

Proposed Amendment to the Yuma Field Office Resource Management Plan

Public Scoping Meetings

Monday, April 18, 2011, 6 – 8 p.m.

Yuma BLM Field Office
2555 E. Gila Ridge Road
Yuma, Arizona 85365

Tuesday, April 19, 2011, 6 – 8 p.m.

Quartzsite Town Hall
465 North Plymouth Avenue
Quartzsite, Arizona 85346



Goals of the Meeting

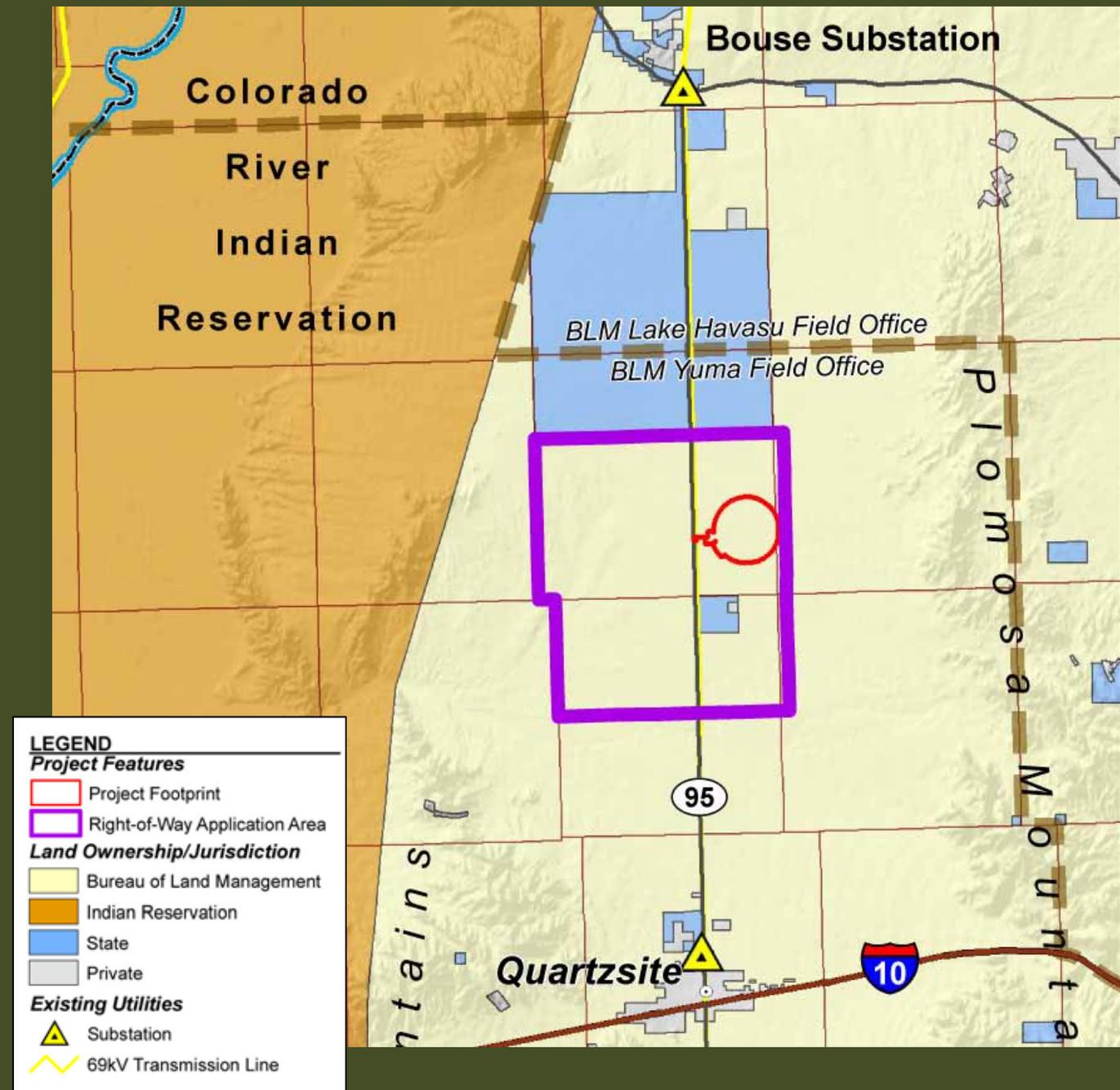
- Discuss Project and RMP background
- Discuss why a Land Use Plan Amendment is being considered
- Discuss Visual Resources and the alternatives that will be evaluated for the plan amendment

Background

- The Bureau of Land Management Yuma Field Office (YFO) is considering amending the Yuma District Resource Management Plan (RMP) to allow the use of public land for Solar Reserve's proposed Quartzsite Solar Energy Project (QSEP) in La Paz County, Arizona.
- Western Area Power Administration is the lead federal agency for the preparation of the QSEP environmental impact statement (EIS).
- The land use plan amendment would be analyzed in conjunction with the proposed solar Project, and will be described in the Draft EIS.

