

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Names and Numbers: **WIU's #CDCA 164-1, 164-2, 164-3, 164-4, 164-5 & 164-6**
(El Pasos North & East)

Summary

Results of Analysis:

1. Do these areas meet any of the size requirements?
Yes for WIUs 164-1, 164-2, 164-3, & 164-5
No for WIUs 164-4 & 164-6

2. Do these areas appear to be natural?
Yes for WIUs 164-1, 164-2, & 164-3.
No for WIUs 164-5 & 164-6.

3. Do these areas offer outstanding opportunities for solitude and/or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation?
Yes for WIUs 164-1, 164-2, & 164-3.
No for WIU 164-5.

4. Do they have supplemental values?
Yes for WIUs 164-1, 164-2, & 164-3.

Conclusion

WIUs 164-1, 164-2, & 164-3 have wilderness characteristics.
WIUs 164-4, 164-5 & 164-6 do not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by:

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Date: 08-14-15

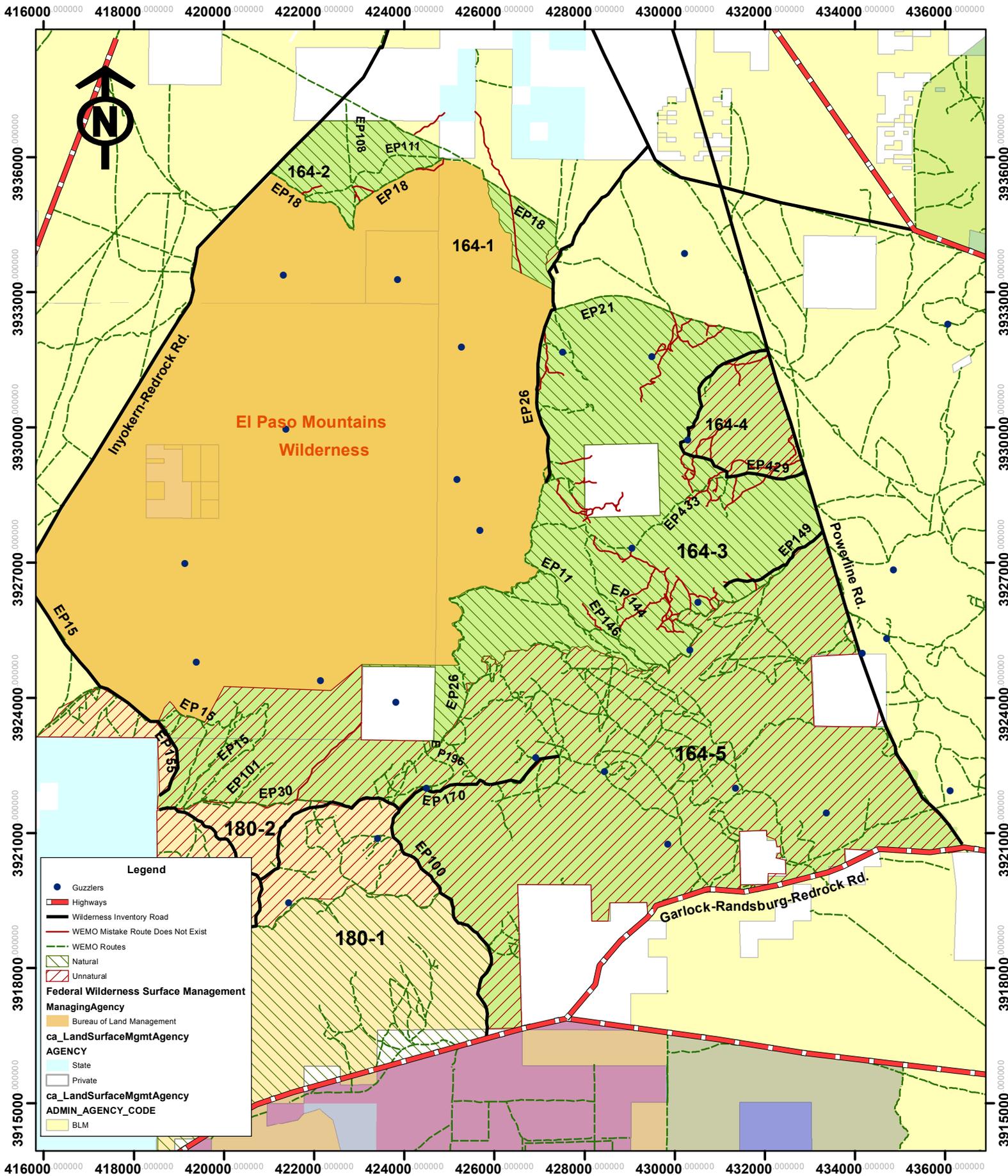
Approved by:



