

6310 – Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

Area Unique Identifier: ESDC_9-1, 9-2, 9-3

Summary: Although the unit does not have 5,000 acres, it is adjacent to the Anza Borrego Desert State Park and the Sawtooth Mountains Wilderness Study Area. It has a history of human uses including, but not limited to hiking, horseback riding, and hunting. The unit is steep and rugged with mountain chaparral. Its rugged terrain and relatively low visitation allow ample opportunity for solitude. Temporary effects on solitude include approved periodic military overflights. The Visual Resources Inventory conducted in September of 2010 shows the area as being a VRM Class 2.

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
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? Yes No
4. Does the area have supplemental values? Yes No

Conclusion:

The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)

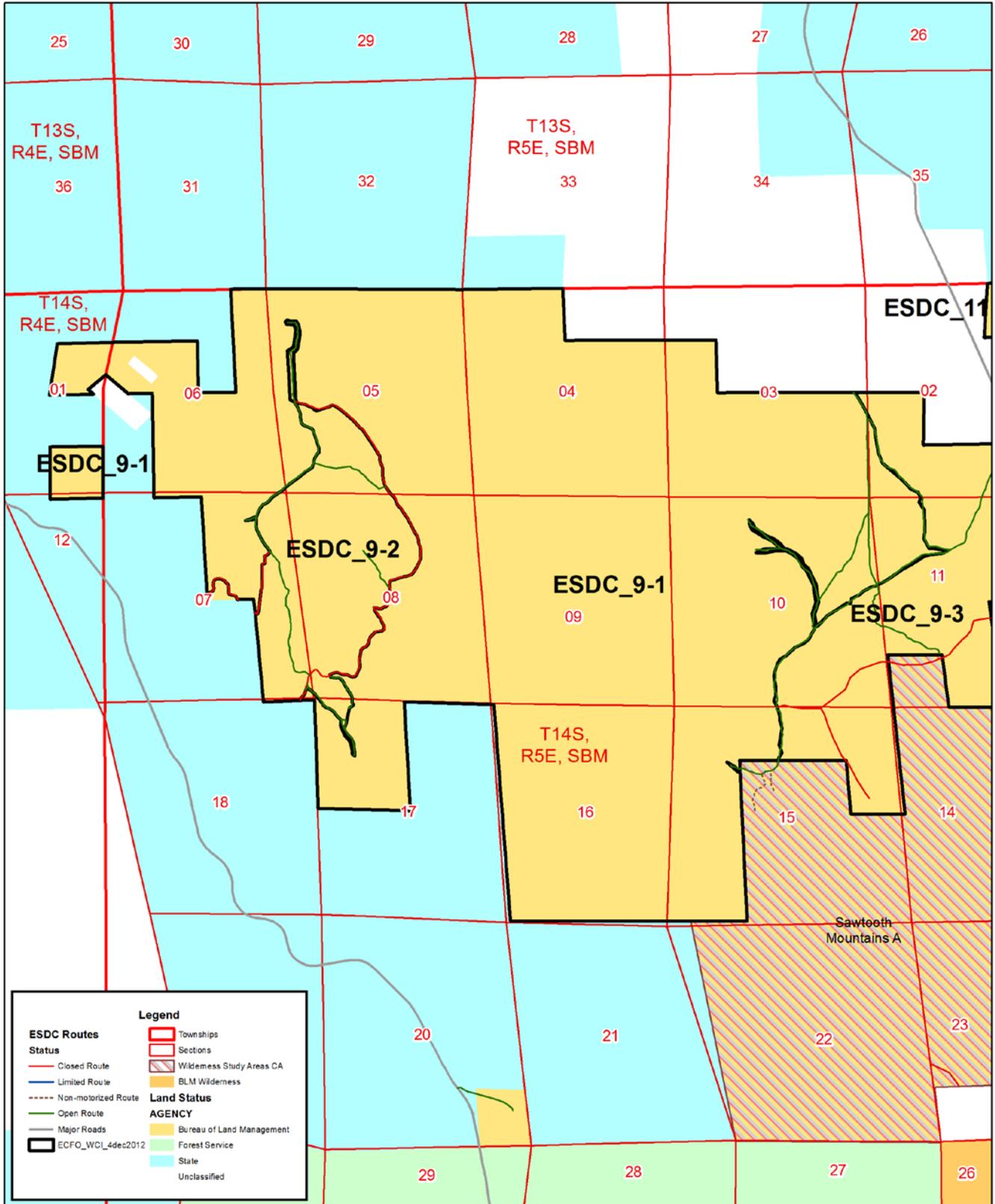
The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by (team members): John Johnson, Environmental Protection Specialist, 12/4/2011 (with input from ECFO Interdisciplinary Team)