Quartzsite Solar Energy Project

Quartzsite Solar Energy LLC, (QSE) a wholly owned subsidiary of Solar Reserve LLC, has submitted an application to the BLM requesting a right-of-way to construct, maintain, and operate a solar energy facility capable of producing approximately 450 gigawatt-hours of renewable energy annually, with a nominal net generating capacity of 100 megawatts. In addition, QSE has applied to Western Area Power Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Energy, to interconnect the Project to Western's transmission system at the Bouse-Kofa 161-kilovolt (kV) transmission line.



Quartzsite Solar Energy Project

QSE's proprietary concentrating solar thermal technology uses a field of heliostats (elevated mirrors guided by a tracking system) to focus sunlight onto a 653-foot solar collection receiver erected in the center of the solar field. Each heliostat tracks the sun throughout the day and reflects the solar energy to the central receiver. The Project features thermal energy storage that allows solar energy to be captured throughout the day and retained in a liquid salt heat transfer fluid.



Artist Rendering

Purpose and Need for RMP Land Use Plan Amendment

- The Project area is designated as a Visual Resource Management Class III area. The objective of Class III designation is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. Under that designation, the level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate .
- An assessment of contrast from SR 95 indicated that the Project could result in a strong contrast, based on the large scale of the solar facility and the potential for glare from the solar receiver. As such, the Project would not be in conformance with the Yuma RMP; therefore, an RMP amendment would be required by the BLM to grant the right-of-way necessary to construct and operate the Project (as proposed).

Timeline for the QSE EIS

- January 14, 2010: Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS is published in the Federal Register.
- January 14, 2010 – February 16, 2010: EIS Scoping Period; three scoping meetings held (Yuma, Quartzsite, Parker).
- January 14, 2010 – March 2011: Analyze the Proposed Action; determined that a Land Use Plan Amendment is required to approve the Project as is.
- **March 30, 2011: Notice of Intent to amend the YFO RMP.**
- May/June 2011: *Anticipated* 90-Day Draft EIS Public Review and Comment Period begins; includes scoping meetings.
- October 2011: *Anticipated* Publication of the Final EIS.
- December 2011: *Anticipated* Record of Decision Issued.

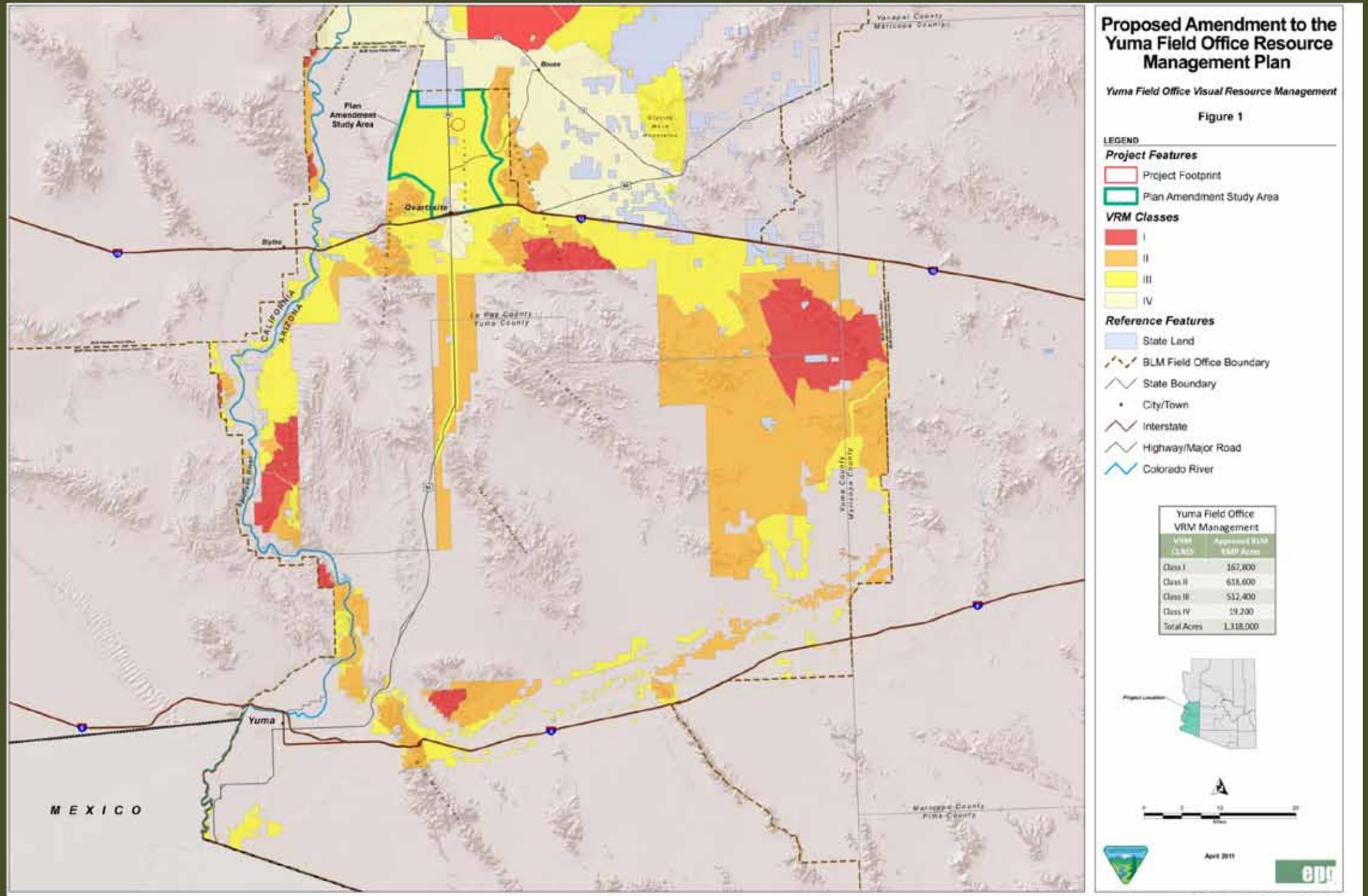
Visual Resource Management System (VRM)

