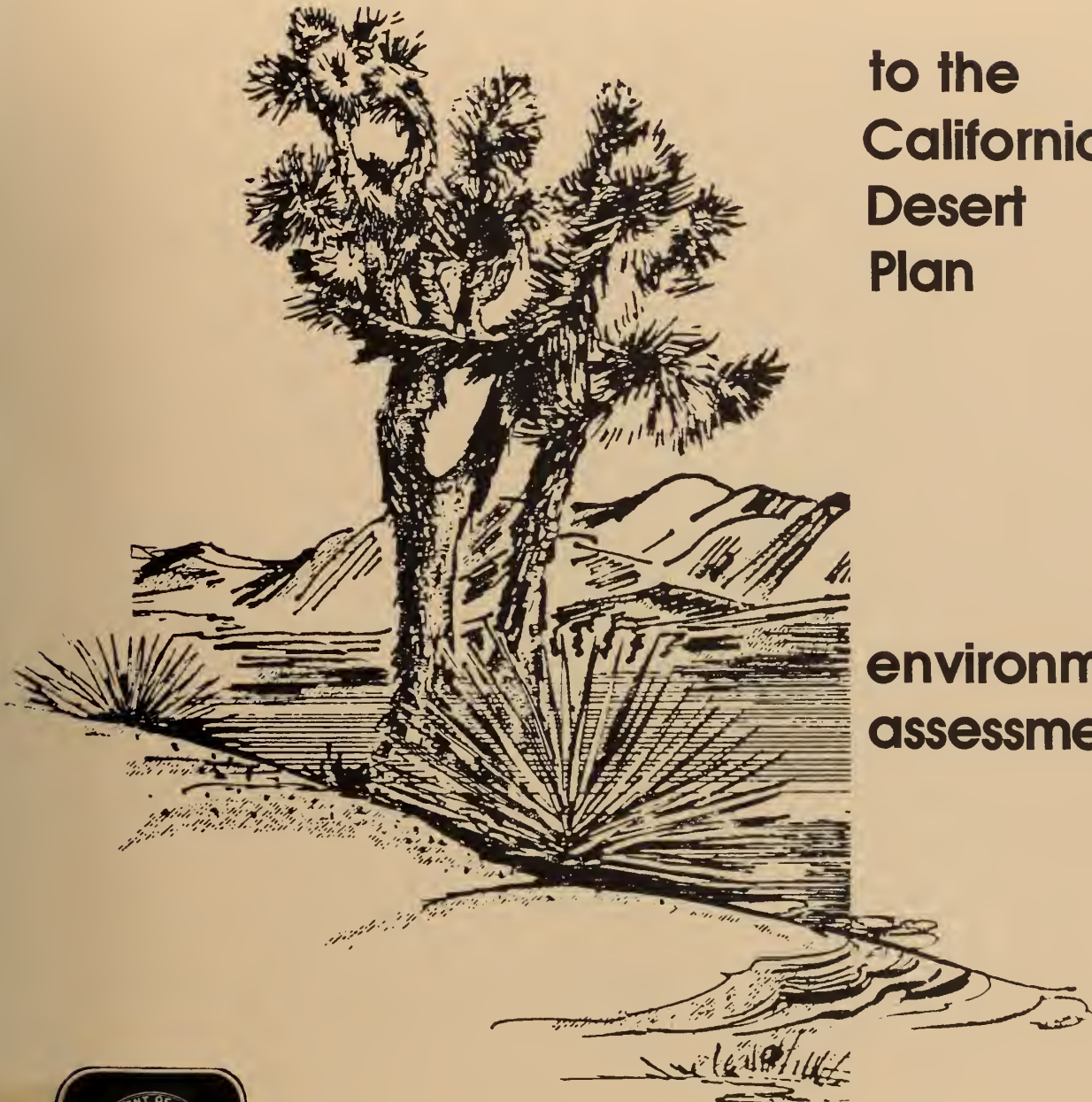


# PROPOSED **1987** **PLAN AMENDMENTS**

to the  
**California  
Desert  
Plan**



**environmental  
assessment**



U.S. Department of the Interior  
**Bureau of Land Management**  
RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA  
OCTOBER, 1987



# United States Department of the Interior

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1600  
(C-060.2)

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
CALIFORNIA DESERT DISTRICT  
1695 Spruce Street  
Riverside, California 92507

Dear Reader:

Last February (1987), we invited you and other interested parties to review the California Desert Plan as amended and submit any comments and recommendations for proposed amendments of the Plan. The response that we received from organizations and individuals as well as from our own staff resulted in the amendment proposals contained in this environmental assessment.

My thanks to those of you who sent in comments and suggestions. I hope that you will continue to help us manage your public lands.

The decision to accept or reject these proposed amendments will be based on a number of factors including effect on the natural environment, input from the public, and recommendations of the California Desert District Advisory Council.

We are providing a two-month public review of the environmental assessment. Please send your comments to this office by December 11, 1987. Send your comments to the following address:

California Desert District  
Bureau of Land Management  
ATTN: Plan Amendments  
1695 Spruce Street  
Riverside, California 92507

A public meeting of the California Desert District Advisory Council will be held in Ridgecrest on October 29 and 30. The 1987 Amendments will be discussed at that meeting. I invite you to attend the meeting and share your thoughts with us. Details and location will be announced shortly before the meeting.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Hillier  
District Manager

10 88014735

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

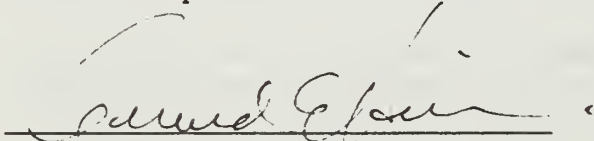
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PROPOSED 1987 AMENDMENTS  
TO THE CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA PLAN

Prepared by  
Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
California Desert District

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The Bureau of Land Management is conducting its 1987 review of the California Desert plan. This Environmental Assessment considers the environmental consequences of accepting or rejecting each of twelve proposed amendments. The amendments include Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (including creation of a new ACEC, deletion of an existing area, and several boundary adjustments), establishment of new Wildlife Habitat Management Areas, multiple use class changes, a new Recreation element goal, changes in a livestock grazing allotment, and designation of a new utility corridor. Under the Bureau's preferred alternative, nine amendments would be accepted, two would be rejected, and one would be accepted in a modified form.

  
DISTRICT MANAGER  
CALIFORNIA DESERT

For Further Information Contact: Gerald E. Hillier, District Manager  
California Desert District  
Bureau of Land Management  
1695 Spruce Street  
Riverside, California 92507

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## SUMMARY

### PLAN AMENDMENTS

In accordance with chapter 7 of the California Desert Plan and with 43 CFR 1610.5-5 (BLM Planning Regulations), the Bureau of Land Management, California Desert District has initiated the seventh amendment review of the plan.

Proposals were accepted during a 31-day period from February 28 to March 31, 1987. Twenty-eight proposals were made by the public and by BLM staff. These proposals were screened by BLM management and by the California Desert District Advisory Council to determine which ones should be considered at this time and which should be deferred, dropped, or handled by an administrative action. Seventeen proposals have been adopted for consideration. These seventeen have been combined into the following twelve proposed amendments.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Description</u>
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	1	Designate an ACEC in West Mesa area of Imperial County.
	2	Designate entire drainage of Short Canyon, Kern County, as an ACEC.
	3	Modify boundaries of Great Falls Basin ACEC.
	4	Delete Coyote Mountains ACEC.
Wildlife	5	Designate six new Habitat Management Areas in Mono and northern Inyo counties.
Multiple Use Class	6	Change 2,164 acres of unclassified land adjacent to Red Rock Canyon State Park to Class L.
	7	Change multiple use class of two parcels of land within Homewood Canyon, and delete the parcels from the Great Falls Basin ACEC.
	8	Change T12S, R16E, from unclassified to Class L west of Coachella Canal (80 acres) and Class I east of Canal (800 acres).
Recreation	9	Add new Recreation Element Goal concerning needs of special populations.
Livestock Grazing	10	Change Piute Valley Allotment from ephemeral to ephemeral-perennial, with a 720 Animal Unit Month carrying capacity.

Utility Corridors	11	Establish a new utility corridor from corridor A at Inyokern to Kerr-McGee facilities near Trona.
Motorized Vehicle Access	12	Increase size of vehicle closure within San Sebastian Marsh/San Felipe Creek Management Area from 1900 acres to 6690 acres.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The impacts of both accepting and rejecting each amendment are summarized in Table S-1.

#### BLM PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Based in part upon the amendment-specific impacts, a preferred alternative has been selected. This preferred alternative is not a final decision, but simply indicates a preliminary recommendation that has been included in this EA for public comment and review. A recommendation to accept, reject, or accept a modified version of each amendment has been made. Nine amendments would be accepted, two would be rejected, and one would be accepted in a modified form.

The cumulative impacts of this preferred alternative are presented in Table S-2 below:

TABLE S-2

#### SUMMARY OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Resource	Unit of Measure	No Action	Preferred Alternative	Percent Change	New Percent of Desert
<u>Multiple Use Class</u>					
C	Acres	1,900,000	1,900,000	0	15.9
L	Acres	5,900,000	5,902,000	0.03	49.3
M	Acres	3,400,000	3,400,000	0	28.4
I	Acres	520,000	520,000	0	4.3
Unclassified	Acres	251,000	249,000	0.8	2.1
<u>Vehicle Access</u>					
Open	Acres	505,000	505,000	0	4.2
Limited	Acres	9,256,000	9,251,000	0.05	77.3
Closed	Acres	1,958,000	1,963,000	0.25	16.4
Undesignated	Acres	251,000	251,000	0	2.1
<u>Wildlife</u>					
Habitat Management Areas	Number	50	54	8	----

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Unit of Measure</u>	<u>No Action</u>	<u>Preferred Alternative</u>
<u>ACECs</u>			
Added	Number	0	2
	Acres	0	18,560
Deleted	Number	0	1
	Acres	0	1,211
Net Change	Number	0	+1
	Acres	0	17,349

# CANDIDATE AMENDMENTS - SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

X = POSITIVE IMPACT

- = NEGATIVE IMPACT

Amend. Number	Amendment	RESOURCES								USES			
		Soil - Air - Water	Botany	Wildlife	Horses - Burros	Cultural Resources	Native Americans	Wilderness	Visual Resources	Livestock Grazing	Recreation	Lands	Geology - Energy - Minerals
1.	WEST MESA ACEC ALTERNATIVE - A: Designate New ACEC B: Reject Amendment		X -	X -		X							
2.	SHORT CANYON ACEC ALTERNATIVE - A: Designate New ACEC B: Reject Amendment										X		
3.	GREAT FALLS BASIN ACEC ALTERNATIVE - A: Expand ACEC B: Partial Deletion C: Reject Amendment			X - -		-			X		X		- X
4.	COYOTE MTNS ACEC ALTERNATIVE - A: Delete ACEC B: Reject Amendment												
5.	NEW HABITAT MGMT AREAS ALTERNATIVE - A: Six New HMA's B: Four New HMA's C: Reject Amendment			X X -	- -								-
6.	RED ROCK CANYON ALTERNATIVE - A: "Unclassified" to Class L B: Reject Amendment					X -					X -		
7.	HOMEWOOD CANYON LAND SALE ALTERNATIVE - A: Change Class to allow sale B: Reject Amendment												



# CANDIDATE AMENDMENTS - SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

X = POSITIVE IMPACT  
- = NEGATIVE IMPACT

Amend. Number	Amendment	RESOURCES								USES				
		Soil - Air - Water	Botany	Wildlife	Horses - Burros	Cultural Resources	Native Americans	Wilderness	Visual Resources	Livestock Grazing	Recreation	Lands	Geology - Energy - Minerals	
8.	T12S, R16E - CLASS CHANGE ALTERNATIVE - A: Accept Amendment B: Reject Amendment													
9.	NEW RECREATION GOAL ALTERNATIVE - A: Adopt Goal B: Reject Amendment													
10.	PIUTE VALLEY ALLOTMENT ALTERNATIVE - A: Ephemeral to Ephem/Perennial B: Reject Amendment		-	-										
11.	RIDGECREST/TRONA UTILITY CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE - A: Designate New Corr. B: Reject Amendment		X	X										
12.	SAN SEBASTIAN CLOSURE ALTERNATIVE - A: Accept Amendment B: Reject Amendment		X	X										



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# **CHAPTER 1**

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## **INTRODUCTION**



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Chapter 7 of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan (1980) and with 43 CFR 1610.5-5, the Bureau of Land Management is conducting the seventh amendment review of the plan.

Proposals for amendments were accepted during a 31-day period from February 28 to March 31, 1987. Twenty-eight amendments were proposed by the public and by BLM staff for consideration during the review. The proposals were then screened by BLM management and by the California Desert District Advisory Council to determine which ones met the following criteria:

- (1) Is the proposed amendment based on new data not considered when the plan was developed?
- (2) Does the information represent a change in legal or regulatory mandate?
- (3) Is the supporting detail sufficient and the problem clearly stated so that the request can be considered?
- (4) Does the information represent a formal change in State or local government or agency plans?

Sixteen proposals met the criteria. They have been combined into twelve amendments. These twelve are analyzed by this environmental assessment. Eleven proposals were rejected from consideration or will be handled by methods more appropriate than the amendment procedure, as described in Appendix B (tables B-1 and B-2). Consideration of one proposal has been deferred to a later date.

The final decision concerning whether or not to approve each amendment will be made following a 45-day public review of the EA. The decision will be based upon several factors, including the findings of this EA and the public response received during the review period. That decision is expected in February, 1988.

Most of the amendments address site-specific issues. Map 1-1 indicates their regional location; site-specific maps can be found in Appendix A.



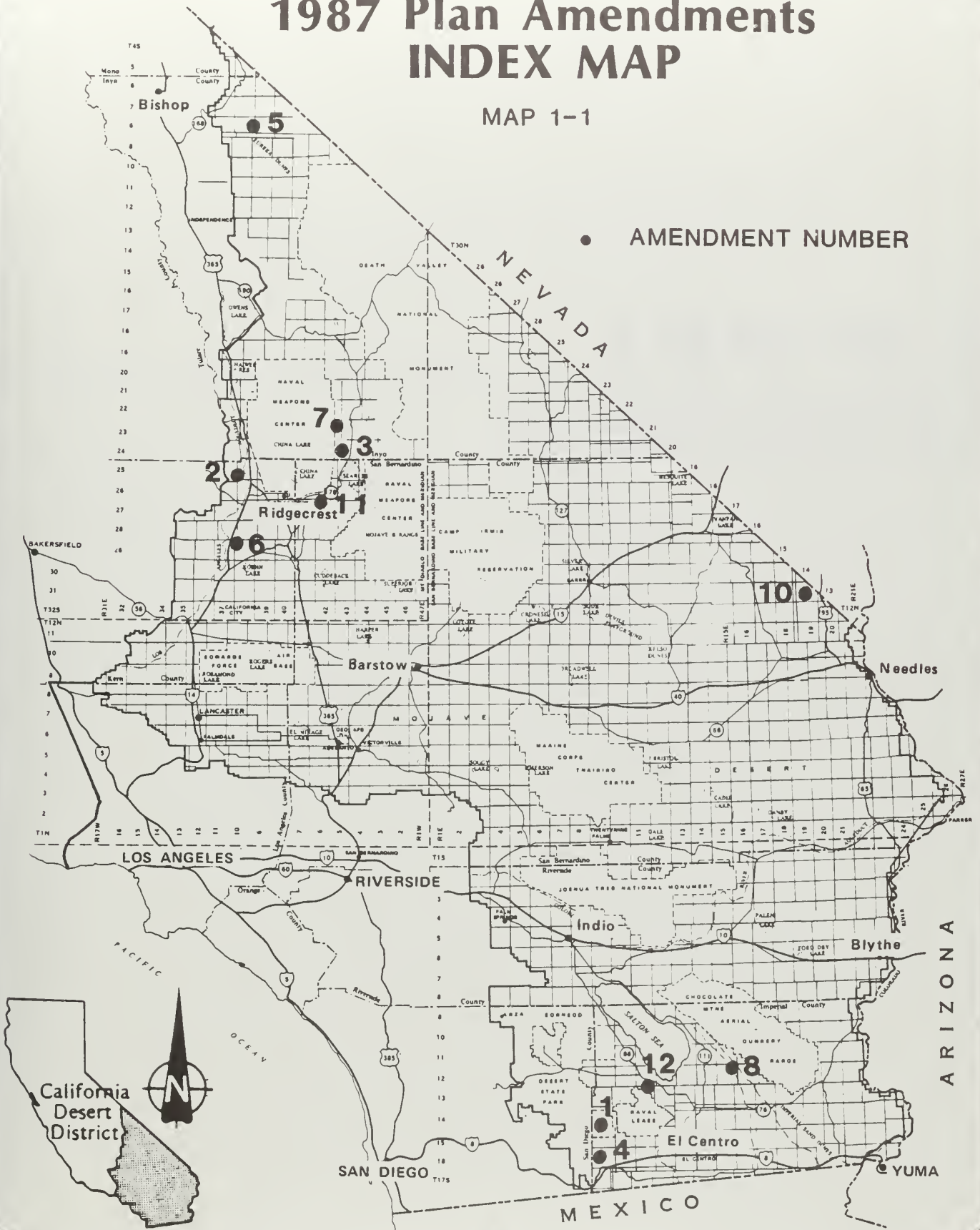


# CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA

## 1987 Plan Amendments INDEX MAP

MAP 1-1

● AMENDMENT NUMBER





# **CHAPTER 2**

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# **ALTERNATIVES**



## CHAPTER 2

### AMENDMENTS AND ALTERNATIVES

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Twelve proposed amendments to the California Desert Plan have been accepted for consideration. Each amendment has been considered individually for either acceptance or rejection. The rejection of an amendment represents the "no action" alternative. Additional alternatives have been proposed for several of the amendments which present modified versions of the proposal.

The amendments have been grouped into the following categories:

1. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
2. Wildlife
3. Multiple Use Class Designation
4. Recreation
5. Livestock Grazing
6. Utility Corridors
7. Motorized Vehicle Access

Table 2-1 describes each of the proposed amendments and the reasons given by the proponent for the change. Maps of each amendment are located in appendix A.

#### PROponents OF AMENDMENTS

The proponents of the amendments are listed in appendix B.

TABLE 2-1  
Description of Amendments

Amendment Number	Amendment	Proponent's Reason for Submission	Preferred Alternative	Rationale for Selection of Preferred Alternative
1	<p><u>AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN</u></p> <p>Designate an ACEC for wildlife, botanical, and cultural resource values in the West Mesa area of Imperial County.</p> <p><u>Alternative A:</u> Accept amendment.</p> <p><u>Alternative B:</u> Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>During the CDCA planning process, this area was not considered because it was within a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation withdrawal leased to the U.S. Navy. However, as part of a 1985 plan amendment, field studies were done and land use designations were made. The 1985 data showed the area to have extremely high populations of the flat-tailed horned lizard (FTHL), a BLM sensitive and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service candidate species. In fact, this area contains the largest amount of crucial FTHL habitat currently existing. Also present are high cultural resource values associated with the Lake Cahulla shoreline and with localized ephemeral ponds, as well as uniquely high populations of <u>Ptilostyles thurberi</u> and <u>Astragalus crotalariae</u>, two plant species listed by the California Native Plant Society. Off-road vehicle use threatens all of these resources. Top priority will be needed for enforcement, compliance checks, and resource monitoring.</p>	Accept Amendment	Amendment accepted for reasons given in proponent's reason for submission.

TABLE 2-1  
Description of Amendments

Amendment Number	Amendment	Proponent's Reason for Submission	Preferred Alternative	Rationale for Selection of Preferred Alternative
2	<p>Designate the entire drainage of Short Canyon, Kern County, as an ACEC. This area would be above the second aqueduct at an elevation of 2800 to 5500 feet and would include the Short Canyon ridges at the high elevations.</p> <p>Alternative A: Accept amendment. Alternative B: Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>There are no fewer than 292 species in 55 plant families in Short Canyon drainage. Intensive cattle grazing is having a deleterious effect on the plants and on the riparian areas.</p>	Accept Amendment	<p>The area is within the Walker Pass Common Allotment. The allotment's recently prepared AMP requires construction of a fence across the bottom of the canyon. This fence will eliminate grazing impacts on plants.</p> <p>However, many benefits could result from ACEC designation. An ACEC management plan would include measures to promote nature study. Higher priority would be given to provide visitor interpretive aids, resulting in a more enriching recreation experience.</p>
3	<p>Great Falls Basin ACEC.</p> <p>Alternative A: Modify the boundary to incorporate lands containing additional springs, riparian habitat, and scenic resources and to delete the disturbed area around the Ruth Mine.</p> <p>Alternative B: Modify the boundary to include only the Great Falls Basin area. The northern portion of the ACEC, which includes Homewood Canyon, would be deleted.</p> <p>Alternative C: Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>Alternative A: This alternative was recommended in BLM's Great Falls Basin ACEC management plan. The present boundary does not include important habitat for the Inyo brown towhee but does include the unsightly Ruth Mine area. The areas to be added contain springs and riparian habitat which are important to the towhee and are presently being impacted by public activities such as uncontrolled vehicle use, camping, and trash disposal. Removal of the Ruth Mine would increase the integrity of the overall scenic value of the ACEC.</p> <p>Alternative B: This ACEC was nominated to protect wildlife and scenic values. The northern portion of the ACEC is a long-time residential and mining area of low scenic value (the BLM designates it a Class IV visual resource management area). Only two sightings of the Inyo brown towhee have been reported here. The Inyo brown towhee is found primarily in the Naval Weapons Center west of the ACEC.</p>	Accept Alt. A	Amendment accepted for reasons given in proponent's reason for submission.

TABLE 2-1  
Description of Amendments

Amendment Number	Amendment	Proponent's Reason for Submission	Preferred Alternative	Rationale for Selection of Preferred Alternative
4	<p>Delete Coyote Mountains ACEC.</p> <p>Alternative A: Accept amendment.</p> <p>Alternative B: Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>Initially, the Coyote Mountains ACEC was identified, nominated, and accorded ACEC status on the basis of best available data. In 1987, prior to preparing a management plan, BLM carried out a sample investigation of the ACEC. Predicted values as noted in the Desert Plan could not be verified. In fact, the resources within the ACEC are sparse and are insignificant compared to others found in the desert.</p>	Accept Amendment	Amendment accepted for reasons given in proponent's reason for submission.
5	<p><u>WILDLIFE</u></p> <p>Designate six new habitat management areas (HMA) in Mono and northern Inyo counties. These would be the East Slope White Mountains HMA (deer, upland game, trout, and riparian and aquatic habitat), the Soldier Pass-Piper Mountain HMA (bighorn sheep reintroduction, deer, upland game), Sylvania Mountains HMA (deer), Last Chance Range (bighorn sheep, deer), Cowhorn-Waucoba HMA (deer, bighorn sheep) and North Coso Range (upland game, deer).</p> <p>Alternative A: Accept amendment.</p> <p>Alternative B: Designate four new HMAs: East Slope White Mountains, Soldier Pass-Piper Mountain, Last Chance Range, and Cowhorn-Waucoba.</p> <p>Alternative C: Reject Amendment (no action).</p>	<p>Existing management objectives and requirements contained in the Plan have not yet caused irreversible degradation of wildlife habitat. However, important wildlife resources in these areas may suffer in the long term due to lack of management and lack of funding that would become available under the authority of Habitat Management Plans prepared jointly by BLM and the California Department of Fish and Game under the Sikes Act. Preparation of these management plans would result in a number of projects to benefit wildlife. In addition, land use conflicts will more likely be resolved in ways benefiting wildlife populations.</p>	Accept Alt. B	<p>Soldier Pass/Piper Mountain, East Slope White Mountains, Last Chance Range, and Cowhorn/Waucoba (in that order) have the highest potential for habitat enhancement of the six proposed areas. Bighorn sheep reintroductions are planned for the first two areas, for which BLM policy requires that a habitat management plan be prepared. The Last Chance Range has a bighorn sheep population of about 100. Cowhorn/Waucoba is included in the Inyo-White Mountains Deer Herd Management Plan.</p> <p>Provided there is treatment of bighorn and upland game in the grazing AMPs, it is unlikely that an HMA plan for the Sylvania and North Coso Range would additionally enhance wildlife values. In addition, energy development of the western side of North Coso precludes many wildlife actions.</p>



TABLE 2-1  
Description of Amendments

Amendment Number	Amendment	Proponent's Reason for Submission	Preferred Alternative	Rationale for Selection of Preferred Alternative
6	<p><u>MULTIPLE USE CLASS DESIGNATION</u></p> <p>Change the multiple use class designation of 2,164 acres of land adjacent to Red Rock Canyon State Park from unclassified to Class L.</p> <p>Alternative A: Accept amendment.</p> <p>Alternative B: Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>When the CDCA plan was adopted, this area was included in a Recreation and Public Purposes Act application for transfer to the State Parks system. Since then, it has been decided that the area will remain under BLM management. The adjacent area is designated class L because of high resource values. The same classification is requested for this area. The area will continue to be managed by the BLM and the State Parks system under a memorandum of understanding.</p>	<p>Accept Amendment</p>	<p>Amendment accepted for reasons given in proponent's reason for submission.</p>
7	<p>Change the multiple use class of two parcels of land within Homewood Canyon from Class L to unclassified. Delete the parcels from the Great Falls Basin ACEC.</p> <p>Alternative A: Accept amendment</p> <p>Alternative B: Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>ACEC status of these properties prevents the BLM from granting full title to residents who have lived there 50 years. The proponents would like to be able to purchase these lands to create an estate for their children who were raised here and also for their grandchildren. They would feel more secure as landowners.</p>	<p>Reject Amendment</p>	<p>The Bureau cannot create private estates on public lands, especially when this would create inholdings in sensitive areas such as ACECs. Bureau policy is to acquire, rather than create, such inholdings.</p> <p>In the 1970s, however, BLM issued lifetime leases to two of the three residents inside the ACEC. The residents will be allowed to occupy the land for the rest of their lives.</p>

TABLE 2-1  
Description of Amendments

Amendment Number	Amendment	Proponent's Reason for Submission	Preferred Alternative	Rationale for Selection of Preferred Alternative
8	<p>Change T12S, R16E, Section 6 from unclassified to Class L west of the Coachella canal (80 acres) and to Class I east of the Coachella Canal (800 acres). Redesignate vehicle access from "undesignated" to "limited to approved routes" west of the canal and "open" east of the canal.</p> <p><u>Alternative A:</u> Accept amendment.</p> <p><u>Alternative B:</u> Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>This section is located on the north side of Mammoth Wash. The part east of the Coachella Canal is used as a camping area by recreationists using the Mammoth Wash open area. A class I designation would be consistent with existing use and would enable possible development of recreation facilities proposed in the Imperial Sand Dunes recreation area management plan. Current unclassified status leaves these lands open to disposal.</p>	Accept Amendment	Amendment accepted for reasons given in proponent's reason for submission.
9	<p>Add the following as a new goal for the recreation element: "Encourage the use and enjoyment of desert recreation opportunities by special populations, and provide facilities to meet the needs of those groups."</p> <p><u>Alternative A:</u> Accept amendment.</p> <p><u>Alternative B:</u> Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>Attention to recreation and interpretive site details such as tread for pathways, curbs, and access to restrooms would make the desert available to the handicapped.</p>	Accept Amendment	The new goal would complement BLM's current efforts to provide such access to developed public facilities. It would also give public emphasis to the development of interpretive materials for special populations.

