



**United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

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www.blm.gov/ca/palmsprings/*

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Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) addressing environmental effects of a proposed land exchange between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians (Tribe). This document describes and analyzes a range of alternatives regarding the extent of public lands that may be exchanged for Tribal lands. Among these alternatives, the BLM's preferred alternative is identified and a description of the "no action" alternative (i.e., continuation of current management) is included. This Draft EIS may also be accessed via the Internet at the web address above.

The proposed land exchange would occur within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument. Up to 5,799 acres of public lands may be exchanged for up to 1,470 acres of Tribal lands, depending on appraised land values. The purpose and need for the proposed land exchange is to improve opportunities for the use or protection of public lands and to promote their effective and efficient management. It would reduce the extent of "checkerboard" landownership by consolidating BLM and Tribal land bases, thereby providing for more logical and consistent land management responsibility in the Monument.

The public previously commented on the proposed land exchange in response to the BLM's release in 2010 of Environmental Assessment CA-060-0010-0005. A high level of controversy was stimulated by the proposal; comments were received from 144 individuals, ten organizations, and three governmental entities. Based on public comments and upon further internal review, it was determined that preparation of an environmental impact statement is necessary to address potentially significant effects of the proposed land exchange. In reaching this determination, consideration was given to location of the proposed action within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, its proximity to the Palm Canyon Creek National Wild and Scenic River, the inclusion of designated critical habitat for the endangered population of bighorn sheep occupying the Peninsular Ranges of California, and the absence of a regulatory mechanism for public participation in future decision-making processes affecting lands transferred to the Tribe.

Public comments regarding the proposed land exchange and Draft EIS must be received on or before March 29, 2015, which ends the 90-day public review period. Comments may be sent via regular mail or alternative carrier, or delivered by hand to: National Monument Manager, Bureau of Land Management, 1201 Bird Center Drive, Palm Springs, California 92262; email to: AguaCalienteExchange@blm.gov; or fax to: (760) 833-7199.

Your comments on the content of this document are important to the BLM's decision-making process. If you wish to submit comments on the Draft EIS, we request that you make them as specific as possible. Comments will be more helpful if they include suggested changes, sources, or methodologies, as well as a

reference to the applicable section or page number. Comments containing only opinions or preferences will be considered and included as part of the decision-making process, but will not receive a formal response from the BLM.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised 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.

For more information regarding the proposed land exchange between the BLM and the Tribe, please contact Jim Foote, National Monument Manager, at (760) 833-7136 or jfoote@blm.gov. Your interest in shared stewardship of the public lands and resources is appreciated.

Sincerely,

/s/ John R. Kalish

John R. Kalish
Field Manager

Enclosure