

6301 - Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: CA-080-253-Midway

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:

Remijio A. Chavez Jr, Rangeland Management Specialist, Barstow FO

Rusty Gates, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Barstow FO

Jamie Livingood, Geologist, Barstow FO

Mickey Quillman, Supervisory Resource Management Specialist, BLM Barstow FO

Timothy Williamson, Wilderness Coordinator, BLM Barstow FO

Approved by:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

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.

Wilderness Inventory
CDCA Wilderness Inventory Unit #253
CA-080-253-Midway
November 21, 2013

Background

Under Section 201 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLMPA) the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is required to maintain an inventory of public land resources, including lands with wilderness characteristics. Wilderness characteristics are part of the resource values to be considered in inventories the BLM undertakes. The Wilderness Act of 1964 established the National Wilderness Preservation System which identified a system of federally managed areas designated by Congress as “wilderness areas”. The goal of the Wilderness Act was to “secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefit of an enduring resource of wilderness.” While the terms “wilderness character” and “wilderness characteristic” are not explicitly defined in the Wilderness Act, Section 2(c) identifies the wilderness characteristics used for evaluation of lands proposed for wilderness protections. The terms generally used to describe and evaluate lands with wilderness characteristics include size, naturalness, opportunities for solitude and/or primitive and unconfined recreation and special features of “ecological, geological or other features of scientific, scenic or historic value.”

All public lands within the California Desert District (CDD) were inventoried between 1978 and 1979 through a sequential process to determine if any of the CDD lands possessed wilderness characteristics. This process initially involved identifying Wilderness Inventory Units (WIUs) that were considered to potentially contain wilderness characteristics. Through a BLM cataloging of resources and with public involvement all the WIUs were reviewed at that time. The WIUs or portions of land within a WIU that were found to have wilderness characteristics were identified by the BLM in 1979 as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) and lands not found to have wilderness characteristics were managed without wilderness considerations. A WSA is managed to maintain their wilderness suitability until Congress either designates them as wilderness or denies this designation and released for other management considerations. A final intensive study phase between 1979 and 1991, which included the preparation of mineral surveys and an environmental impact statement and additional public involvement, led the BLM to recommend to the Secretary of the Interior that some of these WSAs should be designated as wilderness and others released. The Secretary then forwarded his recommendations to Congress which took action to designate wilderness areas and WSAs in the 1994 California Desert Protection Act.

Since the original wilderness characteristic inventories are more than thirty years old, they are being updated at this time. The reason for this update is to accommodate the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) in designating lands being considered for development by

determining if conditions in the units have changed (i.e., Do wilderness characteristics exist in locations where they were not present in 1979?). Several management factors could result if changes are found in these units. Specific examples would be, if natural or agency-initiated reclamation projects have restored the natural conditions or if land acquisitions have restored the ability for a solitary recreation, in either case wilderness characteristics are now present and the agency might have to manage these lands for their existence.

As part of the preparation of this wilderness update, a records search was done. The permanent inventory file for WIU #253 could not be located for this review however the descriptive narrative for the unit was found in the *California Desert Conservation Area, Wilderness Inventory, Final Descriptive Narratives, March 31, 1979*

(http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/pa/wilderness/wi.Par.92238.File.dat/CDCAWildernessInvNarr_Final_March1979.pdf) and the pages which describe this unit have been included in the appendix section. Other sources of information used in the research and writing of this inventory report were: *the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980*

(http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/pdfs/cdd_pdfs.Par.aa6ec747.File.pdf/CA_Desert_.pdf), the 2000 Soda Mountains Desert Access Guide (DAG) and the Cronese Lake Subregion Off-Highway Vehicle Route Supplement map

(http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/cdd/west_mojave_plan_updates/wemo_supplemental.Par.56049.File.pdf/CroneseLake_09AUG2011.pdf).

One field reconnaissance trip was made on July 3, 2013 to record and photograph the unit's environmental situation. The trip involved driving designated routes within the unit, an interstate highway and designated routes and designated roads around the unit to help redefine the 1979 boundaries. Photographs and field notes were taken at that time to help evaluate the current conditions of the area.

