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

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
EA Number DOI-BLM-CA-060-0010-003-EA**

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**DATE:** November 2009

**TITLE / PROJECT TYPE:** Sale of Public Land to the City of Palm Springs

**CASE FILE / PROJECT NO:** CACA 48002

**BLM OFFICE:** Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office  
USDI Bureau of Land Management  
1201 Bird Center Drive  
Palm Springs, CA 92262

**APPLICANT / PROPONENT:** City of Palm Springs, California

**LOCATION OF PROPOSED ACTION:** Palm Springs, Riverside County,  
California  
N1/2 SEC 34 T3S R4E

**PROJECT ACREAGE:** BLM 119.37

**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP:** Palm Springs Quad

**LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE and Other Regulatory Compliance:**

California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan (1980 as amended)  
Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP)  
City of Palm Springs General Plan

Fish and Wildlife Consultation

BLM is consulting with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in accordance with Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act on the effects of the sale on the Coachella Valley milk-vetch.

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

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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.

CRM Tech completed a project-specific cultural resources report<sup>1</sup> in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The report includes the results of a search of historical/archaeological resources records, historical background research, and contact with Native American representatives, and an intensive field survey. The report concluded the public lands do not contain historic properties.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION and ALTERNATIVES**

### **Background**

The City of Palm Springs (City) and the Desert Community College District (District) desire to use approx. 119 acres of public land west of Indian Canyon Drive for a proposed community college campus, including athletic facilities and a renewable energy park for testing and training. The public lands sought by the City surround an existing 17.5 acre park, the James O. Jessie Unity Center, which was conveyed to the City in 1981 under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (43 United States Code 869 et seq.).

The City’s request to purchase these lands is the culmination of several years of study by the District evaluating alternative sites for a new western campus for the College of the Desert and reflects the City’s ongoing interest in acquiring public lands in the area for community and/or recreational purposes.

### **Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action**

The purpose of the proposed land sale is to convey approximately 119.37 acres of public lands to the City of Palm Springs (City). The lands are needed for development of the West Valley Campus of the College of the Desert

The underlying purpose and need for the sale is to meet a demand for community college expansion in the Coachella Valley. The sale would provide lands for community college purposes and other public services, which cannot be developed elsewhere in the community without significant compromises in scale, quality and location of those facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> “Identification and Evaluation of Historic Properties: College of the Desert Western Coachella Valley Campus Project,” prepared by CRM Tech, May 5, 2009; Revised July 30, 2009.

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A secondary purpose of the sale is raise funds for federal land acquisitions as authorized by the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA). Under FLTFA, funds raised from the sale of public lands go into a land disposal account and may be used to purchase private inholdings nominated for acquisition. Currently, the value of private inholdings nominated for acquisition in California exceeds the available FLTFA funds to purchase lands in California.

**Decision to be made:** BLM's decision will be to either approve or not approve a non-competitive sale of 119 acres of public land to the City of Palm Springs.

## **1. Proposed Action**

The proposed action is a non-competitive sale of 119 acres of public land to the City of Palm Springs. The lands proposed for sale are described as that portion of the north one-half of Section 34, Township 3 South, Range 4 East, San Bernardino Base and Meridian, lying south of the Chino Wash Flood Control levee. The proposed sale would include the surface and mineral estate.

Click on the following link to see a map of the public lands proposed for sale:

The sale price would be \$2,102,000, which is the fair market value of the public land based on an appraisal approved by the Department of the Interior's Appraisal Services Directorate.

The public lands would be conveyed subject to the following existing authorizations:

1. A right of way (ROW), 10 feet wide x 68 feet long, for a power line issued to Southern California Edison (SCE) under serial # CA 16922.
2. A ROW, 12 feet wide x 528 feet long, for a road and 2 well sites issued to Desert Water Agency (DWA) under serial # CA 13195.
3. A ROW, 30 feet wide X 2,640 feet long, for a water pipeline issued to DWA under serial # R 1953 (approximately 1,249 feet is on the public land).
4. A ROW 210 feet wide x 5,287 feet long for a flood control dike/levee issued to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers under serial # R4155 (approximately the south 50 feet of the width of this ROW is on the public land).

If the lands are conveyed out of federal ownership, the BLM would have no further jurisdiction over the land. Future development would be under the jurisdiction of the City of Palm Springs and subject to conditions in the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP).

## **2. No Action Alternative**

Under the no action alternative, the public lands would not be sold and would remain in public ownership under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the foreseeable future.

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### **3. Alternatives considered, but eliminated from detailed analysis.**

The City and BLM considered using the Recreation and Public Purpose Act to authorize lease and eventual conveyance of the lands. This was not considered a viable option because the District would be unable to obtaining funding for campus construction until they owned the land. This alternative would also not meet BLM's purpose and need to raise funds for acquisition of lands pursuant to FLTFA. The City and BLM also considered a land exchange, but preliminary proposals were not considered feasible due to the relatively high value of the public land compared to the lands offered by the City.

