



Wilderness Characteristics Inventory (Public)

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

Area Unique Identifier CDCA 1218A-1 Acreage 33,113

(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.):

Roughly 11,810 acres of this unit are now part of the San Gorgonio Wilderness which may include other Federal, State, and Private Lands. The unit's remaining 21,303 acres are bounded to the south by Interstate 10; to the north, by a US Forest Service fire access road between lower Mission Creek and upper Whitewater Canyon; to the east, by Highway 62; and, to the west, by the San Bernardino National Forest and Tribal Lands. A road through lower Whitewater Canyon to a fish hatchery penetrates the area from the south. The lands adjacent to the south-central of the San Gorgonio Mountains Wilderness within T2S, R3E, sections 13 (Public Lands), 14, 23, 24 (western half), and 26 (northern 3/4's) appear natural, roadless, and no structures with a total of 2,553 acres. The remaining acreages are mainly checker-boarded with Private and Public Lands and have several roads, and some primitive, yet visible, ways that cross much of this area. The remaining 18,750 acres of the unit itself has been excluded.

**(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):

Various landforms and vegetation types are represented in this area, which contains a portion of the eastern slope of the San Bernardino Mountains. Landforms range from broad bajadas at the eastern edge of the area to steep, rugged mountains in the interior. Vegetation ranges from yucca, creosote, and mixed scrubs though Pinyon-Juniper and on up into Yellow Pine forest. Several creeks flow through the area in steep-walled canyons and, at least in the upper elevations, many flow all year around. The Whitewater River and Mission Creek are examples of these year-round streams. In the Whitewater canyon, highly eroded and colorful ridges protrude above the stark whiteness of the boulder-strewn canyon floor. Various locations throughout the area also offer excellent views of the rugged, near-vertical slopes of nearby San Jacinto Peak. The area, which appears dominated by natural forces, exhibits an overall undeveloped, primeval character. Due to terrain and vegetative variation, it is insulated from the effects of nearby, man-made features, such as homesteads and highways located at the southern and eastern edges of 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

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

Topographical and vegetative diversity provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation through a screening effect. In addition, adjacent views enhance opportunities to experience both solitude and spaciousness.

**(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):

Topographical and vegetative diversity provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation through a screening effect. In addition, adjacent views enhance opportunities to experience both solitude and spaciousness. The availability of water greatly enhances most primitive recreation opportunities. The routing of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail through this area provides further opportunities for primitive recreation.

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

Yes  No  N/A

Description:

The routing of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail through this area provides further opportunities for primitive recreation.

Summary of Analysis\*

Area Unique Identifier: CDCA 218A-1

Summary

The area adjacent to the south-central of the San Gorgonio Mountains Wilderness within T2S, R3E, sections 13 (Public Lands), 14, 23, 24 (western half), and 26 (northern ¼'s) appear natural, roadless, and no structures with a total of 2,553 acres. Various landforms and vegetation types are represented in this area, which contains a portion of the eastern slope of the San Bernardino Mountains. Landforms range from broad bajadas at the eastern edge of the area to steep, rugged mountains in the interior. Vegetation ranges from yucca, creosote, and mixed scrubs through Pinyon-Juniper and on up into Yellow Pine forest. Several creeks flow through the area in steep-walled canyons and, at least in the upper elevations, many flow all year around. The Whitewater River and Mission Creek are examples of these year-round streams. In the Whitewater canyon, highly eroded and colorful ridges protrude above the stark whiteness of the boulder-strewn canyon floor. Various locations throughout the area also offer excellent views of the rugged, near-vertical slopes of nearby San Jacinto Peak. The area, which appears dominated by natural forces, exhibits an overall undeveloped, primeval character. Due to terrain and vegetative variation, it is insulated from the effects of nearby, man-made features, such as homesteads and highways located at the southern and eastern edges of the area. Topographical and vegetative diversity provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation through a screening effect. In addition, adjacent views enhance opportunities to experience both solitude and spaciousness. Topographical and vegetative diversity provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation through a screening effect. In addition, adjacent views enhance opportunities to experience both solitude and spaciousness. The availability of water greatly enhances most primitive recreation opportunities. The routing of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail through this area provides further opportunities for primitive recreation.

