

Summary of Analysis*

Area Unique Identifier: CDCA 1372-1

Summary

Results of analysis:

The Private Lands are mostly the US Gypsum Mine and railroad. On the south end of this unit is 1,000 acres and north end is 1,100 acres both adjacent to the Fish Creek Mountains Wilderness. Though these two portions are adjacent to wilderness, their natural character has been degraded due to the extensive gypsum mining which is currently taking place in the area.

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

Check one:

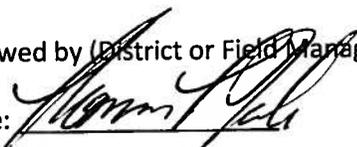
The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)

The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by (team members):

John Johnson, Environmental Protection Specialist, 3/30/2012 (with input from ECFO Interdisciplinary Team)

Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):

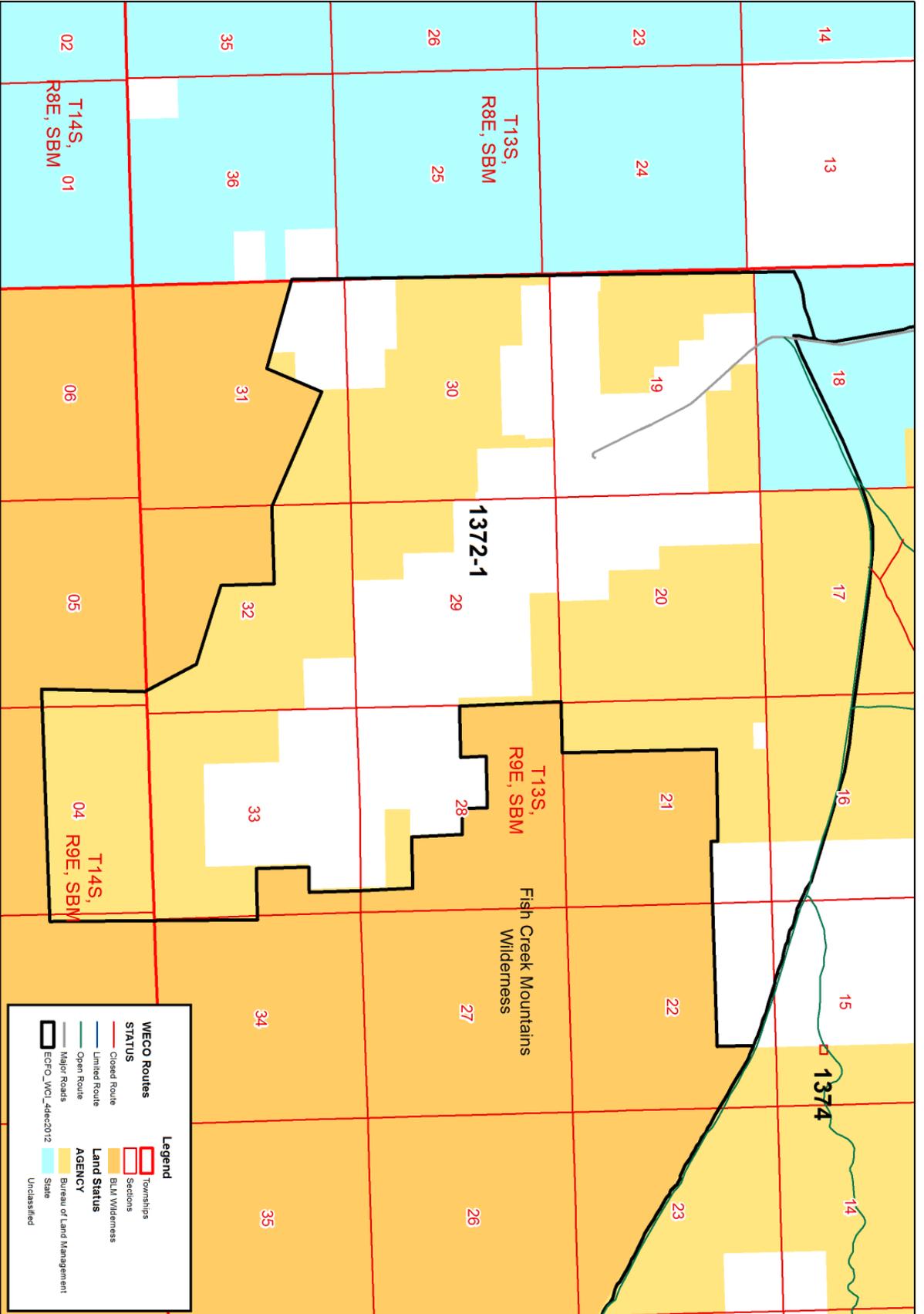
Name:  Title: Acting Field Manager

Date: 2/21/2013

*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 or 1610.5-3



Wilderness Character Inventory - CDCA_1372-1



AREA 371

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This area is bounded on the west by an industrial railroad; on the south by the Evan Hughes Highway; on the east by the Westside Main Canal; and, on the north, by the U.S. Navy Parachute Recovery Test Range.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

About 20 percent of the area is non-public lands.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

This area is extremely flat topography with little relief, sparsely vegetated with creosote.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Numerous ways criss-cross this area, thus the imprint of man's work is substantially noticeable due to the lack of vegetation and flat, open terrain.

