

6301 - Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: Greenwater CA-080-147-1

Results of Analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? Yes No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? Yes No N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? Yes No N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? Yes No N/A

Conclusion

The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC).

The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by:

Team Members:

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Approved by:

Name: _____

Title: Barstow Field Manager

Date: 12/12/13

This form documents information that constitutes an inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR parts 4 or 1610.5-2.

Year 2013 Greenwater CA-080-147- /

Documentation of BLM Wilderness Inventory Findings on Record

1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area?

Yes

Inventory Source: 1979 Wilderness Inventory files, California Desert Conservation Area

Inventory Unit Name(s)/Number(s): Greenwater CA-080-147

Map Name(s)/Number(s): USDI BLM California Desert Wilderness Final Inventory, Dec. 1979

BLM District(s)/Field Office(s): Barstow Field Office

2. BLM Inventory Findings on Record

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics:

Inventory Source: 1979 Wilderness Inventory files, BLM Barstow FO
1990 California Statewide Wilderness Study Report

Unit#/Name	Size (historic acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N
147	123,131	Y	Y	Y	N/A
147	153,295	N	Y	Y	Y

Summarize any known primary reasons for prior findings in this table:

The original unit 147 was much larger than the unit size today. Much of that unit was found to have wilderness characteristics and the southern three-quarters of the unit were found to have wilderness characteristics in the 1979 inventory. The 1990 Wilderness Study Report concluded that the area not be considered for further wilderness considerations mainly due to the potential for mineral exploration. The findings described impacts to naturalness that was missed in the original inventory. This included several graded roads and numerous seismic lines that were part of mineral exploration efforts in the mid-1970s. The southern and western part of that unit, which was not impacted from the mining activities, became part of Death Valley National Park and Wilderness with the passage of the California Desert Protection Act of 1994. The northern portion of the area was released from WSA status and is the subject of this inventory update.

Documentation of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name: CA-080-147-1 Greenwater

(1) Sufficient size

Acreage: Estimated at 71,359 acres pending GIS calculation with a perimeter of roughly 58.5 miles.

Boundaries: The area is bounded on the east by California State Highway 127, on the north by Route 190, on the west and south by Death Valley National Park.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: The unit is mostly comprised of BLM land with six state land sections totaling approximately 2,840 acres, one section of managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs totaling roughly 320 acres and approximately 1,000 acres of private inholdings which are mostly made up of patented mining claims.

Location: The unit is in the eastern portion of Inyo County and the northeastern section of the Barstow Resource Area. The unit is immediately southwest of Death Valley Junction, CA and due east of Death Valley National Park.

Topography: The northeastern and eastern sections of the unit are relatively flat. From these northeastern and eastern sections the land slowly slopes upward towards the western side which is made up of the peaks of the Greenwater Range. This long sloping of the landscape is the hallmark of this new, smaller sized unit.

Vegetation features: The vegetation is predominantly creosote scrub. Other plants seen include; desert holly, prickly pear, cholla and sparse grasses.

Major human uses/activities: Most of the unit has extensive disturbance from the seismic mineral explorations, old mines and associated access routes to these locations. Some of these impacts, including graded roads, were missed in the original wilderness inventory and acknowledged in the 1990 wilderness study report. The area receives light recreation use mainly in the form of Off-Highway Vehicles.

(2) Natural condition

No

The cumulative impacts of extensive seismic explorations and mining related vehicle routes greatly impact the naturalness throughout this unit. The seismic exploration includes many bladed routes at intervals of 1/10 to 2/10 of a mile. Although there are small pockets within the overall unit that appear somewhat natural, these areas are not contiguous and do not meet the 5,000 acre size threshold required of a wilderness area. In summary, the portion of the unit that

was in a natural condition was added to the National Park in 1994, and the remainder of the unit, which is the subject of this inventory, was excluded because of human impacts. These impacts remain and no portion of the unit meets the naturalness criteria.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude

Yes

The areas within the unit that offer the best opportunity for a sense of solitude are the southern and western border sections which are next to Death Valley National Park.

(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation

Yes

While the northern and eastern sections provide outstanding motorized recreation opportunities the mountainous southern and western parts of the unit do offer the recreational user a primitive and unconfined recreational outlet. The opportunity to rely on personal skills to travel and camp rather than on facilities or outside help exists for this area. The idea to provide opportunities for physical and mental challenges associated with adventure and self-direction as well as the personal growth that results from facing and overcoming obstacles is available in this area.