The VRM system involves:

- The inventory of the scenic values of public lands.
- The establishment of management objectives for those values through the resource management planning process.
- These objectives are then used to: (1) evaluate proposed activities to determine whether they conform with the RMP and (2) modify the design of the project (where feasible and applicable) to reduce visual contrast.

Yuma Field Office RMP

Current VRM Class Designations



Visual Resource Inventory (VRI) Process

VRI Process Takes into Account:

- § Scenic Quality Evaluation
- § Sensitivity Level Analysis
- § Delineation of Distance
Zones

Based on VRI, BLM Lands
Become:

- § VRI Class I
- § VRI Class II
- § VRI Class III
- § VRI Class IV

*Note: these are INVENTORY, not
Management Classes*

VRI Classes → VRM Classes

Visual Resource Management Class Designation Decisions under the Multiple-Use Mandate

- § National and regional priorities
- § Visual values and viewshed management priorities
- § Resource uses/ demands
- § Other resource considerations protection
- § Desired outcomes and balancing of resource value/use



VRM Class I

Objective:

To preserve the existing character of the landscape.

§ Level of change to the landscape should be very low, and must not attract attention.

§ Provides for natural ecological change

§ Provides for limited management activity

Examples:

§ Designated Wilderness

§ Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)

§ Outstanding Natural Areas (ONA)



Class I Landscape in Yuma Field Office – Muggins Mountains

VRM Class II

Objective:

To retain the existing character of the landscape.

§ Level of change to the landscape should be low

§ Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the natural features of the landscape – form, line, color, and texture

§ Management activities may be seen, but should not attract attention of the observer



Class II Landscape in Yuma Field Office – Plomosa Mountains

VRM Class III

Objective:

To partially retain the existing character of the landscape.

§ Level of change to the landscape can be moderate

§ Management activities may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer

§ Change should repeat the basic elements found in the natural landscape – form, line, color, and texture



Class III Landscape in Yuma Field Office – Bajada of Plomosa Mountains

VRM Class IV

Objective:

To provide for activities that require major modification of the landscape.

