn sheep resource use patterns (p. 89). A working group of the Desert Managers Group has been established to address interagency coordination issues on an ongoing basis.
3. Develop and implement education and public awareness programs (pp.104-107).
4. Reduce or eliminate wild horse populations from bighorn sheep habitat.
5. Implement a fire management plan in fire adapted habitats to help maintain bighorn sheep habitat (p.78).
6. Manage road use to reduce or eliminate habitat fragmentation or interference with bighorn sheep resource use patterns (p. 89).
7. Participate in the development of an interagency trails management plan for the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains. This plan would be finalized in accordance with Bureau guidance on multi-jurisdictional activity level plans. The goal of this trails management plan would be to provide for reasonable opportunities for recreational trail use while facilitating recovery of Peninsular Ranges bighorn sheep. Actions developed through this trails plan would be subject to change through a multi-jurisdictional adaptive management and monitoring program. Until the trails plan is finalized, the terms of the interim biological evaluation filed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on January 31, 2001, and as amended on February 6, 2001 to reflect designation of critical habitat, would apply.

While general research permitting requirements are already established in the CDCA Plan (1980, as amended), no framework for managing levels of disturbance to bighorn sheep by research activities on public lands has been described. Alternative management directions specific to bighorn sheep research and monitoring are addressed below. The following alternatives also address issues not described above which require more detailed decisions to establish a management direction.

Alternative A. Approach recovery by emphasizing restoration of natural resources that support the sheep's basic physical and biological needs. Make public lands available for testing other measures if they are proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or California Department of Fish and Game.

1. Concentrate efforts to maintain existing water sources and provide additional water sources on public lands on methods that restore natural sources (e.g. tamarisk removal). Installation of artificial waters would not be considered until restoration efforts are substantially complete.
2. Construct fences across public lands to exclude bighorn sheep from urban area where they have begun or may begin using urban sources of food and water.
3. Permit research activities that require helicopter use and direct handling or contact with sheep, in consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game, providing stipulations to mitigate potential adverse impacts. (1) helicopter use would be allowed during lambing season and in BLM wilderness areas, (2) helicopters would be routinely used to retrieve dead sheep and lambs during and outside the lambing season on BLM-managed lands, instead of relying primarily on ground searches, and (3) theoretical/academic research would be allowed, including manipulative methods that included intensional disturbances.
4. Distribute information on review of research and monitoring activities. Prepare an annual report describing the results of bighorn sheep monitoring and research activities on public land to support adaptive management, enhance understanding of human/sheep interactions, understand habitat relationships, understand predator relationships, and clarify factors affecting population trends.
5. Make public lands available for predator control if proposed by Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game.
6. Make public lands available for reintroduction and augmentation activities. Work in consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game.

Preferred Alternative (B). Approach recovery by emphasizing reduction in overall levels of disturbance distributed as equitably as possible across all land uses and testing measures to address levels of mortality and augment population, while providing more resources to support the sheep's basic physical and biological needs.

1. Maintain existing water sources and provide additional water sources on public lands. Maintaining water would involve water source restoration, primarily

- through tamarisk removal. Installation of artificial waters would be conducted in carefully selected locations between Highway 74 and Palm Canyon.
2. Construct fences to exclude bighorn sheep from urban area where there is clear evidence of regular and repeated movement of sheep into developed urban areas, but only once adequate water sources are assured above the proposed fence alignment.
  3. BLM will seek to reduce impacts resulting from all land uses including trail use, motorized vehicles, permitted uses, utility corridors, communication sites, a variety of casual uses, and research. The aforementioned trails management plan includes a more detailed strategy to reduce disturbances to bighorn sheep from casual and permitted trail uses. This CDCA plan amendment addresses motorized vehicle access which includes all forms of motorized vehicle use, including closed or limited access for certain routes. Permitted uses would be subject to environmental review and conformance with the habitat conservation objectives established through the CDCA plan amendment, as well as endangered species consultation under the Endangered Species Act if the use would likely result in a may affect determination to bighorn sheep or critical habitat. No actions for mining, communication sites, grazing allotments, or utility corridors are proposed through the CDCA plan amendment because the activities are not located within essential habitat for Peninsular Ranges bighorn sheep within the planning area.
  4. Review research and monitoring proposals and annual reports describing the results of bighorn sheep monitoring and research activities on public land to ensure that the research supports the recovery of the sheep. The report will also include planned or proposed research and monitoring activities for the coming year. Permits and proposals for research on public land may be subject to 30-day public review and comment.
  5. Work with the Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game to develop and implement research and monitoring techniques that are less reliant on helicopters and/or direct handling of wild sheep. When analyzing sheep research proposals that include public lands and require use of helicopters, close proximity of researchers, or direct handling, always consider (a) less disturbing techniques if they are available and (b) the value of the information to be provided to public land management and sheep recovery decision making processes.
  6. Work with Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game to develop actions to implement a five year study to examine the role of Mountain lion predation in determining the population dynamics of bighorn sheep, and develop appropriate management options between Highway 74 and Palm Canyon.
  7. Work with Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game to develop actions to safely test the effectiveness of reintroduction and augmentation activities on public lands in the vicinity of Snow Creek on the north side of San Jacinto Mountain.