Over the last several years, the District considered alternative sites for a western campus in the Coachella Valley. BLM is currently not aware of any alternative sites which remain available to the College of the Desert. Any alternative sites for a western campus are not considered feasible alternatives to the proposed sale and would not be subject to detailed analysis because they would not meet the needs of the City of Palm Springs or BLM's purpose and need to raise funds for acquisition of lands pursuant to FLTFA.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

The public lands are located in the City of Palm Springs, in the Coachella Valley region of central Riverside County, California. The lands are on the valley floor, immediately south of the Whitewater River Floodplain and west of Indian Canyon Drive.

### **Air Quality**

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCQAMD) establishes standards for air quality in the Coachella Valley (Valley). The Valley is within the Salton Sea Air Basin (SSAB) of the SCAQMD. Air quality in the Valley is generally good, although increased development, traffic, construction activity and the influence of neighboring air basins have resulted in deteriorating air quality in the past few decades.

The primary air pollutants of concern in the Coachella Valley are suspended particulates, including PM<sub>10</sub> (particulate matter measuring smaller than 10 microns in diameter) and ozone. The Coachella Valley is classified as a "serious non-attainment area" for Ozone and PM<sub>10</sub>, exceeding both State and Federal standards for these pollutants.

PM<sub>10</sub> levels can be attributed to natural conditions and to disturbances caused by man. Most of the ozone pollution in the Valley comes from air basins to the west, conveyed into the valley on strong westerly winds. The public lands are in a "High Wind Hazard Zone" in the Palm Springs General Plan, and the "Active Blowsand" and "Blowsand Hazard Zone", which naturally contribute to the elevated levels of suspended

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particulates.

### **Cultural Resources**

CRM Tech completed a project-specific cultural resources report<sup>2</sup> in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The report includes the results of a search of historical/archaeological resources records, historical background research, and contact with Native American representatives, and an intensive field survey. Based on the report, BLM has concluded the public lands do not contain historic properties and the sale would therefore not adversely affect historic properties.

The field survey conducted by CRM Tech found a single prehistoric pottery sherd within the project site. The find was recorded as an isolate (a locality with fewer than three artifacts), and was recorded in the California Historical Resources Inventory. Isolates are not considered potential “historic properties”, and require no further study.

The public lands are outside of any areas considered likely to contain pre-historic cultural resources as mapped in the Palm Springs General Plan. Several miles south of the public lands there are two pre-historic archaeological districts in the City of Palm Springs which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The City and its Sphere of Influence contain numerous areas mapped as “general known areas of historic archaeological sites,” the nearest of which is one mile west of the public lands, on the northeast side of Highway 111.

### **Paleontological Resources**

CRM Tech prepared a project-specific Paleontological Report<sup>3</sup> which included the results of a records search, literature review and a field survey. The report did not identify any paleontological resources on the public land or within a one-mile radius. Since onsite geology is from the Holocene epoch, and of relatively recent age, the area is not expected to contain paleontological resources. The report recommends that excavation exceeding 10 feet be monitored.

### **Native American Concerns**

CRM Tech requested the State of California’s Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) complete a records search of the Commission’s sacred lands file. The NAHC record search did not identify any Native American cultural resources in the vicinity of the planning area.

The nearest tribal lands, associated with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, are approximately one-half mile from the public lands proposed for sale. CRM Tech contacted the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians to request a record search of the Agua Caliente Register for potential cultural resources on the public lands and vicinity.

CRM Tech also contacted representatives of 11 Native American tribes using a list

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<sup>2</sup> “Identification and Evaluation of Historic Properties: College of the Desert Western Coachella Valley Campus Project,” prepared by CRM Tech, May 5, 2009; Revised July 30, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> “Paleontological Resources Assessment Report: College Park Specific Plan, prepared by CRM Tech, May 21, 2009.

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provided by the NAHC, as well as three additional representatives in the region, and subsequently conducted telephone consultations. Four written responses and one verbal response were received. Responses from three of the representatives specified that their respective tribes had no specific concerns regarding the undertaking but requested that they be notified in the event that any cultural resources were found.

The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Tribal Historic Preservation Office responded that the lands are within the Tribe's ancestral territories and requested further consultation. The Agua Caliente Register identified two archaeological resources, including a Native American village site, within a mile of the public lands. The Tribe requested that a Native American monitor be present during all ground-disturbing activities and/or any archaeological testing. The Tribe also requested that copies of all cultural resources documentation generated in connection with the project and additional consultation with the lead agency. The response also requests that the lead agency and the project proponent arrive at an agreement regarding the treatment and disposition of human remains in the event these are found on this site.

