6301 - Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: Franklin Wells CA-080-143-1

Results of Analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? __X__ Yes _____ No

2. Does the area appear to be natural? _____ Yes __X__ No _____ N/A

3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? _____ Yes __X__ No _____ N/A

4. Does the area have supplemental values? __X__ 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).

__X__ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by:

Team Members:

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Bob Wick, Natural Resource Specialist, BLM California State Office

Approved by:

Name: _____ **Title:** Barstow Field Manager

Date: 12/1/12

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 Franklin Wells CA-080-143-1

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): Funeral Mountains CA-080-143

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

Unit#/ Name	Size (historic acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N
143	46,529	Y	Y	Y	Y

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

The western two-thirds of the unit were found to have wilderness characteristics and became the Funeral Mountains Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The eastern portion of the unit was excluded from the WSA status due to the vehicle routes and other impacts from mining to naturalness. A portion of the WSA was added to Death Valley National Park and given Wilderness status within the park while the remainder of the designated portion was designated as the Funeral Mountain Wilderness Area under the California Desert Protection Act of 1994. The portion of the unit that is outside of the original WSA (and therefore did not have wilderness characteristics in 1979) is the subject of this inventory update. The lands are contiguous to existing wilderness.

Documentation of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name: CA-080-143-1 Franklin Wells

(1) Sufficient size

Acreage: Estimated at approximately 18,598.5 acres pending GIS calculation with a perimeter of roughly 43.1 miles.

Boundaries: The area is bounded on the west by Death Valley National Park and the Funeral Mountains Wilderness Area. The eastern boundary is the California and Nevada state line combined with State Highway 127. The southern boundary is state highway 190.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: The unit is mostly comprised of BLM managed lands with three private inholdings totaling approximately 1,400 acres; one State managed property comprising 320 acres and one section managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs which totals roughly 700 acres.

Location: The unit is located in Inyo County at the extreme northern portion of the Barstow Resource Area. The unit is immediately northwest of Death Valley Junction, CA and adjacent to the Funeral Mountains Wilderness Area.

Topography: This unit is mostly a few miles wide and with a sickle-type shape with it with the northern tip arcing towards the west. The entire unit is relatively flat and is composed of the valley floor of the Amargosa Desert.

Vegetation features: The vegetation is predominantly creosote scrub. Other vegetation includes desert holly, prickly pear, cholla and sparse grasses. Some areas of mesquite are found along the Amargosa River.

Major human uses/activities: The area receives light recreation use and has ongoing mining and prospecting activities. While most of the evidence of humans is from past use the area along the Tonopah and Tidewater railroad grade has extensive off-highway vehicle tracks to and around the rail line.

(2) Natural condition

No

The features that lead to the area's exclusion from the WSA in the original inventory still exist; extensive disturbance from mineral exploration and old mines/existing mining and associated access routes are evident. Overall these impacts detract from naturalness throughout the unit.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude

No

The shape of the unit, the human uses of the land and the lack of vegetative screening prevent the achievement of solitude.

(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation

No

This area's ongoing surface mining along with lack of vegetative screening prevents these recreational pursuits from occurring.

(5) Supplemental values

Yes

The unit has a portion of the historic Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad which ran between the towns of Beatty, NV and Ludlow, CA. The remains of the railgrade include a raised earthen bed with wooden ties and metal pins in a handful of locations which help tell the tale of California's rich history with Borax and mineral mining.

