

Slinkard

CA-010-105

SLINKARD WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-105/NV-030-531)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 6,268 acres

The Slinkard WSA is located in northern Mono County and northeastern Alpine County approximately seven miles north and west of Topaz, California. The WSA includes 6,268 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land; 422 of these acres are split estate lands (surface managed by the Bureau, subsurface owned by non-Bureau entity). There are neither State lands nor private inholdings within the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows the Toiyabe National Forest boundary east until it intersects State Highway 89. The boundary follows the meandering highway to the vehicle route that enters the northern end of Slinkard Valley. The boundary proceeds south along the vehicle route and veers west and south in an irregular pattern around private land. The boundary turns and proceeds west for one mile along the northeastern tip of the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness. The boundary turns north and follows private land, contour features including canyons, and on the Mono/Alpine County line until it reaches the Toiyabe National Forest boundary three-quarters of a mile south of Monitor Pass.

The WSA lies at the extreme eastern edge of the Sierra Nevada geomorphic province. The WSA consists of a north-south trending mountain range which is dissected by numerous drainages and canyons. The eastern slope is rugged and steep while the western slope is more gentle and moderate. Elevation ranges from 6,800 feet to 8,938 feet. A tributary of Slinkard Creek is located in the northern end of the unit. Vegetation in the unit consists of Great Basin shrubs and perennial grasses. Dense stands of pinyon-juniper, white fir, quaking aspen, and Jeffrey pine occupy the unit.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended
for wilderness
6,268 BLM acres recommended
for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally-preferred alternative

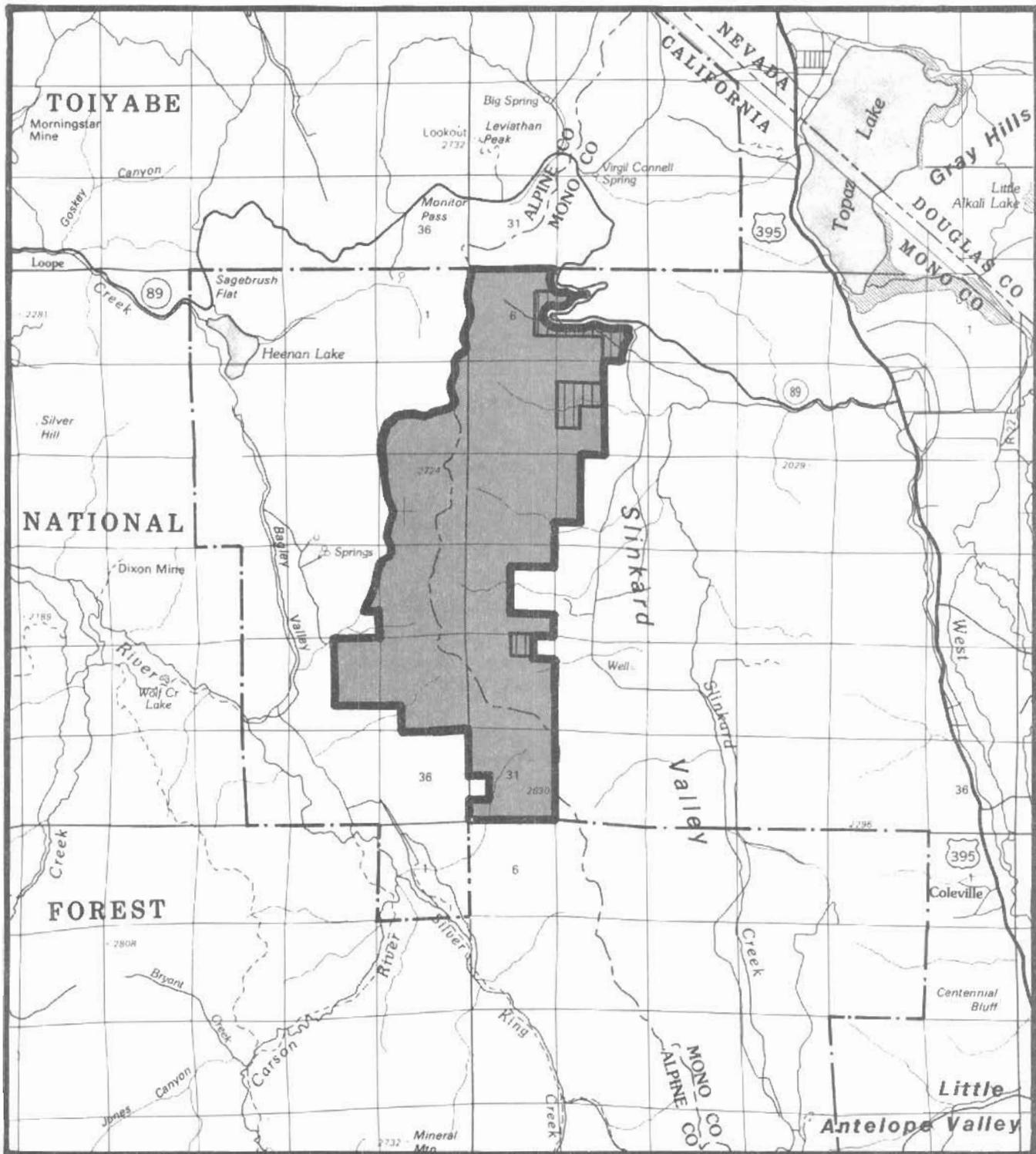
as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

