

IV.18 OUTDOOR RECREATION

IV.18.1 Approach to Impact Analysis

IV.18.1.1 General Methods

The analysis in this chapter addresses potential impacts on outdoor recreation from implementing the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) alternatives (as outlined in Volume II). Existing conditions for outdoor recreation are described in Volume III, Chapter III.18.

The key metrics used for this analysis are (1) acres of lands in existing and proposed recreational management areas that intersect with renewable energy development/proposed Development Focus Areas (DFAs), (2) acres of lands managed for recreation that intersect with existing and proposed conservation lands, and (3) proposed acres of lands managed for recreation—Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs). Because it is impossible to predict where renewable energy development projects may occur within the DFAs, it is possible that lands managed for recreation would be avoided. Land managed for recreation currently includes off-high vehicle (OHV) Open and Limited areas, Long-Term Visitor areas, and other specially designated areas or sites specific to recreation management, such as the Desert Discovery Center. In addition, while other lands are currently managed consistent with recreation goals, they are not currently designated as SRMAs.

The Plan Area encompasses the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area. Because of this, the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area acres are shown in the tables below. Note, the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area is not part of the decision for the DRECP and the DRECP Record of Decision would not affect the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area. As such, there would be no impacts to the Recreation Area caused by the DRECP.

Tables presented in Appendix R2.18 provide additional detail regarding the amount of land currently used for recreation that would be impacted by renewable energy development and land that would be designated in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) LUPA for recreational use purposes.

This programmatic Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) does not evaluate site-specific impacts associated with particular projects. Project-specific impacts would be assessed during the permitting process and in supplemental California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)/National Environmental Policy Act documents.

IV.18.1.2 CEQA Standards of Significance

CEQA has established standards (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G) for use in determining the significance of impacts on recreation resources from a proposed action or project. The recreational standards are less applicable to utility-scale renewable energy, and the following standards were identified from previous renewable energy environmental impact assessments. Would the selected alternative:

- Disrupt or preclude activities in established federal, state, or local recreational areas?
- Substantially contribute to the loss or degradation of the scenic, biological, cultural, geologic, or other factors that contribute to the value of federal, state, or local recreational facilities or programs?

For the purposes of the analysis in this chapter, the interpretation of existing recreational facilities is expanded to include lands commonly used for or designated and managed for recreational uses.

IV.18.2 Typical Impacts Common to All Action Alternatives

IV.18.2.1 Impacts of Renewable Energy and Transmission Development

The following general description identifies typical impacts on outdoor recreation that could result from renewable energy development in the Plan Area. Impacts on outdoor recreation would likely be similar for solar, wind, and geothermal energy development. Due to the visibility of the turbines, wind energy development may include a greater variety of impacts leading to the degradation of scenic resources associated with remote recreational experiences, including hunting, rock-climbing, and backcountry exploration. Competitive and commercial Special Recreation Permits would generally not be authorized in geothermal leasing areas. Renewable energy development could result in direct impacts such as loss or preclusion of recreational facilities or lands or indirect impacts such as a change in character of a recreational area due to visual effects. Renewable energy development would not be allowed in BLM designated open OHV areas, existing and proposed SRMAS, and proposed ERMA. Transmission would be allowed in these areas.

IV.18.2.1.1 Impacts of Site Characterization

Site characterization for individual projects may include construction of temporary access roads, the erection of meteorological towers, geotechnical borings, or activities associated with site reconnaissance. Impacts during the site characterization phase would be temporary and of limited scale, so they would not be expected to exclude the use of any recreational facilities or lands managed for recreational use. The development of access and ser-

vice roads for renewable energy facilities and transmission lines could have a beneficial impact on access to recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, or OHV riding if the access or service roads were designated as open for the motorized use of the public. If adjacent to recreational lands designated for solitary recreation, these roads could lead to degradation of the recreational experience in those areas.

IV.18.2.1.2 Impacts of Construction and Decommissioning

Activities associated with construction and decommissioning of individual projects may include ground-disturbing activities (grading and vegetation clearing), excavation, construction of staging areas and fencing, and temporary drainage.

Renewable energy development would convert undeveloped land into a developed industrial site and would be incompatible with recreational uses. The development of renewable energy facilities would result in the exclusion of recreational use from those areas and diminishment of recreational opportunities. Recreational use would be wholly excluded from areas developed for solar and geothermal facilities because of their concentrated footprints. Although wind energy development can require large tracts of land, its footprint is smaller than solar and geothermal facilities because of the spacing needed between the turbines; so some recreational activities, such as hiking, may be compatible with wind projects. Wind facilities may still result in diminished recreational value due to the presence of large structures in the foreground of the landscape. Other recreational activities, such as hunting, may be prohibited at wind generation facilities due to the potential impact on the infrastructure. Recreational users displaced by renewable energy development would likely seek recreational opportunities elsewhere, which could increase the impact on other recreational areas.

Construction of renewable energy or transmission infrastructure would result in noise, dust, and traffic that would disturb recreationists such as hikers, campers, rock climbers, hunters, or birders. Increased traffic or temporary closure of roadways could disturb or preclude OHV riding. Closure of roadways would be planned and of short duration. Construction activities would also affect the visual experience of recreationists due to the industrial nature of large construction staging areas. These activities are temporary; but the construction and decommissioning activities may take several years to complete, resulting in lengthy disturbance to areas frequented for recreation purposes. Additionally, construction traffic and noise may affect organized recreational activities requiring Special Recreation Permits. The development of access and service roads for renewable energy facilities and transmission lines could have a beneficial impact on access to motorized and motor-dependent recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, or OHV riding. The development of these roads, however, could degrade the recreational experience of relatively pristine nonmotorized recreation areas.

IV.18.2.1.3 Impacts of Operations and Maintenance

Activities associated with operations and maintenance of individual projects may include generation operations, cleaning and maintenance of facilities, dust suppression, and fire and fuel management.

As with development, renewable energy operation would preclude recreational use in the areas of operation and could also affect recreational use on public, state, and private lands adjacent to the facilities due to the visual and noise impacts as well as restricted access to the recreational facilities. See Chapter IV.19 for effects on recreational access, Chapter IV.20 for effects on visual resources, and Chapter IV.21 for impacts due to noise.

Transmission rights-of-way and development would result in a lesser degree of impact on recreation than would the renewable energy facility and would also benefit many recreationists due to the increase in access roads, as outlined in the previous section. The overall recreational experience may be impacted by the development of overhead transmission lines, including the visual disturbance and noise impacts associated with them. Transmission can also pose a threat to certain activities, such as hang gliding, and generally results in increased use levels in an area, detracting from visitors' esthetic experiences of remoteness or isolation.

IV.18.2.2 Impacts of the Reserve Design

Conservation actions and land designation could have adverse and beneficial effects on recreation. Recreation activities may be restricted from areas due to the conservation of lands, habitat, or species. Conservation actions could also preclude or limit disturbance on SRMAs where Areas of Critical Concern (ACECs) overlap with existing SRMAs or Long-Term Visitor areas. In addition, there would be impacts on several proposed SRMAs. These areas currently include a strong recreation focus for management activities. These SRMAs and ERMAs are described in current and proposed Plans in Appendix L. In overlap areas where ACEC and current or proposed SRMA guidance conflict, National Conservation Lands/ACEC guidance will prevail.

Conservation and Management Actions (CMAs) relevant to lands managed for recreation include maintaining the recreation setting and protecting recreation values and opportunities, prohibiting or avoiding large-scale ground disturbance, and requiring replacement or compensation for displacement of recreation opportunities or facilities. CMAs for recreation are detailed in Volume II, Section II.3.2.3, BLM-Specific CMAs.

Conservation Planning Areas identified on private lands would not be mandatory and would occur only if there were willing sellers.

IV.18.2.3 Impacts of BLM Land Use Plan Decisions

IV.18.2.3.1 Impacts of Renewable Energy Development and Transmission on BLM Lands Managed for Recreation

The typical impacts from the various renewable energy and transmission technologies on BLM lands managed for recreation would be the same as those described in Section IV.18.2.1, Impacts of Renewable Energy and Transmission Development. However, the LUPA decisions may encourage or restrict development in some areas.

IV.18.2.3.2 Impacts of BLM Land Designations and Management Actions

Because the BLM LUPA land designations would be managed to protect ecological, historic, cultural, scenic, scientific, and recreation resources and values, they would confer general protection for lands managed for recreation. While other land uses are allowed within these areas, they must be compatible with the resources and values that the land designation is intended to protect. If the protection of these various values conflict, resource conservation values would generally prevail.

Impacts on recreation resulting from designations of ACECs and National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) lands would be both beneficial and adverse. Impacts would be beneficial to solitary or primitive recreation because disturbance caps in these areas would conserve and protect the resource values for which they were designated and the solitary nature of many recreational uses. To the extent that additional SRMAs are designated and managed, they would also protect lands managed for recreation and would direct funding and personnel to these opportunities. The BLM would prohibit development of renewable energy development on SRMAs except where it does not include “surface occupancy” (geothermal only) or in DRECP Variance Land designations as analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

In both DFAs and NLCS lands, including ACECs, most site-specific impacts cannot be anticipated at this time; and the overall changes to recreational opportunities can only be qualitatively assessed. Impacts would generally be greater to larger or organized commercial recreational pursuits because the use of the area for development or conservation would likely conflict with those pursuits. Impacts would likely occur outside of current or proposed SRMAs. Areas outside of SRMAs are typically less attractive to a wide range of recreational users.

Organized and permitted recreational activities may be limited or excluded within portions of DFAs, ACECs and other NLCS lands, including some camping areas, rock hounding areas, and other recreational pursuits near sensitive locations or adjacent to sensitive routes. This may increase conflicts between different types of recreational activities, particularly between motorized and nonmotorized uses. Recreational destinations may not be readily

accessible by motorized vehicle to control ingress and egress to conservation areas or in specific areas such as sand transport areas, riparian areas, and specific-species ACECs. Special Recreation Permits may be prohibited in certain DFAs and sensitive areas; OHV recreational touring outside of designated OHV areas may be further limited in the future to meet ACEC and NLCS conservation goals. Generally, nonmotorized recreational pursuits would be less affected by adoption of the Plan alternatives. Indirect impacts on all recreational activities from changes to the scenic values and esthetic experiences would occur from placement of substantial new renewable energy facilities on the landscape. Additional access limitations and closures in the future in both DFAs and NLCS lands would adversely affect motor-dependent recreational activities.

The DRECP will make decisions for three National Scenic and Historic Trails (Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, Old Spanish National Historic Trail and the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail). The decisions will be whether to designate management corridors to provide for quality outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant, scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which the National Scenic and Historic Trails may pass. Currently, the BLM evaluates potential impacts on these trail systems from energy development and develops specific mitigation or avoidance strategies on a case-by-case basis. The effects of adoption of the management corridor on cultural resources are addressed in Chapter IV.8. The effects of the management corridor on visual resources are addressed in Chapter IV.20.

For some alternatives, designation of ACECs, NLCS lands, and National Scenic and Historic Trails management corridors would limit commercial or nonmotorized competitive Special Recreation Permits except for uses that enhance the opportunity for visitors to experience and enjoy the ecological, cultural, and scientific values of those lands. Where nonmotorized competitive and commercial events do not adhere to this requirement, they would lose recreational opportunities on such lands.

Additional details on allowable uses and management within NCLS are presented in the LUPA description in Volume II. Details on the goals, objectives, allowable uses, and management actions for each ACEC and SRMA unit are presented in the LUPA worksheets in Appendix H.

IV.18.2.4 Impacts of the Natural Community Conservation Plan and General Conservation Plan

The Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) would be administered by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and would be applicable to the entire Plan Area. The General Conservation Plan (GCP) would be administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and would be applicable to nonfederal lands, a subset of the entire Plan Area.

IV.18.2.4.1 Natural Community Conservation Plan

The impacts of renewable energy development permitted under the NCCP would be the same as those defined for the Plan-wide impacts, including the typical impacts described in Section IV.18.2.1.

IV.18.2.4.2 General Conservation Plan

The types of impacts resulting from renewable energy development permitted under the GCP would be the same as those defined for the Plan-wide impacts, including the typical impacts described in Section IV.18.2, Typical Impacts Common to All Action Alternatives. However, the locations of these impacts would vary by alternative. Any differences in these impacts that result from the locational differences are described for each alternative.

IV.18.3 Impact Analysis by Alternative

The following sections present impact analysis for the No Action Alternative, the Preferred Alternative, and Alternatives 1 through 4. Tables IV.18-1, IV.18-2a and b, IV.18-3, and IV.18-4 provide an overview of the acres of BLM land that affect recreation and where the DRECP LUPA would change the status. Recreation impacts to lands under other jurisdictions are discussed in the impact analyses where appropriate.

Table IV.18-1 lists the total acres designated as SRMAs and ERMAs per alternative. ERMAs are designated only as part of the Preferred Alternative.

**Table IV.18-1
Acreage of Recreation Designations Per Alternative**

Ecoregion Subarea	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
<i>Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	0	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	0	286,000	290,000	286,000	286,000	269,000
Open OHV and SRMA ²	0	0	0	0	0	0
Proposed ERMA	0	276,000	0	0	0	0
Total	0	562,000	290,000	286,000	286,000	269,000
<i>Imperial Borrego Valley</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	243,000	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	37,000	114,000	114,000	111,000	111,000	111,000
Open OHV SRMA ^{2,3}	121,000	121,000	121,000	121,000	121,000	121,000

**Table IV.18-1
Acreage of Recreation Designations Per Alternative**

Ecoregion Subarea	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Proposed ERMA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	457,000	235,000	235,000	232,000	232,000	232,000
<i>Kingston and Funeral Mountains</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	59,000	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	0	87,000	87,000	87,000	87,000	86,000
Open OHV SRMA ^{2,3}	0	0	0	0	0	0
Proposed ERMA	0	194,000	0	0	0	0
Total	59,000	281,000	87,000	87,000	87,000	86,000
<i>Mojave and Silurian Valley</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	294,000	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	0	211,000	211,000	211,000	211,000	211,000
Open OHV SRMA ^{2,3}	34,000	34,000	34,000	34,000	34,000	34,000
Proposed ERMA	0	22,000	0	0	0	0
Total	328,000	266,000	245,000	245,000	245,000	245,000
<i>Owens River Valley</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	33,000	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	29,000	54,000	51,000	53,000	53,000	53,000
Open OHV SRMA ^{2,3}	0	0	0	0	0	0
Proposed ERMA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	62,000	53,000	51,000	53,000	53,000	53,000
<i>Panamint Death Valley</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	74,000	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	0	299,000	301,000	299,000	301,000	301,000
Open OHV SRMA ^{2,3}	53,000	53,000	53,000	53,000	53,000	53,000
Proposed ERMA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	127,000	352,000	354,000	352,000	354,000	354,000
<i>Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	256,000	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	0	254,000	255,000	245,000	255,000	254,000
Open OHV SRMA ^{2,3}	128,000 ³	74,000	74,000	74,000	74,000	74,000

**Table IV.18-1
Acreage of Recreation Designations Per Alternative**

Ecoregion Subarea	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Proposed ERMA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	384,000	328,000	328,000	318,000	328,000	328,000
<i>Piute Valley and Sacramento Mountains</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	22,000	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	0	309,000	309,000	309,000	309,000	300,000
Open OHV SRMA ^{2,3}	0	0	0	0	0	0
Proposed ERMA	0	178,000	0	0	0	0
Total	22,000	487,000	309,000	309,000	309,000	300,000
<i>Providence and Bullion Mountains</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	1,000	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	0	330,000	330,000	324,000	330,000	319,000
Open OHV SRMA ^{2,3}	0	0	0	0	0	0
Proposed ERMA	0	210,000	0	0	0	0
Total	1,000	540,000	330,000	324,000	330,000	319,000
<i>West Mojave and Eastern Slopes</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	481,000	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	0	460,000	460,000	410,000	460,000	456,000
Open OHV SRMA ^{2,3}	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Proposed ERMA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	521,000	499,000	499,000	450,000	500,000	496,000
<i>DRECP Total</i>						
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis	1,465,000	0	0	0	0	0
Existing and Proposed SRMA ¹	193,000	2,403,000	2,409,000	2,335,000	2,403,000	2,361,000
Open OHV SRMA ^{2,3}	321,000	321,000	321,000	321,000	321,000	321,000
Proposed ERMA	0	879,000	0	0	0	0
Total	1,961,000	3,602,000	2,729,000	2,656,000	2,724,000	2,682,000

Source: BLM, 2014.

¹ Existing SRMAs include only 164,000 acres in Imperial Valley Borrego ecoregion subarea and 29,000 acres in Owens River Valley ecoregion subarea. All other SRMA acreage is proposed and would be new. The existing SRMA in Imperial Valley Borrego is Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area and is not part of the decision on the DRECP.

² The DRECP is not designating new OHV areas. However, it is proposing to designate SRMAs over the existing OHV areas.

³ For the No Action Alternative, none of the Open OHV lands are designated SRMA. The Imperial Sand Dunes OHV lands are included in the existing SRMA row. Some of the Open OHV areas identified in the No Action Alternative were also

managed as Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis. The total acreage of Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis including Open OHV areas is 1,758,000.

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

Table IV.18-2a lists the existing acres managed for recreation emphasis on BLM land converted to DFAs under the DRECP by alternative. While the areas converted to DFAs would be available for use by renewable energy projects, not all the acres would actually be developed.

**Table IV.18-2a
Acreage of Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis on BLM Land Converted to
Development Focus Areas***

Ecoregion Subarea	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Imperial Borrego Valley	n/a	21,000	12,000	12,000	20,000	12,000
Mojave and Silurian Valley	n/a	0	200	200	200	200
Owens River Valley	n/a	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes	n/a	10,000	0	0	5,000	0
West Mojave and Eastern Slopes	n/a	9,000	30	30	9,000	9,000
Total	n/a	42,000	14,000	14,000	36,000	23,000

* No areas managed for recreation emphasis on BLM land were converted to DFAs in the following ecoregion subareas: Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains, Kingston and Funeral Mountains, Panamint Death Valley, Piute Valley and Sacramento Mountains, Providence and Bullion Mountains.

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

Table IV.18-2b lists the acres managed for recreation emphasis on BLM land converted to BLM Conservation Lands (NLCS, ACECs or wildlife allocation) that would not also be designated as SRMAs or ERMAs. While the areas converted to BLM conservation lands would be available for certain types of recreation use, they would no longer be managed for recreation.