§ Level of change to the landscape can be high

§ Management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of attention

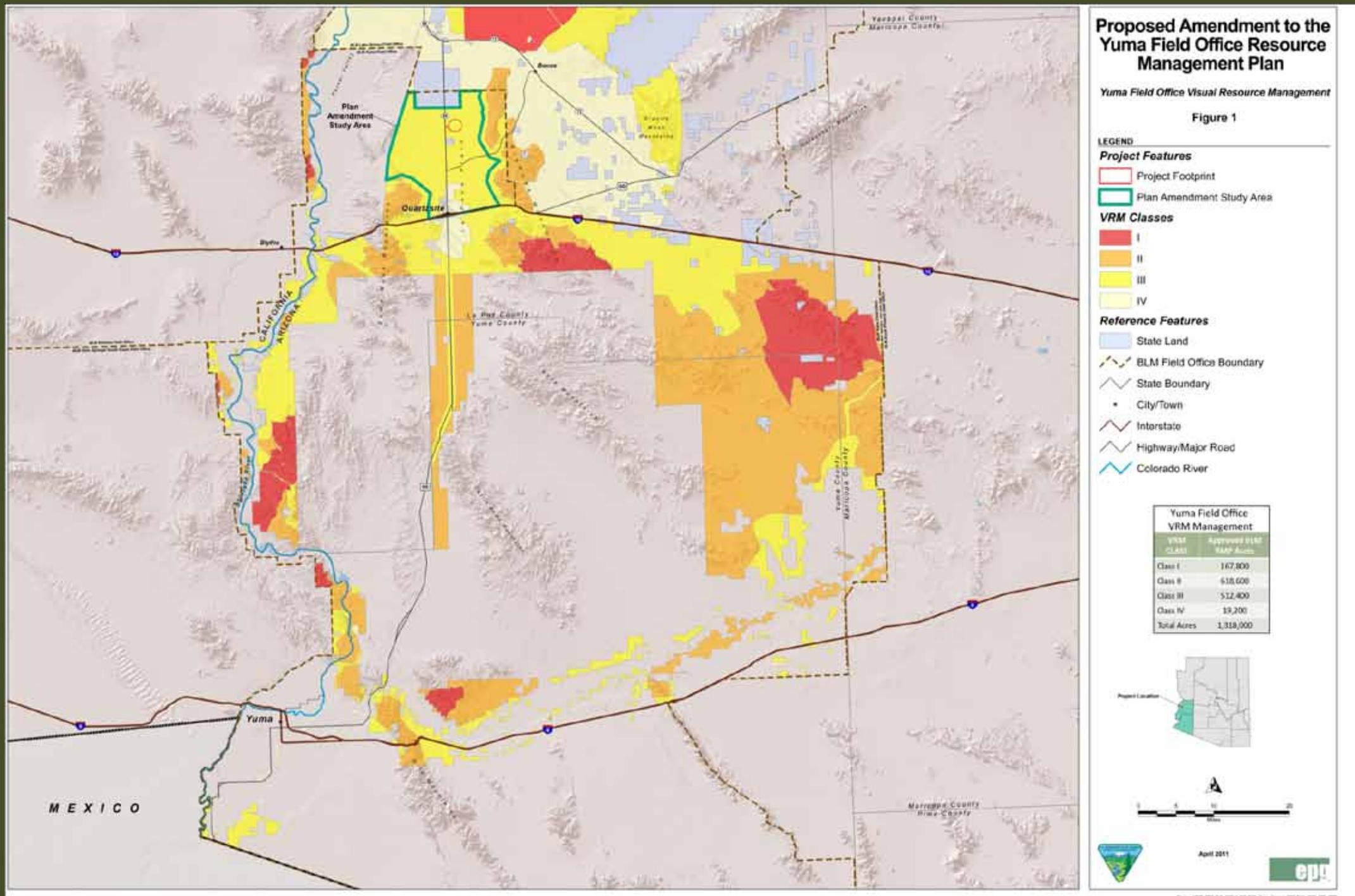
§ Still minimize impacts through location and design by repeating form, line, color, and texture



