

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: **WIU #CDCA 185A & 185A-1**

Summary

Results of Analysis:

1. Do these areas meet the size requirements?
NO, for isolated unit 185A.
YES, for contiguous unit 185A-1.
2. Do the areas appear to be natural?
YES, for unit 185A-1.
3. Do the areas offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation?
YES, for unit 185A-1.
4. Do these areas have supplemental values?
YES, for both 185A and 185A-1.

Conclusion

Unit 185A does not have wilderness characteristics.

Unit 185A-1 does have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by:

Team Member:

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Date: 12-18-13

Approved by:

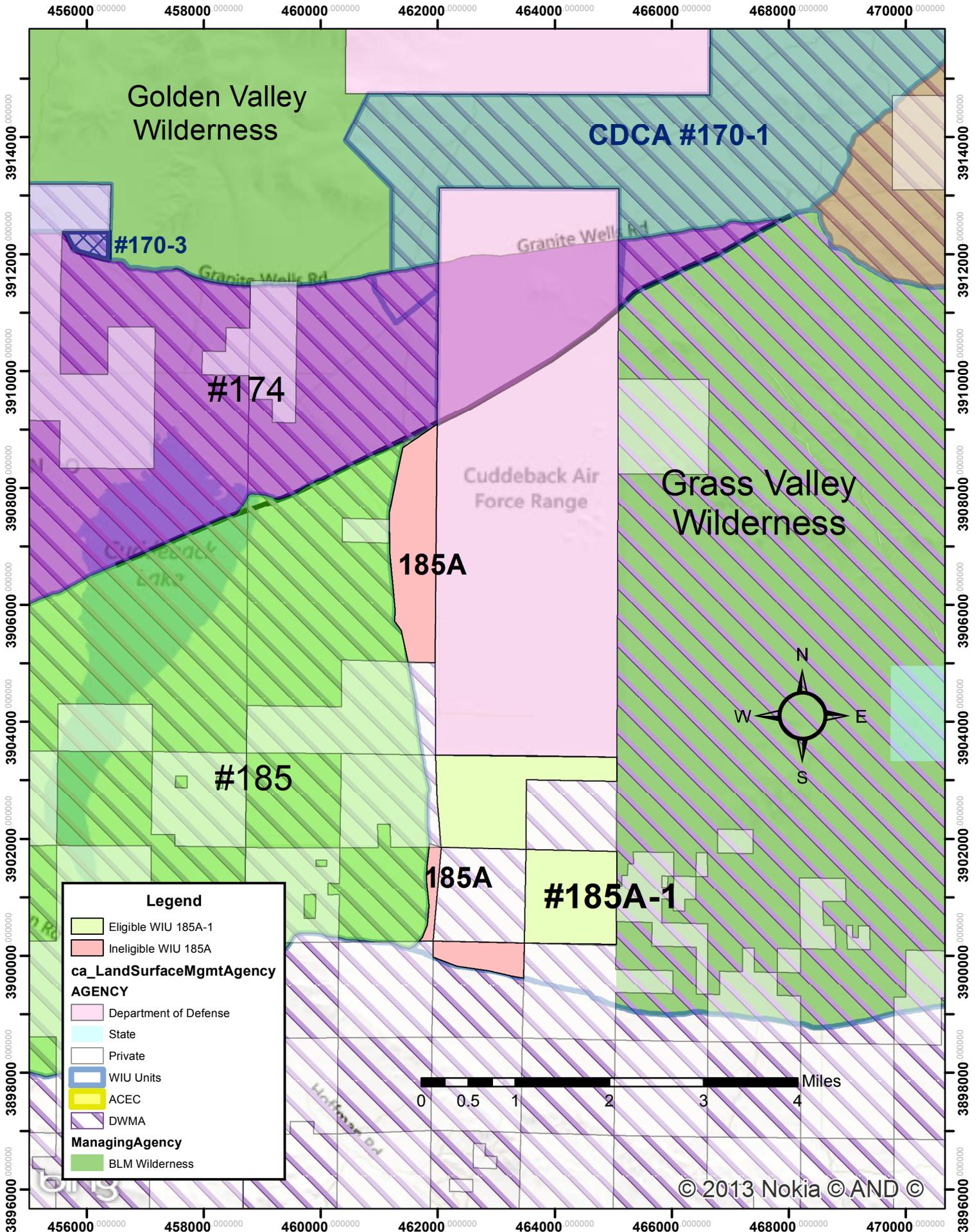


Carl B. Symons, Field Manager

12/29/2013
Date

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 parts 4 or 1610.5-2.

