

Table Mountain

CA-060-026

TABLE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-060-026)

1. THE STUDY AREA — 1,018 acres

The Table Mountain WSA is located three miles north of Interstate 8 in southeastern San Diego County, about 60 miles east of San Diego and 45 miles west of El Centro. This 1,018 acre WSA consists entirely of public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (see Table 1 and Map 1).

The WSA borders Anza-Borrego Desert State Park on the north and east. On the south it borders other public lands; on the west it borders a State section outside the park. The southern boundary is not aligned with any physical or legal feature, but was drawn to exclude those public lands lacking wilderness characteristics.

The WSA consists of the southern tip of a generally north-south trending ridge of the Jacumba Mountains. The southern end of the WSA contains both slopes of the ridge and the rolling land to either side. Moving north, and because the WSA boundary follows the section line which bisects the ridge, only the east-facing slope is included in the northern third of the study area. Table Mountain, the feature after which the WSA is named, is actually over one mile south of the WSA. Located in the transition zone between semi-succulent desert scrub and chaparral, elevations in the WSA range from 2,880 to 4,224 feet. The extremely rocky terrain exhibits the large, rounded granite boulders characteristic of the region. About three miles of primitive dirt road provide motorized access to the WSA boundary from Old Highway 80 to the south. The road is marginally negotiable by two-wheel drive vehicle most of the time.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The rationale for making Table Mountain a WSA was that Anza-Borrego Desert State Park was evaluating the wilderness potential of the land, which borders the WSA on two sides. That portion of the state park has since been designated wilderness. The WSA is within BLM's Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit, for which a management framework plan (MFP) was completed in 1981. Two suitability recommendations were analyzed in the 1980 draft EIS on Livestock Grazing and Wilderness Management of the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit, and the final EIS on the Wilderness Recommendations for the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit Section 202 WSAs, completed in 1988: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE — 0 acres recommended for wilderness
1,018 acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Table Mountain WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

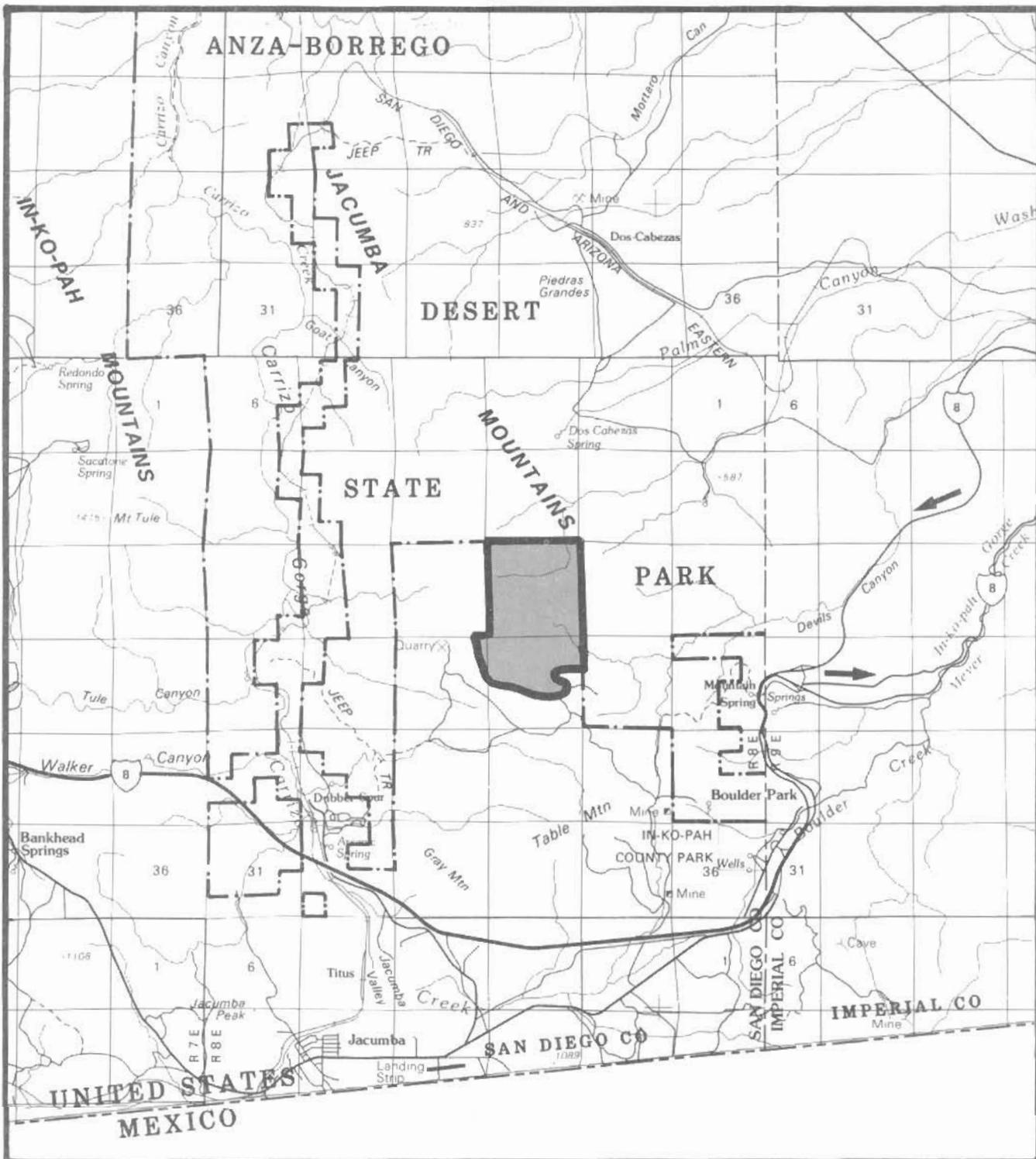
All wilderness is the environmentally preferable alternative. This is because it will result in the least change from the existing natural environment over the long term. It is not the recommendation for this WSA, however, for the reasons described below.