(5) Supplemental values

Yes

There are a plethora of historic mines in this unit which allow the visitor a chance to experience California's rich mining past. These are features of scientific, educational, scenic and historical value to this region.

Appendix A

Images of Area 147 - 1

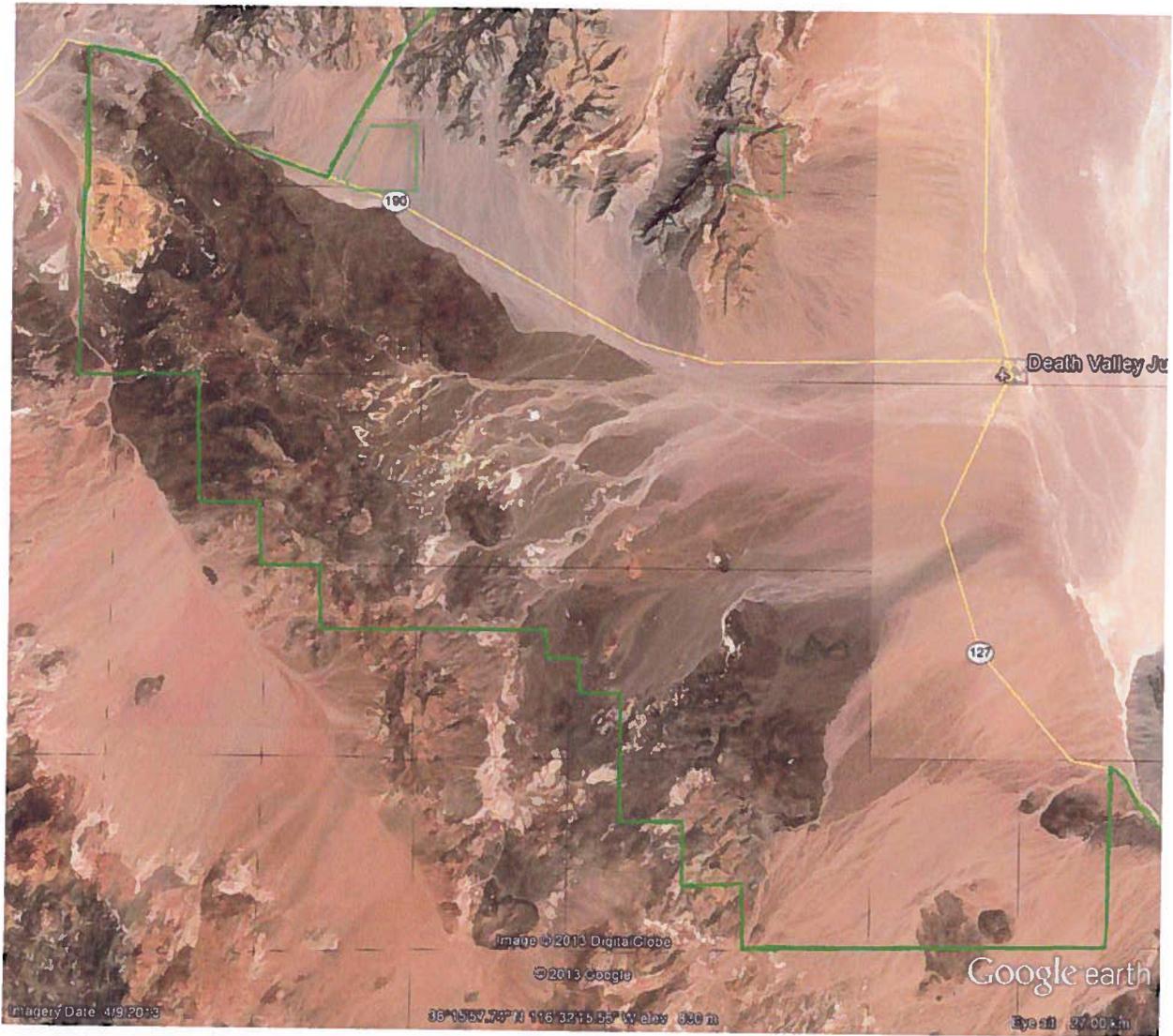


Image #1 - Google Earth™ View of Area 147 - 1



Image #2 - An aerial view of the northern section of the unit which shows seismic exploration impacts to the land.



