

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: **WIU #CDCA 157-1(Sacatar Trail)**

Summary

Results of Analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? **Yes**
2. Does the area appear to be natural? **Yes**
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? **Yes**
4. Does the area have supplemental values? **Yes**

Conclusion

The area has wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by:

Team Members:

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Date: 2015-01-14

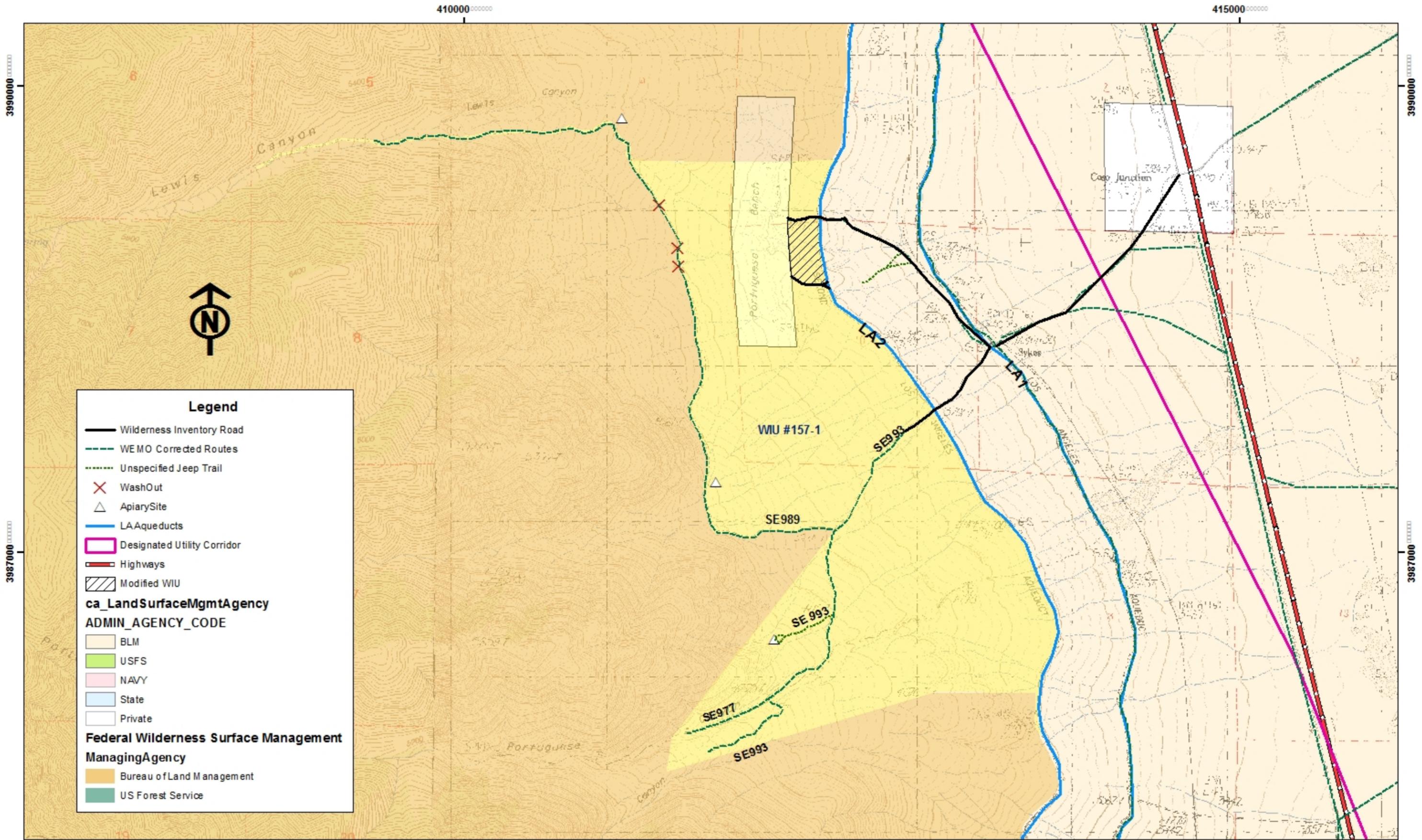
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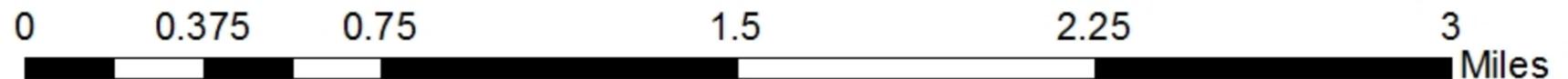
Field Manager