Appendix A

Images of Area 143-1

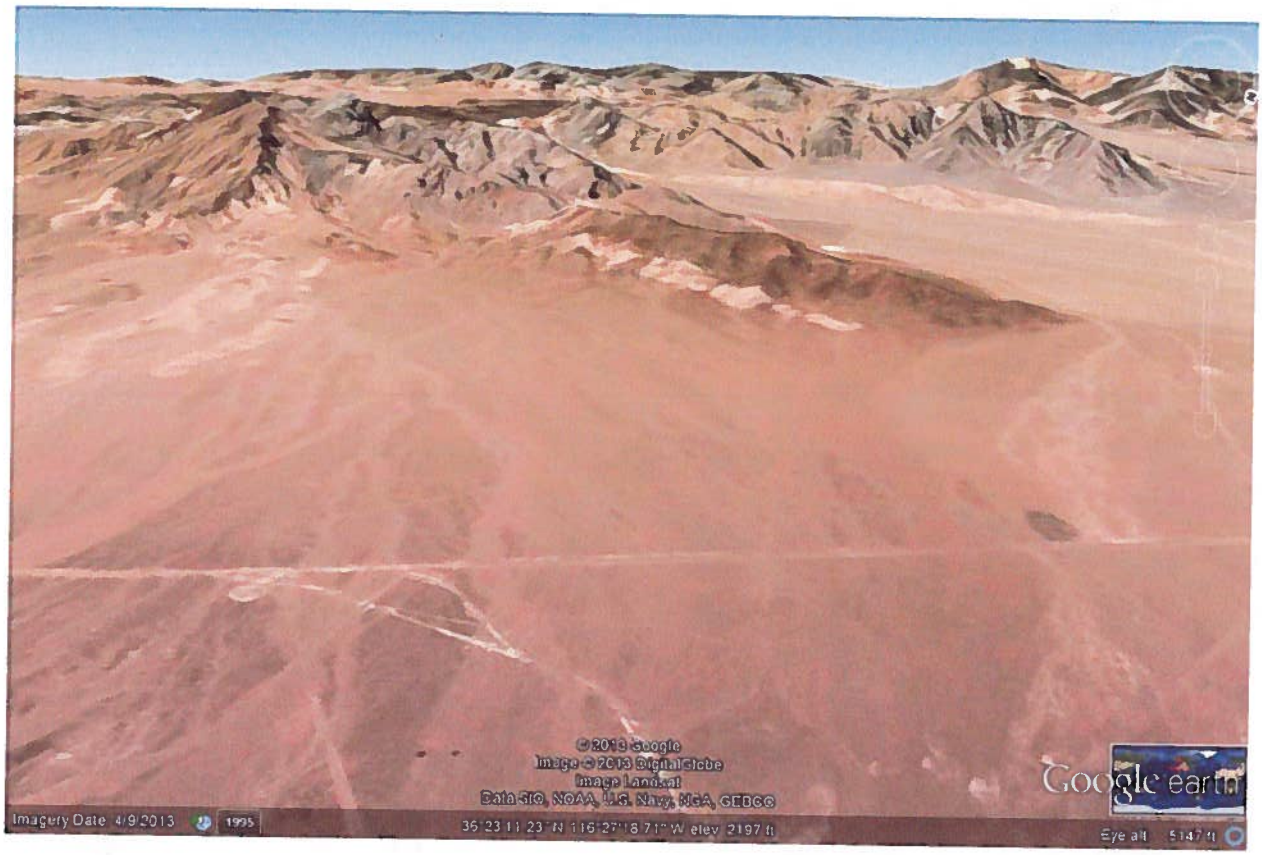


Image #1 - Area 143-1 with a view westward towards the Funeral Mountains. Impacts from access routes are visible in the foreground.

Image #2 - The Funeral Mine is within the inventory unit and was excluded from wilderness because of its substantial impacts to naturalness.

Appendix B

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

Written Description & Map of Area 143

AREA 143

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This area is bordered on the north by the California/Nevada border; on the east by Highway 127; on the south by Highway 190; and, on the west, by Death Valley National Monument.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The site includes approximately nine sections of non-public land, scattered throughout the area and accounting for over 5 percent of the total land area.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

This area includes the rugged and colorful southern extension of the Funeral Mountain, Pyramid Peak and the enclosed valley called Red Amphitheater. Also included are creosote covered bajadas and the northern portion of the Amargosa River. Interesting geologic formations along with steep sloping ridges and narrow canyons contrast with a large interior valley. Vegetation is sparse on the rocky mountain mass and in the interior valleys and washes. Stands of creosote are broken by linear concentrations of mesquite along the route of the Amargosa River. The area also contains a historical railroad grade and the site of the abandoned community of Scanlon. The area includes Bighorn Sheep habitat, and a historic railroad.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The portion of the roadless area where man's work is substantially unnoticeable includes the Funeral Mountains and bajadas north and south of the mountains. This portion of the area has retained its primeval character and influence. The eastern portion has been excluded from wilderness consideration. Active and inactive mines, tailings, prospects and roads penetrate much of this excluded portion. A large milling operation, as well as sites of past structures, a railroad, and a townsite, along with associated ways, also contribute to this portion being affected in such a way that man's work is substantially noticeable. This excluded portion parallels a primitive way and the old railroad grade in the south, and avoids patented active mine operations at Section 18 (T. 18 S., R. 49 E.), as well as the abandoned townsite of Scanlon.