Image #3 - An aerial view from the southern section of unit shows the extent of seismic exploration impacts to the land.

Appendix B

BLM California Desert Conservation Area Wilderness Final Inventory, Dec. 1979

Written Description & Map of Area 147

VI. SUPPLEMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

In terms of cultural history, the area contains several areas where prehistoric artifacts have been found. Five golden eagle and two prairie falcon nesting sites are known to exist in the area. In terms of vegetation, three rare, endangered or threatened species of forbs occur.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Many comments refer to potential mineral areas with some references to specific sites already being utilized through exploratory work. These were field-checked and are reflected on the map where appropriate. Another large number of comments supported the findings.

AREA 146

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This small, elongated area is bordered on the west by Highway 127; on the east, by a power line corridor right-of-way and access road.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area consists primarily of public land, with approximately three-quarters of a square mile in the northern portion being non-public land.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

This area consists of relatively flat and sparsely vegetated creosote-covered valley land and bajada.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Man's work is substantially unnoticeable within this area.

V. OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED TYPE OF RECREATION

Opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation are restrictive due to the flat topographic relief and sparse vegetation and the limiting size and conformity which does not provide for unconfined freedom of movement.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

The few comments received agreed with the findings.

AREA 147

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The area is bounded to the north by Highway 190; to the south, by Highway 178; to the east, by Highway 127; and, to the west, by a graded dirt road through Greenwater Valley.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area consists primarily of public land. Non-public lands are scattered throughout, accounting for approximately 6 percent of the total area.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

Roughly 12 miles across at its widest point and 32 miles long, this area encompasses approximately 300 square miles. Terrain varies considerably, ranging from smooth, flat valleys and bajadas to coarse, jagged mountains. Two major drainages divide the site into thirds. Through Greenwater Canyon the waters have carved a narrow passage through volcanic rock leaving steep sides and a twisting course. At Deadman Pass the erosion has produced a wide interspace with gently sloping sides. Although the valleys are

densely vegetated, the mountains and slopes tend to support only sparse growth. Creosote is the dominant plant in the area, although numerous, less conspicuous, species abound, including desert holly, sage brush, prickly pear, cholla and bunch and annual grasses.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The northern boundary has been adjusted to exclude areas where man's impact has degraded the natural character. The exclusion includes active, abandoned mining operations, patented mining at Section 21, 29, 31, - 33, (T. 25 N., R. 4 E.), a graded road, and a network of unimproved ways. The graded road leads east from Death Valley Junction past the remains of the abandoned Lila C Mine (site of Old Ryan - now only tunnels, slag piles, and rusting equipment remain) to an area laced with old roads and mining claims at the mouth of Greenwater Canyon. A grid-like network of unimproved ways is located in the vicinity of the Lila C mine. At the site of the New Ryan, on the northern tip of the Greenwater Range, active and abandoned mining operations occur side-by-side. Tunnels, slag piles, and road scars exist here as well as many of the old structures that were once inhabited by the population of Ryan. The remainder of the roadless area generally retains its primeval character and appears affected primarily by the forces of nature. Man's works, which include a few abandoned mine shafts and primitive ways, are substantially unnoticeable due to screening by terrain diversity and fairly dense vegetation.

V. OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED TYPE OF RECREATION

This area offers outstanding opportunities for both solitude and a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. Terrain and vegetative variety provide many areas and spaces where a sense of isolation and seclusion are readily available. A relative lack of internal man-made features allows freedom of unconfined movement throughout the site. In terms of primitive recreation, the area offers both challenge and diversity. The Greenwater Range area is bounded to the east and west by large areas that are also relatively pristine, adding to the opportunities for a quality primitive experience. These opportunities are further enhanced by the location of the site adjacent to existing wilderness values in Death Valley National Monument.

VI. SUPPLEMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

The area supports four raptor nesting sites including red-tailed hawks, common ravens and great horned owls. The Greenwater Range is transited by Bighorn Sheep. The area includes many cultural sites from prehistoric Indian habitation.

VII. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Several comments referred to man-made improvements and permanent scars from active and abandoned mining operations. These areas were deleted where appropriate. The Deadman Pass Road shows no sign of maintenance for many years. Other comments indicated too much area had been deleted and that rehabilitation potential was not considered.

