

### 3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

#### 3.16 Environmental Justice and Health Risks to Children

Executive Order 12898. Environmental justice refers to the fair and equitable treatment of all individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity or income level, in the development and implementation of environmental laws and policies. In February 1994, the President of the United States signed Executive Order (EO) 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, which is one of the principal mechanisms used to implement environmental justice concepts at the federal level. Its fundamental objective is to require each federal agency to “make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”<sup>1</sup>

The EO was accompanied by a memorandum, which emphasized the importance of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as a means for implementing environmental justice principles. The memorandum directs federal agencies to analyze the environmental effects, including human health, economic, and social effects, of their actions where such analysis is required by NEPA.

Executive Order 13045. Executive Order (EO) 13045, entitled *Protection of Children From Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks*, was signed by the President on April 21, 1997. It requires all federal agencies to assure that their policies, programs, activities, and standards address disproportionate health risks to children that result from environmental health or safety risks. The EO defines environmental health and safety risks as those that are attributable to products or substances the child is likely to come into contact with or ingest, such as air, food, water, soil, and products children use or are exposed to.

Implementation of EO 12898 and 13045 BLM will utilize the NEPA process to implement these Executive Orders by describing the population affected by the proposed CDCA Plan amendment (below) and addressing disproportionately high adverse impacts of the proposed action on special populations (Chapter 4).

It is important to recognize that most BLM land in the CDCA planning area is uninhabited. Very few exceptions exist where a caretaker or ranger lives on-site, such as in the case of the Big Morongo Canyon ACEC; however, such incidences are rare and isolated. Nonetheless, BLM lands do not exist in a vacuum. They are located within the broader Coachella Valley, a resort-residential community with a permanent population of approximately 275,000, and are frequently utilized by local residents and

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<sup>1</sup> “Environmental Justice: Guidance Under the National Environmental Policy Act,” Council on Environmental Quality, December 10, 1997.

visitors alike for recreational and educational purposes. Certain parcels are also accessed by BLM staff and authorized individuals for the routine maintenance of energy/mineral leases or utility rights-of-way. The following discussion describes special populations in the Coachella Valley, as these groups are likely to utilize BLM lands in the CDCA planning area.

**Minorities and Minority Populations**

As shown in the table below, the majority of residents in the Coachella Valley categorize themselves as “white,” and other races represent a significantly smaller segment of the population. Minority populations are generally well integrated and dispersed geographically throughout the Coachella Valley, and there are few isolated minority neighborhoods or districts in the region.

**Table 3-12: Racial Composition of the CDCA Planning Area, 2000**

	<b>White (%)</b>	<b>Black or African American (%)</b>	<b>American Indian &amp; Alaska Native (%)</b>	<b>Asian (%)</b>	<b>(%) Native Hawaiian &amp; Pacific Islander</b>	<b>Some other race (%)</b>	<b>(%) Two or More Races</b>	<b>Hispanic/Latino (of any race) (%)</b>
Cathedral City	65.3	2.7	1	3.7	0.1	23.1	4.1	50
Coachella	38.8	0.5	0.8	0.3	–	56.6	3	97.4
Desert Hot Springs	68.2	6.1	1.4	2	0.1	16.4	5.8	40.4
Indian Wells	96.3	0.4	0.2	1.5	0.1	0.5	1	3
Indio	48.7	2.8	1	1.5	0.1	42	3.9	75.4
La Quinta	78.5	1.4	0.7	1.9	0.1	13.9	3.5	32
Palm Desert	86.8	1.2	0.5	2.6	0.1	6.5	2.4	17.1
Palm Springs	76.3	3.9	0.9	3.8	0.1	9.8	3.1	23.7
Rancho Mirage	92.7	0.9	0.2	1.2	0.1	3.6	1.3	9.4
Bermuda Dunes	84.2	2.1	0.6	2.7	0.1	6.9	3.4	19.5
Mecca	24.1	0.1	1	0.7	–	70.7	3.4	98
Morongo Valley	91.9	0.8	1.4	0.4	0.1	3.4	2.1	9.3
Thousand Palms	74.8	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.3	19.4	3.2	43.6
Note: – represents zero or rounds to zero. <span style="float: right;">Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000</span>								

The percentage of “Black or African Americans” ranges from 0.1% in Mecca to 6.1% in Desert Hot Springs. “American Indian and Alaskan Natives” range from a low of 0.2% in

Rancho Mirage and Indian Wells, and a high of 1.4% in Desert Hot Springs and Morongo Valley. The “Asian” population ranges from 0.3% in Coachella to 3.8% in Palm Springs. “Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders” range from a low of zero (or near zero) percent in Coachella and Mecca, to a high of 0.3% in Thousand Palms. These individuals clearly represent minority populations in the region. The data indicate that they are generally dispersed geographically, but the greatest percentages live in the western portion of the Coachella Valley, including the cities of Palm Springs, Desert Hot Springs, and Cathedral City.

