

Palen-Ford Playa Dunes

Description/Location: The proposed Palen-Ford Playa Dunes NLCS/ ACEC would encompass the entire playa and dune system in the Chuckwalla Valley of eastern Riverside County. The area is bordered on the east by the Palen-McCoy Wilderness and on the west by Joshua Tree National Park. Included within its boundaries are the existing Desert Lily Preserve ACEC, the Palen Dry Lake ACEC, and the Palen-Ford Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA).

Nationally Significant Values:

Ecological Values: The proposed unit would protect one of the major playa/dune systems of the California Desert. The area contains extensive and pristine habitat for the Mojave fringe-toed lizard, a BLM Sensitive Species and a California State Species of Special Concern. Because the Chuckwalla Valley population occurs at the southern distributional limit for the species, protection of this population is important for the conservation of the species. The proposed unit would protect an entire dune ecosystem for this and other dune-dwelling species, including essential habitat and ecological processes (i.e., sand source and sand transport systems). The proposed unit would also contribute to the overall linking of five currently isolated Wilderness Areas of northeastern Riverside County (i.e., Palen-McCoy, Big Maria Mountains, Little Maria Mountains, Riverside Mountains, and Rice Valley) with each other and Joshua Tree National Park, and would protect a large, intact representation of the lower Colorado Desert. Along with the proposed Chuckwalla Chemehuevi Tortoise Linkage NLCS/ ACEC and Upper McCoy NLCS/ ACEC, this unit would provide crucial habitat connectivity for key wildlife species including the federally threatened Agassizi's desert tortoise and the desert bighorn sheep. Protecting this proposed unit would be crucial for maintaining habitat connectivity between the Chuckwalla and Chemehuevi critical habitat units, the two main desert tortoise population centers in the Colorado Desert. The proposed unit also contains plant species and vegetation alliances that are associated with dune and playa systems, including several listed as rare/ sensitive by the State of California.

Cultural Values: The proposed unit contains a large number of significant archeological sites that are associated with the lacustrine environment of Pleistocene Palen/ Ford Lakes, some of which are contained within the existing Palen Dry Lake ACEC. Disparate sources and collections of intermittent water have provided many small niches for plant and animal communities to survive providing resources for human populations. Major trail networks transit through the area and evidence from the trade and travel can be found throughout the valley. The dry lakes would seasonally or intermittently fill attracting waterfowl and humans for extended stays. Archaic times 2,000 to 8,000 years ago, likely experienced a different climate than today but newly discovered evidence of this early period human occupation shows a significant presence dating back 10,000 years. A recent unpublished account (CA-RIV-11733) of a Paleoindian fluted point, ca. 13,000 years old, was found near Ford Dry Lake.

Scientific Values: This proposed unit contains exemplary representation of pristine sand flow ecosystems and associated assemblages of sand flow ecosystem obligate species. The area represents outstanding opportunities for scientific research in ecosystem functionality, dispersion capacity as well as study of unique species only inhabiting these ecosystems. Significant opportunity also exists to study this system's response to disturbance and investigate resiliency to impact from large scale development as well as develop appropriate mitigation to maintain these ecosystems. Archaeological sensitivity is extremely high near the Dry lakes, benches, and washes. Preservation is exemplary in buried contexts, and on undisturbed desert pavements.

Special Designations/Management Plan/Date newly proposed ACEC, Palen Dry Lake ACEC (1980), Desert Lily Preserve ACEC (1980), Palen-Ford Wildlife Habitat Management Area (NECO 2002).

Goals: Protect biological and cultural resources. Maintain the integrity of essential fringe-toed lizard habitat and essential ecological processes (i.e., the sand transport system and sand sources). Control invasive species on the sand dunes (e.g., tamarisk within the palo verde thickets, Sahara mustard within the dunes/ fringe-toed lizard habitat). Prevent excessive ground water withdrawal that would potentially threatened dune/ playa dependent vegetation alliances. Provide for the protection of cultural resources associated with the Palen and Ford playas. Prohibit conflicting activities that may result in an adverse effect to National Register Eligible sites or artifacts, or landscapes

Designation and Acreage by Alternative:

