

## 4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This chapter addresses the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on elements of the human environment from actions proposed in the CDCA Plan Amendment. This chapter is organized by environmental element, followed by a description and comparison of impacts from the relevant plan element alternatives.

Land use plans, such as the CDCA Plan Amendment, developed in accordance with Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations, provide landscape level decisions for managing the BLM-administered public lands. As a result, the impact analysis for land use plans level actions tends to be cumulative by nature.

### 4.2 Transportation, Traffic and Circulation

**Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Determinations.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives A, B and C). Determinations of eligibility for designation of river segments on public lands as Wild and Scenic Rivers would have no effect on transportation, traffic and circulation. An eligibility determination requires that the free-flowing nature of the river segment and the Outstandingly Remarkable Values supporting river segments' eligibility are not compromised. The classification of the river reflects the level of development, future development and access to the river at the time of designation.

No Action Alternative (D). If the rivers, or portions thereof, were later studied and found to be suitable for designation, existing dams and other impoundments or diversions would be unaffected. However, future development of new roads, railroads or pipelines, or the expansion of existing transportation facilities across BLM lands must demonstrate compliance with the provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Furthermore, no federal agency or department would be permitted to assist by loan, grant, license, or otherwise in the construction of any highway or other transportation project that would have a direct and adverse effect on the values for which such a designation was established. In this regard, the development of new transportation facilities along these rivers would be restricted.

**Visual Resource Management.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives A, B and C). The designation of VRM classifications, in and of itself, would have no impact on roads or other transportation facilities on BLM-managed public lands as the classifications would be based on analyses of existing land uses and landscape quality. However, should a new or expanded transportation project be proposed in the future, the degree of contrast between the existing landscape and the proposed project (Contrast Rating) would be compared with the VRM classification to determine whether the anticipated level of contrast is acceptable. If the allowable contrast level is exceeded, the project would need to be redesigned or abandoned, or mitigation measures would need to be implemented to reduce critical impacts to acceptable levels. This process has the potential to limit the extent and increase the costs of future transportation system development on BLM-managed public lands in the planning area.

In designating public lands as VRM Class 4 outside designated wilderness, CVMSHCP conservation areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, the Proposed Plan minimizes potential adverse effects of the VRM classification system on regional transportation systems. VRM Class 4 is one of the least restrictive classifications, which allows any contrast to attract attention and be a dominant feature of the landscape in terms of scale, but requires it to repeat the form, line, color, and texture of the characteristic landscape. Mitigation measures and project redesign may be required to assure that future transportation facility development meets this standard. Such action may result in increased costs to transportation project developers.

No Action Alternative (D). The assignment of interim VRM classes when project proposals on public lands are addressed would likely mirror the VRM classes designated under the Proposed Plan. Hence, impacts would be the same as described above.

**Land Health Standards and Air Quality.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives A, B and C). The proposed land health standards are directed at promoting healthy landscapes. To achieve these standards, transportation projects would likely need to implement site-specific mitigation measures, such as improvements to soil, drainage, and vegetation, implementation of Best Management Practices to minimize impacts to air and water quality, and special construction, design, or operational techniques. Such measures can be expected to result in increased costs to transportation projects. However, land health standards may not be used to permanently prohibit allowable uses established by law, regulation, or land use plans.

No Action Alternative (D). Adopting the National Fallback Standards would result in essentially the same impacts to transportation projects as described under the Proposed Plan.

**Multiple-Use Classification.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C), Alternatives A and No Action (D). No impacts to existing or future transportation projects would be expected to occur. Transportation projects would still be allowed in Multiple-Use Classes “L,” “M,” and “I,” but would continue to be prohibited in Multiple-Use Class “C,” which applies only to wilderness areas.

**Habitat Conservation Objectives.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C). Implementation of the proposed habitat conservation objectives may require project-specific mitigation measures to be implemented where new or expanded transportation system construction occurs within conservation areas. This will likely increase costs to such projects; costs would depend upon the location of the project relative to sensitive species, habitat conservation areas, and ecological processes, such as sand transport corridors.

Alternatives A and No Action (D). If the Proposed Plan’s habitat conservation objectives

were not adopted, or for land outside conservation areas, transportation projects would still have to mitigate for impacts to listed species, cultural and other sensitive resources. Mitigation measures would be determined on a project-by-project basis. Additionally, recent transportation projects in the planning area but not involving BLM lands have required mitigation measures related to landscape level habitat management, which might also be imposed for such projects on BLM lands in the CDCA planning area.

**Fire Management.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C), Alternatives A and No Action (D). No impacts to transportation systems would occur as the fire management categories are based on analyses of existing land uses and vegetation types, with priority placed on protecting life and property.

With regard to transportation systems and services, the proposed fire management categories would clarify BLM's fire management and response strategy for various habitat types on BLM-managed lands in the planning area.

