

**Summary of Findings and Conclusion**

Unit Name and Number: **WIU #CDCA 159A-2 & 160-1 (Horse Canyon)**

Summary

Results of Analysis:

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

Conclusion

**These areas have wilderness characteristics.**

**Prepared by:**

Team Members:

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Date: 12-04-2013

**Approved by:**



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Carl B. Symons, Field Manager

Date

12/19/2013

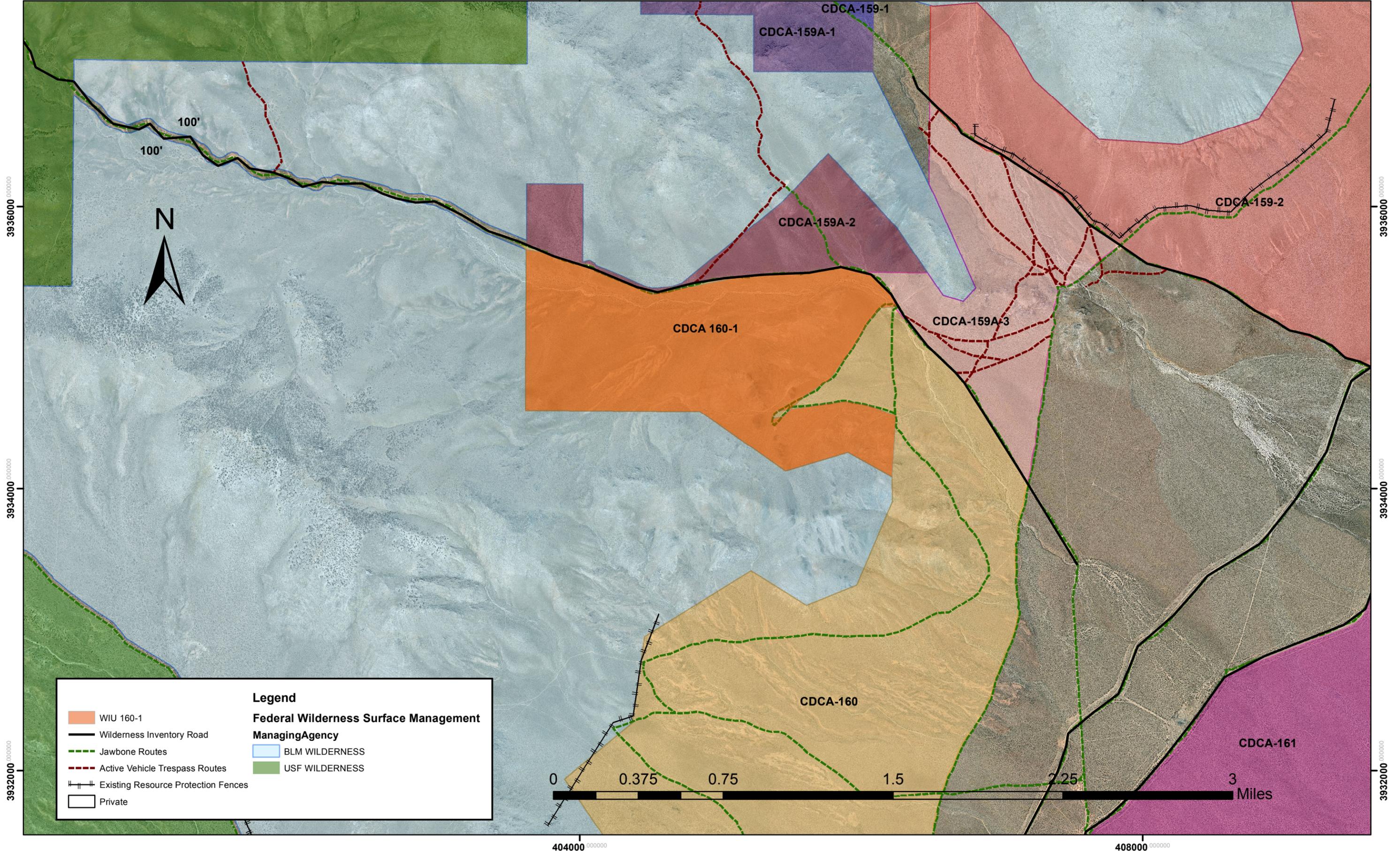


*This form documents information that constitutes an inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR parts 4 or 1610.5-2.*