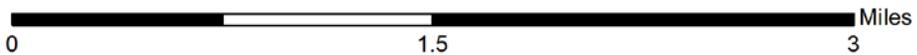
Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):

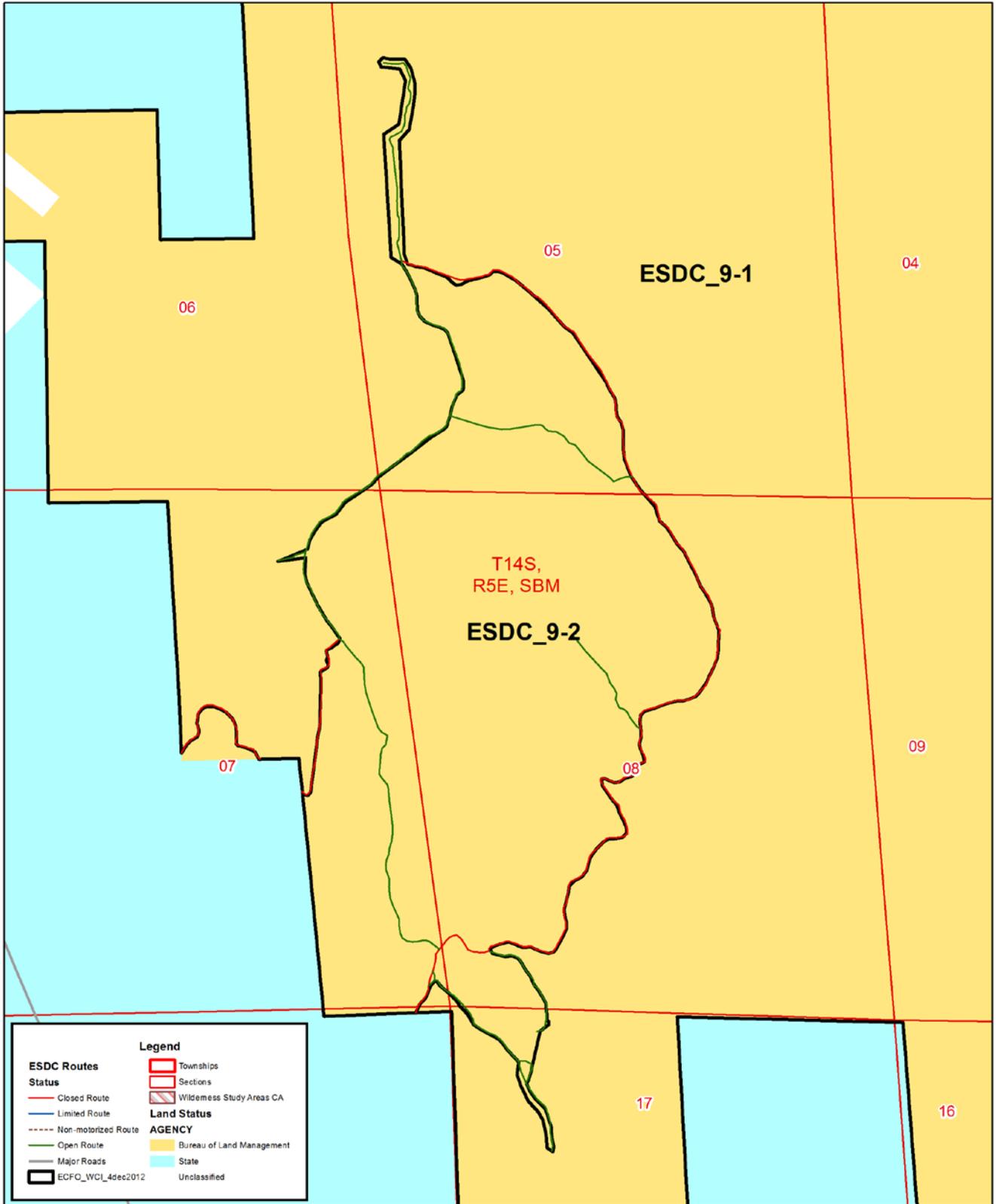
Name: _____ Title: Field Manager Date: 2/21/2013

*This form documents information that constitutes and 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 or 1610.5-3.