Alternative	BLM Acres of NLCS within ACEC or Wildlife Allocation	BLM Acres within ACEC	BLM Acres within Wildlife Allocation	ACEC Disturbance Cap
No Action	0	0	0	NA
Preferred Alternative	21,500	25,600	0	1%
1	50,000	0	62,900	Wildlife Allocation
2	20,700	20,700	0	0.25%
3	58,800	62,800	0	0.5 and 1%
4	17,700	17,700	0	0.25%

* Acreage values are for BLM managed lands

Alternatives:

Alternatives:

Under Alternatives Preferred, 2, and 4—This area (size and location vary between alternative, see table above and maps that follow) would be identified as an ACEC. A connectivity corridor, at least 2 kilometers wide, will be designated crossing over/through the Development Focus Area in the vicinity of the Palen Dry Lake. This corridor’s specific location will be determined at the time that the Plan of Development/Project specific NEPA. This corridor would be managed to support and maintain wildlife connectivity.

Under Alternatives 1 and 3 —This area (size and location vary between alternative, see table above and maps that follow) would be identified as an ACEC and/or Wildlife Allocation Area and would be managed to support and maintain wildlife connectivity.

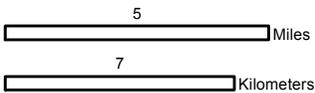
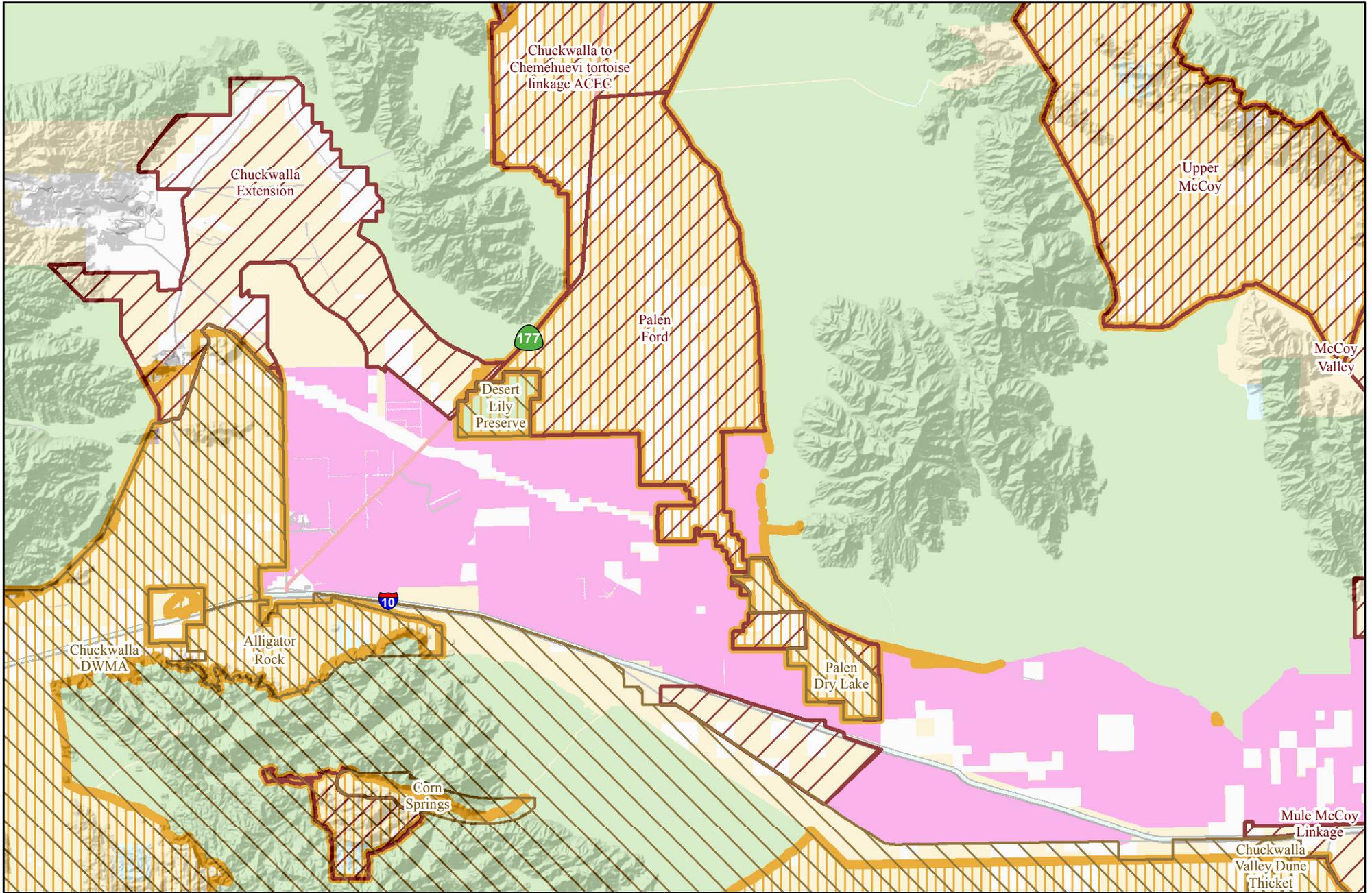
No Action – this area would continue to be managed as a wildlife habitat management area. A connectivity corridor, at least 2 kilometers wide, will be designated crossing over/through the Solar Energy Zone that was designated in the Solar PEIS. This corridor will generally be in the vicinity of the Palen Dry Lake, but the specific location will be determined at the time that the Plan of Development and Project specific NEPA are prepared. This corridor would be managed to support and maintain wildlife connectivity.