Table IV.18-2b
Acreage of Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis on
BLM Land Converted to BLM Conservation Lands Only*

Ecoregion Subarea	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Imperial Borrego Valley	n/a	171,000	171,000	171,000	171,000	171,000
Mojave and Silurian Valley	n/a	40,000	23,000	23,000	23,000	22,000
Owens River Valley	n/a	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Panamint Death Valley	n/a	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes	n/a	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
West Mojave and Eastern Slopes	n/a	20,000	22,000	22,000	20,000	20,000
Total	n/a	243,000	228,000	228,000	226,000	225,000

* No areas managed for recreation emphasis on BLM land were converted to BLM Conservation Lands Only in the following ecoregion subareas: Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains, Kingston and Funeral Mountains, Piute Valley and Sacramento Mountains, Providence and Bullion Mountains.

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

Table IV.18-3 lists the acres managed for recreation emphasis on BLM land converted to SRMAs. A percentage of these acres overlap with areas designated as BLM Conservation Lands.

Table IV.18-3
Acreage of Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis on
BLM Land Converted to SRMAs*

Ecoregion Subarea	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Imperial Borrego Valley	n/a	57,000	57,000	57,000	57,000	57,000
Kingston and Funeral Mountains	n/a	41,000	41,000	41,000	41,000	41,000
Mojave and Silurian Valley	n/a	244,000	244,000	244,000	244,000	244,000
Owens River Valley	n/a	24,000	22,000	22,000	24,000	24,000
Panamint Death Valley	n/a	124,000	124,000	124,000	124,000	124,000
Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes	n/a	283,000	284,000	284,000	284,000	284,000

Table IV.18-3
Acres of Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis on
BLM Land Converted to SRMAs*

Ecoregion Subarea	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Piute Valley and Sacramento Mountains	n/a	22,000	22,000	22,000	22,000	22,000
Providence and Bullion Mountains	n/a	700	700	700	700	700
West Mojave and Eastern Slopes	n/a	454,000	454,000	454,000	454,000	454,000
Total	n/a	1,250,000	1,249,000	1,249,000	1,251,000	1,251,000

* No areas managed for recreation emphasis on BLM land were converted to SRMAs in the Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains ecoregion subarea.

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

Table IV.18-4 lists the acres managed for recreation emphasis on BLM land (No Action) converted to BLM Conservation Lands, either NLCS, ACECs, or wildlife allocation. Except for the acres listed in Table IV.18-2b, all the acreage in Table IV.18-4 overlaps with SRMA and ERMA designation. BLM Conservation Lands allow for many of the same types of recreation that currently occur on areas managed for recreation emphasis.

Table IV.18-4
Acres of Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis on
BLM Land Overlapping with BLM Conservation Lands*

Ecoregion Subarea	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Imperial Borrego Valley	n/a	171,000	171,000	171,000	171,000	171,000
Kingston and Funeral Mountains	n/a	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000
Mojave and Silurian Valley	n/a	213,000	196,000	196,000	196,000	171,000
Owens River Valley	n/a	25,000	24,000	24,000	25,000	24,000
Panamint Death Valley	n/a	52,000	52,000	52,000	52,000	52,000
Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes	n/a	150,000	150,000	150,000	140,000	140,000

**Table IV.18-4
 Acreage of Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis on
 BLM Land Overlapping with BLM Conservation Lands***

Ecoregion Subarea	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Piute Valley and Sacramento Mountains	n/a	10	10	10	10	10
Providence and Bullion Mountains	n/a	700	700	700	700	700
West Mojave and Eastern Slopes	n/a	392,000	394,000	394,000	392,000	386,000
Total	n/a	1,039,000	1,022,000	1,022,000	1,011,000	979,000

* No areas managed for recreation emphasis on BLM land were converted to reserve design in the Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains ecoregion subarea.

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

IV.18.3.1 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative assumes the state’s renewable energy goals would be achieved without the DRECP. It also assumes that renewable energy, transmission development, and mitigation for renewable projects in the Plan Area would occur on a project-by-project basis in a pattern consistent with past approved and ongoing renewable energy and transmission projects and existing programmatic strategies for siting and mitigating solar, such as the BLM’s Solar Energy Development Programmatic EIS (Solar PEIS). Volume II, Chapter II.2, No Action Alternative, describes these assumptions in detail.

No DFAs would be created under the No Action Alternative, and current renewable energy development patterns would likely continue. The BLM would not implement new or modified LUPA Conservation Designations. Conservation areas would be contained in existing protected lands and areas managed by BLM for conservation of resource values.

Current SRMAs and other areas managed with a recreation emphasis would be retained, including OHV Open Areas, see Table III.18-1 and Table III.18-2, in Volume III, Chapter III.18, Outdoor Recreation; Table IV.18-2; and Figure IV.18-1. SRMAs and ERMAs would not be designated through the land use planning process; current recreational programs that focus on designated OHV Open Areas and Long-Term Visitor Areas would continue.

IV.18.3.1.1 Impacts Within the Entire Plan Area in the No Action Alternative

IV.18.3.1.1.1 Impacts and Mitigation for Renewable Energy and Transmission Development in the No Action Alternative

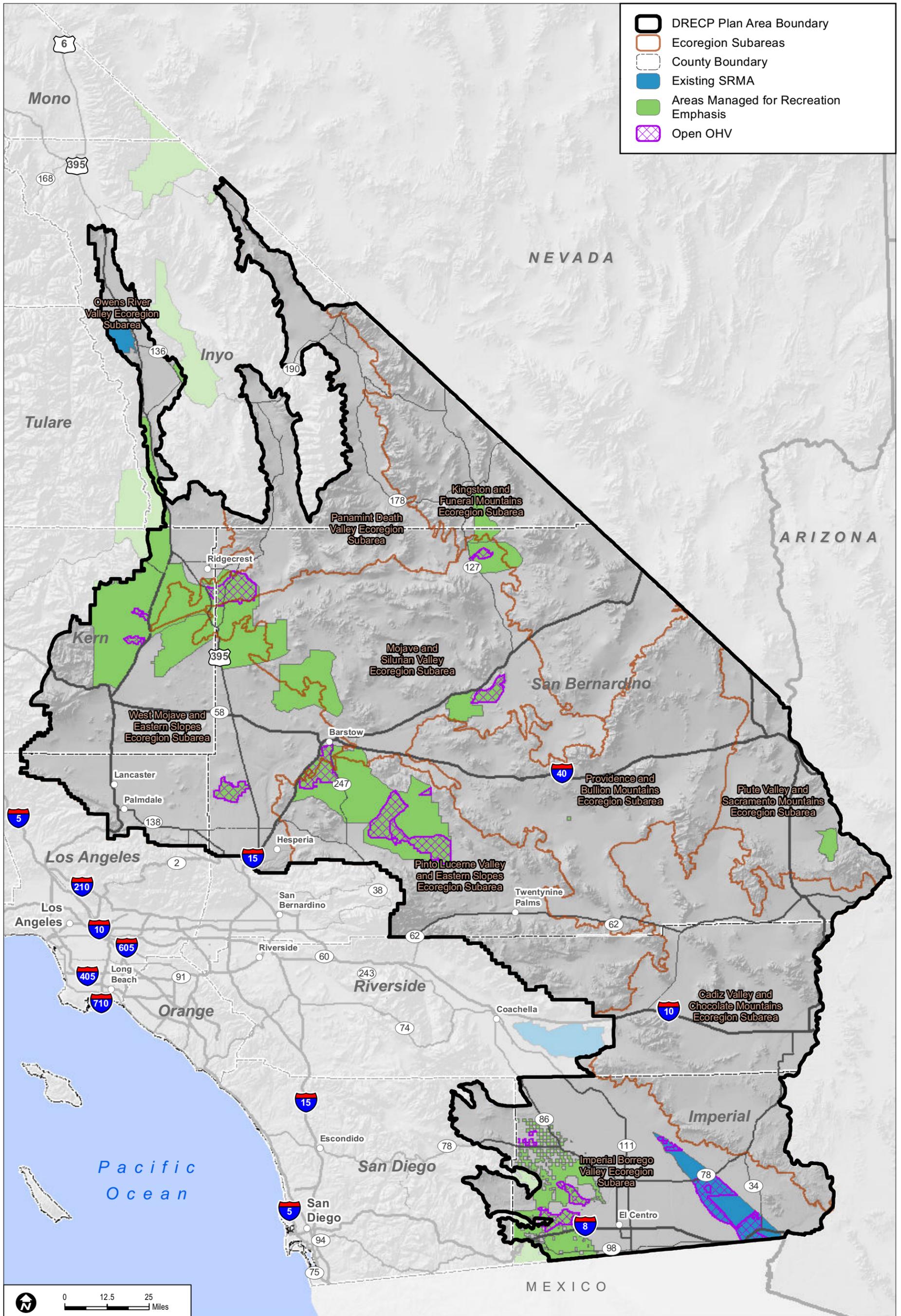
Under the No Action Alternative, 9,781,700 acres could be available for renewable energy development. The actual areas developed are assumed to be much smaller, 123,000 acres based on the technology mix. The DFAs would overlap with areas managed for recreational purposes and could therefore result in impacts on recreation.

Total potential ground disturbance impacts on BLM lands managed for recreation in available development areas would be 8,000 acres for solar energy, 2,000 acres for wind energy, 400 acres for geothermal energy, and 2,000 acres for transmission. Some minor transmission impact acreage could cross National Park Service and California State Park lands. Table R2.18-1 provides detailed acres of impacts for these agencies. Renewable development on BLM lands outside areas that are managed for recreation emphasis but where recreation occurs could result in substantial impacts on dispersed recreational activities, including areas proposed for SRMAs and ERMAs in the DRECP.

The BLM would continue to manage the three nationally designated trails under the existing plans and guidance to provide for the conservation and enjoyment of quality outdoor recreation potential and the nationally significant, scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which the National Scenic and Historic Trails may pass. Currently, potential impacts on these trail systems from energy development, and specific mitigation or avoidance strategies, are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, consistent with the programmatic EIS.

The Imperial Borrego Valley ecoregion subarea would see the greatest potential ground disturbance impacts on lands managed for recreation resulting in close to 7,000 acres of impacts. There would be substantially fewer acres of impacts on recreation from wind and geothermal development.

Approximately 2 miles of National Scenic or Historic Trails could be directly impacted by solar energy development, 16 miles by wind energy development, and less than 1 mile by geothermal and transmission development. Impacts on viewsheds from these trails could be substantially greater than these mileages.



Sources: ESRI (2014); CEC (2013); BLM (2014); CDFW (2013); USFWS (2013)

FIGURE IV.18-1

BLM Recreation Classifications – No Action Alternative

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Impacts

Impact OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use.

Renewable energy development would convert undeveloped land to a developed industrial site for the long term (the lease period, including construction, operation, and decommissioning) and would degrade or eliminate recreational uses.

Exclusion of Recreation Use. The development of renewable energy facilities would exclude recreational use from areas managed with a recreation emphasis, displace recreationists, and diminish recreational opportunities. Development of solar and geothermal facilities would exclude recreational use from the entire footprint due to the extensive grading and concentrated infrastructure required. Solar and geothermal projects would generally be fenced and inaccessible to recreationists. Some types of recreation, such as hiking, may be compatible with wind development due to the large open areas between wind turbines and because fencing may be around the wind turbines and infrastructure rather than the entire wind development area. Wind facilities may still result in diminished recreational value due to the presence of large structures on the landscape. Recreational users displaced by renewable energy development would likely seek recreational opportunities elsewhere and may increase use of other recreation areas. Lands designated for OHV use would generally be avoided, and therefore substantially unaffected.

Transmission rights-of-way and development would result in minimal direct impact on recreation.

Indirect Effects on Recreation. Renewable energy or transmission infrastructure would result in noise, dust, and traffic that would disturb recreationists such as hikers, campers, hunters, or birders. Noise, dust, and traffic would be greatest during construction and decommissioning of the projects. Construction and operational activities would also affect the visual experience of recreationists due to the industrial nature of large construction staging areas and the renewable energy facilities. Renewable energy facilities would substantially impact recreational areas that are destinations for solitary or backcountry recreation including existing Legislatively and Legally Protected Areas such as Mojave National Preserve, Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park, and along the west side of the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area. Under the No Action Alternative, approximately 1.67 million acres of lands available for development occur within 5 miles of national parks and preserves and 323,000 acres within 5 miles of state parks (see Chapter IV.20, Visual Resources, Table IV.20-3). Renewable energy facilities built in those locations would be potentially visible to recreationists. Where renewable energy facilities require night lighting for safety and security purposes, this could impact

night skies and stargazing. Night lighting would primarily be required for wind turbines, solar power towers, and transmission lines.

Impact OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation.

The development of renewable energy could require use of almost 12,000 acres of lands managed for recreation. If these lands were fenced, such as would be the case for solar projects (both photovoltaic and thermal), it would decrease access to such lands and could close roads used for off-highway recreation and realign through routes. Additionally, new routes, improved routes, or increased traffic during construction could result in a different recreation experience along access roads or in temporary closures.

The development of access and service roads for renewable energy facilities and transmission lines could also have a beneficial impact on access to recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, or OHV riding. The development of these roads, however, could lead to degradation of adjacent solitary recreation areas by facilitating new or improved access, especially for motorized vehicles and therefore an increase in use.

Impact OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation.

The No Action Alternative would not designate any new areas managed for recreational use. There would be no impact on areas managed for recreation.

Laws and Regulations

Existing laws and regulations would reduce the impacts of renewable energy development projects in the absence of the DRECP. Relevant regulations are presented in Volume III, Section III.18.1, Outdoor Recreation. Because this EIR/EIS addresses amendments to BLM's land use plans, these plans are addressed separately and are not included in this section. The requirements of relevant regulations would reduce impacts through the following mechanisms:

- Motorized OHV management solutions designed to conserve soil, wildlife, water quality, native vegetation, air quality, heritage resources, and other resources while providing for appropriate motorized recreational opportunities.
- Goals to enhance recreational access and opportunities and engage the public in conservation and the outdoors.
- Restriction of recreation on wilderness lands to nonmotorized activities.
- Creation of opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

- Management of OHV recreation areas for long-term motor vehicle recreation.
- Protection and preservation of open space, recreation, and scenic areas.

Mitigation

Mitigation adopted for recently approved projects is assumed to be the same as mitigation that would apply under the No Action Alternative. The following mitigation strategies are consistent with those identified within recently published BLM programmatic documents evaluating renewable energy development and are considered applicable to avoid or reduce impacts on recreation, depending upon site- and project-specific conditions:

- Public access through or around renewable energy facilities should be retained to provide continued use of public lands and non-BLM-administered lands.
- Renewable energy facilities should not be placed in areas of unique or important recreation resources.
- Renewable energy development should evaluate impacts on public access and recreation as part of the environmental impact analysis for the project and consider options to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate adverse impacts, such as restoring or enhancing other recreational areas or improving access to important recreation areas.
- Replacement of access lost for OHV use should be considered as part of the analysis of project-specific impacts. Any process for designating a replacement route would include the consideration of the designation criteria for routes as specified in 43 Code of Federal Regulations 8342.1 and would be consistent with existing land use plans.
- A variety of mitigation measures may be incorporated as stipulations into the design and development of renewable energy projects to reduce potential land use impacts. These measures include the following:
 - Renewable energy projects should be planned to mitigate or minimize impacts on other land uses.
 - When feasible, a renewable energy project should be sited on already altered landscapes.
 - To plan for efficient land use, necessary infrastructure requirements should be consolidated whenever possible, and current transmission and market access should be evaluated.
 - Restoration plans should be developed to ensure that all temporary use areas are restored.

IV.18.3.1.1.2 Impacts from Reserve Design in the No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative has no reserve design; but without approval of an action alternative, there would be continued protection of existing Legislatively and Legally Protected Areas such as wilderness. In addition, under the No Action Alternative, renewable energy projects would continue to be evaluated and approved with project-specific mitigation requirements.

Table R2.18-2 in Appendix R2 indicates the acres of lands managed for recreation within existing protected areas and existing BLM ACECs. Under the No Action Alternative, these existing protected areas and existing BLM Conservation Designations are assumed to provide ongoing conservation; however, there would be no reserve design to guide where BLM conservation designations could be established or where reserves could be assembled to offset the effects of renewable energy or transmission development. Therefore, the conservation generated from renewable energy or transmission development would be solely based on the mitigation requirements imposed on a project-by-project basis.

IV.18.3.1.2 Impacts on BLM Lands of Existing BLM Land Use Plans in the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM would continue to implement the existing land management plans within the Plan Area on BLM lands.

Existing ACECs, wildlife allocations, and SRMAs would continue to benefit recreation opportunities and are presented in Table R2.18-3. Existing lands managed with a recreation emphasis would also be beneficial recreation opportunities and are presented in Table IV.18-2.

Under the No Action Alternative, BLM's management of recreation under the laws, regulations, and policies listed in Volume II, Section II.3.2, and summarized in the previous section would reduce the impacts of renewable energy construction.

Impacts on the lands managed for recreation would be the same as those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1, Impacts and Mitigation for Renewable Energy and Transmission Development in the No Action Alternative, for the entire Plan Area.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no lands managed for recreation within the lands identified in BLM's Solar PEIS as Variance Lands (2012); and no solar facilities would be sited on public lands within designated OHV areas. However, some of the Solar PEIS Variance Lands may be used for recreational activities such as hiking or camping, which is allowed on all BLM lands unless posted as closed.

Under the No Action Alternative, solar development would have the greatest overlap with lands considered to have higher recreational assets and greater development potential.

There would be no overlap with lands managed or proposed for recreation designations from Solar PEIS Solar Energy Zones for most of the rest of the LUPA.

Total Solar PEIS Solar Energy Zones overlapping with lands managed for recreation emphasis under the No Action Alternative would be 150,000 acres. Solar PEIS Variance Lands overlapping with lands managed for recreation emphasis would be 580,000 acres.

A total of 166 miles of National Scenic and Historic Trails and 23 miles of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System would be in existing BLM Conservation Designations.

IV.18.3.1.3 Impacts of the NCCP in the No Action Alternative

The NCCP would apply to all lands within the Plan Area. In the absence of Plan implementation, the NCCP would not be approved; and no incidental take permits would be issued under the NCCP. The appropriate lead agency would continue to consider projects individually. The impacts that would occur in the absence of the NCCP would be the same as those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1.

IV.18.3.1.4 Impacts of the GCP in the No Action Alternative

As described in Appendix M, the GCP would apply to nonfederal lands in the Plan Area. In the absence of Plan implementation, the GCP would not be approved; and no incidental take permits would be issued under the GCP. The appropriate lead agency would continue to consider projects individually. The impacts that would occur in the absence of the GCP would be the same as those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 but would be specific to nonfederal lands.

IV.18.3.1.5 Impacts Outside the Plan Area in the No Action Alternative

IV.18.3.1.5.1 Impacts of Transmission Outside the Plan Area

Additional transmission lines would be needed to deliver renewable energy to load centers (areas of high demand) outside the Plan Area. It is assumed that new transmission lines outside the Plan Area would use existing transmission corridors between the Plan Area and existing substations in the more heavily populated areas of the state. The areas outside the Plan Area through which new transmission lines might be constructed include the San Diego, Los Angeles, North Palm Springs–Riverside, and Central Valley areas. They are described in Volume III, Section III.18.6, Outdoor Recreation Outside the Plan Area.

