

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
EA Number DOI-BLM-CA-060-0009-0044-EA**

DATE:

TITLE / PROJECT TYPE: Cocopah Land Sale

CASE FILE / PROJECT NO: CACA 50670

FUNDING CODE: LLCAD660000 L58790000 EU0000

BLM OFFICE: Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262

APPLICANT / PROPONENT: Cocopah Nurseries, Inc.

LOCATION OF PROPOSED ACTION: Riverside County
Township 5 South, Range 17 East,
Section 30, S1/2NE1/4

PROJECT ACREAGE:

BLM	<u>80</u>
Other Federal	_____
State	_____
Private	_____
Other (specify)	_____

USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP: Sidewinder Wells

LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE and Other Regulatory Compliance:

In accordance with Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.5-3, the proposed action and alternatives are in conformance with the following approved land use plan: California Desert Conservation Area Plan, 1980 as amended, (CDCA) in Riverside County and the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management (NECO) Plan (an amendment to the CDCA Plan). The CDCA Plans states: selected areas within the CDCA may be sold to reduce inefficient management of isolated and fragmented parcels. Sale of public land may be allowed in accordance with FLPMA and other applicable Federal laws and regulations. The NECO plan amendment does not preclude sale of the public lands.

Fish and Wildlife Consultation

Based on previous biological surveys of the public lands and lands in the vicinity, BLM has concluded the sale of the public lands would have no effect on species listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Cultural Resources Review

Under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the BLM is charged with managing public lands in a manner that will “protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values”. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as implemented at 36 CFR Part 800, requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. The Revised State Protocol Agreement (2007) between the California State Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the California and Nevada State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) defines the roles and relationships between the SHPOs’ offices and the BLM under the National Programmatic Agreement. The State protocol is intended to insure that the California BLM operates “efficiently and effectively in accordance with the intent and requirements of the NHPA.” The protocol streamlines the 106 process by not requiring case by case consultation with the SHPO on most individual undertakings.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is the sale of 80 acres of public land in response to a request by Cocopah Nurseries, Inc. The purpose of the proposed action is to transfer 80 acres of public land into private ownership and to generate funds from the sale for acquisitions of land pursuant to the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA). The sale is needed to dispose of public lands which are difficult and uneconomic to manage as part of the public lands, to provide public lands for community expansion, and because the existing funds available in California in the FLTFA disposal account are insufficient to fund all the lands nominated for acquisition.

The public land is difficult to manage as part of the public lands because it lacks legal access and is completely surrounded by lands owned by Cocopah Nurseries, Inc.

Cocopah Nurseries, Inc. wishes to acquire public land to expand their existing agricultural operations. In recent years, agricultural operations in the Coachella Valley have been displaced by urban development, creating a demand for agricultural lands in other parts of Riverside County.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION and ALTERNATIVES

1. Proposed Action

The proposed action is a direct/noncompetitive sale of 80 acres of public land to Cocopah Nurseries, Inc. The public lands proposed for sale are described as the S1/2NE1/4 of section 30, Township 5 South, Range 17 East, San Bernardino Meridian. The parcel would be sold for \$77,000, which has been determined to be the fair market value of the land based on an appraisal that has been reviewed and approved for use by the Office of Valuation Services. The proposed sale would include the conveyance of both surface and mineral interests.

2. No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, the sale would not occur and the lands would remain in public ownership for the foreseeable future.

3. Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Cocopah Nurseries, Inc. originally requested to purchase additional public lands, consisting of 160 acres in section 25 Township 5 South, Range 16 East and most of section 31, T.5S., R.17E. These lands are currently within a proposed withdrawal of solar energy study areas and are not available for sale at this time. In response to Cocopah Nurseries, Inc. original request, BLM also offered to lease the lands for agricultural purposes. Cocopah Nurseries, Inc. declined to consider leasing the public lands.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

General area description

The public lands proposed for sale are located in the Chuckwalla Valley in the Colorado Desert, approximately 2 miles north of Interstate Highway 10 and approximately 9 miles east of Desert Center. The public lands are surrounded on all sides by lands owned by Cocopah Nurseries, Inc. There is no legal access to the public lands.