Map WIU #CDCA 159A-2 & 160-1 (Horse Canyon)  
December 17, 2013

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100'  
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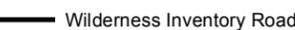
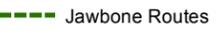
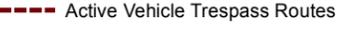
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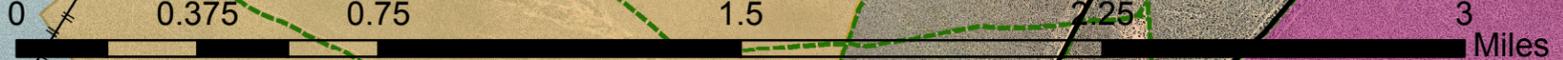
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**Legend**

 WIU 160-1	<b>Federal Wilderness Surface Management</b>
 Wilderness Inventory Road	<b>Managing Agency</b>
 Jawbone Routes	 BLM WILDERNESS
 Active Vehicle Trespass Routes	 USF WILDERNESS
 Existing Resource Protection Fences	
 Private	



CDCA 160-1

CDCA-159A-1

CDCA-159A-2

CDCA-160

CDCA-159A-3

CDCA-159-2

CDCA-161

CDCA-159-1

Year 2013 Inventory Unit Number/Name WIU #CDCA 159A-2 & 160-1 (Horse Canyon)

**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 159 & 160

**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

<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 within WIU #CDCA 159A	Y ~14,500 acres	Y	Y	Y	Y
2013 Findings within WIU #CDCA 159A-2 Northside Horse Canyon	Y 231.09 contiguous acres	Y	Y	Y	Y
1979 Findings within WIU #CDCA 160 (Horse Canyon)	Y More than 5,000 acres	Y	Y	Y	Y
2013 Findings within WIU #CDCA 160-1 Southside Horse Canyon	Y 663.03 contiguous acres	Y	Y	Y	Y

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

The original **1979 WIU #CDCA 159-A** was bounded on the north by Sage Canyon, on the west by the Sequoia National Forest RARE II Area, on the south, by Horse Canyon Road; and on the east by a road from Horse Canyon to Sage Canyon. Approximately 10-15% of the area along the northern border was privately-owned, non-public land.

The unit extended over a major east-west trending ridge of the Sierra Nevada; some deep, heavily vegetated canyons to the north and south, and significant portions of desert floor. The canyons were filled with dense clumps of Joshua trees and other desert shrubs; while the ridgeline with peaks up to 6,000 feet, supported pinyon-juniper forest.

The integrity of the unit was found to have suffered from the use of off-road vehicles. Trails were noted to have criss-crossed many of the lower slopes and to have climbed to higher elevations. The scars left by these trails were felt to be substantially noticeable throughout virtually the entire roadless area.

The vegetation and topography of the area and the area's continuity with the southern Sierra Nevada provided outstanding opportunities for solitude. However, the opportunities available for primitive and unconfined types of recreation were felt to be compromised by the numerous off-road vehicle trails.

The unit was not evaluated in the 1990 Wilderness Study Report.

The original **1979 WIU #CDCA 160** was bounded on the north by the Horse Canyon road, on the east by the Los Angeles Aqueduct maintenance road, on the south by the Bird Springs Canyon road, and on the northwest by the Sequoia National Forest RARE II Area. Approximately one-two percent of the area was privately-owned, non-public land.

The area was described as consisting of a mountain ridge between two major canyons in the southern Sierra Nevada. On the east, a desert bajada (3400-3800 feet) supports a creosote bush scrub plant community. The long, deep canyons climb to 5000' and support dense clusters of Joshua trees and various other desert shrub species. The line of peaks on the ridgeline attain elevations of 6800.' The ridgeline supports pinyon-juniper forest.

