

**Summary of Findings and Conclusion**

Subunit Name and Number: WIU #168-1,-2,-3,-4,-5

Summary

Results of Analysis:

1. Do these areas meet any of the size requirements?  
168-1, -2: Yes  
168-3, -4, -5: No
  
2. Do these areas appear to be natural?  
168-1, -3: Yes  
168-2, -4, -5: No
  
3. Do these areas offer outstanding opportunities for solitude and/or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation?  
168-1: Yes  
168-2, -3, -4, -5: No
  
4. Do these areas have supplemental values?  
168 -1, -4, -5: Yes

Conclusion

**WIU 168-1 was found to have wilderness character.  
WIUs 168-2, -3, -4, -5 were found to not have wilderness character**

Prepared by:

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Date: 7/15/2015

**Approved by:**

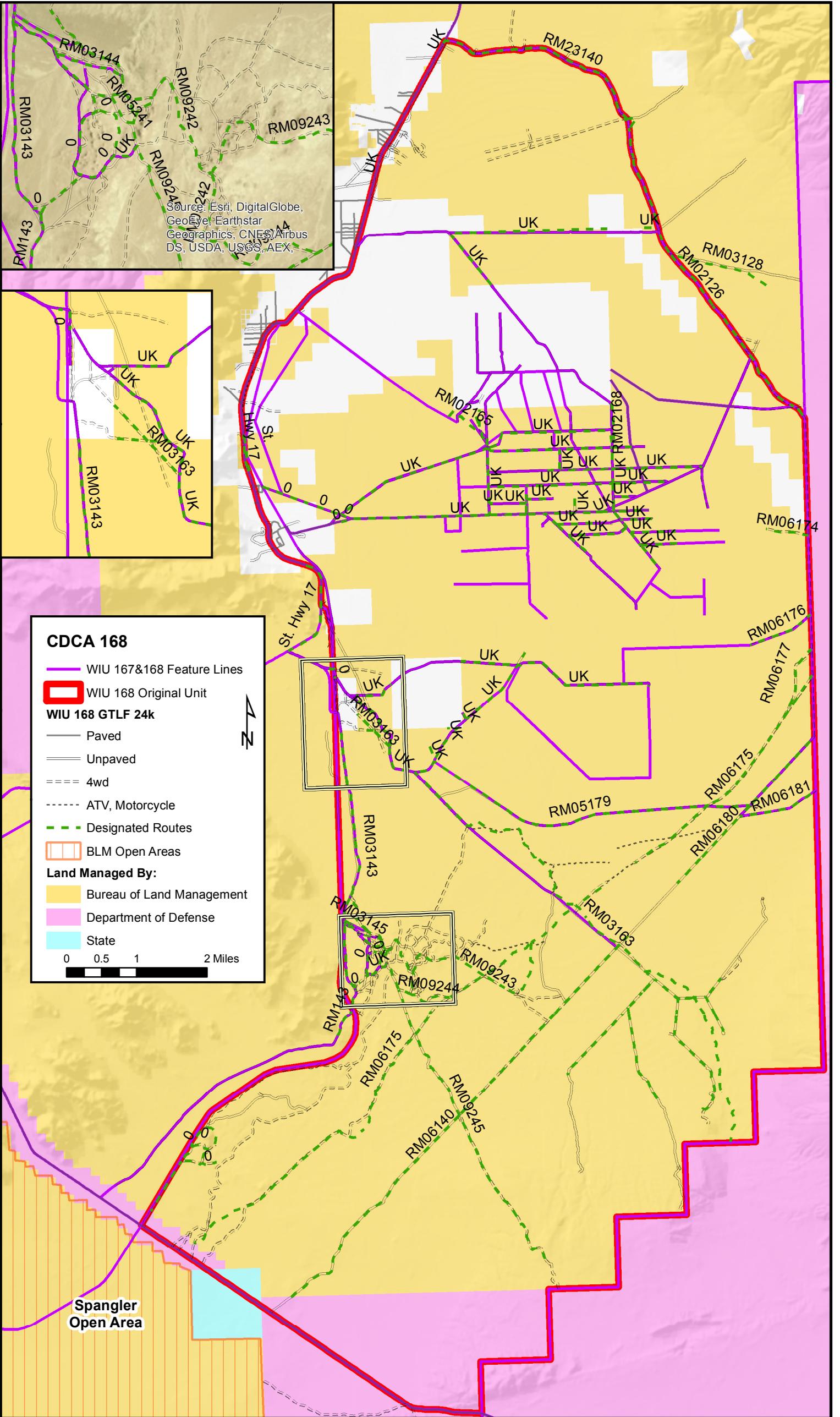


7/16/2015

**Field Manager**

**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.*



**CDCA 168**

- WIU 167&168 Feature Lines
- WIU 168 Original Unit
- WIU 168 GTLF 24k**
- Paved
- Unpaved
- 4wd
- ATV, Motorcycle
- Designated Routes
- BLM Open Areas
- Land Managed By:**
- Bureau of Land Management
- Department of Defense
- State