Land Status

The public lands proposed for sale are part of the original public domain lands. There are no authorized uses on the parcels of public land considered for sale.

The public lands proposed for sale are within the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) and are managed by BLM in accordance with the 1980 CDCA Plan as amended. According to the CDCA Plan, the public lands proposed for sale are in Multiple Use Class (MUC) M (Moderate Use). Public lands in MUC M are available for

sale subject to a site-specific environmental assessment, without any requirement for a plan amendment.

The public lands proposed for sale are within an 18,538-acre Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) designated in an amendment to the CDCA Plan approved as part of the NECO plan amendment in 2002. This WHMA is intended to provide geographic connectivity between the Chemehuevi Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA) to the north and the Chuckwalla DWMA to the south. The designation of the WHMA did not change the MUC of the lands proposed for sale, which means the lands remain available for sale. The NECO plan amendment specifically precludes sales of public land in DWMA's, but does not preclude sales of public land in the desert tortoise connectivity WHMA.

The public lands proposed for sale are also within a utility corridor designated in the 1980 CDCA Plan.

The public lands and the surrounding private lands are designated open space rural in the Riverside County General Plan. This designation allows for one residential unit per 20 acre parcel.

Cultural Resources

The regional prehistory of the Colorado Desert is generally divided into three periods: Early, Archaic, and Late Prehistoric. The earliest posited occupation of the Colorado Desert is represented by the Malpais and San Dieguito complexes. Both complexes are thought to represent a big-game hunting tradition. Rogers (1939) identified the Archaic assemblages of the Colorado Desert as the Amargosa complex, which he subsequently divided into three phases: Amargosa I, II, and III. Amargosa I is marked by projectile points of the Pinto series, which in the Mojave Desert to the north have been reasonably well dated to between 8,000 and 4,000 years before present (B.P.) (Vaughan and Warren 1986). Amargosa II generally corresponds with the beginning of the Gypsum period of the Mojave Desert (4000 to 1500 B.P.). It is characterized by the appearance of fine, pressure-flaked Gypsum, Elko, and Humboldt type projectile points. The Late Prehistoric period in the Colorado Desert is represented by the Patayan complex. Dating from approximately 1450 B.P. (A.D. 500) to the historic period, the Patayan complex is characterized by marked changes in the artifact assemblage, economic system, and settlement patterns. Paddle and anvil pottery was introduced, possibly from Mexico (Rogers 1945; Schroeder 1975, 1979).

As early as 1539, the Spanish began to explore parts of California. However, little exploration of the interior deserts was undertaken until much later. The discovery of gold in California brought a great influx of American and European settlers to the state. Between 1849 and 1860 an estimated 8,000 emigrants crossed the Colorado Desert on their way to California (Laflin 1998:10). Significant economic development of the Colorado Desert region began in the 1870s and came to fruition in the early part of the 20th century. Development was dependent largely on two things: transportation and

water. The first of these came in 1872, with the construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad. In the 1930s, the Metropolitan Water District was created to effect transport of water from the Colorado River to Los Angeles. The Metropolitan Aqueduct was constructed from Parker Dam through the mountains east of Indio to Riverside, and finally, to Los Angeles. It was the largest construction project in the world at the time and provided jobs during the depression (Pittman 1995).

With World War II, General George S. Patton, Jr. determined that the desert stretching from the California-Arizona border and the Mexican border up to the lower part of Nevada would provide the perfect training ground for troops participating in the Desert Warfare campaign in Africa. It was officially designated Desert Training Center. The training area eventually grew to encompass an area twice the size of Maryland. With the end of World War II came a reduction in the military activity in the Colorado Desert region. The primary post-war activities in the area were mining and agriculture.

Cultural Resources Review

ASM Affiliates, Inc., a consultant to the Applicant, conducted a Class III cultural resources survey of the proposed land exchange area/project area/Area of Potential Effects (APE), as reported in *Cocopah Nurseries Land Acquisition Project Cultural Resources Inventory, Riverside County, California* (Iversen 2009). This report is on file at the BLM, Palm Springs/South Coast field office; and at the California Historical Resources Eastern Information Center, University California, Riverside, California (EIC).