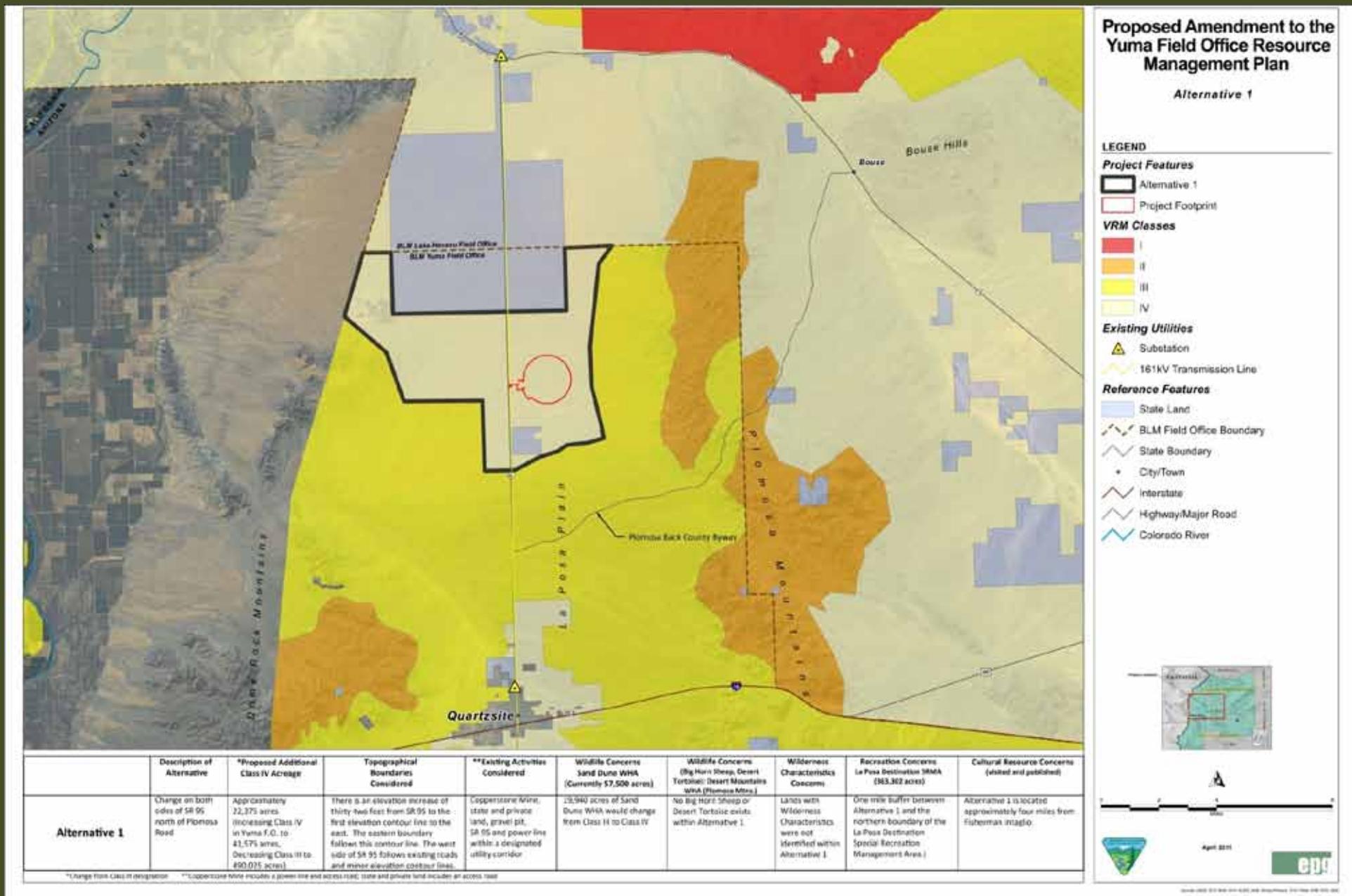
Class IV Landscape in Yuma Field Office – La Posa Plain/Long Term Visitor Area (LTVA)

