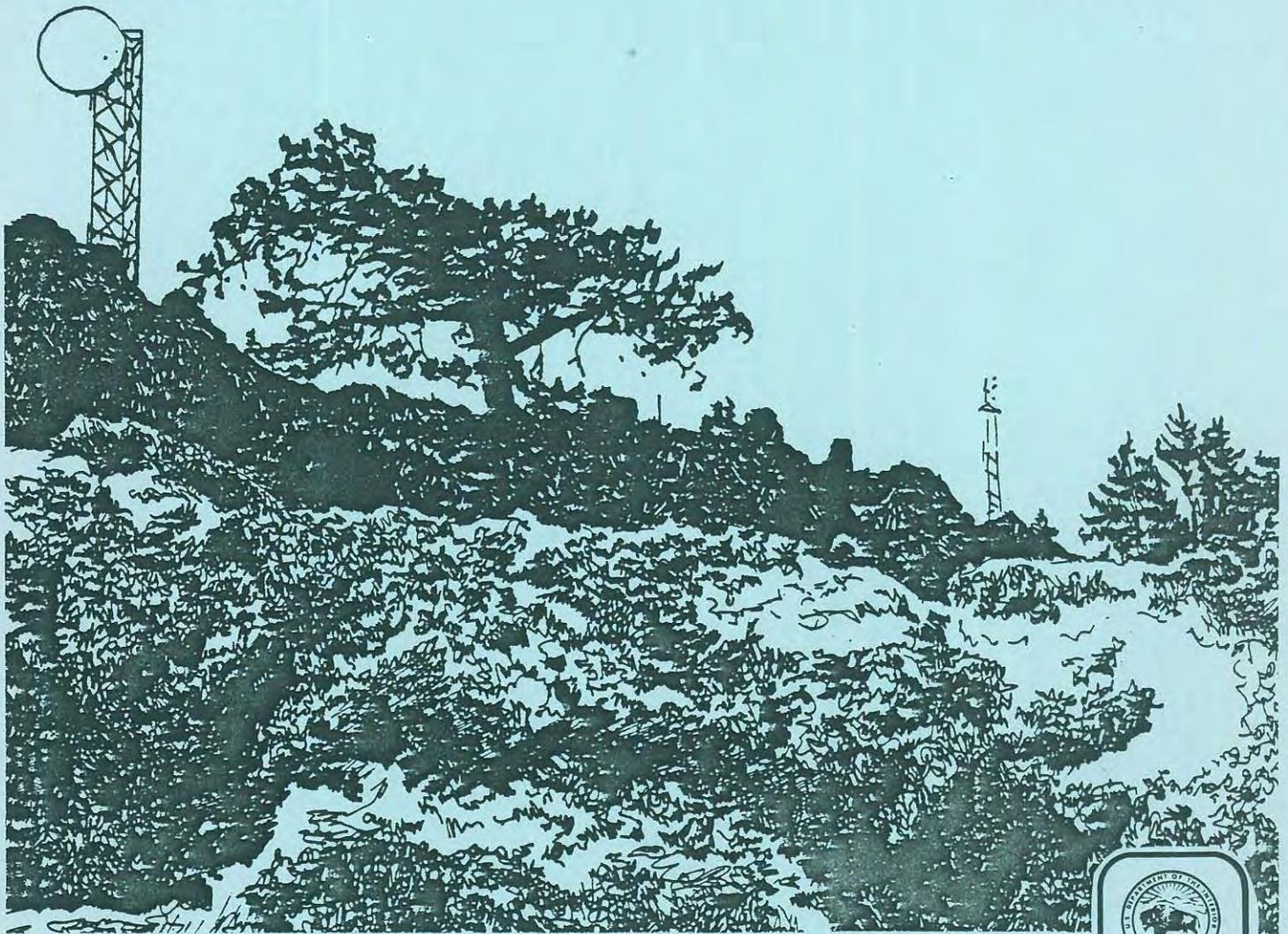


INSTANT WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

**San Benito
Natural Area**

**February
1980**



U.S. Bureau of Land Management



WILDERNESS REPORT

SAN BENITO MOUNTAIN
NATURAL AREA

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

January 7, 1980

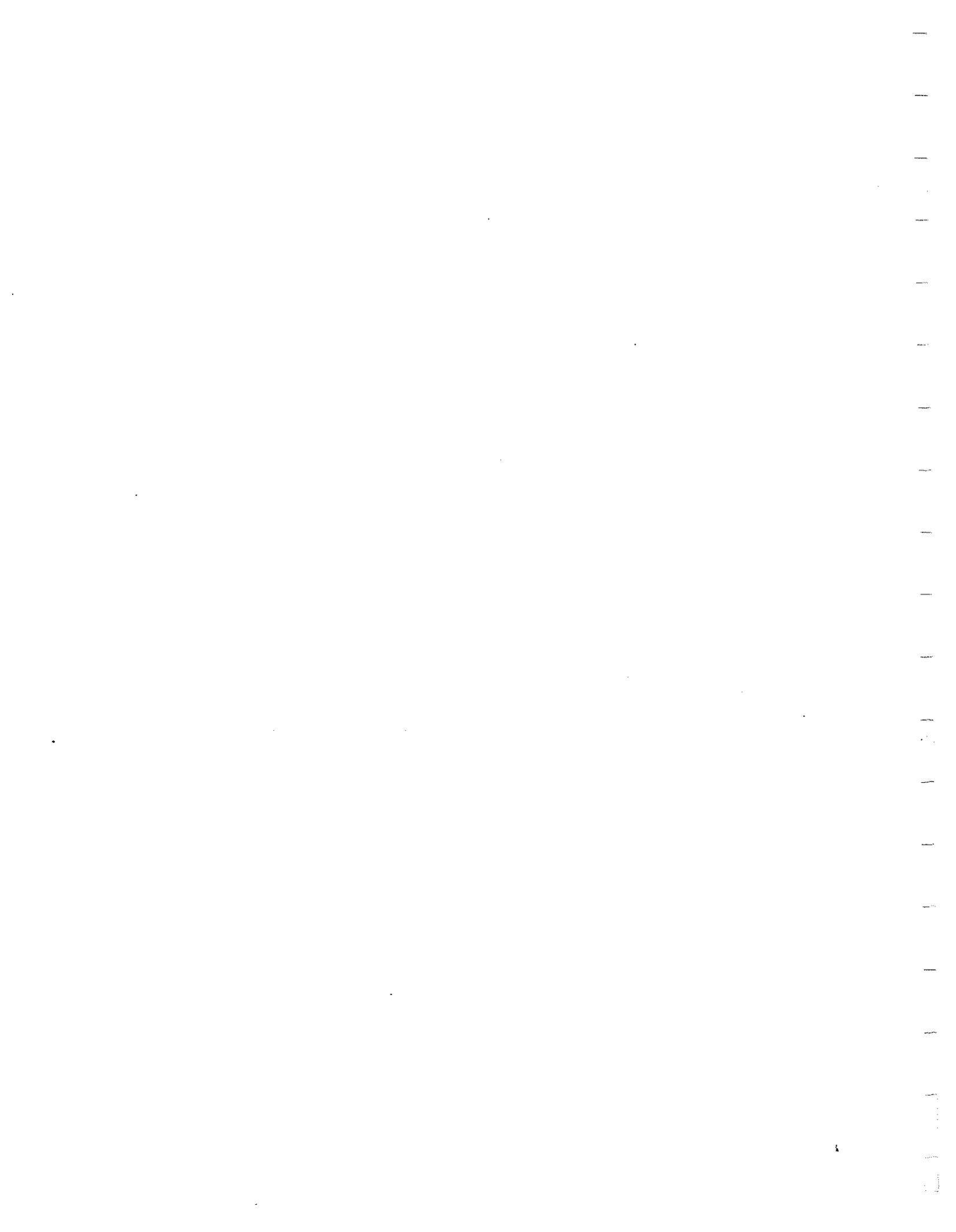


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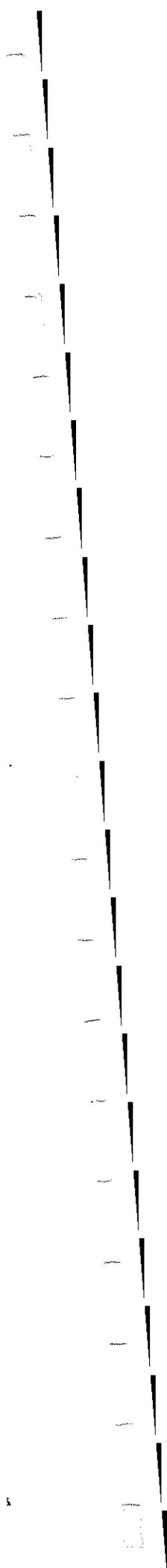
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I. Non-suitability Recommendation and Study Area Summary

a. Wilderness Characteristics Review.

The initial Wilderness Inventory for the San Benito Mountain Natural Area was completed during February 1979 and it was concluded that the area did not possess wilderness characteristics. This conclusion was published in late February 1979 and public comment was solicited for 90 days on this decision. On July 16, 1979, the decision that the Natural Area did not possess wilderness characteristics was republished and public comment was solicited for an additional 90 days. On December 25, 1979, this decision became final and the Natural Area was formally withdrawn from further wilderness considerations.

Additional BLM Administered lands contiguous with the Natural Area were identified in February 1979 as not possessing wilderness characteristics.

b. Economic and Social Impacts.

The San Benito Mountain Natural Area lies in the extreme southern part of San Benito County. The largest industry in San Benito County is Agriculture. Some light and heavy industries are located around Hollister the county seat. The area immediately surrounding the Natural Area is primarily utilized for mining, outdoor recreation, livestock grazing and communication sites. No livestock grazing, mining, timber harvesting or ORV use is authorized within the Natural Area. There are two communication sites and associated powerline right-of-ways located within the Natural Area. The area is also utilized for hunting and other outdoor pursuits.