### **Existing Uses**

The public land records show that portion of 6 rights of way (ROW) were previously authorized by BLM on the lands proposed for sale:

1. A ROW, 10 feet wide x 68 feet long for a powerline issued to Southern California Edison (SCE) under serial # CA 16922.
2. A ROW 12 feet wide x 528 feet long for a road and 2 well sites issued to Desert Water Agency (DWA) under serial # CA 13195.
3. A ROW 30 feet wide X 2,640 feet long for a water pipeline issued to DWA under serial # R 1953 (approximately 1,249 feet is on the public land for sale).
4. A ROW 210 feet wide x 5,287 feet long for a flood control dike/levee issued to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers under serial # R4155 (approximately the south 50 feet of the width of this ROW is on the public land for sale).
5. A ROW, that has not been constructed, 40 feet wide X approx. 2,000 feet long for a sewer line issued to The Cove at Palm Springs L.P., under serial # CA 47274
6. A ROW issued to the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) for water spreading for recharge the groundwater aquifer under serial # LA 052742.

The ROW issued to The Cove at Palm Springs, L.P. has not been constructed. Because the City of Palm Springs will not allow the proposed line to be connected to City's system at the location originally envisioned, the ROW on the public lands will never be used. BLM is taking action to terminate the ROW.

The ROW for water spreading in section 34, T.3S., R.4E., was issued prior to the construction of the Chino Wash flood control levee and that portion of the ROW in section 34 has never been used. Construction of the levee effectively precluded water spreading from occurring on the public lands proposed sale because they are south of the levee. Subsequent to the construction of the levee, BLM amended the ROW to

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1984, terminating that portion of the ROW in section 34.

Additionally, Indian Canyon Drive runs through the public lands along the eastern section line of section 34, T.3S., R.4E. The center line of Indian Canyon drive is located on the eastern section line, so the eastern 30 feet of the public lands is occupied by the existing roadway. BLM records do not show a federal authorization for Indian Canyon drive, but because it was established under a resolution by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, it may have been constructed under the authority of Revised Statute 2477.

### **Floodplains**

The public lands proposed for sale are located south of the Whitewater floodplain and associated flood hazard zone, and are protected by an existing flood control levee. The Whitewater River floodplain is located north of the flood control levee.

### **Energy (E.O. 13212)**

The public lands are mostly vacant and not producing or using any energy. The James O. Jessie Unity Center and the residential neighborhoods to the south of the project site are served by Southern California Edison (SCE).

The public lands are within an area with solar and wind resources considered suitable for renewable energy development. There are several existing utility-scale wind parks nearby, but due to the proximity of the lands to residential areas the lands are not considered suitable for utility scale solar or wind energy development.

### **Land Use Plans**

The applicable BLM land use plan for public lands in the Coachella Valley is the 1980 California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan as amended. The most recent plan amendment to the CDCA Plan in the Coachella Valley was completed in 2002. In general, the 2002 Coachella Valley Amendment to the CDCA Plan provides for public lands to be managed consistent with the CVMSHCP, which was in draft form at that time.

More specifically, under the CDCA Plan, the public lands proposed for sale are designated for moderate use in the CDCA Plan's multiple use class categories. Under the CDCA Plan, lands classified for moderate use are available for sale. Also under the CDCA Plan, the public lands to the north of the Chino Wash flood control levee are not available for sale because they are within the Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area designated in the CVMSHCP.

The applicable local jurisdiction's plans for the public lands are the Palm Springs General Plan and the CVMSHCP. Although not directly applicable to the public lands while in federal ownership, these plans would control development if the lands leave federal ownership.

Although the public lands proposed for sale are not within any conservation areas

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designated in the CVMSHCP, any future development would be subject to mitigation requirements in the CVMSHCP. The City of Palm Springs is currently preparing a specific plan for the area, which would allow for development of a community college campus and associated facilities on the lands.

### **Minerals**

A Mineral Report<sup>4</sup> was completed to determine the mineral resources onsite and the potential for mining operations at this site. The report concluded that mineral resources are largely limited to aggregates including sand, gravel, and crushed stone. The lands are in an area classified as Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ) 2 by the California Department of Conservation Division of Mines and Geology. MRZ-2 is used where “significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that a high likelihood for their presence exists.”<sup>5</sup>

The report also concludes that aggregate mining operations are not practical at this location.

### **Recreation**

The public lands are immediately adjacent to residential areas and are therefore expected to be used for casual recreation, walking, hiking, etc. Although there are no approved routes of travel on the land for motor vehicles, there is some evidence of unauthorized vehicle travel.

### **Wildlife and Plants**

#### *Common Plant and Wildlife Species*

Common reptiles observed onsite during the field survey included the side-blotched lizard, western whiptail, zebra-tailed lizard, and desert iguana. Common species expected to occur onsite include but are not limited to, desert horned lizard, coachwhip, glossy snake, and sidewinder. The site is not suitable habitat for any amphibian species.

Common bird species observed onsite include mourning dove, common raven, great-tailed grackle, verdin, and black-throated sparrow. Other common species that may occur onsite include, but are not limited to, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, greater roadrunner, and California quail.

Audubon’s cottontail and California ground squirrel were observed onsite during the field survey. Burrows of other small mammals were observed, but species were not identifiable. Coyotes and bobcats may occasionally forage onsite, but were not observed.

