

6301 - Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: CA-080-243 Razor Open Area

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).

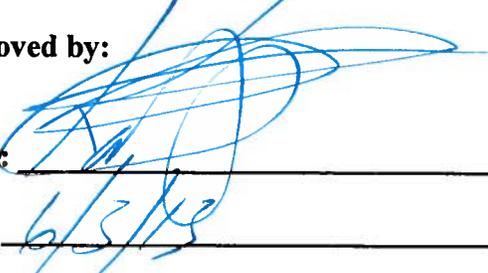
The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by:

Team Members:

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Approved by:

Name: 

Title: Field Manager

Date: 6/3/13

Barstow Field Office

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 #243
CA-080-243 Razor Open Area
May 29th, 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. 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 for other management. The Secretary then forwarded his recommendations to Congress which has taken action to designate wilderness areas and WSAs in the CDD.

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 the 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 research was done. The permanent inventory file for WIU #243 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), the 2008 Newberry Springs Desert Access Guide (DAG) and the Afton Canyon Sub Region Off Highway Vehicle West Mojave Supplement Map which showed open travel routes on BLM administered lands. Also, a draft of the *2000 Raso Off-Highway Vehicle Area Management Plan (uncompleted)* and the *1990 Old Dad Mountain CDCA-243 California Statewide Wilderness Study Report* were used for referencing only. Two field reconnaissance trips were made on July 31, 2012 and April 17, 2013 to record and photograph the unit's environmental situation. The trips involved driving designated routes within and county roads around the unit to help redefine the 1979 boundaries and photograph the existing conditions.

Year 2013 Inventory Unit Number/Name CA-080-243, Razor Open Area

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): Area 243

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
The California Desert Protection Act of 1994

Unit#/ Name	Size (historic acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N
243	49,301	Y	Y	Y	N/A

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

The 1979 California Desert Conservation Area inventory unit number 243 originally had a much different border than it does today. The northern boundary was the utility right-of-way south of the Soda Mountains Wilderness Study Area. The Western boundary was Basin Road while the eastern boundary was Kelbaker Road and the southern boundary consisted of the railroad line and associated maintenance routes. An environmental assessment ranged widely from the Mojave River basin and Soda Lake bed to various rocky hills and mountains and sand dune formations. Vegetation throughout most of the area is sparse consisting of creosote and mixed shrubs. At that time, a majority of the area was deemed "affected by the forces of nature" without the impacts of modern civilization. Also, this area had areas which provided opportunities of solitude and unconfined recreation. Public comments supported these findings and asked for the area's inclusion as wilderness. The 1994 California Desert Protection Act reclassified a large section of this area with former Bureau of Land Management lands becoming National Park Service lands that are now known as the Mojave National Preserve.

Documentation of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name: CA-080-243, Razor Open Area

(1) Sufficient size

Acreage: The rough estimate of Area 243 is roughly 34,051 acres pending a GIS calculation with a perimeter of 37 miles long.

Boundaries: This area does not have a well-defined eastern border since it is the western boundary of the Mojave Natural Preserve. The eastern boundary is Basin Road as well as sections of BLM designated routes AC8711 and AC8712. The southern boundary is the Southern Transcon main rail line owned by the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway (BNSF). The northern boundary is Interstate 15.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: The majority of land within the area is public and managed by the BLM. However there are a handful of private lands located within the area accounting for just over three percent of the total.

Location: Area 243 is located within San Bernardino County roughly 50 miles northeast from Barstow and 25 miles southwest of Baker. This area consists of a large tract of public lands with the private lands in the located throughout. Located in the midst of the Mojave Desert

Topography:

The topography varies from flat, sandy areas on the west and south, to the popular sand dunes on the east, and steep, rugged hills on the north. The soil composition goes from sand predominant to a dirt/sand mix with rocks scattered at higher elevations. Temperatures in the area range from below freezing in January to 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more in July.

Vegetation features: The Mojave Creosote Scrub, Stabilized Desert Dunes and Partially-Stabilized Dunes are the dominant plant communities within the area. Dominant plant species found within the Creosote Bush Scrub plant community include creosote bush, burro-bush, cheese-bush, Anderson boxthorn and the Mojave yucca. This community occurs primarily on the higher elevation bajada and alluvial fans. Stabilized and Partially-Stabilized Desert Dunes plant communities within the area are characterized by plant species such as sandpaper plant, felt-thorn, Spanish needle and honey mesquite. These communities are found at lower elevations on sandy hummocks throughout the planning area. Notable annual species occurring in these communities include desert lily, desert sand verbena and dune primrose. Mesquite often forms thickets within these communities, and is crucial in stabilizing dune systems.

