

## SEVEN RIVERS HILL

---

**Nominated ACEC:** Seven Rivers Hill ACEC

**Nominated by:** BLM

**Size:** 950 acres

### Scenic Values

---

#### ***Relevance***

This area exhibits extraordinary scenic values with drastic changes in topography and gypsum rills. The contrast of the soil colors in the area are visible to travelers driving between Artesia and Carlsbad.

#### ***Importance***

- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.

### Fish or Wildlife

---

#### ***Relevance***

Five caves contain known bat roosts. Counts at Billy the Kid Cave have shown an established population of over 30,000 Cave Myotis. This is the largest known roost in the planning area.

#### ***Importance***

- 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.

### Natural Systems or Processes

---

#### ***Karst Resources***

#### ***Relevance***

This area is known to have the densest collection of large dramatic sinkholes in the planning area. The size and depth of these sinkholes indicate the collapse of large cave passages. The caves in the area play a critical role in the recharging of local groundwater. Contaminates entering caves and karst features in the area can quickly find their way to fresh water. This area includes Seven Rivers Sinks, Adobe Cave, Billy the Kid Cave, Little Outlaw Cave, and Rusty Hinge Cave.

#### ***Importance***

- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.

## **Special Status Plants**

---

### **Relevance**

This area of bare gypsum hills was the only known habitat for Gypsum Wild-Buckwheat (*Eriogonum gypsophilum*) for 90 years. This area is federally designated as Critical Habitat and is one of only three known populations of this species. This area also provides habitat for other unique and endemic vegetation existing on gypsum soils.

---

### **Importance**

- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.

## **Soils**

---

### **Relevance**

Gypsum soils have a very limited organic component. With such very limited fertility, plant growth is very sparse. Most of the area consists of bare steep slopes and deep eroded arroyos covered by cryptogamic soils, a rare and very fragile soil cover. Cryptogamic soils are a highly specialized community of mosses, lichen, and cyanobacteria. In addition to covering the surface of the soil, cryptogamic soils also serve to break down rock material, absorb water, slow soil erosion, and provide an environment in which other plants germinate.

---

### **Importance**

- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.

## **Natural Hazards**

---

### **Relevance**

All undeveloped caves, by their very nature, contain hazards including total darkness, loose rocks, low ceilings, low tight passages, slippery surfaces, and unstable and uneven floors. Gypsum caves are subject to flash flooding, a drowning hazard to cave visitors. Harmful water-borne bacteria is also present in some gypsum caves.

---

### **Importance**

- Has qualities which warrant highlighting in order to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.