Year 2013 Inventory Unit Number/Name CA-080-253-Midway

FORM 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, BLM Barstow FO

Inventory Unit Name(s)/Number(s): Area 253

Map Name(s)/Number(s): USDI BLM CASO 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 Sources: 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	Year
253	N/A	Y	N	N	N/A	1979

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

The 1979 inventory indicated that the area was 23 miles west of Baker and north of Interstate 15. The identified boundaries were the powerline to the north and the interstate to the south. The western boundary is undefined while the eastern is listed as a dirt road. While the report indicates that the "area has been affected primarily by the forces of nature", this area was eliminated from further wilderness consideration due to the fact that every other section was privately held and thus no contiguous section of 5000 acres could be cobbled together. Also, both outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive or unconfined recreation were available due to the small sections of public lands within this area.

Documentation of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name: CA-080-253-Midway

(1) Sufficient size

No.

Acreage: Estimated at approximately 28,094 acres pending GIS calculation with a perimeter of roughly 33.7 miles.

Boundaries: The previous inventory contained a few boundaries that were undefined, an issue that this inventory sought to remedy. The eastern boundary is designated route CL 8337 (or as it also labeled on maps Powerline Road) and for most of the northeastern edge it abuts the Soda Mountain Wilderness Study Area. The northern boundary is designated route CL 8315 which is right-of-way energy corridor. There are electric powerlines owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, fiber-optic cables owned by MCI WorldCom Network and a gas pipeline alongside both of these utilities. The western boundary designated route CL 7684 and a military access road to Fort Irwin called Coyote Lake Road which later becomes Alvord Mountain Road. The southern boundary is US Interstate 15.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: Only 16,243 acres or just less than sixty percent of this unit are public lands, the rest are privately held.

Location: This area is located in San Bernardino County within the north central portion of the Barstow Resource Area. The area is east of the Calico Recreation Area, southeast of the Fort Irwin National Training Center and west of the Mojave National Preserve and the Soda Mountain Wilderness Study Area. The community of Baker is 33 miles to the east and the town of Barstow is 30 miles to the west.

Topography: The area is a mix of small hills and ridge runs, random mountains and washes within a series of open plains. There exists a general sloping from the Northern boundary to the Southern Interstate boundary from a high altitude of 2400 feet moseying down to 1800. The highest elevation point in the area is in the small mountain cluster on the eastern boundary with just 2600 feet. There does exist a series of open plains between these small hills and within many of these are washes with fine sandy loam, otherwise the soil structure rocks and pebbles more common closer to the hills. Lastly there is a dry lake bed on the western edge of the area

Vegetation features: The dominant vegetation type throughout the area is creosote bush scrub. Creosote ranges from scarce with spots of bare ground between the plants to sections where the creosotes bushes grow closer and then give way to a more saltbush scrub community mingled with various grass species on the dry lake bed to the west. In the places where there hills and small mountains the vegetation thins out with the land becoming a rocky shoal. Seasonal wildflowers are scattered throughout the area. This habitat supports small mammals like ground

squirrels, jackrabbits and coyotes although the overall lack of heavy vegetation results in low numbers of these said animals. Nongame birds and ravens intermingle with insects, lizards and rattlesnakes in all sections of the unit.

Major human uses/activities: Participation levels in other common forms of desert recreation (recreational target shooting, rock-hounding, climbing, hiking, wildlife study and hunting) in this area are also low when compared desert recreational activities in other areas. The major recreational use within this unit is motorized recreation which includes all types of off-highway vehicular (OHV) use on designated routes. However, anecdotal evidence on the ground, obtained through on-site visits to or near the area, is that motorized recreational activity in this area is low in comparison to activity in other areas in the vicinity. Dispersed camping is evidenced in a handful of locations in the area. The area does not have a grazing allotment.