There would be no impact on the existing socio-economic structure if the Natural Area is not designated a wilderness area. If the area were designated wilderness, it could require removal of the communication sites and elimination of some roads which would have minor socio-economic impacts. Since the Natural Area is closed to mining and timber harvest, wilderness designation would not affect these resource values.

c. Long and Short-Term Effects of Non-suitability Recommendations

The short-term effects would be minimal if the area were not designated as wilderness. The area will continue to be managed as a Natural Area. The effects of a wilderness designation is that it would provide long-term protection for the Natural Area, and the utilization of its resources.

Existing uses which are not compatible with wilderness designation include powerline right-of-ways, communication sites, roads and off road vehicle trespass. Existing uses which would be compatible with wilderness designation include native flora investigation, hunting, camping, hiking, and protection of rare plant species.

d. Options Foregone by Adoption of Non-suitability Recommendation.

The only option foregone by adoption of the non-suitability recommendation would be the long-term protectability of the resource provided by the Wilderness Act versus the Natural Area designation which is more susceptible to modifications.

The San Benito Mountain Natural Area consists of many negative

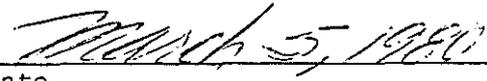
impacts by man, the resultant damage being irreversible. Mans previous activities such as road building, mining, timber harvesting and man made structures are too numerous and highly visible.

The values that exist within the San Benito Mountain Natural Area are being adequately protected via the natural area designation.

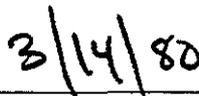
Based upon these evaluations, the Instant Study Area is not suitable for wilderness designation. The area is not of sufficient size and is heavily impacted by the sights and sounds of man. It is my recommendation that the San Benito Mountain Natural Area not be designated a wilderness.