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

Check one:

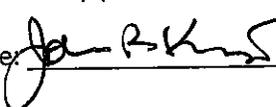
The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)

The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

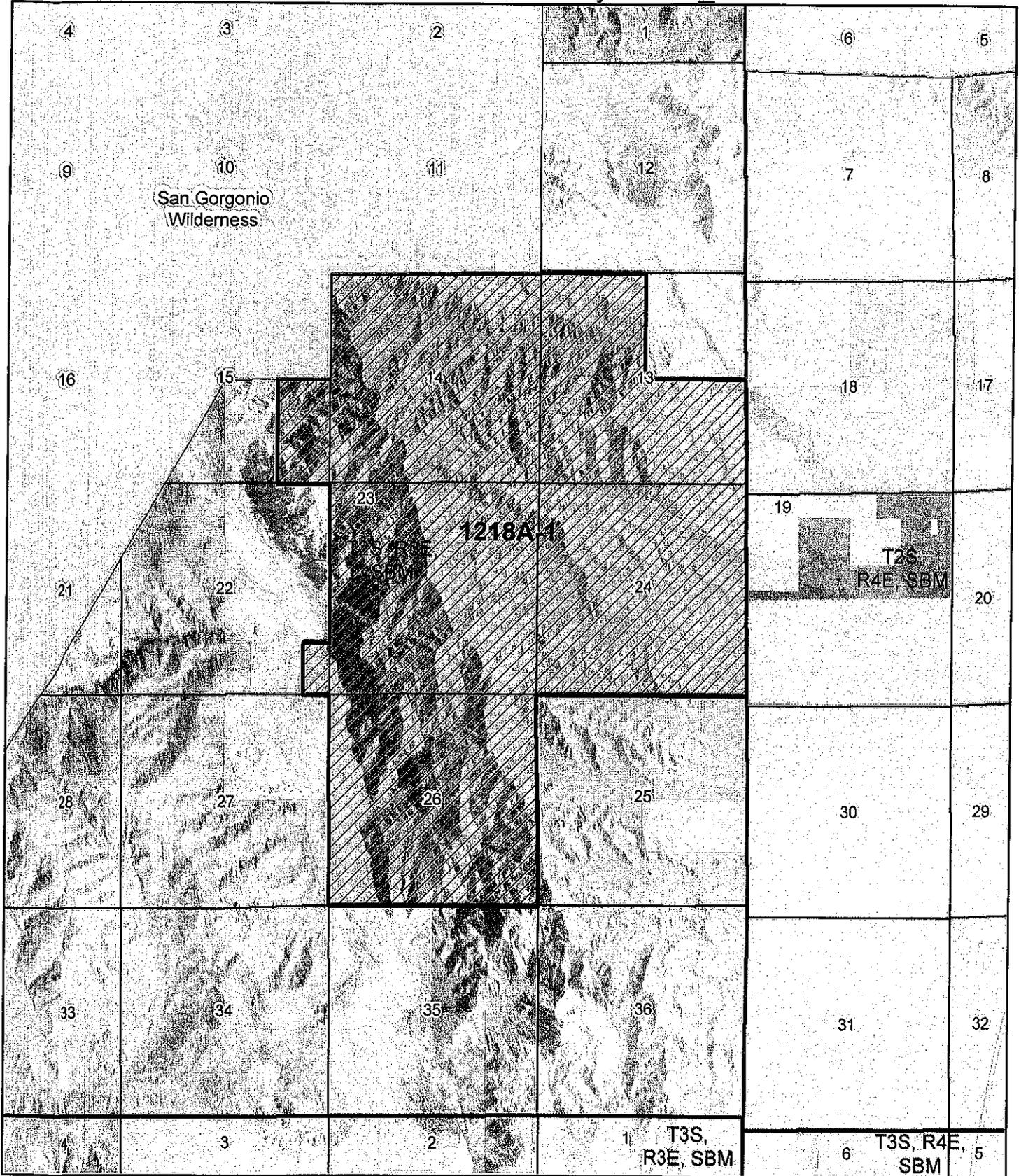
Prepared by (team members):

John Johnson, ECFO - Environmental Protection Specialist, 6/10/2014

Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):

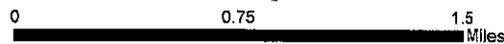
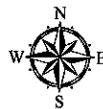
Name:  Title: Field Manager

# Wilderness Character Inventory CDCA\_1218A-1



**Legend**

- Wilderness
- Wilderness Inventory Units
- Bureau of Land Management
- Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Department of Defense
- Other Federal
- State
- Local Government



1:40,000



US Department of the Interior  
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**  
 Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office  
 Palm Springs, California  
 (760) 833-7100  
[www.ca.blm.gov/palmprings](http://www.ca.blm.gov/palmprings)  
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into yellow pine forest. Several deep canyons cut into the eastern flank of the mountains, each containing water in the form of springs and, at least in the winter, small creeks. The sites of the springs are easily recognized by their stands of cottonwood trees.

#### IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Areas affected by man have been deleted from the central area meeting wilderness criteria. These areas include: Kee Ranch, Pioneer Town, Yucca Valley, Little Morongo Heights, Little Morongo Drive, Pierce Ranch, Sherman Road, Morongo Valley, Canyon House Ranch, T Cross K Ranch, Mission Creek Road; and all private land. The small central portion has been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. This nine-section area contains no private land or permanent improvements. This area includes Section 36 (T. 1 N., R. 3 E.); Sections 31 and 32 (T. 1 N., R. 4 E.); Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, the north and east three quarters of Section 7, the north and west three quarters of Section 9, the north half of 10, the northwest one quarter of 18, the north half of 17, the northwest one quarter of 16, and the southwest one quarter of the southwest quarter of 2, all in (T. 1 S., R. 4 E.).

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

Terrain and vegetative diversity provide outstanding opportunities for solitude by providing numerous areas of seclusion. This diversity also provides outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

#### VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public comment is overwhelmingly in favor of the entire roadless area receiving wilderness status due to the ecological and geological diversity and the location adjacent to both RARE II and existing wilderness lands. Most recent comments urge land exchanges to solve the land ownership problem.

### AREA 218A

#### I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The area is bounded to the south by Interstate 10; to the north, by a U. S. Forest Service fire access road between lower Mission Creek and upper Whitewater Canyon; to the east, by Highway 62; and, to the west, by the San Bernardino National Forest RARE II Area. A road through lower Whitewater Canyon to a fish hatchery penetrates the area from the south.

#### II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area is predominantly public lands. Non-public lands, which account for approximately 35 percent of the entire area, occur mostly on the southern and eastern edges of the roadless area and in Whitewater Canyon as solid blocks.

#### III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

Various landforms and vegetation types are represented in this area, which contains a portion of the eastern slope of the San Bernardino Mountains. Landforms range from broad bajadas at the eastern edge of the area to steep, rugged mountains in the interior. Vegetation ranges from yucca, creosote, and mixed scrubs through Pinyon-Juniper and on up into Yellow Pine forest. Several creeks flow through the area in steep-walled canyons and, at least in the upper elevations, many flow all year around. The Whitewater River and Mission Creek are examples of these year-round streams. In the Whitewater Canyon, highly eroded and colorful ridges protrude above the stark whiteness of the boulder-strewn canyon floor. Various locations throughout the area also offer excellent views of the rugged, near-vertical slopes of nearby San Jacinto Peak.

#### IV. NATURAL CONDITION

This area, which appears dominated by natural forces, exhibits an overall undeveloped, primeval character. Due to terrain and vegetative variation, it is insulated from the effects of nearby man-made features, such as the homesteads and highways located at the southern and eastern edges of the area. The boundaries of the area at

Wilderness Study Area have been adjusted to exclude non-public land and impacts of the homesteads and other developments. The resulting southern boundary skirts the southern edges of Sections 31 through 33, then follows the cliff-tops to a point north of the fish hatchery in lower Whitewater Canyon, and then east through Sections 13 and 14 to the eastern edge of the roadless area. The eastern boundary follows the eastern edge of T. 25, R. 3 E. until it meets the Mission Creek Road on the north. Some non-public land inholdings and primitive roads do penetrate the area, as do a few old mining scars; however, man's influence remains substantially unnoticeable as a result of the topographical and vegetative screening.

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

Topographical and vegetative diversity provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation through a screening effect. In addition, views to the adjacent RARE II area enhances opportunities to experience both solitude and spaciousness. The availability of water greatly enhances most primitive recreation opportunities. The routing of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail through this area provides further opportunities for primitive recreation.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Most of the comment received on this area favors its inclusion as a Wilderness Study Area based upon ecological and geological diversity, as well as a location adjacent to a RARE II area and near the existing San Geronimo Wilderness. One comment received dealt with potential conflict with a proposed flood control drain site which would be located within the Wilderness Study Area. This proposal is a study, and not an inventory, factor.

AREA 219

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The northern boundary is paralleled by a mining access and radio tower road; the eastern boundary by Highway 127; the southern boundary by a mining access road; and, the western boundary by Death Valley National Monument.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

This area consists primarily of public lands with one square mile, centrally located, being non-public land.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

This area includes mountains, sand hills, and creosote-covered bajadas.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

This area generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature. Some active mining claims and mines are found in both the northern and southern portion and are substantially noticeable in the immediate area; however, the administratively-endorsed wilderness area in Death Valley National Monument is adjacent. Therefore, the area has been included for further consideration.

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 limited by restrictive size. Active mine operations one mile west of the Death Valley National Monument boundary tend to have a confining effect on freedom of movement. However, the roadless area has been retained because of the adjacent administratively-endorsed wilderness area in the National Monument.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Most comments received supported inclusion of the area.