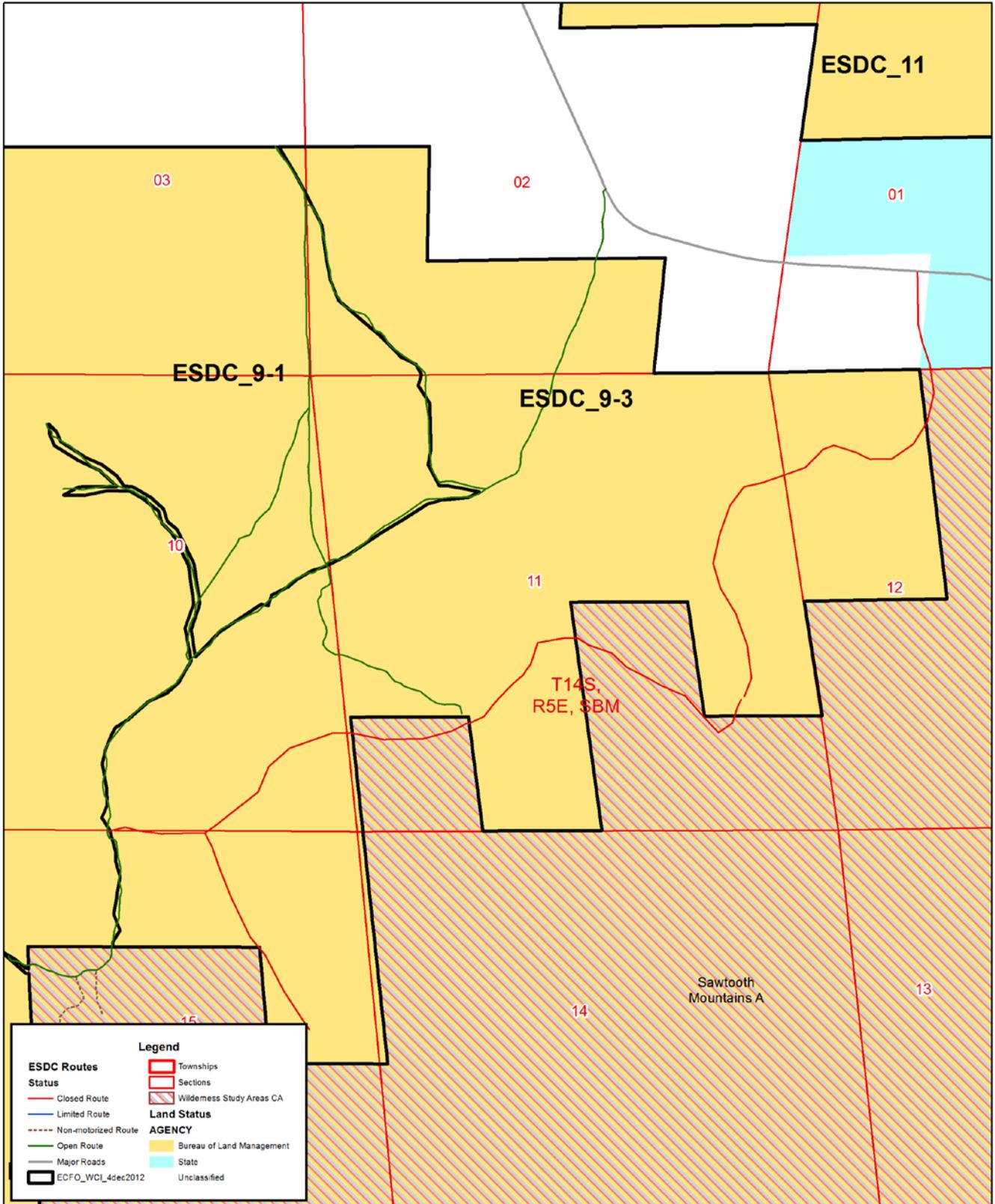
Wilderness Character Inventory - ESDC_9-1



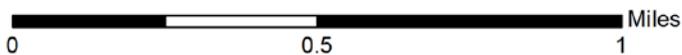
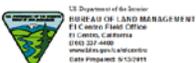


Wilderness Character Inventory - ESDC_9-2





Wilderness Character Inventory - ESDC_9-3



The comments have concurred with BLM's reports, referred to areas outside the unit or are wilderness study phase considerations. No new facts were mentioned.

CA-060-024A, Sawtooth Mountains A
(Map 06-R)

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The unit is bounded on the north and northeast by nonpublic lands. Anza-Borrego Desert State Park borders on the west and the Cleveland National Forest on the south. Unit CA-060-024B borders on the east.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The entire unit is composed of public land. The proposed wilderness study area, which includes all the intensive inventory unit except a small parcel in the northeast corner, contains a total of 3,892 acres.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The dominating feature in the unit is an east-west ridge that rises above the Vallecito Valley to the north. The sides of the ridge are very steep and are covered with sparse desert scrub near the base to dense chaparral near the ridge top. Active grazing occurs in the lower elevations.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The area is in a natural state with almost no evidence of man's actions.