AREA 148

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

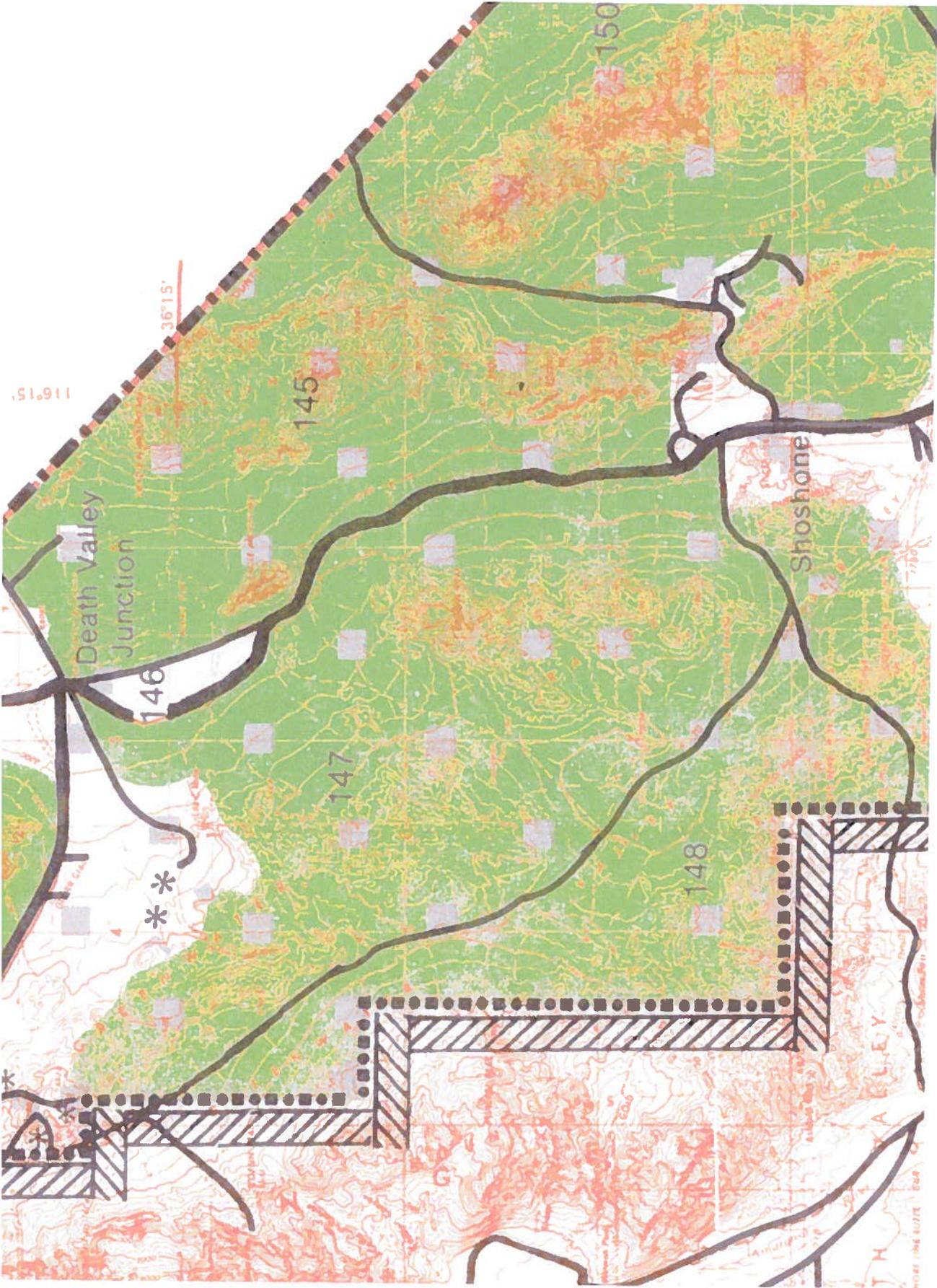
The area is irregular in shape due to its location adjacent to Death Valley National Monument. Boundaries include a dirt road through Greenwater Valley to the east; Highway 178 to the south; and, the Death Valley National Monument to the west.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area consists almost entirely of public land. Only a few sections of non-public land occur within the roadless area, accounting for approximately 5 percent of the total area.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