In the San Diego area, corridors cross the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail and the El Capitan and Goodan Ranch/Sycamore Canyon preserves. In the Los Angeles area, corridors cross National Scenic and Historic, National Recreation, and OHV trails in Angeles National Forest. In the urbanized portion of the Los Angeles area, the transmission corridor rights-of-way contain numerous local parks, paths, golf courses, and preserves. The same situation occurs in the North Palm Springs–Riverside area, where numerous parks, trails, and golf courses are wholly or partially in transmission rights-of-way. No recreation facilities were identified in the Central Valley corridor.

Community recreation facilities and open space are common in transmission corridors in urban areas because they offer opportunities for communities and organizations to take advantage of open land and linear rights-of-way.

Impacts identified for the Plan Area that could apply to transmission corridors outside the Plan Area include the following:

Impact OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use.

New transmission lines in a corridor could add a new set of towers adjacent to or in the vicinity of existing towers or replace existing towers with larger towers and new conductors. The towers could introduce a new or larger component around which the recreational activities would have to be conducted. The degree to which this is an issue can only be determined based on actual line engineering and siting within the context of individual recreation areas and their existing layouts. In most urban situations, there may be no or minor adjustments required. With careful siting and coordination with the recreational facility operator and various stakeholders, recreational use of the area should not be substantially degraded. In areas where the line would cross preserves or nationally designated trails, a new line would add to the visual complexity in an area where a recreational user would expect there to be few or no introduced structures. Because the corridors all have existing transmission lines, the introduction of a new line is not expected to substantially alter the recreational use or experience.

Impact OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation.

During construction, access to recreational facilities sharing the right-of-way with the transmission line would be restricted. When safe to do so, the areas would be opened. With the relatively small footprint of individual towers and the distance between towers, it is not anticipated that access to recreational lands would be affected after construction.

Impact OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation.

The No Action Alternative would not designate any new areas managed for recreational use. There would be no impact on areas managed for recreation.

IV.18.3.1.5.2 Impacts of Existing BLM Land Use Plans Outside the Plan Area

Under the No Action Alternative, the existing BLM CDCA land use plan would continue to be implemented on CDCA lands. Under the No Action Alternative, renewable energy projects would still be developed through BLM's existing policies. Impacts on lands managed for recreation would be of the types described in Section IV.18.2.1, with similar mitigation measures being included on a case-by-case basis.

The existing land designations—such as existing protected areas, ACECs, National Scenic and Historic Trails, and OHV designated areas—would continue to be managed to protect their associated values and resources. Existing recreation within existing BLM land designation is presented in Table R2.18-4 in Appendix R2.

IV.18.3.1.6 CEQA Significance Determination: No Action Alternative

For the purposes of this analysis, the interpretation of existing recreational facilities is expanded to include lands commonly used for or designated and managed for recreational uses.

OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use. Renewable energy facility development under the No Action Alternative could result in long-term exclusion of dispersed recreation from 8,000 acres for solar energy development, 2,000 acres for wind energy, 400 acres for geothermal energy, and 2,000 acres for transmission development within the Plan Area. Additional loss of recreation could occur outside the Plan Area in the CDCA, Caliente RMP, and Bishop RMP field offices including potential conflict and loss of acres primarily within lands managed for recreational emphasis, see Section IV.18.3.1.2, Impacts on BLM Lands of Existing BLM Land Use Plans in the No Action Alternative. In these lands, recreation and visitor services are recognized as primary resource management considerations, and specific management is required to protect the recreation opportunities. Mitigation to replace the loss of recreational areas has not been typically included in the case-by-case environmental review and may not be available. However, mitigation would require the developers to coordinate with the permitting agency and avoid or minimize impacts on recreation areas or enhance other recreation areas. Therefore, loss of 12,000 acres of lands managed for recreation emphasis would be a significant but mitigable impact.

Development of approximately 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy would result in indirect effects on federal, state, or local recreational facilities or programs through visual impacts including increased night lighting, increased noise, and impacts on air quality. The No Action Alternative would have 3.6 million acres of land available for development of renewable energy projects within 5 miles of sensitive recreational areas (e.g., national and California State parks and wilderness areas). The high visibility of these projects would conflict with recreationists' expectations of pristine and expansive desert vistas, creating a significant and unmitigable impact.

OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation. Due to the large scale of construction required, access to recreational facilities could be disrupted by additional traffic and road closures and by the large fenced areas for solar and geothermal energy facilities as discussed in Impact OR-1. Because the displacement would be mitigated in the form of other enhanced recreation operations, recreation facilities, or improved access elsewhere, the impact would be adverse but less than significant.

OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation. The No Action Alternative would not designate any new areas managed for recreational use. There would be no impact on areas managed for recreation.

IV.18.3.2 Preferred Alternative

IV.18.3.2.1 Plan-wide Impacts of Implementing the DRECP: Preferred Alternative

IV.18.3.2.1.1 Plan-wide Impacts and Mitigation Measures from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development

Under the Preferred Alternative, more than 2 million acres could be available for renewable energy development in the DFAs. The actual areas developed are assumed to be much smaller, 145,000 acres based on the technology mix. The DFAs would overlap with 42,000 acres of areas managed for recreational emphasis and could therefore result in impacts on recreation, see Table IV.28-1.

Total potential impacts on lands managed for recreation emphasis in DFAs would be 2,000 acres for solar energy, 70 acres for wind energy, 1,000 acres for geothermal energy, and almost 5,000 acres for renewable energy-related transmission development. For solar, wind, and geothermal energy and transmission development, impacts on National Scenic and Historic Trails would be less than 1 mile. The Imperial Borrego Valley ecoregion sub-area would see the greatest potential impacts on lands managed for recreation resulting from solar (more than 1,000 acres).

Potential impacts on lands managed for recreation resulting from solar, wind, and geothermal energy and transmission development in DFAs for the remaining ecoregion sub-areas are shown in Table R2.18-5 in Appendix R2.

Covered construction and operational activities for solar energy projects are listed and described in Volume II, Table II.3-13. Covered construction and operational activities for wind energy projects are provided in Volume II, Table II.3-15. Covered construction and operational activities for geothermal energy projects are presented in Volume II, Table II.3-17. Volume II, Table II.3-21 describes the Covered Activities for transmission and substations. Typical impacts resulting from Covered Activities are discussed in Section IV.18.2.

Impact Assessment

Impact OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use.

Impacts on lands managed and proposed for recreation under this alternative by the development of renewable energy would be similar to those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 for the No Action Alternative and include loss of use of lands for recreational purposes. Although 42,000 acres of lands managed for recreation emphasis would be designated as DFAs, renewable energy and transmission infrastructure are estimated to result in the loss of up to 8,000 acres of existing and proposed lands managed for recreation. The Preferred Alternative would result in indirect effects to recreation due to an increase in visual impacts, noise, and air emissions. Under the Preferred Alternative, more than 15,000 acres of DFAs occur within 5 miles of national parks and preserves and 108,000 acres of DFAs occur within 5 miles of state parks with several hundred thousand additional acres of DFAs within 5 miles of wilderness (see Chapter IV.20, Visual Resources, Table IV.20-3). Renewable energy facilities built on those acres would be potentially visible to recreationists.

Impact OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation.

The development of renewable energy could require use of more than 8,000 acres of lands managed for recreation. Use of these lands could result in loss of access on and around the lands. Impacts would be similar to those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 for the No Action Alternative. Increased traffic and potential road closures during construction could further degrade access to recreation.

The development of access and service roads for renewable energy facilities and transmission lines could also have a beneficial impact on access to recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, or OHV riding. The development of these roads, however, could lead to impacts on solitude in adjacent recreation areas, and provide more recreationists with motorized access to those areas.

Impact OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation.

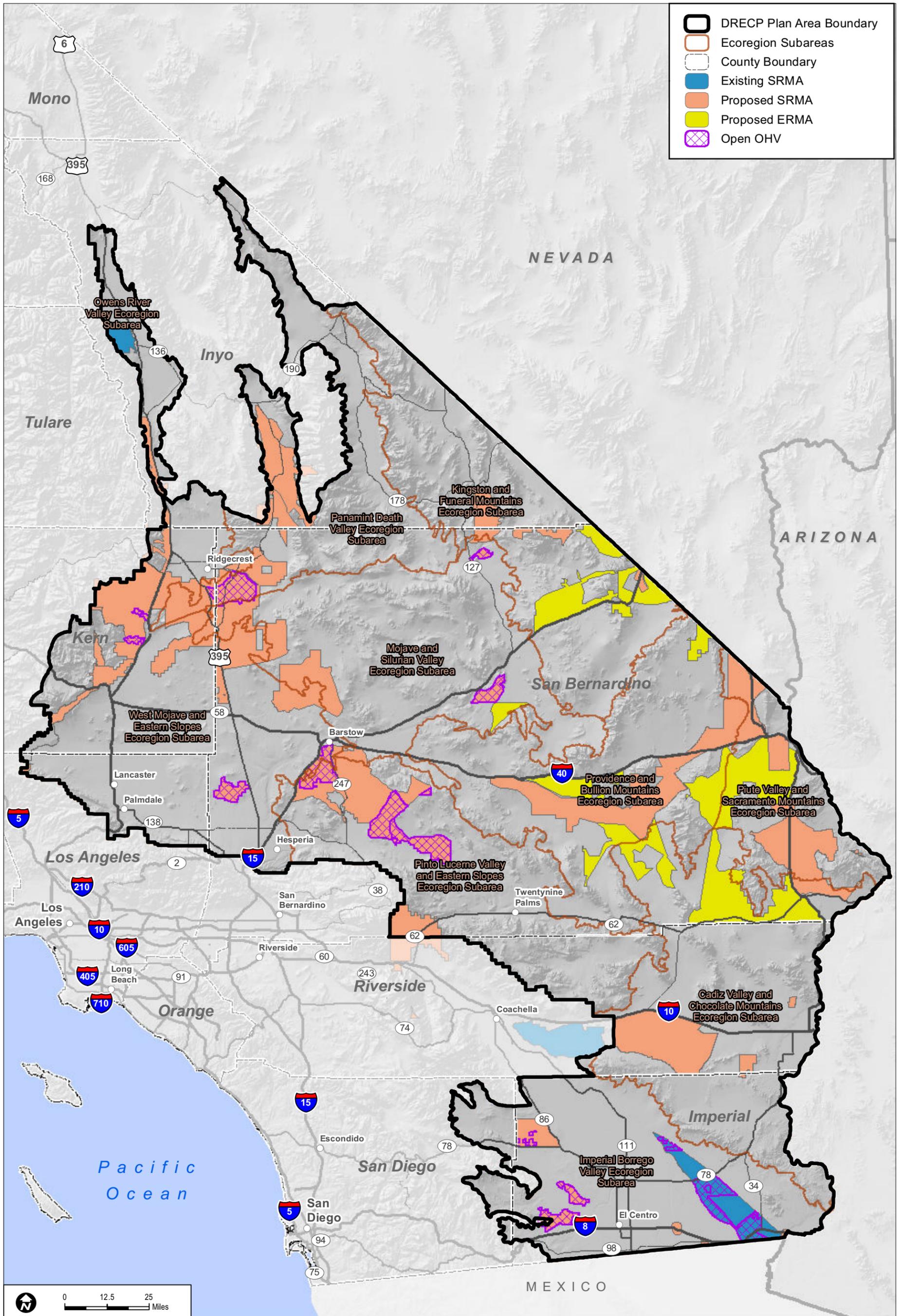
Under the Preferred Alternative, approximately 2.7 million acres would be designated as SRMAs, with an additional 321,000 acres of SRMAs designated over existing open OHV lands, see Table IV.18-1 and Figure IV.18-2. Approximately 880,000 acres would be designated as ERMA. The designation of SRMAs and ERMA throughout the CDCA and adoption of associated management plans (Appendix L) are anticipated to facilitate and concentrate recreational opportunities and visitor services programs and enhance identified opportunities. Beneficial impacts may also include increased coordination between programs and activities supporting primary goals and associated implementation strategies for each management area.

Although the Preferred Alternative would increase the total amount of acreage managed for recreation, certain ecoregion subareas would see Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis designated for other emphasis, such as ACECs or NLCS, in particular the Imperial Borrego Valley, see Table IV.18-4. While the designation might change, the use of these lands may not and they would still be available for certain types of recreation.

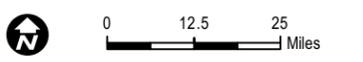
Impacts in Study Area Lands

Future Assessment Areas (FAAs). Lands within FAAs are neither reserve lands nor DFAs; they are simply areas that are deferred for future assessment. The future assessment will determine their suitability for renewable energy development or ecological conservation. If renewable energy development occurs on FAA lands, a BLM LUPA would not be required. FAAs for each alternative are included and located as shown in Table IV.1-2 and Figure II.3-1 for the Preferred Alternative in Volume II. The FAAs represent areas where renewable energy development or inclusion in the reserve design could be implemented through an amendment to the DRECP, but additional assessment would be needed.

Because most of the FAAs are presented as “undesigned areas” in the action alternatives, there would be no difference between the FAAs in the Preferred Alternative except that renewable development in an FAA would not require a BLM LUPA; so the environmental review process would be somewhat simpler than if the location were left undesignated. Development of the FAAs would overlap with SRMAs in the northeast corner of Mojave National Preserve south of Ivanpah and adjacent to Interstate 15; in the area north of Tehachapi west of State Route 295, east of Twentynine Palms; and south of the existing Imperial Sand Dune SRMA. The Pacific Crest Trail would cross the FAA in the Tehachapi area. Developing the FAAs would result in a loss of SRMA acreage and a loss of recreational opportunity.



- DRECP Plan Area Boundary
- Ecoregion Subareas
- County Boundary
- Existing SRMA
- Proposed SRMA
- Proposed ERMA
- Open OHV



Sources: ESRI (2014); CEC (2013); BLM (2014); CDFW (2013); USFWS (2013)

FIGURE IV.18-2
BLM Recreation Classifications – Preferred Alternative

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Special Analysis Areas (SAAs). There are two areas defined as SAAs, representing areas subject to ongoing analysis. These areas (located in the Silurian Valley and just west of U.S. Route 395 in Kern County) have high value for renewable energy development, and also high value for ecological and cultural conservation and recreation. SAA lands are expected to be designated in the Final EIR/EIS as either DFAs or included in the reserve design.

DRECP Variance Lands. DRECP Variance Lands represent the BLM Solar PEIS Variance Lands as screened for the DRECP and EIR/EIS based on BLM screening criteria. Covered Activities could be permitted for NCCP purposes only through an NCCP plan amendment. However, development of renewable energy on Variance Lands would not require a BLM LUPA; so the environmental review process would be somewhat simpler than if the location were left undesignated. Development of the DRECP Variance Lands would impact recreation in the area north of Ivanpah where Variance Lands overlap with an SRMA. Developing the DRECP Variance Lands would result in a loss of SRMA acreage and a loss of recreational opportunity.

Impact Reduction Strategies and Mitigation

The implementation of the Plan would result in conservation of some desert lands as well as the development of renewable energy generation and transmission facilities on other lands. There are several ways in which the impacts of the renewable energy development covered by the Plan would be lessened. First, the Plan incorporates CMAs for each alternative, including specific biological reserve design components and LUPA components. Also, the implementation of existing laws, orders, regulations, and standards would reduce the impacts of project development. If significant impacts would still result after implementation of CMAs and compliance with applicable laws and regulations, then specific mitigation measures would be recommended as described in this section.

Conservation and Management Actions

The conservation strategy for the Preferred Alternative (presented in Volume II, Section II.3.1.1, Conservation Strategy) defines specific actions that would reduce the impacts of this alternative. The conservation strategy includes definition of the reserve design and specific Conservation and Management Actions (CMAs) for the Preferred Alternative. While the CMAs were developed for BLM lands only, this analysis assumes that all CMAs would be applied also to nonfederal lands. The following are the CMAs presented in Volume II, Section II.3.1.1:

CMAs Applicable to the Entire Planning Area

- Maintain, and where possible enhance, the recreation setting characteristics—physical components of remoteness, naturalness, and facilities; social components of

contact, group size, and evidence of use; and operational components of access, visitor services, and management controls.

- Cooperate with the network of communities and recreation service providers active within the planning area to protect the principal recreation activities and opportunities and the associated conditions for quality recreation by enhancing appropriate visitor services and by identifying and mitigating impacts from development, inconsistent land uses, and unsustainable recreation practices.
- Manage lands not designated as SRMAs or ERMAs to meet recreation and visitor services and resource stewardship needs as described in RMPs.
- Prohibit large-scale ground-disturbing activities that do not enhance conservation and recreation values within 1 mile of Level 1 and Level 2 Recreation facility footprints.
 - Level 1 = high value: campgrounds, Long-Term Visitor Areas, visitor contact facilities, day-use areas, watchable-wildlife areas, OHV open areas, etc.
 - Level 2 = moderate value: recreational trailheads for motorized/nonmotorized activities, parking staging areas;
- Avoid large-scale ground disturbance within 0.5 mile of Level 3 Recreation facility footprints. If avoidance is not practical, the facility must be relocated to the same or higher standard and maintain recreation objectives and setting characteristics.
 - Level 3 = lower value: individual developments, kiosks, etc.
- Limit signage to that necessary for recreation facility/area identification, interpretation, education, and safety/regulatory enforcement.
- Refer to local RMPs, RMP amendments, and activity level planning for specially designated areas for vehicular stopping, parking, and camping limitations.
- Provide ongoing maintenance of recreation and conservation facilities, interpretive and regulatory signs, roads, and trails.

CMAAs in DFAs and DRECP Variance Lands, FAAs, and SAAs

- Retain, to the extent possible, the identified recreation setting characteristics: physical components of remoteness, naturalness, and facilities; social components of contact, group size, and evidence of use; and operational components of access, visitor services, and management controls (see recreation setting characteristics matrix¹).

¹ Recreation Setting Characteristics Matrix is available at: http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/wo/Information_Resources_Management/policy/im_attachments/2011.Par.42876.File.dat/IM2011-004_att5.pdf.

- Designate SRMAs as exclusion areas for renewable energy development due to the incompatibility with the values of the SRMA. Two exceptions to this management action are: (1) geothermal development is an allowable use if a geothermal-only DFA overlays the SRMA designation and the lease includes a “no surface occupancy” stipulation; and (2) if a DRECP Variance Land designation overlays the SRMA, renewable energy may be allowed on a case-by-case basis if the proposed project is found to be compatible with the specific SRMA values.
- **Hot Springs, Tamarisk, Pilot Knob, and Ocotillo Wells SRMAs:** No renewable energy development will be allowed except for geothermal development with “no surface occupancy” stipulations. Refer to the individual SRMA documents for SRMA/Recreation Management Zone specific objectives, management actions, and uses. Refer to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Interior and California State Parks for agreed-upon geothermal development zones.
- **ERMAs:** Retain to the extent possible recreation activities and associated qualities and conditions within these areas.
- **Non-SRMA/ERMA:** Retain to the extent possible recreation activities provided for in field office RMPs.