0 0.5 1 2 Miles



**Spangler  
Open Area**

**Year 2015 Inventory Unit Number/Name WIU #CDCA 168 (Searles Lake & Trona Pinnacles)**

**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)/Numbers:** WIU #CDCA 168

**Map Names/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

<b>Unit #/Name</b>	<b>Size (acres)</b>	<b>Natural Condition (Y/N)</b>	<b>Outstanding Solitude? (Y/N)</b>	<b>Outstanding Primitive &amp; Unconfined Recreation (Y/N)</b>	<b>Supplemental Values (Y/N)</b>
1979 Findings WIU# CDCA-168 (Searles Valley)	74895 acres calculated in a GIS using the stated boundaries of the original unit	N	N	N	Y; Trona Pinnacles National Natural Landmark
2015 Findings within WIU 168-1	Yes 21881 acres calculated in a GIS	Y	N	Y	Y; tufa formations
2015 Findings within WIU 168-2 (Industrial Mineral Complex)	Yes 29894 acres calculated in a GIS	N	N	N	N/A
2015 Findings within WIU 168-3 (Northern Searles Lake)	No 4645 acres calculated in a GIS	N	N	N	N/A
2015 Findings within WIU 168-4 (Alkali Scrubland)	No 3502 acres calculated in a GIS	N	N	N	Y; Tufa formations
2015 Findings within WIU 168-5 (Trona Pinnacles ACEC)	No 3055 acres calculated in a GIS	N	N	N	Y; Trona Pinnacles National Natural Landmark

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

*Boundaries* - The northern boundary of the original 1979 WIU 168 was created by a maintained road to the Trona Airport that continued east to the China Lake NAWS and a cutoff between this maintained road and High 178/Trona Road, currently designated as P140. The eastern boundary was the Mojave Range B of the China Lake NAWS. The southern boundary was defined by Randsburg Wash Road. The western boundary was formed by the Trona Railway and Highway 178/Trona Road. 10 % of the area was

considered to be non-public land, which was concentrated in the north central part of Searles Lake.

*Environment* - The area was composed of the Searles Dry Lakebed in the northern half and the lower Searles Valley in the southern half. The whole unit was deemed flat and had elevations ranging from 1600 feet to 2000 feet. The lakebed was found to be unvegetated, while the lower valley was sparsely vegetated with Shadscale and alkali-resistant species. The western border of the unit has natural tufa pinnacles that have been registered as National Natural Landmarks.

*Naturalness* - Naturalness was not found to be apparent in the area. The northwestern part of the unit is near the town of Trona and an industrial development encompasses a large portion of the unit. Large evaporation ponds, salt wells, tanks, and other developments are scattered through the area and visible from great distances. There are a number of dirt roads maintained by the company. The southern end of the lake has maintained dirt roads that service a water-well. Authorized and illegal tufa removal has impacted the natural condition of the pinnacles, and there are many off-road vehicle scars throughout the unit.

*Solitude or Primitive, Unconfined Recreation* – The pinnacles offered the only screening in the area, and the only break in the uniformity of the landscape. Vegetative screening was non-existent. Primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities were found to be extremely limited due, and the area was not deemed to meet any criteria necessary to receive further consideration for wilderness.

*Comments* – The public comments mentioned that the area had certain wilderness characteristics, although the 1979 inventory does not mention what those characteristics were.

*Supplemental Values* – The Trona Pinnacles National Natural Landmark was established within the borders of the unit and has been developed into an interpretive area.

**The March 2015 inventory found the 21881 acres comprising subunit 168-1 to have wilderness character; 41096 acres comprising units 168-2, -3, -4, & -5 were found not to have wilderness character.**

**FORM 2**

**Documentation of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions**

**(1) Subunit Size and Acreage:**

<b>Subunit Number</b>	<b>Subunit's Acreage</b>	<b>Is the subunit of Sufficient Size?</b>
CDCA-168-1	~ 21881 acres	Yes
CDCA-168-2	~ 29894 acres	Yes
CDCA-168-3	~ 4645 acres	No
CDCA-168-4	~ 3502 acres	No
CDCA-168-5	~ 3055 acres	No

**Boundary Revision:** This unit has had its boundaries revised and has been subdivided into 5 sub-units using active rights-of-way and Wilderness Inventory Roads. Non-BLM managed lands have been removed from all sub-units.

**Boundaries:**

**CDCA-168-1:** The western boundary of this subunit is formed by the Trona Railway. The northern boundary is formed by the Trona Pinnacles ACEC, and a wilderness inventory road designated as RM6175 in WEMO, and another wilderness inventory road designated RM 6140. The eastern and southern boundaries are formed by the China Lake NAWS Mojave Range B.

**CDCA-168-2:** The western boundary is formed by the Trona Railway. The northern boundary is an inventory road maintained by the mineral plant leading to a quarry. The eastern boundary is a formed by an inventory road signed as P140 on the ground and the China Lake NAWS Mojave Range B. The southern boundary is formed by RM 3163 and RM 6180.

**CDCA-168-3:** The northern and eastern boundaries are formed by RM23140, signed P140 on the ground. The western boundary is Trona Road (Highway 178). The southern boundary is an unmarked inventory road maintained by the mineral plant leading to a quarry.

