

6301 - Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: Dumont Sand Dunes CA-080-222-1

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 Dumont Sand Dunes CA-080-222-1

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): Kingston Range CA-080-222

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 Kingston Range 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
222	255,058	N	Y	Y	N/A
222	284,025	N	Y	Y	Y

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

While Area 222 was deemed to have wilderness characteristics within certain sections of the unit, it appears that the new polygon that is now Area 222-1 was not then designated either as a wilderness or a wilderness study area. The 1979 findings included specific recommendations that the qualities of naturalness and developedness were not present in this location and that further wilderness consideration should not be pursued.

Documentation of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name: CA-080-222-1 Dumont Sand Dunes

(1) Sufficient size

Acreage: The rough estimate of Area 222-1 is 73,056 acres pending a GIS calculation with a perimeter of 65.4 miles.

Boundaries: The boundaries of this new unit include: State Highway 127 to the west, Old Spanish Highway to the North, the Kingston Range Wilderness Area to the east and the Kingston Range Wilderness Study Area to the south.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: The majority of the unit is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. There are however six State parcels totaling roughly 3,620 acres and numerous private lands totaling approximately 800 acres.

Location: Area 222-1 is located in northeastern San Bernardino County and south eastern Inyo County in the State of California in the northeastern portion of the BLM Barstow Resource Area.

Topography: This is a unit that has it all; sand dunes, mountains and an active river that runs both above and below ground. This unit has a large sand dunes complex called Dumont Dunes in the center which has large sand structures from 700 to 1200 feet tall. The Amargosa River runs through this unit and water running above ground can be seen in various locations. The Sperry Hills in the northern section include Tecopa peak which lies at 2689 feet and the Spring Hills in the south both have rocky rough terrains. The Silurian Valley lies flat and dry.

Vegetation features: The vegetation here consists of creosote scrub, some annual grasses, and wildflowers in the spring. The plants thin out in the hills and disappear entirely within the dunes. Saltbush plant community can be found in the southern section as the unit approaches the Silurian Valley. The Amargosa River has a variety of riparian growth including Tamarisk, Cottonwoods, and other dense greenery which supports a variety of wildlife. The wetlands, springs, and riparian habitat along the river supports more than 260 bird species, including several that are considered sensitive, threatened, or endangered.

Major human uses/activities: The major recreational use within this unit is motorized recreation which includes all types of off-highway vehicular (OHV) use on designated routes and in the Dumont Dunes Open OHV Area. Additional human uses include hiking and bird-watching along the Amargosa, rock-hounding throughout the unit and camping associated with OHV use in the Dumont Dunes location. Historically this unit has seen extensive mining both in terms of mines and the associated rail lines that moved other mining activities south from these locations. This area is also a historic means of travel as several trails have traveled through this area.

(2) Natural condition

No

Overall, the imprints of both modern and historic human uses are seen on the landscape. Historic mining and railroad lines are evident in places and modern OHV traffic can be seen throughout the unit. Tracks and routes, as well as the open area, make the unit seem less than natural.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude

No

The majority of this unit lies within visible or audible evidence of motorized use and the experience of solitude is difficult to achieve. Regular military operations in the region (low flying planes) are often enough to also make solitude challenging.

(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation

No

This unit does not offer either if these recreational pursuits. The reasons for this are varied, ranging from staying out of the river basin per Wild & Scenic policy to regular interactions with motorized vehicles. This unit offers different kinds of recreational pursuits.

(5) Supplemental values

Yes

This unit includes a handful of historic mines and the Amargosa Wild & Scenic River. In addition the Old Spanish National Historic Trail and Old Mormon Trail have sections through this unit as well a section of the historic Tonopah and Tidewater railroad grade.