(2) Natural condition

Yes

The low levels of visitation within this area, of which anecdotal evidence suggests most traffic occurs along the boundary where powerline right of way corridor exists, indicate that there are natural forces shaping this landscape more than modern human use. Travel patterns within the area seem to indicate that OHV recreational users are staying on the trails, however that evidence on the ground is of little visitation. Plants and undisturbed soils are creating a more natural condition outside of the areas affected by powerlines.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude

No.

The ability of the visitor to avoid evidence of other visitors or modern human existence inside the area is shaped by the terrain and the shape of the area. A sense of solitude is influenced by shape of the area in that this polygon is not wide enough to hide the evidence of other people. The sounds of the highway and the visual of the powerlines through the area make solitude almost impossible in that there are no physical barriers to mitigate either situation.

(4)

No.

The shape of the area is mainly flat and open with only a few hills, ridgelines and small mountains. While there are opportunities for both of these recreational activities, neither of them are outstanding or superior to others of its kind. Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are available in nearby locations of Soda Mountain Wilderness Study Area, the Cady Mountain Wilderness Study Area and the Mojave National Preserve.

(5) Supplemental values

No.

There are scattered mining locations but few are of historical value.

Appendix A

Route Analysis of Area 253

WIU #253

Date: 3 Jul 13

Appendix A - Route Analysis

Evaluator(s): Rusty Gates & Tim Williamson

Route #	Purpose	ROW Y/N/UK	ROW In Use?	Constructed Mechanically	Type of Evidence	Improved Mechanically	Hand Tools Or Machinery	Type of Evidence
CL 8337 *	Powerline & Mining Access	Y	Y	Y	Berms & Bladed	Y	Mach	Berms & Bladed
CL 8339	Recreation & Natural Wash	N	N	N	Two Track	N	-	Two Track
CL 8315	Powerline	Y	Y	Y	Bladed & Berms	Y	Mach	Bladed & Berms
CL 8334	Recreation & Natural Wash	N	N	N	Two Track	N	-	Two Track
CL8255	Gas Pipeline Access	Y	Y	Y	Bladed & Berms	Y	Mach	Bladed & Berms
Unnamed **	Powerline	Y	Y	Y	Bladed & Berms	Y	Mach	Bladed & Berms
CL 8205	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track	N	-	Two Track
CL 8145 ***	Well * Mining Access	Y	Y	Y	Berms on Two Sides	UK	-	Berms appear to be old
CL 7684	Military Access	Y	Y	Y	Fresh Blading, Berms & Evidence of Watering	Y	Mach	Fresh Water
CL 7668 ****	Military Access	Y	Y	Y	Bladed & Berms	Y	Mach	Bladed & Berms

- * The Access road to CL 8337 is called Arrowhead Trail and on maps is then called Powerline Road.
- ** There are many authorized routes from CL 8315 that are maintenance routes to the powerline towers. None have designated numbers and all appear to be regularly bladed.
- *** In places this route is marked as AF183.
- **** Also called Alvord Mountain Road.