**CDCA-168-4:** The northern boundary is RM3163; south east boundary is formed by RM 6140 and RM9243. The southwest boundary is formed by the Pinnacles ACEC boundary. The western boundary is formed by the Trona Railway.

**CDCA-168-5:** The boundaries of this subunit are identical to the Trona Pinnacles ACEC boundaries, with the exception that the western boundary is the Trona Railway.

## **Description of Current Conditions:**

### **Land Ownership:**

The BLM manages the entirety of the acres given for the units in the table above.

### **Location:**

This unit is located in the southern Searles Valley, south of Highway 178/Trona Road, East of Randsburg Wash Road, and west of the Trona Railway and Trona Pinnacles National Natural Landmark.

### **Topography:**

168-1: This subunit's topography is generally rolling hills decreasing in elevation towards the dry lake bed to the northeast. There are tufa formations scattered through the western region of the subunit, increasing in density towards the Pinnacles ACEC. The eastern low elevations are the highly alkali Searles dry lake.

168-2: This subunit is dominated by the dry lake bed. Historic mining activity has constructed raised dirt roads that criss-cross the subunit and form evaporation ponds.

168-3: This subunit is dominated by sandy flats on the edge of dry lake bed.

168-4: This subunit is dominated by the alkali flats.

168-5: This subunit is comprised of alkali flats dominated by the tufa pinnacles the ACEC is named for.

### **Vegetation Features:**

168-1: This sub subunit is in the transition zone between the creosote scrub upper elevations of the valley and the alkali flats of the dry lake bed and lower elevations.

168-2: This sub subunit is primarily industrial but there is still vegetation in the spaces between the evaporation ponds, it is all vegetation associated with alkali flats.

168-3: This subunit is dominated by saltbush scrubland.

168-4: This subunit is sparsely vegetated with vegetation associated with alkali flats.

168-5: This subunit has very little vegetation, and what there is associated with alkali flats.

**Major Human Uses / Activities:**

Overall, the primary impact of human activity is limited to subunits -2,-3,-4,-5.

168-1: The primary use in this subunit is sub-surface brackish-water wells in the eastern part of the subunit. These wells were constructed for and used by the mineral plant and are primarily underground. The fact that they are underground means that they are not significantly visible from the rest of the unit, unless you are within a couple hundred yards of the access roads. During the survey, some of the power to the wells was out and there were large tractor-trailer sized generators that were visible from a outside the immediate area. These temporary structures were within the ROW of the inventory roads used to access these sites.

The next highest use of the area would be recreation and access to the Pinnacles National Natural Landmark. These routes were not heavily used at the time of this inventory and are not primary access routes to the Pinnacles.

168-2: The primary use for this subunit is mineral harvesting on an industrial scale. Recreational use of this subunit is null due to the access roads being fenced or signed no trespassing by the mineral plant.

168-3: There does not seem to be any active use in much of this area, as it is simply a sand flat. There is no or minimal industrial activity within the subunit itself; there are few non-designated vehicle access routes to the area, and only one of those had any active tracks on it. The active route branches off of P140 with a sign towards “The Moon”, and so the major human use in the area is likely to be recreational touring.

168-4: This subunit is primarily an access corridor for the brackish water wells in subunit-1. There is a lot of evidence for historical industrial use of the area: empty evaporation ponds and obviously constructed but no longer maintained roads.

168-5: The major use in this subunit is recreational access to the Trona Pinnacles National Natural Landmark. The Pinnacles area has interpretive signs and is a major attraction to visitors; about 26,000 visitors came to see the Pinnacles in 2014. The subunit is often used for filming as well.

**( 2 ) Natural Condition:**

168-1: The majority of this subunit appears to be natural; the only detractions from the subunit’s naturalness are the brackish water well installations which are not substantially noticeable from outside their immediate area along the access roads.

168-2,-4: These subunits are no longer in their natural condition. The active or historic industrial activity is substantial enough that the natural condition is no longer apparent.

168-3: This subunit has retained its natural character. The imprint of man is substantially unnoticeable.

168-5: This subunit does not appear natural. Past activities, including legal and illegal tufa collection, mining, vehicle use, and mining, have scarred the landscape. The area is naturally bare and has no vegetation, which accentuates the impacts to the ground and tufa structures.

**( 3 ) Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and/or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:**

168-1: This subunit offers outstanding opportunities primitive and unconfined recreation; there are few vehicle routes through the area and those have low travel rates. The subunit provides a sense of solitude within it, except where the brackish water wells are. The sense of solitude is diminished by views of Trona and the mineral plant in the distance from nearly every part of the subunit.

168-2 through 5: These areas do not have outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive unconfined recreation.

**( 4 ) Are there Supplemental Values?**

Subunits -1 and -5 have tufa formations and pinnacles scattered throughout, with the density increasing with proximity to the Pinnacles ACEC. Subunits 2, 3, 4 were not evaluated for supplemental values. Subunit 5 contains the geologic features set aside as the Trona Pinnacles National Natural Landmark