Yuma Field Office RMP

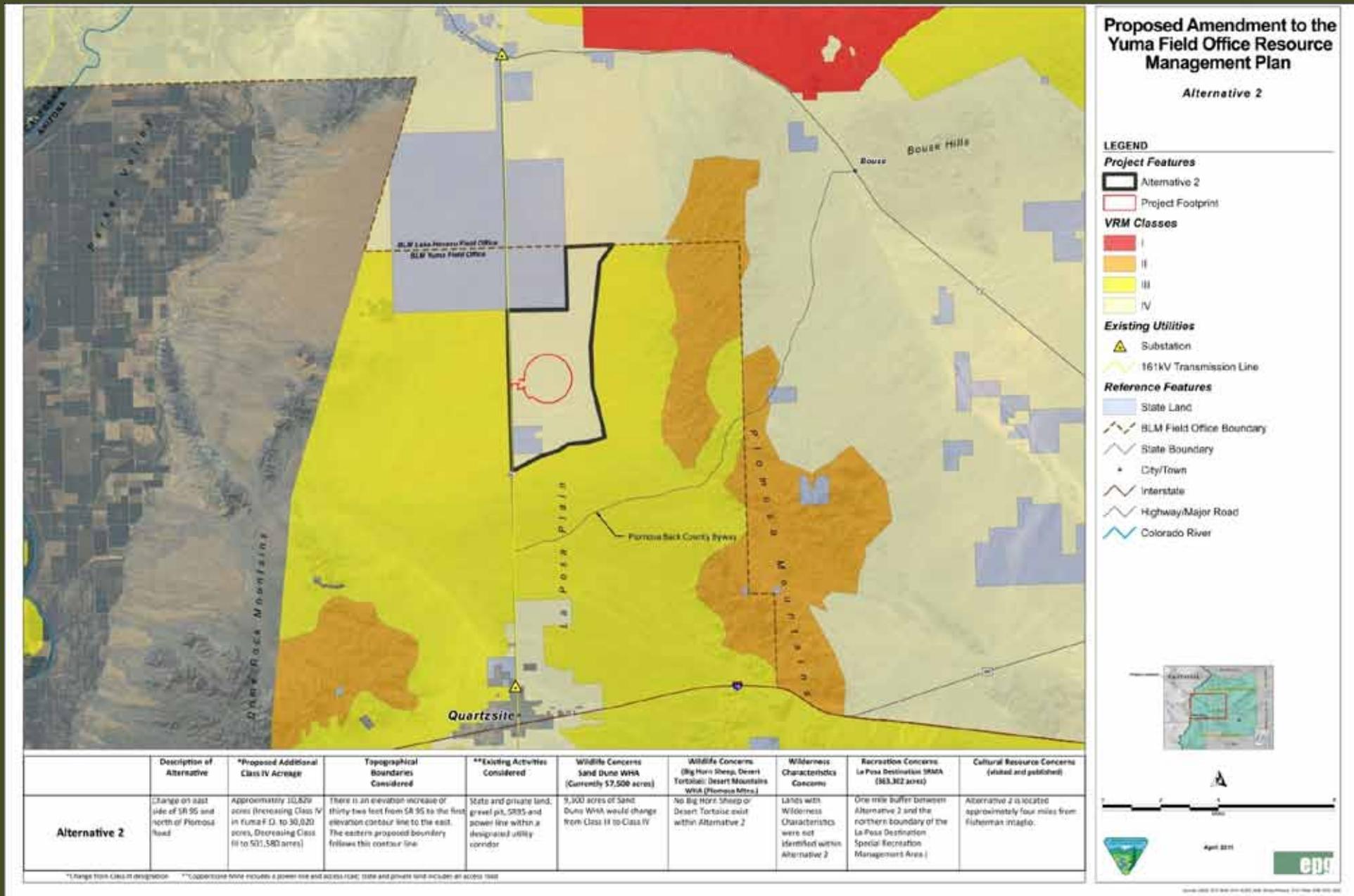
Current VRM Class Designations



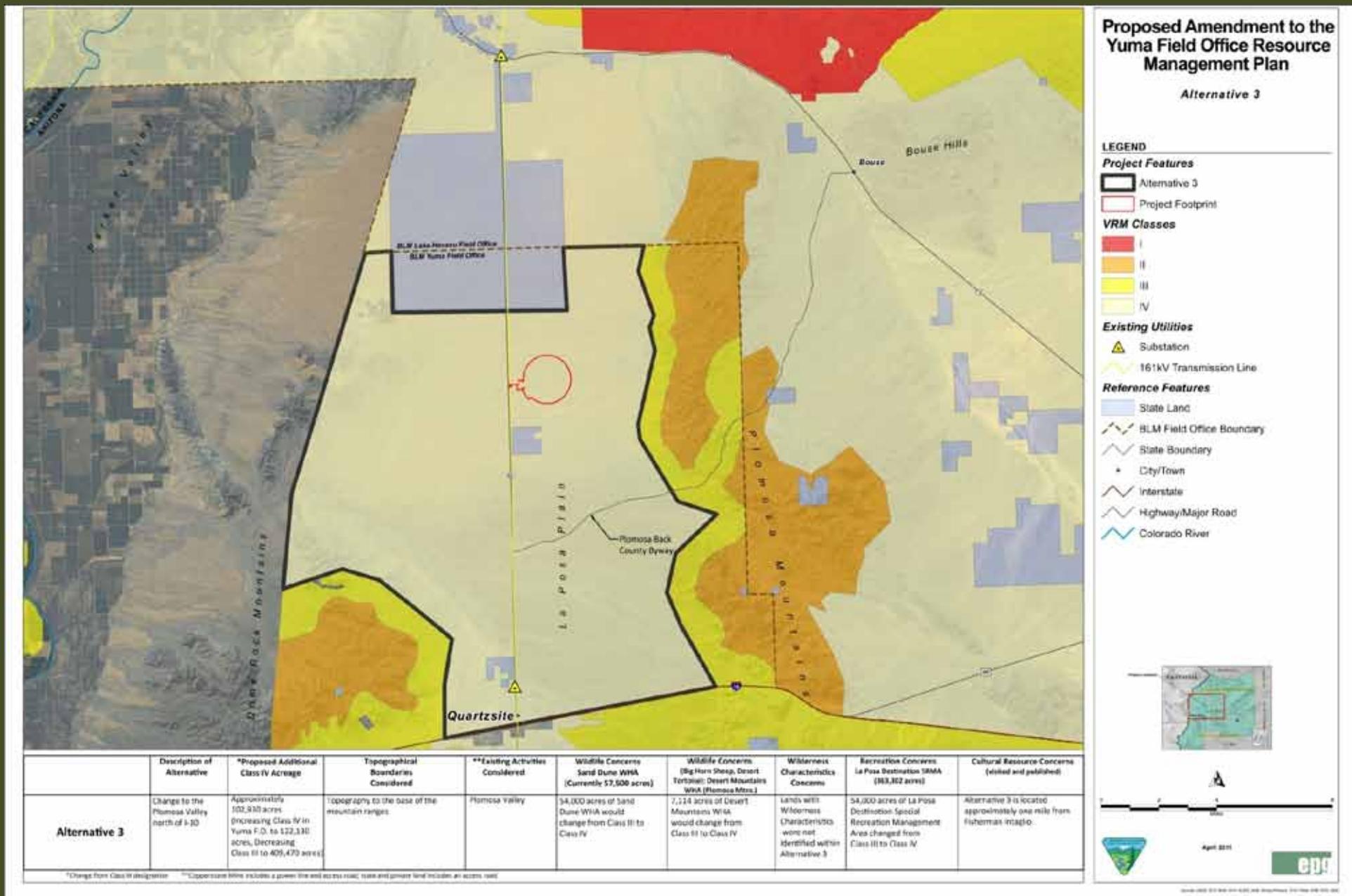
Proposed Class IV Alternatives to RMP: Alternative 1



