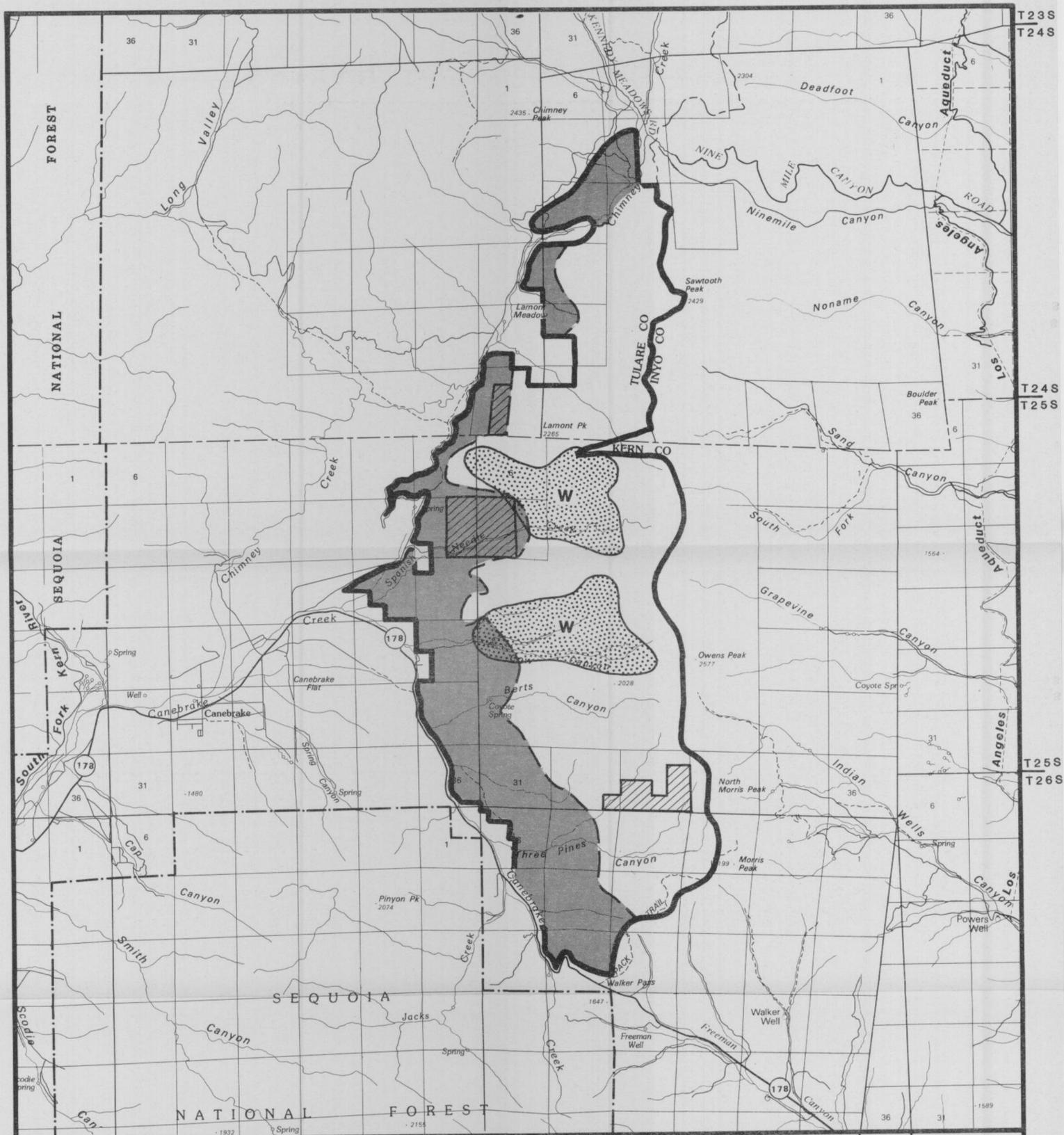


Owens Peak

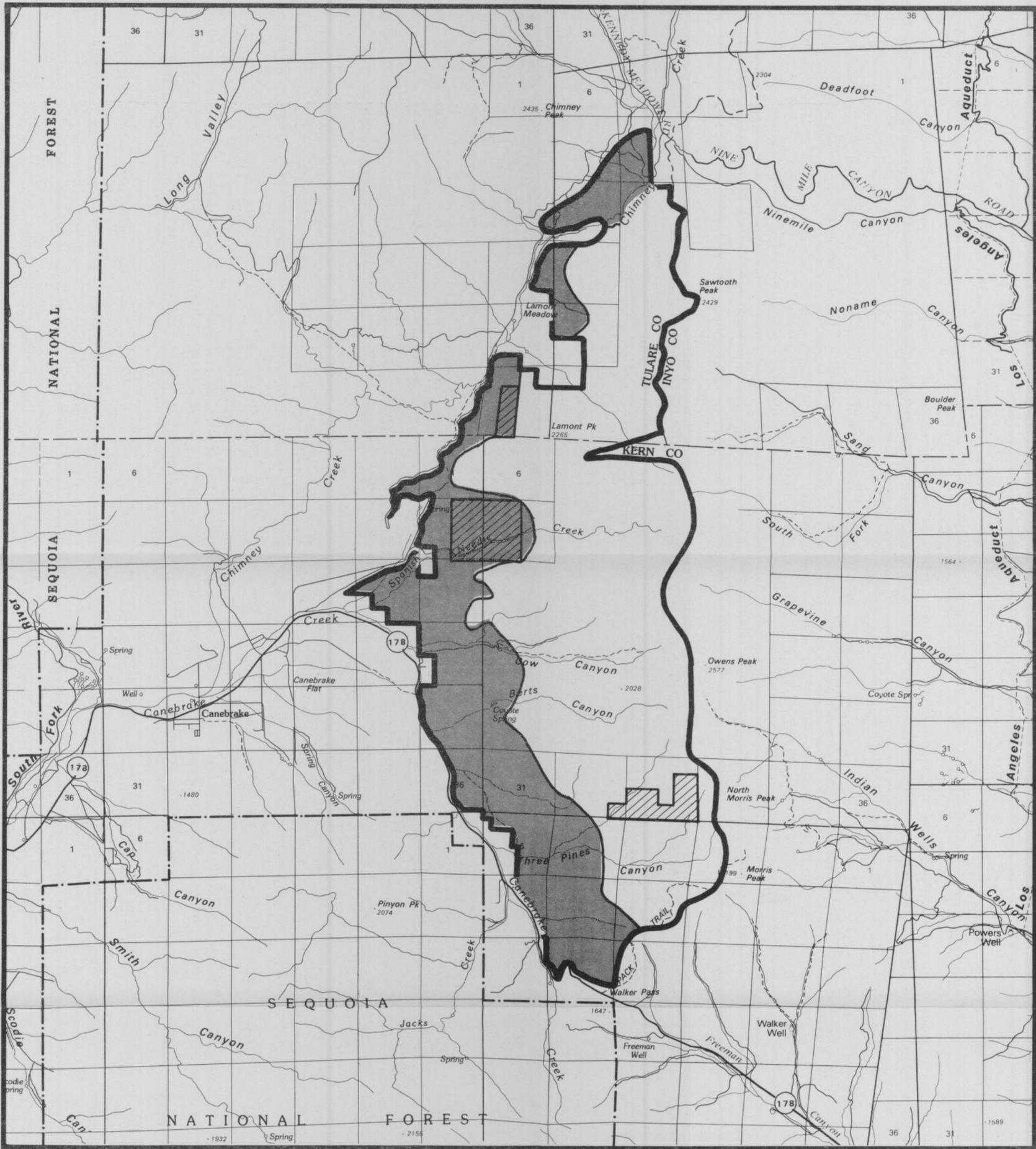
CA-010-026



Owens Peak Mineral Resource Potential		Explanation	Commodity Symbols
	Recommended for Wilderness		High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
	Recommended for Non Wilderness		Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
	Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness		Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
	Split Estate		High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area
	State		
	Private		
			W Tungsten

0 1 2 3
MILES

Map-2
010-026



	RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS		SPLIT ESTATE
	RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS		STATE
	LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS		PRIVATE

Owens Peak Proposal MAP-1

0 1 2 3
MILES

010-026
JUNE, 1988

OWENS PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-026)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 25,514 acres

The WSA is located in eastern Kern County, occupying the western edge of the Sierra Crest, approximately 25 miles west of the town of Ridgecrest, California. The WSA includes 24,128 acres of BLM land and 1,386 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the north by Nine Mile Canyon Road, on the south by Highway 178, on the east by the California Desert District boundary, and on the west by the Canebrake Road. The Owens Peak WSA (CDCA-158) borders this WSA along its eastern edge, a portion of which has been recommended suitable for wilderness.