Objectives (desired future conditions)/Allowable Uses/Management Actions	Resource
<p>Objectives: Maintain current air quality classifications</p> <p>Management Actions: Ensure all authorized activities comply with the State of California State Implementation Plan for all proposed actions that have the potential to would contribute to particulate matter emissions. to air quality degradation. Appropriate Air Quality Consistency Determination must be obtained prior to authorizing activities that may degrade air quality.</p> <p>Appropriate Air Quality Consistency Determination must be obtained prior to authorizing activities that may degrade air quality.</p> <p>Restrict construction activities when soils are susceptible to heightened risk of erosion. Limit ground-disturbing activities when soils are wet in order to avoid compaction of soils.</p> <p>Objective: Prevent excessive ground water withdrawal that would potentially threaten dune/playa dependent vegetation.</p> <p>Management Action: Allow no activities that would create a water basin deficit/decline.</p>	<p>Soil, water, air</p>
<p>Objective: Protect the following special status plants and rare vegetation alliances by ensuring habitats are in a stable or improving condition.</p> <p>Special Status Species:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foxtail cactus (<i>Coryphantha alversonii</i>) (NECO covered, CRPR 4) 2. Desert unicorn plant (<i>Proboscidea althaeifolia</i>) (NECO covered, CRPR 4) 3. Jackass clover (<i>Wislizenia refracta</i> ssp. <i>palmeri</i>) (NECO covered, CRPR 2) <p>Rare Vegetation Alliances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Iodinebush Shrubland (<i>Allenrolfea occidentalis</i>) Shrubland Alliance 2. Spinescale Shrubland (<i>Atriplex spinifera</i>) Shrubland Alliance 3. Honey Mesquite Shrubland (<i>Prosopis glandulosa</i>) Shrubland Alliance 4. Bush Seepweed Shrubland (<i>Suaeda moquinii</i>) Shrubland Alliance 5. Big Galleta Herbaceous (<i>Pleuraphis rigida</i>) Herbaceous Alliance 6. Spectacle Fruit Herbaceous (<i>Wislizenia refracta</i>) Herbaceous Unique Stands 7. Blue Palo verde - Desert Ironwood Woodland (<i>Parkinsonia florida</i> - <i>Olneya tesota</i>) Woodland Alliance <p>Management Action: All surface disturbing activities must demonstrate a no net loss of the above special status plant species and vegetation alliances.</p> <p>Management Action: Establish a cooperative regional weed management area to control invasive species on the sand dunes (e.g., tamarisk within the Palo verde thickets, Sahara mustard within the dunes/ MFTL habitat).</p>	<p>Vegetation (incl. special status species)</p>