**Special Area Designations.** Proposed Plan (Alternative A), Alternatives B, C and No Action (D). Designation of areas as ACECs or Wildlife Habitat Management Areas would not directly impact existing transportation systems or services on BLM-managed public lands in the CDCA planning area. The designation of such areas would not result in automatic closures of such facilities or their operation. Any potential closures would be proposed through a separate action, based on protection of sensitive cultural or natural resources. Efforts would be made to accomplish such protection without unnecessarily or unreasonably restricting public lands from uses that are compatible with that protection.

**Land Tenure: Exchange and Sale Criteria.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C), Alternatives A and No Action (D). Implementation of the proposed land tenure exchange and sale criteria would not impact transportation facilities or services. The BLM would still have the option to retain transportation infrastructure in public ownership. BLM may consider exchanges or sales of land, including land with roads and other transportation facilities, if all the criteria described in Chapter 2.4.9 are met.

**Land Tenure: Acquisition Criteria.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C), Alternatives A and No Action (D). Implementation of the land tenure acquisition criteria would not impact transportation facilities or services.

**Management of Acquired Lands.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives A, B and C). The Proposed Plan would not impact existing transportation facilities on BLM-managed public lands in the planning area. However, should the BLM acquire new lands that already contain roads, rail lines or other transportation facilities, the Proposed Plan would require that they be managed in accordance with management practices on surrounding lands. Where surrounding lands are managed for the protection of sensitive cultural or natural resources (such as in an ACEC), this could result in the need for additional mitigation measures and costs associated with new or expanded transportation facilities.

No Action Alternative (D). If no guidance for managing acquired lands were provided at this time, acquired and formerly withdrawn lands are subject to applicable land and minerals laws when an opening order is issued and published in the Federal Register.

**Communication Sites and Utilities.** Proposed Plan (Alternative B). The Proposed Plan would minimize land use conflicts (such as noise, traffic, construction and operational activity) between sensitive natural resource areas and transportation infrastructure, traffic and associated impacts.

Alternative A. This alternative would provide for road and other rights-of-way for transportation infrastructure, including but not limited to traffic and circulation that serve communication sites, provide public roads, and allow for utility lines both above and below ground. Such improvements could be facilitated consistent with habitat conservation objectives and the application of appropriate mitigation measures.

Alternative C. Alternative C would not affect existing public rights-of-way but would emphasize avoidance of impacts to biological and cultural resources. This alternative could also result in the retirement of some private access through lands within conservation areas serving inactive windfarms and communication sites, or inactive utility facilities and their corridors. New communication sites and associated access roads, and new utility sites and corridors could be permitted, but would require very carefully designed solutions and mitigation measures that avoid impacts to significant biological and cultural resources.

No Action Alternative (D). Impacts associated with the No Action Alternative are the same as those for the Proposed Plan.

**Sand and Gravel Mining.** Proposed Plan (Alternative B), Alternatives A, C and No Action (D). Transportation systems would not be affected by any alternative.

**Livestock Grazing.** Proposed Plan (Alternative A), Alternatives B, C and No Action (D). Continuation or elimination of grazing uses in of all or a portion of the Whitewater Canyon Allotment would not affect transportation infrastructure or services.

**Wild Horse and Burro Program.** Proposed Plan (Alternative B), Alternatives A, C and No Action (D). The proposed transfer of BLM parcels within the Palm Canyon Herd Management Area (HMA) to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians (Proposed Plan), the proposed deletion of the Palm Canyon and Morongo HMAs (Proposed Plan and Alternative C), or retention of the HMA (Alternatives A and D) would not impact transportation systems or facilities.

**Motorized Vehicle Area Designations.** Proposed Plan (Alternative B), Alternatives A, C and No Action (D). These alternatives would not impact non-recreational transportation systems, facilities or services.

**Motorized Vehicle Route Designations.** Proposed Plan (Alternative B), Alternatives A, C and No Action (D). Given that the designation of motor vehicle routes would be

based on analyses of existing land uses, no impacts to existing non-recreational transportation systems, facilities or services would occur. Where routes would be closed to casual use, access for administrative uses to rights-of-way facilities on public lands could be provided.

**Special Recreation Management Area.** Proposed Plan (Alternative B), Alternatives A, C and No Action (D). Designation or non-designation of the Meccacopia SRMA would not impact non-recreational transportation systems, facilities or services.

**Stopping, Parking and Vehicle Camping.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives A and B), Alternatives C and No Action (D). The Proposed Plan or other alternatives would not impact non-recreational transportation systems, facilities or services.

**Peninsular Ranges Bighorn Sheep Recovery Strategy.** Proposed Plan (Alternative B), Alternatives A, C and No Action (D). No impacts to transportation systems, facilities or services would result from any alternative.

**Hiking, Biking and Equestrian Trails.** Proposed Plan (Alternatives A, B and C) and No Action (D). No impacts to non-recreational transportation systems, facilities or services would result from the Proposed Plan or other alternatives.