TABLE 2-1  
Description of Amendments

Amendment Number	Amendment	Proponent's Reason for Submission	Preferred Alternative	Rationale for Selection of Preferred Alternative
10	<p>LIVESTOCK GRAZING</p> <p>Change Piute Valley allotment from ephemeral to ephemeral-perennial with a carrying capacity of 720 AUMs, all allocated to cattle.</p> <p>Alternative A: Accept amendment</p> <p>Alternative B: Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>Proponent has had 60 head of livestock continuously on this allotment for approximately 12 years. There would be no change in use that would not occur in any ephemeral allotment. This would be a "bookkeeping" change that would reflect the actual on-the-ground situation.</p>	<p>Reject Amendment</p>	<p>Although perennial forage is available in the allotment, most of it is in the western portion of the allotment, in the Piute Range. This area is within a recommended-suitable WSA, and has a resident bighorn sheep herd.</p> <p>If the perennial forage were to be utilized, the rancher's operation would have to be shifted into the Piute Range, resulting in resource conflicts. If the operation continued to utilize Piute Valley (an area of primarily ephemeral forage), it would lack the perennial forage base necessary to justify the change to ephemeral-perennial status.</p>

TABLE 2-1  
Description of Amendments

Amendment Number	Amendment	Proponent's Reason for Submission	Preferred Alternative	Rationale for Selection of Preferred Alternative
11	<p><u>UTILITY CORRIDORS</u></p> <p>Establish a new utility corridor from corridor A at Invokern to the Kerr-McGee facilities in the vicinity of Trona.</p> <p><u>Alternative A:</u> Accept amendment.</p> <p><u>Alternative B:</u> Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation (KMCC) intends to construct a replacement potable water line (16 inch diameter) from existing well fields in Indian Wells Valley to KMCC facilities in Searles Valley. Portions of this line will extend across the China Lake Naval Weapons Center parallel to existing pipelines. The pipeline would be constructed by 1992.</p> <p>In addition, a new brackish water pipeline (20 inch diameter) would be built from KMCC's Valley Wells facility to the proposed Argus Cogeneration Expansion facility (to be built by 1990).</p> <p>The City of Ridgecrest also plans to construct a pipeline from the Naval Weapons Center to KMCC in Trona to convey treated sewage effluent for reuse by KMCC. The pipeline may exceed 12 inch diameter.</p> <p>Finally, the Indian Wells Water Agency plans to construct pipelines to transport water from the Los Angeles Aqueduct to the Ridgecrest metropolitan area.</p>	Accept Amendment	Amendment accepted for reasons given in proponent's reason for submission.
12	<p><u>MOTORIZED VEHICLE ACCESS</u></p> <p>Change vehicle access designation from "limited to approved routes" to "closed" in a portion of the San Sebastian Marsh ACEC, as proposed in the recently completed ACEC plan. This action would include closure to vehicle camping.</p> <p><u>Alternative A:</u> Accept amendment.</p> <p><u>Alternative B:</u> Reject amendment (no action).</p>	<p>This change was recommended by the recently completed San Sebastian Marsh ACEC management plan for several reasons. Current vehicle access limitations are not effective in preventing vehicle impacts on sensitive habitat. Unauthorized vehicle use and camping are impacting the management area. Habitat for desert pupfish, flat-tailed horned lizard, Colorado Desert fringe-toed lizard, rare plants, and possibly the San Felipe leopard frog would benefit from the closure. Important cultural resources would also be protected through the closure.</p>	Accept Amendment	Amendment accepted for reasons given in proponent's reason for submission.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Amendment Twelve:  
San Sebastian Closure

As a result of the amendment, the following changes would be made in the off-highway vehicle (OHV) designation status of the San Sebastian Marsh/San Felipe Creek Management Area:

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	<u>Current</u>	<u>After Amendment</u>
Acres Designated Limited	4,420	670
Acres Designated Closed	1,900	6,690*
Miles of Approved Routes	15	9.5
Miles of Closed Routes	7	12.5 (all in closed area)

\*NOTE: 5,650 acres within the management area, 1,040 acres outside the Management Area. The proposed closure extends outside the Management Area in order to create manageable closure boundaries along roads.

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In addition to the BLM public lands closed, 1,920 acres of State Fish and Game lands would remain closed. BLM would seek cooperative agreements with landowners to close 5,770 acres of private lands within the management area. A total of 14,380 acres of BLM, State Fish and Game, and private lands would be closed to OHV use.

Following expansion of the closed area, routes remaining open for use would consist of the Pole Line Road, Kane Spring Road, and Tarantula Wash between Highway 78 and the Pole Line Road. Approximately 5.5 miles of routes located east of the Pole Line Road and south of Highway 78 will be closed.

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

A summary of the impacts of the preferred alternative are presented in Table 2-2 below:

TABLE 2-2

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Unit of Measure</u>	<u>No Action</u>	<u>Preferred Alternative</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>	<u>New Percent of Desert</u>
<u>Multiple Use Class</u>					
C	Acres	1,900,000	1,900,000	0	15.9
L	Acres	5,900,000	5,902,000	0.03	49.3
M	Acres	3,400,000	3,400,000	0	28.4
I	Acres	520,000	520,000	0	4.3
Unclassified	Acres	251,000	249,000	0.8	2.1
<u>Vehicle Access</u>					
Open	Acres	505,000	505,000	0	4.2
Limited	Acres	9,256,000	9,251,000	0.05	77.3
Closed	Acres	1,958,000	1,963,000	0.25	16.4
Undesignated	Acres	251,000	251,000	0	2.1
<u>Wildlife</u>					
Habitat Management Areas	Number	50	54	8	----
<u>ACECs</u>					
Added	Number	0	2		
	Acres	0	18,560		
Deleted	Number	0	1		
	Acres	0	1,211		
Net Change	Number	0	+1		
	Acres	0	17,349		

**CHAPTER 3**

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**AFFECTED  
ENVIRONMENT**





## CHAPTER 3

### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

The affected environment refers to the area which may be impacted by a proposed amendment. For some amendments, this may be an extremely limited area; for others, it may apply to the entire California Desert Conservation Area.

This chapter describes the affected environment for each amendment. Additionally, information on the amendment areas can be found in several other publications. These include the following:

- The California Desert Conservation Plan (including overlays), 1980.
- The appendices for the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Plan, CDCA, September, 1980.
- The EIS for the 1985 Amendments to the California Desert Plan.
- The Great Falls Basin ACEC plan (1986).
- The Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Activity Management Plan (1987).

#### AMENDMENT ONE: WEST MESA ACEC

##### Wildlife

The flat-tailed horned lizard (Phrynosoma mcallii) is a Category 2 Candidate for Federal listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and a BLM Sensitive Species. BLM-funded studies in 1978 and 1979 delineated four crucial habitat areas in the California Desert: Yuha, East Mesa, West Mesa, and Ocotillo Wells (the latter managed by Anza-Borrego Desert State Park). Monitoring studies in 1984, 1985, and 1986, however, revealed significant decreases in the species' relative abundance in the majority of the Yuha, East Mesa, and Ocotillo Wells areas. Uncontrolled off-highway vehicle use appears to be linked to severe declines in the Yuha and Ocotillo Wells areas while pesticide use may be a primary factor in East Mesa.

West Mesa appears to be the only large area of contiguous habitat in which the species persists in high relative abundance. Even in West Mesa, however, the species is present in significantly lower relative abundance in areas of otherwise suitable habitat which are subject to intense OHV use, than in undisturbed areas (1985 CDCA Plan Amendments). Because of severe declines in the other crucial areas, the proposed West Mesa ACEC has become increasingly important to the survival of the species.

## Botany

Two significant plant species, salton milkvetch (Astragalus crotalariae) and Thurber's pilostyles (Pilostyles Thurberi), occur in unusually high numbers in the West Mesa Area. The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) considers both species to be limited in distribution, but not endangered (CNPS 1984).

Salton milkvetch is a perennial forb that is typically found in dry plains washes within the Sonoran and Colorado Deserts (Abrams 1976 and Shreve and Wiggins 1964). Its occurrence is rare, and is linked to locations of higher concentrations of soil selenium (University of California, Santa Cruz 1981).

Thurber's pilostyles is a host-specific parasite plant. It grows on the stems of Dalea emryi and is found in parts of southeastern California, southwestern Arizona, and Baja California (Shreve and Wiggins 1964).

## Cultural Resources

The archaeological record within the proposed ACEC consists of several dozen prehistoric sites associated with ephemeral ponds and ancient Lake Cahuilla. These sites range from isolated campfires to complex temporary habitation sites. The latter contain accumulations of pottery fragments, stone flakes and tools, manos and metates for seed grinding, and campfires or roasting pits. One known site is characteristic of a large, complex habitation area and covers over 10 acres. It contains hearths, milling tools, charcoal, sparse flakes, ceramics, at least one arrowhead, shell beads, and several suspected areas of midden accumulation.

## Recreation

Off-highway vehicle use is the predominant recreation activity occurring in this area, in the form of both casual touring and camping and organized competitive events. Casual recreationists are drawn not so much to the area itself, but to the Superstition Mountain Open Area immediately to the southeast. About 25%--15,525 visitor use days (VUDs)--of the camping and staging activity associated with casual OHV use of Superstition Mountain occurs in the proposed ACEC, principally at a site in Section 27, T.14 S., R.11 E.

While camping is site specific and confined to the boundary with the open area, casual ORV touring occurs throughout the affected area. Day trips are popular between Superstition Mountain Open Area and other nearby playriding locations, which include the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) and the Arroyo Salada and Plaster City open areas. The proposed ACEC is squarely between these locations. The San Felipe Vehicle Corridor project (currently underway) will designate an OHV link between Ocotillo Wells SVRA and Plaster City Open Area, with a spur extending to Superstition Mountain Open Area. About one mile of the proposed route of the main corridor passes through the northwest corner of the affected area, in Section 32, T.13 S., R.10 E. The entire nine miles of the proposed Superstition Mountain spur is within the proposed ACEC.

Competitive events use routes that are partially within the affected area. Pending completion of BLM's route of travel designation process, event courses are reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis. Five events used the affected area for a significant portion of their course during 1986. Although pit areas and start/finish lines must be located outside this class L area, it remains important as a means of adding mileage for long distance events.

Competitive events are not permitted to make at-grade crossings of the U.S. Gypsum Company railroad, but must instead utilize wash trestles to pass underneath. Consequently, a key location for competitive events is the trestle spanning Carrizo Wash, immediately west of the affected area in Section 5, T.14 S., R.10 E. This is the only trestle tall enough to serve as a crossing north of the Plaster City Open Area; therefore, its use is essential for all long distance courses encompassing the racing area on both sides of the railroad tracks. The only way to reach the Carrizo Wash trestle from the east is by a route through the proposed ACEC.

AMENDMENT TWO:  
SHORT CANYON ACEC

### Wildlife

Short Canyon is within the East Sierra Canyons Wildlife Habitat Management Area (unit W-12, map 3 of CDCA Plan). A management plan which will address the management needs of Short Canyon will be prepared within the next 5 years. Management goals will include changes in livestock grazing practices, protection of water sources and overall protection and enhancement of wildlife resources.

Short Canyon contains considerable riparian habitat and several springs that form a perennial stream. Rocky ridges surrounding the canyon provide raptor perching habitat. These habitat features, plus continuity of the canyon with the Sierra Nevada, create a very favorable and valuable wildlife area. However, the riparian and aquatic habitats are being affected by the cattle that graze the area from November 1 to June 30. Cattle are trampling streamside vegetation, streambanks, and meadows and are reducing wildlife cover. Cattle excrement is polluting water. Vegetation trampling and removal of plant cover is causing accelerated sand movement and erosion.

Short Canyon is home to amphibians, songbirds, upland game birds and mammals, including mule deer.

### Botany

Short Canyon contains the Riparian and River Bottomland unusual plant assemblage (UPA; see Map 6 of CDCA Plan). This UPA is considered highly sensitive in the CDCA Plan (see Appendix X). UPAs designated highly sensitive are to be treated in a manner which "preserves the habitat and ensures the continued existence of the plant assemblages" (CDCA Plan, p. 46).

The perennial water supply coupled with varying soil types has created habitats for a great diversity of plant species not seen elsewhere. The area includes the BLM sensitive plant species, Phacelia Nasbiana, which is a

category 2 candidate for endangered status with the Fish and Wildlife Service. An inventory of the canyon conducted by the California Native Plant Society identified 292 species from 55 plant families.

The area is being impacted severely by cattle, which graze in the canyon from November 1 to June 30. Cattle have unrestricted access to the riparian and riverbottom areas and are exploiting them due to the feed and shade found there. Trampling of fragile meadow and streamside vegetation is causing soil instability, which is deteriorating botanical habitats, including that of the Phacelia nasliana.

#### Livestock Grazing

Short Canyon is located within the Walker Pass Common Allotment. One permittee is authorized to graze the area between November 1 and June 30 each year.

The recently completed allotment management plan calls for protecting riparian areas. Two projects were funded for FY 87 which will implement that objective in Short Canyon. The first project will be to fence the riparian zone to exclude livestock. The second project is to reconstruct the Short Canyon pipeline to provide livestock with water outside the fence area. The source for this pipeline is in the riparian area. Map 3-1 shows locations for both projects.

#### Recreation

Short Canyon is a popular day use area for recreationists. The heaviest use is on weekends during non-summer months, when 10 to 30 people use the area. Visitors enjoy the area's scenic qualities and commonly picnic and hike up the canyon to enjoy the scenery and native flora.

#### Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

The proposed Short Canyon ACEC is within the Owens Peak WSA (CDCA-158). This area was studied by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Bureau of Mines and a mineral potential report (USGS Bulletin 1708 B) was issued in 1985. Additional geological data is provided in the Owens Peak GEM Resource Area (GRA) report (CDCA Plan, Appendix G, 1980), and the Kern County Report (California Department of Mines and Geology County Report 1, 1962).

The gross geology of the area is one of intensive basement rock in contact with a northwest trending belt of older metamorphics (roof pendant) in the southeast end of the area. The entire canyon bottom is overlain by younger non-marine sand and gravel deposits (alluvial fan) with some reworked gravels in the immediate canyon bottom.

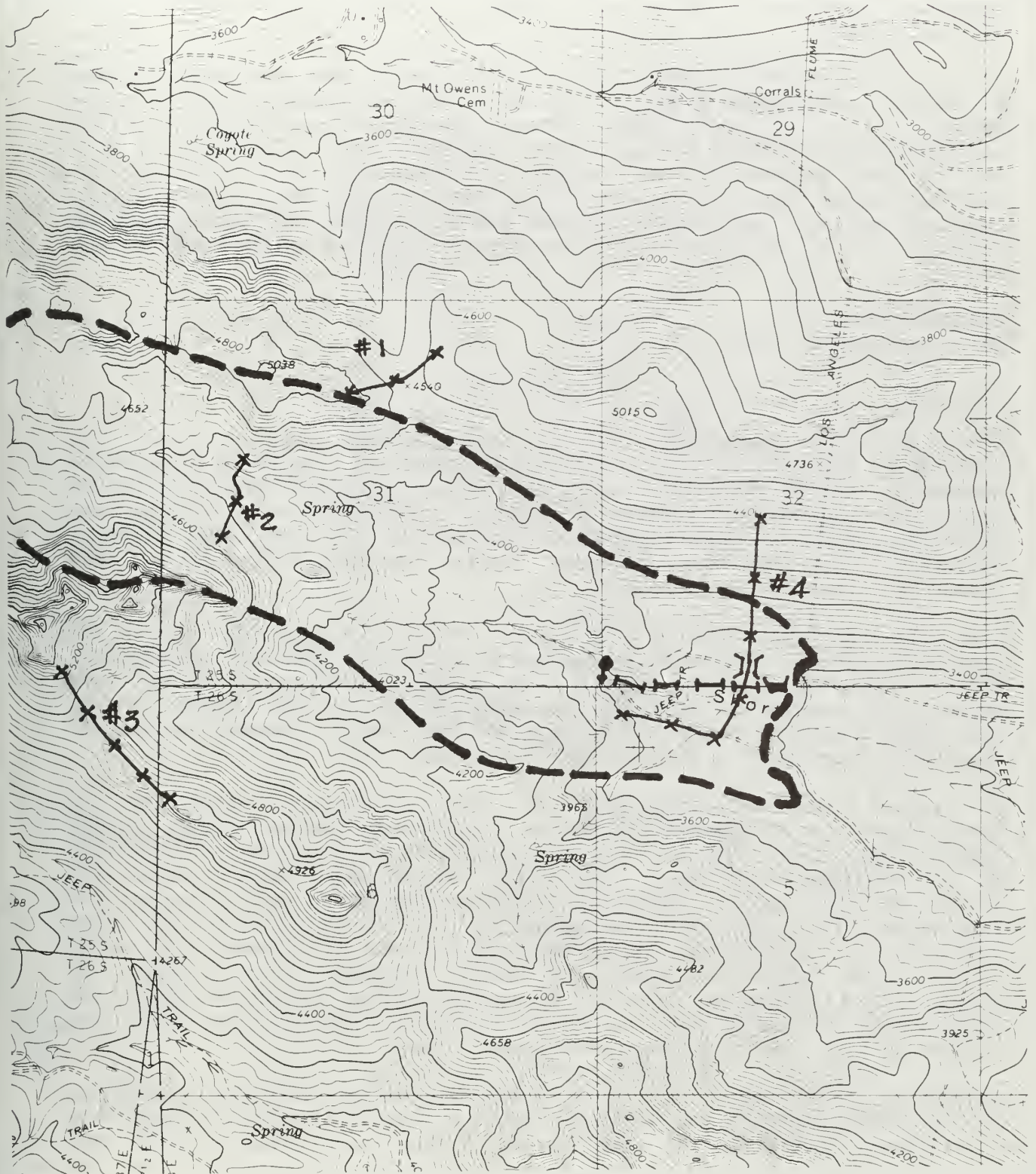
The canyon has not been classified as prospectively valuable for occurrence of oil, gas, leasable or geothermal resources.

The area contains low to moderate potential for development of the saluable resources (chiefly sand and gravel) due to the availability of the resource and the close proximity of a water supply.

- Fence 
- Pipeline 
- Trough 
- Proposed Boundary 
- Short Canyon ACEC 

FIGURE 3 - 1

PROJECTS PROPOSED BY  
WALKER PASS COMMON ALLOTMENT AMP



Scheelite, a tungsten ore, occurs at the High Dome claim (NW 1/4 Section 4) and High Peak mine (section 10) along the granitic rock-paleozoic rock contact. This geologic environment occurs in Short Canyon but is covered by the younger alluvial gravels. Stream sediment samples Op-28 and Op-29 (OFR-85-34) taken in the proposed ACEC area yielded geochemical anomalies of tungsten mineralization. The Short Canyon area shows indirect evidence for tungsten mineralization and a low to moderate potential exists for occurrence of this mineral.

No known gold mineralizations occurs in the study area although the same geological environment occurs at the Blue Max and Magnolia mines on the southwest side of Indian Wells Canyon. Geochemical analysis of stream sediment samples yielded no geochemical anomalies for the presence of gold or associated elements in Short Canyon. The potential for the occurrence of gold is unknown, but the occurrence of a known deposit of low grade ore in the same geologic environment at the nearby Blue Max and Magnolia mines suggests that a low potential for an occurrence of gold exists in the study area.

AMENDMENT THREE:  
GREAT FALLS BASIN ACEC

Wildlife

The Great Falls Basin ACEC supports abundant and diverse fauna. The interior of the ACEC is, for the most part, isolated from human disturbance because of lack of vehicular access, and contains numerous springs and seeps supporting significant expanses of willow riparian habitat. Surface and subsurface water in many drainages, along with the associated riparian vegetation, are the most important habitat features which attract and support the fauna present (map 3-2).

Most noteworthy are migratory and resident birds associated with aquatic and riparian habitats. Although no breeding bird surveys have been conducted in Great Falls Basin riparian habitat, the diversity and abundance of birds probably is similar to the Darwin Falls Canyon Area at the northern end of the Argus range. There, 81 species of birds were observed during 20 observation periods from November 1977 to December 1978.




Of special significance in the ACEC, and the primary reason for its designation, is the presence of the Inyo brown towhee (Pipilo fuscus eremophilus). This bird is a distinct subspecies occurring only in portions of the southern Argus range (map 3-3). It is significant biologically because of its complete geographic isolation from other subspecies and its adaptation to the harsh desert environment. This bird is dependent on dense vegetation associated with springs and water courses. It nests in riparian thickets and forages on seeds and insects in open desert adjacent to riparian areas. The entire known population of the Inyo brown towhee is estimated at 120 individuals and occurs in suitable habitat from Indian Joe Canyon north to Lamotte Spring (La Berteaux, 1984).

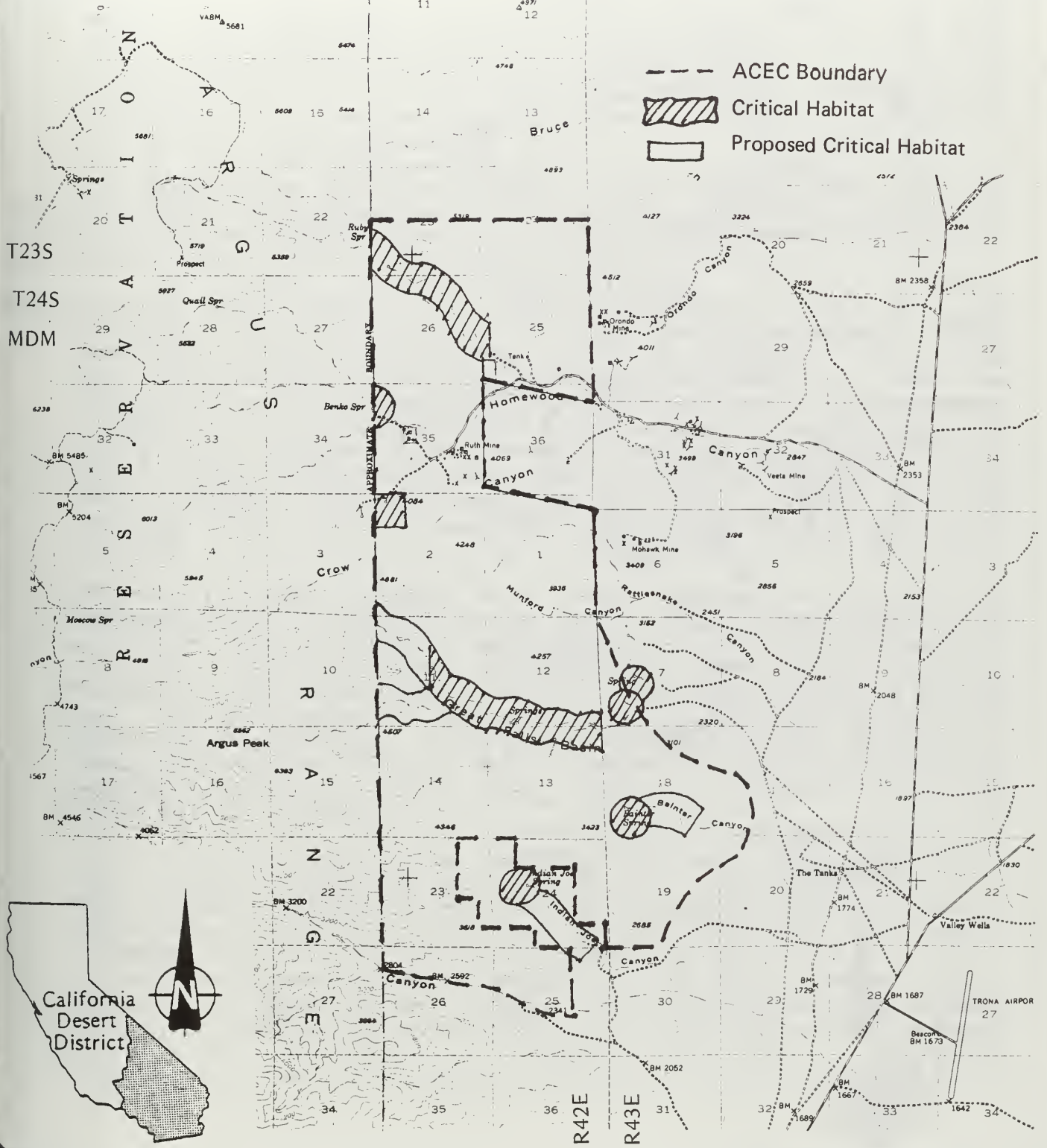
Because of its extremely limited range and existing and potential impacts to the essential riparian and adjacent habitats, the California Fish and Game Commission classified the Inyo brown Towhee as endangered in 1980

# Great Falls Basin/ Argus Range ACEC Map 3-2

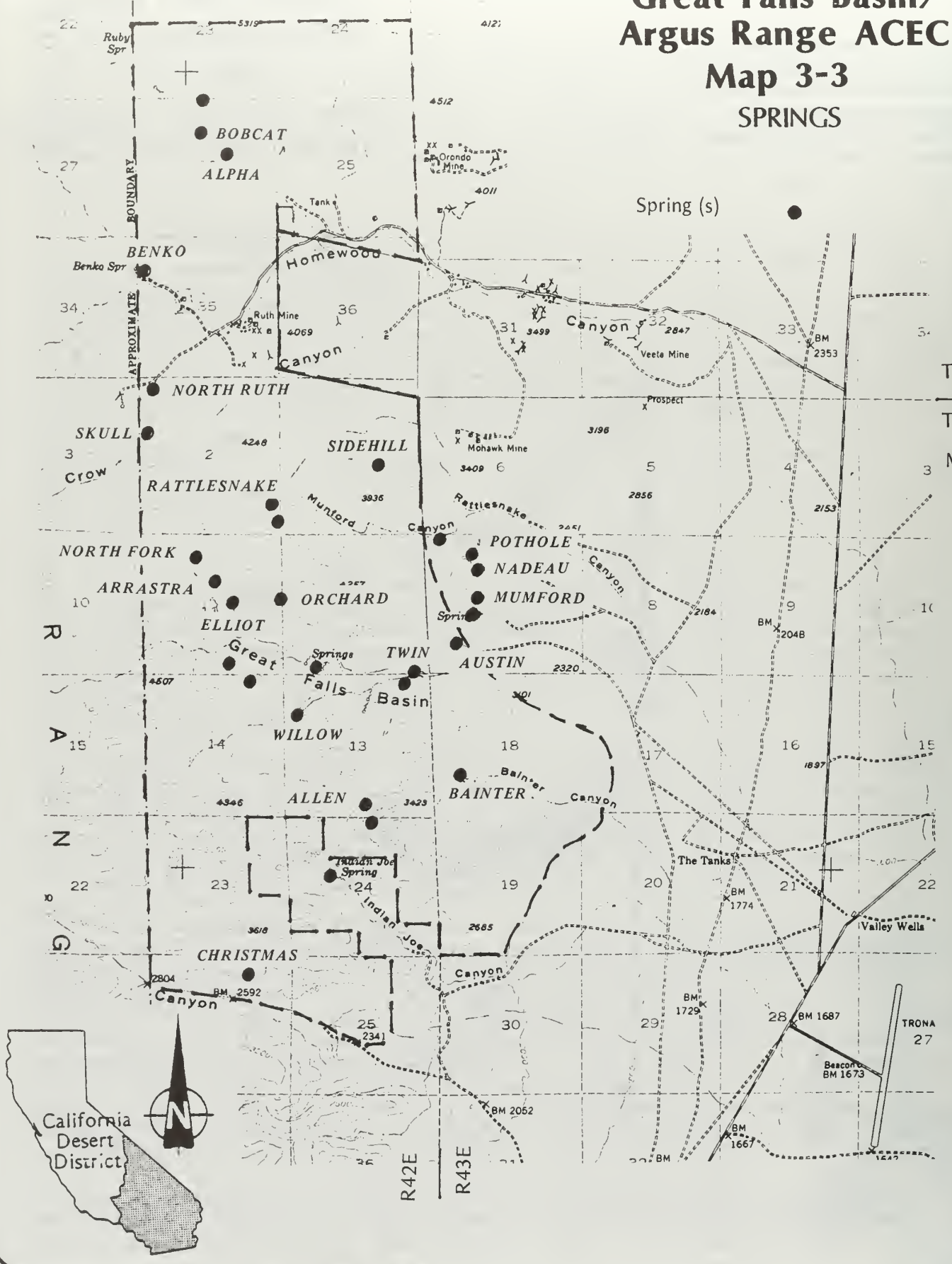
## PROPOSED/CRITICAL HABITAT FOR INYO BROWN TOWHEE

Note: Only areas outside of the China Lake Naval Weapons Center are indicated. For full extent of critical and proposed critical habitat, see the Federal Register notice.

-  ACEC Boundary
-  Critical Habitat
-  Proposed Critical Habitat



# Great Falls Basin/ Argus Range ACEC Map 3-3 SPRINGS



T23S  
T24S  
MDM



(Department of Fish and Game, 1980). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined the Inyo Brown Towhee to be a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act on August 3, 1987 (Federal Register, Vol. 52, No. 158). Critical habitat was designated and additional critical habitat was proposed (map 3-2).

Rugged, isolation terrain in Great Falls Basin is suitable for raptor nesting. At least three golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos) and one turkey vulture (Cathartes aura) nest sites are present. There are likely more, including those of the prairie falcon (Falco mexicanus). Additional field surveys would be required to make a complete inventory, but are not considered necessary at this time.

The ACEC's surface waters, and subsurface water supporting riparian habitat, are essential habitat components for wildlife in general, and especially for migratory and resident birds. Critical and proposed critical habitat for the Inyo brown towhee (map 3-3) centers around such features.

The most serious threat to water and riparian habitat in the ACEC is the potential for excessive diversion of water from public land to private interests for domestic, irrigation and industrial purposes. Some springs are being used to provide water to private residences. There are unauthorized water diversions (i.e. no BLM right-of-way has been issued for pipelines) from Bainter Spring, Alpha Spring, Benko Spring and North Ruth Spring, all of which are within the ACEC. All except for Bainter Spring are in the Homewood Canyon area. Such water diversions, and maintenance of the water collection and transport system, could result in habitat damage by excessive water removal and removal or reduction of willow and aquatic habitat.

Uncontrolled vehicle activity in at least three areas in the ACEC has affected wildlife habitat surrounding springs and has created scars on the landscape. This degradation is most pronounced in the drainage below Great Falls Basin. Hill climbing by motorcycles and four-wheel drive vehicles is extensive as is vehicle play in the large sand wash. Numerous fire rings and litter from weekend camping are present. Plinking with firearms and "beer parties" are common. Christmas Spring in Wilson Canyon and North Ruth Spring in upper Homewood Canyon are also degraded by vehicle use. All these activities have resulted in a downward trend in the resource conditions in these parts of the ACEC.

The ACEC boundary identified in the CDCA Plan excluded some adjacent public land containing springs, riparian habitat and scenic areas, especially in the vicinity of lower Great Falls Basin. These areas are being degraded by uncontrolled vehicle use, camping, and trash left by visitors. The recently completed ACEC management plan proposes a boundary modification (alternative A) which would allow protective management to be taken to prevent further degradation of these springs, riparian habitat and adjacent upland areas. Some of this area is proposed as critical habitat for the Inyo brown towhee.

The disturbed area associated with the Ruth Mine has no scenic or wildlife values.