Records Search

A records search of the project area/APE and a one-mile buffer was conducted on March 23, 2009 at the EIC. The search was supplemented by reports in the ASM files. The records and literature search results indicated that portions of the APE had been previously surveyed, but no cultural resources were identified within the APE as a result. Past surveys conducted in the vicinity of and adjacent to the APE have identified historic artifacts and features primarily associated with Camp Desert Center of the Desert Training Center.

Field Survey

A Class III cultural resources survey was conducted within the APE April 27-30, 2009 by ASM Affiliates, Inc. Phillip R Smith, representing the Chemehuevi Indians, accompanied ASM survey crewmembers. Wanda Raschkow, BLM Archaeologist, also conducted a Class III survey in portions of the project area/APE in July 2009. As a result of the Class III surveys within the APE, no prehistoric-age cultural resources were identified, and it was determined based upon the physiographic characteristics of the APE, that the potential was extremely low for prehistoric cultural resources to be located within the APE. In addition, a mid-1950's era transmission line, one definite road segment (to Sidewinder Well) and one possible road segment (Mecca-Blythe-Ehrenburg Road) were noted within and immediately adjacent to the APE.

Native American Concerns

ASM requested a search of the Native American Heritage Commission's (NAHC) Sacred Land File records. Although the search indicated "numerous cultural resources within the project area", none of these are located within the APE. ASM followed consultation with the NAHC by sending letters concerning the archaeological survey and project to Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, AhaMaKav Cultural Society, Augustine Band of Cahuilla Mission Indians, Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, Chemehuevi Reservation, Colorado River Reservation, Joseph R. Benitez (Mike), Morongo Band of Mission Indians, Ramona Band of Cahuilla Mission Indians, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, and the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians. None of the Tribes or individuals expressed concerns for the project, and as previously noted, Phillip R Smith, representing the Chemehuevi Indians, accompanied ASM during the field survey.

No historic properties and no Native American concerns were identified within the APE and in association with this proposed project. As such, the proposed project will have no effect to Historic Properties.

Mineral Resources

A mineral potential report prepared in 2009 by Leonard Sinfeld, a California Professional Geologist, concluded that, with the exception of sand and gravel, the public lands had no or low potential for any minerals. With regard to sand and gravel or aggregate resources, the report concluded there was a high potential for aggregate resources to be present but no potential for development due to the presence of other sources of similar material located closer to the market for such materials. Based on the lack of potential for development, the federal minerals have no known value.

Water Resources

The public lands are located within the Chuckwalla Valley Groundwater Basin (CVGB). Although the Colorado River Aqueduct flows through the area, groundwater is the only available water resource in the Chuckwalla Valley.

The following groundwater information is summarized from the August 2010 final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the NextEra/Genesis Solar Project. A full copy of the referenced EIS is available at BLM's Palm Springs Field Office.

The CVGB has a surface area of 940 square miles and is an unadjudicated groundwater basin, where owners of land overlying the basin may pump groundwater for reasonable uses. The CVGB is bounded upgradient by the Orocopia Valley and Pinto Valley Groundwater Basins and downgradient by the Palo Verde Mesa Groundwater Basin (PVMGB).

Groundwater in the CVGB flows in a southeasterly direction, through the PVMGB and then into the Palo Verde Valley Groundwater Basin (PVVGB), and eventually into the

Colorado River. The USGS has identified the CVGB as part of the Colorado River Basin/System, which is subject to the Colorado River Compact of 1922, and the Boulder Canyon Project act of 1928, and Consolidated Decree (547 U.S. 150 [2006]).

Groundwater in the CVGB comes from three sources: rain; inflow from upgradient basins; and return flows from agricultural use and treated wastewater. Groundwater leaves the CVGB in three ways: pumping from wells; subsurface outflow; and evapotranspiration.

