

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: **WIU #CDCA 170-3 (Publicly Acquired Edgeholding)**

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:



Marty Dikes, Wilderness Coordinator, BLM Ridgecrest FO



Shelley Ellis, Wildlife Biologist, BLM Ridgecrest FO

Date: 2013-09-22

Approved by:

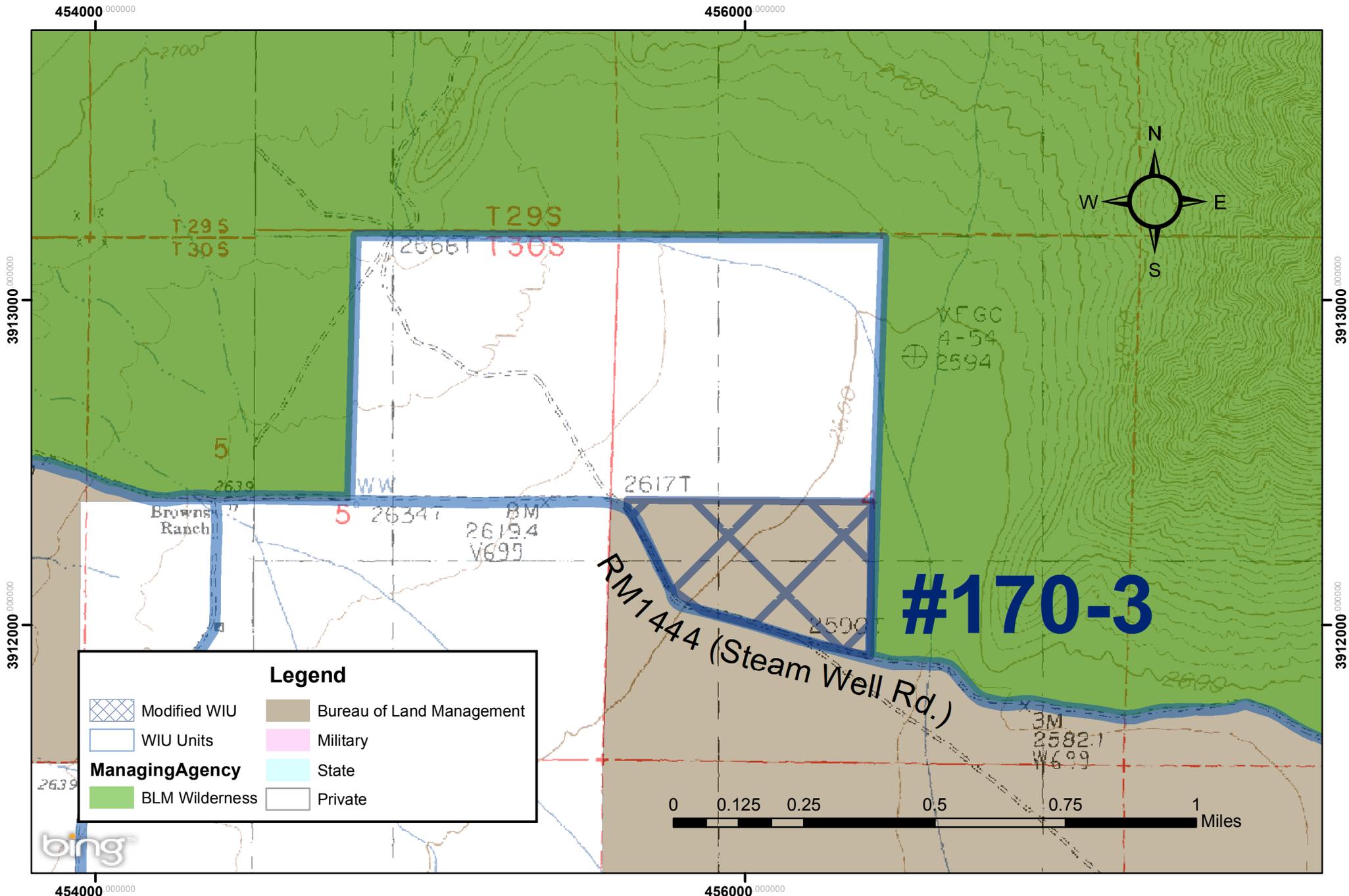


Field Manager

10/23/2013
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 CDCA #170-3 Map



Year 2013 Inventory Unit Number/Name WIU #CDCA 170-3 (Golden Valley Wilderness Edgeholding)

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 170

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 170	39,512	Y	Y	Y	Y
2013 Findings within WIU #CDCA 170-3 (Newly acquired edgeholding contiguous to existing wilderness.)	65	Y	Y	Y	Y

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

The original 1979 WIU #170 was huge, involving more than 100,000 acres. It included all of the Spanglers, the Christmas Canyon ACEC, the Summit Hills, the Golden Valley Wilderness, the Limited Use lands west of the wilderness, as well as the Limited Use lands east of the wilderness.