Appendix A

Images & Photos of Area 222-1

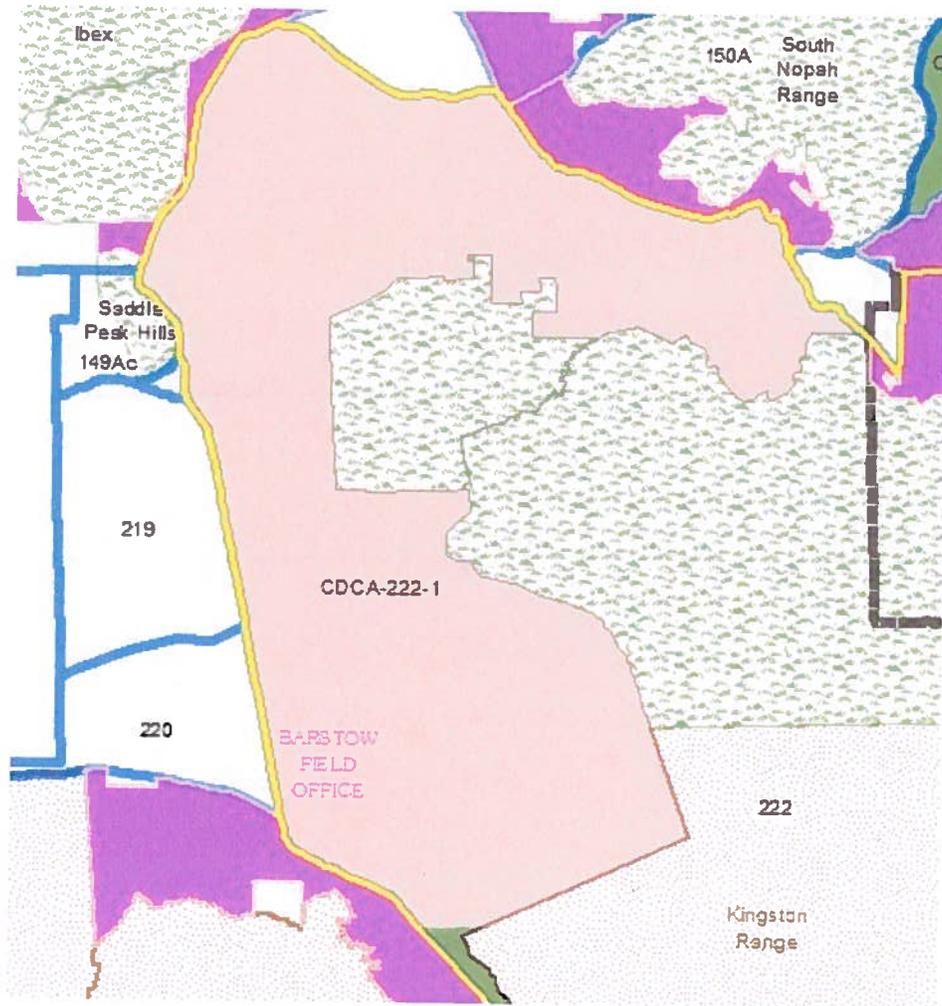


Image #1 - Boundary View of Area 222-1



Photo # 2 - Dumont Dunes Open OHV Area President's Day Weekend 2012



Photo #3 - Amargosa River Basin



Photo #4 - Little Dunes Complex



Photo #5 - Mud hills off Old Spanish Highway with Tecopa Peak in the background

Appendix B

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

Written Description of Area 222

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

Outstanding opportunities for solitude are found within the roadless area. The canyons and washes within the southern Avawatz Mountains provide topographic screening and separation into enclosed spaces. Outside of the mountains, large areas are visible from the bajada including the Soda Mountains and the Avawatz Mountains. The unbroken view of these large features provides a psychological feeling of vastness and outstanding opportunities for solitude. The diversity of terrain within the area provides outstanding opportunities for a variety of forms of primitive recreation.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Most comments supported the findings.

AREA 222

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This extremely large area is located about 15 miles north and east of the town of Baker. The western boundary is a combination of Highway 127; a dirt road just east of Renoville, running southeast to connect with a dirt road running southwest across Silurian Dry Lake to Highway 127; and, the triangular shaped roads joining at the Riggs site. The southern boundary of the Wilderness Study Area is the northern edge of the utility right-of-way which contains power transmission lines. This boundary is located along a line 400 feet north of the three existing transmission lines (except where a service road may extend outside the right-of-way). The northern boundary is the combination of the Excelsior Mine Road which passes through Tecopa Pass and the town of Tecopa; the graded road from Mine Camp, southwest of Tecopa and running 2.5 miles southeast to elevation 2465; and, the graded dirt road from elevation 2465 running a mile north to elevation 2284 at the Excelsior Mine Road. The eastern boundary is a combination of the Excelsior Mine Road and a water line and tank maintenance road in Kingston wash.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

This large area consists primarily of public land with approximately 6 percent in scattered blocks of non-public land.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

