

6301 - Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: CA-080-222A-Silurian South

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:

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Approved by:

Name:  _____

Title: Field Manager

Date: 6/27/13

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.

Wilderness Inventory
CDCA Wilderness Inventory Unit #222A
CA-080-222A-Silurian South
June 21st, 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 #222A 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 *1990 Silurian Valley CDCA-222A California Statewide Wilderness Study Report*

(http://www.blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wilderness_pdfs/wsa/Volume-5/Silurian%20Valley.pdf).

Two field reconnaissance trips were made on August 1st, 2012 and April 17, 2013 to record and photograph the unit's environmental situation. The trips involved driving designated routes within the unit and state highways, designated routes and designated roads around the unit to help redefine the 1979 boundaries. Also, photographs and field notes were taken to help evaluate the current conditions of the area.

Year 2013 Inventory Unit Number/Name CA-080-222A-Silurian South

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 222A

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
1990 Silurian Valley - CDCA-222A, CA 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	Year
222A	17,064	Y	Y	Y	N/A	1979
222A	19,435	Y	Y	Y	N	1990

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

The northern boundary was a dirt road from state highway 127 running east to the town of Riggs. The northeast boundary was a graded road from Riggs Road to the Silver Lake Mine. The eastern boundary was a dirt road running south from the Silver Lake Mine Road to Riggs Wash. The southern boundary is 400 feet north of the edge of the utility power transmission line. The western boundary was state highway 127. A majority of the land inside this area was public lands with roughly five percent private lands. Large rocky and rolling hills were in the southeast portion with a creosote scrub sandy plain dominating the rest of the area. Very little of modern human use were imprinted on the landscape with the forces of nature primarily affecting the lands. The exception was an unimproved two-mile way leading to an abandoned mining tunnel. Opportunities for both solitude and unconfined recreation existed to the large rolling hills and

naturalness of the area. The Tonopah and Tidewater railroad had a section through the area most of which was stilling notable at that time. The 1990 Silurian Valley Wilderness Study Report found that the wilderness characteristics were lacking due to the lack of quality and diverse desert wilderness characteristics when compared to the overall region's wilderness possibilities. Also the report cited the possibility of the expansion of an energy corridor as reasons for the area's non wilderness consideration. Lastly, the Silurian Valley Wilderness Study Area, CDCA 222A, was released from wilderness consideration through the passage of the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 Section 104 (a).

Documentation of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name: CA-080-222A-Silurian South

(1) Sufficient size

Yes.

Acreage: Estimated at approximately 20,140 acres pending GIS calculation with a perimeter of roughly 24.0 miles.

Boundaries: The northern boundary is an unmarked designated dirt route from state highway 127 running east just to the north of Riggs Wash. The unmarked designated route is just south of Silurian Dry Lake. The northeast boundary is another dirt two track that is below the old mine sites up the hill. The eastern boundary is a dirt route that runs south into Riggs Wash. The southern boundary starts as an old route that has been washed out in a few locations, turns into a two track and lastly runs into the utility power transmission line right-of-way. The western boundary is state highway 127 from the powerline north to the designated route.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: Predominately BLM with one private land parcel consisting of 485 acres and one state inholding which is 632 acres in size.

Location: This area is located in San Bernardino County within the north central portion of the Barstow Resource Area. The area is north of the Mojave National Preserve, east of the Fort Irwin National Training Center and south of Death Valley National Park. The community of Baker is twelve road miles to the south while the village of Shoshone is thirty-nine miles to the north.

Topography: The area consists predominately of an alluvial fan that slopes west toward the Salt Creek drainage. This is a gentle western slope from the Silurian Hills west to the state highway that results in the lowest elevation readings just above 700 feet. The southeastern portion contains rocky, rolling hills with several peaks over 2,000 feet in elevation with the highest at 2,249 feet. This area has an overall pebbly sandy composition to the soil with rocks and pebbles more common closer to the hills. However the Riggs Wash basin dominates the northern part of this area with sections consisting entirely of fine sandy loam. One of the now key landscape features would be the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad line which has only a handful of rail-ties remaining however the raised nature of the line offers a break in the above described sloping.