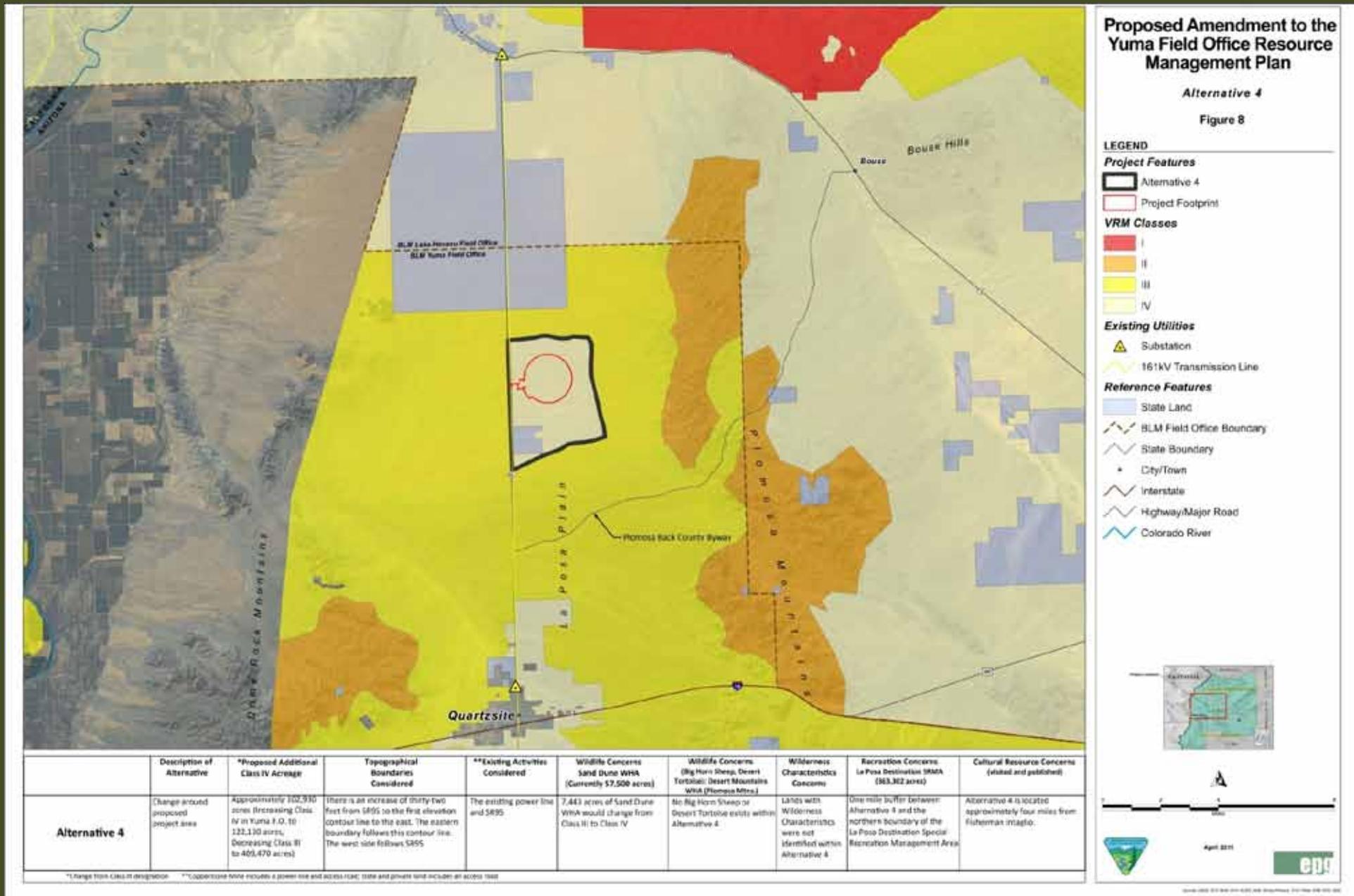
Proposed Class IV Alternatives to RMP: Alternative 2



