

## 6301 - Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

### Summary of Findings and Conclusion

**Unit Name and Number:** Silver Bell Mine CA-080-207-1

#### 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: 12/10/13

*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 Silver Bell Mine CA-080-207-1

## 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):** Rodman Mountains CA-080-207

**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 Newberry Mountains, California 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
207	25,037	Y	Y	Y	N/A
1990	40,454	Y	Y	Y	N/A

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

The majority of this unit was found to have wilderness characteristics and became the Rodman Mountains Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The 1990 statewide wilderness study report indicated a partial wilderness recommendation of the unit but agreed with the earlier report. This report recommended wilderness for the interior portion while the remaining lands were to be managed for low intensity activities. The majority of the WSA, minus some narrow strips surrounding the boundaries, were designated as the Rodman Mountains Wilderness under the California Desert Protection Act of 1994. The portion of the unit that is outside of the original designated wilderness is the subject of this inventory update. The lands are contiguous to existing wilderness and essentially form a narrow partial ring around the area.

## **Documentation of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions**

**Unit Number/Name:** CA-080-207-1 Silver Bell Mine

### **(1) Sufficient size**

**Acreage:** The rough estimate of Area 207-1 is 55,426 acres pending a GIS calculation with a perimeter of 40.2 miles long. However, if the current Rodman Mountains Wilderness Area is eliminated from the acreage total, the unit is only 25,633 acres.

**Boundaries:** The area is bounded on the South by a utility right of way which contains transmission lines. To the east, the road to the Silver Bell Mine forms the boundary. To the west, the road connecting Camp Rock Road to Kane Spring forms the boundary. On the north the boundary is a gas pipeline access road. The "interior border" of the unit is the Rodman Mountains Wilderness; the area being inventoried includes a ring of lands surrounding the wilderness that were not designated.

### **Description of Current Conditions**

**Land ownership:** The unit is comprised primarily of BLM land with a number of private inholdings totaling approximately 4,200 acres and two State managed parcels totaling roughly 700 acres. The BLM managed lands are not contiguous enough to be enough alone for wilderness consideration, however since this unit does have lands connected to current Wilderness Areas, those lands are to be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

**Location:** The unit is located in San Bernardino County roughly in the center of the BLM Barstow Resource Area. The area is 28 miles east from the City of Barstow. The unit is immediately south of Interstate 40 and west of the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command at 29 Palms. The Rodman Mountains Wilderness Area is encircled by the unit.

**Topography:** Colorful escarpments, white mountains splashed with red and black, a maze of canyons, and majestic bajadas come together in Rodman Mountains region. The unit is made up of the foot-slopes and bajadas surround these mountains. From northwest to southeast across the middle of the area, a large lava flow forms a long mesa that slices the terrain in two.

**Vegetation features:** The vegetation is predominantly creosote scrub. It thins out as elevations increase from the boundaries. However, within the old lava flow, little to no vegetation can be common.

**Major human uses/activities:** The area receives regular recreation use associated with its proximity to the Rodman Mountains Wilderness Area. While there are still visible impacts and evidence of human use from past use, there are still two active mines within this. The recreational pursuits within this unit include: off-highway vehicle exploration, rock-hounding, cultural exploration and target shooting. The evidence of these activities is spread around the boundaries into the interior.

**(2) Natural condition**

No

The features that lead to the area's exclusion from the Rodman Mountains Wilderness continue to impact naturalness in the area. In the northern part of the unit, several vehicle routes cross the area and impact naturalness in this area. In the southern part of the unit, a large mine and access road impacts a portion of the area. In summary, the narrow strips of public land that were excluded from the WSA and Wilderness Area, have impacts to naturalness so that they do not have wilderness characteristics, even when considered in conjunction with the current adjoining wilderness lands.

**(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude**

No

The unit does not support the pursuit of solitude. The effects of human developments on the landscape make achieving solitude difficult.

**(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation**

No

The unit does not support this form of recreation. This unit is an outstanding area for motorized use, rock-hounding and target shooting.