Alan P. Thomson, District Manager



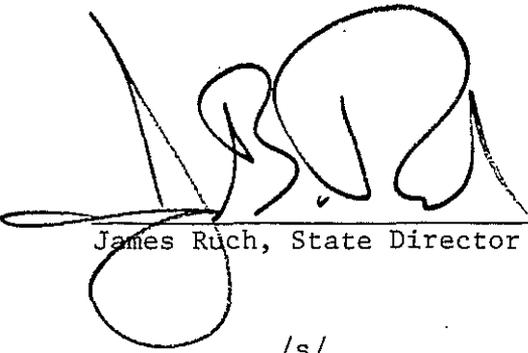
Date



Date

June 27, 1980

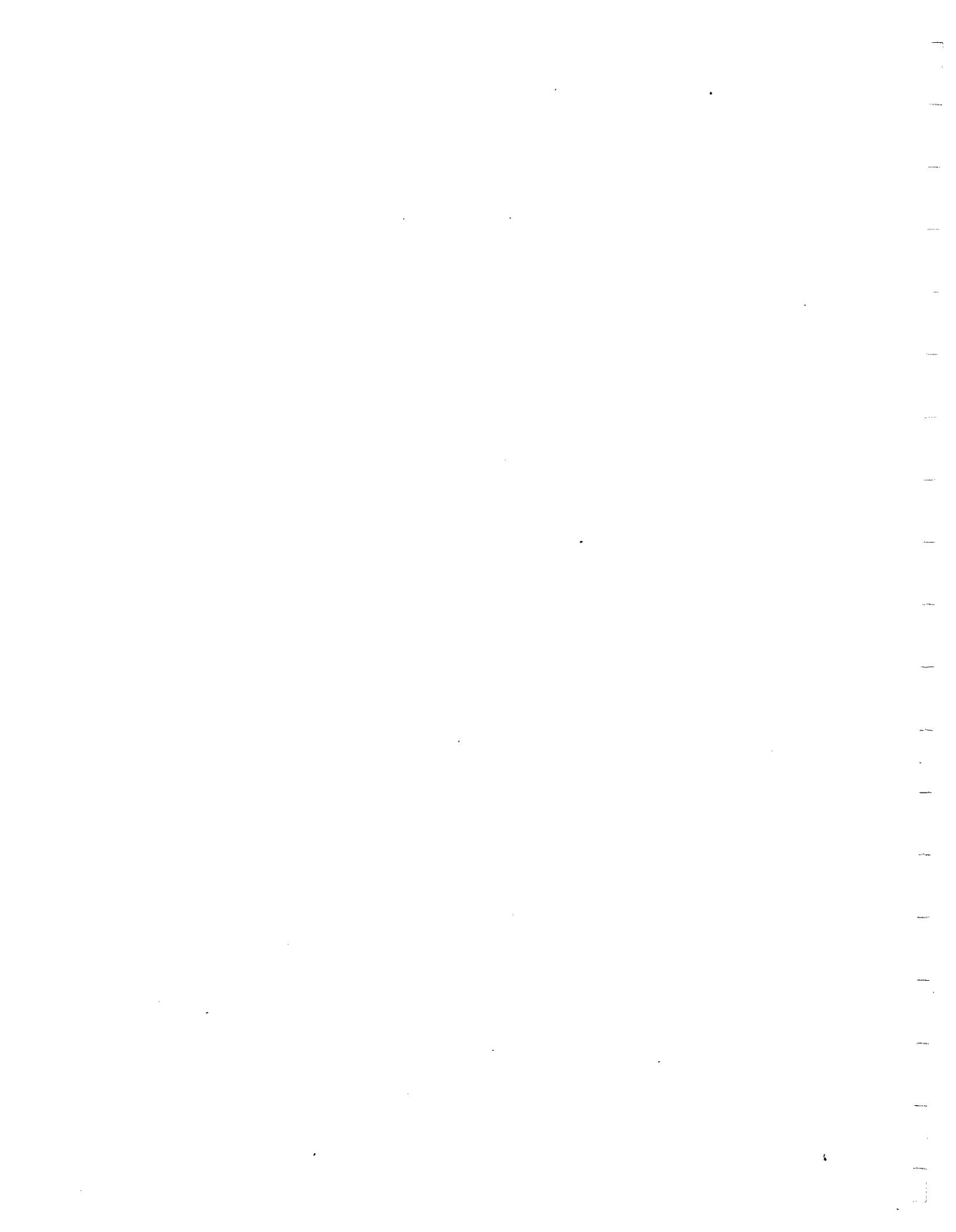
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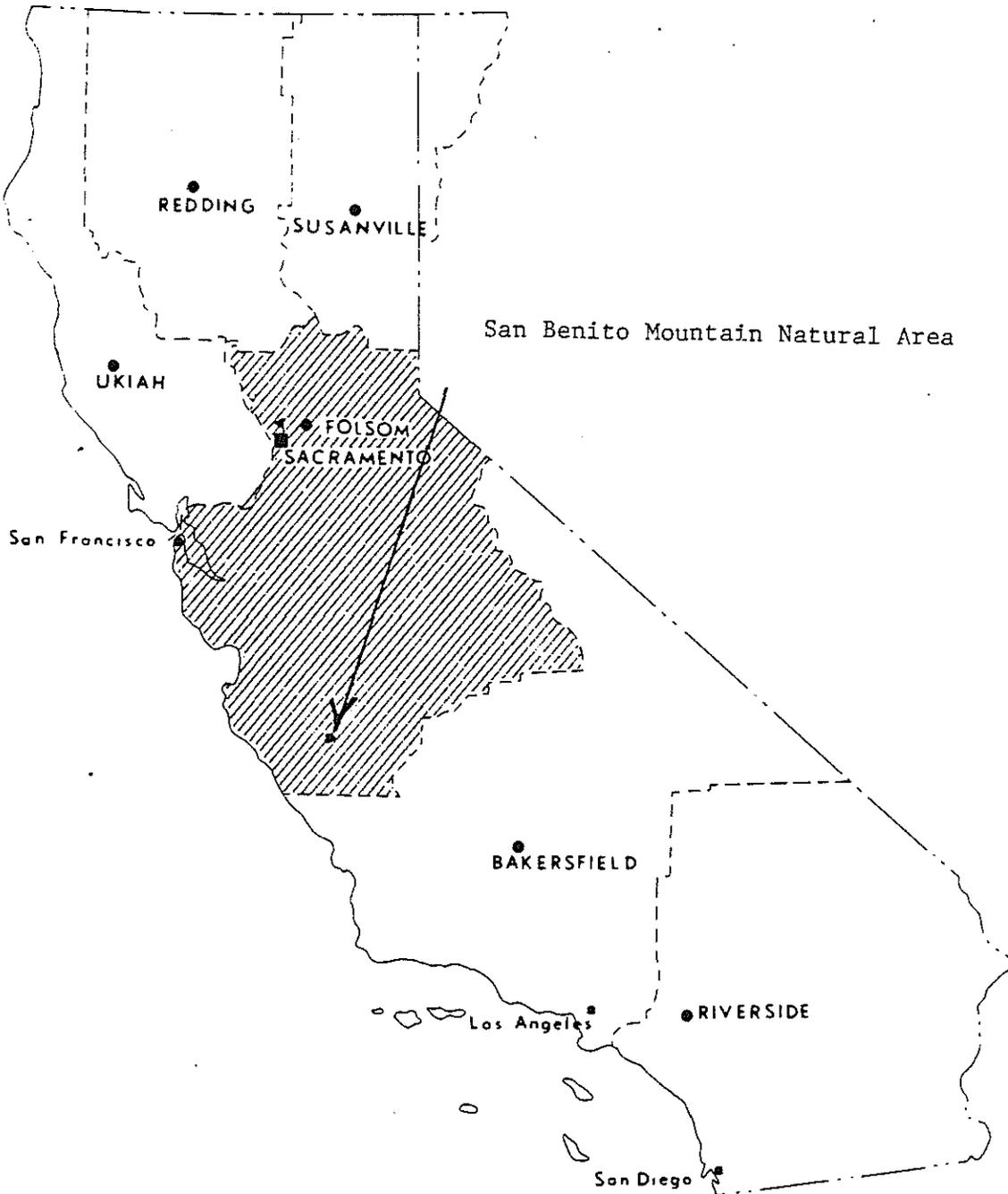