1/23/2015
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.



DETAIL Eligible WIU #CDCA 157-1
December 2014



Year 2015 Inventory Unit Number/Name WIU #CDCA 157-1 (Sacatar Trail)

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): WIU #CDCA 157

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 #157	33,044 acres	Y	Y	Y	Y
1990 Findings within WIU #CDCA 157 (Little Lake Canyon)	32,225 acres	Y	Y	Y	Y
2015 Findings within WIU #CDCA 157-1 (Sacatar Trail)	1,319 contiguous acres	Y	Y	Y	Y
2015 Findings within WIU #CDCA 157-1 (Sacatar Trail - Between Private Access Roads)	22 non-contiguous acres	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

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

The original 1979 WIU #157 was comprised of 33,044 acres. It was bordered on the north by Tunawee Canyon and the southern boundary of Inyo National Forest. The eastern boundary was the Los Angeles Aqueduct western maintenance road. The southern boundary was Nine Mile Canyon Road and the western boundary was the California Desert Conservation Area. Nearly all of the area was public land except for some relatively small parcels along the mid-eastern boundary.

The area was described as adjoining the eastern portion of the Sierra Nevada. It was found to be very topographically diverse, encompassing valleys, canyons, alluvial fans, and steep hills leading to rugged granite mountains. The major canyons were identified as Portuguese, Sacatar, Little Lake, Five Mile, Deadfoot, and Nine Mile. The vegetation was found to be very diverse, ranging from creosote, to Joshua trees, to buckwheats, and various types of desert shrubs. Vegetation within the canyons also included annual grasses, cottonwoods, and some cacti.

The area was found to consist of undeveloped public land retaining its primeval character and influence. The imprint of man's work was substantially unnoticeable within a majority of the area. Water pipelines up Portuguese and Lewis Canyon and the roads associated with them were identified as non-conforming manmade features, as were several developments associated with Tunawee Ranch.

In the 1990 California Statewide Wilderness Study Reports, BLM recommended 32,225 acres with WIU #CDCA 157 (Little Lake Canyon) for wilderness. BLM found these acres suitable, because they possessed "wilderness values which, by far, exceed criteria specified in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964." The finding was based upon the area's outstanding wilderness values, the many special features within the area that would benefit from wilderness designation and protection, and the small number of resource conflicts in the area. The suitable portion was described as "primeval, shaped and formed by a millennium of natural forces." The "deep, dissected canyons" were found to "offer countless opportunities for solitude and a variety of primitive recreation experiences." Thirteen miles of vehicle route (including the Sacatar Trail itself, the original wagon road to Kennedy Meadows) were recommended to be closed, because the wilderness values were so significant. The Sacatar Trail was subsequently highlighted as a "unique" hiking opportunity and experience.

The area had only limited mineral potential. Some moderate potential for geothermal existed within the area, but geothermal was not expected to be developed here because higher potential existed elsewhere. Grazing allotments blanketed the area but it was recognized that these allotments would be grandfathered in. Use levels could remain the same, although maintenance and development of new range developments would be more constrained upon wilderness designation.