<p>Management Action: Seek active scientific research regarding most appropriate methodologies to manage invasive species in sand dune ecosystems.</p> <p>Management Action: Prevent excessive ground water withdrawal that would potentially threaten dune/ playa dependent vegetation.</p> <p>Management Action: Allow no activities that would create a water basin deficit/ decline. Ensure that all proposed water use is obtained in a legal manner. See also Program Specific Rule Sets for Water.</p>	
<p>Objective: Provide for the protections of special status animal species within the NLCS area including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mojave fringe-toed lizard 2. Townsend's big-eared bat 3. Pallid bat 4. California leaf-nosed bat 5. Prairie falcon 6. Mountain plover 7. Rosy boa 8. Leconte's thrasher 9. Mountain lion 10. Burro deer 11. Colorado Valley wood rat <p>Management Action: Maintain the integrity of the sand transport system and sand sources. Control invasive species on the sand dunes (e.g., control tamarisk within the Palo Verde thickets, control Sahara mustard within the dunes/ MFTL habitat).</p> <p>Management Action: All surface disturbing activities must demonstrate a no net loss of habitats associated with the above special status animal species.</p> <p>Management Action: prevent or mitigate projects that would have the potential to impede sand transport or would impact sand source areas. Ensure that all proposed water use is obtained in a legal manner. See also Program Specific Rule Sets for Water.</p>	<p>Fish and Wildlife (incl. special status species)</p>
<p>Objective: Because of the proximity to Joshua Tree National Park, the area will be managed as VRM Class II. Some portions along the southern end managed as Class III.</p> <p>Management Action: Restore all undesignated OHV routes to meet VRM class II objectives.</p>	<p>Visual Resources</p>
<p>Objective: Area would be managed within the Eastern Riverside Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). Provide dispersed opportunities focused on enjoyment of the ACEC qualities.</p>	<p>Recreation</p>

<p>Objective: Maintain intact landscapes</p> <p>Management Action: Retain public lands within the NLCS area. Management Action: Acquire all inholdings from willing sellers</p>	<p>Land Tenure</p>
<p>Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) within the NLCS area would be ROW exclusion areas. Playas, dunes, mesquite bosques, desert chenopod scrub, and other rare vegetation alliances outside of LWC would be avoidance areas for transmission ROWs and exclusion areas for all other types of ROWs.</p> <p>Desert dry wash woodland outside of LWC would be ROW avoidance areas. Surface disturbing activities must demonstrate protection of the NLCS values and ensure no net loss of these values.</p> <p>Should the NLCS area overlap any BLM Utility Corridor, the area is open for transmission ROW only (i.e., the integrity of the BLM Utility Corridor will be maintained). All other areas in the ACEC would be ROW avoidance areas. ROWs in avoidance areas would be authorized on a case by case basis to meet public demand consistent with the goals and objectives and protection of nationally significant values of the NLCS area.</p>	<p>Rights of Way (ROW)</p>
<p>Not an allowable use. Renewable energy development is not compatible with NLCS and ACEC unit values and criteria</p> <p>Geothermal: Area is closed to geothermal leasing and development</p>	<p>Renewable Energy</p>
<p>Recommend withdrawal of the NLCS area from locatable mineral entry.</p> <p>Continue to allow mineral material disposals on a case by-case basis subject to site specific environmental analysis. Allow no disposal of mineral material in Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.</p> <p>No-surface occupancy leasable minerals.</p>	<p>Locatable Minerals Mineral Materials Non-energy Leaseables</p>

Palen Ford



Preferred Alternative ACECs

Date Printed: 5/29/2013

Prepared by BLM California State Office



ACEC Layers

- Existing ACEC
- Proposed ACEC
- Proposed NLCS
- Design Focus Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected

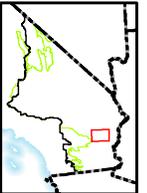
- Cities
- OHV Areas
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