James Ruch, State Director

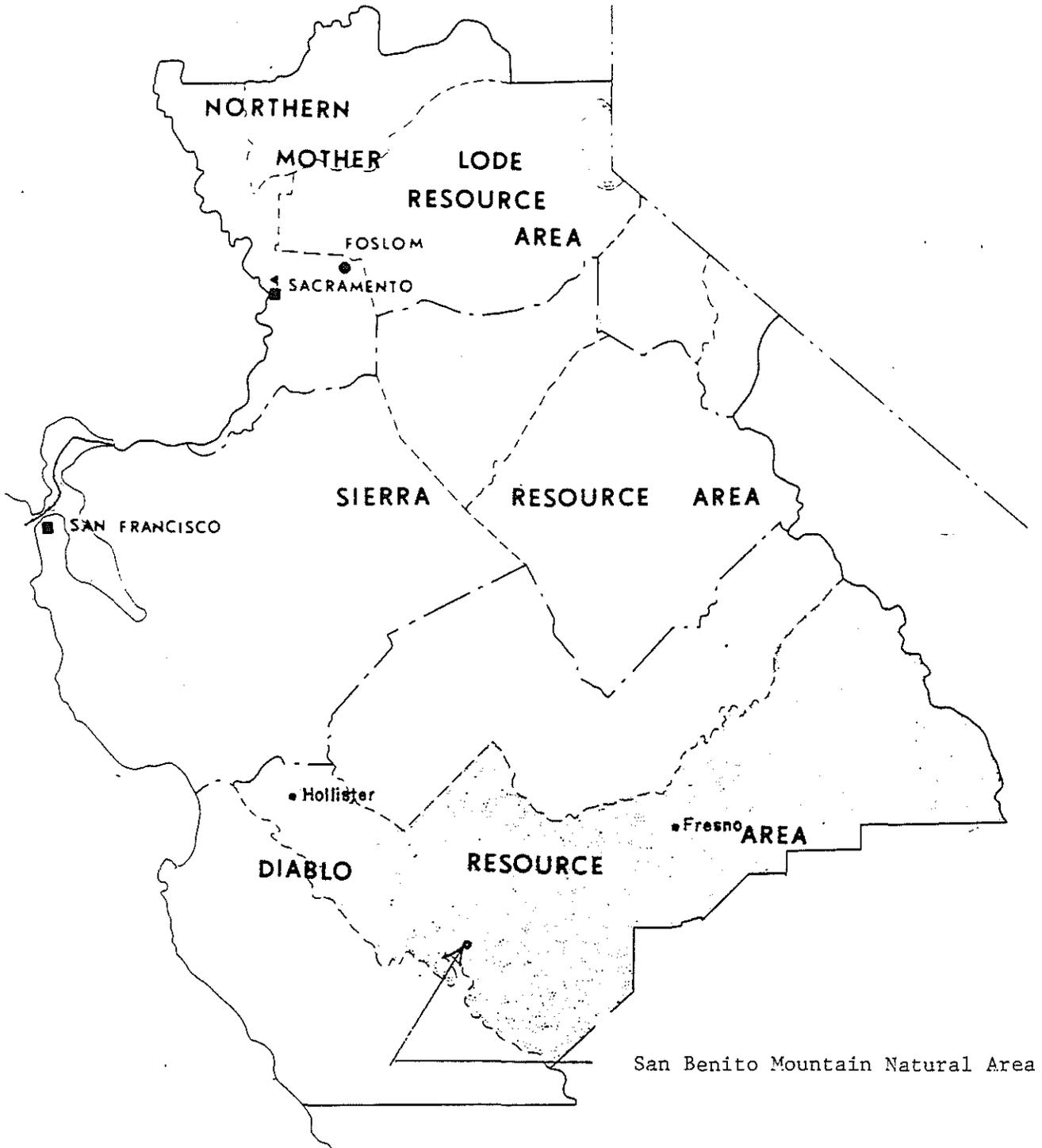
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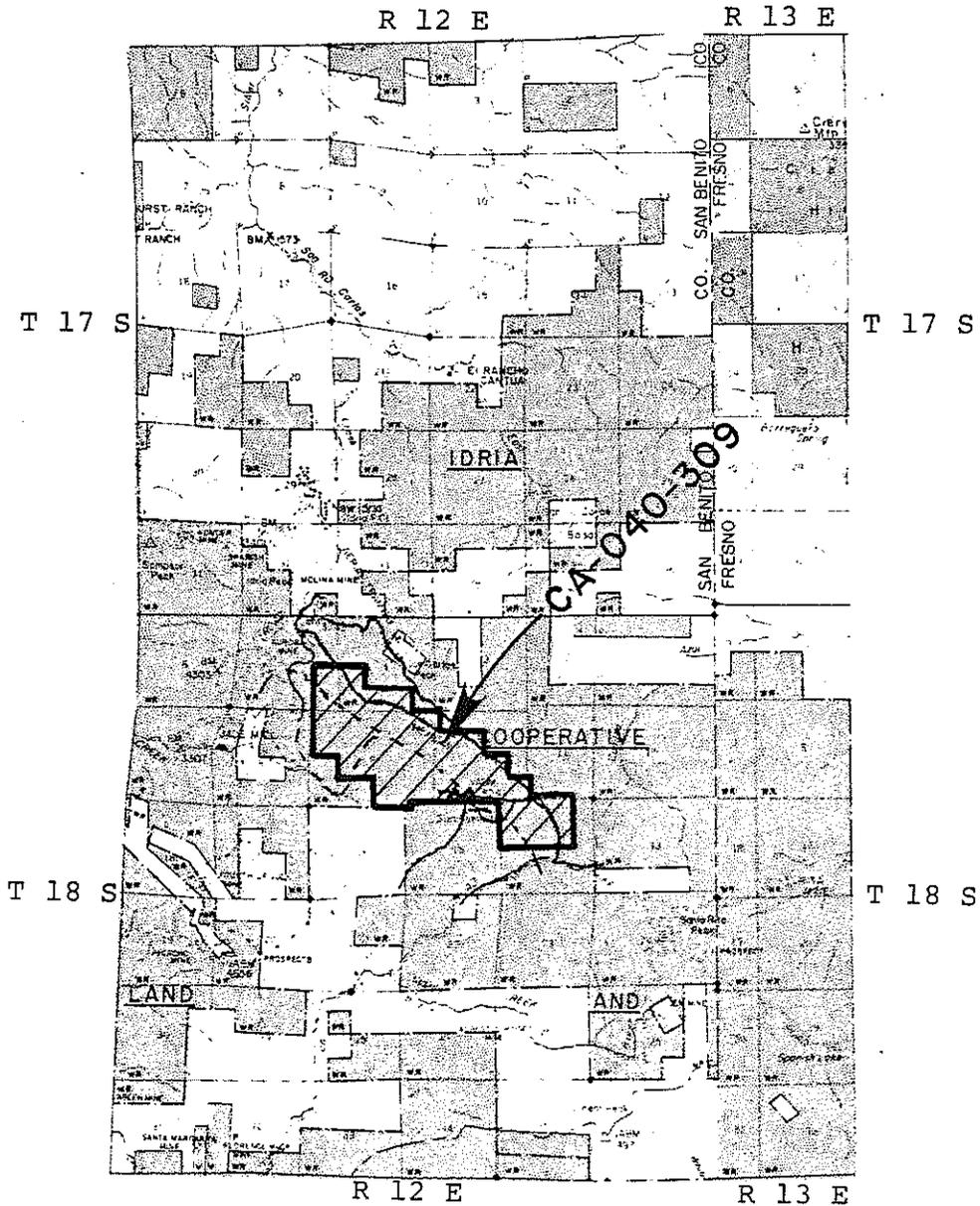
Frank Gregg, Director