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. In the hills region vegetation thins out with the land becoming a rocky shoal. White bur-sage and brittlebush can also be found in the area in addition to an array of seasonal wildflowers scattered in every type of terrain feature. This habitat supports small

mammals like ground squirrels, jackrabbits and coyotes. Nongame birds and ravens intermingle with insects, lizards and rattlesnakes in all sections of the unit. Despite this being a known area where Burros migrate through, there was no evidence of recent Burro activity.

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. However, anecdotal evidence on the ground, obtained through on-site visits to the area, is that motorized recreational activity in this area is low in comparison to activity in other areas in the vicinity. 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. Dispersed camping is evidenced in a handful of locations in the area. The area does not have a grazing allotment. There are a few historic mines and pits in the area that attract public interest. The Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad, referred to as the T&T, was a mining/borax railroad that went out of existence midcentury. The elevated rail line, evidenced throughout the western side of the landscape, is a known historic piece of California's rich mining and railroad history. Lastly, an energy development project has been proposed for a section of this area.

(2) Natural condition

Yes

The low levels of visitation within this area, of which anecdotal evidence suggests most traffic occurs along the boundary of this unit on either State Highway 18 or the powerline right of way corridor, indicate that there are natural forces shaping this landscape more than modern human use. Plants and undisturbed soils are creating a more natural condition. The roads described in earlier reports are becoming two tracks due to inactivity at the mining sites and cessation of regular maintenance. The historic T&T Railway is slowly eroding away over time; trestles and ties are gone or are few in number. The current presence of two meteorological towers, used as potential energy project sites, does not influence the naturalness in the whole area since their locations are close to the boundaries. Earlier reports suggested that this area would become a corridor in which Off Highway Vehicles would use these lands to connect to other places in the region. However, evidence on the ground is that the prediction of increased throughway traffic has not come to fruition.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude

Yes

The hills section of the area, located in the southeastern section, offers the visitor the best opportunity for a solitary experience. This area provides a barrier between the noise associated with the state highway and the powerline corridor. Additionally, previous reports mentioned a possibility of increased visitation to the area; so far the indication is that this increase in usage has not occurred.

(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation

Yes

The shape of the area, with rolling small undulations and the extensive western sloping, offers the visitor opportunities for both types of recreation. 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 handful of tunnels and caves associated with California's mining history that also provide an opportunity to experience life as it once was. Combined with the physical remains of the T&T Railway, there are features of scientific, educational, scenic and historical value to this area.

Appendix A

Route Analysis of Area 222A

WIU # 222A

Appendix C - Route Analysis

Date: 08/1/12

Evaluator(s): 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
C 0743	Powerline	Y	Y	Y	Bladed & Two Sided Berms	Y	M	Bladed & Roadside Berms
Unnamed Designated Route	Old Mining Road? Recreation	N	N	Y	Two Track turns into hardpack in stretches (berms evidenced)	N	-	Two track stretches have locations where the wash has eliminated the route/road
Unnamed Route	Recreation	N	N	UK	Two Track that in spots has possible berm residual	N	-	Two Track
Unnamed & Unmarked Route in the field D112	Recreation	N	N	Y	Roadside berms evidenced	N	-	Two Track is majority of route
Unnamed Old T & T Railway	Recreation & Historic	N	N	UK	Roadside berms evidenced	N	-	Two Track is majority of route
Unnamed & Unmarked in the field D111	Recreation	N	N	UK	Two Track with Berms on Two Side in places	N	-	Mostly a Two Track Route

* State Highway 127 is a border to this area and is a route of travel maintained by the California Department of Transportation.

** There are also two administrative routes that were created to install two Meteorological Evaluation Towers; neither of these routes were evaluated since these routes will be rehabilitated after the structures are removed.

