

Summary of Analysis*

Area Unique Identifier: CDCA 1376A-1

Summary

Results of analysis:

The unit is comprised of State, Tribal and Private Lands with a very small partial section of Public Lands of less than 500 acres, which doesn't meet the size criteria for wilderness characteristics.

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:

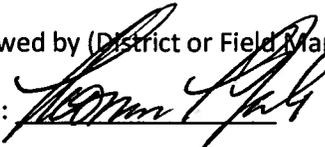
The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)

The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by (team members):

John Johnson, Environmental Protection Specialist, 3/29/2012 (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

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The northern half of the area is entirely public land. The southern half is approximately 30 percent public land in checkerboard pattern.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The terrain is varied, and provides a transition between the flat areas near the Salton Sea and the more mountainous, rugged lands of the state park to the west. Except for washes and low rolling hills, the eastern portions offer little interest. The flat sandy surface gradually erodes into a system of badlands which extend into the park. As in the surrounding areas, vegetation is extremely limited, both in varieties and numbers. Creosote is the dominant plant, although no large specimens or dense stands can be found. The sandy surface supports mesquite, which provides a nucleus for the large number of hummocks found there.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The natural conditions have been degraded by both structures and grading. A microwave tower and support facilities are located in the northern section. The height of the tower, along with the flatness of the terrain, makes it visible in many portions. An airport with limited equipment is operating in the southeastern part near the park border. Off-road vehicle use has been extensive in the past and the naturalness of the area has been severely reduced by the network of trails and ways resulting from this activity.

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

The site does not provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The low, rolling, uniform landform, in conjunction with the sparse, low vegetation, preclude any sense of isolation, except in scattered local situations. A large percentage of the site is generally flat and uniform and, by itself, would not satisfy the requirements for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. This is balanced by the more diverse landforms available in the western areas, near the park. In terms of the entire site, outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation can be found.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments were evenly divided between those favoring and those opposing inclusion of this area as a potential Wilderness Study Area. Comments for inclusion dealt more with the possibilities of joint management with Anza-Borrego Desert State Park than with specific inventory criteria.

AREA 376A

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The site is located to the east of Anza Borrego Desert State Park and shares a common boundary. The eastern edge is formed by Highway 86, and the southern by Highway S-22. The northern portion borders the Torres Martinez Indian Reservation.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area is approximately 70 percent public lands. Non-public holdings occur in a checkerboard pattern in the northern third.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The area contains a low, rolling badlands topography with very sparse vegetation. Creosote Bush Scrub is the dominant plant with occasional mesquite.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

The landscape is marred by off-road vehicle scars which penetrate up the washes and over many of the low hills. Though not heavily scarred in any one region, these scars are general throughout.

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

The low, rolling topography and the sparse vegetation do not provide opportunities for solitude. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are available, but not outstanding, due to the numerous tracks from off-road vehicles.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

A few comments challenged the interpretation of solitude and supported inclusion of the area for further study. Another spoke to its unnatural character. Others dealt with study phase issues.

AREA 377

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The area is roughly triangular in shape and located southeast of the Salton Sea, along Highway 86. The boundaries are formed by Highway 86 on the east; Highway 78 on the south; and, on the west, by a powerline right-of-way and support road.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area does not contain 5000 acres of contiguous public land because of the checkerboard ownership pattern nor is it of sufficient size to make potential its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

Being part of an ancient lake bed, the site is relatively flat throughout. Primary relief from this uniformity is provided by some very low, rolling hills, hummocks and washes. Soil composition is basically "sandy" in nature and, as such, areas of blown sand and shallow depressions are scattered throughout. Vegetation throughout the area is generally sparse. Creosote is the visually dominant plant in most areas, and some mesquite can be found in the hummocks.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Within the confines provided by the highways and powerlines, the site has remained relatively natural and there are no permanent structures visible. It appears that the area is used frequently for random off-road vehicle play. Tracks and debris associated with this type of activity are in evidence throughout and generally degrade the natural appearance of the site.

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

A true sense of solitude is difficult to obtain within the boundaries. The terrain is flat and, although some shielding could be obtained, it would only be for brief periods. Plant life is not only sparse, but also very low, and would not contribute to a feeling of isolation. The site's shape, relief, and location preclude outstanding opportunities for solitude. Any outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are extremely limited by the uniformity of the landform.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments addressed natural conditions within the area, but failed to consider land ownership pattern.

Wilderness Characteristics Inventory (Public)

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

Area Unique Identifier CDCA 376A-1 Acreage 28,001

(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 boundary partially borders the Torres Martinez Indian Reservation; the western is Anza Borrego Desert State Park; the south by Highway S-22; and to the east is Highway 86. The unit is comprised of State, Tribal and Private Lands with a very small partial section of Public Lands of less than 500 acres, which doesn't meet the size criteria for wilderness characteristics.

(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)