Carl B. Symons, Field Manager

Date 8/14/2015

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.



Legend

- Guzzlers
- Highways
- Wilderness Inventory Road
- WEMO Mistake Route Does Not Exist
- WEMO Routes
- Natural
- Unnatural

Federal Wilderness Surface Management

Managing Agency

- Bureau of Land Management

ca_LandSurfaceMgmtAgency

AGENCY

- State
- Private

ca_LandSurfaceMgmtAgency

ADMIN_AGENCY_CODE

- BLM

WIUs #164 (El Pasos) GUZZLER Map
May 2015



Year 2015 Inventory Units Numbers/Names: WIU's #CDCA 164-1, 164-2, 164-3, 164-4, 164-5 & 164-6 (El Pasos North & East)

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's #CDCA 164

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 WIU #CDCA 164 (El Pasos North & East)	51,600+ (acres)	Y/N	N	N	N/A
2015 Findings #CDCA 164-1	Y 427.6 (contiguous acres)	Y	Y	Y	Y
2015 Findings #CDCA 164-2	Y 1,162.5 (contiguous acres)	Y	Y	Y	Y
2015 Findings #CDCA 164-3	Y 7,458.49 (contiguous acres)	Y	Y	Y	Y
2015 Findings #CDCA 164-4	N 1,243.45 (<u>non-</u> contiguous acres)	Not evaluated	Not evaluated	Not evaluated	Not evaluated

Unit#/ Name	Size (acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N
2015 Findings #CDCA 164-5	Y 17,701.88 (acres)	N	N	N	Not evaluated
2015 Findings #CDCA 164-6	N 26 (non-contiguous acres)	N	Not evaluated	Not evaluated	Not evaluated

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

The original WIU #CDCA 164 was much larger than the ~23,700 acres of federal land under consideration now. The unit encompassed all of the designated El Paso Mountains Wilderness area (23,669 acres). It included all private as well as federal land from the Red Rock-Inyokern Road east to the Powerline Road, and from EP1/EP18/EP21 (see attached map) south to what we now call EP30 and south along the east side of EP100 to the Garlock (Randsburg-Redrock Road). Approximately 10-15 percent of this original inventory unit was non-public land, concentrated in the northern portion, with a few additional scattered parcels elsewhere.

The topography of the mountainous area was described as exceptionally diverse in the 1979 CDCA Wilderness Inventory. Straddling the Garlock Fault, the terrain was described as consisting of “numerous reddish-colored buttes and dark, uplifted mesas of volcanic origin.” Intervening elevated areas were divided by narrow, twisting canyons and heavily bifurcated drainages coursing through a badlands topography. Elevations ranged from less than 2,000 feet to over 5,000 feet. While creosote bush scrub was recognized as the dominant plant community; the multi-faceted exposures of the mountainous areas were found to support many other plant communities, including notably, Joshua tree woodland.

The 1979 analysis was that approximately one-half of the unit had wilderness character. This half is now entirely located within the El Paso Mountains Wilderness. This portion of the roadless area was found to be subject to the forces of nature and to have retained its primeval character. The diverse landforms and lack of imprints of men were felt to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and for a variety of primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The remaining half was felt to be too impacted to qualify due to the presence of numerous heavily-used and eroded jeep trails and several habitations and mines. Noticeable works of man were found to occur in Bonanza Gulch, Last Chance Canyon, Mormon Flat, Mormon Gulch, Goler Gulch, Sand Gulch, Iron Canyon, and Goler Heights. These areas are now all located within WIU #164-5, a subpart of the original unit. They are still heavily-impacted by man and remain outside any part of the original unit currently found eligible.