The vegetation on the public lands most closely resembles Sonoran creosote bush

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<sup>4</sup> “Mineral Potential Report Portion of North-Half of Section 34 Township 3S., Range 4E., SBB&M 132.4 Acres, Palm Springs Area Riverside County, California,” prepared by Terra Geosciences, April 7, 2009.

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scrub.<sup>6</sup> The dominant perennial plant species observed during the biological surveys include cheesebush and burrowbush. Less abundant perennials observed included creosote bush, Emory's indigo bush, scale-broom, smoke tree, sandpaper plant, and golden cholla. Dominant annuals include red-stemmed filaree, desert dandelion, stigose bird's-foot trefoil, Fremont pincushion, desert chicory, brown-eyed primrose, and various mustards.

### *Nonnative Species*

Although largely undeveloped, some non-native species were found on the public land, including Sahara mustard, short-pod mustard, Russian thistle, Mexican Paloverde, red-stemmed Storksbill, tamarisk, cheeseweed, red brome, barley, and Mediterranean schismus.

### **Special Status Species, Including Endangered and Threatened**

The public lands proposed for sale are immediately south of the Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area, designated in the CVMSHCP. The Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area is habitat for a variety of special status species, which includes plants or animals considered "sensitive" or as having "special status" due of declining populations, vulnerability to habitat change, or because they have restricted ranges. Some are listed as Threatened or Endangered by the USFWS or by the CDFG and are protected by the Federal and State Endangered Species acts and the California Native Plant Protection Act, while others have been identified as sensitive or as special status species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the BLM, the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), or by private conservation organizations, including the California Native Plant Society (CNPS).

The public land proposed for sale is separated from the Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area by the Chino Wash Flood Control levee. The levee precludes periodic flood events which would provide fluvial deposits of sand as occurs in the Conservation Area to the north. However, due to wind borne sand deposition, habitat on the public land remains suitable for some species found in the Whitewater Floodplain Conservation Area.

A biological resources report<sup>7</sup>, which includes the results of research and field surveys, was completed for the property. In summary, field surveys did not observe any special status wildlife species, but did find 54 individual Coachella Valley milk-vetch plants, a federally endangered plant species in the southwest corner of the subject property.

Although not found during field surveys, the biological resources report concluded the following special status animal and plant species have been observed within 10 miles and have the potential to occur onsite:

### Invertebrates

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<sup>6</sup> As described by Holland (1986).

<sup>7</sup> "Biological Resources Assessment for the City of Palm Springs/College of the Desert BLM Land Sale", prepared by AMEC Earth & Environmental, Inc, May 20, 2009.

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Casey's june beetle, designated as a candidate for federal listing, has a very low to absent occurrence probability onsite. Both the Coachella Valley giant sand treader cricket and the Coachella Valley Jerusalem cricket have a moderate potential for occurrence.

### Reptiles

The project site is at the edge of range for the desert tortoise, and is unlikely to support the species. The federally threatened and state listed endangered Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard has a low probability of occurrence due to the lack of fine, windblown sand. The flat-tailed horned lizard and the coast (San Diego) horned lizard have very low to absent occurrence probability.

### Birds

The burrowing owl has a moderate probability of occurrence. The loggerhead shrike has a moderate probability of breeding and a high probability of foraging on the project site. Although the prairie falcon and the black swift are not likely to breed onsite, they have a low to moderate probability of foraging onsite. The crissal thrasher and Le Conte's thrasher also do not breed onsite but have a low potential for foraging within the project area. The black-tailed gnatcatcher has a very low probability of breeding and a low to moderate probability of foraging onsite.

### Mammals

Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel, designated as a candidate for federal listing, has a high probability of occurrence. The Palm Springs pocket mouse has a moderate probability of occurrence. The pallid San Diego pocket mouse has a low to moderate probability of occurrence and northwestern San Diego pocket mouse has low occurrence potential. Absent from the site but with moderate foraging potential are the pocketed free-tailed bat and big free-tailed bat. Also absent from the site, but with a low foraging potential is the western (southern) yellow bat.

The land is not suitable habitat for peninsular and desert bighorn sheep.

### Special Status Plant Species with Potential to Occur Onsite

The biological report concluded the public land was not suitable habitat for the Triple-ribbed milk-vetch, but contained suitable habitat for the Coachella Valley milk-vetch. The field survey identified 54 individual Coachella Valley milk-vetch plants on the public lands.

Other special status plant species not found during field surveys, but with low to moderate probability of occurrence include chaparral sand-verbena, singlewhorl burrobrush, Arizona spurge, Little San Bernardino Mts. linanthus, slender cottonheads, and Orocopia sage. None of these species hold either federal or state status. Little San Bernardino Mts. linanthus is considered a sensitive species by the CNPS.

### **Wastes (hazardous/solid)**

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In April of 2009 a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment<sup>8</sup> (ESA) was prepared by a certified Professional Geologist and Registered Environmental Assessor II to determine if any hazardous materials or wastes had been stored or released on the public land. The ESA identified an aboveground chlorine tank in the southernmost Desert Water Agency well site. Six automotive batteries were also found on the public lands. No other hazardous materials were found.