Appendix B

Photo Log of Area 253



Photo #1 – Designated Route CL 8337 - Western View

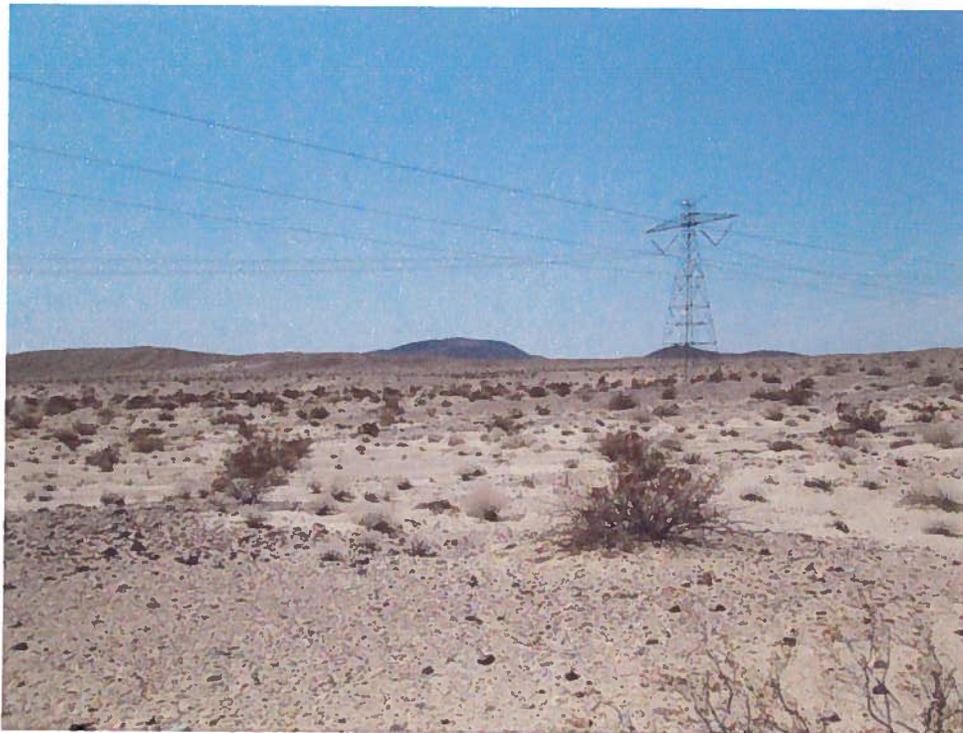


Photo #2 – Designated Route CL 8315 (also a Powerline ROW) – Southern View



Photo #3 – CL 7684 – Eastern View

Photo Log for Area 253				
Photo #	UTM	Town & Range	Dir	Description
1	3882216 N 550387 E	T 12 N 5 R E Sec 33	W	CL 8337 (also called on maps Powerline Road), open plain, creosote scrub, rocky, coarse sandy loam
2	3887344 N 548135 E	T 12 N R 5 E Sec 17	S	CL 8315 (the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power Electrical line road), small hills and washes, scarce creosote scrub, rocky, coarse sandy loam
3	3873548 N 533356 E	T11 N R 3 E Sec 35	E	CL 7684, a military access route, dry lake bed, scattered saltbush, fine sandy loam

Appendix C

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

Written Description & Map of Area 253

types of recreation. Visitors can experience both the intimacy of small, enclosed areas in the hills and canyons, and the vastness and openness of the large bajada between the South Cady Mountains and the Cady Mountains. The relative absence of internal man-made features also enhances opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments referred to the presence of roads and ways; expressed interest in motorized recreation use, and pointed out potential mineral and energy resources. Roads and ways were evaluated and excluded from further wilderness consideration, where appropriate.

AREA 253

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The area is located 23 miles west of the town of Baker, north of and abutting Interstate 15. The northern boundary is a powerline corridor right-of-way and associated access road. The southern boundary is Interstate 15. The eastern boundary is a maintained dirt road between Interstate 15 and the powerlines.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

Every other section of this area is non-public land except for a small block at the northern tip. The area does not contain 5000 acres of contiguous public lands and is not of sufficient size to make practical its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

Except for an area of low mountains in the northeast portion, the area is relatively flat. It is comprised mainly of a bajada that gently slopes to the south and west. The landscape has a gentle transition from the mountains to rolling hills to bajada to flat valley, which adds to scenic quality. The vegetation of this area is low desert shrub and a variety of annual plants. Creosote is the dominant plant throughout the area but becomes very sparse in the southern part of the area.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The roadless area has been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable. No permanent improvements exist in the area.

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

In the small block of public land neither solitude nor unconfined recreation opportunity exist.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

A few comments favored wilderness study status for the area. Several others stated the area was not natural.