The study area will continue to be managed in accordance with the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit MFP. Since this is a broad-based, general plan, not all future management actions can be predicted with certainty. Projections have been made to allow analysis of the effects of the recommendation. Although the BLM is not necessarily committed to all of these actions, the following is an outline of reasonably feasible activities which could occur. Fire suppression activities will continue, and will be guided by a fire management plan. It is expected that no prescribed burns will be conducted, no firebreaks will be constructed, and fire suppression lines will be constructed by mechanized equipment very rarely, at a rate not exceeding one-quarter mile of line every 20 years. A livestock drift fence and spring development will be constructed to curtail the past problem of livestock trespass onto the adjacent state park. After these improvements are installed, cattle will again be allowed to graze the Table Mountain Pasture. It is expected that one small underground mine will be developed near the western WSA boundary, in section 22, T. 17 S., R. 8 E. Total surface disturbance will be 1.5 acres, including approximately 100 yards of new access road. No primitive routes of travel have been identified within the WSA.

The no wilderness recommendation is based on the following rationale: (1) the wilderness values of the area are not considered outstanding, and (2) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources. Wilderness values in the adjacent Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Wilderness will not be adversely impacted by this recommendation.

Opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation are limited by the area's size and the proximity of roads. The south boundary adjoins public land containing a small mine, a quarry, and numerous prospects served by a system of primitive roads, which are frequently used by off-highway vehicle recreationists. Sights and sounds from the adjacent land decrease the feeling of remoteness.

The WSA is currently managed for low-intensity use. Motor vehicles are excluded from the WSA. The principal users of the area are recreationists, primarily hunters and rockhounds. After release from wilderness consideration, BLM guidelines for low-intensity use will assure that the WSA remains essentially natural in character. Only minor changes to the area's existing wilderness values are expected.



NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA

RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

SPLIT ESTATE

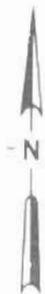
STATE

PRIVATE

SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

PRIVATE



**Table Mountain
Proposal
MAP-1**



060-026
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	1,018
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>1,018</u>
 <u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		 <u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
 <u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		 <u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	1,018
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>1,018</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Table Mountain WSA appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature. The only evident alterations to the natural environment are a few small, unobtrusive abandoned mining prospects.
2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude are limited by the area's small size and the proximity of roads. The south boundary adjoins public land containing a small mine, a quarry, and numerous prospects served by a system of primitive roads, which are

frequently used by off-highway vehicle recreationists. However, because of the WSA's low visitation, solitude can still be found, particularly in the northern third of the unit, which adjoins Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Wilderness. This northern portion is farthest from the roads and hence, other users, and it is visually screened by a ridge.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Like solitude, opportunities for primitive recreation are limited by the area's small size. When viewed in conjunction with the state park wilderness, the area does provide opportunities for cross-country hiking, backpacking, and general nature study. Opportunities for upland game and mule deer hunting are limited because hunting is prohibited in the state park, which partially surrounds the WSA and makes for a very confined hunting area.
4. Special Features: The WSA contains four plant species which are under status review by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) for possible listing as threatened or endangered: Jacumba milkvetch (Astragalus douglasii var. perstrictus), low bush monkeyflower (Diplacus aridus), Mountain Springs bush lupine (Lupinus excubitus var. medius), and Pholisma arenarium. Nine additional species are listed by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). Geraea viscida, Ipomopsis tenuifolia, Linanthus bellus, Mahonia higginsae, Mentzelia hirsutissima var. stenophylla, Mirabilis tenuiloba, and Penstemon clevelandii spp. connatus are classified as rare in California but more common elsewhere. Delphinium parishii spp. subglobosum and Lathyrus splendens are listed as rare both in California and elsewhere.