The following table from the draft EIS for the proposed First Solar Desert Sunlight Solar Farm Project summarizes groundwater information from draft environmental documents prepared for the Palen Solar Power Project and the Genesis Solar Power Project:

Groundwater Budgets for Chuckwalla Valley Groundwater Basin	Palen Solar Power Project	Genesis Solar Power Project
INFLOW in Acre Feet per Year (AFY)		
From precipitation	8,588	9,440
Inflow from groundwater basins upgradient	3,500	3,500
Irrigation return flow	800	800
Wastewater return flow	831	831
TOTAL INFLOW (AFY)	13,719	14,571
OUTFLOW		
Groundwater extraction	10,361	10,475
Subsurface outflow	400	400
Evapotranspiration at Palen Dry Lake	350	350
TOTAL OUTFLOW (AFY)	11,111	11,225
BUDGET BALANCE (NET INFLOW AFY)	2,608	3,346

Groundwater Surplus: The available information indicates that approximately 2,608 more AFY enters the aquifer than leaves the aquifer. Although currently positive, in the past (most notably between 1981 and 1986) annual groundwater use has exceeded the recharge rate resulting in an overdraft condition and lowering of the groundwater table.

Groundwater depth and use in the immediate vicinity: Cocopah Nurseries, Inc. operate 4 wells in the area, using approximately 3,000 AFY to irrigate citrus and date palms on their surrounding private land. The wells are approximately 450-500 feet deep, reaching groundwater between 120 to 250 feet. The wells are used intermittently, with groundwater levels rising when the wells are not pumping. (Personal communication with Duane Young, 2010)

This information is consistent with the California Department of Water Resources conclusion in 2004 that groundwater levels in the basin have been generally stable.

Biological Resources

AMEC Earth and Environment, Inc. completed a site-specific biological resource assessment and focused tortoise surveys on the public lands in 2005. Following is a summary of the 2005 assessment, which also is appended to this environmental assessment.

The general vegetative community in the area is Mojave Creosote Bush Scrub, but the public lands were apparently disturbed sometime ago when the surrounding private lands were prepared for planting date and citrus trees. With the exception of the desert tortoise, no species or habitat for species which are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act are likely to be present on the public lands or in the vicinity.

The lands in the general vicinity were considered to be marginal tortoise habitat, but no tortoises or sign were found on the lands or in the vicinity in 2005. The assessments references prior tortoise surveys in the immediate vicinity (by Dynamic World Biological Services) from 1999 and 2000, which also found no tortoise sign. The only state-listed species of concern which was observed during surveys was the loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*).

Additional information regarding biological resources in the general vicinity of the public land is contained in the California Energy Commission's September 16, 2010 Revised Staff Assessment for the Palen Solar Project. A full copy of the staff assessment may be found at the following website:

www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/solar_millennium_palen/index.html

Of particular relevance to the proposed sale of the public land is the presence of vegetation or plant communities in the area which are dependent on groundwater. The revised staff assessment notes the presence of a groundwater-dependent plant ecosystem near Palen Dry Lake, which could be affected by pumping from wells in the area.

The revised staff assessment also notes the use or potential use of lands in the area by migratory birds and the western burrowing owl for foraging and nesting.

Solar Energy

The public lands are not within a solar energy study zone identified in the Draft Solar Energy Development Programmatic EIS.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Elements of the Human Environment

The following table summarizes various elements of the human environment subject to requirements specified in statute, regulation, or executive order. Elements for which there are no impacts will not be discussed further in this document.

Environmental Element	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Air Quality	Some impacts	No impact
ACEC's	NA	NA
Cultural Resources	No impact	No impact
Native American Concerns	No impact	No impact
Farmlands	No Impact	No Impact
Floodplains	No Impact	No Impact
Energy (E.O. 13212)	No Impact	No Impact
Minerals	No Impact	No Impact
T&E Animal Species	No Impact	No Impact
T&E Plant Species	No Impact	No Impact
Invasive, Nonnative Species	Some impacts	No Impact
Wastes (hazardous/solid)	NA	NA
Water Quality (surface and ground)	Impacts	No Impact
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	NA	NA
Wild and Scenic Rivers	NA	NA
Wilderness	No Impact	No Impact
Environmental Justice	No Impact	No Impact
Health and Safety Risks to Children	No Impact	No Impact
Visual Resource Mgmt.	No Impact	No Impact

B. Discussion of Impacts

Proposed Action

Direct Effects: Sales of public lands have little direct impact on the human environment. The primary direct impact of transferring the public lands into private ownership would be to increase the total value of private property assessed for taxes. The estimated value of the parcel proposed for sale is approximately \$77,000. Since property taxes are assessed at 1% of value, if the parcel was sold, assessed taxes in Riverside County would increase by approx. \$3,000.