## Cultural Resources

About seven percent (a little more than 640 acres) of the ACEC has been inventoried for cultural resources, and four of the eight known cultural resource sites within the ACEC are located on these 640 acres. The low number of cultural resources sites within the ACEC, therefore, represents the level of inventory rather than the actual site density. The actual number and kinds of sites are unknown. The recorded sites appear to be brief rather than long-term camp sites, and do not appear to have the potential to yield information that is important. They do not appear to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

## Recreation

Day use recreation occurs year round in Great Falls Basin. Visitor use is at a medium intensity, and includes picnicing, hiking, and sightseeing. The high point in the area, Argus Peak, is a popular day climb attracting about 200 climbers per year. The area is very scenic, and has many unique landscape features.

## Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

The eastern portion of the ACEC (T.24 S., R.43 E.) has been classified as prospectively valuable for the occurrence of geothermal resources. Based on current information, little or no potential exists for the occurrence of leasable minerals (e.g. potassium, sodium) or saleable minerals (e.g. sand, gravel, clay) within either the ACEC or the proposed expansion area.

The geology of the underlain area is primarily of granitic basement rock cut by east/west trending ore-bearing veins and dikes dipping near vertical.

The area has a history of past gold production, and is part of the Argus Mining District. Gold has been produced from the Orondo, Davenport, Mowhawk and Ruth mines. A major exploration company currently holds lease to the Ruth mine and plans a continuation of exploration drilling on the Orondo-Davenport trend this year. A mining/milling company has expressed an interest in reopening the Mowhawk Mine.

### AMENDMENT FOUR:

DELETE COYOTE MOUNTAINS ACEC

## Cultural Resources

Initially, the Coyote Mines ACEC was identified, nominated, and accorded ACEC status on the basis of best available data. This data came from secondary sources and from predictive modeling.

In 1987, prior to preparing a management plan, BLM carried out a sample investigation of the ACEC. Predicted values as noted in the Desert Plan could not be verified. In fact, the resources within the ACEC are sparse and are insignificant compared to others found in the desert.

It is no longer viable to maintain the ACEC. Preparation of a detailed management plan, ranger patrol, and other special attention simply is not warranted. Bureau efforts would be more profitably expended elsewhere. No other resource values have been identified which cannot be managed under the existing multiple use class guidelines.

### Recreation

The Coyote Mountains ACEC is completely within the Plaster City Open Area, which received an estimated 31,000 VUDs in 1986, about equally divided between casual and organized competitive OHV use. The ACEC itself is occasionally visited by casual recreationists who enter the area from camping and staging areas at Painted Gorge or near Plaster City. Very little camping takes place within the ACEC. The ACEC consists of heavily dissected, badlands-type terrain which perhaps discourages casual users from traveling cross country, since there has been little route proliferation here.

About one organized competitive event per year uses the ACEC, under the requirement that the course be confined to an existing route within its boundaries. This requirement has been imposed to prevent possible damage to cultural resources while the cultural resource potential was assessed. A BLM outdoor recreation planner conducts a pre-event course check to assure compliance. The restriction to one existing route has caused other event sponsors who would like to use the area to route their events elsewhere.

### AMENDMENT FIVE:

#### NEW HABITAT MANAGEMENT AREAS

### Wildlife

#### East Slope White Mountains

The east slope of the White Mountains is winter range for the White Mountains deer herd. Mule deer occupy this area during the winter and spring. The department of Fish and Game recently prepared the Inyo-White Mountains Deer Herd Management Plan. This plan was signed by the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service, and emphasizes deer population management, including aerial surveys to monitor herd composition (sex ration, age classes).

Several perennial streams occur within the area, some of which support riparian vegetation and have a wild trout population. These streams are: Perry Aiken Creek, McAfee Creek, Cottonwood Creek, and Wyman Creek. Trout are known to occur in Cottonwood Creek and Wyman Creek, and may occur in Perry Aiken and McAfee Creeks. The Black Toad, a State listed threatened species, is located at Antelope Springs.

A portion of the area is used for foraging by raptors.

Cattle grazing and water diversions are two uses that may be causing impacts to the deer herd, deer winter range, and aquatic and riparian habitats.

## Soldier Pass - Piper Mountain

The Soldier Pass - Piper Mountain area separates Deep Springs and Eureka Valley. Several small, remote springs provide water for wildlife and support small riparian habitats. The BLM and the Department of Fish and Game have constructed wildlife watering facilities at most of the isolated springs, and conduct annual inspection and maintenance of these facilities. This area once supported a bighorn herd, and a small deer population currently exists. Upland game, primarily chuckar, occur in the vicinity of springs.

The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) has proposed a desert bighorn transplant into this area. This proposal has a direct bearing on the question of whether to designate this area as a new HMA. This is because it is BLM policy to prepare habitat management plans for areas involved with bighorn transplants.

Cattle use in the remote, rugged portions of this mountain range must be addressed before bighorn sheep are transplanted into this area. Cattle are attracted to the area by the several small, developed springs even though the forage and grazable area is minimal. Cattle drift outside the authorized use area is believed to occur.

Two springs on Piper Mountain were recently developed without BLM authorization by a local rancher to provide livestock water. Several dead cows have been observed in the vicinity of these springs in recent years, possibly indicating a poisoning problem from the water, or starvation. Both water sources are located in rugged, rocky terrain.

## Cowhorn-Waucoba

This area is located on the eastern slope of the northern Inyo Mountains and borders the Inyo National Forest. It is included in the Inyo-White Mountains Deer Herd Management Plan prepared by CDFG. This plan, although primarily addressing deer population management, identifies the need for habitat management to benefit deer on the eastern slope of the Inyo Mountains. Water developments would likely extend the deer use zone to the east and disperse the population while on the winter range, thus providing foraging and resting areas away from heavy public use areas such as Whipporwill Flat and Waucoba Spring. A field survey in 1985 by CDFG and BLM identified areas east of the Saline Valley road where water developments would enhance habitat for deer and other wildlife.

There are few wildlife conflicts with other uses. Those conflicts include allowances for a burro herd centered around Waucoba Spring, vehicle use off of designated routes and unauthorized use of cabins as residences in the Whipporwill Flat area. The area was once in a cattle grazing allotment.

## Sylvania Mountains

This area is a very remote mountain range which extends into California from Nevada. Mule deer are known to occur here, but population size is unknown. No herd management plan has been prepared for this area by CDFG. The deer population may be relatively high, based upon winter-season observations of deer sign by the BLM (Harris, personal communication). Habitat ranges from mixed desert shrubs to pinyon pine, big sagebrush and bitterbrush.

The area is within the Last Chance grazing allotment. Year-long cattle grazing within the primary wildlife use area may affect deer through livestock use of key forage species and displacement from social incompatibility. Remote, isolated water sources are scarce. Most may have been developed for cattle watering, thus increasing the potential for conflicts with deer and other wildlife.

Mining road construction and excavation has been a recent problem.

#### Last Chance Range

The Last Chance Range has a bighorn sheep population of about 100. Water developments in the early 1970's probably enhanced the habitat, resulting in a moderate population increase. The estimated potential population of the range is 150 animals.

The BLM acknowledges the need to develop a habitat management plan for the range that addresses water developments, disease control, burro removal and control, and fencing to eliminate cattle drift into the range. Cattle use in the Last Chance allotment is causing impacts on the east side of Last Chance Mountain.

#### North Coso Range

The north slope of Coso Range extends onto public land adjacent to the China Lake Naval Weapons Center (NWC). Habitat ranges from Joshua Tree woodland to pinyon pine forest.

Four natural water sources occur in the northern portion of the area, and wildlife values are high. Upland game and/or deer are known to occur in the higher elevations, and are dependent on water at Long's Well (spring), Black Spring and Centennial Spring (upper and lower). Hunting is popular in these areas.

The western portion of the proposed area contains no natural water. No special wildlife values are known to occur. A few upland game guzzlers were constructed about 20 years ago. However, upland game populations apparently have not increased because of them.

There are several conflicts with other uses. Cattle grazing in the vicinity of springs removes riparian vegetation and wildlife food and cover. Cattle watering facilities in the Centennial Flat area may result in the excessive removal of natural surface water. Vehicle use and camping may occur next to some springs.

A habitat management plan would address conflicts and specify corrective action such as protective fencing to keep cattle out of riparian areas and areas having surface water, improvement of springs for use by wildlife, and vehicle route changes to prevent drive-up access to springs. These opportunities would be limited to the northern rather than western portion. No specific actions are known to be warranted at this time for the latter area.

## Livestock Grazing

The proposed HMAs include all or part of several livestock grazing allotments. The HMAs and the corresponding allotments that could be affected are listed below.

<u>Proposed HMA</u>	<u>Allotments</u>
East Slope White Mountains	Fish Lake Valley Whitewolf Oasis Ranch Deep Springs
Soldier Pass - Piper Mountains	Deep Springs South Oasis Last Chance
Sylvania Mountains	Last Chance
Cowhorn - Waucoba	None
Last Chance Range	Last Chance
North Coso Range	Lacey-Cactus- McCloud

## Wild Horses and Burros

There are two wild horse and burro herd management areas within the six proposed HMA's: Piper Mountain HMA and Waucoba HMA. The Piper Mountain area is a retention area for both horses and burros. The Waucoba area is a burro retention area.

## Recreation

Recreation use is of low intensity. Vehicle sightseeing, hunting, and some camping comprise most of the uses.

## Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

Active geothermal exploration is occurring within the confines of the China Lake NWC to the south and east of the proposed North Coso HMA. Within the proposed HMA three geothermal lease applications (noncompetitive) are on record and are located in the western and southwestern portion of the proposed HMA.

AMENDMENT SIX:  
RED ROCK CANYON

## Wildlife

This area is a known raptor nesting and foraging area. Species known to nest and roost here include the golden eagle, prairie falcon, barn owl and great horned owl. A seasonal closure for all human uses has been implemented in the area to provide solitude for nesting raptors.

## Lands

The State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation filed a Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) application in December 1976 to acquire 6,403.57 acres of BLM managed public land for expansion of Red Rock Canyon State Park. The State's purpose was to consolidate existing park boundaries and to provide the necessary balance between recreational use and resource preservation. In late 1979 public controversy focused on how State Park management, particularly regarding off-highway vehicle use, would affect the Nightmare Gulch portion of the proposed land transfer.

BLM and the State devised a two-fold means to meet the needs of the State and of public land users by separating the 2,164.39 acres which encompass Nightmare Gulch from the rest of the R&PP application. First, BLM and the State are now cooperatively managing Nightmare Gulch as per the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the two agencies in August 1985. Under the MOU the area receives greater protection while still allowing for multiple use. Second, BLM will transfer to the State title to the 4,239.18 acres remaining in the R&PP application.

## Recreation

There are four designated OHV routes of travel in this area, with vehicle use restricted or prohibited on the Nightmare Canyon route during part of the year. There is frequent day use of the area for hiking by people enjoying the area's scenic qualities and interesting native flora and fauna.

## Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

This area has not been classified as prospectively valuable for the occurrence of geothermal, oil and gas, or leasable minerals. A low potential exists for the development of sand and gravel due to the favorable geologic environment, i.e., broad dissected, non-marine alluvial fans. A number of claims for locatable minerals occur.

## **AMENDMENT SEVEN HOMEWOOD CANYON LAND SALE**

Five families have lived on public land in Homewood Canyon since the 1950's. These people own their houses, garages, fences, gardens, and other improvements which they have built on their unpatented mining claims. These residents have been trying since at least the 1960's to purchase the land they live on from BLM. Three of the residences are located within the Great Falls Basin ACEC and are in a Class L multiple use classification under the Desert Plan. As such, BLM is presently prohibited from selling the three parcels. On February 10, 1987, BLM signed a Record of Decision to sell the two parcels located outside the ACEC, which were left unclassified in the Desert Plan.

Of the three residents inside the ACEC, two were issued lifetime leases in the 1970's under the authority of the Mining Claim Occupancy Act (MCOA). The third resident is unauthorized. MCOA leases terminate upon the death of the named lessee and are non-renewable. These three residences include the afore-mentioned housing facilities and domestic water systems installed on

adjacent public lands. The water systems tap springs located within critical habitat for the Inyo brown towhee (Pipilo fuscus eremophilus), which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated as a threatened species.

A draft Environmental Assessment which addressed the sale of the three parcels was prepared and sent out for public review in November 1986. The proposed action was to sell the land under the authority of Sections 203(a)(3) and 203(f)(2) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The sale could serve an important public objective of allowing permanent use of three thirty year old residences, one of which is currently unauthorized while the other two are only temporarily authorized. The draft sale EA is included in this EA as appendix D. It includes a complete description of the affected environment.

No decision on the sale has been made. The three residents have requested BLM (through this plan amendment) to consider deleting the sale parcels from the ACEC and changing the multiple use classification from L to unclassified so that the land sale can be allowed.

AMENDMENT EIGHT:

T.12 S., R.16 E., Section 6 MUC Change

Recreation

This amendment implements prescriptions 1-9 and 1-10 of the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP). The RAMP, which was completed in July 1987, was prepared over a 2 1/2 year period with extensive public participation. An EA prepared for the RAMP provides an extensive description of the general environment of the Imperial Sand dunes.

The section of land affected by this amendment is 880 acres in size, and is located at the north end of the Mammoth Wash Open Area in the Imperial Sand Dunes. Mammoth Wash, which forms the northern boundary of the open area, passes through the southeast corner of Section 6, while the Coachella Canal cuts through the southwest corner. Of the 19,000 VUDs of recreational OHV use occurring in the Mammoth Wash area in 1985, approximately half (9,500 VUDs) originated from camping and staging sites located in Section 6.

The current land use classification ("unclassified") is inappropriate for this area, which has received consistent use as an OHV staging area since the 1960's, despite the lack of convenient public access. Under the Desert Plan, "unclassified" lands are subject to disposal, usually by competitive bid (sale) unless subsequent plans or inventories determine that they should be retained. The RAMP determined that Section 6 was vital to the recreation program, and should be retained and classified appropriately, consistent with existing use.

Access to Section 6 is currently limited to four-wheel drive camping vehicles. The RAMP (prescriptions 6-34 through 6-38) provides for possible future development of an access road, parking, toilets, trash service, and a public telephone on the section in the mid-1990s. The final decision to proceed or not proceed with facility development will be made at that time based on available funding, actual trends in visitor use, and the results of baseline resource studies in the Mammoth Wash Open Area.



## Wildlife

The area is within the Algodones Dunes Wildlife Habitat Management Plan area. Mammoth Wash provides habitat for burro mule deer. The area is also within the range of the desert tortoise, although the number of tortoises present is not likely to be high. No threatened or endangered animals are known to exist in this area.

## Botany

No sensitive, threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur in the affected area.

## Cultural Resources

No known sites eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places exist in the affected area.

## Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

The area has little potential for locatable, leasable or saleable minerals.

### AMENDMENT NINE:

#### NEW RECREATION GOAL

The proposed goal is not inconsistent with existing BLM policy. At present, however, the Desert Plan is silent concerning the needs of special populations.

The proposed goal stresses the need to provide facilities for special populations. This is presently being done at all new developed facilities. For example, handicapped wheelchair access is being provided in new developments. Facilities are not present at older and less developed sites.

### AMENDMENT TEN:

#### PIUTE VALLEY LIVESTOCK GRAZING ALLOTMENT

The Piute Valley allotment consists of 33,468 acres of public land. The lessee runs a cow-calf operation, with base property inside the allotment leased from the Santa Fe Pacific Realty Corporation. This is an ephemeral cattle lease, but it has been used year round since 1979. In that time an average of 49 cattle have been in the allotment year long, for a total of approximately 592 AUMs/year. Since 1984 use has not dropped below 60 head at a time. This allotment is the lessee's sole operation.

Piute Valley was designated ephemeral because it fit the criteria described in the December 7, 1968 Special Rule on Ephemeral Range. The majority of the allotment is a nearly flat valley covered with creosote and bursage. Forage is provided mostly by ephemerals, although scattered Big Galleta, Range Ratany, Mormon Tea, Chamiza, and Acacia provide some perennial forage in summer, fall, and winter.

The west edge of the allotment includes the eastern slopes of the Piute Range. It is here that most of the perennial forage is located. In addition to the above perennial forage species, Desert Needlegrass, Bush Muhly and Three Awns are present in the hills. Livestock do not spend much time in the hills due to their distance from water.

Although no trend studies are in place on the allotment, the 1983 Allotment Management Plan (AMP) states that the allotment is in good condition with an upward trend. Precipitation in the area was above average from 1978 through 1984, and has been below average since. The AMP states that 1506 AUMs of perennial forage are present and recommends that the allotment be managed as perennial-ephemeral with a base herd of 125 cattle. The allotment to the west is perennial-ephemeral; the one to the north is ephemeral.

The vegetation of the Piute Valley allotment is characterized by creosote bush scrub at the lower elevations grading into a mixed-desert scrub at the higher elevations. Some of the canyons draining the eastern side of the Piute Range support a desert grassland community, and a small area in the middle of the valley supports an alkaline-adapted plant community (saltbushes, shadscale, spiny hopsage). At present, this alkaline-adapted plant community is not designated as an unusual plant assemblage although a similar area near Valley Wells was so designated by the Desert Plan. No BLM sensitive plants and no Federal or state-listed threatened or endangered plants are known to occur in the allotment.

The majority of the Piute Valley allotment is located at the extreme northern end of the proposed Fenner/Chemehuevi Valley Desert Tortoise Habitat Management Area, and the eastern half of the allotment supports 50-100 tortoises per square mile. The importance of this area to desert tortoise populations in both California and Nevada is probably of moderate to high significance due to the population density and its location on the California-Nevada border. However, the Piute Valley allotment encompasses only a very small portion of the proposed Fenner/Chemehuevi Habitat Management Area and the highest density areas and highly crucial habitat are located well south of the allotment. Conflicts between desert tortoise and livestock grazing occur primarily during the spring and fall when competition for green forage is at its peak.

The Piute Range forms the western boundary of the allotment and provides habitat for desert bighorn (a BLM sensitive species), desert mule deer, golden eagles and other raptors, and a variety of small mammals, birds, and reptiles. A verified sighting of the Gila monster (a BLM sensitive species) was made at Piute Springs approximately 1 mile south of the allotment. The western portion of the allotment, including most of the perennial forage, is within the Fort Piute Wilderness Study Area, WSA 267, which has been recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

**AMENDMENT ELEVEN:  
RIDGECREST-TRONA UTILITY CORRIDOR**

Wildlife Resources

The proposed corridor crosses creosote bush-bursage habitat in the Indian Wells Valley. Two wildlife species considered significant here are the Desert kit fox and Mohave ground squirrel. Both are fully protected under

State law. The Mohave ground squirrel is also classified as threatened by the California Fish and Game Commission, and is a candidate (Category 2) for proposed listing as threatened or endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### Cultural Resources

Six cultural resource sites have been recorded within the corridor. Four of these have--or had--National Register potential. "Had" because one has been surface collected and two might have been destroyed by previous development. A negligible amount of the corridor has been inventoried for cultural resources, and the distribution and density of sites is not known. Environmental conditions indicate that the potential for significant sites is best from West End through Salt Wells Valley.

### Lands

Utility corridors are established in the Desert Plan to steer major utilities into consolidated routes rather than allow them to spread across the entire California Desert. New electrical transmission lines over 160 kV, pipelines with diameters greater than 12 inches, coaxial cables for interstate communications, and major aqueducts or canals must be located in designated utility corridors.

The proposed Ridgecrest-Trona utility corridor would be a two mile wide route which would run from existing Corridor A at Highway 14 through Ridgecrest and along Highway 178 to Trona. Existing facilities in the proposed corridor include two 115 kV and one 33kV electrical lines, one 10 inch natural gas pipeline and one 12 inch and one 14 inch potable water pipeline.

There are currently three new projects planned to be located in the proposed Ridgecrest-Trona corridor that are large enough to be required to be in a utility corridor. First, Kerr McGee Chemical Corporation plans to replace its 12 inch and 14 inch potable water pipelines with one 16 inch line. The new line will pass through China Lake NWC and run within the proposed corridor from Poison Canyon along Highway 178 to Trona. The two existing lines provide the town of Trona and the three major Kerr McGee plants with their only source of potable water. The portions of these lines in Poison Canyon are susceptible to flood damage and were washed out in both 1983 and 1984.

Second, the City of Ridgecrest wants to run a new 16 to 21 inch treated effluent pipeline from the City's treatment plant on the NWC across the base and then through the proposed corridor along Highway 178 to Trona. The water would be a key element in Kerr McGee's proposed Argus Cogeneration Expansion project. In addition, piping the treated water to Kerr McGee would help the City resolve a problem: its evaporation ponds at the treatment plant are leaking. The contaminated water is causing health hazards by leaching to the surface and is also threatening to contaminate potable ground water supplies for Ridgecrest, the NWC, Trona and Kerr McGee. Ridgecrest is under a mandate from the State Regional Water Control Board and the United States Environmental Protection Agency to dispose of the water elsewhere. The water leaching to the surface is also causing ground swelling which is cracking buildings and other improvements.

The third planned project is a City of Ridgecrest/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposal to construct a 100-foot-wide flood control channel along Bowman Road, which runs within the western half of the proposed Ridgecrest-Trona corridor. The channel has been intensively under study since a 1984 flood caused millions of dollars in damage to Ridgecrest and NWC.

These three projects are key elements in the continued rapid growth in the Ridgecrest/NWC area and to the operation of Kerr McGee in Trona. The projects, because of their size, could only be approved through the plan amendment process by creating a utility corridor or as an exception to the utility corridor system.

### Recreation

There is no significant use of the corridor by recreationists. No WSAs would be crossed.

### Visual

Most of the area is of below average or low quality scenic value. A small area of land southwest of Trona has a higher than average scenic quality where there is a hilly landscape with rugged rock outcrops.

Based on field work conducted during the preparation of the California Desert Plan, the Bureau categorized all lands in the CDCA into one of four visual resource management (VRM) classes. The classes are generally derived from scenic quality ratings, sensitivity to change and distance zones. The classes set a minimum recommended level of visual contrast. This level is expressed in the management objectives listed below for the three classes found in the study area:

CLASS II: Changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) created by an activity would not be evident in the landscape. Contrasts are seen but must not attract attention. Impacts should have negligible effect on the overall visual resource quality.

CLASS III: Changes in any of the basic elements created by an activity may be evident in the landscape. The impacts could have some noticeable effect on the overall visual resource quality.

CLASS IV: Contrasts may attract attention and be a codominant feature in the landscape. The impacts could have some negative effect on the overall visual resource quality.

The VRM class for the Ridgecrest area and the portion extending most of the way to Trona is Class III. There is a small Class II area southwest of Trona and around Trona is Class IV. The scenic quality rating for the majority of the area is "good" with a "fair" quality in the Trona area and southeast of Trona.

AMENDMENT TWELVE:  
SAN SEBASTIAN CLOSURE EXPANSION

Wildlife

San Sebastian Marsh/San Felipe Creek is an ACEC and a Wildlife Habitat Management Plan Area. The area contains a variety of critical wildlife and habitat values. Approximately 11 miles of San Felipe Creek, Carrizo Wash, and Fish Creek Wash have been designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as critical habitat for the Federally-endangered Desert pupfish (Cyprinodon macularius); the only other critical habitat is 0.5 acres of aquatic habitat in Quitobaquito Spring in Arizona. The desert pupfish is also listed as endangered by CDFG. The current distribution of the species is much reduced from its historic distribution, and is restricted to the Sonoyta River in Sonora, Mexico; Quitobaquito spring in Arizona; Salt Creek, San Felipe Creek/San Sebastian Marsh; and a few shoreline pools and irrigation drains along the Salton Sea in California. The Salton Sea and Sonoyta River populations may be so low that they are no longer viable, and recent flooding may have given exotic predators and competitors access to other habitats.

Other species of particular interest include the endemic San Felipe leopard frog (a category 3 candidate for USFWS listing), the flat-tailed horned lizard and the Colorado Desert fringe-toed lizard (both Category 2 USFWS Candidates). One hundred seven bird species representing 38 families are known to occur in the area; of these, 11 are on state or national "watch lists" due to their declining status.

In addition, the perennial stream and native marsh habitat provide a unique corridor of wildlife habitat within the surrounding arid zone.

Although a limited closure is currently in effect, the boundaries are not apparent to visitors. Vehicle use occurs regularly in the stream per se, as well as off of approved routes elsewhere in the management area. Camping is affecting previously unimpacted habitat.

Cultural Resources

The San Sebastian Marsh ACEC was important to prehistoric populations since it represented a stable water source in the desert environment.

San Sebastian Village was a regional base camp and served as a focal point for several mountain trail systems. This camp is one of the largest archaeological sites in Imperial County and contains a wide spectrum of domestic, hunting, and manufacturing goods. Unfortunately, the site has suffered considerable damage from illicit collectors.

The archaeological resources of the area are important from several perspectives. The site associated with the marsh serves as an example of an oasis-like environment. Water would have been extremely scarce after the desiccation of Lake Cahuilla. The marsh clearly served as a focal point for aboriginal use. The Spanish explorer Anza recorded that the village held more than four hundred persons. Such numbers are without parallel in Imperial County. Data are present to describe adaptation to this environment. If there are subsurface deposits, they would be of scientific value.

The overall archaeology contains data regarding the relationship between a central base camp and peripheral temporary camps. Analysis of these relationships is important for illustrating regional use patterns and examining issues current in archaeology. Finally, much of the archaeology illustrates the manner and methods of aboriginal use of the mesquite environment.

#### Botany

Four plant species of special concern occur on or near the area. These are Peirson's milkvetch (Astragalus magdalenae var. peirsonii), Wiggin's cholla (Opuntia wigginsii), Thurber's pilostyles (Pilostyles thurberi), and sandfood (Ammobroma sonorae). Pierson's milkvetch is a federal candidate species (Federal Register 1985) and is listed as endangered by the State of California (California Department of Fish and Game 1987). Wiggin's cholla is also a federal candidate species (Federal Register 1985). All four species are CNPS listed (CNPS 1984).

#### Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

The area has little potential for locatable or saleable minerals. The area has low to moderate potential for geothermal resources. The EA prepared for leasing in this area contains the Bureau's decisions on lease stipulations.

#### Recreation

Estimated visitor use in the management plan area is approximately 2,000 VUDs annually. Nature study is an occasional activity in the area for small, casual groups and, on a formal basis, for groups affiliated with education institutions.

Approximately 1900 acres of BLM public land in the San Sebastian Marsh/San Felipe Creek area are currently closed to vehicle entry. In addition, approximately 750 acres of private lands and 1920 acres of CDFG lands in the area are closed under cooperative agreements between BLM and the owners. The remaining 4,420 acres of BLM public land within the management area are designated "limited use," on which vehicle use is restricted to approved routes. Within the limited area, approximately 15 miles of routes are currently approved, while 7 miles of routes (mainly following San Felipe Wash and tributary washes) have been closed through the vehicle route designation process.

Primary access routes are the Pole Line Road, which runs in a north-south direction along the western edge of the management area, and the Kane Spring Road, which runs in an east-west direction through the southern part of the Management Area. Approximately 75% of total visitor use of the Management Area (1,500 VUD) consists of camping and associated OHV riding in the northwest portion of the area. This camping and staging activity is found along the Pole Line Road and 5.5 miles of other approved routes located east of the Pole Line Road and south of Highway 78. Cross-country travel by OHVs coming from these staging areas is proliferating, contrary to the limited use and closed designations of lands within the management area.

## **CHAPTER 4**

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# **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**





## CHAPTER 4

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the scientific and analytic basis for the selection of the preferred alternative. It describes the effects that would result should each amendment be accepted, accepted in a modified form, or rejected. Both the beneficial and adverse effects are presented. Knowledge of the area and best professional judgement (based on observation and analysis of similar conditions and responses in similar areas) have been used to estimate effects where data is limited.

The analysis is based on the following assumptions:

- Funds and personnel will be available for implementation.
- Impacts will be monitored and adjusted as necessary.
- Minor adjustments in management may occur.
- Baseline data are accurate.

The discussion of each amendment is organized by resource (e.g. wildlife, cultural resources, geology-energy-minerals). Only those resources that would be affected are discussed. A resource that is not expected to be affected is not addressed.

#### AMENDMENT ONE WEST MESA ACEC

##### Alternative A: Accept Amendment

#### Wildlife

ACECs receive the highest BLM priority for monitoring and funding. This would insure that the largest remaining area of high flat-tailed horned lizard values is intensely managed. Such management would include FTHL trend monitoring, route of travel designation, race course designation, compliance monitoring, signing, and enforcement and patrol. These actions would reduce the chance that the FTHL will be listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) as threatened or endangered rather than candidate. The area would also be more likely to receive contributed funding and labor, which would significantly aid BLM management.

A specific, consistent management approach and program would be developed in an ACEC management plan. All management actions would be initiated quickly and would be of high priority in future years, thus promoting effective management in the long term.

#### Cultural Resources

Greater management priority would insure that known sites receive protection, patrol, and data recovery. Additional surveys would be more likely, leading to a better understanding of the Lake Cahuilla site complex.

## Botany

Sensitive plant species would be more likely to be adequately monitored. At present, little is known about the Salton milkvetch and Thurber's pilostyles. Any monitoring would increase our knowledge of the two species and provide valuable information for better management prescriptions. In addition, the area would be patrolled more frequently, which would help to reduce OHV induced degradation of native vegetation.

## Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

This alternative would have no effect since the ACEC designation does not, in and of itself, withdraw the lands involved from operation of the mineral leasing, location and saleable laws.