819 acres were dropped from the suitable area recommendation mostly to exclude the LA Aqueduct and its maintenance roads. Some additional acres of alluvial fan were dropped because it was felt that the wilderness values they exhibited were not as outstanding as that exhibited within the recommended area.

In 1994, the California Desert Protection Act designated more than 50,000 acres as the Sacatar Trail Wilderness. These acres encompassed all of the area found suitable in the 1990 report for WIU #CDCA 157, as well as some additional adjoining acres within the Bakersfield BLM District Office.

FORM 2

Documentation Of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name **WIU #CDCA 157-1 (Sacatar Trail)**

(1) Sufficient size

Yes

Acreage: 1,319 contiguous, refined acres estimated with the GIS measuring tool out of a possible 1,341 acres calculated by a BLM CA State Office GIS Specialist in 2013. Refined acreage excludes the non-contiguous portion of the unit located between two private access roads off of LA2 (the upper Aqueduct maintenance road).

Boundary revision: The northern boundary of the unit follows (conjoins) the Sacatar Trail Wilderness boundary west and east of the private parcel on Portuguese Bench (the private parcel has been excluded from the unit altogether). The eastern boundary follows the western edge of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power ROW along LA2, excluding 22 acres of public land located between two private access roads off of this ROW. The eastern boundary may also exclude (cherry-stem) a short maintained section of SE993 that protrudes into the unit (for approximately 0.2 miles) above LA2, before continuing south along the western edge of the ROW. The southern and western boundaries follow (conjoin) the Sacatar Trail Wilderness boundary. See attached map.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: BLM (~1,319 acres); private inholdings (0 acres).

Location: Approximately 1.5 miles west of Coso Junction and 18 miles south of Olancho along Highway 395.

The boundaries of **CDCA #157-1** are as follows: The northern boundary runs along the Sacatar Trail Wilderness boundary, excluding the private parcel on Portuguese Bench which extends across the two units. The eastern boundary follows the LADWP ROW along LA2. The southern and western boundaries conform to the Sacatar Trail Wilderness boundary.

Topography: Rolling bajadas bisected by several large drainages accented by small springs. In the bottom of Lewis Canyon, an excluded cherry-stem within a significant stream and riparian area, which is no longer accessible by vehicle.

Vegetation features: This unit lies within a rich transitional vegetation zone, often described as Mojave Desert mixed scrub, with elements of Sierra and Great Basin plant communities.

Major human uses/activities: Horseback riding, hiking, photography, and some hunting. There are only two principal vehicle routes in the area (SE993, with three short branches) and SE989. One of these routes (SE989) is no longer passable by vehicle for the last half of its mapped distance as it approaches and enters Lewis Canyon.

(2) Natural condition

Yes. The eligible part of the unit is roadless and undeveloped. Within 0.2 mile above LA2, SE993 lapses from a well-maintained, graded dirt road providing critical access to the two LA Aqueducts into a hard-scrabble, user-created jeep trail that gets rougher as one proceeds further south. SE989 branches off from SE993 to the north along the Sacatar Trail Wilderness boundary across the front of the Sierra range. This route has been in infrequent use as a vehicle route and has not been used at all for more than a year over the last half of its length. The route exhibits a well-vegetated median. It is deeply rutted and extremely rocky in places. And in three locations it has been deeply cross-cut by large channels caused by floods coming down the canyons (See photos for Photo Points 13, 14, & 15). The first channel may be passable with care by dirt bikes or high clearance 4x4 vehicles. The last two channels (especially the third channel) are not; they are completely impassable to vehicles and no one has made an attempt to cross these channels by vehicle. There are plenty of horse and foot tracks, but no vehicle tracks beyond the second channel. (See 1/9/2015 photos where one vehicle traveled off-route and in wilderness for several hundred feet to bypass these two channels.) Three apiary sites are located within the unit. One is located at the first terminus of SE993. Another is located near the beginning of SE989 directly across the designated route from a non-working wilderness restoration/continuing vehicle trespass site. The apiary site was moved out of wilderness at the end of this closed route to the other side of the road sometime after wilderness designation. The third apiary site is located partially inside wilderness beyond the third washout of SE989 and is now inaccessible to vehicles. Otherwise, there are no visible mining disturbances, no vehicle pull-offs and no campsites in the area. (NOTE: The cabin at the terminus of SE977 off of SE993 in Portuguese Canyon is in the Sacatar Trail Wilderness.)