The area was found to be very scenic, with impacts of man restricted mostly to lower elevations where off-road vehicles had ready access and where there was a well-developed water source for cattle. Potential wilderness was felt to encompass the steeper mountainous areas where offroad vehicle tracks and range improvements were not present.

The area was felt to have outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The diverse terrain and plant communities provided good topographic and vegetative screening. The Pacific Crest Trail, proximity to the Sequoia

National Forest RARE II Area, and physical continuity with the physiographic features of the Sierra Nevada offered a wide range of ecosystems and experiences.

The 1990 Wilderness Study Report called the area the “Horse Canyon WSA,” attaching only 4,595 acres to the unit, all of which was publicly-owned land. The area was limited to the upper elevations of the original unit and was described as encompassing 5 interconnecting hills or remnants of the Scodie Mountains. The entire WSA was noted to be within the Jawbone-Butterbrecht Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The BLM recommended 0 acres for wilderness, because: (1) it felt the area’s value as wilderness was minimal and was exceeded by other resource values; (2) Sequoia National Forest was no longer proposing the area adjacent to the WSA as a RARE II wilderness area; and (3) the WSA was less than 5,000 acres in size.

**In 1994, Congress designated lands in WIU #CDCA 159 and WIU #CDCA 160, and contiguous upper elevation lands in Sequoia National Forest, part of the Kiavah Wilderness.** This wilderness encompassed virtually all of the original Ridgecrest and Bakersfield BLM inventory units (totaling 40,960 acres), as well as most of the land in Sequoia National Forest spanning these units. Vehicle routes were cherry-stemmed out of wilderness in Cow Heaven, Horse, Cane, Cholla, Short, and Cap canyons. Private property was excluded along the western and northern boundaries of the new wilderness area and within Sage and Horse canyons, where the private property constituted a large block of contiguous land owned by the Rudnick Trust. Where Congress indicated clear intent to exclude private property, wilderness boundaries were adjusted to conform to the actual private property boundaries.

The Congressional maps accompanying the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 centered the private property block in Sage and Horse Canyons in the bottom of Sage Canyon rather than up on the ridge on the northside of the canyon. This may have been done in anticipation of a patent reformation thought to be underway at the time to “fix” or change the location of the private property with respect to a 1983/84 survey. (See attached photo of the Kiavah Congressional map.) BLM based its legal wilderness boundary description, excluding the private property block, both on the Congressional map and on what BLM too believed would be the actual location of the property after the patent reformation. A legal description was prepared and submitted to Congress for final approval in June 2005.

BLM did not discover that the patent reformation had not gone through until sometime after 2005 when the property kept showing up as significantly offset from the wilderness boundary both on the Master Title Plats and in GIS.

At about the same time, BLM became aware that the indefinite BLM/USFS boundary shown on the 7 ½ minute quads had changed location with the 1983/84 survey. The agency administrative boundary shifted approximately 1 mile east and ½ mile south as a result of the survey. The actual location of the private property also shifted as a

consequence; moving 1 mile east, without, however, moving south, as it would have if the patent reformation had gone through.

The units identified in this wilderness inventory as units WIU #CDCA 159A-2 and #CDCA 160-1 are comprised of public and formerly private lands in the bottom of Horse Canyon that were left out of the CDPA in 1994.

## **FORM 2**

### **Documentation Of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions**

Unit Number/Name **WIU #CDCA 159A-2 & 160-1 (Horse Canyon)**

#### **(1) Sufficient size**

**Yes**

**Acreage:** 212.39 acres and 663.03 acres for WIU #159A-2 and WIU #160-1 respectively, both units being immediately contiguous to the existing Kiavah Wilderness. Acreages were calculated in GIS.

#### **Boundary revision:**

**WIU #CDCA 159A-2** encompasses all public lands in the bottom of Horse Canyon on the *north* side of the Horse Canyon Road (SC65), that were left out of the Kiavah Wilderness in 1994. This unit is bounded by the Kiavah Wilderness on two-three sides and by the Horse Canyon Road on the south.