Appendix B

Photo Log of Area 222A



Photo #1 - Highway 127 & Historic Tonopah & Tidewater RR - Northeast View



Photo #2 - Highway 127 & Historic Tonopah & Tidewater RR - Northeast View



Photo #3 - Designated Route - Eastern View



Photo #4 - Designated Route - Southeastern View



Photo #5 - Junction of Designated Routes - Western View



Photo #6 - Designated Route in Riggs Wash - North Western View



Photo #7 - Designated Route - Northwestern View



Photo #8 - Designated Route - Northern View

Photo Log for Area 210

Photo #	UTM	Town & Range	Dir	Description
1	3917053 N 579279 E	T15N R8E Sec 9	NE	T&T RR line, Creosote Scrub, Coarse sandy loam, open basin, 200 feet from Hwy 127
2	3917053 N 579279 E	T15N R8E Sec 9	NE	T&T RR line, Creosote Scrub, Coarse sandy loam, open basin, 200 feet from Hwy 127
3	3927390 N 575674 E	T16N R8E Sec 7	E	Off des. Route, creosote scrub, open basin, Coarse sandy loam
4	3926299 N 579717 E	T16N R8E Sec 15	SE	Off des. Route, creosote scrub, open basin, coarse sandy loam
5	3923890 N 587818 E	T16N R9E Sec 21	W	Junction of two routes, creosote scrub, mild upslope, coarse sandy loam, near mine area
6	3922080 N 588681 E	T16N R9E Sec 28	NW	Riggs wash area, creosote scrub, coarse sandy loam, off des. Route
7	3921175 N 587299 E	T16N R9E Sec 32	NW	Off des. Route, creosote scrub, coarse sandy loam, in & out of wash area near buried old car
8	3921175 N 587299 E	T16N R9E Sec 32	N	Off des. Route, creosote scrub, coarse sandy loam, in & out of wash area

Appendix C

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

Written Description & Map of Area 222A

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.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The area includes approximately 27 sections of land with about eight sections of rocky, rolling hills in the southeast portion. The Riggs Wash runs through the northeast corner of the area. A large creosote-covered bajada makes up the remainder.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The area is primarily affected by the forces of nature with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. One minor exception is an unimproved way heading northeast from the southwest corner of the area, for approximately two miles, to an abandoned mining tunnel. The way has little effect upon the naturalness of the area due to the revegetation. The deserted Tonopah-Tidewater Railroad bed runs through the area, but is of historic significance.

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

Due to the extensive bajada, large rolling hills and naturalness, opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation are outstanding. Outstanding opportunities for solitude are available in the small mountainous region of the south.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

This is a new area, separated from Area 222 by the addition of mining roads; therefore, no comments have been received.

AREA 223

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The west boundary is the Excelsior Mine Road. The south boundary is the Kingston Road. The north boundary is a road that branches east from the Excelsior Mine Road, goes south by the Snow White Mine, and turns south to meet the Kingston Road.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area contains four sections, or approximately 10 percent, non-public land.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

This area is located north of the Mesquite Mountains and contains interesting portions of geological features and vegetative types. The southwestern portion contains a gradually sloping bajada which is covered with a variety of vegetative species, such as creosote, Joshua trees, yucca, assorted varieties of cacti, and several desert shrub and native grass species. Further north, a cluster of mountains and medium-sized buttes spread to the north and east, changing into steep, rugged mountains. This area contains a relatively small cove garden containing various species of cacti, an extensive, dense stand of Joshua trees, and assorted desert shrubs and native grasses. The eastern portion contains a wide horseshoe-shaped valley that is almost completely surrounded to the south by the rugged mountains and to the west and north by lower foothills. Creosote covers the entire valley, except for the small island in the middle. Scattered portions of cacti, desert shrub, native grasses, and isolated Joshua trees are also found. The northern and western portions contain a limited variety of terrain. Rolling brown foothills with a few steeper mountains in the western portion comprise the major reddish brown geologic features. The vegetation is dominated by creosote supported by desert shrub species, cacti, and isolated stands of Joshua trees.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The imprint of man's work is evident in a small portion of the northern one-third of the area. This occurs in the form of abandoned mining activity in Sections 31 (T. 18 N., R. 12 E.) and unsurveyed Section 11 (T. 19 N., R. 11 E.). Roads to these mining areas have been excluded from the areas possessing wilderness characteristics. This activity is in a relatively localized area and is of little impact to overall naturalness. A short, well-maintained road following a grazing allotment fence penetrates the area from the West and has also been excluded from the potential Wilderness Study Area. Elsewhere, the works of man are substantially unnoticeable. The primeval character of the land is retained in the area suited for wilderness study.



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Appendix D

Current Land Status Map of Area 222A

Current Land Status of Area 222A