Factors that have contributed to enhancing naturalness within the area include:

- (1) The termination of the water use permits and removal of most if not all associated water pipes and developments in Lewis Canyon and Portuguese Canyon upon wilderness designation.
- (2) The deterioration of the unmaintained vehicle routes have made use of them difficult and in some cases, impossible. Deteriorating route conditions and rugged topography have provided little to no opportunity for off-route travel or for new routes to proliferate.

- (3) The private parcel on Portuguese Bench, excluded from but located immediately adjacent to the eligible part of the unit, has been acquired by an Archeological Conservancy group. This group's goals are compatible with managing adjacent, public lands as wilderness. The group will not be opening a gravel pit or quarry or new housing development on the private parcel any time in the foreseeable future.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude

Yes. The area is seldom visited. Visitors mostly travel by jeep or horseback to wilderness trailheads to ride horses, hike, backpack, or to hunt. On numerous hikes in the area, I have never encountered another party. On 3/16/2014, we encountered fresh horse track, but no fresh foot, and no vehicle tracks whatsoever on SE989 beyond the second large route washout or erosion channel. Within Lewis Canyon, intervening mountainsides, twists and turns in the canyon, and dense riparian vegetation make it very easy to slip out of sight and sound of other people.

(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation

Yes. The area offers a number of high quality, primitive, non-confined, non-motorized recreational opportunities for horseback riding, hiking, short overnight backpacking, hunting and photography. There are few obvious, well-defined routes of travel. Most travel is cross-country. The topography is diverse and complex. One could cross this area any number of times, never taking the same route, and still be surprised by something. At the moment, SE989 provides a relatively simple way for people on foot or on horseback to reach the mouth of Lewis Canyon. Within Lewis Canyon itself, a narrow, user-created foot trail extends beyond the terminus of the old vehicle route shown on the map. This path helps visitors get even further up the canyon, within and beyond the cherry-stem, back and forth across the stream, and around dense stands of riparian vegetation. With good water and ample shade, wilderness-type opportunities are available to nearly everyone, regardless of age or physical condition.

(5) Supplemental values

Yes. WIU #CDCA 157-1 encompasses a small but significant area of very variable and undeveloped wildlife habitat, contiguous to designated wilderness. The area also contains several important prehistoric sites.

Vegetation: The area lies within an important transitional zone containing elements of the Mojave, Sierran, and Great Basin plant communities. Vegetation in the area consists of creosote, creosote-brittlebush, and Joshua tree plant communities. This creosote community receives significantly more precipitation than creosote habitat further south since it occurs at higher elevation. The unit ranges in elevation from about 3700 ft along the aqueduct road on the east to about 4400 ft (and higher in Lewis Canyon) along the Wilderness boundary to the west of the unit. Annual species and suffrutescent shrubs grow densely here when spring rainfall is sufficient. These plants, particularly species of *Mirabilis*, *Astragalus*, *Camissonia*, *Lotus*, provide important forage for desert tortoises at

the northern edge of their known range. Mohave ground squirrels are also dependent on spring annual forage and use shrubs such as winterfat, saltbush, and spiny hopsage in dry years when annuals are sparse. Desert shrubs, such as Cooper's thornbush (*Lycium cooperi*), provide nesting sites for the loggerhead shrike, a special status species. Silver cholla (*Opuntia echinocarpa*) is the preferred nesting plant for Le Conte's thrasher.