## Recreation

ACEC designation would have virtually no effect on recreation since no activities would be curtailed or eliminated except those which are already unauthorized. Controlling casual use of this area, which was unrestricted prior to passage of 1985 Desert Plan Amendment One, has required an extensive public education effort. This effort continues, primarily in the form of on-site personal contacts by rangers. As a result of ACEC designation, a greater emphasis on recreation management would be necessary to assure a high level of resource protection. This could be done through improved signing and enforcement of existing use limitations.

## Alternative B: Reject Amendment (No Action)

### Wildlife

Without priority for funding and work month allocation, FTHL habitat of extremely high value would be lost or damaged by uncontrolled OHV use. Such declines would go undetected. Since this is the largest contiguous area of high FTHL relative abundance, declines would precipitate USFWS and/or CDFG listing of the species due to threats to the species' continued existence. This would constrain other activities not only in West Mesa but throughout the species' range in Imperial and Riverside counties.

### Cultural Resources

Sites would continue to be damaged by uncontrolled OHV use. Even if sites were not completely destroyed, their informational content would be very much reduced. Sites not presently recorded would be lost. This is especially significant in relation to complex temporary habitation sites and midden bearing sites.

### Botany

Neither the Salton milkvetch nor the Thurber's pilostyle is considered rare, but this is an area of unusually high populations for both plants. It is likely that impacts on vegetation would continue due to uncontrolled OHV use and would result in losses of sensitive plant species.

## Recreation

Existing recreation opportunities and management levels would continue. Modifying visitor behavior to bring it in line with the recent limited area OHV designation would be a more gradual process under Alternative B than Alternative A, because fewer resources would be allocated to the effort.

## Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

No impacts on GEM resources are expected.

### AMENDMENT TWO: SHORT CANYON ACEC

#### Alternative A: Accept Amendment

## Wildlife

There would be no effect on wildlife. A series of drift fences, to be constructed in the area, would effectively eliminate significant impacts on riparian and aquatic zones. These fences are to be installed in 1987-88 under the range management program. No additional protection would be gained by ACEC designation.

## Botany

There would be no effect on botanical resources. The drift fences, designed to exclude cattle from riparian and riverbottom zones, should prevent continued habitat destruction and allow slow recovery in these disturbed areas. The fence system would be the same as that required under an ACEC management plan, as would the good recovery expected in the next 15 to 20 years.

## Livestock Grazing

The proposed amendment should not effect the management of the Walker Pass Common Allotment because the AMP will close the canyon to grazing.

## Recreation

The quality of the area for day use recreation would be enhanced. An ACEC management plan would probably include measures to promote nature study and provide visitors with more information. This would result in a more enriching recreation experience.

## Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

A new ACEC would have little or no effect on mining activity as this area is protected under the stringent regulations (43 CFR 3802) governing activity within a wilderness study area. Any added layer of protection may make the development of mining claims in existence prior to 1976 (if any exist) more difficult if conflicts arise with the resource value the ACEC is designed to protect.

## Alternative B: Reject Amendment (No Action)

### Wildlife

There would be no effect on wildlife. Drift fences will be constructed in this area anyway (as a requirement of the AMP). Consequently, impacts on riparian and aquatic zones due to livestock use would be effectively eliminated without an ACEC.

In addition, the East Sierra Canyon Habitat Management Plan Area will specify additional actions for enhancing wildlife habitat. BLM policy requires that cooperative management efforts be planned and implemented by the BLM and CDFG.

### Botany

There would be no effect on botanical resources. Measures required by the AMP would eliminate livestock grazing in the canyon. The vast majority of the plant species are confined to the riparian and riverbottom areas which would be protected from grazing with the implementation of the AMP. These are the same measures that an ACEC plan would propose. This would make ACEC designation unnecessary and redundant. Additionally, the East Sierra Canyons HMP (to be prepared within the next five years) would include further measures to protect and enhance wildlife habitat, thus providing for botanical protection and enhancement.

### Recreation

The present high level of unrestricted use would be controlled by the AMP drift fences. This would protect the area's natural resource base, particularly the spring annual wildflower displays. However, opportunities for providing visitor interpretive aids and for enhancing the recreation experience generally would not be pursued. Therefore, recreation and nature study would not be enhanced.

## ALTERNATIVE THREE: GREAT FALLS BASIN ACEC

### Alternative A: Include Eastern Springs, Delete Ruth Mine

#### Wildlife

ACEC management of the lower Great Falls Basin would enable BLM to identify and implement actions needed to protect and enhance springs, riparian habitats and surrounding areas to meet the goal of protection and enhancement of wildlife values and habitat used by the Inyo brown towhee. Management actions would include those already established for the ACEC, such as protection of water sources and riparian habitat, and restrictions on camping and vehicle use in the vicinity of springs. With management attention the condition of springs and riparian areas, and the lower basin in general, would improve slowly over a period of several years.

## Cultural Resources

The area proposed as an addition to the ACEC has not been inventoried for cultural resources and no sites have been recorded within it; therefore, the affect of the addition on cultural resource sites is not known. If cultural resource sites are located within this area, the expansion would be beneficial because it would provide special management attention (identification, recordation, monitoring, stablization, protection).

Ruth mine is not historically significant and its deletion from the ACEC would have no significant affect on cultural resources.

## Recreation

The natural qualities of the lower Great Falls Basin would be greatly improved. People camping and driving vehicles to the springs would be displaced so that it would be necessary to walk to the springs and camp away from them. All forms of passive recreation involving hiking, sightseeing, nature study, and photography would continue.

## Visual Resources

There would be a definite improvement as native riparian habitat regenerated. Use restrictions would reduce visual detractions from rock painting, vehicles, and shooting.

## Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

The potential exists for the development of locatable minerals (gold) in the expansion area. The close proximity of the Mowhawk mine and the trend of the mineralization (east-west) may conflict with the other protected resources within the ACEC expansion area. While claims are not indicative of future development, they do indicated interest in an area. To date 26 mining claims are filed in T.24 S., R.43 E., sections 6, 7, and 18. Twenty two of these claims are filed in Section 6. In addition, the potential for geothermal resources exists.

Expansion of the ACEC may conflict with mining activities if related resources and concerns (water, access) become an issue. Exploration work (such as drilling and sampling) can be conducted in a manner which will produce little impact. Development and production cause a greater amount of overall surface disturbance (depending on mining method, e.g. underground verses surface (open pit)).

The removal of the ACEC designation may make the operation of Ruth Mine more attractive by removing some constraints on how development would proceed. Lifting the designation, however, would be considerably less important than the implications of the costs associated with mining the ore body.

## Alternative B: Delete All of ACEC Except Great Falls Basin

### Wildlife

Deleting these areas from ACEC status would result in less management attention, including monitoring. It would perpetuate conditions in the area which are adversely affecting aquatic and riparian areas. These problems include vehicle use and camping at or in the vicinity of springs and the inappropriate diversion of water from springs. These undesirable conditions are affecting some of the critical habitat (and proposed critical habitat) for the Inyo brown towhee. Mandatory protection of the habitat is required under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, this towhee is listed as endangered by the California Fish and Game Commission, and BLM policy requires that cooperative management efforts be planned and implemented by BLM and CDFG.

### Cultural Resources

Three known cultural resource sites would be deleted from the ACEC. On the basis of the surface description of these sites, the affect of deletion would not be significant since the sites are not considered significant. However, the area has not been well inventoried, and it is possible that unknown sites would also be deleted. The affect on unknown resources is, quite obviously, unknown.

### Recreation

Recreation in most of the area would not be significantly affected since the Great Falls Basin (which would not be deleted) is the principle recreational focal point. However, the opportunity to improve the natural qualities of the lower Great Falls basin would be foregone, and passive recreation activities would not be enhanced.

### Visual Resources

The most scenic area, Great Falls Basins, would remain within the ACEC. Other riparian areas would receive low level useage which would result in a minor lowering of visual quality.

### Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

Minerals development would be enhanced by the deletion of areas outside the Great Falls Basin. Little or no activity is occuring in the basin area. The designation of any areas as an ACEC does not preclude mining, but tends to elevate the status of the resources the ACEC designation is designed to protect.

## Alternative C: Reject Amendment (No Action)

### Wildlife

ACEC designation results in higher priority for management action, and thus earlier protective management. Not including the eastern springs in the ACEC would lessen management priority. Since the Inyo brown towhee is listed as threatened by USFWS, corrective actions are mandatory on critical habitat at a minimum. The reduced priority for management action would be in those areas outside of designated critical habitat.

## Cultural Resources

Special management attention would continue to be provided for cultural resources within the current boundaries of the ACEC. Such special attention would not be provided for any sites which may exist in the Lower Great Falls basin, however, since that area would not be within the ACEC.

## Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

The potential for minerals development would be unchanged.

### AMENDMENT FOUR:

#### DELETE COYOTE MOUNTAIN ACEC

##### Alternative A: Accept Amendment

Deletion of the ACEC would not decrease opportunities for increasing our knowledge of prehistory. No threats or conflicts exist which cannot be managed by enforcement of existing statutes. Deletion of the ACEC removes a certain management emphasis, but in no way reduces BLM obligations and practice under law.

This alternative would have no effect on casual recreationists, at least initially. Because the incidence of cultural resources is low, the requirement that competitive events remain on existing routes in this area would be dropped. As a result, probably one additional event would use the area each year, and several additional routes would be created in the next two to three years. The affected area's position at the edge of the Plaster City Open Area (and consequently the edge of the area available for competitive events) would tend to limit the degree of route proliferation to two or, at most, three additional routes. As competitive event use creates new routes, or further accentuates those already existing, casual use of the area would probably be to increase.

##### Alternative B: Reject Amendment

No resource values are known or threatened at present. No threats would be avoided. Maintenance of the ACEC would be costly, with minimal benefits. This diversion of funds would be significant, because critical funds are needed elsewhere.

This alternative would not change the existing level of recreation use. Casual use would remain light. Organized competitive events would continue to be restricted to existing routes, even though the area is designated "open" for OHV use and the incidence of cultural resources is low.

### AMENDMENT FIVE:

#### NEW HABITAT MANAGEMENT AREAS

##### Alternative A: Designate Six New HMAs

## Wildlife

Designation of any of the six proposed HMAs as a planned management area for wildlife would provide management and protection of key wildlife resources (such as deer, deer winter range, riparian habitat and streams). It is the policy of the Bureau to cooperate fully with CDFG in habitat management

through the development and implementation of Sikes Act plans. Management goals and actions would be developed and implemented cooperatively with the California Department of Fish and Game under the authority of the Sikes Act. Habitat enhancing projects or actions in these plans receive priority for funding from the BLM budget as well as CDFG, including special funds available through the State of California from the California Environmental License Plate Fund, and the Hill Bill Fund.

BLM policy requires that habitat management plans be prepared prior to wildlife reintroduction. Bighorn sheep are planned for reintroduction into the Soldier Pass/Piper Mountain and White Mountain areas by CDFG and BLM.

Habitat management plans prepared for these HMAs would address habitat enhancement projects, mitigation of conflicting land uses and monitoring. Stream and riparian habitat improvement, water developments and cattle drift fences are examples of projects that would result from development and implementation of HMPs. In addition conflict resolution and mitigation related to vehicle use, mining and cattle grazing could also occur. These efforts would result in enhanced management for wildlife, within the context of multiple use and sustained yield. Beneficial results are expected, and would include increased population of trout, upland game, migratory birds, deer and bighorn sheep.

The benefits would come in areas having the potential for the greatest habitat enhancement. Five of the six proposed HMAs are listed below, in order of potential for habitat enhancement (the first-named having the highest potential, the last-named having the least).

1. Soldier Pass/Piper Mountain
2. East Slope White Mountains
3. Last Chance Range
4. Cowhorn/Waucoba
5. Sylvania Mountains

Wildlife benefits would certainly be realized in the first four listed areas from actions resulting from habitat management plans. It is likely that wildlife water developments and possibly some cattle drift fences could be realized in the Sylvania Mountains through a habitat management plan.

It is not clear, at this time, that a habitat management plan for the North Coso Range would enhance wildlife above what can be accomplished through the allotment management plan for livestock and the policy for protection of water sources and riparian areas. In addition, geothermal exploration and development on the western side of the N. Coso Range proposal would preclude many wildlife actions in the unlikely event that any actions could be identified.

#### Livestock Grazing

The effect of this amendment on livestock grazing would be very dependent on a number of factors. The proposed Cowhorn/Waucoba HMA would have no effect on grazing because there is no grazing allotment involved. The impacts from the remaining HMPs would vary according to the objectives and proposed actions in each of the management plans approved for the HMAs. There might



be no effect. On the other hand, grazing might be eliminated from parts of some allotments. The CDFG has proposed limited restrictions on grazing in parts of the Deep Springs and South Oasis allotments to allow a reintroduction of bighorn sheep. Additional restrictions in stocking rates, season of use, development of water sources and choice of grazing systems could result.

An HMA management plan would provide information and decisions necessary to develop an Allotment Management Plan for livestock use. In addition, the CDCA Plan decisions call for certain mitigations, such as livestock control within allotments, to reduce wildlife impact.

#### Wild Horse and Burros

Attempts to reintroduce bighorn sheep into existing herd management areas will lead to direct conflicts between the wild horses and burros and the bighorn sheep. This would lead to a need to decide whether a bighorn herd or a wild horse and burro population is the more appropriate use of this area.

#### Recreation

The proposed HMAs are in areas of low intensity, dispersed recreation use. Therefore, the proposal action would not affect recreation.

#### Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

The development of geothermal resources in the North Coso HMA would not be affected by HMA status.

#### Alternative B: Designate Four New HMAs

The Soldier Pass/Piper Mountain, East Slope White Mountain, Last Chance Range, and Cowhorn/Waucoba areas have the highest potential for habitat enhancement of the six proposed HMAs. Designating these four as new habitat management plan areas would focus management attention on the higher priority areas, or those areas where wildlife management actions would result in the greatest gain. Habitat for trout, upland game, migratory birds, deer and bighorn would be enhanced.

Deleting the Sylvain Mountains and the North Coso Range from consideration would not affect bighorn sheep and may not change the status for upland game and deer provided the allotment management plans call for protection of springs and riparian areas and provision for wildlife water.

There would be no conflict between the existing low intensity recreational use and four proposed HMA's.

#### Alternative C: Reject Alternative (No Action)

Failure to designate the four proposed HMAs with the highest potential for habitat enhancement could result in the loss of several wildlife management opportunities. Without new habitat management plan areas, bighorn sheep transplants into the White Mountain and Soldier Pass/Piper Mountain Areas

would be forgone, enhancement of streams and riparian areas on the East Slope of the White Mountains would not receive attention, deer winter range and habitat enhancement projects within the the Inyo White Mountains Deer Herd would be forgone and conflict resolution and habitat enhancements for bighorn in the Last Chance Range would not be a priority or implemented in an orderly manner.

The non-designation of the Sylvania Mountains would be of far less consequence for the reasons described above under alternative B.

**AMENDMENT SIX:  
RED ROCK CANYON**

Alternative A: Accept Amendment

Designation of this land as class L would provide management of sensitive cultural resources that is consistent with that afforded resources in the surrounding area.

The class L designation would provide the recreation management needs of this area. Under the MOU, there are additional public use limitations which are more consistent with the class L category.

Classification as a limited use area will require a plan of operation for any surface disturbance which would result from mineral development. This would not be a significant impact on the development of saleable or locatable mineral resources.

Alternative B: Reject Amendment (No Action)

Cultural resource management would continue to lack consistency with that afforded resources in the surrounding class L area. This could allow the chance of damage to the resource to continue because cultural resources are present, and are as important as those in the adjacent class L areas.

This area is an important area of recreation resources and scenic quality. Unclassified land is not identified for permanent BLM management and it could be sold. As a result, management of the area's high public recreational use for sightseeing, hiking, nature study, and limited ORV touring could be foregone.

**AMENDMENT SEVEN:  
HOMEWOOD CANYON LAND SALE**

Alternative A: Accept Amendment

Two residents would be sold the land their homes are located on, giving them permanent tenure. This alternative would have no direct affect on cultural resource sites since none were identified within the two parcels. A complete description of both accepting and rejecting this amendment was prepared in November 1986. That EA has been reproduced in this document as Appendix D.

Alternative B: Reject Amendment (No Action)

One of the three residents would remain unauthorized. The two residents currently authorized under lifetime leases would lose their authorization upon the death of the named lessees. All three residents would face a nagging uncertainty as to their future tenure on the land and as to whether they would have anything to pass on to their heirs. This alternative would have no direct affect on cultural resources since none were identified within the two parcels. A more detailed discussion was presented in the Homewood Canyon land sale EA, which has been reproduced in this document as Appendix D.

AMENDMENT EIGHT:

T.12 S., R.16 E., SECTION 6  
MULTIPLE USE CLASS CHANGE

Alternative A: Accept Amendment

The area east of the Canal is currently used by campers. The Class I designation would enable the development of facilities as outlined in the Imperial Sand Dunes RAMP. Facility development would increase use of the area as well as directly disturb habitat. These in turn would affect burro deer and desert tortoise to an unknown degree, since the relative abundance of these species is not known. No threatened or endangered plant or animal species are known to exist in the affected area.

The changes in MUC and OHV designation would insure that these lands are retained for public recreational use, and would be consistent with existing use patterns. No changes in use levels or patterns are expected as a result of the amendment unless public access to the land is developed in the future.

Assigning the area east of the Coachella Canal to class I would be the first of a number of actions prerequisite to possible future development of recreational facilities on Section 6, as outlined in the Imperial Sand Dunes RAMP. Such development would occur in the mid-1990s. Development would also be contingent on the availability of funds for construction, operation and maintenance of the facilities, and the acquisition of private inholdings in the open area, and completion of sensitive resource baseline studies.

Alternative B: Reject Amendment (No Action)

The section would be subject to potential disposal in the future. Disposal could result in the elimination of OHV recreation opportunities and make future recreational development of the site impossible.

If the lands remain in public ownership as "unclassified," it is likely that the existing recreation situation would be maintained for the foreseeable future. However, recreational opportunities at the site could be eliminated if surrounding landowners were to close off existing access routes across their property.

Wildlife, botanical, cultural, and GEM resource would not be affected.

AMENDMENT NINE:  
NEW RECREATION GOAL

Alternative A: Accept Amendment

The new goal would complement BLM's current program of providing access for certain special populations to new developed facilities. These include the California Desert Information Center (in Barstow), the Soda Springs Orientation Center, the Jawbone Canyon Visitor Contact Station, and the Cahuilla Ranger Station, and other sites where development of access is practicable (i.e. facilities other than very primitive ones). It would also give public emphasis to the development of future interpretive and informational materials specifically designed to help special populations.

Alternative B: Reject Amendment

Emphasis would continue to be given to providing opportunities and facilities for special populations. Such a program would not be explicitly established as a goal of the Desert Plan, however. In that case, emphasis on meeting the needs of special populations would not have as high a public profile as if a goal were written into the plan. Consequently, persons might not realize that a opportunities were being made available in the desert for those special groups.

AMENDMENT TEN:  
PIUTE VALLEY LIVESTOCK GRAZING ALLOTMENT

Alternative A: Accept Amendment

Changing classification would not in itself change the level of livestock use. The lessee would be able to keep cattle on the allotment without reapplying for authorization every three months. His operations would have far greater stability, and he would be in a better position to borrow operating money from financial institutions. He would still be able to apply for ephemeral use, if conditions were good enough. The proposed stocking rate is 48% of the level recommended by the AMP, indicating that more than enough perennial forage is present in the allotment.

A surfeit of forage is available in the spring and late summer, when ephemerals are present and perennials are growing. Much of the forage documented the rest of the year is dry feed produced during these seasons. It is not known how much of the current use is made on perennials and ephemerals. Increased monitoring would be necessary to ensure that the allotment is properly stocked. Should the allotment be overstocked, even on a temporary basis, the BLM could still order the lessee to remove livestock, although a more complex and difficult process is required.

However, most of the perennial forage is found in the Piute Range. Livestock do not spend much time in that area at present. To make use of the forage, water would have to be provided. Because nearly all of the range is within WSA 267 (recommended suitable by the Desert Plan), it is likely that at least one new well would be required inside the WSA.

In addition, the range provides habitat for desert bighorn. A shift of the lessee's operation into this area would heighten stress-related impacts on a year-round basis, and would continue the possibility of disease transmission from livestock to desert bighorn.

Should the lessee's operation be managed as it is at present, livestock would continue to be concentrated in the eastern portion of the allotment (in Piute Valley). Here, forage is provided mostly by ephemerals. There is not enough perennial forage available in this portion of the allotment to support a perennial allocation of 720 AUMs. Consequently, the AMP's rationale for recommending that the allotment be managed as ephemeral-perennial (that is, because a large amount of perennial forage is available) would not be supportable.

Except as noted above, acceptance of the amendment would not have a drastic effect on either the vegetation or the wildlife resources of the Piute Valley allotment due to the fact that the allotment has been grazed on a year round basis for the last 12 years and appears to be capable of supporting this level of use in normal precipitation years. However, accepting the amendment could result in a slow, long term change towards more shrubs and less grasses due to selective grazing pressure on the preferred species of grasses. In addition, competition for green forage would continue to occur between desert tortoise and livestock, as they have for the past 12 years.

Changing the Piute Valley Allotment from ephemeral to perennial-ephemeral would not have any adverse impacts on wilderness values in WSA 267, and would not impair the area's suitability for wilderness designation. At appropriate stocking levels livestock grazing is compatible with maintaining wilderness suitability. Changes in the number of livestock and the period of use are permitted by the interim management policy guidelines as long as the changes do not cause degradation of the land.

#### Alternative B: Reject Amendment (No Action)

BLM management would remain unchanged. The lessee might continue to use this allotment year around under ephemeral authorizations. The rancher's operation would remain unstable, as he wouldn't know until his use authorization was about to expire if he would be able to keep cattle in the allotment for an additional three months.

The operator would suffer economically because the lack of an assured grazing authorization would increase the difficulty of obtaining a loan for operating funds. The current practice of limiting use authorizations to 3 month periods forces the BLM to check field conditions in the allotment 4 times each year, allowing a quick adjustment in numbers, if necessary. This alternative would be in conformance with the goals of the Desert Plan.

Rejection of the amendment, and enforcement of the ephemeral status (i.e. seasonal grazing based on annual forage production only) would result in a net beneficial impact on the vegetation and wildlife resources of the area by removing livestock and grazing-related impacts from the allotment for the majority of each year. Perennial grasses and other forage species would be allowed to go to seed, vigor would increase, the establishment of new plants would increase, and overall range condition would improve.

During periods of non-use, water currently being taken from Piute Creek and piped to the allotment would be left in Piute Creek, which would increase stream flows in terms of distance, and improve and expand the riparian area.

Competition between desert tortoise and livestock for green forage would remain unchanged, assuming the minimum forage production requirements for livestock turn-out are met. However, if minimum forage production requirements are not met, livestock would not be allowed to turn-out and no grazing would occur, whereas during the past 12 years and under the ephemeral-perennial designation, grazing has occurred, and will occur, regardless of annual forage production. Therefore, rejecting the amendment could potentially result in a beneficial impact to desert tortoise in less than optimum annual forage production years.

AMENDMENT ELEVEN:  
RIDGECREST-TRONA UTILITY CORRIDOR

Alternative A: Accept Amendment

Cultural Resources

Construction of pipelines, powerlines, tower pads, and access roads could destroy any National Register eligible sites which might be located within the corridor.

Wildlife

The level of impact on wildlife would depend on the type and number of pipelines and powerlines that are eventually constructed in the corridor. Should future construction be limited to the City of Ridgecrest and KMCC waterlines, only a moderate level of impact would occur. Assuming a twenty-foot wide area of disturbance, a maximum of 48 acres of habitat for the desert kit fox and Mojave ground squirrel would be affected. Indirect off-site impact could result due to vehicle use, shooting, and littering that would likely occur due to public use of the access road. These impacts would occur on both public and privately-owned land.

However, a corridor could allow additional facilities to be constructed in the future. While no projects have been proposed to date, powerlines and pipelines could be constructed. A new powerline (for example, a 161kV or 230 kV line, the largest foreseeable in the corridor) would require half a dozen tower pads per mile, and spur or access roads. A second buried gas pipeline could require a right of way clearing 50 feet across. Such facilities could have greater affects on wildlife, particularly the desert kit fox and the Mojave ground squirrel, than the water pipeline. The specific impacts would be identified in the EA or EIS prepared for the project.

Consequently, wildlife could experience the following long-term impacts: permanent loss of approximately 48 acres of habitat for the Mohave ground squirrel and desert kit fox, indirect off-site impacts due to increased human use along the corridor, and additional direct habitat loss if powerlines and pipelines are added. Although the habitat and wildlife losses anticipated from this proposal are relatively low if considered

alone, several projects could contribute cumulative habitat losses, which must be considered in light of the general concern over the cumulative habitat losses in the western Mojave desert.

In summary, cumulative habitat losses would be expected over a long term period from the construction of pipelines, electric transmission lines, and roads. These could result in significant impacts to the desert kit-fox and Mohave ground squirrel within the corridor.

#### Lands

The proposed Ridgecrest-Trona utility corridor is consistent with both Kern County and San Bernardino County planning. The proposed corridor would cross two China Lake Naval Weapons Center low flight corridors, C and G. Placement of tall electrical transmission towers within C or G could create hazardous flying conditions or otherwise limit NWC's use of the flight corridor.

#### Recreation

No recreational activities would be affected.

#### Visual Resources

In the VRM class II and IV portions of the corridor, there would not be any visual conflicts. For a small class III area southwest of Trona, mitigating measures would be required to protect the existing high scenic quality. Powerlines and pipelines already exist through the corridor and additional ones would not cause any significant loss of scenic values.

#### Alternative B: Reject Amendment (No Action)

#### Wildlife

There would be no impacts from large pipelines and transmission lines. However, habitat losses and impacts are already occurring because of the proximity of rapidly-growing Ridgecrest.

#### Lands

If the proposed amendment is rejected, Kerr-McGee would not be able to replace its 12 inch and 14 inch potable water pipelines with one 16 inch line. KMCC would either have to continue repairing its two deteriorating pipelines and have them susceptible to washouts, or replace them with two 12 inch or lesser diameter lines. KMCC estimates the latter option would cost \$5,000,000 more than installing the 16 inch line.

The City of Ridgecrest would not be able to install a new 16 to 21 inch pipeline to remove its treated effluent. The City and the NWC would continue to suffer from health hazards and damage to buildings until another means to dispose of the effluent could be found. KMCC would have to find another source of water for its Argus Cogeneration Expansion Project.

The City of Ridgecrest and China Lake Naval Weapons Center would continue to be susceptible to flooding until an alternative to the proposed Bowman Wash flood control project could be found.

The net effect of all of the impacts could affect growth in Ridgecrest and in the Naval Weapons Center and the continued operation of Kerr-McGee in Trona.

AMENDMENT TWELVE:  
SAN SEBASTIAN CLOSURE

Alternative A: Accept Amendment

Wildlife

Expanding the vehicle closure would increase protection of the area's critical wildlife and habitat values. Three sections of CDFG-owned land would also be posted as closed, and cooperative enforcement would increase compliance. If an expanded closure were implemented, cooperative agreements with private landowners would be pursued to allow enforcement on interspersed private parcels. This coordinated approach would protect all critical habitat and ensure the continued existence of the desert pupfish in its most extensive remaining natural habitat.

Cultural Resources

An expanded closure would be effective in increasing protection of known sites in the area, both on BLM and non-BLM lands. Inadvertant destruction of cultural resources by vehicles would be significantly reduced, and vandalism and removal of artifacts would be discouraged.

Botany

This alternative would provide more protection of sensitive plant species by attempting to reduce the number of OHVs in the area.

Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

This alternative would have no effect on geothermal leasing since an EA for leasing has been prepared and the Bureau does not intend to change existing decisions.

Recreation

As a result of the closure expansion, approximately 1,500 VUDs of camping and OHV recreational use will be displaced from the area. Much of the camping use is expected to shift to the north side of Highway 78 near the Pole Line Road. With the elimination of vehicle camping and OHV riding within the closed area, the incidence of illegal cross-country OHV travel is expected to decrease significantly, although some closure violations would occur.

While nature study would be affected both positively and negatively by the closure expansion, the overall effect would be positive, through a reduction in vehicle tracks, noise, and disturbance of vegetation and wildlife in the marsh area. The main negative effect would be reduced access. It is currently possible to drive within a hundred yards of the marsh with a two-wheel drive vehicle from Highway 78. This opportunity would be



eliminated. A minimum hike of about a mile (one way) would be required. However, such a hike should not be a significant hindrance to most nature study enthusiasts, and may serve to enhance the experience of some visitors.

#### Alternative B: Reject Amendment (No Action)

##### Wildlife

A failure to expand the closure would allow continued degradation of desert pupfish critical habitat as well as direct crushing or injury of individuals of other species of special management concern. This failure to meet Endangered Species Act responsibilities could lead to serious local reductions in the already depleted desert pupfish population.

##### Botany

OHV and recreation-related problems would continue to impact the native vegetation.

##### Cultural Resources

Sites would continue to be damaged by vehicle use and camping. A number of sites have already suffered vandalism and theft; this would continue, especially since the area is regularly featured in treasure magazines. Continued vehicle use also leads to increased erosion, which leads to loss of archaeological resources. Not expanding the closure would be especially detrimental to relatively intact, remote sites which are only accessible by OHVs.

##### Geology-Energy-Minerals (GEM)

This alternative would have no impacts (see Alternative A).