The WSA consists of rocky, steep slopes along the west face of the Sierra Nevada Crest and rolling terrain interspersed by meadows at lower elevation levels. A unique ecotone formed by the convergence of five vegetative types is found here. The primary vegetative type is pinyon; in addition, there are outstanding examples of Joshua tree woodland near the Walker Pass area, big sage/rabbitbrush associations and mixed conifer at the higher elevations.

The WSA is part of the Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA), established in 1962 through Public Land Order No. 2594. It is managed by BLM in cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G) for the benefit of the wildlife resources. Both agencies have been involved in habitat improvement projects, especially water developments, which have significantly improved the habitat for upland game species.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness, partial wilderness (recommending 64% of the area as suitable), and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 16,399 acres recommended for wilderness
8,231 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Sixty-four percent partial wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA - 8,231 acres in this WSA are released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation is in accordance with the South Sierra Foothills Management Framework Plan/South Sierra Foothills Grazing Management EIS, dated 1983.

In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, 368 acres of private land will be acquired through exchange or purchase and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of these inholdings, a total of 16,399 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 lists the inholdings and provides additional information on their acquisition. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally-preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The 64% partial wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

Partial wilderness is the recommendation for this unit based on the following rationale: the lands proposed are an example of a unique ecotone, eleven candidate plant species occur in the recommended area, a portion of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail traverses the unit, and the wilderness characteristics for the area are outstanding. With the deletion of those parcels proposed, manageability and resource conflicts will be reduced.

The proposed wilderness area is located in an ecotone between pinyon-juniper woodland, sagebrush scrub, foothill woodland, Joshua tree woodland, and yellow pine forest vegetative types. It is characterized by pinyon-juniper covered slopes in the higher elevations and mixed desert shrubs with annual plants in the lower elevations. Occasional pockets of scrub oak and coniferous forest occur on the crest of the Sierra Nevada near the east side of the WSA. Particularly unique to the area are the eleven candidate plant species that occur in the unit. Four of these species have been discovered since 1984.

Overall, the wilderness characteristics for the area are outstanding. The imprint of man's work is substantially unnoticeable throughout the unit. A variety of steep canyons and small ridges serve to isolate the visitor from outside sounds and provide excellent opportunities for solitude. One special feature which offers the public an opportunity to view the WSA, is the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail which winds 23 miles through the unit.

For manageability reasons and other resource values, the following parcels were not included in the area recommended for wilderness. Removal of the parcel north of Chimney Creek is recommended as non-suitable for wilderness designation. This will eliminate the irregular boundary and narrow, protruding portions of the WSA while utilizing easily identifiable boundary features. This exclusion also meets the demand for vehicular access for historical pinyon nut and Christmas-tree harvesting. The removal of the parcel on the western boundary would enhance the manageability of the area. This adjustment includes eliminating 884 acres of non-public inholdings and portions of the irregular boundary. The remaining private inholding in sections 32 and 33, T. 25 S., R. 37 E., MDM, would be acquired to prevent incompatible development and the need for vehicular access. The parcel to be removed on the southern boundary would also improve manageability. The area is now receiving use by OHVs along the canyons and has a high potential for OHV use along Highway 178. There are approximately 12 miles of routes

of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access included within this WSA. The boundary is relocated to points where, because of the topography, vehicular access can be controlled and the wilderness values maintained.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	24,128
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		1,386
Total		<u>25,514</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	15,897
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>15,897</u>
Inholdings ¹		
State		0
Private		502
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	8,231
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>8,231</u>

¹Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split-estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split-estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non-Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non-Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The unit displays a unique melting of vegetative types. The primary vegetative type is pinyon; however, there are outstanding examples of Joshua tree woodland near the Walker Pass area, big sage/rabbitbrush associations and mixed conifer at the higher elevations. Where these vegetative types come together, interesting and unusual combinations of plants can be seen growing in association with one another. The imprint of man's work is substantially unnoticeable throughout the unit.
2. Solitude: The large size of this unit, combined with the excellent and diverse topographic and vegetative screening provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. Those areas where solitude would be impacted adjacent to Highway 178, are outside of the recommended suitable area.