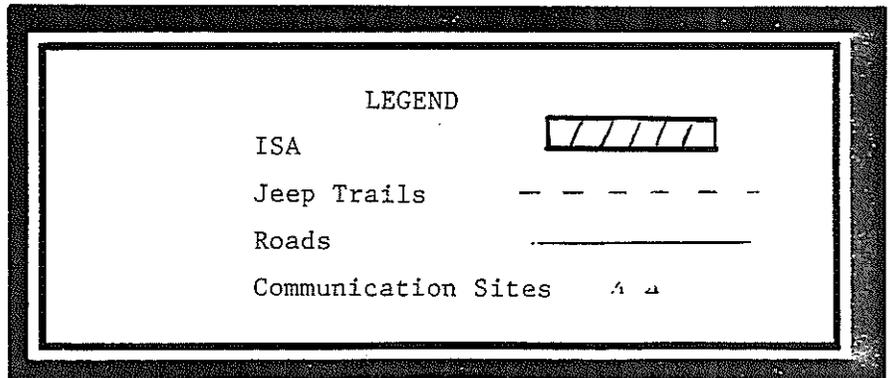


F O L S O M D I S T R I C T





(From Initial Inventory Map 04-10)



WILDERNESS FINAL INTENSIVE INVENTORY

DECEMBER, 1979

III. STATISTICAL SUMMARY

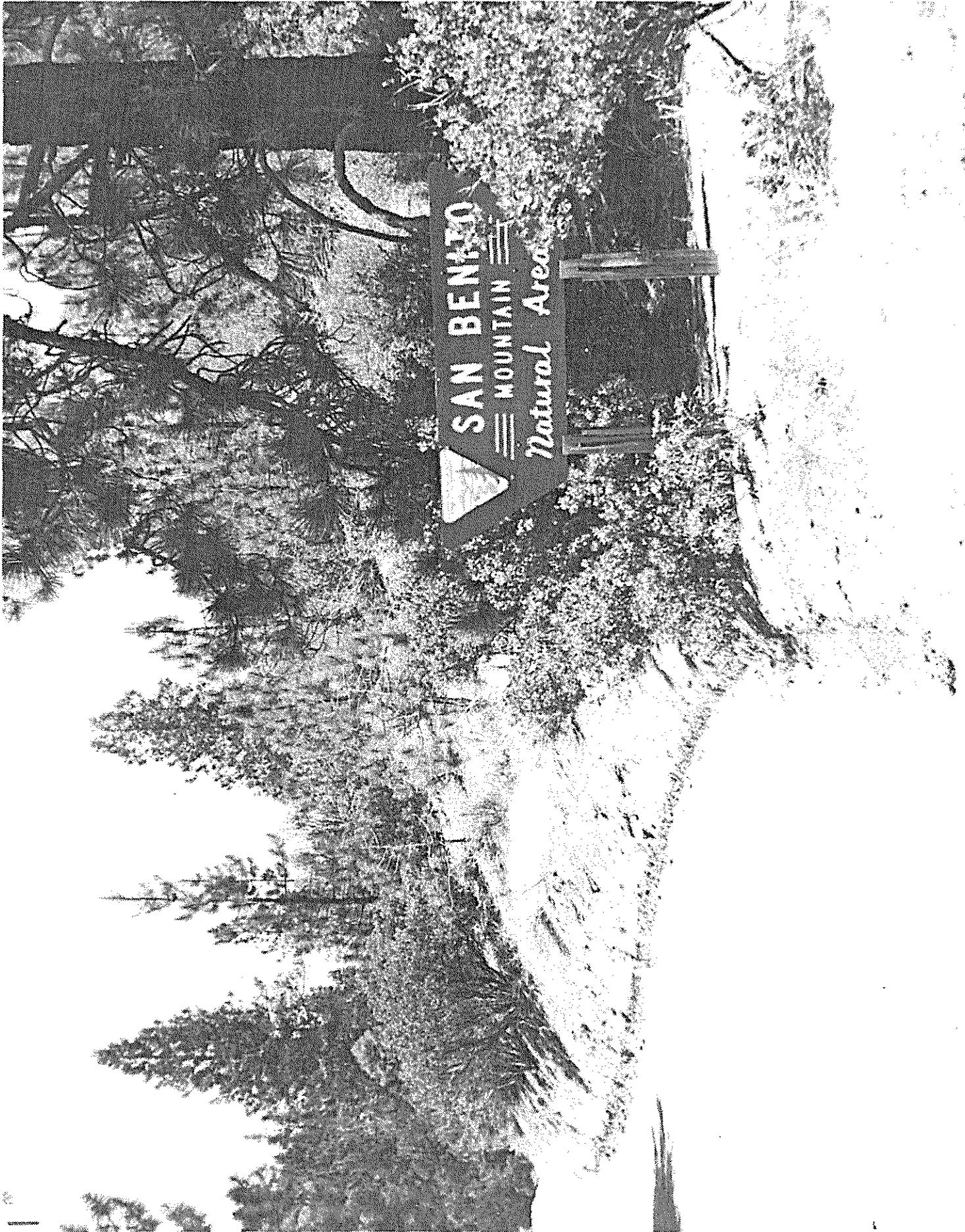
San Benito Mountain
Natural Area

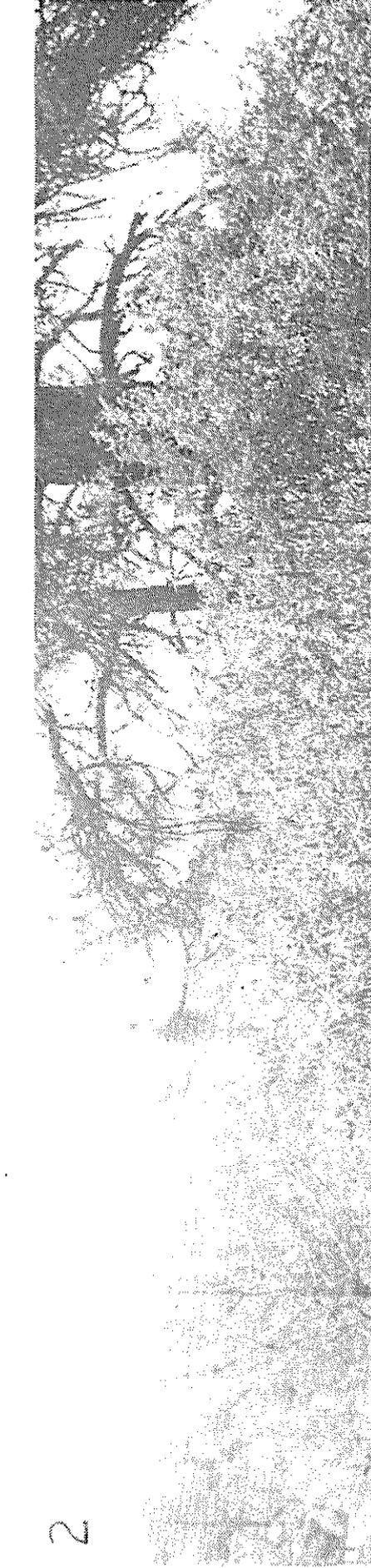
San Benito County, California
Folsom District

	<u>Previously Designated Area</u>	<u>Contiguous Lands (if any)</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Acres With Wilderness Characteristics</u>	-0-	-0-	-0-
 <u>Areas With Wilderness Characteristics</u>			
Recommend For Designation	-0-	-0-	-0-
Recommended Against Designation	-0-	-0-	-0-
<u>Total</u>	-0-	-0-	-0-

Ownership in Study Area (dated)