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

The limited access and rugged topography provide outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Based on Forest Service review, a potential exists to include approximately 2,000 acres of the Cleveland National Forest with this intensive inventory unit and Unit CA-060-024B, for a combined total of nearly 30,000 acres of potential wilderness. This would further increase opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

The public has expressed the following varied viewpoints. The area is permeated with roads. Because the unit borders on Indian reservations and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the criteria for wilderness are not met. They expressed a belief that the protection of bighorn sheep is the reason for considering the unit as a wilderness area, but the bighorn sheep are not affected by man and do not need the protection of a wilderness area. The use of beehives, water troughs, and fences on public lands disqualify an area for wilderness designation. Some questioned the BLM's designation of the route to Inner Pasture as a road. Discrepancies between the Draft Initial Inventory map and the July 1979 map were noted.

Statements on land treatment and management are study phase considerations. The route to Inner Pasture is maintained and regularly used to provide access to private property and an airfield. Corrections are being made to maps as cartographic errors are detected.

CA-060-024B, Sawtooth Mountains B
(Map 06-R)

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The Cuyapaipe Indian Reservation and the Cleveland National Forest comprise the west boundary of the unit. The north and southeast boundaries are comprised of nonpublic lands. The east boundary is Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the Manzanita Indian Reservation forms the south boundary.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The 31,006 acres of public land encompass 38 acres of private ownership. The proposed wilderness study area contains 24,419 acres of BLM-administered land.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The topography of the unit varies from flat valley bottom to steep rugged mountainsides. The higher elevations support a dense chaparral vegetation; the lower valley areas and lower ridges are covered with sparse desert scrub. Active grazing occurs throughout the lower portion of the unit.

Wilderness Characteristics Inventory (Public)

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

Area Unique Identifier ESDC 9-1, 9-2, 9-3 Acreage 5,637

(If the inventory area consists of subunits, list the acreage of each and evaluate separately).

In completing steps (1) – (5), use additional space as necessary.

(1) Is the area of sufficient size? (If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check “Yes” and describe the exception in the space provided below),

Yes No

Note: If “No is checked, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check “N/A” for the remaining questions below.

Description (describe the boundaries of the area—wilderness inventory roads, property lines, etc.):

To the west is Anza Borrego Desert State Park; north is Anza Borrego Desert State Park and Private Lands, east is the Sawtooth Mountains Wilderness Study Area; and to the south are Anza Borrego Desert State Park and the Sawtooth Mountains Wilderness Study Area. The eastern portion (971 acres) of the unit lay a network of routes in the Cottonwood Canyon area as well as a small network of routes in the southwestern portion (475 acres). These two areas have been eliminated as having wilderness characteristics.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes No N/A

Note: If “No is checked, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check “N/A” for the remaining questions below.

Description (include land ownership, location, topography, vegetation, and summary of major human uses/activities):

The small unit is mostly Public Lands between Sunrise Hwy and Hwy S-2 near the Mason Valley area. It has a history of human uses including, but not limited to hiking, horseback riding. The unit is steep and rugged with mountain chaparral.

(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remaining is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

Yes No N/A

Description (describe the area’s outstanding opportunities for solitude):

Although the unit is small, it is adjacent to the Anza Borrego Desert State Park and the Sawtooth Mountains Wilderness Study Area. Its rugged terrain and relatively low visitation allow ample opportunity for solitude. Temporary effects on solitude include approved periodic military overflights.

(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remaining is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?

Yes No N/A

Note: If "No" is checked for both 3 and 4, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "N/A" for question 5.

Description (describe the area's outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation):

With somewhat limited legal access, the unit offers opportunities for hiking, hunting, horseback riding and general nature study. No formal hiking trails exist, so all hiking is cross-country.

(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value)?

Yes No N/A

Description:

Two plant species of special concern may occur in the unit which is the Mount Laguna alumroot (*Heuchera brevistaminae*) and *Ayenia compacta*. The San Diego coast horned lizard and spotted bat are also suspected to be within the unit as well as historic habitat for peninsular bighorn sheep. The unit has historic archeological values as sites exist throughout the unit. The Visual Resources Inventory conducted in September of 2010 shows the area as being a VRM Class 2. The unit offers opportunities for hiking, hunting, horseback riding and general nature study. No formal hiking trails exist, so all hiking is cross-country.