The 1979 analysis found 39,512 acres in the vicinity of the current Golden Valley Wilderness to be suitable for wilderness, noting that the “quality of the landscape is a direct reflection of [historic] use designations.” Vehicle use in these areas is restricted to “designated roads and trails only.” Mountainous areas are closed to vehicle use and are mostly inaccessible to such use due to their extremely rugged nature. Intensive sheep grazing resulting in sheep trails and some damage to vegetation were noted but these impacts did not appear “to be so intensive as to be irreversible or irretrievable.”

Outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation were found in the interior canyons and ridgetops of the Lava and Almond mountains (now part of the Golden Valley Wilderness). A big part of their effect included sweeping vistas of adjacent natural areas. “These expanses show little significant imprint of man at these distances and lend a psychological feeling of vastness.” Most of Golden Valley was included in the suitability study as one of the adjacent natural areas, singled out for its sweeping spring wildflower displays. The once-private edgeholding in question is located within Golden Valley, just north of RM1444 (Steam Well Road). It is contiguous to the existing Golden Valley Wilderness, occupying the same physical and psychological space. These lands are now in public ownership and are available for wilderness review.

In 1990, the BLM recommended just 29,195 acres for wilderness within the 39,512 acre Golden Valley Wilderness Study Area (CDCA-170) in its Statewide Wilderness Study Report. These acres were largely confined to Golden Valley and the surrounding mountains. The report noted that the area supported desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizi*) and Mohave ground squirrel (*Spermophilus mohavensis*), also that it contained several important prehistoric cultural sites.

In 1994, the California Desert Protection Act designated 37,000 (36,536 actual) acres as the Golden Valley Wilderness.

FORM 2

Documentation Of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name **WIU #CDCA 170-1 (Blackwater Well) and 173 (Golden Pocket)**

(1) Sufficient size

Yes

Acreage: 65 contiguous acres, as calculated by a BLM CA State Office GIS Specialist in 2013.

Boundary revision: The unit is comprised of recent publicly acquired lands in Section 4 (T 29S, R42E), north of RM1444 (Steam Well Road). See attached map.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: BLM (65 acres); private inholdings (0 acres).

Location: Approximately 10 miles east of the communities of Randsburg and Johannesburg along Highway 395. The northern boundary is the public/private land boundary. The eastern boundary is the wilderness boundary. The southern boundary parallels and follows 30 feet north of the centerline of RM1444 (Steam Well Road) to its intersection with the same private land block.

Topography: Flat valley floor.

Vegetation features: Vegetation ranges from saltpan to saltbush scrub to creosote scrub. The area is carpeted with many varieties of yellow-gold wildflowers each spring.

Major human uses/activities: Wildflower viewing, hiking, and photography.

(2) Natural condition

Yes.

The area is roadless and nearly trackless. A vehicle route has never crossed the area. The construction of a wilderness perimeter fence in 2011, stopped vehicles from crossing the

area illegally to drive into wilderness. It is now virtually indistinguishable from the land protected behind the fence line.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude

Yes. Relatively few people walk into this area, outside of bird hunting or the popular wildflower season. You can feel quite alone and lost even in the vast expanse of the valley floor just a couple of hundred feet from the Steam Well Road (RM1444).

(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation

Yes. The area offers a range of primitive, non-motorized recreational opportunities within the context of the entire valley floor, from bird hunting to nature photography, to plant identification and wildflower viewing, to dispersed cross-country hiking and short overnight backpacking. One of the area's best assets is the relative gentleness of much of the terrain. Wilderness-type opportunities are available to virtually anyone, within a short distance of Steam Well Road, regardless of age or physical condition.

(5) Supplemental values

Yes.

Wildlife: Two BLM special status and listed species occur in the area. Mohave ground squirrels (*Xerospermophilus mohavensis*), a BLM special status species and a California state listed species, occur throughout the area. The area also provides excellent habitat for the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassii*), a federally and California state listed species. The Fremont-Kramer Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA) starts just on the opposite side of Steam Well Road. The DWMA is designated Desert Tortoise Critical Habitat.

Large mammals living in the area include coyotes, Kit foxes, bobcats, and lagomorphs such as black-tailed jackrabbit and desert cottontail. Because of the lack of water sources, bobcats, kit foxes, and coyotes occur in low numbers. Upland game birds can be found in the area in wetter, cooler months. Valley floors provide good foraging habitat for raptors, including golden eagles, prairie falcons, northern harriers, and red-tailed hawks. Other special status bird species that may be found in the area include the burrowing owl, Le Conte's thrasher, loggerhead shrike, and the California horned lark.

Vegetation: Vegetation is salt pan grading into saltbush scrub and creosote scrub. Several species of yellow annuals and suffrutescent shrubs grow densely here when winter and spring rainfall is sufficient. Many of these plants provide important forage for desert tortoises. 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.

Cultural Resources: This area has not been inventoried for cultural resources. However several important cultural sites have been identified on the valley floor.