This area has an extremely diverse terrain, including the steep Kingston Mountains, the Shadow Mountains, the Dumont Hills, the Silurian Hills, the Valjean Valley, the Dumont Dunes, and the western top of the Ibex Mountains. The rugged Kingston Mountains are the highest mountains in the area and display the largest variety of colors. A bajada slopes south from the Kingston Mountain Range and leads to the Kingston wash. The Shadow Mountains have smooth ridges and rounded peaks with gentle interior canyons and numerous erosion channels. The Dumont Hills have a soft rolling topography, with numerous small interior valleys, located west of the Kingston Mountains. The Silurian Hills also have a soft rolling topography. Between the Kingston Range and the Silurian Hills is a very large interior valley called Valjean Valley, which is virtually flat. Located along Highway 127 are the Dumont Dunes, a relatively large sand dune system rising some six to eight hundred feet from the valley floor. Just north of the Dunes is the Amargosa River, which has surface running water most of the year. North of the river is the western tip of the Ibex Mountains. This zone has flat-top mountains, laced with numerous rocky, steep-walled canyons, developed from continual erosion in volcanic rock. The vegetation of this area is as diverse as the landform and changes primarily with elevation. In the washes, interior valleys, and at the base of the mountains, are a variety of low desert shrubs with creosote being the dominant plant. In the higher interior valleys there are Joshua trees, yucca, barrel cactus, and cholla. Above the high interior valleys, on the steep mountain sides, there is a Pinyon Pine-Juniper forest, which finally leads to a White Fir forest at the highest elevations in the Kingston Mountains.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The area contains areas both disturbed and undisturbed by man. The following areas along the perimeter have been excluded from further wilderness consideration because they do not meet criteria established by the Wilderness Act: (1) The southwestern side of the Silurian Hills because of extensive silver and talc mining opera-

tions and associated scars, roads and ways, including the Rigg, Talc, Silver Lake and S.S. Mines; (2) An improved way from Highway 127, at Renoville, to the Eastern Star Mine, Kingston Spring and a patented mine at Section 30 (T. 18 N., R. 10 E.); (3) The Dumont Dunes, a BLM-designated "open area," where extensive vehicular use is evident in the area in the form of vehicle tracks, ways and an absence of vegetation; (4) Portions of the Spring Hills and the bajada north and west of them for ORV scars, ways, mining scars, the Dumont Dunes entrance road, and a ranch house complex and road in Section 36, (T. 18 N., R. 6 E.); (5) A paved highway maintenance circle approximately one mile south of the Ibex Spring Road, east of Highway 127; (6) An area just south of Ibex Pass for the old paved route of Highway 127 and a wood pole utility line and associated road; (7) The extreme northwest corner of the area in the vicinity of McLain Park for mining operations and scars; (8) The areas south of the Excelsior Mine Road from Tecopa to approximately five miles south east of Horse Thief Springs for the town of Tecopa, the China Ranch and road and patented mining in Section 33, 34, 35, 36, 26, and 27 (T. 20 N., R. 7 E.), the town of Mine Camp southeast of Tecopa Pass, a waterline road, a house and associated facilities at Horse Thief Springs, a water tank, a corral, fire break, extensive mining operations and associated roads, ways, buildings, tunnels, pits, scars, and locations of the patented Western Talc, Smith, ACME and Omega Mines and other patented mines in Section 33 - 35 (T. 20 N., R. 8 E.) and Section 3, 4, 12 and 13 (T. 19 N., R. 8 E.); (9) The road leading west off the Excelsior Mine Road to the Horse Thief Mine and its associated talc mine operations; (10) An improved fence line road heading west off the Excelsior Mine Road to the southern edge of the Kingston Range; (11) The abandoned Shadow Mountain Mine because of extensive bulldozing scars, mine shafts, slag piles and associated structures; (12) A road running north off the southern boundary into the Shadow Mountains for its associated mines and roads. The remaining area has been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable. There are a few primitive ways south of the Kingston Mountains in the bajada, none of which detract from the naturalness of the area. The old Tonapah-Tidewater Railroad bed runs in a north-south direction through this area and is of historical significance. The Sperry Wash Road also runs through the northern portion of the area. It is unmaintained from the northern edge of the Dumont Dunes area to the Western Talc Mine. Within this area it runs through a wash and has an insignificant effect upon the naturalness of the area.

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

Because of the extreme diversity in both terrain and plant type, those portions of the area which meet wilderness criteria have outstanding opportunities for solitude. The area has substantial topographical and vegetational screening and is of such a great size as to be able to keep visitors apart. In addition to solitude, outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation are also available because of the diversified vegetation and terrain.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments directed to the inventory included: (1) a map correction for the location of Baker; (2) statements on unnatural areas that have been excluded; (3) agreement on the naturalness of the area meeting wilderness criteria; (4) questions on the validity of deletions. The area has been extensively field checked to verify public comments. A few minor boundary changes have been made.

AREA 222A

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The northern boundary is the dirt road from Highway 127 running east to Riggs. The northeast boundary is the graded road from the Riggs Road to the Silver Lake Mine. The eastern boundary is the dirt road running south from the Silver Lake Mine Road, one and one-quarter miles to Riggs Wash. The southern boundary of the Wilderness Study Area is the northern edge of the utility right-of-way which contains power transmission lines. This boundary is located along a line 400 feet north of the three existing transmission lines (except where a service road may extend outside the right-of-way). The western boundary is Highway 127.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

Approximately 5 percent of this area is non-public lands.

Appendix C

Current Land Status Map of Area 222-1

Current Land Status for Area 222-1