**WIU #CDCA 160-1** encompasses all public lands in the bottom of Horse Canyon on the *south* side of the Horse Canyon Road (SC65), that were left out of the Kiavah Wilderness in 1994. This unit is bounded the Horse Canyon Road on the north, Sequoia National Forest on the west, the Kiavah Wilderness on the south, and by two jeep trails identified as SC74 and SC78 and a projected north-south line from the intersection of SC78 and an unnamed jeep trail on the east.

#### **Description of Current Conditions**

**Land ownership:** BLM (875.42 acres total); private inholdings (0 acres).

**Location:** Bottom of Horse Canyon, excluding the Horse Canyon Road (with a 100' setback on either side of the centerline), from two jeep trails identified as SC74 and SC78 near the mouth of the canyon to the BLM/USFS boundary, T. 27S., R. 36E.

**Topography:** Broad canyon floor bracketed by tall mountains, becoming more sinuous and narrow as it climbs in elevation.

**Vegetation features:** Creosote bush scrub, Joshua trees, and pinyon-juniper woodland at higher elevations.

**Major human uses/activities:** Hunting, hiking, horseback riding, grazing and off-road vehicle use.

## **(2) Natural condition**

**Yes.** In 1994, wilderness designation curtailed much of the vehicle use in Horse Canyon, restricting it to one primary route, the Horse Canyon Road (SC65) and three short, open, designated jeep trails (SC70, SC74 & SC78) near the mouth of the canyon. BLM has put considerable effort since passage of the CDPA into stopping vehicle use in wilderness and off of the designated route system. Efforts have revolved around signing, restoration, vehicle barriers, stepped-up holiday patrols and occasional “sting” operations. These efforts are on-going and while they have not stopped all illegal vehicle use, they have curbed it, diminishing impacts. In 2012-13, Student Conservation Association crews cleaned up two large campsites. They also restored 8 of the 10 remaining vehicle trespass routes in the area. These routes are no longer active or visible. They are disappearing over time. The bottom of Horse Canyon now looks more natural than it has looked at any time over the past 20 years.

Currently only two significant vehicle trespass problems remain, both revolving around the campsite at the terminus of SC70. The most serious of the two is the trespass over the saddle between Horse and Sage canyons. The solution to this problem will require some type of hard barrier in addition to restoration. It should be effectively addressed by SCA projects planned for 2014-2015.

In short, while OHV use in the canyon, off of the designated route system and into designated wilderness continues to be a problem in Horse Canyon, it is significantly improved from what it was at the time of wilderness designation, let alone from what it was at the time of the 1990 Wilderness Inventory Reports.

## **(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude**

**Yes, most of the time, outside of heavy OHV-use periods (i.e., cool season holiday weekends).** Excellent opportunities for solitude exist when OHV-users are not present in great numbers and do not appear with great frequency. At these times, it is easy to find oneself alone and beyond the reach of sights and sounds generated by other people, within a relatively short distance of SC65. Broad expanses, deep washes, undulating bottomlands, thick clumps of Joshua trees, intervening ridgelines, and pinyon-juniper forests, help isolate hikers and equestrians in the canyon from vehicle activity along SC65.

**No, not on holiday weekends during the cool weather OHV season, i.e., not on Halloween, Thanksgiving, New Years, Presidents Day, and Easter (<20/360 days per year).** The amount of off-road vehicle use, the large number and frequency of riders, during these excepted times precludes any opportunity for solitude in the canyon, be it inside or outside of designated wilderness. There can be as many as 100-200 dirt bike and quad users riding up and down SC65 (or off-route and into wilderness) on any given day during these times. That amounts to a rider every 1 ½ to 2 minutes between the daylight hours of 10 a.m.- 3 p.m. within sight and sound distance of the Horse Canyon Road. The noise from these vehicles travels long distances and the dust plumes can be visible for miles.