If impacts on recreation setting characteristics identified in RMPs or activity plans for designated recreation areas (SRMA, ERMA, OHV areas, etc.) from proposed projects or developments are identified, one or more of the following actions shall be applied:

- For displacement of dispersed recreation opportunities, commensurate compensation in the form of enhanced recreation operations, recreation facilities, or opportunities is required. If recreation displacement results in resource damage due to increased use in other areas, the field office shall require the developer to mitigate that damage through whatever measures are most appropriate.
- Where development displaces facilities, similar new recreation facilities/campgrounds (including the installation of new structures such as pit toilets, shade structures, picnic tables, interpretive panels, etc.) will be provided.
- If designated vehicle routes adjacent to SRMAs or adjacent to/within ERMAs are directly impacted by renewable energy development activities (including modification of existing route to accommodate industrial equipment and restricted access or full closure of designated route to the public), mitigation shall include the development of alternative routes to allow for continued vehicular access, with a similar recreation experience adjacent to/throughout the SRMA/ERMA. In addition to continued access throughout the SRMA/ERMA, mitigation shall include the construction of an OHV touring route, which circumvents the renewable energy development

project area and allows for interpretive signs to be placed at strategic locations along the route.

- Impacts on Special Recreation Permit activities shall be mitigated by providing necessary planning/National Environmental Policy Act compliance documentation for replacement activities.
- SRMA – If residual impacts on SRMAs occur from renewable energy development, or other development or project impacts, commensurate mitigation through relocation or replacement of facilities or compensation (in the form of a recreation operations and enhancement fund) will be required.
- ERMA – Impacts from development projects that do not enhance conservation or recreation goals will require commensurate mitigation through relocation or replacement of facilities.

Conservation and Management Actions in National Conservation Lands, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and Wildlife Allocations

- Refer to the individual National Conservation Areas and ACEC Special Unit Management Plans in Appendix L for specific objectives, management actions and uses. Where ACECs overlap SRMAs, refer to SRMA Special Unit Management Plans in Appendix L also. Where guidance conflicts in these overlap areas, National Conservation Areas/ACEC guidance will prevail.
- Maintain targeted recreation activities, experiences and benefits. Maintain, and where possible enhance, the recreation setting characteristics: physical components of remoteness, naturalness and facilities; social components of contact, group size and evidence of use; and operational components of access, visitor services and management controls.
- Design public access features (access roads, roadside stops, trailheads, interpretive sites, etc.) to support or enhance conservation values for National Conservation Land units.

Conservation and Management Actions in Special Recreation Management Areas

- Protect SRMAs for their unique/special recreation values by prohibiting utility-scale renewable energy development. Refer to the individual SRMA Special Unit Management Plans in Appendix L for SRMA/Recreation Management Zone specific objectives, management actions, allowable uses, and specific mitigation requirements.
- Manage SRMAs for their targeted recreation activities, experiences, and benefits. Maintain (and where possible enhance) the recreation setting characteristics— physical components of remoteness, naturalness, and facilities; social components

of contact, group size, and evidence of use; and operational components of access, visitor services, and management controls.

Laws and Regulations

Similar to the No Action Alternative, existing laws and regulations would reduce certain impacts of Plan implementation. Relevant regulations are presented in Volume III, Section III.18.1. The requirements of relevant laws and regulations are summarized in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the CMAs would reduce the development of renewable energy to the extent feasible. No additional mitigation is required.

IV.18.3.2.1.2 Impacts of the Reserve Design

The Preferred Alternative would designate almost 5.9 million acres as reserve design, including more than 4 million acres of NLCS lands and more than 5.6 million acres of ACECs. Some acres designated as NLCS lands and ACECs overlap. The reserve design would not directly impact some types of recreation such as hiking, stargazing, and other solitary recreation. The NLCS management would restrict other types of recreation, such as commercial and competitive events requiring Special Recreation Permits, except for those uses that would enhance the opportunity for visitors to experience and enjoy the values of the unit. This restriction would impact the larger commercial and competitive opportunity to recreate within the NLCS lands. Where ACECs and SRMAs overlap, the SRMA management actions and uses would be allowed unless they conflict with the ACEC management and uses. As such, the ACECs would also enhance some types of recreation but could restrict other types where SRMA management is less constrained. The reserve design is also made up of Conservation Planning Areas. These areas are where actions to provide compensatory mitigation for Covered Activities would be focused. There are more than 7,100 acres of recreation lands in the Conservation Planning Areas. There are approximately 2.5 million acres of BLM land where recreation occurs within the reserve design. Table IV.18-4 lists the acres of lands managed for recreation emphasis that would be designated within the reserve design by ecoregion subarea. In addition, there are more than 9,000 acres of recreation lands in the Conservation Planning Areas². As with the NLCS lands and ACECs, the Conservation Planning Areas could enhance solitary types of recreation.

² Note that Conservation Planning Areas identified on private lands are not mandatory and would only be implemented if there are willing sellers.

As part of the reserve design, the following CMAs would be required.

Conservation and Management Actions in National Conservation Lands, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and Wildlife Allocations

- Refer to the individual National Conservation Areas and ACEC Special Unit Management Plans in Appendix L for specific objectives, management actions, and uses. Where ACECs overlap SRMAs, refer to SRMA Special Unit Management Plans in Appendix L also. Where guidance conflicts in these overlap areas, National Conservation Lands/ACEC guidance will prevail.
- Maintain targeted recreation activities, experiences, and benefits. Maintain, and where possible enhance, the recreation setting characteristics: physical components of remoteness, naturalness, and facilities; social components of contact, group size, and evidence of use; and operational components of access, visitor services, and management controls.
- Design public access features (access roads, roadside stops, trailheads, interpretive sites, etc.) to support or enhance conservation values for National Conservation Land units.

IV.18.3.2.2 Impacts of DRECP LUPA on BLM Lands Managed for Recreation: Preferred Alternative

This section addresses two components of effects of the BLM LUPA: the streamlined development of renewable energy and transmission on BLM land under the LUPA and the impacts of the amended land use plans themselves.

IV.18.3.2.2.1 Impacts from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development on BLM Lands Managed for Recreation

Renewable energy-related activities covered by the DRECP would be confined to DFAs. The distribution of different generation technologies varies depending upon underlying factors that affect each technology. The area of disturbance for each technology is summarized in Volume II, Table II.3-12. Typical impacts resulting from Covered Activities are discussed in Section IV.18.2. Impacts on the lands managed for recreation and CMAs for recreation on BLM-administered lands would be the same as those described in Section IV.18.3.2.1.1, Plan-wide Impacts and Mitigation Measures from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development, for the entire Plan Area.

BLM lands managed for recreation would be potentially impacted by renewable energy development. As a percentage of the 3.6 million acres of SRMAs and ERMAs potentially designated as part of the BLM LUPA, this impact is about 1% of the total.

Table IV.18-4 presents the acres of lands managed for recreation within proposed BLM land designations (NLCS, ACECs, and wildlife allocations).

In addition to the existing laws and regulations listed under the No Action Alternative, the CMAs specific to recreation contained in Volume II, Section II.3.2, would reduce the impacts of renewable energy construction under the Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.2.2 Impacts of Changes to BLM Land Designations

Under the Preferred Alternative, there would be 3,602,000 acres of lands managed for recreation in BLM LUPA lands. These lands would be SRMAs, ERMA, and OHV areas but in some instances overlap with NLCS, ACEC, and wildlife allocation designations. Under the Preferred Alternative, the BLM would designate 32 SRMAs, approximately 2.7 million acres, and 8 ERMA, approximately 878,000 acres, see Table IV.18-1. See Appendix L for the individual SRMA and ERMA Management Plans.

Under the Preferred Alternative, potential impacts on recreation opportunities and lands managed under these BLM designations could be beneficial and adverse. Proposed ACEC and NLCS designations could provide beneficial impacts on recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation as a result of disturbance caps in these areas designed to conserve and protect the resource values. However, development in NLCS lands would be limited to 1% of total authorized disturbance, or to the level allowed by collocated ACEC/wildlife allocations, whichever is more restrictive. These disturbance caps and other management actions would provide protection for recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation but may limit certain recreational opportunities, in particular more organized, commercial recreation.

Proposed SRMAs and ERMA could have adverse or beneficial impacts on recreation opportunities, depending upon the allowable uses within the SRMAs. As part of the LUPA, the following CMAs would be required to protect the SRMA resource value and ensure all types of recreation are protected, including intensive-use recreation and Special Recreation Permits.

IV.18.3.2.3 Impacts of the NCCP: Preferred Alternative

The analysis of Covered Activities under the NCCP is equivalent to the Plan-wide analysis of the interagency alternatives. Reserve design features and other conservation actions under the NCCP alternatives represent more detailed categories of the reserve design under the interagency Plan-wide alternatives. These NCCP differences in reserve design features do not affect nonbiological resources analyzed in this document. The analysis of reserve design and CMAs under the NCCP is therefore equivalent to the Plan-wide analysis of the interagency alternatives, as described in Section IV.18.3.2.1, Plan-wide Impacts of Implementing the DRECP: Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.2.4 Impacts of the GCP

The impacts of the GCP for the Preferred Alternative would be similar to those defined in Section IV.18.3.2.1 for the Plan-wide analysis, but they would occur on nonfederal lands only. The potential acres of recreation on GCP lands is provided in Table R2.18-6.

IV.18.3.2.4.1 General Conservation Plan

Under the Preferred Alternative for the GCP, there would be 355,000 acres of recreation lands in GCP lands, see Table R2.18-6 in Appendix R2. Because the majority of the lands managed for recreation on nonfederal land would not be open to renewable energy development, the acres of direct effects are limited. Potential impacts on recreation lands resulting from solar energy development would be 160 acres (this includes ground-mounted distributed generation). There would be essentially no potential direct impacts resulting from wind energy development. Potential impacts resulting from geothermal energy development (this would include the entire project area) would be 60 acres. All impacts would occur on recreation lands managed by California State Parks and would include 0.4 mile of National Scenic or Historic Trails.

Of the Plan Areas, 11.2 miles of National Scenic and Historic Trails—Pacific Crest Trail—would be within FAAs. There would be no recreation lands within SAAs.

Indirect effects and impacts on access to recreation for GCP lands would be the same as those addressed for the Plan-wide analysis.

Table R2.18-7 in Appendix R2 shows the acreage of recreation lands within the GCP Reserve Design Lands under the Preferred Alternative. Of the lands available for recreation in the GCP, the majority are within existing conservation areas or would fall within proposed Conservation Planning Areas. The effects of the reserve design land on recreation would be the same as described for the Plan-wide analysis.

IV.18.3.2.5 Impacts Outside the Plan Area

IV.18.3.2.5.1 Impacts of Transmission Outside the Plan Area

The impacts of transmission outside the Plan Area on outdoor recreation would be the same under all alternatives. These impacts are as described for the No Action Alternative in Section IV.18.3.1.5, Impacts Outside the Plan Area in the No Action Alternative.

IV.18.3.2.5.2 Impacts of BLM LUPA Decisions Outside the Plan Area

There would be more than 170,000 acres of lands managed for recreation on BLM LUPA lands outside the Plan Area. Of these, more than 45,000 acres would be proposed NLCS lands and more than 88,000 acres would be existing and proposed ACECs managed for recreation in BLM LUPA conservation under the Preferred Alternative, see Table R2.18-8 in Appendix R2. Designating lands for recreational purposes would have beneficial and adverse effects as described in Section IV.18.3.2.2.2, Impacts of Changes to BLM Land Designations.

IV.18.3.2.6 CEQA Significance Determination for the Preferred Alternative

For the purposes of this analysis, the interpretation of existing recreational facilities is expanded to include lands commonly used for or designated and managed for recreational uses.

OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use. Renewable energy facility development and associated transmission infrastructure in DFAs under the Preferred Alternative could result in long-term exclusion of dispersed recreation from up to 8,000 acres. No loss of designated OHV open areas would occur. Development of renewable energy in DFAs would be required to comply with a comprehensive list of CMAs that would reduce the impacts of renewable energy on recreation.

Conservation Designations could also result in some long-term exclusion of some types of recreation, depending upon any restrictions placed on use of the area. However, the Preferred Alternative would also result in 2.7 million acres of SRMAs and 878,000 acres of ERMAs dedicated to enhanced recreation. With implementation of the CMAs and the development of SRMAs and ERMAs, the Preferred Alternative would have a less than significant impact on recreation.

Development of up to 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy would result in indirect effects on federal, state, or local recreational facilities or programs through visual impacts including increased night lighting, increased noise, and impacts on air quality. The Preferred Alternative would have 123,000 acres in DFAs available for development of renewable energy projects within 5 miles of national and state parks. The high visibility of these projects would conflict with recreationists' expectations of pristine and expansive desert vistas, creating a significant and unmitigable impact.

OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation. Due to the large scale of construction required, access to recreational facilities could be disrupted by additional traffic and road closures and by the large fenced areas for solar and geothermal energy facilities as discussed in Impact OR-1. Because the dis-

placement would be mitigated by CMAs that require other enhanced recreation operations, recreation facilities, or access, the impact would be adverse but less than significant.

OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation.

Under the Preferred Alternative, more than 2.7 million acres would be designated as SRMAs and more than 878,000 acres would be designated as ERMAs. The designation of SRMAs and ERMAs is anticipated to facilitate, enhance, and concentrate recreational opportunities and visitor services programs. Because the plan would designate recreational management areas, this impact would be beneficial.

IV.18.3.2.7 Comparison of the Preferred Alternative With No Action Alternative

Chapter IV.27 presents a comparison of all action alternatives and the No Action Alternative across all disciplines. This section summarizes the comparison of the Preferred Alternative with the No Action Alternative.

IV.18.3.2.7.1 Preferred Alternative Compared With No Action Alternative for Plan-wide DRECP

Potential impacts from solar and wind energy development on lands managed for recreation in DFAs would be less under the Preferred Alternative than under the No Action Alternative because there would be fewer acres of potential loss of lands managed for recreation and because a comprehensive list of CMAs would require mitigation for any direct effects on recreation. While there would be areas managed for recreation emphasis converted to DFAs in the Preferred Alternative, this potential loss would be minimal compared with the lands designated as SRMAs and ERMAs in the Preferred Alternative. The DFAs would avoid SRMAs entirely in the Preferred Alternative. While the reserve design could restrict some types of recreation such as those requiring a Special Recreation Permit, the ACECs and NLCS lands would be compatible with SRMAs whenever feasible.

IV.18.3.2.7.2 Preferred Alternative Compared With No Action Alternative for the BLM LUPA

Potential impacts from the Preferred Alternative for the BLM LUPA would be less overall when compared with the No Action for the same reasons addressed for the Plan-wide DRECP. Effects to OHV Open Areas are anticipated to be minimal under all alternatives including No Action and the Preferred Alternative. Additionally, under the LUPA, the Preferred Alternative would result in more than 2.7 million acres of SRMAs and more than 878,000 acres as ERMAs within the Plan Area compared with approximately 200,000 acres of existing SRMA designation under the No Action Alternative. The Preferred Alternative would result in more than 2.5 million additional SRMA designation lands, as well as the lands designated as ERMAs although the No Action Alternative does have more than 1,465,000 acres of land managed for enhanced recreation. The SRMA designation would have a general exclusion from renewable energy development.

IV.18.3.2.7.3 Preferred Alternative Compared With No Action Alternative for the NCCP

The impacts of the NCCP for the Preferred Alternative would be the same as those defined in Section IV.18.3.2.1 for the Plan-wide analysis. As a result, the comparison of the Preferred Alternative with the No Action Alternative for the NCCP is the same as described for Plan-wide DRECP, in Section IV.18.3.2.7.1.

IV.18.3.2.7.4 Preferred Alternative Compared With No Action Alternative for the GCP

There would be no GCP under the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative assumes that renewable energy and transmission development and mitigation for such projects in the Plan Area would occur on a project-by-project basis in a pattern consistent with past and ongoing renewable energy and transmission projects and current programmatic analyses and policies.

IV.18.3.3 Alternative 1

IV.18.3.3.1 Plan-wide Impacts of Implementing the DRECP: Alternative 1

IV.18.3.3.1.1 Plan-wide Impacts and Mitigation Measures from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development

Under Alternative 1, more than 1 million acres could be available for renewable energy development in the DFAs. The actual areas developed would be much smaller: 148,000 acres. The DFAs would overlap with areas managed for recreational purposes and could therefore result in impacts on recreation.

Although 14,000 acres of lands managed for recreation emphasis would be designated as DFAs, the estimated potential impacts on lands managed for recreation in DFAs would be 500 acres for solar energy, no impacts due to wind energy, 2,000 acres for geothermal energy, and 4,000 acres for renewable energy-related transmission development (see Table R2.18-9 in Appendix R2). Impacts on lands managed for or proposed for special recreation management would occur mainly in the Imperial Valley.

Impact Assessment

Impact OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use.

Impacts on lands managed for or proposed for special recreation management by the development of renewable energy would be similar to those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 for the No Action Alternative and include loss of lands managed for or proposed for designation as recreation management areas. Renewable energy and transmis-

sion infrastructure could result in the loss of up to 6,000 acres of lands managed for or proposed for recreation management designation. Under Alternative 1, more than 15,000 acres of DFAs occur within 5 miles of National Parks and Preserves and 104,000 acres of DFAs occur within 5 miles of State Parks with several hundred thousand additional acres of DFAs within 5 miles of wilderness (see Chapter IV.20, Visual Resources, Table IV.20-5). Renewable energy facilities built on those acres would be potentially visible to recreationists.