A substantial portion of the population identifies itself as Hispanic or Latino, of any race. Percentages range from a low of 3.0% in Indian Wells to a high of 98.0% in Mecca. The data indicate that substantially higher percentages of Hispanics/Latinos reside in the eastern valley, including the communities of Coachella, Indio, and Mecca.

Low Income Populations

As shown in the following table, the Coachella Valley population is characterized by a diverse range of incomes. Residents include young working families, middle and upper class professionals, retirees on fixed incomes, those receiving public assistance, and seasonal workers employed in the region’s agricultural and resort industries. The data indicate that the greatest percentage of persons living below the poverty level reside in the eastern portion of the Coachella Valley, specifically in the communities of Mecca and Coachella, and to a lesser extent Indio. Relatively high percentages of residents living below the poverty level are also concentrated in the northwesterly portion of the region, in Desert Hot Springs and Morongo Valley.

Table 3-13: Comparison of Income Levels in the CDCA Planning Area, 1990

	Median Household Income	Persons Living Below Poverty Level	
		Total Number	% of Population
Cathedral City	\$30,908	4046	13.6
Coachella	\$23,218	4115	24.5
Desert Hot Springs	\$20,687	2,469	21.5
Indian Wells	\$87,942	100	4
Indio	\$25,976	7652	21.2
La Quinta	\$39,572	730	6.5
Palm Desert	\$37,315	1643	7.1
Palm Springs	\$27,538	4,991	12.6
Rancho Mirage	\$45,064	728	7.6

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Bermuda Dunes	\$47,195	123	2.7
Mecca	\$21,829	622	31.7
Morong Valley	\$38.125	361	23.2
Thousand Palms	\$27,219	333	8.1
<p>Note: Income data from the 2000 census was not available at the time of this writing Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990</p>			

**Native American Populations**

As described earlier, the percentage of local residents identifying themselves as Native Americans/Alaska Natives in the 2000 Census ranges from a low of 0.2% in Rancho Mirage and Indian Wells, to a high of 1.4% in Desert Hot Springs and Morongo Valley. These individuals account for an extremely small percentage of the regional population and are generally well dispersed geographically.

However, an estimated 70,000 acres of land in the Coachella Valley region consists of Native American reservation lands. These lands include Tribal trust, allotted, and fee (privately owned) lands under the jurisdiction of the following entities: (1) the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians in the San Gorgonio Pass area, (2) the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians in the Palm Springs, Cathedral City, and Rancho Mirage areas, (3) the Torres-Martinez Indians near the Salton Sea area, and (4) Santa Rosa Indian Reservation in the Anza Valley area. Although Indian land is not subject to the provisions of the CDCA Plan Amendment, Native Americans represent an important local population which may utilize BLM land for recreational and other purposes.

**Children**

Although the Coachella Valley is nationally recognized as a winter haven for retirees and other seniors, much of the valley’s year-round population includes younger families with children. The following table identifies the number of persons under the age of 18 living in the CDCA planning area.

Table 3-14: Children in the CDCA Planning Area, 2000

	<b>Persons Under Age 18</b>	
	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>% of Population</b>
Cathedral City	13267	31.1
Coachella	9270	40.8
Desert Hot Springs	5519	33.3
Indian Wells	290	7.6
Indio	17318	35.3
La Quinta	6905	29.1
Palm Desert	7130	17.3
Palm Springs	7275	17

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Rancho Mirage	1362	10.3
Bermuda Dunes	1468	23.6
Mecca	2152	39.8
Morongo Valley	486	25.2
Thousand Palms	1312	25.6
TOTAL	73754	--
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000		

The data suggest that children are generally well distributed geographically throughout the planning area. The highest percentages reside in the eastern portion of the valley (Coachella, Mecca, and Indio) and the lowest percentages reside in the central portion of the valley (Indian Wells and Rancho Mirage).