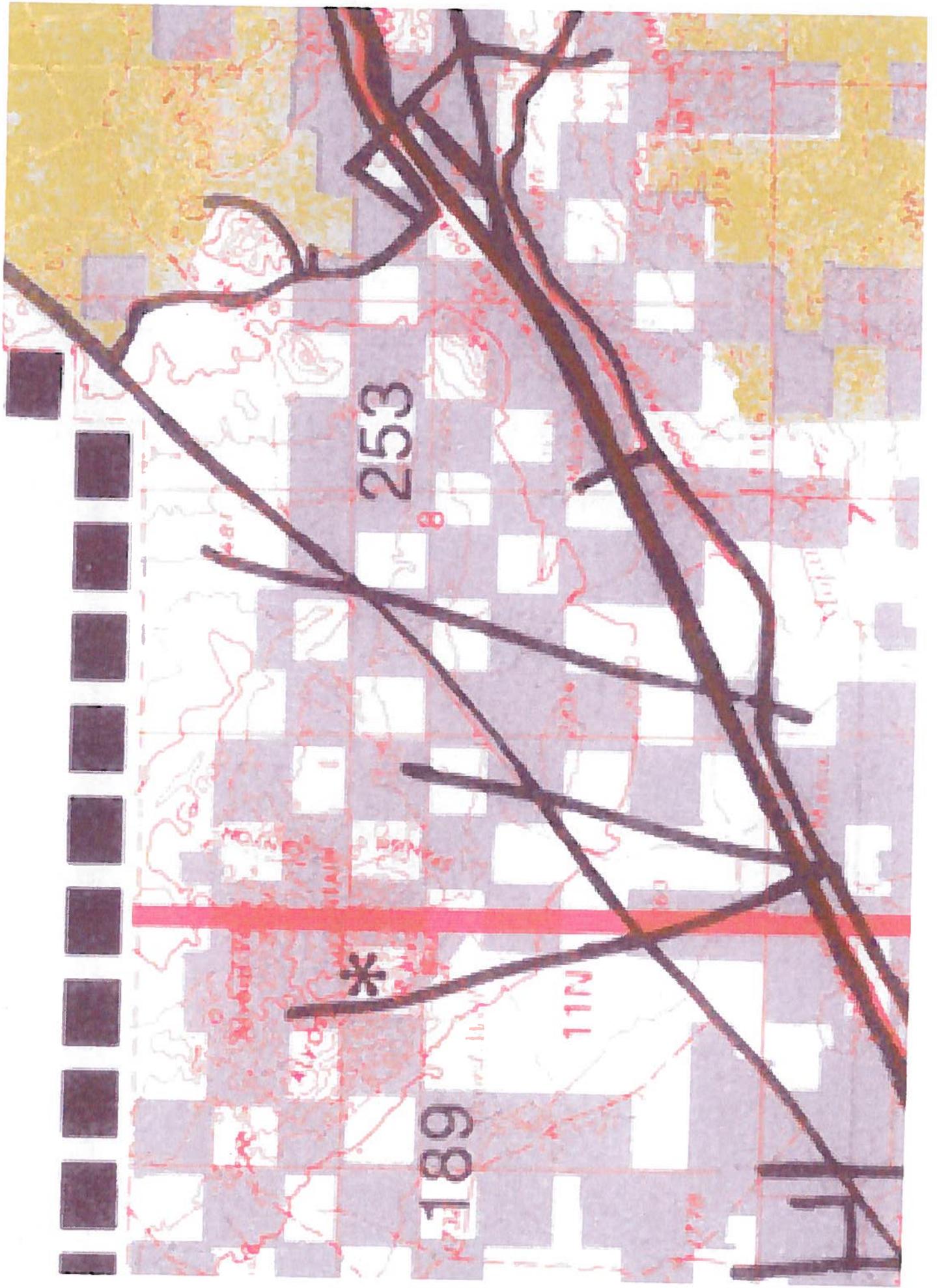
AREA 254

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The area is bounded to the north by a gas/telephone line right-of-way; to the south, by the Marine Corps Training Center at Twentynine Palms; to the east, by a Marine Corps Base right-of-way; and, to the west, by a graded road to the active Stedman Mine.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The roadless area is approximately 70 percent public land with non-public holdings occurring in north-south strips of alternating odd sections.



253

8

*

189

110

Appendix D

Current Land Status Map of Area 253

Current Land Status of Area 253