### **Water Resources**

The Coachella Valley overlays a large sub-surface groundwater aquifer, which generally extends through the Coachella Valley from the Whitewater River to the Salton Sea.

The public lands are within the Palm Springs Subarea of the Whitewater River Subbasin of the groundwater aquifer. This Subbasin is estimated to contain over 28 million acre-feet of good to excellent quality groundwater within the first 1,000 feet below the ground surface.<sup>9</sup> The water table in the Palm Springs Subarea ranges from 300 to 400 feet below the surface, with the aquifer believed to be at least 1,000 feet thick. The Palm Springs Subarea is an unconfined aquifer that makes up a triangular area between the Garnet Hill Fault on the north, the east slope of the San Jacinto Mountains on the west, and extends southeast to the Cathedral City area.

The Desert Water Agency (DWA), in cooperation with the Coachella Valley Water District, monitors groundwater and surface water to determine suitability for human consumption. The DWA supplies domestic water to the Palm Springs area, including the public lands. Surface, groundwater and water in the distribution system monitored by DWA does not exceed any of the established maximum contaminant levels.<sup>10</sup>

The primary water quality concern in the region is stormwater runoff, which can be high in pollutants. In some areas, septic tanks have also been associated with degradation of groundwater, primary due to increased nitrates.

Water quality in the project area is good to excellent, but extraction of groundwater from the aquifer exceeds the natural recharge from rain and snow in the watershed. The Coachella Valley Water District estimated that groundwater production from the upper portion of the Whitewater River sub basin was approximately 210,530 acre feet per year in 2008. The natural recharge rate is supplemented using water from the Colorado River placed in spreading ponds in the Coachella Valley.

### **Environmental Justice and Health and Safety Risks to Children**

Federal regulations require analysis of economic, social effects, and human health effects, including health and safety risks to children. The public lands are immediately north of an older residential neighborhood but are also close to recent residential developments with relatively higher home values.

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<sup>8</sup> "Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for the Proposed College of the Desert West Valley Campus," prepared by Terra Nova Planning and Research Inc., April 2009.

<sup>9</sup> "Coachella Valley Final Water Management Plan State," prepared by Coachella Valley Water District, Adopted September 2002.

<sup>10</sup> "Desert Water Agency Water Quality Report," prepared by the Desert Water Agency, 2006.

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### Visual Resource Management

The BLM has established a Classification system, Visual Resource Management (VRM), to manage scenic values and visual resource integrity. The property is designated as a Class 4 VRM. The level of change permitted for Class 4 VRM can be high; however every attempt should be made to minimize impacts to visual resources.

Generally, the visual landscape in the vicinity of the public lands has been heavily modified by surrounding development, including adjacent residential development and wind turbines farther away to the north.

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

#### A. Proposed Action

The environmental consequences of the proposed sale are based on the reasonably foreseeable future use of the land. If the public lands are conveyed to the City, approx. 117 acres would be used for development of the College of the Desert West Valley Campus, Conceptual plans for the campus include classrooms, laboratories, library, student center, administrative offices, renewable energy generation, sustainable technology training and development facilities, and athletic facilities.

Improvements to Indian Canyon Drive, which currently occupies approximately 1 acre, would use an additional acre of land.

The following table shows future proposed uses based on current conceptual plans.

Proposed Land Uses	
Land Uses	Estimated Acreage
COD Green Energy Park	40 acres
City Community Park Expansion	14 acres
COD R&D/Sustainable Business Incubator	10 acres
COD Core Campus & Parking	51 acres
DWA Well Sites	2 acres
Indian Canyon Right-of-way	2 acres
<b>Total</b>	<b>119 acres</b>

Source: Preliminary West Valley Campus Master Plan Land Use, April 2009.

Campus buildings would include classrooms, library, student center/commons, administration, and a variety of ancillary buildings. Development would require new and or upgraded of water and sewer systems, roadways and storm water facilities. Solar and other renewable energy facilities are planned for the Green Energy Park and campus.

Future development would be subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act and requirements in the CVMSHCP. For purposes of evaluating future impacts, BLM has assumed the following conditions would be imposed on future development:

Air Quality

Grading and construction permits would require the use of all measures reasonably available to minimize emissions. The following dust control measures are expected to be part of any grading plan:

<b>Fugitive Dust Control Methods</b>	
<b>Daily PM<sub>10</sub> Reduction</b>	
Apply Soil Stabilizers to Inactive Areas	30%
Replace Ground Cover in Disturbed Areas Quickly	15%
Water Exposed Surfaces 2 Times Daily	34%
Water Exposed Surfaces 3 Times Daily	50%

Source: Urban Emissions Model (URBEMIS2002) version 8.7.0, April 2005.