#### **(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation**

**Yes.** Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation exist when OHV-users are not in the canyon in great numbers and with great frequency, i.e., outside of the Halloween, Thanksgiving, New Years, Presidents Day, and Easter weekends. Hikers and equestrians can travel up the Horse Canyon Road with little to no interference from vehicles from 3400' to over 7,000' where they can intersect the Pacific Crest Trail, following it south or north across the Kiavah Wilderness. Or, they can climb out of the bottom of the canyon to one of the low saddles visible up on the flanking ridgelines. These ridgelines can then be followed for some distance.

#### **(5) Supplemental values**

**Yes.** The units are within the Jawbone-Butterbrecht Area of Critical Environmental Concern. This ACEC was established to protect biological, Native American, and cultural resource values. The area contains some of the most productive wildlife habitat in the California desert, including an important migratory bird stopover and a major raptor and vulture migratory corridor. It also contains important Desert tortoise, yellow-eared pocket mouse, Bendire's Thrasher and Mohave ground squirrel habitat.

Cultural resource values include: prehistoric habitation locales, lithic reduction sites, and extensive pictograph and petroglyph rock art sites. Historic resources identified throughout the area include: the Los Angeles Aqueduct and associated labor camps; stage coach stops; railroad sidings; mining features; and Civilian Conservation Corp camps and projects. Historically significant routes of travel such as Bird Springs Pass used by the Fremont Expedition, Walker Pass, a National Historic Landmark identified as one of the first overland routes into California, and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail traverse the area. During the CDCA Plan, the Kawaiisu identified several traditional resource gathering sites, ceremonial locations, and religious areas within this area.

**Vegetation:** This unit contains Joshua tree woodland, riparian stream habitat, desert wash, and creosote desert scrub. Mojave Desert species such as creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) and Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) occupy lower elevations, scattered pinyon pine (*Pinus monophylla*) appear at higher elevations in the unit. Desert needlegrass (*Achnatherum speciosum*) and sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) are also important plant species that occur in the unit. In years of adequate precipitation, annual wildflowers cover the slopes in stunning displays of color. Annual species grow densely here when spring rainfall is sufficient. Charlotte's phacelia (*Phacelia naschiana*) is a BLM special status plant species that occur in the area on decomposed granite.

**Wildlife:** Large mammals include mule deer, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, kit foxes, and lagomorphs such as black-tailed jackrabbit and desert cottontail. Bears and mountain lions occasionally pass through the area. The unit contains suitable habitat for the pallid bat, spotted bat, and Townsend's big-eared bat. Mohave ground squirrel, a BLM special status species and a California state listed species, occurs throughout this unit. The yellow-eared pocket mouse, a BLM special status species, has been documented in Sage and Horse Canyons along the riparian areas. An extensive area of habitat occurs along both drainages and is shown in the California

Natural Diversity Data Base. The unit provides prime foraging habitat for raptors, including golden eagles, prairie falcons, northern harriers, cooper's hawks, red-tailed hawks, and great horned owls. Nesting golden eagles have been documented in these canyons in the spring of 2012. Other special status bird species found in this area include the burrowing owl, Le Conte's thrasher, loggerhead shrike, and the California horned lark. Important upland game species are also present: dove, chukar, mountain quail, and California quail. Cactus wrens, loggerhead shrikes, ladder-back woodpeckers, sage sparrows, black-throated sparrows, horned larks, and ash-throated flycatchers are some of the resident species that nest in this unit. The lower elevations, within the eastern portion of the unit, provide suitable habitat for the desert tortoise, a federally and California state listed species.

***Cultural Resources:*** Several prehistoric sites exist in the vicinity. These have been documented near the mouth of the canyon, up on saddles along the flanking ridgelines, and on the approach to and in the general vicinity of Horse Canyon Spring. Horse Canyon falls within Kawaiisu territory. The Kawaiisu lived in small groups and moved into the canyon on a seasonal basis to take advantage of the resources there.

Most cultural resource inventory work by BLM archaeologists has been limited to corridors related to routes of travel, authorized or otherwise. BLM archeologists have identified several sites along these corridors. Dr. Mark Allen of Cal Poly Pomona has demonstrated that vehicle use can have a direct, adverse impact on cultural resources found in the area. In some cases, route restoration has been restricted to applications of horizontal as opposed to vertical mulch.