Alternative C. Approach recovery by emphasizing natural processes with very limited management intervention, except to provide more water.

1. Concentrate efforts to provide additional water sources on public lands through installation of artificial waters.
2. Construct fences across public lands to exclude bighorn sheep from urban area when public lands are a small but necessary part of completing a fence across other ownerships.
3. Research and monitoring activities would be allowed. Review and analysis would be on a case-by case basis, contingent on the following parameters: (a) No more than 15 sheep would be captured on the BLM lands; (b) No captures would be allowed in designated Wilderness Areas on BLM land. (c) No lambs would be captured during the lambing season on BLM land to reduce disturbance to ewes and lambs during the lambing season. (d) No more than 5 dead sheep would be retrieved by helicopter from the BLM lands during the lambing season (January 1 -June 30).
4. Consider permitting predator control on public lands only with substantial evidence tying significant bighorn sheep predation losses to an individual animal.
5. Make public lands available for reintroduction and augmentation activities. Work in consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game.

No Action Alternative (D). Continuation of current management in accordance with the CDCA Plan (1980, as amended).

1. Continue efforts to control tamarisk. Artificial waters may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
2. Fence construction may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
3. Research and monitoring proposals may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
4. Public lands may be considered for reintroduction, augmentation, or predator control after analysis and public comment.

#### 2.1.3.21 Hiking, Biking & Equestrian Trails

Preferred Alternative (A, B & C). Manage trail segments across public lands in coordination with members of the public, local jurisdictions, State and other Federal agencies to provide for a year-round suite of non-motorized recreation opportunities on interconnected trails in the Coachella Valley and surrounding mountains. Non-motorized uses of the public lands within the Coachella Valley planning area may be limited, including area and trail closures, as needed to protect sensitive resources. New trails which avoid impacts to sensitive resources and are developed in coordination with the community may be allowed.

No Action Alternative. Non-motorized uses of the public lands and development of new trails would be allowed, in accordance with Federal law and regulation.

**2.1.4 Plan Maintenance**

Several of these CDCA Plan Amendment alternatives are contingent upon the conservation boundary established through the CVMSHCP. Most of the CVMSHCP conservation boundary has been largely delineated. Areas still under discussion between the local jurisdictions, CDFG and the USFWS do not involve BLM-managed public lands. If BLM chooses any alternatives contingent on the CVMSHCP conservation boundary, BLM would still be able to definitively establish management direction for the BLM-managed public lands. The BLM would use the CVMSHCP preferred alternative conservation boundary delineated as of the date of the Record of Decision for the BLM CDCA Plan Amendment. The final CVMSHCP boundary would be updated in the CDCA Plan Amendment through plan maintenance (43 CFR 1610.5-4) as uses or restrictions on the BLM-managed public lands would not change. In the event that the CVMSHCP is not completed, the land use designations established for the BLM-managed lands through this CDCA Plan Amendment would remain extant, until such time a subsequent CDCA Plan Amendment was deemed necessary.

**2.1.5 Plan Implementation**

All activities on the BLM-managed public lands within the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) must be in conformance with the approved CDCA Plan (1980, as amended) (43 CFR 1610.5-3). New proposed activities, including actions implementing the CDCA Plan, are subject to further environmental review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). These environmental documents may tier to the environmental impact statement (EIS) prepared for this CDCA Plan Amendment to provide the cumulative impact analysis for proposed activities. These proposed activities are also subject to laws, regulations and policies which provide guidance on how to protect sensitive resources, as site specific projects are implemented in conformance with the approved plan. The following is a summary of the more pertinent laws, regulations and policies relative to the CDCA Plan, 1980 as amended.

