



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Needles Field Office
1303 South U.S. Highway 95
Needles, CA 92363
www.ca.blm.gov/needles

August 29, 2008

8560 (P)
NOPA-CA690
CA-690.41

NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED ACTION ON PUBLIC LANDS DESIGNATED PART OF THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM

To Whom It May Concern:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in an effort to inform interested or effected public about proposed actions, specific emergencies, or unauthorized activities occurring within BLM Wilderness areas is providing the following information.

Public Notification Begins – September 1, 2008

Public Notification Ends – September 30, 2008

Anticipated Implementation Date – October 1, 2008

WILDERNESS AREA: Portions of the Kingston Range Wilderness, North Mesquite Wilderness, Mesquite Mountains Wildernesses, and Hollow Hills Wilderness.

Public lands administered by the BLM account for one hundred percent of the forage for the grazing authorization. Forage allocations and the Valley Wells grazing allotment within the Needles Field Office were determined by the CDCA Plan (1980) and the NEMO Plan amendment. The following three alternatives are being addressed in regards to the implementation of Livestock Management Activities within the NEMO Plan.

The following are:

1. Allotment Relinquishment within DWMA

Upon voluntary relinquishment of the grazing preference, BLM would make the portion of the allotment within the Shadow Valley DWMA unavailable for grazing.

Grazing would continue on the non-DWMA lands within the allotment in conformance with the NEMO plan.

Prior to authorizing grazing use outside the DWMA, an allotment management plan addressing the development of sufficient water sources for livestock distribution and the construction of approximately 50 miles of fence to prevent livestock grazing within the DWMA would be developed.

a.) Livestock Numbers and Season of Use (Mandatory Terms and Conditions)

Allotment Name	Allotment Number	Number of Livestock	Class	From	To	AUMs
Valley Wells	9009	131	Cattle	03/01	02/28	1,571 Active

Note: based on estimate of BLM lands outside DWMA (86,586 acres; 45%) X (4,656 active AUMs) = 2,095 AUMs; taking into account the influence of slope, distance to water and surrounding terrain that ~75% is available (2,095 X 0.75) yields 1,571 AUMs

b.) Livestock Management (Other Terms and Conditions)

Livestock grazing would be limited to the public 86,586 acres outside the DWMA. These areas are alluvial fans and bajadas moving out from the valley floors.

- Livestock grazing would rely on the one remaining water source located outside the Shadow Valley DWMA and the potential for future water developments would be considered under separate environmental review.
- Regional standards for public land health and guidelines for grazing or fallback standards and guidelines will be applied as appropriate.
- A grazing strategy will be developed.
- Ephemeral authorizations are no longer available for cattle use.
- Existing cattle guards will be modified to prevent entrapment of desert tortoise.
- All grazing will be in accordance with an allotment management plan.
- Salt may be placed no closer than ¼ mile of a water source.
- Prior to placement of salt and supplements on BLM administered land, written approval from the Field Manager must be received.
- An annual actual use report must be submitted by March 15 each year.
- Maintenance of range improvements is the responsibility of the lessee.
- Grazing authorizations are for a one-year period.
- Payment must be received within fifteen days of the due date.

c.) Range Improvements

Range improvements would require individual inspections and assessments to determine their condition, and whether they are kept, abandoned, or removed based on potential obstructions and hazards to the desert tortoise and other wildlife needs. Activities associated with removals of range improvements would be subject to separate environmental review.

d.) Administrative Grazing Restrictions

The remaining portion of the Valley Wells grazing allotment outside the Shadow Valley DWMA would conform to the management strategies necessary to maintain or achieve rangeland health standards. Where livestock movements cannot be substantially controlled a perimeter boundary fence would be considered around the Shadow Valley DWMA. Approximately 50 miles of fence would be required to control livestock access onto the DWMA. The project scale is beyond the scope of this environmental assessment and would be analyzed under a separate environmental review.

2. No Grazing Alternative

The entire allotment would be unavailable for grazing. This alternative does not currently conform to the CDCA Plan as amended by the NEMO Plan. If this alternative were selected, it would not be implemented until a land use plan amendment is approved.

This alternative is included because it would contribute to recovery of the desert tortoise by removing grazing from critical habitat outside the DWMA (See Appendix A) as well as by protecting habitat outside the DWMA that is comparable to adjacent critical habitat.

Additionally, this alternative would also protect Mojave fringe-toed lizard habitat outside the DWMA.

3. No Action Alternative

The allotment would remain available for grazing under the terms and conditions in the NEMO Plan (Appendix A, Table 2.9, page 2-39, Valley Wells Alternative #5 and page 2-34, Alternative #3). An Allotment Management Plan would be written prescribing grazing management within and outside the DWMA. This alternative does not meet the purpose and need; it is presented here as a basis for comparison with the action alternatives.