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 outstanding. Narrow, winding canyons, and large rugged peaks and ridges create solitude. Primitive types of recreation are enhanced by being adjacent to a proposed national monument wilderness area which encompasses the majority of the Funeral Mountains, a part of the Amargosa Range. These opportunities are further enhanced by adjacent wilderness values in Death Valley National Monument.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

One comment discussed areas that did not contain wilderness values pointing out agricultural development, dwellings, and other imprints of man. This portion of the area was never considered for further study. All other comments support the findings.

AREA 144

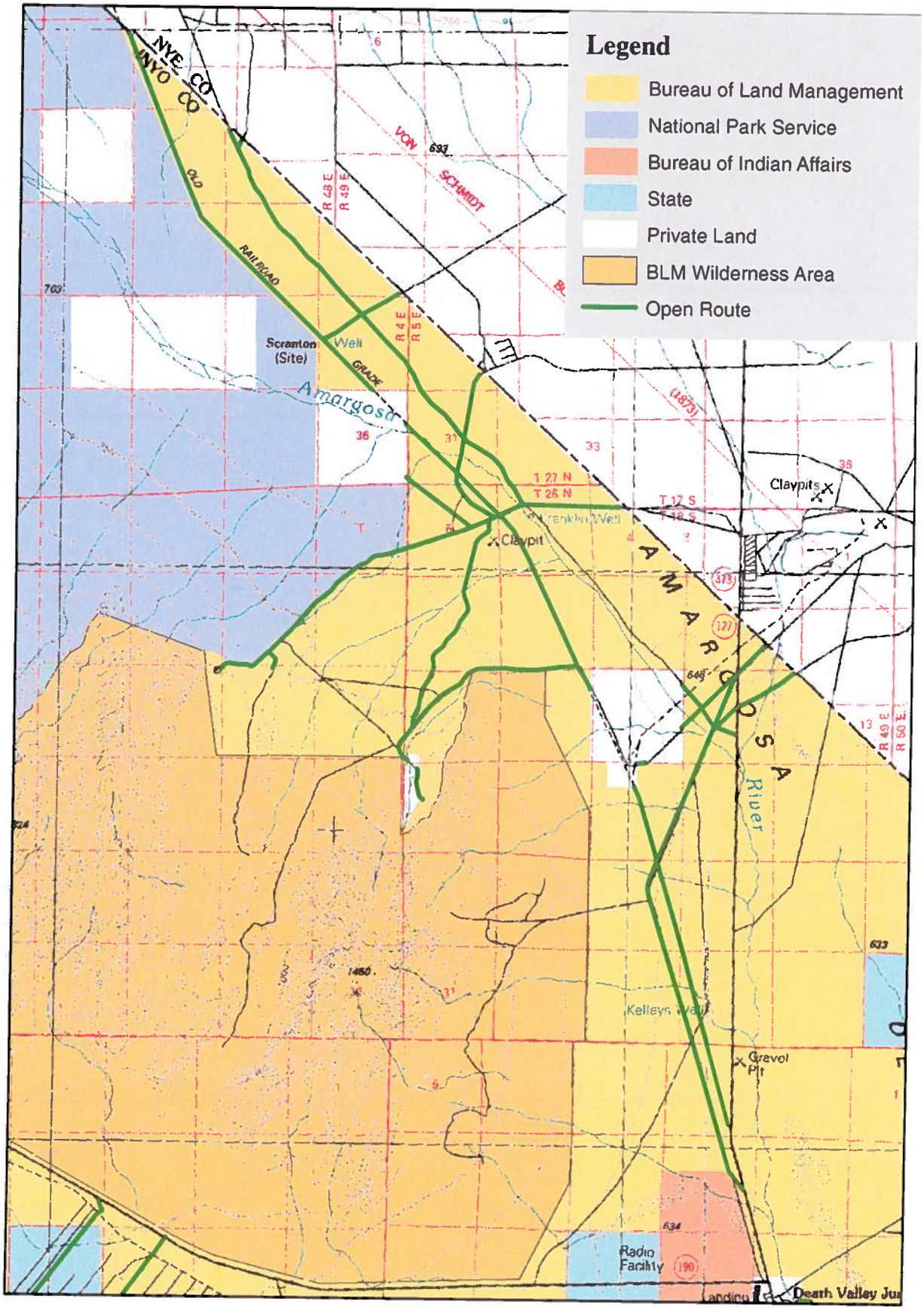
I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This triangular-shaped roadless area is bordered on the northeast by the California/Nevada border; on the south, by a maintained road between Death Valley Junction and Ash Meadows; and, on the west, by Highway 127.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

Public lands predominate, with only one centrally-located section of non-public inholding.

Appendix C

Map with Current Land Status of Area 143-1

Current Land Status of Area 143-1