Construction equipment is expected to use the following technologies:

<b>Available Emission Reduction Technologies</b>					
<b>Diesel Equipment</b>	<b>Daily Emission Reduction Factors</b>				
	<b>ROG</b>	<b>NOx</b>	<b>PM<sub>10</sub></b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>SOx</b>
Aqueous Fuel	0%	14%	63%	0%	0%
Diesel Particle Filter	0%	0%	80%	0%	0%
Cooled Exhaust Gas Recirculation	90%	40%	85%	90%	0%
Lean NOx Catalyst	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Diesel Oxidation Catalyst	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Worker Trips</b>	<b>ROG</b>	<b>NOx</b>	<b>PM<sub>10</sub></b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>SOx</b>
Use Shuttle to Lunch	1%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%

Source: Urban Emissions Model (URBEMIS2002) version 8.7.0 April 2005.

Native American Concerns

Prior to construction, the City of Palm Springs, as lead CEQA agency, is expected to reach an agreement with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians regarding treatment and disposition of human remains which might be discovered during construction.

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Biological Resources (T&E Animal Species and T&E Plant Species)

1. Development would require payment of applicable fees in the CVMSHCP.
2. As provided in the CVMSHCP, the City of Palm Springs would be required to protect the burrowing owl and other species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The Take Permit associated with the CVMSHCP has specific requirements for species not fully covered under the plan but protected under the MBTA. Since the burrowing owl is not listed under the Endangered Species Act but is protected by the MBTA no take can be authorized, including killing and wounding of any such birds, or take of eggs and active nests.
3. Impacts to nesting birds, including burrowing owl, would be minimized by either allowing no disturbance during nesting season (January 15 through July 31 for the Coachella Valley) or by conducting nesting bird surveys immediately prior to site disturbance during the nesting season, and avoiding nesting sites. A relocation effort acceptable to the resource agencies may be required if active owl burrows are found.
4. If site disturbance/vegetation clearance was proposed during nesting season, site specific nesting surveys for birds protected under the MBTA would be required.
5. Development would adhere to Adjacency Guidelines in Section 4.5 of the CVMSHCP and standard condition #26 of the 10(A)(1)(B) Take Permit issued by the USFWS for the CVMSHCP. The guidelines are intended to reduce the effects of developments which are adjacent to conservation areas and include requirements for drainage, toxic materials, lighting, noise and landscaping.

After considering the conditions which would affect future development, the environmental consequences of the sale are described below:

**Air Quality**

Grading, construction, and operation of the West Valley Campus and recreational facilities will adversely impact air quality. Potential emissions from construction are listed below.

<b>Fugitive Dust Potential</b>		
<b>Total Acres to be Disturbed per Day</b>	<b>Factor (lbs./day/acre)</b>	<b>Total Potential Dust Generation (lbs./day)</b>
20	26.4	528.0

Source: Table A9-9, "CEQA Air Quality Handbook," prepared by South Coast Air Quality Management District, April 1993.

Projected emissions from grading are shown below. Grading was projected to begin in

2010 and emission factors are from EMFAC 2007 (Version 2.3).

<b>Grading - Related Emissions Summary</b> (pounds per day)							
	<b>CO</b>	<b>NOx</b>	<b>ROG</b>	<b>SOx</b>	<b>PM<sub>10</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>2.5</sub></b>	<b>CO<sub>2</sub></b>
<b>Equipment Emissions</b>	51.9	123.0	14.5	0.1	5.9	5.3	12,079
<b>Workers' Vehicle Emissions</b>	1.7	1.3	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	239
<b>Construction Emissions</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>124.3</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>12,318.4</b>
<b>SCAQMD Thresholds</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Emissions from campus construction are shown below. Construction was assumed to begin in 2010 and emission factors are from EMFAC 2007 (Version 2.3) and URBEMIS 2002. Construction-related NOx emissions are projected to exceed established daily thresholds.

<b>Aggregate Construction - Related Emissions Summary</b> (pounds per day)							
	<b>CO</b>	<b>NOx</b>	<b>ROG</b>	<b>SOx</b>	<b>PM<sub>10</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>2.5</sub></b>	<b>CO<sub>2</sub></b>
<b>Equipment Emissions</b>	52.29	114.15	15.22	0.13	6.29	5.60	11,860
<b>Worker Vehicle Emissions</b>	2.27	1.83	0.30	0.00	0.07	0.06	325.37
<b>Asphalt Paving Emissions</b>	-	-	2.62	-	-	-	-
<b>Arch. Coatings Emissions</b>	-	-	46.25	-	-	-	-
<b>Construction Emissions</b>	<b>54.56</b>	<b>115.99</b>	<b>64.39</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>6.36</b>	<b>5.66</b>	<b>12,185</b>
<b>SCAQMD Thresholds</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Daily campus operations would also affect air quality. For purposes of this analysis campus facilities were assumed to occupy 420,600 square feet. Emission factors for energy and natural gas are from the CEQA Air Quality Handbook and URBEMIS 2007. Moving Source emission factors are from EMFAC 2007 (Version 2.3) and assume a scenario year of 2016. Total miles traveled are based on the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition ITE trip generation rates for Junior/Community College and assume 10,000 full time students, with an average trip length of 5 miles. The analysis assumes that 98% of vehicle use is passenger vehicles and 2% are delivery trucks.

