

Summary of Analysis*

Area Unique Identifier: CDCA 1373-1

Summary

Results of analysis:

The unit does not meet the size criteria, at just over 800 acre, and the WECO designated route of travel that runs through the unit.

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:

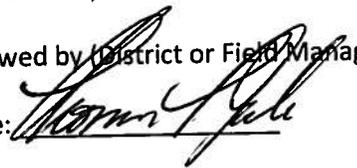
The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)

The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by (team members):

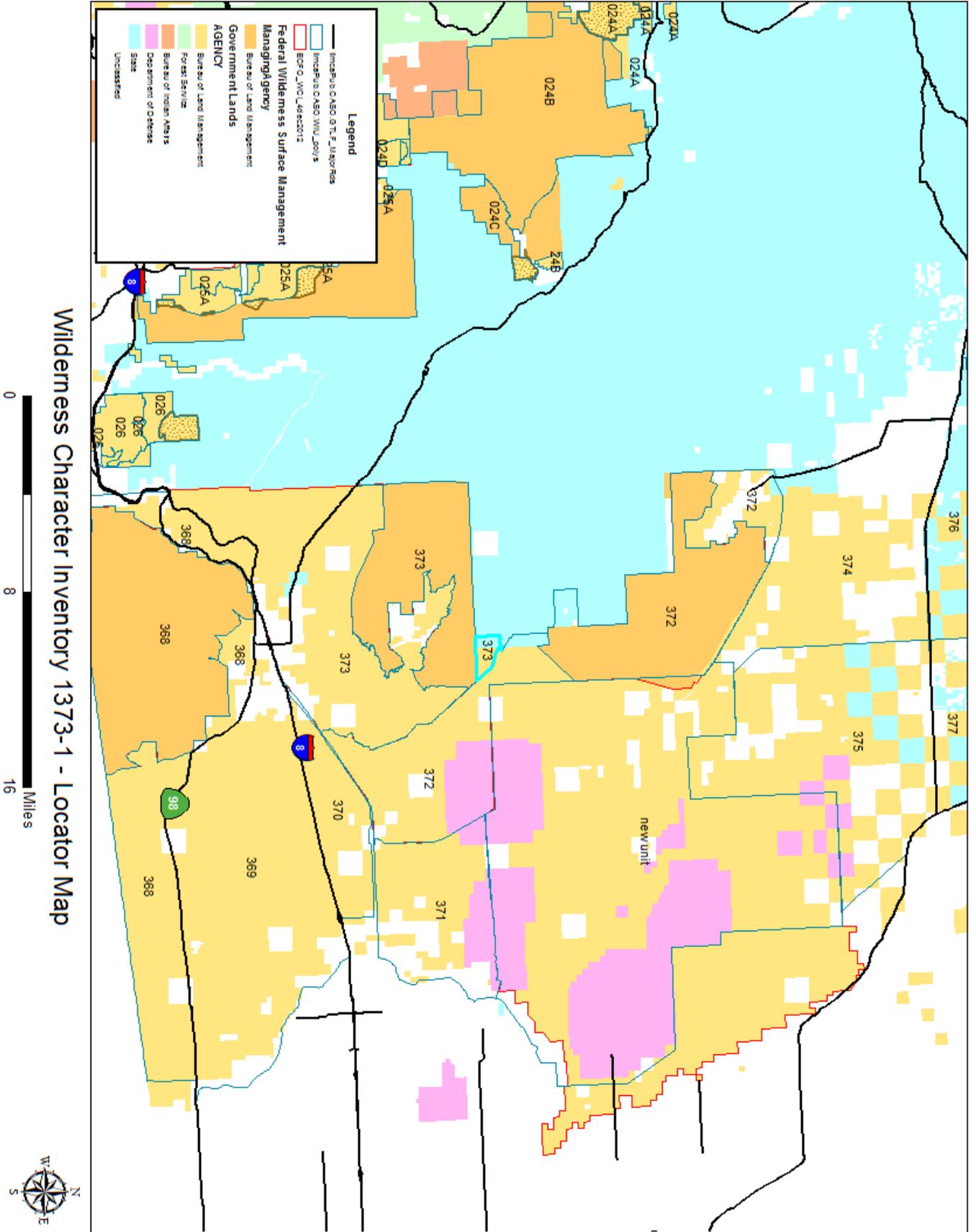
John Johnson, Environmental Protection Specialist, 3/30/2012 (with input from ECFO Interdisciplinary Team)

Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):