This WSA is periodically overflown by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The area offers good opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail enhances the access to the area. Recently, water sources adjacent to the trail were located, thus making this segment easier to hike in its entirety.
4. Special features: Eleven candidate plant species occur within the unit, four having been discovered since 1984. Also as discussed, the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail traverses the entire length of the unit.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 24,128 acres of the Sierran Forest/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. Wilderness designation of this WSA would add a new ecosystem to the NWPS. The Sierran Forest Province/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland community is not currently represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BIM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	30,872
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	30,872

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 10 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BIM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS areas		Other BIM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BIM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation or partial designation; Sacatar Meadows (CA-010-027), Rockhouse (CA-010-029), Little Lake Canyon (CDCA-157), Owens Peak (CDCA-158), El Paso Mountains (CDCA-164), and Golden Valley (CDCA-170). Four miles to the west of the WSA is the Domeland Wilderness Area and five miles to the northwest

lies the South Sierra Wilderness Area. Both of these units are managed by the Sequoia National Forest.

C. Manageability

The area recommended is manageable as wilderness. No major conflicting uses occur within this area. With the boundary adjustments recommended, resource conflicts will be reduced to a minimum, thus allowing for the effective management of this area as wilderness. Over the long term, enhanced knowledge of visitor use patterns along the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail will enable BLM to monitor and develop management guidelines for the trail.

There have been no conflicts over water rights to the area's streams and springs in the past and none are anticipated in the future. The springs are withdrawn as Public Water Reserve 107's and the Federal water interest has been identified to the State of California, Division of Water Rights. The streams form the headwaters of their watersheds and have not been diverted within the WSA. A developed spring source, within a short distance of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, will provide treatable drinking water.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The geology and mineral resources for the Owens Peak Wilderness Study Area are described in the Affected Environment Section of the BLM 1987 Wilderness Recommendations, Central California Study Areas EIS. The EIS description is based largely on a 1982 BLM minerals inventory (BLM Memorandum, March 2, 1982 Mineral Inventory Report: Owens Peak Wilderness Study Area, (CA-010-032). The EIS indicates that there are occurrences of gold, tungsten, zinc and possibly copper in the WSA but that no economic concentrations of these minerals were known. It also identified occurrences of decomposed granite, a salable mineral material, but concluded these deposits were too inaccessible and too far from local markets to have any value. The WSA was considered to have no potential for oil and gas or geothermal resources based on its geologic environment. The EIS indicates there has been no history of prospecting or production within the WSA, but that 16 unpatented mining claims were on record with BLM in 1986.

The BLM mineral inventory report (BLM memorandum), determined that the majority of the WSA is underlain by granitic intrusive rocks associated with the Sierra Nevada batholith. The WSA also contains several roof pendants with associated skarn deposits. Claims were located throughout the WSA, but were mostly

concentrated in the central portion. Claim activity around the Golden Age Prospect is concentrated in the vicinity of contact metamorphic tungsten skarn deposits. Several of the areas under mining claims were noted to have been extensively prospected, contrary to what is said in the EIS.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: The United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted mineral surveys of the WSA from 1982 to 1985. The results of those surveys were published in USGS Bulletin 1705-A titled The Mineral Resources of the Owens Peak Wilderness Study Area, Tulare and Kern Counties, California. This report indicates the existence of two areas having moderate potential for the occurrence of tungsten mineralization. This tungsten mineralization extends into both the suitable and non-suitable portions of the WSA.

The accompanying map shows these areas of upgraded mineral occurrence potential which are largely associated with roof pendants of metamorphic rocks (skarn bodies) and pegmatite dikes.

USGS and BOM concluded that there are primarily four areas having mineral resource potential in the WSA. The Burnt House Canyon area has a moderate potential for the occurrence of tungsten, and low potential for copper and zinc. The Spanish Needle Creek area has a moderate potential for the occurrence of tungsten, and a low potential for lead. The canyon east of Lamont Meadow and west of Sand Canyon has a low potential for the occurrence of tungsten, copper and barite. The area of lower Three Pines Canyon has a low potential for the occurrence of tungsten and copper. For clarity, only the moderate mineral resource potential areas are shown on the accompanying mineral potential map (see Map 2).