BLM	1500
Forest Service	-
Etc.	-
Private	-





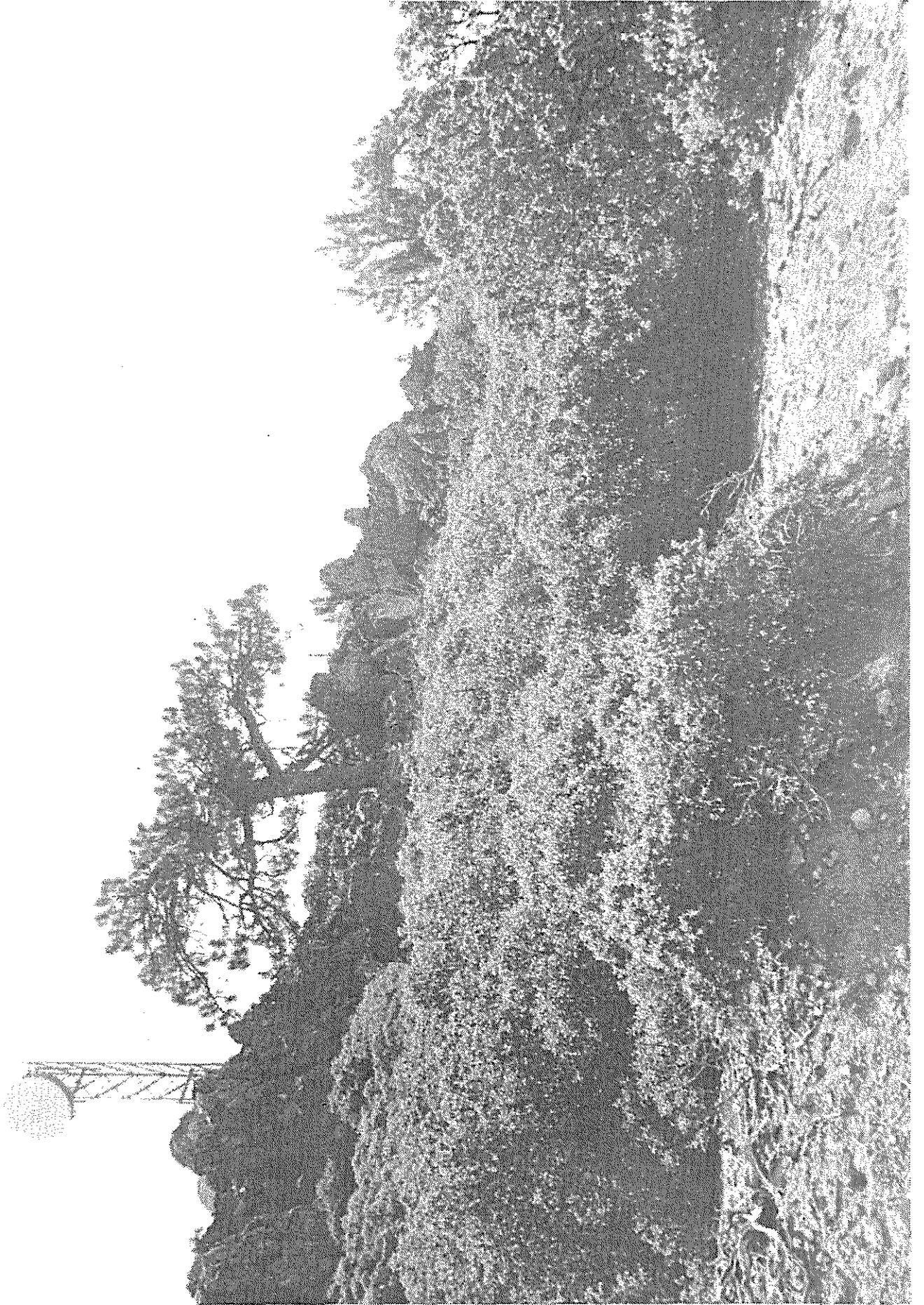
SAN BENITO MOUNTAIN NATURAL AREA

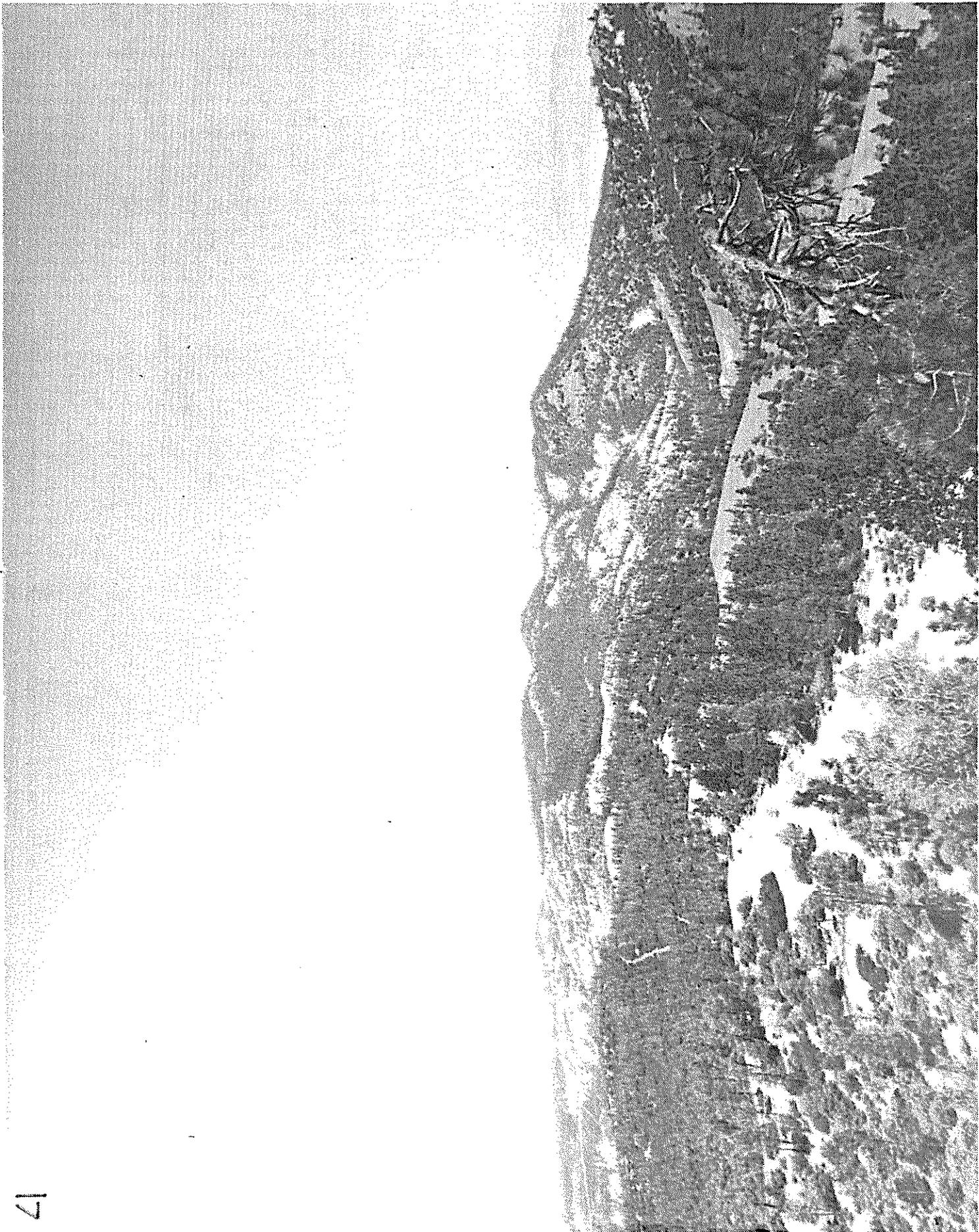
THIS NATURAL AREA HAS BEEN CLOSED TO OFF ROAD VEHICLE USE TO PROTECT A UNIQUE PLANT COMMUNITY. SEVERAL RARE, ENDANGERED, AND UNUSUAL PLANTS SURVIVE HERE. THE BARREN SERPENTINE SOIL PROVIDES A HOME FOR SPECIALLY ADAPTED PLANTS SUCH AS SAN BENITO EVENING PRIMROSE, JEWEL WEED, SAN BENITO MINT, AND TIDY-TIPS.