**Table 2-8: Policy and Management Guidance for Plan Implementation**

<b>ELEMENT</b>	<b>POLICY and MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE</b>
Plan Monitoring	In accordance with BLM planning manual guidance, BLM shall monitor and evaluate the continued effectiveness of the CDCA Plan, as amended, in meeting the goals and objectives of the CVMSHCP and other multiple uses in the Coachella Valley.
Valid Existing Rights	Disposal of parcels with existing land use authorizations will be subject to valid existing rights. Subsequent BLM actions may not have the effect of terminating any validly issued right-of-way, or customary operation, maintenance, repair and replacement activities in such rights-of-way issued in accordance with Section 509(a) and 701(a) of FLPMA.
Sensitive Species	In order to minimize adverse impacts to sensitive species and to avoid future listings, the BLM would confer or consult as necessary, with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on all sensitive species.

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<b>ELEMENT</b>	<b>POLICY and MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE</b>
Cultural Resources	All management actions shall comply with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which provides for the protection of significant cultural resources. In furtherance of this Act, the 36 CFR 800 procedures shall be conducted pursuant to the State Protocol Agreement (1998) between the BLM and the California State Historic Preservation Officer. An appropriate level of inventory shall be conducted for all actions with a potential to affect cultural resources.
Native American Concerns	For all public land activities adjacent to reservation lands, the BLM shall consult with the relevant tribes to determine potential impact to Native American trust assets and cultural values and to develop mitigation measures if needed.
Mining and Utility Proposals	Proposed extraction sites and new utility sites shall be surveyed for cultural resources, and sensitive, threatened and endangered species prior to approval and appropriately mitigated.
Land Exchanges, Sales and Acquisitions	All land exchange, sale and acquisition proposals are discretionary Bureau actions, depending on overall Bureau priorities and resource capabilities at the time. Selected BLM lands will be evaluated for presence of mineral resources and significant cultural and Native American sites. If found, these values will be compensated, mitigated or not available for exchange in accordance with law, regulation, and policy.
Management of Lands Acquired through Exchange	Lands acquired by exchange shall be managed in accordance with existing regulations and provisions of applicable land use plans. Lands acquired by exchange located within the boundaries of ACECs or any other area having an administrative designation established through the land use planning process shall become part of the area within which they are located and managed accordingly. No further action is necessary (43 CFR 2200.0-6(g).)
Management of Withdrawn Lands	<p>Withdrawn lands are public lands withheld from settlement, sale, location or entry under some or all of the general land laws in order to reserve the area for a particular public purpose; or transferring jurisdiction over an area of Federal land from one department, bureau or agency to another (43 CFR 2300.0-5(h).) Withdrawals are instituted through Acts of Congress or approved by the Secretary of the Interior.</p> <p>BLM has no management responsibility over withdrawn lands resulting in jurisdictional transfer to another agency. For example, public lands withdrawn to the Bureau of Reclamation are administered by BOR, which is responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable Federal laws and regulations, such as the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, etc.</p> <p>Withdrawals approved by the Secretary are discretionary and shall be reviewed two years prior to their expiration. During withdrawal review, the Secretary shall determine if the lands are being used appropriately for the purposes of the withdrawal, assess compliance with the regulations and consider other factors, before making a decision to extend or terminate the withdrawal (43 CFR 2310.4.) Withdrawals instituted by Act of Congress terminate as specified in the statute (43 CFR 2091.5-6). Lands removed from withdrawn status are not subject to the applicable BLM land and minerals laws until an opening order is published in the <i>Federal Register</i> (43 CFR 2091.6).</p>

## **2.2 Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Trails Management Plan**

This Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Trails Management Plan is being prepared as an element of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Area Plan (CVMSHCP). In an effort to ‘benchmark’ the progress made to date through negotiations with the local jurisdictions and wildlife agencies, the BLM is including the trails management plan in this draft environmental impact statement. The purpose and scope of the environmental impact analysis for the trails management plan is to analyze the effect of alternative management strategies for trail use in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, rather than to consider the effects of other types of land uses that may include habitat conversion. Only a summary of impacts is provided at this time. Habitat conversion and land use issues on non-federal lands would be analyzed through the appropriate California Environmental Quality Act process, led by the appropriate jurisdiction and subject to Endangered Species Act compliance.

BLM’s decisions for the trails management plan would be issued upon completion of the CVMSHCP, separate from the Coachella Valley CDCA plan amendment decisions. From a Bureau perspective, the trails management plan is an activity level (also known as implementation level) plan prepared in accordance with BLM Manual 8322. Activity level plans are more focused on an area or plan element, and include site-specific or project-specific actions. The trails management plan must be in conformance with and is tiered to the Coachella Valley CDCA plan amendment under the section addressing “Hiking, Biking & Equestrian Trails” above. The BLM Field Manager is delegated to approve the BLM portion of the completed trails plan. Members of the public may appeal activity level decisions, once they are made, to the Interior Board of Land Appeals in accordance with 43 CFR 4.4. The BLM preferred alternative for the trails management plan consists of Alternative B.