BLM records as of May 6, 1988, indicate there are 17 lode mining claims remaining in the WSA, nine in the suitable portion and eight in the non-suitable portion. No mineral leases or mineral material sales contracts/permits have been issued in this WSA. The distribution of unpatented mining claims is shown in Table 4:

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Lode	7	1	8	140	20	160
Placer	2	7	9	80	280	360
Mill Sites	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	9	8	17	220	300	520

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	<p>Wilderness designation of this area would result in a minor positive benefit to wilderness values particularly naturalness and solitude as a result of closing this area to recreational OHV use and mineral development. Also, restricting the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression would slightly benefit naturalness.</p> <p>Generally, wilderness values would be retained throughout the WSA with the exception of mineral development including a loss of naturalness on approximately 50 acres. Additionally, placer and lode mining activities would impair the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude on 1,250 acres surrounding the mine sites. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, a special feature of the WSA, would be slightly enhanced by closure of the designated portion to vehicular use. Long-term security from unanticipated adverse future actions would be provided to the area recommended for wilderness.</p>	<p>Under the All-Wilderness Alternative wilderness values would be retained and slightly enhanced within the total WSA. Naturalness and solitude would particularly benefit from eliminating 650 visitor days of recreational OHV use and prohibiting mineral development. As a special feature of the WSA, the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail would be slightly enhanced as a result of closing the WSA to recreational OHV use. In addition, long-term security from unanticipated adverse actions would be provided.</p>	<p>There would be a minor impact to wilderness values within the WSA as a result of increased OHV use from the current 650 visitor days to 1,000 visitor days. Additionally, low-level exploration and development of mineral resources on 16 placer and lode mining claims would result in a loss of naturalness on 80 acres as well as an impairment of the WSA's perception of naturalness and sense of solitude within 2,000 acres in the western portion of the WSA. Increased OHV use would disrupt hiking and backpacking use on the PCNST and increase the threat of vehicle use on the trail.</p>

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Recreational OHV Use	Recreational OHV use of 50 visitor days annually would be foregone within the designated portion of the WSA. The impact of this action on recreational OHV use would be negligible because of the similar opportunities available on public lands outside the WSA and the relatively small amount of use displaced. Approximately 600 visitor days of recreational OHV use annually would continue within the non-designated portion of the WSA.	Recreational OHV use of 650 visitor days annually would be foregone. The impact of this action on recreational OHV use would be minor since similar opportunities are available on other public lands.	Motorized recreation use would continue and is projected to increase from the current 650 visitor days annually to under 1,000 visitor days.
Impact on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources	Overall, the WSA's archaeological resources will be retained under the Proposed Action. Surface-disturbing activities such as mineral development and mechanized fire suppression will be restricted and vehicular access along 8 miles of primitive vehicle routes will be eliminated. Adverse impacts associated with continued mineral development and vehicular access in the non-suitable portion of the WSA will be minor.	Wilderness designation of the Owens Peak WSA will enhance the preservation of archaeological resources. Surface-disturbing activities such as mineral development and mechanized fire suppression will be restricted and vehicle access along 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways will be eliminated.	Overall, the WSA's archaeological resources will be minimally impacted by continued vehicular access and increased recreational OHV use as well as surface disturbance from projected mineral development activities and the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression throughout the WSA.
Impact on Mineral* Exploration and Development	Wilderness designation would withdraw 64% of the area from mineral entry while 36% would remain available for exploration and development. Due to the low potential for	There would be a minor impact on mineral exploration and development due to withdrawing the entire WSA from mineral appropriation and entry. There are no known	There would be no impacts on mineral exploration and development as the WSA would remain open to mining and mineral exploration and development. Due to the low

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
	the occurrence and development of minerals within the WSA, there would be negligible impacts on mineral exploration and development. No significant exploration or development is anticipated within the portion of the WSA not recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.	economic concentrations of mineral resources that would be foregone.	potential for occurrence and development of minerals within the WSA, there is no significant mining activity projected for the area.

* NOTE: Since this impact summary table was prepared, new minerals data has been obtained, refer to the energy and mineral resources section of this document.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Several study comments received during the wilderness inventory phase dealt with other resource values and potential activities, such as mineral values, rockhounding opportunities, and possible hydroelectric power plant sites. One comment referred to noise and air pollution influences on the unit from Highway 395.

During the study phase a public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and comment period a total of 47 comments were received, both oral and written, relative to this unit. Thirty-eight comments supported the all-wilderness alternative. Five comments supported the Bureau's partial-wilderness recommendation. Four comments supported the no-wilderness alternative.

The Resources Agency of California supported the partial-wilderness alternative, but believed it should be extended to cover the entire WSA, since the gravel pit and Christmas-tree harvesting were not considered justified, especially since the area contains the Monache deer winter range and part of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors unanimously moved in favor of the Bureau's recommendations.

No comments specific to this WSA were received from Federal agencies.

APPENDIX 1
 ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN
 AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION
 OWENS PEAK WSA (CA-010-026)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	25S.	37E.	32,33	MDM	368	1	PRIVATE	FEDERAL	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.