**(5) Supplemental values**

No

Appendix A  
Images of Area 207-1



Image #1 - View of Original Boundary for Area 207

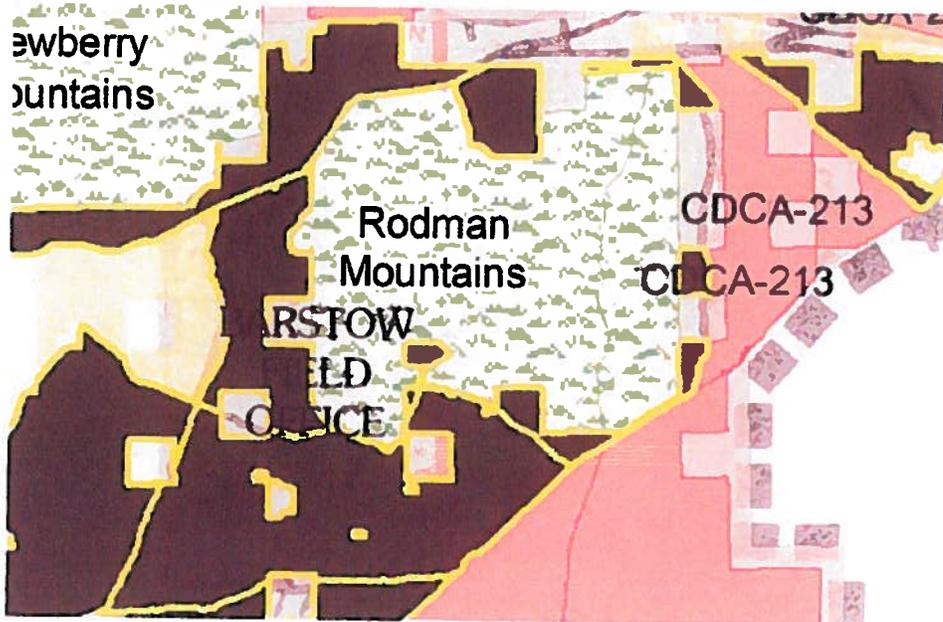


Image #2 - View of Boundaries for Area 207-1



Image #3 - Active Cinder Cone mine in southern portion of the unit.

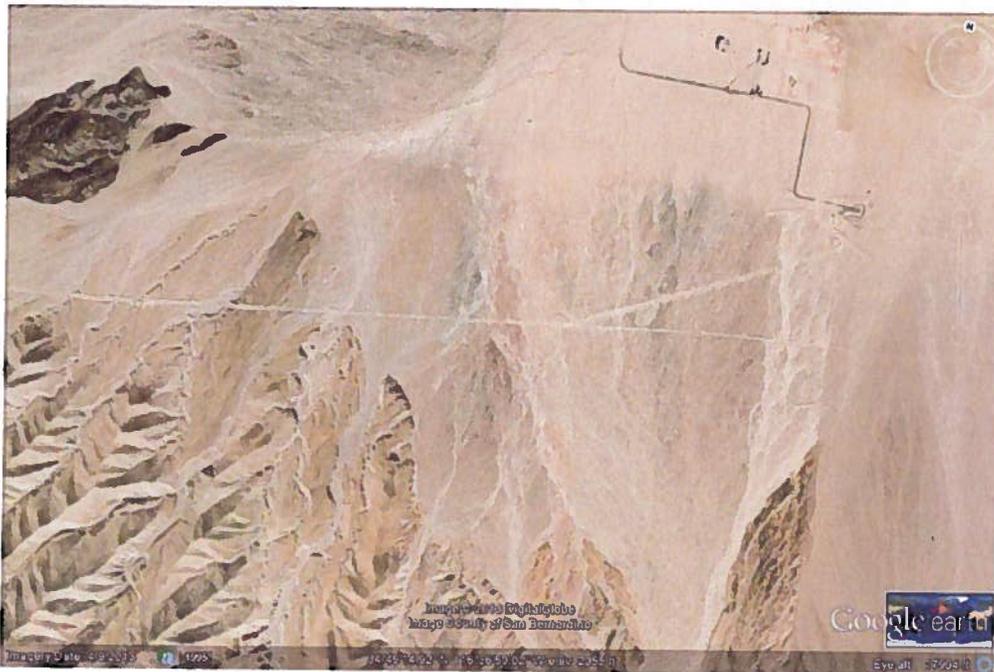


Image #4 - Vehicle routes in northern portion of unit.

Appendix B

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

Written Description of Area 207

## VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

The many comments received recognized the natural values of the area, with the vast majority supporting the findings.

### AREA 207

#### 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). To the east, a maintained dirt road used as access to the Silver Bell Mine is the area border. The western boundary is a maintained dirt road between Camp Rock Road and Kane Spring. To the north, the boundary is a gas pipeline maintenance road.

#### II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area is approximately 69 percent public lands. Non-public holdings occur in north-south strips of alternating sections.