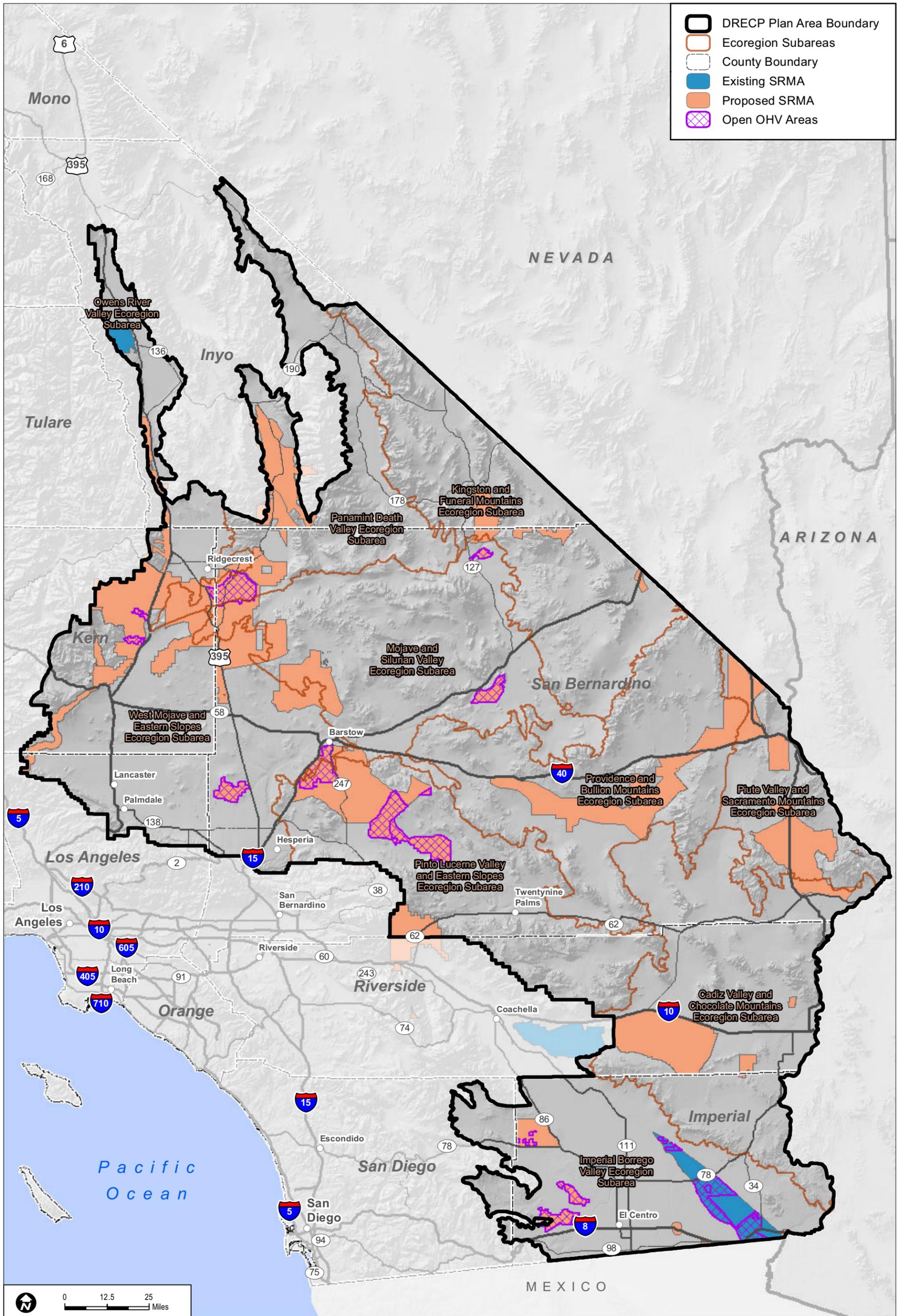
Impact OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation.

The development of renewable energy could require use of more than 6,000 acres of lands managed for or proposed for designation as recreation management areas. Use of these lands could result in loss of access on and around the lands. Impacts would be similar to those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 for the No Action Alternative. Increased traffic and potential road closures during construction could further degrade access to recreation.

The development of access and service roads for renewable energy facilities and transmission lines could also have a beneficial impact on access to recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, or OHV riding. The development of these roads, however, could lead to less solitude and increased noise in adjacent recreation areas.

Impact OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation.

Under Alternative 1, approximately 2,380,000 acres would be designated as SRMAs with an additional 321,000 acres of SRMAs designated over open OHV lands, see Table IV.18-1 and Figure IV.18-3. The designation of SRMAs throughout the CDCA and adoption of associated management plans (Appendix L) are anticipated to facilitate and focus recreational opportunities and visitor services programs and enhance identified opportunities. Beneficial impacts may also include increased coordination between programs and activities supporting primary goals and associated implementation strategies for each management areas.



Sources: ESRI (2014); CEC (2013); BLM (2014); CDFW (2013); USFWS (2013)

FIGURE IV.18-3

BLM Recreation Classifications – Alternative 1

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Although Alternative 1 would increase the total amount of acreage managed for recreation, certain ecoregion subareas would see Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis designated for other emphasis, such as ACECs or NLCS, in particular the Imperial Borrego Valley, see Table IV.18-4. While the designation might change, the use of these lands may not and they would still be available for certain types of recreation.

Impacts in Study Area Lands

Future Assessment Areas. No FAAs are designated in Alternative 1.

Special Analysis Areas. The SAA along U.S. 395 would overlap with a proposed SRMA. If the SAA is designated as conservation, the SRMA would be managed to enhance recreation. The conservation could provide beneficial impacts on recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation as a result of disturbance caps in these areas designed to conserve and protect the resource values. However, designating the SAA as conservation could also limit the types of recreation available on these lands.

DRECP Variance Lands. DRECP Variance Lands represent the BLM Solar PEIS Variance Lands as screened for the DRECP and EIR/EIS based on BLM screening criteria. Covered Activities could be permitted for NCCP purposes only through an NCCP plan amendment. However, development of renewable energy on variance lands would not require a BLM LUPA; so the environmental review process would be somewhat simpler than if the location were left undesignated. Development of the DRECP Variance Lands would impact recreation in the area north of Ivanpah where Variance Lands overlap with an SRMA. Developing the DRECP Variance Lands would result in a loss of SRMA acreage and a loss of recreational opportunity.

Impact Reduction Strategies and Mitigation

The implementation of the Plan would result in conservation of some desert lands as well as the development of renewable energy generation and transmission facilities on other lands. There are several ways in which the impacts of the renewable energy development covered by the Plan would be lessened. First, the Plan incorporates CMAs for each alternative, including specific biological reserve design components and LUPA components. Also, the implementation of existing laws, orders, regulations, and standards would reduce the impacts of project development. If significant impacts would still result after implementation of CMAs and compliance with applicable laws and regulations, then specific mitigation measures would be recommended as described in this section.

Conservation and Management Actions

The conservation strategy for Alternative 1 (presented in Volume II, Section II.3.1.1) defines specific actions that would reduce the impacts of this alternative. The conservation strategy includes definition of the reserve design. The CMAs that apply to the Preferred Alternative would apply to Alternative 1. While the CMAs were developed for BLM lands only, this analysis assumes that all CMAs would be applied also to nonfederal lands.

Laws and Regulations

Similar to the No Action Alternative, existing laws and regulations would reduce certain impacts of Plan implementation. Relevant regulations are presented in Volume III, Section III.18.1. The requirements of relevant laws and regulations are summarized in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the CMAs would reduce the development of renewable energy to the extent feasible. No additional mitigation is required.

IV.18.3.3.1.2 Impacts from the Reserve Design

Alternative 1 would designate more than 7.3 million acres as reserve design, with more than 1.6 million acres of NLCS lands and more than 4.9 million acres of ACECs. Some acres designated as NLCS lands and ACECs overlap. The reserve design would not directly impact hiking, stargazing, and other solitary recreation. The NLCS management would provide for commercial and competitive events requiring Special Recreation Permits on NLCS lands, consistent with area management plans. This would reduce impacts on organized recreation on NLCS lands. Where ACECs and SRMAs overlap, the SRMA management actions and uses would be allowed unless they conflict with the ACEC management and uses. As such, the ACECs would also enhance some types of recreation but could restrict other types where SRMA management is less constrained. The reserve design is also made up of Conservation Planning Areas. These areas are where actions to provide compensatory mitigation for Covered Activities would be focused. There are approximately 9,000 acres of recreation lands in the Conservation Planning Areas. There are approximately 1.6 million acres of BLM land where recreation occurs within the reserve design. Table IV.18-4 lists the acres of lands managed for recreation emphasis that would be designated within the reserve design by ecoregion subarea. As with the NLCS lands and ACECs, the Conservation Planning Areas would not adversely affect some types of primitive recreation. The CMAs required for NLCS lands, ACECs, and wildlife allocations in the Preferred Alternative would be required for Alternative 1.

IV.18.3.3.2 Impacts of the DRECP LUPA on BLM Land: Alternative 1

This section addresses two components of effects of the BLM LUPA: the streamlined development of renewable energy and transmission on BLM land under the LUPA and the impacts of the amended land use plans themselves.

IV.18.3.3.2.1 Impacts from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development on BLM Lands Managed for Recreation

Renewable energy-related activities covered by the DRECP would be confined to DFAs. The distribution of different generation technologies varies depending upon underlying factors that affect each technology. The area of disturbance for each technology under Alternative 1 is summarized in Volume II, Table II.4-7. Typical impacts resulting from Covered Activities are discussed in Section IV.18.2. Impacts on the lands managed for recreation and CMAs for recreation on BLM-administered lands would be the same as those described in Section IV.18.3.2.1.1 for the entire Plan Area.

BLM lands managed for recreation would potentially be impacted by renewable energy development. As a percentage of the 2.7 million acres of SRMAs that would be designated as part of the BLM LUPA, this impact on recreation is about 1% of the total.

Table IV.18-4 presents the acres of lands managed for recreation within proposed BLM land designations (NLCS, ACECs, and wildlife allocations).

In addition to the existing laws and regulations listed under the No Action Alternative, the CMAs specific to recreation contained in Volume II, Section II.3.2, would reduce the impacts of renewable energy construction under Alternative 1.

IV.18.3.3.2.2 Impacts of Changes to BLM Land Designations

Alternative 1 would have more than 2.7 million acres of lands managed for recreation in existing and proposed SRMAs, see Table IV.18-1. See Appendix L for the individual SRMA Management Plans. Accounting for the overlaps within these designations, the lands managed for recreation within BLM LUPA land designations under Alternative 1 would total more than 6 million acres.

Under Alternative 1, potential impacts on recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation under these BLM land designations could be beneficial and adverse. Proposed ACEC and NLCS designations could provide beneficial impacts on recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation as a result of disturbance caps in these areas designed to conserve and protect the resource values. Development in NLCS lands would be limited to 1% of total authorized disturbance or to the level allowed by collocated ACEC/wildlife

allocations, whichever is more restrictive. These disturbance caps and other management actions would minimize surface disturbance and thereby provide protection for recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation but may limit certain recreational opportunities and developments. Proposed SRMAs could have adverse or beneficial impacts on recreation opportunities, depending upon the allowable uses within the SRMAs. As part of the LUPA, the CMAs required for the Preferred Alternative would also be required for Alternative 1 to protect the SRMA resource value.

IV.18.3.3.3 Impacts of NCCP: Alternative 1

The analysis of Covered Activities under the NCCP is equivalent to the Plan-wide analysis of the interagency alternatives. Reserve design features and other conservation actions under the NCCP alternatives represent more detailed categories of the reserve design under the interagency Plan-wide alternatives. These NCCP differences in reserve design features do not affect nonbiological resources analyzed in this document. The analysis of reserve design and CMAs under the NCCP is therefore equivalent to the Plan-wide analysis of the interagency alternatives, as described in Section IV.18.3.2.1.

IV.18.3.3.4 Impacts of GCP

The impacts of the GCP for Alternative 1 would be similar to those defined in Section IV.18.3.2.1 for the Plan-wide analysis, but they would occur on nonfederal lands only. Because the majority of the lands managed for recreation on nonfederal land would not be open to renewable energy development, the acres of direct effects are limited.

Under Alternative 1, potential impacts on lands managed for recreation resulting from solar energy development would be 300 acres. Impacts on lands managed for recreation resulting from geothermal energy development would be 100 acres. There would be no potential impacts on lands managed for recreation resulting from wind energy or transmission development.

Table R2.18-10 in Appendix R2 shows the potential impacts on GCP recreation lands resulting from solar, wind, geothermal, and transmission development under Alternative 1.

Indirect effects and impacts on recreation access for GCP lands would be the same as those addressed for the Plan-wide analysis.

Table R2.18-11 in Appendix R2 shows the acreage of recreation lands within the GCP Reserve Design Lands under Alternative 1. Of the lands available for recreation in the GCP, the majority are within existing conservation areas or would fall within proposed Conservation Planning Areas. The effects of the reserve design land on recreation would be the same as described for the Plan-wide analysis.

IV.18.3.3.5 Impacts Outside the Plan Area

IV.18.3.3.5.1 Impacts of Transmission Outside the Plan Area

The impacts of transmission outside the Plan Area on outdoor recreation would be the same under all alternatives. These impacts are as described for the No Action Alternative in Section IV.18.3.1.5.

IV.18.3.3.5.2 Impacts of BLM LUPA Decisions Outside the Plan Area

Under Alternative 1, there are more than 170,000 acres of land managed for recreation in BLM LUPA land outside the Plan Area. The BLM LUPA would designate 33,000 acres of proposed NLCS lands and 76,000 acres of existing and proposed ACECs, see Table R2.18-12. Designating lands for recreational purposes would have beneficial and adverse effects as described in Section IV.18.3.2.2.2.

IV.18.3.3.6 CEQA Significance Determination for Alternative 1

For the purposes of this analysis, the interpretation of existing recreational facilities is expanded to include lands commonly used for or designated and managed for recreational uses.

OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use. Renewable energy facility development and associated transmission infrastructure in DFAs under Alternative 1 could result in long-term exclusion of dispersed recreation of up to 6,000 acres. No loss of designated OHV open areas would occur. Development of renewable energy in DFAs would be required to comply with a comprehensive list of CMAs that would reduce the impacts of renewable energy on recreation. Conservation Designations could also result in some long-term exclusion of some types of recreation, depending upon any restrictions placed on use of the area; Special Recreation Permits may be authorized in NLCS designations, on a case-by-case basis. Alternative 1 would also result in more than 2.7 million acres of SRMAs dedicated to enhanced recreation. With implementation of the CMAs and the development of SRMAs, Alternative 1 would have a less than significant impact on recreation.

Development of up to 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy would result in indirect effects on federal, state, or local recreational facilities or programs through visual impacts, including increased night lighting, increased noise, and impacts on air quality. Alternative 1 would have 119,000 acres in DFAs available for development of renewable energy projects within 5 miles of sensitive recreational areas (national and state parks). The high visibility of these projects would conflict with recreationists' expectations of pristine and expansive desert vistas, creating a significant and unmitigable impact.

OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation. Due to the large scale of construction required, access to recreational facilities could be disrupted by additional traffic and road closures and by the large fenced areas for solar and geothermal energy facilities. Because the displacement would be mitigated in the form of other enhanced recreation operations, recreation facilities, or access, the impact would be adverse but less than significant.

OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation. Under Alternative 1, more than 2.7 million acres would be designated as SRMAs. No lands would be designated as ERMAs. The designation of SRMAs is anticipated to facilitate and focus recreational opportunities and visitor services programs and enhance identified opportunities. Because the plan would designate recreational management areas, this impact would be beneficial.

IV.18.3.3.7 Comparison of Alternative 1 With the Preferred Alternative

Chapter IV.27 presents a comparison of all action alternatives and the No Action Alternative across all disciplines. This section summarizes the comparison of Alternative 1 with the Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.3.7.1 Alternative 1 Compared With Preferred Alternative for Plan-wide DRECP

Total potential impacts on lands designated and managed for recreation in DFAs would be less under Alternative 1 than under the Preferred Alternative because the potential loss of lands managed for recreation would be lower. Both Alternative 1 and the Preferred Alternative would require CMAs for development in DFAs and would avoid renewable energy development in SRMAs. The Alternative 1 reserve design would be less restrictive to organized recreational uses than the Preferred Alternative because it would allow Special Recreation Permit events to be considered on NLCS lands. The Preferred Alternative would designate more than 900,000 acres of land for ERMAs compared with Alternative 1. While Alternative would have fewer potential impacts of loss of areas managed for recreation emphasis, the acreage of additional land designated for recreation in the Preferred Project would result in a greater benefit to recreation.

IV.18.3.3.7.2 Alternative 1 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the BLM LUPA

Potential impacts from Alternative 1 for the BLM LUPA would be more than from the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative would designate 900,000 acres more of SRMAs and ERMAs than Alternative 1 to provide more recreation opportunities. As such the Preferred Alternative would have greater beneficial impacts for recreation.

IV.18.3.3.7.3 Alternative 1 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the NCCP

The impacts of the NCCP for Alternative 1 would be the same as those defined in Section IV.18.3.3.1, Plan-wide Impacts of Implementing the DRECP: Alternative 1. Alternative 1 would have slightly fewer impacts on recreation than the Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.3.7.4 Alternative 1 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the GCP

Under Alternative 1, there would be slightly more acres of potential impacts resulting from renewable development in the GCP than under the Preferred Alternative. Other impacts would be comparable between the two alternatives.

IV.18.3.4 Alternative 2

IV.18.3.4.1 Plan-wide Impacts of Implementing the DRECP: Alternative 2

IV.18.3.4.1.1 Plan-wide Impacts and Mitigation Measures from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development

Under Alternative 2, more than 2.4 million acres could be available for renewable energy development in the DFAs. The actual areas developed would be much smaller: 134,000 acres. The DFAs would overlap with 14,000 acres of areas managed for recreational emphasis and could therefore result in impacts on recreation, see Table IV.28-1.

Total potential impacts on lands managed for recreation in DFAs would be 5,000 acres for solar energy, 300 acres for wind energy, 1,000 acres for geothermal energy, and 4,000 acres for renewable energy-related transmission development (see Table R2.18-13 in Appendix R2). The west Mojave area would see the greatest potential impacts on lands managed for recreation from development in DFAs.

Impact Assessment

Impact OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use.

Impacts on lands managed for recreation by the development of renewable energy would be similar to those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 for the No Action Alternative and include loss of lands managed for recreation. Although 42,000 acres of lands managed for recreation emphasis would be designated as DFAs, renewable energy and transmission infrastructure could result in the loss of up to 10,000 acres of all lands managed for recreation. Alternative 2 would result in indirect effects to recreation due to an increase in visual impacts, noise, and air emissions. Under Alternative 2, more than 33,000 acres of DFAs occur within 5 miles of national parks and preserves and 121,000 acres of DFAs occur

within 5 miles of state parks with several hundred thousand additional acres of DFAs within 5 miles of wilderness (see Chapter IV.20, Visual Resources, Table IV.20-7). Renewable energy facilities built on those acres would be potentially visible to recreationists.

Impact OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation.