WIU #185A & 185A-1 (Grass Valley)



Year 2013 Inventory Unit Number/Name WIU #CDCA 185A & 185A-1 (Red Mtn.)

FORM 1

Documentation of BLM Wilderness Inventory Findings On Record

1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area? Yes

Inventory Source: 1979 CDCA Wilderness Inventory Final Descriptive Narratives, BLM Ridgecrest FO

Inventory Unit Name(s)/Number(s): WIUs #CDCA 174 & 185

Map Name(s)/Number(s): USDI BLM CASO Wilderness Final Inventory, March 31, 1979

BLM District(s)/Field Office(s): Ridgecrest Field Office

2. BLM Inventory Findings on Record

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics:

Inventory Source: 1979 CDCA Wilderness Inventory Final Descriptive Narratives, BLM, Ridgecrest FO

Unit#/ Name	Size (acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N
1979 Findings within WIU #CDCA 185A	Y <5,000 public/ private acres	N	N	N	N
2013 Findings within WIU #CDCA 185A	N 724.39 acres	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y
2013 Findings within WIU #CDCA 185A-1	Y 1,493 contiguous acres	Y	Y	Y	Y

Summarize any known primary reasons for prior findings in this table:

The original **1979 WIU #CDCA 185A** was bounded on the west by a dirt road paralleling the Cuddeback Gunnery Range (now RM52), on the north by the Twenty Mule Team Road, on the east by a dirt road through the hills known as the “Parachutes” (currently RM1777, the Grass Valley Wilderness vehicle corridor), and on the south by a dirt road to the Arena Mine (currently BM6381, this route now defines the southern boundary of the Grass Valley Wilderness). A contiguous block of eight sections along the western border was withdrawn for the Cuddeback Gunnery Range. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the remaining area was public land. A checkerboard public/private ownership pattern was displayed along the southern boundary.

The area was described as consisting of scattered abrupt hills of reddish coloration projecting upwards to 4200,’ with a broad west-facing alluvial slope running from 3600’ down to 2700.’ The predominant vegetation was classified as creosote scrub.

The sections within the Gunnery Range were found to have been substantially altered by the presence of man. The area was in use by the U.S. Air Force for bombing target practice and for other aerial gunnery maneuvers. The ground surface was extensively pock-marked in some places as a result of this activity.

Along the southern boundary, off-road vehicle activity was found to have substantially altered the primeval character of the land, particularly within the checkerboarded areas.

Elsewhere in the roadless area man’s impacts were not thought to be substantially noticeable.

Opportunities for solitude and/or primitive and unconfined recreation were found to be lacking due to the presence of the Gunnery Range and the lack of vegetative or topographic screening. The relative monotony of the terrain did not appear to provide much opportunity for a diverse range of primitive recreational experiences.

The unit was dropped from further wilderness consideration and was not evaluated in the 1990 Wilderness Study Report.

In 1994, Congress designated nearly all lands in WIU #CDCA 185A, west of the current Grass Valley vehicle corridor (RM1777) and all lands in WIU #CDCA 173A, east of the corridor, part of the 30,121-acre Grass Valley Wilderness. The western wilderness boundary coincides with the range line defining the eastern boundary of the Gunnery Range. The Gunnery Range was excluded from the wilderness, as were checkerboarded public/private lands south of the Gunnery Range. All other checkerboarded public/private lands within the unit were placed inside wilderness.