Name:  Title: Acting Field Manager

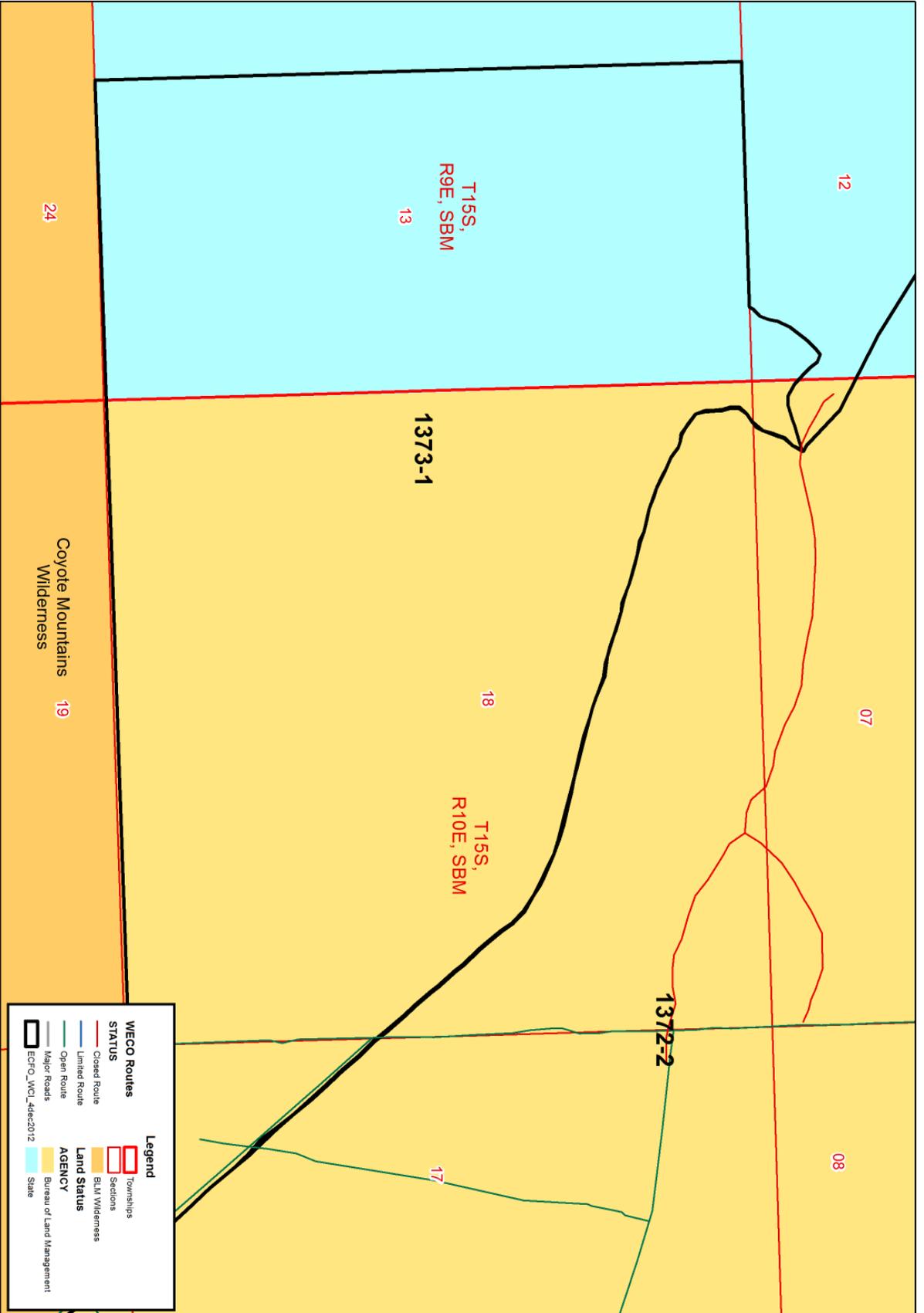
Date: 2/21/2013

*This form documents information that constitutes 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 - CDCA_1373-1



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.

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

The rugged and often vertical nature of the Coyote Mountains, combined with isolated interior badlands, tends to screen visitors from one another; thus, opportunities for solitude are outstanding. Outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation are readily available due to the varied terrain, abundance of challenging topography, and importance for geological and ecological study.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

The relatively large volume of comments was substantially in support of this area as a potential Wilderness Study Area. Some felt the area should be expanded to the south and east. Those public comments opposed to wilderness study designation identified the roads, mining activity, and off-road vehicle use in the general area. These areas have been excluded from the potential Wilderness Study Area. Other comments addressed study phase considerations.

AREA 374

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

Located adjacent to the eastern boundary of Anza Borrego Desert State Park, the site is roughly rectangular in shape. Its boundaries are formed by Highway 78 to the north; a graded dirt road and company railroad to the south; a north-south powerline right-of-way to the east; and, a graded dirt road to the west, leading into mines in the Fish Creek Mountains.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

Because of the checkerboard land pattern this area does not contain 5000 acres of contiguous public lands and is not of sufficient size to make practical its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

III. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments addressed natural condition of the area, but failed to consider the public land status. Additional comments dealt with study phase considerations.

AREA 375

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This area is located north of, and adjacent to, the U.S. Navy Parachute Recovery Test Range, south of Salton Sea. Its boundaries are defined by a north-south powerline right-of-way and associated road to the west; Highway 78 to the north; a powerline right-of-way and road to the east; and, the Test Range to the south.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

Because of the checkerboard land pattern this roadless area does not contain 5000 acres of contiguous public lands and is not of sufficient size to make practical its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

III. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments addressed natural condition, but failed to consider the public land status. Additional comments dealt with study phase considerations.

AREA 376

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The area's western border is common with the eastern border of Anza Borrego Desert State Park. The northern boundary is Highway S-22; the southern, Highway 78; and, on the east, an improved and maintained powerline right-of-way.

Wilderness Characteristics Inventory (Public)

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

Area Unique Identifier CDCA 1373-1 Acreage 828

(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 X

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.):

The northern and eastern boundary parallels a mining access road which traverses the Carrizo Impact Area; the southern boundary is the Coyote Mountains Wilderness; the western boundary is the Carrizo Impact Area boundary. Land ownership in the area is almost half Public and the other half State Lands. The unit does not meet the size criteria, at just over 800 acre, and the WECO designated route of travel that runs through the unit.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes _____ No _____ N/A X

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):

(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)