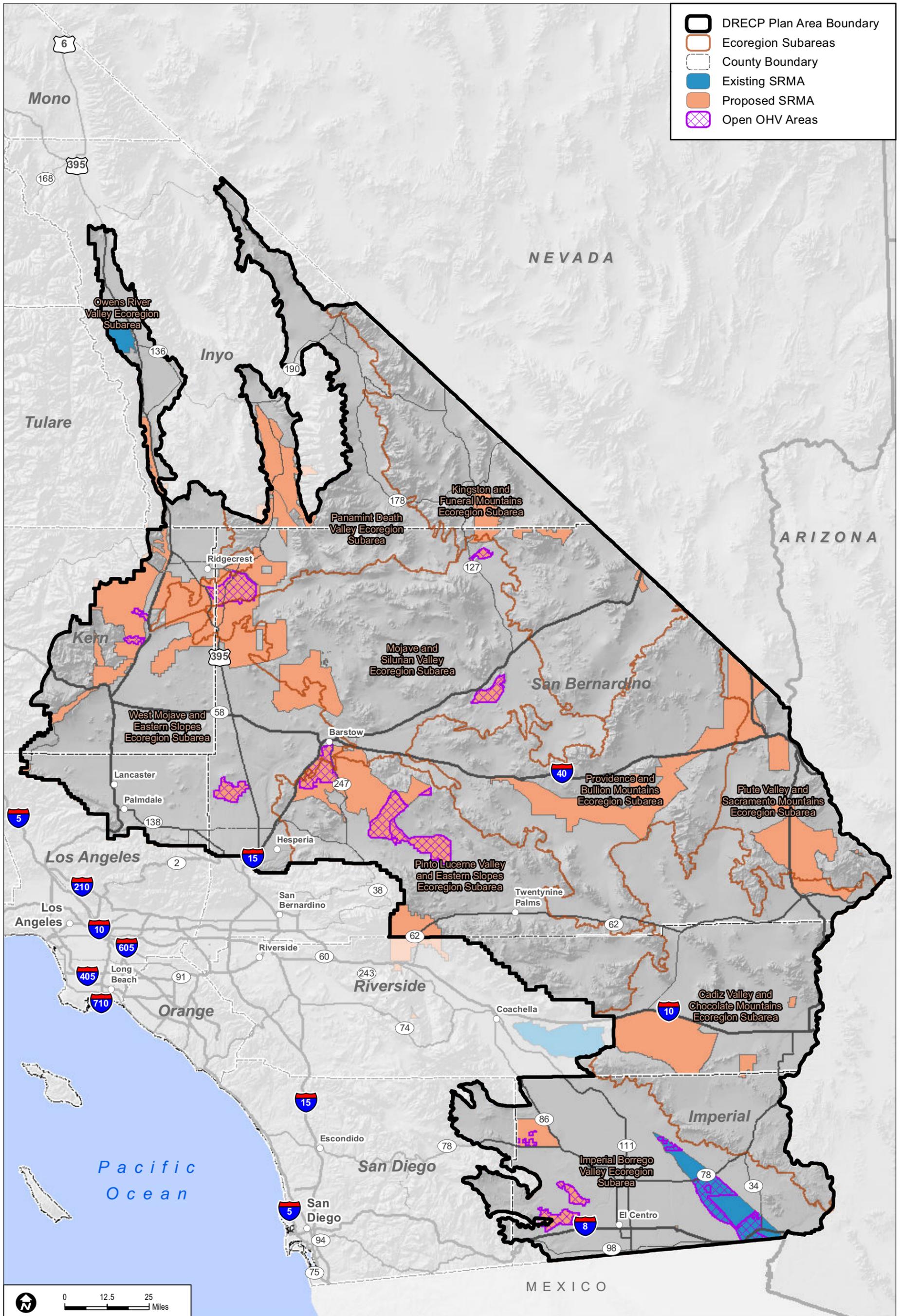
The development of renewable energy could require use of more than 10,000 acres of lands managed for recreation. Use of these lands could result in loss of access on and around the lands. Impacts would be similar to those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 for the No Action Alternative. Increased traffic and potential road closures during construction could further degrade access to recreation.

The development of access and service roads for renewable energy facilities and transmission lines could also have a beneficial impact on access to recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, or OHV riding. The development of these roads could also degrade recreational experiences in adjacent recreation areas.

Impact OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation.

Under Alternative 2, the BLM would designate 2,303,000 acres of SRMAs with an additional 321,000 acres of SRMAs designated over existing open OHV lands, see Table IV.18-1 and Figure IV.18-4. No ERMAs would be designated under Alternative 2. The designation of SRMAs and ERMAs throughout the CDCA and adoption of associated management plans (Appendix L) are anticipated to facilitate and focus recreational opportunities and visitor services programs and enhance identified opportunities. Beneficial impacts may also include increased coordination between programs and activities supporting primary goals and associated implementation strategies for each management areas.

Although Alternative 2 would increase the total amount of acreage managed for recreation, certain ecoregion subareas would see Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis designated for other emphasis, such as ACECs or NLCS, in particular the Imperial Borrego Valley. While the designation might change, the use of these lands may not and they would still be available for certain types of recreation.



- DRECP Plan Area Boundary
- Ecoregion Subareas
- County Boundary
- Existing SRMA
- Proposed SRMA
- Open OHV Areas

Sources: ESRI (2014); CEC (2013); BLM (2014); CDFW (2013); USFWS (2013)

FIGURE IV.18-4

BLM Recreation Classifications – Alternative 2

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Impacts in Study Area Lands

Future Assessment Areas. Lands within FAAs are neither reserve lands nor DFAs; they are simply areas that are deferred for future assessment. The future assessment will determine their suitability for renewable energy development or ecological conservation. If renewable energy development occurs on FAA lands, a BLM LUPA would not be required. FAAs for each alternative are included and located as shown in Table IV.1-2 and Figure II.5-1 for Alternative 2 in Volume II. The FAAs represent areas where renewable energy development or inclusion in the reserve design could be implemented through an amendment to the DRECP, but additional assessment would be needed.

Because most of the FAAs are presented as “undesigned areas” in the action alternatives, there would be no difference between the FAAs in Alternative 2 except that renewable development in an FAA would not require a BLM LUPA; so the environmental review process would be somewhat simpler than if the location were left undesignated. Development of the FAAs would not overlap with SRMAs. Developing the FAAs would result in indirect effects to Joshua Tree National Park, as the majority of FAAs in this alternative are located immediately north of the park and would therefore be visible to recreationists.

Special Analysis Areas. Designating the SAAs as development would result in impacts similar to those identified for the DFAs for the Plan-wide impacts. Development of the SAA along U.S. 395 would impact recreation because most of the SAA overlaps with an SRMA. Developing the SAA would result in a loss of SRMA acreage and a loss of recreational opportunity.

DRECP Variance Lands. There are no DRECP Variance Lands designated as part of Alternative 2.

Impact Reduction Strategies and Mitigation

The implementation of the Plan would result in conservation of some desert lands as well as the development of renewable energy generation and transmission facilities on other lands. There are several ways in which the impacts of the renewable energy development covered by the Plan would be lessened. First, the Plan incorporates CMAs for each alternative, including specific biological reserve design components and LUPA components. Also, the implementation of existing laws, orders, regulations, and standards would reduce the impacts of project development. If significant impacts would still result after implementation of CMAs and compliance with applicable laws and regulations, then specific mitigation measures would be recommended as described in this section.

Conservation and Management Actions

The conservation strategy for Alternative 2 (presented in Volume II, Section II.3.1.1) defines specific actions that would reduce the impacts of this alternative. The conservation strategy includes definition of the reserve design. The CMAs that apply to the Preferred Alternative would apply to Alternative 2. While the CMAs were developed for BLM lands only, this analysis assumes that all CMAs would be applied also to nonfederal lands.

Laws and Regulations

Similar to the No Action Alternative, existing laws and regulations would reduce certain impacts of Plan implementation. Relevant regulations are presented in Volume III, Section III.18.1. The requirements of relevant laws and regulations are summarized for the No Action Alternative in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the CMAs would reduce the development of renewable energy to the extent feasible. No additional mitigation is required.

IV.18.3.4.1.2 Impacts from Reserve Design

Alternative 2 would designate more than 6.2 million acres as reserve design, with more than 5.2 million acres of NLCS lands and more than 5.2 acres of ACECs. Most acres designated as NLCS lands and ACECs overlap. The reserve design would not directly impact hiking, stargazing, and other solitary recreation but may limit certain recreational opportunities and developments. The NLCS management may provide for commercial and competitive events requiring Special Recreation Permits on NLCS lands, consistent with area plans and policies. This would reduce impacts on organized recreation on NLCS lands. Where ACECs and SRMAs overlap, the SRMA management actions and uses would be allowed unless they conflict with the ACEC management and uses. As such, the ACECs would also enhance some types of recreation but could restrict other types where SRMA management is less constrained. The reserve design is also made up of Conservation Planning Areas. These areas are where actions to provide compensatory mitigation for Covered Activities would be focused. There are almost 10,000 acres of recreation lands in the Conservation Planning Areas. There are approximately 1.7 million acres of BLM land where recreation occurs within the reserve design. Table IV.18-4 lists the acreage of lands managed for recreation emphasis that would be designated within the reserve design by ecoregion subarea. As with the NLCS lands and ACECs, the Conservation Planning Areas could enhance solitary types of recreation. The CMAs required for NLCS lands, ACECs, and wildlife allocations in the Preferred Alternative would be required for Alternative 2.

IV.18.3.4.2 Impacts of DRECP LUPA on BLM Lands Managed for Recreation: Alternative 2

This section addresses two components of effects of the BLM LUPA: the streamlined development of renewable energy and transmission on BLM land under the LUPA and the impacts of the amended land use plans themselves.

IV.18.3.4.2.1 Impacts from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development on BLM Land

Renewable energy-related activities covered by the DRECP would be confined to DFAs. The distribution of different generation technologies varies depending upon underlying factors that affect each technology. The area of disturbance for each technology under Alternative 2 is summarized in Volume II, Table II.5-7. Typical impacts resulting from Covered Activities are discussed in Section IV.18.2. Impacts on the lands managed for recreation and CMAs for recreation on BLM-administered lands would be the same as those described in Section IV.18.3.2.1.1 for the entire Plan Area.

BLM lands managed for recreation would be potentially impacted by renewable energy development. As a percentage of the almost 2.7 million acres of SRMAs that would be designated as part of the BLM LUPA, this impact is about 1% of the total.

In addition to the existing laws and regulations listed under the No Action Alternative, the CMAs specific to recreation contained in Volume II, Section II.3.2, would reduce the impacts of renewable energy construction under Alternative 2.

IV.18.3.4.2.2 Impacts of Changes to BLM Land Designations

Alternative 2 would have approximately 2.7 million acres of lands designated as SRMAs, see Table IV.18-1. See Appendix L for the individual SRMA management plans.

Under Alternative 2, potential impacts on recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation under these BLM land designations could be beneficial and adverse. Proposed ACEC and NLCS designations could provide beneficial impacts on primitive recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation over the long term and adverse impacts on recreation opportunities that require additional facilities as a result of disturbance caps in these areas designed to conserve and protect the resource values. Development in NLCS lands would be limited to 0.25% of total authorized disturbance or to the level allowed by collocated ACEC/wildlife allocations, whichever is more restrictive. Proposed SRMAs could have adverse or beneficial impacts on recreation opportunities, depending upon the allowable uses within the SRMAs. As part of the LUPA, the CMAs required for the Preferred Alternative would also be required for Alternative 2 to protect the SRMA resource value.

IV.18.3.4.3 Impacts of NCCP: Alternative 2

The analysis of Covered Activities under the NCCP is equivalent to the Plan-wide analysis of the interagency alternatives. Reserve design features and other conservation actions under the NCCP alternatives represent more detailed categories of the reserve design under the interagency Plan-wide alternatives. These NCCP differences in reserve design features do not affect nonbiological resources analyzed in this document; and the analysis of reserve design and CMAs under the NCCP is therefore equivalent to the Plan-wide analysis of the interagency alternatives, as described in Section IV.18.3.2.1.

IV.18.3.4.4 Impacts of GCP

The impacts of the GCP for Alternative 2 would be similar to those defined in Section IV.18.3.2.1 for the Plan-wide analysis, but they would occur on nonfederal lands only. Because the majority of the lands managed for recreation on nonfederal land would not be open to renewable energy development, the acres of direct effects are limited.

Table R2.18-14 in Appendix R2 shows the potential impacts on GCP recreation lands resulting from solar, wind, geothermal, and transmission development under Alternative 2. Under Alternative 2, potential impacts on GCP recreation lands resulting from solar energy development would be 130 acres and geothermal energy development would be 60 acres. There would be essentially no impacts from wind energy development and from transmission development. Indirect effects and impacts on access to recreation for GCP lands would be the same as those addressed for the Plan-wide analysis.

There would be 2.8 miles of National Scenic and Historic Trails within GCP FAAs under Alternative 2.

Table R2.18-15 in Appendix R2 shows the acreage of recreation lands within the GCP Reserve Design Lands under Alternative 2. Of the lands available for recreation in the GCP, the majority are within existing conservation areas or would fall within proposed Conservation Planning Areas. The effects of the reserve design land on recreation would be the same as described for the Plan-wide analysis.

IV.18.3.4.5 Impacts Outside the Plan Area

IV.18.3.4.5.1 Impacts of Transmission Outside the Plan Area

The impacts of transmission outside the Plan Area on outdoor recreation would be the same under all alternatives. These impacts are as described for the No Action Alternative in Section IV.18.3.1.5.

IV.18.3.4.5.2 Impacts of BLM LUPA Decisions Outside the Plan Area

Under Alternative 2, there are more than 170,000 acres of land managed for recreation in BLM LUPA land outside the Plan Area. The BLM LUPA would designate more than 64,000 acres of proposed NLCS lands and more than 88,000 acres of existing and proposed ACECs, see Table R2.18-16. Designating lands for recreational purposes would have beneficial and adverse effects as described in Section IV.18.3.2.2.2.

IV.18.3.4.6 CEQA Significance Determination for Alternative 2

For the purposes of this analysis, the interpretation of existing recreational facilities is expanded to include lands commonly used for or designated and managed for recreational uses.

OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use. Renewable energy facility development and associated transmission infrastructure in DFAs under Alternative 2 could result in long-term exclusion of dispersed recreation of up to 10,000 acres. No loss of OHV areas would occur. Development of renewable energy in DFAs would be required to comply with a comprehensive list of CMAs that would reduce the impacts of renewable energy on recreation. Conservation Designations could also result in some long-term exclusion of some types of recreation, depending upon any restrictions placed on use of the area; Special Recreation Permits may be allowed in NLCS designations. Alternative 2 would also result in more than 2.6 million acres of SRMAs dedicated to enhanced recreation. With implementation of the CMAs and the development of SRMAs, Alternative 2 would have a less than significant impact on recreation.

Development of up to 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy would result in indirect effects on federal, state, or local recreational facilities or programs through visual impacts including increased night lighting, increased noise, and impacts on air quality. Alternative 2 would have 154,000 million acres in DFAs available for development of renewable energy projects within 5 miles of sensitive recreational areas (national and state parks). The high visibility of these projects would conflict with recreationists' expectations of pristine and expansive desert vistas, creating a significant and unmitigable impact.

OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation. Due to the large scale of construction required, access to recreational facilities could be disrupted by additional traffic and road closures and by the large fenced areas for solar and geothermal energy facilities as discussed in Impact OR-1. Because the displacement would be mitigated in the form of other enhanced recreation operations, recreation facilities, or access, the impact would be adverse but less than significant.

OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation.

Under the Alternative 2, more than 2.6 acres would be designated as SRMA. The designation of SRMAs and ERMAs is anticipated to facilitate and focus recreational opportunities and visitor services programs and enhance identified opportunities. Because the plan would designate recreational management areas, this impact would be beneficial.

IV.18.3.4.7 Comparison of Alternative 2 With the Preferred Alternative

Chapter IV.27 presents a comparison of all action alternatives and the No Action Alternative across all disciplines. This section summarizes the comparison of Alternative 2 with the Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.4.7.1 Alternative 2 Compared With Preferred Alternative for Plan-wide DRECP

Total potential impacts on lands managed for recreation in DFAs would be slightly more under Alternative 2 than under the Preferred Alternative because there would be slightly more acres of potential loss of lands managed for recreation. Additionally, under Alternative 2, there are close to 1 million fewer acres of land designated as SRMAs compared with the Preferred Alternative. Both Alternative 2 and the Preferred Alternative would require CMAs for development in DFAs and would avoid development in SRMAs, with the exception of the allowance for surface occupancy geothermal development in a portion of the Ocotillo Wells East SRMA. The Alternative 2 reserve design would designate more NLCS lands than the Preferred Alternative that have overall more restrictive management. However, it would be less restrictive to organized recreational uses than the Preferred Alternative because it would provide for Special Recreation Permit events to occur on NLCS lands, consistent with area plans and policies. For these reasons, Alternative 2 would have slightly greater impacts on recreation than the Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.4.7.2 Alternative 2 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the BLM LUPA

Potential impacts from Alternative 2 for the BLM LUPA would be greater overall when compared with the Preferred Alternative for the same reasons addressed for the Plan-wide DRECP analysis. Alternative 2 would result in fewer acres of designated SRMAs than the Preferred Alternative. As such the Preferred Alternative would have greater beneficial impacts for recreation.

IV.18.3.4.7.3 Alternative 2 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the NCCP

The impacts of the NCCP for Alternative 2 would be the same as those defined in Section IV.18.3.4.1, Plan-wide Impacts of Implementing the DRECP: Alternative 2. Alternative 2 would have slightly more impacts on recreation than would the Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.4.7.4 Alternative 2 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the GCP

Under Alternative 2, there would be fewer acres of potential impacts resulting from renewable development in the GCP than with the Preferred Alternative. Other impacts would be comparable between the two alternatives.

IV.18.3.5 Alternative 3

IV.18.3.5.1 Plan-wide Impacts of Implementing the DRECP: Alternative 3

IV.18.3.5.1.1 Plan-wide Impacts and Mitigation Measures from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development

Under Alternative 3, more than 1.4 million acres could be available for renewable energy development in the DFAs. The actual areas developed would be much smaller: 150,000 acres. The DFAs would overlap with 36,000 acres of areas managed for recreational emphasis and could therefore result in impacts on recreation, see Table IV.28-1.

Total potential impacts on lands managed for recreation in DFAs would be 3,000 acres for solar energy, 160 acres for wind, 960 acres for geothermal, and 4,000 acres for renewable energy-related transmission development (see Table R2.18-17 in Appendix R2).

The Imperial Valley area would see the greatest potential impacts on lands managed for recreation from development in DFAs.

Impact Assessment

Impact OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use.

Impacts on lands managed for recreation by the development of renewable energy would be similar to those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 for the No Action Alternative and include loss of lands managed for recreation. Although 36,000 acres of land managed for recreation emphasis would be designated as DFAs, renewable energy and transmission infrastructure are estimated to result in the loss of more than 8,000 acres of lands managed for recreation. Alternative 3 would result in indirect effects to recreation due to an increase in visual impacts, noise, and air emissions. Under Alternative 3, more than 15,000 acres of DFAs occur within 5 miles of national parks and preserves and 108,000 acres of DFAs occur within 5 miles of state parks with several hundred thousand additional acres of DFAs within 5 miles of wilderness (see Chapter IV.20, Visual Resources, Table IV.20-9). Renewable energy facilities built on those acres would be potentially visible to recreationists.