Major human uses/activities: The major human use in this area is semi-primitive motorized recreation which includes all types of off-highway vehicular (OHV) use on designated routes and everywhere within the Razor Road Open OHV riding area. Other recreational uses include:

camping (dispersed camping is evidenced throughout the area), hiking, sightseeing, rock climbing and hounding plus wildlife and plant study.

(2) Natural condition

No

The Razor Open OHV area is designed to be an open riding area where any OHV participant could, in theory, ride wherever they wanted to. There are also areas where permanent roads cross the lands and when these are added to the OHV routes; the naturalness of the area has lessened since earlier inventories.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude

No

The area has seen increased levels of public off-highway vehicle (ohv) use in this area and when you combine that noise from the open riding area to the increased traffic along Interstate 15, opportunities for solitude are minimal.

(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation

No

Unlike the 1979 inventory, this smaller area is crisscrossed with OHV routes within the open riding area and outside it making it the significant recreational pursuit within this area. Since OHV riding is prominent, this makes both primitive and unconfined recreation activities difficult to achieve.

(5) Supplemental values

Yes

The Mojave Road, an important historic period travel route, transects the area in a southwest-to-northeast direction. Remnants of the 1906 Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad berm are adjacent to the eastern boundary and a portion of the historic and still active Union Pacific (now BNSF) Railroad follows the southern boundary. Also there are some historic mines and associated mining debris located within this area.

Appendix A

Route Analysis of Area 243

WIU # Area CA-080-243

Date: April 17, 2013

Appendix C - Route Analysis Evaluator(s): Rusty Gates and Tim Williamson

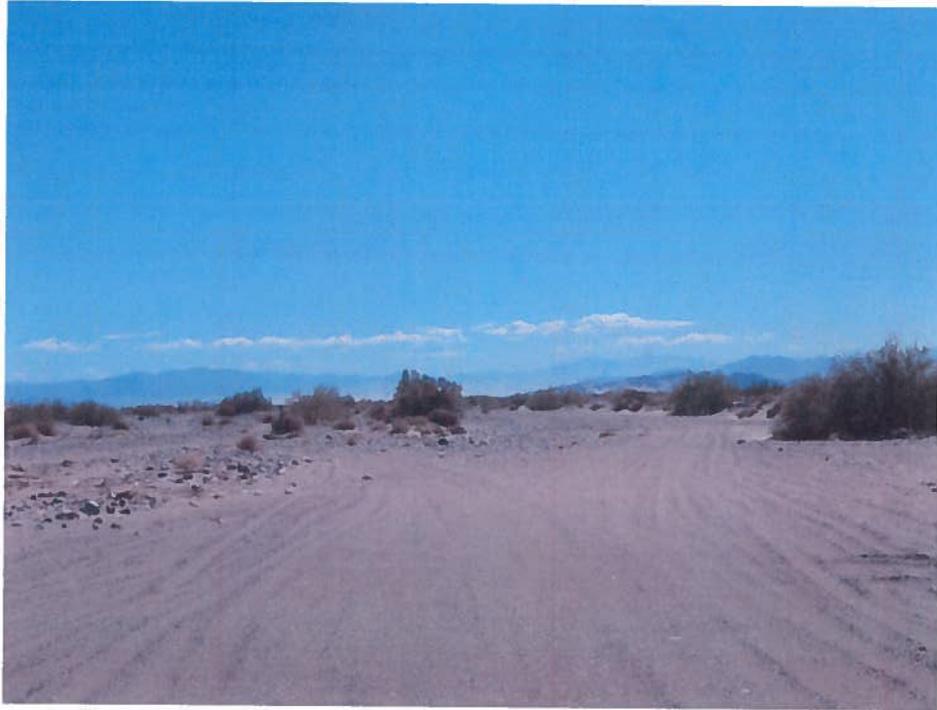
Route #	Purpose	ROW Y/N/UK	ROW In Use?	Constructed Mechanically	Type of Evidence	Improved Mechanically	Hand Tools Or Machinery	Type of Evidence
AC 8711	Industrial & Recreation	Y	Y	Y	Hardpack & Blading	Y	Machinery	Berms on two sides
AC 8828	Recreation	UK	UK	Y	Hardpack & Blading	N	Machinery	Berms on two sides
Historic Mojave Road	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track	N	N/A	Many different two tracks visible in wash
*Unnamed & Unmapped	Recreation	N	N	N	Two Track	N	N/A	Two track that turns into a wash
**Unnamed & unmapped	Recreation	N	N	Y	Hardpack & Blading	N	Machinery	Berms on two sides

* Route is more of an illegal route that starts on the edge of the Razor Open Off-Highway Vehicle area and ends approximately 500 yards north of where it starts. GPS coordinates - 3889300 N 575842 E is the rough starting point off AC 8828.