Indirect Effects: For purposes of considering indirect effects, BLM assumes that, if sold, the parcel would be used for date palm or citrus production.

Impacts to Air Quality: Agricultural development would result in short-term and long-term adverse impacts to air quality from ground disturbance and operation of agricultural equipment.

Groundwater impacts: Cocopah Nurseries, Inc. projects that future use of the land for date farming would use approximately 6-7 AFY of water/acre (approx. 5 years after planting), or about 560 AFY. (Personal communication with Duane Young, 2010) This estimate is consistent with an estimated use of 8 AFY/acre for citrus from the Coachella Valley Water District website. This increased use would reduce the current net surplus in groundwater recharge in the groundwater basin from 2,608 AFY to 2,048 AFY.

The environmental consequences of increased groundwater use in the general area have been analyzed in the draft Staff Assessment/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Palen Solar Project. Although the Palen Solar Project is projected to use 300 AFY, while the proposed sale is expected to use 560 AFY, the analysis in the draft EIS is generally considered applicable with the understanding that impacts may be somewhat greater. A full copy of the referenced draft EIS is available at BLM's Palm Springs Field Office.

The following impacts of increased groundwater use are summarized from the draft Staff Assessment/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and the September 16, 2010 Revised Staff Assessment for the Palen Solar Project.

Increased water use would lower the groundwater level in the immediate vicinity of the well or wells pumping additional groundwater and would probably affect ground water levels at least 1 mile away and possibility up to 2 to 3 miles away. As water is pumped from the well, groundwater in the surrounding aquifer flows toward the pump, lowering the surrounding groundwater levels. The greatest drop in groundwater elevation occurs at the well, with the drop decreasing at greater distances from the well.

The maximum drop in groundwater levels for the Palen Solar Project (pumping 300 AFY) was predicted to be approximately 57 feet near the pumping well. The area where drawdown would exceed 1 foot was predicted to be limited to within approximately 2 to 3 miles of the well.

These predictions contrast with the predicted drawdown in the draft EIS for the proposed First Solar Desert Sunlight Solar Farm (north of Desert Center, but within the CVGB). The predicted drawdown for use of 700 AFY (for 2 years during construction) was estimated to be at most one foot at one mile away from the pumping well.

While various models can be used to estimate declines in ground water level, the models cannot always accurately predict actual groundwater declines.

The additional groundwater use could also affect subsurface groundwater flow to the adjacent groundwater basin and eventually affect the Colorado River. Given the location of the wells which would be used, the additional groundwater use is not expected to affect the Colorado River basin flows.

The impact of declining groundwater on plant communities is addressed under biological resources.

Ground subsidence can occur as a result of water level decline in aquifer systems. Reversible deformation occurs in all aquifer systems as a result of the cyclical rise and fall of groundwater levels associated with short and longer term climatic cycles.

Permanent ground subsidence can occur when pore water pressures in the aquifer fall below their lowest historical point, and the particles in the aquifer are permanently rearranged and compressed. Soils particularly susceptible to such consolidation and subsidence include compressible clays in a confined aquifer system. The potential for subsidence from lower groundwater levels in this area of the aquifer is considered remote.

Biological Resources

In the short term, wildlife species occupying the public lands would be displaced or killed by date palm or citrus farming. In the longer term, date palms or citrus trees may provide nesting and foraging habitat for some species.

Groundwater-dependent vegetation could be adversely affected by increased pumping if the water table drops below the rooting depth. Groundwater dependent plant communities near Palen Dry Lake could be adversely affected by the drop in water levels. The actual effects of the sale on groundwater-dependent plant communities is difficult to predict because the actual drop in the water table becomes increasingly difficult to predict as the distance from the well increases.