Impact OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation.

The development of renewable energy could require use of more than 8,000 acres of lands managed for recreation. Use of these lands could result in loss of access on and around the lands. Impacts would be similar to those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 for the No Action Alternative. Increased traffic and potential road closures during construction could further degrade access to recreation.

The development of access and service roads for renewable energy facilities and transmission lines could also have a beneficial impact on access to recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, or OHV riding. The development of these roads, however, could lead to degradation of recreational experience on adjacent recreation areas.

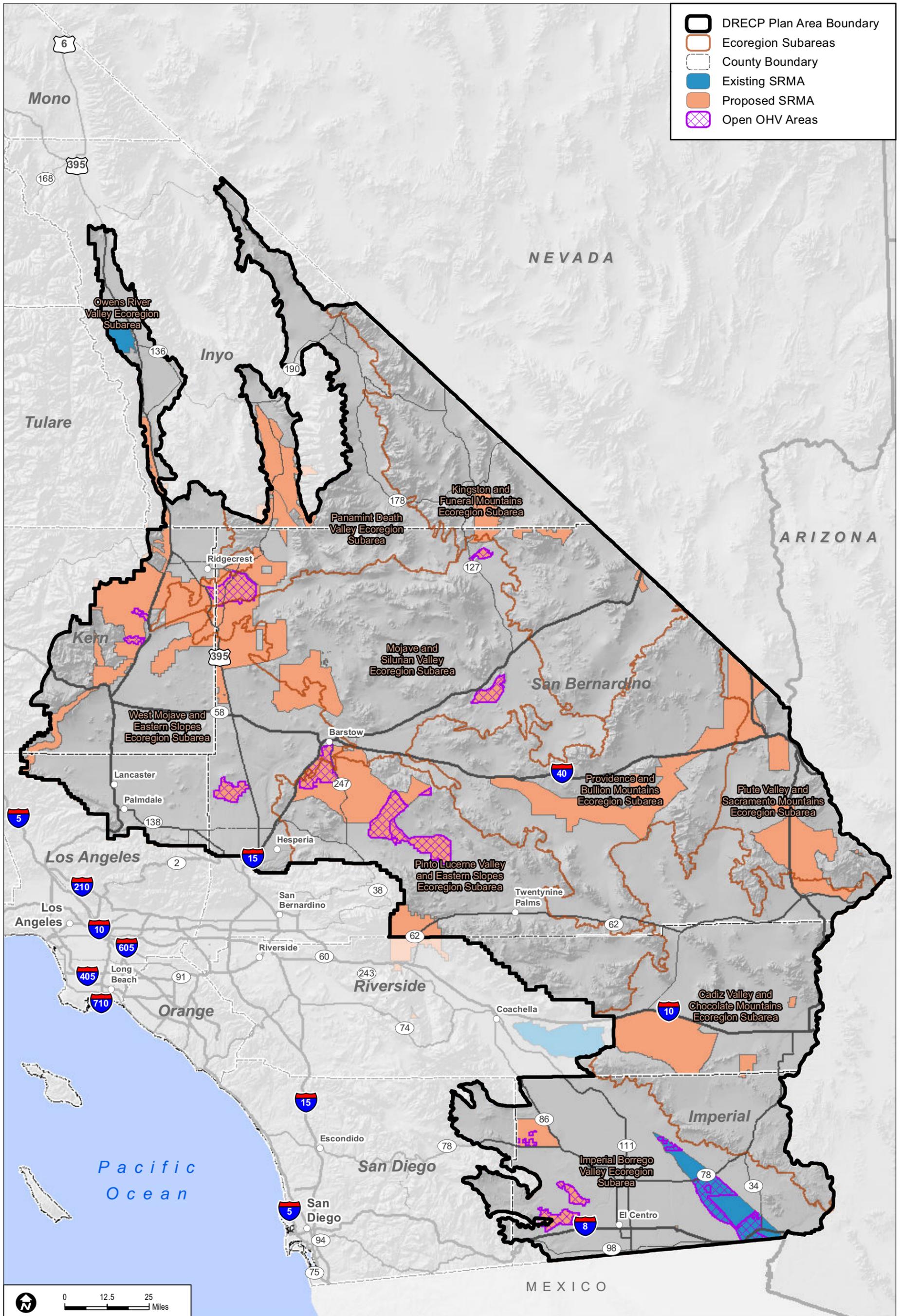
Impact OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation.

Under Alternative 3, approximately 2,372,000 acres would be designated as SRMAs, with an additional 321,000 acres of SRMAs designated over existing open OHV lands, see Table IV.18-1 and Figure IV.18-5. No ERMAs would be designated as part of this alternative. The designation of SRMAs and ERMAs throughout the CDCA and adoption of associated management plans (Appendix L) are anticipated to facilitate and focus recreational opportunities and visitor services programs and enhance identified opportunities. Beneficial impacts may also include increased coordination between programs and activities supporting primary goals and associated implementation strategies for each management areas.

Although Alternative 3 would increase the total amount of acreage managed for recreation, certain ecoregion subareas would see Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis designated for other emphasis, such as ACECs or NLCS, in particular the Imperial Borrego Valley. While the designation might change, the use of these lands may not and they would still be available for certain types of recreation.

Impacts in Study Area Lands

Future Assessment Areas. Lands within FAAs are neither reserve lands nor DFAs; they are simply areas that are deferred for future assessment. The future assessment will determine their suitability for renewable energy development or ecological conservation. If renewable energy development occurs on FAA lands, a BLM LUPA would not be required. FAAs for each alternative are included and located as shown in Table IV.1-2 and Figure II.6-1 for Alternative 3 in Volume II. The FAAs represent areas where renewable energy development or inclusion in the reserve design could be implemented through an amendment to the DRECP, but additional assessment would be needed.



Sources: ESRI (2014); CEC (2013); BLM (2014); CDFW (2013); USFWS (2013)

FIGURE IV.18-5

BLM Recreation Classifications – Alternative 3

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Because most of the FAAs are presented as “undesigned areas” in the action alternatives, there would be no difference between the FAAs in the Preferred Alternative except that renewable development in an FAA would not require a BLM LUPA; so the environmental review process would be somewhat simpler than if the location were left undesignated. Development of the FAAs in this alternative would not overlap with SRMAs or other existing recreation areas.

Special Analysis Areas. The SAA along U.S. 395 would overlap with a proposed SRMA. If the SAA is designated as conservation, the SRMA would be managed to enhance recreation. The conservation could provide beneficial impacts on recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation as a result of disturbance caps in these areas designed to conserve and protect the resource values. However, designating the SAA as conservation could also limit the types of recreation available on these lands.

DRECP Variance Lands. There are no DRECP Variance Lands designated as part of Alternative 3.

Impact Reduction Strategies and Mitigation

The implementation of the Plan would result in conservation of some desert lands as well as the development of renewable energy generation and transmission facilities on other lands. There are several ways in which the impacts of the renewable energy development covered by the Plan would be lessened. First, the Plan incorporates CMAs for each alternative, including specific biological reserve design components and LUPA components. Also, the implementation of existing laws, orders, regulations, and standards would reduce the impacts of project development. If significant impacts would still result after implementation of CMAs and compliance with applicable laws and regulations, then specific mitigation measures would be recommended as described in this section.

Conservation and Management Actions

The conservation strategy for Alternative 3 (presented in Volume II, Section II.3.1.1) defines specific actions that would reduce the impacts of this alternative. The conservation strategy includes definition of the reserve design. The CMAs that apply to the Preferred Alternative would apply to Alternative 3. While the CMAs were developed for BLM lands only, this analysis assumes that all CMAs would be applied also to nonfederal lands.

Laws and Regulations

Similar to the No Action Alternative, existing laws and regulations would reduce certain impacts of Plan implementation. Relevant regulations are presented in Volume III, Section

III.18.1. The requirements of relevant laws and regulations are summarized in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the CMAs would reduce the development of renewable energy to the extent feasible. No additional mitigation is required.

IV.18.3.5.1.2 Impacts from Reserve Design

Alternative 3 would designate more than 6.8 million acres as reserve design, with more than 3.8 million acres of NLCS lands and more than 5.8 acres of ACECs. Some acres designated as NLCS lands and ACECs overlap. The reserve design would not directly impact hiking, stargazing, and other solitary recreation but may limit certain recreational opportunities and developments. Where ACECs and SRMAs overlap, the SRMA management actions and uses would be allowed unless they conflict with the ACEC management and uses. As such, the ACECs would also enhance some types of recreation but could restrict other types where SRMA management is less constrained. The reserve design is also made up of Conservation Planning Areas. These areas are where actions to provide compensatory mitigation for Covered Activities would be focused. There are approximately 6,000 acres of recreation lands in the Conservation Planning Areas. There are approximately 1.7 million acres of BLM land where recreation occurs within the reserve design. Table IV.18-4 lists the acres of lands managed for recreation emphasis that would be designated within the reserve design by ecoregion subarea. The CMAs required for NLCS lands, ACECs, and wildlife allocations in the Preferred Alternative would be required for Alternative 3

IV.18.3.5.2 Impacts of DRECP LUPA on BLM Lands Managed for Recreation: Alternative 3

This section addresses two components of effects of the BLM LUPA: the streamlined development of renewable energy and transmission on BLM land under the LUPA and the impacts of the amended land use plans themselves.

IV.18.3.5.2.1 Impacts from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development on Land

Renewable energy related activities covered by the Draft DRECP would be confined to DFAs. The distribution of different generation technologies varies depending upon underlying factors that affect each technology. The area of disturbance for each technology under Alternative 3 is summarized in Volume II, Table II.6-7. Typical impacts resulting from Covered Activities are discussed in Section IV.18.2. Impacts on the lands managed for recreation and CMAs for recreation on BLM-administered lands would be the same as those described in Section IV.18.3.2.1.1 for the entire Plan Area.

BLM lands managed for recreation would be potentially impacted by renewable energy development. As a percentage of the 2.7 million acres of SRMAs and ERMAs potentially designated as part of the BLM LUPA, this impact is about 1% of the total.

In addition to the existing laws and regulations listed under the No Action Alternative, the CMAs specific to recreation contained in Volume II, Section II.3.2, would reduce the impacts of renewable energy construction under Alternative 3.

IV.18.3.5.2.2 Impacts of Changes to Bureau of Land Management Land Designations

Alternative 3 would have more than 3.8 million acres of lands designated as NLCS that would be managed for recreation, more than 5.8 million acres of lands designated as ACECs, and more than 13,000 acres in wildlife allocation designations. Many of these acres overlap. Alternative 3 would have more than 2.7 million acres of lands managed for recreation in existing and proposed SRMAs, see Appendix L for the individual SRMA Management Plans and Table IV.18-1.

Under Alternative 3, potential impacts on recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation under these BLM land designations could be beneficial and adverse. Proposed ACEC and NLCS designations could provide beneficial impacts over the long term on primitive recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation but may limit future recreational facilities and developments as a result of disturbance caps in these areas designed to conserve and protect the resource values. Development in NLCS lands would be limited to 0.25% of total authorized disturbance, or to the level allowed by collocated ACEC/wildlife allocations, whichever is more restrictive. Proposed SRMAs could have adverse or beneficial impacts on recreation opportunities, depending upon the allowable uses within the SRMAs. As part of the LUPA, the CMAs required for the Preferred Alternative would also be required for Alternative 3 to protect the SRMA resource value.

IV.18.3.5.3 Impacts of Natural Community Conservation Plan: Alternative 3

The analysis of Covered Activities under the NCCP is equivalent to the Plan-wide analysis of the interagency alternatives. Reserve design features and other conservation actions under the NCCP alternatives represent more detailed categories of the reserve design under the interagency Plan-wide alternatives. These NCCP differences in reserve design features do not affect nonbiological resources analyzed in this document. The analysis of reserve design and CMAs under the NCCP is therefore equivalent to the Plan-wide analysis of the interagency alternatives, as described in Section IV.18.3.2.1.

IV.18.3.5.4 Impacts of General Conservation Plan: Alternative 3

The impacts of the GCP for Alternative 3 would be similar to those defined in Section IV.18.3.2.1 for the Plan-wide analysis, but they would occur on nonfederal lands only. Because the majority of the lands managed for recreation on nonfederal land would not be open to renewable energy development, the acres of direct effects are limited.

Table R2.18-18 in Appendix R2 shows the potential impacts on GCP recreation lands resulting from solar, wind, geothermal, and transmission development under Alternative 3.

Under Alternative 3 for the GCP, potential impacts on recreation lands resulting from solar energy development would be 240 acres, impacts resulting from geothermal energy development would be 90 acres, and transmission development impacts would be 260 acres. There would be no potential impacts resulting from wind energy development. Indirect effects and impacts on recreation access for GCP lands would be the same as those addressed for the Plan-wide analysis.

Table R2.18-19 in Appendix R2 shows the acreage of recreation lands within the GCP Reserve Design Lands under Alternative 3. Of the lands available for recreation in the GCP, the majority are within existing conservation areas or would fall within proposed Conservation Planning Areas. The effects of the reserve design land on recreation would be the same as described for the Plan-wide analysis.

IV.18.3.5.5 Impacts Outside the Plan Area

IV.18.3.5.5.1 Impacts of Transmission Outside the Plan Area

The impacts of transmission outside the Plan Area on outdoor recreation would be the same under all alternatives. These impacts are as described for the No Action Alternative in Section IV.18.3.1.5.

IV.18.3.5.5.2 Impacts of BLM LUPA Decisions Outside the Plan Area

Under Alternative 3, there are more than 170,000 acres of land managed for recreation in BLM LUPA land outside the Plan Area. The BLM LUPA would designate more than 42,000 acres of proposed NLCS lands outside the Plan Area and more than 88,000 acres of existing and proposed ACECs, see Table R2.18-20 in Appendix R2. Approximately 17 miles of National Scenic and Historic Trails would also be in BLM LUPA conservation. Designating lands for recreational purposes would have beneficial and adverse effects as described in Section IV.18.3.2.2.2.

IV.18.3.5.6 CEQA Significance Determination for Alternative 3

For the purposes of this analysis, the interpretation of existing recreational facilities is expanded to include lands commonly used for or designated and managed for recreational uses.

OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use. Renewable energy facility development and associated transmission infrastructure in DFAs under Alternative 3 could result in long-term exclusion of dispersed recreation of more than 8,000 acres. No loss of designated OHV open areas would occur. Development of renewable energy in DFAs would be required to comply with a comprehensive list of CMAs that would reduce the impacts of renewable energy on recreation. Conservation Designations could also result in some long-term exclusion of dispersed recreation. Alternative 3 would also result in more than 2.7 million acres of SRMAs dedicated to enhanced recreation. With implementation of the CMAs and the development of SRMAs, Alternative 3 would have a less than significant impact on recreation.

Development of up to 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy would result in indirect effects on federal, state, or local recreational facilities or programs through visual impacts including increased night lighting, increased noise, and impacts on air quality. Alternative 3 would have 123,000 acres in DFAs available for development of renewable energy projects within 5 miles of national and state parks. The high visibility of the renewable energy projects in DFAs would conflict with recreationists' expectations of pristine and expansive desert vistas, creating a significant and unmitigable impact.

OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation. Due to the large scale of construction required, access to recreational facilities could be disrupted by additional traffic and road closures and by the large fenced areas for solar and geothermal energy facilities as discussed in Impact OR-1. Because the displacement would be mitigated in the form of other enhanced recreation operations, recreation facilities, or access, the impact would be adverse but less than significant.

OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation. Under Alternative 3, more than 2.7 million acres would be designated as SRMAs. The designation of SRMAs and ERMAs is anticipated to facilitate and focus recreational opportunities and visitor services programs and enhance identified opportunities. Because the plan would designate recreational management areas, this impact would be beneficial.

IV.18.3.5.7 Comparison of Alternative 3 With the Preferred Alternative

Chapter IV.27 presents a comparison of all action alternatives and the No Action Alternative across all disciplines. This section summarizes the comparison of Alternative 3 with the Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.5.7.1 Alternative 3 Compared With Preferred Alternative for Plan-wide DRECP

There would be similar total potential impacts on lands managed for recreation in DFAs under Alternative 3 as under the Preferred Alternative. Under Alternative 3, there are fewer acres of land designated as SRMAs compared with the Preferred Alternative. Both Alternative 3 and the Preferred Alternative would require CMAs for development in DFAs and would avoid development in SRMAs. The Alternative 3 reserve design would designate fewer NLCS lands than the Preferred Alternative. For these reasons, Alternative 3 would have slightly greater impacts on recreation than the Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.5.7.2 Alternative 3 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the BLM LUPA

Potential impacts from Alternative 3 for the BLM LUPA would be greater overall when compared with the Preferred Alternative for the same reasons addressed for the Plan-wide analysis. Alternative 3 would result in 900,000 fewer acres of ERMAs compared with the Preferred Alternative. As such the Preferred Alternative would have greater beneficial impacts for recreation.

IV.18.3.5.7.3 Alternative 3 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the NCCP

The impacts of the NCCP for Alternative 3 would be the same as those defined in Section IV.18.3.2.1 for the Plan-wide analysis. As a result, the comparison of Alternative 3 with the Preferred Alternative for the NCCP is the same as described above for the Plan-wide analysis.

IV.18.3.5.7.4 Alternative 3 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the GCP

Under Alternative 3, there would be slightly fewer acres of potential impacts resulting from renewable development in the GCP than under the Preferred Alternative. Other impacts would be comparable between the two alternatives.

IV.18.3.6 Alternative 4

IV.18.3.6.1 Plan-wide Impacts of Implementing the DRECP: Alternative 4

IV.18.3.6.1.1 Plan-wide Impacts and Mitigation Measures from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development

Under Alternative 4, more than 1.6 million acres could be available for renewable energy development in the DFAs. The actual areas developed would be much smaller: 148,000 acres. The DFAs would overlap with 23,000 acres of areas managed for recreational emphasis and could therefore result in impacts on recreation, see Table IV.28-1.

Potential impacts on lands managed for recreation in DFAs would be 1,000 acres for solar energy development, 60 acres for wind energy, 1,000 acres for geothermal energy, and 5,000 acres for renewable energy-related transmission development (see Table R2.18-21 in Appendix R2).

The eastern Riverside County area would see the greatest potential impacts on lands managed for recreation from development in DFAs.

Impact Assessment

Impact OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use.