Three wildlife species under status review by USF&WS may occur within the WSA, all though their presence has not been confirmed: San Diego coast horned lizard, magic gecko, and peninsular bighorn sheep. Sheep have been observed southwest of the WSA and may occur on the periphery of the WSA on a transient basis. The loggerhead shrike, considered sensitive by USF&WS in Region 1, inhabits the WSA year-long.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 1,018 acres of the California Chaparral/Chaparral ecosystem. Wilderness designation of the Table Mountain WSA would not increase the ecological diversity of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BIM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chaparral/Chaparral	17	462,256	10	86,192
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chaparral/Chaparral	17	462,256	10	86,192

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a days driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of five major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of wilderness areas and other BIM study areas within a five-hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BIM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The Table Mountain WSA is within 50 air miles of six BIM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness is contiguous with the WSA in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Less than 50 air miles away are three other wilderness areas Pine Creek and Hauser, administered by the U.S. Forest Service and Cuyamaca Mountains State Wilderness Area.

C. Manageability

The Table Mountain WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, the area's wilderness values will remain marginal. Opportunities for both solitude and primitive recreation are limited by the area's small size and the proximity of roads.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

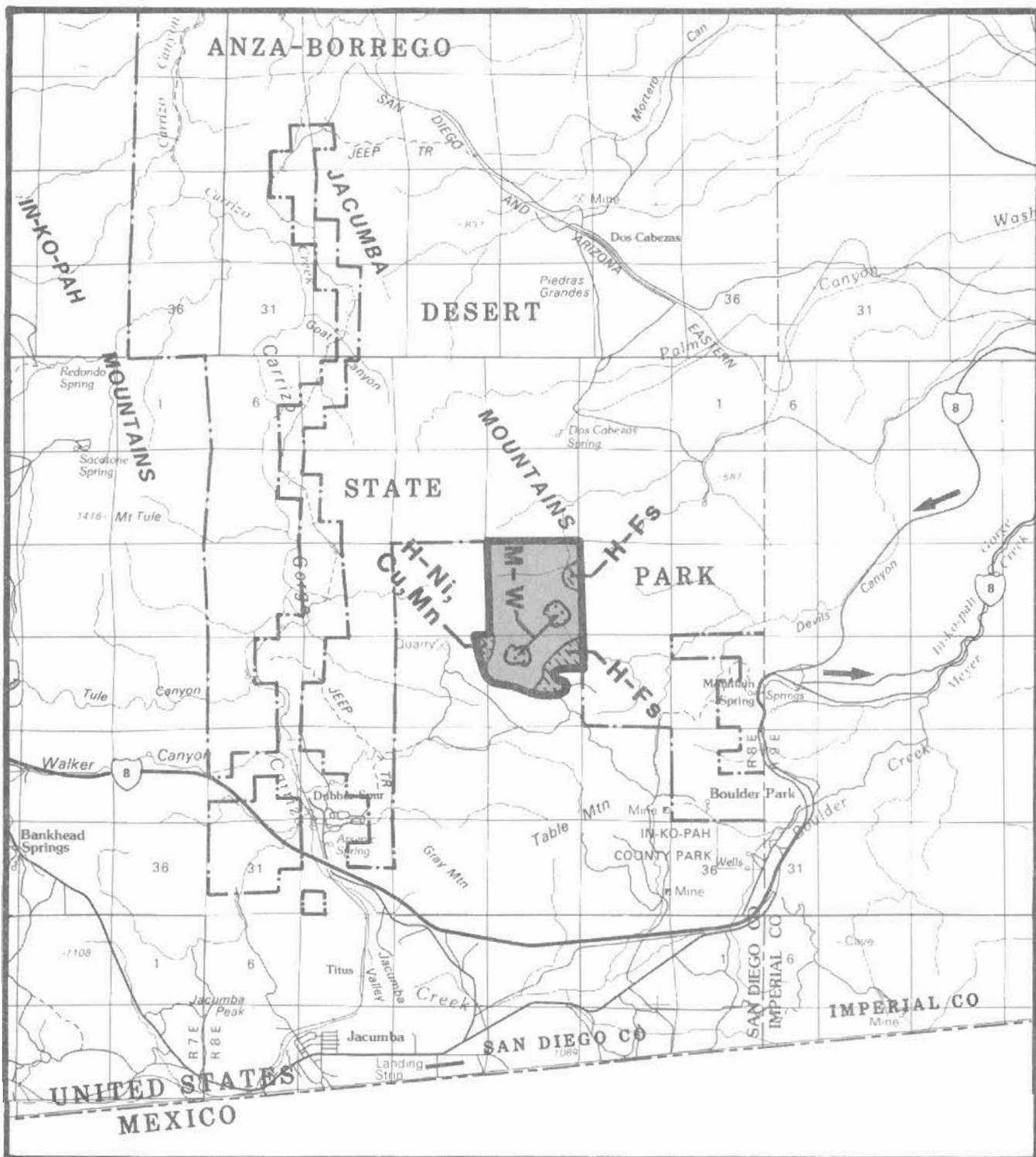
D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Table Mountain WSA is within the Vallecito Mountains Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA), for which BLM prepared a GRA Report in 1980. The GRA Report indicated a moderate potential for the occurrence of copper, lead, silver, and zinc near prospects outside and immediately inside the west-central portion of the WSA. The 1980 GRA Report cites the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) designation of the area as prospectively valuable for geothermal resources in 1979; however, potential for occurrence is low under the BLM classification system. The GRA Report lists the area as favorable, but unclassified, for uranium and thorium.