##### Recreation

If the amendment is rejected, the incidence of camping and OHV riding within the management area would increase in the future. Much of the OHV use would continue to occur off of approved routes of travel, within San Felipe Wash at the marsh, and on the higher ground adjacent to the marsh. While OHV operation in and adjacent to the marsh is interesting and at times challenging for the operator, it degrades the experience of those seeking to enjoy the special wildlife and cultural resources of the area in quiet, non-impacting ways.

#### MITIGATION MEASURES

##### Amendment Ten: Piute Valley Livestock Grazing Allotment

##### Alternative A

Measure 10-1: Close off all free-flowing water on the Piute pipeline. The installation of float valves on all tanks and troughs, and capping the end of the pipeline, will greatly reduce the amount of water drawn from Piute Creek. This in turn should allow riparian areas to expand.

Measure 10-2: Develop water somewhere north or west of T 13 N, R 19 E, section 8 before the amendment is implemented. This would increase livestock distribution in the north half of the allotment.

Alternative B

Amendment Eleven: Ridgecrest-Trona Utility Corridor

Measure 11-1: Electrical transmissions towers as well as any other facilities) would be limited to 125 feet in height within the Naval Weapons Center's C and G low flight corridors.

Measure 11-2: New facilities must meet all VRM class objectives within the VRM class III lands southwest of Trona.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The cumulative impacts of this preferred alternative are presented in Table 4-1 below:

TABLE 4-1

SUMMARY OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Resource	Unit of Measure	No Action	Preferred Alternative	Percent Change	New Percent of Desert
<u>Multiple Use Class</u>					
C	Acres	1,900,000	1,900,000	0	15.9
L	Acres	5,900,000	5,902,000	0.03	49.3
M	Acres	3,400,000	3,400,000	0	28.4
I	Acres	520,000	520,000	0	4.3
Unclassified	Acres	251,000	249,000	0.8	2.1
<u>Vehicle Access</u>					
Open	Acres	505,000	505,000	0	4.2
Limited	Acres	9,256,000	9,251,000	0.05	77.3
Closed	Acres	1,958,000	1,963,000	0.25	16.4
Undesignated	Acres	251,000	251,000	0	2.1
<u>Wildlife</u>					
Habitat Management Areas	Number	50	54	8	-----

TABLE 4-1 (con't)

## SUMMARY OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Unit of Measure</u>	<u>No Action</u>	<u>Preferred Alternative</u>
<u>ACECs</u>			
Added	Number	0	2
	Acres	0	18,560
Deleted	Number	0	1
	Acres	0	1,211
Net Change	Number	0	+1
	Acres	0	17,349



**CHAPTER 5**

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**CONSULTATION  
AND  
COORDINATION**



CHAPTER 5  
CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

NOTICES AND MEETINGS

The 1987 amendment process was announced by a letter sent to the Desert Plan mailing list on January 28, 1987. The list consists of approximately 5,600 individuals, organizations, businesses, and government agencies. The letter outlined the criteria for evaluating amendment proposals and gave the final date for submitting proposals as March 31, 1987. A Federal Register notice was published on February 12 (Vol. 52, No. 29), and a news release was issued on February 27, 1987.

Proposed amendments were reviewed by the District Advisory Council at its public meeting in Victorville on April 10, 1987. This meeting also served as a scoping meeting for the environmental assessment.

PUBLIC INPUT

Thirty letters were received in response to the invitation for amendment proposals. Nineteen were from individuals, three from organizations, two from businesses, one from a utility, and five were from agencies. Twenty eight were from California, one was from Texas, and one was from Virginia. Twenty-three respondents offered twenty-seven proposals.

Twelve of these were recommended by the District Advisory Council and approved by BLM management for consideration in the 1987 amendment process. The remainder will be handled by other administrative processes or dropped as inappropriate. Each amendment proposal and its fate are listed in Appendix B.

LIST OF PREPARERS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Team Assignment (Amendment No.)</u>
William Haigh	Chief, Planning & Environmental Staff	California Desert District	Team Leader
Greg Thomsen	Realty Specialist	Ridgecrest Resource Area (RA)	Ridgecrest Coordinator Lands (6,7,11); Soc-Econ (3)
Peter G.D.Ertman	Chief, Branch of Resources	El Centro RA	El Centro Coordinator; GEM (8,12)
Sandra Robles	Typist	California Desert District	Administrative Support
Jeff Aardahl.	Wildlife Biologist	Ridgecrest RA	Wildlife (2,3,5,11)
Roger Alexander	Natural Resource Specialist	Needles RA	Wildlife, Botany (10)
Lynn Anderson	Outdoor Recreation Planner	El Centro RA	Recreation (1,4,8,12)
Cynthia Grover	Range Conservationist	El Centro RA	Botany (1,8,12)
Glenn Harris	Range Conservationist	Ridgecrest RA	Range (2,5)
Steve Larson	Range Conservationist	Needles RA	Range (10)
Peter Milne	Geologist	Ridgecrest RA	GEM (2,3,5,6)
Steve Nelson	Outdoor Recreation Planner	El Centro RA	Recreation (1,4,8,12)
Lillian Olech	Wildlife Biologist	El Centro RA	Wildlife (1,8,12)
Joan Oxendine	Archaeologist	Ridgecrest RA	Cultural Res (2,3,6,11)
Eric Watkins	Natural Resource	Ridgecrest RA	Botany (2)



LIST OF ACCRONYMS

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
AMP	Allotment Management Plan
AUM	Animal Unit Month
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CDCA	California Desert Conservation Area
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FTHL	Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard
GEM	Geology-Energy-Minerals
GRA	GEM Resource Area
HMA	Habitat Management Area
HMP	Habitat Management Plan
KMCC	Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation
MCOA	Mining Claim Occupancy Act
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MUC	Multiple Use Class
NWC	Naval Weapons Center
OHV	Off-Highway Vehicle
RA	Resource Area
RAMP	Recreation Activity Management Plan
R&PP	Recreation and Public Purposes Act
SVRA	State Vehicular Recreation Area
UPA	Unusual Plant Assemblage
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VRM	Visual Resource Management
VUD	Visitor Use Day
WSA	Wilderness Study Area

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  - 1987. Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Activity Management Plan.
  - 1987. Cultural Resource Survey--Coyote ACEC (unpublished)

# APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A  
MAPS OF AMENDMENTS



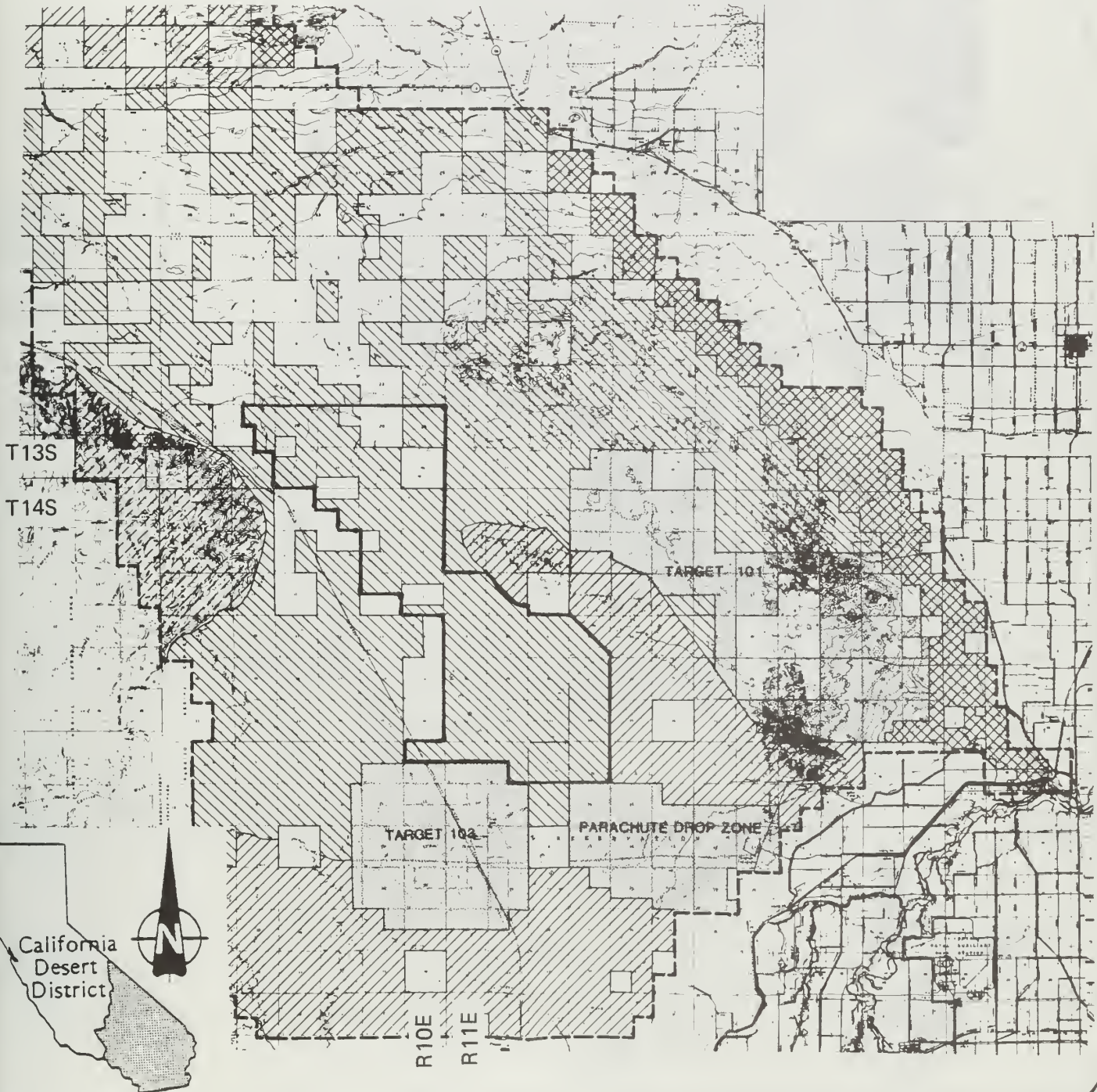
# AMENDMENT 1

## New ACEC-West Mesa (Imperial County)

### LEGEND

- Study Area Boundary
- ▨ Class "C"
- ▧ Class "I"
- ▩ Class "L"
- ▤ Class "M"
- Unclassified (Navy Withdrawal)
- Patented Land

Proposed ACEC Boundary



T13S  
T14S

TARGET 101

TARGET 102

PARACHUTE DROP ZONE

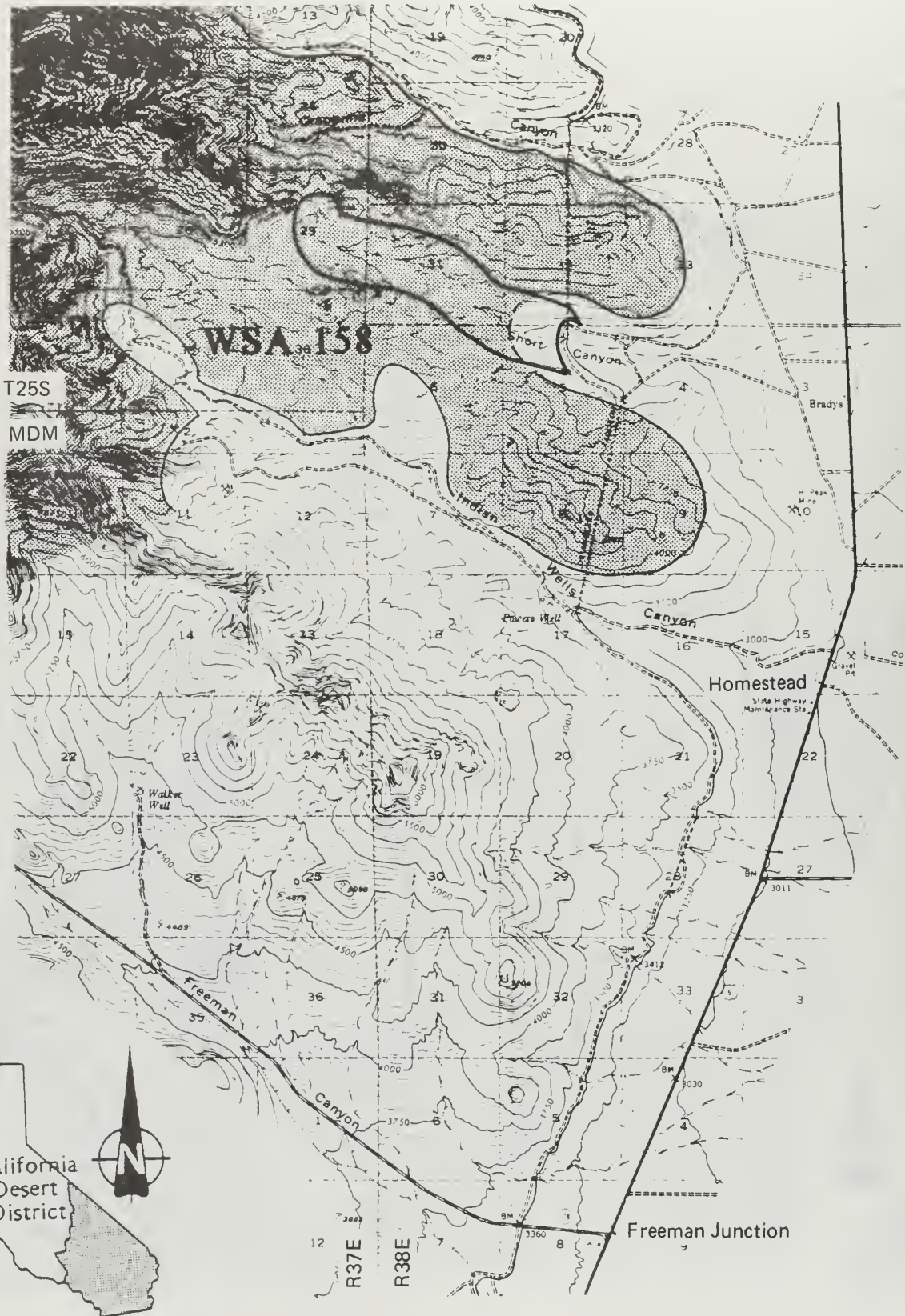
R10E  
R11E



California  
Desert  
District

New ACEC-  
Short Canyon

Proposed ACEC Boundary 





# Great Falls Basin/ Argus Range ACEC

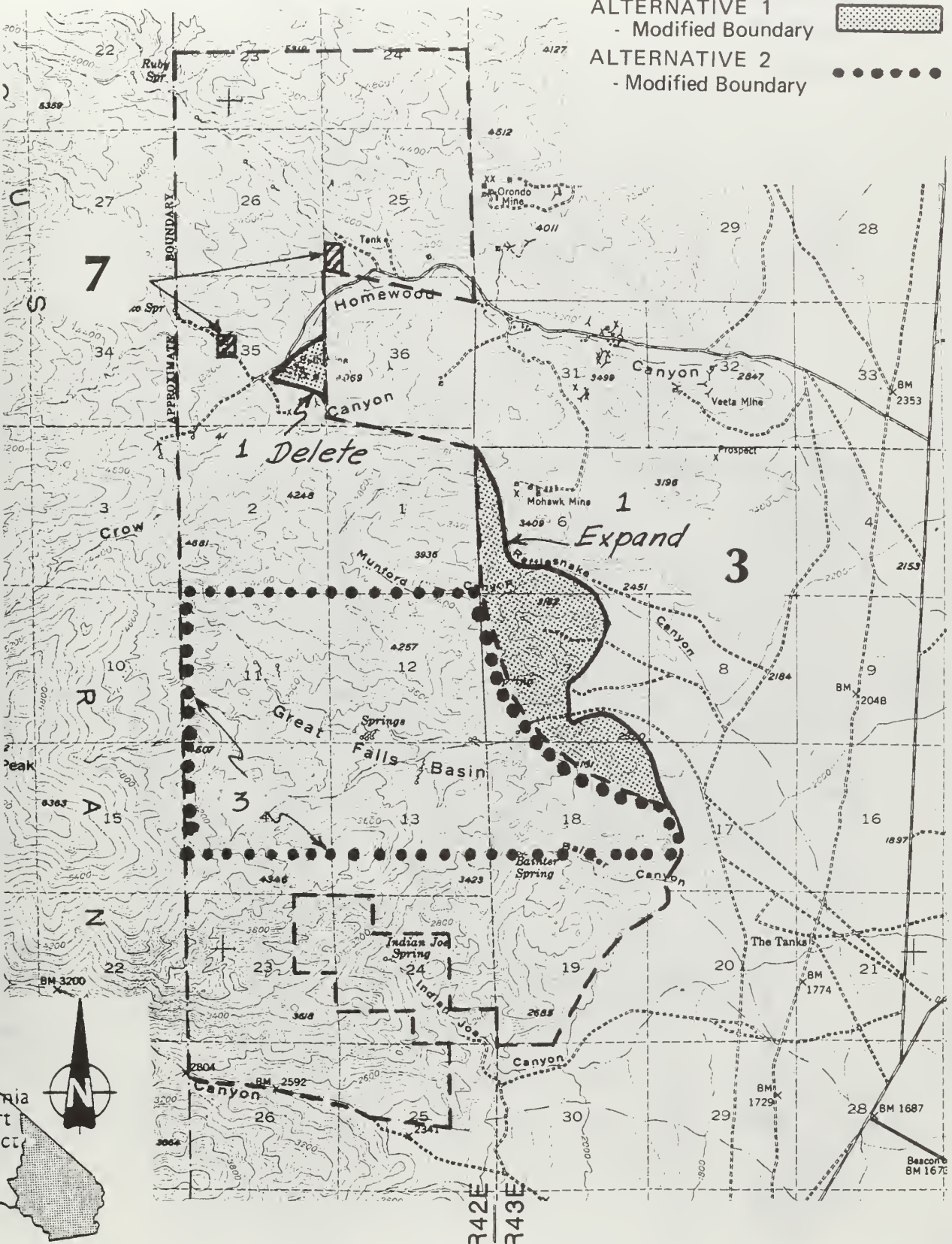
HOMEWOOD CYN  
LAND SALE



ALTERNATIVE 1  
- Modified Boundary



ALTERNATIVE 2  
- Modified Boundary




T23S  
T24S  
MDM



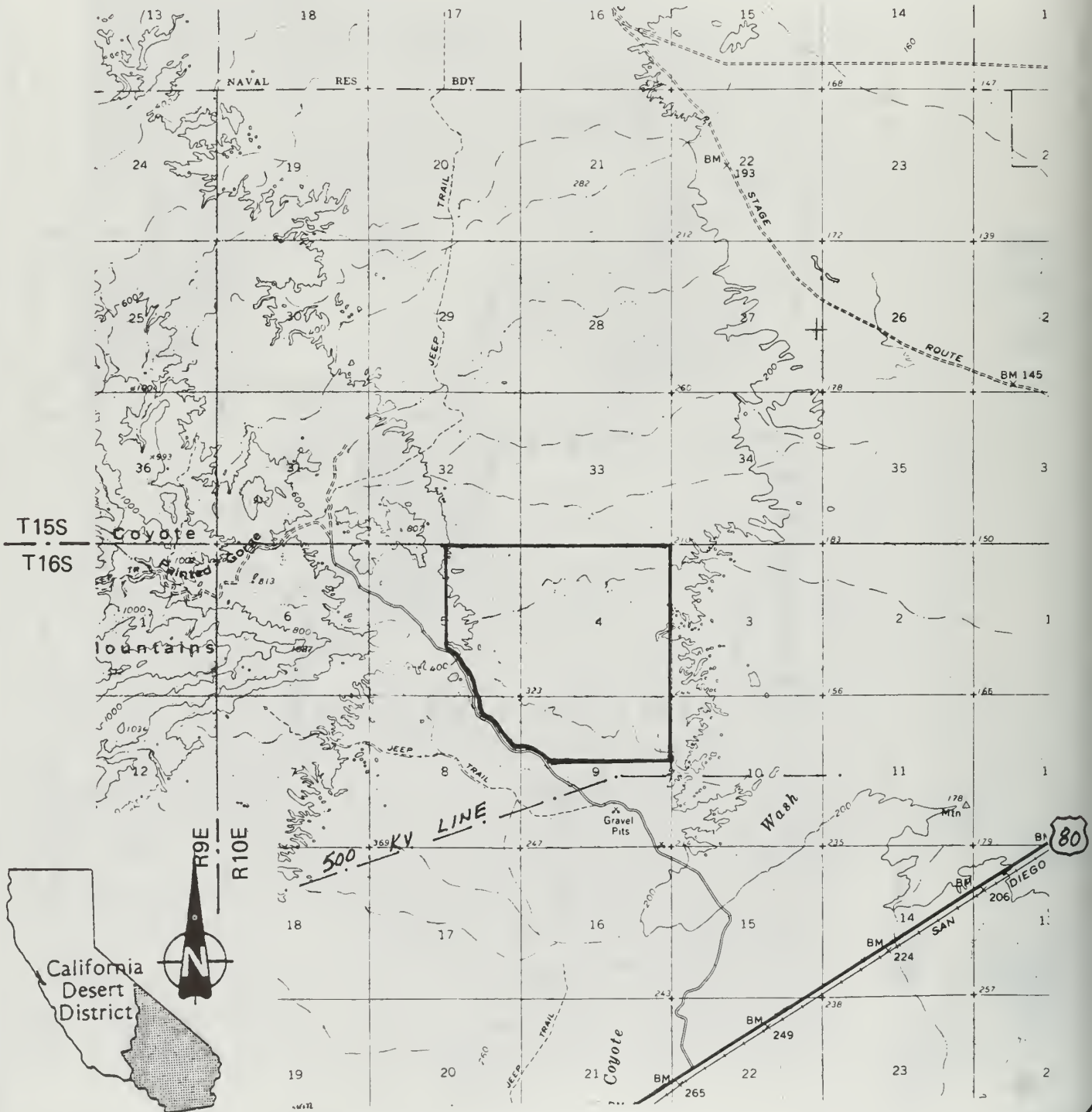
R42E  
R43E

Beacon  
BM 1673

# AMENDMENT 4 Coyote Mountains ACEC

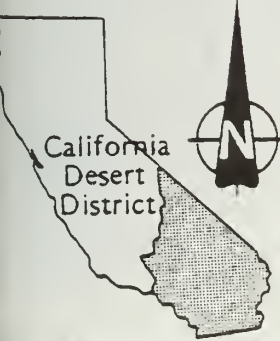
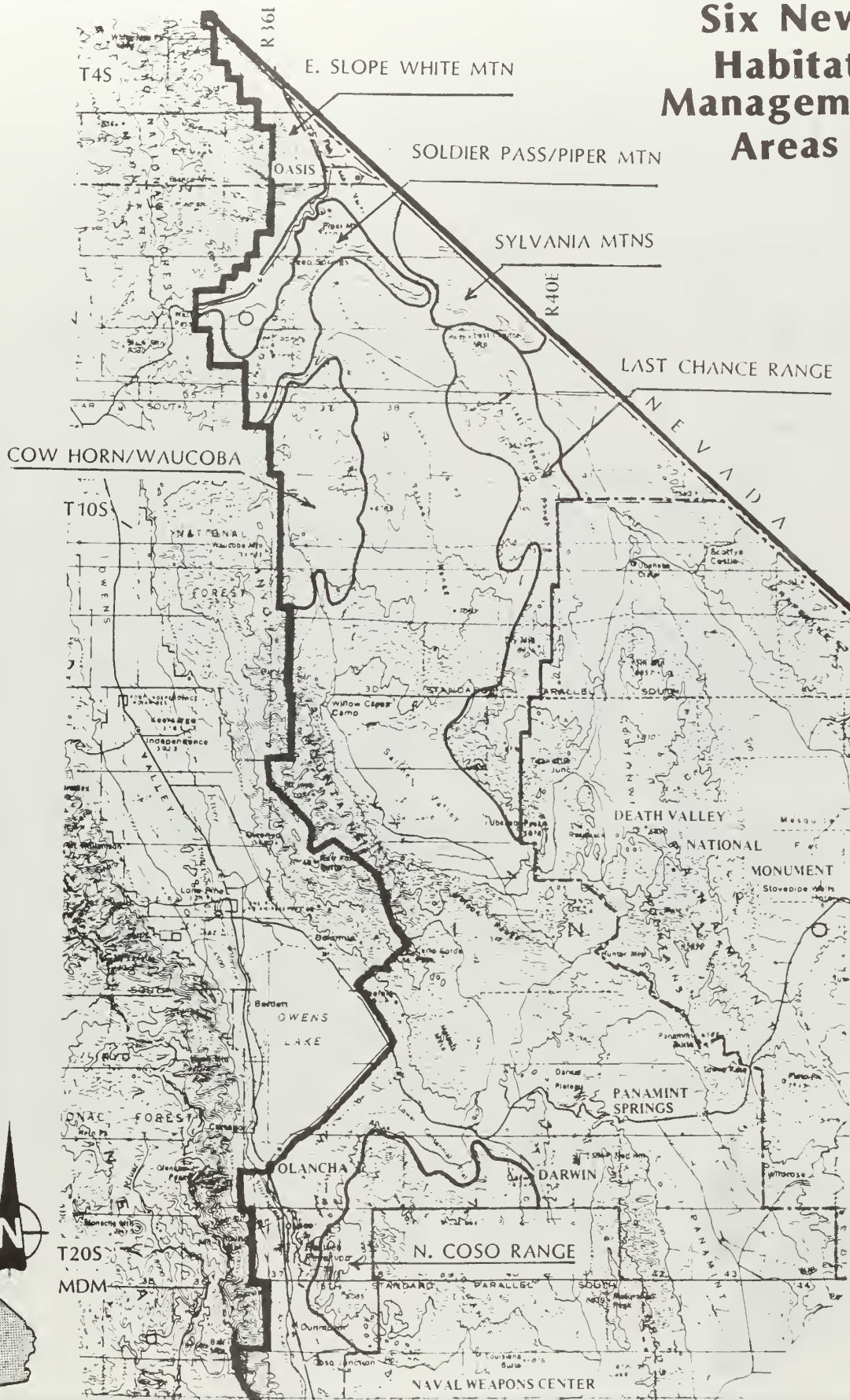
ACEC Boundary 

ALTERNATIVE A  
Delete ACEC



Inyo/Mono Counties

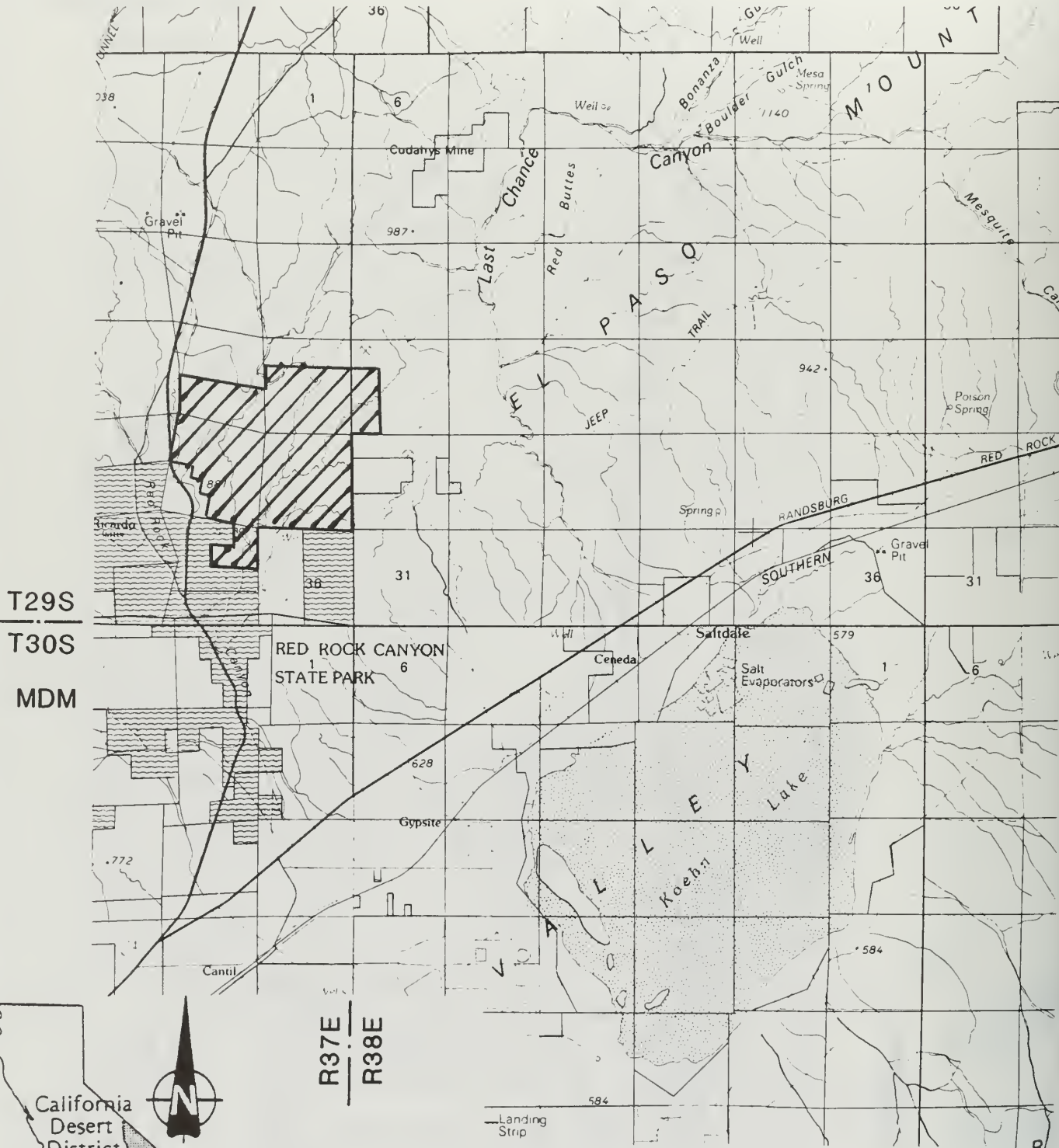
Establish Six New Habitat Management Areas