** This appears to be an old road which is no longer in use. It starts off AC 8828 and runs parallel to interstate for roughly three miles until it terminates. GPS coordinates - 3889090 N 573950 E off AC 8828.

Appendix B

Photo Log of Area 243



#1 - Route 8711 & Historic Mojave Road - Eastern View



#2 - Route 8711 OHV Staging Area - Northeastern View



#3 - Small Hill West of Razor Road/Route 8828 - Northwestern View



#4 - Razor Road/Route 8828 - Northwestern View



#5 - Unnamed Route South of I-15 - Eastern View



#6 - Unnamed Route South of I-15 - Southern View



#7 - Unnamed Route South of I-15 - Northern View



#8 - Razor Road/Route 8828 - Northern View

Photo Log for Area 243

Photo #	GPS	Town & Range	Dir	Description
1	3879026 N 565034 E	T 11 N R 7 E Sec 7	E	Route 8711 and Historic Mojave Road, dry river wash, pebbly sandy loam, willow, mesquite and scrubs.
2	3883072 N 567002 E	T 12 N R 7 E Sec 32	NE	Route 8711, staging area for the Razor Open OHV area, pebbly sandy loam, mesquite and scrubs.
3	3884280 N 578498 E	T 12 N R 8 E Sec 28	NW	Small Hill due west of Razor Road/Route 8828 and within the Razor Road Open OHV Area, Rocky with sandy pebbly loam, sparse scrub in foreground.
4	3888281 N 576485 E	T 12 N R 8 E Sec 8	NW	Razor Road/Route 8828, within the Razor Road Open OHV Area, pebbly sandy loam, creosote scrub and grasses.
5	3891256 N 575316 E	T 12 N R 8 E Sec 6	E	Unmaintained and unnamed route, south of I-15, creosote scrub, pebbly sandy loam.
6	3891256 N 575316 E	T 12 N R 8 E Sec 6	S	Unmaintained and unnamed route, south of I-15, creosote scrub, pebbly sandy loam.
7	3891256 N 575316 E	T 12 N R 8 E Sec 6	N	Unmaintained and unnamed route, south of I-15, creosote scrub, pebbly sandy loam.
8	3888681 N 572717 E	T 12 N R 7 E Sec 11	N	Razor Road/Route 8828, pebbly sandy loam but hard packed in spots with visible evidence of an old road, creosote scrub.

Appendix C

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

Written Description & Map of Area 243

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Portions of this area have been affected by man. Some activity, both past and present, has resulted in a degradation of the natural environment and in the exclusion of these sites from those containing wilderness values. A telephone relay station and access road in the southern Soda Mountains near Interstate 15 at the Beacon overpass has been included. In addition, the active Blue Bell Mine, at VARM 2849, in the Soda Mountains was excluded because of current operations (bulldozing, slag piles, shafts, equipment). Along the western border two active quarries, one mine, borrow pit, and their associated roads and ways have been excluded, in portions of Sections 21, 22, 26, 28, 34 and all of 27, (T. 12N., R. 5E.). Another borrow pit and road, off Highway 91, have been excluded in Section 33 (T. 12N., R. 6E.). In the northern portion of the area having 2(c) values, signs of man's works including an active mine with open pit scars, a house, and its associated road have been excluded. From the northern border in Section 25, (T. 15N., R. 7E.), this road runs south through Sections 25, 36, (T. 15N., R. 7E.), and Sections 1, 2, 11, 14, 15, (T. 14N., R. 7E.). Nearby another mining road comes off the northern border in Section 3 (T. 14N., R. 7E.). It has been excluded also due to its maintenance and associated mining scraps. The southeast corner, near Baker, has been excluded due to several ways, old mining scars and ORV tracks.