FORM 2

Documentation Of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name **WIU #CDCA 185A & 185A-1 (outstanding Red Mountain units)**

(1) Sufficient size

No, for non-contiguous unit 185A, located west of the Cuddeback Gunnery Range road (now RM52).

Yes for modified, contiguous unit 185A-1, located east of the Cuddeback Gunnery Range road (RM52).

Acreage:

Unit 185A is comprised of 724.39 non-contiguous acres. These acres are isolated from adjacent wilderness and undeveloped public lands by the Cuddeback Gunnery Range and a private block of land located in the SW corner of the unit. These portions of the unit are too small to make practical their preservation and use as wilderness.

Unit 185A-1 is comprised of 1,493 acres of public land that is contiguous to the existing Grass Valley Wilderness. It's location makes practical its preservation and use as wilderness.

Boundary revision: Boundaries have been adjusted to exclude all private land within the original WIU boundary. Adjustments reflect the current land status, including some changes in private ownership and recent public acquisitions. (See attached map.)

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: BLM (1,493 eligible acres; 724.39 ineligible acres); private inholdings (0 acres). Public ownership of land within the original inventory unit and within the current wilderness boundaries is being expanded and consolidated.

Location: San Bernardino County, approximately 10 miles east of the communities of Randsburg, Red Mountain, and Johannesburg along U.S. Highway 395.

Topography: Undulating terrain broken by an abrupt smattering of colorful, ragged hills. Elevations range from 2,700' to 4,200.'

Vegetation features: Creosote scrub desert with mixed bunch grass communities.

Major human uses/activities: Hiking & wildflower viewing. Some illegal vehicle trespass across the area and into wilderness.

(2) Natural condition

YES. Eligible unit 185A-1 is indistinguishable from the adjacent wilderness area. It is comprised of one-third of a section and two full sections of public land that are completely undeveloped. While off-route vehicle trespass across these sections and into wilderness has been a problem in the past, the area is now protected by several restoration sites and a fence line from further vehicle intrusion. There are no open designated vehicle routes, no visible full-size vehicle ways, except for an expired telephone ROW, and no well-established user-created off-road vehicle trails within the area. In the past, vehicles trespassing into the area have cut their own trails or traveled up one of the myriad of desert washes draining into Cuddeback Lake. These types of incursions are quick to disappear with the next rainstorm.

Additionally, improvements have occurred, because:

- (1) Private land is being acquired and cleaned up by NGO's and by BLM for conservation purposes within the newly designated Desert tortoise DWMA.
- (2) Grazing is no longer occurring in the area. The Pilot Knob Allotment has been retired. The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee has cleaned up Blackwater Well, removing the cabin there, and other range facilities (fences, pipelines and water tanks) that are no longer needed.
- (3) The Cuddeback Gunnery Range has not been used for many years. Edwards Air Force base has been cleaning up the area in preparation for returning it to BLM.
- (4) A designated route system has been implemented. Vehicles are now only allowed to travel on routes that are signed open to vehicles.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude, and for primitive and/or unconfined recreation

YES. The terrain becomes more variable and the creosotes larger and more robust with rising elevation and distance from the playa. Topographical and vegetative screening enhances opportunities for solitude and/or for primitive and unconfined recreation. These opportunities dramatically increase with distance from the open vehicle route system. The uninterrupted expanses are impressive. The views into wilderness seem to go on forever. One can feel quite isolated and alone, thrown back completely upon oneself, within a vast sea of creosotes.

(4) Supplemental values

YES. These units are within the Fremont-Kramer Desert tortoise Wildlife Management Area (DWMA). The DWMA has been designated Desert Tortoise Critical Habitat by the Fish & Wildlife Service. As such, it is considered essential to the recovery of this federally-listed species. The DWMA also provides habitat for the Mohave ground squirrel, a state-listed species. More generally, the DWMA is important because it encompasses essential movement corridors which link wildlife habitats in the Western Rand Mountains and Fremont Valley to the Cuddeback Lake area and to both the Golden Valley and Grass Valley Wildernesses. These WIU units contribute to the DWMA's overall functionality.