# AMENDMENT 6

## Red Rock Canyon

 CHANGE FROM "U" (Unclassified)  
TO "L"



T29S  
T30S  
MDM



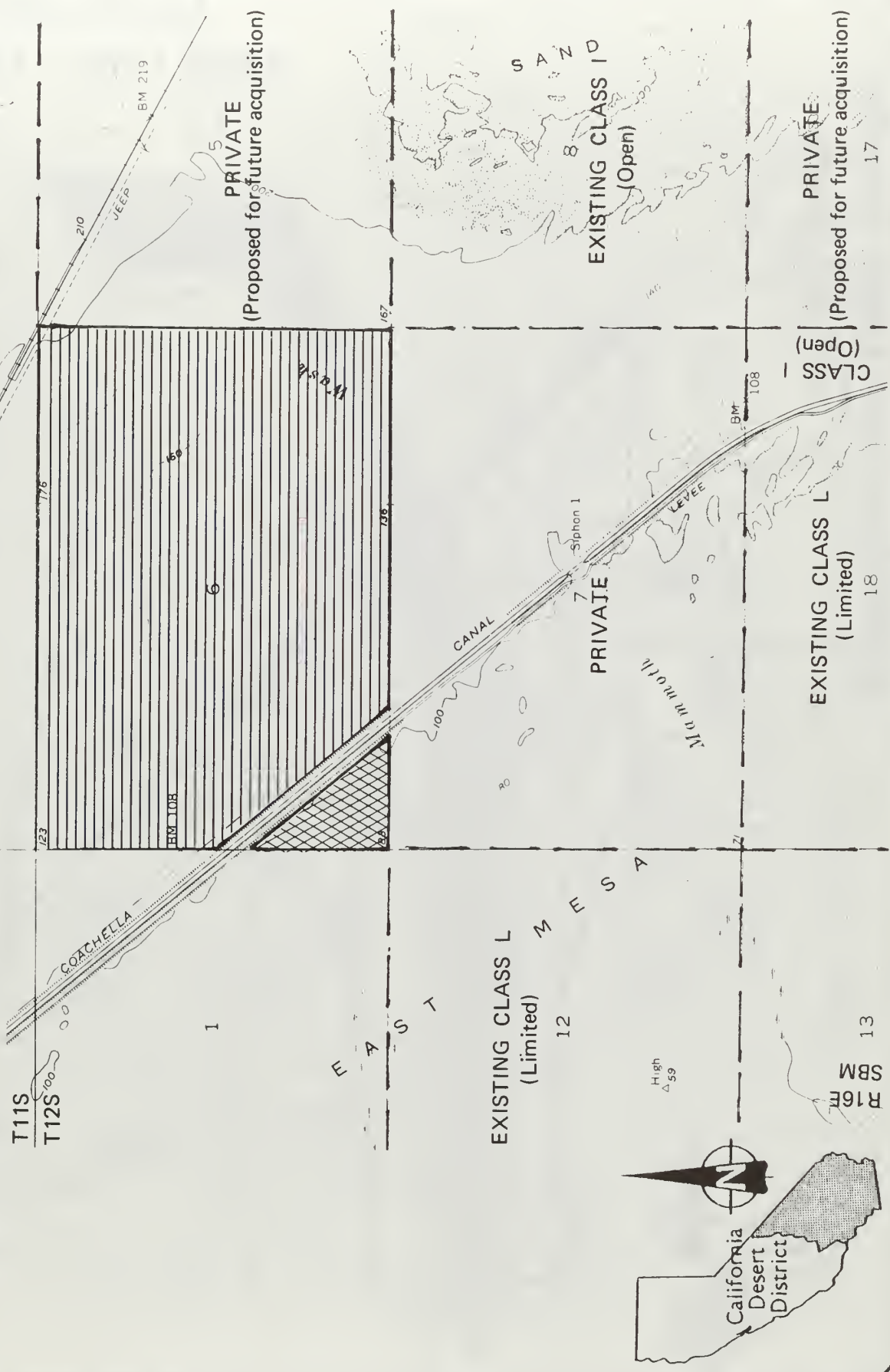
# AMENDMENT 8

## Mammoth Wash

Sec. 6, T12S, R16E

CHANGE FROM 'U' (Unclassified)  
TO CLASS I, OPEN  
FOR VEHICULAR USE

CHANGE FROM CLASS 'U' (Unclassified)  
TO CLASS L, LIMITED  
To Approved Routes



High  
Δ 59

SBM  
R16E  
13

EXISTING CLASS L  
(Limited)  
12

E 74 S T  
M E S A

EXISTING CLASS L  
(Limited)  
18

CLASS I  
(Open)

PRIVATE  
(Proposed for future acquisition)  
17

EXISTING CLASS I  
(Open)

PRIVATE  
(Proposed for future acquisition)

T11S

T12S

COACHELLA

CANAL

Siphon 1

PRIVATE

LEVEE

Mammoth

31

BM 187

Tortuga

210

VEEP

BM 219

123

175

BM 108

6

59

Mammoth

167

136

123

BM 108

108

108

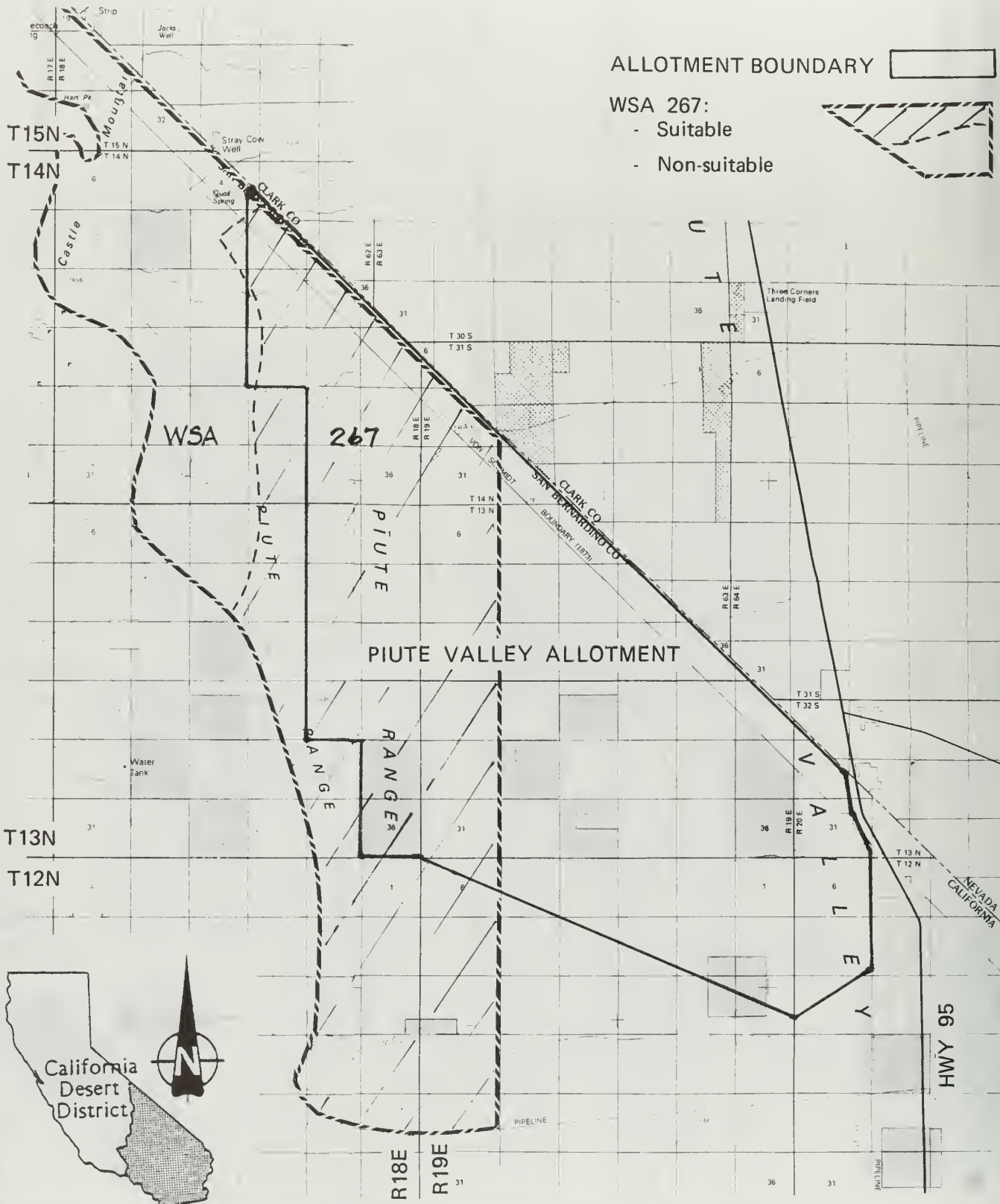
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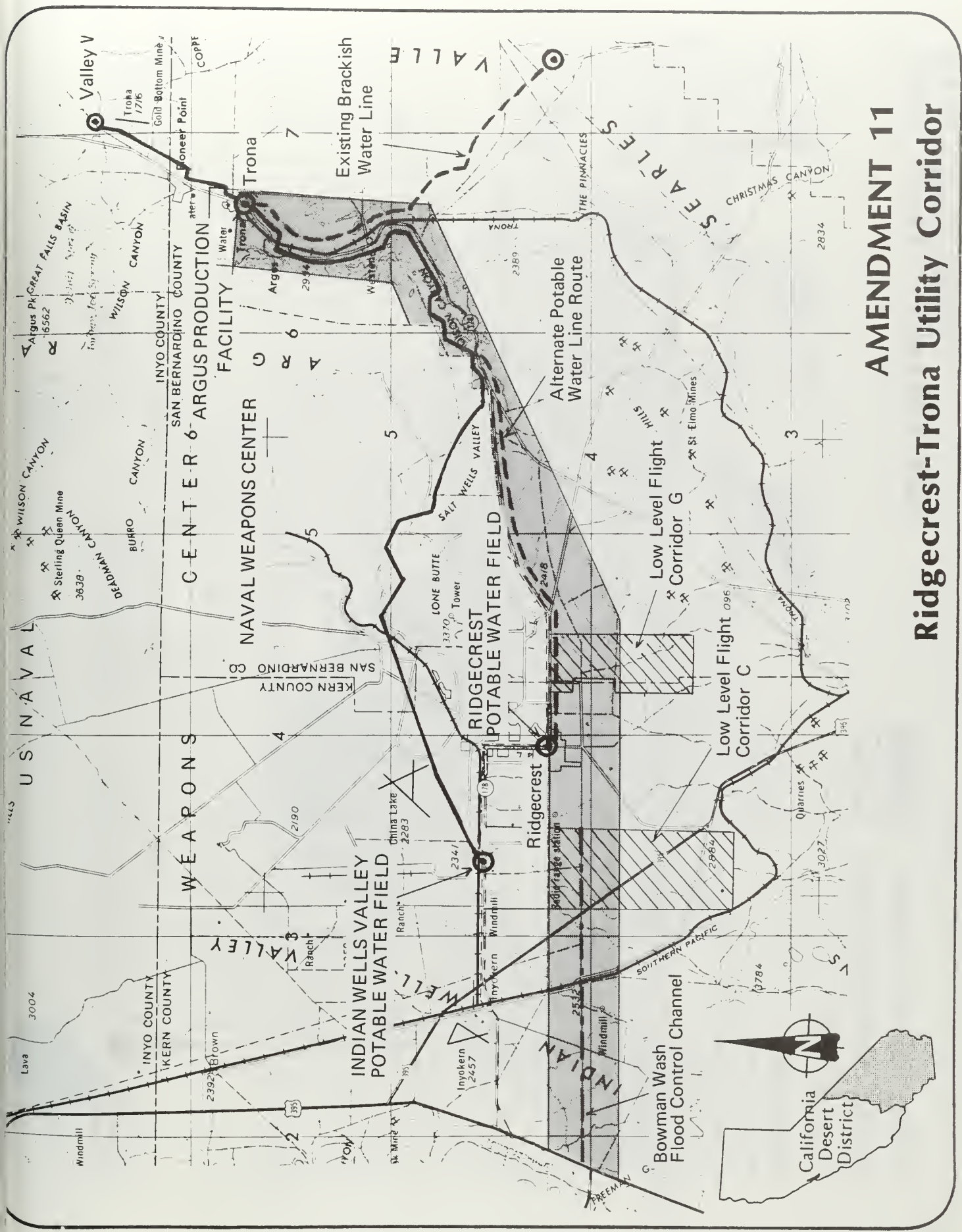
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17

# AMENDMENT 10

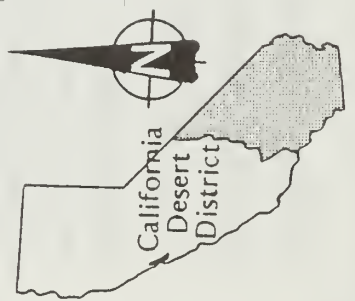
## Piute Valley Allotment










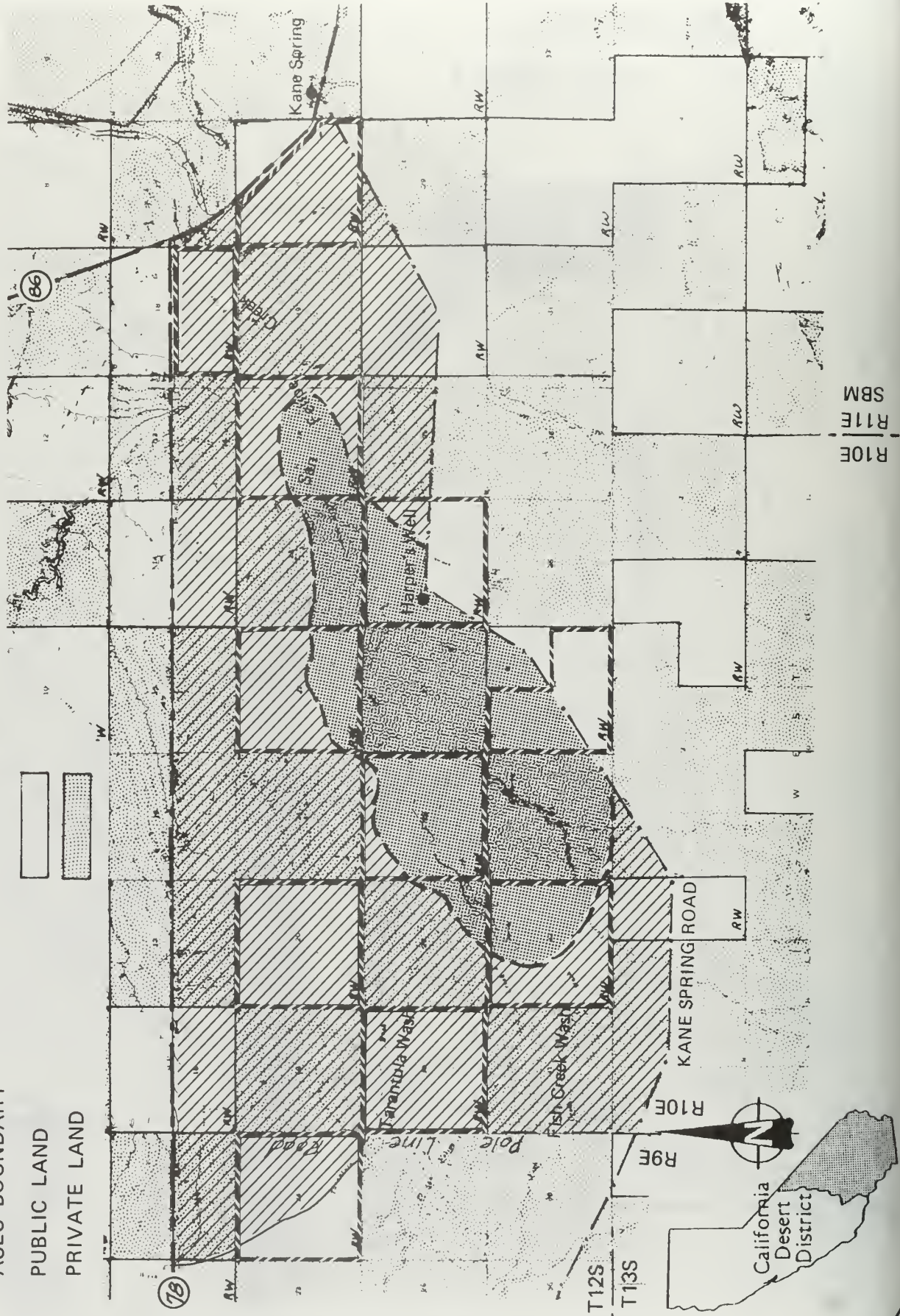
# AMENDMENT 11

## Ridgecrest-Trona Utility Corridor



# AMENDMENT 12 San Sebastian Marsh ACEC

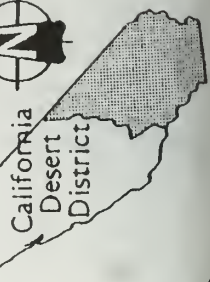
-  CURRENT VEHICULAR CLOSURE
-  EXPANDED VEHICULAR CLOSURE
-  ACEC BOUNDARY
-  PUBLIC LAND
-  PRIVATE LAND



R10E  
R11E  
R12E  
SBM

R9E  
R10E

T12S  
T13S





APPENDIX B

AMENDMENTS NOT CONSIDERED



TABLE B-1  
 AMENDMENTS HANDLED THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

<u>PRELIMINARY AMEND NO.</u>	<u>AMENDMENT</u>	<u>PROponents REASON FOR SUBMISSION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
	<u>LIVESTOCK GRAZING</u>		
87-P-21	Eliminate cattle from Short Canyon (Jan B. Lawson)	This highly scenic area is readily accessible from Highways 14 and 395. It is popular for hiking and for spectacular spring wild flower displays. Cattle grazing in the canyon is ruining the high scenic quality. Oak groves, streams, stream banks, and meadows are being destroyed. Less than a quarter mile of fence from the base of the falls to the parking area should be adequate to keep cattle from the upper canyon.	The recently completed Walker Pass Canon Allotment Amp requires the construction of drift fences to eliminate grazing in Short Canyon (see map 3-1).
87-P-28	Multiple Use Class Designation  Change the multiple use class designation from Class "I" to "unclassified" on a small parcel in Jawbone Canyon (Eugene S. McKendry, Cantil).	A tiny portion of the proponent's dwelling and all of a smaller second house lie on BLM public lands. The proponent would like to purchase this land but cannot because of the existing multiple use class designation. Proponents feels that he would be better able to control trespass by ORV users if the property were his own.	Only a minor class boundary adjustment is necessary to ensure this site is unclassified. It will be handled through BLM's plan maintenance procedure (43 CFR 16105-4).

TABLE B-2  
AMENDMENTS DROPPED

PRELIMINARY AMEND NO.	AMENDMENT	PROPOSERS REASON FOR SUBMISSION	REMARKS
87-P-2	<u>AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN</u> Expand the Western Rand Mountain ACEC to include all habitat in the Fremont Valley supporting some of the highest density tortoise populations remaining in the western Mojave Desert. Management actions would include protection and enhancement of tortoise populations and habitat through the elimination or restriction of land uses incompatible with the goal of preserving the desert tortoise and its habitat. (Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee).	The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the desert tortoise warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act in the western Mojave Desert. However, official listing procedures are precluded at this time due to higher priority work. D.T.s and their habitat in Fremont Valley are being negatively affected by human activities (competitive ORV races, ORV free play, shooting, camping). Collection of tortoise probably occurs. Due to the intensity of recreational use in this area, impacts to the D.T. population are probably greater than have been documented at the nearby Natural Area. The "moderate" use class designation allows excessive and inappropriate uses to continue in this area. An ACEC management plan would identify management actions needed to protect and enhance the tortoise population and habitat.	It would be premature to consider an expansion of the ACEC prior to the preparation of the ACEC management plan. This plan will be prepared by October, 1988. Should any boundary changes be necessary, the plan will make a recommendation.
87-P-6	Discontinue ACEC status for the Great Falls Basin ACEC and manage the lands according to Multiple Use Class "L" guidelines. (Kenneth Taylor, Peter Cummings, Normal Riggie).	ACEC status and management of this area are depriving residents of their water supply which comes from springs in the Argus mountains. The	Several boundary adjustments are considered by this EA. However, the question of whether or not an ACEC is

TABLE B-2  
AMENDMENTS DROPPED

PRELIMINARY AMEND NO.	AMENDMENT	PROponents REASON FOR SUBMISSION	REMARKS
87-P-27	Modify the boundary of Saline Valley ACEC (#4) to remove the Morning Sun Millsite (Fred Johnson).	<p>Inyo brown towhee, which this ACEC is supposed to protect, occurs on the China Lake Naval Weapons Center and has access to may springs there. Wildlife and scenic values can be protected without an ACEC.</p> <p>This pre-existing millsite within the Saline Valley ACEC has potential for increased and possible conflicting uses. This small boundary change would prevent future use conflicts and would not cause significant environmental impact.</p>	<p>warranted in the Great Falls Basin has already been considered, in the Desert Planning Process.</p> <p>Whether or not the millsite was within an ACEC, its development would be guided by a plan of operation. Removal of ACEC status would not make any practical difference in future uses.</p>
87-P-13	Prohibit ORV activity at Windy Point (near Palm Springs)(Sandy Carmichael, Snow Creek).	<p>Off-road vehicle use has been increasing in the Windy Point area for the last five years causing the following effects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Recreationists trespass onto adjacent communities of Snow Creek, Palm Springs Oasis, and Western Village. Residents are annoyed and fear a potential fire hazard from sparks from faulty equipment, smoking, and bonfires; 2) there is potential contamination of well water used at Palm Springs Oasis and Western Village from gasoline and oil products spilled into the stream by ORVs; 3) The situation is hazardous for recreationists because the stream and aqueduct water which they use is contain-</li> </ol>	<p>The parcels of public land near Windy Point are "unclassified"; that is, they have not been designated as either class C, L, M, or I by the Desert Plan. In addition, private lands are intermingled, upon which there are also no access controls. In unclassified areas, BLM's route approval process is applied to identify routes which should be opened to vehicular travel. No routes have been opened at Windy Point. Therefore, a formal designation of Windy Point as a closed area would not change the on-the ground situation.</p>

TABLE B-2  
AMENDMENTS DROPPED

PRELIMINARY AMEND NO.	AMENDMENT	PROponents REASON FOR SUBMISSION	REMARKS
87-P-15	Require all vehicular traffic to remain on existing roads within BLM's five areas of crucial desert tortoise habitat. Stop-ping, parking, and/or vehicular camping within 300 feet of "routes of travel" would be prohibited within these areas (CA Dept. Fish and Game).	nated by manure from grazing cattle; 4) Camping areas are unsanitary and filled with trash; 5) This highly scenic area is being spoiled by ORV activity; and 6) This is habitat for the fringed-toed lizard, a federally-listed species.	A feasibility study and hearings were conducted this past summer by BLM, Riverside County, and the City of Palm Springs on the Windy Point situation. Based on the results of this study, a decision on Windy Point will be made by the agencies. If that decision is to close the area, no amendment will be needed. If the decision is to open the area, an amendment would be required to open the area and designate it Class I. If the decision is to manage the area intensively, an amendment may or may not be necessary, depending on the management arrangement and the land to be aquired.
			Amendment is not necessary. The 1982 Plan Amendment, which established the 300-ft camping limits, stated that "within sensitive areas BLM reserves the right to specify a narrower camping corridor." Such a requirement could be made through an activity plan or through the vehicle route designation process.
			BLM has designated five areas as crucial habitat for the desert tortoise, a species listed by the BLM as "sensitive." The Plan states that the BLM will "give certain species, designated sensitive by BLM, special consideration and attention in the planning process because of their present condition and status." The objective is to minimize the

TABLE B-2  
AMENDMENTS DROPPED

<u>PRELIMINARY AMEND NO.</u>	<u>AMENDMENT</u>	<u>PROponents REASON FOR SUBMISSION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
87-P-16	<u>RECREATION</u> Revise the Recreation Element Goals to: a) Provide for a wide range of recreation opportunities and experiences: b) Provide recreation facilities to accommodate the special needs of minorities and handicapped and reduce the impact of all visitors on natural resources, particularly vegetation (Judy Anderson, Sierra Club).	<p>potential for Federal or State listing. Restricting vehicle traffic to existing roads in tortoise crucial habitat would reduce habitat damage, loss of individual tortoises, and proliferation of trails.</p> <p>The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently found that "listing of the desert tortoise throughout its range is warranted, but precluded by other pending proposals of higher priority." This new information about the tortoise's status warrants it further protection which this proposed amendment would provide. This proposal is also consistent with the above referenced guideline of the Plan.</p>	<p>a) The emphasis on dispersed camping is highly destructive to vegetation and has a greater impact on wildlife than carefully sited designated camping areas. Public opinion about dispersed camping has changed after noting the unanticipated impacts of the current policy, and the public health and safety concerns;</p> <p>b) Designated camping areas would not require special vehicles. Providing a "destination" and public information at the destination would be very efficient.</p> <p>BLM reconsidered all of the Desert Plan recordation goals in the 1985 amendment reviews. The revised goals were based on the findings of BLM's report titled "<u>Progress: 1980-1984.</u>"</p> <p>A new goal dealing with the needs of special populations has been accepted for consideration. See amendment 9.</p>

TABLE B-2  
AMENDMENTS DROPPED

<u>PRELIMINARY AMEND NO.</u>	<u>AMENDMENT</u>	<u>PROponents REASON FOR SUBMISSION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
87-P-19	<p><u>LIVESTOCK GRAZING</u></p> <p>Prohibit all grazing south of Interstate-10 in the Ford Dry Lake allotment (CA Dept. Fish &amp; Game).</p>	<p>cient, and provide greater contact between rangers and visiting public. Attention to details such as tread for pathways, curbs, and access to restrooms would make the desert available to the handicapped.</p>	<p>This amendment was proposed for both the 1984 and 1985 Amendment Reviews. The change was not felt to be warranted at that time. As indicated in the 1985 Amendment EIS, BLM staff has identified only one burro mule deer here, and tortoise habitat is southwest of the allotment. No new information not available then has been provided. Therefore, the amendment will not be considered.</p>
		<p>The BLM made a commitment to eliminate grazing on mountain sheep ranges south of Interstate-40 when the Plan was adopted. The BLM is also directed to "manage the public lands so as to prevent deterioration of sensitive species habitat...". The continuance of domestic sheep grazing in the southwest corner of the Ford Dry Lake Allotment will conflict with that directive, particularly in light of the small remnant population of mountain sheep still existing in the Chuckwalla Range.</p>	
		<p>The southern promotion of the allotment is important deer wintering range and will be degraded by sheep grazing. Burro deer have also been using this part of the allotment. Their numbers have increased due to several years of good rainfall. The Chuckwalla's remnant mountain sheep population is not adequately separated from domestic sheep which may transmit diseases</p>	



TABLE B-2  
AMENDMENTS DROPPED

<u>PRELIMINARY AMEND. NO.</u>	<u>AMENDMENT</u>	<u>PROPOSERS REASON FOR SUBMISSION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
87-P-20	Remove all grazing in the East Mojave Scenic Area west of Kelbaker Road (Judy Anderson, Sierra Club).	which are disastrous to native sheep populations. Finally, the southern portion of the allotment is within boundaries of critical desert tortoise habitat. The I-10 southern boundary would be a more enforceable boundary and the designation would lead to fewer domestic sheep roaming into unauthorized areas.	BLM studied grazing in the Kelso Dunes recently (1982 plan amendment) and found it was an appropriate use of the dunes.
87-P-25	<p><u>MINERALS/WILDERNESS</u></p> <p>Change the BLM's Interim Management Policy (IMP) within the CDCA as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Allow non-impairing temporary mining to continue, contingent on reclamation to the point of being substantially unnoticeable within 60 days after Congress designates wilderness.</li> <li>2) Change management policy in the California Desert to read: "Mining operations will be considered non-impairing if BLM determines that there will only be temporary impairment."</li> </ol>	The BLM's policy on temporary impact (non-impairment) mining operations in recommended WSAs which demands that all operations and proposed operations "be reclaimed to the point of being substantially unnoticeable by the time the Secretary of the Interior is scheduled to make a recommendation to the President on the suitability of a WSA for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System" is a	Changing the IMP is beyond the scope of what the Desert District can consider through the BLM planning process. It is a Secretarial policy, adopted after consultation with the Departmental solicitor.