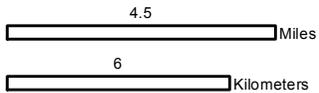
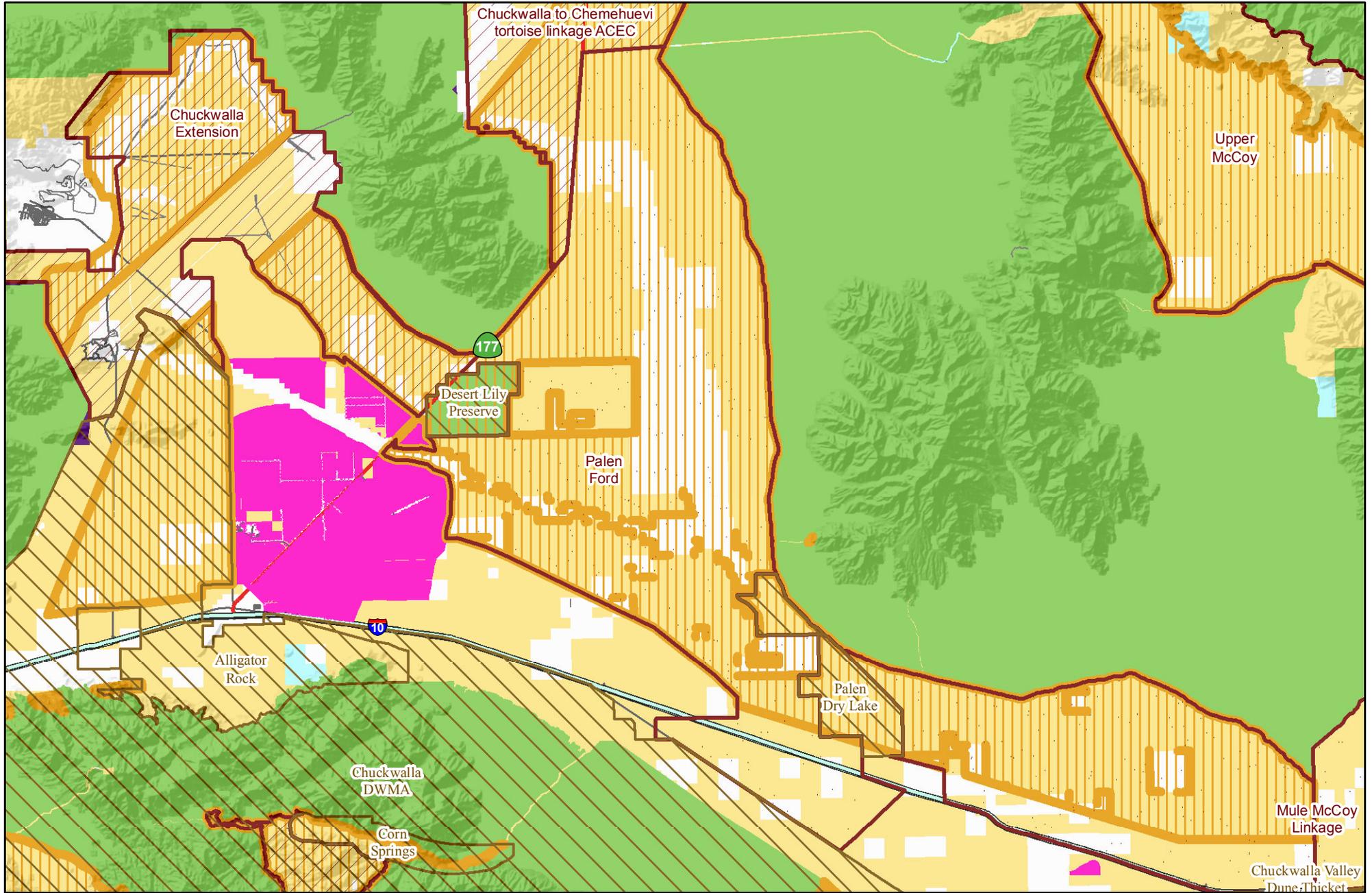
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTLF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Palen Ford



Alternative 1 ACECs

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ACEC Layers

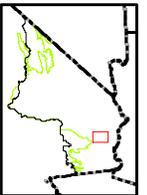
- Existing ACEC
- Proposed NLCS
- Proposed ACEC
- Proposed Wildlife Allocation
- Legislatively and Legally Protected
- Design Focus Areas
- OHV Areas
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