Scattered meadows of desert needlegrass (*Achnatherum speciosum*) and sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentate*) occur in Lewis Canyon. In addition to canyon live oak (*Quercus chrysolepsis*), pinyon pine (*Pinus monophylla*) and Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) at mid-elevations, the canyon bottom contains numerous riparian species, including desert olive (*Forestiera pubescens*), willow spp. and cottonwood. Somewhat unusual riparian trees found in Lewis Canyon include velvet ash (*Fraxinus velutina*) and single-leaf ash (*Fraxinus anomala*).

Wildlife: Large mammals living in the area include mule deer, coyotes, and lagomorphs such as black-tailed jackrabbit and desert cottontail. Bears and mountain lions occasionally pass through the area moving between the Sierra, Coso, and possibly Inyo Mountain ranges. The East Monache mule deer herd winters in the Haiwee Deer Winter Range, which runs along the base of the Sierras between Olancha Creek and Five Mile Canyon. Most of the deer wintering here are Inyo mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus inyoensis*). As winter progresses, deer move out of Lewis, Portuguese, and Fine Canyons to forage on the desert flats. Suitable habitat for several special status bat species is present on the Portuguese Bench. Although this bench is private land, wildlife moves between BLM and private lands without regard to land ownership. The pallid bat and Townsend's big-eared bat probably occur on Portuguese Bench where several springs and riparian areas exist. Mohave ground squirrel, a BLM special status species and a California state-listed species, occurs throughout this unit. The area provides prime foraging habitat for raptors, including golden eagles, prairie falcons, northern harriers, cooper's hawks, and red-tailed hawks. Other special status bird species found in this area include the burrowing owl, Le Conte's thrasher, loggerhead shrike, and the California horned lark. The area provides excellent habitat for the desert tortoise, a federally and California state-listed species. Tortoise has been recorded at several locations within this unit.

Cultural Resources: The earliest human occupation of the Rose Valley locale occurred during the late Pleistocene, about 10,000 years ago, as small bands of hunters and foragers congregated along the riparian corridor of the Pleistocene Owens River, and they utilized the rich array of food resources that were present.

Climate changes then occurred and the region became much warmer with the Owens River drying up into a series of dry playa. The larger fauna of the late Pleistocene was replaced by smaller animals such as antelope and deer. The types of lithic materials used to make points and tools also changed with the discovery and development of obsidian from the nearby Coso volcanic cones.

By about 5,000 years ago this obsidian procurement had become established with a full time populace working the quarries and reducing rough cores into manageable sizes called Bifaces. Yet other groups and individuals then obtained these Bifaces and they trekked long distances trading the obsidian to other groups along the Pacific Coast, the Central Valley, and valleys of the Great Basin region. The creeks and drainages of the east side of the Sierra Nevada were all used as transportation corridors to the Sierra's western slopes, and each now contains dozens of archeological sites and thousands of artifacts dating to this era.

This trade in Coso obsidian Bifaces reached its peak about 1,000 years ago when there were about a half dozen major villages within the Rose Valley locale, with perhaps a hundred people residing in each, all involved in the business of obtaining and trading the obsidian.

After that climax though, there was a rapid decline in the trading of obsidian Bifaces that seems to correspond to a change from heavy dart projectile points to small arrowheads. Besides representing a possible technology change, another possibility is that there was a population change in that the former obsidian traders were pushed out by different groups migrating in. Continuous war and conflict is implied as the obsidian trade disappears as an important activity within the locale.

During the past 500 years the Rose Valley locale was continually used by small family groups foraging for plant and other food resources, with some hunting of small mammals such as rabbits also taking place. While culturally similar, two linguistically different groups were present, the Paiute and Western Shoshone peoples. The influx of Anglo-American peoples and society during the 19th Century lead to the demise of both groups and an end to the foraging and hunting lifestyle that lasted for 10,000 years in the locale.