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, the proposed sale would not occur and the public lands would be retained in federal ownership for the foreseeable future. The effects of the no action alternative are summarized here and will not be discussed further.

Funds would not be generated from the sale for the Federal Land Disposal Account pursuant to the FLTFA.

C. Mitigation Measures

No mitigation has been identified by BLM.

D. Residual Impacts

Since no mitigation has been identified, residual impacts are unchanged from the direct and indirect impacts of the proposed action discussed above.

E. Cumulative Impacts

The direct and indirect effects of the proposed sale would incrementally contribute to the impacts of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the area. Because the proposed sale involves only 80 acres of public lands in the Chuckwalla Valley Groundwater Basin, the discussion of cumulative impacts has been limited to indirect impacts of the sale on the Chuckwalla Valley Groundwater Basin.

As noted earlier, the CVGB currently has a net ground water recharge surplus of 2,608 AFY and future agricultural use of the public lands of 560 AFY would reduce the annual surplus to 2,048 AFY.

The following analysis of cumulative impacts to the CVGB is summarized from the Revised Staff Assessment (Part 2) for the Palen Solar Project (California Energy Commission, September 16, 2010).

The Revised Staff Assessment listed 10 foreseeable projects in CVGB, which if, approved and constructed, would use an additional 3,352 AFY beginning in 2011 and 3,602 AFY during years 2019 through 2043. Although this additional use would place the aquifer in overdraft, the overdraft was not considered a significant impact (under the criteria of California Environmental Quality Act) for the following reasons:

1. The storage capacity of the CVGB is approximately 15,000,000 AF and the cumulative groundwater extraction for construction of the future/foreseeable projects amounts to 0.01% of the total stored groundwater.
2. At the end of project operation in 2043, the amount of total stored groundwater in the aquifer would be reduced by 0.383%.

The Staff Assessment did not list the proposed sale and expected use of an additional 560 AFY, but it appears unlikely the omission would have changed the analysis and conclusions.

At this point, it is difficult to predict which of the 10 foreseeable projects listed in the

Revised Staff Assessment will be approved and constructed. Despite this uncertainty, it appears reasonable to assume that ground water pumping could exceed natural groundwater recharge in the aquifer, with or without the proposed sale.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT CONSIDERATIONS:

Public comments submitted for this environmental assessment, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:

A Notice of Realty Action for this sale was published in the Federal Register in May of 2010, and published once a week for three consecutive weeks in the Desert Sun (May 27, June 3, and June 10, 2010). The notice was also sent to interested parties of record. No comments were received.

PREPARED BY:

Thomas Gey, Realty Specialist, BLM
Della Asuagbor, Realty Specialist, BLM

REVIEWED BY:

Environmental Coordinator

Date

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
DOI-BLM-CA-060-0009-0044-EA**

NAME of PROJECT: Cocopah Land Sale

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: Environmental impacts associated with the proposed action have been assessed. Based on the analysis provided in the attached EA, I conclude the approved action is not a major federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment under the criteria in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.18 and 1508.27. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

Field Manager
Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office
USDI Bureau of Land Management
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Date

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE**

**DECISION RECORD
DOI-BLM-CA-060-0009-0044-EA**

NAME of PROJECT: Cocopah Land Sale

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE: The approved action is in conformance with the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) and the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management (NECO) Plan. Under the analysis of this EA, no significant impacts to the human environment were identified and no Environmental Impact Statement is required.

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE: I have selected the Proposed Action as it conforms to the CDCA Plan and the NECO Plan. This action will provide for reduced inefficient management of isolated and fragmented parcels.

RATIONALE: This approved action is in conformance with the applicable land use plans and will not cause unnecessary or undue degradation of public land.

DECISION: It is my decision to approve the proposed action as described in Environmental Assessment (EA) number DOI-BLM-CA-060-0009-0044-EA.

Field Manager
Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office
USDI Bureau of Land Management
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Date

APPEALS: This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4, and the information provided in Form 1842-1 (enclosed). If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in the Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1201 Bird Center Drive, Palm Springs, California 92262, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, pursuant to Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4, Subpart E, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulations, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) the relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) the likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- (3) the likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) whether the public interest favors granting the stay.