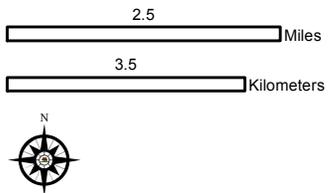
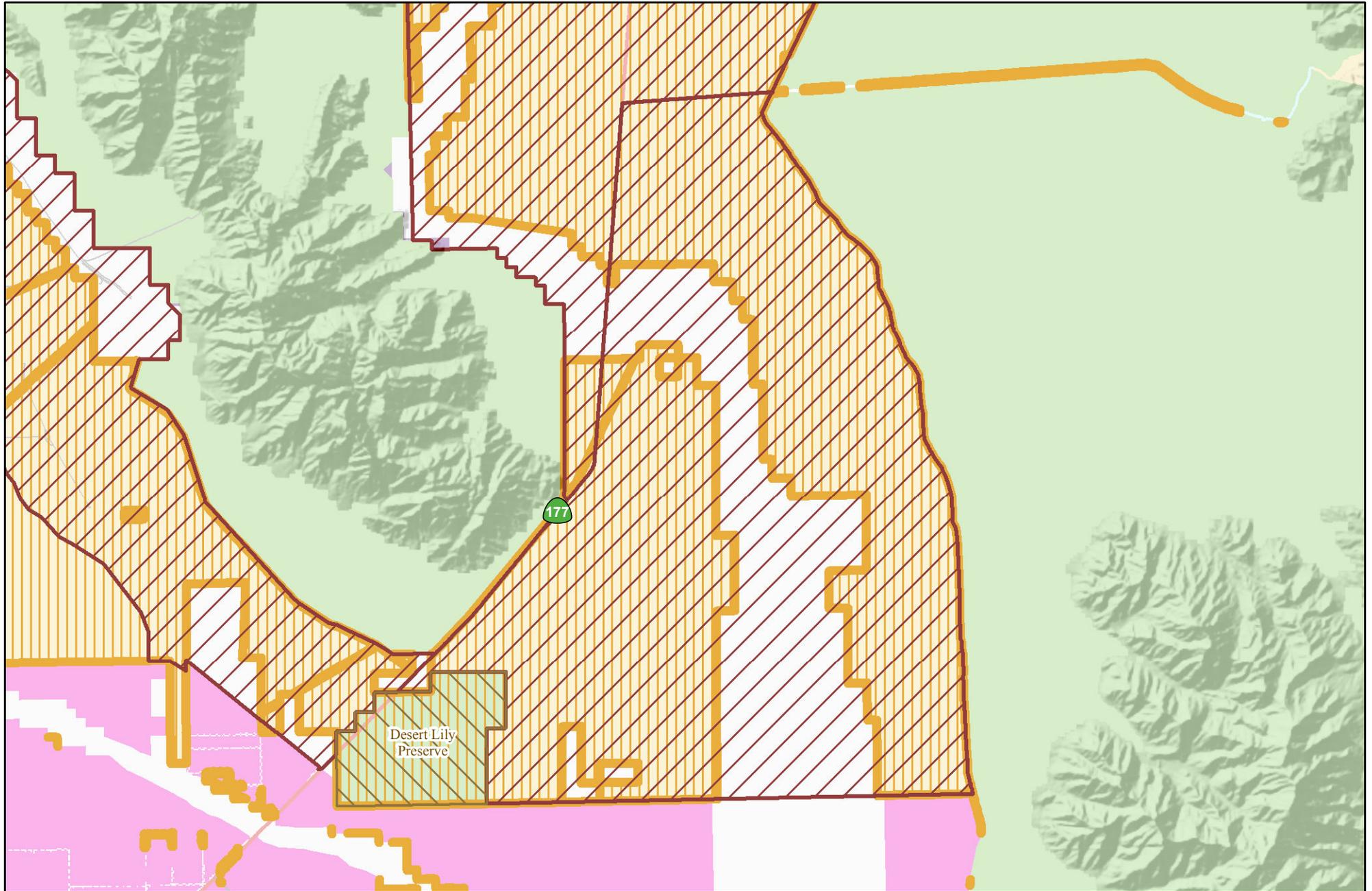
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTLF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Palen Ford



Alternative 2 ACECs
 Date Printed: 5/29/2013
 Prepared by BLM California State Office



ACEC Layers

- Existing ACEC
- Proposed ACEC
- Proposed NLCS
- Design Focus Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected

- Cities
- OHV Areas
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

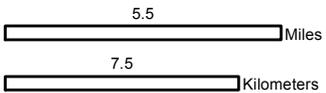
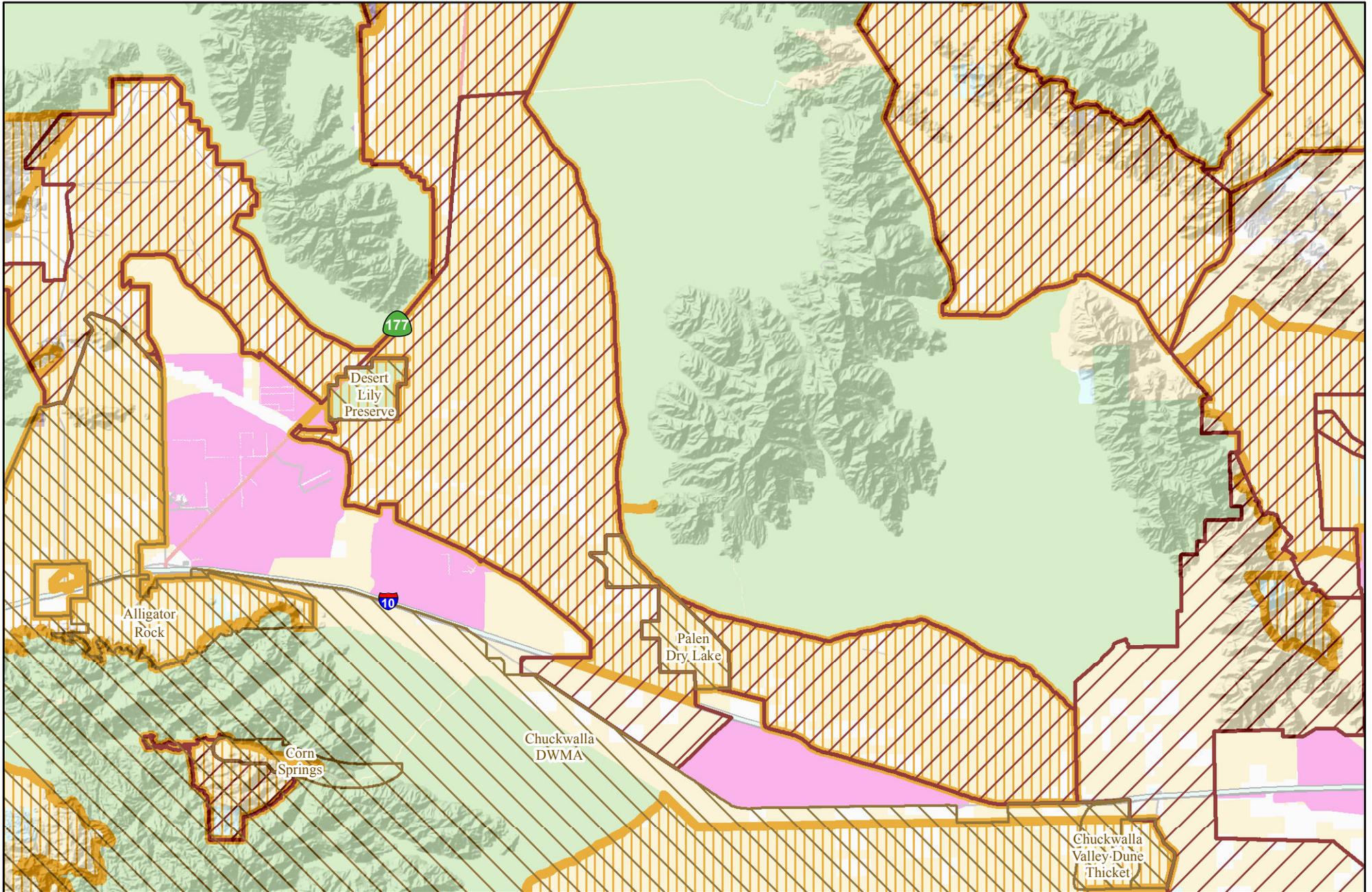
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTLF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Palen Ford



Alternative 3 ACECs
 Date Printed: 5/29/2013
 Prepared by BLM California State Office



ACEC Layers

- Existing ACEC
- Proposed ACEC
- Proposed NLCS
- Design Focus Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected

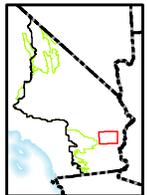
- Cities
- OHV Areas
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