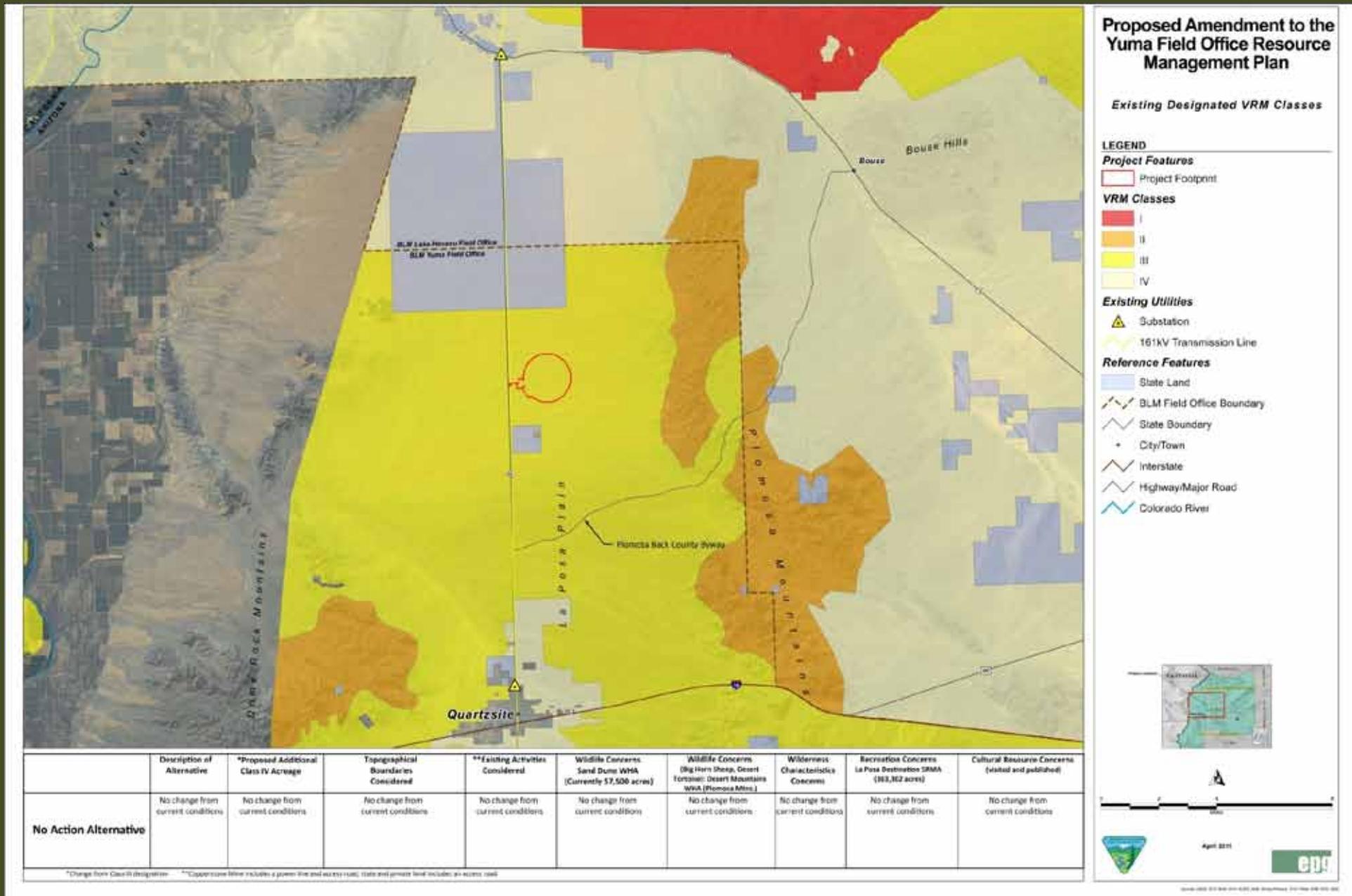
Proposed Class IV Alternatives to RMP: Alternative 3



Proposed Class IV Alternatives to RMP: Alternative 4



Proposed Class IV Alternatives to RMP: Alternative 5 (No Action)





Public Comments

During the public scoping period, the BLM is soliciting public comment on issues, concerns, and opportunities that should be considered in the analysis. Comments about the proposed action should focus on the potential environmental impacts, visual resource management, reasonable alternatives, and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impacts. In order to be included in the Draft NEPA document, all comments must be received prior to the close of the scoping period (April 29, 2011). Additional opportunities for public participation and formal comment will occur when the Draft EIS is issued. Comments may be submitted by either of the following methods:

Mail: Use first-class postage and include your name, any organization you represent, and a return address.

Electronic Mail: Include your name, any organization you represent, and return address in the email message to: Quartzsite_solar@blm.gov.

For further information, contact Eddie Arreola, Supervisory Project Manager for the Quartzsite Solar Energy Project. Contact Information: 602.417.9505 or eddie_arreola@blm.gov.