TABLE B-2  
AMENDMENTS DROPPED

PRELIMINARY AMEND NO.	AMENDMENT	PROponents REASON FOR SUBMISSION	REMARKS
	<p>any impacts that will be reclaimed to the point of being substantially unnoticeable within 60 days after Congress recommends a WSA for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, and the impacts will not degrade wilderness values."</p> <p>3) Allow WSAs recommended unsuitable due to lack of wilderness criteria to fall under 43 CFR 3809 management criteria (Inyo County Multiple Use Coalition; Fred Johnson).</p>	<p>direct conflict with FLPMA in that in that Wilderness Preservation will not be given until Congress makes its decision at some date after 1991. The BLM is now (1987) going to demand a halt to all operations of both suitable and unsuitable WSAs before the end of 1988; they will not approve any more Temporary Plans of Operation in any WSA.</p>	
		<p>This action would more closely follow the intent of FLPMA by allowing Congressional decision before negating non-impairing use on all WSAs.</p>	
		<p>If these criteria are met, the Secretary would have no problem recommending any WSA deemed suitable by the BLM.</p>	
		<p>To keep these lands in the highly restrictive use classification of "Wilderness Study" when both Wilderness and study have been ruled out is in conflict with the intent of FLPMA Sec. 603(a) and (c).</p>	
87-P-26	<p>After each WSA mineral study is completed, all areas recognized and mapped as high mineral potential should be nominated as "Areas of Critical Mineral Potential" by the BLM. (Fred Johnson, Tecopa).</p>	<p>The thrust of the AOMP program is to identify areas not accessible to exploration, location, and development. These would include military reservations</p>	

TABLE B-2  
 AMENDMENTS DROPPED

<u>PRELIMINARY AMEND. NO.</u>	<u>AMENDMENT</u>	<u>PROPOSER'S REASON FOR SUBMISSION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
			as well as Bureau of Reclamation withdrawals. Lands under wilderness review are not already withdrawn.

TABLE B-3  
AMENDMENTS DEFERRED

PRELIMINARY AMEND NO.	AMENDMENT	PROponents REASON FOR SUBMISSION	REMARKS
<u>LIVESTOCK GRAZING</u>			
87-P-17	Eliminate the Lazy Daisy Grazing Allotment for a period of at least five years (CA Dept Fish & Game).	<p>This action should be part of a long term program to improve mountain sheep habitat and its management and to clarify the role of cattle in transmission of livestock-associated diseases to this native species</p> <p>A 1981 amendment to the Desert Plan expanded the Lazy Daisy Allotment to include the Old Woman Mountains. The amendment stipulated that "at the end of five years (1987), there will be a full reanalysis of bighorn populations and range conditions."</p>	Studies are still underway in this area. When they are completed, the proposal will be reevaluated to determine if an amendment is warranted.
		<p>In 1984, CDFG hired Dr. John Wehausen to study the impacts of cattle grazing on the bighorn population in the Old Woman Mountains. His findings indicate that although competition does not seem to be a significant factor, introduction of diseases may adversely affect bighorn populations. It is likely that cattle have acted as a reservoir for viruses causing epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD), blue tongue (BT), and parainfluenza-3 (PI-3) within the Old Woman bighorn herd. The disease rate is higher than for any of the more productive bighorn ranges, suggesting that the reduced range carrying capacity in the Old Woman may be due to livestock-associated diseases.</p>	

APPENDIX C

SOURCE OF AMENDMENTS  
ACCEPTED FOR CONSIDERATION



SOURCE OF AMENDMENTS  
ACCEPTED FOR CONSIDERATION

Final Amend. No.	Preliminary Amendment No.	Title	Proponent
1	87-P-1	West Mesa ACEC	BLM, El Centro RA
2	87-P-9	Short Canyon ACEC	Mary Ann Henry
3	87-P-3 87-P-5 87-P-7	Great Falls Basin ACEC	BLM, Ridgecrest RA Phillis Riggle John Keys
4	87-P-8	Coyote Mountains ACEC	BLM, El Centro RA
5	87-P-10	New Habitat Management Areas	California Dept of Fish and Game
6	87-P-11	Red Rock Canyon	BLM, Ridgecrest RA
7	87-P-4	Homewood Canyon Land Sale	Beatrice A. Kirk
8	87-P-12	T12S, R16E Section 6 MUC Class Change	BLM, El Centro RA
9	87-P-16	New Recreation Goal	Sierra Club
10	87-P-18	Piute Valley Allotment	Joe Evans
11	87-P-22 87-P-23 87-P-24	Ridgecrest-Trona Utility Corridor	Kerr-McGee Co. City of Ridgecrest Indian Wells Water Agency
12	87-P-14	San Sebastian Marsh Closure	BLM, El Centro RA





APPENDIX D

HOMEWOOD CANYON LAND SALE EA



## I. INTRODUCTION

Several residents in Homewood Canyon have lived there since the 1950s on public land. Typically, these people own their houses, garages, fences and other improvements which they have located on their unpatented mining claims. In the 1960s many of these residents applied to purchase the land they live on under the authority of the Church/Johnson Act (since repealed by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA)). Some of the applications were denied because the applicants did not meet the time in residence requirements of the Church/Johnson Act, because of C&MU (Classification and Multiple Use Act) restrictions and other reasons. Three of these applicants were offered leases instead under the Mining Claim Occupancy Act (MCOA); two accepted and one declined. The owners of these Homewood Canyon residences have now asked BLM to sell them the land they live on under the authority of Section 203 of FLPMA.

Three of these sale requests have been separated from the others and are being analyzed in this Environment Assessment because the parcels are within the Great Falls Basin Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and are within a Class L area as designated by the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980. As such, an amendment to the Desert Plan will be required to authorize the sale. Thus, if the Decision Record subsequent to this EA approves the sale, a plan amendment will be nominated. A separate EA has been completed and is available for review in the Bureau of Land Management's Ridgecrest Resource Area office on the sale of four parcels outside the ACEC. These include the Mark Goins and Rosalie Jordan residences, the County of Inyo landfill and a County of Inyo equipment storage yard.

The status of the residents follows:

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. <u>Beatrice Kirk</u>            | Are partners in an unpatented claim.   |
| 2. <u>Ralph and Ramona Hevener</u> | Their residences are adjacent to each other. Kirks were issued a lifetime lease (MCOA). Heveners refused to sign the MCOA lease they were offered because it was limited to five years, renewable. |
| 3. <u>Elizabeth Raibourn</u>       | Was issued a lifetime lease (MCOA).  |

## II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The proposed action is the Bureau - motion direct (non-competitive) land sale of three parcels of public land in Homewood Canyon under the authority of Sections 203 (a)(3) and 203 (f)(2) of Public Law 94-579 (FLPMA). The parcels are located about 10 miles north of Trona, California in the Argus Mountain Range. The proposed action is to sell the minimum acreage to include existing, fixed improvements. The proposed action would also authorize through subsequent BLM rights-of-way the domestic water systems the residents have installed on adjacent public lands. The purpose and size of the sale of each parcel follows:

Parcel E (Kirk) - 2.24 acres. The sale would replace a lifetime lease with fee simple ownership (Figure 1(a)). The proposal would authorize a water system that Kirks and Heveners have installed on public land.

Figure 1



(a) Kirk and Hevener residences.



(b) Alpha Spring Canyon - looking southeast from above spring towards Kirk and Hevener residences.

Drinking water is piped in from Alpha Spring approximately one mile to the northeast (Figures 1(b) and 2(a)). Irrigation water and backup drinking water is piped in from a well a few hundred feet off-site (Figure 2(b)). Both water lines tie into storage tanks off Parcels E and F (Figure 3(a)).

Parcel F (Hevener) - 1.79 acres. The sale would resolve an unauthorized occupancy. See Parcel E for water system description.

Parcel G (Raibourn) - 1.76 acres. The sale would replace a lifetime lease with fee simple ownership (Figure 3(b)). The proposal would authorize a water system that was installed on adjacent public land. A 1-2" pipeline shallowly buried for most of its length (Figure 4(a)) runs from Benko Spring (Figure 4(b)) approximately 1/2 mile to a water tank just off Parcel G.

A condition of the sale would require the buyers to clean up their lots and remove all of their personal belongings or debris that are outside their lots. The sale price of the parcels would be for no less than fair market value. The buyers would need to relinquish that portion of their mining claims on the sale parcels.

#### ALTERNATIVE 1

The first alternative is to sell the three parcels but not authorize the domestic water systems the residents have constructed that tap the springs on adjacent public lands. Kirks and Heveners would be authorized via a right-of-way to continue use of their well a few hundred feet from their residence, but would have to remove their pipeline that taps a spring approximately one mile northeast. Raibourn would have to remove her pipeline that taps Benko Spring and seek a new source of water. This could be drilling a well on or immediately adjacent to her parcel.

#### ALTERNATIVE 2

The second alternative is denial of the sale, continuation of the Kirk and Raibourn lifetime leases, issuance of a lifetime lease to the Heveners under the authority of Section 302 of FLPMA, and authorization via rights-of-way of the off-site domestic water systems for the duration of the leases.

#### ALTERNATIVE 3

The third alternative is denial of the sale, continuation of the Kirk and Raibourn lifetime leases, issuance of a lifetime lease to the Heveners, and authorization of the limited off-site domestic water system described in Alternative 1.

#### ALTERNATIVE 4

The fourth alternative is no action. Under this alternative the Hevener residence and all the off-site water systems would remain unauthorized.

Figure 2



(a) Pipeline diverting water from Alpha Springs.



(b) Well associated with Kirk and Hevener residences.

Figure 3



(a) Tanks used to store water piped from Alpha Springs.



(b) Raibourn residence.

Figure 4



(a) Pipeline diverting water from Benko Spring.



(b) Benko Spring.



### III. ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

#### A. Wildlife

##### 1. Affected Environment

- a. Habitat and Species Occurrence - The proposed land sale is within the Great Falls Basin Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) (Figure 5) (Bureau of Land Management, 1980). Habitat on parcels of land proposed for sale was originally vegetated with creosote bush (Larrea tridentata) and other desert shrubs, but has been almost totally altered by vehicle access routes, construction of residences, other buildings, fences and by planting of gardens and orchards. Habitat immediately adjacent to these developed parcels is typical of upland areas in the general area and is vegetated with creosote bush, bursage (Ambrosia dumosa), paperbag bush (Salizaria mexicana) and other shrubs as well as numerous species of annuals.

The water systems associated with these residences consist of a water collector at each of two separate springs, Alpha and Benko, and a pipeline system. At this time it is not known if residences in the area other than those described in this proposed action are linked to the same water systems.

Water from Alpha Spring is piped 0.7 mile to the initial point of use (Figure 1(a)). This spring supports a thicket of Arroyo willow (Salix lasiolepis) approximately 7500 square feet in area (250 feet long x 30 feet wide). Surface water was essentially absent at the time of the field survey on April 15, 1986. Only a muddy area about 2 feet x 4 feet existed at an old cistern.

Benko Spring occurs in upper Homewood Canyon. Water is diverted and piped to a residence 0.7 mile down the canyon (Figure 3(b)). This spring supports a large thicket of Arroyo willow approximately 11,000 square feet in area (250 feet long x 45 feet wide). Surface water was present during the field visit on April 16, 1986, and flowed downstream below the riparian zone for about 100 feet. However, this flow is seasonal, and was absent during a previous field visit on November 1, 1983 (Aardahl, personal observation).

Wildlife occurring in the area include numerous species of reptiles, birds and mammals, many of which are common throughout the region. Certain species may be more abundant around the residences and orchards, assuming the residents do not purposely repel, trap or poison them. Examples of such species are house sparrows (Passer domesticus), mockingbirds (Mimus mimus), warblers (Parulidae), house mice (Mus musculus), pocket gophers (Thomomys bottae), and coyote (Canis latrans). Domestic pigeons or rock doves (Columba livia) were seen in the area on April 15, 1986. Species diversity and abundance are naturally high around

the springs and riparian habitats. These habitat features are natural and are extremely important to most wildlife in the area. Up to 80 percent of the animal species in the area are dependent on these spring systems (Thomas, J., et. al., 1979). The most noticeable abundant animals in these areas are birds, because of their general diurnal habit. Most mammals in the area are nocturnal and are seldom observed. Mammals likely abundant in the vicinity of the springs are rodents, kit fox (Vulpes macrotis), grey fox (Urocyon cinereoargenteus), coyote (Canis latrans), and bobcat (Lynx rufus). Feral burros (Equus asinus) were observed at each spring during the field visits (April 15-16, 1986). See Appendix A for species occurring in the area.

- b. Endangered, threatened and sensitive species. The Inyo brown towhee (Pipilo fuscus eremophilus) occurs in the affected areas, and is associated with willow riparian habitat and adjacent hillsides in the vicinity of both Alpha and Benko Springs (Figure 6). This bird is proposed for listing as a threatened species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and its proposed critical habitat was published on November 23, 1984 (Federal Register 49, No. 227:46174-46177). See Figure 5 for proposed critical habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will likely issue another notice which amends the known distribution and proposed critical habitat when additional data is obtained. (The Inyo brown towhee is listed as endangered by the California Fish and Game Commission (Department of Fish and Game, 1985)).

The riparian areas associated with Alpha and Benko Springs and the adjacent uplands are included in the proposed critical habitat (Figure 7) and Inyo brown towhee are known to occur in these areas (Cord and Jehl, 1978; La Berteaux, 1986; Aardahl, personal observation) in addition to others in a limited area in the southern Argus Range. All sightings of the Inyo brown towhee in the 1978-1979 field studies by Cord (Cord and Jehl, 1978) were made within a circle 11 miles in diameter centered at "Benko Canyon." Thirty-six percent of the sightings were made within a circle three-miles in diameter. Both Alpha and Benko Springs are within the 3-mile circle.

Willow and tanglebush thickets (Forestiera neomexicana) at Alpha and Benko Springs are essential to the Inyo brown towhee. These areas are used for escape and nesting cover, and most foraging occurs within 0.25 mile of these areas on adjacent hillsides. Seeds and insects form the bulk of the diet.

## 2. Environmental Consequences

- a. Proposed Action - The continuing existence of the residences, by themselves, will not have a significant adverse impact on wildlife resources. Any impact that occurred was long ago, and was limited to removal of a few acres of habitat supporting species common to the region.

Fig. 5. Map of the ACEC boundary in relation to proposed critical habitat for the Inyo brown towhee.

ACEC Boundary -----

Proposed Critical Habitat for the Inyo brown towhee

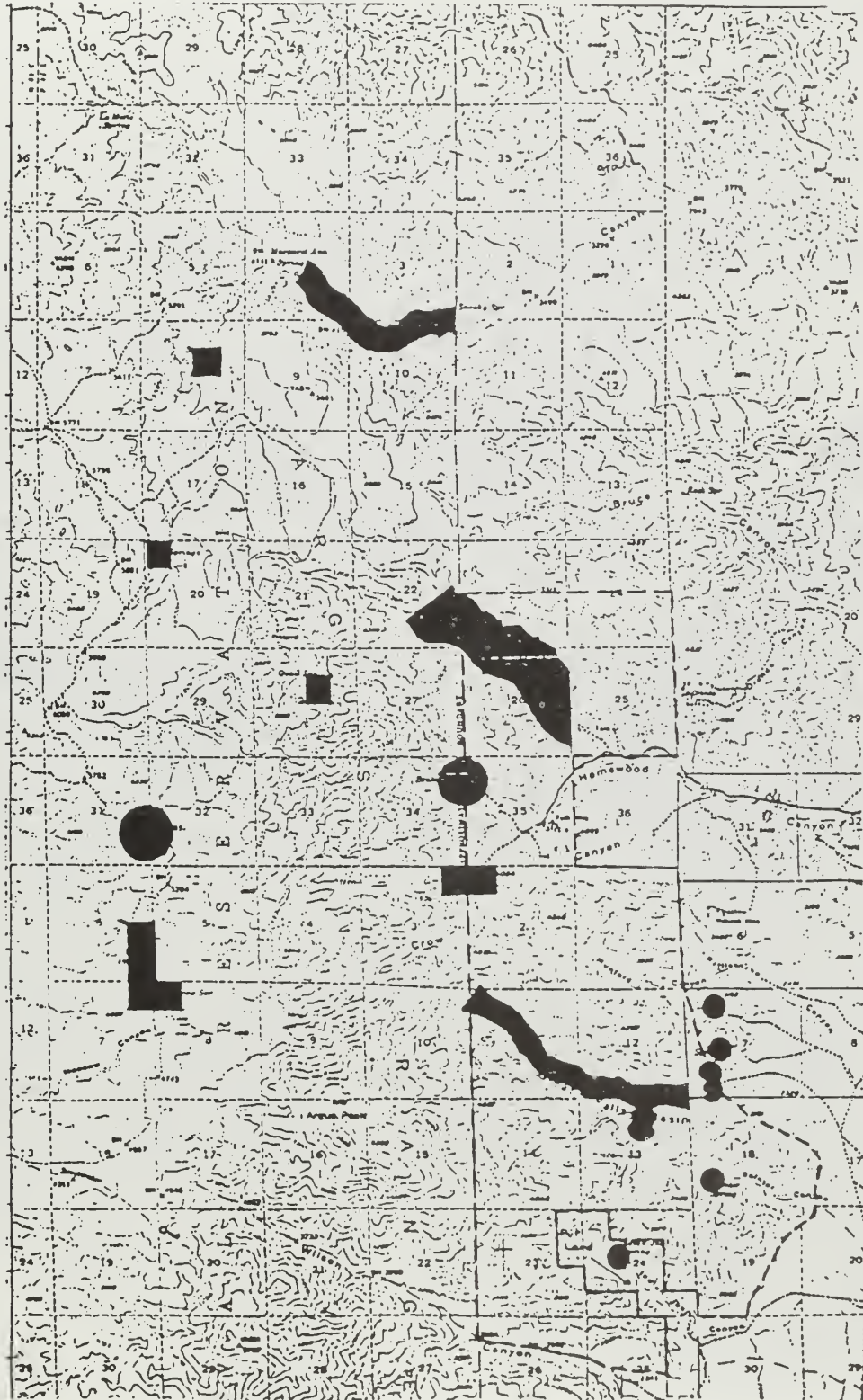


Fig. 6. Distribution of the Inyo brown towhee in the vicinity of the proposed action (from Cord, 1978; LaBertaux, 1986).

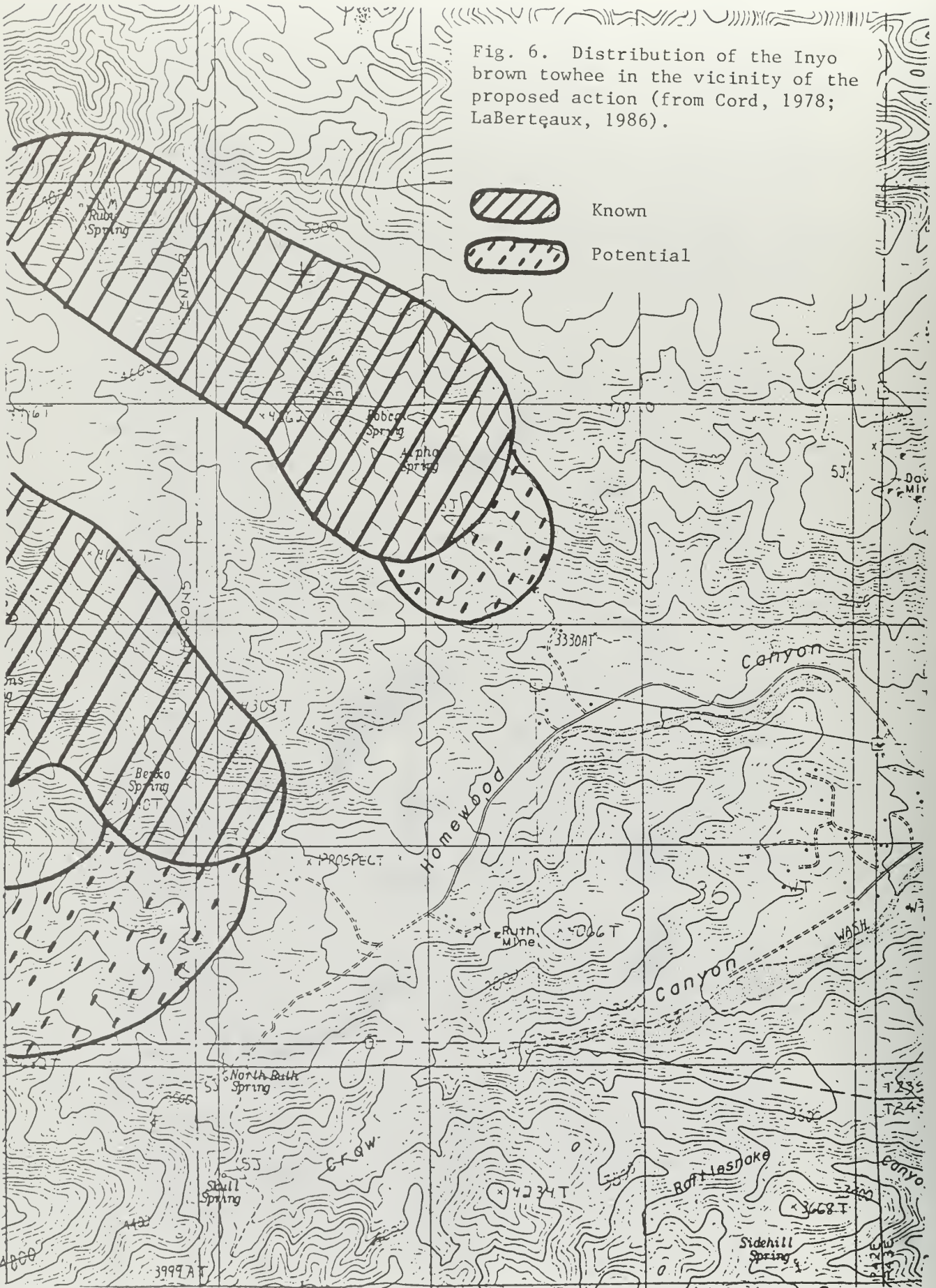
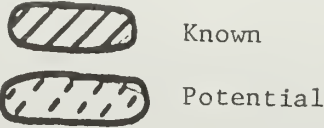
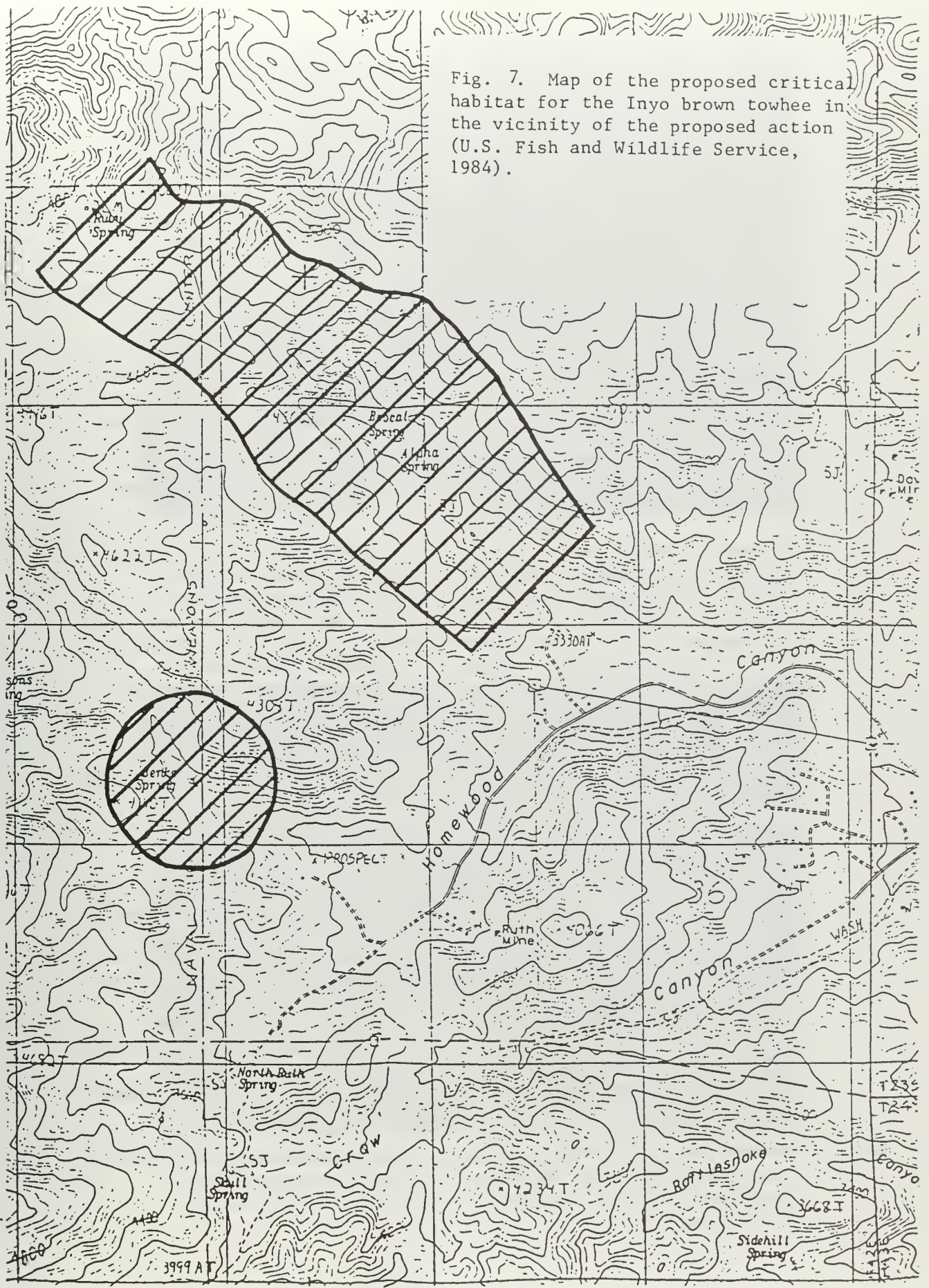


Fig. 7. Map of the proposed critical habitat for the Inyo brown towhee in the vicinity of the proposed action (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1984).



Water diversion from the springs has also occurred for an unknown period of time. This has likely resulted in a decrease in the extent of willow and decreased or perhaps eliminated surface water from the spring areas during most of the dry season (April through November). Conditions of riparian vegetation and surface water at each spring before diversions were made are unknown. Willows, and to a lesser extent tanglebush, are indicators of surface or near-surface water in these habitats. Removal of water from these habitats that would otherwise be available very likely results in a decrease in willow and tanglebush (Figure 8 (a)). Decreasing or eliminating surface water has a direct, adverse impact on wildlife requiring surface water. In general insects, birds and mammals require surface water, although they may utilize it in different ways, both direct and indirect. During field inspections of the two areas on April 15-16, 1986, bird abundance appeared much greater in riparian areas where surface water was present (Aardahl and Thomsen, personal observation). Bird activity was much greater at Bobcat Spring (0.15 mile up canyon from Alpha Spring) and at Benko Spring, where surface water was present, than at Alpha Spring and unnamed springs in a canyon near Benko Spring where it was absent.

Visually, the willow habitat at the upper end of Alpha Spring appeared moisture-stressed (i.e. slightly brown in color), (Figure 8(b)) whereas the lower portion was healthy (dark green). In addition the willow thicket was discontinuous. Two dry segments within the riparian area totaling about 90 feet occur, also (Figure 9). Water is diverted from a buried collector at the upper end of the willow habitat, and flow was estimated at about 5,760 gallons per day from a point in the pipeline about 50 feet below the collector. No significant leaks in the pipeline were observed. It is assumed that the entire flow is used for domestic and irrigation water at the two residences down the canyon.

Under the proposed action, the residents would be allowed to maintain the water diversion systems. This could have an adverse effect on the riparian areas. Dense growth at Alpha and Benko Springs has covered the pipelines. Replacement or repair of rusted or clogged pipes may require an unknown degree of vegetation removal. There is evidence of an old fire at Alpha Spring. It is unknown if this was natural or man-caused in an effort to remove dense vegetation to expose a pipeline route, increase surface water flow, etc. However, other riparian habitats in the Argus Range have been purposely set afire, which is probably related to increasing surface water flow for diversions associated with mining operations (Aardahl, personal observation).

The two water diversions, if authorized, would continue to limit the opportunities of the Bureau of Land Management and Department of Fish and Game for habitat restoration and enhancement.

Figure 8



(a) Alpha Spring - dry area in willow stand.



(b) Willows at upper end of Alpha Spring which appear moisture-stressed.

Figure 9



Discontinuous willow stand at Alpha Spring.



- b. Alternative 1 - This alternate action authorizes the residences but requires removal of the water diversions. No significant impact would occur. The riparian and aquatic habitats would return to a natural state, and no impacts due to maintenance activities of the diversions would occur. Habitat protection and enhancement opportunities would increase.
- c. Alternative 2 - Impacts would be the same as for the proposed action but would be limited to the duration of the lifetime leases.
- d. Alternative 3 - Situation would be the same as for Alternative 1.
- e. Alternative 4 - Impacts would be the same as for the proposed action of authorizing the residences and water diversions.

### 3. Mitigation

Mitigation is identified for the portion of the proposed action and alternatives related to diversion of water from Alpha and Benko Springs. The alternatives to the proposed action, in part, can be considered mitigations.

- a. Proposed Action - Remove the water diversion from Alpha Spring and authorize use of water from an existing well on public land at the terminus of habitat used by the Inyo brown towhee. Authorize development of a well for the Raibourn residence in a location near the parcel but well outside the riparian habitat and areas used by the Inyo brown towhee. Such a well would eliminate conflicts associated with a water diversion from Benko Spring. A wind powered pump and water storage tanks would be most appropriate.
- b. Alternative 1 - No mitigation required.
- c. Alternative 2 - See mitigation identified for the proposed action.
- d. Alternative 3 - No mitigation required.
- e. Alternative 4 - For the purpose of this environmental assessment this is the no action alternative, with the assumption that no action or mitigation would be taken.