ADVISORY:

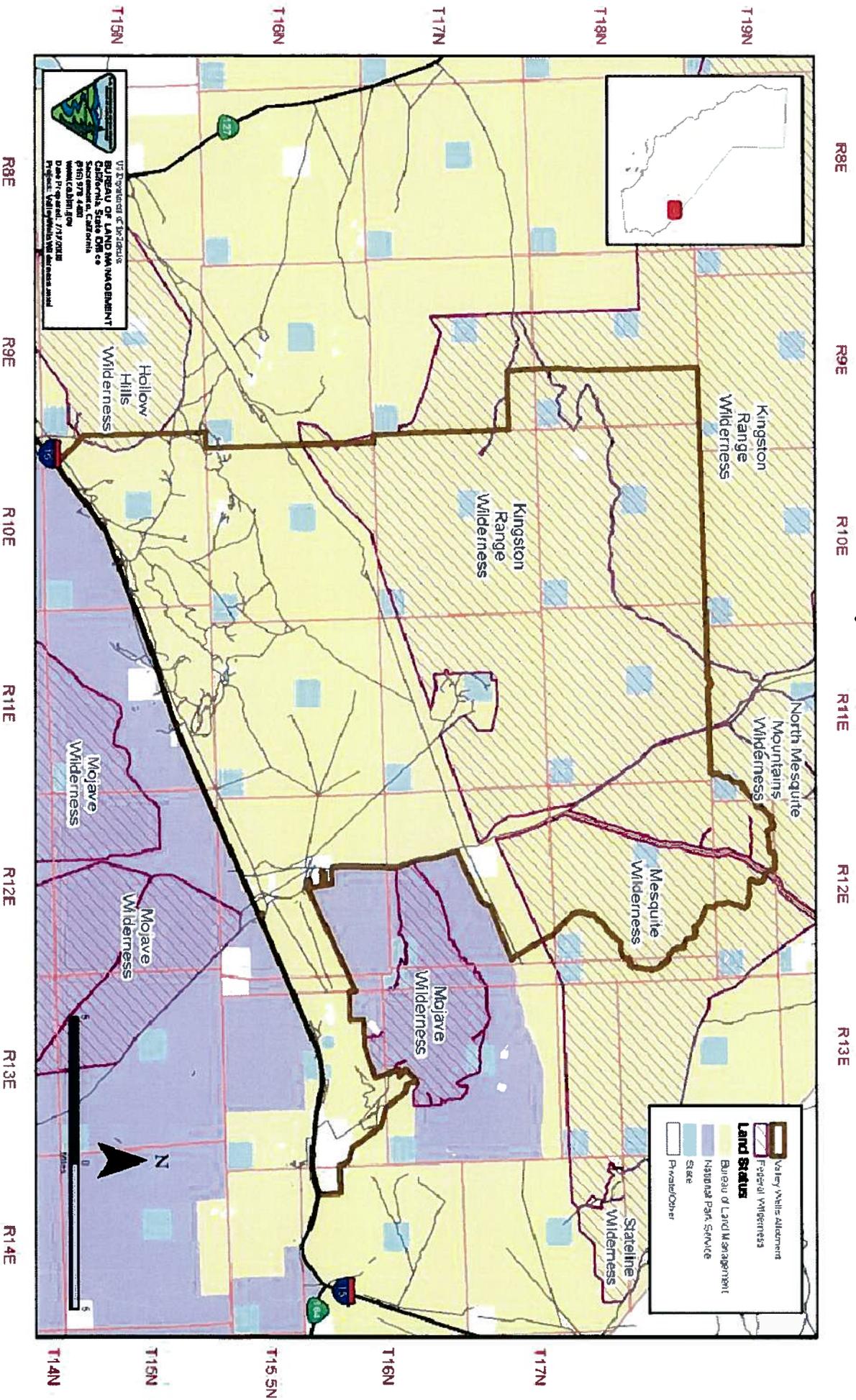
The comment period for this Notice of Proposed Action closes on September 30, 2008. Individuals making comments may request confidentiality. If you wish your name and/or address withheld from public review or disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written or e-mailed comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. The Bureau of Land Management will not, however, consider anonymous comments. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

As always, your comments and questions are welcome concerning this or any other actions being reviewed by the Needles Field Office. Should you have any questions regarding this Notice of Proposed Action please contact The Needles Field Office, at 760-326-7000 (email: ca690@ca.blm.gov).


Field Manager, Needles Field Office

8/29/08
Date

Wilderness Valley Wells Allotment



ACECs and Desert Tortoise Critical Habitat Valley Wells Allotment