The roadless portion east of Sheep Spring now identified as WIU #164-3 was also found to be ineligible in 1979, “due to numerous ways providing access to almost any point in that area.” That is no longer the case, if it ever truly was the case. An exceptionally rugged, steep, and impenetrable chain of mountains, buttes, and mesas form the central backbone of the area. Many old ways, small finger intrusions into these mountainous regions have been effectively signed closed and are now successfully rehabbing on their own. Currently, there are approximately 15 miles of open designated vehicle routes within this 12-square mile area. Most of these routes are short and/or are located along the periphery of the unit. Only three of them cross the area for significant distances. Two of the three are user-created wash routes in the bottoms of canyons; the other is half user-created jeep trail, half user-created wash route. One of the three (EP11) is heavily-used. One (EP433) is in regular use. And the third (EP144) is lightly-used, parallels EP11, and could be dropped from the vehicle route system altogether without compromising transportation connectivity.

BLM’s 1990 California Statewide Wilderness Study Report recommended 13,986 acres out of 22,243 potential acres as suitable for wilderness within what became WSA CDCA-164. Acres were dropped from the suitability recommendation, because of moderate potential for mineral development and unspecified human activities resulting in reduced naturalness.

In 1994, the California Desert Protection Act designated 23,669 acres (all 22,243 acres of the WSA and then some) as the El Paso Mountains Wilderness.

The original WIU #CDCA 164 has been modified for this updated inventory to exclude areas already designated as wilderness and all private non-federal lands. The unit has been subsequently subdivided in the course of this inventory into six sub-units: three containing wilderness character (WIU #164-1, #164-2, and #164-3) and three not containing wilderness character (WIU #164-4, WIU #164-5, and WIU #164-6). (See attached map UPDATED OVERVIEW WIU #164.)

The units found not to have wilderness character did not to meet wilderness criteria for the following reasons:

Unit WIU #164-4 is completely encircled by a maintained wilderness inventory road. At 1,243.45 acres, it does not meet the minimum 5,000-acre, stand-alone size requirement.

Unit WIU #164-5 is of sufficient size at more than 17,000-acres, but for the reasons described earlier, heavy motor vehicle use, manmade structures, old and current mining disturbances and activities, does not meet wilderness requirements for naturalness and does not provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Unit WIU #164-6 was split off from eligible unit #164-1 because it is too heavily-disturbed by rock quarrying, i.e., it does not meet the wilderness requirement for naturalness.

FORM 2

Documentation Of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name **CDCA WIU #s 164-1, 164-2, and 164-3 (El Pasos North & East)**

(1) Sufficient size

Yes for contiguous units #164-1 & 164-2, and for contiguous and stand-alone unit 164-3.

Acreeage: Approximately 427 acres immediately contiguous to wilderness for WIU #164-1. Approximately 1,150 contiguous acres for WIU #164-2, where the unit is separated from wilderness by an unmaintained jeep trail. Approximately 7,400 acres for WIU #164-3, that are also contiguous to wilderness. These 2015 acreages were calculated using the measuring tool in GIS.

Boundary revision:

WIU 164-1 is bordered on the south and west by the El Paso Mountains Wilderness; on the north by EP18 (an unmaintained jeep trail); and on the east by EP226 (another unmaintained jeep trail), the edge of a disturbed quarry site, and by a maintained segment of EP26.

WIU 164-2 is bordered on the south by the northern boundary of the El Paso Mountains Wilderness along EP18 (an unmaintained jeep trail); on the west by a ROW associated with a county-maintained road (the Inyokern-Redrock Road); on the north by a private property boundary and EP1 (an unmaintained jeep trail); and on the east by another private property boundary.

