

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACECS)

ACEC designations highlight areas where special management attention is needed to protect, and prevent irreparable damage to, important relevant and important values. The ACEC designation indicates to the public that the BLM recognizes that an area has significant values and has established special management to protect those values. Designation of ACECs occurs through the resource management planning process.

Nomination

Areas considered for ACEC evaluation include existing ACECs, external nominations, internal nominations, areas identified through inventory and monitoring, and areas adjacent to designations of other Federal and State agencies. The following special management areas from the 1988 Carlsbad Resource Management Plan (RMP) were considered:

Special Management Area	Acres	Reason for Designation
Bear Grass Draw SMA	1,780	Cultural
Blue Springs ACEC	600	Riparian, Federally Listed Fish Species
Bluntnose Shiner Habitat SMA	200	Riparian, Federally Listed Fish Species
Cave Resources SMA	8,450	8 Caves, Nonrenewable Geologic, Biological, Paleontological, Hydrologic, Recreational, Educational Studies
Chosa Draw ACEC	2,200 ¹	Caves, Riparian, Sensitive Soils, Recreation, Education, Scientific Studies
Dark Canyon ACEC	1,480 ²	Visual, Natural Resource Values, Caves, Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Dark Canyon Scenic Area	3,220 ¹	Visual
Dry Cave RNA	420	Paleontological Research
Guadalupe Escarpment Scenic Area	49,570	Visual
Laguna Plata SMA	3,360	Cultural
Little McKittrick Draw RNA	10	Hydrological, Federally Proposed Snail
Lonesome Ridge ONA ACEC	2,990	Natural Values, Recreation, Wildlife, Scenic
Maroon Cliffs SMA	11,783	Cultural
Pecos River/Canyons Complex RNA ACEC	5,190	Cultural, Scenic, Research Opportunities, Wildlife Habitat
Pecos River Corridor SMA	6,000	Riparian, Recreation, Sensitive Soils
Phantom Banks Heronries SMA		Colonial Bird Habitat
Poco Site SMA	51	Cultural
Pope's Well SMA	40	Historical Site
Potash Bull Wheel SMA	4	Historical, Site No longer Exists
Seven Rivers Hills SMA	540	Sensitive Soils, Sensitive Plant Species
South Texas Hill Canyon RNA	1,360	Protected Plant Species, Habitat
Springs Riparian Habitat SMA	524	Habitat, Endangered Species, Riparian, Hydrological
Yeso Hills RNA	560	Fragile Soils, Federally Listed Species

¹ The 1988 Carlsbad RMP identified 2,200 acres in the Chosa Draw ACEC; however, the subsequent management plan identified 2,260 acres.

² The 1988 Carlsbad RMP identified 1,480 acres in the Dark Canyon ACEC; however, the subsequent management plan identified, 1550 acres.

The following external nominations were received:

Name	Proposed Relevant and Important Values
Birds of Prey Grasslands	Wildlife
Carlsbad Chihuahuan Desert Rivers	Cultural, Fish, Wildlife, Natural Systems or Process
Desert Heronries	Wildlife
Salt Playas	Cultural, Wildlife

Evaluation

To be considered as a potential ACEC and analyzed in RMP alternatives, an area must meet the following relevance and importance criteria.

Relevance

An area meets “relevance” criterion if it contains one or more of the following:

- A significant **historic, cultural, or scenic value** (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).
- A **fish and wildlife resource** (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).
- A **natural process or system** (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian, or rare geological features).
- **Natural hazards** (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.

Importance

The value, resource, system, process, or hazard must have substantial significance and values. This generally means it is characterized by one or more of the following:

- Has more than locally significant qualities which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.
- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.
- Has been recognized as warranting protection in order to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.
- Has qualities which warrant highlighting in order to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.
- Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.

Incorporation

ACEC nominations that meet the relevance and importance criteria are incorporated in appropriate RMP alternatives. Management is developed for each potential ACECs and it is included as a recommended ACEC in at least one RMP alternative.