Projected daily emissions from the campus are shown below. The projected emissions do not include possible reductions from energy efficient design, use of alternative energy, trip reductions from ride sharing, etc. Even without these measures, SCAQMD emission thresholds are not expected to be exceeded.

**Projected Cumulative Daily Emissions of the College Campus**

	Stationary Source Emissions		Moving Source Emissions	Total Anticipated Emissions (lbs./day)	SCAQMD Threshold Criteria* (lbs./day)
	Power Plants	Nat. Gas Consumption			
Carbon Monoxide	2.7	2.3	351.54	<b>356.52</b>	<b>550.0</b>
Nitrogen Oxides	15.3	2.8	46.80	<b>64.87</b>	<b>100.0</b>
ROG	1.6	0.2	39.13	<b>40.93</b>	<b>75.0</b>
Sulfur Oxides	0.5	0.0	0.66	<b>1.20</b>	<b>150.0</b>
Particulates	0.1	0.0	10.14	<b>10.29</b>	<b>55.0</b>
Carbon Dioxide	-	3,319	68,476.08	<b>71,794.78</b>	<b>N/A</b>

\* Threshold criteria offered by the South Coast Air Quality Management District for assistance in determining the significance of air quality impacts. Source: "CEQA Air Quality Handbook," prepared by South Coast Air Quality Management District, April 1993, Revised October 2006; EMFAC 2007 (Version 2.3); and URBEMIS 2007 Version 9.2.4.

Emissions from a campus using renewable energy and designed to consume less energy, as planned for this campus, would be less, but cannot be quantified at this time.

**Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change**

Emissions from campus operations which are commonly known as greenhouse gases (GHG), which may contribute to climate change and global warming, are projected below:

**Annual GHG Emissions of the Community College**

<b>Emission Source</b>	<b>CO2 Equivalent Metric Tons</b>	<b>CO2 Equivalent Million Metric Tons</b>
Electricity	47,020.98	0.047
Natural Gas	52,601.03	0.053
Moving Source	352,353.00	0.352
<b>Total</b>	<b>451,975.00</b>	<b>0.452</b>

Since the campus plans to generate power from renewable sources actual emissions from campus operations are expected to be less.

**Cultural Resources**

The proposed sale would not affect historic properties or significant cultural resources.

**Paleontological Resources**

The proposed sale would not affect paleontological resources.

**Native American Concerns**

No specific concerns have been raised about the sale of lands, but concerns were expressed about the need to monitor future ground disturbance and provisions for

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treatment of human remains if discovered. BLM anticipates these concerns would be addressed by the City after conveyance of the land.

### **Energy**

The sale of the lands to the City of Palm Springs would not adversely affect energy development, because the lands are not considered suitable for utility scale renewable energy facilities. Energy use from future development is expected to be partially offset by a renewable energy park generating energy using solar and wind technologies.

### **Minerals**

The sale and subsequent development of the public lands would effectively preclude any future development of mineral resources on or under the public lands. Although the public lands are likely to contain significant aggregate resources, mining operations are not considered practical at this location. The land sale would not result in the loss of any locatable, saleable, or leasable minerals, which might have been otherwise developed if the lands remained in public ownership.

### **Special Status Species, Including Threatened & Endangered Species**

The sale and subsequent development would result in the loss of all or substantially all natural habitat and plant and animal species on the public lands. Since no threatened or endangered animal species are thought to be present on the lands, the sale would not affect any such species. The sale would result in the loss of 54 individual Coachella Valley milk-vetch plants. The sale would not affect any other threatened or endangered plant species.

BLM is consulting with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in accordance with Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act on the effects of the sale on the Coachella Valley milk-vetch.

### **Hazardous Materials/Wastes**

The sale would not involve the transfer of land subject to regulatory actions for onsite hazardous materials or wastes.

### **Water Resources**

Future development of the lands is expected to require a total of approximately 211.8 acre feet per year. Assuming a 35% return/reuse rate, net water use would be approximately 137.7 acre feet per year.

Storm water runoff from the land after development will have some impacts on groundwater quality, but impacts are expected to be minimal.

### **Environmental Justice**

The sale and development of the lands for community college purposes and expansion of public parks would increase recreational and educational opportunities for the surrounding community.

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Traffic in the area will increase, but conceptual plans for the campus provide for primary access points off of Indian Canyon Drive avoiding, to the extent possible, residential neighborhoods. The City also expects to develop pedestrian and bicycle pathways to interconnect with other parts Palm Springs. Sunline Transit Agency is expected to expand available bus routes in the area, which would benefit existing residents.

### **Visual Resource Management**

Development of the lands for a community college campus would affect the existing views shed from Indian Canyon Drive and from nearby residential communities. Future development would go through an architectural review processes, required by the City, and is expected to be consistent with appropriate building setbacks, building height limits, and incorporate visually enhancing landscaping buffers.

