3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.15 Socio-Economic Considerations

The CDCA planning area occurs in a region which has positioned itself as one of the premier destination resort areas in the country. Although most BLM lands in the planning area are remote and uninhabited, they offer a broad range of economic opportunities for the local population, including eco-tourism, mineral and energy leases, and utility rights-of-way.

3.15.1 Regional Economy and Demographics

Population. The population of the CDCA planning area has grown rapidly over the past two decades. As described in the table below, the regional population more than doubled during the 1980s, from 91,124 to 194,718. During the 1990s, the population grew to 274,470, which represents a 10-year gain of 79,752 or 41%.

Table 3-10: Population Trends for the CDCA Planning Area, 1980-2000

City/Place	Population		
	1980	1990	2000
Cathedral City	N/A[1]	30085	42647
Coachella	9129	16896	22724
Desert Hot Springs	5941	11668	16582
Indian Wells	1394	2647	3816
Indio	21611	36793	49116
La Quinta	3328	11215	23694
Palm Desert	11081	23252	41155
Palm Springs	32359	40181	42807
Rancho Mirage	6281	9778	13249
Bermuda Dunes	N/A[2]	4571	6229
Mecca	N/A[2]	1966	5402
Morongo Valley	N/A[2]	1544	1929
Thousand Palms	N/A[2]	4122	5.12
TOTAL	91124	194718	274470

1 Cathedral City was not incorporated until 1981
2 Data not tabulated in1980
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990, 2000

The Coachella Valley population is expected to continue to grow rapidly over the next two decades. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) forecasts

that the population will reach approximately 440,301 by year 2010, and 540,901 by year 2020.[1]

Median Age. In 2000, the median age of residents living in the CDCA planning area ranged from a low of 22.6 in Mecca, to a high of 63.4 in Indian Wells.[2] This wide range of ages is representative of the valley's diverse population, which includes students, young families, middle-aged professionals, retirees and seniors.

Race and Ethnicity. The CDCA planning area is primarily Caucasian, with approximately 68.4% of residents in the region classifying themselves as "white." However, nearly half (44.5%) of the population identifies itself as Hispanic or Latino, of any race. The table below describes the region's racial/ethnic composition, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

Table 3-11: Ethnicity in the CDCA Planning Area, 2000

Race	Population	
	Total No.	Percent
White	187839	68.4
Black or African American	6480	2.4
American Indian/ Native Alaskan	2339	0.9
Asian	6333	2.3
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	259	0.09
Some Other Race	61980	22.6
Two or More Races	9240	3.4
TOTAL	274470	100
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	122226	44.5

1 Difference due to rounding
Note: Table includes combined data for nine incorporated cities and four unincorporated communities in the CDCA planning area.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Households.[3] In 2000, there were approximately 101,871 households in the CDCA planning area. Average household sizes ranged from a low of 1.92 persons per household in Rancho Mirage, to a high of 5.04 in Mecca. This indicates that the region

[1] Southern California Association of Governments, letter correspondence to City of La Quinta, May 23, 2001.
[2] U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.
[3] Ibid.

contains a wide variety of family units, ranging from singles and couples to large, extended families.

Employment and Income. According to the California Employment Development Department, the number of jobs in the Coachella Valley increased from 74,146 in 1991, to 100,231 in 1999. This represents a gain of 26,085 jobs or 35.2% over the eight-year period.[4] The region's largest employment sectors are retail trade, agriculture, and hotel and amusement. Other growing industries include construction, business services, and distribution and transport services.

Median household incomes in the region have risen steadily over the past decade. In 1990, they ranged from a low of $20,687 in Desert Hot Springs, to a high of $87,942 in Indian Wells. By 1998, the range increased from $29,555 in Desert Hot Springs to $125,642 in Indian Wells. These data suggest a wide variation in residents' economic situations and expendable incomes.

Historic Overview of Regional Economy. Agriculture was the Coachella Valley's dominant industry during the first half of the twentieth century. The region's main staple, the date palm, was introduced around the turn of the century by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the industry soon expanded to include the cultivation of grapes, citrus, and other fruit and vegetable crops.

As early as the 1920s, however, hotels, restaurants, country clubs, and casinos began to emerge in the upper Coachella Valley, especially in the Palm Springs and Cathedral City areas. Equestrian camps and resort hotels, including the historic La Quinta Hotel, were constructed in the lower valley. By the 1930s, the character of the region had been transformed toward the budding resort industry, with the marketing and construction of weekend homes throughout the valley. A new era of development emerged during the post-World War II era, giving the region its predominant image as a destination resort community.

Over the past three decades, the Coachella Valley has expanded to become one of the premier destination resort areas in the country. Today, it is characterized by high quality hotels, convention facilities, spas, and planned residential golf course developments. Approximately 3 million (overnight) visitors come to the Coachella Valley annually, and tourism has an estimated $1.5 million annual economic impact on the region.[5]

3.15.2 Socio-Economic Issues Specific to BLM Lands

BLM lands within the CDCA planning area provide a variety of direct and indirect economic benefits the general economy. These include the leasing of BLM lands for such economic opportunities and activities as mineral (sand and gravel) extraction, wind

[4] California Employment Development Department data, as provided in "Coachella Valley Economic Review," John E. Husing, Ph.D., July 22, 2000.
[5] "Palm Springs Desert Resorts Fact Sheet," Palm Springs Desert Resorts Convention and Visitors Bureau, Spring 2000.

energy production, utility corridors, and commercial recreational uses such as ecotourism.

The Bureau leases lands with locally important resource value, which in the planning area is limited to sand and gravel extraction. Sand and gravel have a relatively low unit value and are especially sensitive to extraction, processing and transportation costs. Making sand and gravel resources available to the local economy has significant positive impacts on a wide range of construction costs, including roads and highways, manufacture of concrete and related products, and other construction uses.

BLM lands are also an important part of wind energy development in the CDCA planning area. As discussed elsewhere in this document, wind energy is a clean, economical and renewable energy resource, which reduces air pollutant emissions, creates local jobs and still allows the land to provide wildlife habitat for a variety of sensitive species and communities. These lands also provide important local and regional rights-of-way for the transmission of electricity, water, natural gas and petroleum products, enhancing their availability and positively affecting their price structure.

Commercial ecotourism has also become a progressively more important local economic benefit, enhancing the resort industry in the planning area and providing opportunities for increased employment in “nature” industries.

Occasionally, the Bureau may enter into land exchange agreements that provide opportunities that free up appropriate public lands for expanded private economic development and optimal land use. In exchange, the Bureau and the public typically receive lands that are environmentally or ecologically important.