The remainder of the area has been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man's works substantially unnoticeable. A way crosses the valley between the Cronese and Soda Mountains. Sections of this way are under water at East Cronese Lake. Several other old ways are in the area but have an insignificant affect upon the naturalness of the area.

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

Opportunities for both solitude and for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation are outstanding in the area. The large size and variation in landform provide numerous opportunities.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

The majority of the comments agreed with the findings. Several comments suggested the southeast border should be extended south. A few comments dealt with additional roads. After field checks, the appropriate changes were made.

AREA 243

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The northern boundary includes an underground telephone line right-of-way, a cattle fence maintenance road south of Rattlesnake and Big Cowhole Mountains; and, a cattle fence maintenance road that eventually ties into the telephone road near 17-Mile Point on the Kelbaker Road. The eastern boundary includes the Kelbaker Road. 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 railroad line and maintenance road; and, the western boundary, Basin Road.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

Approximately 10-15 percent of this area is non-public land scattered throughout the area.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

This area contains a variety of vegetative types, geographical features, and landforms. Of particular significance is the Mojave River Sink, occupying the southern portion of the area, which grades from flat, rocky terrain on the west to mesquite-covered sand hummocks and small dunes in the central portion. Other significant landforms include the flat, alkali-covered Soda Lake Bed, the low, sand-blanketed hills of Devil's Playground, the large, steep-sided Old Dad Mountain, and the smaller, but rugged, Soda Mountains and Cowhole Mountains. Except for the sand hummock area, which supports a rich community of mesquite and other sand-tolerant plants, vegetation throughout the area is sparse, consisting mostly of creosote and mixed shrubs. A major portion of Soda Lake Bed is entirely devoid of vegetation due to the mineral content in the soil.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

A major portion of the area generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. Boundary adjustments have been made in order to exclude heavily impacted areas, such as the area just east of Afton Canyon which contains numerous ways and surface scrapings and which appears to have been used as a dumpsite for scrap metal; the Razor Ranch/Crucero area which contains numerous ways, off-road vehicle impacts, and the abandoned Razor Ranch structures; the road to private dwellings from the Razor Ranch exit on Interstate 15; the improved roads, buildings, and other developments in and around Soda Springs; the roads to active mines (surface scraping, structures, and slag piles) in the Cowhole and Little Cowhole Mountains; and the roads, slag piles, tunnels, and shafts near 17-mile point. A previously graded road leads along the western edge of Old Dad Mountain to a mine (grading or slopes) on the northern edge. An unimproved way continues north from this road along the western edge of the mountains and ties into the road going east from the Little Cowhole Mountains. The way has little impact on the naturalness of the area due to its deteriorated condition.

The adjusted boundary proceeds northeast following a wash from the Union Pacific Railroad at Section 12 (T. 11 N., R. 9 E.) to the edge of the dry lake. It then follows the edge of the dry lake and skirts around the southern edge of the Cowhole Mountains, then northward to the roadless area boundary at Section 30 (T. 13 N., R. 10 E.). Except for the exclusion of the mines near 17-mile point, the boundary generally follows the roadless area boundary from this point on.

Within the adjusted boundaries, the land has generally retained its primeval character and influence. Other works of man, which include a few primitive ways, are substantially unnoticeable due to terrain variety and the sandy nature of some areas.

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

The area contains a variety of topography which provides outstanding opportunities for solitude within the secluded canyons of the mountains and in the vast, open plains. Unobstructed views in many directions enhance feelings of remoteness in the area. The diversity of geological features also provides outstanding opportunities for a wide range of primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public comment is overwhelmingly in favor of this area's inclusion as a study area. Many comments urged the addition of the Mojave River Sink on the basis of its ecological significance and apparent naturalness. A few comments opposed the addition of the Sink area due to its popularity for off-road vehicle and camping use in the Razor Ranch/Crucero area. Field examination revealed the impacts mentioned in Part IV which impaired the natural condition.