### **B. No Action Alternative**

For purposes of considering the environmental consequences of the no action alternative, BLM assumes the City of Palm Springs and the Desert Community College District would find an alternate location for a western campus. Construction and operation of a campus at an alternative site is expected to have impacts similar to the proposed action, with respect to air quality, water resources, visual resources and traffic.

Since no specific alternative sites are currently being considered and detailed site specific information is not available, it's not possible to evaluate the environment consequences of the no action alternative on biological, cultural, paleontological, mineral, and energy resources.

### **C. Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not normally considered appropriate for land sales where the United States is conveying lands out of federal ownership and does not desire to retain any interest or further jurisdiction over future development of the land. Since no overriding federal interests have been identified, with the exception of the removal of old batteries found on site, no specific mitigation has been identified for the proposed sale.

Measures to mitigate impacts of subsequent site development are expected to come from the CEQA process and requirements in the CVMSHCP. The application and enforcement of these measures would be the responsibility of the state and local jurisdictions and to the extent possible, have been considered as part of foreseeable future development.

### **D. Residual Impacts**

Since no mitigation is proposed specifically for the land sale, residual impacts for both the proposed action and the no action alternative would be unchanged from impacts

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previously identified.

## **E. Cumulative Impacts**

Cumulative effects are generally defined as the impacts on the environment resulting from the incremental impact of the proposed action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future Federal and non-Federal actions. In considering cumulative impacts, BLM considered existing environmental information as a relevant baseline for considering future impacts and has not attempted to list past actions in the area. The baseline information provided in the Affected Environment and Environment Consequences sections is considered sufficient for considering the significance of cumulative effects.

BLM has also not attempted to exhaustively list all present and reasonably foreseeable private actions, but instead has summarized available information to provide a context for evaluating the significance of cumulative impacts. The primary cumulative impacts of importance from the proposed sale are indirect impacts to the Coachella Valley milkvetch, air quality and water resources.

The proposed sale would result in the loss of 54 Coachella Valley milkvetch plants and all milkvetch habitat on the lands. The CVMSHCP projects that plan implementation would eventually result in the loss of a total of 15,392 acres of habitat for this species, which constitutes 42% of the known habitat for this species. The habitat on the public lands constitutes less than 1% of total habitat which would be lost through implementation of the CVMSHCP. The loss of the habitat on the public land proposed for sale was also included in the analysis of habitat lost under the CVMSHCP. Required MSHCP impact fees would be used to secure permanent off-site habitat and thus mitigate for the loss of habitat on the subject property.

The net increase in water use resulting from the development of the public land would be approximately 137.7 acre feet per year. This would constitute less than one tenth of 1% of the estimated 210,530 acre feet of groundwater produced from the upper portion of the Whitewater River sub basin (of the Coachella Valley groundwater aquifer) in 2008. In terms of contributing to the overdraft from this portion of the aquifer (which CVWD calculated to be 104,837 acre feet in 2008) the 137.7 acre feet increase in use represents slightly more than one tenth of 1% of the annual net overdraft.

As previously noted, the primary air pollutants of concern are suspended particulates and ozone, with the Coachella Valley classified as a “serious non-attainment area” for ozone and PM<sub>10</sub>, exceeding State and Federal standards for these pollutants. Since most increases in PM<sub>10</sub> from development of the public lands are expected to be temporary, lasting only until construction is completed, the incremental impact of the proposed sale on particulate pollution is not considered likely to delay local plans to meet air quality standards and is therefore not considered to be significant.

Similarly, because the proposed sale involves only 119 acres, the incremental increase in ozone pollution due to development of the land for a community college campus are

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not considered likely to delay local plans to meet air quality standards and is therefore not considered to be significant.

Cumulative impacts from the no action alternative are expected to be similar in nature and scope to the impacts on air quality and water resources from the proposed action.

### **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:**

USFWS for a Section 7 consultation  
California Native American Heritage Commission  
Agua Caliente Register  
Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians

### Technical Reports Appended

- A. "Historical/Archaeological Resources Survey Report: College of the Desert Western Coachella Valley Campus Project and College Park Specific Plan," prepared by CRM Tech, May 13, 2009.
- B. "Paleontological Resources Assessment Report: College Park Specific Plan," prepared by CRM Tech, May 21, 2009.
- C. "Mineral Potential Report Portion of North-Half of Section 34 Township 3S., Range 4E., SBB&M 132.4 Acres, Palm Springs Area Riverside County, California," prepared by Terra Geosciences, April 7, 2009.

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- D. "Biological Resources Assessment for the City of Palm Springs/College of the Desert BLM Land Sale", prepared by AMEC Earth & Environmental, Inc., May 20, 2009.
  - E. "Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for the Proposed College of the Desert West Valley Campus," prepared by Terra Nova Planning and Research Inc., April 2009.
  - F. "Air Quality Analysis for the BLM/Palm Springs Land Sale," prepared by Terra Nova Planning and Research, Inc., May 2009.

**DRAFT PREPARED BY: Terra Nova Planning and Research, Inc.**

**FINAL PREPARED BY: Tom Gey, Realty Specialist, BLM**

**REVIEWED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Environmental Coordinator Date