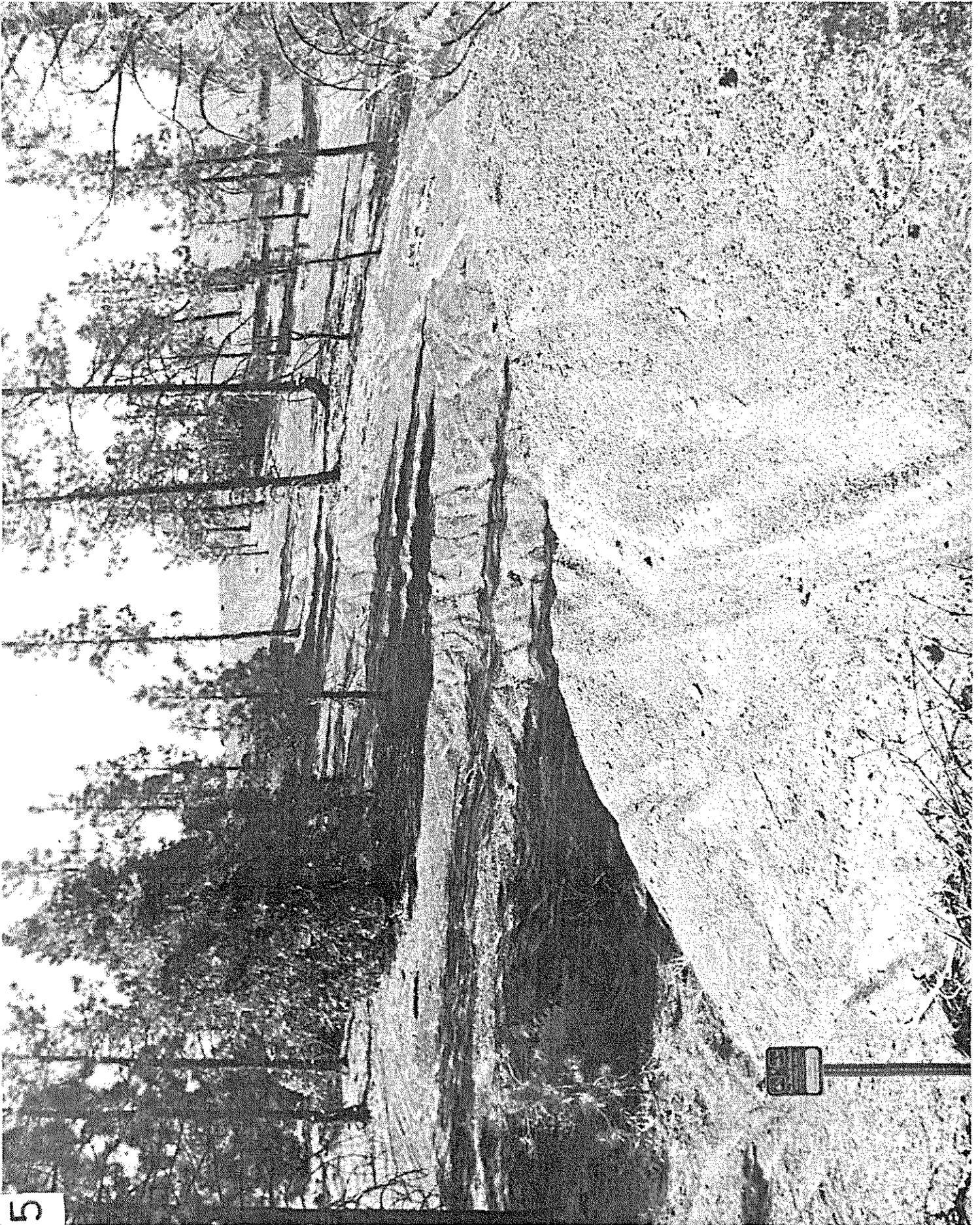
NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD DOES A FOREST OF JEFFREY, COULTER, AND DIGGER PINE EXIST. UNIQUE HYBRID TREES RESULT FROM NATURAL CROSS POLLINATION BETWEEN COULTER AND JEFFREY PINE.

YOU CAN HELP PRESERVE THIS IRREPLACABLE PLANT COMMUNITY BY DRIVING ONLY ON THE MAIN ROAD WHILE IN THE NATURAL AREA.

THE SAN BENITO MOUNTAIN NATURAL AREA IS OPEN FOR YOUR HIKING AND HUNTING ENJOYMENT.