#### III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The area encompasses the Rodman Mountains and minor alluvial formations at the northern and southern ends. The Rodman Mountains consist of an extensive series of ridges ascending from 2900 to 3000 feet near the northern alluvial slope of the Mojave Valley to 4906 feet on Pipkin Cinder Cone near the southern end of the area. A surrounding lava flow nearly bisects the area from northwest to southeast. This lava forms a mesa gently sloping to the northwest and has cliff-like sides, creating deep canyons along its perimeter. At several points along this perimeter, drainage channels flow over the escarpments, creating spectacular waterfalls during wet seasons. The Creosote Scrub community is represented on the alluvial slopes, while a transitional type, indicating the Joshua Tree Woodland association, is evident at higher elevations. South of Target Peak, the mountains drop sharply to 4200 feet and slope toward Johnson Valley. Several low hills in the far southwest corner of the area seem more closely associated with the northern end of the Fry Mountains than the Rodman Complex.

#### IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Man-made improvements are present over portions of the area. Large-scale mining activity has occurred in the southwest portion in the area north and west of Camp Rock Mine. These are located in low, scattered, highly eroded hills between the Rodman Mountains and Newberry Mountains and are highly visible scars upon the landscape. A dirt road, which is not maintained, leads to Pipkin Cinder Cone from the base of Target Peak. An abandoned cinder mine is located on the cinder cone. Apparatus associated with the mine still remains. Diggings from the mine are visible and are a major scar, as the disturbed areas have altered the shape and color of the cone. Some random vehicle tracks occur across the lava flow, but not to a degree which would make rehabilitation impracticable. The Pipkin Cinder Cone is excluded along with the western portion from a north-south line through Camp Rock Mine. These are areas where man's work dominates the landscape and have thus been excluded from the potential Wilderness Study Area boundaries. The boundaries of the potential Wilderness Study Area are common with the roadless area boundaries along the northern, eastern, and southern borders to Pipkin Cinder Cone. The cone is excluded and the boundary is again common to a point approximately one-half mile east of Camp Rock Mine. The boundary runs north from Camp Rock Mine through a wash and way to the northern boundary one-eighth mile east of EM 2855.

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

Several aspects of the area enhance outstanding opportunities for solitude. Higher elevations offer outstanding vistas of the Mojave River Valley, Troy Lake depression, Newberry Mountains, Alvord Mountains, Cady Mountains, and the Pisgah Crater and lava beds. The deep canyons provide screening and isolation from other visitors. The topography of this area is varied and scenic, providing outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Various degrees of challenge are offered, with

areas of geological and historical significance. Surprise Canyon contains many examples of rock art in the form of petroglyphs, as do rocks around the Deep Tank area. Of interest geologically are the cinder cone, lava flow, and eroded cliffs along the perimeter of the volcanic mesa.

#### VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Most comments were in agreement with presence of solitude and uniqueness of the terrain.

### AREA 207A

#### I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The area has as its southern and eastern boundaries steel-structure powerline right-of-ways and accompanying maintenance roads. The western boundary is Camp Rock Road, and the northern boundary is a maintained dirt road from Camp Rock Road to Surprise Canyon and further east to connect with the eastern boundary.

#### II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area is approximately 70 percent public lands. Non-public holdings occur in north-south strips of alternating sections.

#### III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The boundaries encompass Target Peak, the highest portion of the Rodman Mountains, and surrounding alluvium. Scattered low hills south and west of Target Peak are associated with the northern end of the Fry Mountains. The Creosote Bush Scrub community is represented on the alluvium while a transitional type, indicating the Joshua Tree Woodland, is evident at higher elevations.

#### IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Large-scale mining activity has occurred in the western portion at Copper Strand Mine and Stark Mine. These are located in the low scattered hills south and west of Target Peak and are highly visible scars upon the landscape. Ways to these apparently abandoned operations further detract from the primeval character and influence of the area. A communications site is located atop Target Peak and is apparent throughout the entire area. The imprint of man's work is substantially noticeable throughout the area, making it unsuitable for further wilderness consideration.

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

Opportunities are limited due to the impact of man-made improvements upon the landscape.

#### VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comment stated the area was not natural.

### AREA 208

#### I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The area is bordered on the east and north by Camp Rock Road; to the south, by a steel-structure powerline right-of-way. The west boundary is a gas pipeline and maintenance road. A section of the border between the powerline and pipeline is defined by a maintained dirt road.

#### II. LAND OWNERSHIP

Public lands constitute approximately 65 percent of the area in strip-pattern ownership.

Appendix C

Current Land Status of Area 207-1

# Current Land Status of Area 207-1