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

Opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation are severely restricted by the small, confining nature of this area and inability to provide a seclusive experience.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments received agreed with the findings. One comment suggested that consideration be given to wilderness values within the Naval Gunnery Range; another mentioned geothermal potential.

AREA 372

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This area is bounded on the north by an industrial railroad; on the east, by the U.S. Navy Parachute Recovery Test Range; on the south, by the Evan Hughes Highway; and, on the west, by a mining access road into the Carrizo Impact Area and a portion of the Anza Borrego Desert State Park boundary called the Old Tram Road.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

About 25 percent of the area is non-public land. The mountains in the far western portion of the area consist of a solid block of non-public land.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The northern portion includes the rugged, colorful, and massive Fish Creek Mountains which contain diverse geologic and archaeological values. Near-vertical walls and maze-like canyons dominate portions of this sparsely vegetated mountain uplift. The ancient beach line of Lake Cahuilla can be observed in the northern portion of this area. The southern portion includes Carrizo Wash and the relatively flat terrain of West Mesa. Topographic features are visibly absent, and vegetation is scattered and sparse.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The portion of the area which contains wilderness values is primarily limited to the eastern Fish Creek Mountains, which are affected primarily by the forces of nature with man's work substantially unnoticeable. Large areas to the west and south have been excluded from wilderness consideration due to degradation of their natural character. These areas include the extensive gypsum mining operation which is currently taking place in the northwestern corner; exploration and mining occurring at the terminus of the Old Tram Road; and, numerous permanent improvements and habitations, along with evidence of intensive off-road vehicle activity in the southern portion of the area. The mountains in the far western portion were excluded due to solid, non-public land

status. The adjusted boundary generally conforms to the roadless area boundary to the northeast and southwest, while to the southeast it follows washes; including Carrizo Wash, at the base of the Fish Creek Mountains. To the west it generally follows the western slopes of the Fish Creek Mountains, avoiding the gypsum mine, continuing south and around a small strip of non-public land before reaching the State Park boundary at the extreme southwest corner of Section 2 (T. 14 S., R. 9 E.).

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

The area in and around the Fish Creek Mountains contains outstanding opportunities for solitude. Because of the rugged topography and winding, narrow canyons, visitors are effectively shielded from one another. Diverse topography also offers challenge and a variety of primitive recreation opportunities.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Most comments favor inclusion of the area for further wilderness study. Many also urge expansion of the potential study area southward based on high ecological values (especially in Carrizo Wash) and natural character. Field checks revealed man-made features which detracted from the area's natural character. Some comments dealt with mining and roads, which were excluded where verified through field checks.

AREA 373

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The northern and western boundaries are Anza Borrego Desert State Park. The eastern boundary parallels a mining access road which traverses the Carrizo Impact Area. The southern boundary follows section lines which approximately parallel the southern base of the Coyote Mountains.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The boundaries include approximately three sections of non-public land scattered throughout and accounting for approximately 5 percent of the land area.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

This area varies from the deep, steepwalled canyons, massive ridges, highly dissected badland topography, fossils, and fragile geologic phenomena of the Coyote Mountains, to the fairly flat, open bajada dissected by desert washes. Some canyons are highly colorful, with varying pastel hues of earth tones accentuated by the sparseness of vegetation. From a great many locations, outstanding views of badlands and pristine land in Anza Borrego Desert State Park are visible.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The majority of the Coyote Mountains retain their primeval character and influence and the area generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature. Some primitive ways and inactive mining activities do penetrate the interior but, after two seasonal hurricane rains, much of that influence has diminished and the natural condition dominates the landscape today. This area was identified by BLM in 1975 as a primitive area. A large portion has been excluded from further wilderness consideration since man's work is substantially noticeable. Along the bajada, near the base of the mountains and near the mouths of some canyons, are found sand and gravel operations as well as a refuse dump. The southeastern portion has permanent improvements and human habitation in the form of several houses and mobile homes, utility pole lines, and numerous residential roads. The road into Painted Gorge also has been excluded as has the large area around Carrizo Mountain due to the numerous mining roads and active claims which have severely altered the natural appearance of the landscape.

The potential wilderness study area boundary follows the roadless area boundary along the north and west. The southern boundary is located at the base of the Coyote Mountains to exclude mining and areas impacted by off-road vehicle use. The eastern boundary parallels Fossil Canyon and skirts around the mining activity on and around Carrizo Mountain.

Wilderness Characteristics Inventory (Public)

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

Area Unique Identifier CDCA 1372-1 Acreage 5,690

(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 X 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.):

This unit is bounded on the north by the US Gypsum Railroad and Split Mountain Road; on the west by Anza Borrego Desert State Park; on the south and west by the Fish Creek Mountains Wilderness. The area is mixed with Private and Public Lands. The Private Lands are mostly the US Gypsum Mine and railroad. On the south end of this unit is 1,000 acres and north end is 1,100 acres both adjacent to the Fish Creek Mountains Wilderness.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes _____ No X 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):

Though these two portions are adjacent to wilderness, their natural character has been degraded due to the extensive gypsum mining which is currently taking place in the area.

(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 X

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

(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 X

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):

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

Yes _____

No _____

N/A X

Description:

(Add description here)