AREA 244

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

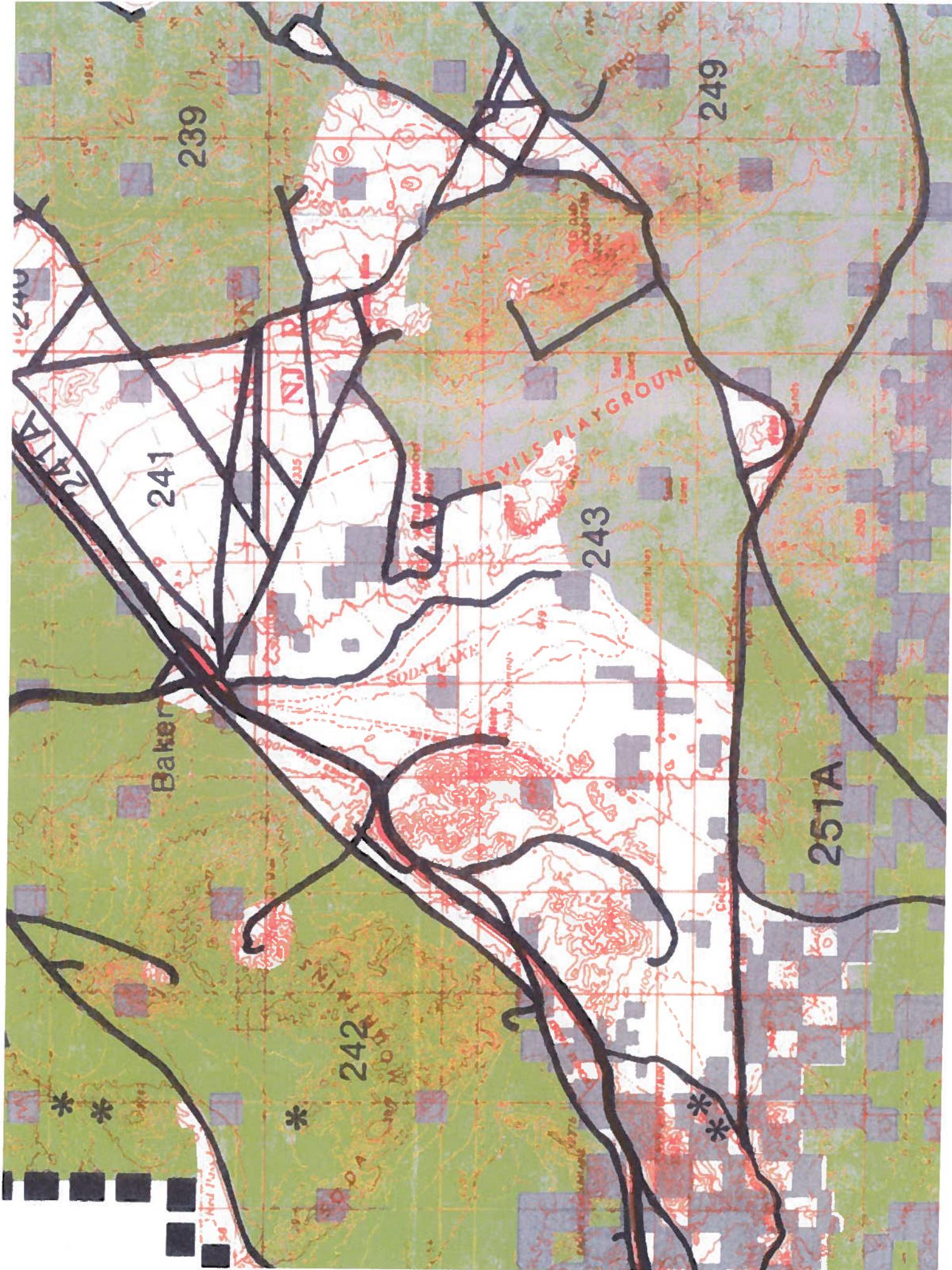
The southern boundary of the Wilderness Study Area is the northern edge of the utility right-of-way which contains power transmission lines. This boundary is located along a line 400 feet north of the three existing transmission lines (except where a service road may extend outside the right-of-way); on the east, by a maintained road used for access to Rainbow Wells and for service to a utility line; and, on the northwest, by a road used for access to the Aiken Cinder Mine, as well as a maintenance road for adjoining cattle tanks and water line.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area contains two sections of non-public land, accounting for roughly 10 percent of the total area.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

This area contains about half of the area known as the "Cinder Cones." Topography varies throughout the area. The Cones rise above the surrounding terrain about 300 feet, are dark red and black, and symmetrically shaped. Between the Cones are large



Baker

239

241

242

243

249

251A

247A

DEVILS PLAYGROUND

SODA LAKE

OLD DAD LIGHT TOWER

NJ R

5000 ft

3000 ft

*

*

*

*

Appendix D

Current Land Status Map of Area 243

Current Status of Area 243