5

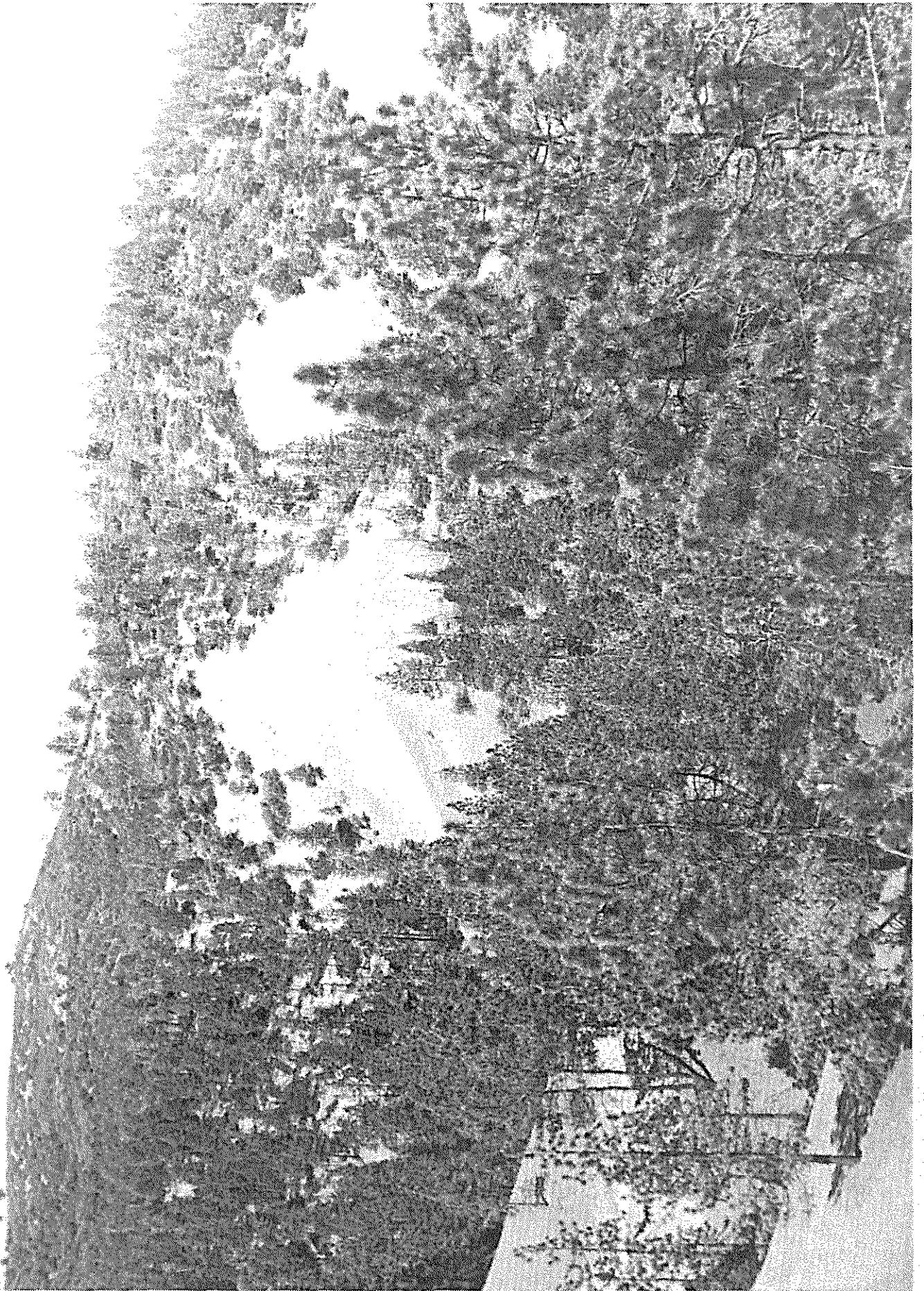


PHOTO LOG SHEET

1. Southeast entrance to the San Benito Mountain Natural Area via San Carlos County Road.
2. One of two informational signs located in the extreme northwest portion of the Natural Area adjacent San Carlos County Road.
3. View of the southeastern portion of the San Benito Mountain, showing the two microwave towers.
4. Looking from San Benito Mountain onto the jeep trail which follows the ridge line in a northwesterly direction.
5. ORV trespass within the natural area.
6. View from San Benito Mountain due north depicting typical terrain and vegetation.

V. Background Information

a. Statement on an Existing Designation.

On December 25, 1970, the San Benito Mountain (proposed) Natural Area was segregated from application under all land laws, including the mining and mineral leasing laws. The Director of the Bureau of Land Management officially designated this area as the San Benito Mountain Natural Area on July 29, 1971 (J-4577).

b. Significant Resource Data

The Natural Area was created to preserve the botanically unique vegetative communities found there. According to Dr. James R. Griffin of the Hastings Natural History Reservation, this is the only known area where a natural woodland of Digger pine, Coulter pine, and Jeffrey pine occur in a single plant community. In addition, there are examples of hybridization between Coulter pine and Digger and Jeffrey pine in the area.

Some rare and endangered plant species include rayless layia (*Layia discoidea*) and evening primrose (*Camissonia benitensis*). Uncommon species include leather oak (*Quercus dumosa*), Serpentine manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glauca*, *A. glandular*, and *A. neomexicana*) and tossle brush (*Garrya condonii*).

This is habitat for several species of rare and threatened birds. The area is in the extreme northeast corner of the range of the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californicus*). Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) have been noted in the area. Golden Eagles (*Aquila*

Chrysactos) are common and many nest in the surrounding area. It is extremely doubtful that the Condor or the Bald Eagle nest here because of disturbance by man.

c. General Physical Description of Report Area and Surrounding Lands.

The terrain is very rough and consists of alternate high ridges and, steep-sided canyons. Altitudes range from 300 to 400 feet in the canyon bottoms to a high of 5241 feet atop San Benito Mountain. This mountain marks the southernmost point of the San Benito Natural Area.

The average annual rainfall is approximately 14 inches. There are many intermittent streams in the area whose flow ceases by mid-June or earlier. There is one perennial stream, Clear Creek, whose waters are not considered potable.

The entire area is highly mineralized. The country rock is largely serpentine, but there are intrusions of schists. Mining for mercury ore has gone on for many years. There are sizeable deposits of asbestos, and the headwaters of Clear Creek are a noted locality for Jade. Somewhat south of San Benito Mountain there is a gem mine that was the original source of the unique gemstone, benitoite. The rare cornflower - blue mineral is found associated with naturalite, neptunite and joaquinite. Benitoite is found in only one other locality outside the United States.

d. Summary of Public Comments

Two responses were received concerning this report area.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company more or less agreed with our findings, while the other response indirectly indicated the Natural Area should be added to the inventory but gave no further information. The PDF has a copy of all views submitted regarding this ISA.

CA-040-309 SAN BENITO MOUNTAIN NATURAL AREA
(MAP 04-L)

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This unit involves the 1,500 acre San Benito Natural Area located within San Benito County. No non-public lands are located within this unit.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The area does not contain 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless public land and includes two roads, a powerline, and a communication site. This unit, even when considered with contiguous public lands outside the Natural Area, is not suitable for consideration as wilderness due to size and the impacts of man. The unit will be reported as non-suitable for wilderness.

III. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Two comments were received on this unit; one agreed with our findings, while the other indicated the unit should be added to the inventory but offered no supportive information. No changes were made to our inventory decisions as a result of public comments received.

WILDERNESS INVENTORY
WILDERNESS SUMMARY SHEET

CA-040-309

I. LOCATION

Inventory Unit No. (area or island, grouping of areas or islands): _____

Areas/Island Name: San Benito Mountain Natural Area

District: Folsom State: California

II. SUMMARY:

A. Results of wilderness characteristics analysis.

1. Does the area or island appear to be natural? yes X no
2. Does the area or island offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type recreation? yes X no
3. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? yes X no
4. Does the area or island have supplemental value? X yes no

B. Resulting map.

Attach a map showing inventory unit, roads, area with possibility of returning to a natural state, recommended boundary of wilderness study area (WSA).

III. RECOMMENDATION

Check one:

- Area or island should be approved as a WSA.
 X Area or island does not qualify for wilderness study.
 A portion of the area(s) or island(s) should be approved as a WSA for further study and reported to the President. The restrictions imposed by Section 603 will no longer apply (reference to map) on the remainder of the area.

IV. APPROVAL

A. District Manager: Alan P. Thomson

Date: Nov. 1, 1979

B. State Director: (Sgd) James B. Ruch

Date: Nov. 1, 1979