

CA-010-045 Kelso Creek Valley
(Map 01-N)

I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The unit is located south of Onyx and adjoins the western boundary of the 48,000 acre Scodie RARE II Area which has been recommended by Sequoia National Forest for further planning.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP

That portion of the inventory unit that meets the Wilderness Act criteria is 2,244 acres in size and consists entirely of public land. A total of 11,970 acres was eliminated due to unnatural features.

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The unit occupies the western edge of the Scodie Mountains and contains small portions of Kelso Creek Valley. Topography consists of steep, rounded hills dissected by numerous canyons. The many canyons drain westward leaving long, narrow, east-west trending tentacles of low hills protruding from the main Scodie Mountain mass. Vegetation consists predominantly of mixed shrubs and annual grasses, although a few Joshua trees dot the landscape and the higher elevations support pinyon pine and juniper.

IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Boundary adjustments have been made in order to exclude areas where the works of man dominate the landscape. These man-made features include maintained roads, numerous primitive vehicle routes, and other developments, the majority of which are utilized in support of livestock operations. Every canyon entering the unit contains at least one road that leads to a windmill and stock water tank. Numerous vehicle routes branch from each of these roads and extend to every corner of the interior valleys. The paved Kelso Creek Road traverses the western portion of the unit. In addition, the south-western portion of the unit contains evidence of mining activity in the vicinity of Rocky Point. The numerous roadcuts and switchbacks are evident on the hillsides as well as the excavations and slag piles created by the mining operation. The majority of these man-made features are substantially noticeable throughout the western portion of the unit.

A narrow, mountainous band of public land immediately adjacent to the Forest Service boundary generally retains its natural character. Few vehicle routes penetrate the unit to that point, leaving the area primarily free from the imprint of man's work.

V. OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED TYPE OF RECREATION

That portion of the unit that retains its natural character provides only limited opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation due to its small size and narrow configuration. But in association with the adjacent RARE II lands, the unit may provide outstanding opportunities due to added size and increased diversity of terrain and vegetation. The east-west trending ridges emanating from the Scodie Mountains lack outstanding opportunities for either solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation due to their narrow, irregular shape and the confining effect of the valley encroachments.

VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Several comments stated that the unit possesses wilderness characteristics. That portion of the unit which retains its natural character and lies adjacent to the Forest Service RARE II area will be studied for possible inclusion in the Wilderness Preservation System. Those portions of the unit where the natural character has been degraded or a combination of size, shape, and man-made encroachments has impaired opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation have been excluded from further wilderness consideration. A few comments recommended that the east-west trending ridges be retained for study due to their natural character. But the confining nature of their small size and narrow configuration, combined with the encroaching development in the canyons, precludes most opportunities for both solitude and a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. A few comments supported the Bureau findings. Two comments addressed Study Phase considerations such as oil and gas and other mineral potentials. These values will receive consideration through the Bureau Planning Process.