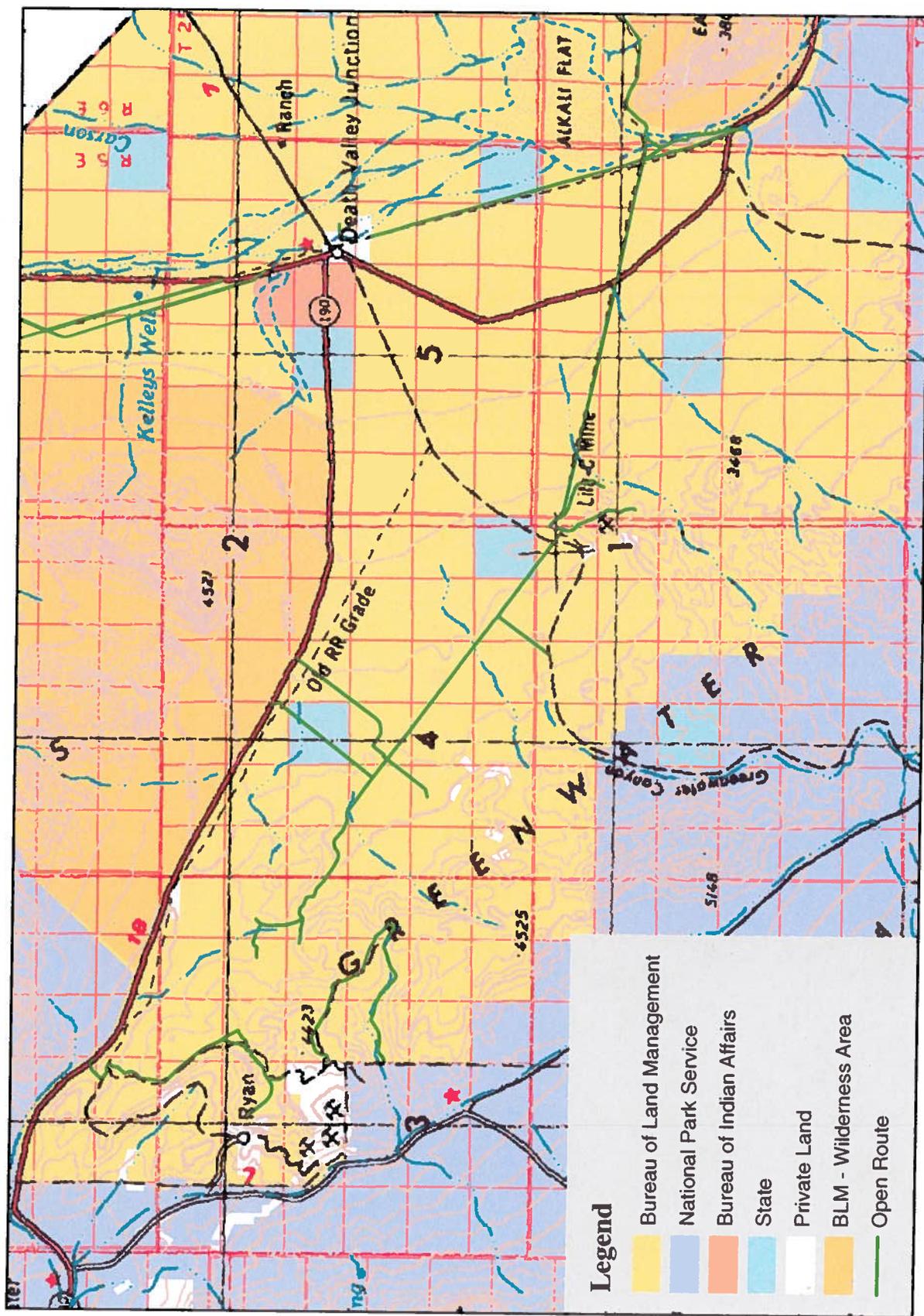
The area is dominated by the relatively gently sloping expanse of Greenwater Valley. To the south, the gentle, eastern slopes of the Black Mountains enter the area. Vegetation is lush and dense on the valley floor, but thins rapidly as it rises on the steeper mountain slopes. Creosote is the dominant plant, supported by sagebrush, annual and bunch grasses, seasonal wildflowers and scattered cholla cactus.



Appendix C

Current Land Status Map of Area 147 - /

Current Land Status of Area 147 - I



Legend

- Bureau of Land Management
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- State
- Private Land
- BLM - Wilderness Area
- Open Route