WIU 164-3 is bordered on the south by the maintained portion of EP149 (with the short maintained segment of route EP434 to an old mine site cherry-stemmed out), by the unmaintained portion of EP149 (a jeep trail) morphing into EP15/EP146, and by an east-west trending ridgeline near the confluence of two drainages (an unnamed wash and Goler Gulch) and the intersection of jeep trails (EP149/15 and EP146). From the ridgeline's intersection with an unmaintained jeep trail identified as EP26, the boundary runs south (forming a part of the eastern boundary) along the jeep trail to an intersection with the eastern section line of Section 36, Ts.28S, R.38E. This section line comprises the private/federal property line boundary. The western boundary follows this section line north and then continues east along the El Paso Mountains Wilderness boundary to a second intersection with EP26, a short distance north of the previous intersection. The western boundary continues north along the unmaintained portion of this jeep trail to the Sheep Springs picnic area, excluding the picnic area, to continue north along the east side of the maintained section of EP26 (in effect cherry-stemming this portion of the route out) to EP21. The unit is bordered on the north by EP21 (an easterly trending, unmaintained jeep trail) and it is bordered on the east by the Powerline ROW along a maintained north-south trending road also identified as EP21.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: BLM (~427, ~1,150 and ~7,400 acres respectively, subdivided into 3 units, WIU #164-1, #164-2, and #164-3); private inholdings (0 acres).

Location: These units are located approximately 10 miles southwest of the community of Ridgecrest, immediately east and south of the El Paso Mountains Wilderness, between EP 26 on the west and the Powerline Road (EP21) on the east and between EP21 (on the north) and EP149 and an unidentified prominent ridge line north of Lower Goler Gulch/Canyon in Ts. 27 & 28 S.; Rs. 38 & 39 E.

Topography:

WIU #164-1 is located within a relatively flat, somewhat undulating, rough and rocky (basalt-dominated) floodplain cut by several north-south trending washes that cross into wilderness.

WIU #164-2 is also located in an active floodplain immediately north of the El Paso Mountains Wilderness. It is more hilly and sandy and its washes are larger and more at odds and cross-purposes to one another. The most outstanding and central feature of the unit is Little Dixie Wash, a huge east-west trending drainage, that eventually turns south at the wilderness boundary to run the entire length of the wilderness before dispersing in multiple directions.

WIU #164-3 is dominated by a large north-south trending chain of color-splashed high mountains, red buttes, and flat black mesa tops that form the backbone of the unit. These mountains, buttes, and mesas are flanked by colorful badlands, deep, twisty, narrow canyons, steep drainages, and fractured washes.

Vegetation features: Lush, dense creosote scrub desert. More diverse plant communities, including some Joshua tree woodland, in more hilly and mountainous areas with more variable exposures and higher elevations.

Major human uses/activities:

WIU #164-1 is completely roadless (devoid of any vehicle routes whatsoever). The only GTLF feature identified within the unit follows a wash, a wash which has been for the most part, successfully signed closed and blocked by boulders to vehicles for many years now. The wash provides almost immediate access to the interior of the wilderness area. It is undoubtedly used by some hikers and horseback riders, as well as by bird hunters, for that purpose.

WIU #164-2 is criss-crossed by two sandy wash routes used primarily, I believe, by locals, to bypass the most rocky and difficult sections of EP18. The roadbed along two-thirds of EP18 is studded with basalt. This makes for a much longer, slower, and more uncomfortable drive to get from one side of the wilderness area to the other. EP1, the

route defining the northern boundary of the unit, serves the same purpose as the two sandy wash routes.