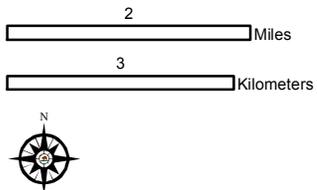
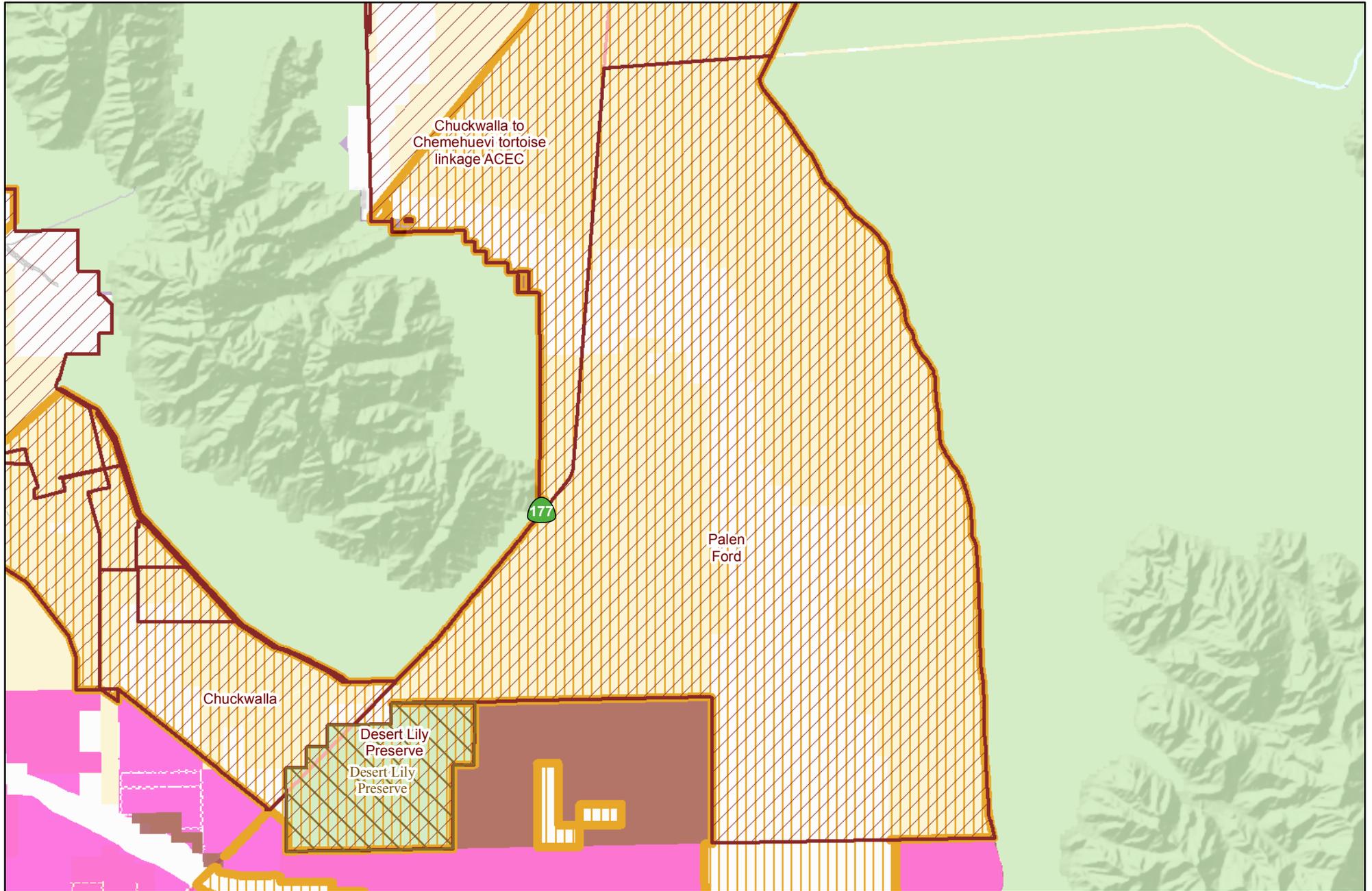
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTIF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Palen Ford



Alternative 4 ACECs
Date Printed: 8/6/2014
Prepared by BLM California State Office



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|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| ACEC Layers | Design Focus Areas | Land Status | GTLF |
| Existing ACEC | Variance Lands | Bureau of Land Management | Interstate |
| Proposed NLCS | OHV Areas | State | US Hwy |
| Proposed ACEC | CDCA Boundary | Other Federal | CA Hwy |
| Proposed Wildlife Allocation | DRECP Boundary | Military | County Hwy |
| Legislatively and Legally Protected | BLM Field Office | Private | |