Impacts on lands managed for recreation by the development of renewable energy would be similar to those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 for the No Action Alternative and include loss of lands managed for recreation. Although 23,000 acres of lands managed for recreation emphasis would be designated as DFAs, renewable energy and transmission infrastructure could result in the loss of up to 8,000 acres of lands managed for recreation. Alternative 4 would result in indirect effects to recreation due to an increase in visual impacts, noise, and air emissions. Under Alternative 4, more than 16,000 acres of DFAs occur within 5 miles of national parks and preserves and 108,000 acres of DFAs occur within 5 miles of state parks with several hundred thousand additional acres of DFAs within 5 miles of wilderness (see Chapter IV.20, Visual Resources, Table IV.20-11). Renewable energy facilities built on those acres would be potentially visible to recreationists.

Impact OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation.

The development of renewable energy could require use of more than 8,000 acres of lands managed for recreation. Use of these lands could result in loss of access on and around the lands. Impacts would be similar to those described in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1 for the No Action

Alternative. Increased traffic and potential road closures during construction could further degrade access to recreation.

The development of access and service roads for renewable energy facilities and transmission lines could also have a beneficial impact on access to recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, or OHV riding. The development of these roads, however, could lead to degradation of the recreational experience on adjacent recreation areas.

Impact OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation.

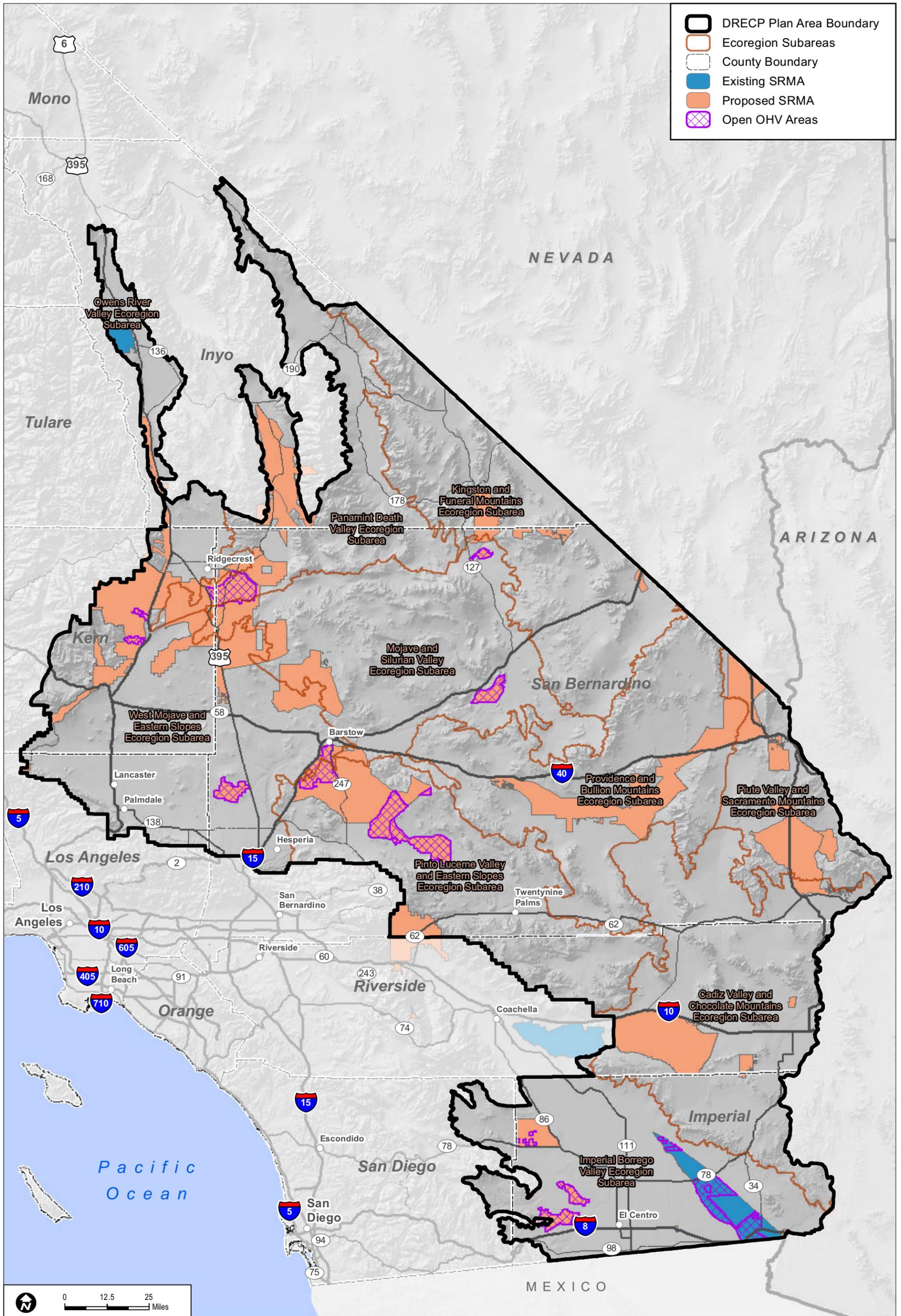
Under Alternative 4, the BLM would designate more than 2.3 million acres as SRMAs, with an additional 321,000 acres of SRMAs designated over existing open OHV lands, see Table IV.18-1 and Figure IV.18-6. No lands would be designated as ERMAs. The designation of SRMAs throughout the CDCA and adoption of associated management plans (Appendix L) are anticipated to facilitate and focus recreational opportunities and visitor services programs and enhance identified opportunities. Beneficial impacts may also include increased coordination between programs and activities supporting primary goals and associated implementation strategies for each management areas.

Although Alternative 4 would increase the total amount of acreage managed for recreation, certain ecoregion subareas would see Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis designated for other emphasis, such as ACECs or NLCS, in particular the Imperial Borrego Valley. While the designation might change, the use of these lands may not and they would still be available for certain types of recreation.

Impacts in Study Area Lands

Future Assessment Areas. There are no FAAs designated as part of Alternative 4.

Special Analysis Areas. The SAA along U.S. 395 would overlap with a proposed SRMA. If the SAA is designated as conservation, the SRMA would be managed to enhance recreation. The conservation could provide beneficial impacts on recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation as a result of disturbance caps in these areas designed to conserve and protect the resource values. However, designating the SAA as conservation could also limit the types of recreation available on these lands.



- DRECP Plan Area Boundary
- Ecoregion Subareas
- County Boundary
- Existing SRMA
- Proposed SRMA
- Open OHV Areas

Sources: ESRI (2014); CEC (2013); BLM (2014); CDFW (2013); USFWS (2013)

FIGURE IV.18-6

BLM Recreation Classifications – Alternative 4

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DRECP Variance Lands. DRECP Variance Lands represent the BLM Solar PEIS Variance Lands as screened for the DRECP and EIR/EIS based on BLM screening criteria. Covered Activities could be permitted for NCCP purposes only through an NCCP plan amendment. However, development of renewable energy on Variance Lands would not require a BLM LUPA; so the environmental review process would be somewhat simpler than if the location were left undesignated. Development of the DRECP Variance Lands would impact recreation in the area north of Ivanpah and near Interstate 95 where Variance Lands overlap with SRMAs. Developing the DRECP Variance Lands would result in a loss of SRMA acreage and a loss of recreational opportunity.

Impact Reduction Strategies and Mitigation

The implementation of the Plan would result in conservation of some desert lands as well as the development of renewable energy generation and transmission facilities on other lands. There are several ways in which the impacts of the renewable energy development covered by the Plan would be lessened. First, the Plan incorporates CMAs for each alternative, including specific biological reserve design components and LUPA components. Also, the implementation of existing laws, orders, regulations, and standards would reduce the impacts of project development. If significant impacts would still result after implementation of CMAs and compliance with applicable laws and regulations, then specific mitigation measures would be recommended as described in this section.

Conservation and Management Actions

The conservation strategy for Alternative 4 (presented in Volume II, Section II.3.1.1) defines specific actions that would reduce the impacts of this alternative. The conservation strategy includes definition of the reserve design. The CMAs that apply to the Preferred Alternative would apply to Alternative 4. While the CMAs were developed for BLM lands only, this analysis assumes that all CMAs would be applied also to nonfederal lands.

Laws and Regulations

Similar to the No Action Alternative, existing laws and regulations would reduce certain impacts of Plan implementation. Relevant regulations are presented in Volume III, Section III.18.1. The requirements of relevant laws and regulations are summarized in Section IV.18.3.1.1.1.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the CMAs would reduce the development of renewable energy to the extent feasible. No additional mitigation is required.

IV.18.3.6.1.2 Impacts from Reserve Design

Alternative 4 would designate more than 5.9 million acres as reserve design, with more than 3.0 million acres of NLCS lands and more than 4.7 acres of ACECs. Some acres designated as NLCS lands and ACECs overlap. The reserve design would not directly impact hiking, stargazing, and other solitary recreation but may limit certain recreational opportunities and developments. The NLCS management would allow commercial and competitive events requiring Special Recreation Permits on NLCS lands. This would reduce impacts on organized recreation on NLCS lands. Where ACECs and SRMAs overlap, the SRMA management actions and uses would be allowed unless they conflict with the ACEC management and uses. As such, the ACEC areas would also enhance some types of recreation but could restrict other types where SRMA management is less constrained. The reserve design is also made up of Conservation Planning Areas. These areas are where actions to provide compensatory mitigation for Covered Activities would be focused. There are more than 8,000 acres of recreation lands in the Conservation Planning Areas. There are approximately 1.6 million acres of BLM land where recreation occurs within the reserve design. Table IV.18-4 lists the acres of lands managed for recreation emphasis that would be designated within the reserve design by ecoregion subarea. As with the NLCS lands and ACECs, the Conservation Planning Areas could enhance the solitary types of recreation. The CMAs required for NLCS lands, ACECs, and wildlife allocations in the Preferred Alternative would be required for Alternative 4.

IV.18.3.6.2 Impacts of DRECP LUPA on BLM Lands Managed for Recreation: Alternative 4

This section addresses two components of effects of the BLM LUPA: the streamlined development of renewable energy and transmission on BLM land under the LUPA and the impacts of the amended land use plans themselves.

IV.18.3.6.2.1 Impacts from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development on BLM Land

Renewable energy-related activities covered by the DRECP would be confined to DFAs. The distribution of different generation technologies varies depending upon underlying factors that affect each technology. The total area of disturbance for each technology under Alternative 4 is summarized in Volume II, Chapter II.7, Alternative 4. Typical impacts resulting from Covered Activities are discussed in Section IV.18.2. Impacts on the lands managed for recreation and CMAs for recreation on BLM-administered lands would be the same as those described in Section IV.18.3.2.1.1 for the entire Plan Area.

BLM lands managed for recreation would be potentially impacted by renewable energy development. As a percentage of the 2.7 million acres of SRMAs and ERMAs potentially designated as part of the BLM LUPA, this impact is about 1% of the total.

In addition to the existing laws and regulations listed under the No Action Alternative, the CMAs specific to recreation contained in Volume II, Section II.3.2, would reduce the impacts of renewable energy construction under Alternative 4.

IV.18.3.6.2.2 Impacts of Changes to BLM Land Designations

Alternative 4 would have more than 3 million acres of lands designated as NLCS that would be managed for recreation and more than 4.7 acres in existing and proposed ACEC designations. Alternative 4 would have 5,000 acres in wildlife allocation designations. Many of these acres overlap. Alternative 4 would have more than 2.7 million acres of lands proposed as SRMAs, see IV.18-4. See Appendix L for the individual SRMA Management Plans.

Under Alternative 4, potential impacts on recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation under these BLM land designations could be beneficial and adverse. Proposed ACEC and NLCS designations could provide beneficial impacts over the long term on recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation but may limit future recreational developments and facilities as a result of disturbance caps in these areas designed to conserve and protect the resource values. Development in NLCS lands would be limited to 1% of total authorized disturbance or to the level allowed by collocated ACEC/wildlife allocations, whichever is more restrictive. These disturbance caps and other management actions would minimize surface disturbance and thereby provide protection for recreation opportunities and lands managed for recreation. Proposed SRMAs could have adverse or beneficial impacts on recreation opportunities, depending upon the allowable uses within the SRMAs. As part of the LUPA, the CMAs required for the Preferred Alternative would also be required for Alternative 4 to protect the SRMA resource value.

IV.18.3.6.3 Impacts of NCCP: Alternative 4

The analysis of Covered Activities under the NCCP is equivalent to the Plan-wide analysis of the interagency alternatives. Reserve design features and other conservation actions under the NCCP alternatives represent more detailed categories of the reserve design under the interagency Plan-wide alternatives. These NCCP differences in reserve design features do not affect nonbiological resources analyzed in this document. The analysis of reserve design and CMAs under the NCCP is therefore equivalent to the Plan-wide analysis of the interagency alternatives, as described in Section IV.18.3.2.1.

IV.18.3.6.4 Impacts of GCP: Alternative 4

The impacts of the GCP for Alternative 4 would be similar to those defined in Section IV.18.3.2.1 for the Plan-wide analysis, but they would occur on nonfederal lands only. Because the majority of the lands managed for recreation on nonfederal land would not be open to renewable energy development, the acres of direct effects are limited.

Table R2.18-22 in Appendix R2 shows the potential impacts on GCP recreation lands resulting from solar, wind, geothermal, and transmission development under Alternative 4. Under Alternative 4, potential impacts resulting from solar energy development would be 200 acres, impacts from geothermal energy development would be 100 acres, and impacts from transmission development would 100 acres for the GCP. There would be no potential impacts resulting from wind energy development. Indirect effects and impacts on access to recreation for GCP lands would be the same as those addressed for the Plan-wide analysis.

Table R2.18-23 in Appendix R2 shows the acreage of recreation lands within the GCP Reserve Design Lands under Alternative 4. Of the lands available for recreation in the GCP, the majority are within existing conservation areas or would fall within proposed Conservation Planning Areas. The effects of the reserve design land on recreation would be the same as described for the Plan-wide analysis.

IV.18.3.6.5 Impacts Outside the Plan Area

IV.18.3.6.5.1 Impacts of Transmission Outside the Plan Area

The impacts of transmission outside the Plan Area on outdoor recreation would be the same under all alternatives. These impacts are as described for the No Action Alternative in Section IV.18.3.1.5.

IV.18.3.6.5.2 Impacts of BLM LUPA Decisions Outside the Plan Area

Under Alternative 4, there are more than almost 200,000 acres of land managed for recreation in BLM LUPA land outside the Plan Area. The BLM LUPA would designate more than 40,000 acres of proposed NLCS lands outside the Plan Area. Existing and proposed ACECs outside the Plan Area would be 88,000 acres, see Table R2.18-24 in Appendix R2.

Designating lands for recreational purposes would have beneficial and adverse effects as described in Section IV.18.3.2.2.2.

IV.18.3.6.6 CEQA Significance Determination for Alternative 4

For the purposes of this analysis, the interpretation of existing recreational facilities is expanded to include lands commonly used for or designated and managed for recreational uses.

OR-1: Plan components could enhance or degrade recreational use. Renewable energy facility development and associated transmission infrastructure in DFAs under Alternative 4 could result in long-term exclusion of dispersed recreation of up to 8,000 acres. No loss of OHV areas would occur. Development of renewable energy in DFAs would be required to comply with a comprehensive list of CMAs that would reduce the impacts of renewable energy on recreation. Conservation Designations could also result in some long-term exclusion of dispersed recreation, depending upon any restrictions placed on use of the area. Special Recreation Permits would be allowed in NLCS designations, reducing impacts on organized recreation. Alternative 4 would also result in more than 2.7 million acres of SRMAs dedicated to enhanced recreation. With implementation of the CMAs and the development of SRMAs, Alternative 4 would have a less than significant impact on recreation.

Development of up to 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy would result in indirect effects on federal, state, or local recreational facilities or programs through visual impacts including increased night lighting, increased noise, and impacts on air quality. Alternative 4 would have 124,000 acres in DFAs available for development of renewable energy projects within 5 miles of national and state parks. The high visibility of renewable energy projects in DFAs would conflict with recreationists' expectations of pristine and expansive desert vistas, creating a significant and unmitigable impact.

OR-2: Plan components could enhance or degrade access to lands managed for recreation. Due to the large scale of construction required, access to recreational facilities could be disrupted by additional traffic and road closures and by the large fenced areas for solar and geothermal energy facilities as discussed in Impact OR-1. Because the displacement would be mitigated in the form of other enhanced recreation operations, recreation facilities, or access, the impact would be adverse but less than significant.

OR-3: Plan components would enhance management of focus areas for recreation. Under Alternative 4, more than 2.7 million acres would be designated as SRMAs. The designation of SRMAs and ERMAs is anticipated to facilitate and focus recreational opportunities and visitor services programs and enhance identified opportunities. Because the plan would designate recreational management areas, this impact would be beneficial.

IV.18.3.6.7 Comparison of Alternative 4 With the Preferred Alternative

Chapter IV.27 presents a comparison of all action alternatives and the No Action Alternative across all disciplines. This section summarizes the comparison of Alternative 4 with the Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.6.7.1 Alternative 4 Compared With Preferred Alternative for Plan-wide DRECP

There would be more total potential impacts on lands managed for recreation in DFAs under Alternative 4 than under the Preferred Alternative. Under Alternative 4, there are 900,000 fewer acres of land designated as SRMAs and ERMAs compared with the Preferred Alternative. Both Alternative 4 and the Preferred Alternative would require CMAs for development in DFAs and would avoid development in SRMAs. The Alternative 4 reserve design would designate fewer NLCS lands than would the Preferred Alternative. The NLCS lands would have less restrictive management for organized recreational uses compared with the Preferred Alternative because it would allow Special Recreation Permit events to occur on NLCS lands. Alternative 4 would have slightly greater impacts on recreation than would the Preferred Alternative.

IV.18.3.6.7.2 Alternative 4 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the BLM LUPA

Potential impacts from Alternative 4 for the BLM LUPA would be greater overall when compared with the Preferred Alternative for the same reasons addressed for the Plan-wide analysis. Additionally, impacts of renewable development could occur on SRMA lands as shown in Section IV.18.3.6.2.1, Impacts from Renewable Energy and Transmission Development on BLM land. Alternative 4 would result in 900,000 fewer acres of SRMAs than the Preferred Alternative. As such the Preferred Alternative would have greater beneficial impacts for recreation.

IV.18.3.6.7.3 Alternative 4 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the NCCP

The impacts of the NCCP for Alternative 4 would be the same as those defined in Section IV.18.3.6.1, Plan-wide Impacts of Implementing the DRECP: Alternative 4. As a result, the comparison of Alternative 4 with the Preferred Alternative for the NCCP is the same as described above for Plan-wide analysis.

IV.18.3.6.7.4 Alternative 4 Compared With Preferred Alternative for the GCP

Under Alternative 4, there would be slightly fewer acres of potential impacts resulting from renewable development in the GCP than under the Preferred Alternative. Other impacts would be comparable between the two alternatives.