WIU #164-3: This large and relatively roadless and undeveloped area serves multiple functions. It is a very pristine and spectacular area, with sheer mountains, colorful formations, and twisted, labyrinth-like badlands. Much of it is excellent tortoise habitat. The area immediately west of the Powerline Road and east of the mountainous backbone of the unit supports an unusually lush stand of creosote scrub desert criss-crossed with dozens of small sandy washes. In general, this unit is much less OHV-oriented than the unit immediately to the south (WIU #164-5). It has more landscape integrity. There are no attractive nuisances, i.e., popular structures such as cabins or large mine sites to attract visitors in large numbers. It is also tougher to travel across by vehicle. Much of it is basalt and the topography is severe. The land largely protects itself. There are steep jeep trails but no hillclimbs, and no authorized trails other than jeep trails. The route network is relatively sparse (see analysis in Form 1), and it is quite challenging in many places. It appeals mostly to visitors looking for exceptional scenery and a more technical 4x4 experience. There are few campsites other than sheep camps, bedding and watering sites, and most of these are located on the periphery of the area. There are no routes suitable for RV-use and no RV-staging areas within easy striking distance. The area appears to function primarily as a day-use area, and more than likely, is visited primarily by locals from the nearby communities of Ridgecrest and Inyokern. Because it is relatively undeveloped, undisturbed, and isolated from the much more heavily-used OHV areas, the area provides excellent opportunities for other, non-motorized forms of recreation, such as hunting, hiking, and horseback riding. There are four small bird guzzlers in the area.

(2) Natural condition

Yes. WIU #164-1 is completely roadless and is indistinguishable from the adjacent wilderness. WIU #164-2 is criss-crossed by two routes, but these routes are user-created routes in large sandy washes/active drainages. The unit is separated from the wilderness area by an unmaintained jeep trail. Private developments in the general vicinity are entirely on private lands. They are non-existent to minimal, long-abandoned, and probably historic. WIU #164-3 is a relatively large area of extremely rugged, badland to mountainous terrain, with a minimal route network and very few, small-scale developments. There are four small bird guzzlers and three mine sites. The mine sites, an abandoned prospect and two old mines are very small and discreet, well-screened and/or dwarfed by the surrounding topography. Most of this unit is inaccessible to vehicles.

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

Yes. Vehicle access is non-existent to limited and opportunities for solitude and/or primitive and unconfined recreation are outstanding throughout most of these units. The topography, particularly in WIU #164-3 is extreme, providing ample opportunities for remaining undetected within the landscape and for screening out the sights and sounds of others, even within the same twisting and immediately adjacent canyons and drainages.

The area offers many challenges for interesting cross-country non-motorized travel and ascents to scenic high points. The inaccessibility of much of the area to motorized vehicles helps it function as a natural extension of the wilderness area.

(5) Supplemental values

Yes.

There are many special status species that inhabit these unique areas. The state listed Mohave ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus mohavensis*) and federally listed Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus aggasii*) both reside in these areas. A particularly robust and healthy population of desert tortoises was recorded in recent years immediately northeast of the wilderness area. Other BLM sensitive and/or CA species of special concern known to inhabit these areas include Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) as well as several other raptors, burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*), Le Conte's thrashers (*Toxostoma lecontei*), Townsend's big-eared bats (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) and American badgers (*Taxidea taxus*).

There are special status plants, one of which is endemic specifically to the El Paso Mountains. They are the Red Rock Poppy (*Eschsholzia minutiflora* S. Wats. Ssp. *twisselmannii*) and Charlotte's Phacelia (*Phacelia nashiana*). Both are BLM Sensitive species.

The Goler Formation occurs in the El Paso Mountains. It is one of the few land deposit Paleocene localities in the world.

Over 120 cultural properties have been recorded within the El Paso Mountains to date. The majority of these sites were recorded during several seasons of inventory conducted by Alex Apostolides during the 1960s and 1970s, dubbed the "Saltdale Quadrangle Archeological Survey." Apostolides' work focused primarily on the rock art sites within the entire mountain range, which have been described as "one of the richest concentrations of prehistoric rock art in the Mojave and Great Basin Areas (Apostolides 1974)." As a result, the Last Chance Canyon Archeological Areas was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, incorporating 77 sites as directly contributing to the district. An unknown number of additional resources potentially contributing to the National Register District likely occur within the surveyed area, as well as throughout the El Paso Mountains and wilderness area. Several prehistoric sites are known to occur and have been recorded east of EP26, across the road from the wilderness area. These sites include petroglyphs, bedrock mortars, rockshelters, agave roasting pits, and lithic scatters. A sacred lands file has been established for the El Paso Mountains by the State of California Native American Heritage Commission.