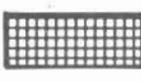
The WSA is recommended non-suitable due to overriding manageability considerations. In addition, the potential for mineral exploration and development outweighs the area's wilderness values.

A primary manageability concern which led to the nonsuitable recommendation is the unit's long, narrow (only one to two miles wide), irregular shape which limits effective management. Its ridge-like character renders it highly vulnerable to adjacent outside sights as well as to potential encroachment of incompatible uses. Based on discussion with the Toiyabe National Forest, it does not enhance manageability of the adjacent Carson-Iceberg Wilderness. It extends from the northeast edge of the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness as a narrow finger of public land that would be more difficult to manage than the existing wilderness.

Secondarily, minor resource conflicts in the WSA include moderate uranium and geothermal potential throughout the WSA. A small number of mining claims are located in the northwestern portion of the WSA. There is a low probability that mining claims in the WSA would result in valid existing rights.

There are approximately three miles of primitive ways which will remain available for vehicular use.



-  NONE RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS
-  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

-  SPLIT ESTATE
-  STATE
-  PRIVATE



Slinkard Proposal



010-105
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)	5,846
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	422
Inholdings		
	State	0
	Private	0
Total		<u>6,268</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
	State	0
	Private	0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,846
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	422
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>6,268</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The overall area is very natural. The unit occupies a portion of a narrow linear mountain range bounded by Slinkard and Bagley Valleys to the east and west, respectively. The western slope contains dramatic rugged mountain features while the gentler eastern slope reflects more subdued soft physical features. The unit is dissected by numerous tree-lined canyons. A tributary of Slinkard Creek occupies the northern portion of the unit. The low elevation slopes are covered by big sagebrush, bitterbrush, and perennial grasses. Higher elevation slopes support a pinyon-juniper woodland with associated mountain mahogany. The steep-sloped drainages have stands of white fir, Jeffrey pine, and aspen.

A few primitive vehicle routes totaling approximately three miles exist. A creek is undergoing some localized site degradation due to past livestock use. Lack of access to the WSA has insured its natural integrity.

2. Solitude: The WSA has limited opportunities for solitude. Although the rugged topography and vegetative screening provide isolation, opportunities for solitude are limited by the unit's vulnerability to adjacent or outside activities. The unit's ridge-like character and its very narrow linear shape make it susceptible to outside sights. State Highway 89 borders the northeastern boundary of the WSA, while adjacent private lands and associated activities such as vehicle use are easily seen from the main ridge and the lateral flanks of the unit.

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The unit contains opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation experiences. These opportunities include hunting, backpacking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, camping, horseback riding, etc. The rugged and diverse terrain facilitates opportunities for different types of recreation experiences.
4. Special features: The primary special features in the WSA consist of wildlife values, old growth forest and riparian values. The unit is considered crucial deer fawning habitat because mule deer rely on lower elevation habitat for forage requirements during the harsh Sierra high-country winters.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 6,268 acres of the Sierran Forest/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. Although this WSA would add diversity in the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS the Bureau has recommended two WSAs with similar ecosystems (Owen's Peak WSA and Sacatar Meadows WSA) as suitable for wilderness designation. The Slinkard WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	49,154
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	49,154

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 13 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,822
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
San Francisco/Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Santa Rosa/Petaluma	10	888,579	12	134,167
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	175	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. The Carson-Iceberg Wilderness adjoins the one-mile wide southern WSA boundary. This wilderness is administered by the Toiyabe National Forest. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include the Mokelumne Wilderness which is managed by the Stanislaus and Toiyabe National Forests, the Emigrant Wilderness which is managed by the Stanislaus National Forest, and the Hoover Wilderness which is managed by the Inyo and Toiyabe National Forests.