### 4. Residual Impacts

Adoption of the mitigation recommended for the proposed action would not result in any significant wildlife impacts. Some minor disturbance could occur near the Raibourn residence from well drilling and placement of water storage tanks.

5. Compatibility with existing Land Use Plans, Laws, etc

Current Bureau of Land Management Policy for managing ACECs does not allow sale or disposal of public lands. Therefore, the proposed action and alternative 1 are not allowed under existing policy and land classification. If the proposed action is approved, an amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980 will need to be nominated and approved before the sale could be conducted.

The Endangered Species Act and Bureau of Land Management regulations and policy do not allow for authorizing land uses which could result in impacts to a species listed as threatened or endangered or which is proposed for such listing. The Inyo brown towhee is proposed for listing as threatened. Allowing continued diversion of water will likely impact the habitat for the Inyo brown towhee, and other wildlife, and would therefore be subject to a conference between BLM and the Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

## Literature Cited

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- Aardahl, J., and G. Thomsen. 1986. Personal observations made on 15-16 April 1986. Wildlife Biologist and Realty Specialist, respectively, Bureau of Land Management. Ridgecrest, California.
- Bureau of Land Management. 1980. The California Desert Conservation Area Plan. California Desert Plan Program, Riverside, California 173pp.
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- Thomas, J., C. Maser and J. Rodiek. 1979. Riparian zones In: J. Thomas, Ed. Wildlife habitats in managed rangelands of southeastern Oregon. Pacific Northwest For. and Rng. Exp. Sta. USDA, Forest Service Gen Tech. Report PNW-80.

B. Vegetation

1. Affected Environment - The vegetation in the area of the proposed action and alternatives is dominated by shrub species with an understory of annual forbs. The plant community is common in the region (see Table 1 for a list of common species noted). No rare, threatened or endangered species were noted in the area.

See the wildlife section of this EA for a discussion of riparian vegetation.

2. Environmental Consequences - As the action is pre-existing the vegetation has already been removed from most of the residence sites. It can be expected that additional vegetation could be removed in the future. Such removal would not be significant as the vegetation is common to the area. Exotic vegetation species have been planted at the sites by the residents, and it is likely they will plant more exotic species in the future.

Vehicle use associated with maintenance of the water pipelines could damage additional vegetation. If the buried pipelines are removed, vegetation that has grown in since the pipelines were installed several decades ago could be damaged or destroyed.

See the wildlife section of this EA for a discussion of environmental consequences and mitigation measures regarding riparian vegetation.

3. Mitigation - If issued, the rights-of-way should require use of existing roads/trails for any pipeline repairs to avoid further loss of vegetation.

If the pipelines are not authorized through rights-of-way, only the above-ground portions of the pipelines should be removed. The buried portions should be plugged and left in place to prevent disturbance to vegetation.

Important Vegetation  
Species Table 1

Species Common Name	Scientific Name	Occurrence			Pipeline Routes	Springs
		Site	E	F		
Creosote Bush	<u>Larrea divaricata</u>		X	X	X	
Cattle spinach	<u>Atriplex polycarpa</u>				X	
Ephedra	<u>Ephedra nevadensis</u>				X	
Black brush	<u>Coleogyne rammosissima</u>				X	
Cheese bush	<u>Hymenoclea sasola</u>	X	X		X	
Buckwheat	<u>Eriogonum fasciculatum</u>				X	
Thornbush	<u>Lycium spp.</u>	X	X		X	
Dalea	<u>Dalea spp.</u>	X	X		X	
Paperbag bush	<u>Salazaria mexicana</u>				X	
Brittle bush	<u>Encelia farinosa</u>	X	X		X	
Cotton thorn	<u>Tetradymia axillaris</u>				X	
Fiddleneck	<u>Amsinkia spp.</u>				X	
Phacelia	<u>Phacelia spp.</u>				X	
Bursage	<u>Ambrosia dumosa</u>	X	X		X	
Tanglebush	<u>Forestiera neomexicana</u>				X	X
Arroyo willow	<u>Salix lasiolepis</u>				X	X

C. Soils

1. Affected Environment - Soils within the affected area range from medium to high sensitivity according to the CDCA Plan of 1980. These soils are on moderately steep slopes, with high susceptibility to water erosion if disturbed. Much of the soils are very shallow to deep (10" - 60") but dominantly shallow to moderately deep (20" - 36"). Textures range from sand to silty clay loam in the affected area.
2. Environmental Consequences
  - a. Proposed Action - There would be minimal impacts to soils beyond the existing disturbances.
  - b. Alternative 1 - Under alternative 1 the residences would remain but water sources from springs would not be authorized. There would be no impact to soils with housing developments left as is. Mrs. Raibourn would have to drill a well near her residence for an authorized water source. There would be a short term negative impact to soil with drilling activity, including compaction of soil at the drilling location and possible alteration of soil if a drill pad is needed. Additional soil disturbance would be incurred with removal of segments of both of the underground springs' pipelines to prevent future use. Soils at the springs would be positively impacted due to the increase of available water. The riparian zones would probably expand, decreasing the erosion potential of the affected area.
  - c. Alternative 2 - Under alternative 2 the situation would remain status quo and there would be no further impacts to soils until termination of the lifetime leases. Once the leases were terminated, the springs' pipelines would be removed as described under alternative 1, creating some short term negative impacts, but mostly long term positive impacts at the springs themselves. There may be some short term impacts to soils with the removal of structures. There should be no increase in erosion potential with the foundations left in tact. Soils would be compacted from the activity of equipment used to remove structures and debris.
  - d. Alternative 3 - Under alternative 3 impacts to soils would be incurred, as described in alternative 2, once the lifetime leases have expired. Soils would be impacted regarding the water source relocations as described in alternative 1.
  - e. Alternative 4 - Under alternative 4, no action, there would be no impact to soils beyond what has already occurred.

D. Geology and Minerals

1. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

The proposed sale parcels lie within the east flank of the Argus Mountain Range. Parcels E through G lie within the Argus Gold Mining District. Sand and gravel and alluvial detritus within and below Homewood Canyon underlie Parcels E and F. Altered granodiorite underlies the northeastern part of Parcel G. A silicified shear zone is located 50 feet outside the Parcel G boundary. This zone was developed by the Ruth Mine, now undergoing exploration activity. Mining claims encumber parcels E, F and G.

All parcels are classified by BLM as being prospectively valuable for geothermal resources. No hot springs are known to exist within the subject area.

It was determined in the Mineral Report that because of the small size of the parcels, the reservation of the locatable mineral interest and any development of any parcel with "known mineral values" would interfere with appropriate non-mineral development. Geothermal development would not interfere with appropriate non-mineral surface use.

It is the opinion of the author of the Mineral Report that based on literature and field examination of the subject area that the subject parcels are not mineral in character, do not contain known mineral values, and are not prospectively valuable for locatable, salable or 1920 Leasing Act minerals. The subject parcels are classified as prospectively valuable for geothermal resources by BLM, with data from the State of California to indicate that although the area is not mineral in character, it is valuable for prospecting for geothermal energy, hence has "known mineral value" as defined in 43 CFR 2720.

See the Mineral Report for a more detailed discussion of the affected environment and environmental consequences of sale or lease of parcels E, F and G.

Regarding issuing rights-of-way for the currently unauthorized domestic water systems serving these parcels, the subject lands are encumbered by several post P.L. 167 mining claims. There are no free use permits, material sales or mineral leases on the lands. Issuance of rights-of-way for the water systems should have minimal impact to the mining claims because the water systems have been in place for over 30 years.

## 2. Mitigation

If issued, the rights-of-way should be subject to valid existing rights.

The Mineral Report recommends if the parcels are clearlisted for sale pursuant to Section 203 of the FLPMA, that:

- a. Geothermal resources be reserved with the right to develop those resources, pursuant to Section 209(a) of the FLPMA;
- b. Conveyance of all locatable, salable, and 1920 Leasing Act minerals pursuant to Sec. 209(b) of the FLPMA be made a condition of sale;
- c. That any Notice of Realty Action published in the Federal Register indicate that Parcel G is encumbered by the Benko Nos. 1 and 3 lode mining claims filed on April 6, 1984 by Queenstake Resources (USA), Inc., 5619 N. Paseo Ventoso, Tucson, Arizona 85715;
- d. That Queenstake Resources (USA), Inc., 5619 N. Paseo Ventoso, Tucson, Arizona 85715 be served a copy of the Notice of Realty Action during the time it is published in the Federal Register;
- e. That Queenstake Resources (USA), Inc. 5619 N. Paseo Ventoso, Tucson, Arizona 85715, because of their extensive holdings in the subject area, lack of proper posting observed, and nebulous and incomplete maps filed pursuant to the regulations at 43 CFR 3833 by Queenstake, be notified at the time of the NORA's publication in the Federal Register of all parcels offered for sale in Homewood Canyon;
- f. That Mrs. Beatrice Kirk, relinquish all interest in portions of the Sara Bill and/or Sara Bill II. lode mining claims encumbering Parcels E and F; and
- g. That prior to sale, Queenstake Resources relinquish any right or interest in the Benko Nos. 1 and 3 lode mining claims encumbering Parcel G, or any right or interest in any mining claims or portion thereof encumbering any parcel identified by Queenstake or others during or after the period of Notice of Realty Action and prior to sale.



Visual1. Affected Environment

The Argus Range, with the exception of rock outcrops, generally presents a smooth face to the highway. Traveling north the crest appears to descend and transition from mountain to low rolling hills. Vegetation on the mountains is sparse and, although some extends all the way to the crest, it thins out rapidly past the one third point. A few mining scars mark the surface of the ranges but for the most part do not degrade the scenic quality.

The visual resources contrast rating within the area is Class IV. The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which may require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. (These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention.) However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance and repeating the basic elements.

2. Environmental Consequences

Due to the length of time that the Kirk, Hevener and Raibourn residences have existed (since the 1950's), there will not be a decrease in the visual quality in the area as a result of the proposed action or the alternatives.

F. Recreation1. Affected Environment

The Argus Range is rated "excellent" for hiking opportunities. Other major recreation activities that are included in this range are: motorcycle and four-wheel-drive play and touring, target shooting, hunting, and nature study.

2. Environmental Consequences

Due to the length of time the residences have existed, there is no significant impact on recreation anticipated as a result of the proposed action or the alternatives.

G. Cultural Resources1. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

a. Proposed Action - The land occupied by the Kirk and Hevener families has houses, barns, sheds, a corral, orchard, and gardens, and has been landscaped. Boulders have been used in landscaping, and some rocks have been put in piles.

The original condition of the land surface and subsurface has been so altered that any cultural resources which might have been present would have lost all cultural context (Oxendine, personal observation, August 28, 1985). There were no cultural materials observed on these residences, but it cannot be determined whether cultural materials were there when the Kirks and Heveners moved in. It is certain that a cultural resource site could not have survived the intensity of residential disturbance which the Kirks and Heveners put on the land.

No cultural resources were observed along the pipeline which has been installed on the side of a canyon north of the residences. The hillside has been modified with a hiking trail and a mining adit. Repairs or replacement of the pipeline would not effect cultural resources. Continued use of the Kirk and Hevener residences and pipeline will have no effect on cultural resources.

At the Raibourn residence there is a milling slick on a large, flat boulder which is adjacent to a much larger boulder. Both boulders are close to the Raibourn house on its north side. The larger boulder has two horizontal and six vertical lines on it. The lines appear to have been chipped into the surface of the rock, and have a messy rather than neat appearance. Continued occupancy of the residence will not have an adverse effect on the bedrock milling slick or pattern on the boulder.

There is a cultural resource site along the pipeline to Benko Spring. Iny-3377 is primarily along the southwestern bank of the canyon. The pipeline currently has no effect on this cultural site, and should have no future effect on it as long as the pipeline stays in its present location. Access to the pipeline would probably be along a dirt road on the northeastern edge of the streambed, and if so would not disturb the cultural site. The cultural site consists almost entirely of bedrock milling, and these would not be adversely affected by pipeline repairs. The few artifacts associated with the bedrock milling could be adversely affected if a new pipeline were installed on the site.

- b. Alternative 1 - Continued occupancy through a land sale would have no adverse effects on cultural resources. Removal of the pipeline servicing the Kirks and Heveners would have no adverse effect, and removal of the pipeline servicing Raibourn is not expected to have an adverse effect since vehicles would use an existing road and the streambed.
- c. Alternative 2 - Continued occupancy through lifetime leases and rights-of-way for water systems should not have an adverse effect on cultural resources.

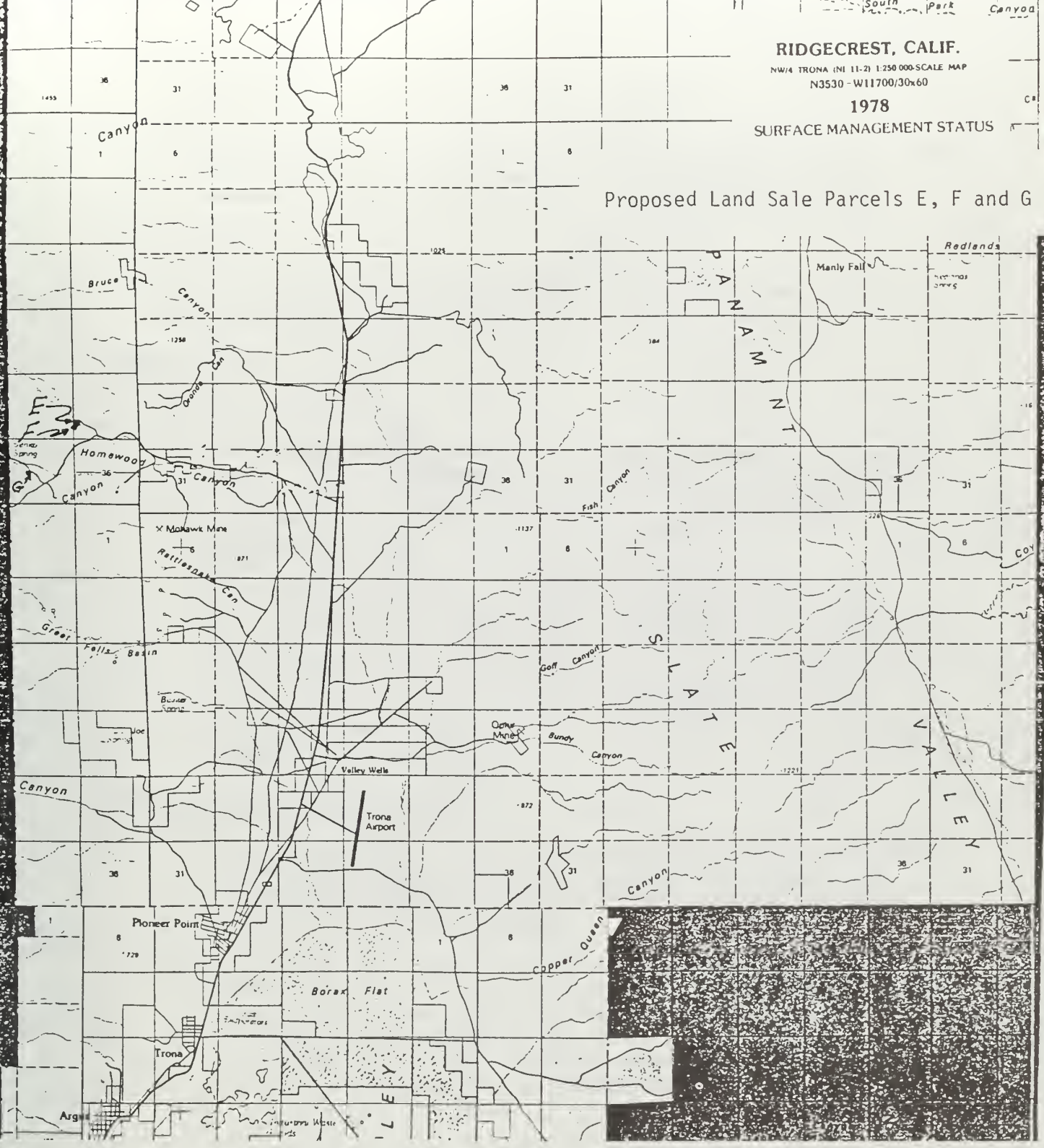
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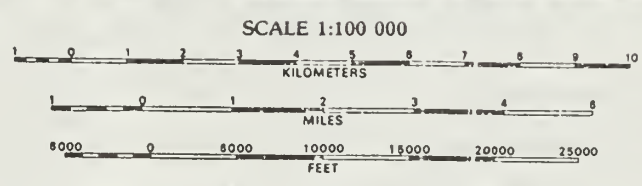
## 1978

### SURFACE MANAGEMENT STATUS

## Proposed Land Sale Parcels E, F and G



- ROAD CLASSIFICATION**
- highway, hard surface
  - highway, hard surface
  - highway road, hard or improved surface
  - other road
- State Route U.S. Route State Route



**ELEVATIONS SHOWN IN METERS**  
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
 To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808  
 To convert feet to meters multiply by 0.3048

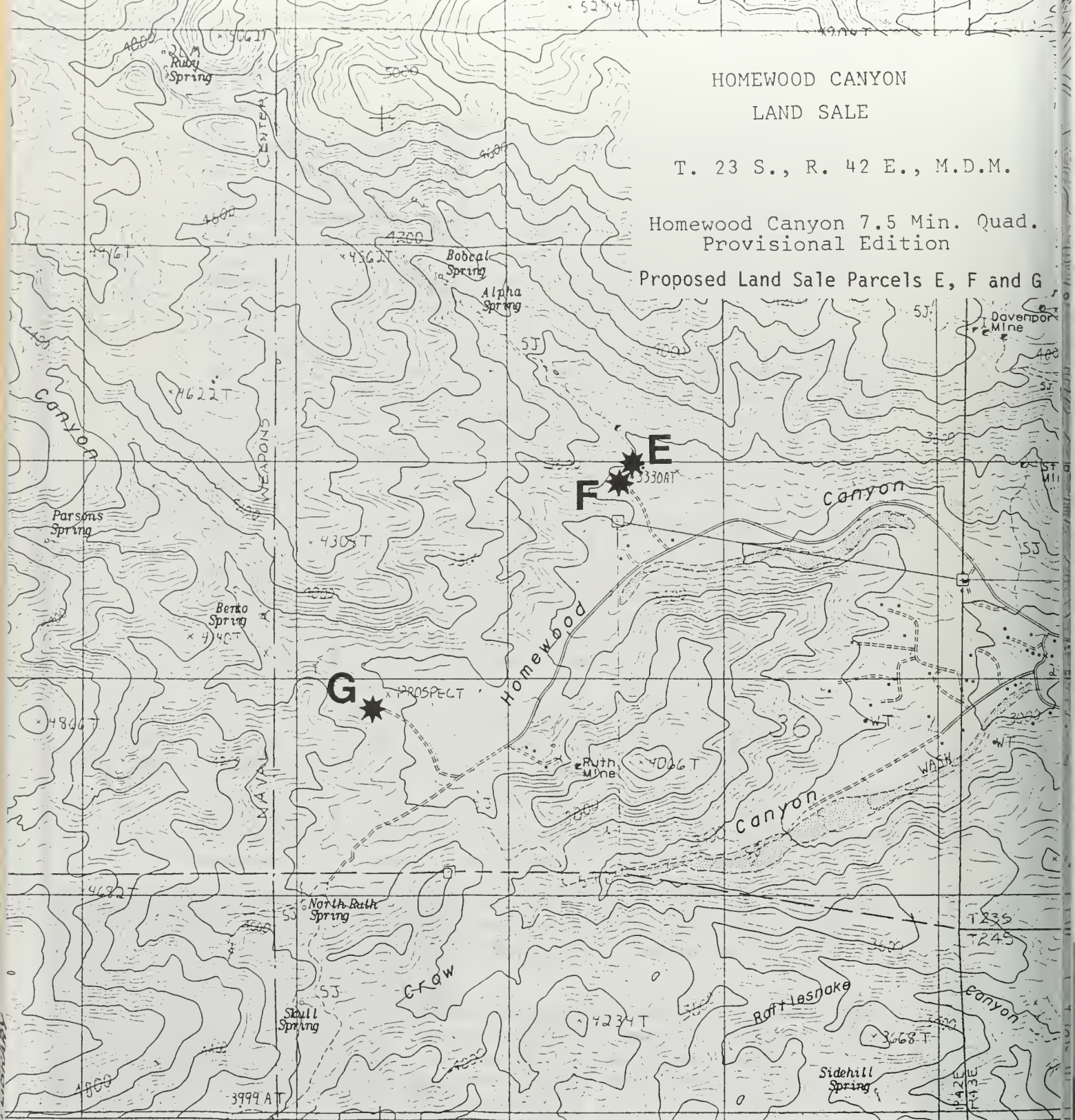
# HOMEWOOD CANYON

## LAND SALE

T. 23 S., R. 42 E., M.D.M.

Homewood Canyon 7.5 Min. Quad.  
Provisional Edition

Proposed Land Sale Parcels E, F and G



61 62 25' 63 64 65000 E  
INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY RESTON VIRGINIA—1983



40 FEET

ply by 3.2808  
ply by 0.3048

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

### ROAD LEGEND

- Improved Road.....
- Unimproved Road.....
- Trail.....
- Interstate Route    ◻ U.S. Road

1	2	3	1 Louisiana Butte
4		5	2 Maturango Peak
			3 Maturango Peak SE
			4 Mountain Springs Canyon
			5 Slate Range Crossing
			6 Burro Canyon
6	7	8	7 Trona West
			8 Trona East

HOMEWOOD CANYON  
PROVISIONAL EDITION

- d. Alternative 3 - See alternative 2 above.
- e. Alternative 4 - Continued residency, either under lifetime lease or unauthorized, and continued use of water systems are not expected to have an adverse effect on cultural resources.

## 2. Mitigation

Any vehicle access to Benko Spring should be restricted to the existing road on the northeastern edge of the streambed.

## H. Social/Economic

### 1. Affected Environment

Homewood Canyon is a strictly residential community of about 100 people. Most residents are retired or work in Trona, typically for Kerr McGee Chemical Corporation. The main reasons people choose to live in Homewood Canyon are the peace and quiet, and a cooler climate than Trona.

The three sale proponents have lived in Homewood Canyon for about 30 years. They state that they have invested much of what they own in their dwellings and other associated improvements. These residents have lived there with a nagging uncertainty as to their future tenure on the land or whether they will have anything to pass on to their heirs (two of the three have lifetime leases from BLM; the residence of the third party, the Heveners, is unauthorized).

### 2. Environmental Consequences

- a. Proposed Action - The residents would be sold the land their homes are located on, giving them permanent tenure, and would be issued rights-of-way authorizing continued use of their existing water systems.
- b. Alternative 1 - Same as proposed action for land tenure, but the three sale proponents would have to modify their current sources of water. Heveners and Mrs. Kirk may need to install a purification system on or redrill their well which is a few hundred feet from their residences. Mrs. Raibourn would probably need to pay the expense of drilling a new well near her residence.

- c. Alternative 2 - No change on the lifetime lease land tenure for Mrs. Raibourn or Mrs. Kirk, which would be particularly felt by Mrs. Kirk's family because upon her death the two younger generations of Kirks living with her would have to move their homes off public land.

Upon Mrs. Raibourn's death her heirs would also be required to remove her house and improvements. Heveners would receive the assurance of long term authorized tenure to their home through issuance of a lifetime lease. All three sale proponents would be issued rights-of-way which would authorize use of their existing water systems for the rest of their lives.

- d. Alternative 3 - Same as alternative 2 for land tenure and alternative 1 for water systems.
- e. Alternative 4 - The Hevener residence and all the off - site water systems would remain unauthorized. The frustration of the three sale proponents over the uncertainty of their tenure in their homes would continue. The issue of how to resolve this situation would likely continue to resurface as it has for 20 years.

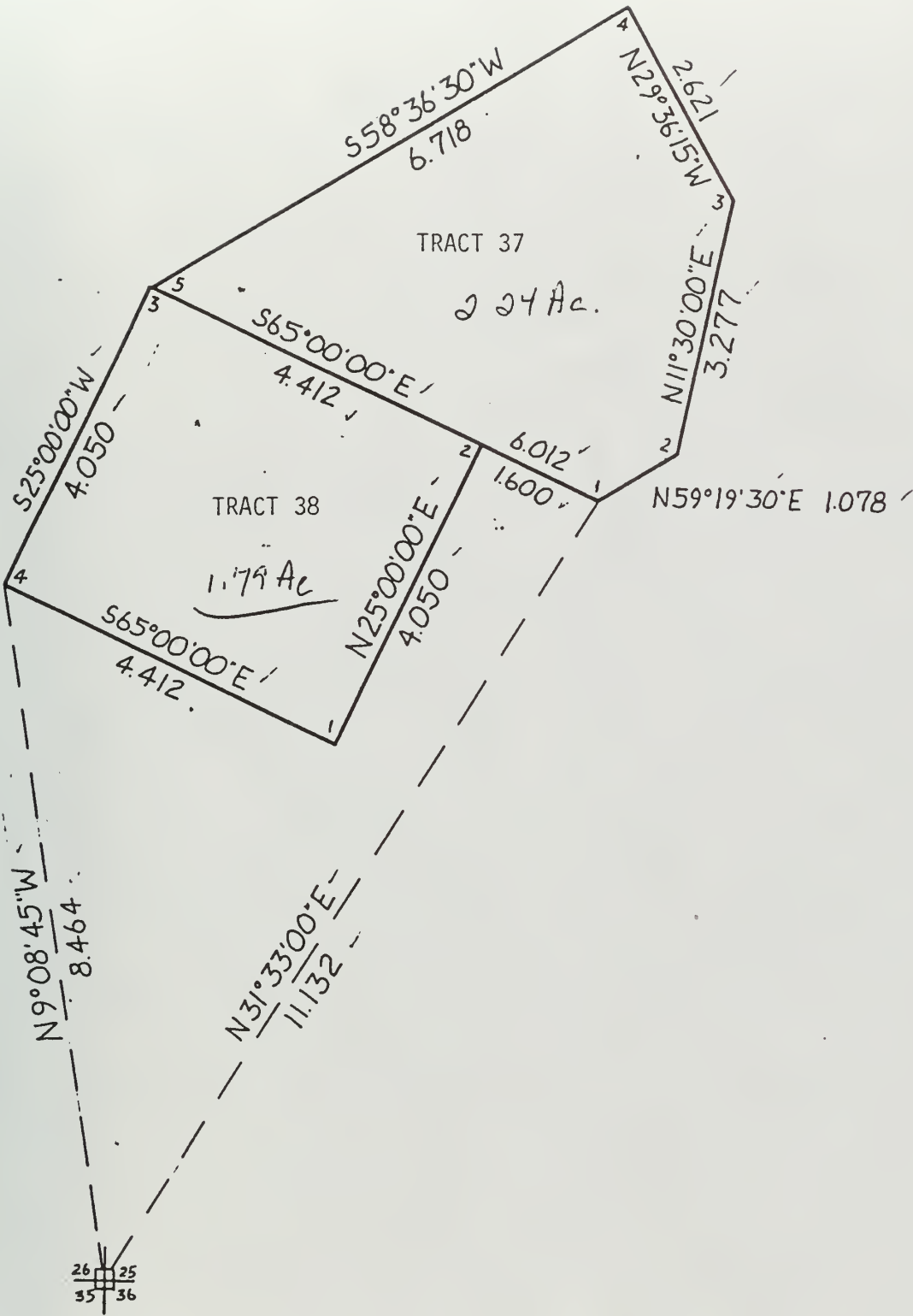
#### IV. PUBLIC AND OTHER AGENCY INTEREST

The member of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors whose district includes Homewood Canyon has expressed his support for the proposed action, as did local residents at a December 1984 town meeting there. The local residents, like others in rural desert communities, are wary of the federal government and likely feel the three sale proponents have squatters rights to the land they live on.

There is, on the other hand, currently considerable interest in protective management of riparian habitat. This interest is shared by conservation organizations as the National Audobon Society and Defenders of Wildlife as well as by the California Department of Fish and Game. The presence of the Inyo brown towhee, a wildlife species proposed for listing as threatened, will probably heighten public interest.

# DETAIL 'A'

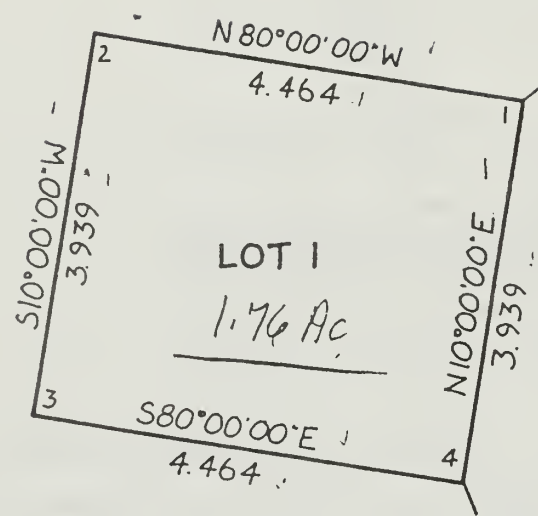
PARCELS E and F



PARCEL G

26  
35  
25  
36

DETAIL 'B'



N 52° 10' 45" E  
66.979

Sec 35

N 21° 49' 45" W  
38.340

1/4 SEC COR