Feldspar production was cited in the northeastern and southeastern portions of the WSA. Under the BLM classification system, these areas are considered to have a high potential for the occurrence of feldspar, as shown on Map 2.

In the southwest portion of the WSA, a pegmatite was intercepted in a tunnel that assayed 14% nickel with copper sulfate. A shear zone in an area in the southern portion of the WSA produced manganese in 1928; a small amount of 17% manganese grade ore was also mined in 1953. These areas are considered to have a high potential for the occurrence of nickel, copper, and manganese.

In the east-central portion of the WSA there is a prospect for tungsten in a tactite skarn. In addition, a pegmatite sill in the south-central portion of the WSA showed some tungsten in tactite but was not developed. Based on a favorable geologic environment, and anomalous concentrations, or known deposits of tungsten, the area is considered to have a moderate potential for the occurrence of tungsten resources under the BLM classification system.



- NONE Recommended for Wilderness
- Recommended for Non Wilderness
- Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
- Split Estate
- State
- Private

- Explanation**
- High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
 - Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
 - M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
 - H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

- Commodity Symbols**
- Cu** Copper
 - Fs** Feldspar
 - Mn** Manganese
 - Ni** Nickel
 - W** Tungsten



**Table Mountain
Mineral Resource Potential**



**MAP-2
060-026**

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Decision: No U.S. Geological Survey or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA since it is recommended nonsuitable. The 1963 California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG) County Report 3 cites mines and mineral activity that have occurred from the late 1800s to 1962.

Although numerous mining claims are located immediately west of the WSA, BLM records as of December 31, 1987, show no unpatented mining claims within the WSA.

E. Impacts on Resources

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topic	Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action)	All Wilderness Alternative
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Negative impacts to wilderness values will occur as a result of mining, fence construction, fire suppression, and cattle grazing, but all of these impacts will be minor. Fire suppression activities will have only a short-term impact.	The net effect of this alternative would be the retention and long-term protection of the area's wilderness values. However, cattle grazing and range management activities would occur as under the Proposed Action, with identical impacts.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Proposed Livestock Grazing and Wilderness Management for the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit - Draft EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the Eastern San Diego County MFP. The following is a summary of all comments received.

1. Inventory Phase: Some comments agreed with the BLM's findings. Others mentioned roads and mines within the unit. Field checks disclosed no new roads.

2. Study Phase: Some comments received during the inventory phase concerned study phase considerations. One requested wilderness designation to protect bighorn sheep. Rockhounds wanted to maintain vehicular access to favorite collecting spots, particularly for those hobbyists who have difficulty walking long distances.
3. Proposed Livestock Grazing and Wilderness Management for the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit - Draft EIS: During the review of the Draft EIS, 23 letters were received from Federal, State, and local agencies; organizations; and individuals. Only four of these responses addressed the Table Mountain WSA. Two favored a wilderness designation for this WSA but gave no reasons. A gem and mineral society opposed wilderness, because they want vehicle access to reach favorite collecting sites. An oil company stated that the region has potential for geothermal resources. They urged that the potential be carefully evaluated throughout the WSA and any promising areas be exempted from wilderness designation.
4. Management Framework Plan (MFP) for Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit - Wilderness Recommendations: Out of approximately 60 responses to the MFP, 24 specifically requested a wilderness designation for the Table Mountain WSA. One of these was a petition listing (but not signed by) 43 individuals. Some of these letters pointed out that although the area is small, it would be a valuable buffer or addition to the adjacent proposed wilderness in Anza-Borrego State Park. The Desert Protective Council suggested deferring the decision of Table Mountain until the decision has been made on the adjacent State Park wilderness.

Three respondents whose particular interest was four-wheel drive recreation, opposed all wilderness in this region. One individual wanted this land to be used for homesteading rather than wilderness.

No comments were received from local governments.