C. Manageability

The WSA is manageable as wilderness but with severe limitations due to its very narrow, linear shape. Its ridge-like character renders it highly vulnerable to adjacent or outside sights. The unit's narrow and protruding character does not enhance manageability of the adjoining Carson-Iceberg Wilderness according to Toiyabe National Forest, nor does the adjoining wilderness enhance manageability of this unit. Any unforeseen developments on these adjoining private lands would severely limit manageability.

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 Slinkard WSA is described in the Slinkard Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Technical Report prepared in 1983 by Great Basin G-E-M Joint Venture. The mineral resources description in the Affected Environment of the section of the 1987 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Areas, Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was taken primarily from the G-E-M report mentioned above. The EIS states that the WSA has a low potential for the occurrence of minerals with the exception of uranium, which has moderate potential. The EIS indicates a moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources according to the BLM classification scheme.

The predominant rock types encompassing most of the WSA are andesite and rhyolite, a thick sequence of which was extruded during the late Tertiary and early Quaternary. During the Miocene andesite breccias, mudflows and interbedded tuffs were deposited upon the granitic intrusives of the Sierra Nevada Batholith. These granites are of Jurassic age and, according to the G-E-M report, are interspersed with remnants of metasediments and metavolcanics. Abundant evidence of recent faulting, recent volcanic activity and the presence of hot springs near the WSA in Antelope Valley support the determination of moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources. The moderate potential for

uranium is based on two types of environments known to be favorable for its occurrence. The primary environment for uranium in the WSA is the rhyolite. This rock is known to be a common source rock for uranium. The second favorable environment for uranium occurrence is in localized pegmatites and alaskites intrusions which invade more mafic granites.

There are three mining districts within ten miles of the WSA. The Silver Mountain Gold-Silver District is ten miles west of the WSA. The Monitor-Moyul Gold-Silver District is five miles northwest of the WSA. The Silver King Area contains two small gold-silver prospects, and is three miles south of the WSA.

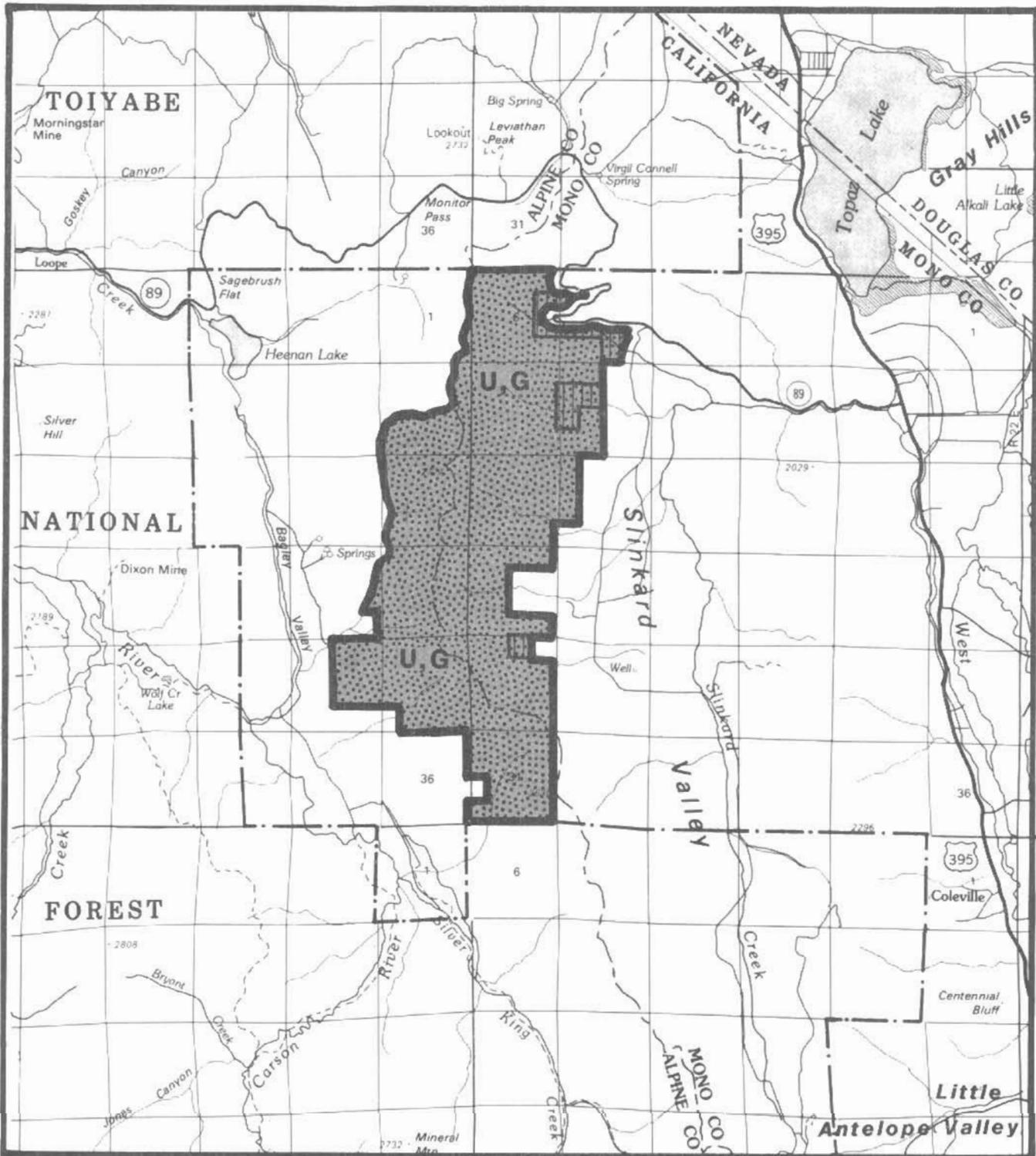
Five miles southeast of the WSA are the Al Mono and Golden Gate properties which produced minor amounts of gold from quartz veins in an area of extensive hydrothermal alteration. Sulfur was produced from the Leviathan mine from volcanic tuffs five miles north of the WSA. The Geranium claims in T. 9 N, R. 20 E., section 32 were reported to produce minor amounts of uranium, molybdenum, lead and zinc from carbonaceous sandstone. Limestone in metamorphic roof pendants has been produced ten miles west of the WSA.

Although no mineral production has ever been recorded within the WSA, mineral interest has been indicated by the presence of eighteen unpatented mining claims located in T. 9 N., R. 21 E., sections 12 and 13.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. No additional information regarding the mineral potential for the WSA has been received since publication of the original EIS in 1987. As of March 25, 1988, the Mining Claim Index showed 18 mining claims or mineral leases on file within the WSA.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



- 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**
- G** Geothermal
 - U** Uranium



**Slinkard
Mineral Resource Potential**



**Map-2
010-105**

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	Wilderness values within the 6,268 acres of the WSA would essentially remain unchanged. Only slight or negligible impacts would occur from continued low levels of vehicle use for recreation, fuelwood harvesting, and pinyon nut collecting. Annual mining claim assessment work would impair the perception of naturalness on less than 5 acres.	Wilderness designation of the entire 6,268 acres within the WSA would result in a slight positive benefit to all wilderness values. Elimination of motorized recreation use and casual vehicle use associated with fuelwood harvesting and pinyon nut collecting would slightly improve solitude as well as the deer fawning and winter habitat. Prohibiting mining claim assessment work would maintain the perception of naturalness on a localized basis.
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use in the WSA. The current 70 visitor-days per year are anticipated to increase slightly but will remain less than 100 visitor-days per year.	The entire WSA would be closed, eliminating 70 visitor-days of motorized recreation use. Only minor adverse impacts are anticipated due to the low level of use.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, approximately 14 comments were received, most noting that the area contains wilderness characteristics. A few of the comments noted roads, intrusions, or lack of outstanding opportunities. Several noted supplemental values.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. A few comments supported wilderness while one respondent stated the WSA should not be designated wilderness unless the adjacent RARE II area was designated wilderness. A

respondent noted that roads in the area degrade wilderness, while another comment noted that the long, narrow configuration of the WSA limits opportunities for solitude and primitive experiences. This respondent also indicated that the area contains low to moderate base metal potential and that State Highway 89 flanks the WSA.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Forty comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-three comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

No Federal agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

The Lahontan Water Quality Regional Board, a state agency, has expressed its support to designate the WSA for wilderness.

The Alpine County Board of Supervisors has submitted a resolution opposing designation of the Slinkard WSA as wilderness. No comments specific to this WSA were received from Mono County.